



TORONTO
HIV/AIDS
NETWORK

Strategic Plan

April 1st 2016 to
March 31st 2020

1. Executive Summary

The Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) facilitates community planning, coordination and collaboration among Toronto-based HIV services, and aims to improve access to those services for people living with, affected by, and at increased risk for HIV. THN emerged out of a planning process in 2007-08 and was guided by an initial report with priority recommendations and accountability structures. Now, in our 2nd decade, a number of sectoral shifts require us to reposition ourselves: a proposed new *Ontario HIV/AIDS Strategy to 2025*; a growing emphasis on formalizing collaborations, and new networking challenges. At the same time, we are in a flat funding environment, and the demand for our services is outstripping our resources. We must make difficult choices.

While the AIDS Bureau of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), our sole funder, has named specific projects that it expects THN to engage in over the next few years, it has also supported THN in making the hard choices that come with focusing on quality, so that we are not spreading ourselves too thin.

After a compressed environmental scanning process, our strategic planning committee convened a day-long retreat of THN's Steering Committee in January 2016, and we identified the following three key strategic issues:

1. THN's limited resources, from staff to volunteers to financial;
2. How to determine which major long-term collaboration projects to take on so that it doesn't stretch itself too thin.
3. How to best improve on and expand our communications and information sharing role.

After a discussion of our strategic issues in light of our strengths, challenges and external opportunities and threats, we took on the following goals and objectives.

By end of March 2020:

- **Goal #1: THN will have taken a more strategic leadership role in facilitating member organizations/ programs to collaborate and share information for more consistent and effective programs and services;**
 - Objective #1:** THN will identify and implement one project at a time that our membership identifies as its priority to improve the engagement, health, longevity and quality of life of priority populations living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.
 - Objective #2:** THN will improve inter-agency and cross-sectoral engagement through activities that simplify the exchange and dissemination of relevant information.
- **Goal #2: THN will have improved its organizational capacity to address and prioritize needs, to manage workload and to create meaningful engagement opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs).**
 - Objective #1:** THN will develop and implement a framework for assessing and prioritizing current and new projects and initiatives.
 - Objective #2:** THN will increase PHA engagement and will have met annual targets for PHA volunteer and mentorship opportunities in the office, in coordination activities, in deputations; and for PHA participation on the Steering Committee and in working groups.

These goals and objectives will inform our next four annual workplans. The strategic plan and its workplans will be tracked, monitored and evaluated by our Steering Committee, which will annually report on progress to our membership. THN will continue to act on and update our membership on our other existing priorities.

THN looks forward to the important next phase of our support of Toronto HIV/AIDS services sector.

Keith Hambly & Murray Jose-Boerbridge
Co-Chairs

2. Background and Context

The Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) facilitates community planning, coordination and collaboration among Toronto-based HIV services, and aims to improve access to those services for people living with and affected by HIV. THN emerged out of the Toronto HIV/AIDS Community Planning Initiative (TCPI), a regional consultative process conducted from 2005 to 2007. That process, initiated and sponsored by the provincial AIDS Bureau of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), received guidance from the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS (OACHA).

In the recommendations that emerged, it was recognized that Toronto was unique in Ontario. Being a municipality with a multitude of health, housing, social service and HIV-specific services, and the city with the most people living with HIV/AIDS as well as the most new HIV diagnoses in the province, Toronto required a broad-based HIV/AIDS planning and coordination function. This function—with which THN has been entrusted—was meant to address key inefficiencies in service delivery, but more importantly, to eliminate barriers to access and to seamless service navigation faced by people living with and affected by HIV.

Since its inception, THN's activities have been guided by the initial TCPI Report, and have been instrumental in supporting many community planning projects, ongoing working groups, and information-sharing processes and projects. In that time, there has been a growing emphasis, supported by both community and funders, on formalizing collaborations and solving key service integration challenges.

At the same time, THN has a sole funder (the AIDS Bureau), is living in a flat funding environment, and we have been a product of our own success: the demand for our services is outstripping our resources. We must make difficult choices.

Last year, the AIDS Bureau began rolling out the proposed *Ontario HIV/AIDS Strategy to 2025* (“the Strategy”), which names priority populations and has explicit goals and activities. THN's work falls mostly in Goal 1 of the Strategy, “Improve health and well-being of populations most affected by HIV”; Goal 4: Improve the health, longevity and quality of life for people living with HIV; and in Goal 5 of the Strategy: “Ensure the quality, consistency and effectiveness of all provincially funded HIV programs and services.”

At the same time, MOHLTC has become more contractually explicit with all of its funded agencies and programs regarding its expected deliverables—deliverables that must all align with and support the Strategy. The AIDS Bureau has named specific projects that it expects THN to engage in over the next few years—such as the Toronto Volunteer HIV Core Training Program; supporting partnerships amongst AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) and HIV clinics and between ASOs and Toronto Public Health; and supporting Toronto's Opening Doors forum. Nonetheless, the AIDS Bureau has also supported THN in focusing on quality, so that we are not spreading ourselves too thin.

This funder's expectations have given some parameters to our strategic planning process—but have also facilitated our making those hard choices. Moreover, we support the goals of the provincial strategy wholeheartedly.

3. Strategic Planning Process

It has been nine years since the original planning process and TCPI Report that led to THN's creation. The epidemic has changed, and so has Toronto. Eager to develop a strategic plan that will help us to focus and deepen the services that we provide, we engaged the support of the Ontario Organizational Development Program and John Miller Consulting. A strategic planning committee guided our process. This committee comprised THN Steering Committee members from the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Shannon Ryan), Fife House (Keith Hambly), and the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation (Murray Jose-Boerbridge), and THN part-time staff (Joan Anderson, Dave Skitch & Andrew Kinsman).

An environmental scan included a survey to members, a staff focus group, a review of key documents, and interviews with key informants that included representatives of our funder and of the City of Toronto.

The key documents surveyed included:

- The Toronto HIV/AIDS Community Planning Initiative (TCPI) Report from 2007;
- The proposed *Ontario HIV/AIDS Strategy to 2025*;
- The strategic plan of the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network – 2015-2018;
- Toronto Central LHIN – Housing and Its Impact on Health Outcomes for Populations with (and at risk of) Complex Care Needs (2015);
- The Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy (2015);
- The City of Toronto's "10 year Housing Opportunities for Toronto: Progress Report 2014".

The results of the environmental scan were presented to a retreat of the THN Steering Committee on January 14th 2016, at which we reviewed our Mission Statement, conducted an analysis of our strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats, identified strategic issues, and developed draft goals and objectives. We then sent these draft goals and objectives to our members and key stakeholders to elicit any questions or concerns, and further refined and confirmed them at a retreat on May 4th 2016. Members ratified the Strategic Plan when it was presented at a meeting in early June.

4. Environmental Scan Key Results

The environmental scan revealed that our stakeholders value overall THN's work in facilitating collaboration, sharing and disseminating information and our role in bringing forward the issues facing our members and service users and affected populations.

Our stakeholders named the following as emerging or ongoing areas of concern for people living with HIV in Toronto:

- The desire to see more inter-agency collaboration to better meet the needs of service users;
- The varied challenges posed by aging and accelerated aging among people living with HIV; and
- An interest in the availability and efficacy of Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP).

Specific expectations of the AIDS Bureau in terms of our projects include:

- Alignment with the provincial strategy, while prioritizing its key directions and focusing on quality, even if this means being more focused in choosing projects;

- Moving the Volunteer HIV Core Training Project to an ongoing regional program with a signed multi-agency partnership agreement;
- Supporting Toronto agencies to develop protocols/ agreements with HIV clinics in the years 2016-17 & 2017-18; and
- Supporting Toronto agencies to develop protocols/ agreements with Toronto Public health beginning in 2017-18.

In assessing the results of the environmental scan,

- Some of THN’s strengths were identified to be in: supporting partnerships; in its staffing knowledge and skills; in its governance support; in PHA involvement (with some areas for improvement); in its reputation and reliability; and in the stability of its funding.
- Some of THN’s challenges were named as: resource limitations – which occasionally may lead to an inability to respond to the diverse needs or in prioritising requests; and improving GIPA/MEPA in certain areas.
- Some of THN’s future challenges were considered to be: increasing GIPA/MEPA & PHA engagement; strengthening communications and the ability to act as an information hub; the need to sharpen our focus; the desire to see THN take a lead on additional collaborative efforts; and better managing our existing resources.
- Some of THN’s opportunities, some of which were also acknowledged to also be challenges, were identified as: new or increased accountabilities and program measures—including a focus on health outcomes—from sector funders including the AIDS Bureau; the Toronto gay men’s services initiative; and expectations from funders that programs find administrative efficiencies in the delivery of programs.

5. Our Mission

At our retreat on May 4th 2016, THN slightly amended the wording of our Mission Statement, but our core mission remains the same. The amended statement reads:

The Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) facilitates HIV/AIDS planning, collaboration, engagement and innovation to improve access to programs and services for people from diverse communities living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.

THN’s other core statements will be reviewed in line with this plan in the coming year. For the present, we amended the THN Values statement to add the concept of meaningful engagement of PHAs, so that it now reads: “Greater Involvement and engagement of People Living with HIV (GIPA/MEPA Principles)”.

6. THN’s Strategic Issues

The process of developing strategic goals and objectives involved identifying key strategic issues based on an analysis of our strengths, challenges, and of the opportunities and threats that exist at this moment in our history.

The following key strategic issues were identified.

1. **Resources:** THN has limited resources, including staff, volunteers and financial. Funding is static with no increase in the foreseeable future. This challenges THN's abilities to respond to current and emerging issues.
2. **Collaborations:** THN must determine which major long-term collaboration projects to take on. This may include expanding and supporting collaborations to include different sectors outside of HIV. The work may be guided by convening stakeholders and the identification of projects that respond to emerging needs of populations most vulnerable to HIV in Toronto.
3. **Communications:** Input from members tells us that there is a desire for THN to increase its communications role among member organisations, broader sector allies and others. Specifically, we could enhance the inter-agency sharing of information on programs and services/ events/ activities in Toronto.

7. THN's Goals & Objectives to 2020

The following chart outlines THN's strategic goals and objectives for our plan to March 31st 2020:

Goals	Objectives
<p>Goal #1: THN will have taken a more strategic leadership role in facilitating member organizations/ programs to collaborate and share information for more consistent and effective programs and services.</p>	<p>Objective #1: THN will identify and implement one project at a time that our membership identifies as its priority to improve the engagement, health, longevity and quality of life of priority populations living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.</p> <p>Objective #2: THN will improve inter-agency and cross-sectoral engagement through activities that simplify the exchange and dissemination of relevant information.</p>
<p>Goal #2: THN will have improved its organizational capacity to address and prioritize needs, to manage workload and to create meaningful PHA engagement opportunities.</p>	<p>Objective #1: THN will develop and implement a framework for assessing and prioritizing current and new projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Objective #2: THN will increase PHA engagement and will have met annual targets for PHA volunteer and mentorship opportunities in the office, in coordination activities, in deputations; and for PHA participation on the Steering Committee and in working groups.</p>

8. Tracking Progress and Reporting to Membership

THN's Steering Committee will be incorporating into its meeting structure a regular tracking of progress of the strategic plan. The Steering Committee will report on our progress related to governance-related tasks, and THN's Project Manager will report on the status of operational tasks. Each year of this plan, the Steering Committee and staff will conduct work-planning to ensure that progress continues to be made towards achieving our Goals and Objectives.

In addition, THN's Steering Committee will report annually to our membership.

9. Contact:

We look forward to hearing and learning from our stakeholders. If you are interested in learning more about the thinking and analysis that went into this strategic plan, the progress we have made, or about any of THN's work, please contact:

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