

Purpose, Approach, & Theory of Change



KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

SMART ON CRIME

2015-2018
EVALUATION

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Introduction

Between September 2016 and April 2019 a team at the Centre for Community Research Learning and Action (CCRLA) at Wilfrid Laurier University conducted a multi-phase 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 first of five knowledge briefs (KB), which feature the following topics:

- The purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation approach and methodology, as well as the theory of change (KB I)
- The three most significant change stories that represent the contributions of WRCPC in the community through the Smart on Crime plan (KBs II-IV), and
- An overall summary of key findings with recommendations for future strategic actions and directions (KB V).

Purpose

Crime prevention is a complex challenge. Crime itself can be described as a wicked problem as it is a product of many different interacting factors and effective solutions are difficult to identify. Effective crime prevention can be accomplished through the simultaneous engagement of key decision-makers (e.g., organizational and governmental leaders) and the grassroots (e.g., neighbourhood associations) within a community - such approach is at the core of WRCPC's work. Addressing wicked problems also requires going beyond the seemingly obvious and downstream solutions and exploring the issues at their upstream end, that is, at their source.

The vision of WRCPC is to be smart on crime by shifting the way people think about crime and act to prevent it through community and social development. The 2015-2018 Smart on Crime Plan is the implementation of that vision over the past four years through aspirational principles that guide the planning and day-to-day actions of the WRCPC.

The goal of this evaluation was to assess the implementation of the Smart on Crime Plan by WRCPC and how that is contributing to creating the conditions for crime prevention through social development. Capturing this unique experience not only demonstrates to the core funder (Regional Council) and local community the value of its crime prevention council but also showcases one of Canada's first and most established crime prevention councils, which has become a role model and inspiration for multiple other municipalities across the country.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The following four key objectives were identified for this evaluation:

01

To increase understanding of the role WRCPC plays as a center of responsibility for crime prevention and community safety

02

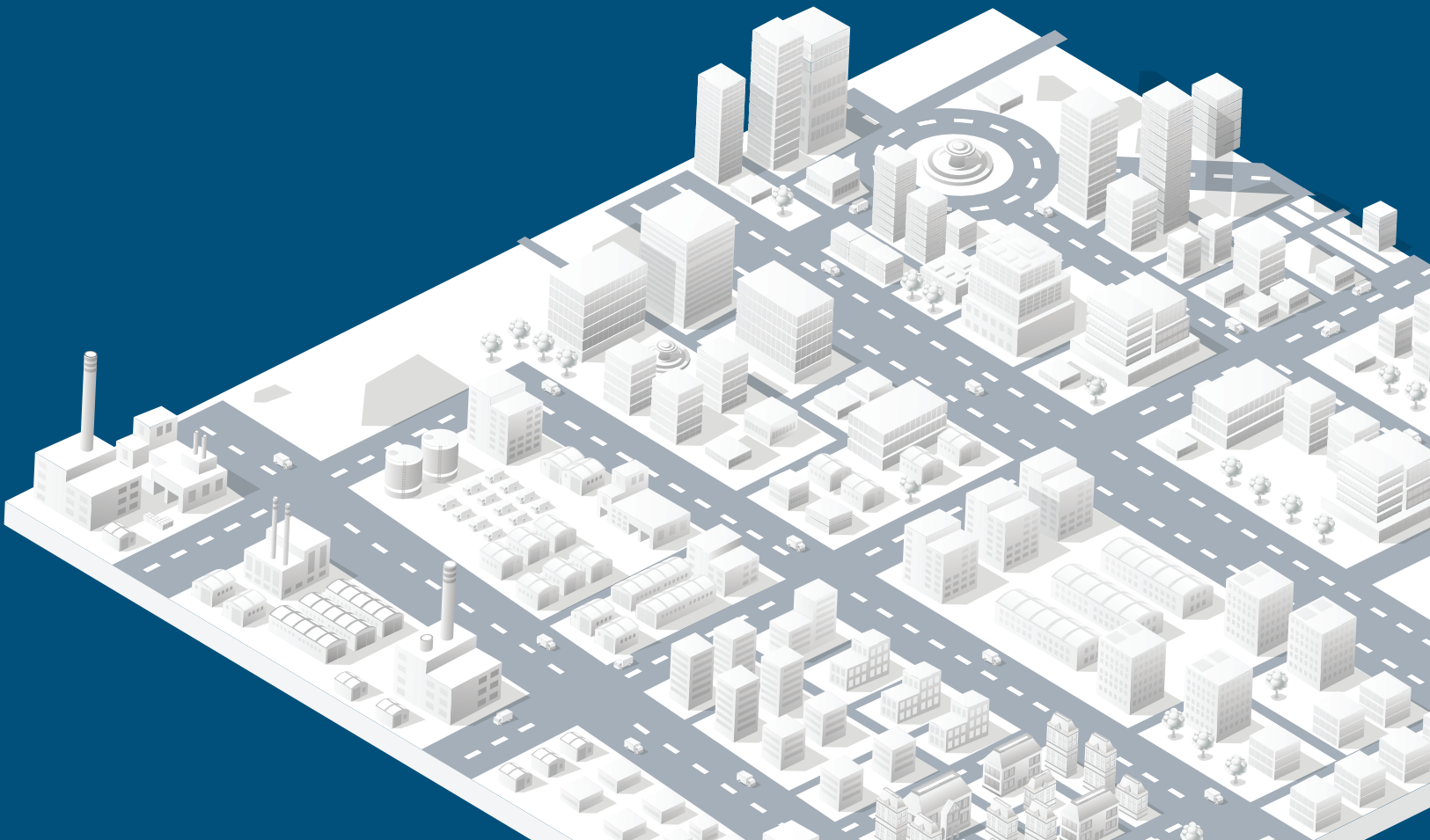
To clarify the value of this role by identifying outcomes and impacts of WRCPC's work

03

To identify opportunities to optimize this role and the Council's collaborative approach

04

To provide critical insights and new data to inform future directions for WRCPC



Approach

The researchers at CCRLA as well as the staff and the evaluation working group of the WRCPC agreed on a participatory developmental evaluation approach. Developmental evaluations provide a flexible, emerging, and learning-oriented approach to evaluation that is well-suited for complex and dynamic issues (Gamble, 2010) such as crime prevention and the promotion of community safety. The participatory nature of this approach - reflected in the collaboration between WRCPC stakeholders and the evaluation team - ensures that the members of the WRCPC feel ownership over the process and results, making it more likely that the evaluation findings will be used.

The evaluation partners also agreed to use best practices and rigorous methods that are best suited for evaluating the complex contributions of a crime prevention strategic plan such as WRCPC's Smart on Crime Plan.

An attribution analysis tries to establish a direct causal link between program activities and an effect on the outcomes. This task is almost impossible to accomplish for a complex issue such as community safety and wellbeing, especially without the availability of valid comparison communities and funding for large-scale longitudinal studies. Contribution analysis on the other hand seeks to

demonstrate that the program-related activities helped to bring about the observed changes in the phenomenon

The emphasis here is on examining contribution as compared to a more traditional attribution (or causal) analysis.

of interest. For example, a specific gang prevention program may have caused a reduction in gang-related crime while a crime prevention council may have contributed to that impact by facilitating an effective collaboration and community engagement that made a successful program possible in the first place. Each type of analysis requires different type of methodological approaches.



Following best practices, **the evaluation was conducted in two phases: i) an evaluability assessment and ii) a comprehensive mixed-method evaluation.** An evaluability assessment serves to clarify and generate agreement about the initiative's theory of change, as well as its current implementation; it also

serves to identify the appropriate evaluation framework that will meet the needs of the evaluation partner, in this case the WRCPC. A comprehensive mixed-method evaluation design was selected to capture the complex and dynamic aspects of a phenomenon such as a community's approach to crime prevention.

Methodology

Phase I: Evaluability Assessment

As part of this phase of the evaluation, the team at CCRLA conducted the following:

- 01 review of reference documents
- 04 development meetings with WRPC evaluation leads
- 04 facilitated conversations with an evaluation working group
- 01 facilitated evaluability assessment session with WRPC staff
- 01 presentation to the WRPC Facilitating Committee
- 01 presentation to the WRPC

The key findings from this phase were summarized in the Evaluability Assessment Report.



Phase II: Mixed-Method Evaluation

Through the evaluability assessment, a sequential mixed-method case study evaluation was identified as the most appropriate evaluation design given the objectives, the nature of crime prevention, and the context. More specifically, the selected framework consisted of an online survey followed by the application of The Most Significant Change Technique (MSCT).

WRPCPC Evaluation Survey

Throughout April and May of 2018, online surveys were conducted with WRCPC staff, Council members, and Friends of Crime Prevention¹. Participants were invited via emails sent through WRCPC mailing lists. Email recipients were also encouraged to further share the invitation within their respective sectors or networks. The goal of the survey was to obtain perceptions of key stakeholder groups regarding the main areas of interest related to WRCPC's key functions.

These areas were

- 1) general functioning,
- 2) relationships,
- 3) collaboration,
- 4) knowledge exchange, and
- 5) community engagement.

The survey was completed by 28 WRCPC staff or Council members and 23 Friends of Crime Prevention. Survey data were analyzed for basic distributional properties such as frequencies, averages, range, and standard deviations and, in some cases,

compared between the two groups (staff/council vs. friends of crime prevention).

Most Significant Change Stories

The MSCT is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation especially well-suited for capturing the collective impact of collaborative initiatives on complex issues such as community safety and wellbeing (Davies & Dart, 2005). The MSCT process involves engaging in a rich and iterative analysis process in order to learn from the stories not just what changes have occurred but also how and under which circumstances. Thus, MSCT captures what is often difficult to capture: process and outcome changes.

WRPCPC staff as well as Council and community members were encouraged to share their story of change by responding to two key questions:

- 1. What is an example of a significant change brought about by WRCPC in our community (or beyond) since the start of 2015?**

¹ Friends of Crime Prevention is a network of individuals and organizations in Waterloo region that support the core values and principles of crime prevention through social development and serve as the eyes and ears in the community and a web for exchanging and sharing knowledge, news and activities related to community safety and wellbeing.

2. Why is this change significant?

Change was considered everything from informing someone's outlook or actions to supporting neighbourhoods, organizational change and policy development and included both successes as well as 'failures' one can learn from.

Email invitations were sent through WRPCPC mailing lists to all current WRPCPC staff, Council members and Friends of Crime Prevention. Everyone was encouraged to share these emails with their respective sectors or networks. Stories were collected between July 2018 and January 2019 and included audio recorded interviews (group or individual), self-recorded videos or written stories submitted through an online website, which also served to inform people about the evaluation. Stories were also collected during the WRPCPC meeting on September 14, 2018. In total, 20 unique stories were collected by

26 storytellers (some stories had multiple storytellers).

A two-phase directed thematic content analysis approach was used to analyze the qualitative story data. That is, first, a list of concepts or themes that the evaluation team anticipated to be present within the data were identified such as 'knowledge exchange' or 'backbone organization' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Second, specific concepts and themes were extracted directly from the collected data (Saldana, 2009) and compared to the list of anticipated concepts generated in the first phase. Codes emerging from the data were then organized into non-hierarchical categories and related to the pre-existing concepts. This two-phase process ensures that important concepts based on the theory of change are captured but are kept only if they are actually contained in the data itself.



Theory of Change

The evaluability assessment revealed that The Smart on Crime community plan is understood as an aspirational document that is meant to provide general direction and guidance – rather than serve as a traditional strategic plan or program model that would define and command activities in pursuit of specific, measurable goals to which Council would be directly accountable. Also, rather than having an accompanying set of objectives and detailed implementation plan, WRCPC staff integrate the goals and priorities of the Smart on Crime community plan into their operational plans.

Being **'smart on crime'** was defined as addressing the roots of crime and community safety (i.e., primary prevention) through evidence-based interventions,

particularly collaborative and partnership-based approaches that balance upstream and downstream initiatives to produce collective impact.

Through the evaluation it was determined that WRCPC fulfills **three key functions: backbone support, knowledge exchange, and community engagement**. Overall, WRCPC primarily serves as a backbone organization; it convenes and facilitates collaborative body of multi-sectoral stakeholders to align efforts towards a common

Among its stakeholders, WRCPC is seen as a catalyst that plays an important leadership role in convening partnerships and incubating new initiatives that advance the principles of being 'smart on crime'.

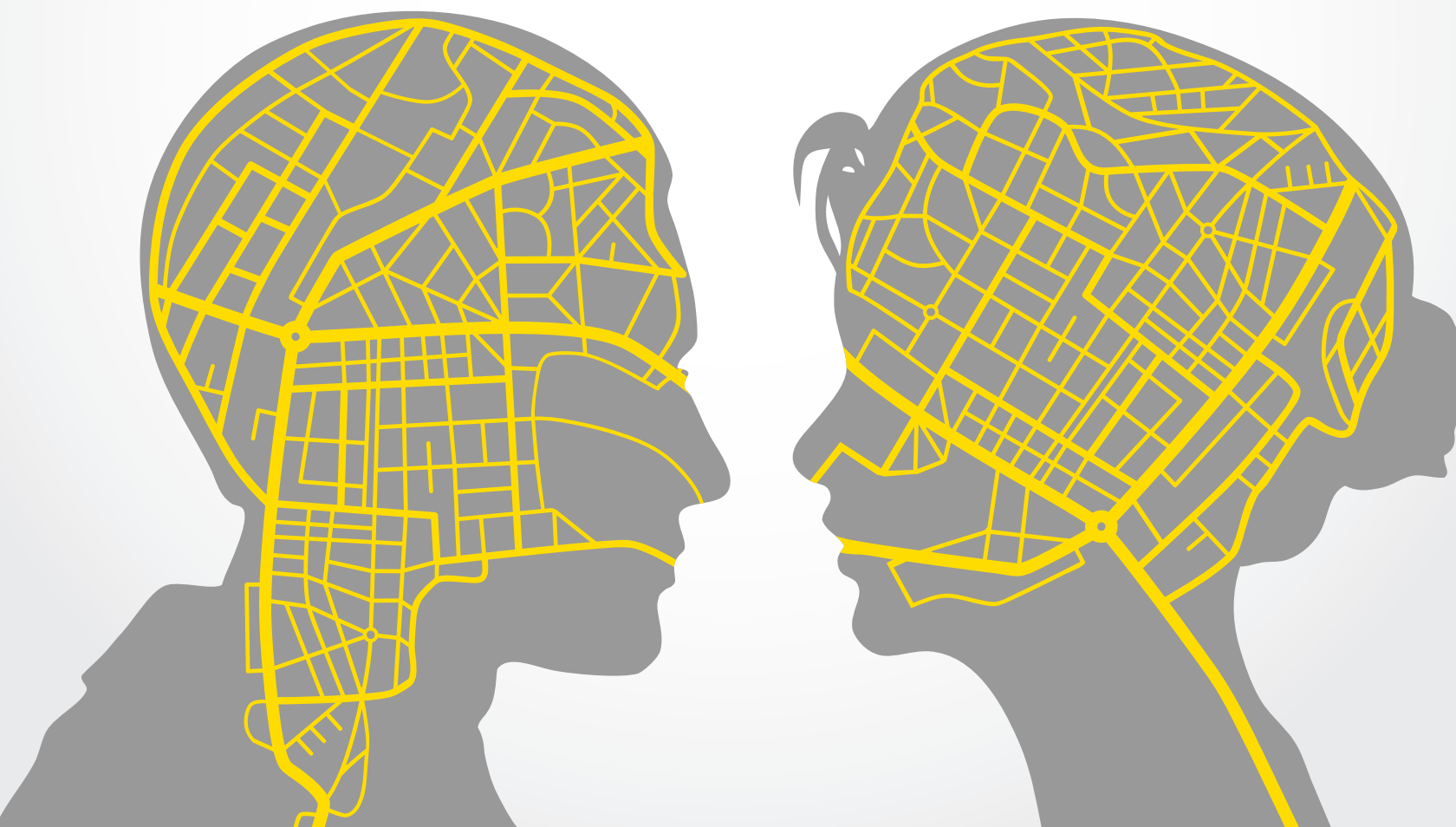
vision. Knowledge exchange and community engagement are intended to further support the backbone function by providing relevant information and connections

to increase stakeholders' capacity to contribute to systems change. The following table provides a comprehensive summary of these functions, their objectives and overall goals.

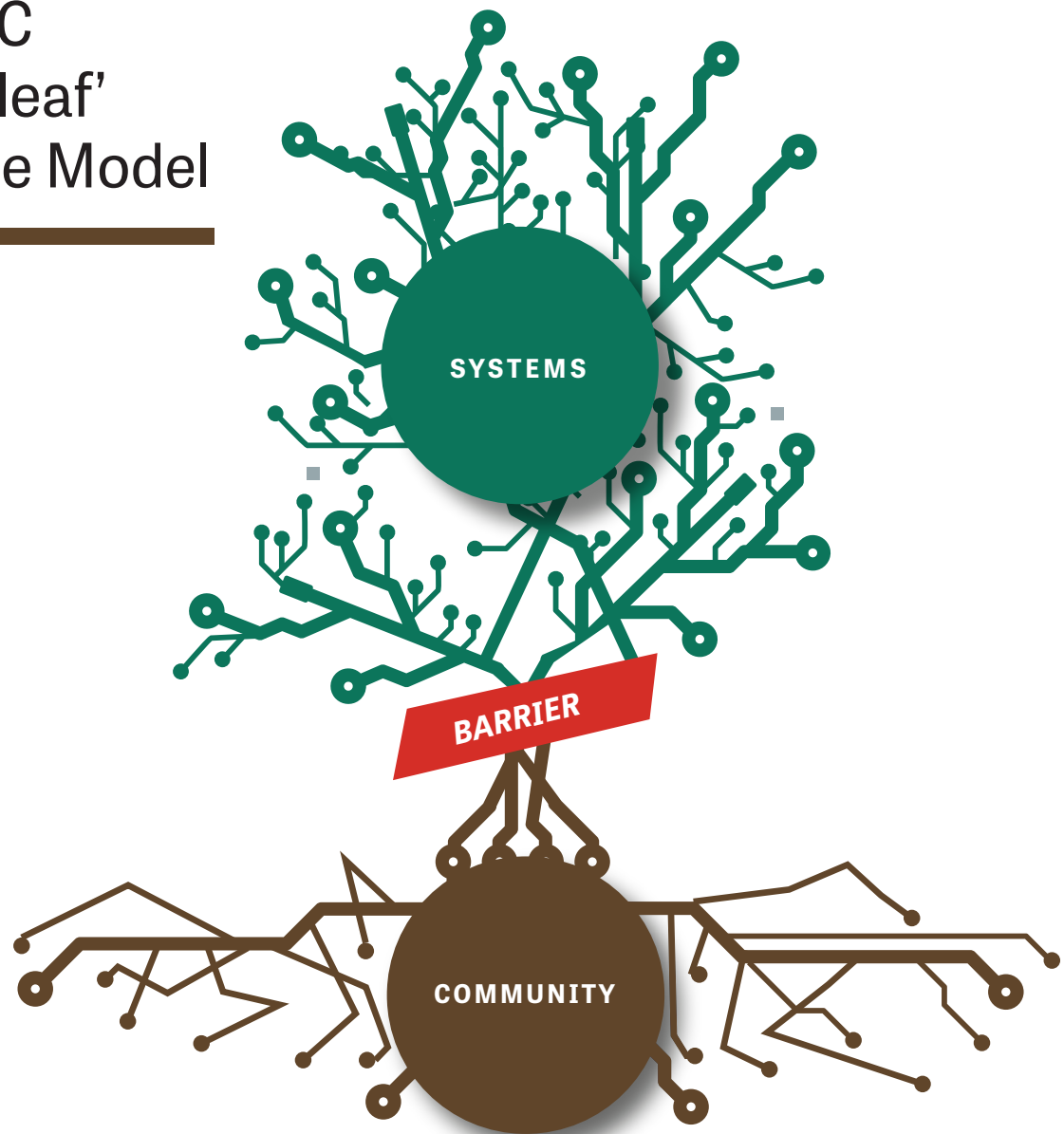
Function	Description	Objectives
Backbone Organization (BB)	<p>WRCPC primarily functions as a backbone organization for promoting crime prevention through community and social development (CPCSD) in Waterloo Region and beyond.</p> <p>In collective impact approaches, this may include: 1) guiding vision and strategy, 2) supporting aligned activities, 3) building public will, 4) advancing policy, and 5) mobilizing funding.</p> <p>Fundamentally, this requires developing and growing relationships with stakeholders from various sectors and systems critical to CPCSD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be a catalyst for collaboration among sectors and systems critical to community safety and crime prevention • To support alignment of systems-level actions that promote community safety and address the roots of crime • To facilitate comprehensive, integrated, proactive and responsive systems-level approaches to CPCSD • To foster a shared responsibility among sectors <p>Goal: Increased systems capacity for transformative change.</p>
Knowledge Exchange (KE)	<p>This function involves knowledge generation, synthesis, dissemination, and application using collaborative and participatory approaches.</p> <p>“Knowledge” is understood as a broad concept; reciprocal production and sharing of knowledge is therefore a key focus (e.g., evidence-informed practice and practice-informed evidence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate involvement of community and systems in sharing/exchange of knowledge pertinent to promoting CPCSD • To advance understanding of the roots of crime, upstream approaches to community safety and crime prevention, as well as the local context including community assets, needs and perspectives • To promote use of effective and promising CPCSD approaches that are appropriate and relevant with respect to local context. <p>Goal: Informed decision-making, policy, practice, attitudes and perceptions</p>
Community Engagement (CE)	<p>This function involves building and sustaining relationships with and between local community members.</p> <p>These relationships serve as a means for mobilizing community capacity to take part in change opportunities addressing the issues of community safety and crime prevention.</p> <p>Engagement processes are sometimes designed and intentional, and at other times organic, in order to respond to opportunities that arise within the community and build on organizing that already exists. This serves to reach and involve people where they are at.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To leverage resources and assets in the community, building on existing community organizing capacity • To streamline community organizing to enhance community voices and create collaboration through community • To promote the inclusion of all community members, especially those who are most often left out, in informing planning and decision-making <p>Goal: Advancement of a social movement for CPCSD</p>

Two concepts of the change model were developed with stakeholder input: **the 'grassleaf' model and the 'catalyst' model**. Together these models move beyond traditional crime prevention

change models or Collective Impact approaches by employing a community empowerment approach that simultaneously addresses those at the systems and community levels.



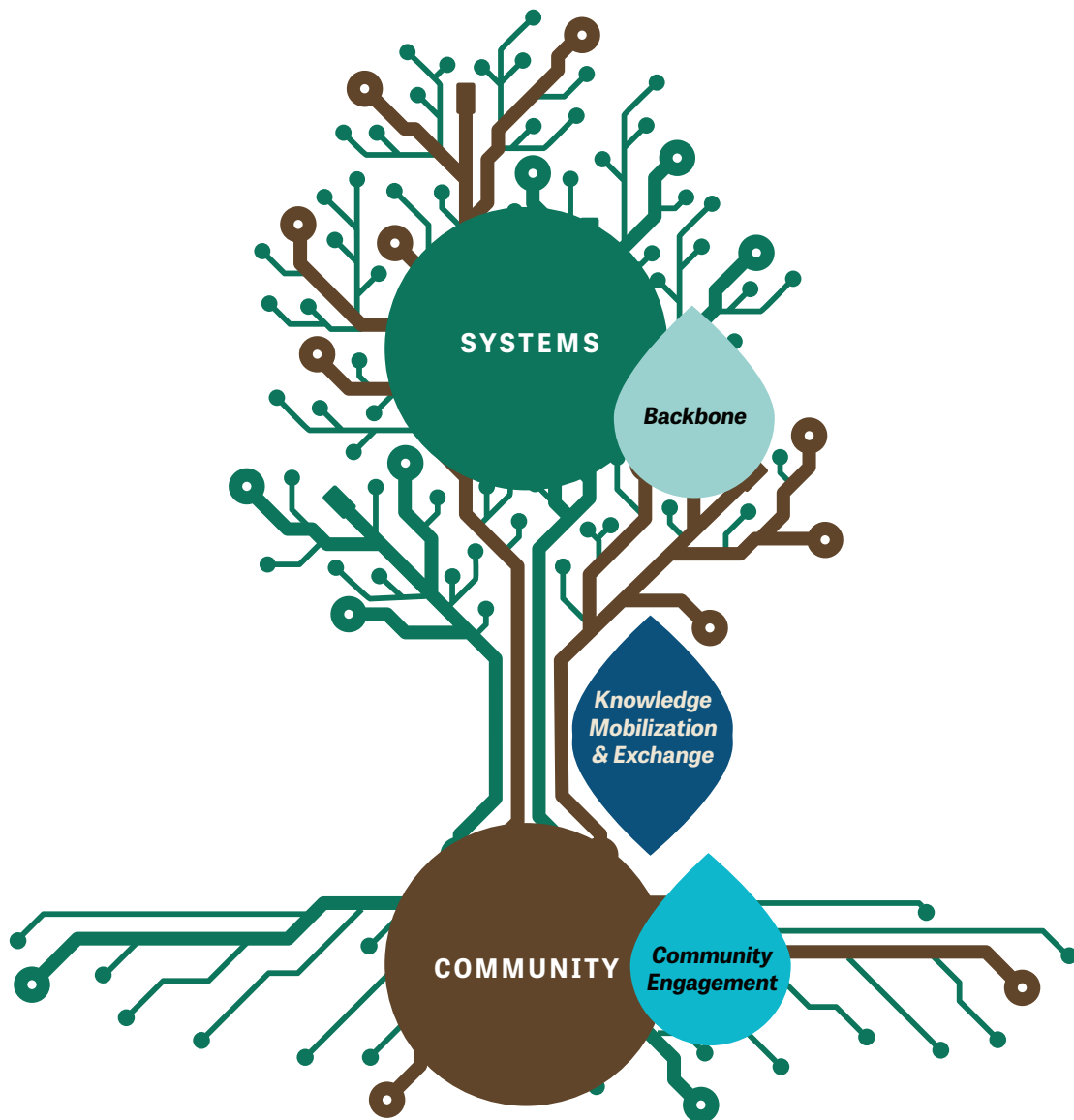
WRCPC 'Grassleaf' Change Model



WRCPC engages grassroots community (the 'grassroots') and decision-makers within the larger systems (the 'grass-tops') simultaneously, with the aim of aligning grassroots efforts and systems change efforts towards a common vision (i.e., smart on crime) while also breaking down barriers to collaborative approaches to crime prevention through social development. Potential barriers include

working in silos, different training and backgrounds, different understanding of and approaches to crime prevention, etc. As part of this approach, WRCPC makes use of community organizing, engagement, networking, and knowledge mobilization to create change at multiple levels (e.g., community, service sector, and government).

WRCPC 'Grassleaf' Change Model



THE CATALYST MODEL



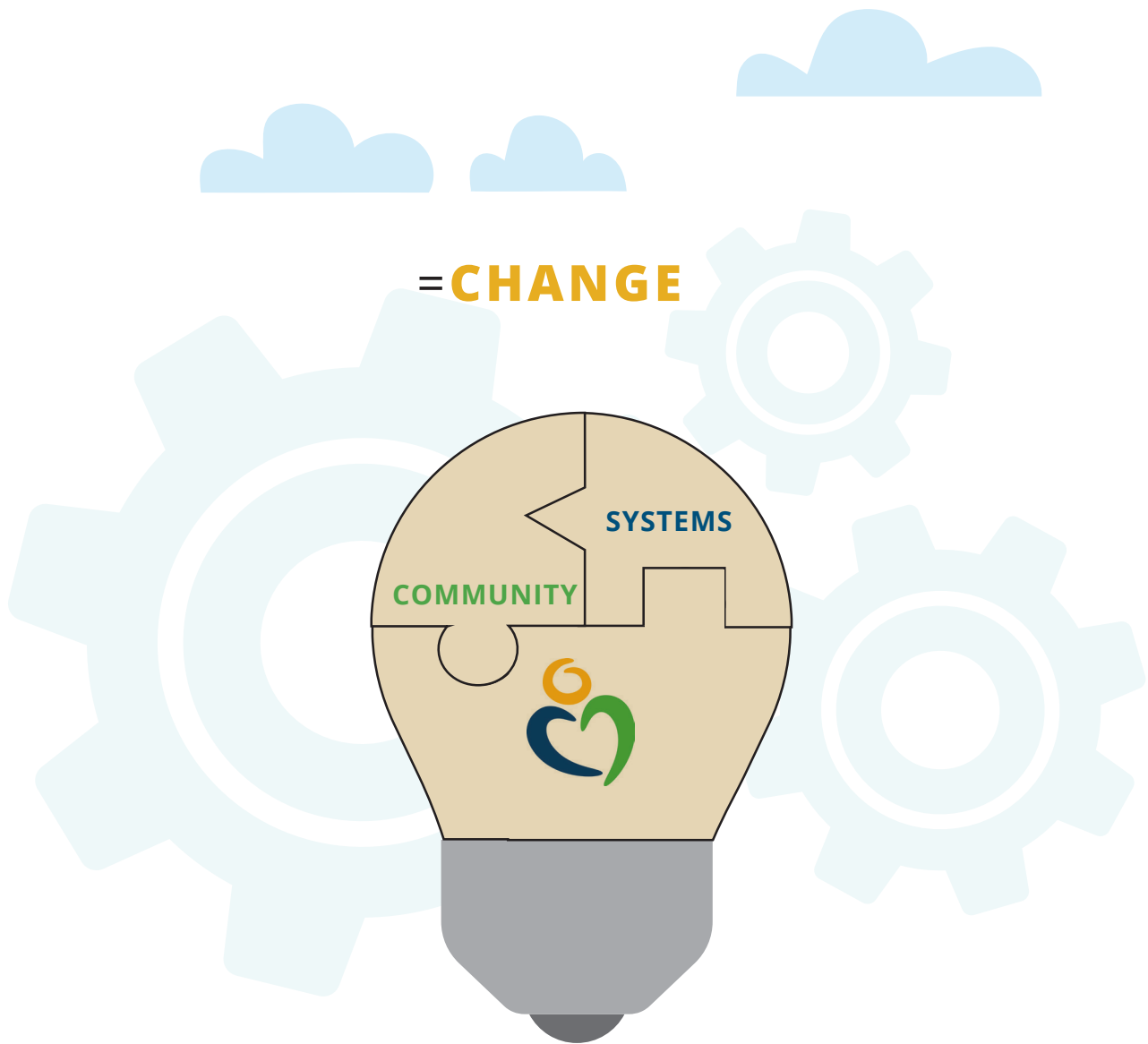
WRPCPC functions as a catalyst in that it facilitates an interaction (change process) among grassroots community and systems by bridging the gap or disconnect between them. As a catalyst, WRPCPC knows how each side (community and systems) works and operates in the middle to accommodate the needs of both sides. By engaging the two sides and bringing them together, WRPCPC provides a

platform for collaborative community-level prevention efforts. The interaction and exchange between the community and systems improves the collective understanding of community issues and opportunities. The overall process builds citizens' capacity while also helping to ensure policies and practice are responsive to the needs and hopes in the community.

THE CATALYST MODEL



THE CATALYST MODEL



Finally, the **Constellation Governance Model** was identified as a fitting representation of the process through which WRCPC organizes, initiates and facilitates its activities. This model, which was developed by Surman and Surman (2008) to capture how groups from multiple sectors come together and work together towards an action-oriented goal, was adapted for the purpose of the WRCPC evaluation.

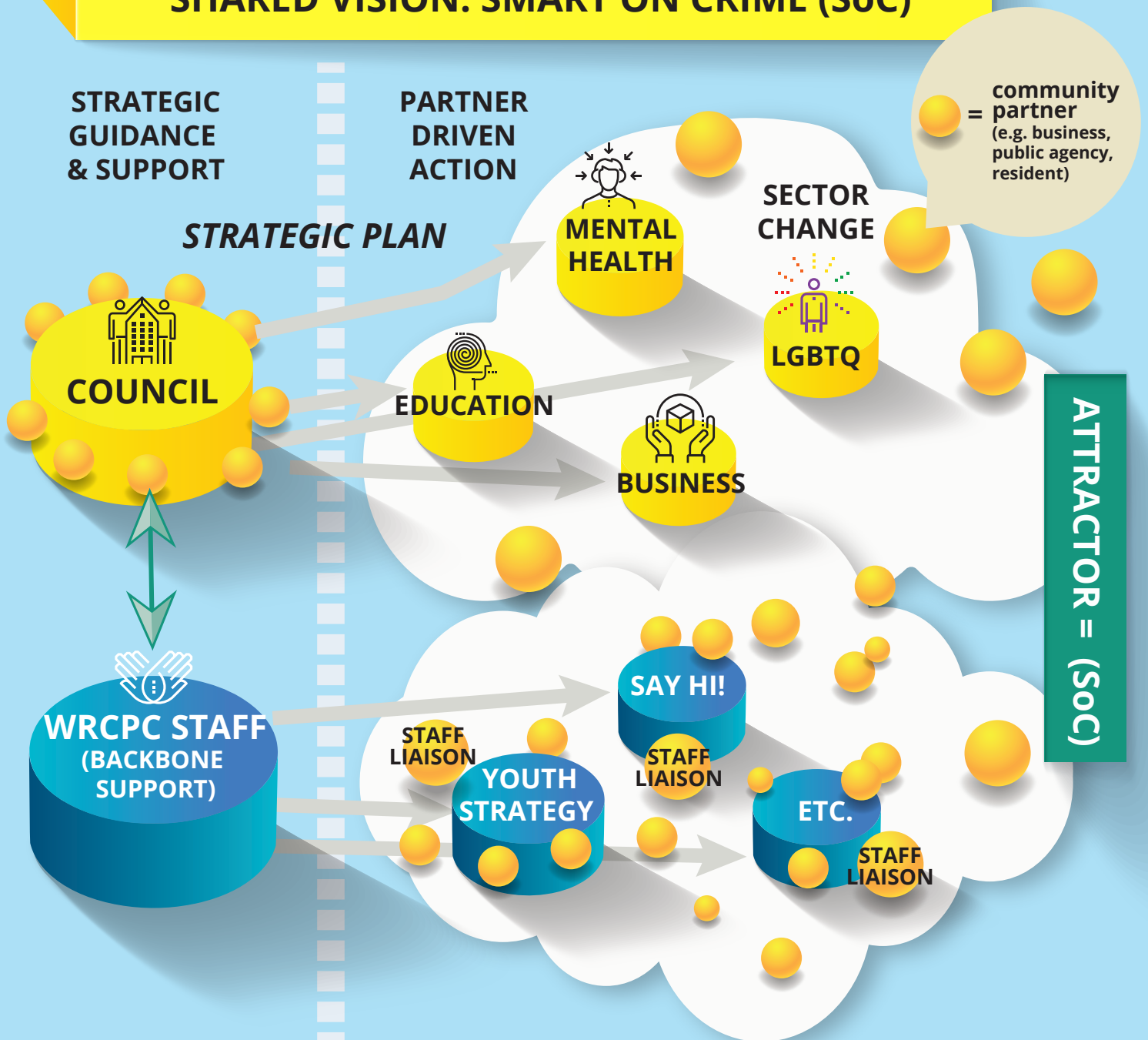
From a structural perspective, WRCPC has two distinct bodies that provide the backbone for creating the shift in the community toward being “Smart on Crime”: the Council members and the staff. These two bodies provide strategic guidance and support to facilitate the community change process, which is informed by the underlying values and principles of collaboration. The Council consists of community sector representatives who are systems leaders and grassroots organizers who hold key positions within the larger system related to crime prevention and community safety. These sector representatives engage in collaboration and knowledge sharing with one another. They also provide strategic direction to the staff and support the work of staff. Both the Council members and staff are guided by a shared vision of a community that is smart on crime. Through this shared vision, which is negotiated at the Council table and with staff, different ‘constellations’ or working groups emerge based on community priorities (e.g., the opioid crisis) and new opportunities (e.g., new funding announcements). The

constellations refer to small, self-organizing action teams that work on a specific issue or task, such as the Say Hi campaign or the Youth Engagement Strategy. Within this model, all constellations are ever emerging, dynamic, as well as directed and pulled by a ‘magnetic attractor’, which in this case is the vision of being smart on crime. Ideally, the work of the different constellations should be focused on working towards this long-term vision as opposed to being responsive to each and any community priority that may emerge. In some cases, however, responding to emerging priorities is well-aligned with the principles and goals of WRCPC - as in the case of the opioid crisis featured in KB II – and, thus, can be seen as fitting within this model.

Constellations are always initially supported by a staff liaison and pull in other community members (‘grassroots’) or sector representatives (‘grasstops’) from the context as needed. Staff members provide important support functions within this context, rather than actively delivering a service *per se*. Depending on the nature of the constellation, staff might fulfill any of the three functions identified in the change model (see Table on page 12). It is possible and, to a large degree, desirable that most constellations become de-coupled from their connection to WRCPC as community takes ownership over a project or continues an activity after the original working group dissolves. Likewise, some constellations might emerge that were never explicitly linked to WRCPC but were motivated by a WRCPC event, outreach, conversation, etc.

WRCPC 'Constellation' Implementation Model

SHARED VISION: SMART ON CRIME (SoC)



ADAPTED FROM SURMAN AND SURMAN (2008) AND COMMUNITY TOOLBOX, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS



Summary

The Smart on Crime Plan is an aspirational and guiding framework that informs the planning and actions of WRCP and the various constellations of Council members, staff, sector representatives, and community members. The purpose of the plan is to engage key system decision-makers and the community grassroots in moving toward a shared vision of being smart on crime supported by WRCP as the backbone organization. The goal of this evaluation was to capture how this plan and its implementation by WRCP through its core functions contribute to crime prevention and community safety in Waterloo region and beyond. The evaluation findings also served to develop recommendations for future directions.

References

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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 WRCPC staff (David Siladi and Christiane Sadeler), the evaluation working group of the WRCPC (Mark Pancer, Sarah Shafiq, Dianne Heise, Carlos Luis Zatarain, Daniel Bader, Kendra Foord, Carolyn Keays), members of the WRCPC facilitating committee, and CCRLA team members (Brianna Hunt, Emily Churchill, and Ellis Furman). This knowledge brief was prepared and written by Bianca Dreyer, Sue Weare, and Dr. Manuel Riemer.



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