



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 25-058**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Ruth Noordegraaf, Director, Community Development & Wellbeing and IIDEA
Date of Meeting: February 18, 2025
Subject: Planet Youth – Change of Scope

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 4. Foster a Caring and Inclusive Community

Goal: 4.1 Enhance community safety and well-being.

Executive Summary:

In January 2024, Council committed \$30,000 from the working fund to a group of community partners, with the intent to support a federal funding application for the 'Planet Youth' initiative. Planet Youth is a program that aims to steer young people towards positive activities and away from activities with negative impacts to their physical and mental health, such as substance abuse.

The grant application was not successful, and the group of partners has since approached City staff with an updated proposal. They are requesting that the City funding be allocated towards developing a youth engagement strategy and directly supporting youth involvement in the creation and implementation of a local substance use prevention approach for the KFL&A region. The group of partners have formed a dedicated working group named the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project (KFL&A UYP) and were able to secure permanent staff resources supporting the youth planning, and secured funding to relaunch the grade 5 and 9 ActivPass.

This report outlines the rationale for redirecting the funds from the Planet Youth program to the KFL&A UYP. It details the planned use of the redirected funds, the expected outcomes and how this initiative aligns with existing City work in the youth sector, including the Council-directed

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update of the Youth Strategy and the review and update of the Community Safety & Wellbeing Strategy.

Should Council approve the redirection of funding, staff will collaborate with the working group on the implementation of the project and will be report back through the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee on the outcomes and next steps of the initiative.

Recommendation:

That Council redirect the \$30,000 from the Working Fund Reserve committed towards the Planet Youth Program on January 9, 2024 to the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project; and

That Council direct staff to report back on the outcomes of the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project to the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee by Q1 2026.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Jennifer Campbell,
Commissioner, Community
Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services Not required

Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services

David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston Not required

Ian Semple, Acting Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services Not required

Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer

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Options/Discussion:**Background**

In January 2024, community partners including Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC), Community Foundation Kingston and Area, KFLA Public Health and other agencies supporting youth (The Partners) approached City staff about a new program in development called 'Planet Youth'. This program aims to steer young people towards positive activities and away from activities with negative impacts to their physical and mental health, such as substance abuse.

The Partners were intending to apply to the Public Health Agency of Canada grant program with an application deadline of January 15, 2024, and requested City Council contribute \$30,000 to this initiative as part of their grant application. The requested funding from the City was intended to cover the cost of registering for the Planet Youth model, which provides a blueprint and guidance for implementing the program. Resources from other partners and the federal grant funding were intended to help cover other program and project costs if the application had been successful.

Given the intents shared above, Council approved the following recommendations at the January 9, 2024, City Council meeting ([Report Number 24-064](#)):

That City Council endorse the City of Kingston partnership on the Planet Youth Program being led by Kingston Community Health Centres; and

That City Council commit \$30,000 from the Working Fund Reserve towards the Planet Youth Program; and

That City Council direct staff to be actively engaged in the Planet Youth program and support youth engagement in the program.

City staff were informed in mid 2024 that the grant application to the Public Health Agency of Canada was not successful. The partners reached out to staff with a request to redirect the previously approved funding to a locally designed youth project. While there are opportunities to continue pursuing a partnership with Planet Youth, the local partners decided to move forward with a local substance use prevention approach. This decision was based on a thorough review of the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM) literature, which is the underlying model that Planet Youth is based upon. A more detailed rationale on the creation of a local model versus pursuing the official Planet Youth program has been summarized in the proposal that is included in this report as Exhibit A.

Staff have worked with the partners on refining this proposal and are recommending that Council redirect the previously approved funding to continue to support this important youth focused prevention model. A brief overview of the proposed project, its alignment with ongoing work in the City and potential next steps are provided in the next section of the report.

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Analysis

Growing Need for Substance Use Prevention Models for Youth

Youth substance use in Kingston and the surrounding region continues to have a significant impact on the health and well-being of our youth population. According to data from Youth Diversion, a local agency supporting youth, the number of youth in elementary and secondary school receiving substance use and addiction support increased by 22% between the 2022-2023 school year and the 2023-2024 school year. With the Kingston census metropolitan area (CMA) also being one of the top ten fastest growing medium-sized CMAs in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024), it can be anticipated that the number of youth using substances will continue to grow without a population-level substance use intervention. Existing substance use prevention models suggest that early intervention is effective at reducing both experimentation and routine use of substances. One of the most widely cited factors influencing youth substance use is access to alternative leisure-time activities. Accessing alternative leisure-time activities may be particularly effective at reducing the use of substances after school hours when there may be less adult supervision of youth.

Formation of Working Group – KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project (KFL&A-UYP)

After the partners presented to Council in January 2024, a dedicated working group was formed with the goal to steer young people towards positive activities and away from activities with negative impacts to their physical and mental health (such as substance abuse). The working group is referred to as the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project (KFL&A UYP) and includes representation from 11 different organizations. As of July 2024, the KFL&A Public Health Unit dedicated a permanent full time staff resource to supporting this work.

Even though the working group steered away from the Planet Youth model, it has adopted several evidence-based best practices from the Planet Youth program. These include seeking sustainable funding sources that reflect a long-term commitment to primary prevention, establishing a multi-sectoral community coalition with representation from KFL&A's communities, researchers, policymakers and youth services, and using local, robust and timely data from existing surveys to inform evidence-based decision-making.

In addition to securing a permanent position, the KFL&A UYP received a \$40,000 grant from Public Health Ontario to re-launch the [ActivPass](#) as a digital-based application. The Grade 5 and 9 ActivPass gives over 5,000 youth the option of free access to recreation facilities across KFL&A at designated times, including the City of Kingston's recreation facilities. At this point the application is designed for Grade 9 students. Grade 5 students will continue to receive the paper-based version. This project is the result of consultations with community partners who work directly with youth, highlighting the critical protective factor that access to leisure-time activities provides in preventing substance use.

At present, community partners offering the ActivPass all have different sign-in systems, making it difficult to determine how, where and when the pass is used and by whom. Without sufficient data, current uptake of the ActivPass is unknown. The proposed digital relaunch will allow for

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use data to be tracked. As a program that provides free access to facilities across KFL&A, a robust evaluation can provide critical evidence of a best-practice method for both delaying experimentation and routine use of substances. This approach is consistent with other community-based prevention initiatives.

In partnership with Kingston Gets Active, the KFL&A UYP will also be leading a grant application to the Davies Foundation to increase the number of rural facilities accessible through the ActivPass and create partnerships that will open access to facilities outside the field of recreation (i.e. arts facilities). The objective of this grant is to provide a greater variety of options that are tailored to diverse youth interests.

KFL&A UYP Proposal to Redirect Planet Youth Funding

The KFL&A UYP working group has indicated that the project's next step should focus on youth engagement. Incorporating youth perspectives is consistent with other community-based prevention initiatives using the Icelandic Prevention Model, including the approach being implemented by United Way Calgary (<https://calgaryunitedway.org/planet-youth/>).

The KFL&A UYP proposes to use the \$30,000 previously committed by Council to develop a youth engagement strategy and directly support youth engagement in the development and implementation of a local substance use prevention approach for the KFL&A region.

The funds would be used to support:

- Six focus groups with youth between the ages of 12 and 17 within the boundaries of the City of Kingston. These focus groups will gather information on how youth would like to be engaged in the development and implementation of a substance use prevention approach, as well as what the substance use prevention approach should incorporate. The location of the focus groups will be determined based on neighbourhood-level characteristics to capture diverse youth perspectives. Additional focus groups will be conducted in Frontenac and Lennox & Addington counties using separate funds to capture the perspectives of youth who live in rural locations within KFL&A.
- A large youth symposium in Spring 2025, with an expected attendance of approximately 200 youth between the ages of 12 and 17. This event will be used to formally launch the substance use prevention approach and focus on garnering youth interest to promote engagement with the project. The event will take place for one full day.
- Any remaining funds after these activities will be used towards the implementation of the KFL&A UYP, consistent with the original resolution approved by City Council.

The KFL&A UYP is a long-term commitment to the health and well-being of youth in the community. In the initial evaluation plan, the working group will evaluate short and medium-term outcomes related to protective factors against substance use, such as the level of participation in leisure-time pursuits. Long-term changes related to substance use (i.e. the societal norm around youth substance use) are expected to be evaluated in the future given that these changes represent long-term outcomes.

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The expected outcomes from the KFL&A UYP align with the work to update of the City of Kingston's Community Safety & Well-Being Plan (CSWP) in 2025. The KFL&A UYP can support this work through the development of common performance measures that can be used to assess the impacts of programs supporting youth. These intents are consistent with the City's efforts to collect reliable data and find evidence-based best practices.

For KFL&A UYP, the youth engagement strategy to be developed through the activities outlined in their proposal is expected to significantly strengthen future grant applications and foster greater community buy-in across the City. The strategy will also help inform decisions regarding programming and interventions for youth serving organizations.

Other City of Kingston Youth Initiatives

As part of the Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026 it is important to note that work is currently underway on various youth initiatives in the corporation such as: the roll out of the Youth Engagement Program, dedicated youth positions on advisory committees and the update of a City-wide youth strategy. Additional information on these initiatives is found below.

The Youth Engagement Program – The program aims to foster youth development and community involvement through various structured opportunities in a supportive and inclusive environment for young individuals within the workplace. The program includes high school co-op placements, post-secondary co-op placements, post-secondary internships, a new graduate program, summer students, apprenticeships and volunteers. The program provides youth with meaningful work experiences, skill development and pathways to future employment within the City of Kingston. More information about all components of this program will be presented to the Administrative Policies committee later in 2025.

Youth Positions on Advisory Committees - In 2023, a dedicated youth position, defined as between the ages of 15 – 26, was added to six advisory committees and a working group (Arts, Culture & Heritage Advisory; Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Advisory; Municipal Accessibility Advisory; Kingston Environmental Advisory; Housing & Homelessness Advisory; and the Rural Economic & Community Development Working Group). Youth in these positions serve a two-year term and retain all of the same participatory and voting rights as other committee members. Staff receive applications for the positions through the annual resident recruitment process for committees, boards and working groups, with additional communications targeted through secondary and post-secondary institutions and other youth organizations.

Update of Youth Strategy - In the 2023-2026 Council Strategic plan, staff were directed to update the Youth Strategy in 2025. The intent for this strategy is to build on the Youth Friendly Plan (2011-2013) and the Youth to Kingston (Y2K) collective impact work in the community between 2013 and 2019. Due to budget constraints, staff are anticipating this work will not start until the fourth quarter of 2025, which will provide a great opportunity to incorporate the outcomes of the KFL&A UYP work as one of the foundations for the City Youth Strategy.

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Public Engagement

Should Council approve the redirection of these City funds support the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project, the project will be able to move forward with dedicated engagement with youth between the ages of 12 and 17 in the Kingston community and provide valuable input in the development and implementation of a local substance use prevention approach for the KFL&A region. This engagement will also help inform decisions about programming and interventions for youth serving organizations throughout the region.

Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations

This program includes the voice of a diverse group of young people aged 12 to 17 in various Kingston neighbourhoods.

Existing Policy/By-Law

None

Notice Provisions

None

Financial Considerations

Council is being asked to redirect the previously approved (January 2024) \$30,000 contribution from the Working Fund Reserve that was earmarked to support the Planet Youth Project to support the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project.

Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Kevin Stephenson, Supervisor, Recruitment and Selection, Human Resources and Organizational Development

Derek Ochej, Deputy Clerk, Clerk's Office

Tony Gargaro, Manager, Recreation Services, Recreation & Leisure Services

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A - KFL&A UYP – Funding Proposal

Proposal for Committed Funds from the Working Fund Reserve

Original Resolution from January 9, 2024

At the Kingston City Council meeting on January 9, 2024, a delegation including Roger Romero (Manager of Youth Services, Kingston Community Health Centres), Bridget Glassco (Project Manager, Adverse Childhood Experiences & Resilience Coalition of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington (KFL&A)), and Anne Marie MacDonald (Chair, Adverse Childhood Experiences & Resilience Coalition of KFL&A) spoke to Council with respect to Clause 4 of Report Number 10. The following resolution was approved by City Council:

That City Council endorse the City of Kingston partnership on the Planet Youth Program being led by Kingston Community Health Centres; and

That City Council commit \$30,000 from the Working Fund Reserve towards the Planet Youth Program; and

That City Council direct staff to be actively engaged in the Planet Youth program and support youth engagement in the program.

Background

Our grant application to the Public Health Agency of Canada to partner with Planet Youth was not funded. However, youth substance use in Kingston and the surrounding region continues to have a significant impact on the health and well-being of our youth population. According to data from Youth Diversion, the number of elementary and secondary school students from Kingston and the surrounding region receiving substance use and addiction support increased by 22% between the 2022-2023 school year and 2023-2024 school year. The Kingston census metropolitan area (CMA) is also one of the top ten fastest growing medium-sized CMAs in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024). Thus, it is anticipated that the number of youth using substances will grow without a population-level substance use intervention. Existing environment-focused substance use prevention models suggest that early intervention is effective at stemming both experimentation and routine use of substances (Sigfusdottir et al., 2009). The most effective environment-focused interventions focus on interpersonal and environmental protective and risk factors associated with youth substance use. For example, one of the most widely cited factors influencing youth substance use is access to alternative leisure-time pursuits (Kristjansson et al., 2021). Accessing alternative leisure-time pursuits may be particularly effective at reducing the use of substances after school hours when there may be less adult supervision of youth (Nawi et al., 2021). While there are opportunities to continuing pursuing a partnership with Planet Youth, the working group responsible for the Planet Youth submission to the Public Health Agency of Canada has decided to move forward with a local substance use prevention approach based on a thorough review of the Icelandic Prevention

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Model (IPM) literature. The IPM is the underlying model that Planet Youth is based upon. This approach is currently known as the KFL&A Unnamed Youth Project (KFL&A UYP). The reasons for developing a local initiative are as follows:

- Planet Youth was initially developed in Iceland, which has a national youth curfew policy and significantly less diversity that does not reflect the political and social environment present in Kingston.
- Planet Youth does not have a Canadian office. Planet Youth support would be provided from outside Canada.
- Planet Youth mandates the use of a time intensive survey for data collection. Youth in our region already participate in surveys administered by local school boards that collect similar information.

To date, the KFL&A UYP has incorporated evidence-based best practices from the Planet Youth program, including:

- Seeking sustainable funding sources that reflect a long-term commitment to primary prevention.
- Establishing a multi-sectoral community coalition with representation from KFL&A's communities as well as research, policymaking, and youth services.
- Utilizing local, robust, and timely data from existing surveys to make informed, evidence-based decisions.

Project Update

Current Staffing

KFL&A Public Health has assigned a 1.0FTE staff member to lead the KFL&A UYP beginning July 2, 2024. This is a full-time, permanent position that is funded entirely by KFL&A Public Health. The KFL&A UYP also has a working group that includes representatives from 11 different organizations, including representatives from local school boards.

Current Funding

The KFL&A UYP has received \$40,320 from a grant supported by Public Health Ontario. The purpose of this grant is to re-launch the paper-based ActivPass as a digital-based ActivPass app. The Grade 5 and 9 ActivPass gives over 5,000 youth free access to recreation facilities across KFL&A at designated times. The facilities accessible using the ActivPass include the City of Kingston's recreation facilities. The app is designed for Grade 9 students. Grade 5 students will continue to receive the paper-based ActivPass. This project is the result of consultations with community partners who work directly with youth about the critical protective factor against substance use that access to leisure-time activities provides. Furthermore, community partners

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offering the ActivPass all have different sign-in systems, making it difficult to determine how, where, and when the pass is used and by whom. Thus, without sufficient data, current uptake of the ActivPass is unknown. As a program that provides cost-free access to facilities across KFL&A, a robust evaluation will provide critical evidence of a best-practice method for both delaying experimentation and routine use of substances. This approach is consistent with other community-based prevention initiatives using the Icelandic Prevention Model, which have demonstrated that participation in leisure-time pursuits was a significant protective factor against lifetime use of various substances, including alcohol and cannabis (Woodward et al., 2023).

In partnership with Kingston Gets Active, the KFL&A UYP will also be leading a grant application to the Davies Foundation to increase the number of rural facilities accessible through the ActivPass and create partnerships that will open access to facilities outside the field of recreation (e.g., arts). The objective of this grant is to provide a greater variety of options that are tailored to diverse youth interests.

Next Steps

The KFL&A UYP working group has indicated that the project's next step should focus on youth engagement in order to launch this approach in the community. Incorporating youth perspectives is consistent with other community-based prevention initiatives using the Icelandic Prevention Model, including the approach being implemented by United Way Calgary (<https://calgaryunitedway.org/planet-youth/>).

Proposal

The KFL&A UYP proposes to use the committed funds (\$30,000) from the working fund reserve to develop a youth engagement strategy and directly support youth engagement in the development and implementation of a local substance use prevention approach for the KFL&A region. These funds would be used to support the following activities:

1. 6 focus groups with youth between the ages of 12 and 17 within the boundaries of the City of Kingston. These focus groups will gather information related to the way youth would like to be engaged in the development and implementation of a substance use prevention approach and what the substance use prevention approach should incorporate. The location of the focus groups will be determined based on neighbourhood-level characteristics to capture diverse youth perspectives. Funds will be used to:
 - Market and promote the focus groups with posters and on social media.
 - Provide meals and refreshments for attendees.
 - Purchase equipment (e.g., audio-recording device).

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- Purchase event materials and supplies (e.g., name badges).

Additional focus groups will be conducted in Frontenac and Lennox & Addington counties using separate funds to capture the perspectives of youth who live in rural locations within KFL&A.

2. A large youth symposium with an expected attendance of approximately 200 youth between the ages of 12 and 17 in Spring 2025. This event will be used to formally launch the substance use prevention approach and focus on garnering youth interest to promote engagement with the project. The event will take place for one full day. Funds will be used to:

- Market and promote the symposium with posters and on social media.
- Rent venue space in a central location within the City of Kingston.
- Rent technology and equipment (e.g., AV equipment, live streaming/videorecording services).
- Pay a keynote speaker, including a speaker fee, travel expenses and hotel accommodation.
- Provide meals and refreshments for attendees.
- Purchase event materials and supplies (e.g., name badges).

It is important to note that the proposed funds will only be used to support youth engagement within the boundaries of the City of Kingston. We are currently in communication with governments across Frontenac and Lennox & Addington counties to secure support to engage youth in those communities. Youth from surrounding rural regions, including Frontenac and Lennox & Addington counties, will also be engaged using funds allocated to rural youth engagement in the aforementioned Public Health Ontario grant. Any funds that remain from the amount committed by the City after funding the activities described above will be used towards implementation of the KFL&A UYP consistent with the original resolution approved by City Council.

Expected Outcomes

Like Planet Youth, the KFL&A UYP is a long-term commitment to the health and well-being of youth in our community. In our initial evaluation plan, we will evaluate short and medium-term outcomes related to protective factors against substance use, such as the level of participation in leisure-time pursuits. Long-term changes related to substance use (e.g., the societal norm around youth substance use) are expected to be evaluated in the future given that these changes represent long-term outcomes. The expected outcomes from the KFL&A UYP align with the City of Kingston's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan that aims "to support safe and healthy communities" (City of Kingston, 2021, p.14). The KFL&A UYP will support the Plan's

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implementation by working with partners to develop common performance measures that are consistent with the City's efforts to collect reliable data and find evidence-based best practices.

The youth engagement strategy that is developed using the youth engagement activities outlined in the proposal is anticipated to both significantly strengthen future grant applications and result in greater community buy-in across the City of Kingston for the KFL&A UYP. Furthermore, the youth engagement strategy will help inform decisions about programming and interventions for youth serving organizations throughout the region. This youth engagement strategy will be foundational for a large multi-year grant application to the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul Community Impact Fund from the Community Foundation for Kingston & Area in Spring 2025.

References

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