

2016 - 2018 Strategic Plan

SOCIAL PLANNING TORONTO



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Background

Social Planning Toronto (SPT) initiated a strategic planning process in late 2015. The most recent strategic plan for the agency was approved in October 2011 and covered the 2011 - 2015 period. It identified two core and three enabling directions for the organization:

Core Directions:

- To promote a livable, affordable, and equitable city for all.
- To be a centre of leadership in social planning, linking research with community action.

Enabling Directions:

- Strengthen our financial capacity and sustainability while maintaining independence.
- Expand our connectedness.
- Strengthen our human resource capacity: staff, students and volunteers.

The Board of Directors also agreed that SPT would focus its work in three key areas in the 2011 - 2015 period:

1. Income security and labour market issues,
2. Education and human development,
3. Community infrastructure, public finance and resource allocation.

These directions both refined and built on the strategic directions approved for the earlier 2008 - 2011 period.

In late 2015, SPT initiated a process to reflect on their past priorities and to explore, with the community, their partners, funders, staff and Board, the role SPT can and should play in the sector for the period from 2016 - 2018.

SPT's review of future directions is well timed. Much has changed since the 2011 - 2015 strategic plan. It has recently experienced a change of leadership at the Board and Executive Director levels. SPT is part of an evolving nonprofit sector. There are ongoing changes in funder directions and priorities including the City of Toronto, United Way of Toronto and York Region, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation that could have a significant impact on SPT. In addition, there has been an increasing emphasis on partnerships and collective impact. There is a changed political environment and potentially new opportunities to advance the messages, work and impact of the SPT. It is important that future strategic directions consider how these and other factors influence and shape SPT's plans for the future.

Process

The strategic planning process was led by the Strategic Planning Committee and the Executive Director. They engaged Caryl Arundel and Associates to support the process.

Strategic planning is a process to enable an organization and its decision makers to answer key questions that will guide the identification of directions and priorities for the future:

What do we do? What business are we in? What impact are we trying to have?
Who do we do it for (or serve)?
How do we do it?

These questions are answered based on the best information that SPT has about the changing environment and its position in the environment. The process was designed to engage stakeholders in reflecting on past SPT work and successes and in thinking about future directions and priorities. The consultation process included:

- *Staff survey and facilitated discussion* - all staff were invited to contribute to an e-survey about past strategic plan performance, current and future issues.
- *Program staff focus group* - program staff took part in a facilitated discussion that explored opportunities and challenges and potential directions for SPT.
- *Interviews with management staff* - the consultant conducted individual interviews with management staff that explored past performance, current issues, and opportunities and challenges for the future.
- *Board survey and facilitated discussion* - Board members contributed to an e-survey about past strategic plan performance, current and future issues. They also participated in a focus group discussion facilitated by the consultant that explored the issues, challenges, opportunities and potential future directions in more detail.
- *Four open community meetings* were organized to get input on key questions about SPT current work and future directions. The sessions, attended by community residents, SPT members, and community agencies, explored a range of issues in facilitated large and small group formats. Meetings, attended by about 60 participants, were held in Scarborough, Etobicoke, York and Toronto.
- *Individual interviews* were conducted with funders, partners, past SPT EDs, and other key stakeholders. Nineteen interviewees provided valuable insight on SPT work and performance, current issues and future opportunities and challenges for SPT.

- *Facilitated focus groups* (two) were held with select SPT member agencies and partners to get their input to the process. Efforts were made to ensure that those invited represented the diversity of the sector in Toronto and included groups who had both close and weaker relationships with SPT. Efforts were made to organize two additional focus groups but it proved too difficult, and the consultant conducted individual interviews with as many of the invitees as possible to get their input to the process.
- *SPT members* - an open invitation was sent to SPT members and posted on the website inviting members and others to contribute to the process by providing their input on a question about the focus for SPT Toronto for the future. About 30 individuals shared their thoughts on future directions for the organization.

The Executive Director and Board of Directors considered the input and changing environment and developed the strategic directions.

What We Heard

An environmental scan is an important tool in strategic planning for a number of reasons:

1. It provides important feedback on the organization and its work from the internal and external stakeholders;
2. It ensures that all participants have access to the same information about the organization and its position in the environment;
3. It contributes to the identification of future opportunities and barriers (challenges).

The input from the various sources was rich and generous. Contributors were thoughtful and reflective of the current and future role and opportunities for SPT. This section presents summary of the key findings and messages from the scanning and consultation process undertaken in December 2015 and January 2016.

There was strong support for SPT from among the community members, agencies, members and stakeholders. They described SPT as playing a unique and valuable role in Toronto, connecting research and community planning, bringing a city-wide as well as social and economic focus and being objective and respected. Stakeholders also talked about the need for SPT to adapt and redefine its role and focus in the complex and changing environment. They wanted a clearer focus and use of resources for system change. They described this as needing to be both opportunistic regarding emerging issues and 'windows' for change as well as intentional in efforts for longer-term system change.

The consultations talked about a refocused role for SPT including:

- A SPT role in connecting issues and supporting understanding of the big picture.
- Significant interest in a new role for SPT to anticipate and bring a future orientation to issues.
- A positive solution-oriented and action-oriented approach to issues.
- Both supporting community voices and bringing voice to issues.
- Interest in collective impact and a SPT role in convening, connecting and supporting community and sector/agency levels efforts.
- A role in research, evaluation and knowledge mobilization.
- Strategic relationships and partnerships with existing and new partners in the social and other sectors.

Those consulted identified the need to develop new internal capacities and align of existing resources to support the system change agenda. They commented on the need for enhanced communications and use of technology.

Other directions for change included a strong message about the need to measure and communicate the impact of SPT efforts. It was acknowledged that it is difficult to attribute impact of change that has involved many other stakeholders over time and that it would take some time to develop meaningful measures.

And finally, many of those consulted offered suggestions for future issues and initiatives for SPT. Appendix 1 includes the What We Heard summary of the consultations and a list of the various ideas and suggestions for future work.

Our Approach to Our Strategic Plan

The consultations identified the need for change beginning with an articulation of ‘how’ we would do our work in the future. Community members, partners and funders spoke about the need for different relationships, supports and connections with SPT, clarity around how SPT would make choices about its work, and enhanced and realigned internal capacity.

The next sections of our Strategic Plan talk about our commitment to collaboration, to system change through work with communities, social agencies and actors and policy and decision makers, and sets out our areas of focus for 2016 to 2018.

A ‘Collaborative’ Model for the Future

The Strategic Plan recognizes that individuals, groups, communities, organizations and decision makers can most effectively contribute to and influence policy, program and decision making processes when they have shared knowledge and information, a shared understanding of what matters to communities and an appreciation of system change opportunities.

Social Planning Toronto is the platform for knowledge and information sharing and engagement to promote the ongoing development of Toronto as an inclusive, equitable and livable city. We will support voices across the city to contribute to policy and influence decision-making.

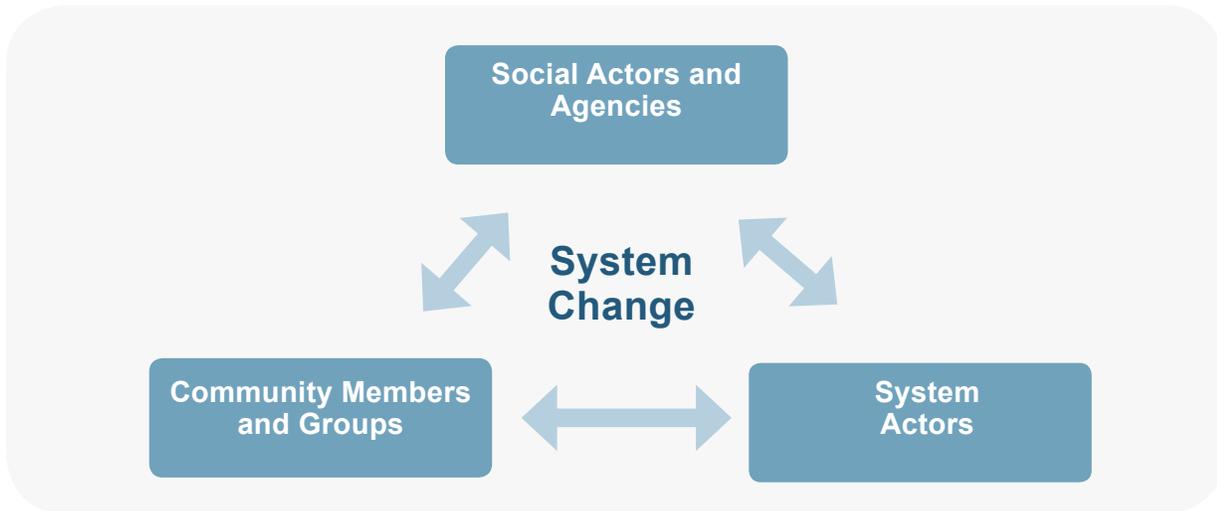
To achieve this we will:

- Be independent and provide a space for others to engage;
- Conduct research to promote understanding and enhance collective knowledge of choices at the community, sector and system levels;
- Be an agent of learning - we build community capacity for innovation and change by learning with and from diverse actors, and effectively sharing knowledge;
- Empower people, communities, agencies and groups to participate in decision-making processes;
- Promote a focus on action and solutions and engage others in concrete future change.

We think of our new focus as one of ‘social arbitrage’ - working with communities and organizations to identify the connections between issues, opportunities, knowledge and information and leveraging those connections for broad social benefit. We will connect different actors and sectors and create additional value from those relationships and networks. We will facilitate the sharing of ideas and concepts between sectors and among communities, social actors, funders and policy makers to open up opportunities to do things differently.

SPT's Role in System Change

In addition to the social arbitrage role described earlier, our role in system change will be informed by the issue and the other actors involved. In some situations, SPT may play an integrative leadership role; in others SPT may play a support and enabling role.



In the community, we will:

- Engage to strengthen community voices and ability to effect change;
- Share tools that support community capacity building;
- Support community leadership development;
- Share knowledge, curate and translate information and research for community use;
- Convene, and where needed coordinate, community members and groups;
- Engage in research with communities to inform and support advocacy for system change;
- Be guided by communities to support front line community development, planning and engagement;
- Engage communities in processes to measure and evaluate impact and change.

We will work within the community sector, including sector organizations, service agencies, issue groups, grass roots groups, activist groups, labour organizations, researchers and SPT members, to:

- Support a strengthened voice for the community sector in policy and decision making;
- Create linkages and ongoing communication that will build an interactive and mutually supportive, two way relationship;

- Share knowledge, curate and translate information and research for agency use and for use in communities;
- Engage and collaborate through networks of networks, partnerships, collective impact initiatives;
- Engage in research within the sector to inform and support advocacy for system change;
- Provide leadership and support existing community leadership when needed;
- Engage with others outside the social sector - connect with and bring social equity and justice perspectives to other sector networks.

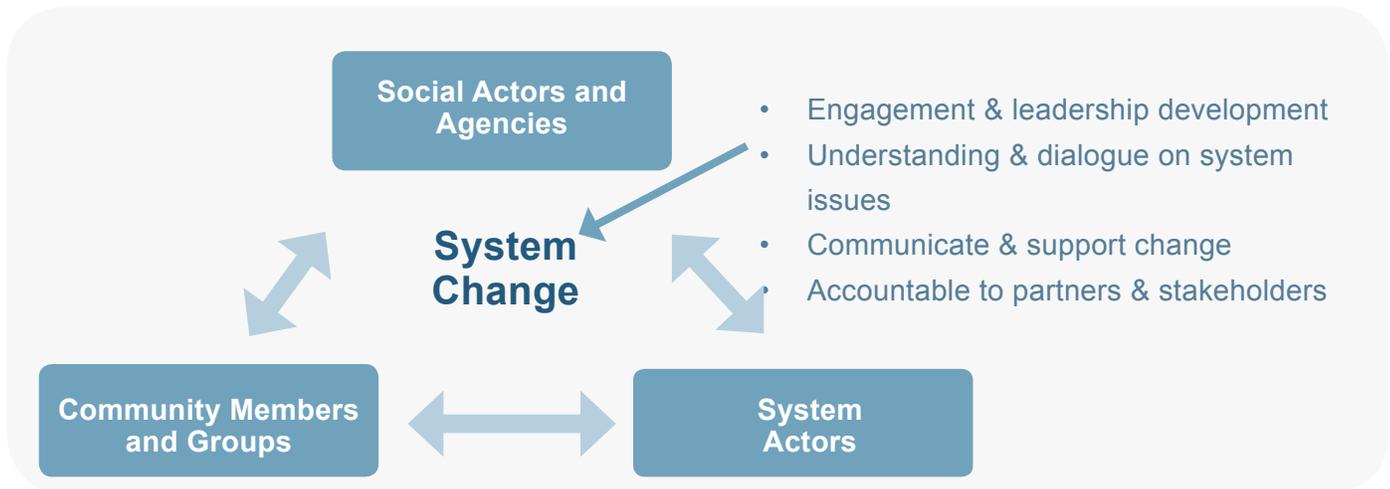
We will work with system actors, including funders, researchers, policy makers and decision makers:

- Develop open platforms to share information, knowledge, research to influence decision making around system change;
- Support community voices as input to policy and decision making;
- Influence policy and decision making processes to include more opportunity for meaningful community engagement;
- Engage in research that informs public policy and decision makers;
- Actively engage in policy conversations bringing community perspectives on system change;
- Identify new and emerging issues and opportunities for attention/action. Bring foresight to the system tables;
- Support system efforts to understand and facilitate impact, good practices, innovation and change.

Four Foundations for System Change

Social Planning Toronto is committed to work with others to influence and impact system change that results in a livable city for all.

SPT is uniquely placed to engage and interact with local communities, social agencies and system actors and to inform, facilitate, support, and enable these three groups to connect and contribute to social change. We will play an important role as integrator and have articulated four foundations that will contribute to our broad vision of a livable, affordable and equitable city for all and clearly position SPT on a path of change and development.



We will promote **engagement and develop leadership** to support a livable city by:

- Working through existing networks and organizations;
- Developing and supporting community leadership and voices as input to policy and program decision making;
- Connecting and convening interests, groups and individuals to promote understanding, strengthen voice and mobilize for change;
- Providing a platform for social sector coordination and voice in Toronto;
- Bringing leadership to issues through research, knowledge, mobilization and advocacy;
- Actively engaging with others, in and across sectors, through collaborations and partnerships and with system actors to promote policy and system change.

We will promote **understanding** and enable a deeper dialogue on larger systemic issues by:

- Applying research, scanning, learning from others, analyzing evidence, data and trends, evaluation of existing programs and policies as well as options for change;
- Using research and community connectedness to identify new and emerging issues and opportunities for attention/action and to bring foresight to system issues;
- Integrating knowledge, information and experience and support learning from other sectors with different lens and voices on issues that move towards shared commitment and action;
- Supporting system efforts to understand and share good practice, innovation and change that leads to real impact.

We will **communicate and support change** by:

- Enhancing communication with communities, social actors and agencies and system actors;
- Developing platforms for engagement with communities and members to access and share information and ideas;

- Enhancing communications and engagement of SPT members;
- Sharing and developing resources and tools to support learning and participation.

And finally, **we will be accountable to the community, our partners and stakeholders** and will:

- Clearly communicate SPT focus and priorities, the connection between our vision and intended impact, and be publicly accountable for our results by measuring and communicating our impact;
- Continue to monitor the dynamic environment and assess our position and role in advancing social justice, equity and inclusion.

SPT has begun a process to articulate its theory of change based on these foundations. This is an iterative process that will be refined over time. The preliminary theory of change is included as Appendix 2.

Focusing our Work

We will engage in a process to identify issues and initiatives that we will work on, that reflect our social arbitrage role, that build on the collaborative model and that contribute to a livable, equitable and inclusive city.

Our decisions on what issues or initiatives to work on will be based on our assessment of:

- The interests and priorities of communities;
- The interests and priorities of our partners, members, and sector and system stakeholders;
- SPT ability to play a meaningful role either in partnership with others or alone;
- The guidance from research findings;
- The 'window' of opportunity for system impact.

We will develop and facilitate a regular process to scan the environment and engage staff, members, partners and community members in helping SPT identify issue priorities for the future. This will give us the opportunity to assess our focus or approach to issues and initiatives in the changing environment and to add new, emerging issues when appropriate.

We have applied the assessment criteria to a range of issues identified in the strategic plan consultations and informed by our ongoing work in communities and with partners. The result, in Appendix 3, is an overview 'what' we will focus on for the next year or so and an indication of the type of role we expect to play in those issues.

Next Steps

SPT needs to work differently and to be focused and intentional in its efforts. While it is acknowledged that change takes time and that SPT capacity and impact will evolve, there is also recognition that there needs to be clear evidence of change in the short term and that SPT needs to realize some early wins.

Next steps must include a refocus and realignment of the organization to support the strategic directions. SPT must also get the building blocks in place to support the engagement of communities and the development of a collective sector voice. This includes the development of open platforms or space for sharing, engagement, development and articulation of voices and supporting the connection between the nonprofit and community networks.

We need to work strategically with members, communities, groups, agencies and funders and both within and across sectors on system issues and initiatives.

2016 - Actionable Priorities - to be completed by December 2016

Our priorities for 2016 are informed by our experience and what we heard in the consultations, and reflect the need to build the internal capacity to deliver on our ambitious agenda and to refocus our work on issues and opportunities that support system change. The key actions needed to support our new focus include:

1. Developing the Capacity for Change

- A. Initiate a process to align the internal organization and develop internal capacity to support the future strategic directions.
 - » Restructure the organization so that it can focus on the priorities yet have capacity to be opportunistic and nimble.
 - » Refocus staff roles:
 - In the community - shift from doing locality focused development work to supporting, engaging, connecting and facilitating others involved in community capacity building.
 - In research - shift to research that is conducted in collaboration with others; that is informed by and connected to community need; and that is solutions and impact oriented.
 - » Develop a strong communications capacity - Develop and implement plan to communicate and engage members and other shareholders in SPT change vision.
 - » Strengthen technological capacity - more extensive and sophisticated systems and use of technology and social media to communicate, share, connect and engage with our communities and partners.

- » Develop the internal systems and processes to support and enable SPT work.
 - B. Find/negotiate/develop the resources to necessary to support this change.
 - a. Review the strategic directions with funders and enlist their support;
 - b. Identify potential sources of new funding;
 - c. Consider opportunities for partnerships that bring skills or experience to SPT;
 - d. Consider opportunities for earned income.
 - C. Develop a plan to engage, support and grow SPT membership annually over the next three years.
2. Continue to develop and refine our expectation of impact as expressed in our working draft theory of change and to develop measures to assess impact and outcome.
 3. Develop and facilitate a process to engage staff, SPT members, agencies, community members, and system actors in helping SPT identify issue priorities for the future years that reflect our social arbitrage role, build on the strategic directions, and contribute to the livable, equitable and inclusive city.
 4. Develop an open platform to engage communities for social action including network development; support for collaboration; development and provision of accessible resources, material and information; leadership development and civic literacy.
 5. Develop a nonprofit platform or space for the development and articulation of a meaningful collective voice for the sector in Toronto.
 6. Based on our preliminary analysis (see Appendix 1), we have identified a short-list of areas of focus for 2016 that we will refine and continue to assess. We will confirm our role and focus by May 2016:

SPT to play key leadership role:

- Poverty reduction
- Recreation/family supports
- Community networks/capacity building
- Partner networks, Sector role

SPT will support partner efforts:

- Decent work/community benefits/ESA
- Housing
- Settlement

SPT to integrate the issues/areas into existing work:

- Childcare
- Equity/anti-racism
- Seniors
- Youth/children
- Transit

SPT will actively monitor issue/ areas for future consideration:

- Education
- Civic literacy
- Policing
- New municipal decision-making/ planning structures
- Health

Priorities for 2017 - 2018

The key actions needed to support the strategic priorities in 2017 - 2018 include:

1. Use theory of change results to inform strategic and priority decisions and to strengthen the connection between SPT action and results.

2. Review and refine areas of focus and SPT roles each year and develop action plan for issues identified in the assessment and review process.

3. Launch a Toronto nonprofit network in early 2017.

4. Continue to align the internal organization and develop capacity to support future strategic directions. Continue to refine internal systems and supports related to communications, technology, and internal administrative and other systems.

5. Produce and communicate findings from an annual review of SPT performance and impact - beginning in December 2017. This accountability report should include analysis based on outcome and impact measures as well as stakeholder perspectives on SPT performance and impact.

6. Grow SPT membership by 10% per year based on a set of clearly articulated member benefits.

Appendix 1

What We Heard

Report from the Social Planning Toronto Strategic Planning Consultations

Introduction

Strategic planning is a process to enable an organization and its decision makers to answer key questions that will guide the identification of directions and priorities for the future:

What do we do? What business are we in? What impact are we trying to have?
 Who do we do it for (or serve)?
 How do we do it?

These questions are answered based on the best information that Social Planning Toronto (SPT) has about the changing environment and its position in the environment. To that end, the strategic planning process included extensive engagement and consultation with stakeholders to reflect on past SPT work and successes and to think about future directions and priorities.

- *Staff survey and facilitated discussion* - all staff were invited to contribute to an e-survey about past strategic plan performance, current and future issues.
- *Program staff focus group* - program staff took part in a facilitated discussion that explored opportunities and challenges and potential directions for SPT.
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- *Individual interviews* were conducted with funders, partners, past SPT EDs, and other key stakeholders. Nineteen interviewees provided valuable insight on SPT work and

performance, current issues and future opportunities and challenges for SPT.

- *Facilitated focus groups* (two) were held with select SPT member agencies and partners to get their input to the process. Efforts were made to ensure that those invited represented the diversity of the sector in Toronto and included groups who had both close and weaker relationships with SPT. Efforts were made to organize two additional focus groups but it proved too difficult, and the consultant conducted individual interviews with as many of the invitees as possible to get their input to the process.
- *SPT members* - an open invitation was sent to SPT members and posted on the website inviting members and others to contribute to the process by providing their input on a question about the focus for SPT Toronto for the future. About 30 individuals shared their thoughts on future directions for the organization.

The input from the various sources was rich and generous. Contributors were thoughtful and reflective of the current and future role and opportunities for SPT. This document is a summary of the key learnings, or messages, from the scanning and consultation process undertaken in December 2015 and January 2016.

Support for Social Planning Toronto

The first key message from the consultations is that there is a significant and broad base of support for the SPT among the community members, agencies, members and stakeholders. They described the SPT as having a unique position that includes:

- A social and economic focus,
- The intersection of research and evidence with community planning,
- A focus on both community mobilization and policy advocacy,
- A city-wide focus, and
- Credibility and a strong reputation based on past history.

The Change Imperative

Stakeholders consulted as part of the scan talked about the implications of the changing environment for SPT and its position in the environment and the role it should play in the future.

Overwhelmingly, they commented that SPT has an opportunity to adapt and evolve to a stronger position and force for social change. One interviewee described it as a “moment”.



Figure 1, Characteristics of Social Planning for the Future

There was a strong message that SPT needed to change to maintain a position of influence and leadership and that it needed to embody the characteristics in Figure 1.

Stakeholders described a complex and changing environment that brings different challenges and opportunities for SPT. New and different organizations have developed capacity in social policy development and advocacy and there have been a number of initiatives to provide community development and planning supports in communities. These contribute to a 'crowded' environment and are challenging SPTs traditional roles in these areas. Technology has changed how we connect and communicate. Funders are changing how and what they fund and there is growing emphasis on outcomes and impact as well as expectations regarding partnerships and collaboration. Many noted the difficulty for organizations like SPT to demonstrate impact and outcomes as expected by funders. There is significant competition for funding. SPT is also impacted by the size of and growing diversity in the city - it was noted that SPT does not have the capacity to do everything that stakeholders, communities, agencies and funders want them to do.

The current organization was described as trying to be many things to many people with the result that it was overextended and pulled in many directions. Stakeholders commented that it had a weak organizational identity or brand, an ad hoc vision and that its impact was diffuse.

It was commented that there was limited internal capacity, the functions were not well integrated, and the work was not well supported by internal infrastructure including internal systems, communications, and technology. It was recognized that this made it difficult

to deliver quality and timely products to the broad community and to offer value to SPT members.

These focus, capacity and performance challenges are exacerbated by the crowded environment of organizations engaged in social policy and planning work, the continuing and intense competition for funding, and the changing nature of funding. They are also impacted by the size of and growing diversity in the city - SPT does not have the capacity to do everything that stakeholders, communities, agencies and funders want them to do.

While the scan suggests a mismatch between the support for strong social planning function in Toronto and the current position and capacity of the SPT, it also shows the interest in and support for change. This is the second key message from the consultations.

As one stakeholder noted, we need “careful, coherent and strategic thinking” about social planning - SPT needs to play a role that moves the ‘bar’. The scan also showed that despite the challenges, there were real opportunities in the environment that support a strong, reimagined social planning function. Technology and changes to funding programs may present opportunities for SPT to work differently. Political alignment and a growing interest in cities present unique, but time limited, opportunities to shift the policy frame.

Directions for Change - Key Messages

Big picture - Many of those consulted described a big picture role for SPT to connect issues and to help others understand relationships between the elements in the system and related strategies. Some talked about the opportunity to engage with other sectors, like arts or environment, and to develop positions and strategies that support and reinforce the shared priorities.

Future orientation - There was interest SPT bringing a future orientation to issues - that they could play a role in extending thinking from current issues to anticipating trends and opportunities and how they may affect responses to issues.

Positive, solution orientation - Many commented that social issues need to be framed more positively and with a solution or action orientation. They argue that a broader, action orientation would serve to engage more community members in the issue than a negatively framed ‘at-risk’ type of issue. The solution orientation would help garner support for action as part of the discussion of the issue.

Voices - The SPT role was frequently described in terms of ‘voice’ - helping develop and support community voices as well as bringing SPT voice to issues. This reflects the community development, planning, convening, and mobilization role as well as the social research

and planning role that SPT has played in the past. There was support for both a stronger 'enable community voices' and a 'SPT voice' in the future.

Convene, connect, and support collective impact at the community and sector/agency level - Many participants described a shift in SPT role from directly providing support to groups and organizations to providing broader supports, including tools and resources, for use in the community by agencies and groups and playing a stronger connector role to support groups working together for broader impact. At the sector level, frequent reference was made to the efforts underway to develop and support a Toronto network of agencies and service providers.

Support learning - There was significant support for a SPT role in evaluation and promotion of learning about initiatives, practices and experiences from Toronto as well as other jurisdictions. There was continued support for objective and unbiased research. There was also interest in a SPT role in knowledge mobilization - the curation, translation, and transfer of learning from research, reports, evaluations, and data/information in an accessible and usable form to the community, groups, members and agencies. And finally, reference was frequently made to SPT work supporting civic literacy in the last election. Many identified that this type of work - understanding government and how decisions are made - is a cornerstone to convening and mobilization and to developing local leaders and that SPT needs to have an ongoing role to promote and develop civic literacy and engagement.

Relationships - The consultations reinforced the importance of strategic and meaningful collaboration and partnership. A number of stakeholders suggested that SPT's broad goal of promoting a livable city suggested that these relationships should cross sector boundaries and connect with others in transportation, environment, planning, arts, recreation, etc. Others identified an opportunity to leverage support for change through relationships with business and associations like the Rotary Club, Board of Trade. Most commented that SPT had limited resources and could not have its intended impact unless it worked with other partners and collaborators. They also commented that these relationships needed to be strategic - that SPT couldn't be everything to everyone and that partnerships, collaboratives and participation in networks would need to be more focused and more directly aligned with SPT priorities. Funders also expressed an interest in a stronger and different relationship with SPT. And finally, many stakeholders commented that SPT needed to refresh its relationship with its members - that there needed to be clearer benefits and value of being a member.

Capacity and sustainability - A consistent message in the consultations is that core internal capacities, at the staff and Board levels, of the SPT need to align with the focus and priorities

of the organization. This may include new capacities in evaluation, mapping and indexes, scanning and a refocus of some of the existing roles. In addition, many stakeholders raised the need for enhanced communication and technology. At the same time, it was commented that SPT is a valuable community and city resource and that it needs to develop a structure and focus that is sustainable.

Issues - The consultations identified a list of potential areas for attention over the next 3 - 5 years. The list is included at the end of this document. While participants had their unique issues or areas of interest, they tended to agree on a range of criteria that could be used to assess which issues to focus on:

- A 'window' of opportunity for impact
- SPT capacity or ability to get the capacity to make a difference
- No duplication with other efforts
- SPT ability to play a meaningful role either in partnership with others or alone
- When the issue resonated and came from the community

SPT should also work with other sectors and undertake some work with a future orientation, as described earlier in this section. Participants suggested that SPT needed to be nimble, responsive and proactive in its approach to issues and ongoing work.

Variations on the Messages

A number of the stakeholders interviewed commented that SPT is unique in terms of the range and breadth of its stakeholders. While this gives SPT a diverse base of support, it can make planning and priority setting challenging especially when stakeholders assign different values or importance to an idea, issue or activity.

It is important to understand the distinctions between the perspectives. The previous section identified the key themes from the input and consultations - this section provides a condensed summary of the input received from the different groups.

Staff - They commented that they felt pulled in many directions and that there is little time to reflect or to make their work meaningful. Staff wants SPT effort to be better connected to strategic priorities and have a more sustainable foundation. They commented that there needs to be enhanced internal capacity including staff, staff training, and better internal connections between community planning and research roles. Staff recognize the need to make SPT more relevant, proactive and focused and to be able to demonstrate its impact to funders, members, and stakeholders.

SPT members - SPT members shared their input online. They commented on the need to

inspire, engage and support organizations and groups and advocate with and for their interests. Member engagement was also identified as important. Contributors talked about the need for SPT leadership on social issues including an inclusive process to make Toronto a livable city, ongoing research and community planning, and leadership related to systemic change, equity and inclusion. One participant described SPT as the 'principal advocate and architect for the human side of the city'. Other roles for SPT included connecting and building bridges between different sectors and groups (faith and business groups were mentioned), making knowledge accessible through curation, translation, and communication, and monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the performance and impact of public policy, programs and decisions.

Community consultations - brought a more local perspective that recognized the hands-on role of SPT's community planners as well as a broader SPT role in connecting groups and networks and developing community leaders and champions. Participants talked about a SPT role in curating, translating and sharing research, information and tools with communities as well as in public education and developing community voices and leadership. They commented that SPT should play a leadership and catalyst role in social policy and planning and that SPT could bring an unbiased, big picture lens to social and community issues.

Board - Board members reflected on the need for a stronger connection between SPT work and the impact that it had. The limited capacity of the organization and concerns about the long-term sustainability of the organization, especially given the funding changes underway or planned, were seen as limitations on the current role and impact. Board members recognized the challenges and opportunities of the changing environment for SPT. They talked about the need for greater integration between SPT research and planning functions, longer term planning and foresight, the need to work collaboratively and in partnership with others.

Funders - Funders articulated many of the challenges and opportunities raised by the other stakeholders. They commented on the lack of focus, limited capacity, diffuse impact and noted that it is an exciting time for SPT and that there are opportunities in the current environment for SPT. They identified the need for a more solution or 'building' focused role for SPT that would raise and research issues, explore and assess options and advocate for change. Funders commented that SPT is uniquely positioned at the intersection of research/evidence and community mobilization and as an intermediary organization with a mandate to develop community capacity. They also recognized that the environment is dynamic and that SPT's role in the environment will continue to change over time - it needs to be flexible and responsive. Funders want to see a connection between SPT work and outcomes and impact and suggested a business model would help connect the work with the resources.

Community agency consultations - recognized the importance of the voice that SPT brings to social development. However, the community agency participants questioned the value of the current research and community planning roles, including how they are structured, focused and pursued and the impact of the efforts. They felt that SPT's current convening role is too broad. Overall, they agreed that SPT needed to focus its role and efforts and to align its limited resources for greater impact. The participants described a number of future functions for SPT including a strong 'connector' role; monitoring and evaluation of both option for change and change itself; mapping; scanning and learning from others; coordinating community initiatives; translating, interpreting and disseminating information based on experiences, research, data analysis; advocacy; education about civic literacy, engagement and 'how to do' system change.

There was support for SPT taking a more strategic approach to system change. It was noted that much of the sector is focused on individual agencies, groups and projects and there are few organizations that can bring a much needed system perspective to the policy and program discussions. SPT should bring system level leadership informed by a social justice and inclusion lens.

Some of the community agency stakeholders had more limited direct involvement with SPT. They reflected that SPT is not well known among some newer organization and among younger community members and social actors. They commented that wanted to engage differently with SPT and to help shape system change rather than be engaged in an SPT driven initiative. They would like greater resources to be available to communities including learning and training, as well as support for connections between and among communities and partnerships including collective impact initiatives.

Key informants - Like the other stakeholders, the key informants also felt that the SPT mandate was broad and its impact was too diffuse. One informant commented that SPT needed to 'pick and identity and own it'. Others reflected on the need to go deeper on a few issues and use the limited SPT resources wisely and strategically. Many argued for the need for leadership for 'big' change - that systemic change is needed and that SPT is well positioned to provide thoughtful leadership on the social change agenda.

Challenges such as the increasing competition in the current environment, the limited capacity of the organization and the need for strengthened communications and use of technology were identified. Informants wanted to see a proactive and strong research function and shift to cross-city community planning work. They commented that SPT needed to be more proactive in their work and use approaches that resonate with emerging new community leaders. Some identified a role for SPT in evaluating impact of policies and programs, assessing options, and in supporting community research through accessible

survey methodologies and resources. Partnerships, connecting, convening and mobilizing others were identified as important roles for SPT. Many suggested that SPT should look for issues that can engage diverse stakeholders for collective impact.

Some informants commented that SPT has been too influenced by funder directions in the past while others identified an ongoing opportunity to collaborate, where there were consistent/compatible goals, with funders and policy makers.

Some Urgency

Stakeholders recognized that change takes time and that SPT needs to be thoughtful and intentional to develop capacity to enable its new role and position. This includes an articulation of its outcomes and intended impact. On the other hand, there was also recognition that there needs to be some evidence in the short term that progress is being made along the change path. The window that SPT has, in terms of support and opportunity in the environment, will not remain open indefinitely.

Need for Change Leadership

Stakeholders recognized that change would be difficult but that it is necessary to retool and refocus the organization for the future. They noted that it would require additional resources, strong leadership and ongoing commitment to the role SPT can continue to play in social planning in Toronto.

Demonstrating Impact

Many of the individuals and groups commented on the need to measure and communicate the impact of SPT efforts. They also recognized the difficulty of attributing the impact of initiatives or projects that involve many other stakeholders and interventions over time to one group like the SPT, and of the inadequacy of other shorter term measures of change. It was recognized that there is a need for stronger dialogue and further work to explore meaningful ways to identify and measure the impact of SPT work.

List of Issue Areas Identified in the SPT Strategic Plan Consultations

This list shows the range of suggestions made in the stakeholder consultation process. They were offered in response to questions about opportunities for SPT, broad issues in the environment, stakeholder thoughts on priorities for SPT as well as any out-of-the-box ideas. They are included as ideas raised rather than a comprehensive list of issues for SPT to choose from.

The suggestions have been grouped into policy, community and system level suggestions.

Policy areas:

- Poverty reduction, income security, income disparity, guaranteed annual income
- Equity, inclusion and social justice
- Affordable housing
- Anti-racism
- Health, health equity
- Good jobs
- Employment reforms to Labour Relations Act and employment
- Seniors
- Education
- Crime
- Children and families
- Newcomers, refugees, settlement

Community level:

- Building community capacity to engage in policy
- Building health communities
- Community infrastructure - social, community, physical, including transit, space in community
- Regional development and connections with social planning organizations in neighbouring regions
- Evaluation, mapping and providing tools for communities to conduct local research and surveys
- Resources and information for local communities and groups
- Develop as the centre (role model) for CD in Toronto
- Civic democracy and capacity building - needs to go beyond engagement in budget process to engagement in community and civic level - citizens academy
- Community benefit
- Social procurement - help communities take advantage of it

System level

- Cultural shift in understanding poverty, wealth, inclusion and equity - focus on community, less on wealth
- Needs to be explicit that issues of racial justice are at the centre of SPT work
- Livable city - Toronto a city for everyone
- Cyberspace - as important for engagement as physical space
- Municipal structures - political structure, planning, neighbourhood level planning
- Focus on connectedness in land development/planning issues - involve developers on board.
- Lead the digital participation and empowerment of marginalized groups.
- Current focus is on publicly funded and policy bounded services - as opposed to defining social planning in terms of resources, assets, capacities that real people use to combat poverty/marginalization
- Role in evaluation - system level programs, policies, approaches
- Board of Trade for the community sector - collaboration, partnership - Toronto network of nonprofits
- Economic impact of the sector
- Corporate social partnerships
- Socio-political think tank - high profile
- Next generation focus - build community capacity to advocate, mobilize around issues, support capacity building through communications, technology, skill building for next generation
- Develop participatory budget model for Toronto (stop trying to fix a broken system)
- Civic tech hub that supports online community engagement and organizing

In addition, many stakeholders commented that SPT needed to be nimble and leave some 'room and time' for emerging opportunities that have momentum and need more immediate action.

Appendix 2 - Draft - Social Planning Toronto - Theory of Change

Objective	Activity	Output
Engage local communities	Build a local community network	Network of groups across Toronto communicate regularly, reciprocally with SPT
	Support partners with tools and activities that help in maintaining their local groups	Local groups are successful and linked to SPT
	Do capacity building (training, tools, support, development) in gaps to launch new independent groups	New groups emerge and operate independently
Collaborate with partners	Form agency network	Meetings of the agency network
	Support agency network in reviewing issues affecting the sector	Concrete, informed discussion about issues
	Support agency network in taking action on issues	Action on issues
Employ research to make change	Build consortium	Meetings of consortium that operate in a structured and clear way
	Conduct local community action research on issues suited to SPTs key competencies and role in the sector	New research is released and circulated broadly within communities, and with sector/social actors and decision makers.
	Monitor and engage with decision making structures	Ongoing awareness of issues emerging among decision makers that affect marginalized communities
Operate for impact	SPT and partners track correlation between network activities and local community activities	Local community networks, agency network are aware of correlation between their priorities and public policy and systemic change opportunities
	SPT scans research, community activity and policy making settings for future opportunities	Local community networks, agency network are aware of emerging opportunities
	Show leadership	SPT organizes, convenes and coordinates in areas where long term opportunity exists but short term infrastructure cannot address it

Short-term Outcome	Long-term Outcome
Ideas and choices about action and information flow easily back and forth across the network	
Local groups communicate effectively with a network across the City	Local groups and leaders participate in public policy discussions in Citywide networks that feed and supports public policy reform on issues affecting local community communities
Local groups communicate effectively with a network across the City	
Development of coherent sector leadership and engaged membership	
Development of clear agenda for change	Decisions that support network positions on issues or that reflect priorities in agenda for change. Citywide networks feeds and supports public policy reform on issues affecting nonprofit partners
Greater decision maker awareness of issues affecting nonprofit partners in Toronto. Coordinated action on agenda for change	
Joint decisions made about distributing research activities to avoid redundancies and gaps and facilitate better secure research funding	A more coordinated research agenda is implemented year after year
Research draws attention to new issues	Research leverages and informs public policy change. Research changes public policy
Ongoing Increased awareness of issues and opportunities for public policy reform and/or areas to create opportunities for systemic change	Citywide agency and community networks engaged in areas of public policy reform reflecting real policy opportunities. Influence on public policy decisions.
Coordinated action on areas where systemic change opportunities exist	Citywide agency and community networks engaged in areas of public policy reform reflecting real policy opportunities
Coordinated action on areas where systemic change opportunities are pending	Citywide agency and community networks engaged in areas of public policy reform reflecting emerging policy opportunities
Capacity for action on areas where systemic change opportunities are pending	Citywide agency and community networks engaged in areas of public policy reform reflecting emerging policy opportunities

Appendix 3

Social Planning Toronto - Focus for 2016

Social Planning Toronto (SPT) has made a commitment to a regular process to identify issues and initiatives that we will work on, that reflects our social arbitrage role, builds on the strategic directions, and contributes to the livable, equitable and inclusive city.

Our decision on which issues or initiatives to work on will be based on our assessment of five factors:

1. The interests and priorities of communities
 - What issue affect them most
 - What areas are most acute
 - Where there is an appetite for taking action to address those issues
2. The interests and priorities of partners
 - Where changes are imposing new challenges
 - What challenges are most acute
 - Where there is a constellation of partners ready to take action to tackle issues
3. SPT ability to play a meaningful role either in partnership with others or alone
4. The guidance from research findings
 - What research provides new insights into solutions or points to more significant consequences as a result of exiting or evolving problems
5. The 'window' of opportunity for system impact
 - What developments at the system level or in public policy provide new opportunities to take action in ways that can address the needs of communities

Our assessment will be based on a review of the current context, including areas that communities seek to have addressed, consideration of partner priorities, issues highlighted by research, and opportunities created by the shifting policy context.

For example, on poverty:

- SPT would consider the widespread concern in communities about income issues, whether addressed as poverty or income inequality. SPT would also assess the severity of concern through discussions with our partners and with communities.
- SPT would apply a solution oriented lens to the problem and work with communities and partners to assess whether there is a critical mass of groups or organizations interested in addressing poverty issues or if there is an opportunity to build capacity to create such a critical mass. For poverty reduction at the city level, there are many groups interested in the issue but limited coordination, and capacity to coordinate is needed to optimize the effectiveness of that network.

- SPT research staff would work with partners in research to review new developments and evaluate whether, for example, the poverty reduction strategies emerging in other jurisdictions, such as Community Benefit Agreements, offer new approaches that could be beneficial. SPT would also assess what research tells us about the severity of the problem to inform efforts to raise the issue, for example the levels of child poverty based on new data or the impact of precarious work based on new surveys on the issue. SPT would also draw on evidence to confirm that potential and proposed changes represent viable and effective solutions.
- SPT would work with partners and communities to understand the policy-making context and shifts among decision-makers that indicates potential for progress on the issue. For example, the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy Process, Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy Process, as well as the Provincial interest in Community Benefit Agreements and Employment Standards reform all present potential opportunities for progress on the poverty agenda. SPT would seek to understand the significance of those opportunities and the time frame for action to determine whether there is an opportunity for engagement and progress in the issue.
- Finally SPT will review the activities of other organizations on issues to determine if SPT's support is needed and in what capacity. This could include whether SPT should play a leadership or support role, and the focus of the role including research, community engagement or policy-making.

In each case SPT will draw on available data sources and identify the priority issues as well as potential SPT activity or focus including research, outreach, communications or policy development, that are needed to address the issues. We will also identify where other groups and organizations are effectively providing some or all of those activities. SPT will not duplicate the work of others and will contribute as a supporter or partner where others are successfully providing a leadership role on issues.

The following table sets out our preliminary analysis of the social planning environment based on the factors outline above:

	Community	Sector	Research	Policy Makers	Other Leads	Proposed Focus and Role
Poverty reduction	Strong	Strong	Strong	Major and immediate	Present, fragmented poorly resourced	Co-lead – all areas
Decent work/ ESA/ Community benefit	Strong	Strong	Strong	Major and immediate	Strong and coherent	Support – community engagement and policy
Childcare	Strong	Strong	Strong	Mixed	Strong and coherent	Incorporate into work in policy areas
Education	Mild	Mild	Mixed	None	Fragmented and poorly resourced	Monitor/Support - policy
Housing	Strong	Strong	Strong	Major and immediate	Present, fragmented poorly resourced	Support/Convene – policy and sector
Recreation/Family supports	Strong	Mixed	Strong	Mixed	None	Co-lead – policy and research
Settlement	Strong	Strong	Strong	Mixed	Strong and coherent	Support – municipal issues/ engagement
Seniors	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Strong	Present, fragmented poorly resourced	Monitor/ support when with other issues
Youth/Children	Strong	Strong	Strong	Mixed	Strong and coherent	Monitor/ support when with other issues
Civic literacy	Mixed	Strong	Mixed	Strong	Mixed	As opportunities arise
Transit	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Present, low resources	Support
Role of sector/ Agency capacity	Mild	Strong	Strong	Mixed	Present but uneven coordination	Co-lead
Municipal decision-making/ Planning	Mild	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Fragmented but poorly resourced	Monitor
Policing	Strong			Major and immediate	Present but poorly resourced	Monitor
Equity/Anti-racism	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Present	Incorporate into work in all policy areas
Health		Mild		Major	Strong and coherent	Monitor

Based on this analysis, we have identified a short-list of potential areas of focus for 2016 that we will refine and continue to assess. We will confirm our roles and areas of focus no later than May 2016.

<p>SPT to play key leadership role:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty reduction • Recreation/family supports • Community networks/capacity building • Partner networks, Sector role
<p>SPT will support partner efforts:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decent work/community benefits/ESA • Housing • Settlement
<p>SPT to integrate the issues/areas into existing work:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare • Equity/anti-racism • Seniors • Youth/children • Transit
<p>SPT will actively monitor issue/ areas for future consideration:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Civic literacy • Policing • New municipal decision-making/planning structures • Health

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