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STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Social Service Team – Extension of Contract

Date: March 24, 2025

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Toronto Public Library Board approval to extend the Toronto Public Library (TPL) Social Service Team contract with Gerstein Crisis Centre through December 31, 2025.

This service offers low-barrier access to in-branch mental health and crisis support services and wellness and recovery programming, including referrals to other social service and health agencies and supports. Gerstein Crisis Centre was awarded a one-year contract in a non-competitive procurement process for the period April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 to provide TPL's Social Service Team pilot with a commitment of \$499,090, excluding Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). This was later extended to December 31, 2024 for a total contract value of \$871,408, excluding HST.

TPL wishes to extend the service contract through 2025 because of the documented success of the service; Gerstein Crisis Centre being under contract to the Toronto Community Crisis Service as the anchor partner for the areas of

Toronto that TPL's service operates in; and TPL's 2025 Operating Budget and TPL Foundation 2025 donor funding confirmed.

In 2025, TPL will operationalize the pilot service level of four locations now incorporated into TPL's approved 2025 operating budget, funded by the City of Toronto, and will further expand this vital service to eight additional locations for a total of 12 locations. The expansion is fully funded in TPL's approved 2025 operating budget through donations received by the TPL Foundation.

The total value of the extension to the service contract with Gerstein Crisis Centre is \$1,067,000, allowing for the extension of the existing services as well as the expanded services planned for 2025. With this extension, the total revised contract value covering the period April 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025, will be \$1,938,408 excluding HST.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves a commitment with Gerstein Crisis Centre to continue to deliver TPL's Social Service Team initiative from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, including:
 - a. a contract extension with cost not exceeding \$1,067,000 for a total April 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025 contract value of \$1,938,408, excluding HST.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The total value of the commitment with Gerstein Crisis Centre is \$1,938,408, excluding HST, which is comprised of the:

- expansion contract value of \$567,000 from January 1, 2025 to December 1, 2025;
- operational contract value of \$500,000 from January 1 2025 to December 31, 2025;
- contract Pilot extension value of \$372,318 from April 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024 ; and

- original Pilot contract value of \$499,090 from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

The budget for this service contract in 2025 is included in TPL's approved 2025 operating budget. The budget for the existing service has been incorporated into TPL's base operating budget, funded by the City of Toronto. The budget for the expansion of these services is funded in 2025 through donations received by the TPL Foundation, with continued funding for these expanded services in 2026 and beyond to be incorporated into TPL's base operating budget.

The Director, Finance & CFO has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 25, 2024, the Library Board considered [Social Service Team – Extension of Contract](#) and approved a contract extension with cost not exceeding \$372,318 for a total April 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024 contract value of \$871,408, excluding HST.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

This service supports the 2025-2029 strategic plan priorities of *Learning and Growth* through increasing programs and services that offer expert health, wellness and recovery support; and *Shared Community Spaces* through increasing opportunities for access to expert agencies so customers can conveniently connect with specialized services.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

TPL's Social Service Team initiative was developed as an equity-focused service approach to vulnerability. It is a community-based, trauma-informed, harm reduction approach to crisis that provides a direct and free service to TPL's customers that are experiencing the often-intersecting vulnerabilities of mental health challenges, addictions, low income, and homelessness or precarious housing. The voices of people with lived experience guide and promote this innovative model for crisis support, wellness and recovery, and knowledge sharing. Due to structural barriers, many vulnerable customers have difficulty

navigating and accessing basic resources and supports in the community. Although individuals experiencing homelessness may be the most visible population using library spaces, there are other vulnerable individuals using the library that benefit from accessing these social service supports at their point of need.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

First identified as a service need following a 2019 Community Needs Assessment led by TPL's Social Worker and the Services to Vulnerable Persons Committee, the Social Service Team Pilot model was defined and approved as a 2020-2024 TPL fundraising priority. The service began pilot operation at four TPL locations in June 2023, supported by funding from the TPL Foundation. TPL received permanent operating budget funding for this service level in its 2025 Operating Budget.

COMMENTS

The Social Service Team provides an on-site service offering low-barrier mental health and crisis supports to individuals accessing the Library and builds the capacity of the Library system. While anyone can access the service, the program is for Torontonians who are the most vulnerable and are unable to access the mental and physical health resources as well as support services required to improve their lives. This initiative serves as an access point for library users and connects them to resources outside the library setting such as mental health, primary care, housing, and recovery supports.

The Social Service Team pilot was available at four TPL branches, primarily focusing on services at Toronto Reference Library and Lillian H. Smith, with additional resources and programming available at Sanderson and Fort York. The expansion will see these services offered there and at eight additional locations in 2025.

Gerstein Crisis Centre is an anchor partner in the Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS) for the areas of Toronto that TPL's service operates in and was awarded under City of Toronto Ariba Document Number 3044861985. This connection is critical for the success of TPL's service to ensure integration with the TCCS partner network for housing, mental health and addictions referrals.

With the approval of this contract extension, the Social Service Team service, delivered in partnership with Gerstein Crisis Centre, will continue through to December 31, 2025.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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