

Report to Council



Date: June 13, 2022
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Youth Services Framework
Department: Active Living & Culture

Recommendation:

THAT council receives, for information, the report from Active Living & Culture, dated June 13, 2022, that provides an overview of the Youth Services Framework;

AND THAT Council endorse the 2022 action items as outlined in the report.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an overview of the Youth Services Framework and the action items for 2022 to increase youth resiliency.

Background:

In recent years, the City has been re-thinking how to support youth development in response to the transition away from the City-funded counselling services provided through Kelowna Youth and Family Services (KYFS). The original purpose of KYFS was to address "youth identified as at-risk of escalating involvement in the criminal justice system." The service delivery model, created in 1979, required an update to align with current municipal service levels and to address the changing needs of youth. Over the course of 2019 and 2020, the City supported the transition by contracting the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club to provide counselling services to youth and their families. Though the pandemic slowed the progress, the City has continuously gained a better understanding of how youth in our community, ages 12-24, can be supported through municipal services in the social sector, focusing on upstream initiatives to increase resiliency in youth.

The annual budget for KYFS was \$284,777. As part of the 2022 Preliminary Budget, \$73,200 was allocated to support the RCMP's role with the Child Advocacy Centre leaving approximately \$212,000 to be invested in other youth services. Future use of these funds will align with the original intent of the KYFS program: to support youth experiencing higher vulnerabilities.

Over the past year, the City worked with Urban Matters to develop a Youth Services Framework to gain a broader understanding of the Youth Serving System within Kelowna, the specific needs of local youth and scan other municipal practices showing promise of success. By investing in youth, the goal is to

increase resiliency, connectedness, and overall health of youth in our community, and consequently reduce vulnerabilities and barriers that impact the well-being of youth.

Between August and October of 2021, Urban Matters conducted research and engagement with five municipalities, four youth groups and 22 youth-serving organizations. It is recognized that this is merely a snapshot of the diverse youth, programs and services present in Kelowna; the framework provides an overview of the youth-serving landscape and the unique needs of young people in our community. It offers an understanding of what might be possible and where our immediate efforts may have the greatest impact while a deeper understanding of this complex issue is gained. This framework has been developed alongside the recently endorsed Community Safety Plan (CSP).

Discussion:

Overwhelmingly, it was reported that a collaborative and cohesive systems-approach would be well received within this community. There are many effective organizations that work in small pockets of youth development; however, there is no formal strategy to ensure that the collective and unique needs of youth are being addressed through access to healthy opportunities co-designed with youth.

It was also consistently reported that youth want and need to be part of the solution. Any future programs or services designed for youth need to directly involve youth in the early planning stages.

The unique and complex needs of youth have also been identified through the Community Safety Plan. Like the CSP, the Youth Services Framework focuses on upstream supports and preventative measures to improve the health and well-being of our community over the long-term. The Youth Services Framework's "Priority Actions" have been centered around the CSP's strategic recommendation to *Strengthen upstream prevention and early intervention to reduce risks, harm, crime, and victimization:*

Action 2.1 – Support and expand affordable and accessible prevention strategies for youth including recreation, peer-led programming, and job opportunities.
Action 2.2 – Support and expand family support services (e.g., through a community hub) to promote and strengthen healthy lifestyles and to enhance child and family development.
Action 2.3 – Expand affordable and accessible skills-based, extra-curricular activities for youth who are unable to manage a full day of school and during out of school hours/ times in the year (winter, spring, summer).
Action 2.4 – Build on Journey Home's (A Way Home Kelowna's Upstream Program – 'AWHK') early intervention and prevention approach to identify and connect at-risk youth to integrated, wrap-around supports and services with the goal of reducing school disengagement, preventing homelessness, and connecting youth requiring mental health supports.

The immediate priorities from the Youth Framework will contribute to these action items from the CSP, all of which the City of Kelowna has been identified as a Lead or Partner organization in moving the action forward.

In addition to the Community Safety Plan, creating safe, supportive, and inclusive environments for youth has also been identified as a priority in the Journey Home Strategy which points out that "there is a distinct need in our community to provide recreational and skill-building opportunities for youth to foster a sense of belonging and connection to the community." The Youth Services Framework also aligns with the following action item from the Journey Home Strategy:

Work with Community partners and youth to co-design and create healthy opportunities for youth focused on building natural supports, enhancing, and increasing access to healthy opportunities and peer initiatives, and is underpinned by the Social Determinants of Health.

The Youth Services Framework identifies several promising practices and potential initiatives of which three areas have been deemed as being the highest priority for implementation over the next two years.

1. Increase opportunities for programs and safe spaces for youth
 - a. Navigation support: Implement/establish a Youth Navigator role that provides direct navigation of services support to youth and connection among youth agencies. This role will further reduce barriers, connect youth to services and gain a better understanding of youth trends and challenges to inform program development
 - b. Develop low-commitment programs: Establish low-barrier, drop-in and “pop-up” programs and workshops that promote connection, engagement, fun and healthy choices for youth
 - c. Staff training and skill building: Develop youth engagement training and resources for City staff to guide planning and development of youth services and programs – with an emphasis on supporting youth in cultivating leadership skills and remaining engaged in the community
2. Strengthen the youth serving system through community collaboration
 - a. Convene a Youth Serving Organization Network: Establish, support and facilitate an ongoing working group focused on responding to the unique needs of youth, trends in services, and enhancement of assets and healthy opportunities for youth in the community. Convene community stakeholders to develop a systems approach to youth services (every door is the right door)
 - b. Build capacity within local organizations and initiatives: Review and enhance existing grant programs and additional resources to support youth-led initiatives and/or service agreements with youth serving organizations enhancing their capacity to support youth
3. Engaging, enabling, and supporting youth development
 - a. Youth Strategy: Work with youth and the community to develop a comprehensive Youth Strategy that supports collaboration and coordination of upstream/mid-stream/downstream responses. A community vision for youth, indicators for monitoring the status of youth and a detailed action plan should be considered for inclusion in the Youth Strategy
 - b. Build community connection and resiliency: Maintain existing and foster new opportunities in life skills training that are co-created with youth. Develop strategies to engage youth in programming through leadership in facilitating, decision-making and peer mentorship, and utilizing opportunities to build capacity, resiliency, and connection to community.

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

While the needs of youth are complex, the City is in a position to implement some action items that will have immediate and long-term impacts. Working within the existing budget for youth services (formerly Kelowna Youth & Family Services), there is approximately \$212,000 in annual funding available. The budget is intended to be allocated as follows:

Action Item	Description	Cost
Youth Navigator	Staff resources dedicated to connecting youth to services and informing youth-centered programs	\$100,000
Youth program development	Low-barrier youth-centered programs offered throughout the city	\$32,000
Convene Youth Serving Organization Network	Working group established to respond to the needs of youth in a collective way	\$5,000
Youth Strategy development and implementation	Build on the framework to create a Kelowna-specific vision for youth, indicators for monitoring the status of youth and a detailed action plan to build resiliency in youth. Improve capacity of staff and the broader community to respond to the complex needs of youth	\$75,000
Total		\$212,000

Additional budget considerations may be brought forward in future years to address other priority areas identified in the Youth Services Framework and through subsequent youth engagement and strategic planning.

Conclusion:

This work will help to build the foundation to connect community members, stakeholders, service-providers, and youth. It enables the City to take immediate action and implement direct programming while simultaneously building capacity within the sector to support long-term progress.

Internal Circulation:

- Active Living & Culture
- Community Communications
- Community Safety
- Financial Services

Considerations applicable to this report:

Considerations not applicable to this report:

- Legal/Statutory Authority:*
- Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:*
- Existing Policy:*
- Financial/Budgetary Considerations:*
- External Agency/Public Comments:*
- Communications Comments:*

Submitted by: M. Siggers, Community & Neighbourhood Services Manager

Approved for inclusion: J. Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture

Attachments: Presentation - Youth Services Framework
Kelowna Youth Services Framework Report

cc: Active Living & Culture
Financial Services
Corporate Strategic Services