

## **Youth Service Review - Investing in Youth Outcomes**

**Date:** June 16, 2021

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged and changed the City's youth programs. Some have needed to pause, others have shifted online or made other adjustments to meet public health guidelines to keep young people safe. Despite these changes in regular programming, the eight City of Toronto divisions, agencies and corporations involved in the delivery of youth programming were able to advance the Youth Service Review through strong interdivisional collaboration, the assistance of an external consultant and extensive research on youth development and youth violence.

The Youth Service Review brings under one frame the City's current portfolio of youth programs delivered directly, or in partnership with, community organizations. The Review also delivers Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs. The Guide is a strategic approach for City of Toronto youth programs that supports positive youth development, contributes to violence prevention and fosters equity and inclusion. It has three key components: 1) the Youth Outcomes Framework, 2) the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum, and 3) Promising Practices to Improve Program Access. These components are intended to guide program planning, monitoring and evaluation, service delivery and decision-making. Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs is also aligned with SafeTO: Toronto's Ten Year Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan being considered in the July 2021 City Council cycle.

The evidence-based Youth Outcomes Framework will establish a culture of monitoring and evaluation to maximize the impact of programming for Toronto youth (ages 12-29). Full implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework will enable strategic and data-driven decision-making related to policies and programs that support the wellbeing of all Toronto youth, including those most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

Toronto City Council has consistently expressed commitment to youth violence prevention in the City's portfolio of youth programs. Using the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum, the Youth Service Review distinguishes between universal programs that prevent the development of risk factors for youth violence and highly targeted programs that focus on youth that are experiencing risk factors for serious crime and violence.

Most of the City's youth programs, such as the well-established and popular youth hubs and youth spaces, are universal programs aimed at the general youth population and contribute to preventing the development of risk factors to crime and violence through the promotion of positive youth development. Along the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum, however, there are a few "targeted prevention" and "intervention" programs in the City's youth service portfolio. These types of programs, such as TO Wards Peace and Community Healing, are high dosage (i.e. frequency, intensity, and duration) and target youth that are either experiencing risk factors for violence or are already involved in violence, crime and/or high risk activities. Both types of programming are valuable to support more systemic efforts to achieve broad-scale community safety in Toronto and support the development of healthy and resilient young adults.

Based on the findings of the Youth Service Review, staff recommend continued investment in the development of the TO Wards Peace model to advance a balanced spectrum of universal and targeted programming in the City of Toronto's youth portfolio.

The Interdivisional Youth Service Working Group has also identified a list of high impact City of Toronto youth programs that will be incorporating one or more Promising Practices to Improve Program Access in the upcoming year. These practices, summarized in Attachment 2, will help optimize the impact of youth programs across the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum, including enhancing the ability of universal programs to serve youth facing structural inequities due to income, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, immigration status, and/or the neighborhoods they live in.

Finally, the Youth Service Review highlights the need for increased support and investment in building the capacity of City divisions, agencies and corporations to monitor and evaluate all youth programs in order to improve outcomes for Toronto youth.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. City Council approve Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs in Attachment 2 to this report.
2. City Council request all City divisions at the City of Toronto that deliver youth programs, including Economic Development and Culture, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Social Development, Finance and Administration and Toronto Employment and Social Services, to implement Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs, including the collection of socio-demographic data identified in Attachment 2 to this report for the purpose of measuring program outcomes through monitoring, evaluation and analysis.
3. City Council forward this report to the Boards of Directors of the City of Toronto's Agencies and Corporations that deliver youth programs, including Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Toronto Public Library and Toronto Police Service, and request that they implement Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto

Youth Programs, including the collection of socio-demographic data identified in Attachment 2 to this report for the purpose of measuring program outcomes through monitoring, evaluation and analysis.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no immediate financial impacts resulting from the recommendations in this report. Divisions and agencies will be expected to absorb the costs of implementing Stage 1 of the Youth Outcomes Framework within their Approved 2021 Operating Budgets.

The full implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework requires ongoing investment in monitoring and evaluation. Based on the experience and learnings from Stage 1 of implementation, staff will identify what additional funding is required to support the City-wide implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework and submit the required proposals in the 2022 Budget process.

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

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

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The Youth Service Review has been analysed at the conception and initiation stage for potential impacts on Indigenous, Black and equity-seeking groups of Toronto. The performance measures in the Youth Outcomes Framework were developed in alignment with the City of Toronto's Data for Equity Strategy and include the collection of socio-demographic disaggregated data to assess who is accessing youth programs and whether the programs are serving the needs of all youth participants. This information is foundational for the planning and design of youth programs that are equitable both in access and impact.

The Youth Service Review also provides recommendations to help the City of Toronto youth programs respond to the diverse and complex needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence. Many of the factors that increase the risk of a young person becoming involved in violence and/or criminal activity are grounded in systemic causes such as poverty and anti-Black racism. Furthermore, community violence disproportionately affects youth in communities facing socioeconomic disadvantage. Although youth programs alone cannot directly address these systemic challenges, the Youth Service Review uses current research and best practices to provide tools and recommendations that can help City of Toronto youth programs better understand and strengthen their role in youth violence prevention.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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### **EC6.14 - Youth Service Review - Directions Report**

On June 12, 2019, staff provided the Economic and Community Development Committee with an outline of the Youth Service Review, including the delivery of a Youth Outcomes Framework and immediate actions the City can take to improve

service delivery for youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC6.14>

### **EC1.6 Optimizing Youth Service Delivery**

On April 23, 2018, Economic and Community Development Committee adopted a motion 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 recommendation on how best to optimize youth service delivery to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC1.6>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Crime and violence in Toronto remains a significant public concern and threat to the wellbeing of communities and residents, particularly youth. In April 2018, the Economic and Community Development Committee directed staff to undertake a review of all City of Toronto youth programming in order to identify how to best optimize youth service delivery to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

In response, staff planned and implemented the Youth Service Review, which focused on addressing the following questions:

- What youth programs is the City of Toronto currently delivering?
- Who are these programs serving and what impact are they having on youth participants?
- How can current programs be more accessible to youth facing structural inequities?
- How can the City optimize its youth programming to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence?

One of the main challenges to answering these questions is the limited monitoring and evaluation of City youth programs and services. There is little information about the youth demographic the programs are serving and what impact the programs are having. Staff across the City 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also posed some unprecedented challenges to the delivery of City youth programs. Some have needed to pause, others have shifted online or made adjustments to meet public health guidelines and keep young people safe. Despite these disruptions, the Interdivisional Youth Service Working Group, which includes staff from all City of Toronto divisions, agencies and corporations involved in the delivery of youth programming, was able to advance the Youth Services Review.

The Youth Service Review provides a collective and long-term vision for all City of Toronto youth programs, which includes a comprehensive Youth Program Inventory and Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs.

Investing in Youth Outcomes is a strategic approach for City of Toronto youth programs that supports positive youth development, contributes to violence prevention and fosters equity and inclusion. The main components of the Guide include:

### 1. Youth Outcomes Framework

- Shared outcomes to outline the individual and collective impact City of Toronto youth programs intend to have on the wellbeing of youth in Toronto.
- Performance measures to track progress towards desired outcomes. This can help facilitate clear and consistent monitoring, reporting as well as establish baselines and targets for youth services.

### 2. Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum

- Spectrum of youth violence prevention approaches to understand the different roles current City of Toronto youth programs play in violence prevention.
- Menu of risk factors for violence to identify youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence and refine program reach.

### 3. Promising Practices to Improve Program Access

These components are intended to guide program planning, monitoring and evaluation, and decision-making related to youth services at the City of Toronto. They have also helped identify immediate actions the City can take to meet the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious violence and crime, including: i) investing in consistent monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure programs are achieving their intended outcomes, ii) investing in targeted prevention and intervention programs such as TO Wards Peace that have a defined target population based on the risk factors for serious violence and crime, and iii) implementing promising practices to make programs more accessible to youth facing structural inequities.

## **YOUTH PROGRAM INVENTORY**

Different actors, institutions and circumstances impact the lives of Toronto youth, including families, peers, communities, schools, organizations and other orders of government. Although the City of Toronto does not have the same level of impact on youth compared to the school system, the Youth Service Review explains the role the City *does* play in youth development through the creation of the Youth Program Inventory and Youth Outcomes Framework.

Attachment 1 provides an inventory of youth programs that the City of Toronto currently delivers either directly or in partnership with community organizations. The Youth Program Inventory includes high level descriptions of these programs including their operational status (i.e. active, inactive, and online) due to COVID-19.

In alignment with the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (2014-2019), the City of Toronto defines "youth" as individuals ages 12 to 29. This does not mean that youth programs serve the entire age range; some are designed for teens, while others serve older youth.

Youth programming at the City of Toronto is managed and delivered by different divisions, corporations and agencies, each with its own mandate, service outcomes and

responsibility for advancing Council priorities. In total, eight City of Toronto divisions, agencies and corporations are involved in the delivery of youth programming including:

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

The City's portfolio of youth programming encompasses a diverse range of services and activities. It includes individual case management and wrap around supports, mentorship and leadership programs, as well as, tutoring and recreation. The City of Toronto also impacts youth as an employer, funder and planner of communities; however, an exploration of these roles is beyond the scope of the Youth Service Review.

## **INVESTING IN YOUTH OUTCOMES: A STRATEGIC GUIDE FOR CITY OF TORONTO YOUTH PROGRAMS**

### **1. City of Toronto Youth Outcomes Framework**

To build a common vision for the diverse range of programs captured in the inventory and to provide a platform for future monitoring, evaluation and reporting, the Interdivisional Youth Service Working Group developed the City of Toronto's first Youth Outcomes Framework.

The City of Toronto Youth Outcomes Framework articulates the common goals that the City's youth-serving programs aim to achieve. It answers the question: *what impact do our programs individually and collectively have on the lives of youth in Toronto?* Moreover, the Youth Outcomes Framework includes performance measures to help City divisions, corporations, and agencies monitor the degree to which their individual programs are achieving their intended outcomes.

The focus on outcomes shifts the attention from tracking program inputs and outputs (e.g. number of workshops organized, number of participants) to measuring more meaningful results, including whether a program has achieved its intended impact for youth (e.g., youth have gained transferrable and technical skills to succeed in employment). This focus aligns with the City's organizational move towards Results Based Accountability and delivers on Action 28E of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, which called for the development of a youth outcomes framework, including a common set of indicators for monitoring progress and impact for youth in Toronto.

The outcomes and performance measures in the Youth Outcomes Framework are program level, which means they are designed to assess the impact City youth programs are having on participants. The Framework does not track outcomes at the population level or outcomes for other stakeholders, such as schools or youth serving organizations. The focus on program level outcomes allows the City of Toronto to better

understand the scope of its impact on youth development and accurately communicate its role in the wider youth service system.

Attachment 2 includes a comprehensive outline of the Youth Outcomes Framework, which is organized into three components:

- **Outcome Areas:** broad categories or themes that help organize specific outcomes for youth participants.
- **Outcomes:** statements that describe the intended change or impact the City of Toronto programs will have on the youth they serve.
- **Performance measures:** an indicator (a percentage, ratio or proportion) for each outcome to help measure progress towards the intended outcomes.

Table 1 below provides a high level summary of the Youth Outcomes Framework without the performance measures.

Table 1: City of Toronto Youth Outcomes Framework

Outcome Areas	Outcomes
<p><b>Supportive peers and adults</b></p> <p>Youth have trusting and mutually respectful relationships with peers, adults, mentors and community members to support positive cognitive, emotional, and social development, help navigate challenges, enable access to opportunities, and provide support and care.</p>	<p><i>Toronto youth...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have trusting and mutually respectful relationships with peers.</li> <li>• have trusting, mutually respectful, and supportive relationships with adults, mentors and community members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Life and social skills</b></p> <p>Toronto youth have the life and social skills they need to thrive, including planning and organizing, communication, team work, conflict management, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, self-awareness, learning and information-seeking, and financial management skills.</p>	<p><i>Toronto youth...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel they have planning and organizing skills.</li> <li>• feel they have communication and creative expression skills.</li> <li>• feel they are able to work well with others and manage conflict.</li> <li>• feel they have problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking skills.</li> <li>• feel they have learning and information-seeking skills.</li> <li>• feel aware of their strengths and areas for improvement.</li> <li>• feel they have financial literacy skills.</li> </ul>

Outcome Areas	Outcomes
<p><b>Employment and entrepreneurship</b></p> <p>Toronto youth have transferable and technical skills to create or obtain employment and advance their chosen employment path.</p>	<p><i>Toronto youth...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have the skills and opportunities to develop professional networks and build knowledge of a sector of interest.</li> <li>• have employment or career goals, know the steps needed to work towards them, and feel they have the skills to obtain work.</li> <li>• have transferrable and technical skills to succeed in employment.</li> <li>• pursue and successfully complete education and training related to their interests and chosen path.</li> <li>• obtain, create, retain, and advance in meaningful, sustainable work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Civic and community engagement</b></p> <p>Toronto youth participate in community initiatives, take on leadership roles, contribute to decision-making processes, and feel included in their communities.</p>	<p><i>Toronto youth...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are involved in their communities and take part in programming, community events, and volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>• take on leadership roles in their communities.</li> <li>• feel included in their communities.</li> <li>• feel that they have the opportunity to contribute to the decisions that affect them.</li> </ul>

In addition to identifying the extent to which programs are achieving intended outcomes, it is important to understand the extent to which a broad representation of youth has easy access to and is participating in City programming. It is also helpful to understand if the youth who do participate in programming feel safe and welcome, and whether they are satisfied with their experience.

For the City of Toronto’s Youth Outcomes Framework, these measures are captured under the following outcome area of “participant reach and satisfaction.”

<p><b>Participant reach and satisfaction</b></p>	<p><i>Toronto youth...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have equitable access to City of Toronto programs.</li> <li>• feel safe and welcome in City of Toronto programs.</li> <li>• are satisfied with their experiences in City of Toronto programs.</li> </ul>
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The performance measures that will be used to assess participant reach and satisfaction are based on the guidelines set out in Data for Equity Strategy (2020) and include the collection of socio-demographic characteristics such as Indigenous communities, racialized groups, and gender identities. The collection of socio-



demographic disaggregated data will ultimately serve as an important tool for advancing equity in service access and delivery.

### **Implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework**

The implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework to all youth programs at the City will require a staged approach and continued interdivisional collaboration. Attachment 3 details the implementation plan, including the following key stages:

#### **Stage 1 (March to December, 2021):**

The existing Interdivisional Youth Service Working Group and external consultant will co-design a process to collect, store, analyze, and report on youth program data in a standardized way. Data collection tools including surveys will be developed in consultation with youth from various City advisory tables to ensure the language used in the survey questions is youth-friendly and the questions are clear and easy to understand.

Divisions, agencies and corporations will pilot the surveys with a select number of youth programs that provide a sufficient level of service during COVID-19. Surveys will be administered to youth participants and the resulting data will be analyzed. Staff will also reflect on lessons learned during Stage 1 and identify whether resources are needed to ensure the successful City-wide implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework.

#### **Stage 2 (Q1 and Q2, 2022):**

Staff will apply the learnings from Stage 1 to develop a City-wide implementation guide and standardized tools (e.g. common survey questions) to support staff in applying the Youth Outcomes Framework to all youth serving programs. Staff training will accompany the guide to facilitate learning and ensure ethical, culturally appropriate and consistent data collection and analysis.

Stage 1 and 2 can take place during the pandemic where COVID-19 prevents the regular operations of many City youth programs. These stages develop the ability of City divisions, boards and agencies to more fully monitor and evaluate youth programs once the resumption of regular City programs and services are possible.

#### **Stage 3 (Q3 and Q4, 2022):**

The Youth Outcomes Framework will be implemented City-wide across all relevant youth programs. In addition, staff will establish a standardized analysis and reporting process in order to share data findings with senior leadership at regular intervals. Currently, it is anticipated that Stage 3 will begin in the second half of 2022.

### **Investing in Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation**

The only way to fully know if City youth programs are having the desired impact is to monitor and evaluate them. The Youth Outcomes Framework is the first step in an ambitious, multi-year initiative to embed outcome and performance measurement in the ongoing operations of the City's youth programs. This practice will enable strategic and data-driven decision-making related to policies and programs that affect the wellbeing of all Toronto youth, including those most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

While there are no immediate financial impacts resulting from the recommendations in this report, the full implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework requires ongoing investment in monitoring and evaluation. Based on the experience and learnings in Stage 1, staff will identify what additional funding is required to support the City-wide implementation of the Youth Outcomes Framework and submit the required proposals in the 2022 Budget process.

## **2. Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum**

The second key component of Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs is the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum. The Spectrum is a tool that explains the different approaches to youth violence prevention in order to understand the current role that City of Toronto youth programs play in violence prevention. It also includes a menu of risk factors for youth violence to help identify *who* are the youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence.

### **Roots of Youth Violence**

Youth violence and crime have interpersonal, institutional, and systemic causes including poverty, racism, harmful educational practices, poor community design and lack of affordable housing. These are analyzed in depth in the Roots of Violence (2008) report. Addressing these structural inequalities requires transformative social and economic change and the active engagement of different orders of government and sectors of society. The City of Toronto has developed policies and strategies to contribute to these efforts such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, HousingTO Action Plan, Toronto Strong Neighborhood Strategy and Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.

The current scope and jurisdiction of City of Toronto youth programs does not directly address these structural challenges in a meaningful way to systemically reduce youth violence. Nevertheless, City of Toronto youth programs can and do play a helpful and important role in violence prevention through a combination of universal and targeted programs that take into account the risk factors for youth violence.

### **Risk Factors for Youth Violence and Crime**

Risk factors for youth violence and crime are circumstances or conditions that increase the probability that a young person will become involved in violence and/or criminal activity. Various promising violence prevention programs apply these risk factors to identify youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence and design programs to either reduce these risk factors or increase protective factors (i.e. supportive adults) to buffer their harmful effect.

Attachment 2 provides a comprehensive menu of risk factors for violence and crime based on Toronto Public Health's [Community Violence in Toronto: A Public Health Approach](#) report, Public Safety Canada [National Crime Prevention Strategy](#) as well the Province of Ontario's [Community Safety and Wellbeing Planning Framework](#). Some examples of risk factors include: mental health challenges, experiences of trauma, chronic unemployment, negative peer groups, and anti-social behaviour. Exposure to and/or the presence of multiple risk factors increase the likelihood a young person will become involved in violence and crime. Not surprisingly, many of these risk factors result from the structural roots of violence highlighted above.

Risk factors are an effective way to identify who are the youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence. While community violence does disproportionately affect communities facing socioeconomic disadvantage, demographics such as race, sex or ethnicity, in isolation, should not be confused with risk factors. These personal characteristics have no causal relation to the perpetration of violence on their own. Furthermore, there is evidence that most risk factors are equally valid predictors of criminal involvement and violence regardless of sex, race, or ethnicity.

### **Youth Outcomes Framework and Risk Factors**

The Youth Outcomes Framework aligns the goals of current youth programs at the City of Toronto with the most current research on positive youth development. Many of the outcomes identified in the Youth Outcomes Framework can also be considered "protective factors," which can help buffer the impact of risk factors for youth violence and crime. The outcomes in the Framework related to employment, supportive adults, and life and social skills, in particular, are relevant to the needs of youth experiencing risk factors for serious crime and violence. The type of programming that is needed to facilitate these protective factors however, depends on who is being served. The following section elaborates on these different approaches to youth violence prevention based on the target youth population.

### **Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum**

Preventing youth violence requires a range of program approaches. The Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum explains the different approaches to youth violence prevention based on *who* is being served and incorporates the risk factors to crime and violence highlighted above.

The Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum is based on current research and practice in the field of community safety, including the public health approach to violence prevention. The categories are derived from the Province of Ontario's Community Safety and Wellbeing Planning Framework and ensures policy alignment with the proposed Toronto Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, SafeTO.

The Spectrum is divided into four fluid categories based on the following target groups:

- General youth population (12-29),
- Youth that experience more than one risk factor for serious crime and violence,
- Youth involved in violent behaviour and/or high risk activities (e.g. non-violent crimes), and
- Perpetrators of violence and crime as well as victims of violence, including affected communities.

Table 2: City of Toronto Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum

<b>Category</b>	<b>Social Development (Upstream)</b>	<b>Targeted Prevention (Midstream)</b>	<b>Intervention (Downstream)</b>	<b>Incident Response</b>
<i>Target Group</i>	General Youth Population (12-29).	Youth that experience more than one risk factor for serious crime and violence.	Youth involved in violent behaviour and/or high risk activities (e.g. non-violent crimes).	Victims and perpetrators of crime and violence as well as affected communities.
<i>Objectives</i>	Programs that aim to prevent the development of risk factors for serious crime and violence through the promotion of positive youth development.	Programs that focus on the reduction of risk factors for serious crime and violence.	Program that aim to interrupt the reoccurrence or escalation of crime and violence.	Immediate and reactive responses to crime or safety.

Note: The categories in the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum are not mutually exclusive, meaning that some youth programs may fall under more than one category.

Each target group requires a different approach to program delivery including objectives and program dosage (i.e. intensity, frequency, duration). Prevention and intervention programs tend to be more expensive than social development programs because of the high program dosage required to meet the specific needs of youth experiencing risk factors for serious crime and violence.<sup>1</sup>

Upstream and downstream programs are equally important and work together to support a culture of youth violence prevention. What is more, the majority of investments need to be focused on developing and/or enhancing youth programs that fall under social development, prevention and intervention to reduce the number of youth that reach the point of incident response.<sup>2</sup> This investment approach is also underscored in SafeTO as important to building community safety and a culture of violence prevention.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Surgeon General (US) (2001). [Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General](#).

<sup>2</sup> Province of Ontario (2019). [Community Safety and Well-being Planning Framework. A Shared Commitment - Booklet 3](#).

## **City of Toronto Youth Programs and Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum**

To understand the current role of City youth programs in violence prevention, the programs included in the Youth Program Inventory were mapped along the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum. The mapping exercise is captured in Attachment 2 and reveals that majority of the City of Toronto youth programs fall under social development. In other words, most City youth programs are aimed at the general youth population and contribute to preventing the development of risk factors to crime and violence through the promotion of positive youth development. This includes well established and popular programs such as the City of Toronto's youth hubs and youth spaces.

The mapping also reveals a lack of "targeted prevention" and "intervention" programs in the City's youth service portfolio. These type of programs are high dosage (i.e. frequency, intensity, and duration) and target youth that are either experiencing risk factors for violence or are already involved in violence, crime and/or high risk activities. Some existing programs that fall under this category include Community Healing, which focuses on youth experiencing trauma (risk factors of youth violence) and Project Prosper, which serves youth in conflict with the law.

### **Investing in Intervention - TO Wards Peace**

The current gap in targeted prevention and intervention programs in the City of Toronto's youth service portfolio will be filled through the continued planning and implementation of the TO Wards Peace pilot in 2021.

Social Development, Finance and Administration, in collaboration with health and community agencies as well as persons with lived experience of violence and crime, are currently developing the TO Wards Peace violence prevention and intervention model for implementation. The main goal of the model is to identify and implement community based solutions to the risk factors for violence that affect youth and their families. This made-in-Toronto model, informed by best practices from various jurisdictions around the world, will include trauma informed and culturally appropriate case management, access to community mentors, and on the ground interruption to prevent the escalation of violence.

The model will be initially piloted in Toronto's North West region (Black Creek and Rexdale) where there are escalating incidences of gun violence. Staff have partnered with Black Creek Community Health Centre, Rexdale Community Health Centre, Nia Centre for the Arts and local grassroots groups to design and implement the TO Wards Peace pilot. This includes ongoing consultation with the local community to learn about the risk factors to violence that are relevant to the youth population in the area and identify community based solutions.

TO Wards Peace programming began in the North West part of the city in 2021. Community partners and staff from Social Development, Finance and Administration Division continue to make refinements to the model. The Program includes a monitoring and evaluation process to assess effectiveness and inform the expansion of the program to other communities in Toronto that are experiencing trends of escalating community violence.

Integrated community safety data indicate a need to extend this comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to violence prevention and intervention to other areas of the city: Downtown (Regent Park and Alexandra Park); North Scarborough (Woburn and Malvern); and Central (Flemingdon Park, Thorncliffe Park and Lawrence Heights). During the 2021 Budget process, Social Development, Finance and Administration estimated that it would cost approximately \$7M to implement TO Wards Peace across the four regions, adding one region annually from 2021 to 2024. Business cases will be submitted in the relevant budget processes.

### **3. Promising Practices to Improve Program Access**

The final component of Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs are the promising practices to improve program access detailed in Attachment 2, which are relatively simple and inexpensive. These practices are applicable to youth programs across the Youth Violence Prevention Spectrum and will help staff identify program enhancements in the upcoming year to optimize access for youth, particularly youth facing structural inequities.

Attachment 2 includes specific practices that are critical to youth programs that fall under “targeted prevention” and “intervention.” This includes the need to define a target population based on the risk factors for youth violence and crime and ensure the target population is being served through more advanced methods such as targeted outreach, focused referrals and/or assessment tools. Identifying a target population provides clarity and helps divisions, agencies and corporations develop an effective program model. To support existing targeted and intervention programs with this task, staff will develop an assessment tool to determine the extent to which a young person has been exposed to and/or displays risk factors as part of the 2021-2022 work plan.

Programs that serve the general youth population to prevent the development of risk factors are also critical investments in violence prevention. However, the full impact of these investments will not be realized without the application of equity criteria in the planning and implementation of programs. Program design and delivery needs to be grounded in the needs of youth that face structural inequities due to income, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, immigration status, and/or the neighborhoods they live in. This was the main finding of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy that requires continued attention and action.

One example of how the City of Toronto can operationalize equity in youth program planning is the methodology Parks, Forestry and Recreation recently used to identify new locations for the enhanced youth spaces. Staff applied demographic factors such as high incidence of crime and prevalence of low-income youth to locate ten new enhanced youth spaces approved in the City of Toronto 2020 Operating Budget.

Attachment 2 highlights other promising practices to improve the accessibility of programs for youth facing structural inequities. While many City of Toronto youth programs already incorporate some of these practices, the Interdivisional Youth Services Working Group has identified opportunities for improvement. Over the course of the next year, while the COVID-19 pandemic limits regular operations, the following City youth programs will review their design and incorporate the relevant practices highlighted in Attachment 2 to improve access for youth facing structural inequities.

Table 3: City youth programs selected for enhancement

Division/Agency	Programs for Enhancement (2021-2022)
Economic Development and Culture	Cultural Hotspot: Youth Mentorship & Employment
Parks, Forestry, and Recreation	Enhanced Youth Spaces Youth Outreach Workers
Social Development, Finance, and Administration	Artworks TO Community Healing Project Restorative Justice Programs Toronto Youth Job Corps Toronto Youth Partnership and Employment Program Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) Support Services
Toronto Community Housing Corporation	Be.Build.Brand - Entrepreneurship Development Program
Toronto Employment and Social Services	Purchase of Employment Services
Toronto Public Libraries	Career Coaches in Residence (contingent on funding) Poetry Saved Our Lives Youth Hubs

## CONCLUSION

The main findings of the Youth Service Review are that the City of Toronto plays a limited but valuable role in supporting positive youth development and meeting the needs of youth most vulnerable to serious crime and violence. To optimize its current portfolio of youth programming, divisions, agencies and corporations will implement Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs. This includes: i) investing in consistent monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure programs are achieving their intended outcomes; ii) investing in targeted prevention and intervention programs such as TO Wards Peace that have a defined target population based on the risk factors for serious violence and crime; and iii) implementing promising practices to make programs more accessible to youth facing structural inequities.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Denise Andrea Campbell  
Executive Director, Social, Development, Finance and Administration

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - City of Toronto Youth Program Inventory

Attachment 2 - Investing in Youth Outcomes: A Strategic Guide for City of Toronto Youth Programs

Attachment 3 - Implementation Plan for the City of Toronto Youth Outcomes Framework