

# TOGETHER LIVE .ca

## Worksheet: Strategic planning



Ontario Centre of Excellence  
for Child and Youth  
Mental Health



Waterloo Region  
Suicide Prevention Council  
[www.wrspc.ca](http://www.wrspc.ca)

This tool was created for youth suicide prevention however it can easily be adapted to suit other sectors of mental health. The Centre would like to acknowledge the support of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council in the development of this tool.

## Strategic planning worksheet

Now that you've built a **coalition** to address youth suicide in your community, you've laid the foundation for working together. So **now what?**

Where do you start with your efforts? The strategic planning process will help you to:

- ✓ identify activities that will be effective in preventing youth suicide in your community
- ✓ prioritize your efforts among all the possible activities
- ✓ identify *how* you will carry out the identified activities

### What's in a name?

While this worksheet uses the term **coalition**, you may refer to your group of community members as a network, working group, task force, alliance, partnership or any other term for a collaborative effort. Try not to get caught up in the terms - what's important is knowing how you'll work together so that everyone's on the same page.

### Who should use this worksheet?

This worksheet will take you through the steps of strategic planning. It's important to remember that strategic planning is a circular process that involves ongoing planning, monitoring and adjusting.



This diagram was adapted from the strategic planning approach created by the Suicide Prevention Resource Centre.



## STEP 1: Describe the problem

Describing what's going on in your community and the context around youth suicide can help your coalition understand how it affects the community. It's important to ask questions that will help you find information to answer those questions.

**Who?** Explore the types of youth dying by suicide, attempting suicide or experiencing suicidal ideation. Make note of characteristics such as region, age, sex and ethnicity.

**How?** It's important to understand the means or methods youth are using to harm themselves. Is there a specific trend in your community?

**Why?** Consider the risk factors contributing to suicidal behaviours. Does this vary across the region?

**What?** It's important to take inventory of the resources available in your community. What community resources are used to identify and assist youth at risk of suicide? What existing resources promote mental health and well-being? Exploring your community's current assets can help identify what's already in place for you to build on (rather than trying to create an entirely new solution). It can also help uncover gaps or needs in community resources.

How will you **gather the information** to answer these important questions? Finding data can be challenging due to issues of privacy and access. Your task is to understand the problem in your community. You need to find ways to achieve this with the information available to you.

What **data** is available for you to review? For example, do you have access to data on rates of suicidal behaviours (deaths, attempts, ideation)? Sometimes data can be accessed from coroner's reports, public health departments and hospitals.

For many communities, data is hard to find. Even if you can track down the data you need, it may not be accurate or exact. Reporting of suicide still has a long way to go. **If no data is available**, who do you need to talk to in order to **start collecting data** for your community going forward (e.g. local health institutions, governing bodies, data collection agencies, etc.)?

What does the **research** say? What does it demonstrate about best practices related to youth suicide prevention and interventions that may be effective in addressing youth suicide? *Together to live* has information related to [prevention](#), [risk management](#) and [postvention](#).

Who should you be talking to? **Talking to community members** can help your coalition better understand youth suicide. Consider connecting with the following:

- mental health providers
- health care providers
- faith leaders
- social service providers
- educators
- youth workers
- youth
- community leaders
- community centres
- substance abuse counsellors
- staff of agencies and organizations that serve youth at risk
- representatives of marginalized groups
- survivors of suicide
- families

## STEP 2: Set goals

Your coalition needs to know **where it wants to go** before deciding how it will get there. Setting goals collectively can help you figure that out. The questions highlighted in this section can help your coalition establish goals.

**Tip:** *If your coalition identifies a number of goals, it may be helpful to prioritize them to make the most of your time and money. It may be worthwhile to divide into working groups for each identified goal.*

Think about the **people most affected** by this issue. How widespread is youth suicide? Are there specific populations/groups where it's more prevalent? Is youth suicide linked with a health disparity (that is, a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic and/or environmental disadvantage)?

Are there **resources** that can be directed towards youth suicide? Think about concrete resources (such as funding or community mental health clinics) and intangible resources (such as community support and readiness to address youth suicide).

**Tip:** Check out our *sustainability planning tool* to further help you think through concrete steps to help sustain your coalition's structure and activities.

Do you know enough about the **current evidence** on youth suicide to take effective action?

**STEP 3: Identify priorities**

There's a range of possible activities surrounding community efforts targeting youth suicide. Take a moment to step back and reflect on **the big picture**: Consider your **current and future activities** as part of a larger strategy by doing an environmental scan. This will help you be strategic and prioritize the best plan of action for your community.

**Example from the field:**

The Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council identified priorities through an environmental scan (link to scan on Waterloo profile) based on the suicide prevention activities outlined in the World Health Organization's 2014 report entitled *Suicide: A Global Imperative*. [Learn more.](#)

	<b>Life promotion/mental health promotion</b>  Strategies targeting the general population (e.g. promoting resiliency, community-owned wellness approaches and recreational programs)	<u><b>Prevention</b></u>  Strategies targeting groups at risk (e.g. gatekeeper programs, mental health clinics, controlling access to means, working with the media and efforts that target <a href="#">risk and protective factors</a> )	<u><b>Risk management</b></u>  Strategies targeting those in need <b>during a crisis</b> (e.g. follow-up services, 24/7 crisis lines, crisis beds, support for caregivers, protocol development and efforts to ensure fluidity between services)	<u><b>Postvention</b></u>  Strategies targeting those in need <b>after a crisis</b> (e.g. individual or group bereavement services and postvention programs in schools)
Looking for <b>specific strategies</b> for your community? Check out the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's <a href="#">Best Practices Registry</a> .				
What strategies have been used in your community <b>in the past</b> ?				
What efforts are <b>currently</b> taking place in your community?				

<p>Which areas are <b>lacking</b> (i.e. are there gaps in any of the 4 key areas)? Are there ways your coalition can fill these gaps?</p>				
<p>What are your <b>goals</b> in each area (short, medium and long-term)?</p>				
<p>Which areas will your coalition focus on? What is most important to your community <b>right now</b> (in the short-term)? In other words, what's the <i>low hanging fruit</i> that will give your coalition a win to celebrate your success with the community?</p>				

## STEP 4: Select or develop interventions/activities

Select or develop interventions/activities to **address the priorities** you identified in step 3. What intervention(s)/activity(ies) will your coalition implement? Research and practice have taught us a lot about developing interventions for suicidal behaviours. You can learn about interventions from sources such as [The Best Practices Registry](#), [the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Library](#), [PubMed](#) and [Google Scholar](#), to name a few.

Why are you **selecting** this particular intervention/activity? It's important to link interventions/activities to your long-term goals using a logic model (as a basis for evaluation). Otherwise, it can be difficult to prove that a program affecting a relatively small population is making statistically significant changes in suicidal behaviour. A logic model can help illustrate the effect of prevention efforts on suicidal behaviours in the long-term. Check out the [logic model template in the evaluation worksheet](#) on *Together to live*. In addition, what are immediate outcomes that can be measured more easily?

How are you going to **implement** your selected intervention/activity? An action plan outlines steps that must be taken in order to implement the activities noted in the logic model. See **Appendix A** for a fillable action planning table. Make sure to include the following in your action plan:

- tasks and subtasks in the order in which they must be completed
- objectives/goals for each task (*Tip: make your goals SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time Bound*)
- timelines and completion dates for each task
- who has primary responsibility for overseeing each task
- who else will be involved in each task
- what resources will be needed for each task
- how you will evaluate the success of each task
- who should be informed about each task (even though they may not be involved)

## STEP 5: Plan the evaluation

Ideally, your coalition should **build in a plan for evaluation** *before* implementing your intervention activities. Evaluation can help your coalition identify and solve problems, determine if you're making progress towards set goals, show the community/partners/stakeholders/policymakers/funders the value of suicide prevention, and help you decide how to enhance and/or expand suicide prevention efforts.

Consider whether your coalition has the **capacity** to do the evaluation alone. Do any members of your coalition have evaluation experience or do you need to bring in an external evaluator? Is there a faculty member or graduate student from a local university that you could collaborate with?

For more details on creating a logic model and evaluation plan, please refer to [the evaluation worksheet](#) and [additional guidance](#) on *Together to live*. The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health also has information available on evaluation on its [Resource hub](#).

## STEP 6: Implement, evaluate and improve

Action planning is a **continuous process** of implementing, evaluating and improving your coalition's efforts. Use your evaluation data to monitor implementation, identify and solve problems that may be limiting the effectiveness of your prevention efforts, and enhance prevention efforts. Take the time to reflect. Explore the following questions:

Were interventions implemented **as planned**? Reflect on how the **quality of your work** is linked to the outcomes of your efforts. Implementation helps you ensure that you're delivering the best possible care in your community. For more on implementation, check out the resources on [Together to live](#).

Are your activities having the anticipated **results**?

Are you reaching the **goals** you set out to achieve?



## Reference

A strategic planning approach to suicide prevention. (n.d.). Suicide Prevention Resource Centre.

Retrieved from <http://training.sprc.org/>

## Acknowledgement

The Centre would like to acknowledge the support of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council in the development of this tool.



**APPENDIX A: Action plan**

<b>TASKS</b> List chronologically	<b>SUB-TASKS</b> List chronologically	<b>OBJECTIVES</b> What are you looking to achieve?	<b>TIMELINE</b> When will you start and complete each?	<b>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is <i>primarily</i> responsible for completion?	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b> How will you measure success?	<b>FEEDBACK LOOPS</b> How will you report back