

## Backgrounder

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### Youth Reports Key Findings:

#### *Toronto's Youth Serving System: Fragmented paths to youth development*

The report examined youth policy and program coherence. It provides a review of the systems and policy structures across the Toronto youth-serving sector.

#### Key findings:

- Despite numerous innovative and responsive youth programs and services, accessibility and availability (service coverage) remain key concerns
- Lack of coordination and alignment within the sector creates gaps in service felt most acutely by vulnerable youth or, duplication of services creating confusion for parents and youth.
- Responses to youth issues are reactive instead of being sustained proactive responses to broad youth issues.
- Most current initiatives focus on short-term solutions and are developed with narrow mandates, creating a “flavour of the month” dynamic, which restricts long-term planning.
- Typically, youth funding is short-term, project-based and intervention-focused promoting competition between organizations rather than encouraging collaboration to achieve the best possible results for youth.
- The implication of the fragmentation experienced by the youth sector is great. Service continuity, program accessibility and resource allocation are compromised, limiting the impact that can be achieved.

#### Conclusions:

- Support for long-term youth development requires long-term prioritization and significant resource investment.
- Systemic causes of fragmentation need to be addressed to better serve youth.
- Best practices and research need to be consolidated and shared to improve policy development and system-wide learning.

## ***Youth Policy: What Works and What Doesn't***

The report is a review of youth policy frameworks examining how different jurisdictions approach youth policy. Formal policy responses to systemic youth issues were examined from 11 jurisdictions at the local, regional and national levels from across Canada and internationally.

This report identifies the approaches governments can take to contribute to long-term, positive outcomes for youth.

### **Key findings:**

- Developing a comprehensive, outcomes-based approach to youth development is the first step to effectively coordinate and integrate investments in youth. No such framework exists in Toronto or Ontario.
- Inter-governmental service coordination and collaboration is critical to minimize service gaps and duplication.
- Youth polices with narrow mandates and limited target populations create barriers to addressing broader youth development needs.
- Responding to the needs, aspirations and expectations of youth is essential for developing youth-relevant and youth-friendly policies.
- Both Quebec and the United Kingdom have youth strategies in place with measurable indicators for youth success and set out the specific actions needed to achieve desired outcomes for youth. Both reports also outline how the federal or national government will work with and support local authorities and their partners to achieve results.

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