

Date: November 12, 2021

To: Guelph City Council

From: Guelph Community Health Centre

Request: That City Council approves a two-year funding commitment through an extension to the existing Community Benefits Agreement to support the ongoing operations of the Welcoming Streets Program.

Situation: The Welcoming Streets Program is completing its third year in operation, providing on-demand support and capacity building to downtown businesses, and support and connection to people spending time downtown. **This program does not currently have sustainable, base funding**, but rather has received annual funding for the past three years from various funders who all benefit from this collective impact program, including: City of Guelph, The Downtown Business Association, Guelph Police Services, and the Local Health Integration Network.

Background & Assessment: The Welcoming Streets Program began as a pilot program out of the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness three years ago with one outreach worker doing capacity building with local businesses and connecting with people spending time downtown. The objectives of the program were/are to:

- Prevent unnecessary police involvement;
- Facilitate positive relationships between business owners and vulnerable individuals;
- Ensure that street involved individuals are linked with the services they need; and
- Address concerns identified by business owners and the public about street involved individuals who may be at risk

This program has since expanded to two, full-time outreach workers who respond to business calls 5 days a week, provide information to businesses, support clients experiencing crisis, and provide access to medical care and basic needs support.

This program has also become a critical component of the strategy to create a welcoming and thriving downtown for businesses and community members as we recover and build back better as a community, from the impacts of COVID-19. Recently, the DGBA, Guelph Police and The Guelph CHC have been working together

to further align the staff across our organizations that are working downtown to create a cohesive team approach to supporting clients and businesses.

WSI has proven benefits to the community every year and has shared this outcome data with City Council and various other stakeholders:

- 2020/21: <https://create.piktochart.com/output/56578219-wsi-2020-2021>
- 2019/20: See attachment, WSI Evaluation – Infographic.

It is now time to align this program, which has demonstrated community benefit, with a sustainable funding model.

The current funding for this program will end on March 31, 2022. The risks of not funding this program include: increased calls to police from downtown businesses, economic risk to downtown businesses, and increased escalated behaviours in the downtown core.

Current Funding Request:

2022/23 – Total \$170,000

City of Guelph	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$91,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGBA - \$20,000 • GPS - \$15,000 • Guelph CHC – Remaining costs covered by one-time, in-year surplus generated by staff vacancies in the WSI program.

2023/24 – Total \$170,000

City of Guelph	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$91,000* 	<p>Option 1 - \$80,000 in health funding. Guelph CHC will advocate with Ontario Health West during FY 2022/23 for base funding and will apply for any funding opportunities that might align with the mandate of WSI program.</p> <p>Option 2 – Same funding strategy as 2022/23*.</p> <p>*If health funding is secured all partner contributions will be reassessed to determine the appropriate amounts to ensure successful program operations.</p>

Conclusion:

The Welcoming Streets Program is a critical component of creating a welcoming and thriving downtown and is working closely with police and housing partners to ensure seamless connections are being made to services that will meet the needs of clients where they are at. Approval of the next two years of funding will allow the Guelph CHC to start planning for the sustainability, evolution, and future of this program in a way that is not possible with the current funding model. It is recommended that after the 2 years of funding covered by this request, the City of Guelph and partner budgets would include ongoing, base funding for this program covered by a Community Benefit Agreement starting in April 2024.

Welcoming Streets Initiative: Snapshot of Evaluation Results

The purpose of the Welcoming Streets Initiative (WSI) is to support local businesses and street-involved individuals in the Guelph Downtown Area. WSI also offers anti-stigma and de-escalation training.

88%

of survey respondents reported that the WSI Service(s) they used were either very good or excellent

"It makes me feel more secure in dealing with future situations knowing that there are people I can call to help resolve an issue without involving the police. Thank you Welcoming Streets!!"

Key Strengths of WSI Program

- Valued service
- Supportive service
- Effective service
- Appreciated service
- Quick service
- Wish for service to continue/expand
- Friendly service
- Provides sense of safety
- Addressed needs and struggles

WSI Snapshot: By the Numbers

April 2019 - September 30, 2020

345

of calls from business received by WSI

2680

of interactions with clients

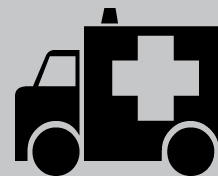
206

of individual clients served from April 1 2019 to March 31, 2020*

278

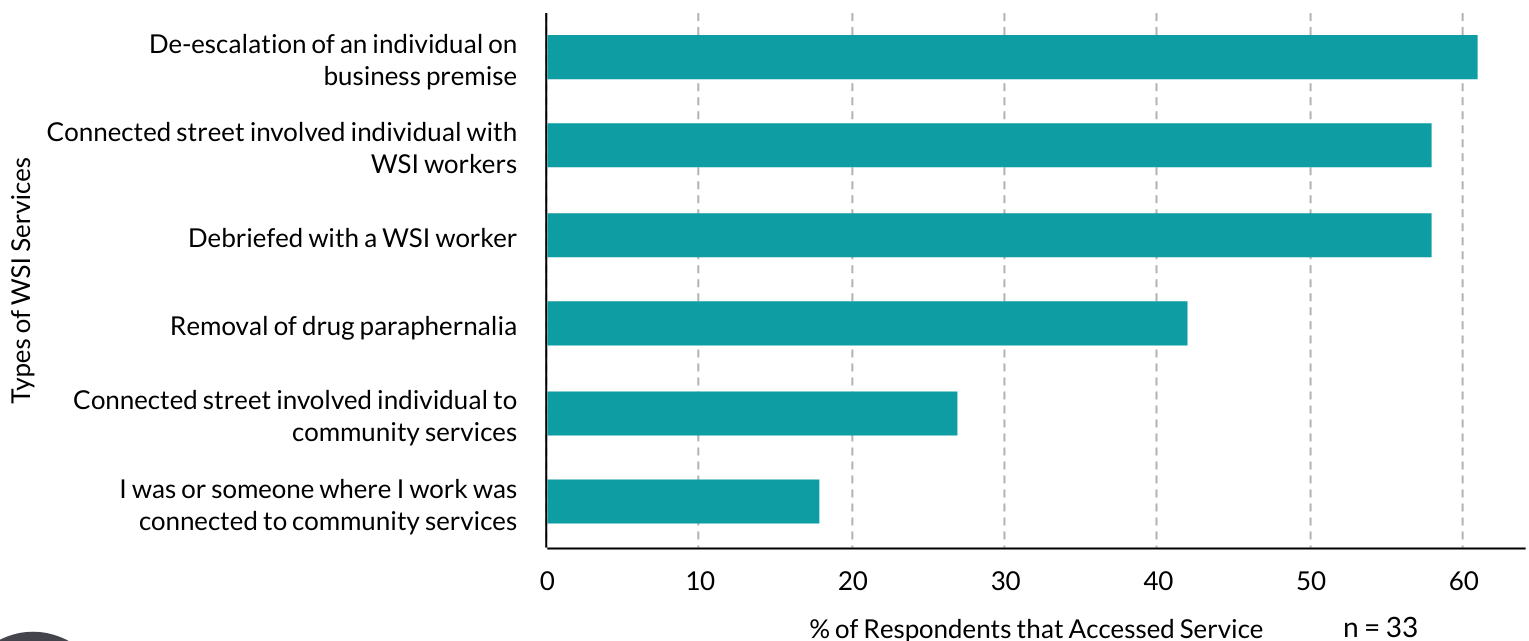
of individual clients served from April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020*

Services that Respondents Would have Accessed if WSI Did Not Exist



1. Police (Non-Emergency)
2. 911 (Police)
3. Dealt with it on their own
4. 911 (ambulance)
5. Bylaw services

Types of WSI Services Accessed



Recommendations

1 Expand WSI Services

- Increase service delivery area (expand service delivery area, increase number of staff)
- increase service hours (e.g. add evening hours)

2 Expand & Improve WSI Training

- Explore the development of an online training option
- Implement changes to current training in response to survey respondent suggestions

3 Increase Promotion of WSI Services & Training

- Use flyers/posters and/or online methods to further promote services and engage business
- Increase exposure of services to downtown business staff (e.g. speaker series, more frequent training)

"I think it is an important service that bridges a gap between policing and people getting access to services. You need to have good caring people in this role to make it work which it seems you have had"

Limitations

- Data collection methods were limited by available resources
- The survey was only available online and in English
- Response rate for some questions was low

* # of unique clients from April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020 will include some of the same individuals counted from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 (see page 1) thus the counts from these two timeframes can not be added up for a total.

60%-90% of respondents that attended training, felt mostly or completely that:

- they would apply the knowledge they learned (90%)
- the training was relevant, useful and engaging (90%)
- the training gave them new information (60%)
- they built skills (80% - 90%)
- their confidence increased (70% - 90%)

Respondents Suggestions for WSI Services & Training Improvements

- Expand service delivery
- Make it easier to get information about WSI services and training
- Expand presentation content in training
- Diversify types of media used in training
- Improve presentation handouts in training
- Consider offering training in different formats

Overview of Respondents & Information Sources

Overview of Respondents

- 92 respondents answered a survey in October & November 2019
- 38 respondents answered questions about their experience using WSI services and/or participating in the training
 - 33 of those respondents answered questions about their experiences accessing WSI services
- 54 respondents had not used WSI services or taken the training
 - These respondents mostly did not need or did not know about the WSI program
 - A small minority were not able to connect to the service or not interested

Methods

- An online survey was sent (with multiple reminders) to all Downtown Guelph Business Association members
- Postcards were delivered to downtown businesses with information about and a link to the online survey
- An additional short paper survey was given to WSI training participants
- WSI Program data from April 2019 to September 2020 was used for the *WSI Snapshot: By the Numbers*

