

Wellbeing Waterloo Region

Progress
Report 2020

Executive summary

Our Vision

Is a community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind.

Why a collective Community Wellbeing Collaborative?

Community wellbeing is shaped by a wide variety of conditions and systems in which individuals and communities are born, grow, work, live, and age. So what is community wellbeing? Public health researchers Wiseman and Brasher define community wellbeing as:

The combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfill their potential. When looking at the community as a whole, there are three attributes that play a large role in wellbeing: connectedness, livability, and equity.

Because of this complexity, there is the realization that no single organization, government or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex conditions or systems to impact community wellbeing. We need to work together to create transformative change and truly improve community wellbeing to ensure that no one gets left behind.

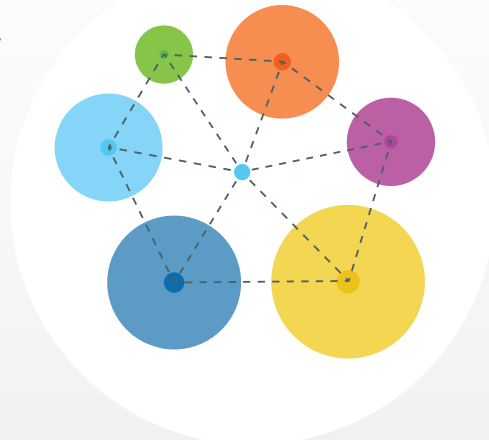
The reason we are pursuing a community wellbeing initiative – the “WHY” – is as follows:

- We are trying to do together what no organization has accomplished or can accomplish on its own.
- We want to create new, significant and impactful solutions across the wellbeing system.
- We wish to work together to identify, amplify, advocate and address collective priorities to improve community wellbeing so that everyone in our community is able to thrive, and no one is left behind.

About Wellbeing Waterloo Region

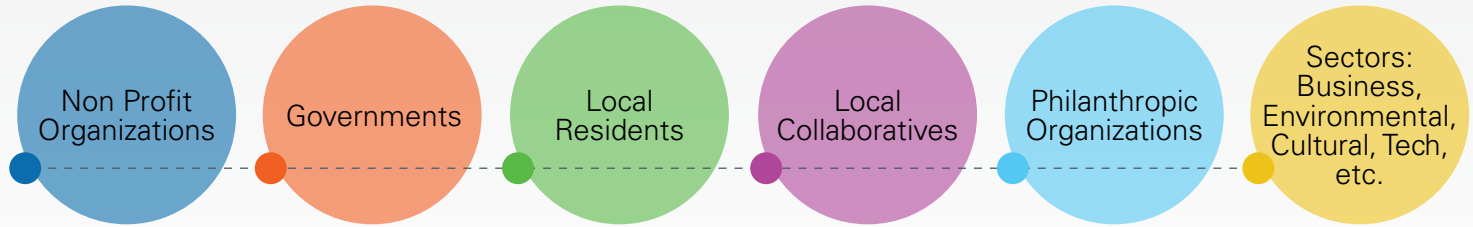
Wellbeing Waterloo Region (WWR) is a community-led collaborative where members work together across sectors to improve the wellbeing of residents in Waterloo Region. WWR’s 160+ working group members come from all parts of Waterloo Region, representing local residents with various lived experiences and 70+ organizations. Over 1,000 contacts are part of the WWR network and they receive frequent updates on wellbeing events, programs and happenings through the WWR newsletter.

Financial Support this past year has been provided by The Local Health Integration Network, the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation, Waterloo Regional Police Service, and the United Way Waterloo Region Communities. In addition to financial support, backbone staff support was provided through Waterloo Region Police Service, Region of Waterloo (CAO office and Public Health), and through Lutherwood. Community partners and residents have contributed time and expertise to support the work of Wellbeing Waterloo Region.



Who we are

Wellbeing Waterloo Region brings together people and groups representing:



Our purpose

We are a diverse and connected network, working together differently to make transformational change in wellbeing. We are able to impact wellbeing together in a way we are unable to alone. More specifically Wellbeing Waterloo Region's purpose for existence is to CARE:

Convene and connect: our diverse community to leverage local assets, increase alignment, and overcome challenges to wellbeing collectively.

Amplify and align: existing efforts to promote and focus attention where transformational change is needed in community wellbeing across the region.

Respond and act: actively develop new solutions and actions to address community issues.

Educate and enhance knowledge: to learn from one another and understand system-wide issues, and to address inequities.

What we are

- Community collaborative
- Connect and convene people on issues of importance to the community
- Amplify issues and supports
- Respond with actions that fill a gap
- Educate system-wide to shine a light on and work on actions to reduce inequities
- Informed and diverse leaders from multiple community sectors
- Experts with lived and professional experience

What we are not

- Direct service provider
- Hierarchy
- Duplicate of other community work

Our impact in three priority areas

From January 2019 to December 31, 2020 Wellbeing Waterloo Region has worked on three priority areas with many actions and outcomes:

- **Affordable Housing:** Everyone has a place to call home.
- **Healthy Children and Youth:** All children and youth have the foundation they need to thrive and reach their potential.
- **Social Inclusion:** Foster a community-wide movement that seeks equity, prevents isolation and strengthens belonging.



Purpose of this report

It has been two years since Wellbeing Waterloo Region began the implementation of the two-year work plan and launched our enabling structure. Together, we have achieved so much towards the vision. Many organizations and residents have contributed to this progress. It has truly been a community effort! We are so grateful for the support and collaboration throughout the years. As a collaborative we have had to pivot our actions due to the pandemic and still managed to work towards the actions in the original plan.

The purpose of this report is to communicate and document progress for 2020. The report also provides an overview of how Wellbeing Waterloo Region responded to the impacts of COVID-19. We invite you to visit the [Wellbeing Waterloo Region website](#) for more details about work that has been accomplished over the past two years.

•----- Social inclusion: Everyone is welcome and can belong -----•

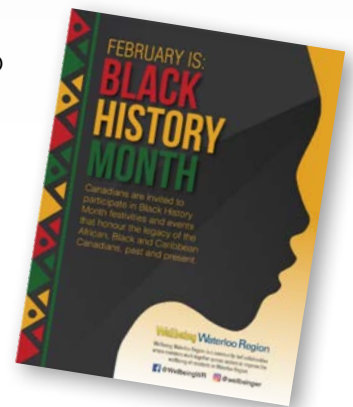
Objectives

- Create in Waterloo Region a social inclusion movement that seeks equity, prevents isolation and strengthens belonging.
- Develop respectful and meaningful relationships with Indigenous People to foster intercultural understanding and connection that facilitates authentic conversations and impact.

- Trained over 400 people in equity and bias awareness resulting in improved decision-making to enhance wellbeing by making better decisions based on facts rather than opinions or biases.
- [The Equity Lens video series and discussion guide](#) was developed and launched. This video series features Kike Ojo-Thompson and has been used by many different partner agencies as professional development for staff, especially in response to the Black Lives Matter protests and calls for better understanding of equity and racial injustice at the systems level.
- More than 250 people attended a March 4, 2020 "Challenging Barriers to Women's Wellbeing: An International Women's Day Event and Health Fair."



- Supported the Rhythm & Blues: Celebrating Black History Month. This event was hosted by the Accessibility & Diversity Services in the City of Cambridge.
- Developed [Black History Month posters](#) that were shared through our network in print and on social media. The Wellbeing Calendar and blog continues to promote local events that celebrate our region's diversity.



Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response



- In partnership with Carizon, WWR supported the creation and implementation, of "The Friendly Voice", a phone-based check-in service to improve the general wellbeing of those who are experiencing social isolation during the pandemic.
- Worked with [Interfaith Grand River](#) to develop a resource of spiritual supports available in Waterloo Region that have been adapted due to the pandemic.
- Worked with partner organizations and the Psychosocial and Spiritual Supports Group of the pandemic to create resources and tools to build resiliency and supports throughout the pandemic. <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/resiliency-resources>
- In partnership with Carizon, we offered six self-care workshops for the Wellbeing Waterloo Region network. Topics included mindfulness, dealing with anxiety, isolation, worries about the future, managing stress, and coping strategies for working from home. Over 60 participants signed-on for the sessions weekly.
- Offered virtual coffee chats following COVID-19 closures in order to connect with network members. Emerging issues or needs related to COVID-19 were expressed by participants, and were passed along to the appropriate working group of Pandemic Control Group.
- Held three meditation sessions to encourage a change in focus to "gratitude"
- Held an improv event for people needing connection over the winter holidays.

First Nations, Métis, Inuit Advisory and Advocacy Circle



Wellbeing Waterloo Region is committed to developing and supporting meaningful relationships with the First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities. WWR supports the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Advisory and Advocacy Circle that is resourced to provide networking support for the Indigenous community, and to provide advice and input on Wellbeing Waterloo Region actions, as well as services and programs in Waterloo Region.

- Circle members participate on all working groups and were able to offer the perspectives on First Nations, Métis and Inuit ways of being, reminding the groups of the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action.
- Mapped the gaps and assets in services for wellbeing involving First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Waterloo Region. Discussed the need for data collection to consider the Indigenous context.

Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response

- The First Nations, Metis and Inuit Advocacy and Advisory Circle continues to grow. The circle has continued to meet (virtually) regularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and has provided vital insights on how pandemic responses can be culturally safe and accessible to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit community members.
- Supported culturally safe access to COVID-19 testing and other health care concerns developing into a collaborative with the LHIN, Ontario 4 and the Sanguen bus in partnership with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit organizations.
- Supported organizations helping families during the holiday break, through the provision of Christmas care packages.
- Launched the [Indigenous Engagement webpage](#) with new resources and educational materials, and updates.

Our Journey to Reconciliation Actions

- In collaboration with the Indigenous community, implemented training, education and tools to the working groups of WWR on Indigenous culture and history, the impacts of colonization as well as provided opportunities for reflection on how to work towards reconciliation.
- Developed public resource materials to educate community members on Indigenous culture and protocols. These materials, such as the [WWR Territorial Acknowledgements](#) Protocol, support the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as community members' reconciliation efforts and knowledge-building.
- Began the development of an organizational assessment tool, to be launched in March 2021, to help groups understand where they are on the journey to reconciliation.

Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response

- Due to COVID-19 the in person training was modified to be offered virtually. Five virtual Journey to reconciliation training sessions were offered in the fall of 2020. Plans to continue the training in the winter of 2021 have been developed.
- The profile and stories of local Indigenous wellbeing were put on hold due to the pandemic.

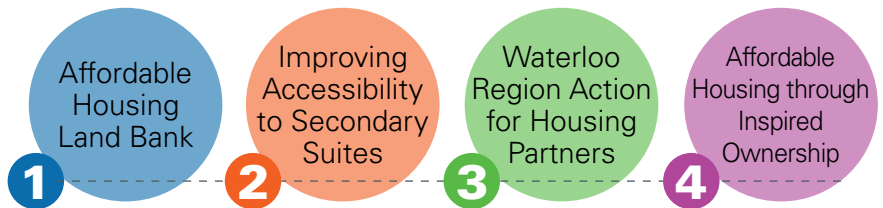
• Affordable housing: Everyone has a place to call home •

Objectives

- Mobilize the community to end chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region.
- Build readiness to move to a transformative affordable housing focus.



- ALL IN 2020 raised and disbursed more than \$90,000 to provide rent subsidies to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.
- WWR formed a strategic alliance with [Leadership Waterloo Region](#) (LWR), and Waterloo Institute of Social Innovation and Resilience (WISIR). This alliance supports WWR's objective to build readiness in the area of affordable housing.
- Through a 10-month process, in partnership with the [Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience](#) (WISIR), the Class of 2020 was able to involve more than 60 community partners in an affordable housing solutions lab discussion. Through community cafes, one on one interviews, attendance at lived experience groups, research, and community collaborations, the class created a report and videos related to four areas of leverage:



The class report which included the affordable housing recommendations was widely distributed and shared with the WWR Connectors Hub, Regional Council, alumni and local leaders.

Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response

- Wellbeing Waterloo Region hosted an Oct 1, 2020 forum on Housing and Homelessness in Waterloo Region. The forum's theme was "Everyone deserves a place to call home" and the forum included speakers who shared their insights on immediate housing-related needs for the winter, the importance of supportive housing and the Region's housing and homelessness plans. Updates were also provided on all the work that was accomplished to house people in safe spaces during the pandemic.



Everyone deserves a place to call home

----- **Healthy children and youth:** All children and youth have the -----
foundation they need to thrive and reach their potential

Objectives

- Support the Smart Cities Federal grant proposal.
- Intentionally align/amplify efforts and directions with the Children and Youth Planning Table.



The initial focus of this work was to support the Smart Cities proposal to the Federal government through the Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT). We received news that Waterloo Region was not successful in its application, therefore conversations took place to determine focus and next steps. The focus to improve child and youth wellbeing was identified and “belonging” was chosen to work on collectively.

- WWR provided data and input for the [Smart Waterloo Region](#) initiative related to healthy children and youth.
- Members from WWR joined CYPT to identify a [recommended priority area of focus – Belonging](#).
- CYPT joined the WWR Social Inclusion Group to seek opportunities for support, alignment and collective advancement of actions related to social inclusion and belonging.
- Ensured on-going cross-promotion of activities between the two initiatives via social media and bulletin content.
- Joined together membership to participate in the [Brain Story training series](#).
- Promoted Family Compass as the go-to site for services and supports for children, youth and families.

Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response

- WWR, along with our partners at the Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council, Immigration Waterloo Region, have been supporting the #StrongerTogetherWR campaign.



Communications: Connecting our community

Objectives

- Convene and connect our diverse community to leverage local assets, increase alignment, identify gaps and overcome challenges in wellbeing.
- Amplify and align existing efforts to promote and focus attention where transformational change is needed in community wellbeing across the region.

- Hosted a fall forum for all WWR working groups in support of 'On the Table' by Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation (KWCF), and Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation (CND CF). Approx. 70 people attended and Anne Gloger from the Centre for Connected Communities gave a keynote address: "[Connected Communities from the Inside Out](#)."



- Developed and implemented a variety of communication methods to leverage partnerships and reach a broad spectrum of citizens, including the WWR website, community calendar, email subscription service, Instagram feed, and print materials (i.e. bookmarks, post cards, etc.)

- 1,023 people (and about 15 new ones per month!) subscribe to the WWR newsletter.
- From 2019 to 2020, the total number of website views jumped from 13,915 to 39,356. This is approximately a 182% increase in website traffic!
- The WWR website has had up to 660 views in one day.

Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response

- WWR purchased 20 zoom licences for the WWR network. From March 23, 2020 to December 31, 2021 more than 12,113 people participated in 1687 Zoom meetings held to support clients and staff. In total, Zoom was used for 11,242 meeting hours.
- Implemented social media tools for WWR, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram this year.
- [Wellbeing Waterloo Region's website](#) became a hub for information on wellbeing supports during the pandemic; 14 new pages were added to the website. The website provides links to coping tools, services, events, and other supports for community members who are feeling isolated or stressed during the pandemic as we continue to take physical distancing measures. Furthermore, the website now features a translation option that can translate the site into 104 languages.
- Circulated weekly newsletters following COVID-19 closures in order to keep our network updated on rapid changes to events, services, and programming in the community.
- Held conversations with the network on fall (2020) and winter (2021) priorities.

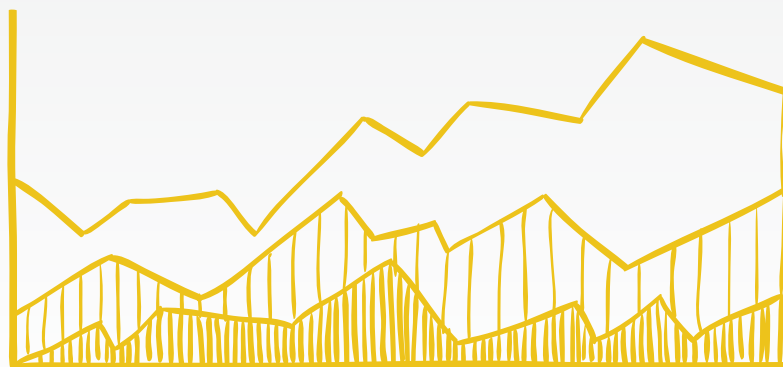


- WWR has started a [Finding Hope Movement](#) that focuses positive energy on recognition, encouragement and inspiration. We also provide resources and reference local services for people who are having trouble finding hope.
- Created tools, [videos](#), stories and messaging so organizations can help spread the word of hope.
- Created window clings in nine languages so residents could print and stick the posters on their windows.
- Hosted a "Hope" webinar for the network.
- Created a "60 ways in 60 days" initiative to help communicate messages of hope.

•----- **Measurement and monitoring:** Measure, identify gaps -----•
and disaggregate data to mobilize and understand inequities and collective wellbeing.

Objectives

- Monitor, track and report on community wellbeing to inspire action e.g., the Profile of Wellbeing.
- Disaggregate data to identify health disparities and inequities.
- Identify gaps in wellbeing data and develop methods to address these gaps in culturally appropriate ways.

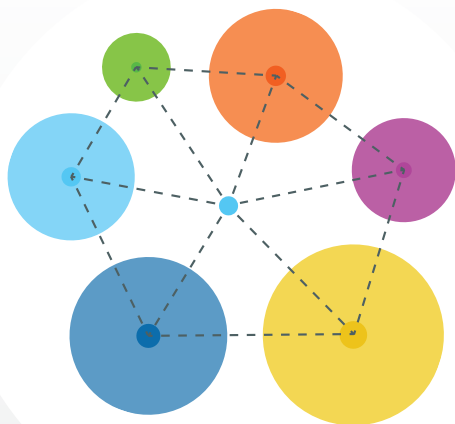


- Created several reports (available on the [WWR website](#)) to facilitate knowledge, understanding, and application of the Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey data, including the “Prompt for Discussion,” which highlights top findings and comparisons with other data sources, and “Profile of Survey Respondents,” which highlights survey and census demographics.
- Disaggregated [wellbeing survey](#) data in order to understand which population groups are not doing well in our community.
- Hosted community data sense-making sessions with our network to discuss the results and inform the analysis and actions.

 **Some highlights specific to COVID-19 Response**

- [Data spotlight](#). There is a vast amount of data related to new and developing issues as a result of the pandemic. To keep our network updated on new and emerging data sources, we have been circulating some relevant findings through our WWR newsletter Data Spotlight.

Disaggregated survey data, reports and presentations can be found at: <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/wellbeing-survey/>



Thank you

Like many organizations, WWR has experienced impacts due to COVID-19, including shifting services to virtual platforms, hosting meetings and training virtually. We have also seen staff redeployment and budget reductions as a result of the pandemic. Despite these impacts, WWR has continued to address community wellbeing priorities. For 2021, WWR consulted with the network and has developed a revised plan to respond to emerging wellbeing issues and priorities in the community. This revised plan will be coming out for consultation in February 2021.

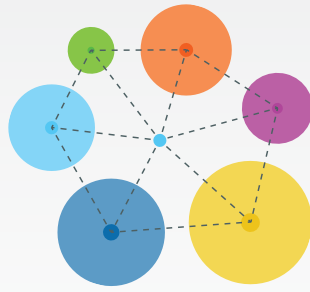
We invite you to visit the [Wellbeing Waterloo Region website](#) for more specific details and to sign up for our newsletters. Also, remember to follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) for regular updates, or drop us a line at wellbeingwr@regionofwaterloo.ca.

We would like to thank each and every community member for their continued support during this time. It has been very meaningful to stay connected and continue the work we do during this challenging and ever-changing time. We have much to be proud of and we hope we can celebrate our joint successes and continue to work together to create a community where everyone thrives and no one is left behind.

Inequities impact the wellbeing of all individuals and our community.

Lean into the conversation and disrupt inequities!

To find out more visit www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/equity



Wellbeing Waterloo Region

Wellbeing Waterloo Region is a community-led initiative committed to working differently across sectors to make transformative change.

Visit our website at wellbeingwr.ca

 @wellbeingwr  @WellbeingWR

