



Hamilton



## HAMILTON'S BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

Multi-Year Plan: 2023-2026



APRIL 2023



*The City of Hamilton is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit (of the Between the Lakes Treaty of 1792) and the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people.*

*We recognize the significance of the Two Row Wampum Covenant and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant to this land, and offer our respect to the First Nations, the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Métis communities, and acknowledge that this land is a gathering place and a home to many Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous peoples of the global diaspora.*

# CONTENTS

---

Executive Summary	4
Listening to Community Voices	6
Environmental Scan	13
Impact of Racism	16
Municipality Review	19
Gap Analysis	22
Inclusion Criteria	22
Search Strategy and Categorization	23
Validation Process	25
Considerations and Limitations	25
Mapping Results	27
Gap Analysis	31
Priorities	33
Goal 1: Prevention Programs	34
Goal 2: Comprehensive Wraparound Services	39
Goal 3: Systems Approach	43
Governance Structure	47
Acknowledgments	48
Community Partners	48
References	50
Appendix A: Terms of Reference – Building Safer Communities Advisory Panel	51



## Executive Summary

The City of Hamilton is a recipient of a new fund offered by the federal government through Public Safety Canada. The funding totals almost \$4 million over four years (2022-2026).

The Building Safer Community Fund (BSCF) has three principal objectives:

1. Support municipalities and Indigenous communities to develop community-based prevention and intervention strategies and initiatives to tackle gun and gang activities.
2. Increase the knowledge of the nature, scope and challenges of the identified recipients to tackle gun and gang activities.
3. Support recipients to develop a plan to sustain successful prevention and intervention activities upon completion of the five-year program.

In recent years, gun and gang violence in Hamilton has been a growing concern. Hamilton Police Services data shows a steep rise in crime gun possessors with organized crime linkages since 2017. Trends across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area show an increase in the number

of offenders carrying firearms, resulting in more discharge scenes with multiple shooters (Toronto Police Services, 2022). Anecdotally, service providers from Hamilton and the GTHA have shared concerns related to the complexity and increase gun and gang activity across jurisdictions at the GTHA Community Safety and Well Being Symposium in 2022.

In Hamilton, youth crime is decreasing overall, however, there are concerning trends related to youth violent crimes (Hamilton Police Services, 2022). These concerns include a slower decline in youth involvement in crime compared to the rest of Canada and a slight increase in youth violent crime in Hamilton between 2020 and 2021 with 352 youth involved in a violent crime (Hamilton Police Services, 2022). Due to these factors, Hamilton was selected as a recipient of the Building Safer Communities Fund, with a focus on preventative and upstream approaches to addressing gun and gang violence.

To inform the development of a multi-year plan for the Building Safer Communities Fund, the City of Hamilton worked closely with consultants from EMPOWER Strategy Group. The focus of the multi-year plan is to prevent and address risk factors associated with youth gun and gang violence.

## Listening to Community Voices

A key focus of the initiative seeks to support communities to develop strategies to tackle guns and gang activities. To do this, youth must be prioritized which means considering the services they most need and centering youth voices in the multi-year plan.

At the time EMPOWER Strategy Group was brought into this project, some initial community consultation had already taken place. To inform what initiatives the Building Safer Communities Fund will implement, Hamilton undertook a rapid granting process to engage local community organizations to lead youth engagement activities and develop trauma informed and anti-racism supports for the larger youth services system.

As part of this process, nine local community agencies were funded to conduct consultations with youth and other stakeholders in the Fall of 2022. These agencies completed a mix of consultations that were both in person and virtual and included focus groups, interviews, and surveys. These consultations involved primarily youth with some participation from teachers, parents/caregivers, probation officers and youth workers/ advisors. Participating in these sessions were a diverse group from across Hamilton including, 470 youth, 33 caregivers, and 41 service providers. Using an intersectional approach, sessions were organized for various cultural groups including African descended communities, Indigenous and female identified youth.

EMPOWER Strategy Group reviewed the above engagement reports with the goal to develop the key priorities that would drive the funding distribution. Common themes were identified and grouped together to better inform the priorities and recommendations. A parallel stream of work was led by local researcher which involves a comprehensive review of existing programs and services to identify possible gaps and opportunities.

The following are the key themes that emerged from community consultations:

- **Recreation** – Participants asked for more youth-specific community programming and recreation time. By ensuring sustainability in planning for youth programming and for community or youth-driven organizations, young people can have consistent access to people and activities that benefit them. Communities also asked for more recreational support that was closer to where they live. Participants requested more flexible programming that was free and near public transportation and schools and other places frequented by youth (libraries, shopping malls).
- **24/7 Support** – Participants acknowledged that most agencies work typical 9-5 hours Monday to Friday, which doesn't coincide with when youth need them most. Instead, they asked for flexible and extended hours along with phone/text support late in the evening and weekends when they may be in crisis.

- **Youth Programs** – Participants indicated a need for peer mentoring program staffed by individuals with lived experience and cultural competency. Also, participants indicated a need for clearer pathways to career opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and access to meaningful work.
- **Education** – Parents are not always aware of the supports offered by schools such as guidance counselling for their children. The issue of racism in the education system also leads to distrust of the system.
- **Intercity Transitions** – Older youth expressed that they may be transient and will move from city to city with minimal notice. There is a need for a more coordinated approach so that youth are supported during these transitions when they move from one support network to another to minimize housing insecurity.
- **Transitioning to Adulthood** – Participants indicated that many services end at age 18 creating a “cliff” without a meaningful safety net. Participants asked for continued support into early adulthood extending to age 25 or later.
- **Support for Families** – Although some services exist, parents/ caregivers indicated that they are geared towards those with young children. More intervention is needed for parents/ caregivers of teenagers and young adults and to help families

navigate and access existing supports. Also, there are few services for young adult parents who expressed a need for specific programs for their age group.

- **Trauma-informed Programming** – Many participants underscored the need for trauma-informed, culturally appropriate programming that recognizes specific experiences of newcomers from war-torn countries and the multi-generational trauma experienced by many Indigenous families as well as racialized youth who face systemic racism.
- **Cultural Appropriate Programming** – Participants expressed a need for programming that embeds their lived experiences. This may include staffing and approaches that consider race, culture and language.

Additional feedback from Indigenous, Black and female-identifying participants is listed below.

Feedback from Indigenous participants included the need for:

- Programming with a focus on Indigenous art and culture
- Access to role models and elders who can lead programs and services sharing their wisdom and lived experience.
- Access to green space for recreation and outdoor programming

“

“I never thought workers would be able to actually gain my trust again but seeing workers out on roads when we all were at night made me feel safe, like they actually wanted to understand what was going on out here, after seeing them a couple times, I felt safe to come check the drop in, and now I have a safe place when I need to talk.”

– 19 year old youth

Feedback from Black community participants included the need for:

- Mental health and addiction resources
- Safe and welcoming spaces
- Culturally relevant supports
- Support in navigating services and knowing what’s available particularly for newcomer caregivers/parents
- Interpretation services to help newcomer parents.

Feedback from female-identified youth included the need for:

- More inclusive spaces
- Access to mental health services

“

“Individuals who are going to make incredible contributions in the world, but until we have that place set up in the city of Hamilton, we’re going to be doing Band-Aid work and patchwork continuously going into the future and those young people graduating from those schools.”

– Youth feedback



A small Advisory Committee was put together that met twice – at the beginning and end of the project. The nine agencies that received youth engagement funding to validate the summary of key themes reconvened as well (Appendix A provides list of Advisory Committee members). Lastly, additional community organizations were invited to an open meeting to help prioritize goals. Hamilton Police Services were engaged separately to review the recommendations. Sessions were conducted in a facilitated round-table format to allow for participation. Following the community engagement sessions, common themes were identified and grouped based on feedback.



**“I feel like the system in our city is racist and I don’t feel like I belong in our community. Gang culture is attractive because it’s something to belong to.”**

**– Youth Feedback**

Following community consultation and research, it is recommended that the funds be used to advance three goals:

- Goal 1: Expand and launch **preventative programs** that facilitate youth and community connections, strengthen youth capacity, build positive pathways including employment, recreation, mentorship as well as awareness and education around the realities of gang involvement.
- Goal 2: Expand and launch programs that support youth exiting gangs through **comprehensive wraparound services**
- Goal 3: Increase **system coordination** to enhance existing collaboration and create system pathways among organizations that support youth to develop protective factors related to involvement in guns and gangs.

With regard to governance, it is proposed that the City of Hamilton strike a small volunteer committee to review funding applications allowing for community voices to lead the decision-making.

## Environmental Scan

The percentage of Hamilton residents living with low income was 11% in 2020, down from 15% in 2015. These rates are similar to the rates we see across Canada (2021 CENSUS). “Pandemic related benefits, such as improvements to Employment Insurance along with Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), partially explain these reductions in poverty in the overall population. However, the largest drop in poverty rates was

among children, which is also due to the positive impact of the increase in child benefits for low-income families that was implemented in 2016” (*2021 CENSUS: POVERTY IN HAMILTON BY MAJOR AGE GROUPS, 2022*).

As of 2020, the poverty rates in Hamilton are highest amongst 0-17-year-olds, at 15%. However, this is down from 21% in 2015 (*2021 Census: 2022*). 65 years and older are the second highest impoverished group, at 12% in 2020, followed by 18-64. The percentage of Hamilton residents living with low income was 11% in 2020, down from 15% in 2015 (*2021 Census: 2022*).

Food insecurity caused by high inflation and frozen social assistance is an emergency in Hamilton. The cost of inflation affects low-income individuals most drastically, as the highest percentage of their monthly income is spent on food and necessities. Inflation is affecting healthier foods more drastically, as they are increasing in cost at a higher rate.

Among persons in households receiving Ontario Disability Support Program benefits, single individuals without children account for 58% of recipients” (*2021 Census: 2022*). However, the number of seniors accessing food banks has grown significantly, as it has increased by 34% in the past two years (*2021 CENSUS: POVERTY IN HAMILTON BY MAJOR AGE GROUPS, 2022*).

According to the City of Hamilton’s *Housing and Homelessness Action Plan in Hamilton*, “In 2021 the average market rent continues to increase. Overall, it increased from \$1,118 to \$1,190 for all units.

Significant increases were seen in one bedroom and two-bedroom units. With increases of 4.6% and 4.4% compared to only 4.3% increase overall” (City of Hamilton, 2022: 6).

Canada’s Indigenous population has been growing over multiple decades. “There are two reasons for this growth. The first, often called “natural growth,” relates to higher birth rates and increasing life spans. The second has been termed ‘response mobility,’ which refers to people who once responded to the Indigenous identity questions one way on the census questionnaire, but now respond differently” (Government of Canada, 2022e). “The 2021 Census counted 1,807,250 Indigenous people, accounting for 5.0% of the total population of Canada, up from 4.9% in 2016” (Government of Canada, 2022e). In the 2021 census, 98.97% of Indigenous peoples identified themselves as living off reserve. 322,805 Indigenous people identified themselves as living on reserve (Government of Canada, 2022d).

It is worth noting that youth crime rates in Hamilton have been on the decline with violent crimes decreasing by 23% from 2019 to 2020. There is a similar pattern in the decline in youth crimes, but there is disturbing trend related to youth and fire-arm related cases. Since 2013, approximately 60% of cases at the Ontario Court of Justice involved an accused person under the age of 29 (City of Hamilton, 2022).



## Impact of Racism

The risk factors for Black and Indigenous youth involvement are compounded by the wider historical, structural, and cultural issues of marginality based on race. The impact of marginalization can lead to systemic problems including lower high school graduation rates, misdiagnosed/underdiagnosed mental health challenges, increases in poverty and domestic issues to name a few.

The social structure and institutionalized patterns of racism, individual experiences, and perceptions of racism and discrimination, are important causal determinants and reinforcements of gang involvement and crime. Racism has played an important role in the onset and persistence of gangs. If young people perceive that a future of helplessness and hopelessness awaits them, the gang lifestyle may appear to offer them a better alternative.

Reports on street-level crimes point to an over-representation of Black youth in these criminal activities. While official statistics are very limited, data from the 2006 census showed that, in an urban center in Ontario, Black youth represented 65 percent of all youth in state care but the Black population represented only 8 percent of the total (Grant and Ojo 2009:8). Years of this type of socialization and bearing witness to these experiences leads to Black youth becoming marginalized within their 'urban iconic ghetto' (Anderson 2012).

Any meaningful attempts to address the issues of guns and gangs must acknowledge the complexity of youth gun violence regarding its causes and dig deeper to understand the risk factors for gang involvement which include historical and contemporary issues of marginality based on race. Risk factors include higher rates of poverty, lower high school graduation rates, social isolation, over policing and perceptions of injustice which may lead to violence related behaviors. (Caldwell, et al, 2004; Khenti, 2013; Reed et al 2010) Numerous research findings explain that Black youth exposure to racism and disadvantage may explain why Black youth appear to be more involved in gangs than are people from other ethnic groups (Wortley & Tanner, 2008).

Scholars argue that the impact of racism results in increased rates of morbidity and mortality and reduces overall feelings of well-being (Ford and Airhihenbuwa 2010).

Locally, Hamilton is experiencing an increase in hate motivated crimes. In its 2022 Hate/Bias Statistical Report, the Hamilton police hate crime unit indicated that there were a total of 174 hate/bias incidents during that reporting period compared to 108 reported in 2021 (Hamilton Police Services, 2022). Of those targeted, the Black population experienced the highest number of attacks.

Below is a snapshot of the experiences of discrimination among the Black and Indigenous populations in Canada, 2019 (Adam Cotter, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics)

## Experiences of Black Canadians

- According to the 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety, nearly half (46%) of Black people aged 15 years and older reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination in the past 5 years, compared to 16% of the non-Indigenous, non-visible minority population.
- Of all Black people, four in ten (41%) experienced discrimination based on their race or skin colour, about 15 times higher than the proportion among the non-Indigenous, non-visible minority population (3%).
- Experiences of discrimination were much more common among Canadian-born Black people (65%) than among Black immigrants (36%).
- Data from the GSS show that a considerably higher proportion of Black people experienced discrimination in 2019 than in 2014 (46% versus 28%).

## Experiences of Indigenous Peoples

- Discrimination was more common among the Indigenous population than among populations who are both non-Indigenous and non-visible minority (33% versus 16%). More specifically, 44% of First Nations people had experienced

discrimination in the 5 years preceding the survey, as had 24% of Métis and 29% of Inuit.

- Among those who were discriminated against, 21% of Indigenous people and 16% of Black people said it was when dealing with police, compared with 4% of non-Indigenous, non-visible minority people who experienced discrimination.
- Experiences of discrimination were more common among Indigenous people in 2019 (33%) than they were in 2014 (23%).

## Municipality Review

Approaches to this funding from other municipalities were reviewed and included City of Toronto and Calgary. More specifically, the engagement and consultation methods, funding application process and governance and priorities were assessed to better understand how to approach this work.

Upon review, there were some similarities and differences to the Hamilton approach that should be noted. The City of Calgary had a highly client focused model, with the client being the youth involved in gang-related activities. Similar to Hamilton's findings, the City of Calgary focused on direct family members with a youth receiving services but also recognized and emphasized the need for culturally relevant supports. Meanwhile, the City of Toronto had a much wider

approach in that its strategy is to respond to various areas to reduce the impact of the intersectional oppression. A key feature being that it had a heavy emphasis on how to build support for families, senior care and stronger systems for civic engagement allowing for community members to be leaders and intercessors themselves.

The analysis of best practices in other areas along compared to the City of Hamilton's goals highlighted that the local approach and strategy is a balance of both the City of Toronto and Calgary. The goals and recommendations are to create, expand and enhance supports to prevent and deter youth gang involvement in the city. Unique to the recommended approach in Hamilton is a focus on systems building. This important collaborative approach allows not only young people, but all people in our city experiencing the effects of having young people involved in gang related activity get the support necessary. Many of the supports that exist are underutilized due to lack of connectivity communication amongst service providers but also a lack of awareness by potential clients. Our approach is to generate awareness, expand participation, programs and launch new services where possible. A systems-wide table allows the City to dismantle silos and adopt a more coordinated effort in developing those wraparound services.





## Gap Analysis

To support the gap analysis, existing gang prevention and intervention programs and strategies that already exist within the City of Hamilton were reviewed. Prevention programs are typically geared towards children and youth to strengthen protective factors against gang involvement. Intervention programs usually work with those already engaged with gangs. Both types of programs are essential.

## Inclusion Criteria

For programs and services to be included in this analysis, they had to:

- Be within the **geographic boundaries** of the City of Hamilton,
- Be offered **free of cost** or subsidized through eligibility to be free of cost,
- Be offered **currently** (i.e., not closed due to COVID-19 pandemic),
- Be offered with **consistency** (i.e., not a one-time offering),
- Be offered in one of the following settings: school-based, City-run, or community-based for ease of mapping.

This criterion was based on the need for programs/services to be easily accessible to a wide variety of youth and families. It allowed for an achievable level of scoping for the mapping exercise. Including all at-cost, surrounding area/outside of Hamilton, one-off or currently non-operational due to the COVID-19 pandemic programs/services would result in far too large of a data pool to be used to identify gaps/opportunities for the most at-risk youth.

It is important to note that there are many faith-based institutions in Hamilton, over 270. Some may offer youth events or worship options but for scope of this mapping, these institutions were not included. Faith-based programming and social connection can have a positive impact on youth so the availability of so many places of worship is an asset to the city.

## Search Strategy and Categorization

The following search strategy was used: Once the initial categorization of all the programs/services was completed, key stakeholders were engaged to review and validate it.



Source	Strategy and Process Steps
<p><b>Red Book of Community Information</b> by Hamilton Public Library provides trusted, up-to-date information about social services and community resources for residents of Hamilton.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Red Book Search feature with key words: Youth + the following - Outreach; Diversion; Parenting; Mentorship; Gang; Shelter &amp; housing; Recreation; Social skills; Life skills; Job skills; Employment; Education; Substance use; Mental health; Justice; Civic engagement + combinations of these terms.</li> <li>• Key word searches were filtered by area of the city: Downtown Hamilton, Ancaster, Glanbrook, Stoney Creek, Dundas, Flamborough, all Hamilton (largest scope),</li> <li>• Programs and services were included/excluded based on established criteria,</li> <li>• Programs and services were mapped only once to the categorization framework based on primary intended function or outcome of the program/service (Prevention, Early Intervention/Redirection, or Diversion/Reintegration) to avoid redundancy or over counting.</li> <li>• Program/service were captured by program name, agency/organization offering, program/service description, area of the city served, target/intended audience, setting (community-based, school-based, City-run), access (referral, drop in, sign up).</li> </ul>
<p><b>An Environmental Scan</b> was conducted by Hamilton's Community Safety &amp; Well-Being Plan Leads to briefly identify evidence-based youth programs/services offered across regions in North America to prevent and address gang involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs/services listed were cross-referenced with those identified by the Red Book search.</li> <li>• No new programs or services were found through this cross-reference (any programs listed in the scan specific to Hamilton had already been identified through Red Book).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultations with community service providers</b> in Hamilton were conducted in late 2022 to identify what's happening locally in terms of youth programs/services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs/services listed by the local service providers during consultations were cross-referenced with those identified by the Red Book search.</li> <li>• Programs/services that had been missed during the Red Book search were added and categorized.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Snowballing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional programs/services were added to the inventory using a snowballing technique branching off from the initial Red Book and community consultation programs/services (i.e. if a program website linked to another program site).</li> </ul>

## Validation Process

Once the initial categorization of all the programs/services was completed, key stakeholders were engaged to review and validate it.

## Considerations and Limitations

A service map acts as a snapshot of the time of available, active programs and services. While the search strategy and resulting inventory of categorized programs/services for this map are comprehensive, they may not be exhaustive. To avoid redundancy or unintentional over counting of programs/services, the decision was made to only include programs in one subcategory based on the primary intended function or outcome of the program/service (prevention, early intervention/redirection, or diversion/reintegration).

Some programs defined youth as 8-18 years, others as 10-24 years, others using other age ranges including as young as 6 years old and as old as 35 years old. The most common age range seen was 12-24 years. The inconsistent use of age range meant that analysis by age could only report general trends instead of trends by typical age groupings of 0-6 years, 7-12 years, 13-18 years, and 18-25 years.

Similarly, there was inconsistent use of the terminology 'at-risk' and 'high-risk' youth for program and service eligibility. Some programs

defined high risk as in conflict with the law while others used high risk regarding underhoused or lacking protective factors. This inconsistent use of risk criteria and language may lead to confusion regarding eligibility for programs/services by youth and their families and may be an area of consideration for streamlined communication of programs and services.

The location of programs/services by area of the city was included in the data collection, however, many are offered at multiple or rotating sites throughout the city and/or offered virtually in some capacity. As such, mapping by location of the city in detail was not done. Rather, a high-level analysis by location was conducted. The general trend revealed that most programs/services that met the inclusion criteria are offered in the lower city area, but representation was seen across Waterdown, Dundas, Hamilton Mountain, Ancaster and Stoney Creek areas. This combined with the multi-site, rotating site, and virtual program/service options demonstrated broad program/service coverage across the city.



# YOUTH PROGRAMS & SERVICES IN HAMILTON: Mapping the Landscape

**59 agencies** are offering programs & services in all categories.

- 49 of the agencies are community-run

59

Program & Service Categories

**Prevention:**

- # Programs = 106
- # Agencies = 38

**Early Intervention:**

- # Programs = 86
- # Agencies = 44

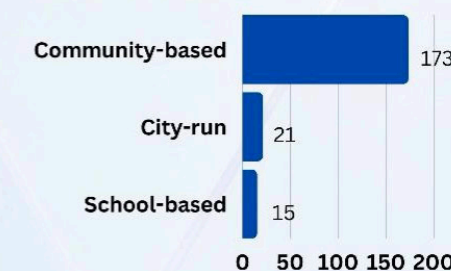
**Diversion:**

- # Programs = 17
- # Agencies = 9

209

**209 programs & services** are offered across all categories.

**Program Breakdown by Setting**



**Programs & Services Specific to Target Population**

- # Newcomers = 19
- # Black/Person of Colour = 12
- # Females = 11
- # LGBTQ = 11
- # Indigenous = 8
- # Males = 1

28

**28 Agencies** provide programs/services that cross at least two category areas.

**6 Agencies** provide programs/services that cross ALL category areas; Prevention, Early Intervention & Diversion.

6

## Mapping Results

The results of the mapping exercise revealed that 59 unique service providing agencies offer 209 unique programs/services:

- 106 programs in the area of prevention offered by 38 agencies
- 86 programs offered in early intervention offered by 44 agencies
- 17 programs offered relating to diversion offered by 9 agencies

Of the 209 programs/services, the majority (83%, n=173) are offered by community-based agencies. The remaining programs are school based (7%) or offered through the City of Hamilton (including Library and Police Services programs) (10%).

### Breakdown by Prevention Category:

- 106 programs offered by 38 different agencies. The majority fall into the subcategories of Educational Support/School Involvement (24%), Caregiver Skill-Building & Positive Parenting (16%), Life & Social Skills (15%), Caring Adults & Mentorship (12%) and Housing Support (10%).
- 79% of Prevention programs are run by community-based agencies, 10% by schools/School Boards, and 10% by the City of Hamilton.
- The key intended audiences for this category included youth in the age range of 4-30 years with the focus of most programs on 8-19 years. Parents and caregivers of children & youth, primarily those with children aged 0-6 years and/or 12-14 years are also a key audience for this category.

### Breakdown by Early Intervention & Redirection Category:

- 86 programs were offered by 44 different agencies. The majority fall into the subcategories of Social Connectedness & Recreation (36%), Job Skills & Apprenticeship (23%), Mental Health & Substance Use Treatment (16%) and Outreach & System Navigation (13%).
- 85% of Early Intervention & Redirection programs are run by

community-based agencies, 4% by schools/School Boards, and 12% by the City of Hamilton.

- The key intended audiences for this category included youth in the age range of 5-35 years with the majority focused on the 14-24-year age range. This category saw more 'at-risk' eligibility for programming, specifically in reference to mental health & substance use and outreach services/programs.

### Breakdown by Diversion & Reintegration Category:

- 17 programs offered by 3 different agencies. The majority fall into the subcategories of Community Reintegration (53%), Justice System Partnerships (18%) and Outreach & Mentorship (12%). Of note is that only 1 program is offered in each of the subcategories of: Substance Use and Mental Health Treatment, Employment Matching, and Hospital & Health Care Partnerships.
- 88% of Diversion & Reintegration programs are run by community-based agencies, 6% by schools/School Boards, and 6% by the City of Hamilton, Hamilton Police Services.
- The key intended audiences for this category included youth in the age range of 5-29 years with the majority focused on justice-involved youth in the 12-24 years age range.

**Cross-Over Service Provision:**

- 28 agencies offer programs/services in two or more categories (Prevention, Early Intervention & Redirection, Diversion & Reintegration).
- 12 agencies offer programs/services only under Prevention, 18 offer programs/services only under Early Intervention/Redirection.
- 6 agencies offer programs in all three categories. These agencies are:
  - John Howard Society
  - The Hamilton HUB
  - Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
  - Hamilton Police Services
  - Living Rock Ministries
  - Liberty for Youth
- Other key partners in Hamilton that offer multiple programs/services for youth are:
  - Boys and Girls Club Hamilton Halton
  - Empowerment Squared
  - Good Shepherd Centre
  - Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

- Routes Youth Centre
- Wesley
- YMCA
- YWCA

**Target & Priority Populations:**

- 19 programs/services specific to newcomer youth
- 12 programs/services specific to Black and racialized youth
- 8 programs/services specific to Indigenous youth
- 11 programs/services specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ youth
- 11 programs/services specific to young female-identifying youth
- 1 program specific to male youth at-risk

**Gap Analysis**

A gap analysis was completed to identify areas for coordination, expansion, enhancement, and introduction of services or programming to address youth gang involvement in Hamilton. Although there are a significant number of programs/services being offered in the city that aim to increase protective factors, provide early intervention and redirection pathways, and improve reintegration supports, opportunities exist to expand and coordinate these services. Eight areas were identified. They were:



- Increase system coordination to enhance existing collaboration and create system pathways,
- Amplify programs that improve youth awareness and education around the realities of gang involvement,
- Strengthen formal supports to parents and caregivers of older youth (16+) and youth-aged parents,
- Leverage key community partners and partnerships to enhance culturally appropriate program options and apply a lens of anti-racism and anti-colonialism to programming and services,
- Offer tailored mentorship opportunities between individuals with lived experience, peers, and caring adults and specific at-risk populations such as young females and Indigenous youth,
- Explore subsidization of at-cost programs/services during 'out of school' timeframes,
- Expand programs and services that support gang exiting youth, and
- Ensure sustainable access to emergency youth shelters for underhoused or street-involved individuals.



## Priorities

EMPOWER Strategy Group worked with the Advisory Committee to identify and shortlist a number of key priorities. Through facilitated discussions, service providers and stakeholders, analysis of the youth engagement reports, service mapping and discussions with agencies and other community stakeholders a priority list was developed.

From this, it was determined that the distribution of Building Safer Communities Funding will center around three key goals:

- Goal 1: Expand and launch **preventative programs** that facilitate youth and community connections, strengthen youth capacity, build positive pathways including

employment, recreation, mentorship as well as awareness and education around the realities of gang involvement.

- Goal 2: Expand and launch programs that support youth exiting gangs through **comprehensive wraparound services**
- Goal 3: Increase **system coordination** to enhance existing collaboration and create system pathways among organizations that support youth to develop protective factors related to involvement in guns and gangs.

Below is a breakdown of these goals as well as how the funding will be used to support their achievement.

## Goal 1: Prevention Programs

Through this Building Safer Communities initiative, an equitable and transparent funding process will provide organizations funding to run programs and services that offer youth and families strategies and support to prevent involvement in youth violence including guns and gangs. These preventative programs will facilitate youth and community connections, strengthen youth capacity, build positive pathways including employment, recreation, mentorship as well as awareness and education around the realities of gang involvement.

The City of Hamilton will put out a call for grant applications for programs to begin in July 2023 that will stipulate that programs and services must fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Recreation programs and/or mentorship programs for youth;
- Employment programs for youth;
- Parenting/caregiver support and/or system navigation programs for parents/caregivers /youth; and,
- Delivery of programs within or accessible to relevant communities to ensure youth and their families has access to programs and services where they are most likely to engage.

Organizations will need to show they have identified and tried to eliminate barriers to access by reviewing hours of operation, policies, locations, languages and staffing. To qualify for funding, programs must be available free of charge, near neighbourhoods where the target populations reside or frequent and will be offered during hours where there is currently a lack of programming/services. Organizations will provide a clear rationale around recommended hours of programming. These programs will run from July 2023 and will taper off/become sustainable by the end of March 2026.

The above categories are based on local consultation with youth, parents/caregivers, and service providers conducted during the developmental stage of this project. These consultations found consensus between youth, parents/caregivers and youth service providers that before/after school programs help reduce the potential

time and opportunity that youth may have available to become involved in gang-related activity and increase their sense of belonging within their community. Programs/services offered during the summer months and during breaks in the school term could provide a similar reduction in time/opportunity for gang involvement. No cost programs help to ensure accessibility and attendance. Mentorship by peers or adults with lived experience of exiting gang lifestyle may be one way of connecting the effective prevention strategies of increasing gang awareness, cultural connection, and mentorship.

Parents also expressed concerns about lack of awareness of programs and services to support their youth. They were in favour of the development of a model that includes a wraparound approach to assist youth. There is a need to address the lack of culturally appropriate programming for all parents and caregivers.

There is an opportunity to thoughtfully expand culturally appropriate programs to caregivers of older teens (16+) who may need additional support in coping with challenges that come with parenting youth transitioning to adulthood.

Additionally, there is a lack of awareness of programs/services available to support youth-aged parents. It is necessary to increase accessibility and make programs more culturally appropriate to ensure racialized and newcomer parents are aware of programs and comfortable participating. Additionally, these programs typically focus on life skills, behaviour issues, and completing education, but an expanded focus

on skills to manage parenthood at a young age and to help youth-aged parents find social connectedness could be explored.

**Goal 1: Expand and launch preventative programs that facilitate youth and community connections, strengthen youth capacity, build positive pathways including employment, recreation, mentorship as well as awareness and education around the realities of gang involvement.**

To measure this goal, we recommend the following outcomes and measures:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
Strengthened connections between families and local community to increase social connectedness and belonging	Outcome: Youth and families can access more services available closer to communities that need them.  Measures:  Meeting communities where they are most likely to access services (measure: participation rate, level of satisfaction related to location)  Increased participation from target population and populations currently underserved, specifically programming for young women and Indigenous youth (measure: number of participants, level of satisfaction related to tailored programming) - Increased partnerships/collaboration between community agencies (measure: new collaborations)

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
<p>More consistent and flexible access to youth programs to enable greater participation and engagement</p>	<p>Outcome: Hamilton youth can access services when they need them</p> <p>Measures:</p> <p>Increased participation in a greater number of programs and services (measure: number of participants and an increase in new programs/services)</p> <p>More accessible hours provided after hours (measure: number of programs offering services during flexible hours, level of satisfaction related to accessible hours)</p> <p>Closer proximity to relevant programs and services (i.e. shorter geographical distance) and/or accessible virtual programming (measure: level of satisfaction related to accessibility of programming)</p> <p>Robust program evaluation which measures impact of programming before and after (measures: to be determined)</p> <p>Increased access to programs to improve community-led youth supervision</p>
<p>Increased knowledge of available programs and services to increase participation and engagement</p>	<p>Outcome: Increased awareness of programs and services to foster prosocial behaviours</p> <p>Increased awareness of programs and services (measures: number of participants, number of program inquiries and referrals)</p> <p>Robust program evaluation which measures impact of programming before and after (measures: to be determined)</p>

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
<p>Application of an anti-racism, anti-oppression and decolonization lens and trauma-informed approach to programming and services through leveraging key community partners to enhance culturally appropriate program options</p>	<p>Outcome: Programs and services are bias-free and effective in meeting community needs.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and capacity to apply ARAO, decolonial, and trauma-informed approach (measure: number of staff and volunteers trained from service providers, pre/post level of knowledge)</p> <p>Increase in specific number of programs for Indigenous youth (measure: number or new/expanded programs)</p> <p>Increase in participation of Indigenous youth in programming (measure: number of self-reported Indigenous youth participating in programs)</p> <p>Increase in leadership/staffing/mentors of programs and services of those with relevant lived experience from priority populations (measure: number of staff self-reported to have relevant lived experience and representative of priority populations)</p>

## Goal 2: Comprehensive Wraparound Services

Through consultation with youth and caregivers in late 2022 and early 2023, it was determined that programs and services that focus on prevention and early intervention are key to reducing youth gang involvement. In particular, strong support systems (safe housing, employment, recreation, families) can make all the difference. Even with preventative efforts, there remains a need to ensure system-wide

programs/services are accessible for youth in need of intervention, diversion, and reintegration support. Youth indicated that support needs to exist beyond the typical 9:00am to 5:00pm hours and they advocated for more seamless transitions between agencies as they move through key life stages and into adulthood.

**Initiatives/Programs:**

Through this Building Safer Communities project an equitable and transparent funding process will provide organizations with funding to run programs and services that prioritize:

- Services for gang-exiting youth who are ready to re-integrate into the community such as housing supports, mental health and crisis support, employment and training, peer mentorship;
- Innovative approaches to providing services that are accessible beyond the typical 9:00am-5:00pm hours, including 24/7 services if needed (partnerships and collaborations, piloting of services, etc.);
- Access to emergency shelter through the provision of wraparound care and increased sense of belonging. This may include piloting new collaborations between agencies with complementary mandates. More robust programming for older youth (approx. 18-25 years old) who are transitioning into adulthood and need critical life skills.

As per above, these programs will need to be free and as accessible as possible. Organizations will need to show they have identified and tried to eliminate barriers to access by reviewing hours of operation, locations, offering services in different languages and/or with interpretation and staffing.

These programs will run from July 2023 and will taper off/become sustainable by the end of March 2026.

**Goal 2: Expand and launch programs that support youth exiting gangs through comprehensive wraparound services**

To measure this goal, we recommend the following outcomes and measures:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
New resources/ initiatives to help gang-involved individuals identify and commit to long-term positive goals related to decreasing and ending gang involvement	<p>Outcome: Gang-exiting youth are well supported in their transition</p> <p>Pilot/launch of new and/or innovative programs such as mentorship, employment opportunities, skill development (measure: number of new and/or innovative programs) Robust program evaluation to help test the programs and identify improvements (measures to be determined by applicants)</p> <p>Scaling of existing programs to increase participation, adding more robust programming, new locations etc. (measure: satisfaction of youth, new locations, related to accessibility of programs)</p>

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
<p>Increased wraparound supports for young offenders and their families to reduce recidivism and continued gang involvement</p>	<p>Outcome: Decrease in recidivism</p> <p>Pre/post program evaluation that demonstrates the effectiveness of wraparound supports (measure to be determined by applicants)</p> <p>Increase in number of participants (youth and families/caregivers) (measure: number of youth and family/caregiver attending programs, demographic information.)</p> <p>Increase in coordination and access to multiple services/supports through streamlined approach (measure: pre/post knowledge of youth-serving service providers of resources and referral pathways, number of warm referrals from primary agency that match the needs identified by the youth)</p>
<p>Increased collaboration among agencies which may include new partnerships, tighter coordination of programs and services as youth age and needs change</p>	<p>Outcome: New partnerships and collaborations which improve youth experience at key transition points</p> <p>Increase in new and/or innovative collaborations between agencies with complementary mandates (measure: number of agencies reporting new and/or innovative collaboration)</p> <p>Increased coordination between services for transition age youth (measure: level of effective coordination)</p> <p>Sustainable model for ongoing collaboration between agencies developed (measure: sustainable model developed)</p>

### Goal 3: Systems Approach

Through consultation with service providers and youth, it became clear that comprehensive connections to build and sustain infrastructure for wraparound support for youth are needed. This collaborative approach must allow for the seamless movement of youth between and through the continuum of programs and services focused on prevention, intervention, diversion, and reintegration.

Improved service coordination and facilitated pathways will provide increased ability for youth and families to navigate to appropriate programs and services as they need. It also provides an opportunity for community partners with expertise in varying aspects of youth programming to work together more consistently and with shared goals.

The following initiatives will support system coordination and integration and provide backbone support for the Building Safer Communities initiatives.

#### Hamilton Multi-Sectoral Youth-Centered System Table:

To facilitate system coordination and service integration a City-wide youth-centered table will be supported over the life of the funding timeline. This will be driven by a planning table that will include organizations that have received Building Safer Communities Funding and other key agencies and community leaders. In its first quarter, the

table will set clear goals around systems-wide collaboration in relation to minimizing youth involvement in guns and gang activity and report on the progress of those goals each year. At the end of the funding, it will produce a report outlining what the group achieved and will be prepared to implement a sustainability plan to continue working from a collaborative model.

### **Situation Table:**

A Situation Table will be implemented in partnership with key public safety, health, education, child welfare, and social service sectors in Hamilton that will connect individuals/families facing situations of acutely elevated risk to the services they need, immediately, before they experience a negative or traumatic event. The situation table will contribute to providing wraparound support to youth who are in imminent risk of crisis and or victimization.

These two tables will be coordinated by a full-time Senior Project Manager situated in the City of Hamilton's Healthy & Safe Communities Department and through dedicated funding to support special projects related to system coordination over the term of the funding.

### **Equitable Funding Distribution:**

In addition to the above tables, the City of Hamilton will administer the Building Safer Communities Funding; key decisions will be driven

by community partners representative of the priority populations. A call for community grant reviewers (with no conflicts of interest) will be held early in the process. The grant review team will review and score applications to provide programs/services for Initiative #1 and Initiative #2 in this submission based on a transparent criterion.

This funding distribution will be coordinated by a part-time Business Support Analyst situated in the City of Hamilton's Healthy & Safe Communities Department.

### **Consistency in Trauma-Informed Care and Anti-Racist Approach:**

To qualify for funding, organizations will be expected to articulate their approach to trauma-informed care and anti-racist, decolonized approach to service provision. To support this, the City of Hamilton will coordinate training and competency development to strengthen organizational capacity across the youth-serving system. Subject matter experts will work with organizations in articulating and embedding these principles in programs and services. Through the above tables, agencies will have a chance to collaborate and develop best practices around trauma-informed care and anti-racist approach to ensure consistency across programs.

**Goal 3: Increase system coordination to enhance existing collaboration and create system pathways among organizations that support youth to develop protective factors related to involvement in guns and gangs.**

To measure this goal, we recommend the following outcomes and measures:

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
<p>Develop a better understanding of systems pathways, increase collaboration and dismantle silos and increase coordination to provide wraparound services and drive collaboration across youth-serving organizations</p>	<p>Outcome: Systems-table is establish to enhance collaboration and reduce silos-</p> <p>Increased awareness knowledge of system pathways by parents/ caregivers and enhanced coordination (measure: pre/post feedback from agencies)</p> <p>Increase in new and/or innovative collaborations between agencies with complementary mandates (measure: number of agencies reporting new and/or innovative collaboration)</p> <p>Robust systems-mapping to identify gaps and develop plan to close those gaps (measure: robust system map completed)</p>
<p>Mobilize and share culturally-responsive practices; and,</p>	<p>Outcome: Embed an intersectional framework in program design/delivery.</p> <p>Provide ARAO/EDI training to all staff and volunteers. Offer coaching ARAO/EDI best practice as needed (measures: a) number of staff and volunteers, trained, b) diversity of youth utilizing programs/services, c) satisfaction level of agencies regarding guidance provided)</p> <p>Programs and services provided in languages other than English as needed (measure: number of programs and services offered in language other than English when requested)</p> <p>Increased access to services/programs by Black and racialized youth and their families (measure: number of culturally relevant program offering by and for Black youth , number of participants, Increased access to programs for Indigenous youth lead by Indigenous community (measure: number of specific programs for Indigenous youth led by Indigenous community)</p>

OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME AND MEASURES
<p>Ensure that the distribution of funding is equitable, transparent, and informed by the community.</p>	<p>Outcome: Fair and transparent funding allocation</p> <p>Community-led panel that reflects Hamilton’s diverse lived experience (measure: community-led panel created with representation of priority population, ARAO/EDI training provided to all panel members)</p> <p>Decision-making community-led (measure: satisfaction regarding level of community input from representatives of the priority populations)</p> <p>Robust communication with community on process, call for applicants and clear decision-making criteria/matrix (measure: number of different approaches to share call for applicants, decision-making criteria/matrix approved by procurement specialists with EDI expertise)</p> <p>Feedback provided to all applicants on success and/or areas of improvement (measure: number of applicants who received feedback)</p>

## Governance Structure

A transparent process to distribute the funding led by community members is proposed. To do this, it is recommended that a volunteer committee of 5-7 community leaders using an intersectional lens is convened. All volunteers should have completed training in anti-racism, anti-oppression and trauma-informed approaches to be able to equitably assess funding applications.



The City of Hamilton would do an expression of interest for volunteers and ask a small group of 3-5 volunteers to review applications.

Successful candidates should represent the community of Hamilton including youth, racialized community members, Indigenous leaders and other stakeholders from health, education and employment sectors. This committee will meet to review applications and make decisions around funding.

## Acknowledgements

EMPOWER Strategy Group would like to express its gratitude to the many organizations that provided input during this consultation listed below as well as the leadership of the Advisory Committee.

We are also grateful to Children's and Community Services Division at the City of Hamilton for collaborating with us on this important work.

## Community Partners

### Community Engagement Leads:

Afro Canadian Caribbean Association

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton and Hamilton

Hamilton's Centre for Civic Inclusion

John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area

Liberty for Youth

Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg

The Hub

Wesley

YWCA

### Participating Organizations:

Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg

Big Sisters of Halton, Hamilton

City of Hamilton

Wesley Urban Ministries

John Howard Society

The HUB

Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion

Healthy Youth Network

YWCA

Afro Canadian Caribbean Association

Centre de Santé Communautaire

Hamilton Public Library

Youth Probation

Hamilton Police Services

All Nations Full Gospel Church

**Trauma Informed Lead:** Banyan Community Services

### BSC Advisory Committee:

Irene Hefferman, City of Hamilton

Lyndon George, Hamilton Legal Clinic

Manny Figuieredo, YMCA

Rayanne Banaga, Health and Wellness Consultant

Yasmeen Mirza, Muslim Association of Hamilton

## References

2021 CENSUS: POVERTY IN HAMILTON BY MAJOR AGE GROUPS (Hamilton Social Landscape Poverty and Social Assistance). (2022). Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. <https://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SPRC-Hamilton-Social-Landscape-Poverty-and-Social-Assistance-Oct-2022.pdf>

Government of Canada, S. C. (2022a, February 9). *Census Program Data Viewer*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/cpdv-vdpr/index-eng.cfm?statisticsProgramId=3902&activeIndicatorId=21140031&visualizationGeographyLevelId=2&focusGeographyId=2021A000011124>

Government of Canada, S. C. (2022b, July 13). *Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census—Canada*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&topic=9&dguid=2021A000011124>

Government of Canada, S. C. (2022c, August 17). *Mother tongue by geography, 2021 Census*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/language-langue/index-en.html>

Government of Canada, S. C. (2022d, September 21). *Indigenous identity by Registered or Treaty Indian status and residence by Indigenous geography: Canada, provinces and territories*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810026401>

Government of Canada, S. C. (2022e, September 21). *The Daily—Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>

Government of Canada, S. C. (2022f, November 30). *Labour force status by visible minority, immigrant status and period of immigration, highest level of education, age and gender: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810044601>

Hamilton Police Services. 2022 *Hate/Bias Statistical Report*. Prepared by Detective Fabiano Mendes. <https://pub-hpsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=2516>

# Appendix A: Terms of Reference –Building Safer Communities Advisory Panel

## Overview

In May 2022, the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada identified the City of Hamilton as an eligible recipient for funding through Public Safety Canada's Building Safety Communities Fund (BSCF). The BSCF is a funding stream of Public Safety Canada in support of community-based programs to prevent gun and gang violence by tackling its root causes. The total funding amount expected for Hamilton is almost \$4 million from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2026.

EMPOWER Strategy Group has been engaged to develop a workplan to be submitted by the end of March 2023. The work plan is to implement a community-led process to develop a comprehensive multi-year plan to reduce and prevent youth gun and gang violence through trauma-informed and healing-centered community engagement and through the building of strong community partnerships. This multi-year plan will be implemented from April 1, 2023, until March 31, 2026, with the remaining anticipated BSCF budget of \$3.5 million.

## Purpose/Mandate/Mission

- To oversee the development of the multi-year work plan for the BSC initiative.

## Responsibilities

- Attend two meetings (likely early February and early March 2023)
- Review draft plans and provide feedback either during the
- Ensure that appropriate stakeholders have been consulted and engaged.

## Members/Composition

The Advisory Panel will:

- Be comprised of 5-9 community representatives including youth
- Reflect the diversity of Hamilton as well as the multiplicity of stakeholders involved in reducing violence (education, health, legal etc).
- Represent the priority populations: Black youth, Indigenous youth, Immigrant youth, and young women.

## Inclusion Policy

To support equitable and accessible participation, members may re-

quest resources that may be required to participate and contribute effectively. Every effort will be made to fulfill these requests as budget and resources permit. Our work will be guided by the City of Hamilton's Equity and Inclusion policies.

**Remuneration**

Advisory Panel members shall serve without remuneration in money or time. Participation on this committee is without remuneration and is completely voluntary.

**Term of Membership**

Each volunteer member is committed to serving for the duration of the expressed timeframe (February to March 2023).



# EMPOWER

STRATEGY GROUP