



United Way  
Toronto

**Landscape of Toronto's Youth System: *Fragmented paths to youth development***

**Presentation by Tazim Virani, November 25, 2009**



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# Purpose of the Research Project

- Determine the extent to which **policy and program coherence** existed in youth services and supports in Toronto
- Use the findings from the research project to **inform** public policy, advocacy, convening activities and funding priorities



# Guiding Research Questions

- **What were the existing policies, frameworks, and funding structures?**
- **What were the gaps and disconnects in/for youth services, programs and policies?**
- **What were the promising practices and opportunities to address the gaps and disconnects?**



# Methodology

- **Environmental Scan**
- **Literature Review**
- **Synthesis & Analysis**
- **Preliminary Findings**
- **Validation with Stakeholders**
- **Final Report**
- **Dissemination of Findings**





# Findings



# Findings



Without you, there would be no way.

# Context

- **Demographic changes in the suburb**
  - Increase in younger youth in suburbs by 92%
  - Increased diversity of youth
  - Necessity for responding to changing needs
  - Connecting with hard to reach youth



# Approaches to Serving Youth

- Multiple theoretical approaches to serving youth
- Prevailing deficit based approach to youth
- It's not too late – changing the mindset



# Policy

- **Three levels** of government & multiple NGOs' policies impact Toronto's youth system.
- Policies are **varied** and focus on facilitating individual policy maker's objectives.
- **Different objectives** results in fragmentation in approaches, gaps in addressing needs and **lack of integration** across programs and services.



Without you, there would be no way.

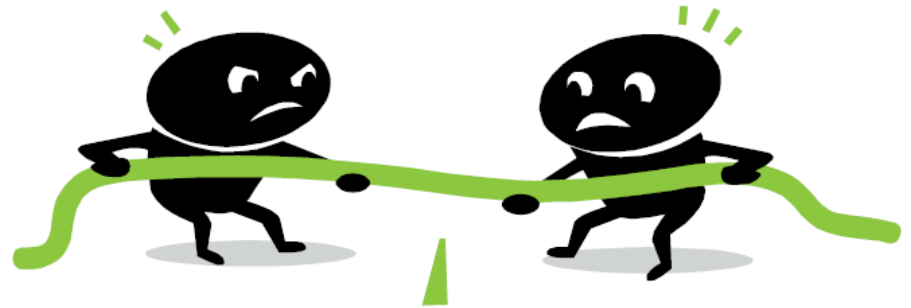
# Policy

- No overarching policy framework
- Working in silos



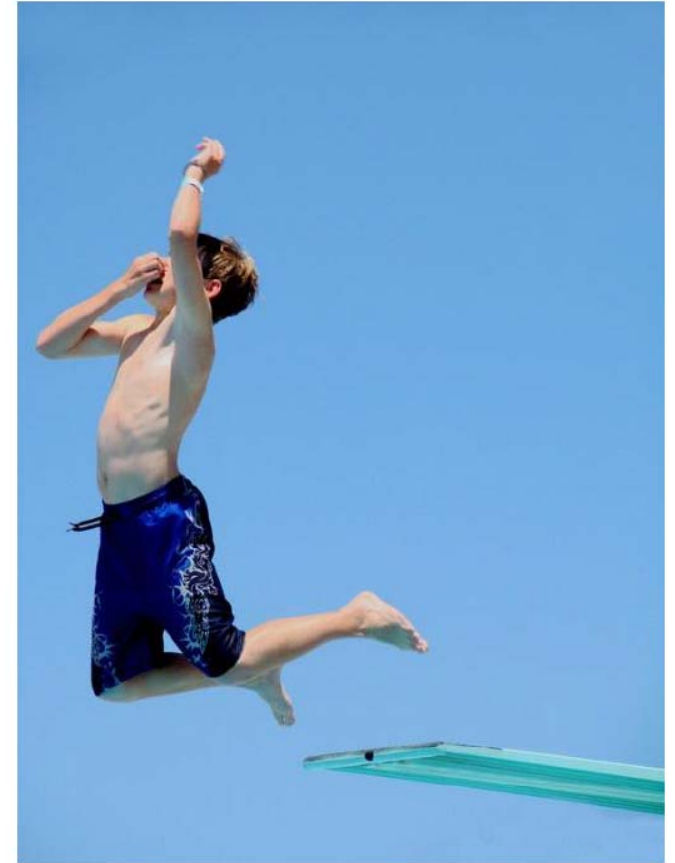
# Funding

- Funding from 3 levels of government, NGO, Other
- Environment of competition



# Programs & Services

- Difficulty accessing programs
- Challenges to holistic response
- Fun not seen as important
- Decentralization/  
Centralization



# Validation Findings

- Funding structures **prevent holistic approaches**, reinforce working in silos, problem focused approaches, and environment of competition.
- Need to set youth as **priority at all levels** and matched with appropriate investments.
- **Youth involvement** in decision making, policy formation and program planning is important.
- Need to provide support for **advocacy, collaboration** and ensuring that diverse youth and parent voices are heard as well as from grassroots organizations.

# Validation Findings: Cont'd

- **Disconnect between what is said and what is done:** Prescriptive approaches, hierarchy of relationships between organizations and lack of core values of collaboration, trust, openness, etc.
- Need to support **innovation and creativity** at policy and programmatic levels with service providers/staff who are appropriately skilled, flexible and who can develop sustainable relationships with youth.
- Support for **research** to establish grounding for best practices.

# Overall Conclusions

- **Youth need to be taken seriously**
  - Maintain high priority on youth
  - Match with serious time, resources and funding
  - Long term perspective
  - Collaboration between stakeholders –involve youth and their parents



# Overall Conclusions

- **Address systemic issues**
  - Need clear **vision**
  - Reorganization of system with youth at the centre –**start with where youth are** –at schools -but don't forget those who are not in schools
  - Maintain essence of community development and **grassroots** organization's key contribution
  - Need **infrastructural oversight** –e.g. youth supra council –funded, provided with authority with key role in **coordination**, supporting **collaboration and monitoring** of system level indicators, ensuring essential services/programs are maintained in the system

# Overall Conclusions

- **Consolidate best practices/research and disseminate**
  - Inform system level changes, policy, programs
  - Encourage sharing and cross sector learning





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**Will Wait for Discussion**

