

# The Unity Project: Review in Practice

## Background

The Unity Project, a beacon of unity and shared responsibility, was an outreach program run by One City Peterborough. The project ran for a year, starting in January 2024, and aimed to support businesses and individuals in the downtown Peterborough community. The program, staffed with dedicated outreach workers, was a testament to the power of collective action, responding to calls about individuals in crisis and acting as a liaison between businesses and community members for de-escalation, crisis management, and mediation. The workers, equipped with sharps pick-up and disposal training, were always ready to discard drug paraphernalia and provide naloxone kits and training. The program's success was a testament to the community's commitment, with about half of its funding coming from the businesses it supported. The other half of the funding came from the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough, and United Way Peterborough and District, further highlighting the community's shared responsibility.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the Unity Project was successful in providing support to the community. This will indicate whether a future program of a similar capacity will be useful for the downtown Peterborough community. The study also looks to determine the elements of the Unity Project that were most beneficial, as well as possible improvements that could be made to the program's format.

## Research Question

**Has the Unity Project been successful?**

1. Did businesses feel safer downtown?
2. Did businesses feel supported during their interactions with the Unity Project?
3. Did the individuals in crisis feel supported by the interactions?

**What were the beneficial elements of the Unity Project and what were improvements that can be made?**

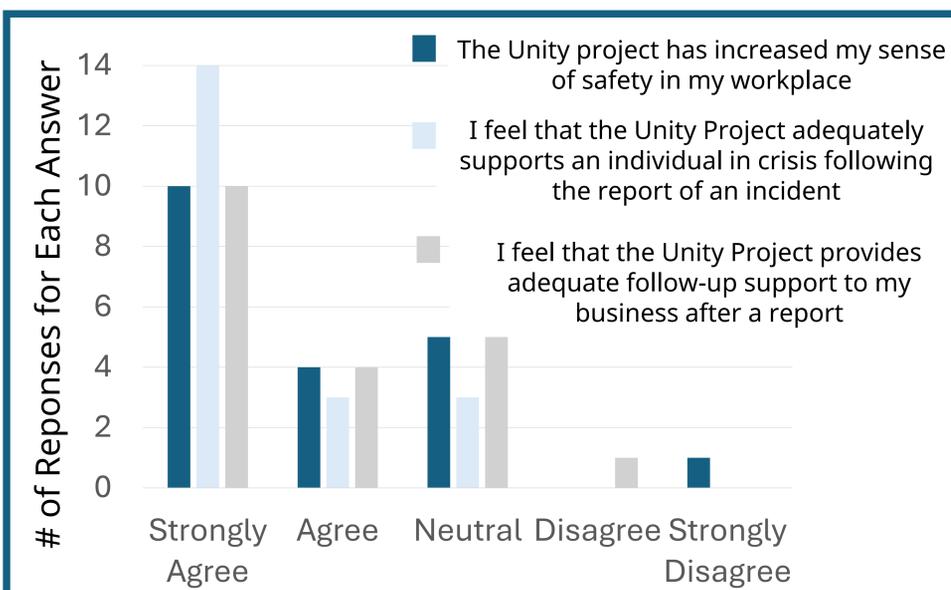


Figure 1: Survey responses for three questions directly pertaining to the research questions of the study

## Methods

The research followed a mixed-method approach and included quantitative data collected through surveys and qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. Data was collected through surveys and interviews with businesses that interacted with the Unity Project. One City Peterborough also provided secondary data to bolster the information collected.

## Findings

Key findings thus far include a generally positive reaction towards the Unity Project. The Survey (20 participants) and the interviews (6 participants) yielded the following results from primary analysis.

### Survey:

- 14/20 businesses had previously contacted the Unity Project for support
- 10/20 businesses would like increased hours from the Unity Project

### Interviews:

- All six individuals interviewed would like the program to return
- Participants would like expanded programming
  - Increased hours
  - Increased number of outreach workers

### Common themes from the interviews:

- Outreach workers offered excellent support towards individuals in crisis and the staff of the businesses
- Businesses were more comfortable contacting outreach workers than police
- Participants wish for the program to be municipally funded