



# Founding Charter

## Strategy, Purpose and Description

The purpose of Ottawa's MERIT model for collaborative, risk-driven community safety and well-being is to improve individual lives and find greater system efficiencies by applying a risk mitigation lens to human service delivery in our community. We will leverage the perspectives, information, talents and resources of multiple agencies in the development and execution of a community wide and multi-sector strategy that will bring about greater efficiency, effectiveness, and improved service connections leading to more positive social outcomes from all human services in the City of Ottawa and its surrounding communities (hereafter referred to as "Ottawa"). We intend to apply a holistic approach to service delivery and better align the resources and delivery mechanisms of social, health, government and policing services.

## Membership

Founding members of MERIT are (listed alphabetically):

- Boys and Girls Club Ottawa
- Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- CMHA Ottawa
- Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) Champlain
- Community Health Resource Centres
- Crime Prevention Ottawa
- City of Ottawa: Community and Social Services
- City of Ottawa: Emergency and Protective Services
- John Howard Society
- City of Ottawa: Ottawa Public Health
- Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Champlain
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Ottawa Catholic School Board
- Ottawa Community Housing
- Ottawa Hospital
- Ottawa Paramedic Service
- Ottawa Police Service
- Ottawa Probation and Parole (Ontario MAG)
- Royal Ottawa Hospital
- United Way Ottawa
- Youth Services Bureau (Ontario MAG)



## Scope and Approach

MERIT will:

1. Inform and further refine a broader community human service model that can align and grow along with the MERIT Situation Tables;
2. Develop protocols to enable more effective information sharing across disciplines and agencies;
3. Develop and operate one or more MERIT Situation Table models, in selected neighbourhoods and/or applied to selected social issues, to address situations of acutely elevated risk through rapid, multi-agency interventions and service connections.
4. Gather, conduct, and develop a repository/database for shared, inter-disciplinary research related to social services, health, health care and policing and their contributing factors;
5. Conduct cross-sector analyses and studies using Ottawa-based and professionally reviewed data and consult collectively with other human service agencies, academics, governments and community-based organizations to develop an inventory of local needs and identify priority opportunities for enhanced programming and other supports related to community safety, well-being and the social determinants of health.
6. Develop a robust system of metrics to support both the collective and individual accountabilities and reporting requirements of participating member agencies;
7. Contribute to, learn from and share with parallel initiatives in collaborative risk-driven community safety and well-being occurring in Ottawa, and across Ontario and Canada including (but not limited to):
  - Crime, Disorder, & Antisocial Behaviour
  - Gangs & Violence
  - Domestic Violence Initiatives
  - Police & Mental Health Crisis Teams
  - Vulnerable Sector Youth & Elder
  - Community Development
  - Housing, Homelessness, & Street Population
8. Be results driven, focused on connecting services and supports with individuals and families needing immediate and proactive interventions.



9. Develop and execute a communications strategy designed to engage others and inform the public and other stakeholders on the achievements of MERIT.

### **Roles, Responsibilities and Governance Model**

Each charter member will contribute appropriately qualified resources as necessary to accomplish the deliverables and priority tasks of MERIT.

Specifically, each Charter Member directly involved in the development and operations of a MERIT Situation Table will contribute at least one sector specialist to be available as needed to fulfill the ongoing work and to attend regular meetings as determined.

MERIT members agree to recognize and operate within the adopted MERIT documents to govern all operations, including (but not limited to):

- MERIT Executive Committee Terms of Reference
- MERIT Senior Management Committee Terms of Reference
- MERIT Active Agency & Table Participants Terms of Reference
- MERIT Secretariat Terms of Reference
- MERIT Table Participant Non-disclosure Agreement
- MERIT Table Visitor Non-disclosure Agreement

During the start up phase of MERIT, Ottawa Police Services (OPS) will provide leadership, secretariat functions, technical guidance, facilitation support and other expertise as needed for the initial situation table pilot.

As champions of MERIT, all Founding Members will encourage and facilitate wherever possible broad and on-going multi-sectorial participation.

### **Assumptions and Inter-Dependencies**

MERIT has been conceived and designed to draw upon multiple perspectives and resources, including those currently within the scope of the founding MERIT partners and those not yet present.

As such, it can be assumed that the work of MERIT will proceed within a rich context of related initiatives and programs. Every effort will be made to avoid duplication of efforts, and to take optimal advantage of existing and ongoing initiatives at the local, regional and provincial levels.

### **Resources and Commitments**



Founding Members will provide the necessary resources to support a successful launch of the MERIT Situation Table(s) pilot.

### **Founding Member Endorsement**

In my authority and on behalf of the organization named below, I understand and confirm that we are committed to the directions and intents of this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE: MERIT Executive Committee**

### **Mandate:**

As program Champions, the mandate of the MERIT Executive Committee is to provide executive oversight of the MERIT framework and provide strategic and expert direction regarding opportunities to mobilize community resources in the provision of health, social and safety services.

### **Authority:**

The Ontario Working Group on Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety encourages the establishment of local Situation Table models in the context of applying a comprehensive approach to planning for community safety and well-being.

### **Membership:**

The members of the MERIT Executive Committee represent public organizations including schools, hospitals, the municipality, and policing services. Their mandate is to provide social, health, and safety related services to the residents of Ottawa.

Membership is comprised of the following:

- Charles Bordeleau: Chief of Ottawa Police Service
- Dr. Isra Levy, Medical Officer of Health, City of Ottawa
- Dr. Jennifer Adams: Director of Education, Ottawa Carleton District School Board
- Chantale LeClerc: Chief Executive Officer, Local Health Integration Network



### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

The MERIT Executive Committee will:

- Direct the development and evolution of the Collaborative Risk Driven Community Safety & Wellness agenda for MERIT
- Provide strategic advice for operationalizing the MERIT model in Ottawa
- Identify required community resources to sustain the MERIT model
- Receive regular reports and respond to recommendations of MERIT Senior Management Committee (SMC)
- Resolve issues escalated from MERIT SMC
- Direct periodic process evaluation and longitudinal studies
- Advocate with representatives of other levels of government on associated legislative or funding matters

### **Decision Making, Issue Management and Resolution:**

The MERIT Executive Committee will resolve issues escalated from the MERIT Senior Management Committee and decisions will be made on a consensus basis.

### **Meeting Schedule:**

Meetings will be conducted semi-annually and/or as deemed necessary.

### **Reporting:**

The MERIT Executive Committee makes decisions on behalf of residents of the City of Ottawa and will provide updates to its citizens through various stakeholder organizations.



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE: MERIT Senior Management Committee**

### **Mandate:**

The mandate of the MERIT Senior Management Committee is to provide strategic advice and direction in the development, resourcing and execution of the MERIT pilot.

### **Authority:**

The Ontario Working Group on Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety encourages the establishment of local Situation Table models in the context of applying a comprehensive approach to planning for community safety and well-being.

### **Membership:**

The members of the MERIT Senior Management Committee represent public and private organizations providing education, social, health, and policing services to residents of Ottawa.

Membership will include representation from The City of Ottawa; Ottawa Police Service; local school boards; local hospitals; housing authorities, and various health and social resource organizations. {Member names and organizations TBD}

Chair to be determined.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

The MERIT Senior Management Committee will:

- Oversee the development and evolution of the multiagency risk intervention framework based on direction of the MERIT Executive Committee (EC)
- Recommend strategies for operationalizing the MERIT model in Ottawa
- Identify and assign appropriately qualified resources to the Situation Table as needed on a consistent basis
- Ensure sharing of information between organizations respects legislative and privacy regulations
- Resolve issues escalated from the Situation Tables
- Encourage and facilitate wherever possible broad and on-going multi-sectoral participation
- Initiate and oversee periodic evaluation of the MERIT process
- Provide recommendations and regular reporting to the MERIT EC

### **Decision Making, Issue Management and Resolution:**



The MERIT Senior Management Committee will resolve issues escalated from the MERIT Situation Tables.

Decisions will be based on a quorum comprised of the majority of its voting members (50% plus 1).

**Meeting Schedule:**

Meetings will be conducted quarterly and/or as deemed necessary.

**Reporting:**

The MERIT Senior Management Committee makes decisions on behalf of their respective organizations and will provide regular status updates to the MERIT EC and individual stakeholder organizations.



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE: MERIT Secretariat**

### **Mandate:**

The mandate of the MERIT Secretariat is to provide advice to the MERIT Executive Committee on the design and implementation of the MERIT model in Ottawa and execution and evaluation of the pilot in the South-end.

### **Authority:**

The Ontario Working Group on Collaborative, Risk-driven Community Safety encourages the establishment of local Situation Table models in the context of applying a comprehensive approach to planning for community safety and well-being.

### **Membership:**

The members of the MERIT Secretariat represent the interests and are the bridge between the MERIT Executive Committee and MERIT Senior Management Committee.

During the start up phase of MERIT, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) will provide secretariat functions, including technical guidance, administrative and facilitation support to the Situation Table. Long term requirements and membership of the Secretariat will be determined during the post-pilot evaluation.

Temporary membership is comprised of the following:

- Deputy Chief Ed Keeley (Chair) – linkage with MERIT EC and SMC
- OPS senior officers – operational advisors
- OPS Strategic Initiative Program Office – MERIT implementation planning and execution, and administrative support

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

The MERIT Secretariat will:

- Act as liaison between the MERIT EC and SMC
- Define the strategy, approach and operations of the MERIT pilot
- Provide recommendations to the MERIT Executive Committee on strategic matters related to MERIT
- Receive and respond to recommendations of the MERIT Senior Management Committee (SMC)
- Assist with the resolution of issues escalated from MERIT SMC
- Provide adequate budget and resources to support the MERIT pilot



- Provide administrative support to the Situation Table
- Provide guidance on the development of reporting requirements
- Facilitate the post-pilot evaluation as directed by MERIT EC
- Develop and execute a communications strategy to engage and inform the public and other stakeholders on the achievements of MERIT

### **Meeting Schedule:**

Meetings will be conducted as deemed necessary.

### **Reporting:**

The MERIT Secretariat executes decisions on behalf of and reports to the MERIT Executive Committee.



## TERMS OF REFERENCE: Active Agency Leads and Table Participants

### Vision:

Children, youth, adults and families will grow and thrive in a safe and healthy community as a result of agencies working collaboratively and implementing integrated services.

### Mission:

A collaborative, integrated multi-agency team striving to build safer and healthier communities through rapid mobilization of resources and service connections to meet the immediate needs of individuals and families experiencing acutely elevated levels of risk (*See Appendix A: Terms*)

### Operating Principles:

- Holistic efforts to address the complex and integrating factors that influence crime, victimization and community well-being
- Efforts and solutions that are balanced, culturally appropriate and well integrated across the spectrum of prevention, integration, suppression, rehabilitation and restoration
- Efforts leading to solutions that are sustainable and incremental, and able to address the need in the short, medium and long term
- Efforts that build on continuing and meaningful engagement, shared commitment, and clear roles and accountability for continuing case management
- Community-based efforts that advance local capacity, local ownership and local responsibility for community well-being and safety
- Efforts that focus on building positive assets to reduce the risk profile of citizens and communities with specific needs
- A continuing focus on measurable outcomes and results



## Membership:

Membership of the MERIT Table(s) will consist of qualified representation from each of those agencies determined as appropriate for table participation by the MERIT SMC.

Representatives at the MERIT Table will have the authority to make decisions for their organizations that fall within the scope of the table's roles and authorities.

Membership at the MERIT Table (Southeast) includes active representation from:

- Boys and Girls Club Ottawa
- Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
- Boys and Girls Club Ottawa
- Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- CMHA Ottawa
- Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) Champlain
- Community Health Resource Centres
- Crime Prevention Ottawa
- John Howard Society
- City of Ottawa: Community and Social Services
- City of Ottawa: Emergency and Protective Services
- City of Ottawa: Ottawa Public Health
- Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Champlain
- Ottawa Carleton District School Board
- Ottawa Catholic School Board
- Ottawa Community Housing
- Ottawa Hospital
- Ottawa Paramedic Service
- Ottawa Police Service
- Ottawa Probation and Parole (Ontario MAG)
- Royal Ottawa Hospital
- United Way Ottawa
- Youth Services Bureau (Ontario MAG)

Quorum is to be determined at each meeting by the designated MERIT Table Chair.



### Accountability:

- The active members of the MERIT Table(s) are accountable for information flow to and from their own respective organizations and sectors (including related community-based organizations and other service delivery partners not represented at the MERIT Table)
- The active members of the MERIT Table(s) are accountable to one another for their actions, participation level and contributions to the table and to the collaborative interventions that result from the table's deliberations
- The active members of the MERIT Table(s) are accountable to one another, to the MERIT SMC, and to their own organizations for their disciplined adherence to the established protocols that guide the table's activities, including but not limited to the Four Filters process for information sharing (*Appendix B*)
- All active members of the MERIT Table(s), including the Chair and Recorder(s) are accountable to successfully complete all prescribed learning modules as determined by the MERIT SMC

### Roles and Responsibilities:

#### MERIT SMC Committee

- Select and appoint a MERIT Table Chair annually or as required
- Select and appoint one or more qualified MERIT Table Recorder(s) annually or as required
- Guide the learning and development of the MERIT Table participants and approve learning materials on a continuing basis
- Support the MERIT process and respective agency representatives participating at the Table
- Monitor to ensure consistent allocation of qualified and suitable representation at the MERIT table
- Monitor the MERIT Table's ongoing operations and effectiveness
- Provide support and direction to the Chair of the MERIT Table as required
- Identify targeted areas for improvement and develop strategies to address areas where operational improvement is needed based on available data
- Focus on measurable outcomes and results
- Liaise with the Ontario Working Group (and others) and assist in establishing and applying Provincial "best practices"



### **CHAIR of the MERIT Table**

- Chair the meetings of the MERIT Table
- Lead the table in consensus-based decision making through the diligent application of the Four Filters process for information sharing
- Monitor the work of the MERIT Table Recorder(s) for consistency with established best practices
- Implement dispute resolution as necessary
- Liaise with the Chair of the MERIT SMC as required
- Liaise with the MERIT Executive Committee as required

### **MEMBERS of the MERIT Table**

- Participate in all regularly-scheduled MERIT Table meetings (unless represented, at the approval of the Chair, by a qualified back-up representative)
- Accurately relate the perspectives of the organization and sector they represent and ensure an effective information feedback loop is maintained
- Engage in collaborative problem solving and promote innovation in all solutions
- Place issues needing resolution before the table during meetings (or if necessary, offline and directly to the Chair), and engage in solution-focused problem solving
- Champion MERIT within their organization, sector and with others, as deemed appropriate
- Identify capacity-building activities and information sharing needed to support improved integration or coordination of the broader MERIT model
- Monitor the application of Filter One protocols in their respective organization(s)
- Research situation details ahead of time and be prepared to respond/make informed decisions at Filters Two and Three on behalf of their organization or sector
- Participate in Filter Four intervention planning discussions related to setting goals and collaborative actions for the MERIT Table
- Engage in reviews of interventions executed to determine results achieved, appropriate reporting back to the MERIT Table, evident trends, and areas for improvement over time

### **MERIT Table Recorder(s)**

- Ensure the accurate and appropriate de-identified recording of all situations presented to the MERIT Table, using tools approved by the MERIT SMC and applying practices consistent with established best practices for Situation Tables in Ontario



### **Decision Making, Issue Management and Resolution:**

- All MERIT Table decisions will be based on a consensus, solution-focused approach that engages team members in a collaborative process
- In the event a clear consensus cannot be reached, the matter will be resolved in a manner consistent with sound professional and community development practice, or referred by the Chair to the MERIT SMC for resolution

### **Conflict of Interest:**

- Any table member with a perceived or real conflict of interest must declare this to the MERIT Table as soon as such conflict has been recognized, and before any further disclosure of private and confidential information proceeds
- A member in conflict should remove themselves from the table until the matter is resolved to reduce the risk of influence in the decision-making process or unwarranted intrusion into the privacy of individuals or families

### **Meeting Schedule:**

- The MERIT Table will meet on a regular schedule determined by the MERIT SMC, and no less frequently than once a week unless determined by the Chair

### **Terms of Reference Review:**

- This Terms of Reference for MERIT Agency Leads and Table Participants will be reviewed each year
- Any revisions will be incorporated and approved at the next meeting of the MERIT SMC



**Approval:**

The members of the MERIT SMC have agreed through consensus to adopt these Terms of Reference on:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*yyyy/mm/dd*

**Table Participant Endorsement**

I certify that I understand these terms of reference and that they will govern my participation at the MERIT Situation Table(s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Acutely elevated risk:** “Acutely elevated risk” is a reference to any situation impinging on individuals, families, groups or places where circumstances indicate an extremely high probability of the occurrence of victimization from crime or social disorder. Left untended such situations will require targeted enforcement and/or other emergency responses.

The “acute” nature of these situations is an indicator that either chronic conditions have accumulated to the point where a crisis is imminent, or new circumstances have contributed to severely increased risks of victimization.

Objective and standardized criteria for acutely elevated risk do not exist owing to the complexity and uniqueness of each situation. Professionals sitting at the Situation Table must rely on their combined experience and professional judgment to discriminate whether any given situation merits that designation and an immediate intervention to reduce the levels of risk.

**Community wellness:** A variety of social, neighbourhood or community indicators including (but not limited to) health (mental and physical), economic status (like employment and income), quality of housing, education, sense of safety, and even happiness. Community wellness indicators are the targets of social development strategies.

**Neighbourhood assets:** Neighbourhood residents, individuals or groups, organizations, clubs, associations that have the capabilities, can, and will do things to make their neighbourhoods safer and more secure on the conditions that: 1) it is safe for them to do so; 2) they can be identified and encouraged to do so; and 3) once identified, they are adequately supported to do so.

**Participating Agencies:** Agencies from the sectors of policing, community-based organizations, the City, health, education and social services which agree to participate in MERIT.

**Places:** Micro-locations like single buildings, street addresses, street corners, alleys where crime or disorder are concentrated, and where victimization is more likely -- sometimes called “hotspots”.

**Risk intervention:** Identifying persons, families, groups or places at acutely elevated risk of crime or victimization; and, mobilizing the appropriate mix of resources and services needed to reduce those risks before the situation requires emergency response or recovery.

**Situations and Situation Table:** “**Situation Table**” is the phrase applied to the collaborative exchange that happens at MERIT meetings. Participating Agencies use “situation” in order to remind themselves that they are present only, to address specific occasions of acutely elevated risk of victimization. They are not present to debate systemic barriers, open case files, plan long-term treatments, implement social development measures or otherwise deal with the chronic conditions in Rexdale that serve as precursors to crime, social disorder and victimization.

## Appendix B: Four Filter Approach to Confidentiality

Integrated service providers adopt a four filter approach to the sharing of information in order to be able to meet privacy expectations. The four filters will:



- Only allow situations of acutely elevated risk to be discussed;
- Minimize the identifiable personal information and personal health information that is disclosed to the discussion;
- Limit the agencies to which the information is disclosed; and
- Limit the recording of identifiable information – i.e. only agencies with a role to play record identifiable information and no identifiable information is recorded in the central records of the integrated service.

**The First Filter** is the screening process within the agency that brings forward a situation for discussion. The agency determines that the risk factors are beyond its scope/mandate to mitigate the elevated risk and all traditional inter-agency approaches have been exhausted. It is the responsibility of each agency how they organize their individual screening processes. Once an agency has identified a situation it considers to meet the requirements for discussion, the second filter comes into play. At this point the participating agency should have concluded that sharing information with the table is necessary to help prevent harm or danger to an individual.

**The Second Filter** occurs when the agency presents the situation to the table discussion in a de-identified format. This allows the table to collectively decide if the situation meets the requirement of acutely elevated risk factors across a range of service providers, before any personal information is disclosed. The wide range of sectoral specialists at the table discussion is the ideal setting for making a decision on the question if acutely elevated risk factors across a range of service providers are present. If the circumstances do not meet this threshold, no personal information is disclosed and no further discussion of the situation occurs at the Hub. This filter helps confirm for the originating agency that the situation satisfies the harm test, and at this point, the collective assessment of the table is that there is now a need to know additional information in order to prevent or reduce the likelihood of harm or danger.

**Third Filter** occurs if the agencies conclude that the above threshold is met, limited personal information may be included at this stage if necessary to help determine who should continue to be part of the discussion. At this point, the table is able to determine which agencies will be required to participate in a full discussion.

**Fourth Filter.** At this point, only those identified agencies then may discuss personal information that needs to be disclosed to inform the outcome of the solution of the acutely elevated risk factors. Discussion is still limited to only the personal information that is deemed necessary to assess the situation and determine appropriate actions. If at any point in the above, it becomes evident that resources are currently being provided within existing agencies and the table is confident elevated risk is being mitigated, there is no further discussion. Actions taken as a result of a table discussion are taken by one or more agencies and can include a “door knock” or visit to an individual or family deemed to be in need of services. At that time an invitation for services is offered and, if accepted, the services are then provided by the individual agencies as part of their normal business, though usually with more inter-agency cooperation than what might otherwise be provided.