

Community Services Briefing to

Regular Meeting of Council

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Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy Implementation Update

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

In 2021 Council approved *A community of connections: Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Community Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023* (referred to as "the Strategy") (Attachment 1) directed Administration to convene partners to implement its actions. In November 2023, Council approved base funding to advance the Strategy's actions on an ongoing basis. This briefing and its attachments provide an overview of the implementation of the Strategy to date, its outcomes, impact and next steps to incorporate the Strategy's work into operations.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Overview

Council's decision to invest in the Strategy acknowledges both the challenges that Calgarians are experiencing, and The City's firm commitment to helping those who face mental health and addiction issues find the hope and support they need. The Strategy's implementation is informed by a set of aligned initiatives such as the Age-Friendly Strategy, the Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and The City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, which underscore the significance of supporting Calgarians of all backgrounds and identities experiencing vulnerabilities and systemic barriers to accessing support. Whether directly or indirectly, mental health and addiction issues impact all Calgarians and every aspect of our community, economy, and city. The Strategy aims to enhance the mental health and addiction system of care through a spectrum of supports and local advancements which complement services supported by other orders of government. The City's approach focuses on identification, prevention, and early intervention, in addition to supporting access to crisis-related services, recognizing that treatment associated with mental health and addiction fall within Provincial jurisdiction. The Strategy mobilizes cross-sector initiatives that provide value to Calgarians within three strategic themes:

- **Being Well** – *Wellness at home, school, work and in community.* Helping to prevent mental health and substance use problems before they start so Calgarians feel like they belong and are accepted, at home, at school, at work, and in the community and have ways to cope with uncertainty and challenges as early as possible. The various programs funded under this theme showcase this work, including supporting 548 newcomers through a multi-cultural mental health program designed by The Immigrant Education Society. Reporting indicates 85 per cent of their clients improved their coping ability.
- **Getting Help** – *What Calgarians need, where and when they need it.* People can get help for mental health issues, substance use and addiction issues where and when needed: at home, school, work, and community; it means earlier access to services and supports for Calgary youth in schools and adults in workplaces; a faster and more seamless connection to the help Calgarians need from both primary care and community supports and services; and, an efficient, reliable and sustainable system of supports and services that help to improve quality of life for Calgarians experiencing mental health and/or addiction issues. An example of this includes the partnership between 211, Alberta Health Services and the Primary Care Network where 1/3 of patients have accepted a referral from their physician for additional supports in health factors like food, housing, or income insecurity.

- **Staying Safe** – *Security at all times, especially in crisis.* Improved well-being through an equitable and effective crisis response system where people and families in crisis situations are connected to effective help in a timely manner. This is shown through enhanced crisis services offered through Distress Centre Calgary. The introduction of a 24/7 text and chat line provides people in crisis additional choice and more anonymity and comfort to reveal distressing thoughts (e.g. suicidal ideation) so they can be connected to appropriate supports.

To advance the Strategy, The City serves as a convenor and investor, enabling community action and providing opportunities for continuous improvement and learning through evaluation and data gathering.

Convening for Collective Impact

The City convenes strategic groups to champion, fund, and foster integration of the Strategy. Strategy groups are varied in their membership and purpose, and include:

- A Leadership Group of sector experts, advocates, and individuals with lived experience to steward the Strategy's implementation by setting direction and making strategic connections and advocacy to other organizations and orders of government.
- Research in Action, which connects 15 mental health and addiction research projects to ensure actions and initiatives are informed by evidence, while fostering connection points between community organizations and researchers.
- Strategy Action Teams comprised of self-identified community partners working to identify gaps and opportunities to develop collective responses. Currently, five Action Teams are working in support of 21 systems-change initiatives.
- The Community Investment Table that convenes eight community funders to share sector knowledge and co-invest in initiatives addressing gaps in the mental health and addiction system of care, while allowing for stronger sector knowledge and decision-making between funders.
- The Mental Health Forum which was held in partnership with strategy groups to host more than 300 Calgarians on November 6, 2023. The inaugural Forum provided a platform to share knowledge, foster collaborations, and highlight various programmatic and research initiatives embedded within the Strategy.

The Strategy's five-year evaluation indicated that current and historic strategy groups effectively set the groundwork for collaboration, successfully identified system gaps and opportunities, advanced collaborative initiatives to significantly break down system silos, improved funding practices through collaborative funding models and modeled collective impact for the sector more broadly (Attachment 2).

Funding and Investments

In 2018, Council earmarked \$25 million in one-time funds from the Fiscal Sustainability Reserve to support the Strategy's development and implementation. With additional \$1.2 Million leveraged through the Community Investment Table, these funds were administered through the Mental Health and Addiction Investment Framework (Attachment 3) in the following ways:

- \$11.2 million for strategy development, including 18 programs and services, and 29 pilot projects.
- \$14.7 million for strategy implementation, including 43 programs and services, 32 pilot projects, and 3 targeted projects.

- In 2022, \$5.9 million of these funds were allocated to advance the strategic themes of *Being Well* and *Getting Help* (see summary of 2022 investments and impact in Attachment 4).

In 2021, the Community Safety Investment Framework was established as a collaborative funding partnership between The City and Calgary Police Service (Attachment 5). This investment supports the strategic theme of *Staying Safe* through each partner's contribution of \$8 million annually, for a total annual investment of \$16 million for programs and services that enhance and improve Calgary's response to persons in crisis.

- In 2022, due to a carryover, \$19.7 million from the Community Safety Investment Framework was invested in 48 programs, services and initiatives which advanced the strategic outcome of *Staying Safe*.

In 2023, The City and our funding partners have invested a combined \$17.4 million through the Strategy's supporting Investment Frameworks. Impact reporting for investments made throughout 2023 will be developed as reporting from community partners becomes available. A detailed list of funding allocations made in 2022 and 2023 are available in Attachment 6 and Attachment 7.

Evaluation and Impact

Evaluation to date has measured both the outcomes of the Strategy's investments and the extent to which systems and processes have been implemented effectively. In addition to improving sector and system processes through collective impact, the Strategy's five-year evaluation indicated progress on *Being Well*, *Getting Help* and *Staying Safe* in two ways:

Enhanced capacity and impact of programs and services:

Between 2019-2022, \$42 million in funding was allocated to over 230 (over 150 unique) programs and services through both the Mental Health and Addiction Investment Framework and Community Safety Investment Framework. Reporting indicated investment had a positive impact on addressing the mental health and addiction related issues affecting Calgarians. In 2022, initiatives supporting the strategic theme of *Being Well* reported 97 per cent of participants increased their understanding of how to support their family, friends and neighbours experiencing mental health concerns. Under the theme of *Getting Help*, 85 per cent of participants reported improved access to services through coordinated points of access. 55 per cent of programs and services funded to advance *Staying Safe* improved crisis triage by diverting individuals in crisis to appropriate supports in the community, rather than defaulting to police involvement or unnecessary healthcare intervention.

Advanced cross-sector collaboration

The Strategy has leveraged existing communities, task forces, and groups to identify and address the systemic barriers or gaps impacting Calgarians in *Being Well*, *Getting Help* and *Staying Safe*. Through expert panel discussions, cross-sector strategy groups, and engagement sessions, the Strategy contributed to the advancement of 18 cross-sector collaborative initiatives which were significant in breaking down system silos most recently through an inaugural Mental Health Forum in November 2023. Between 2019 and 2022, over 1,000 organizational partnerships were reported by funded organizations to provide coordinated care, improved system navigation, and increased information sharing between organizations leading to better, more responsive supports for Calgarians.

Next Steps

Moving forward, The City will continue to invest, convene, and collaborate with partners to implement Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy as part of ongoing operations. In response to Council direction, Administration will work closely with Intergovernmental Relations to develop an advocacy plan and ensure any advancements made under municipal jurisdiction complement but do not duplicate those from our provincial counterparts.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023
2. Mental Health and Addiction Strategy Evaluation Report 2023
3. Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Investment Framework
4. 2022 Mental Health and Addiction Investment Impact Summary
5. Community Safety Investment Framework
6. 2022 Investments
7. 2023 Investments

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General Manager Katie Black concurs with the information in this Briefing.