



Youth Service Review - Directions Report

Date: June 12, 2019

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Youth Service Review will provide a long-term strategic approach to the planning, coordination and monitoring of City of Toronto youth services to improve outcomes for young people in Toronto, particularly those most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

The following report outlines the directions of the City of Toronto's 2019 Youth Service Review, which will draw on existing research and stakeholder consultations to:

- Deliver a Youth Outcomes Framework with shared outcomes and performance measures to guide the design, delivery and monitoring of youth programs and services,
- Recommend immediate actions the City can take to improve service delivery for youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

The report responds to a directive from City Council to review all City of Toronto youth programming, as well as lessons learned from the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, to identify how to best optimize youth service delivery to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

Staff in the Social Policy Unit at Social Development, Finance and Administration will lead the implementation of the Youth Service Review in consultation with relevant City Divisions, Agencies and Corporations under the leadership of an interdivisional steering committee chaired by the Deputy City Manager of Community and Social Services.

The deliverables of the Youth Service Review will be presented in a staff report to Economic and Community Development Committee in the second quarter of 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 23, 2018, Economic and Community Development Committee adopted [EC1.6 Optimizing Youth Service Delivery](#) (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC1.6>), directing the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to undertake a review of all City of Toronto youth services and programming and report back with recommendations on how best to optimize youth service delivery to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

COMMENTS

Crime and violence in Toronto remains a significant public concern and threat to the wellbeing of residents and communities. Addressing the needs of youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious crime and violence is widely recognized to be essential not only to reduce violence, but to support all youth to thrive. In 2014, City Council adopted the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy that aimed to "address what the City can do to better serve the needs of this specific population, within its authority to plan, manage, deliver and advocate." As the Strategy enters its final year of implementation, it affords the opportunity to reflect on lessons learned and next steps.

Staff across Divisions have also identified the need for a common vision to guide, focus and maximize the efforts of all youth programs that the City of Toronto currently delivers and/or administers. While efforts have been made over the years to better coordinate services, there is a need for common objectives and consistent monitoring to ensure City programs are meeting the needs of Toronto youth, particularly those who face multiple barriers.

The following report outlines the City of Toronto's 2019 Youth Service Review, which responds to the challenges and opportunities outlined above. The Review will draw on existing research and stakeholder consultations to:

- Develop a Youth Outcomes Framework with shared outcomes and performance measures to guide the design, delivery and monitoring of youth programs and services,
- Recommend immediate actions the City can take to improve service delivery for youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

These deliverables will provide a long-term strategic approach to the planning, coordination and monitoring of youth serving programs to improve outcomes for young people in Toronto, particularly those most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

Staff in the Social Policy Unit at Social Development, Finance and Administration will lead the implementation of the Youth Service Review in consultation with relevant City Divisions, Agencies and Corporations under the leadership of an interdivisional steering committee chaired by the Deputy City Manager of Community and Social Services.

Staff will begin the work outlined in this report in the summer of 2019 and report back to Economic and Community Development Committee in the second quarter of 2020.

Youth Outcomes Framework

Shared outcomes, definitions and performance measures

One of the core deliverables of the Youth Service Review is the Youth Outcomes Framework. The Framework is a long term strategic initiative that will articulate a common vision for youth serving programs at the City of Toronto and provide a platform for service planning, monitoring and alignment.

The Youth Outcomes Framework will include:

- Updated inventory of all youth programs delivered (or administered) by the City of Toronto,
- Shared outcomes to outline the desired improvements in the well-being of youth in Toronto,
- Common language and definitions, including a harmonized definition of youth, to facilitate interdivisional collaboration,
- Performance measures for each outcome to facilitate clear and consistent monitoring and reporting, including performance measures that are specific to the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

The future application of performance measures will provide data to inform the planning and delivery of youth programs and support inter-divisional collaboration by drawing on the same evidence and working toward the same outcomes. This process will also result in the establishment of base lines and targets, leading the way for evidence based decision making.

Understanding the needs of all youth

This Framework will also use an equity lens to consider the complex and multiple barriers that some youth in Toronto face in reaching their potential, many of which are rooted in systemic oppression and discrimination, particularly anti-Black racism. The analysis of these barriers will inform future decision-making related to program design as well as the collection of disaggregated data to determine if City services are appropriate and accessible to the youth who need them most.

Asset-focused approach to youth development

Similar to the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, the Youth Outcomes Framework will rely on an asset-focused approach to youth development that seeks to prepare youth to thrive rather than a deficit focused model, which aims to ensure that youth are "problem free." Often researchers, policy makers and service providers have regarded young people as problems requiring a solution or intervention. Although the treatment of specific youth issues (e.g. drug addiction) will always remain a critical component of youth development, recent research has demonstrated that programs that support the strength and potential of youth are highly effective in improving youth outcomes.

Process of Framework development

The Youth Outcomes Framework will be developed through a collaborative process with all relevant Divisions, Agencies and Corporations that provide youth focused programming. An interdivisional work group will be established to develop shared outcomes and performance measures that are appropriate to the scope and capacity of municipal level services.

The work group will include all Divisions, Agencies and Corporations that provide youth focused programming, including:

- Economic Development and Culture
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
- Social Development, Finance and Administration
- Toronto Employment and Social Services
- Toronto Public Library
- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Police Services.

Staff will also draw substantially from recent research undertaken by the City and other levels of government, which included extensive public consultation with youth, subject matter experts, service providers, community leaders and other relevant stakeholders. Additional consultations will be undertaken with the Toronto school boards, local colleges, youth serving agencies and other partners to ensure the Outcomes Framework reflects and informs Toronto's youth service system.

Alignment with Province of Ontario's Stepping Up Framework

The Framework will align with the Province of Ontario's *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed* released in 2016. Stepping Up identifies 20 priority outcomes that are important for the positive development of youth ages 12 to 25 in Ontario. These outcomes are intended to inform policy design and program development across all service sectors (i.e. charities, not-for-profits, other levels of government, private sector) involved in supporting Ontario youth.

Stepping Up will provide a strong foundation for the development of Toronto's Youth Outcomes Framework. It incorporates the findings in the *Review of the Roots of Youth Violence* report (2008) and builds on the work of the *Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development* (2012) and *Ontario's Youth Action Plan* (2012). Moreover, it was created in broad consultation with youth, community leaders, researchers and service providers. For a summary of the common vision, guiding principles and priority outcomes of the *Stepping Up Framework*, see Attachment 1.

Optimizing services for youth most vulnerable to crime and violence

In response to City Council direction, the Youth Service Review will also examine how to optimize the City of Toronto's current portfolio of youth services to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence. The scope will include not only youth at risk of involvement in crime, but also youth impacted by violence in their communities.

Significant research including the 2008 *Review of the Roots of Youth Violence* report identified the social and economic marginalization of youth as the key contributing factor to the escalation of youth violence in communities. The same research has identified a number of protective factors that can reduce the vulnerability of youth to crime and violence, such as access to employment and positive role models. However, the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy has underscored that youth in most need of supportive interventions to reduce the likelihood of involvement in violence face the most barriers to accessing those supports.

The Youth Service Review will build on this existing research and identify immediate actions the City of Toronto can take to ensure its programs, including youth spaces and youth hubs, are relevant and accessible to youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence. In particular, staff will leverage the process of developing the Youth Outcomes Framework and an updated inventory of youth services to:

- Identify existing City programs that address the needs of youth most vulnerable to crime and violence,
- Recommend ways to improve these programs for greater effectiveness,
- Propose actions to reduce service barriers for youth most vulnerable to crime and violence,
- Identify best practices that are suitable to the Toronto context and fall within the jurisdiction of the municipal government,

- Develop performance measures in the Youth Outcomes Framework that are specific to measuring outcomes for youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious crime and violence.

To deliver on these goals, staff will review relevant literature, lessons learned from the implementation of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy as well as recent research undertaken at the City, including the *Firearm Possession among Young People in Toronto: Causes and Solutions* report published in 2018, which included consultations with youth, City staff and community organizations. Staff will also organize focus groups with key stakeholders including youth and relevant subject matter experts.

Alignment with other City strategies and policies

The Youth Service Review will closely align with existing strategies as well as ongoing research initiatives to share resources, findings and promote coherence among complementary City policies.

The Review will strive to build a policy continuum between the Youth Outcomes Framework and Raising the Villages: Shared Outcomes for Children and Families and Middle Childhood Strategy. Continuity between these policies is important in order to address the specific needs of young people as they transition through the developmental stages of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.

The Review will also incorporate the insight and recommendations of the City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategy in recognition that many of Toronto's youth face barriers to positive youth development due to systemic issues of racism and poverty. In particular, the Youth Outcomes Framework will align with the outcomes being developed for the next action plan of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Staff leading the Review will also work closely with Toronto Public Health to learn from their current review on the extent of exposure to community violence in Toronto and effective strategies for preventing and mitigating the negative impacts of community violence. This work will be discussed at the Board of Health in November, 2019.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of the Stepping Up Framework's common vision, guiding principles and priority outcomes, 2016