

Erin Mills Youth Centre 2020 Vision

Introductory Comments

Welcome to the Erin Mills Youth Centre (EMYC) 2016-20 Strategic Plan. This new, long-term plan establishes EMYC's vision for what is possible going forward. We are immensely proud of our organization and the many donors, volunteers, community partners and stakeholders that make EMYC great. As we look to the future we are confident that EMYC will continue to make a meaningful difference to the youth and communities we serve.

In setting our new strategic plan EMYC reached out to many stakeholders. During our planning we reflected deeply on the emerging environment and the challenges that community-based organizations are facing to keep up with shifting client needs, expectations and funding. Our reflections and conversations have significantly influenced the directions and priorities we have outlined in our new plan. We would like to thank all of our volunteers, funders, partners and Board of Directors for helping us to set an exciting and focused course for the coming years.

We look forward to working with each of you as we fulfill the promises outlined in our plan. The following pages summarize the high-level outcomes of our planning discussions and set the tone and direction for through 2020. It is natural for things to change and there is a great deal that will most certainly change as we embrace our new priorities. And, while we are committed to this plan, we realize that we must always remain flexible and nimble to adapt to shifts that we could not possibly anticipate as part of this planning. In fact, becoming a more flexible and nimble organization will be a key ingredient in bringing this plan to life!

A Bit about Erin Mills Youth Centre

EMYC started out as an outreach program of Erin Mills United Church in the mid-90s. It was incorporated as an independent non-profit agency in 2010 with registered charity status. In its first five years as an independent agency, EMYC has already been through significant organizational change including three different Executive Directors, transitions in the relationship with Erin Mills United Church and significant change in the composition of the Board of Directors, particularly over the past year. The organization serves one of the Region of Peel's at risk socio-economic neighbourhoods that have been plagued with a number of significant challenges for children, youth and their families. At present EMYC targets the Ridgeway, South Common, and Fowler/Roche Court communities in the west end of Mississauga, with an estimated population of about 44,000 people, based on 2011 data from Region of Peel.

There are a couple of pockets within the local area at both ends of the income spectrum – two census tracts are above the average population living in low income (LIM-AT) for Mississauga, four below average, and the other three census tracts are in the 12-14% range. The median household incomes show a similar trend.

Census Tract	Prevalence LIM-AT (%)	Median Household Income After Tax (\$)
0515.01	6.1	77,925
0515.02	10	61,032
0516.08	20.5	52,003
0516.09	8.6	74,210
0516.17	16.8	58,608
0516.18	13.7	78,326
0516.24	12.1	91,926
0516.25	12.9	85,425
0516.26	10.4	78,244
Peel	12.6	68,251
Mississauga	13.6	66,464

According to Kevin Farrugia, Junior Planner/GIS Analyst with the Regional Municipality of Peel, "Part of the large difference between areas is possibly caused by the public housing and other types of affordable housing that are concentrated in a couple of areas." These types of locations represent what has been identified as "pockets of poverty." What may appear to be a sea of prosperity is home to small islands of poverty where children, youth and their families often experience isolation as they strive against low wage jobs, under-employment and unemployment. Within the pockets served by EMYC, one-in-four people live under the poverty line and four-in-ten households are single parent, many of whom have escaped abusive situations and are trying to re-establish a home.

As documented in the 2014 Registered Charity Information Return, EMYC's goals included: "education of youth on a variety of issues; promotion of inclusion, tolerance and empowerment and healthy lifestyles; development of strategies to reduce the effects of poverty." Numerous programs have been offered over the years by EMYC in order to address these goals including a daily breakfast and lunch program, afterschool programming, youth recreational and leadership programs, and grass-roots community development initiatives. Part of our strategic review has included revisiting our goals and programming to ensure that we are tracking with the needs of the community.

Our stakeholders (including youth, community members, partner organizations and funders) had much to say about the direction and priorities of EMYC. There is a great deal of enthusiasm regarding the role EMYC has played in developing recreational, leadership and agency-based job opportunities for youth, especially in the last two years. In particular, stakeholders point to EMYC's collaborative role with the City in obtaining funding and coordinating community consultations for the new multisport court being built in the summer of 2016. These activities resonate as an example of how EMYC's commitment and increasing capacity to collaborate with community partners, creating opportunities for youth to flourish. Ongoing programming like the breakfast club and afterschool programs along with the leadership program, EMYC's practice of hiring of local youth, and support of community-driven activities have helped to develop the credibility of our staff. Brand recognition, however, needs to be developed. Stakeholders also point to the need for enhancing EMYC's programming through more evidence-based approaches and a solid logic model and outcome measurement framework.

EMYC currently operates with a full-time staff of 2 and a part time staff of 9. In 2014, EMYC served 512 youth between the ages of 9 and 25, an increase of 18% compared to the prior year. Demographic data show that half of the people served self-identify as Black with the next highest proportion self-identifying as South Asian background at 20%.

For more information about EMYC, please visit us at: www.erinmillsyouthcentre.com

Our Emerging Ecology

As we set about to determine our priorities for the future it is important to appreciate our ever evolving environment. While many of these patterns and trends are beyond our control, we must pay close attention to their potential impact, both positive and negative, on EMYC and on our community. Some of the most significant global and sector patterns we identified include:

- A growing income inequality is putting stress on social cohesion and leading to greater marginalization
- Canadian demographic shifts evidence a growing aging population and multicultural landscape
- Social media is increasingly influencing how people—especially youth—get information and connect
- Government investment in the nonprofit sector has been declining or has become stagnant
- An increasing expectations of funders to see non-profits prioritize collective impact is encouraging collaboration, partnering through networks and the sharing of resources including staff, administration, and space.
- Stakeholders, especially funders, are increasingly expecting evidence-based programming and reporting on impact and outcome
- Volunteerism is changing as people and businesses look for ways to meaningfully engage people in need
- Non-profit governance requires increasing rigour to ensure the integrity of agency processes and practices

With so much change and some increasing uncertainty as we move forward into the future, it is clear that EMYC's Board of Directors, Staff and volunteers, must:

- Continue to nurture relationships of trust, accountability and mutual respect within the community, with local schools, with other agencies, and with funders
- Stay connected with funders and other key stakeholders, and ensure we understand their priorities and expectations
- Consider how best to deliver evidence-based programming, working closely with funders, regional government and the local academic community for guidance and support
- Continue to look for ways to partner with agencies that serve similar needs and those that are serving the same target audience; understand and be able to respond to growing support for "Collective Impact" strategies
- Focus time and efforts to deliver effectively on key priorities and avoid mission creep
- Explore funding opportunities that best align with key priorities

- Ensure that board members understand and deliver on their obligations as board members
- Ensure board recruitment strategy is in place and identifies the types of skills needed for the agency to thrive
- Ensure that website is kept up to date with information that is meaningful and relevant to funders, clients and other key stakeholders.
- Use social media intelligently to reach key stakeholders (we don't need to be on all types of social media but we need to know what our stakeholders rely on and be there)

Charting Our Path Forward

While there are numerous ways to shape and implement a strategic plan, one of the widely recognized models that has emerged in the last 20 years is that of the “balanced scorecard.” First introduced in the mid-90s, the balanced scorecard is an approach to strategic planning and management that seeks to bring together key features that a business needs to address in order to be successful. It provides an organization with a map around which the agency can shape its activities, translating its vision and strategy into action (see www.balancedscorecard.org). The scorecard brings together the following five elements: clients (the people we serve), people (including staff, volunteers and our board), stakeholders, internal systems and finances.

In the following pages we will articulate our core commitments (our vision and mission), then identify strategic priorities and outcomes for each of the five areas of our balanced scorecard. Each priority also sets a clear direction for operational leadership to begin aligning the resources and operational activities required to deliver on these promises.

Our Core Commitments

As part of developing our Strategic Plan, we reviewed our mission statement and set out to establish a clear vision for EMYC's future. Through our discussions we determined that there was room to improve the words we choose to describe what EMYC really is, why it exists and what we are striving to achieve over the long term. As a result of these discussions we have refreshed our mission statement and established a new, compelling vision statement. These new core commitments or "promises", together with our well established values, will guide us in the work we do every day in striving to achieve our goals. These statements will also enliven us to contribute in a meaningful way, with purpose and focus and will act as our ultimate measure of success.

EMYC believes in youth. Given the right supports and opportunities, we believe that all youth can overcome the barriers they face to become active, engaged and productive citizens. We affirm the growing diversity of Canada as a key strength in each community. As outlined in the Ontario Youth Action Plan, we are committed to an positive, asset-based view of youth with targeted support for those who need it. Research has shown that youth engagement with the most positive, long-lasting impact are characterized by two elements: (1) youth are a central part of planning, shaping and delivering programs—not just as volunteers, but also as paid staff; (2) programs are designed to promote adult-youth partnerships that involves mentoring and affirms the capacity and contributions of youth. These two principles are rooted in a community development framework where an agency's role is to empower and equip the community to develop its assets and find solutions to the issues that affect them. Youth thrive when provided with meaningful engagement and leadership opportunities. Solutions built from this framework have a deeper and more lasting impact on communities. At EMYC we have identified this strategy as "youth driven." These core values stand behind our refocused mission and vision and inform each of our priorities and outcomes.

Erin Mills Youth Centre's Mission

A Mission Statement seeks to describe the organization's main reason for being in clear, concise and simple terms: EMYC's core purpose; what EMYC does every day that leads it towards achieving its vision of the future.

Erin Mills Youth Centre supports and empowers youth to advocate for themselves and their community in order to create a brighter future.

Erin Mills Youth Centre's Vision

A vision statement seeks to describe the ideal, aspirational, long-term outcome that can be achieved by living out EMYC's mission, every day. Like the mission statement, it should be clear, concise and simple.

Youth are achieving their goals and reaching their full potential equipped with the necessary skills, supports and perspectives to thrive.

The following priorities and outcomes express our commitment making this mission and vision a reality.

The EMYC Balanced Score Card

1. EMYC Client (Youth) Priorities & Outcomes

As our mission and our corporate name states, EMYC exists to support and empower youth to advocate for themselves and their community in order to create a brighter future. Through our planning discussions we were reminded of the importance of delivering support that improves each young person's ability to imagine, seek out and create for themselves a full and rewarding life.

Our **priorities** for the foreseeable future include:

1. Provide a safe space and opportunities for youth in the community to interact with peers and adults in positive ways, build healthy relationships, improve interpersonal skills, participate in organized as well as unstructured recreation opportunities, access resources;
2. Connect youth to resources that help them address issues they may be experiencing – mental health, physical health, addictions, financial and legal assistance;
3. Provide opportunities that build youth leadership and other job readiness skills;
4. Provide opportunities for youth to contribute to decision making and to have their voices included in the community;
5. Explore the role of EMYC in helping youth to secure employment; and
6. Explore how to provide improved mentorship.

By focusing on these priorities EMYC intends to achieve the following **outcomes**:

1. Youth have a voice in EMYC & the community:
 - a. Designated spaces for youth on committees at EMYC;
 - b. Number of youth leading programs, especially for younger ages;
 - c. Number of youth helping to design programs; and
 - d. Youth advocating in local government and institutions;
2. Youth have greater access to safe spaces that provide quality opportunities for play and recreation;
3. Youth know about and easily navigate resources in their community;
4. Increased job opportunities for youth;
5. Youth engaged in EMYC report improvements in own well-being and confidence;
6. The diversity of youth interacting through EMYC programs reflects the diversity within the local community; and
7. Growing participation in programs.

2. EMYC People Priorities

EMYC could not possibly accomplish its work without the dedication of a talented team of people including our staff and volunteers. Their tireless efforts and passion are a testament to the importance of our work for the community. Through our planning discussions we were reminded of the pride people have in their work and how they strive to provide the highest levels of service possible to meet the ever increasing and diverse needs of the youth in our community.

Our **staff and volunteers priorities** for the foreseeable future include:

1. Create and implement a staff development plan;
2. Provide staff with appropriate opportunities to have their voices heard:
 - a. Enable staff to help guide and shape agency; and
 - b. Integrate staff input into decision making processes;
3. Demonstrate appropriate appreciation and recognition;
4. Develop agency capacity to offer more secure full-time jobs with benefits;
5. Increase our fundraising resources – at least part-time.

By focusing on these priorities EMYC intends to achieve the following **outcomes**:

1. Improved staff morale including reduced stress and burnout, and increased staff productivity;
2. Improved organizational climate, engagement, job satisfaction;
3. Improved staff development; and
4. Decreased staff turnover.

In order to enact our mission and achieve our vision, priorities for the Board of Directors must also be articulated, focusing especially on its role to ensure the promises laid out in this strategic plan are accomplished.

Our **Board of Directors priorities** for the foreseeable future include:

1. Ensure Board members are aware of—and meeting—their obligations including attendance, preparation, participation;
2. Develop a Board recruitment strategy that addresses:
 - a. Composition: ensuring we have the right balance of skills and diversity; and
 - b. Succession management: developing people for the board of directors;
3. Continue Board structure evolution (sub, ad hoc committees);
4. Ensure the diversity of the board is reflective of community served;
5. Explore ways to integrate youth into the leadership structures of the agency;
6. Ensure Board policies and procedures are up-to-date; and
7. Demonstrate appropriate appreciation and recognition.

By focusing on these priorities EMYC hopes to achieve the following **outcomes**:

1. Strong, committed and skilled board directors; and
2. Youth are actively involved in shaping the direction of EMYC.

5. EMYC Stakeholder Priorities

EMYC recognizes that in addition to our clients who are key stakeholders and for whom priorities were identified in item one above, other stakeholders must be considered, including funders and partners that support and collaborate with EMYC to do the work it does in the community.

Our **priorities** for the foreseeable future include:

1. Link our strategy to Ontario Youth Action Plan (OYAP):
 - a. Map out a logic model for all programs demonstrating their contribution to OYAP priority outcomes; and
 - b. Develop an outcome measurement framework that demonstrates how the activities and programs of EMYC contribute to OYAP priority outcomes;
2. Develop our capacity to:
 - a. Deliver an evidence-based and evidence-informed approach; and
 - b. Collect meaningful data, measure impact and communicate impact;
3. Use our approved strategic plan as an opportunity to engage key stakeholders;
4. Increase collaboration with other agencies to better align programs and services offered in the community to OYAP framework;
5. Identify who we need to bring to the table to deliver a more aligned and integrated approach to youth development in the community:
 - a. Joint ventures / build relationships;
 - b. Build relationships and support from companies located in the area, especially along Ridgeway and Laird; and
 - c. Improve our website and social media presence; and
6. Increase our capacity to support community-defined priorities.

By focusing on these priorities EMYC intends to achieve the following **outcomes**:

1. EMYC collaborates effectively with community members and other organizations serving in the neighbourhood to align program and service offerings, reduce gaps and overlaps to better deliver against Ontario Youth Action Plan;
2. Funders see that EMYC is better aligned with OYAP; and
3. EMYC receives increased funding as a result of clearer alignment with OYAP.

4. EMYC Internal Systems Priorities

Balancing resource efficiency, effectiveness, quality service, and funder accountability is a delicate act. EMYC is benefiting from strong leadership and careful stewardship of financial resources. Through our planning discussions we were reminded of the importance of making the best use of every single dollar; ensuring technology is used to optimize our work; that processes are streamlined and that work efforts are focused on only the most important priorities.

Our **priorities** for the foreseeable future include:

1. Standardize our policies and procedures for programming;
2. Strengthen our business process and documentation practices;
3. Improve our reporting / information sharing system:
 - a. Focus on information that is most critical to making decisions; and
 - b. Configure IT to better support integrated information and document management including data and information protection;
4. Streamline and standardize our funding application process;
5. Improve volunteer coordination – how we recruit, train, recognize, retain; and
6. Develop succession planning for key staff positions and agency practices to ensure business continuity in the event of a transition.

By focusing on these priorities EMYC intends to achieve the following **outcomes**:

1. Improved ability to learn from data and fine-tune approaches;
2. Improved financial stability; and
3. Better ability to adapt to staffing changes.

5. Our Financial Priorities

Our funders expect the highest level of financial stewardship from EMYC. Through our planning consultations we were reminded of the critical importance of assuring the long-term financial viability of our organization and the unwavering trust of our stakeholders.

Our **priorities** for the foreseeable future include:

1. Strategic pursuit of grants aligned with our priorities;
2. Strengthen our financial / accounting process and reporting practices:
 - a. Identify and implement more effective internal financial reporting practices;
 - b. Strengthen the integration of program budget with financial allocations budget;
 - c. Review and enhance the budgeting process; and
 - d. Review and enhance financial policies;
3. Develop our fundraising capacity including the development and implementation of a fundraising strategy;
4. Explore automated deposit processes (salary cheques and other cheques); and
5. Develop financial sustainability:
 - a. Balanced budget;
 - b. Create a financial surplus; and
 - c. Secure stable funding stream.

By focusing on these priorities EMYC intends to achieve the following **outcomes**:

1. Balanced budgets;
2. Sustainable funding; and
3. Board and ED have a clear understanding of the financial position of EMYC each time they review financial reports.

Operational Plan and Priorities

EMYC's new strategic plan gives a clear multi-year direction to our operational team and the many volunteers that support our day-to-day initiatives. Our operational plan will answer in greater detail "how" we will accomplish our longer-term aspirations. Together, our strategic and operational plans will create greater alignment and enable us to budget resources in a sustainable manner.

Moving forward the staff of EMYC have been commissioned, under the leadership of our executive director, to identify goals and objectives for each of the next three years that will contribute to the achievement of our client priorities and outcomes. The executive director will work with the board and its committees to define similar goals for each of the other areas. The board will review progress toward our priorities and outcomes on a regular basis and report back at our Annual General Meeting.

Some Closing Thoughts

It's been said that failure does not occur in strategy but in execution. To this extent we depend heavily on our volunteers and dedicated staff to achieve our priorities. Guided now by a revitalized mission, a clear vision for what is possible and strong track record of success, the EMYC board and staff team are committed to achieving each and every one of the important goals set forth in this strategic plan.

Thanks to everyone who took time to provide input and feedback to guide and inform our new plan. Your commitment and thoughtfulness has helped to ensure a sound long-term plan for EMYC.

Respectfully,

Mohammed Hashim, EMYC Board Chair
March, 2016