



New Directions in Community Safety

Consolidating Lessons Learned about Risk and Collaboration

The Ontario Working Group
...on Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety

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April, 2014



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Ontario Working Group...

...on Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety (OWG)

A Collaborative of Four Police Agencies and Their Community Partners

Stimulated by lessons learned in Saskatchewan about multi-sector collaboration to mitigate imminent risks of crime and or victimization, four Ontario police services and their community partners decided to implement their own initiatives in marginalized neighbourhoods.

- Toronto Police Service (TPS) in partnership with United Way Toronto and the City of Toronto convened “*FOCUS* Rexdale” in 2012. (*FOCUS* is an acronym for “Furthering Our Communities--Uniting Services”.) For two hours, once weekly, 20-30 human service agency workers convene to identify and intervene on situations of acutely elevated risk in the neighbourhoods of Rexdale.
- Coming off its very successful inter-agency collaboration in their Flour Mill and Donovan neighbourhoods, the Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS), in 2013, invited human services agency executives to support a local “CRISIS table” (where CRISIS is an acronym for Collaborative Risk-Identified Situation, Intervention Strategy). The initiative found space and hired an executive director.
- Waterloo Region, under the leadership of the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) partnered with Langs¹ to launch a “Connectivity Table” that brings acute care workers together regularly to identify and intervene on situations of imminent risk of harm.
- Peel Regional Police (PRPS) launched training for themselves and partners on how to collaborate effectively across sectors. Steps were taken in 2013 to launch a “situation table” that would address risk factors in a Mississauga housing development.

Early in 2013 these four police services decided to meet once monthly to share lessons-learned as they all strived to achieve similar goals. They referred to themselves as the “Ontario Work-

¹Co-locating 25 health and social service partners, Langs leads “Health Links” for Cambridge and North Dumfries

ing Group on Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety (OWG).” Meanwhile, Saskatchewan’s successes continued to attract a lot of interest in Ontario among police services, other human and social services and municipalities.

Future of Policing Advisory Committee

At the same time, provincial discussions about the future of policing reinforced the value of collaborative approaches to community safety. The multi-stakeholder Future of Policing Advisory Committee (FPAC), led by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (the Ministry), deliberated on a number of issues that also preoccupied the OWG:

- Community safety planning driven at the local level by municipal governance
- Participation of all local human and social service agencies in community safety planning
- Reliance on evidence-based practices and new standards for performance measurement in community safety
- Strategies and protocols that will increase information sharing among local community safety partners
- New roles for police services boards in community safety planning

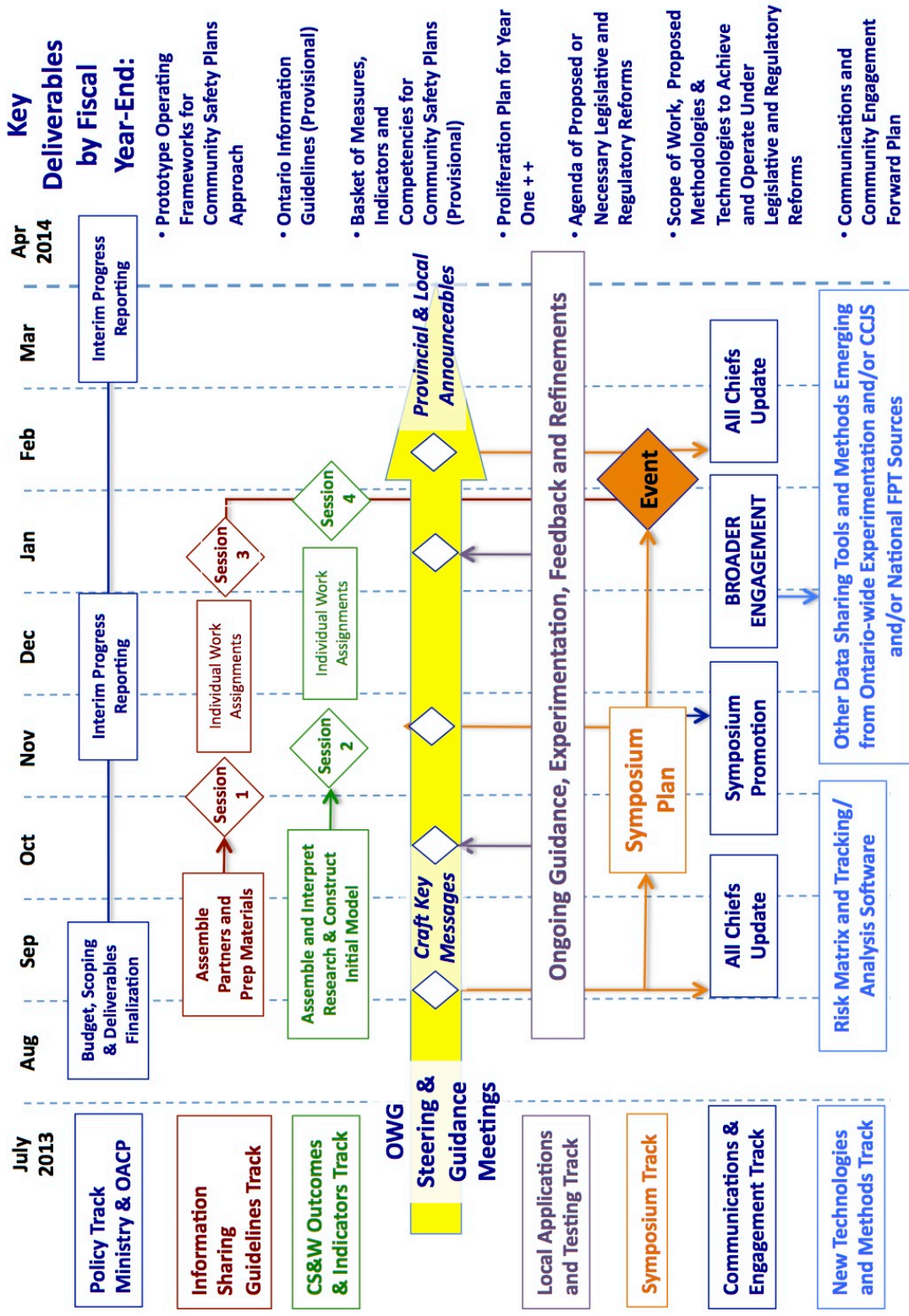
The confluence of all of these discussions and initiatives encouraged the Ministry to support the work of the OWG through the *Proceeds of Crime Grant* process. The four founding police services applied to the Ministry for financial support for their local initiatives; and donated a quarter of what they received to finance the work of the OWG.

Work Plan

In the Spring of 2013, the OWG hired Dr. Hugh C. Russell and Norman E. Taylor to provide technical guidance for the work of the OWG. The first step was development of a work plan which can be seen on the following page. The ambitious Work Plan focused the OWG on six principle products:

- Communications
- Logical framework for community safety planning
- Performance measures for community safety planning
- Guidelines for multi-sector information sharing
- Symposium
- Analytic tools

Additionally, the Work Plan called for specifying areas for legislative reform in Ontario; and, some recommendations for furthering the work of the OWG in the next fiscal year. The balance of this report reflects the work done in each of these areas.



Ontario Working Group on Collaborative, Risk-Driven Community Safety – Project Plan and Timeline

Communications

Early in the year, the OWG considered how it could reach the broad range of interests in its work, especially among Ontario police services. At this point, the Community Safety and Crime Prevention standing committee of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) invited the OWG to serve it, virtually as a subcommittee. At that point it became apparent that the OACP provided an excellent venue for communications with its broad membership.

The work of the OWG was supported throughout the year by the superlative communications capacities of our Ontario Provincial Police partners. As already intimated, the OWG rode on the crest of a wave of interest in collaborative, risk-driven community safety among offices of local government, human and social service agencies, police services, and provincial ministries. In effect, the OWG had a large constituency of interest, from the outset. Hence it was important to provide carefully crafted messaging that would inform that constituency as well as encourage them to support the work of the OWG and attend a provincial symposium slated for February, 2014, at which time they would begin to see the results of this year of activity.

Framework for Safety Planning

The OWG's *Framework for Planning Community Safety and Well-being* emerged early in the project period owing to related initiatives and discussions happening in a number of Ontario municipalities, discussions among police CEOs, FPAC draft recommendations, consultations in the Ministry and, most significantly, interim deliberations and findings among all of the OWG task groups. In many ways this *Framework* evolved from all of the other work being done by the OWG.

The *Framework* was produced in three parts:

- A discursive text which depicts and explains the *Framework* in all of its detail
- An animated PowerPoint® slide deck that is available for local presentations
- A script for local narration of the slide deck

Performance Measures

The *Framework* prescribed four levels of planning activity:

- Social Development
- Prevention
- Risk Intervention
- Emergency Response

Safety and well-being indicators and performance measures are different for each level of planning. As a result, a broad coalition of community safety and well-being researchers, evaluators and policy analysts formed a working group to pull together the measures that would best fit the *Framework*. The group developed a work plan for this task and guidelines for performance

measures. The final report appears in, *Performance Measures for Community Safety and Well-being*.

Information Sharing

Reluctance to share information between agencies is often mentioned as the greatest constraint to multi-sector collaboration. Most often protection-of-privacy legislation is cited as the cause of such reluctance. As a result, the OWG convened a task group to examine such legislation and develop some guidelines that human and social agency practitioners may use as a basis for deciding when and how to exchange the kinds of information that would be required to reduce harms and victimization.

The work of this group led to the resource paper, *An Interpretive Guide to Information Sharing Practices in Ontario*. Four of the most useful guidelines relate to:

- Eight principles for making decisions about information sharing
- Four thresholds for discerning when to share information, and with whom
- Analysis of Ontario legislation as it pertains to information sharing
- Suggestions for legislative reform that would enhance collaborative, risk-driven community safety

Symposium

The OWG was very courageous in committing to offer its broad constituency an all-day Symposium in February 2014, just before the end of the fiscal year. That commitment was made well before any of the technical work was done. The Ontario Provincial Police communications specialists were invaluable in generating diverse communications tools that promoted the Symposium, via the OACP's website. Both of these partners were key to the success of the Symposium. The Toronto Police Service (TPS) hosted the OWG and 250 registered guests at the Symposium for a whole day at the Toronto Police College.

The Symposium provided an opportunity to share with OWG constituents:

- The *Framework for Planning Community Safety and Well-being*
- Principles for deciding whether to share personal and confidential information
- Descriptions of what happens when collaborators decide to convene in order to mitigate situations of acutely elevated risk (what we in Ontario will call a "Situation Table")
- Outtakes from a video training package that was under development in Peel Region, for the purpose of teaching Situation Table practitioners how to share information that will permit risk mitigation through the protocols of a highly disciplined discussion

Analytic Tools

As more communities move forward to embrace the various new models arising from the work of the OWG, new forms of data are beginning to emerge, and new forms of analysis will soon be possible. Two important early developments have already come out of this collaboration. In the first, the Greater Sudbury Police took the lead and with the cooperation of the Ontario Police Technology and Information Cooperative (OPTIC), completed a Niche-based adaptation of the Risk Matrix, a tool originally developed in Prince Albert on a Versaterm RMS platform. This tool assists police in identifying and presenting high-risk individuals and locations to the Situation Table, and can also be used for other deployment purposes. It is now available for use by all police services in Ontario.

The second achievement is nearing completion and involves an inter-provincial agreement for Ontario communities to take advantage of a Situation Table tracking system, developed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice: Corrections and Policing and adopted by all Hubs active in that province. Once available, this tool will potentially capture de-identified risk and intervention information coming from all active Situation Tables in Ontario in a common format to enable continuing analysis at the local, regional and provincial levels. It is expected that the tool will be initially piloted in the Gateway Community Mobilization Hub in North Bay.

Next Steps

Like any other research project, this year of OWG work not only provided useful insights, guidelines and answers to some questions; it also generated a lot of interest in continuing to do this kind of work. For example, during the course of the year, a number of municipalities began their own, local, community safety planning initiatives. They now look to the OWG for technical assistance and guidance as they begin to develop a local constituency for their work.

In many respects, this year of OWG work focused on research literature, as well as integrating lessons-learned from other jurisdictions -- in Ontario and beyond. In that sense, it was a “lab exercise.” At the same time, the OWG’s various products, and the very successful Symposium sparked a lot of local interest in applications. Hence, the opportunity exists for the OWG to support collaborative, risk-driven community safety, and to mount projects that support local initiatives.

There is also unfinished work from last year. While the information sharing guidelines that emerged from that task group provide a partial analysis of some federal and provincial legislation -- including some suggestions for needed improvements -- it remains to complete a comprehensive review of relevant legislation that enables local planning for community safety and well-being.