



GROWING GREAT[™]
generations

WELLINGTON - GUELPH

GROWING GREAT GENERATIONS

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2026

About Growing Great Generations

Growing Great Generations (GGG) is the collaborative planning initiative for children and youth services (birth to 25 years of age) in the Wellington service delivery area. The Wellington service delivery area consists of the City of Guelph and the seven municipalities of the County of Wellington (Centre Wellington, Erin, Guelph/Eramosa, Minto, Mapleton, Puslinch and Wellington North).

The work of Growing Great Generations is overseen by the GGG Planning Table, which is made up of senior leaders who have decision making power in their organizations and represent key sectors that provide services to all children and youth.

GGG Vision

All children, youth and their families in the Wellington service delivery area have access to resources, services and supports that promote their optimum social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

GGG Mission

Growing Great Generations is a collaborative planning initiative of community health, education and social service organizations and groups who engage in system-level planning to strengthen and align services and supports for all children, youth and their families in the Wellington service delivery area. Action is achieved by leveraging our knowledge and resources to improve services and supports for children, youth and their families.

Process for Developing the GGG Strategic Plan 2024-2026

- **February 2023:** Review of GGG Fundamentals, including mission, vision, and Terms of Reference.
- **April & June 2023:** Presentation of ‘sector stories’ by key organizations, focusing on sector trends, data, and projections to establish a community context.
- **September 2023:** Overview of GGG Community Plan 2018-2023 outputs and confirmation of the process for developing the next action plan.
- **November 2023:** Identification of the GGG Planning Table’s strategic priorities and potential actions/activities for 2024-2026.
- **February 2024:** Review, refine and confirm the proposed ideas for the strategic action plan.
- **March & April 2024:** The GGG Planning Table and the Birth to Six Working Group finalize the strategic actions and outline the corresponding activities needed to achieve them.

Community Context

This section summarizes the trends presented by members representing the child care, EarlyONs, children's treatment, public health, school boards and mental health sectors, during the strategic planning process.

From early 2020 until 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic safety measures entailed, at various times, province-wide shut-downs, travel restrictions, school and park closures, mask wearing, social distancing, the suspension of services and services being offered only virtually. These measures have taken a toll on children, youth and families. The result of which is a different landscape than that for which Growing Great Generations planned, in preparation of its last Community Plan (2018-2023).

Increased levels of need and complexity of the children, youth and families with whom service providers work now exist. As some families continue to face financial losses and stress, an additional concern is that the number of vulnerable families will rise. In terms of caregivers, there are now more grandparents providing care to children and youth. Higher caregiver stress levels are having an impact on children and youth.

Some of the complexity referenced above is seen in mental health. Increased levels of psychological distress, anxiety, fear, stress, depression and distraction were noted. The incidence of eating disorders and body image concerns amongst youth has climbed. The School Boards have noted an increased number of Violent Threat and Risk Assessments (VTRAs). The incidence of non-consensual sexual activity is also elevated. Peer connectedness amongst youth has decreased. Non-binary youth are especially vulnerable, with elevated incidences of suicidal behaviour.

While it seems that agencies are having to contend with growing populations and larger caseloads of more complicated cases, they report that funding is not increasing on par with need. Referrals to services are increasing and there are lengthy waitlists for many services. There is an increase for early years services including speech therapy, breastfeeding support and EarlyONs. Staff shortages are also a major concern, especially around early childhood education.

Concerns regarding the ability of children to smoothly transition to school due to COVID-19 related delays to their opportunities for social development, are prevalent. Lengthy child care waitlists have meant an increase in parents delaying their return to work.

While these conditions may seem dire, institutions and agencies have changed their focus to respond to the evolving needs of children, youth and families. There is a greater awareness of mental health and the need for literacy in this area. While COVID-19 shone a light on the inequities that have always existed between various groups, service providers have intensified their efforts in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion. This is the context in which planning began for the GGG Strategic Plan 2024-2026.

GGG Strategic Priorities

The Growing Great Generations (GGG) planning table has identified five strategic priorities that serve as objectives for working collaboratively to improve the system of services and supports, while enhancing the overall health and well-being of all children and youth in the Wellington service delivery area.

GGG's Strategic Priorities are as follows:

- 1. Relationships and Community Connections**
Build trust-based partnerships among organizations and service providers to create a cohesive support network for children and youth. Prioritize information sharing and direct connections to address community needs effectively.
- 2. Evidence Informed Service Planning and Decision Making**
Establish and leverage a collective data system to capture trends, guide service planning, and measure progress. Use data-driven insights to inform collective action and strategic responses to community needs.
- 3. Coordinated Service Planning and Response**
Facilitate proactive service planning by addressing gaps through collaboration and resource coordination. Align resources with the evolving needs of children and youth to ensure services are integrated and responsive.
- 4. Build Protective Factors and Well-Being**
Promote strategies that enhance the resilience, health and well-being of children and youth. Prioritize preventive approaches and protective factors in all initiatives.
- 5. Coordinated Community Engagement**
Involve children, youth, families, and community members in planning, shaping, and evaluating services. Ensure diverse voices and insights drive decision-making for inclusive, and effective service delivery.

GGG Strategic Plan 2024-2026

Considering the unique community context and GGG's strategic priorities, the GGG Planning Table has developed the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan. This plan outlines GGG's specific role in positively impacting the system of services for children and youth in the Wellington service delivery area through 13 key actions and 37 supporting activities over the next three years.

GROWING GREAT GENERATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES 2024-2026

Relationship and Community Connections	
Action	Activities
1 Review and build a strong membership that is reflective of the City of Guelph and Wellington County.	1.1 Complete an inventory of members. Examine the services they offer and identify which agencies are missing. 1.2 Survey the membership regarding their participation in GGG. 1.3 Diversify membership by inviting missing and identified agencies/individuals e.g. immigrant services, health/primary care, police, businesses, youth, faith groups, neighbourhood groups and equity deserving groups. 1.4 Encourage decision maker representation at GGG.
2 Provide clarity of the role of the GGG membership	2.1 Clearly identify other aligning children/youth and transitional youth groups/councils/tables and determine how to ensure linkage/coordination. 2.2 Consideration of different ways to engage members beyond meetings and homework. 2.3 Connect to other provincial early years and youth planning tables (e.g. Waterloo). 2.4 Create an onboarding package.
3 Engage service partners or community connectors who can have a service linkage, navigation, and referral role.	3.1 Identify partners who can support the navigation of services (e.g. Primary care and immigrant services). 3.2 Employ or assign navigators within each organization to connect community members, especially youth, with services and programmes. 3.3 Connect navigators – peer group navigator committee (professionals in similar roles e.g. Youth). 3.4 Develop a ‘no wrong door’ model and symbol (e.g. Similar to the rainbow flag.). 3.5 Create an intentional plan to provide information, resources and training for professionals and the community on navigating services, prioritizing frontline staff.
4 Provide opportunities for networking and informal connections among professionals, including topic-specific discussions of interest.	4.1 Hold open GGG meetings with expanded attendance on high priority topics that include networking, resource coordination and planning time. 4.2 Form a working group to generate ideas and to develop an annual plan for ensuring opportunities are scheduled and available at least once a year (e.g. lunch and learn activities, operational tours).
5 Collect, maintain, and update information about community services, supports, and programmes for children and youth, and disseminate this information to stakeholders.	5.1 Identify stakeholders and target audience for information (e.g. service providers, families, primary care). 5.2 Effectively utilize GGG website and ensure links to and from individual member websites are up-to-date and easy to navigate to. 5.3 Highlight and prioritize dissemination of information about centralized access points (SmartStart Hubs, Here4Kids, Here24/7, AIR, 211). 5.4 Develop and share comprehensive resource in formats (e.g. PDF with active links) that best meet the needs of the target audience (e.g. immigrant services, emergency departments).
6 Prioritize an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens in the planning tables’ work, discussions, and sharing of resources	6.1 Embed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion principles into the GGG mission, vision and strategy. 6.2 Share and promote inclusive practices, diversity, and cultural competence opportunities for professionals. 6.3 Celebrate and share an innovative practice that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.

Informed Service Planning and Decision Making	
Action	Activities
7 Identify indicators of impact to guide direction, report on trends and measure community progress.	7.1 Revisit, review and confirm how WDG Coalition Report Card metrics may inform indicators. 7.2 Assemble the data that each agency/organization collects that informs indicators and identify opportunities for collaboration on data collection. 7.3 Identify, share successes and raise awareness of GGG collective impact.
Coordinated Service Planning and Response	
Action	Activities
8 Develop standing agenda items for GGG meetings that ensure ongoing information/resource sharing and promote collaboration.	8.1 Focus areas include presentations and targeted updates from service providers, including agencies outside GGG, opportunities to collaborate on funding and problem-solving, and aligning training opportunities like plain language and system navigation.
9 Hold a forum with educators, administrators, service providers, families, and youth on a topic of the membership's selection.	9.1 Identified focus of forum; symposium or conference day for Wellington-Guelph birth to six professionals (opportunity for networking and connection as well as professional development). 9.2 Identified focus of forum; youth-led community resilience summit focused on children and youth promoting positive outcomes, resilience and protective factors. 9.3 Collaborate with existing forums.
Building Protective Factors and Well-Being	
Action	Activities
10 Encourage, promote and facilitate the implementation of resiliency training for staff among service providers	10.1 Create an inventory of which training courses are currently available. 10.2 Create a training information page to store all possible learning opportunities. 10.3 Consider a community/family-based resiliency training 10.4 Reinvigorate/reframe the 'why' of Community Resilience Champions.
11 Review, update and maintain the GGG Mental Health pathways resource.	11.1 Increase access to the mental health pathways resource by updating format
12 Make transition to school resources available to community.	12.1 Develop an easy-to-access, centralized database/webpage including agencies, organizations and service providers. Provide information in other formats such as hard copy, culturally specific etc. 12.2 Continue to offer a transition to school events for professionals.
Coordinated Community Engagement	
Action	Activities
13 Explore and seek opportunities for collaboration on community engagement	13.1 Standing agenda item for meetings.