

# Impact Story – Community Family Support Project

## Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Fund

### Final Report

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# 1.0 Introduction

Goss Gilroy Inc (GGI) is pleased to present the following impact story for the Community Family Support Project funded by the Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) Fund.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Impact Story

The purpose of this impact story is to illustrate and explain the impacts of CSWB funding on the programs, individuals, and communities it supports. This impact story highlights the Community Family Support project and examines both the systems-level impacts by six Community Houses (CH) in priority communities in the Ottawa region, and their interpersonal impacts on the individuals they serve, particularly black and racialized families and youth.

This impact story report is one line of evidence and aligns with the goals of the CSWB evaluation to explore how the CSWB fund is effecting change at the community level, namely by:

- Increasing capacity in the funded organizations and programs;
- Building and strengthening community resources;
- Positive outcomes for clients; and,
- Social development and reduction of risks of harm.

The evaluation is intended to contribute to the City of Ottawa’s learning on how to better support funded organizations to fulfil their goals to meet the needs of diverse and underserved communities and promote community safety and well-being.

## 1.2 Organization Description

The Community Family Support project is delivered by an amalgam of six Community Houses (CH) in priority communities in the Ottawa region, namely: Banff Avenue CH; Blair Court CH; Britannia Woods CH; Confederation Court CH; Debra Dynes Family House; and the Russel Heights CH. These organizations are part of the Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses (OCCH), established in 1998 with the mandate to “strengthen the impact of place-based, barrier-free support programs and services in low-income neighbourhoods along with increasing opportunities for community engagement and the success of residents”.<sup>1</sup> Member organizations consist of small social service organizations located directly within social housing neighbourhoods in Ottawa, offering community-based programs and supports for individuals and families.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ottawacommunityhouses.com/what-is-occh%3F-1>

## 1.3 Impact Story Development Process

Featured impact stories, including the Community Family Support project, have been developed in collaboration with CSWB funded agencies. During the orientation session for the CSWB evaluation all eighteen funded organizations were invited to participate in the development of impact stories by sharing details of the impacts, large and small, of their programs on the individuals and communities they serve.

GGI then conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with each of the eighteen funded agencies to inform the development of impact stories and key informants were asked to provide details on key impacts they have seen in their organizations as a result of the funding. After each interview organizations were invited to provide background information about their project.

GGI and City staff then shortlisted three impact stories to feature (one from each of the three impact areas). These were appraised using a matrix of key criteria including evidence of: increased capacity in the funded organizations; building and strengthening community resources; positive outcomes for clients and enhanced partnerships.

The Community Family Support project was one of three projects selected to highlight in 2023. This impact story summarizes these findings and draws on various methods used in the CSWB evaluation including:

- A 90-minute semi-structured group interview with all six participating organizations (n-6) funded under the CSWB fund, namely:
  - Banff Avenue Community House.
  - Blair Court Community House.
  - Britannia Woods Community House.
  - Confederation Court Community House.
  - Debra Dynes Family House; and,
  - Russel Heights Community House.
- A document review of foundational program documents and project proposals for all six funded organizations.
- CSWB survey feedback by individuals and families who have participated in the Community family support program at one of the six CHs (n-176).

The City of Ottawa will validate each impact story with featured funded agencies prior to finalization.

## 1.4 Alignment of Organization with Impact Areas

The Community Family Support project is aligned with the CBSW's priority of supporting projects and services for racialized youth. This is consistent with the City's Anti-Racism Strategy, including its focus on addressing systemic racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and other forms of racism.

The impact area for this impact story is Social Inclusion and includes social activities and social programs. Social activities are programs and services that offer residents an opportunity to participate in an activity outside their normal programming with peers. Social inclusion offers residents an opportunity to socialize with other residents and promote social belonging and connection within normal programming.

The following provides a description of the Community Family Support project.

## 1.5 Project Description

The Community Family Support project offers programs to promote positive youth development & wellbeing using a placed-based, family-centered approach, therefore mitigating health crises (mental health, violence) and reducing emergency/police interventions.

Family support programs provide welcoming, community- based opportunities for families to voluntarily come together and exchange support. The term "family support program" describes both an innovative model and an approach to service delivery that focuses on the complex needs of families with children. Such programs empower families to enable healthy growth and development by enhancing strengths and capacities in individuals, families, and communities.<sup>2</sup>

### Community Family Support Project Goals

The Community Family Support project targets black and racialized youth in priority communities. From directly within a priority neighbourhood, the CH employs a family-centered approach to providing programs and services for racialized children and youth. The CH is a space of wellness and relies heavily on relationships and trust not only with youth, but also their family as a whole.

This project includes several key goals including:

- **Goal 1:** Black and Racialized youth can meet their needs for education, health care (mental health), food, employment.
  - Engage parents as active partners in the social & healthy development of youth.
  - Connect youth & their families to appropriate mental health resources.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://fsio.ca/family-support-program/>

- Increase knowledge of risk factors & prevention strategies around youth mental health
- **Goal 2:** Black and Racialized youth feel a sense of belonging in a safe, encouraging space to learn, grow, express themselves culturally.
  - Outreach & engage Black and Racialized youth in the community.
  - Youth have caring adults in their lives, mentors.
  - Youth are active in their community: volunteer/employment
  - Youth identify emerging community needs, mobilize to create solutions.

## 1.6 Project Partnerships

The Ottawa Coalition Community Houses (OCCH) is a key partner under the City’s Equitable Systems & Structures. OCCH staff provide support to all CHs with program development. It is important to note that the six CHs funded by CSWB are taking a coordinated approach to design and delivery of this program.

Project proposals highlight that OCCH sits on the Community Development Framework (CDF) Steering Table. This committee includes the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), Community Health and Resource Centres (CHRC), Ottawa Police Service (OPS), Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO), and Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO). This table is intended to enhance efficiency/effectiveness as it provides continuous communication, alignment & integration of community serving organizations. CDF-ONSCF Mental Wellbeing Strategy Working Group – OCCH is contributing to the development of a place-based BIPOC Family Neighbourhood & Youth Strategy.

The OCCH sits on the Steering Committee & Critical Hours Task Group. Addressing emerging youth needs, common evaluation, staff training & program resources. United for All (UFA): The OCCH is a member of the UFA Coalition & the Rapid Response Table. These table amplify the voice of the communities around discrimination & racism.

## 2.0 Impact of the CWSB Funding

### 2.1 Anticipated Results for the Organization

The local neighbourhoods served by the CHs are disproportionately affected by the priorities outlined in the CSWB plan. Project proposals indicate when families are faced with risks & experience barriers to address the risks, their ability to protect their children is greatly impacted. Youth of families who are facing discrimination, marginalization, racism & experiencing poverty, gender-based violence, housing insecurity & poor wellbeing are at higher risk for mental health crisis, substance abuse, addiction, underachieving at school, and poor employment prospects.

The CSWB funds are intended to increase the capacity of participating CHs to provide a higher quality of engagement with at-risk youth & their families by providing resources to hire a frontline, full-time skilled worker. Five of six programs have engaged a full-time staff member to run the program 35 hours per week including evenings, Saturdays (except Blair Court CH which runs 17.5 hours per week). To provide a barrier-free service, the program does not charge membership fees/program fees.

The CH Family Support Program is designed to identify & address the barriers faced by Black and racialized individuals and families. This project posits that investing adequate resources in neighbourhoods with high numbers of at-risk Black and racialized youth is an effective & efficient way to address community safety using an equitable approach.

The overall goal of the project aligns with the desired outcomes outlined in the logic model for the CSWB Fund. CSWB fund indicators of effective communication, cultural safety and wellbeing align with their approach to programming. Interviewees suggest there may be a need to include indicators specifically related to cultural responsiveness, access to culturally appropriate services, and community engagement to enhance cultural safety. Their approach recognizes and responds to the cultural backgrounds, values, and needs of the diverse clients it serves. They seek to ensure that the services they provide are culturally sensitive, and relevant to the clients' cultural identities and backgrounds. Situating the client as an equal partner in decision making may not align perfectly with their approach. Instead, they emphasize a client-led approach because empowerment and equity are achieved by prioritizing the clients' perspectives and preferences.

## 2.2 Changes in Organization

A review of interview findings and program documentation shows organizational changes are seen in three key areas as a result of CSWB funds: increased capacity, building and strengthening community resources and enhanced partnerships. Specifically, the CSWB funds have contributed to: Increased capacity in the funded organizations; building and strengthening community resources, and, enhanced partnerships.

### Increased capacity in the funded organizations

The CSWB funds allowed the CHs to implement a systemic and long-term approach across organizations and address multiple areas of needs instead of short-term approaches in just one area.

“When it comes to offering wraparound supports for young people and their families, we did not have a collective approach, so the individual community houses were doing different things and it was harder to try and coordinate any kind of systematic approach to delivery of services...”

### *Increased capacity to deliver services/Consistent delivery of services*

Consistent with many CSWB funded organizations, the CHs saw a drastic increase in the need for basic services over the past few years, with the pandemic and inflation, as well as the housing and mental health crisis. Most CHs were consumed with piecing together different funds to try and focus on filling the growing basic needs that were being seen in the community, e.g., food banks which were open a few days (3-8) days a month are now able to provide emergency services everyday. The CSWB funds increased the capacity of organizations to deliver services, including consistent delivery of services.

“One of the things that has been significant throughout the pandemic, even in the past year, is a lot of growth in our community... At some point our program went from being one of many programs to become a real focal point and were putting more resources, time in that direction, and that effort enables us to be to pick up some of the basics needs because during that time it seems the need in the community became really amplified, and everything else kind of takes a bit of a back seat because we really do have to deal with basic needs such as food. One of the other things we have been able to do to meet the challenges is that we went from being able to have the foodbank open just a couple of times a month, to providing emergency services every day, and we went from only being open a few times a month to being open 8 days per month, like we did prior to the pandemic.”

### *Coming together as a collective has allowed to plan activities/programs more intentionally*

CSWB funds provided the infrastructure to begin to see systemic changes. Because this project includes 6 community houses, and there are 16 community houses in the regions, the impact is magnified so they are able to provide and share information and work collectively in a way they could not have before. Looking at how they can sustain this long term will help to make changes that they have wanted to do but did not have the time or resources to focus on, such as scaling-up initiatives. All have similar roles and are/were functioning in a similar manner based on the funding that was available at the time.

“The funds have enabled us to take a more systematic approach. The continuity of a position allows us to maintain contact with partners and to create some familiarity among the groups (houses) and to be more familiar with the persons that are involved in providing services and it has given time to develop a more sustainable approach to how we function as a collective.”



### *Allowed to develop an evaluation framework*

This CSWB funding has allowed the CHs to build on previous planning and evaluation work with the City of Ottawa and it allowed them to build an evaluation framework specific to supporting Black and racialized young people from directly within their communities.

Program documents show OCCH, the City of Ottawa, OCH, and SPCO created an Evaluation Framework in 2016. CHs track outcomes & reports to the City. CHs are highly connected and are a hub to connect residents to each other and to services they identify as important. In 2019, they developed the Child & Youth framework. Outcomes focus on prevention/early intervention strategies to build protective factors to mitigate risk factors of at-risk youth.

Indicators incl. that youth: are positively engaged in their community, have at least one consistent, caring adult in their lives, develop soft skills and make choices that support healthy, safe development.

Outcomes are reported annually to UWEO, including segregated data. They have engaged Youthrex to support with best practices and impact measurement

“I want to add to that – our ability to track the service being delivered, we are able to see what is coming, some of the trends and emerging needs, and really being able to focus and plan for what services are needed and making sure the right services are established get responsive to the right needs. That evaluation piece and being able to really articulate a problem and measure success is something that is really important and allows some reflection to improve.”

### *Allowed to not just do crisis intervention but program development*

The CSWB funds have given some breathing space to organizations to not only focus on crisis intervention, but also to be able to become more intentional. This has been beneficial because when people are in crisis organizations are hesitant to turn people away. Not being in that position clients can begin to see they have what one respondent describes as “a consistent fixture in that community, a caring place, a reliable place that they can count on to feel safe, that has been one of the biggest impacts”.

“I think we always had reach in our community. But we didn’t have depth. Being able to go further and away from crisis intervention and to program development has enabled to us to develop deeper ties in the community and shoving away people so we could move to the next person is now less likely to happen.... From there we are able to really know them and their needs and are able to connect them to different programs, and they have a supportive from precarious to a calm environment, and people who live in crisis really need to see this, then they are able to begin to develop a sense of stability...”

## Building and Strengthening Community Resources

The CSWB funds provided organizations with increased capacity to serve clients (e.g., more clients, shorter wait times), and it also allowed CHs to hire intentionally to diversity their staff to better meet the needs of Black and racialized youth and families.

One key outcome of the funding was that it allowed increased staffing capacity and more qualified staff (e.g., able to deliver culturally sensitive training which has also resulted in reaching a wider group of clients).

“Another one of the ways we were very mindful of the diversity when we were hiring for the position. It’s very helpful and allowed us to have a further reach with community engagement. Having the ability to provide cultural sensitivity training, and to become more culturally- aware of what is going on with people instead of crisis management, those kinds of things that have a little more of a leg up and helping us to serve our communities.”

### *Professional Development for Staff*

Through this funding, the CHs were able to certify their frontline staff in Community-Based Conflict Resolution with the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution. This 40 hour certification program is instrumental in resolving conflicts using a community-based approach, therefore mitigating community crises.

“Attending the Conflict Resolution training was a meaningful unique experience; I am grateful to have shared it with other community house workers. The discussion of social issues, experiences, and unique exercises that evoked collaborative strategies left us all with new perspectives, ideas, and a great sense of hope that we could bring back to each of our communities.”

CSWB funds were targeted to increase the capacity of participating community houses to hire qualified staff to respond to the identified concerns, issues and risks Black and racialized youth are facing. This includes:

- Outreach to marginalized youth
- Community education
- Crisis mitigation (addressing issues before they become a mental health crisis)
- Early non-critical response (building trust & relationships, Mental Health First Aid) and,
- Warm hand offs to services.

“I think it allowed us to make sure we have quality people in the positions with qualified background, and this makes a big difference in our reach. Competitive compensation and adequate resources to hire someone, with more experience and with the background understanding that is needed to deal with clientele helps to work more efficiently...”

### Enhanced Partnerships

Interview respondents emphasized an unexpected outcome of hiring a position in the program which is has allowed more time and attention to be paid to relationship building to develop new partnerships for which there was no capacity before (e.g., now they have someone who can follow through, work on contracting, continuous communication etc.).

“Having the continuity of a person now hired in the program has really helped us to develop partnerships that we did not have time to focus on before which has brought some efficiency because we had such limited resources before that we did not have capacity to pursue this kind of coordination...”

## 2.3 Target Population Served by the Project

Priority communities are a key focus of this project, and it targets family-centred services for racialized youth. According to program documents, the neighbourhoods served by this program are comprised of families with multiple intersectionalities: poverty, Black/racialized, female-led, fleeing domestic violence, immigrants and refugees. The households are densely populated with families experiencing many of the intersecting and overlapping social identities above. The conditions in large social housing neighbourhoods are forever in a state of deterioration: families with less disadvantages are more likely to move on, only for the unit to be replaced with a family with high needs (e.g., Special Protection Status/living homeless on the registry). The need for targeted, consistent and robust resources for these communities with a high concentration of

Racialized youth is a critical step stable at distributing resources to where they are needed most in the city.<sup>3</sup>

## Community Reach

In total, 1,001 young people and parents were reached in priority neighbourhoods in year 1 of this project. The children and youth in the neighbourhoods served by these community houses are mainly black and racialized and comparatively disenfranchised relative to the City's population as a whole. In Ottawa, 29.9% identify as visible minority, and the median household income is \$87, 000 (CSWB). This can be compared with the six participating community houses funded by the CSWB fund where on average, half to three quarters identify as visible minority, with most living at the poverty line with an average household income of less than \$25, 000.<sup>4</sup>

### Community Family Support Project

#### **1,001: Total number of young people and parents reached in priority neighbourhoods in year 1**

- 4588 individuals and families targeted (2022 projection)
- 1351 children/youth targeted in these priority Ottawa neighbourhoods
- Over three quarters (75-84%) identify as a “visible minority”
- Average household income: under \$25,000

## 2.4 Anticipated Results for the Target Populations Served by the Organization

Project proposals highlight the need to target enhanced services to these neighbourhoods and to understand the benefits of providing stable, secure resources and investments to ensure equitable distribution of resources to underserved communities.

“Equitable distribution of resources, we keep talking about equity, yet we continue to fund things that are not equitable in that people continuously show up a door of a under-funded space and resource agency because that is where they want to go, we need to put resources where people continue to show up... But yet, how many people do we see with funds with outreach dollars just to reach out to people and bring them in? If we are talking about equity, right there is something that we are not paying enough attention to.”

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<sup>3</sup> Project proposals

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

Respondents in the group interview emphasize place-based, local interventions as a means to provide wraparound services and build trust. Program documents reinforce the need for local interventions in highly impacted neighbourhood, where services are accessible & familiar to the targeted youth. Working with youth and families to identify and address their needs increases individual capacities is proven to build trust and community cohesion (known to reduce calls for emergency/police response).

“I go back to the fact that we are place-based organization, and this is a very safe and accessible place to come and get services....I think this is so integral to our clients and partners because it is here, where they are, and where they have ownership and they already know this place, this is their neighborhood...”

## 2.5 Changes in Individuals (as Members of Target Populations)

**Nearly all (95%) of survey respondents from the six CHs found the program very helpful** to themselves personally or for their family, emphasizing the importance of coming together, receiving support, engaging with others including staff and community members to share experiences in a family friendly environment, learn new things and have fun. A total of 176 participants from the project responded to the CSWB survey and of those, 75% identified as racialized.

### CSWB Participant Survey (2023)

- **Nearly all (95%) of survey respondents from the six CHs found the program very helpful.**
  - **176 participants** from the Community Family Support project responded to the CSWB survey.
  - **Over 75% identify as racialized** (96 identify as Black; 33 identify as Arabic and 11 identify as Indigenous).





### *Distinctive community connection and proximity*

Some respondents wrote about the community connection and proximity that made a difference for them in terms of ease of access and convenience, as well as familiarity. Most emphasize the importance of feeling connected with others in their neighbourhood and experiencing a feeling of belonging.

“This program has offered me and my family many opportunities that elevated our quality of life. Through these programs I was able make strong and healthy relationships in my neighbourhood and gain the confidence to explore new things.”

### *Positive outcomes for clients*

This CSWB funded project builds on longstanding success of CHs in reaching out to marginalized groups in priority communities. Surveys dating back to 1996 show 95% of residents reporting that the CH helped them in a way that was meaningful to them. These are consistent with the current interview and survey findings.

## 2.6 Impact Stories

### *Community Development, Outreach, In-reach & Engagement*

The Community House **community development** model recognizes community members to be experts in their communities, and values their knowledge, wisdom, experience and needs. Through ongoing collaboration, mutual respect and trust, Community Houses support young people to be meaningfully engaged and included in their community.

**Outreach** is the process of targeting young people that are currently not engaged. Quarterly “Move-in Reports” are provided to each Community House by Ottawa Community Housing (OCH). This allows Community Houses to target outreach to new community members.

Outreach is done in three ways:

- Targeted outreach: door knocks, out in the community
- Community events: BBQs, potlucks, community meetings
- Communications: flyers, social media

**In-reach** is the process of connecting with young people who are already involved in their community. The purpose of in-reach is to deepen relationships, increase involvement and build individual and community capacity. In-reach is a critical component to meaningfully connect with hard-to-reach young people, notably in times of community crises and emergencies.

### **Impact Story: Ongoing Outreach**

*A young person recently moved into the neighbourhood. They attended the Youth Opportunity Info fair at the Community House, mostly for the shawarma dinner offered, but left better connected to their community. They met the staff and learned about all the programs offered at the Community House. They also learned about the scholarships available to them, volunteering and employment opportunities at the house. Since then, this young person has been active in helping out with the children’s programs and hopes to get a job next summer in the camp.*

### *Children & Youth Programs*

- 574 young people were engaged in after school programs September to June
- 86% Black/racialized
- 42% Francophone

Community-based after school and summer programs follow the 3 pillars of critical hours programs to build protective factors: safe and supportive spaces, skills development and caring adults with the overarching goal of building a sense of belonging.

#### ***Impact Story: The Power of Trusting Relationships***

*There was a group of young people from the community hanging out at a local mall and taking part in illegal activities. A few of the young people had built a trusting relationship with the CFS Worker and shared what was happening. Through this relationship, the worker was successful at offering incentives to have these young people become more positively engaged in their community by taking on roles within the programs at the Community House. The worker also reached out and worked with the parents to be able to offer consistent support to the young people. Having the staffing resources to provide timely interventions before they reach a crisis has a big impact on changing lives and helping families.*

### *Frontline Crisis Intervention*

Being located directly in the community, Community House staff often will find themselves on the frontlines of crises/serious incidents as they happen or shortly after, making them unavoidably the first responders. As part of this first response, Community House staff are positioned to de-escalate situations, provide conflict-resolution, provide emotional and practical support and follow-up.

#### ***Impact Story: Being There in Times of Crisis***

*A young man from the community lost his life to gun violence. As a community response, a group of mothers came together to discuss the issues facing their children. As some parents did not want to talk with their neighbours, the Community Family Support (CFS) Worker was integral in connecting with and supporting the hard-to-engage families to respond to the community crisis. Through this effort, the mother of the young man received support from her community to navigate the investigation and court process. In addition to working closely with parents, the CFS Worker was also available to speak with the young people in the community to support them through the crisis.*

### *Food Support*

All Community Houses involved in this project operate an onsite food bank. As members of the Ottawa Food Bank (OTF), Community Houses leverage the food supplies received by OTF and often source additional food to distribute in the community. In addition to food banking, Community Houses offer snack and meal programs to ensure children have access to nutritious food.



Community Houses not only alleviate the immediate needs posed by hunger and malnutrition through food banking and snack programs, but they also provide opportunities for community-based solutions to increase food security. These programs include, but are not limited to: community gardens, collective kitchens and youth nutrition and cooking classes.

**79,286: THE NUMBER OF VISITS TO THE FOOD BANKS IN THE 6 COMMUNITY HOUSES LAST YEAR. IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING CRITICAL FOOD FOR THE FAMILIES, THESE VISITS REPRESENT OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH VULNERABLE FAMILIES TO OFFER ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS.**

### *Wraparound Supports*

Wraparound is a strength-based, needs-driven, individualized support service that addresses basic needs in order to build sustainable plans for young people and their families to support their wellbeing and healthy development. These basic needs include but are not limited to, food, safety, emotional, educational, medical, social, and employment support.

### ***Impact Story: One Thing Can Lead to Another***

*A mom came into the foodbank and shared with the staff that she was struggling getting her child to school each day. The young person was struggling with a learning disability and mental health. This was creating issues at school and at home. The staff connected the young person to after school programming at the Community House which provided educational supports and helped with social skill development. They also were able to help the family work with the school to open communication and get more support. As a result of that one interaction at the foodbank, the family became more connected to community resources and shared that their stress level at home was reduced and the young person was doing better in school.*

### **Lessons Learned**

Interviewees share 'lessons learned' on increasing capacity to deliver equity-focused programs and community resources to inform future efforts. Referencing the need for equitable distribution of resources, respondents once again emphasize the need for sustainable ongoing funds for target populations to ensure equity.

*"It really is community-based programs for young people and their families in priority neighbourhoods... and targeting where resources are distributed, and I think this is something the City can learn from. It about equity and distribution of resources."*

Respondents expressed concerns about long-term sustainable funding for community safety and wellbeing and wondered about how the City will address funding gaps to ensure social inclusion.

*"The big glaring one you do great work this year, but what is the plan for 3 years? So, what is the sustainability plan for this. We are already looking back 3 years in the logic model. Aligning the program for long-term needs to be addressed."*

## 3.0 Reflections and Conclusion

### 3.1 Key Reflections

A review of interview and survey findings and program documentation shows organizational changes are seen in three key areas as a result of CSWB funds: increased capacity, building and strengthening community resources and enhanced partnerships. The fund has also contributed to individual impacts. Specifically, the CSWB funds have contributed to:

- Increased capacity in the funded organizations
- Building and strengthening community resources
- Enhanced partnerships
- Positive individual impacts

### 3.2 Conclusions

The Community Family Support project has had a substantial positive impact in reaching, helping and supporting Black and racialized youth in priority neighbourhoods through participating CHs in the Ottawa region. CSWB funding by the City of Ottawa has increased the capacity of CHs to operate as a collective and take a more intentional approach to its program planning, and increased the capacity of participating community houses to hire qualified staff to expand and deepen its reach to Black and racialized youth and their families by providing culturally responsive programming.

Testimonials show this program is having an immense positive impact on participants, and nearly all (95%) of survey respondents from the six CHs found the program very helpful to themselves personally or for their family. Survey results show education, health care (mental health), food, employment services are helpful for racialized youth and their families. Some respondents wrote about the community connection and proximity that made a difference for them in terms of ease of access and convenience, as well as familiarity. Most emphasize the importance of feeling connected with others in their neighbourhood and experiencing a feeling of belonging. Overall this project builds on and strengthens the longstanding success of CHs in reaching out to marginalized groups in priority communities and expands the capacity of this network to deepen its connections and relationships with Black and racialized youth and families in ways that enhance community safety and wellbeing.