

Review and Gap Analysis of Housing, Substance Use & Mental Health Services for People Experiencing Homelessness in Guelph

Collective Results Inc.
September 12, 2023

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- Collective Results acknowledges that many organizations and collaborative planning tables in the community have, and continue to, lead great work in the areas of housing services, mental health services and substance use services for people experiencing homelessness.
- **This report is not intended to override those efforts, but rather to complement the work that is already underway.**

Project Background

- Urgent issues related to homelessness, mental health and substance use are increasing in the city
- The City has (and will likely continue) to receive funding requests for these services
- Current approach has been fragmented and reactionary
- Seeking a framework to support an intentional and coordinated approach
- Findings and recommendations will support City Council in the development of multi-year budget



PROJECT PURPOSE AND SCOPE: LEFT SIDE OF THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

HOUSING CONTINUUM

Guelph-Wellington



Partnered, Resourced, and Supported

Primarily administered by the County

Primarily facilitated by the City

2,000 units a year facilitated

PROJECT SCOPE

In Scope

- An analysis of the **current state, gaps and recommendations** specific to issues of homelessness, substance use and mental health in Guelph.
- **Recommendations for consideration by City Council** that consider a **system-wide approach** to these issues.
- **Specific program/service recommendations** for consideration only included for **those the City funds**.

Out of Scope

- Assessment of the **effectiveness of the service providers** within Guelph.
- Revisiting the **legally binding relationship** between the City and the County.
- Interventions focused on the **prevention** of substance use, mental health and homelessness.
- Interventions focused solely on youth **under the age of 18**.
- The **right side of the housing continuum**, including affordable housing.

PROJECT LIMITATIONS

- Point in time assessment as of **June 2023**
- A **focused validation process** occurred, as opposed to a comprehensive process with community partners and people with lived/living experience (PWLE)
- The **inventory of services** is limited to those **organizations that participated** in this data collection method
- All **survey and interview data** is a collection of **subjective perceptions and experiences**
- **PWLE interviews** were conducted in key **downtown locations; self-selection bias**
- **System wide scan** focused on other **Ontario municipalities**, excluded academic scholars

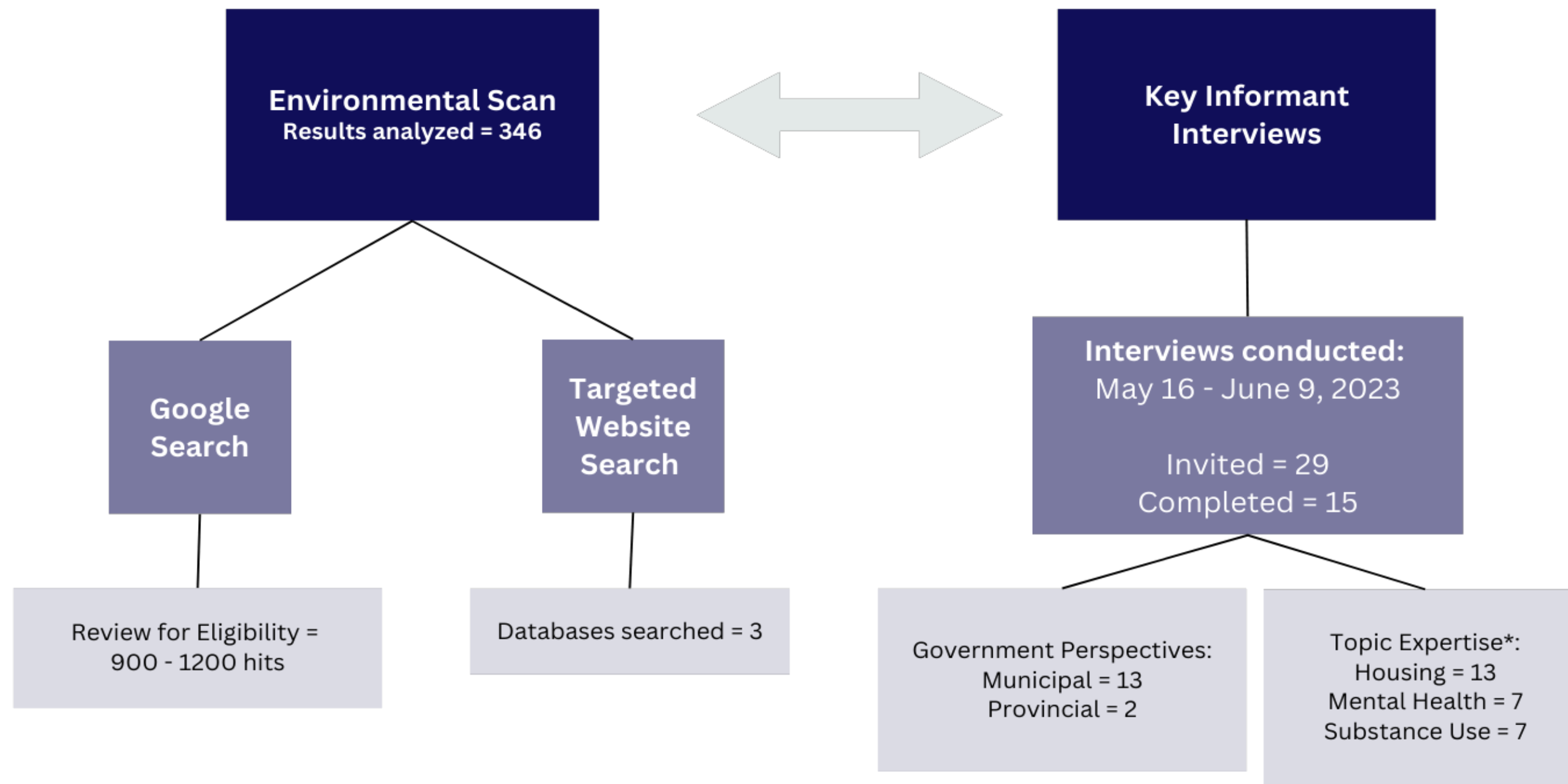
APPROACH: LOCAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Purpose: To determine the local current state of services and funding, and to identify gaps and areas of opportunity.



APPROACH: SYSTEM WIDE SCAN

Purpose: To determine services and funding at the federal, provincial, and municipal-levels (similar-sized communities) and to identify innovative/emerging best practices.



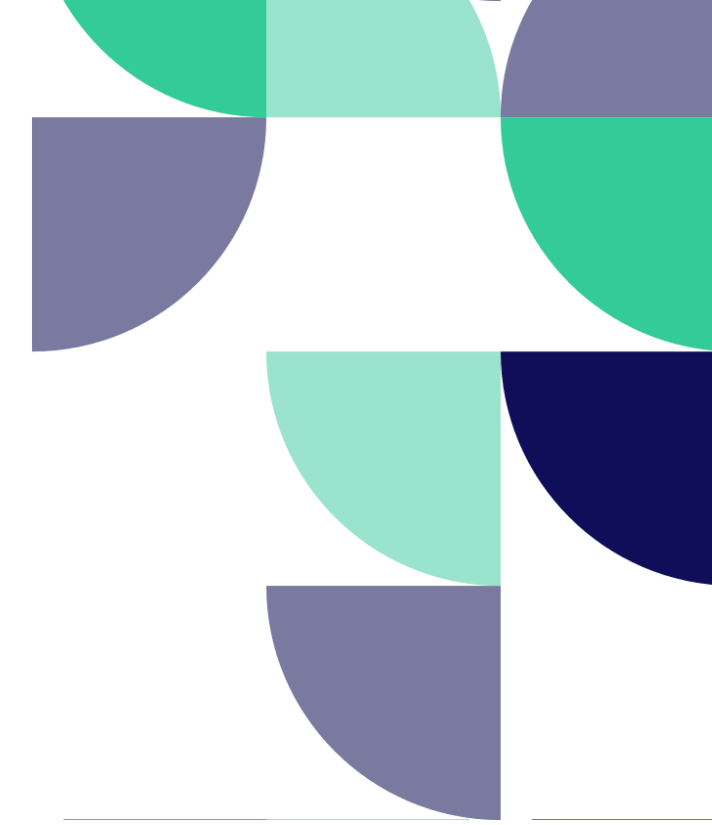
*One person could have multiple areas of expertise

KEY FINDINGS

SOME THINGS ARE WORKING WELL

- Understanding **community need**
 - Example: By-Name List
- Community **partnerships** and **relationships**
 - Examples: Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy; formal agreements between CMHA & Stonehenge
- Local commitment to provide **best practices** and use of **local data**
 - Example: FAST Overdose Alert Platform

SOME AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFIED



- **Access to local programs, services**
 - Long wait lists
 - Housing supports (e.g., permanent supportive housing)
 - Mental health services (e.g., psychiatry, psychology, rehabilitation services)
 - Substance use services (e.g., withdrawal management, rehabilitation services)
 - Not always equitable
 - Offered during traditional work hours
 - Limited public ward beds available for residential treatment programs
- **Low-barrier spaces** for adults experiencing homelessness
- **Adequate funding, supports to meet growing needs**
 - More complex cases; Increase in breadth of complexity
 - Staff burnout, trauma

SOME AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFIED

- Focus on **acquiring stable housing first**
 - Emphasis on supportive housing, wraparound services
- A **collaborative, systems level approach**
 - Integration of housing and health sectors
 - Within service sectors
- Clarity on **roles, accountability**
 - Example: County, City

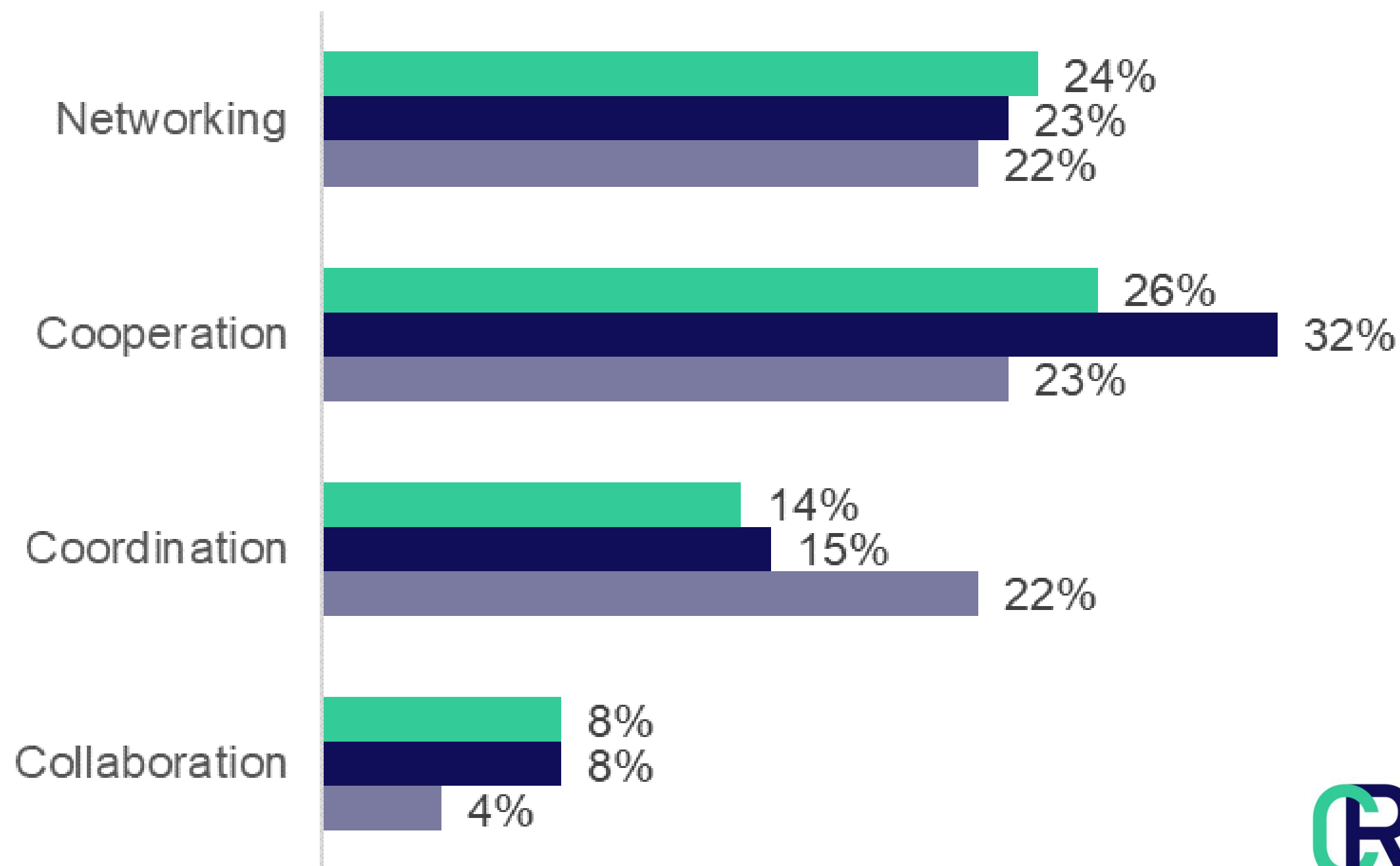


The current state of community partnership is mainly **networking** and **cooperation**

Substance Use

Mental Health

Housing

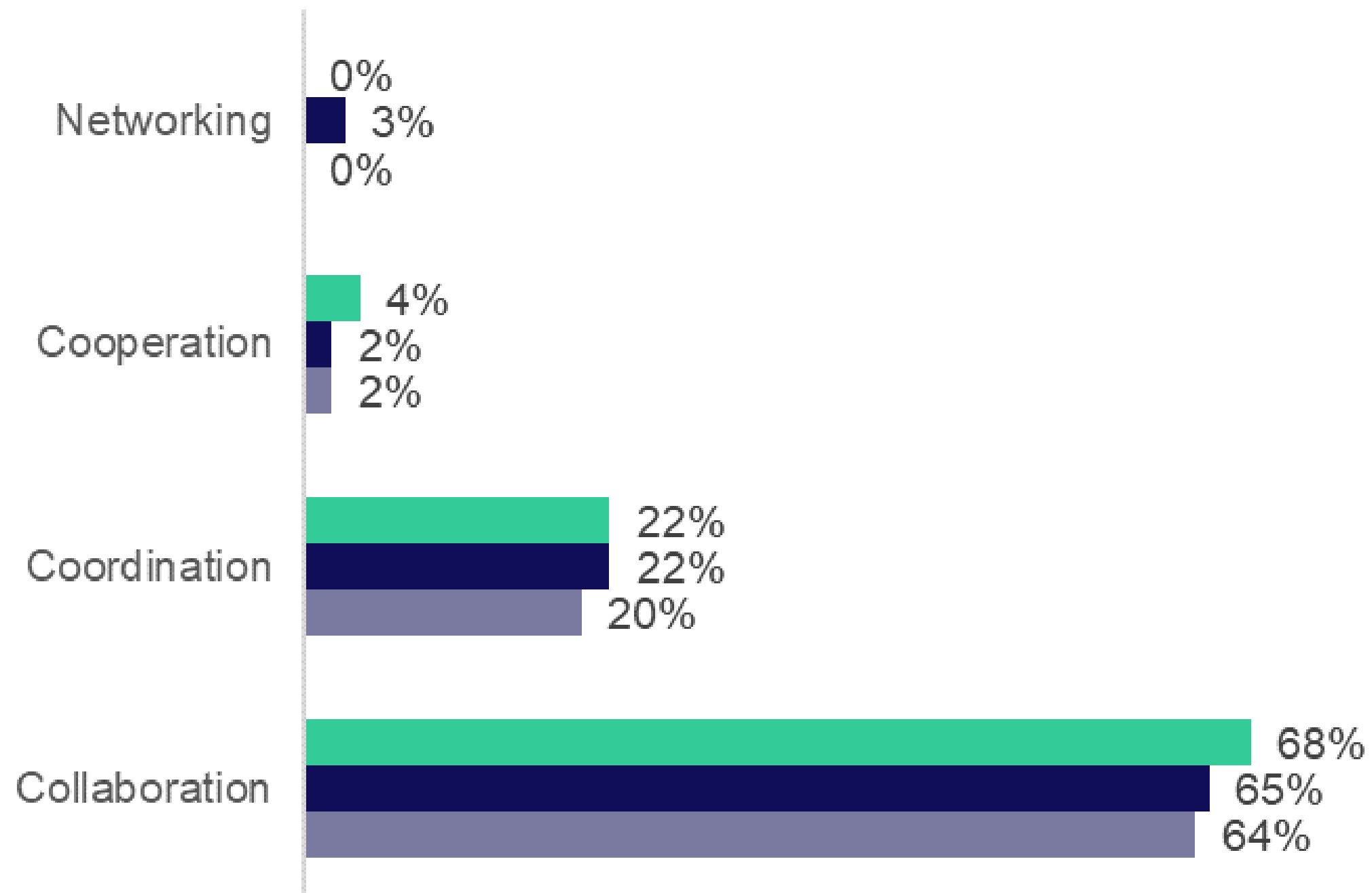


The ideal future state of community partnership is **collaboration**

Substance Use

Mental Health

Housing





RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

- 6** SYSTEM LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS
- 3** HOUSING FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS
- 4** HEALTH SERVICES FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS
- 13** TOTAL RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

Systems Level



System Recommendation 1

The City of Guelph adopt a **human rights-based approach** to housing (with Housing First built in) to align with the National Housing Strategy.



System Recommendation 1: Human-Rights Based Approach to Housing

Based on the following key takeaway:

A human rights-based approach to housing needs to be prioritized in Guelph. This approach will provide the City with the needed framework, rooted in legislation (the National Housing Strategy Act, 2021), to support people experiencing homelessness in the community.



System Recommendation 1: Human-Rights Based Approach to Housing

How this could be operationalized:

- Long-term vision for housing, focusing on housing outcomes for the most vulnerable
- Education for City Councillors and Staff
 - Informed decisions, critically evaluate requests and recommendations
 - Enhanced accountability
- Complement the County's mandate, 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Support intergovernmental collaboration



System Recommendation 2

Council requests that the Government of Ontario develop and adopt a **provincial housing strategy with measurable targets** and **sufficient funds** for ending homelessness and ensuring access of all Ontarians, including those of limited income, to housing of an adequate standard without discrimination. It should also take into consideration the needs of Indigenous people, LGBTQ2S+ people, people with disabilities including mental illness, women experiencing domestic violence, lone parents, immigrants and newcomers and people living in poverty or with low incomes.



System Recommendation 2: Provincial Housing Strategy Advocacy

Based on the following key takeaway:

Funding barriers currently exist for an integrated systems approach to occur. Greater investments and flexibility with how and where funding can be used is required across all service areas to meet community needs.



System Recommendation 3

Council requests that the Guelph Wellington Ontario Health Team work with the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination to:

- a. plan for the **integration of health services in the housing sector** (wraparound supports)
- b. address the community need for **permanent supportive housing**

This planning should include City, County and Ontario Health West representation and be aligned with provincial direction and/or strategy.



System Recommendation 3: Local Collaboration

Based on the following key takeaways:

- There is a need for greater collaboration and systems level planning to support integration of housing services, mental health services and substance use services for people experiencing homelessness. There is a lack of alignment across these service areas locally, with a siloed approach.
- There is a need to focus on permanent supportive housing, including investments in both capital and operational expenditures, along with outcome evaluation measures built in to best support the most vulnerable in our community. This type of investment would support a human rights-based approach to housing.





System Recommendation 4

Council requests the County of Wellington, in collaboration with local municipalities and local health organizations, jointly **advocate to the Ministry of Health** to provide accessible base funding to support **wraparound health supports** on the left side of the housing continuum.



System Recommendation 4: Wraparound Health Supports Advocacy

Based on the following key takeaway:

While there is an identified need to better integrate mental health services and substance use services with the left side of the housing continuum, there are funding limitations from the Ministry of Health to integrate these services.



System Recommendation 5

Council requests that the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Board of Health lead an ongoing, **comprehensive outcome evaluation** of the systems level approach to homelessness (housing, mental health and substance use focus), whether it be working with the Guelph Wellington Ontario Health Team or with the City and the County.

System Recommendation 5: Comprehensive Outcome Evaluation

Based on the following key takeaways:

- There is a need for greater collaboration and systems level planning to support integration of housing services, mental health services and substance use services for people experiencing homelessness. There is a lack of alignment across these service areas locally, with a siloed approach.
- There are only a few examples of programs across the province that attempt to measure the impact and outcomes of housing services for people experiencing homelessness. Measurement tends to focus on process measures (e.g., number of people, costs etc.) as opposed to client outcomes. This limits our understanding of how the overall system, including specific services within the system, meet/do not meet immediate and long-term outcomes.



System Recommendation 6

Council requests that the Chamber of Commerce approach developers to donate **land for housing needs and wraparound services** on the left side of the housing continuum including, but not limited to, emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing and wellness hubs.

The City must be prepared to facilitate the required approvals connected with these opportunities. This should directly connect with the local collaborative plans (see System Recommendation 3).



System Recommendation 6: Land for Housing Needs

Based on the following key takeaways:

- Greater investments and flexibility with how and where funding can be used is required across all service areas to meet community needs.
- There is a lack of daytime low-barrier locations for people with substance issues to go to for social support, recreational opportunities, safe consumption and support services (e.g., similar to the Grove Youth Wellness Hub, but for adults). The Kingston Integrated Care Hub is a promising model that provides this type of support in one location.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing Focused



Housing Recommendation 1

Council requests the following to establish **clarity and accountability** regarding the City and the County's role in the housing continuum:

- a. **A review of the governance model** of the County of Wellington's Social Services Committee
- b. **Updated service level agreements**, with measurable outcomes, key performance indicators and clear expectations for reporting process and frequency
- c. The City of Guelph should **hire a dedicated role** to support (a), (b), and the implementation of a human rights-based approach to housing (see System Recommendation 1). This role should be an active member of the County of Wellington's Community Advisory Board.



Housing Recommendation 1: Accountability

Based on the following key takeaways:

- In Wellington County, homelessness is most visible in Guelph. For this reason, services on the far left of the housing continuum (e.g., emergency shelters) are all based in Guelph. This has led to confusion regarding roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and ownership of the left side of the housing continuum from partners and the community.
- The identified lack of a systems level collaborative approach to housing has and will continue to impact the ability to develop and implement community-based solutions in Guelph. A systems level collaborative model requires a commitment to a shared vision, accountability, defined mandates and roles.



Housing Recommendation 1: Accountability

How this could be operationalized:

- Review of City representation on the Social Services Committee
- Review of City representation on the Community Advisory Board
- Regular reporting from the County to the City





Housing Recommendation 2

Council requests that City staff undertake a review of the **City's role and process in informing funding decisions** for housing services on the left-side of the housing continuum (this includes funding for daytime shelter space).

This should directly connect with a human rights-based approach to housing (see System Recommendation 1), the local collaborative plans (see System Recommendation 3), and the City's role in the housing continuum (see Housing Recommendation 1).

Housing Recommendation 2:

City's Role and Process to Fund Housing

Based on the following key takeaways:

- The identified lack of a systems level collaborative approach to housing has and will continue to impact the ability to develop and implement community-based solutions in Guelph. A systems level collaborative model requires a commitment to a shared vision, accountability, defined mandates and roles.
- Funding for housing services on the left side of the housing continuum was a noted challenge across municipalities in Ontario. Some municipalities are looking for creative ways to flow housing funds into the community to best meet community needs.



Housing Recommendation 3

To be reviewed in Closed Session with Council.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Health Services Focused



Health Services Recommendation 1

Council requests that City staff provide CMHA Waterloo Wellington with a **letter of support** for the funding application to the Ministry of Health for a **regional alternate care destination clinic**.



Health Services

Recommendation 1:

Support a Regional Alternate Care Destination Clinic

Based on the following key takeaways:

- The Alternate Care Destination Model (in London, Ontario) is an emerging best practice approach to provide mental health services outside of a hospital setting. Community partners in Guelph are preparing a funding proposal with support from Ontario Health West for this model to be developed and implemented in Guelph. There is not currently a dedicated funding stream to support this model.
- There is a lack of discharge planning for hospital/rehabilitation programs to community-based mental health services and supports. This was noted as a system gap in the system wide scan in other communities as well.
- There is a lack of discharge planning for hospital/rehabilitation programs to community-based substance use services and supports.



Health Services Recommendation 2

Council requests that the Ministry of Health provide **clarity on how all mental health services in Guelph are funded**, including community based services, hospital/residential services and public-private models of care, to determine if the funding model impacts **equitable access** to mental health services in Guelph.



Health Services Recommendation 2: Equitable Access to Mental Health Services

Based on the following key takeaway:

The most vulnerable in our community without the means to pay out of pocket for services experience challenges and barriers in accessing mental health services.



Health Services Recommendation 3

Council supports the Guelph Police Service (GPS) and CMHA Waterloo Wellington's second application to the Solicitor General for [Here 24/7 & IMPACT funding](#).

Council requests that GPS provide a copy of the written submission to City staff when it has been finalized, so that staff may provide a letter of support on behalf of Council.



Health Services Recommendation 3: Support for Crisis Response Funding

Based on the following key takeaway:

Challenges were noted in the crisis response system, including inconsistent response times for the IMPACT program and Here 24/7.



Health Services Recommendation 4

Council requests that the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy continue to address known **substance use service barriers** including, but not limited to, funding, access and waitlists, to improve substance use services available to vulnerable populations within Guelph.



Health Services

Recommendation 4:

Substance Use Service Barriers

Based on the following key takeaways:

- The most vulnerable in our community experience barriers in accessing substance use services.
- There is a lack of discharge planning for hospital/rehabilitation programs to community-based substance use services and supports. System navigation has been identified as a gap and is essential to support movement through the system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who participated in this study from April 2023 - June 2023, including people with lived/living experience, community partners and City staff.

Thank you to City Council for receiving this report and presentation.

We welcome any questions that you may have.



THANK YOU

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