

Community Investment Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The Community Investment Strategy directly contributes to advancing Regional human services goals and priorities. Investments will be targeted to community-based programs and services that complement and enhance the Community and Health Services Department's core services.

The Regional Municipality of York recognizes community investments are an essential means of achieving its economic and social strategic goals. The Region is committed to strengthening community capacity and social infrastructure to improve communities' ability to identify and respond to residents' needs and changes. Moreover, the Region recognizes the Region's investments enable community agencies to leverage funding from other community funding resources.

1.1 Principles

Community investments will be guided by the following core principles:

Accountability

The Region will make information about its funding activities available to the public and will work with agencies so that Regional funding is used for the purposes for which it is provided.

Transparency

The Region will make information about the criteria and process for evaluation; and the results publicly available.

Responsiveness

The Region will consult with stakeholders in the ongoing review of community needs and ensure that its investments are able to respond to new and emerging needs.

1.2 Goals

The goals of the York Region Community Investment Strategy are to:

- Invest in community services that address human service priorities as outlined in Regional strategies
- Strengthen the capacity of York Region human services system
- Promote innovative and collaborative programs and delivery models

2. SCOPE:

This Strategy applies to all community investments coordinated through the Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch.

3. PURPOSE:

This Strategy is an integral part of investing resources in community-based sector in an accountable, consistent and effective manner to address the diverse needs of low and moderate income residents and gaps in services in York Region.

Investments will support a variety of projects to support low and moderate income residents through prevention and direct service delivery.

4. APPROACH:

The York Region Community Investment Strategy provides a framework to outline the funding process based on established principles and alignment with Regional strategic priorities and goals.

This Strategy will take a community-development approach by providing education and development opportunities for community organizations to effectively plan and deliver services that will strengthen agency capacity.

4.1 Investment Streams

Investments are to be made under three funding streams: Community-based Services, Innovation and Collaboration , and Organizational Development..

Community-based Services Stream

The Community-based Services Stream invests in community-based social service programs/services that directly address human service gaps in York Region and align with Regional investment priorities.

Innovation and Collaboration Stream

The Innovation and Collaboration stream invests in new innovative, multi-sectoral partnerships and collective actions to address increasingly complex and interrelated human service needs of York Region. This stream is to support initiatives that present multi-faceted solutions through new, evolving and non-traditional models for working together and/or delivering social services.

Organizational Development Stream

The Organizational Development Stream provides supports to develop and strengthen organizational capacity of social service agencies in the human services sector.

4.2 Investment Priorities

A Results Based Accountability Framework has been adopted to guide community investment to effect positive change in the community.

The Community Investment Strategy is targeted towards improving the lives of low and moderate income residents living in York Region. As needed, priority may be given to those who face multiple or unique challenges (e.g., newcomers, youth, seniors). This may also include instances where targeting specific demographic, social or community characteristic (e.g. geographic, age, ethnic) for investment would best meet a service need.

Human services issues are interconnected and work together in a complex relationship; the Strategy recognizes and addresses these through a set of four comprehensive and integrated Community Investment Results. These Results contribute to residents being able to grow, live, work and age successfully.

- 1. Economic Independence:** Low and moderate income residents have and keep jobs that match their skills and have financial stability.
- 2. Social Inclusion:** Low and moderate income residents are connected and can engage in communities.
- 3. Housing Stability:** Low and moderate income residents can live in affordable, adequate and suitable housing.
- 4. Community Health:** Low and moderate income residents are healthy and able to make healthy choices.

The progress on advancing the Community Investment Results will be measured through an appropriate set of indicators. These indicators will be developed to help quantify the achievement of the Results.

As identified in 5.3(a), for each funding cycle, the Region will identify a set criteria for actions under each Result that improve and contribute to that Result. As illustrated in 5.3(e), performance measures will be developed and monitored to measure how well these actions/programs/services are working in the community. The Region will work with the community to track progress toward these Results.

4.3 Call for Proposals Process

The Region will hold an annual call for proposals process to receive project proposals for community-based, not-for-profit agencies. The call for proposals will include a two-stage process to enable a community development approach. Projects will be required to demonstrate how they fit with the Community Investment Results and Action Areas.

4.4 Investment Term

The investments under each stream may be allocated through either a single- or multi-year period. Investment periods will be based on available funds and the scope of each successful proposal. Projects receiving three consecutive years of funding will undergo

a program review to determine ongoing need in the community for the program and how that need can be best addressed.

5. IMPLEMENTATION:

Procedures and tools will be developed including policies and guidelines to support the implementation of the Strategy.

5.1 Administrative Structure

The administrative structure developed under this Strategy will support the implementation of the Community Investment Strategy. A Community Investment Committee, comprising of representatives from Community and Health Services Department, will inform the on-going development and implementation of the Region's community investments.

5.2 General Administration Policies

a) Funding for the Strategy will be integrated into the Community and Health Services Department's annual Business Plan and Budget cycle. New funding opportunities that arise outside of the Business Plan and Budget timeframe will be brought to Council for approval.

b) For the Community Investment Strategy, The Regional Municipality of York will:

- Provide staff resources for administering a call for proposals including advising and guiding organizations in developing applications prior to the deadline
- Review and evaluate proposals
- Develop and negotiate funding agreements with recipient organizations outlining the agreed upon deliverables and the terms and conditions needed to meet the funding requirements
- Develop processes to monitor the recipient organizations' progress towards achieving the results and performance measures stated in the funding agreement
- Develop and manage the funding review process in an accountable and fair manner
- Make all funding decisions public

c) General Criteria

Accountability

Organizations must demonstrate they are accountable through meeting the following criteria:

- Must provide services to low and moderate income residents
- Have a mandate that benefits York Region residents

- Demonstrate the need for the service as it relates to the Departmental strategies and Community Investment Results
- Be incorporated as a non-profit organization or a registered as a charity for the purposes of the Income Tax Act (Canada)
- Be governed by a volunteer board of directors/volunteer committees reflective of the community it serves, democratically elected, active, with a minimum of three members not related by blood or marriage
- Have established and documented financial management systems in place and provide annual audited financial statements or a review engagement report
- Have evidence of insurance coverage acceptable to the Region

Transparency

Organizations must demonstrate they are transparent to the communities they serve through the following criteria:

- Comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code in hiring practices and in the provision of all services
- Comply with relevant federal, provincial and municipal laws including Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Demonstrate financial need that the agency does not otherwise have the resources necessary to undertake the activity for which funds are sought
- Evidence of good standing with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in the form of a valid WSIB clearance certificate
- Appropriately acknowledge The Regional Municipality of York as a funder.
- Be in good standing with The Regional Municipality of York
- Have an ongoing internal evaluation process in place that seeks out and uses client feedback

Responsiveness

Organizations must demonstrate they are responsive to the community they serve by meeting the following criteria:

- The activity for which funds are sought must contribute to one of the Community Investment Results
- Use demographics, research and other information to inform program/service planning and delivery
- Services must not duplicate existing services unless it can be demonstrated such duplication is warranted and appropriate
- Normally operate within the boundaries of York Region and provide services to residents of York Region

- Recognize the multicultural community perspective of York Region and respect the diversity of needs of the communities served
- Build on existing community strengths such as volunteers and have partnering relationships with other community service providers in York Region

d) Ineligible organizations

The Community Investment Program will not fund any of the following types of organizations:

- Those with mandates and activities covered under provincial or federal legislations/mandates including daycares, hospitals and schools
- Those where the service component is conditional upon participation in the religious activities of the organization
- Those which have political affiliations
- Those with primary athletic-based, environmental-based, educational-based, arts and culture based mandates
- For-profit organizations
- Those that duplicate service in the same geographical area
- Those acting in the capacity of a funding body, fundraising drives or events

e) Ineligible activities/costs

Proposals will not be considered for the following:

- Programs/agencies that do not specifically target low and moderate income York Region residents
- Purchase of property
- Religious or political activities or proselytizing
- Event sponsorships or fundraising
- Debt retirement, depreciation or deficit funding
- Programs more appropriate for consideration under other York Region policies and programs
- Programs where the federal and/or provincial government have the primary responsibility. Examples include settlement and English-language programs funded by the federal government
- Proposals made exclusively by government or government based organizations
- Projects at the national or provincial level unless a York Region based branch exists and a direct local benefit can be demonstrated
- Overhead administrative costs (e.g., rent, utilities) accrued above and beyond a set limit by the Region
- Agencies or organizations acting in the capacity of a funding body, fundraising drives or events.

- Programs that duplicate service in the same geographical area.

5.3 Administration Guidelines

Administration processes and tools will be developed to direct the implementation of the Community Investment Strategy focusing on the components listed below. Each of the components identified below will be undertaken during each funding cycle for due diligence. The administrative procedures developed under these components will guide the delivery of a Community Investment Program in an accountable, transparent and responsive manner.

a) Criteria setting

To determine specific criteria for action/programs/services under the four Community Investment Results to guide allocations and decision-making. This will be done in consultation with the Branches of Community and Health Services to maximize impact in advancing the Community Investment Results.

The development of specific criteria will utilize:

- Criteria suggested, recommended or required by another funding source
- Criteria required to address targeting specific demographic, existing agencies, services and geographic area
- Other requirements as deemed appropriate to the initiative, e.g. service integration, barrier elimination, capacity building and service equalization

b) Community Outreach

To provide information about the investment program to potential applicants and other stakeholders through the development of a targeted communication strategy.

c) Application review and Allocation Approval

To have in place appropriate mechanisms to receive and review proposals and ensure that the basis for recommendations and assessment decisions of each proposal are well documented. To ensure fairness and transparency in decision-making and allocations, details of investment allocations will be provided to Council. Where appropriate, all multi-year service contracts will be reviewed and re-approved annually.

The Region's decisions on funding are final; and there is no appeal process.

d) Contracting and Monitoring

To maintain a consistent process in contracting with organizations through standardized requirements with respect to deliverables and performance. The performance measures will be keeping with the Results Based Accountability framework and will focus on measuring:

- How much did the funded programs do?
- How well did the funded programs do?
- Is anyone better off through the funded programs?

Monitoring results of investments is essential to ensuring such programs are achieving their objectives, particularly respecting the terms and conditions set out in the contracts.

e) Evaluation and Reporting

To assess the quality and impact of the community investments and identify opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Community Investment Program delivery process.

An annual activity report will be presented to Council on the yearly allocations and performance of community investments.