



AIDS COMMITTEE
OF YORK REGION

STRATEGIC PLAN

APRIL 1, 2019 to MARCH 31, 2023



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MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR



Since 1993, the AIDS Committee of York Region (ACYR) has been providing support and care to people living with HIV/AIDS, people co-infected with Hepatitis C and those at risk of acquiring HIV and Hep C.

In 25 years, the face of HIV and Hep C co-infection, the various treatment options, and York Region have all changed. However, challenges for at-risk populations, and for people living with HIV and Hep C co-infection still remain. For instance, stigma, isolation, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination continue to make it difficult to stay HIV-negative and free of Hep C; to be connected to and adhere to treatments if HIV-positive or co-infected with Hep C; and to access stigma-free medical and social services.

In the last two years, ACYR has decided to expand our reach and fill a gap in the broader health and social services provided to two of our priority populations in York Region – people who use drugs, and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

At the recommendation of the Ontario Organizational Development Program and Endeavour Volunteer Consulting for Non-Profits, we paused a strategic planning process begun in 2016 to allow time for Endeavour's report on an organizational strategy for ACYR's long-term sustainability.

In early 2018, with Endeavour's strategy documents and several other reports in hand, our Board of Directors felt it was time for us to resume the planning for our next phase.

In the spring and summer of 2018, we scanned our environment, identified key issues and developed a measurable and achievable four-year plan.

We are thrilled to announce the results of our efforts.

By March 2023, ACYR will have accomplished its strategic goals, and their associated S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-oriented) objectives to:

- Extend our reach
- Enhance social inclusion and engagement
- Strengthen our governance

Each of these goals and their respective S.M.A.R.T. Objectives will inform our next four annual workplans. The strategic plan and ACYR's annual workplans will be monitored, tracked quarterly, and evaluated by our Board of Directors. The Board will report on our progress to the agency membership at our Annual General Meeting.

"ACYR looks forward to an exciting and productive four years, by the end of which we intend to be a more effective, inclusive and responsive organization."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karman Lock".

Karman Lock
Chair, Board of Directors

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The AIDS Committee of York Region was founded in 1993 and formally incorporated as a registered charitable organization in 1996. We have been providing support and care for many years now to people living with HIV/AIDS and people living with Hepatitis C co-infection, and have also been providing prevention services to those at risk of acquiring HIV and Hep C. But over the years, York Region has changed, HIV and Hep C treatments have evolved and improved, and so has 'the face of HIV and Hep C co-infection' – the profile of our service users.

We still serve a population of longstanding service users, but new populations now come through our doors. Available treatments have meant that HIV is now a manageable chronic illness for those who know their status and yet HIV (and Hep C) stigma, isolation, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination continue to make the lives of our HIV-positive service users difficult. In some cases, they make it difficult to adhere to HIV treatments long enough to sustain an undetectable viral load. These problems also hinder at-risk populations from accessing testing and other health and wellness supports, or picking up their test results and connecting to essential health and social services.

Better provincial data has allowed us to pinpoint the sub-populations affected by HIV that we should be making a priority in our work. But ACYR noticed that in York Region, the broader health and social service needs of two of those priority populations – people who use drugs and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals - were not being adequately met.

To step up and fill this gap, ACYR decided in 2017 to expand our reach. We now provide services and support to both populations in addition to focusing on HIV. We added two new programs:



My House Rainbow Meeting Spaces
for members of the 2SLGBTQ+
community and their allies



A community-based harm reduction
program for people who use drugs
in York Region.

In addition, a strategy report from Endeavour Volunteer Consulting for Non-Profits and other program evaluation documents informed our efforts to embark on a new strategic plan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

We began our strategic planning process in 2016 with environmental scan work done by Beth Jordan through the Ontario Organizational Development Program (OODP). During the same period, ACYR had also engaged Endeavour Volunteer Consulting for Non-Profits in a six-month process to assess ACYR's sustainability and to provide strategic recommendations to the organization. On the advice of the OODP and Endeavour, we paused our 2016 strategic planning process to allow for completion of Endeavour's report, which was focused on our future directions.

In the spring of 2018, our Board of Directors felt that it was time for us to resume the planning for our next phase. The Endeavour report had been received, as had several other reports from evaluations done by Eko Nomos. With a grant from the Regional Municipality of York's 2018 Community Investment Strategy, we engaged John Miller Consulting to restart the strategic planning process.

At an organizational readiness assessment and scope-setting meeting, ACYR's strategic planning committee updated its plan development process. The following steps were undertaken between May and September of 2018:

A Compressed Environmental Scan

The Strategic Planning Committee chose key documents for our consultant to review, including: several program evaluation reports by Eko Nomos; an organizational strategy report done by Endeavour Volunteer Consulting for Non-profits; and the View from the Front Lines report produced annually by the Ontario HIV Treatment Network. 2016 epidemiology data from York Region Public Health and our own service user data were also analysed.

The consultant interviewed several key informants -- people who would bring an important perspective to this process. These included: ACYR Executive Director Vibhuti Mehra; former ACYR Manager of Support Services Megan McGrath; Ann Ramkay, Manager, Sexual Health Clinics at The Regional Municipality of York; Susan Dobson, Executive Director at the Krasman Centre; Mary Ann Proulx, Coordinator of Street Outreach & Services Network at LOFT/Crosslinks; and Anita Fervaha, Manager of Public Health Program at the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Our consultant led focus groups with staff on May 31, 2018 and with the Board on June 21, 2018. Because Adobe Consulting had previously led a service user focus group in 2016 on the subject of service-related strengths and weaknesses, it was decided that service user input would be sought in the context of a redrafting of the agency Mission and Vision statements.

Mission and Vision Statement Redraft

The Board decided that new Mission and Vision statements were needed to guide us in this process – one that would speak to all of ACYR’s longstanding and new programs, and that would point us to the future.

Service users provided advice to the Board at a focus group held on June 13, 2018. A representative of this group of highly-engaged individuals also sat on the strategic planning committee and acted as a liaison to service users to keep them informed of our progress.

Strategic Planning Retreats

ACYR’s Board and staff held three retreats.

At the first retreat:

- A new combined Mission and Vision Statement was crafted using the input from the service user focus group.

At the second retreat:

- The revised Mission and Vision Statement was validated (this new statement was also adopted formally by the Board at its August 29, 2018 meeting);
- The results of the environmental scan were presented and discussed;
- The Board discussed internal strengths and challenges, and also current threats and opportunities;
- Twelve strategic issues were identified; and
- Strategic Goals and S.M.A.R.T. Objectives were developed.

At the third retreat:

- The Strategic Goals and S.M.A.R.T. Objectives were slightly edited for clarity and were then validated;
- The staff and the Board representatives developed an implementation plan, with the Board focusing on governance-related items, and staff focusing on operational ones; and
- The process for monitoring and updating the plan was confirmed.

Approval of the plan by the Board

At its November 28, 2018 Board meeting, the Board of Directors approved and adopted the 2019-23 Strategic Plan.

Richmond Hill Family PRIDE

Join us for a FREE family friendly event to celebrate Pride month in York Region showcasing music, art and poetry from the 2SLGBTQ+ community members and allies. Enjoy an open mic on the patio, with refreshments.

Sunday June 10, 2018 • 5:00-8:00 PM

Richmond Hill Heritage Centre

19 Church Street North, Richmond Hill

Limited seating. Please bring your own picnic chairs and blankets.

For more information contact Gary Wu at 647-381-0439 or gwu@acyr.org

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FOR THE LGBTQ2S COMMUNITY

My House is an inclusive and safe space for members of the LGBTQ2S community and their allies.

- We offer several Rainbow Rooms for those who identify with the LGBTQ2S community as well as their allies to:
- Gather together and form social supports
 - Organize recreational activities
 - Access information and resources on services
 - Participate in volunteering and leadership development opportunities

Rainbow Rooms are open on a drop-in basis.

A comprehensive collection of Queer literature and books is available at our Richmond Hill Rainbow Room that can be borrowed for personal use.

Find a Rainbow Room for you!



CONTACT

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www.acyr.org/mnyhouse



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WEDNESDAY APRIL 15, 2015
BLUE DOOR SHELTERS, ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

PLEASE LET THE SHELTER MANAGER KNOW IF YOU WILL BE ATTENDING.
ALL NAMES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL.

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AIDS COMMITTEE
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HARM REDUCTION SUPPORTS & SERVICES



We aim to help reduce stigma and discrimination
against people who use drugs

We offer:

- Sterile needles and syringes
- Sterile water
- Cookers
- Vitamins C
- Filters
- Naloxone kits
- Straight (crack) pipes
- Brass screens
- Push sticks
- Bowl (meth) pipes
- Mouthpieces
- Used needle disposal containers
- Condoms and lubes
- Information about safer drug use
- Sexual health promotion and testing drives
- Wellness drop-in programs

All services are free and confidential.

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THE ONTARIO ACCORD
A Statement of Solidarity with GIPA/MIPA

"We, people living with HIV/AIDS and allies in the community:

- Commit to the greater involvement and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MIPA); GIPA/MIPA puts PHAs at the centre and is grounded in human rights and the dignity of the full human being
- Commit to personal and social transformation
- Promote the evolution of thought, action and collaboration among us and with our allies

• Inclusion over exclusion, a quest for integrity at all times and the embodiment of self-determination

• Promote the evolution of thought, action and collaboration among us and with our allies

• Because GIPA/MIPA is about human struggles and aspirations, ethics, empowerment and accountability are its foundation."

Ontario AIDS Network

OUR MISSION AND VISION

Given that we are still the only AIDS service organization in York Region, an important component in this process was a review of our foundational statements to ensure that we were simultaneously:

- a) positioned for the future, while also;
- b) speaking to our current service user populations; and
- c) reflecting our ongoing commitment to our existing programs.

It was decided that ACYR would adopt a new, combined Mission and Vision statement. It is as follows:

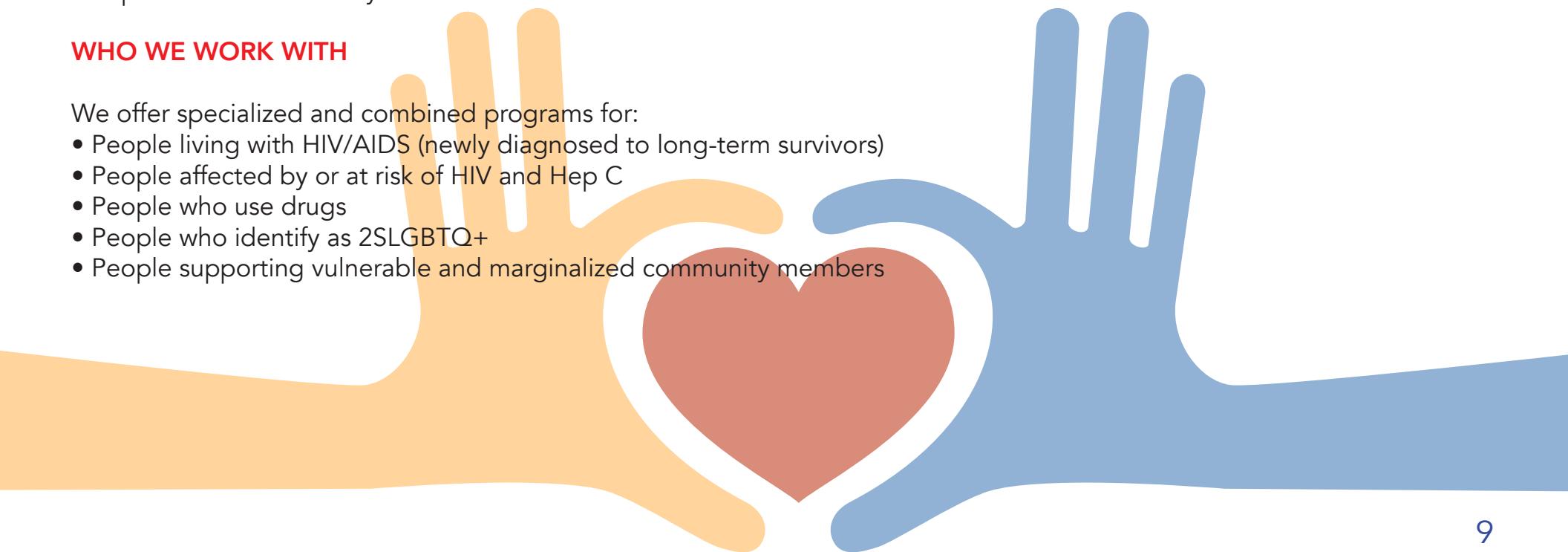
OUR MISSION AND VISION

To create safe, confidential, and inclusive spaces and services in York Region where people can access dignified support and meaningfully engage in self-determined pathways to well-being. We envision an informed, healthy, stigma-free and compassionate community.

WHO WE WORK WITH

We offer specialized and combined programs for:

- People living with HIV/AIDS (newly diagnosed to long-term survivors)
- People affected by or at risk of HIV and Hep C
- People who use drugs
- People who identify as 2SLGBTQ+
- People supporting vulnerable and marginalized community members



ACYR'S STRATEGIC GOALS AND S.M.A.R.T. OBJECTIVES 2019-23

The process of developing Strategic Goals and S.M.A.R.T. Objectives (objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-oriented) involved identifying key strategic issues based on an analysis of our strengths, challenges, and of the opportunities and threats that exist at this moment in our history.

The Strategic Goals and S.M.A.R.T. Objectives are connected to the identified strategic issues. Note, however, that some issues may have contributed to the development of several S.M.A.R.T. Objectives





GOAL 1

ACYR will extend the reach of its programming, and improve the effectiveness and interconnectedness of its programs and services.

Specifically, we will implement these **S.M.A.R.T. Objectives:**

#1 We will have developed and implemented -- in partnership with key organisations -- dedicated strategies that include measurable health outcomes for youth, aging service users, and African, Caribbean and Black communities in York Region;

#2 We will involve both staff and peers to expand our satellite presence in the municipalities of Georgina, King, Vaughan, and East Gwillimbury; and

#3: We will have established an evaluation culture that involves the development of outcomes for all programs and services. We will also have begun to collect and analyse service user, service provider and program outcomes in order to support future planning.

STRATEGIC ISSUES ADDRESSED

No ACB strategy. ACYR has no fulsome strategy or funding to serve African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) populations in York Region, despite their being 30% of our service users.

Lack of services for aging community members living with or at risk of HIV. People living with HIV and co-infected with Hep C who are aging, or experiencing accelerated aging need more support and services than are currently available. ACYR needs to play a greater role in service provider capacity building to support these groups.

Need to improve services for young service users. Youth are one of our most at-risk populations. With the incorporation of My House, ACYR has an increased connection with young 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. We need to do more for this population in the areas of prevention and support.

The need to decentralize our services. We have a head office in Richmond Hill and an established a presence in Newmarket, Aurora and Markham, but our region is vast and transportation is difficult. We need to establish an increased presence in other key communities in the region.

Our partnership must be solidified and expanded. ACYR can't do it alone. We need to rely on the reach and services of our excellent partners. However, we must be clear and respectful and accountable to one another in those partnerships by continuing to negotiate and signing strong agreements and memoranda of understanding.

The lack of a strong culture of evaluation and measurement of success. ACYR has made progress in this area, but we have work to do to ensure we are thoughtfully planning and evaluating our programs and services using measurable outcomes – and that we have the resources and capacity to routinely do so.

We must stabilize the expansion and integration of our newly added programming – and we must thoughtfully take on new programming. We must take the time to continue to integrate our new services for people who use drugs, and for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. We must also take the time to ensure there is stable funding and staff capacity for all new and existing programming.



GOAL 2

ACYR will enhance social inclusion and engagement opportunities, and other health outcomes, of service users and key at-risk populations. We will engage service users in identifying gaps, finding solutions, and delivering programs and services.

Specifically, we will implement these **S.M.A.R.T. Objectives:**

#4: We will have transformed our programs and services to meaningfully engage and support peers to propose and develop programs, to be peer mentors and navigators, and to assist in delivery of programs and services; and

#5: We will have led a regional effort in developing and implementing an HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) education, access, and adherence strategy. The strategy will result in community-based access and testing points in, at least, the municipalities of Vaughan, Georgina, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Markham.

STRATEGIC ISSUES ADDRESSED

Challenges in peer engagement. Aside from the My House program, ACYR has struggled to meaningfully engage and support peers and people with lived experience throughout its programming, including in the design and delivery of new programs and services.

There are few inclusive and stigma-free health and social service settings in York Region for people living with HIV/AIDS, people who use drugs, and people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.



GOAL 3

ACYR will continue to strengthen its governance model, processes and tools to more effectively represent its communities, and to improve its oversight, risk management and planning.

Specifically, we will implement this **S.M.A.R.T. Objective:**

#6: Our Board of Directors will be attracting and retaining the most competent and representative Directors, which will include peers and community partners. The Board will support its organisational governance by: a) having implemented an effective Board orientation, training and mentorship program; and by b) having strengthened its planning and self-evaluation culture.

STRATEGIC ISSUES ADDRESSED

Our Board has work to do to be more representative, and to build and sustain its capacity.

The Board of Directors of ACYR has struggled with Board retention – and this has led to challenges in accomplishing our goals. Another challenge has been ensuring our Board has meaningful representation of our service users and community partners.

TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING TO MEMBERSHIP

ACYR's Board will be incorporating into its meeting structure a quarterly process of tracking the progress of this strategic plan. The Board will self-report on its progress related to Objective #6, and the Executive Director will report to the Board on the status of Objectives 1 to 5. Each year of this four-year plan, the Board and staff will conduct work-planning to ensure that progress continues to be made towards achieving our Goals and S.M.A.R.T. Objectives.

In addition, ACYR's Board will report annually to our membership on our progress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACYR thanks The Regional Municipality of York for the funding support which allowed us to engage John Miller Consulting in the development of this plan. For also contributing to this plan and its development, we must thank:

- The Strategic Planning Committee: Karman Lock, Michelle Sudeyko, Gavin Demonte, Vibhuti Mehra, Megan McGrath, Gary Wu, Arpa Azmila, Mark Koning, and Rajiv Shah;
- Our service and funding partners who contributed their insights: Ann Ramkay, Susan Dobson, Mary Ann Proulx and Anita Fervaha;
- Beth Jordan and the Ontario Organizational Development Program for the 2016 work on the environmental scan as well as all our community and funding partners who contributed their insights in the 2016 scan including Joanne Lush (AIDS and Hepatitis C Programs, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care), Andrea Wong (United Way Greater Toronto), Dr. Danny Chen, Patrice Graham-Brown, Radha Bhardwaj, Marnie Sigmar and Sue Carr;
- Endeavour Volunteer Consulting for Non-Profits and Eko Nomos, whose reports were so helpful in our assessing our deficits and our strengths; and
- The staff, Board and service users who participated in the crafting of our plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2023

ACYR learns and improves by connecting with its stakeholders. If you or your organization are interested in learning more about the thinking and analysis that went into developing this strategic plan, the progress we have made to implement it, or about any part of ACYR's work, please contact:

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