

Wellbeing Waterloo Region

An overview of the initiative

Spring 2021

Background

Why a collective Community Wellbeing Initiative?

Community wellbeing is shaped by a wide variety of conditions and systems in which individuals and communities are born, grow, work, live, and age. So what is community wellbeing? Public health researchers Wiseman and Brasher define community wellbeing as:

The combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfill their potential. When looking at the community as a whole, there are three attributes that play a large role in wellbeing: connectedness, livability, and equity.

Because of this complexity, there is the realization that no single organization, government or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex conditions or systems to impact community wellbeing. We need to work together to create transformative change and truly improve community wellbeing to ensure that no one gets left behind.

The reason we are pursuing a community wellbeing initiative – the “WHY” – could be summarized as follows:

- *We are trying to do together what no organization has accomplished or can accomplish on its own.*
- *We want to create new, significant and impactful solutions across the wellbeing system,*
- *We wish to work together to identify, amplify, advocate and address collective priorities to improve community wellbeing so that everyone in our community is able to thrive, and no one is left behind.*

Summary Overview

Wellbeing Waterloo Region (WWR) is a community-led collaborative initiative where members work together across sectors to improve the wellbeing of residents in Waterloo Region. WWR's members come from all parts, rural and urban, of Waterloo Region, representing local residents with various lived and living experiences and over 70 organizations.

Vision – What We Aspire To

A community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind.

Mission – Why We Exist

We are a diverse network working together differently to make transformational change in community wellbeing. We are able to impact wellbeing together in a way that we are unable to alone.

Mandate – What We Do

We CARE:

Convene and connect: our diverse community to leverage local assets, increase alignment, and advocate to overcome challenges to wellbeing collectively.

Amplify and align: existing efforts to promote and focus attention where transformational change is needed in community wellbeing across the region.

Respond and act: actively develop new solutions and actions to address community issues.

Educate and enhance knowledge: to learn from one another and understand system wide issues and address inequities.

Principles – our commitment of how we work together:

Courageous:

Having ongoing critical reflections to help us look at issues in new and different ways rather than accept the status quo.

Dynamic:

Continuously learning, adapting and improving our mutually reinforcing actions through the use of data, shared measurement and community input.

Equitable

All voices matter equally and we will provide supports and opportunities so everyone has the chance to become meaningfully involved.

Transformational:

Move beyond existing organizational and collaborative efforts through fostering trusting relationships and a culture of mutual respect in which new opportunities and knowledge can be harnessed.

What we are

- Community collaborative
- Connect and convene people on issues of importance to the community
- Amplify issues and supports
- Respond with actions that fill a gap
- Educate system wide to shine a light on and reduce inequities
- Informed and diverse leaders from multiple community sectors
- Experts with lived and professional experience

What we are not

- Direct service provider
- Hierarchy with a Board of directors
- Duplicate of other community work

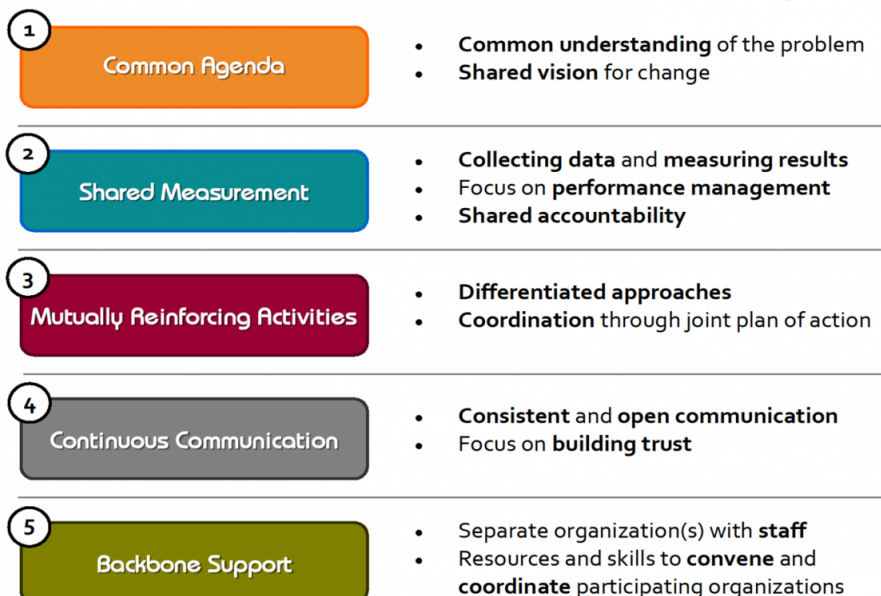
The Planning Approach

Collective Impact has been used as the approach to plan the work and structure of Wellbeing Waterloo Region – although we do not call this a “collective impact initiative”. Collective Impact provides a structured approach to work on complex issues and achieve significant and lasting social change by multiple sectors coming together on a common agenda, shared measurement and alignment of effort.

The approach is premised on the belief that no single policy, government department, organization or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex social problems we face as a society.

Consistent and open communication and building trust amongst the stakeholders is integral throughout the process. John Kania & Mark Kramer identified five key conditions for a successful Collective Impact approach which have been incorporated into the Wellbeing Waterloo Region approach and process.

The 5 Conditions of Collective Impact



Areas of Focus – our priorities

In order to be responsive to community needs and context Wellbeing Waterloo Region identifies a limited number of priority areas for collective action every couple of years. There are many areas that Wellbeing Waterloo Region could focus on, and in order to determine where to place the current focus. These criteria help to funnel or choose where to place the upcoming focus. These areas will change when the external context changes (e.g., COVID-19) or when priority area actions have been accomplished.



The following criteria were identified by the community to help WWR focus and align its work:

- **Builds on existing energy**, assets and initiatives and does not duplicate.
- Implements actions and focus that are **upstream and prevention** oriented aimed at the root causes of a population health problem or benefit.
- **Fosters equity** and addresses and focuses on people in greatest need.
- Is **based on evidence** and is supported by data and community input.
- Will have **multiple impacts** on many challenges and issues in the community.
- Will be **measurable** including goals, actions and outcomes.
- Foster **community engagement** and involves multiple sectors.
- Greatest potential for **meaningful change**.

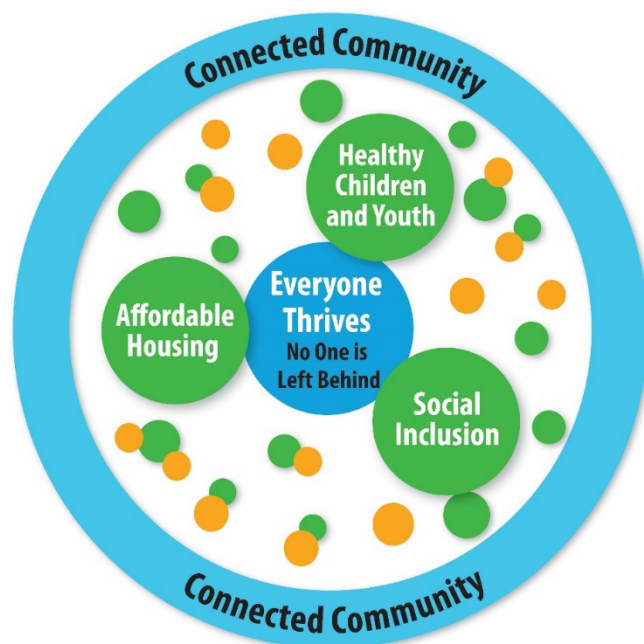
Focus – 2019-2020

From January 2019 to December 31 2020 Wellbeing Waterloo Region worked on three priority areas with many actions and outcomes:

- **Affordable Housing**: Everyone has a place to call home.
- **Healthy Children and Youth**: All children and youth have the foundation they need to thrive and reach their potential.
- **Social Inclusion**: A welcoming region that embraces diversity, reduces social isolation, enhances relationships and enables belonging.

There have been many achievements over the past two years (see appendix 1) with groups and partners aligning, amplifying and creating new actions in these focus areas.

For 2021 WWR is ready to respond to the emerging community context and identify and develop new actions under refreshed but related goal areas based on evolving community needs.



Focus – 2021-2023

There are three areas that Wellbeing Waterloo Region will be focusing on over the next two years in order to improve wellbeing. Each focus area has a series of actions and measures which are interconnected and work together to achieve the vision of *a community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind*. These are described in more detail on subsequent pages. The three areas of focus are:

1. **Connected community:** Work together to amplify priority areas and impact wellbeing in a way we are unable to alone.
2. **Reduce inequities:** Identify priorities, intentionally educate, advocate and develop new solutions that will address inequities and work towards reconciliation.
3. **Measure and monitor wellbeing:** Measure, identify gaps and disaggregate data to mobilize and understand inequities and collective wellbeing.



Focus Area 1: Connected Community: Work together to amplify priority areas and impact wellbeing in a way we are unable to alone.

Complex problems require a collaborative community effort to be successful. In order to tackle complex issues of community wellbeing and create meaningful and transformational change, we will need to create the structure and actions to intentionally focus on strengthening individual and network connections. This is a necessary foundation for addressing any of the big ideas by breaking down siloes, leveraging local assets and mobilizing collective action. Connecting within and across will give us the relationships, support and instill trust in order to be the change we wish to see.

Objectives	Actions: CARE	Resources needed
1.1 Convene and connect our diverse community to leverage local assets, increase alignment, identify gaps and overcome challenges and in wellbeing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community forums to strengthen connections, amplify issues and mobilize for collective action – both virtual and face-to-face. 2. Ad hoc meetings to plan and move actions forward. 3. Continue the stipend program for lived experience in WWR working group members. 	Funding for stipends Zoom licences or meeting expenses
1.2 Amplify and align existing efforts to promote and focus attention where transformational change is needed in community wellbeing across the region.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Website, social media promotions and information sharing. 2. Production of bi-weekly newsletter 3. Host community wellbeing symposiums 	Communications back bone staff – PT Communications ad hoc working group – meet as needed
1.3 Create, support, promote and connect people to wellbeing services, tools and resources.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Children and Youth Planning Table and other community partners to update 211 or develop other platforms that will be a “go to” source of all wellbeing services and programs for our community to access 2. Continue to develop and maintain the website and resources that provide coping tools, services, events, and other supports for community members who are feeling isolated or stressed during the pandemic. 	Budget for development and maintenance of information Backbone staff support
1.4 Support community connection to prevent isolation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot the Friendly Voice telephone support line in collaboration with Carizon for a one year period. 2. Help to support hope and resilience and hope during the winter months of the pandemic. Give messages of hope and encouragement, as a community we did good work. Share widely the heartfelt positives on how citizens are looking out for each other. 	Communications back bone staff Campaign support

Focus Area 2: Reduce inequities: Identify priorities, intentionally educate, advocate and develop new solutions that will address inequities and work towards reconciliation.

An equitable community is one where everyone is included in the full benefits of society. In such a community, everyone is treated with fairness and justice participates fully in social, cultural, and economic life. And the evidence is strong that individuals thrive in these types of communities. Social scientists summarize the research, noting that: *"People in more egalitarian countries live longer and have better health outcomes."* We know that is not the case for everyone in Waterloo Region. People living with a low income, Indigenous communities, people living with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, racial and ethnic minorities, and women are all examples of groups that experience inequities and disproportionate negative health outcomes.

Providing education on the legacies of inequities helps systems and services become conscious of the root causes of inequities. This awareness creates the desire to move to actions that create changes in our systems, processes and organizations and remove inequities. Wellbeing Waterloo Region is committed to developing meaningful relationships with First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities. WWR is committed to working together on **Actions** in order to understand the legacy of residential schools and colonization and advance the process of reconciliation.

Objectives	Actions: CARE	Resources needed
2.1 Respond and advocate to develop new solutions to address inequities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through connections within and external to WWR, to advocate for and collaborate in the development of equity and anti-oppressive frameworks/strategy. 2. Advocate for supports for people (e.g. income security, basic income – ongoing CERB). 3. Advocate for access to technology - Need for the technology, wifi and digital literacy so people can keep connected and informed. Especially older adults, people living on a low income. 4. Advocate on issues, programs and policies to increase access to affordable housing. 	Budget for staff or consultant in partnership with other collaboratives.
2.2 Educate and enhance knowledge to learn from one another to intentionally understand system wide issues and address inequities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement equity training for the wellbeing network to understand the legacies of inequity and racial injustice – part 2. 2. Share equity focused resources, events and tools with WWR network. 3. Bring together partners to host conversations that raise awareness and address inequities. 	Budget for training Budget for facilitators

Objectives	Actions: CARE	Resources needed
2.3 Support the mobilization and network of the First Nations, Metis, Inuit communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the First Nation Metis, Inuit Advisory and Advocacy Circle logistics and actions. 2. Maintain an updated list of local resources available for First Nations, Metis and Inuit community agencies. 	Backbone staff – part time
2.4 Work towards reconciliation by implementing training, education and tools on the impacts of colonization.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and conduct a report card for organizations to assess their understanding and implementation of services for the Indigenous community in Waterloo region. 2. In collaboration with the local Indigenous community, implement training, education and tools to the working groups of WWR on Indigenous culture and history, the impacts of colonization as well as provide opportunities for reflection on how to work towards reconciliation. 	Budget for training

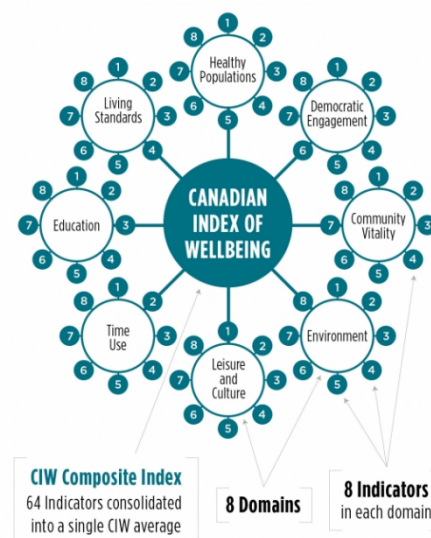
Focus Area 3: Measure and monitor wellbeing and disaggregate data to mobilize and understand inequities and collective wellbeing.

Over the past two years Wellbeing Waterloo Region developed a coordinated measuring and monitoring approach to measure community wellbeing in Waterloo Region based on the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW). This framework has a commonly agreed upon set of indicators of community wellbeing in order to:

- Understand the status of wellbeing in Waterloo Region at the system level
- Identify gaps in wellbeing data
- Understand which groups experience inequities in health outcomes
- Tell us over time whether community wellbeing is improving

The CIW was chosen as it is:

- Holistic and measures wellbeing across a wide spectrum of domains.
- Research teams and citizens from across the country were engaged to develop the indicators.
- A number of communities are already using the CIW.
- The CIW is already used and supported locally.
- It is Canadian based and home grown – University of Waterloo.



The CIW provided coaching support to the WWR Measurement and Monitoring working group in order to identify the indicators to add to the measurement framework. Several reports were published as a starting point for our measurement system.

Objectives	Actions: CARE	Resources needed
3.1 Monitor, measure and track community Wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate a region wide data measurement and monitoring group link work on all aspects of measuring wellbeing. 2. Continue work on commonly agreed upon set of indicators of community wellbeing and report on results to mobilize action 3. Conduct a community survey on perceptions of wellbeing. 4. Develop an online portal of data for community to access 	Budget for survey would be needed for 2022

Objectives	Actions: CARE	Resources needed
3.2 Disaggregate data to identify health disparities and inequities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify gaps in data 2. Ensure that data collected represents our community and amplifies the voice and perspective of people experiencing health inequities 3. Advocate to collect data that helps to identify wellbeing inequities 4. Collect and report on disaggregated data 5. Advocate and work to remove barriers that are identified through the data 	
3.3 Share data and produce reports on community wellbeing to inspire and mobilize community action.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Host data sense-making sessions 2. Produce community wellbeing reports 	Meeting spaces and facilitation

Historical Timeline

