



Year One Impact: Youth Violence Prevention and Community Crisis Response Fund

The community programs funded through the Youth Violence Prevention Grants and the Community Crisis Response Fund advance the goals of [SafeTO: Toronto's Ten Year Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan](#). Specifically, these programs align to Goal #5: Invest in People and Goal #6: Invest in Neighbourhoods.

Youth Violence Prevention Grants

Toronto City Council approved the [Youth Violence Prevention Grants](#) on February 19, 2020 to support the de-escalation of violence in Toronto communities by funding programming in neighbourhoods identified as having a high number of incidents based on a data-driven approach.

Overview of Investments

- 12 organizations were approved to receive a total of \$2,243,151 annually for three years. The Community Youth Violence Prevention Grant recipients, ward investments and program descriptions can be found in the [November 2020 report to Council](#).
- Six of the twelve organizations funded are either Indigenous-led or Black-mandated.
- To respond to the unique needs of Indigenous youth, Community Funding staff worked with The Mino Collective, an Indigenous youth-led group to invest an additional \$200,000 into Indigenous youth-led community violence prevention activities with support from the City's Indigenous Affairs Office. \$120,000 has been allocated to ENAGB Youth Program and staff from Social Development, Finance and Administration Division are working with The Mino Collective to allocate the remaining \$80,000 to an agency recommended by the youth.
- A grant made at the end of 2019 in response to a Member Motion to [support youth in the Rustic Neighbourhood Improvement Area](#) to the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre to support youth violence prevention initiatives in the Falstaff community was increased and is now considered a Youth Violence Prevention Grant.

Year One Impact

Over the last year, 1,648 youth were served by City-funded Youth Violence Prevention programs. Youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime were referred to programs by: Toronto Community Housing, youth justice centres, probation officers, Youth Outreach Workers, lawyers, youth-serving not-for-profit and grassroots organizations and Toronto Police Services. Many of the youth participants reported living in Toronto Community Housing communities, and disclosed their experiences of

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physical and cyber bullying, their involvement in crime, and their experience with active gang recruitment.

As part of monitoring and evaluation activities, funded organizations have aligned their program models to the Council-approved and evidence-based [Youth Outcomes Framework](#) to maximize the impact and evaluation of programming for Toronto youth. A total of 13 outcomes from the Youth Service Review were selected for evaluation by the Youth Violence Prevention grantees with the most common being:

- **Civic and Community Engagement:** Toronto youth are involved in their communities and take part in programming, community events, and volunteering opportunities
- **Supportive peers and adults:** Toronto youth have trusting, mutually respectful, and supportive relationships with adults, mentors, and community members
- **Life and Social Skills:** Toronto youth have what they need to maintain their mental wellbeing

These outcomes and a total of 44 indicators will be tracked by the lead organizations and will contribute to the overall evaluation of the grant stream.

Youth Violence Prevention grant recipients are also participating in a Funder For Public Benefit Sector collaboration with the United Way of Greater Toronto and the Ontario Trillium Foundation that is piloting the collection of social identity data. As part of this pilot, funded organizations will receive support in collecting sociodemographic data that will inform best practices for wide spread adoption of this practice. This work will begin in November 2021 and is one of the City's designated pilots in the [Data Equity Strategy](#).

Organizations report that year one programming was significantly impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic, presenting challenges for both youth and program staff. A transition to virtual service was necessary, hampering traditional outreach and youth engagement strategies. Public health mandated lockdowns left programs with less access to youth and youth serving agencies than anticipated, and virtual programming affected group dynamics and made it difficult to engage participants on sensitive topics typical of youth violence prevention programming.

Funded organizations reported on how their programs incorporated the following proven violence prevention and intervention strategies.

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Table 1: Violence Prevention and Intervention Strategies Implemented in Year One

Strategy	Examples from Year One Programming
Effective Community Engagement Approaches	The Neighbourhood Group established partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, libraries and schools to engage broad stakeholders in violence prevention activities.
Trauma-Informed Programming	Through one-on-one mentorship counselling sessions, Agincourt Community Services provided wrap-around supports that allowed MVP youth to form and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults and provided opportunities for young people to be involved as leaders in their communities.
Leadership Development	Harriet Tubman Community Organization offered workshops and training sessions to support participants in the development of various life skills such as problem solving, interpersonal relationships, financial literacy, critical thinking and entrepreneurial pathways to provide youth with safe ways to make money.
Employment Development	Stolen From Africa supported youth to identify educational and/or professional career paths with the support of project facilitators, guest speakers and credible mentors. Youth received opportunities to network and connect to programs and resources that will help their transition towards identified academic and career pathways.
Mental Health Supports	Unison co-developed a youth mental health resource sheet to assist youth in accessing virtual mental healthcare which was distributed to all residential units in the Neptune neighbourhood of Lawrence Heights. Unison also engaged culturally appropriate mental health workers to lead workshops for youth, supporting healing and recovery from trauma caused by gun violence.

Youth Community Crisis Response Grants

The Community Crisis Response Fund provides one-time financial assistance to support communities impacted by traumatic incidents and community violence exposure. In 2020, programming was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Despite pandemic impacts, as needs persist, \$100,000 was invested in the following initiatives which align with the intended outcomes of the funding stream:

- DeenUp Athletics ran the Reflection, Empowerment, Action, Love (R.E.A.L.) project in the Yorkdale-Glen Park neighbourhood. This project supported younger youth to reflect on the impacts of gun violence and connected them to local supports and networks.
- Next Generation Arts led the Health Empowerment and Arts Leverage (H.E.A.L.) project in partnership with the City's Community Crisis Response Program. The project provides culturally appropriate, trauma-informed intervention/prevention and capacity building resources to youth in Scarborough. 60 youth have been engaged in programming to date.

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- Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club is working with the SEEN Collaborative to develop and implement the Community Support Fund. This project has trained and is supporting six Youth Ambassadors to develop and lead a youth-friendly process for supporting healing, recovery and capacity building initiatives in the Regent Park, Esplanade and St. James Town neighbourhoods in the Downtown East.
- Funding was also used to support the three trustee organizations who provide administrative and project support to youth as they deliver their community projects.

With fewer public health restrictions now in place, and with an increased emphasis on outreach, the Community Crisis Response Fund has seen a drastic increase in applications in the second and third quarters of 2021 with 13 projects receiving funding thus far. Staff from Social Development, Finance and Administration Division will work with funded groups in 2022 to pilot enhanced reporting tools and activities including group reporting and peer capacity building.