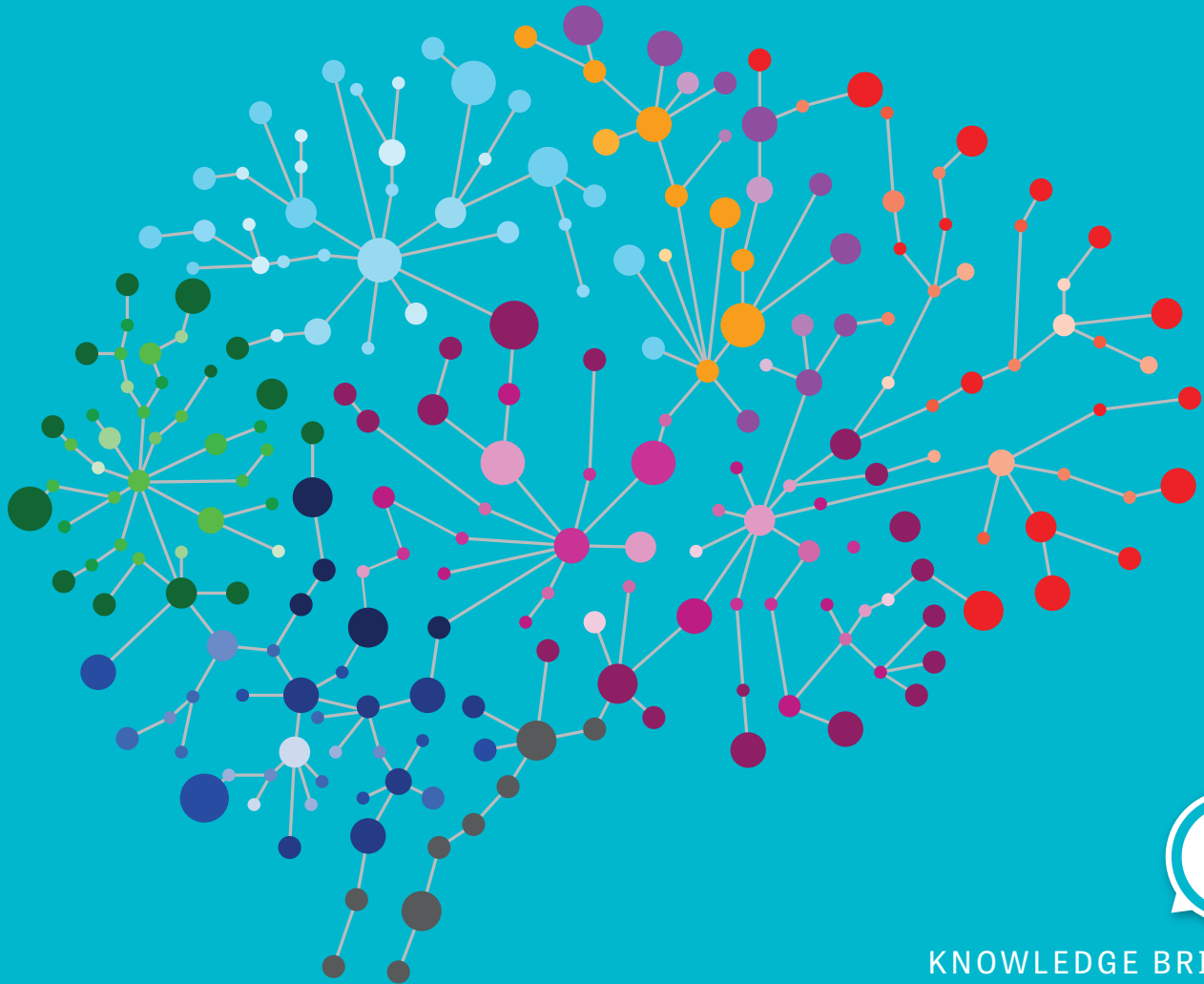


# Summary of Findings and Recommendations



KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

## SMART ON CRIME

2015-2018  
EVALUATION

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# Introduction & Objectives

Between September 2016 and April 2019, a team at the Centre for Community Research Learning and Action (CCRLA) at Wilfrid Laurier University conducted a multiphase participatory developmental evaluation of the *Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council's (WRCPC) 2015-2018 Smart on Crime Community Plan: Making the Connection between Community Safety and Community Vitality in Waterloo Region*. This is the final of five knowledge briefs (KB) featuring **key findings** and **recommendations**. Background information regarding the evaluation and the theory of change is provided in KB I and three most significant change stories, each featuring one of the WRCPC's main functions (backbone support, knowledge exchange, and community engagement), can be found in KBs II-IV.

The evaluation used a sequential mixed-method case study design

consisting of two parts: a survey with WRCPC staff and Council members, Friends of Crime Prevention, as well as other system stakeholders and community members followed by a qualitative study using the Most Significant Change Technique (MSCT).

The objectives of this evaluation were to better understand the role WRCPC plays as a centre of responsibility for crime prevention and community safety as well as to clarify the value of this role by identifying outcomes and impacts of WRCPC's work. Furthermore, the intention was that this evaluation could help with identifying opportunities to optimize WRCPC's role and provide some insights for its future directions. The first two sections of this brief (i.e., WRCPC's role and value) address the first two evaluation objectives while the observations and recommendations sections speak to the latter two.

“

***“It’s interesting since that meeting, people reference – people who would not have been familiar are referencing that Iceland model and things that they learned [...] It brought into the conversation this concept of: well you have to look at very upstream prevention. And so, I think that’s not the usual topic people were talking about when they talk about trying to find solutions to issues. So, I think one of the contributions that the CPC makes is bringing that awareness of, importance of focusing on the upstream. Which is very difficult to do.”***

”





# Summary of Key Findings

The results from the evaluation provide evidence that WRCPC plays a unique and central role within Waterloo region. An increasing number of sectors are starting to realize the importance of backbone organizations, which have the ability and trust to bring together diverse stakeholders to collaboratively and sustainably address complex social issues, such as poverty, environmental degradation, and crime. In multiple ways, the evaluation revealed that WRCPC fulfills exactly that role for crime prevention and has done so for multiple decades. The findings also highlighted the importance of WRCPC's unique position in the community – being arms-length from the Regional government, not being responsible for a specific single sector, and being relatively independent of various funders. This was considered important because it provides a safe space to i) have the kind of honest conversations that are necessary to find creative solutions to complex issues and ii) develop a shared vision and message among sectors, system decision-makers and the broader community.

“

***“Crime Prevention Council is in a really interesting spot because it’s arms-length from the Region or from funders. Messages could be delivered through Crime Prevention that you might not necessarily be able to [deliver through other processes ...] – it’s such a different structure.”***

”

Overall, the evaluation confirmed the key functions of WRCPC as being backbone support, knowledge exchange and community engagement. The findings also illustrated different ways these functions create impact in the community (see subsequent sections and KBs II – IV for more details). A major theme that emerged depicted a **clear focus on upstream approaches** – this was evident in the Council discussions, in the work of different constellations (i.e., working groups; see KB I), and in the work and communications of WRCPC staff. The focus on upstream approaches particularly referred to taking a long-term and broad (or ecosystem) perspective and approach to issues related to community safety and wellbeing.

# WRCPC's Role as Centre of Responsibility

WRCPC's role within the community can best be described along its three key functions: **backbone support, knowledge exchange, and community engagement**. The following table summarizes the main themes regarding WRCPC's role under each of these functions.

## *Main Themes Regarding WRCPC's Role*

<b>Backbone Support</b>	<b>Knowledge Exchange</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>
Guiding vision and strategy	Knowledge generation & synthesis	Building and sustaining relationships with and between community members
Building public will	Dissemination of knowledge	Identification of resources and community capacity
Mobilizing funding and other resources	Reciprocal production and sharing of knowledge	Reaching and involving people where they are at
Advocacy and policy development	Application of knowledge	Realizing change opportunities

# Backbone Support

WRCPC staff and Council members provide backbone support for a range of activities related to crime prevention and community wellbeing more broadly. This backbone support is not one-dimensional, but takes on many different forms. A key element of WRCPC's backbone function involves **guiding a common vision and strategy** on prevention, with a focus on shifting the momentum towards upstream approaches to crime prevention and community safety. WRCPC further supports the shift towards upstream by **building public will** for these approaches, by **mobilizing resources** (including funding), and by engaging in **advocacy and policy development**.

In guiding a common vision and strategy, WRCPC focuses on creating a common understanding of a problem and providing strategic guidance towards solutions. This vision is specifically focused on 'upstream thinking' in the context of prevention. As upstream approaches to crime prevention and community safety are

currently not the predominant form of practice, the aim is to re-orient resources and efforts towards upstream work (while at the same time balancing the need to respond to pressing issues and crises in the community; see KB II for an example).

First, the common vision is established around the Council table, among members of Council and the staff.

Each Council member also represents

a specific sector (e.g., education) and shares the common vision and strategy within their sector. Among the Council survey sample, a majority (82%) indicated a shared understanding of

the main goals and direction of WRCPC among members. In addition, **89% of Council survey respondents and 83% of community survey respondents agreed that their work within their sector/in the community aligned with WRCPC's goals and direction**. This work towards a shared vision often focuses on less tangible changes such as shifts in language or in the familiarity with the concepts of upstream approaches to crime prevention and community safety.

***Almost all (96%) of the Council members who responded to the survey and 87% of the community survey respondents felt that WRCPC addresses issues relevant to the local community.***

“

***I really think that we could credit Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council [for] bringing this idea across the ocean to our little community [...] That's a good story. I think it's a start of something. It's the start of a conversation. It's the potential for these ideas to get rolling.***

”

The Council recognizes that a common vision and strategy require community support. Thus, an important role fulfilled by WRCPC is to build public will, consensus and commitment to engage in upstream approaches to crime prevention and community safety. Building public will can be challenging, especially when the topic is contentious, information is limited or there are widespread misconceptions. Thus, much of the work is related to creating a space for public conversations (e.g., Porch Chats) and a call to action. This is partly facilitated by WRCPC's focus on creating accessible messaging that can resonate with the public. The success of this work

can be seen in the international reach of some of WRCPC's campaigns (e.g., THINK), which have been taken up in other countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico.

Further support for upstream prevention initiatives is provided through the mobilization of funding and other resources (e.g., important connections to existing programs and initiatives). WRCPC staff members play a critical role in supporting various projects spearheaded by the Council and other community stakeholders. Staff members also provide much needed administrative support and other resources, such as meeting space for newly formed committees. In addition, WRCPC supports community initiatives through the provision or mobilization of funding (e.g., by obtaining grants from various sources). One other key form of support relates to WRCPC leveraging its extensive relationships and partnerships into in-kind resources.

Through its work, WRCPC advocates for an aligned policy agenda that recognizes the roots of crime and emphasizes upstream approaches to crime prevention and community safety. **Most (85%) of the Council members who responded to the survey and 74% of the community survey respondents reported that they advocate for changes in the**

**community that are aligned with WRPC's goals.** WRPC's advocacy work usually does not happen in isolation, but rather is aligned with other backbone activities, as one participant pointed out within the context of a program working with youth furthest from opportunities (see adjacent quote). There are also instances, however, in which WRPC takes on policy advocacy work due to a gap in existing policy, as in the case of the opioid response plan (see KB II).

“

***And, Crime Prevention was the backbone to it; they led it, some of the trainings for [...] our outreach workers [...] They did all administrative backbone. So that's a reward. But they also did the advocating to government.***

”



# Knowledge Exchange

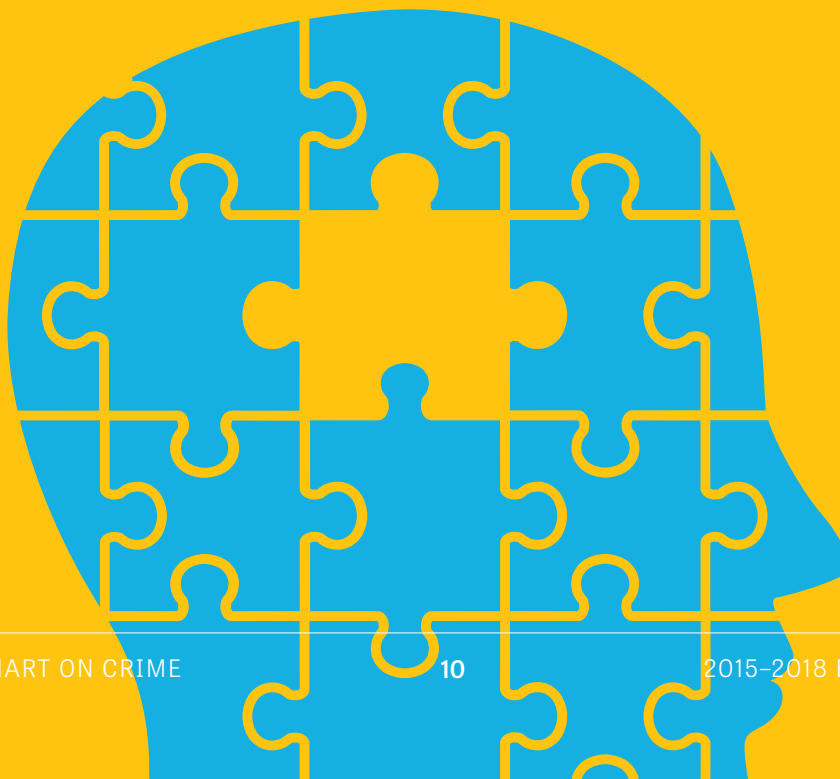
WRCPC engages in a wide range of knowledge mobilization activities. This includes **generating and synthesizing a well-developed knowledge base** on key issues related to crime prevention and community safety. Within the context of the opioid crisis, for example, one WRCPC staff member became the go-to knowledge source in the community and beyond (see KB II). More recently, WRCPC carried out a knowledge development project involving a deep dive on upstream approaches to community wellbeing.

With respect to **dissemination**, WRCPC strives to share the knowledge widely as well as actively reach out and make information available to community members. This work happens through community events such as Porch Chats, various outreach events, and media channels. WRCPC also engages in a more

focused dissemination aimed at decision-makers and practitioners in order to share with them knowledge often related to specific projects or models (such as promising and evidence-based practices).

**Among the Council members who responded to the survey, 93% indicated they had made use of the knowledge shared through WRCPC in their work. In addition, 96% reported that the knowledge shared through WRCPC has informed their views and perspectives on community safety and crime prevention.**

In all forms of knowledge mobilization, there is acknowledgement that the process is **reciprocal** in nature. More specifically, sharing of knowledge is seen as a two-way interaction where all those involved can learn something from each other. There is recognition that lived experiences can be a valuable complement to empirically validated research studies when informing





“

***Another example is researching, and then coming up with a bit of – an infographic – around what some of the effects of domestic violence are, specifically related to health. That piece of work has been used locally, but it’s also being given a wider recognition.***

”

crime prevention and community safety approaches. Along those lines, **92% of the Council survey sample expressed that, in its planning and decision-making, WRCPC takes into consideration diverse perspectives represented in the community.**

WRCPC has shown to be quite intentional in using community knowledge to influence specific **practical applications**. For example, in the context of a youth engagement project, community knowledge was gathered during mobilization phases. This knowledge was then shared by WRCPC with key stakeholders and used to inform the development of the program. In another instance, knowledge generated by WRCPC served to develop an anti-bullying campaign for schools. Often, these applications can go beyond the initially intended targets and find widespread resonance (see KB III).



# Community Engagement

WRCPC actively promotes community engagement across various areas of crime prevention (e.g., working with women in prison and youth furthest away from opportunities as well as facilitating development of a comprehensive community drug strategy). WRCPC's community engagement efforts involve **building and sustaining relationships**

**with and between community members, identifying resources and community capacity, reaching people where they are at, and realizing opportunities for change.**

WRCPC aims to build a strong sense of community involvement in all of its work. Doing 'with' rather than 'to' or 'for' community is a hallmark of the work. For WRCPC, community engagement does not start and stop with those community members already involved.





Rather, WRCPC's relationship building is deliberate in reaching individuals and groups at a distance from opportunities and who are usually left out of community activities. Building on people's assets and existing resources in the community, even among those who are generally perceived as having little to offer, gives people a chance to contribute positively to their community. Community members have a lot to contribute to change efforts towards a 'smart on crime' community and WRCPC recognizes, leverages, and fosters these community resources and assets in its work. **Among the community survey respondents, 74% expressed that the community organizing efforts undertaken by WRCPC make good use of existing capacity in the community.**

“

***“This campaign gives incarcerated women an opportunity to contribute positively to their community and gives the community an opportunity to think differently about women in prison. Together building safer, stronger more caring communities.”***

”

WRCPC's community engagement efforts are also focused on building capacity in the community to continue the work that was started and to address emerging issues.

WRCPC relies on their sector representatives, working groups and their relationships with community members to gain awareness of change opportunities. Within crime prevention work, it is important to be able to react to these opportunities to maximize their impact. While crime prevention work is grounded in a long-term perspective of change, employing a flexible approach also seems to be critical. Shifts in community or government as well as other unforeseen events such as the opioid crisis change opportunities for engagement. Finding a balance between advancing the long-term plans focused on upstream approaches and responding to emerging opportunities for engagement in the community can be quite challenging, especially with very limited staff capacity. Within the survey, a majority (79%) of Council members, however, felt that the WRCPC strikes a good balance between upstream prevention and downstream interventions.

“

***“The impact on Council and the impact on staff of the opioid crisis was unforeseen and unsustainable. We had an opportunity to say yes or no, we're not gonna get involved. And we took the more difficult road; it was a difficult road because of the lack of capacity.”***

”

# Value of WRCPC's Role to the Community and Key Stakeholders

As discussed in Knowledge Brief I, it is not feasible to establish a causal link between activities of the WRCPC and a specific impact within the community, given the nature of WRCPC's role and approach. Many factors must come together to create measurable change and, as a backbone organization, WRCPC mainly plays a facilitating role as the catalyst and enabler of change processes. Thus, it is better to investigate the **contributions** WRCPC is making to crime prevention and community safety in Waterloo region. This is how the Council and the staff are creating an impact in the community.

The evaluation participants described the impact of WRCPC's contributions across multiple levels. **At the individual level**, participants described changes in attitudes and perspectives; increased knowledge, awareness, and engagement; reduced fear; and feelings of inclusion and mattering. **At the relationship level**, participants observed increased mutual understanding, more positive interactions with others, as well as greater extent of relationships with other community members. Eighty-five percent of the

Council survey respondents agreed that their involvement with WRCPC allowed them to build valuable relationships. **Within the Council**, participants reported high levels of trust and safety as well as a shift toward thinking about upstream solutions. The Council was also said to provide important conditions for finding collaborative solutions to complex social issues. **At the community level**, Council and community members described stronger community connections, improved public awareness and understanding of key issues, greater inclusion of marginalized communities, and overall increased community engagement. Almost a third (74%) of the Council survey respondents agreed that the impact of WRCPC is evident in the community. **At the systems level**, there is increased collaboration among different sectors, greater number of connections between system decision-makers and the community, as well as a different approach to crime prevention, characterized by greater focus on upstream solutions and looking at prevention as social development. While there are some changes within sectors as well, the impact

there has been less clear than in other areas. Only about half (56%) of the participating Council members reported that the impact of WRCPC was evident in their sector (although, as noted above, most of them agreed that their work within their sector aligned with WRCPC’s goals and direction). Finally, the work

of the WRCPC appears to have had a significant ripple effect that extended its impact not only to a **national level** (e.g., through their involvement and leadership with the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention) but also to an **international level**, including work with UN-Habitat.

WRCPC’s value and contributions in the community can also be expressed in relation to its three key functions as summarized in the following table.

***Main Themes Regarding WRCPC’s Value to and Contributions in the Community***

<b>Backbone Support</b>	<b>Knowledge Exchange</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>
Relationship-building with sector stakeholders	Advancing understanding of roots of crime and upstream approaches	Raising awareness; Reducing stigma and fear
Fostering shared responsibility among sectors	Promoting use of CPCSD/upstream approaches	Inclusion of all community members
Catalyst for collaboration	Sharing/exchange of knowledge between community and systems	Leveraging community assets and perspectives
Alignment of system level actions		Building and streamlining community capacity in order to foster a social movement

## Backbone Support

The backbone support activities help to **foster strong relationships and a shared responsibility** among sectors. WRCPC further serves as a **catalyst for collaboration and the alignment of system-level actions**.

WRCPC builds trust and creates a safe environment for sector representatives around the Council table. The work of WRCPC is rooted in building strong relationships among all the members. The resulting culture promotes honest and meaningful interaction.

“

***Members around Council feel empowered and feel like they have the ability to speak up [...] Members can feel safe to say what's respectful obviously, but what's useful, sometimes provocative or contentious.***

”

In addition, the relationships within the Council are further extended to other sector stakeholders to bring them into the fold and create new connections.

“

***We kept the conversation going until others were better positioned to be part of the conversation [...] – but there's more happening in our community now than there was three years ago [...] more people are involved than there were two years ago and I think that part of it is our ability to keep the conversation going.***

”

Common vision and strategy along with trusting relationships play a supportive role in fostering shared responsibility among sectors. Working towards shared responsibility happens partly around the Council table where the members develop a sense of we-ness - “we” the Council are working together on this. The Council's unique relationship to the core funder (Regional government) and other funders also seems to be an important factor in fostering shared responsibility. More specifically, the Council's **arms-length positioning** allows it to function as a somewhat independent and discreet entity in the community.

This independence helps to affirm the Council's identity and impart its members with a greater sense of buy-in, which, in turn, promotes shared responsibility. The Council also aims to develop shared responsibility beyond its members; in some instances, this happens intentionally through Council members reaching out and engaging other sector stakeholders in the community.

“

***And when you think the ability – just the different sectors in this room – the ability, the influence, thinking across systems, that's the exciting part-right?***

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WRCPC supports the development of collaborations across sectors in addressing the roots of crime. **Among the Council survey respondents, 85% agreed that their engagement with WRCPC has increased their involvement in collaborative work addressing crime prevention through community and social development.**

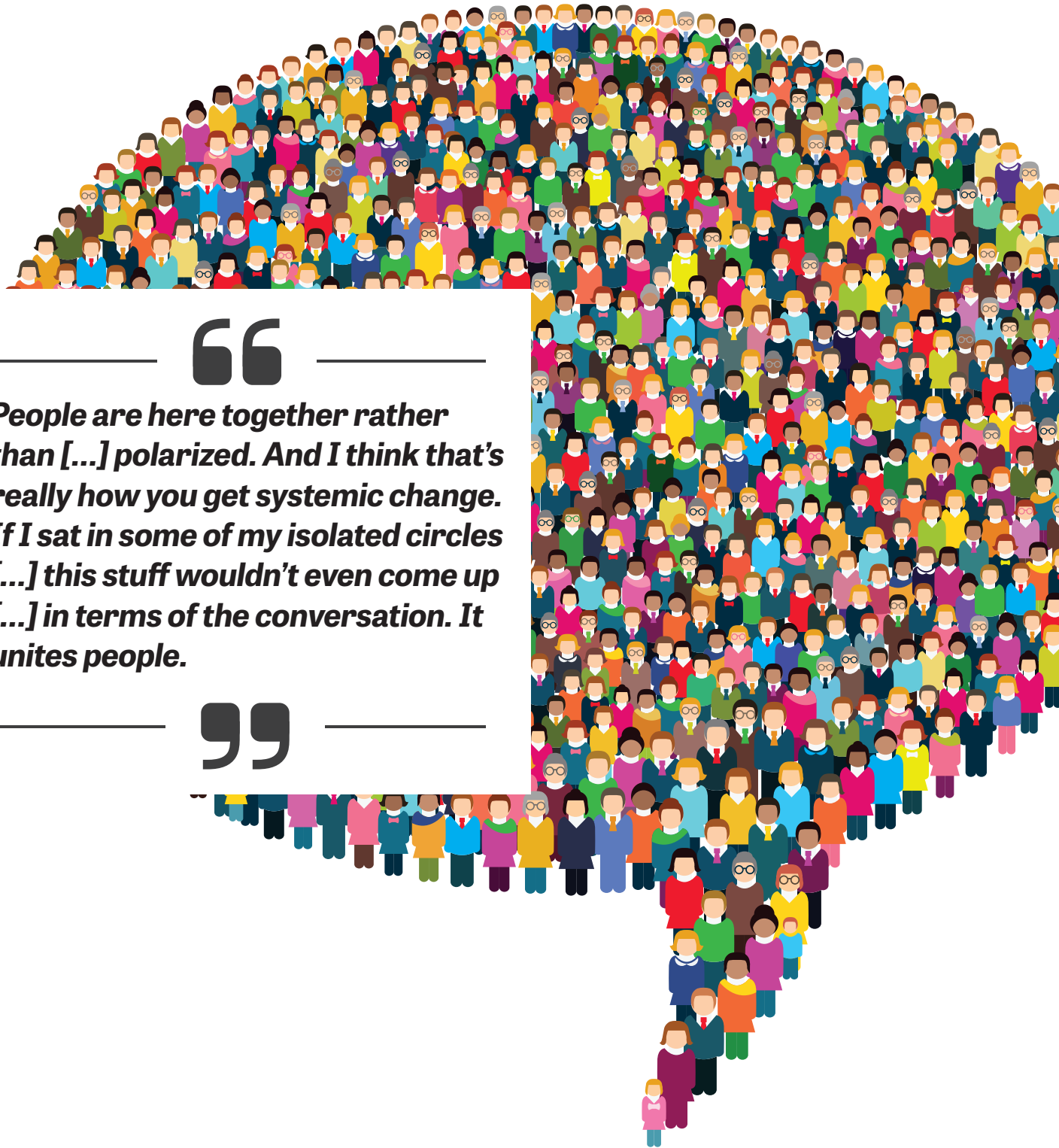
Fostering cross-sectoral collaboration sometimes happens through the development of working groups (constellations) that can take up the shared vision of WRCPC. To support collaborative work, WRCPC often leverages its connections and provides a platform to engage and bring together a diverse range of stakeholders. Ninety-six percent of Council members who responded to the survey expressed that WRCPC is well connected to the key community leaders. In addition, **78% of the Council survey respondents stated that because of WRCPC they collaborate with individuals and organizations from sectors with which they typically do not engage.**

WRCPC also serves as a catalyst by kick-starting prevention projects and helping other agencies, organizations or sectors to take ownership of these projects. While this **incubator role** is an expected aspect of backbone organizations, it also makes the

assessment of direct impact more difficult as the goal is to make prevention projects and initiatives gain independence from the WRCPC. One potential issue here is that when initiatives move from WRCPC into the community they may be faced with the challenge of finding and securing resources and funding. This is illustrative of the fact that sustainability of projects and funding can be a challenge when focusing on upstream work and shifting leadership into the community.

Operating from a sector representation model and establishing shared responsibility allows WRCPC to bring all sectors involved in prevention work together around **one** table. This format enables conversations and planning that can align system-level actions. Furthermore, these conversations do not end at the Council table. The common vision and strategy that is developed around the table permeates throughout the community through the sector representatives and through media outlets to the broader public.





“

***People are here together rather than [...] polarized. And I think that's really how you get systemic change. If I sat in some of my isolated circles [...] this stuff wouldn't even come up [...] in terms of the conversation. It unites people.***

”

# Knowledge Exchange

Notable contributions of WRPC's knowledge exchange activities include the following: **enhanced understanding of roots of crime and upstream approaches; promotion of crime prevention through community and social development (CPCSD) approaches among practitioners and decision-makers; and sharing of knowledge between community and systems.**

Through the mobilization of relevant knowledge on key issues related to crime prevention, WRPC advances the collective understanding of roots or crime and upstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing. Conversations and dialogue are a key avenue through which this understanding is reached. **Among survey respondents, most (89%) of the Council members and 78% of the community sample indicated that through their connection with WRPC they have an improved understanding of CPCSD including root causes of crime.** The shift in understanding is difficult to measure because it happens gradually and is often invisible. Shaping the overarching approach, which guides community actions and solutions to problems, requires significant time investment and close relationships. These are fostered

at the Council table and, in turn, Council members promote these approaches and the lens in their own sectors in the community. WRPC is often seen as a credible source of information on upstream approaches and issues related to the roots of crime. People who have questions or are looking to change their approach to crime prevention work turn to the Council to get this insight.

“

***So even that language around ‘upstream’ thinking [...] the number of times now that key people in the community are using that language it’s just gradually shaped things. Or root causes. Or things that happen that Crime Prevention Council has been talking about for a long time and are not just around the table anymore. Or that upstream video. The number of times I’ve gone to meetings now and people say, ‘I wanna show you this really neat video [...] on upstream thinking.’***

”



WRCPC's effectiveness at reaching people in key positions related to addressing community safety represents one of the key impacts of its knowledge mobilization activities. In addition to being key community stakeholders themselves, Council members are actively engaged in their role as **sector representatives**. This role involves sharing the knowledge and insights gained through WRCPC with their organizations, sectors and the community more broadly. **Among the Council survey respondents, nearly all (96%) had discussed knowledge gained through WRCPC within their sectors.** The strategic/focused nature of WRCPC's knowledge mobilization and outreach can be quite instrumental in supporting informed planning and decision-making across various systems and sectors in the community. Within the context of the opioid crisis, WRCPC promoted effective strategies and demonstration projects, often before other government or community bodies were ready or able to tackle the issue (see KB II).

While WRCPC can be very intentional and specific about its messaging and the intended audience, there are also instances where messages are aimed at the broader community in order to build public buy-in and shift the community towards being more receptive of

upstream approaches. Promotion of upstream approaches occurs at various levels, including among community members, professionals providing services and supports, and government representatives. As part of its knowledge mobilization efforts, WRCPC adopts a **middle-out approach** – reaching those at the grassroots level while at the same time engaging the grass-tops i.e. systems and government (see theory of change in KB I).

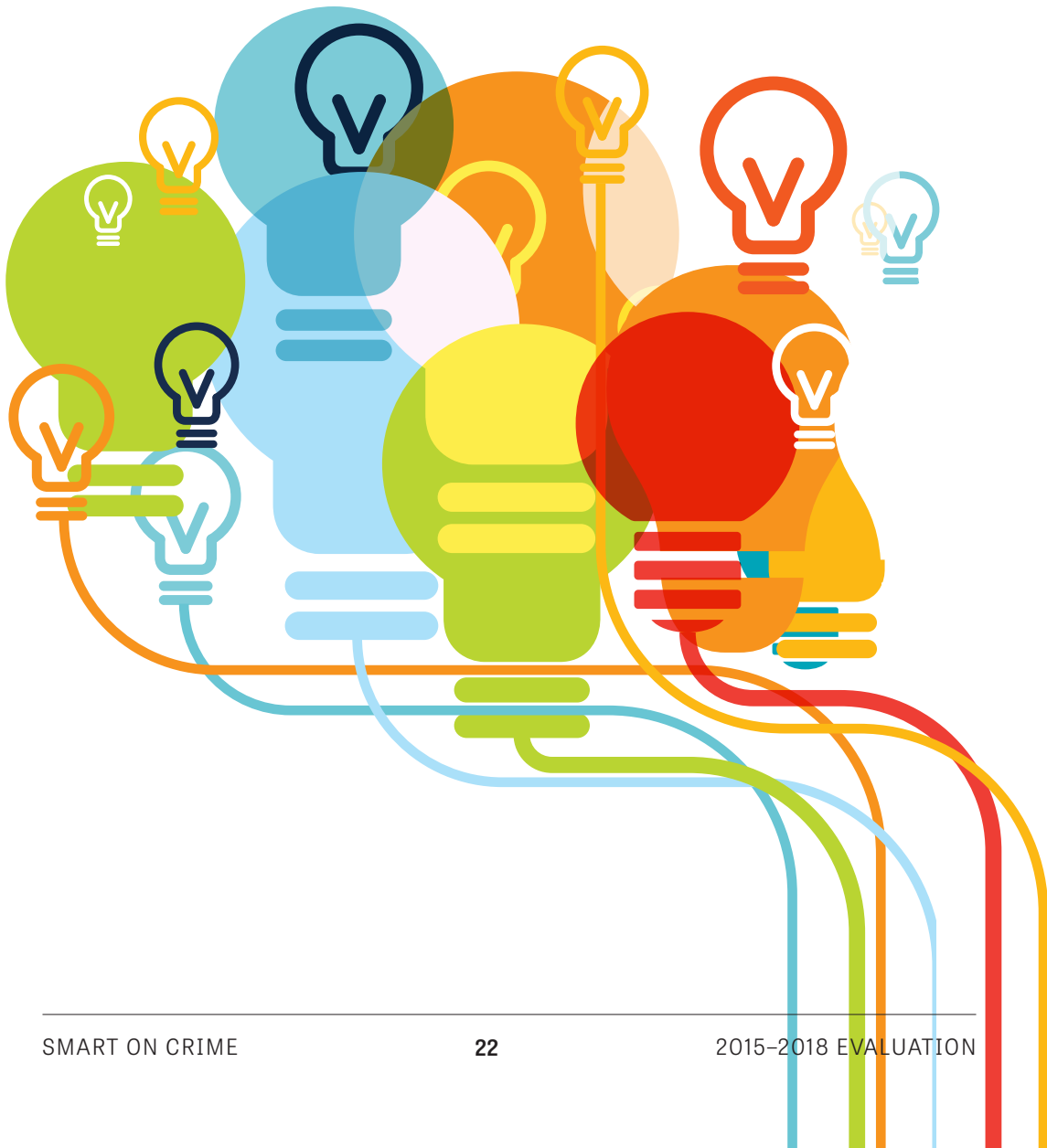
WRCPC's familiarity and connectedness with many sectors involved in crime prevention and community safety position it well to bring together knowledge from diverse sources and facilitate the adoption of successful prevention models in various domains in the community. The middle-out approach adopted by WRCPC contributes to the sharing and exchange of knowledge between community and systems. This involves bridging the gap between the grass-tops and grassroots to work together on solving common problems. **Almost all (93%) of the Council survey respondents and 83% of the community survey respondents felt that WRCPC provides opportunities for interaction and sharing of knowledge among various stakeholders including community members, practitioners, decision-makers, etc.**

WRCPC intentionally combines different forms of knowledge, honouring community voices and experiences alongside traditional knowledge, to ensure informed decision-making around crime prevention and community safety.

**The vast majority (89%) of the Council survey respondents agreed that knowledge shared through WRCPC contributes to systems being more responsive to community**

**needs, preferences and priorities.**

Exchange of knowledge also happens at a broader scale and this involves sharing of promising and proven approaches not only from within our community, but beyond, such as the Iceland Prevention Model for addressing substance use among youth or the collaboration with the City of Guadalajara, Mexico regarding municipal approaches to crime prevention.



# Community Engagement

The evaluation results suggest that WRCPC's community engagement activities create impact in multiple ways including **raising awareness while reducing stigma and fear; fostering the inclusion** of all community members; as well as **leveraging community assets and perspectives**. In addition, community engagement serves to **build and streamline community capacity towards a social movement** for advancing upstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing.

WRCPC engages community members in learning and thinking about upstream approaches to community safety. Beyond informing community members of upstream approaches broadly, this work also happens within specific initiatives that target roots of crime. Through engagement of community members in crime prevention work, WRCPC raises awareness and profile of the crime prevention efforts and looks to shift this work more towards upstream approaches. For example, as part of the Porch Chats initiative, WRCPC encouraged community members to engage in conversations around mental health and its connection to community safety (including implications for the

enforcement and justice system). The extent of WRCPC's reach and impact in the community was captured well across the most significant change stories, which highlighted a wide range of engagement activities including training health professionals on issues of domestic violence, engaging children in anti-bullying campaigns (see KB III), raising issues of discrimination of LGBTQ+ communities, as well as challenging perceptions of the opioid crisis, among others.

“

***So, in 2015 I would have thought of personality tests, profiling, working within the judicial system and the correctional facilities. That sort of is what I thought back then. And now, I'm looking at how an advocacy effort of making it very clear how inequality is like the perfect thing for crime to arise. If you have an unequal society, then you're building all the conditions for crime to [arise].***

”

Through raising people’s awareness and making evidence widely available, WRCPC works to reduce the fear and stigma in the community as well as overcome the resistance people may feel towards becoming more engaged in the community. While the combination of increased awareness as well as decreased fear and stigma can be difficult to measure, it represents an important impact as it helps to bring people’s behaviour in line with ‘smart’ or upstream approaches to community safety.

“

***“It has changed thinking [...] and I think [it is] affecting some of the stigma around domestic violence. I’m making the assumption that when people’s awareness is raised and they have that information that they view those situations differently and they behave differently as a result.”***

”

A key role of WRCPC’s community engagement work is to make people

feel included and connected to their community. A greater sense of connection and active support among community members helps to contribute to the common good and wellbeing. **Among community survey respondents, 77% stated that WRCPC helps to foster greater collaboration among community members and partners.** WRCPC intentionally reaches out and involves those members of the community who are usually left out of opportunities for engagement (see KB IV). Engagement of individuals with diverse perspectives, experiences and gifts helps to mobilize and leverage community capacity to a fuller extent; it also helps to shed light on opportunities for the community to shift and work upstream. Inclusion in community-based activities provides community members with opportunities to give back, which further helps to develop community capacity. Making community members feel valued, in turn, increases their engagement in initiatives, which ensures that change efforts are community driven and have support in the community.

WRCPC’s engagement efforts reflect the philosophy that the **process** or approach taken in achieving community wellbeing is a critical part of the work. Accordingly, emphasis is placed on not just the outcome, but also on **how** the outcome is achieved. For WRCPC,

engaging community is not just about solving a specific problem. It is also an essential component and approach of working upstream and addressing the roots of community wellbeing. A strong level of engagement in community-based efforts serves as a foundation for advancing **a social movement for upstream approaches** to community safety and wellbeing.

Upstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing rely on all sectors related to crime prevention to work in partnership towards a common goal. WRCPC’s community engagement aims to increase community capacity by working across sectors and invisible boundaries, connecting people to work together and learn from each other.

Eighty-four percent of the Council survey respondents and 80% of the community survey respondents indicated that WRCPC engages all the relevant sectors and groups that have a stake in addressing crime prevention and community safety.

“

***“When we’ve got a problem, it is about building connection and trust and coming together in order to resolve whatever that problem is.”***

”



# General Observations

## Specific Approaches

The evaluation found that WRCPC is using a variety of specific approaches and strategies to implement its different functions. These include social media and other public campaigns, information sessions, interviews for the local media (print, radio, and TV), policy briefs and strategies, a variety of informational reports (including infographics and knowledge briefs), videos, resource development and grant writing, donations to local charities, community events, and meeting facilitation, among others.

## Key Challenges

Through the two phases of the evaluation, we have identified four specific challenges that provide opportunities to improve and strengthen the work of the WRCPC.

01

WRCPC staff and Council members struggled at times to determine how to best use the Smart on Crime strategic plan and how it should guide their work. The plan was originally generated through a community consultation process. While this anchored the plan within community needs, it did not always provide clear

alignment with the upstream vision of the WRCPC. There was also a mix of broader guiding principles and specific actions that were difficult to implement at times. Some staff felt challenged to see how their day-to-day work fits with the overall plan, which can cause stress about meeting expectations. This speaks to the nature of this type of initiative especially during resource-challenged times and when there are significant, ongoing shifts in the community and broader environment.

02

Although the majority of survey respondents felt that WRCPC manages the balancing act of pursuing long-term upstream goals with responding to immediate needs and crises in the community, this came at a great personal cost to WRCPC members and especially the staff. Council members and staff felt community pressure and a personal calling to respond to needs in the community as they emerged. Their connections, trust, and positive reputation in the community as well as their cross-sector function make them naturally attractive as a first responder to community needs and crises. They have played this role well, quickly pulling in key stakeholders for joint



stakeholders, such as in the Opioid crisis (see KB II). However, their long-term work in implementing the strategic plan and fulfilling their backbone function also continued, requiring staff to often work overtime to meet both demands.

03

Overall, it is quite impressive how much the WRCPD has been able to accomplish with relatively few staff and financial resources. However, **only 36% of the Council survey participants believe that WRCPD currently has adequate resources, including human resources, to accomplish its goals.** This is our impression as well based on our conversation with staff and Council members in Phase I of the evaluation as well as based on the data from Phase II. The need for both approaches (long-term vision work and short-term response to emerging needs, both aligned with principles of upstream thinking) is clearly there and, therefore, needs to be considered in the strategic planning and then adequately resourced.

04

When asked about whether they make meaningful contributions to the work of WRCPD, just 61% of Council respondents agreed. We observed a heavy reliance on staff to do the work in implementing the key functions of the WRCPD. There seems to be a need for increased sense of responsibility of sector representatives to actively contribute to the core backbone function of WRCPD. As an intermediary organization connecting different sectors as well as community with each other, the WRCPD has to rely on sector representatives to champion the vision of the WRCPD within their sectors and the community more broadly. This approach is significantly challenged by an overextension of human resources in the community over the last several years. As organizations and community groups have taken on more work - with same or fewer resources - and as greater demands have been placed on them, their capacity has been strained; this, in turn, has decreased the ability of community and systems stakeholders to contribute to collaborative initiatives (placing greater pressure on staff).

# Recommendations

The findings of the evaluation have informed the following recommendations:

01

## Focus on and solidify backbone function supported by knowledge exchange and community engagement

WRCPC has unique experience and expertise in facilitating upstream prevention work and transformational changes. We recommend building on these capacities for upstream work, moving beyond the Smart on Crime agenda of 2015-2018 and **focusing on upstream approaches as the core function for the WRCPC**. This work should aim to foster conditions that allow solutions and sustainable change to be created collaboratively while building capacity in the community to enact those solutions (through convening key stakeholders, creating safe spaces for cross-sectoral dialogue, informing planning and decision-making, mobilizing community into action, etc.). Furthermore, this work should enable WRCPC to work on a long-term vision and facilitate community and system changes including those changes that are slow in progress but essential. Through relationship-building and

community-building, WRCPC can further its standing as a respected and trusted leader with a long history and positive reputation in the community.

02

## Reflect on and clarify role of sector representatives on Council as being part of the backbone function

WRCPC plays a crucial role in the community as a backbone organization. To enhance the backbone support and leverage capacity for upstream work, we recommend further engaging all Council members in their role as sector representatives and emphasizing the critical function they perform in the constellation model. This would include continuing to explore the most effective ways of engaging sector representatives and finding specific tools and resources for supporting them in their role. Building capacity through training, workshops, and guidebooks in how to effectively foster and manage change processes are some of the options that could be considered. A community of practice with sector representatives from different municipalities with crime prevention councils could be another approach. Setting specific sector-based goals related to the overall WRCPC upstream goals and reporting on these



goals annually may also be a way to create engagement and accountability.

03

**Continuously clarify the role and focus of WRCPC as identified in theory of change (KB I) with all staff (especially new employees), Council members, and decision-makers within the Region**

WRCPC's work is guided by a common vision and strategy and fulfills three crucial functions in upstream prevention work in the Region and beyond as captured by the theory of change presented in KB I. To ensure ongoing support and fidelity to these roles and theory of change, we recommend ongoing clarification about the roles, especially with new members and decision-makers. Regular intentional team reflections regarding the extent to which ongoing and new projects fit with the core functions of WRCPC and the theory of change can also contribute to optimal alignment of intentions and practice.

04

**Develop a clear organizational approach that allows WRCPC to be responsive to quickly emerging needs and opportunities without interfering with the long-term visionary work of a backbone organization**

A clear protocol for determining whether/how to respond to emerging community needs and crises (including how to allocate staff resources in those situations) can provide the needed guidance to WRCPC staff and Council members. This process would take into account WRCPC's priorities and the fit with the long-term focus on upstream approaches. One potential action could be to develop and implement a 'decision-making lens', which outlines the necessary considerations and steps to be taken as part of the assessment process. Also, a review of the current staff resources to assess whether they are sufficient for adequately engaging in both long-term visionary work and crises response, may be warranted.

05

**Consider altering the way strategic planning is done**

WRCPC brings together representatives of all sectors involved in crime prevention and community safety in this Region. The Council's collective experience and expertise is un-paralleled by any other organization. Upstream, long-term visioning work requires a high level of cross-sector collaboration and expertise. We recommend that the strategic planning builds on the sector expertise, while continuing to consider community needs and priorities in the long-term planning.

06

**Support core functions by increasing financial and staff resources**

We recommend to increase funding to hire more staff that can support ongoing work initiated by WRPCPC. As illustrated, staff play a crucial role across all three critical functions of WRPCPC and are particularly imperative in fulfilling the function of the backbone

organization within the collective impact approach. With more staff, the sector representatives can be more effectively supported in their role of fostering change within their respective sectors and the balance of focusing on long-term upstream work while being also responsive to emerging needs in the community can be better managed.







## Contributions

This evaluation was conducted by a team at CCRLA at Wilfrid Laurier University and led by Bianca Dreyer and Sue Weare under the supervision of Drs. Manuel Riemer and Maritt Kirst. They were supported by WRPCPC staff (David Siladi and Christiane Sadeler), the evaluation working group of the

WRPCPC (Mark Pancer, Sarah Shafiq, Dianne Heise, Carlos Luis Zatarain, Daniel Bader, Kendra Foord, Carolyn Keays), members of the WRPCPC facilitating committee, and CCRLA team members (Brianna Hunt, Emily Churchill, and Ellis Furman). This knowledge brief was prepared and written by Bianca Dreyer and Dr. Manuel Riemer.



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