



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Proposed Project Model and Implementation Plan for Youth Gang Prevention Pilot Project

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| Date: | January 22, 2009 |
| To: | Community Development and Recreation Committee |
| From: | Executive Director Social Development, Finance and Administration |
| Wards: | 1,7,8,9,11,12 |
| Reference Number: | |

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the Community Development and Recreation Committee refer the proposed project model and implementation plan for the Toronto Youth Gang Prevention Pilot to the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, for appropriate action.

The Pilot Project was developed by staff in consultation with Toronto Police Service, Guns and Gangs Task Force, academic, federal, community, and project stakeholder partners and in accordance with the terms of the Project Contribution Agreement with Public Safety Canada.

At its meeting September 24 and 25, 2008, Council authorized the Acting Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to negotiate and execute a Project Contribution Agreement on behalf of the City with the Government of Canada including full responsibility and accountability of funds in 2008 and subsequent years.

In approving the report, Council “requested the Acting Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee no later than February 2009 with a proposed project model and implementation plan”. This report responds to that request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. Community Development and Recreation Committee refer the proposed project model and implementation plan to the Executive Director of Social Development, Finance and Administration for appropriate action and report annually on project implementation, results and learning.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Youth Gang Prevention Pilot Project is multi-year project with a total project cost of \$4.933 million over a period of 3.5 years with \$0.100 million in 2008; \$1.500 million each year for 2009, 2010 and 2011, and the balance of \$0.333 million in 2012.

The project funding for 2009 is included in Social Development, Finance and Administration's 2009 Recommended Operating Budget and will be considered by the Budget Committee during the 2009 operating budget process.

There will be no net impact to the City as the total project cost of \$4.933 million will be fully funded from the Government of Canada's Youth Gang Prevention Fund.

The Acting Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting September 24 and 25, 2008, Council authorized the Acting Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to negotiate and execute a Project Contribution Agreement on behalf of the City with Public Safety Canada including full responsibility and accountability of funds in 2008 and subsequent years.

In approving the report, Council "requested the Acting Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee no later than February 2009 with a proposed project model and implementation plan".

This Council decision can be accessed at the following on pages 37-39:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/cc/decisions/2008-09-24-cc24-dd.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

On September 3, 2008 the Minister of Public Safety Canada and the Mayor of Toronto signed a multi-year Project Contribution Agreement with a total value of up to \$4.9M to design and implement a Pilot Project to prevent and reduce youth gang violence in

priority neighbourhoods disposed to gang violence. Funding for the Pilot Project comes from the Youth Gang Prevention Fund, which is part of the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy administered by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC).

This Strategy provides funding to support projects that contribute to preventing and reducing crime in addition to increasing knowledge about successful crime prevention programs and methods. Federal priorities for funding include addressing early risk factors among vulnerable children and youth and preventing youth gang crime.

Under the Community Safety Plan and the Making A Safe City Safer mandate, staff were directed to develop youth gang prevention and intervention initiatives. Working with the Toronto Police Service, Guns and Gangs Task Force, academic, federal, community, and project stakeholder partners, staff submitted this Pilot Project proposal to the Government of Canada in 2007. It was approved by the Government of Canada in September 2008.

The Toronto Youth Gang Prevention Pilot Project represents the largest youth gang diversion initiative the City has undertaken to date, and the largest ever funded by the Government of Canada.

COMMENTS

Project Model

Under the terms of the Project Contribution Agreement staff have six months to work with project partners to develop the project model. Staff have been actively working with the University of Toronto's Centre of Criminology, and the Senior Evaluation Analyst at the NCPC to develop this model.

Staff have also consulted both internally and externally to seek strategic advice from key stakeholders and other experts to inform the development of the project model. In particular, staff reconvened the community agencies and project stakeholders that contributed to the original submission to determine whether these were still the correct components for a youth gang prevention pilot. As a result, adjustments to the project model were made.

The Toronto Youth Gang Prevention Pilot Project model will consist of the following components:

- an intensive outreach and referral strategy to engage at risk and gang-involved youth;
- an intake and screening process to evaluate the level of risk of gang affiliation or activity;

- pro-social group training sessions with instruction in conflict resolution, anger management, goal-setting, substance abuse and the impact of crime on victims and neighbourhoods;
- individualized case management supports to engage youth participants with sports, recreation, arts, culture or other activities and support their regular participation;
- individualized case management supports to provide a range of employment and education supports to assist youth in obtaining employment skills, employment (part- or full-time) and improve educational qualifications;
- family-based supports to link family members with appropriate resources in the community;
- community education initiatives to increase awareness of gangs and their prevention.

The Pilot Project will reach approximately 300 youth over a period of three years that are at risk of or gang-involved and will provide community education and public awareness initiatives to approximately 500 community members.

Implementation Plan

The Pilot Project will operate in selected priority neighbourhood areas for a period of three years. The implementation phase will begin following the completion of the project development phase.

The project will be implemented under the administrative oversight of a small City staff team comprised of a Project Manager, a Community Development Worker, and an Administrative Support Assistant. These positions will be temporary three-year assignments located within the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division. The full cost of these temporary staff positions will be funded by the Government of Canada under the terms of the Project Contribution Agreement.

The Pilot Project will be delivered through purchase of service agreements with the community-based not for profit sector who will have responsibility for providing services and supports to youth participants and their families.

Staff consulted with the following City of Toronto program areas on both the project model and implementation plan:

- Children's Services
- Community Crisis Response Program
- Corporate and Community Development Programs, Toronto Community Housing
- Employment Program Support, Toronto Employment and Social Services
- Hostel Services, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

- Neighbourhood Action Community Development Officers
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat, Toronto Public Health
- Urban Health Issues, Toronto Public Health
- Youth Employment Programs Unit

In addition to providing insight and expertise on the project model and implementation plan, Manager and Director-level program area staff were consulted to provide input on how existing City program and service areas currently working with this youth population would link with, support and strengthen the Pilot Project. Staff also consulted with the Bi-Level Youth Outreach Worker Program Committee (City of Toronto/Ministry of Children and Youth Services) on the project model and implementation plan.

The Project Contribution Agreement stipulates that the City of Toronto work with the contracted Project Evaluation Lead (Dr. Scot Wortley, Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto) to develop both the project model and implementation model.

The project will be strategically advised by a Project Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from participating organizations, the NCPC, individuals with research/evaluation experience, and others with an interest in the subject area.

Pilot Project Neighbourhood Areas

The original proposal to NCPC developed by City staff in consultation with community partners identified Jamestown-Rexdale, Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park, and Malvern as the pilot project neighbourhoods.

As a result of the extended period of consideration given to the Pilot Project proposal by the Government of Canada it was necessary to review neighbourhood selection data to ensure the Pilot Project would respond to the areas of greatest need. Staff, in consultation with the Toronto Police Service and Guns and Gangs Task Force and the contracted evaluator, developed a methodological tool to identify those areas with the highest risk of youth gang affiliation and activity and a relatively lower availability of community services and programming related to youth gang prevention and reduction.

The tool is known as the “Toronto Youth Crime Risk Index” (TYCRI). The TYCRI uses a number of key data sources including:

- socioeconomic and demographic data such as the number of youth residents, median household income, unemployment rates among youth, percentage of tenants spending more than 30% on shelter, and drop-out and literacy rates;
- “positive” data such as the number of youth safety programs in the area; and
- “negative” crime data such as the incidence of shootings, robberies, swarmings, muggings, violent calls for service, as well as perceptions of neighbourhood safety.

The crime-related variables and the socio-economic variables are weighted equally, but within the two domains more precise weights were distributed among the indicators to emphasize slight variations in the importance of one variable over another.

As a result of this assessment, three priority neighbourhoods were identified as most appropriate for Pilot Project intervention:

1. Jane-Finch
2. Jamestown-Rexdale
3. Weston-Mount Dennis

Staff reconvened consultations with senior members of the Toronto Police Service, Community Mobilization Unit and Guns and Gangs Task Force who confirmed that the TYCRI results support the heightened gang activity currently taking place in the City. Furthermore, they advised that these areas combine to form a “Northwest Corridor” that is particularly vulnerable to youth gang affiliation and activity.

These consultations indicated the need to employ a corridor approach to the Pilot Project, as the neighbourhoods taken collectively serve an area that is broader than the fixed geographical borders of the three priority neighbourhoods. Toronto Police Service, Community Mobilization Unit and Guns and Gangs Task Force confirmed that these areas are experiencing heightened risk of gang-related violence.

NCPC requires that the Pilot Project be implemented in areas where there are identified service gaps in addition to heightened criminal activity and gang violence. As part of staff’s re-examination of Pilot Project areas, staff identified that the Northeast priority neighbourhoods will benefit from a new multi-year investment of \$3.5M in 2009. The Redemption Reintegration Services initiative funded under the Youth Challenge Fund will develop and implement a program to serve the reintegration needs of African-Canadian youth who have been through the criminal justice system. Staff are working with provincial Youth Challenge Fund partners to identify intersecting points and opportunities for collaboration between these two initiatives.

In addition, the NCPC recently invested approximately \$1.4M in a multi-year project in the Jane-Finch community to provide supports to approximately 75 students from grade six to eight (aged 11-14) that are in conflict with the law and/or at significant risk of engaging in gang activity. Given the City’s Pilot Project focuses on youth aged 13-24, staff will establish links with the “Positive Alternative to Youth Gangs Project” to discuss respective partnerships and continuity, where appropriate.

The proposed Northwest Corridor approach addresses these geographical and age-related program gaps.

Evaluation Requirements under the Agreement

Like the City, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that the funds it approves achieve measurable results. Under the terms of the Project Contribution Agreement the City agreed to work with project partners to design and implement a pilot project in high-need neighbourhoods to prevent and reduce youth gang affiliation and activity. The purpose of the Pilot Project from the perspective of the NCPC is to determine whether an intensive case management approach to youth with supports to family members and wider community proves to be an effective method of preventing and reducing youth gang violence.

To obtain financial support for the Pilot Project, the City must demonstrate to NCPC that the Pilot Project has a valid methodological design with the capacity to produce statistically significant evidence. In order to receive the current funding envelope of \$4.9M over 3.5 years and be favourably considered for any future financial support for gang prevention programming by NCPC, the Pilot Project must be evaluation-driven and incorporate learnings and best practices from other gang prevention projects and jurisdictions.

The Project Contribution Agreement stipulates that the City of Toronto will work with the contracted Project Evaluation Lead (Dr. Scot Wortley, Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto) and use a “just in time” evaluation model. Whereas the classic model of evaluation occurs by a third party at the end of the project life cycle, the “just in time” evaluation model requires comprehensive involvement throughout the project life cycle.

The “just in time” evaluation model ensures that the project is:

- ready for evaluation (evaluability);
- built around a sound and consistent theory of change;
- supported by evidence from evaluations of proven successful projects (evidence-based); and
- subjected to a rigorous evaluation process.

In addition this model ensures that the evaluation findings will be widely disseminated to increase the knowledge base of effective crime prevention interventions. These evaluations are designed to improve and strengthen future interventions.

The contracted evaluator involved in this project, Dr. Scot Wortley and his team at the Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto are working with the City to develop a risk assessment tool for the Pilot Project that clearly identifies youth vulnerable to gang affiliation and provides interventions consistent with the goal of crime prevention.

While there is no assurance of future funding from the Government of Canada, an important criterion of future funding to the City of Toronto is the extent to which the project is proven to be effective in preventing or reducing gang violence in selected neighbourhoods. If the Pilot Project is successful in this regard, there is a possibility of extending it to other priority communities across the City.

Conclusion

In keeping with the City's collaborative, targeted, place-based approach established by the 2004 Community Safety Plan and Making A Safe City Safer mandate, the Toronto Youth Gang Prevention Pilot Project builds on the community safety partnerships established through the Community Safety Secretariat. The Pilot Project model and implementation plan for the Toronto Youth Gang Prevention Pilot Project is the result of a collaborative process involving City staff, the Toronto Police Service, the Guns and Gangs Task Force, the University of Toronto's Centre of Criminology, the Government of Canada, community funders and the Toronto Youth Cabinet.

As the Pilot Project moves to implementation, the City's Community Safety Secretariat and the Neighbourhood Action Teams will work with the Pilot Project staff team and community stakeholders to ensure the Pilot Project assists in reducing the threat of youth gang activity and builds community capacity in neighbourhoods to avert future gang violence.

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