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# Mapping the Youth Mental Health and Addictions Ecosystem in Nova Scotia

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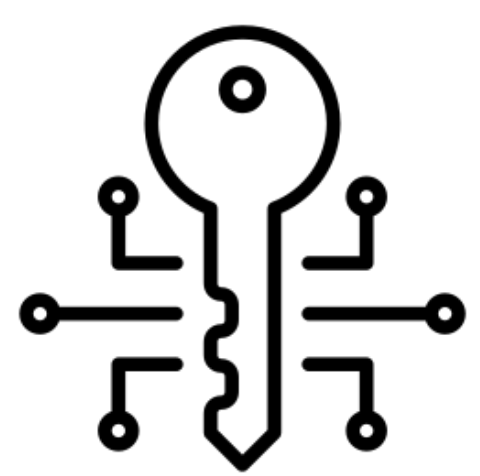
## BACKGROUND

Unifying Networks to InnovaTE (UNITE) is a research initiative that aims to optimize current efforts in navigation in Nova Scotia's youth mental health and addictions (YMHA) space and increase data insights by enhancing the capacity for people and groups working in complex systems to more effectively innovate together. The initial stage of UNITE's multiphase participatory research design entails the collection, analysis and visualization of data on Nova Scotia's youth mental health and addictions ecosystem.

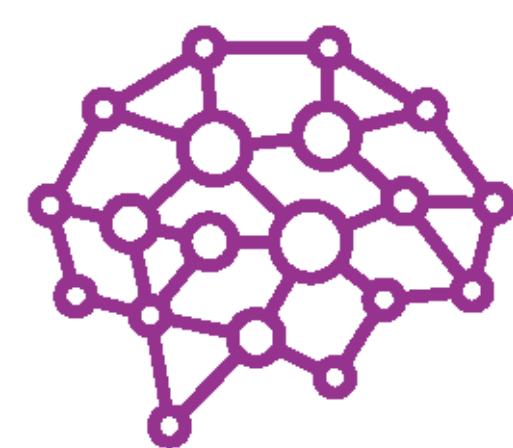
The goal of this organizational research is to develop a preliminary understanding of the following:

- 1 Actors** (organizations) who play a role in supporting navigation and/or data sharing within the YMHA ecosystem in Nova Scotia.
- 2 Key attributes** (characteristics) of actors in the ecosystem. Attributes might include: type of organization, stated mission, geographic area of impact, association with navigation initiatives, data assets and coordination projects.
- 3 Relationships** between actors in the ecosystem. Preliminary relationships are identified by the existence of formal data sharing agreements, memorandums of understanding and funding arrangements.

## OBJECTIVES



Identify key learnings from the ecosystem mapping process



Showcase the complexity of the YMHA ecosystem in Nova Scotia



Visualize connections and gaps between YMHA organizations in Nova Scotia

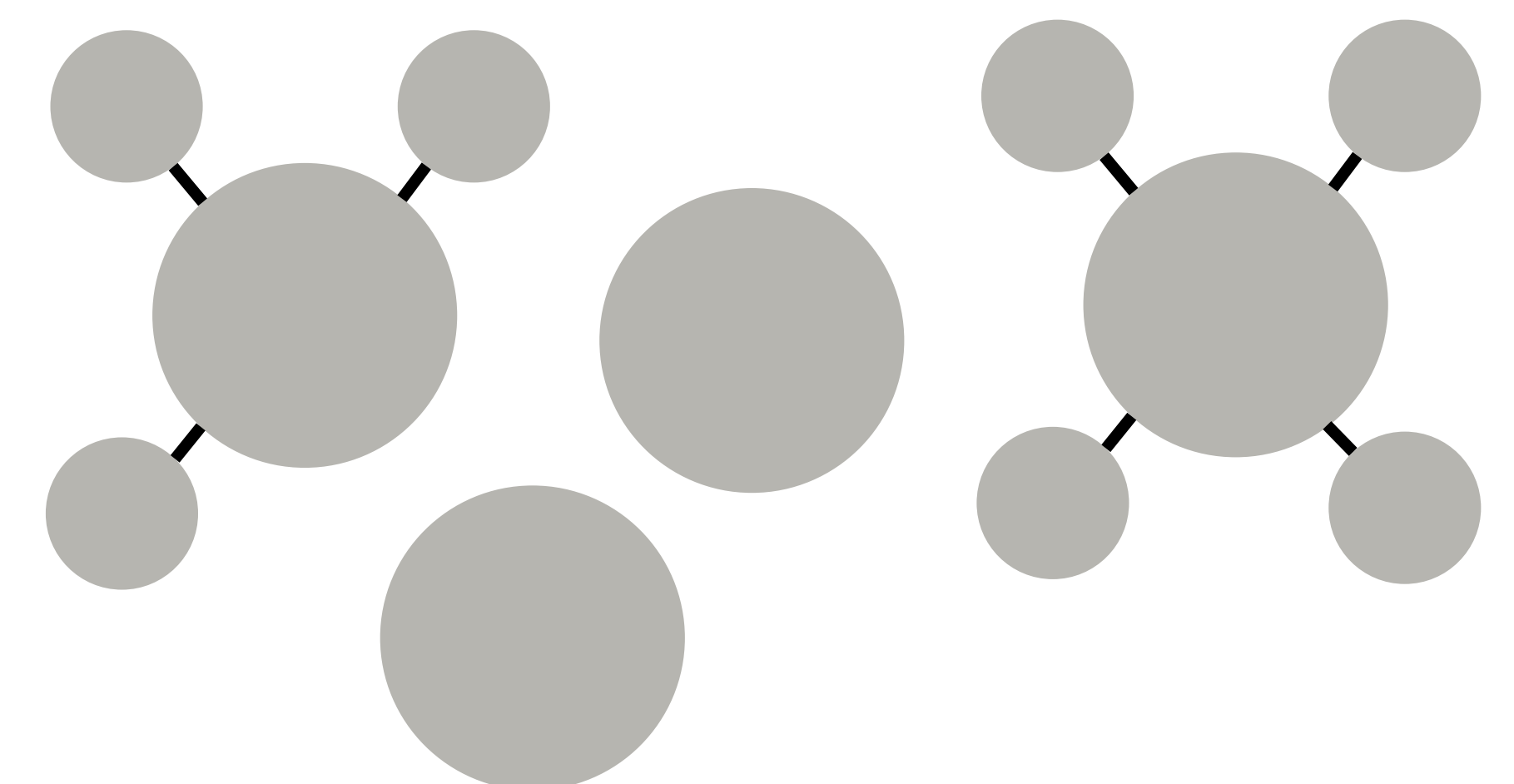
## METHODS

Methods utilized for creating ecosystem maps include an environmental scan using publicly available data supplemented with key informant interviews. Analysis will include thematic and network elements, with results visualized using digital mapping tools. The resulting ecosystem maps will reveal attributes and the nature of connections of ecosystem actors. Maps will provide an opportunity to engage ecosystem members to meaningfully discuss gaps and emerging priorities related to improving navigation of services by youth and practitioners, data sharing amongst actors and collaboration efforts across the ecosystem.

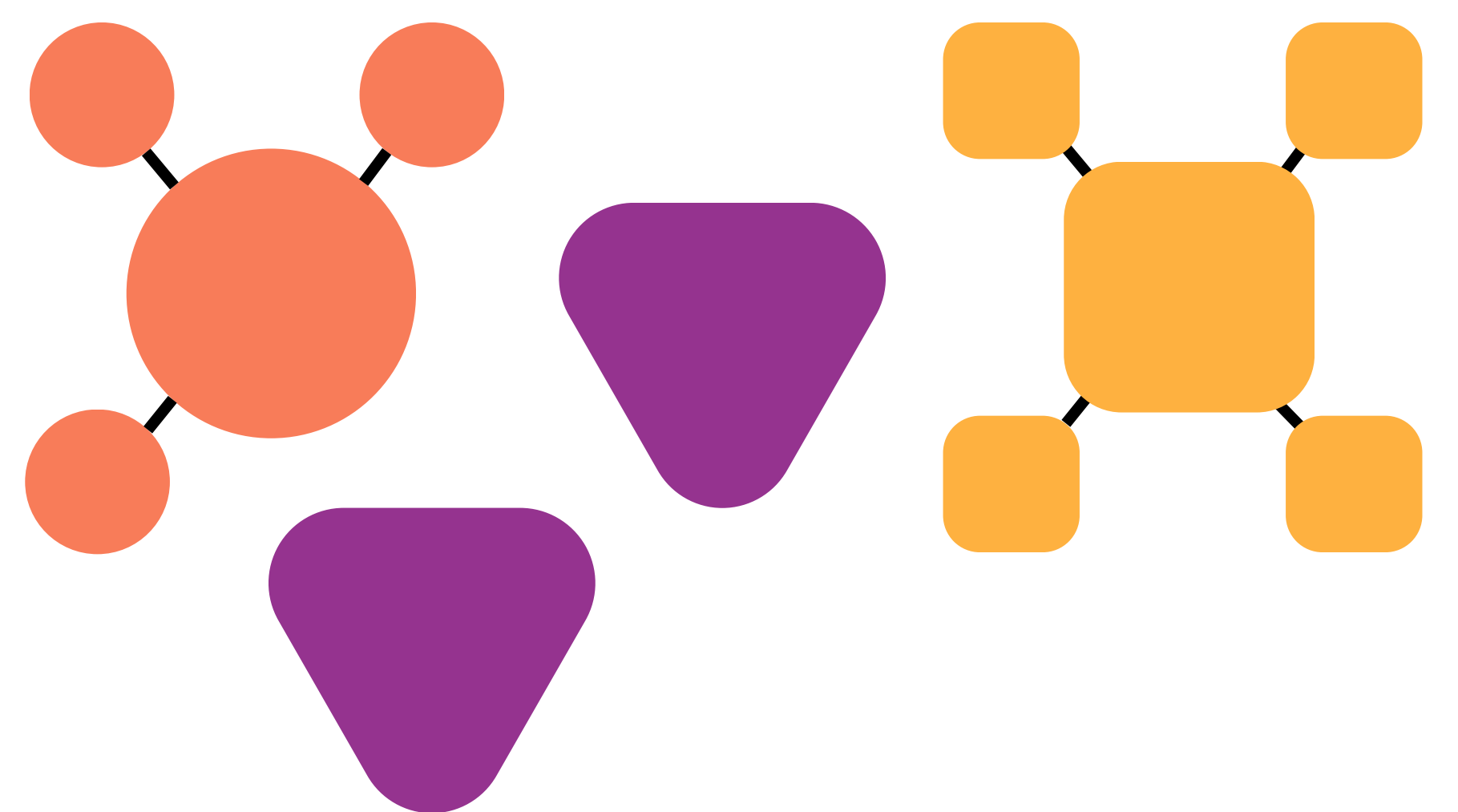
## VISUALIZATIONS

Kumu<sup>3</sup> system mapping software is being used to visualize the data for this project in the form of ecosystem maps. Here are small-scale sample visualizations, each of which reveals different insights about ecosystem actors.

**Figure 1: Four primary actors with their associated units.**



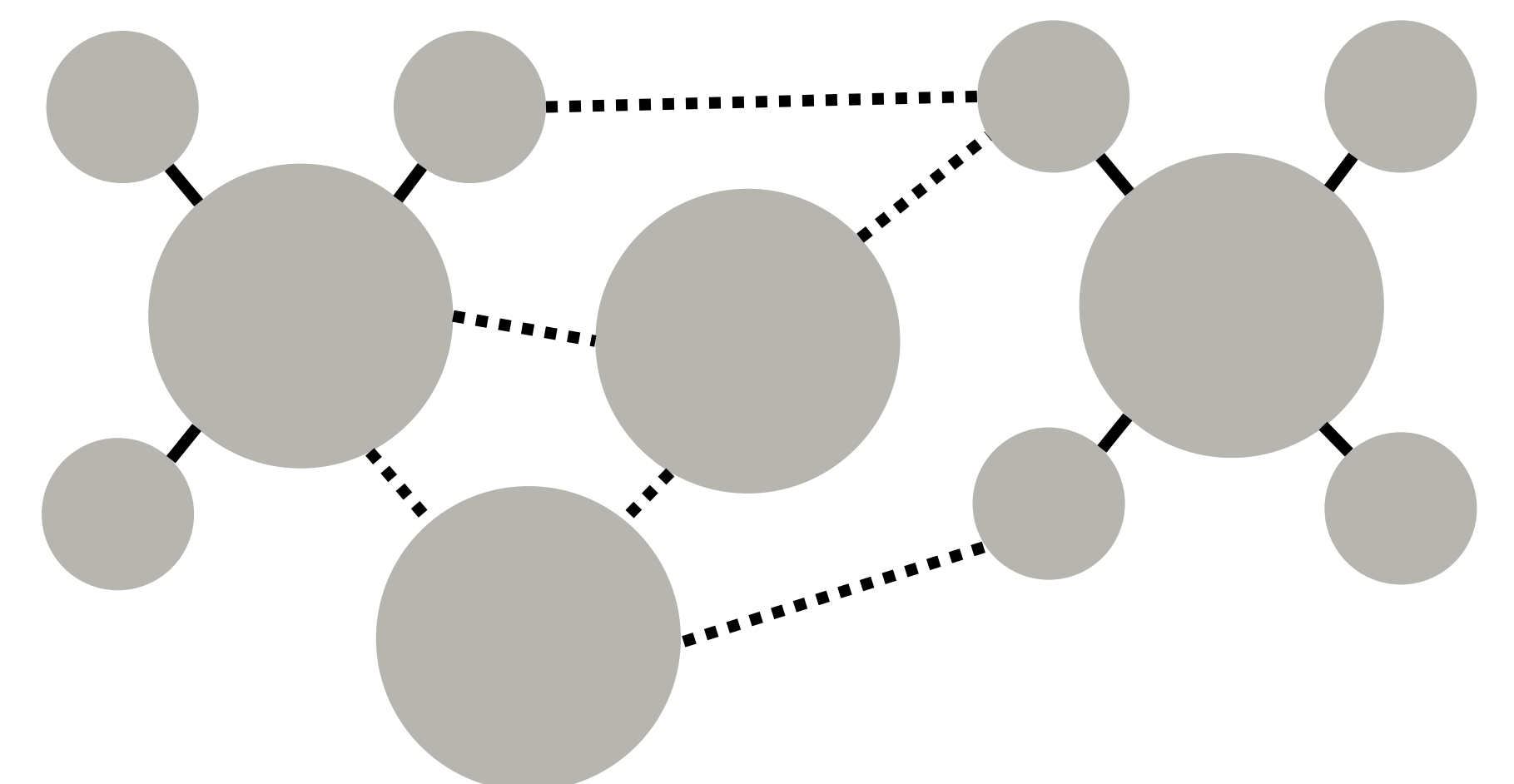
**Figure 2: Actors coded by organization type.**



**Legend**

- Provincial Government Department
- Community Organization
- Health Authority

**Figure 3: Actors connect by Data Sharing Agreement.**



**Legend**

- Organizational Affiliation
- Data Sharing Agreement

## EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

- Preliminary maps will be developed over the lifespan of the UNITE initiative. In March 2026, the maps will be reviewed during "Sharing and Feedback" sessions, where interest holders will convene to identify missing actors, attributes or relationships—helping build a fuller picture of the YMHA ecosystem in Nova Scotia.
- Maps will reveal opportunities for further data collection that will allow for a richer understanding of the ecosystem.
- Maps will highlight gaps in navigation and data sharing efforts, providing direction to UNITE researchers about what "solutions" might best serve the ecosystem. Solutions co-developed in partnership with ecosystem actors will be the foundation of UNITE's participatory action research projects in Year 2.

3. Kumu: <https://kumu.io/markets/system-mapping>

