



**Upstream
Fund**



2022 Upstream Yearbook:

Impact of Changemaking

Territorial acknowledgement

Waterloo Region is on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Chonnonton People. We acknowledge the enduring presence of the Indigenous People with whom we share this land today, their achievements and their contributions to our community. We offer this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.

We invite you to watch video of a Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address delivered by Paula Whitlow, Director of Truth and Reconciliation, Region of Waterloo.



Executive summary

This yearbook's stories bring to life the incredible work of the 2022 Upstream and Community Capacity Building (CCB) projects and impacts. In 2022, \$4.1 million dollars was distributed to 41 recipients.

The short stories in this yearbook share highlights from Upstreamers (Upstream and CCB fund recipients). Stories are listed in alphabetical order by recipient name.

Quotes, images and photos accompany the stories from recipient reporting to give you a sense of the positive community impact resulting from the funded projects.

Throughout the yearbook, the term "Upstream Funding Model" refers to the process for allocating Upstream and CCB funds.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - **Margaret Mead**

A message from Regional Chair Karen Redman

On behalf of Regional Council, I am thrilled to see so many grassroots organizations continue to grow their incredible work as we partner to build a foundation for systemic change.

As a municipal government and Council, we are growing too. We have had the opportunity to unlearn and learn in many ways these past few years, and then start to take meaningful action.

The Upstream model is one step forward in this journey alongside the community, as we invest in groups and individuals most closely connected to their communities, and who know what is best for them.

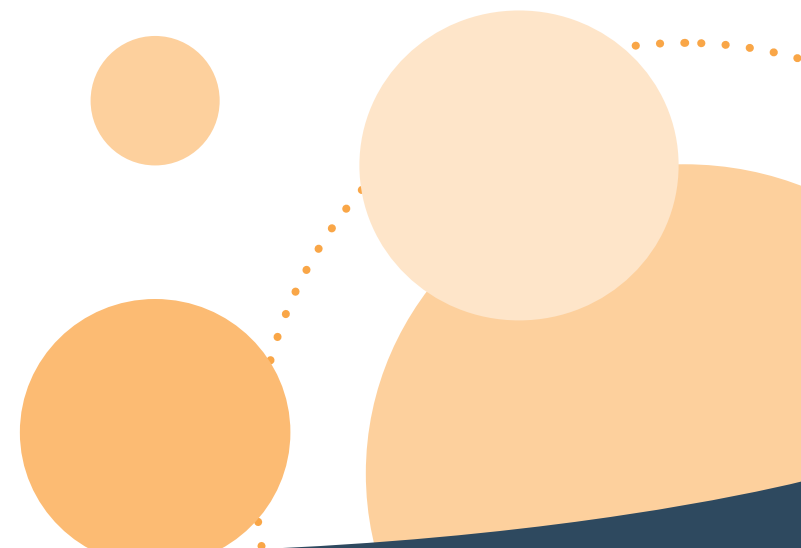
Investment in grassroots work is essential. The Upstream and Community Capacity Building Funds recognize and support the need to expand grassroots work that improves the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and youth who continue to face systemic barriers and discrimination in the community.

Together with the community, the Upstream model is how we are putting the Community Safety and Wellbeing plan into action.

Individually and collectively, Upstreamers are building a community where each individual who calls Waterloo region home has opportunities to grow, learn, work, play, be cared for, and feel like they belong.

I am inspired, encouraged by, and excited to see the impacts of this funding, and to see recipients building capacity, working towards sustainability, and supporting each other.

I look forward to continuing to work with you towards a safe and well Waterloo Region for all, and I thank all Upstreamers for the incredible work they do each and every day.



A message from Acting CAO Mathieu Goetzke

I am proud to share this inaugural Upstream yearbook with our community. This collection highlights the transformative work of the Upstream and Community Capacity Building Funds over its first two years, showcasing what can be achieved when we collaborate to remove barriers and foster lasting relationships.

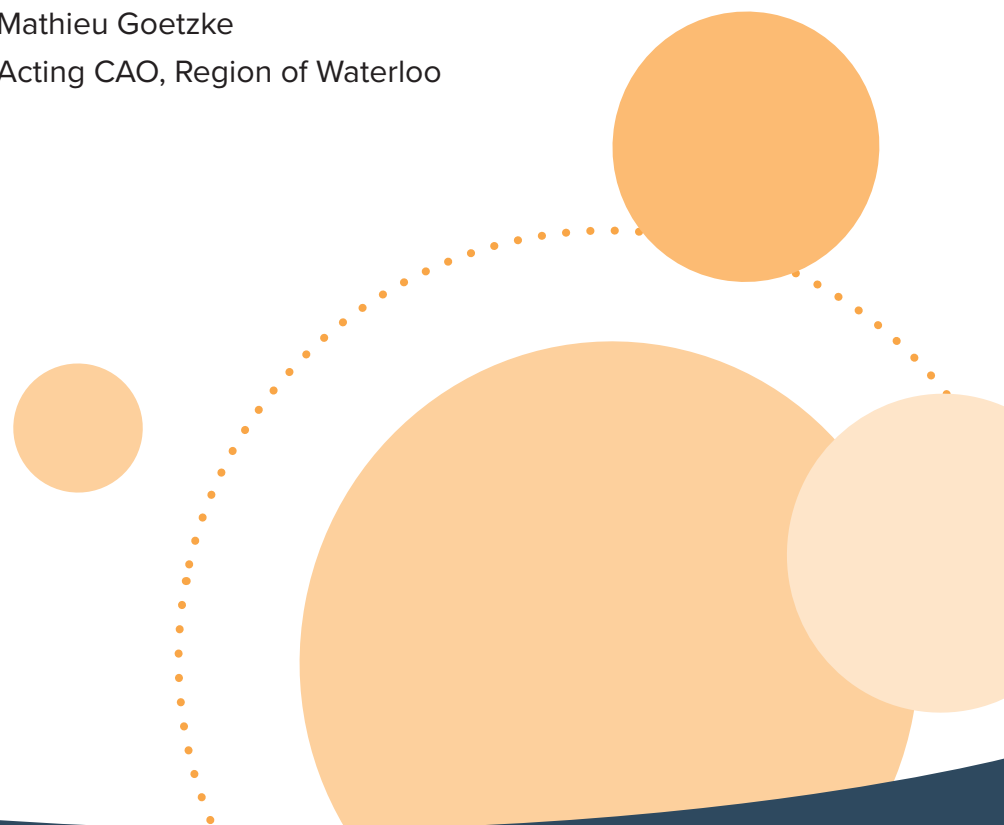
At the Region, we are committed to shifting power to the community, adopting a culture of learning and unlearning, influencing change through courageous and open conversations, and inviting the community to co-create with us. The vision for our new Strategic Plan, Growing with Care, is *'A compassionate community that cares for all people, stewards the land for future generations and where everyone has the opportunity to live a good life.'* The Upstream funding model is one way we are working towards this vision. These investments are critical to building a thriving, inclusive community, and the partnerships they nurture enhance the safety and well-being of all.

This yearbook captures stories of change driven by grassroots organizations and community leaders who now are provided with resources from the Region to support more people and help build a secure future for themselves and their communities.

Thank you, Upstreamers, for your inspiring work. Your contributions, dedication, and passion make a significant difference. I am deeply grateful for your efforts and look forward to our continued partnership in building a thriving community for all.

Sincerely,

Mathieu Goetzke
Acting CAO, Region of Waterloo



A message from Fauzia Baig, Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Region of Waterloo

It is a joy to be able to share this yearbook with you – a sampling of what recipients have accomplished individually and collectively over the past few years. These short stories bring the 2022 Upstream and Community Capacity Building projects and their impacts to life.

This group of grassroots and community organizations and leaders, who we call the “Upstreamers,” have been investing in and building a safe and inclusive community that cares for the wellbeing of all residents.

What makes the Upstream Funding Model different is that we didn’t lead the process – the community did. We provided support to enable the community to grow and expand the meaningful work they do with the communities they serve.

Together over the past few years we have been learning what Upstream impact looks like on a community level.

We’ve experienced Self Determined communities come to life. Communities know their needs best and we’ve been learning

from the Upstreamer what the current community needs are and what the needs will be as Waterloo Region’s population continues to grow.

I have had the pleasure of joining many events, celebrations and sharing in laughter and tears with Upstreamers. I am grateful for these opportunities and the beautiful relationships that have formed. I would like to extend a thank you to the amazing group of talented, dedicated and inspiring community changemakers who are working to build a Waterloo Region where everyone can thrive through community-led programs, services and solutions. Thank you for your dedication.

With appreciation,

Fauzia Baig

Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Region of Waterloo



Creating a safe and well community for all



The Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP), developed alongside the community, is a framework for action and change. Building on the good work already underway in our community, the **vision is to enable everyone who calls Waterloo Region home to feel safe, cared for, and thrive.**

The CSWP framework was approved by Council in 2022 and emphasizes local priorities such as Truth and Reconciliation, Anti-Hate, Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and addressing the social determinants of health. It also speaks to the need for equitable, accessible, and trauma-informed services for all. The CSWP works along a continuum, with a focus on upstream issues, to address barriers and create impact. It shifts power and resources to community with community-led system supported approaches that build circles of support around people and hold systems accountable.

One of the key commitments of the CSWP is to continue to action the framework alongside community. The Upstream Funding model is just one example of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP) coming to life. To learn more about the plan, or join our collective efforts, visit [Community Safety & Wellbeing Plan](#).

Since the launch of Waterloo Region's CSWP, we have continued to collaborate and co-create with leaders across systems, community organizations and communities to implement the framework. The following four priorities have been identified for community action based on local needs and feedback:

- **Combatting Hate**
- **Safe and Inclusive Spaces**
- **Addressing mental health needs together**
- **Addressing intimate partner violence, gender-based violence and missing and murdered Indigenous women**

In this yearbook, themes are shared for each story of impact to highlight how community leaders, organizations and grassroots groups are working together to address issues related to improving safety and wellbeing across Waterloo Region that have been identified in the CSWP.

Themes addressed by the 2022 recipient projects include the following:

- Addressing Gender Based Violence
- Addressing Intimate Partner Violence
- Addressing Mental Health Needs Together
- Combatting Hate
- Arts and Culture
- Basic Needs
- Rural Focus
- Safe and Inclusive Spaces
- Social Determinants of Health
- Systems Change/ Accountability
- Youth and Belonging



Systemic change seems impossible... until it isn't



Doing things differently:

The [Upstream Funding model](#) was created in response to community discussions on safety and wellbeing that made it clear that resources, decision making, and funds need to be redirected to historically marginalized communities including, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, African, Caribbean, Black and racialized communities who continue to be underserved, under resourced and face ongoing systemic barriers. Together with community, the Region is setting a new standard for inclusive and equitable funding practices that focus on collaboration over competition, removes barriers to funding, and puts the community at the centre.

By focusing on action and centering community voices, we are creating a Region where everyone knows they are welcome and valued.

The Three Step Upstream Funding Model:

Together with community, a 3-step funding model was developed that allocates Regional Council approved annual Upstream Fund and Community Capacity Building Fund.



“Another strength of the Upstream model lies in its ability to challenge the status quo... it is about empowering communities to become architects of their own future”

- Upstream Fund Evaluation Report



1. Open call and engagement: Self-determined communities

During the open call and engagement phase, community collaborative events are held across Waterloo region. These are opportunities for interested community members, leaders and grassroots community organizations to share, learn, build networks and collaborate together.

2. Decision making: Shifting power to community

Using a rigorous community facilitated process, a Community Change Committee (CCC) consisting of diverse community members with a variety of skills and living experiences come together to make decisions and allocate funds. The CCC works with an external facilitator to review applications and make decisions rooted in the Community Safety Wellbeing Plan (CSWP) priorities, and the priorities of each fund as outlined in the Terms of Reference. In this way, decisions are made by the community, for the community, to help funds go where they're needed most.

3. Sharing stories and impact: The power of trust

This is focused on sharing, learning and encourages organizations to share impacts in the ways that are most meaningful for them. This yearbook is one of the ways we are sharing stories of community impact.

Upstream Funding Model evaluation highlights

Researchers from Wilfrid Laurier University evaluated the Upstream Funding Model between 2022 and 2023.

The researchers, in tandem with a team of graduate students from diverse backgrounds, engaged in a community based participatory research process which involved key informant interviews (with staff, community partners, members and the Community Change Committee). The team also conducted focus groups, document reviews and attended over 20 workshops and information sessions to observe the implementation of the Upstream Funding model. The team completed 31 interviews with Regional staff involved in the multi-departmental team supporting the Upstream Funding Model.

Dr. Lamine Diallo shares some insights in the following video:



Overall, the researchers found that we successfully developed a community-led funding model that meaningfully supported equity deserving groups towards sustainability and growth.

Below are some more highlights from the research evaluation report:

- The Upstream model honors the principles of Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as illustrated in the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
- Through this model, equity deserving groups, grassroots and community organizations were supported to build networks and relationships with the Region and peers; build capacity, access opportunities to learn and grow; and work towards upstream solutions.

- Funds effectively reached organizations led by and supporting equity-deserving groups, including First Nation, Inuit and Métis, ACB (African, Caribbean, Black), 2SLGBTQ+, faith and ethnic based organizations, individuals living below the poverty line as well as people living with disabilities.
- Involving the community in identifying and articulating their needs is paramount to the success of this initiative. This was achieved through intentional and discerning community engagement that allowed the Upstream team to create a space for the community to express their needs and challenges and suggest ways to resolve them.
- The Upstream team has also been able to understand that innovation requires risk-taking and obstacles can be approached as opportunities to learn.
- One of the core strengths of this initiative lies in its' ability to build bridges between systems and communities.

Lamine Diallo M.A., Ph.D.
Ginette Lafrenière M.A., M.S.W., Ph.D.

Short term impacts of Upstream

- Galvanizing the community
- Building networks
- Facilitating trusting relationships between the Region and the larger community
- Building community capacity
- Providing training to community members
- Encouraging greater collaboration between funders
- Sparked organizational change within the Region of Waterloo





The following is a summary of communities served based on Upstream funding recipients who provided this information as part of their* reporting

Communities or populations served	Number of organizations
African, Caribbean, Black identifying	22
Children and Youth	22
First Nations, Inuit, Métis	5
2SLGBTQ+	11
Newcomers	21
Older adults	19
People living on low income	23
People living with a disability	17
Racialized	9

Locations of program and service delivery, based on recipient reporting

City of Township	Number of organizations
Cambridge	22
Kitchener	26
North Dumfries	6
Waterloo	23
Wellesley	6
Wilmot	8
Woolwich	6



6

collective learning events with community partners and Upstreamers.

Topics included: Community Supports, Creative Story Telling and Impact Research

8



collaborative events across the Region with over 60 community members engaging in conversations

41



1-1 check in meeting with Upstreamers

171+



partnerships and collaborations**

180+



volunteer positions added**



244

staff and volunteers received training**



6,000+

community members participated in community events (e.g. festivals) offered by recipients**

**These numbers reflect numbers shared in Upstream Reporting. Not all projects chose to reflect their impact through numbers

*These numbers reflect numbers shared in Upstream applications.



Adventure4Change (A4C)

Upstream Fund

“We were able to plan programs in the long-term. We were also able to hire staff knowing they could run these programs or support administration. This is helping us meet community needs more intentionally and with better planning.”

- Recipient

Initiative:

Rebuilding for growth and sustainability

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging

Because of funding support, [Adventure4Change](#) has been able to hire staff and to access and use relevant, safe space to provide transformative opportunities, programming and events for marginalized and racialized youth and families.

New partnerships formed allowed for unique services to be brought to Adventure4Change spaces to meet the varying needs of community members. Volunteers, staff and Board members are also better equipped to do their work because of training sessions.



African Canadian Association of Waterloo Region and Area (ACAWRA)

Upstream Fund and
Community Capacity Fund



“The African community has been given a sense of belonging through the free accessible community center. The networks formed have fostered unity and support amongst members. There is increased information on accessibility to health care from monthly info sessions on health. The African community kids gained wellness skills (basketball, football, and swimming) through a YMCA membership.” - Recipient

Initiative:

New community center fosters belonging

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Addressing Mental Health Needs Together, Youth and Belonging, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health

Through their funds, the [African Canadian Association of Waterloo Region and Area](#) (ACAWRA) established a community center that provides inclusive programming, and fosters belonging for the African diaspora. Through partnerships with the Region’s Public Health Neighborhood Nursing team and African Women Alliance, they delivered monthly health sessions and parenting workshops. They also provided discounted YMCA memberships for families.



African Family Revival Organization

Upstream Fund and Community Capacity Fund

“The funding we have received has been crucial in sustaining and advancing our programs, enabling us to address the pressing needs of our community through a range of impactful initiatives.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Supporting youth and seniors’ wellbeing

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Addressing Mental Health Needs Together, Youth and Belonging

Through their funds, the [African Family Revival Organization](#) (AFRO) enhanced and implemented capacity building programs including mental health counselling for youth and older adults, youth skill development training and staff training and hiring. AFRO formed collaborations and partnerships with mentors (e.g. KW Titans, University of Waterloo Women’s basketball team) to provide resources and opportunities for program participants.



African Women’s Alliance of Waterloo Region (AWAWR)

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The tangible and intangible outcomes achieved through this funding collectively contribute to a more resilient, empowered, and interconnected network of organizations striving to make a lasting impact in the lives of those they serve.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Networking builds resilience and empowers women and families

Themes:

Addressing Gender Based Violence, Addressing Mental Health Needs Together, Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health

The [African Women’s Alliance of Waterloo Region](#) (AWAWR) organized events as part of their “Securing our Future” initiative. This included a gender-based violence conference and women’s wellness workshops. They also facilitated the creation of a platform to engage families in open dialogue and sharing of parenting experiences within their cultural groups and supported a food distribution project for isolated community members.





Anishnabeg Outreach Employment and Training Inc.

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The Spirit Bundle program addresses social inequities and barriers that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals face, providing a holistic, healing-centred approach to meet their needs and support their well-being. The program fosters trust within the community, ensuring that individuals feel safe accessing additional supports and services.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Spirit Bundle Program promotes holistic healing and well-being

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Social Determinants of Health, Basic Needs

Funding supported staffing, partnerships, community engagement and program delivery and expansion of the Spirit Bundle program at [Anishnabeg Outreach](#) (AO). The Spirit Bundle program provided essential items such as food, household goods, and hygiene products to over 450 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) families. The program also provided a gateway to other critical services such as mental health support, employment readiness, and cultural programming.

Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative (Rohingya Centre of Canada)

Community Capacity Building Fund



“Upon arriving in Kitchener, we discovered the Rohingya Centre, which has become our lifeline. The Centre provides us with a safety net and addresses all the challenges we face.” - Participant

Initiative:

Rohingya Centre, a lifeline for the Rohingya community

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health, Youth and Belonging

The [Rohingya Centre of Canada](#) expanded organizational capacity by establishing physical spaces and programs that directly benefit the Rohingya community especially children and youth. Funding was used to hire staff who provide essential services offered in Rohingya and English (e.g. support to find housing, enroll in English classes, secure a family doctor, etc.) to support newcomers to integrate into their new lives.

Activities supported by funding included: training interpreters, forming partnerships, running programs for children to learn about Rohingya culture and history, hosting community events, holding consultations with MPs, Ministers and local leaders, and organizing a Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day – a travelling art exhibition to honor those lost and affected by the genocide, while educating the public.

Hiring a female staff to foster trust and a safe space for women in the Rohingya community has resulted in a significant rise in the number of Rohingya women accessing the Centre’s services and events.



Caribbean Canadian Association of Waterloo Region (CCAWR)

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The [Community Capacity Building Fund] allowed us to create and fund a Mentorship Program, which had been a goal of the CCAWR for over three years. The funding allowed us to pay contributors, create content, and administer the program. We hope to repeat and expand the program in [the] future, building on what we’ve learned.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Mentorship Program supports career development and good health

Themes:

Addressing Mental Health Needs Together, Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Social Determinants of Health

Through its funds, the [Caribbean Canadian Association of Waterloo Region](#) (CCAWR) created a six-week mentorship program focused on career development, education, professional networking and fostering emotional and mental health. The program encouraged community members to “dream big” and partnered with Nigerians in the Region of Waterloo to expand its reach.



Central Ontario Chinese Cultural Centre

Community Capacity Building Fund



“Some members who recently arrived to Canada expressed their appreciation for being welcomed to our community when they had no one to talk to or participate in activities within their own language, while also helping them integrate into Canadian culture.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Enhancing programs and facilities

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Addressing Mental Health Needs Together, Youth and Belonging, Arts and Culture

Through this funding, the [Central Ontario Chinese Cultural Centre](#) enhanced its programming and facilities, introducing new initiatives like archery and junior ping pong. The grant also facilitated important maintenance and repairs to the centre. With improved facilities, the centre now hosts daily programs with 10-20 participants per session, fostering community engagement and cultural integration for new immigrants.





Coalition of Muslim Women (CMW) of KW

Upstream Fund and
Community Capacity Fund

“This funding helped us to build on our prevention work that the community has become familiar with and they know how to reach out to us.” - **Recipient**

Initiative:

Strengthening efforts to counter hate and discrimination

Themes:

Combatting Hate, Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Social Determinants of Health

The Upstream and Community Capacity Building Funds enabled the [Coalition of Muslim Women KW](#) to conduct extensive outreach and educational sessions to significantly increase public awareness and help ensure more cases of hate and discrimination are documented. The data collected informed the “[Snapshot of Hate in Waterloo Region](#)” report. Additionally, CMW trained hosts for Tea and Tales sessions, enhancing cross-cultural communication and public dialogue. The funding strengthened CMW’s efforts and enabled them to stay true to their core values.



Crow Shield Lodge

Community Capacity Building Fund

“This funding has helped us build a solid foundation and establish ourselves in the Region. Without this funding we would not be experiencing this growth and have solid footing to go forward.” - **Recipient**

Initiative:

Expanding Indigenous-led healing

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Arts and Culture

Through the Community Capacity Building Fund, [Crow Shield Lodge](#) was able to hire two employees and provide more learning programs for non-Indigenous people while continuing to provide essential cultural programming for the local urban Indigenous community.





Ethiopian Association of KW and Surrounding Area

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The community has many needs, and having a paid staff allows consistent, culturally/linguistically appropriate, and proactive support to the community.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Building capacity to provide culturally inclusive support to the community

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

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Through the Community Capacity Building Fund, the [Ethiopian Association of KW and Surrounding Area](#) was able to hire its first full-time employee in 28 years. With this resource, the association organized cultural events, financial and health workshops, weekly drop-in sports programs for children, and a STEM camp. The organization retained community leaders, recruited new members, and provided training and awareness for members, essential for the organization’s long-term sustainability and impact in community.



Grassroots Growth Alliance

Upstream Fund and Community Capacity Fund



“We find ourselves at more conversations and tables, guiding mainstream organizations at times, and helping to slowly shift systems. Our communities have increased access to services they need that are more suited to them because of our work. We are important voices in the community.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Grassroots model of collaboration, capacity building and growth

Themes:

Systems Change/Accountability

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The Grassroots Growth Alliance is a partnership between the Somali Canadian Association Waterloo Region, Rhythm and Blues Cambridge, and Muslim Women of Cambridge focused on early support for children and youth mental health. The Upstream Funding enhanced the growth of each member organization through things like shared grant writing and leadership coaching.

Significant accomplishments include implementing HR policies, securing insurance, and establishing spaces to operate. This led to a proactive approach to program planning, stronger community networks, and a greater presence in community conversations, which enhances culturally appropriate services and increases support for children and youth mental health.



Hamere-Noah Kidane Mihret Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church

Upstream Fund and
Community Capacity Building Fund

“We gave the kids alternative [ways] to spend time with their peers while gaining impactful lifelong knowledge and skills... and we ensured the program’s sustainability by mobilizing available resources.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Youth program fosters sense of belonging

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

The Upstream Fund supported a program at the [Hamere-Noah Kidane Mihret Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church](#) for racialized youth to engage in academic tutorials, life mentorships, cultural learning, and networking events. The funding fostered a sense of belonging and equality among youth. It helped establish trusting relationships to prevent cycles of harm.



HOPE for Community Development

Upstream Fund



“As a result of the funding, we were able to equip young people with the skills required to launch their own businesses.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Program empowers young entrepreneurs

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

With the Upstream Fund, [HOPE for Community Development](#) grew its entrepreneurship program to over 100 racialized youth and adults – enabling them to engage in positive activities and thrive in their business ventures. The program provides employable and financial planning skills, mentorship, and networking opportunities through educational workshops and training sessions. It also increases access to financial support for their businesses. The funding has been instrumental in equipping young entrepreneurs with the skills needed to launch their own businesses.





Independent Living Waterloo Region

Upstream Fund

“For many of the people we serve, our peer activities program is their only social interaction. Many have said it is a lifesaving program keeping them from excessive negative mental health.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Enhancing a lifesaving social program

Themes:

Addressing Mental Health Needs Together, Basic Needs, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

The Upstream Fund helped to enhance [Independent Living Waterloo Region](#)'s community resource program for people with disabilities. Two part-time staff were hired to help connect individuals to their peers and to vital resources such as financial aid, food security, and special equipment. The funding has also enabled staff to research and identify sustainable funding and programming solutions.



Indigenous Poets Society

Upstream Fund



“My heart and spirit was always and significantly lifted during and after every event. I love language and loved the opportunity to sing with performers who welcomed the audience (me) to add my voice to their drum song. Listening to community members read their published work or works from their journals or passages from their favorite poets really inspired me to pick up my long latent creative writing process. These events were easygoing, supportive and in an open environment to grow relationships with Indigenous/Mixed Ancestry folks...” - Participant

Initiative:

Inspiring creativity among Indigenous artists

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Arts and Culture, Youth and Belonging

The [Indigenous Poets Society](#) was able to host and promote regular community IndigArts events with their funding. These events encourage local Indigenous community artists, writers, crafters and community to come together on a regular basis and have ongoing spaces and opportunities to network with each other while receiving fair compensation for their work.





Islamic Centre of Cambridge – Jami Mosque

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The funding has made a great impact on our community. Many food recipients have contacted us to thank us for helping them in their most desperate times.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Feed the need program

Themes:

Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health, Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Funding supported the continuation of the Feed the Need program to purchase and distribute food to families in need. [The Islamic Centre of Cambridge](#) collaborated with local halal food grocers in the Region resulting in better prices on food items for the program and more volunteers were recruited to support getting food to families without transportation or with special needs.



Kaleidoscope Collective

Upstream Fund



“We see Two-Minute plays as methodology for community-based and driven holistic research that can create positive social change. It is also a means to build community capacity as we encourage people to connect and consider the most pressing issues of concern.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Encouraging conversation on pressing community issues

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Arts and Culture

With the Upstream Fund, the group conducted Two Minute Play Laboratories. The sessions engaged a diverse group in storytelling, movement, music, and sound, aiming to liberate creative impulses, build trust, and showcase lived experiences through short plays. Two sharing circles were also held with individuals who have or who are currently experiencing precarious housing. Participants received an honorarium. In addition, Kaleidoscope recruited a Managing Artistic Director and formed new partnerships in the community.





KW Community Healthcaring

(formerly Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre)

Upstream Fund

“This funding has allowed us to expand our volunteer team with more diverse and skilled breastfeeding counsellors. It has also allowed us to learn from families about their unique needs and how feeding a baby in a new land has different challenges and how to provide more culturally safe lactation support.” - **Recipient**

Initiative:

Increasing access to prenatal workshops for priority populations

Themes:

Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health

With Upstream Funding, the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre, part of [Community Healthcaring](#), increased access to the “Me Breastfeed” prenatal workshop facilitated by Breastfeeding Buddies program staff by hiring an Arabic peer worker to provide support to priority populations. This enhanced service breaks down barriers to health care for many newcomers.



KW Urban Native Wigwam Project

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The hires from this funding have led to permanent housing or temporary housing for many who might not have had culturally relevant support in the past. We have been out distributing sacred medicines and offering ceremony to folks that needed to connect to who they are. This connection brings healing and offers support on site. They don’t need to come in and tell their story, we are there with them.” - **Recipient**

Initiative:

Providing Indigenous community members with real time support to access health care and to find housing

Themes:

Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health, Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Through their funds, The [K-W Urban Native Wigwam Project](#) provided staffing and supplies to help underserved Indigenous community members that have not been housed in a decade to find a home, feel belonging, have control of their outcomes and have support to access health and dental care.





Laurier Wellbeing in Film Forum

Community Capacity Fund

“These film nights enabled relationship building among community members and community organizations to learn more about organizations doing similar work. Establishing these relationships enable us to increase community outreach and widen community recognition/trust in LWIFF’s events.”
- Recipient

Initiative:

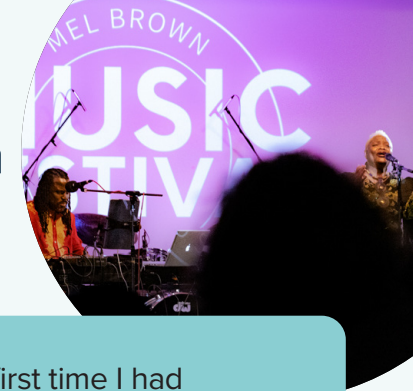
Community film nights address health and wellbeing

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Arts and Culture, Social Determinants of Health



With this funding, the Laurier Wellbeing in Film Forum addressed health and wellbeing issues through the medium of film. The film forum hosted six impactful community film nights, addressing different aspects of the structural and social determinants of health and wellbeing. The funding supported the hiring of staff, advertising, theatre rental, film access, and stipends for partners. Following each film, facilitated discussions allowed the audience to delve into the health-related themes presented in the stories. The events promoted community engagement and fostered relationships with local organizations and community members.



Mel Brown Music Festival and Symposium

Community Capacity Building Fund

“The Mel Brown Festival at KPL was the first time I had ever seen Black people invited to make noise in a library. It shattered the notion I had lived since childhood that the library was not a space where I could be my whole, authentic self. Black volume at KPL was high that day. The Mel Brown Festival put allyship and community development into action, and was a major factor in my decision to accept my offer of employment at KPL.” - Participant

Initiative:

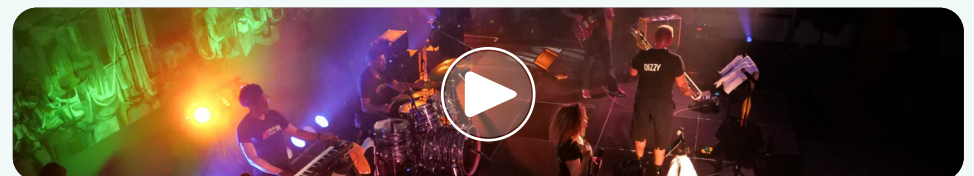
Mel Brown Music Festival and Symposium celebrates Black music and art

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Arts and Culture, Youth and Belonging



The Mel Brown Music Festival and Symposium (MBMFS) celebrates Black music and art in Waterloo Region and is influenced by the enduring legacy of epic blues musician Mel Brown. Funding supported this multi-event project featuring public concerts, discussions, workshops and youth-focused events. Funding also specifically supported, MBMFS to establish a brand, provide administrative support, focus on sustainability, and to focus on a curation process that includes contracting with emerging Black artists, storytellers, poets, performers and musicians.





Muslim Social Services

Upstream Fund and
Community Capacity Fund

“One clear example of the fund’s positive effect is the story of a woman in our community who was facing significant mental health challenges. With the support of the funding, we were able to provide her with counseling services in her native language, making a profound difference in her ability to express herself and receive meaningful support.”

- Recipient

Initiative:

Enabling access to much needed services

Themes:

Addressing Mental Health Together, Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

With Upstream Funding, [Muslim Social Services](#) (MSS) was able to grow, adapt, and meet the different needs of the community. MSS conducted training programs and carried out strategic planning to enhance the skills and efficiency of staff and volunteers. The funding also allowed MSS to form new partnerships, contract counselors who speak different languages, and hire people to lead different programs.



Nigerians In The Region of Waterloo (NIROW)

Community Capacity Building Fund

“It was a lifesaver, I saw my family, especially my two kids eat with smiles on their faces. The service was well organized. E seun gan ni (thank you very much).”

- Program participant

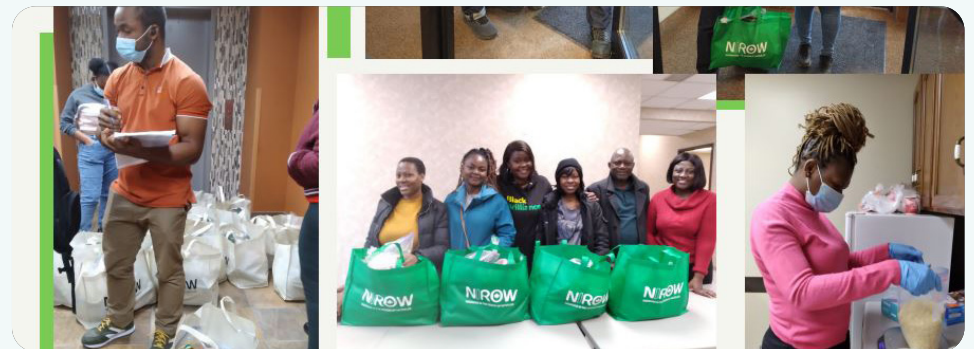
Initiative:

Maintaining cultural identity through access to traditional foods

Themes:

Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health, Safe and Inclusive Spaces

Through the Upstream Fund, [Nigerians in the Region of Waterloo](#) (NIROW) supported Nigerian newcomers to maintain their cultural identity and emotional and physical wellbeing by providing access to their traditional foods. NIROW trained volunteers in food handling and logistics, and facilitated the procurement, packaging, and distribution of culturally significant and often costly imported foods.





Peace for All Canada

Community Capacity Fund

“... Life cannot really be suppressed, and it’ll naturally express and thrive in a safe container.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Promoting peace and understanding in communities

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces

With Upstream Funding, [Peace for All Canada](#) identified and trained education navigators in the Circle process. The Circle process challenges prevailing worldviews and practices, fostering self-reflection and critical consciousness among participants. By providing a psychologically safe space, the training allowed individuals to experience and practice these skills in a natural and organic environment. Participants highlighted the effectiveness of the Circle training in achieving psychological safety. The initiative highlights the transformative power of structured dialogue in promoting peace and understanding within communities.



Rhythm & Blues Cambridge

Upstream Fund and Community Capacity Building Fund

“We have been able to connect with more participants and further our mission in the community.” - Recipient

Initiative:

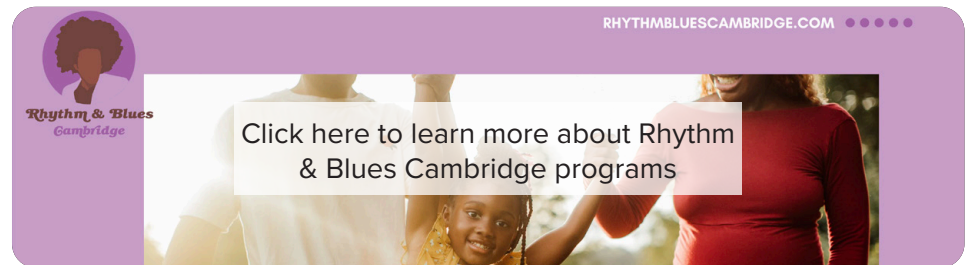
Enhancing Afro-centered culturally responsive programs and outreach

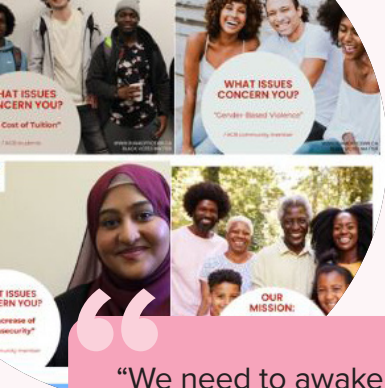
Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Addressing Mental Health Together, Arts and Culture, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

The Upstream Funds enhanced [Rhythm & Blues Cambridge](#)'s organizational capacity and staffing to provide Afro-centered and culturally responsive community education, outreach, and programs that meet the needs and concerns of the Black community. This included the Black Excellence program in schools, mental health conversations, hair empowerment program, a Black Girl Excellence summer camp and Art from the Heart.

Rhythm & Blues also partnered with several organizations to host an Inaugural Emancipation Day Celebration, a historic moment for Cambridge.





Run for Office Waterloo Region

Upstream Fund

“We need to awaken the ACB communities that have been so long marginalized to claim their political power, but it is not going to be easy to change how things have systematically operated to keep them down because the systems that are in play were not made for them but for those who would benefit from it.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Engaging racialized youth in politics

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Systems Change/Accountability

[Run for Office Waterloo Region](#) intends to increase the number of Black persons who run for political office. Upstream Funding was used to develop an online presence, facilitate in-person discussions about the importance of voting, and profile African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) candidates in the 2022 elections, resulting in five newly elected ACB officials. The funding also supported the launch of the “Ambassador Program” to engage ACB youth and promote political education, as well as organize a historic panel discussion with newly elected ACB officials.



Social Development Centre Waterloo Region

Upstream Fund



“.. The space has been a blessing. We use it for one-on-one and group meetings. We get good access to internet and technology for our work. They (SDCWR) provide the human support needed to set up hybrid meetings. We use the kitchen for storage and preparation of refreshments/coffee...” - Participant

Initiative:

Civic Hub, a place for grassroots social justice

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Systems Change/Accountability

Through its funds, the [Social Development Centre Waterloo Region](#) supported the revitalization of the Civic Hub, transforming it into a thriving grassroots social justice hub that offers organizations access to physical space, infrastructure, monthly exchange lunches, podcast series, fiscal sponsorships and training opportunities.

Over the past year, Civic Hub’s membership has grown to include more than 40 grassroots groups and small nonprofits dedicated to enhancing civic engagement, representation and social inclusion. The initiative has strengthened advocacy efforts for equity-deserving communities often excluded from political and social systems.



Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region

Upstream Fund and Community Capacity Building Fund

“Even for us as adults, it’s important for us to see each other, and speak with someone who speaks our language. Before, there weren’t a lot of Somali people in the area and we weren’t as connected. With SCAWR, the community is a lot stronger. We haven’t seen this type of community elsewhere.”
- Participant

Initiative:

Capacity building enhances programs for Somali community

Themes:

Youth and Belonging, Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Social Determinants of Health

With Upstream Funding, the [Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region](#) addressed the growing needs of the Somali community, providing and direct services, sports programs, homework support programs, information sessions and a community connection event. Funding also enabled the association to provide staff with valuable training, including supporting their mental wellbeing, to evaluate the success of their workshops, and to develop organizational priorities for the year.



[Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region Annual Report](#)



SPECTRUM Waterloo Region’s Rainbow Community Space

Upstream Fund and Community Capacity Fund

“(With) weekly meetups, consistent support from facilitators, I feel at home, welcomed and cared about.” - Participant

Initiative:

Increasing inclusion and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and young adults

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging

This funding has significantly enhanced [Spectrum](#)’s ability to provide essential support and community engagement for LGBTQ2+ individuals and families. It enabled Spectrum to hire part-time dedicated co-facilitators to offer weekly youth and monthly young adults’ groups. Getting together regularly ensured continued support.

The grant supported Spectrum’s Rainbow Diversity Training team to conduct community workshops, promoting LGBTQ2+ inclusivity and education in the region. This funding has significantly enhanced Spectrum’s ability to provide essential support and community engagement for LGBTQ2+ individuals and families in the Waterloo Region.





The Dope Content

Community Capacity Building Fund

“We have been able to empower individuals, particularly youth, to recognize the abundance of positive options and choices available to them. By instilling a sense of agency and self-efficacy, we are equipping them with the tools they need to navigate their lives with confidence and determination.”
- Recipient

Initiative:

Educating and inspiring BIPOC community with emerging technologies

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Arts and Culture, Youth and Belonging

With their grant, the [Dope Content](#) educated and inspired BIPOC individuals while equipping them with valuable skills for personal and professional growth. The Dope Content created educational tools focused on emerging technologies, providing hands-on learning experiences that foster creativity and expression. This included the BIPOC Access Podcast, highlighting Black, Indigenous and racialized voices and community resources, and hosting a conference educating participants on intellectual property rights, content creation, and marketing strategies within Web 3 technologies.

Collaborative workshops with the Ontario College of Art and Design University further enhanced educational opportunities.



The Eritrean Islamic Community of Waterloo Region

Community Capacity Fund

“These programs help people stay active, be creative, and explore many new opportunities that they would not have come across otherwise.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Expanding youth focused wellbeing and leadership programs and events

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

The Upstream Fund provided [Eritrean Islamic Community of Waterloo Region](#) an opportunity to run new and continue to run existing programs and events. This includes a tutoring program, year-round recreational sports for children and youth, a two-day camp, a creative arts program, cooking classes (led by a local community chef), and a financial literacy program. Youth took on leadership roles in planning these events.



The Healing of the Seven Generations

Community Capacity Building Fund

“If you remove spokes from a wheel the tire will never roll the way it’s supposed to, with this funding we were able to keep all spokes in the wheel for our community members to be able to move forward in their healing journey” - **Recipient**

Initiative:

Providing culture and ceremonies to support Indigenous community members healing journeys

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health

Funding supported [The Healing of the Seven Generations](#) to be able to provide culture, supports (e.g. food hampers, language, addictions and mental health) and ceremonies to Indigenous community members who need this to support their healing journeys.

The Rural Upstream Collaborative

(hosted by Woolwich Community Health Centre)

Upstream Fund



“There is an overall feeling that the investment in this project is an acknowledgement that the needs of rural residents across the region are important. The increasing interest in their well-being has enhanced the credibility of our work and paved the way for conversations, bringing together rural partners and understanding the needs of groups we have not traditionally served.” - **Recipient**

Initiative:

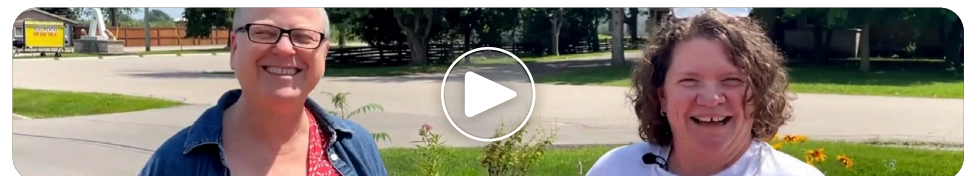
Responding to changing rural needs

Themes:

Rural Focus, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health

The Rural Upstream Collaborative is made up of eight health and social service agencies with a history of providing health and social services to rural communities. These agencies want to ensure services are responsive to changing and evolving needs as the region grows.

With the Upstream funding, the collaborative hired a rural planner to work with the rural community to understand the challenges and barriers of its residents. The collaborative now has a wealth of information to inform a Rural Strategy and Action Plan.





The Sexual Health Options, Resources and Education Centre (SHORE)

Upstream Fund

“This funding has allowed us to both offer newcomer programming and receive feedback which will create better newcomer reproductive health services across the Region”
- Recipient

Initiative:

Supporting newcomers to access reproductive health services

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Social Determinants of Health, Basic Needs

The Sexual Health Options, Resources and Education [\(SHORE\) Centre](#) increased cultural responsiveness and reduced systemic barriers for newcomer and racialized groups in relation to pregnancy care, sexual health and reproductive rights.

Funding supported newcomer health sessions, feedback collection, outreach events and piloting service provider sessions. SHORE was also able to enhance and create new partnerships with other newcomer serving agencies.



Townline Muslim Centre

Upstream Fund and
Community Capacity Fund



“I became more confident and became friends with people I never expected to even know or see. I took on skills, participated and expressed my feelings and opinions on topics I never thought to learn, such as restorative justice. During the final conference, I barely even got nervous while talking in front of so many people.” - Participant

Initiative:

Empowering young Muslim women to be future leaders

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Youth and Belonging, Social Determinants of Health

Through the Upstream Fund, [Townline Muslim Centre](#) expanded their Leadership Program, providing 25 Muslim women with valuable skills, mentorship opportunities, and a platform to develop as leaders. Program participants learned about managing projects, financial literacy, community engagement, goal setting, and conflict resolution. They also organized a “Sisters in Success Summit” attended by over 85 people at a venue in Cambridge.





Wisahkotewinowak Collective

Upstream Fund

“This funding enabled us to employ Indigenous Peoples, namely youth, to support our caregiving and relationship building with Land sites that we have worked with for several years, also sharing knowledge and produce with the wider Indigenous community.” - Recipient

Initiative:

Collaborating through land-based relationships that nurture education and Indigenous food sovereignty

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health

Funding supported [Wisahkotewinowak Collective](#) to employee Indigenous Peoples, develop policies and procedures, and cover operational costs integral to starting up as a new not-for-profit. Funding also enabled Wisahkotewinowak Collective to host:

- A land-based education provision for local school classes
- A food share program to distribute grown produce to Indigenous community members. This program was in partnership with White Owl Native Ancestry Association
- A planting event in partnership with a neighborhood community.



Woolwich Community Services

Upstream Fund

Initiative:

Enhancing outreach and connections to address family violence

Themes:

Addressing Intimate Partner Violence, Addressing Gender Based Violence, Social Determinants of Health, Rural Focus

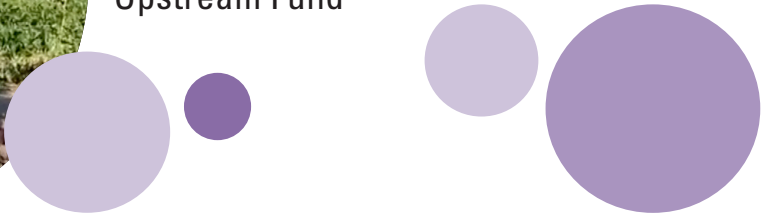
With Upstream Funding, [Woolwich Community Services](#) enhanced their Family Violence Prevention Program through the development of a conference and outreach plan aimed at fostering connections within rural communities. This allowed the organization to better connect with and support their community, ensuring crucial programs and services are effectively delivered and promoted. By enhancing their outreach and operational capacity, Woolwich Community Services continues to make a significant impact in addressing family violence and fostering community connections.





Young City Growers

Upstream Fund



Initiative:

Young City Growers offers Black, Indigenous and racialized youth with land-based employment and connection opportunities

Themes:

Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Basic Needs, Social Determinants of Health, Youth and Belonging



Funding supported Young City Growers to continue their land-based urban agricultural programming that provides Black, Indigenous and racialized youth with opportunities to connect, participate in a paid internship and to contribute to community wellbeing. Young City Growers also created a board of directors and an organizational structure to improve the sustainability of the program.





Upstream Fund



Accessible document available online



Region of Waterloo