YOUTH STRATEGY SERVICES REPORT

for the

COMMUNITY OF
WASAGA
BEACH

TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH • INCORPORATED 1974

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Executive summary

The Town of Wasaga Beach hired The Students Commission of Canada to engage youth and adults from various organizations in the community in developing a Youth Strategy. A Working Group of youth and adults in the community, with the Students Commission's assistance, mapped resources and strengths in the community, identified gaps and aspirations, and developed key strategic priorities, with specific recommendations.

Frameworks and evidence

The Town had identified that youth needed to develop positively in four areas of physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth and it wanted to understand current resources serving youth in these areas and gaps that needed to be filled.

Three evidence-based frameworks have informed the mapping of strengths and gaps and the development of the proposed Strategy. First was the **Play Works** Youth Friendly Community criteria, which if communities meet the criteria, can earn the community the designation of Youth Friendly Community at various levels of bronze, silver, gold and platinum. http://www.playworkspartnership.ca/

Second was **Stepping Up**, the previous Government of Ontario's evidence-based strategic framework for improving youth outcomes. It is a guide for decision-making, program planning and partnerships so that everyone involved in supporting youth between 12 and 25, can work together through a common, shared approach. Even though some of the outcome priorities or language about them may shift with the current government, the Stepping Up framework is based on some extensive research and youth development maps outlined in **Stepping Stones**, which was the research basis for Stepping Up and is still actively front and centre on the Ministry of Children and Youth's current website. http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/steppingup/index.aspx http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/steppingstones/youth_policy.aspx

Finally, the Strategy references **Youth Who Thrive,** an extensive literature review that summarizes the critical factors and effective programs that support youth ages 12-25 in thriving throughout life and through critical life stages**.** (youthwhothrive.ca)

Strengths and resources

In terms of strengths, the YMCA and Wasaga Beach library were both seen as resources greatly contributing to the healthy development of youth.

Gaps

When identifying gaps, having a space to access and gain knowledge on resources in the community was an idea that came up many times. Resources exist that are not known.

Strategic priorities that emerged

1. Build a Sense of Community among Youth in Wasaga Beach
2. Develop programs and services to address current gaps identified by working group (young people and adult allies)
3. Improve current accessibility to services and information

WASAGA BEACH
YOUTH STRATEGY SUMMARY
OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 Build a **sense of community** among youth in Wasaga Beach

2 Develop **programs and services** to address current gaps identified by working group *(both youth and adult allies)*

3 Improve **accessibility to services and information**

Recommendations for Action:
Sense of Community

☑ Continue to develop relationships with community stakeholders, youth and working groups.

☑ Create meaningful opportunities for youth, adults and seniors to work together in partnership.

☑ Prepare Wasaga Beach youth to be successful in school extracurricular programs.

Recommendations for Action:
Programs & Services

☑ Provide new programs and services where needed and further develop unstructured play-spaces across Wasaga Beach.

☑ Enhance current programs and build/implement a variety of youth recreation and leisure opportunities while striving to further engage the youth of Wasaga Beach.

☑ Advocate for relevant and beneficial support services for Wasaga Beach youth.

Recommendations for Action:
Accessibility & Communication

☑ Create a communication network, utilizing existing social media platforms to promote and enhance visibility of Wasaga Beach support services, jobs, programs and volunteer opportunities relevant to youth.

☑ Increase collaboration and communication amongst organizations focused on serving youth in Wasaga Beach.

☑ Advocate for the creation of flexible transportation options for youth.

Introduction

The primary purpose of this report is to provide an introductory youth strategy for the Town of Wasaga Beach. The report includes recommendations, tools and tactics to help support the Town to be designated as a youth friendly community, where youth are engaged, supported, and recognized as partners in the growth and development of the Town.

Background

Growing from a mainly cottage community to a full-service urban municipality over the past eighty years, the Town of Wasaga Beach has experienced a large amount of growth as a community of choice for many people and continues to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in Ontario.

Its permanent population is anticipated to increase to 27,500 by 2031, yet the Town faces some population inequities. In the 2016 census, residents 55 years and older made up 50% of Wasaga Beach's population, while residents 10 to 19 years old made up 9% of the population. Households with children are declining as a percentage of total households. In the 2001Census, approximately 45% of the town's families contained children. That value decreased to fewer than 43% in 2006, 41% in 2011, and 39% in 2016. This is in part because Wasaga Beach does not have a high school, a fact that was identified by both youth and adults consulted for this strategy as a major gap and barrier for youth developing a sense of community and attachment to Wasaga Beach. Currently the approximately 1200 adolescents of Wasaga Beach are spread between high schools in Collingwood, Stayner and Elmvale.

Of the current 20,675 residents (Statistics Canada 2016 Census), 2,065 are aged 10 to 24, the primary focus of a youth strategy. If one includes those under 10, who will benefit longer term from an implemented youth strategy, the 0 to 24 population is 4,205, and 0 to 29 is 4,885. Compare this to the 6,900 residents who are 65+, and those 8,900 who are 30 to 64, and the need for a strategy to invest in youth and support their parents becomes apparent, particularly without a school.

The pressure for non-youth, non-family related services and resources arises in part from the fact that Wasaga Beach has become an attractive retirement community, with 6,205 households with no children (4,050 couple households and 2,155 single person households) versus 4,638 households with children (1,885 couple households and 865 lone parent households)

However, as noted in the Downtown Development Master Plan released March 2017, Wasaga Beach is one of the few communities in Simcoe County that is seeing positive growth in the 0-19 age cohort which is a positive sign for the future.

Recognizing that the growth in this cohort is both a current and future asset of the community, the Town of Wasaga Beach hired a consultant organization, The Students Commission of Canada, to engage with a working group of youth and adults allies to develop recommendations for a youth strategy.

The Students Commission was founded in 1991 with a mission to help young people put their ideas for improving themselves, their communities and their world into action. In the year 2000, The Students Commission became the lead of The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, which brings academics,

youth organizations and young people together to provide research and training to improve youth programs and youth engagement in Canada. The Students Commission has supported the development of multiple youth strategies for other municipalities, as well as youth organizations, and provincial and federal government departments.

The Town of Wasaga Beach had identified that it wanted to explore the possibility of obtaining a youth-friendly community designation from Play Works, a project of a consortium of organizations led by Parks and Recreation Ontario, and that it wanted to use some of its criteria as an assessment tool and building block for a youth development strategy. It also identified a want for a Strategy that ensured resources in the community addressed physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs of youth that contribute to positive youth development.
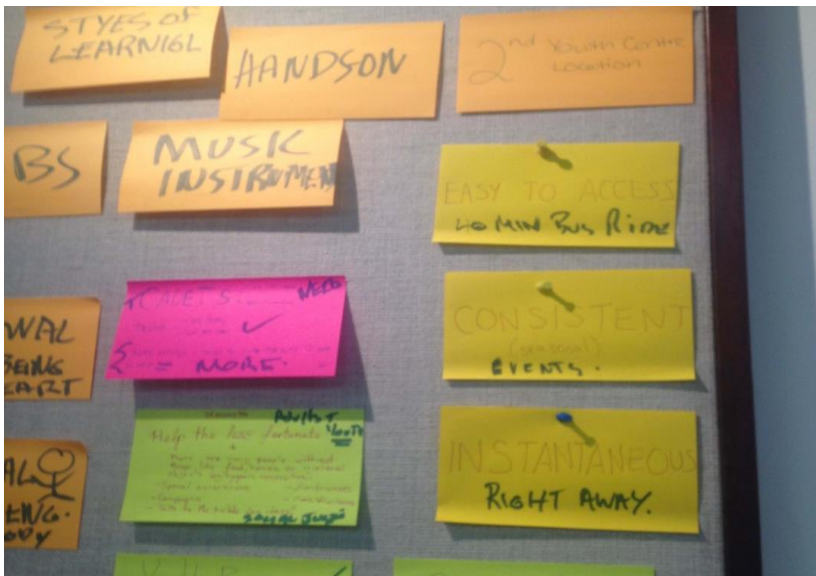
The creation of the Youth/Adult Working Group

Youth engagement in community decisions and advisory structures, as well as youth and adults working together, are important criteria of youth friendly communities from Play Works. These are also important contributors to positive youth development and effective programs and resources (*Stepping Up, Stepping Stones, Youth Who Thrive*). The Youth/Adult Working Group for this project was developed and led by Shelley Brook, a youth coordinator at the Town of Wasaga Beach. The Working Group's role included helping collect data, identify current strengths and gaps of the town, as well as provide descriptions of experiences and thoughts on how Wasaga Beach could be a more youth friendly community. Adults from the community and youth service organizations volunteered to work alongside youth selected from an already existing advisory circle in order to form the Strategy group.

Facilitated by The Students Commission of Canada, in a collaborative process , these youth and adult volunteers came together during the year of 2018. The group met multiple times to gather data and reached out to the community to gather additional input from approximately 100 youth in the Wasaga Beach area. The group also asked adult allies to identify important resource and service gaps in order to address the current and future needs of Wasaga Beach Youth.

Research process and methodology

Young people and adults in the community were engaged in multiple aspects of the research including helping to identify current service needs, strengths and survey tools, as well as gathering input.

Data sources

The main sources of information derived from surveys distributed at a local community centre, surveys collected by the working group, and their discussions identifying gaps and present resources in Wasaga Beach.
Brainstorm sessions on themes were regular parts of working group meetings, affirmed by surveying.

Key Themes

Programming
•Age-related Programming

Skill Development
•Learning
•Hands On
•Multiple Styles of Learning
•Free language lessons for youth
•Technology: learning, expanding

1) Short paper surveys: Resources and Engaged in the Community

The working group chose two surveys that had been validated through previous uses in multiple settings to measure how well youth were aware of, and able to access, resources within their community. Developed by the Students Commission of Canada, the *Resources in the Community* and *Engaged in the Community* surveys, were completed by the youth within working group, youth receiving services in the community, and youth at a local community centre in Wasaga Beach. A total of 181 responses were filled out by youth in the Wasaga Beach area.

The *Resources in Community* module is an 11-question survey that measures young people's Community Involvement, Community Knowledge, and Skills for Accessing Resources. Youth participants answered questions by rating from Not at all like you (1) to Very much like you (5) and Not at all (1) to Completely (5).

The *Engaged in the Community* module is a 15-question survey created to examine the extent to which youth are engaged in their community and their perception of how their involvement may affect their community. The module measures young people's Community Involvement, Community Knowledge, and Skills for Accessing Resources. Youth participants answered questions by rating from Not at all like you (1) Never to (5) A lot and (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly agree.

2) Working Group meetings

The working group was comprised of youth and adult allies who work in youth service organizations. Five meetings were held throughout the year to discuss and describe the realities of youth in Wasaga Beach from both the youth and adult perspectives. In these meetings, the working group members worked together to identify current resources (strengths) and gaps (needs) in relation to physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of youth. Upon completion, written responses were collected, compiled into an electronic document, and brought back to the working group to further discuss any observations or questions which arose. The youth in the working group also reached out to youth in their community to get feedback on the service gaps and strengths current in the community.

3) Sharing the Stories aggregate

Sharing the Stories (StS) is an online interactive platform focused on amplifying the voices of youth and organizations across the country. With 315 StS subscribers and 10,000 youth respondents in the database, an aggregate of survey responses is used to help further understand and explain trends being seen with youth in the community. There are currently a total of 3082 responses for *Resources in Community* and 4296 for the *Engaged in Community* collected from youth across the country.

After the completion of surveys and notes collected from meetings, data was compiled and analyzed, engaging youth and adults in the working group to review, develop and refine recommendations for this strategy.

Play Works youth-friendly community criteria

The Play Works partnership is a group of organizations, led by Parks and Recreation Ontario, focusing on areas of sport, physical activity, civic engagement, arts, and recreation to bring back the power of play to Ontario youth. Play is seen as crucial for the physical, intellectual, emotional, civic, and social development of youth. Yet, places to play are becoming less accessible to youth, with issues such as funding cutbacks of programs and activities, and youth participation is decreasing. This is important for a strategy because youth participation is associated with reduced engagement in crime, drug use, and health concerns, such as childhood obesity.

Through extensive research and consultation, Play Works has developed 10 criteria for a youth friendly community; each criteria is linked to at least one of the themes and outcomes of *Stepping Up*; an evidence-based strategic framework of the Government of Ontario that aims at improving youth outcomes.

A community meets these criteria through services, programs, and support provided by their local government, non-profit- and other organizations in the community. In order to be recognized as youth friendly, a community must meet at least 7 of the 10 following criteria:

1. Youth have options to play
2. Youth are formally connected community-wide
3. It is easy for youth to find information about play activities in the community
4. The community recognizes and celebrates youth
5. The community formally commits funding for youth play
6. The community supports Positive Youth Development

7. Youth feel valued by their community
8. Schools and school boards support the Youth Friendly approach
9. Play is accessible to youth
10. Play is socially inclusive

Stepping Up

Stepping Up is an evidence-based strategic framework of the Government of Ontario that aims at improving youth outcomes. The framework acts as a guide for decision-making, program planning and partnerships so different parts of the community can work together to support youth between 12 and 25 through a common shared approach. Through research, data and lessons learned from programs across Ontario, the strategic framework defines what matters most to young people in Ontario.

Stepping Up provides a set of 20 outcomes that can help service providers, foundations, community groups, et cetera, better align their work with what research and youth have said is important for their success. The outcomes articulate what needs to be done to achieve the government's vision and support youth to succeed. These outcomes are organized into seven themes.

Youth Who Thrive

Youth Who Thrive is an extensive literature review written with the purpose of analyzing the critical factors that support youth ages 12-25 in thriving throughout life and through critical life stages. The research was founded on the following three beliefs: (i) youth face significant challenges if they do not have access to the supports, services, and opportunities they need to thrive; (ii) youth have significant assets upon which to build;

and (iii) a coherent evidence base is required to determine the optimal nature of these supports, services, and opportunities. Commissioned by the YMCA of Greater Toronto, United Way Toronto, and the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the report identifies three critical factors (autonomy, relatedness, and competence-ARC) and outcomes required for youth to thrive throughout various stages of life. It assesses these critical factors in terms of three key outcome areas for youth thriving: (i) cognitive/learning, (ii) behavioral, and (iii) psychological/emotional.

 (i) Cognitive/learning outcomes refer to cognitive-related achievements such as higher test scores, effective learning strategies, and a commitment to lifelong learning. The combination of the three-critical ARC factors help predict cognitive development. (ii) Behavioral outcomes refer to success related to interpersonal exchanges, including positive social interactions, community involvement, and assumption of leadership roles. Satisfying the critical ARC factors is a predictor of perceived social competence and meaningful engagement in civic activities. (iii) Psychological/emotional outcomes are healthy intrapersonal achievements such as contentedness, low levels of depression, and healthy self-image. The critical ARC factors may lead to higher self-esteem, psychological well-being, and better coping skills.

Ten key features of effective youth programs:
The *Youth Who Thrive* research also confirms 10 important features of effective youth programs and their settings. Four of these features support relatedness, four support autonomy, and two support all three critical factors.
1. Build supportive relationships (**Relatedness**)
2. Opportunities to belong (**Relatedness**)
3. Positive social norms (**Relatedness**)

4. Integration of family, school and community efforts (**Relatedness**)
5. Physical and psychological safety (**Autonomy**)
6. Appropriate structure (**Autonomy**)
7. Support for youth to be effective and feel like they matter (**Autonomy**)
8. Opportunities for skill building (**Autonomy**)
9. Diversity of experience (**Autonomy, Relatedness, & Competence**)
10. Customized youth programming (**Autonomy, Relatedness, & Competence**)

This research and criteria from these three frameworks is used in the following Tables to provide evidence, rationale and support for the recommendations for the Strategy, which is in turn supported by the very specific recommendations made by both youth and adults working in organizations and programs that service youth in Wasaga Beach.

Current strengths and gaps of Wasaga Beach youth services

Gaps in Wasaga Beach services

During multiple working group meetings, youth and adults had the opportunity to discuss Wasaga Beach's current strengths and gaps in relation to the positive physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of youth. When identifying gaps, having a "bulletin board" was a service that the working group felt the community could benefit greatly from, as they identified that often there were services or programs or events happening, but youth in the community did not know about them, and had limited opportunities to learn about them.

The Youth Centre was seen as a place where youth would have the opportunity to access different services and resources in a centralized place while also having a space to simply hangout with friends outside of school; youth, however, are not all aware of the different programs and services offered both inside and outside of the Centre. The bulletin board was not necessarily conceived of being in a physical or even in a single format. Multi-channel approaches were recommended for all types of tactics and programs. Its function would provide youth with information on different events, programs, and services offered in Wasaga Beach. Organizations would also have the opportunity to post to this board for youth as well. Ideally, youth could be hired and engaged to both gather the information and communicate it by various channels to their peers. Increasing knowledge of programs and services available to youth, through a peer-to-peer approach, may contribute to an increase in youth participation in the community, but likely the "communication board" needs to be combined with effective word-of-mouth and shoulder tapping through peer-to-peer channels and youth/adult relationships..

A unique challenge in serving Wasaga Beach's population, and young people specifically, is the long geographical nature of the community. The majority of the population settlement follows the 14km long beach and the winding Nottawasaga River, in a long linear pattern. The community lacks a centralized hub and therefore balancing services in the west end and east end of Town is an ongoing challenge, made more challenging for youth by the lack of a shared high school for building a sense of shared community, and limited public transportation services. Identified as a gap by the working group, building a new youth centre in an easily accessible location to all Wasaga Beach youth would help to solve this issue. Improvements to the current youth centre's infrastructure, transportation shuttles and available programs to increase accessibility for youth in Wasaga Beach may be more feasible in the short-term.

The following tables list the main current gaps in resources that would contribute to the healthy development of youth, assess feasibility and suggest whether the initiative that should be led by adults, youth, or both. The first table below describes what youth said they would like to see, the second what adults said and the third what both groups would like to see in Wasaga Beach.

The table below highlights what <u>youth</u> said they would like to see in Wasaga Beach :

Resources (and type)	Connected theme/outcome	Implementation	Description/feasibility
Infrastructure			
Hospital	Physical	Adult Led Initiative	**Low Feasibility** - Given the population of Wasaga Beach, it is not likely a hospital would be built in the town in the near future. Having access to more walk-in clinics in the town may help to address access issues faced by youth.
Improve current and add more Bike Lanes	Physical	Adult Led Initiative, youth informed	**Realistic** - Youth have mentioned making it clearer where the bike lanes are, where they begin and end.
Programming and services			
Competitive Programs at Youth Centre (Offer more competitive programming)	Physical/Social/Emotional	Joint Initiative	**High Feasibility** - As the space is already present, the Youth Centre can consider hosting more competitive programs with the help of youth volunteer in Wasaga Beach.
Youth Crisis Support	Cognitive /Emotional	Joint Initiative	**Realistic** - Although they are aware of services such as Kids Help Phone, youth identified challenges getting in contact with someone who can help (long hold times with no answer). Adults can work together to gather information on different crisis support and share with youth via the bulletin board.

The table below highlights what <u>adults</u> said they would like to see in Wasaga Beach:

Resources (and type)	Connected theme/outcome	Implementation	Description/feasibility
Communication			
Bulletin Board	Cognitive, Emotional, Social, & Physical	Joint Initiative	**Very Feasible**- Online and physical board providing information of program, events, and services in Wasaga Beach. Adults can work together to gather and provide youth with the information while youth manage the board and communication to other youth in Wasaga Beach.
Infrastructure			
Advocate for the creation of flexible transportation	Physical	Adult Led Initiative	**Medium Feasibility** - Having more frequent busing and/or shuttle (Uber style ?).
Programming and services			
Early ON Centre and Early Years Programing	Social & Emotional	Adult Led Initiative	**Currently Present** - Although mentioned as a gap, this resource is currently based in Collingwood and Alliston but does have a satellite site in Wasaga Beach.
LGBTQ Group	Social & Emotional	Adult Led Initiative, room for Youth Leadership	**Highly Feasible** - Adults mentioned offering more LGBTQ based programming in already existing spaces such as the Youth Centre and Public Library.

Resources (and type)	Connected theme/outcome	Implementation	Description/feasibility
Mental Health Peer Support Programs	Cognitive, Emotional, & Social	Joint Initiative	**Medium Feasibility**- There are spaces available to provide such programming and services. Youth can also do this on a volunteer basis although it should also be considered that there is a risk that some issues may require professional knowledge youth do not have. Providing training and to peer leaders would build capacity.
Mentors Linking or Matching Wants & Needs	Cognitive	Joint Initiative	**High Feasibility** – Frequently suggested were programs or services where youth have the opportunity to be connected with an adult The connections can be used to help provide support in providing knowledge on, and accessing community resources.
Mindfulness Groups in School	Emotional & Social	Joint Initiative	**High Feasibility** - Such groups can be operated at already existing high schools as an afterschool activity or program supported by adults (teachers) and run by youth.
Tutoring Services (Peer)	Cognitive	Joint Initiative	**Medium Feasibility** - To address the issue of cost, having older youth help those younger, or even their peers, with different homework needs on a volunteer basis would be beneficial. This can be led by youth at their current schools or at the Wasaga Beach Public Library with the support of an adult.

The tables below highlights what both <u>youth and adults</u> would like to see in Wasaga Beach :

Resources (and type)	Connected theme/outcome	Implementation	Description/feasibility
Infrastructure			
Build a Network of Skate Parks	Physical & Social	Adult Led Initiative with youth involvement	**Medium Feasibility** – Increase unstructured recreation spaces, for skateboarding etc., throughout the town, ideally networked. This would allow for an increase in accessibility among youth all across Wasaga Beach, not just in the West End.
New or Improved Community/Youth Centre	Cognitive, Emotional, Social, & Physical	Adult Led Initiative, youth informed, youth leadership roles	**Low Feasibility** - Although mentioned as a gap due to stigma and how old the current building is, the solution may not necessarily be to build a new youth centre, but rather apply for funding via capital grants to improve the current infrastructure. The combination of improving current infrastructure and also providing more accessible programming would also help increase participation among youth. Intentionally work to expand the demographic of youth attending the Centre in an inclusive way.

Resources (and type)	Connected theme/outcome	Implementation	Description/feasibility
Off Road Bicycle Trails	Physical	Adult Led Initiative, youth informed, youth engagement opportunity	**Medium Feasibility** - Mentioned by both youth and adults, it was suggested to potentially change or expand existing trails to allow for bike access.
Programs and services			
Physical Activity Equipment Rentals	Physical	Joint Initiative	**High Feasibility** - As youth and adults have mentioned, the issue of cost to participate in play is a barrier. They would like to have a space where youth can rent free equipment for play. Both youth and adults can support by donating gently used equipment they no longer need. The rentals can be managed youth, adult, or a combination of both.

Existing strengths and currently provided services

Both the YMCA and Wasaga Beach Library were frequently mentioned when identifying current strengths in Wasaga Beach that help contribute to the healthy development of youth physical, cognitive, social and emotional outcomes. The Wasaga Beach YMCA is currently a place where many youth go to attend various programing outside of school hours while the Library serves as a space for youth to access resources, information, and some afterschool activities. The table below lists the current resources that are seen as strengths in regards to the healthy development of youth; text written in **green** are strengths identified by adults while text in **orange** are strengths identified by youth.

Resources	Connected theme/outcome	Description
Groups and associations		
Georgian Triangle Ministerial Association	Emotional & Social	Association that provides a regular forum for local clergy to explore common issues and to communicate with each other.
Healthy Community Network of Wasaga Beach	Cognitive & Social	Acts as a link between Council and the citizens of Wasaga Beach. Advises Council on matters related to active and healthy living for residents and a sustainable and healthy future for the town.
Infrastructure		
Library	Cognitive	Public Library that provides free and equitable access to public library services, supporting literacy and lifelong learning.
Youth Centre	Physical & Social	The Wasaga Beach Youth Centre is a drop in centre for youth grades 7-12. The Centre offers games tables, arts and crafts, and other resources/activities at no cost.

| Resources	Connected theme/outcome	Description
Programs and services		
Cadets	Emotional, Physical, & Social	Aims to advance the education of the Air Cadets and to promote an interest in the air element of the Canadian Forces. Provides youth with a variety of fun, challenging and rewarding activities while developing life and work skills. Highly rated by youth, but also under pressure re local accessibility.
Career Solutions	Cognitive	Employment Services in Wasaga Beach.
Children's Treatment Network	Cognitive, Emotional, Physical, & Social	Offers services through contracted public and private partner organizations in education, health and community sectors.
Church Youth Groups	Emotional & Social	Youth group at Wasaga Beach United Church
Dance Programs	Physical & Social	A variety of dance programs for youth in Wasaga Beach offered by multiple organizations. These programs include: Dance by Design, May Dance, and Active Arts.
Girl Guides	Physical & Social	Multiple program opportunities
Minor Sports	Physical	Sport programs offered in Wasaga Beach for youth of various ages; this includes, but not limited to,: Hockey, Baseball, Ball Hockey, and Trail Blazers Basketball.
Mothercare (CAPC) - Prenatal Program	Emotional & Social	Offers Mothercare, next steps, and CAPC programs.
Seniors Active Living Centre	Emotional & Social	Operating out of the current Youth Centre at 1621 Mosley St., it offers various free programming for seniors. The Centre is also an opportunity for intergenerational programs to exist for youth.
Wasaga Beach ministerial food bank	Physical	Provides food and spiritual support to disadvantaged residents in the Wasaga Beach area.

Resources in the Community findings

A total of 85 responses for the *Resources in the Community* module were collected by youth in Wasaga Beach. As illustrated in the graphs, the responses collected in Wasaga Beach were compared to 3082 other responses (StS aggregate) collected from youth across Canada who have also completed the *Resources in the Community* module.

Overall, the statistical analyses suggested that the StS aggregate (3.21) youth tended to score higher on their total score on *Resources in the Community*, as well as on the sub-scales in comparison to youth in Wasaga Beach (2.72). This suggests that youth who are part of Wasaga Beach may need more support in regards to becoming knowledgeable and involved in their community. Looking specifically at Community Involvement, youth in Wasaga Beach do not feel they know where to go to volunteer (2.33) as well as those in the aggregate. These findings in combination with the qualitative results suggest that youth in Wasaga beach would benefit from having some kind of communication system (bulletin board) where they can receive information about events, programs, and services in the community.

In terms of the community knowledge section of the module, although not necessarily always knowing where to find or access information, youth in Wasaga Beach moderately felt that they knew someone who would be able to help them find and access resources and opportunities in their community (3.14).

Although lower than the aggregate, Wasaga Beach youth scored highest in having skills to access resources (2.90) in comparison to the previous two key performance indicators. Youth reported lowest in regards to feeling comfortable

Resources in the Community

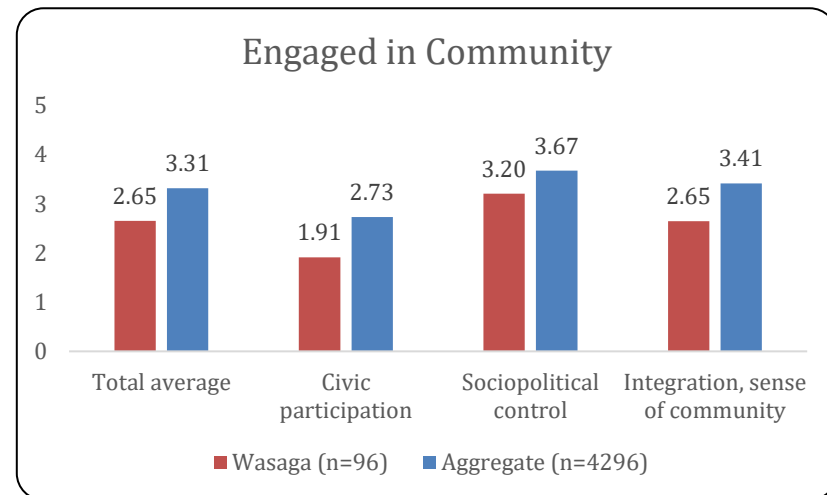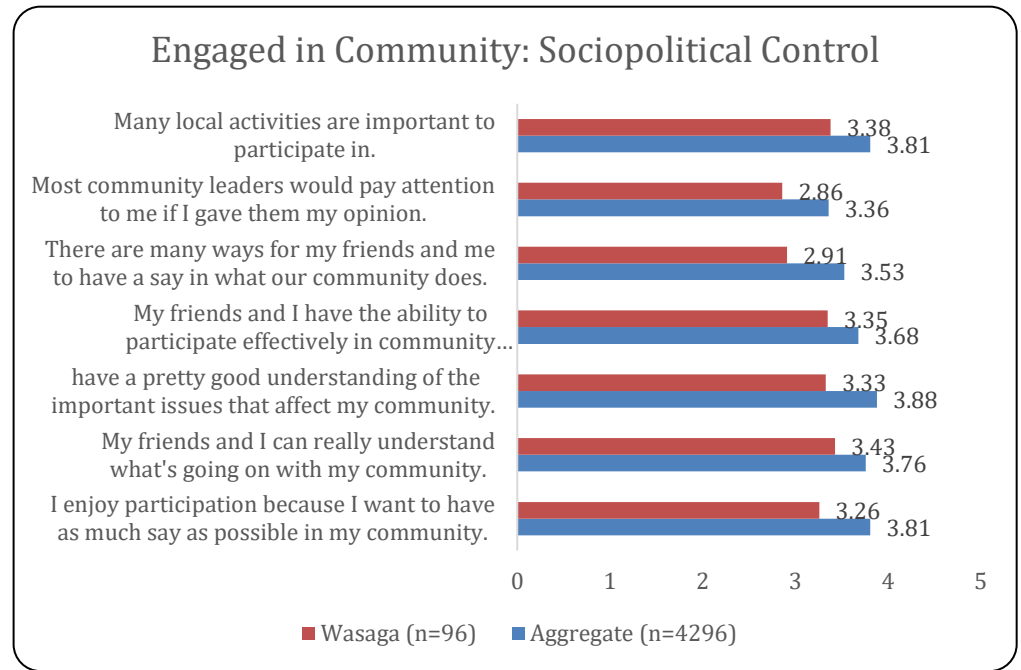Resources in the Community: Skills for Accessing Resources
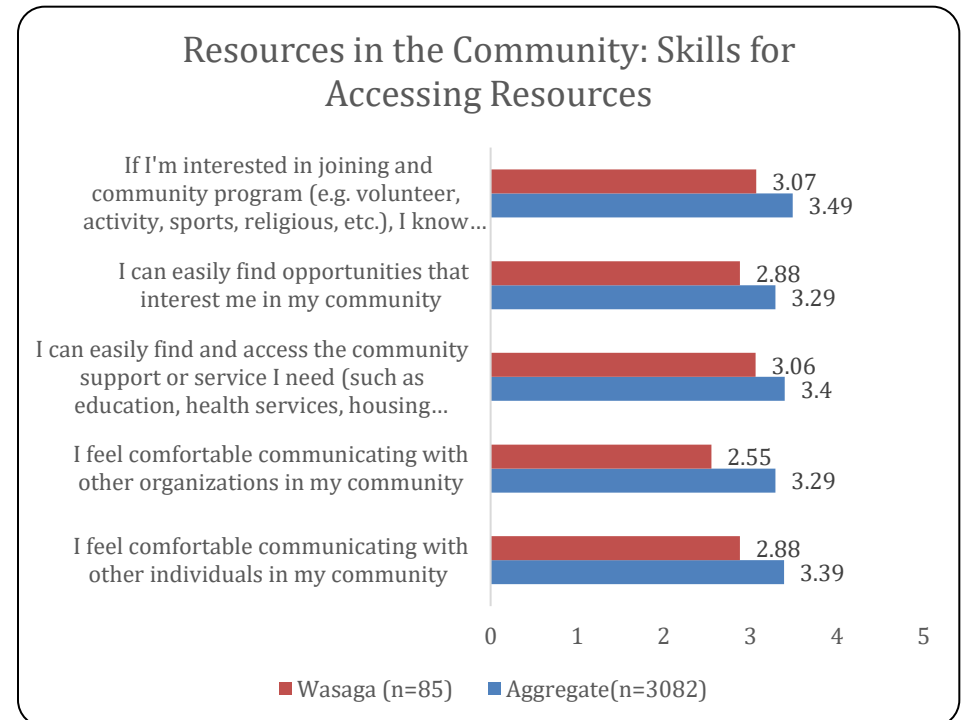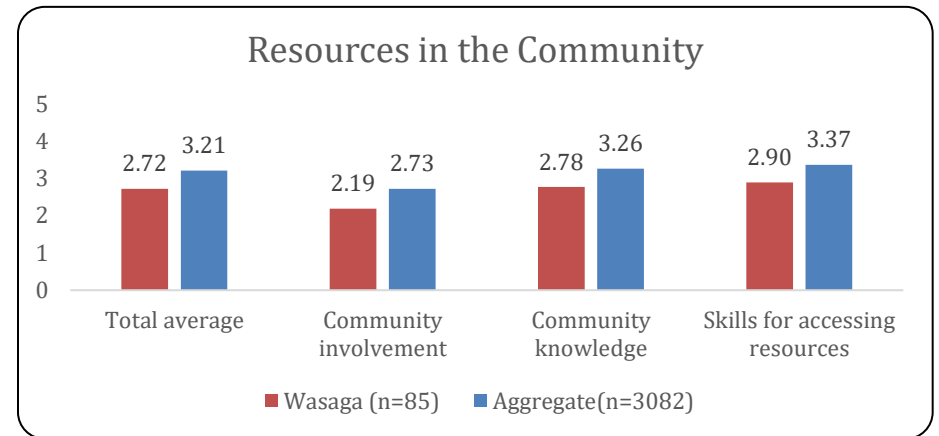
communicating with other organizations in their community (2.55). This may suggest that youth organizations need to consider different ways to outreach and communicate with youth in Wasaga Beach, and perhaps the need for greater collaboration among programs and services.

Engaged in the Community

A total of 96 responses for the *Engaged in Community* module were collected by youth in Wasaga Beach. As seen in the graphs, the responses collected in Wasaga Beach were compared to an aggregate of 4296 responses collected from youth across Canada who have also completed the resources in the community module.

Overall, the Wasaga Beach youth tended to have lower scores on the *Engaged in Community* module (2.65 total) and sub-categories based on significant statistical analyses. The results would suggest that youth in Wasaga feel that they are moderately engaged in their community. This finding should be contextualized with the fact that the StS aggregate is made up of a variety of youth, some of whom are very engaged in their communities.

Looking at the Civic Participation of youth in Wasaga Beach (1.91) in comparison to the StS aggregate (2.73), youth are participating in the community at lower levels than the aggregate. This may be the result of being able to access, and having knowledge on, events and resources in the community. Taking into further consideration their integration and sense of community, youth in Wasaga Beach also reported a lower level of sense of community in comparison to aggregate.

Engaged in Community: Sociopolitical Control

Statement	Wasaga (n=96)	Aggregate (n=4296)
Many local activities are important to participate in.	3.38	3.81
Most community leaders would pay attention to me if I gave them my opinion.	2.86	3.36
There are many ways for my friends and me to have a say in what our community does.	2.91	3.53
My friends and I have the ability to participate effectively in community…	3.35	3.68
have a pretty good understanding of the important issues that affect my community.	3.33	3.88
My friends and I can really understand what's going on with my community.	3.43	3.76
I enjoy participation because I want to have as much say as possible in my community.	3.26	3.81

Engaged in Community

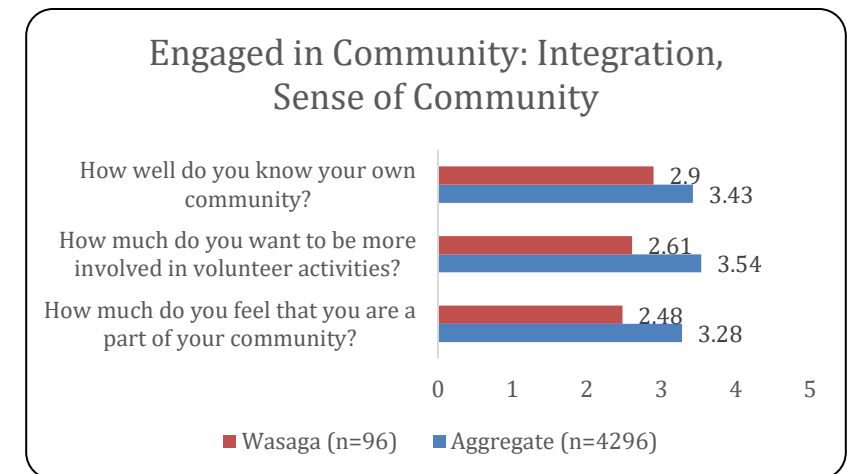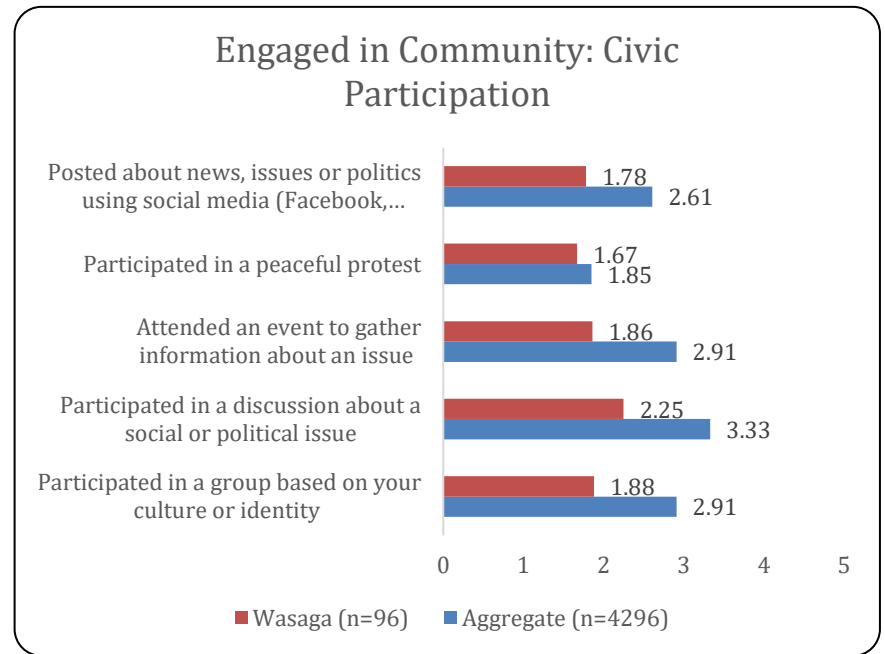| Category	Wasaga (n=96)	Aggregate (n=4296)
Total average	2.65	3.31
Civic participation	1.91	2.73
Sociopolitical control	3.20	3.67
Integration, sense of community	2.65	3.41

By providing youth in Wasaga Beach the opportunity to access programs and services with other youth who reside in Wasaga Beach, one can help to increase the sense of community among youth.

Although reporting lower levels of sociopolitical control (3.20) in comparison to the aggregate (3.67), youth in Wasaga Beach do feel they have moderate sociopolitical control in their community. The results suggests that youth feel that there are local activities that are important for them to participate in (3.38) and they also understand what's going on within their own community (3.43).

Looking at results overall, youth do feel they have the ability, understanding, and knowledge to drive social change in their community but since they have a lower sense of community in Wasaga Beach, this may be the reason why they are doing so at a lower rate than the aggregate.

Developing a sense of community among youth in Wasaga Beach can help increase civic participation given the current state of the town. Continuing to support youth groups, such as the advisory committee, can also help maintain and increase how much youth feel they are listened to when they provide their opinions, increasing engagement.

Engaged in Community: Civic Participation

Category	Wasaga (n=96)	Aggregate (n=4296)
Posted about news, issues or politics using social media (Facebook,…)	1.78	2.61
Participated in a peaceful protest	1.67	1.85
Attended an event to gather information about an issue	1.86	2.91
Participated in a discussion about a social or political issue	2.25	3.33
Participated in a group based on your culture or identity	1.88	2.91

Engaged in Community: Integration, Sense of Community

Category	Wasaga (n=96)	Aggregate (n=4296)
How well do you know your own community?	2.9	3.43
How much do you want to be more involved in volunteer activities?	2.61	3.54
How much do you feel that you are a part of your community?	2.48	3.28

Strategic priorities and recommendations

Priority 1: Build a sense of community among youth in Wasaga Beach

Based on the data and information provided by youth via meetings, there appears to be a low sense of community among youth in Wasaga Beach. Not having a great sense of community among youth may contribute to the low participation among youth in regards to civic participation and general participation in events and programs in the community.

Recommendations:

1) **Continue to develop relationships with community stakeholders, youth and working groups.**

Context: Already established, the Youth Advisory Council is a good mechanism for youth to be formally connected to the community with a group that is recognized by the Town of Wasaga Beach. This will also ensure a space for youth to share their current and future needs while ensuring their voice is heard in a formal and public way.

Play Works Criteria 2: Through these groups, youth can be encouraged to engage in their community more, while also providing a formal connection to the community.

Stepping Up Outcomes 5 & 16-18: The continuous commitment to support a youth advisory council would ensure young people are being heard, they have opportunities to be involved and lead, and a space to understand and be recognized for their contributions to the community as youth.

Youth Who Thrive (Cognitive & Emotional): As well as receiving youth advice, having youth on advisory circles exposes them to opportunities to further develop job skills such as communication, team work, problem solving, and other skills important to the workforce. Having adults and public figures, such as the mayor, attending some advisory circle meetings provides role models and can also show the youth that their voices are both being heard by adults in the community. This may result in an increase self-esteem for youth who are a part of the advisory circle.

2) **Create meaningful opportunities for youth, adults and seniors to work together in partnership.**

Context: With the development of the Seniors Active Living Centre, there are many opportunities to create intergenerational programming, such as the ongoing participation of the Youth Support Committee, which is made up of adults and the Youth Advisory Council. Intergenerational programs promote the transmission of cultural traditions and values from older to younger generations, helping to build a sense of personal and societal identity while encouraging tolerance.

Identified as a current strength, the Senior Active Living Centre operating out of the current Youth Centre at 1621 Mosley St., is a resource in the community that can support this

recommendation. As the space will be used by both youth and seniors, it would be a great opportunity to offer mutual mentorship based programs or even programs where youth and seniors get to work together. As the facility will be used by seniors during the day (9am-3pm) and used for youth programming afterwards, it is also recommended to have some overlap in time to ensure youth and seniors have the opportunity to connect and help establish the idea of a shared space.

Play Works Criteria 2, and 7: Having a group of youth who work with and are supported by adults in their community in multiple formats can help them feel more valued by members within the community.

Stepping Up 5-7 and 10-12: Depending on the format, this partnership can address multiple outcomes that are a part of the Stepping Up framework. The partnership can lead to developing a healthy relationship with a caring adult while also contributing to youth academic success (i.e. tutoring programs). Offering opportunities, such as job shadowing, allows for youth to be supported in a meaningful employment experience that can contribute greatly to their career.

Youth Who Thrive (Cognitive & Emotional) : Youth working groups expose youth to opportunities to develop job related skills while also being supported by an adult ally.

3) Prepare Wasaga Beach youth to be successful in school extracurricular programs.

Context: With over 700 high school students, currently residing in Wasaga Beach, promoting participation and mastery of high school extracurricular activities is a feasible goal for staff to

work towards. Instructional-based programming for sport and recreation will allow youth the opportunity to develop skills, physical literacy and an understanding of sport ethics, rules and how to take life lessons from recreational based activities.

Further, the development of recreation facilities that not only allow for unstructured play but promote the use of rules, boundaries and eventually allow youth to feel a sense of mastery with activities. In addition, it is imperative to promote social opportunities, cultural and awareness programs in a similar fashion that help promote engagement in the community.

Play Works Criteria 8, 9 and 10: Working with the high schools that Wasaga Beach youth currently attend to help support the promotion of participation in extracurricular activities can help ensure that play is more accessible for youth in Wasaga Beach. Having more social opportunities and programs that are more culturally aware can also insure that youth play is not only accessible but socially inclusive and builds a sense of community belonging that promotes mental health.

Stepping Up Outcome 13 , 17, & 19: These programs can help ensure that youth experience social inclusion and become more active and engaged in their community dependant on the program. Through the development of new unstructured spaces for play, combined with extracurricular activities in a school space where possible, the community can help make sure youth have access to safe spaces that provide quality opportunities for play and recreation.

Youth Who Thrive (All) : Dependant on the program or service offered to youth, there is potential for each of the individual outcomes highlighted in *Youth Who Thrive* to be addressed.

Priority 2: Develop programs and services to address currents gaps identified by working group (young people and adult allies)

Although there are several programs and resources in the community that contribute to the positive physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of youth, there are still many gaps that need to be addressed to make the town a more youth friendly community. Both youth and adults have identified important resources and programs that can be developed to address the current gaps.

Recommendations:

4) Provide new programs and services where needed and further develop unstructured play-spaces across Wasaga Beach.

Context: As mentioned in working group meetings, a network of skate park/skate park elements in Wasaga Beach would provide a space where youth can hangout and participate in different physical activities with their friends. As a skate park does currently exist, it would be beneficial to develop smaller skate parks or components around the town, specifically in the east end. There are indeed spaces and programs available for youth to hang out but most of the spaces are located in the west end of town which creates an accessibility issues for many youth.

Having more unstructured places for youth to hangout will also result in an increased sense of community amongst youth.

Play Works Criteria 1& 9: Unstructured spaces, such as a skate park, can provide another option for youth to be physically active at a relatively low cost.

Stepping Up Outcomes # 1: A network of skate parks, or other unstructured spaces, would help support youth to be more physically active. Depending on the format of the unstructured space, other outcomes can be addressed as well.

Youth Who Thrive (Physical &Social) : As previously stated, a network skate park would allow for more physical activity among youth in Wasaga beach. Unstructured spaces for youth play fosters autonomy, relatedness and competence. Raising funds for, and designing skate parks, can be powerful engagement experiences for youth.

5) Enhance current programs and build/implement a variety of youth recreation and leisure opportunities while striving to further engage the youth of Wasaga Beach.

Context: Although it was suggested to build a new youth centre in some meetings, it may be more feasible and applicable to apply for funding to improve already established youth and community centres. The improvement of infrastructure should be thought of in such a way that would allow for various programming types to be offered at facilities; i.e. implementing indoor and outdoor spaces for future activities. It is important to also ensure that various facilities in the community are being supported in the same way to help increase accessibility and participation among youth who have trouble commuting to the west or east end of town. Developing programs that reach a variety of youth and that take place in various locations across town will increase youth engagement in programs and organized activities.

Play Works Criteria 1, 9 & 10: The improvements and adding of programs can ensure that play is more accessible and socially inclusive.

Stepping Up Outcome 13: Youth experience social inclusion and values. This can be seen through youth who feel a sense of belonging in their community and experience diversity in various settings and programs.

Youth Who Thrive (All): By doing things such as spreading out resources and programs, and offering free rental equipment for activities or programs, youth who have less access to resources and financial supports will be more likely to access them. Being able to access more programs and services at youth centres, these youths will also be exposed to other youth in the community which may contribute to developing a sense of community in Wasaga Beach.

6) Advocate for relevant and beneficial support services for Wasaga Beach youth.

Context: This recommendation supports advocating for relevant social services, recreation-based activities and other services, providers and programs to take place in Wasaga Beach directly benefiting youth. The Wasaga Beach Youth Centre is a current strength in providing youth services. The partnerships developed with the Library, YMCA and community Health Centre can help support the implementation of new, needs-based programming that will assist youth in building social skills, life skills, health and well-being, plus a recreation and leisure repertoire.

As presented in the 'Gaps in Wasaga Beach Services' section of the report, there are gaps in services being offered but there are also services that could be improved upon or advertised more. For example, the food bank was a service that was said to be offered in the community, yet something that not many people knew about. In terms of mental health, it was also suggested that crisis support could be offered through an organization called 'Kinark" in Wasaga Beach.

Play Works Criteria 7: Providing more relevant and beneficial services for Wasaga Beach youth to address some of the gaps previously presented may help them feel valued by their community. This is one way the community can show that it listens and acts on the needs expressed by youth in Wasaga Beach.

Stepping Up 1,2, and 18: Depending on the service or resource, various outcomes highlighted in the *Stepping Up* framework can be addressed. Some suggested resources may contribute to both the physical and mental well-being of youth. Having the opportunity to provide this information may allow them to use their knowledge to address social issues.

Youth Who Thrive (All): Similar to *Stepping Up*, each of the outcomes highlighted in *Youth Who Thrive* can be addressed depending on the structure of the service.

Priority 3: Improved accessibility to services and information

Throughout the meetings with both youth and adults, it was clear that accessing services is not easy for many youth in Wasaga Beach. Many of the youth are limited in what services they can access due to the fact that they travel outside of town for school and transportation within Wasaga Beach is challenging.

Recommendations:

7) Create a communication network, utilizing existing social media platforms to promote and enhance visibility of Wasaga Beach support services, jobs, programs and volunteer opportunities relevant to youth.

Context: As mentioned, it was clear that there are resources and services currently available to youth in Wasaga Beach that they are not utilizing due to lack of knowledge. Information should be publicized through a variety of media and communication outlets that allow youth easy access for information. There is evidence that youth are using social media tools such as twitter snapchat, Facebook, et cetera, to access and share information with other youth. If youth in Wasaga Beach are given information on different events, programs, and services in their community, this may result in an increase on how much youth are engaged in their communities. It is recommended that this not be an adult-driven initiative, but a youth-led, adult-supported one. For example; implement a youth-focused communication bulletin board system, electronic or other, across Wasaga Beach in popular youth "hang-outs". This communication network can also be used to help encourage collaboration between organizations, such as Cadets, the Y, the Youth Centre, music and sport groups to share best practises and methods for successfully engaging youth in Wasaga Beach.

Play Works Criteria 3: Developing a communication network utilizing existing social media platforms will allow youth to have easy access to find information about program, events, and activities for play in Wasaga Beach. Best practises can be shared between organizations to help develop policies, procedures, and methods that allow play to be more socially inclusive.

Stepping Up Outcome 17 & 10 – If youth are more aware and have the information necessary to access resources, this will help make them more engaged and connected to their community. Allowing a space for organizations to learn from each other can help ensure youth have access to safe spaces that provide quality opportunities for play and recreation.

Youth Who Thrive (All) - Youth being more knowledgeable about how to access programs and services in their community would allow them to attend them more. A combination of different programs and services contribute to each of the outcomes discussed in *Youth Who Thrive*.

8) Increase collaboration and communication amongst organizations focused on serving youth in Wasaga Beach.

Context: Sharing a common communication strategy is a strong starting point for increased collaboration among organizations. This will assist in addressing gaps and providing broader ranges of opportunities for youth. Collaboration improves staff/adult capacity in previously siloed services to know about other programs and assist the youth they know to find and use other resources and services. This reduces duplication and

strengthens the web of support and development opportunities for all types of youth. Increased staff collaboration, and inter-organizational programming and/or events also assist to address the "stigma" and stereotyping identified by youth. Reasons cited for not participating included: 'only certain types of youth' use certain programs and services, such as the Youth Centre. Collaboration brings different types of youth together, with their trusted adult allies, helping to develop a stronger sense of belonging to a common, yet diversified, Wasaga Beach community.

Play Works Criteria 10: Best practices can be shared to help develop policies, procedures, and practices that allow play to be more socially inclusive. Resources and staff knowledge among organizations are mutually leveraged; revenue sources increase.

Stepping up Outcome 19– increased collaboration among youth serving organizations can ensure that youth have access to safe spaces that provide quality opportunities for play and recreation. Youth experience a broader range of adult role models and more opportunities to connect to consistent, caring adults.

Youth Who Thrive (All) - When participation is more socially inclusive, it supports more youth to participate. Experiencing diversity of programs and opportunities is beneficial to developing competency and autonomy, and experiencing diversity of learning and people builds both competency and relatedness or connection.

9) Advocate for the creation of flexible transportation options for youth

Context: Many youth rely on the school bus system to return to Wasaga Beach at the end of the day. Having a flexible bus program can contribute to all of the outcomes (cognitive, emotional, physical, and social) as it allows youth to participate in more extracurricular programming at school, in multiple programs in the community and spend time with friends in the community. Youth and adults have also mentioned the need for improved bike lanes and trails, and more of them, as an alternative form of transportation. Although public transportation is available, youth identified issues with affording the link pass for transportation between Collingwood and Wasaga Beach. Youth are paying $5 a month for their monthly passes in Wasaga Beach, while the cost for the link pass is $40.

Play Works Criteria 1,8,& 9: School and school boards actively support and promote play for youth outside of normal school hours; this can be both in or outside of the school itself. Improved and increased methods of transportation can help access to programs/services.

Stepping Up Outcome 17 & 19: Flexible transportation options would allow for youth to engage more in their community. Varied modes of transportation increase access to a safer spaces for play and recreation.

Youth Who Thrive (All): Being able to stay after school to attend extracurricular programs contributes to attachment to school, which is associated with key outcomes for youth thriving. Extracurricular activities support youth to be more connected to other youth within their school.

Recommendations with action items

Priority 1: Build a sense of community among youth in Wasaga Beach				
RECOMMENDATIONS	**ACTION ITEMS**	**Rationale**		
		Alignment with Play Works Criteria	**Alignment with Stepping Up**	**Alignment with Youth Who Thrive**
Continue to develop relationships with community stakeholders, youth and working groups	a) Provide opportunities for youth to contribute to adult meetings b) Support youth in identifying and presenting current needs in public spaces c) Ensure groups continue to be attached and recognized by local government d) Fully implement Sport and Recreation, Cultural, Gay Straight Alliance and Environmental sub committees of the Youth Advisory Council e) Develop social and cultural based programs f) Partner with existing youth/recreation focused organizations to offer programs	2	5, and 16-18	Cognitive & Emotional
Create meaningful opportunities for youth, adults and seniors to work together in partnership	a) Develop Mutual Mentorship Program between youth and seniors b) Provide more inclusive and accessible tutoring opportunities for youth c) Provide job shadowing opportunities for youth d) Develop meaning full role for youth on age-friendly committee	2 and 7	5-7 and 10-12	All
Prepare Wasaga Beach youth to be successful in school extracurricular programs	a) Build out relevant programs that assist Wasaga Beach youth in being successful attending high school extracurricular activities. b) Ensure recreation facilities and play spaces are designed to teach relevant skills associated with organized play, recreation and sport. c) Develop social and cultural based programs	8, 9, and 10	13, 17, and 19	All

		Priority 2: Develop programs and services to address current gaps identified by working group (both youth and adult allies)		
RECOMMENDATIONS	**ACTION ITEMS**	**Rationale**		
		Alignment with Play Works Criteria	**Alignment with Stepping Up**	**Alignment with Youth Who Thrive**
Provide new programs and services where needed and further develop unstructured play-spaces across Wasaga Beach	a) Create a Youth Committee, supported by adults, key organizations to undertake the project b) Continue to enhance outdoor spaces that promote sport and unstructured play i.e. Skateboard parks and basketball courts	**1 and 9**	**1**	**Physical & Social**
Enhance current programs and build/implement a variety of youth recreation and leisure opportunities while striving for further engage the youth of Wasaga Beach	a) Seek funding to provide more accessible programming activities (i.e. free rental equipment) b) Develop more social inclusive programming for youth c) Develop infrastructure to support recreation centre projects (indoor and outdoor spaces for the future arena)	**1, 9 and 10**	**13**	**All**
Advocate for relevant and beneficial support services for Wasaga Beach Youth	a) Work with youth serving organization such as the YMCA, Public Library, and Health Centre, to discuss implementation of new needs-based programs b) Build on and advertise more the Good Food Box c) Offer crisis or emergency support at Kinark d) Provide service support for LGBTQ	**7**	**1,2, and 18**	**All**

Priority 3: Improve accessibility to services and information				
RECOMMENDATIONS	**ACTION ITEMS**	**Rationale**		
		Alignment with Play Works Criteria	**Alignment with Stepping Up**	**Alignment with Youth Who Thrive**
Create a communication network, utilizing existing social media platforms to promote and enhance visibility of Wasaga Beach support services, jobs, programs and volunteer opportunities relevant to youth	a) Work with organizations in the community to identify a common platform and methods to share information b) Hire youth to help manage online board c) Implement youth -focused bulletin board system across town in popular youth "hang-outs". d) Work with Cadets , YMCA, Library, sports organizations and others to identify strengths that other programs can share and learn from and with each other e) Develop opportunities for organizations to share best practices for services youth (i.e. presentations at adult and youth advisory meetings)	**3 and 10**	**17 and 19**	**All**
Increase collaboration and communication amongst organizations focused on serving youth in Wasaga Beach	a) Convene meetings of organizations to review and explore ways to collaborate and implement the Strategy b) Promote shared use of the communication network c) Encourage and support collaborative programming and services, including shared revenue generation, and transportation options	**10**	**19**	**All**
Advocate for the creation of flexible transportation options for youth	a) Work with School Board to identify possibility of more flexible bus system b) Seek funding to provide shuttle bus services for youth after school c) Provide cheaper monthly passes (Link Pass) or subsidized passes for youth d) Increase the number of, and mark more clearly, bike lanes throughout Wasaga Beach	**1, 8 and 9**	**17 and 19**	**All**

Conclusion

Through the research process, both youth and adult allies in Wasaga Beach have identified many important resources currently available for the positive physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of youth. However, youth and young adults also felt that there is still much to be added that can help make the town a more youth friendly and supportive place. Identified in many meetings and the research process, the opportunity for youth to work together with adults in the community to share their perspectives, experiences, and ideas is something that should continue to be supported. Although a youth working group currently exists, the youth and adult allies have seen the need to support services or programs operating in such a way that both youth, adults, and seniors are able to interact more together, to learn and gain something useful from the intergenerational experience.

Travelling outside of Wasaga Beach to attend high school in three different communities limits the time youth have to access resources, and many do not have knowledge of what's available in their town. As the development of a local high school is likely not feasible currently, it would be beneficial to find ways to support high school program involvement for Wasaga Beach youth. Advocating for more flexible transportation options would help meet this challenge.

Although some youth do feel there is someone they could go to help access resources in the community, they also often feel uncomfortable communicating with them or other individuals in the community. Improving comfort levels with communication should be designed to address low participation from youth in the town at events/programs and building and a stronger sense of being part of the community.

As the Town moves forward to a more youth-friendly community, as outlined by Play Works, there are opportunities for organizations to collaborate to help build frameworks and policies that allow play to be more accessible and socially inclusive for youth. Collaboration can include shared revenue generation to create infrastructure and to fund operating costs. Developing a communication network can help support youth with access resources in the community while also supporting youth serving organizations to share their approaches. Collaboration will help structure and ensure new and existing programs that are inclusive, accessible and well-attended.

Lastly, the development of the Working Group and Youth Advisory Council are great opportunities for youth to provide their voice and work alongside adults in the community. Youth strongly indicated that such groups should continue within the Town. Both youth and young adults also identified the value of building programs that will help connect youth with each other, as well as youth with older demographics in the community.