

Wellspring Key Program Developments 2024–25

During the 2024–25 fiscal year, Wellspring Cancer Support Foundation made significant progress in expanding its reach and enhancing the quality of its services. This year was marked by key initiatives focused on enhancing digital systems, providing inclusive support for diverse communities, and improving accessibility while filling programming gaps. Below is a summary of these initiatives, the rationale behind each, and key learnings.

1. Digital Transformation

To support growth and streamline operations, Wellspring launched a new front-end website and Salesforce back-end system just prior to this fiscal year, laying the foundation for improved data management and user experience. Enhancements continue to be made to this system.

Key Developments:

- **Community Forum:** In February 2025, Wellspring launched a secure online Community Forum exclusively for its members—a space to connect, share experiences, and offer support. Early engagement demonstrated its value in building community.
- **Volunteer Management System:** Piloted new system to help front desk and peer support volunteers to better manage schedules.
- **Improved Program Navigation:** Introduced a new website section to help users explore and access programs more intuitively.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- **Forum Engagement:** More than 320 members participated in the first two months, generating 1,700+ visits. While engagement has since dipped (likely due to the forum's closed nature), Wellspring is planning strategies to boost participation.
- **Change Management:** Volunteer adoption of new tools took time, but features like calendar integration have helped ease the transition.
- **Continuous Feedback:** Member and volunteer input continues to shape system enhancements.

2. French Expansion

To reflect Wellspring's national scope and respond to partner needs, French-language offerings continue to expand.

Key Developments:

- **Website:** Launched a French program portal in July 2024 to allow individuals to register for French programs.
- **Program Tools:** Completed French translations for Cancer-Related Fatigue and Nourish program materials.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- **Staffing:** Part-time French support staff left in fall 2024. New fee-for-service support began in May 2025.
- **Funding:** Translation is resource-intensive. Wellspring is actively seeking funding for the next phase.
- **Program Adaptation:** Planning is underway to expand French program materials so that French programming can be offered by Wellspring New Brunswick.

3. New Brunswick Expansion

To increase in-person support in New Brunswick, Wellspring partnered with Horizon Health and launched a new affiliate in partnership with The Friends of the Moncton Hospital Foundation: Wellspring New Brunswick.

Key Developments:

- **Launch:** The Moncton-based affiliate began delivering programs at a temporary location within the local YMCA and launched a standalone website.
- **Expansion:** Horizon Health grew its roster of programming, as well expanded their program locations.
- **Training:** Staff training took place to ensure an understanding of our systems, as well as consistency and quality in program delivery.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- **Mentoring:** Meetings and sessions continue to take place with staff to ensure quality is maintained.

- Coordination: Working with multiple healthcare bodies has brought both logistical challenges and valuable insights.
- French Website: A French-language version launched in May 2025, with programming to follow.

4. Training Program Updates

To ensure content is current and inclusive, several programs were reviewed and revised based on licensing agreements, last review dates, and identified gaps.

Key Developments:

- Healing Journey: Piloted an updated virtual leader training program.
- Art Therapy: Developed a new leader manual to support consistent and high-quality delivery.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- Implementation Time: Rolling out Healing Journey updates took longer than anticipated and feedback taken throughout informed adjustments.

5. 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion

Wellspring is committed to ensuring all individuals feel welcome and supported in their cancer journey.

Key Developments:

- New Support Group: The Lesbian and Queer Cancer Support Group launched in fall 2024.
- Training: A new diversity training module is in development for volunteers and program leaders, with rollout planned for late 2025.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- Leader Recruitment: It remains challenging to recruit leaders for specialized groups requiring lived experience. We are focused on growing a more diverse pool of leaders to support these programs.

6. New Program Development

To meet emerging needs, Wellspring introduced and expanded several innovative programs.

Key Developments:

- Young Adult Programs: With rising diagnoses among young adults, Wellspring launched YA Brain Fog and a YA Breast Cancer group to support their unique needs and life stage.
- Nourish RxFood Pilot: Completed a pilot assessing the integration of an app to support dietary changes inspired by the Nourish program.
- Body Image: Wellspring launched a new six-week program, Body Image Awareness Seminar (BIAS) in winter 2025. This was based on a pilot project which Wellspring participated in in 2021, that was published by Carly MaGee and Dr. Kimberley Gammage in March 2025 in a peer-reviewed journal.
- Fear of Cancer Recurrence: With funding from The Initiators, Wellspring is implementing Dr. Sophie Lebel and Dr. Christine Maheu's six-week Fear of Cancer Recurrence Therapy (FORT) program in 2025, becoming Canada's largest provider of this program.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- Program Evaluation: Wellspring continues to assess pilot programs and will determine future offerings based on member feedback.
- Program Leaders: Wellspring continues to work towards our goal of expanding our leadership pool to include professionals from all provinces and territories
- Upcoming Launches: Throughout 2025, we will expand young adult program offerings, and launch early-onset pancreatic support group (with dedicated resources for children and teens) and Fear of Recurrence Therapy (FORT).

7. Partnerships

Wellspring is committed to working with partners and improving outreach to professionals within the health community.

Key Developments:

- University of Toronto Sandbox Collaboration: Wellspring engaged in four research partnerships with the University of Toronto.
 - Departments we collaborated with are Human Biology, Statistics and Nutritional Science
- Pancreatic Cancer Canada: Continued collaboration on aligned programming, as well as providing funding for the development of upcoming programs, such as the early-onset pancreatic support group.
- New Tools: Launched a quarterly e-newsletter and online platform to make it easier for health professionals to refer patients and access resources.
- OMPRN: Wellspring partnered with the Ontario Molecular Pathology Research Network to offer a four-part educational series demystifying complex medical topics.
- Hospitals: Peer Support in Hospitals returned after a hiatus for the pandemic. Halton Healthcare launched this fiscal and North General Hospital launches in spring 2025.
- Community Centres: Wellspring partnered with the Jaffari Community Centre in Toronto to hold a Wellness Day for individuals living with cancer and their families. The event included healthy nutrition strategies, recipe samples from the Nourish program, and exercise tips to support community members' well-being through cancer.

Learnings/Next Steps:

- Relationship Building: Strategic partnerships take time and care to develop. We continue to explore new collaborations across Canada.