Ottawa Gang Strategy
A Roadmap for Action
2013-2016

CRIME PREVENTION OTTAWA
PRÉVENTION DU CRIME OTTAWA

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE
SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA
Working together for a safer community
La sécurité de notre communauté, un travail d'équipe

YOUTH SERVICES JEUNESSE

2002–2012
OCH LCO

Eastern Ontario Youth Justice Agency   L'agence de justice pénale pour adolescents de l'est de l'Ontario

COALITION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND RESOURCE CENTRES OF OTTAWA
COALITION DES CENTRES DE RESSOURCES ET DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRES D'OTTAWA

The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa | La Société de l'aide à l'enfance d'Ottawa

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SOCIETY OF OTTAWA

World SKILLS
COMPÉTENCES MONDIALES

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Report prepared by:

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1   Introduction

1.1   How We Got Here

In 2006, a number of community stakeholders came together to discuss how they could work together to address a growing concern around youth involvement in gang activity and the harmful effect of gangs in Ottawa. Together, in February 2007, the provincial Ministry of Children and Youth, the Youth Services Bureau and the Ottawa Police Service presented a "Youth and Gangs" training session for service providers. The event brought together over 200 interested participants and ended with a call for the community to work together to address the gang issue in our city.

Building on this momentum, the Youth Services Bureau and Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO) brought together and co-chaired a broad, multi-stakeholder collaboration, the first working group on youth gang prevention in Ottawa, in May 2007. This group was eventually renamed the Ottawa Youth Gang Prevention Initiative (OYGPI).

The OYGPI identified four components as the focus of their efforts: neighbourhood cohesion, prevention, intervention and suppression; and, developed a holistic framework that speaks to an integrated approach that unites youth, families, child welfare, schools, community, social service agencies, faith groups, police, and criminal justice agencies in multi-faceted efforts to prevent and reduce gangs in Ottawa.   Through their collective efforts, the OYGPI coordinated the following initiatives and events to engage, educate and raise awareness in the community:

- May 2008: Youth and Gangs Conference
- 2008: *Now is the Time to Act: Youth Gang Prevention in Ottawa,* research paper commissioned by CPO and the OYGPI to gain a better appreciation for the gang situation in Ottawa
- October 2008: Public Forum on Youth Gangs
- October 2008: Conference on Youth Gangs – From Prevention to Intervention
- September 2009: *Faith-Based Approaches to Youth Gang Prevention, Examples from Boston, Philadelphia, Florida, Los Angeles and New York,* research paper commissioned by CPO and OYGPI on best practices
- September 2009: *Community Cohesion and Youth Gang Prevention in Six Priority Areas*, research paper commissioned by the CPO and the OYGPI to provide a framework for future youth gang prevention activity
- 2009-2010: Faith and Gangs Roundtables (3 in total)
- 2010: Parents Workshops in six languages (12 in total)
- 2011: Public Forum and Stakeholder Workshops on Ottawa youth gangs: pathways in, pathways out
- October 2011: *Life Course of Youth Gang Members*, paper commissioned by CPO and OYGPI on the life histories of 16 gang-involved men and youth from Ottawa

Most recently in October 2012, the Ottawa Police Service, Crime Prevention Ottawa, the Youth Services Bureau, and Ottawa Community Housing co-hosted a Public Forum and a Leadership Symposium "*Taking Action Together: Addressing Gangs in Our City*" with the aim to engage community members and stakeholders to collectively propose strategies to address gangs in Ottawa. Over 350 participants representing community stakeholders, grass roots and front line organizations, communities, schools, local government, law enforcement, criminal justice agencies and academia engaged around five themes and developed a series of recommendations that together demonstrated the complexity and proposed solutions to the multiple challenges of gangs in our city.
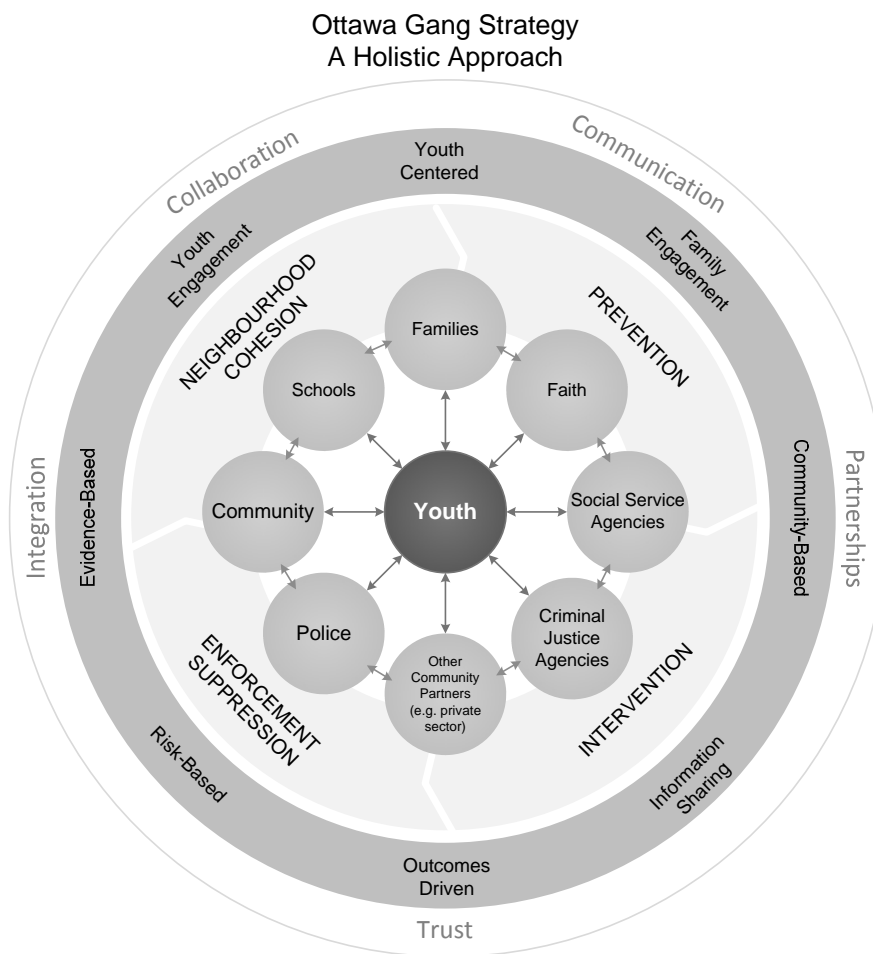
1.2   The Path Ahead

The Ottawa Gang Strategy brings together the work of the OYGPI from its early beginnings to the recommendations set forth as a result of the most recent events in a comprehensive document supported by a shared work plan. It represents a community-based approach to achieving collective impact by taking a balanced approach between neighbourhood cohesion, prevention, intervention and enforcement. It also builds on the understanding that was made clear at the October events that this is not a police issue alone and that it takes a community committed to this balanced approach and to achieving a common set of goals to be successful.

The scope of this Strategy does address gangs in its broader sense and in accordance with the Ottawa Police Service definition of a gang (see Appendix A). It does however identify youth as a priority demographic and looks to specifically address youth related issues through various initiatives from preventing youth at risk from getting involved with a gang to youth specific exit strategies. This is clearly reflected in the Strategy's supporting work plan, which translates the strategy into concrete actions that focus on the priority areas identified by the community and are led by various community partners.

2 A Holistic Approach

The Ottawa Gang Strategy builds on the holistic framework developed during the earlier work of the OYGPI, which looked at the broader social context that contributes to youth becoming involved in gangs. This Strategy also aligns with the National Crime Prevention Centre's findings for successful gang prevention strategies, which include a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach focused on at-risk individuals, community engagement, and appropriate levels of intervention at various stages of gang involvement. It also takes into account social science literature which generally group key risk factors under five areas, which are individual, family, peer, school and community.

Ottawa Gang Strategy
A Holistic Approach

As a community, we can appreciate that gangs are not just an enforcement issue. Enforcement alone is not enough, nor is the improvement of social services without also addressing issues such as family support, education, poverty, housing, mental health, and the local economy. This requires the engagement of a broad community of stakeholders and taking into account the linkages between gang specific issues, local realities and the broader social context.

Through this holistic lens, a four component approach is proposed to effect systemic change and prevent young people from becoming involved in gang activity, as well as minimize the

harmful effects of gangs in our community, including: neighbourhood cohesion, prevention, intervention and suppression.

Neighbourhood Cohesion refers to building positive relationships in gang affected neighbourhoods to reduce fear, strengthen relationships, increase evidence of positive social interactions and increase community capacity to recognize and address unacceptable activities. This can include community celebrations, Neighbourhood Watch, community clean-ups and other activities.

Prevention refers to taking an inclusive and preventative approach in order to predict, identify, prevent and reduce crime by addressing the risk factors associated with crime and victimization. It also suggests to the following four pillars of a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to crime prevention:

- Prevention through **Social Development** by targeting risk factors associated with crime and victimization
- Prevention through **Situational Measures** by reducing opportunity to commit crime;
- Prevention through **Education and Awareness**, including building knowledge about local resources and community needs; and
- Prevention through **Community Policing** by enhancing policing efforts and supporting police in their crime prevention activities.[1]

Within the Ottawa Gang Strategy context, prevention specifically refers to activities, programs, curriculum and other supports, which seek to positively engage young people with their families, their schools and their community before they are attracted to gang life. This could include after school programming, pro-social recreation, mentoring, outreach, supports to stay engaged in learning and /or school, mental health supports, employment programs, parenting programs and other activities.

Intervention refers to initiatives and programs that engage youth and adults who are involved or beginning to be involved in gang activity. It also addresses intervention programs in youth and adult correctional institutions and for individuals under court-ordered conditions. This can include exit programming, programs for suspended or expelled students, mental health and addiction treatment programs, intensive employment or life skills training programs and other interventions.

Enforcement and Suppression refer to targeted, sustained and effective enforcement aimed at criminal gang activity as well as the prosecution, sentencing, incarceration and court-ordered community supervision after release. This can include highly visible policing such as the Direct Action Response Team (DART), collaborations between landlords and the Police on targeted evictions, and meaningful conditions for offenders released on probation.

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[1] Crime Prevention in Ontario: A Framework for Action – Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services in partnership with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, 2009

3   Guiding Principles

The Ottawa Gang Strategy is based on a set of guiding principles that emerged during the October 2012 Leadership Symposium *"Taking Action Together: Addressing Gangs in Our City"*. These Principles are intended to inform the holistic approach, supporting initiatives and actions aimed at addressing gangs in our city.

These include, in no particular order:

- **Youth centered** – apply a needs-based approach driven by the needs of children and youth at risk and their affected families

- **Youth engagement** – ensure that youth are given opportunities to provide their perspective on the issues that affect them, and are empowered to take a leadership role in shaping the services that best suit their needs

- **Family engagement** – work in partnership with families to identify and address the needs of children and youth at risk or wanting to exit

- **Community-based** – initiatives should recognize the unique needs of communities and foster youth, family and community engagement in a culturally responsive manner to develop and deliver grassroots, community led prevention and intervention solutions that reflect unique community needs and that are culturally responsive

- **Evidence-based/risk-based/results-focused** – proven initiatives and successes should be identified and leveraged to encourage similar initiatives adapted to our community needs based on our shared assessment of risk. Initiatives undertaken by stakeholders should be evaluated for impact

- **Integration, collaboration and partnerships** – foster trust, a collective effort, and multi-disciplinary collaboration through partnerships among community, police, all levels of government and agencies, where results are far greater than any one organization could provide independently. A coordinated and horizontally integrated approach is required to address the multi-faceted issues pertaining to community safety and broader youth issues such as metal health, addiction, child welfare, youth violence, and family violence.

- **Information sharing** – foster an openness to lawful and appropriate sharing of information between individuals and organizations in a timely and accurate manner

- **Increased investment in prevention** – advocate from all levels of government for additional resources for proactive evidence-informed measures

4   Collective Impact

The Ottawa Gang Strategy is intended as a collaborative approach and plan for action to make a collective impact on gangs in Ottawa. It is built on the assumptions that:

- this can only be achieve through a shared agenda which includes:
    - agreement from community champions and leaders on clear and shared goals,
    - shared measures of success, and
    - mutual commitment to the processes, activities and initiatives that are most likely to effect change and contribute to achieving shared outcomes;
- a long term commitment by key stakeholders is necessary to achieve success;
- cross-sector engagement is essential for community-wide change;
- measurable data is essential to inform direction, track progress, learn from successes and challenges, and make required adjustments along the way; and
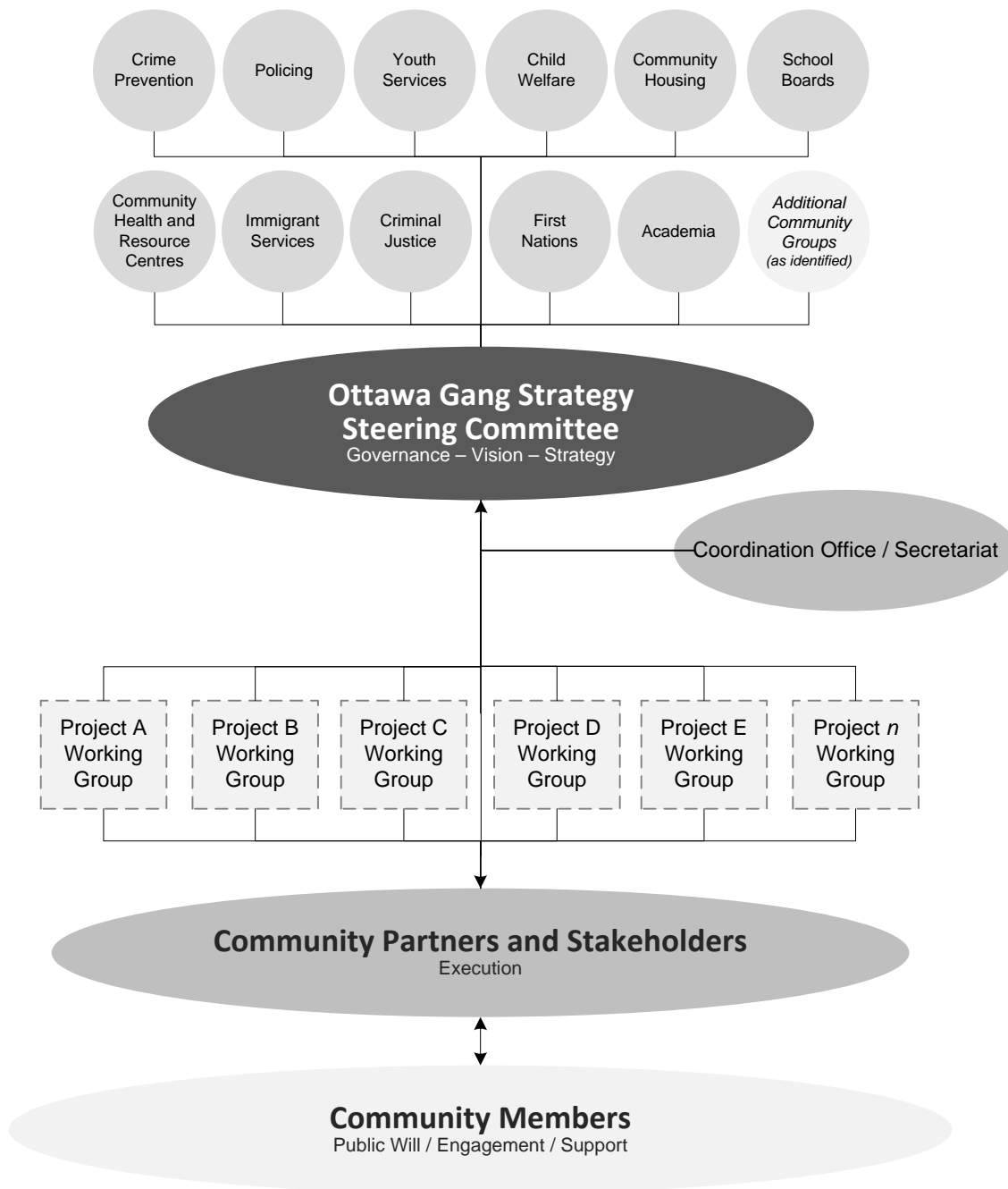- we are committed to engaging the community as agents of change.

5   Governance

This Strategy is built on broad community engagement and recognizes the role of community stakeholders in a balanced approach that addresses all four areas of focus, from neighbourhood cohesion, prevention, intervention, to suppression.   It brings together communities and non-government organizations, government, law enforcement and individuals through a shared and collaborative governance model.

Transitioning from the OYGPI committee, the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee represents a cross-disciplinary community of champions and leaders who commit to working as a collective to prevent and address gang activity in Ottawa. The Steering Committee efforts build on existing collaborative efforts already underway and leverage established organizations and structures. The terms of reference and current membership are provided in Appendix B.

To coordinate collective initiatives, Crime Prevention Ottawa has been assigned as the Coordinating Office and Secretariat in support of the Steering Committee's activities. Their key function includes:

- Guiding the strategy and the work plan
- Assisting in the establishment of shared measurement practices
- Supporting community engagement
- Assisting with the mobilization of funding and resources

Crime Prevention

Policing

Youth Services

Child Welfare

Community Housing

School Boards

Community Health and Resource Centres

Immigrant Services

Criminal Justice

First Nations

Academia

Additional Community Groups (as identified)

Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee
Governance – Vision – Strategy

Coordination Office / Secretariat

Project A Working Group

Project B Working Group

Project C Working Group

Project D Working Group

Project E Working Group

Project *n* Working Group

Community Partners and Stakeholders
Execution

Community Members
Public Will / Engagement / Support

6   Common Metrics

As a critical step to the implementation of the Ottawa Gang Strategy and its respective work plan is an evaluation framework with common metrics. Although data on gang specific crime is limited and challenging to collect, a framework to evaluate progress that leverages existing means of data collection within the Ottawa Police Service and other community partners, is required to better understand the impact of actions within the Strategy on the state of gangs in our city.

The following metrics have been identified as indicators to monitor and measure progress over time.

Metrics

• Enhanced cross-agency collaboration and service coordination
 	
• Improved awareness and access to services
 	
• Reduced fear in neighbourhoods
 	
• Enhanced trusting relationship between the community, police and other services
 	
• Greater family, neighbourhood and community awareness of available services
 	
• Gangs challenged to recruit new members
    o Effective anti-gang programs
 	
• Gang members exiting
    o Integration of community services
    o Effective exit programs/strategies
 	
• Gang members being prosecuted and convicted
    o Effective gang enforcement

7   Work Plan

7.1   Context

Given the current fiscal environment, this initial Work Plan builds on initiatives that are currently underway or have been resourced and are in the early stages of planning.   As additional projects and initiatives are identified, the Steering Committee will work collectively to explore funding and resourcing options.   Initiatives are directly linked to the four components of community cohesion, prevention, intervention and enforcement/suppression to ensure a balanced approach. Specific timelines for each initiative will be set by its respective lead(s) in consultation with the Steering Committee. Detailed project summaries are provided in Appendix C (to follow).

7.2   Interrelated Initiatives

Given the multi-faceted nature of gangs and the complex relationship between various risk factors that contribute to gang involvement, the Ottawa Gang Strategy and Work Plan are mindful of numerous interrelated initiatives, including:

- The Mayor's Youth Summit;
- The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative: Growing Up Great;
- The Ottawa Youth Justice Services Network;
- The Regional Safe School Committee;
- Provincial initiatives within the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services such as A Shared Responsibility, Ontario's Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health Policy Framework; and
- Other relevant leadership initiatives.

7.3   Review

This Strategy and supporting Work Plan are living documents that will continue to evolve and adapt through the engagement and work of stakeholders and community partners.   The Steering Committee will work together to monitor their implementation on an ongoing basis. This will be supported by a formal review of the Strategy in three years informed by annual reviews, updates and reporting of the Work Plan. It is expected that the collective approach established in the Strategy will remain evergreen and enhance the coordination of community efforts.

7.4   3-Year Work Plan

Initiative / Outcomes	Desired Outcomes	Lead Contributors
A. Neighbourhood Cohesion		
A1. Develop and implement the Community Leadership Network for Families initiative to increase the understanding between immigrant communities and the Canadian Justice System	• Better understanding of the Canadian Justice System by immigrant communities; • Build relationships between immigrant services agencies and main stream services	**Lead**: LASI **Contributors:** - CPO (funding) - Criminal Justice System - COMPAC - OPS - Other immigrant community leaders and service agencies
A2. Develop a post-incident neighbourhood support protocol	• Reduce negative impact of major incidents on neighbourhoods • Build trust	**Co-lead:** OCH and CHRC **Contributors**: - CPO (possible funding) - OPS - CR/CHCs
A3. *New initiatives and other projects to be developed over the course of the Strategy*		
B. Prevention		
B1. Develop a joint agreement on risk identification building on existing methods and tools with flags for gang involvement and a protocol for information sharing	• Efficiency • cross-network relationship development • information sharing	**Lead:** OPS **Contributors:** - YSB - JHS - EOYJA - CAS Ottawa - School Boards
B2. Building on the High Risk Youth Initiative, implement a pilot project on an approach to family-based case coordination	• Improved outcome for target youth • Improved service coordination	**Co-lead: JHS, EOYJA** **Contributors:** - CPO (funding) - Other tbd

B3. Host shared training events for service agencies and community-based organizations	• Improve shared/common knowledge base in the community • Build stronger relationship/ network of workers • Make best use of training resources and funding	(subject to training opportunity identified)
B5. *New initiatives and other projects to be developed over the course of the Strategy*		
C. Intervention		
C1. Provincial Gang Asset Mapping Initiative – "Making Connections": Map assets across all services in four regions in Ontario, led by four regional partners	• Identify opportunities to collectively improve outreach to affected communities • To promote existing services and resources • To explore mechanisms to collectively report on outcomes of existing services	**Lead**: Youth Services Bureau for Ottawa Region with the Province of Ontario **Contributors**: - TBD
C2. Engage Criminal Justice and education stakeholders in exploratory discussions on exit strategies during incarceration (e.g. employment or life skills training) and after release and under probationary conditions (e.g. completion of high school diploma)	• Reduce the likelihood of an individual returning to gang life after conviction	**Lead:** - TBD **Contributors:** - CPO - OPS - School Boards
C3. *New initiatives and other projects to be developed over the course of the Strategy*		
D. Enforcement / Suppression		
D1. Ottawa Police Service - Guns & Gangs Strategy		Lead: OPS
D3. *New initiatives and other projects to be developed over the course of the Strategy*		

Appendix A: Defining a "Gang" and Gang Member Classification

There are multiple terms used when referring to gangs such as "street gang", "youth gang", or "criminal organization", which are often used interchangeably and indiscriminately. Part of the challenge rests in the lack of a common definition. While there is no legislated definition for gangs in Canada, section 467.1 the Criminal Code does define a criminal organization as:

467.1(1) "criminal organization" means a group, however organized that

a. is composed of three or more persons in or outside Canada; and
b. has as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences that, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including financial benefit, by the group or any of the persons who constitute the group.

Several police services across Canada, including the Ottawa Police Service, use a common definition for "gang" that was drafted by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Street Gangs committee in June 2011. For the purpose of this Strategy, this definition will be adopted:

"Any group of three (3) or more people, formally or informally organized, which may have a common name or identifying sign or symbol, whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged primarily in street level criminal behaviour, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community."

Gang Member Classification

The Ottawa Police Service has adopted the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada (CISC) six (6) point criteria and a seventh criterion, which was recommended by the CACP Street Gang Committee in June 2011, to classify persons as gang members:

1. Reliable source information (inside gang member/rival gang member, legitimate community resources, i.e. schools, business, citizen).
2. Police information provided as a result of observed association with other known gang members, i.e. surveillance.
3. Admission of gang membership.
4. Involvement (direct/indirect) in gang-motivated crime.
5. Previous court findings that a person was a gang member.
6. Common and/or symbolic gang definition, i.e. gang paraphernalia (tattoos, weapons, poems, induction rituals, clothing).
7. Physical evidence, including photographs, documents, data or items of evidentiary value that speak to street gang membership, which are not outlined here.

The minimum standard to be met when classifying persons as a "gang member" is the fourth criteria, that is, "Involvement (direct/indirect) in gang-motivated crime", with any two other criteria.

Appendix B: Terms of Reference

OTTAWA GANG STRATEGY
STEERING COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.   Background

In May 2007, the Youth Services Bureau and Crime Prevention Ottawa brought together and co-chaired a broad, multi-stakeholder collaboration, the first working group on youth gang prevention in Ottawa. This group was eventually renamed the Ottawa Youth Gang Prevention Initiative (OYGPI).

With the creation of the Ottawa Gang Strategy, the OYGPI is being transitioned to the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee (OGSSC) representing a cross-disciplinary community of champions and leaders who commit to working as a collective to prevent and address gang activity in Ottawa. Although the membership of the OGSSC is similar to the OYPGI, it has broadened its scope to focus on youth, families, neighbourhoods and adult gang members.

As there is no new funding or resources associated with the Strategy and its supporting governance, the Steering Committee efforts build on initiatives and collaborative efforts already underway and leverage established organizations and structures.

2.   Purpose

The purpose of the Ottawa Gang Strategy Steering Committee is to lead the development, buy-in and implementation of the Ottawa Gang Strategy and to champion and coordinate the delivery of the work plan.

3.   Structure

The governance structure created to support the Strategy is intended as a community-based approach that brings together key community stakeholders that are committed to supporting the collective effort within any of the four components of the Strategy of neighbourhood cohesion, prevention, intervention and enforcement.

4.   Membership

The Steering Committee membership is made up of community partners representing various sectors including, but not limited to, youth, families, child welfare, schools, community, social service agencies, police, and criminal justice agencies. Members must together agree to work collectively to address gangs in our city through a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and the coordination and mutual reinforcement of activities. A strong effort is made to ensure a balanced representation while maintaining a manageable committee size. Membership will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Steering Committee Members.

Members represent their respective organization's mandate as well as other positions and memberships of relevance.

The Executive Committee with agreement from the Steering Committee may also elect to bring in ad hoc members on a temporary basis as needed. It may also elect to created sub-committees or working groups to address a specific priority or task.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Steering Committee Members

The roles and responsibilities of the committee members include:

- Identifying key partners and building coalitions
- Creating the call to action through different levels of engagement for stakeholders
- Providing opportunities for dialogue in a collective effort to enhance the collaboration and coordination among organizations;
- Promoting information sharing
- Conducting research
- Creating a common vision through the development of the Strategy
- Developing, implementing and monitoring the execution of a shared action plan
- Identifying capacity (time, funding and people) to execute the plan and support working groups
- Developing shared measures and collectively identifying the data available to support the monitoring of progress
- Making decisions for actions to be undertaken by the Committee
- Collaborate and coordinate with other projects and initiatives that contribute to the collective efforts to address gangs within our community, including, but not limited to:
    - Youth engagement and the identification and early intervention of at risk youth;
    - Other relevant social issues such as youth employment, mental health, drugs, poverty and initiatives that engage, for example, youth, families, neighbourhoods, faith or cultural communities

Collectively, all Steering Committee members shall share the following common responsibilities:

- Attendance at scheduled meetings;
- Preparation for meetings;
- Open and honest communication to and from the members;
- Accurate representation of their respective organizations;
- Commitment to act on a consensus reached by the group and to seek endorsement as required from outside the membership.

5.2. Chair and Executive Committee Members

The Steering Committee will appoint a small Executive Committee and a Chair on an annual basis. The Chair and Executive Committee ideally represents different sectors or stakeholder communities. The

Chair's primary role is to facilitate the operations of the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee in accordance with the Terms of Reference. Specifically, the Chair and the Executive Committee will be a Champion for the Strategy and supporting Work Plan in partnership with the Steering Committee Members; chair meetings of the Executive and Steering Committee; and guide the Committee to consensus on decisions and issues through open discussion.

5.3. Backbone Organization

In addition, Crime Prevention Ottawa will serve as the organization who will provide backbone support to the Executive and Steering Committees. Key functions include:

- Guiding the Strategy and the Work Plan;
- Assisting in the establishment of shared measurement practices;
- Supporting community engagement;
- Assisting with the mobilization of funding and resources; and
- Providing administrative support to the Chair, Executive Committee, and Steering Committee.

6. Meeting Logistics

- The Executive and Steering Committees will meet a minimum of once per quarter. Meetings may be held more often at the discretion of the Chair or at the request of any member.
- The Committee will meet at facilities provided by its membership, on a rotational basis or as most convenient to its members. The location for the next meeting will be determined at each meeting based on availability.
- Meeting invitations, agendas, and minutes will be coordinated by Crime Prevention Ottawa with the input of all members.

7. Decision Making Rationale

7.1. Consensus

It is highly desirable that the group reach consensus about its decisions since the results must be acceptable to the wider community of stakeholders. The committee may choose to present recommendations endorsed by a substantial majority of the group provided that minority viewpoints are reflected in any shared comments. The Steering Committee members may elect the removal for cause of any member following a recommendation to the Chair by a Steering Committee member or a member of the community. Removal shall occur only after the member has been advised of the complaint and given reasonable opportunity for defence.

7.2. Confidentiality

Although members are naturally free to express their own views within the context of Steering Committee meetings, or the general business of the Committee, members should publicly support a course of action decided by the committee. If a member is unable to support a majority course of action, it is that member's responsibility not to publicly comment on the decisions.

Steering Committee members may want to discuss issues and/or decisions with peers, nominating organizations and representative groups in order to gain feedback and measure consensus. It is not the purpose of this confidentiality clause to prevent this from occurring, but to protect individual members from being quoted out of context and undermining the network and the committee's integrity.

8. Review of Terms of Reference
These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and amended by the Steering Committee as required.

Appendix C: Project Summaries

(to follow)