

HOW DID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECT THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE IN THE YOUTH WITHIN THE NROCRC COMMUNITY?

A collaboration between the Nepean Rideau Osgoode Community Resource Centre (NROCRC) and the Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective (ROYMHC) on youth mental health

Kiana Chen, Sahil Chopra, Ruohan Huang, Johanna Musingya, Chris Talman, and Shiyu Zhu

ABSTRACT

The Nepean Osgoode Rideau Community Resources Center (NROCRC) is a non-profit organization that provides a wide range of social services and programs to residents in the Nepean, Osgoode and Rideau areas of Ottawa.

In collaboration with NROCRC, the Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective (ROYMHC) provides mental health support and education to youth in rural Ottawa. The collective comprises community members, healthcare professionals, and youth volunteers who work together to promote mental health awareness and reduce the stigma around mental illness.

ROYMHC offers a variety of programs, such as mental health workshops, youth-led support groups, and mental health first aid training. They also offer one-on-one counselling services and referrals to mental health professionals. Through their programs and initiatives, ROYMHC aims to empower youth and provide them with the necessary resources to maintain good mental health and well-being.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect the need for mental health assistance in the youth within the NROCRC/ROYMHC community?

- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted youth's mental health in the NROCRC community.
- Limited availability, location and financial barriers hindered access to mental health resources.
- The long-term impact of a pandemic on youth mental health in the NROCRC/ROYMHC community needs to be mitigated.

10 EMERGING NEEDS

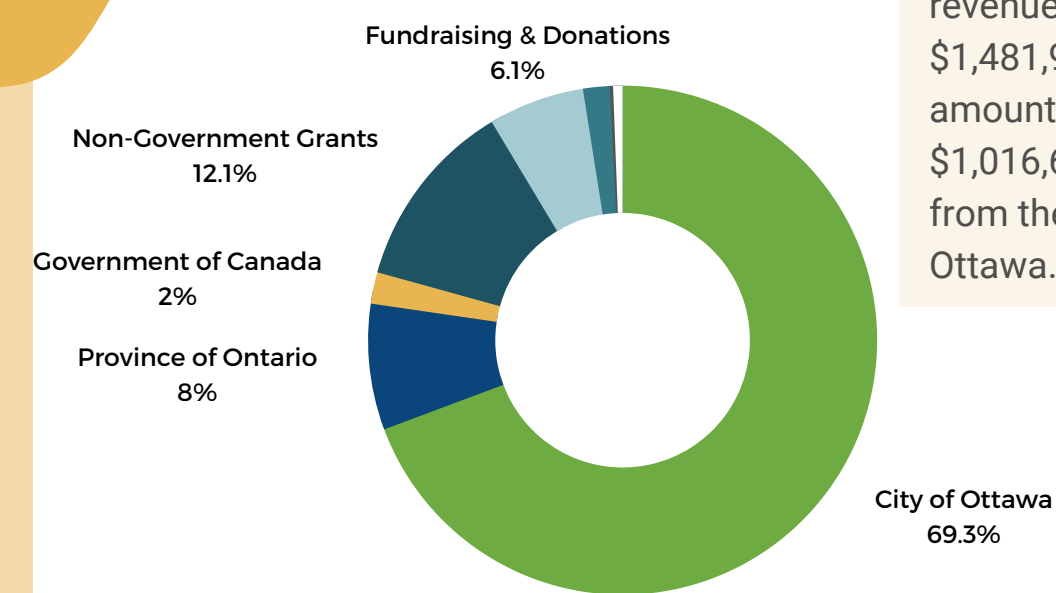
The following are the accompanied emerging needs of the NROCRC and the ROYMHC, following COVID-19. With the following data collected on the NROCRC, and the associated ROYMHC, through the analysis of the two organizations' annual reports, websites, reviews, and their social media accounts and content, these were the most prominent issues the organizations faced:

- Lack of funding
- Understaffed
- Poor social media management & outreach
- Limited resources in-proportion to the vast area they serve
- Gap in accessibility for those who live in the rural areas vs those who live in the urban areas
- NROCRC has only two mental health counsellors
- Limited community engagement
- Back-log in services
- Lack of in-house programs
- Poor communication management

Of these 10 emerging needs, an analysis of the most significant and leading issues of the organizations will be explained in the following section on the "information about client needs."

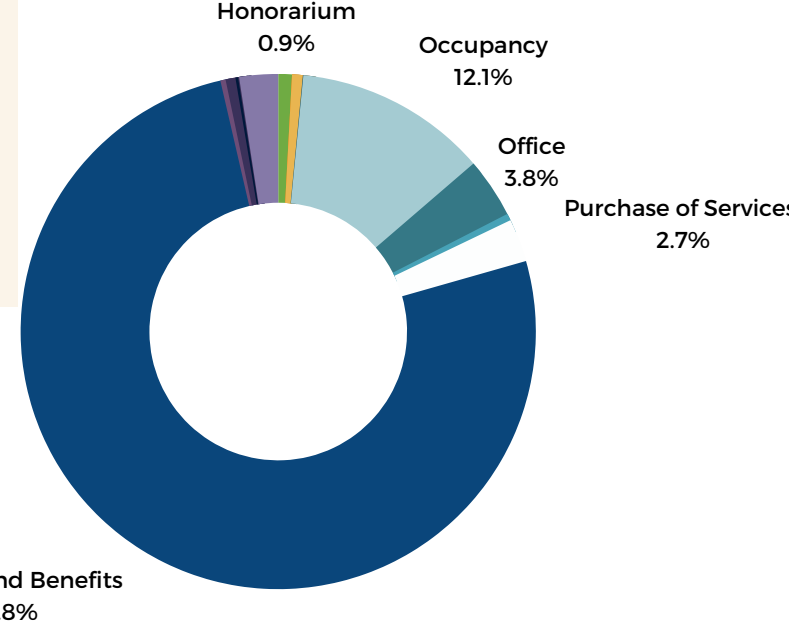
DATA ON FUNDING

Where the NROCRC's Funding Comes From



In 2022, NROCRC's revenue totalled \$1,481,930. Of that amount, \$1,016,619 came from the City of Ottawa.

How Did the NROCRC Spend their Money in the 2022/2023 Fiscal Year



In 2022/2023, NROCRC's expenses were mostly delegated towards salaries and benefits of full-time and part-time staff.

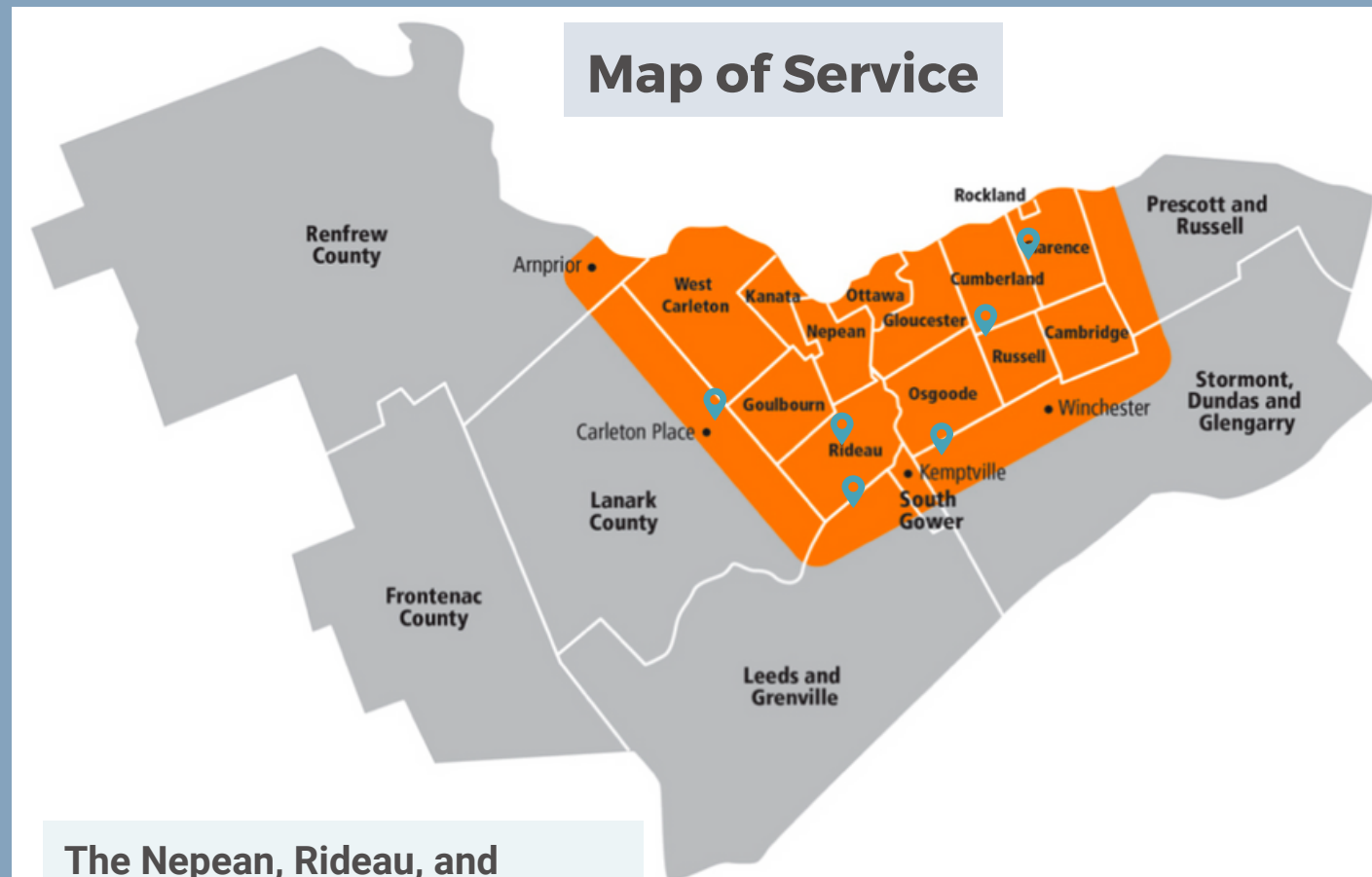
- Not enough put into training
- Not enough put into more locations
- Not enough put into community research and engagement
- Not enough put into the training of staff and volunteers
- Not enough put into their joint services with the ROYMHC

ROYMHC funding

- Conversation Grant funding received from Innoveave Youth CI to support youth-focused groups across Ontario (February 2018).
- Exploration Grant and Development Coaching funding received from Innoveave Youth CI (November 2018).
- Planning Coaching Support funding received from Innoveave Youth CI (March 2020).
- Hire an Evaluation Coordinator (Emily Dozois) with funding from Innoveave Youth CI (February 2021).
- Launch Grant funding approved for July – December 2021
- Applied for and successfully received the final phase of LaidLaw Foundation's Youth CI project funds: Execution Phase (May 2022).

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Map of Service



The Nepean, Rideau, and Osgoode Community Resource Centre (NROCRC) provide a range of programs and services to support individuals and families in the Ottawa area. The exact areas covered by NROCRC may vary depending on their programs and services, but generally, they serve the following communities:

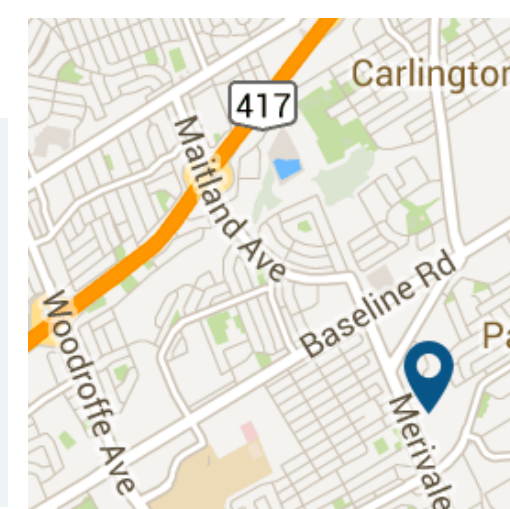
- Barrhaven
- Clarence
- Nepean
- Manotick
- Rideau
- North Gower
- Osgoode
- Riverside
- Rockland
- South

The Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective (ROYMHC) is a community-based organization that aims to support youth's mental health and well-being in the rural Ottawa Area. The exact areas covered by ROYMHC may vary depending on their programs and services, but generally, they serve the following communities:

- Carp
- Pakenham
- Constance Bay
- Richmond
- Dunrobin
- Stittsville
- Fitzroy Harbour
- West Carleton
- Kinburn

Centre Location

In comparison with the area the NROCRC X ROYMHC serves, the location of the center where most services are based is far from most areas. It is true that some operations may happen from other partner centres, however, most youth do not have access to the Merivale location due to transportation and other related issues.



INFORMATION ABOUT CLIENT NEEDS

Of the 10 emerging needs of the NROCRC, these are some of the most urgent ones:

- The NROCRC needs funding.** The effects of lack of funding lead to reduced staff and space, which can limit the capacity to provide services and support to the community. The centre may not be able to hire enough staff to meet the demand for services or offer the services needed for the community. This can lead to longer wait times for services, resulting in backlog, reduced quality of care, and the limited ability to provide critical services and support. This is most important to those urgently seeking mental health resources. The NROCRC is currently facing a lot of backlog in services, as they are not sufficiently staffed to cater to their large service area.
- There are accessibility barriers to the NROCRC,** which can limit their ability to serve the community effectively. This can impact the mental health of individuals, as it limits their ability to physically access critical services and support. The NROCRC is currently located in the urban part of their service area, which creates a gap in accessibility for those residing in the rural parts of their service area.
- The NROCRC need more staff with adequate training to work with the mental health of youth.** This can foster a better understanding of youth mental health issues, such as signs of mental health concerns. This can help promote early intervention, reduce stigma around mental health, and increase access to support for youth in the community. The NROCRC is dependent on volunteers; however, they are most often untrained in this aspect. Currently, the centre has only two mental health counsellors, affecting their ability to fulfill their community's needs with their current case load.
- Place-based services are needed,** as they recognize the role of an individual's environment in shaping their mental health and wellbeing. Offering services that are tailored to the specific needs and context of a location, can result in more effective services addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals living in that community. Investing in these services is essential to build a supportive and connected community that can better assist mental health. Since the NROCRC caters to such a large area, they are unable to meet the different needs of each community.
- The NROCRC needs to better utilize social media platforms.** By providing accessible mental health resources through social media, it can increase the likelihood that youth will seek help when they need it, reducing social isolation and stigma surrounding mental health. The NROCRC currently has little to no engagement on social media, and lacks consistency in their communication.

RURAL OTTAWA YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH COLLECTIVE

The Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective (ROYMHC) provides various services to support the mental health and well-being of youth in rural Ottawa. The ROYMHC Collective is a team of 12 partners invested in the mental well-being of rural Ottawa youth. Some of the services provided by ROYMHC include:

- Mental health workshops:** ROYMHC offers workshops on various mental health topics, including stress management, anxiety, and depression. These workshops are designed to provide youth with practical skills and tools to manage their mental health and promote well-being.
- Youth-led support groups:** ROYMHC facilitates peer-led support groups for youth to connect with others who may be going through similar experiences. These support groups provide a safe space for youth to share their stories, receive support, and learn coping strategies.
- Mental health first aid training:** ROYMHC provides training in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), which teaches participants how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and provide initial support to someone in crisis.
- One-on-one counselling:** ROYMHC offers one-on-one counselling services to youth who need additional support. These services are provided by mental health professionals who specialize in working with youth.
- Referrals to mental health professionals:** ROYMHC can also refer youth to mental health professionals in the community if they require more specialized or ongoing support.

Through these services and initiatives, ROYMHC aims to promote mental health awareness, reduce the stigma around mental illness, and provide youth with the resources they need to maintain good mental health and well-being.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, after having analyzed the impact of the COVID-19 on the mental health resources for youth in the NROCRC and the ROYMHC, the main takeaways from this project are:

- The Centre needs more funding to increase outreach to youth and tackle barriers of accessibility
 - Estimated at least 4 to 8 million needed to hire more staff, ideally have a team of full time and part time staff, open more Centres and increase community outreach programs
 - Funding would enable an increase in social research on Youth Mental Health

