

This Way Out → Project Evaluation

Interim Report

April 2025

PREPARED BY
**Collective
Results Inc.**



supported by:



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



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Executive Summary

In November 2023, Victim Services of Peel (VSOP) launched a collaborative service delivery model that provides immediate response to victims/survivors of human trafficking called This Way Out → (TWO). TWO embeds VSOP's Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) Counsellors with the Vice Unit (Human Trafficking Unit) of Peel Regional Police to improve survivor access to emergency and community services. The following is an interim report of the evaluation findings up to March 2025. The focus of the evaluation is on **1) the implementation of TWO and its alignment with promising practices** and **2) the extent to which the project has achieved the outcomes anticipated**. Data was collected through a VSOP self-assessment tool; interviews with VSOP, police, and agency partners; and client tracking data.

Alignment with Promising Practices

Promising Practice	Achievements	Challenges & Opportunities	Alignment Rating
1 - Involvement of survivors in direct response and program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate involvement of survivors in direct response (i.e., one counsellor with survivor experience) and in the development of program (e.g., procedures and practices) All counsellors received specialized training for their role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of racial representation on the direct response team 	High
2 - Single point of contact and warm transfers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client's point of contact with AHT counsellor was clear & consistent At least 26 warm transfers & 95 accompaniments (e.g., court, appointments) were completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHT counsellors not always available after hours or on weekend 	High
3 - Co-location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VSOP & police are co-located on separate floors within same building Easy access for warm transfers, discuss/problem-solve, & face-to-face interpersonal interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified 	High
4 - Client-centred and trauma-informed services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible, low-barrier service Safe environment Culturally responsive to identified needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting to services that may not be as client-centred/trauma-informed 	High

Alignment with Promising Practices (continued)

Promising Practice	Achievements	Challenges & Opportunities	Alignment Rating
5 - Meeting essential needs of survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most successful at meeting needs quickly for transportation, safety devices, food/basic necessities, hotel accommodations, & medical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More difficult to meet needs quickly for shelters, financial assistance, and substance use treatment 	High
6 - Referral network and community asset mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear strengthening of referral partnerships Referrals in are low-barrier & seamless Total of 474 referrals out to 43 organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers to referrals out: extensive intake, not responsive, lack of space or capacity Transitioning clients out of VSOP's care 	High
7 - Formalized structure and direct channels of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear roles/responsibilities and communication AHT counsellors are responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different expectations/rules around confidentiality between VSOP and police 	High
8 - Specialized Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate training to handle crisis situations, use client-centred trauma-informed approach, and be culturally responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training opportunities identified: cultural responsiveness, mental health, safety protocols, & administrative 	High
9 - Proactive approach to identify survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles were clear and counsellors were considered an asset Not enough collaborative probes to determine effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty planning and coordinating Access to vehicle for counsellors 	Low to medium
10 - Coordinating body/advisory board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory group of key partners created and met on a regular basis Facilitated connections, multiple perspectives, project promotion, and strategic direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More opportunities to problem-solve & develop advocacy strategies 	High
Cultural responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall TWO has been culturally responsive when interacting with & connecting clients to supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional training, racial diversity on team, partnerships with organizations serving racialized groups 	Medium to High

Achievement of Outcomes

Outcome	Achievements	Challenges & Opportunities	Status
1 - Improved collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of many new collaborations and strengthening of existing collaborations Refer to Promising Practice 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional collaborations with organizations focused on racialized communities 	On track
2 - Improved timely systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis intervention was responsive, quick and seamless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Promising Practice 2 	On track
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection to supports were timely (see Promising Practice 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Promising Practice 5 Better understanding of the number of clients who need immediate emergency support (i.e., within 3 hours) 	On track; more data needed
3 - Increased sense of safety & trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 88% of clients accepted the support being provided 20% (68) of clients were willing to speak to police 22% of clients were self-referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct feedback from clients would strengthen these findings 	On track; more data needed
4 - Increased engagement in support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2024-25, the number of human trafficking clients has more than tripled and the amount of VQRP+ funds used has more than doubled compared to the year prior to TWO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified 	On track
5-6 - Safety planning & exiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of clients made a safety plan 80% of clients made at least one attempt to exit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified 	On track

Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall, for this interim report, TWO has achieved high alignment on almost all promising practices and is on track towards achieving both organizational-system and individual-level outcomes. In response to the challenges and opportunities identified in this report, the VSOP project team developed eleven recommendations to be implemented in 2025-2026.

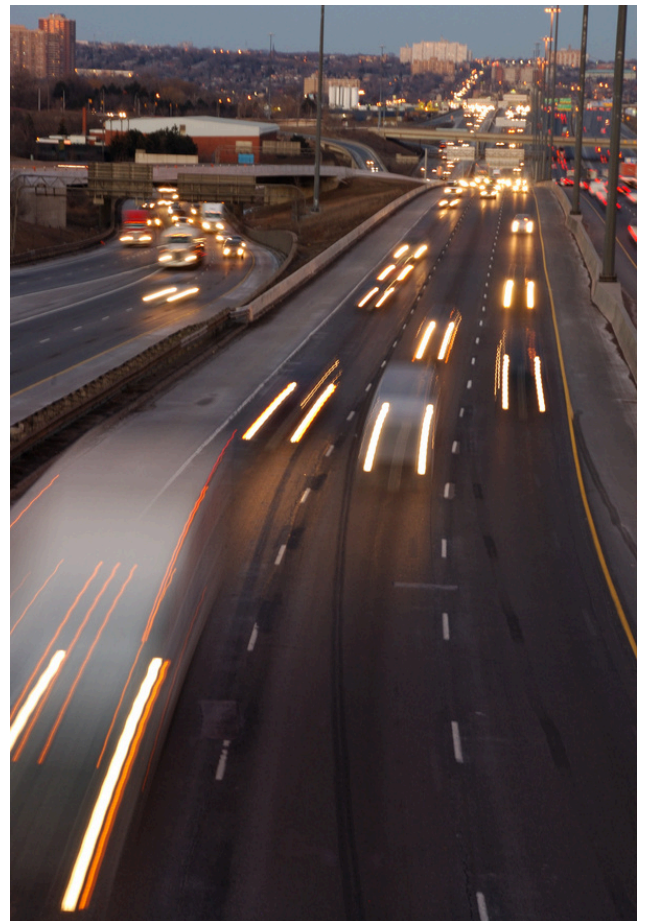
Background

Police-reported incidents of human trafficking have been increasing since 2013 with rates in Ontario, particularly large urban centres, being higher than the national average. The vast majority of these police-reported survivors are women and girls (93%) and of these women and girls, most are aged 24 years and younger (68%) (Statistics Canada, 2023). Others who are at-risk include Indigenous women and girls, new immigrants, 2SLGBTQI+ persons, and those who are socially or economically disadvantaged (Public Safety Canada, 2024).

The demographic profile, size and location of the Region of Peel makes it particularly susceptible to incidents of human trafficking. Peel has a population of 1.5 million people and the highest percentage of racialized people in the Greater Toronto Area with 69% of its population identifying with a racialized group. It also has the highest proportion of immigrants in Ontario with over half of their population being born outside Canada and 14% of the immigrant population being newcomers (arrived in Canada within the past five years) (Peel Region, 2021). Peel Region is located along the Highway 401 corridor between the City of Toronto, Niagara Falls and Pearson Airport making it accessible to human traffickers for receiving, transporting, or harbouring individuals for exploitation.

In June 2023, Victim Services of Peel (VSOP) received a grant from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) to implement a collaborative service delivery model that provides immediate crisis response to victims/survivors of human trafficking called This Way Out → (TWO). This model aims to increase survivor access to supports in the Region of Peel by embedding VSOP's Anti-Human Trafficking Counsellors with the Vice Unit (Human Trafficking Unit) of Peel Regional Police.

From November 2023 to March 2025, Collective Results led the development and implementation of an evaluation of TWO. The following is an interim report of the evaluation findings up to March 2025. The focus of the evaluation is on the implementation of TWO and its alignment with promising practices and the extent to which the project has achieved organizational/system-level and individual-level outcomes.



Program Model

TWO is a collaborative service delivery model that provides immediate crisis response to victims/survivors of human trafficking by embedding VSOP's Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) counsellors to work directly with the Vice Unit (Human Trafficking Unit) of Peel Regional Police. This model was based on what is known as "Crisis Intervention Teams" whereby police and community mental health professionals work together to address and de-escalate incidents of mental health crises in the community. It was first piloted for human trafficking cases in Durham Region starting in 2019 (Victim Services of Durham Region/Durham Regional Police Services, 2021).

The overall goal of this model is to improve access to emergency and community support services for survivors of human trafficking. Through this model of service delivery, VSOP aims to deliver survivor-centred, trauma-informed crisis services for human trafficking victims/survivors; improve access and reduce response time to urgent and necessary support services; increase capacity for 24/7 emergency support services for victims/survivors of human trafficking; ensure human trafficking victims/survivors are quickly identified and provided with appropriate supports; and ensure a continuum of service through inter-organizational collaboration.

Activities

TWO provides support to any individual in the Region of Peel who is currently in or has recently exited a human trafficking situation. In November 2023, VSOP hired two AHT counsellors with funding from WAGE. Due to unexpected demand, a third counsellor was added in January, 2024. These three AHT Counsellors work collaboratively with four Human Trafficking Vice Unit teams (16 police officers) at Peel Regional Police. The Vice Unit identifies human trafficking survivors through their general investigations and provides referrals directly to the counsellors. The counsellors provide immediate crisis intervention counselling for survivors and connect them to community and emergency support services as needed. The counsellors will also connect human trafficking survivors that they have identified (through other referral sources) to the Vice Unit as appropriate. The Vice Unit also collaborates with AHT Counsellors to go on in-person investigations of suspicious activities in the community (called probe investigations) that may lead to identifying a human trafficking situation.

Outcomes

The overall impact statement for TWO is that victims/survivors of human trafficking live their lives free from violence, exploitation, and fear. TWO aims to achieve impact through both organizational and system-level and individual-level outcomes recognizing that these two levels are strongly interconnected.

Organizational & Systems-Level

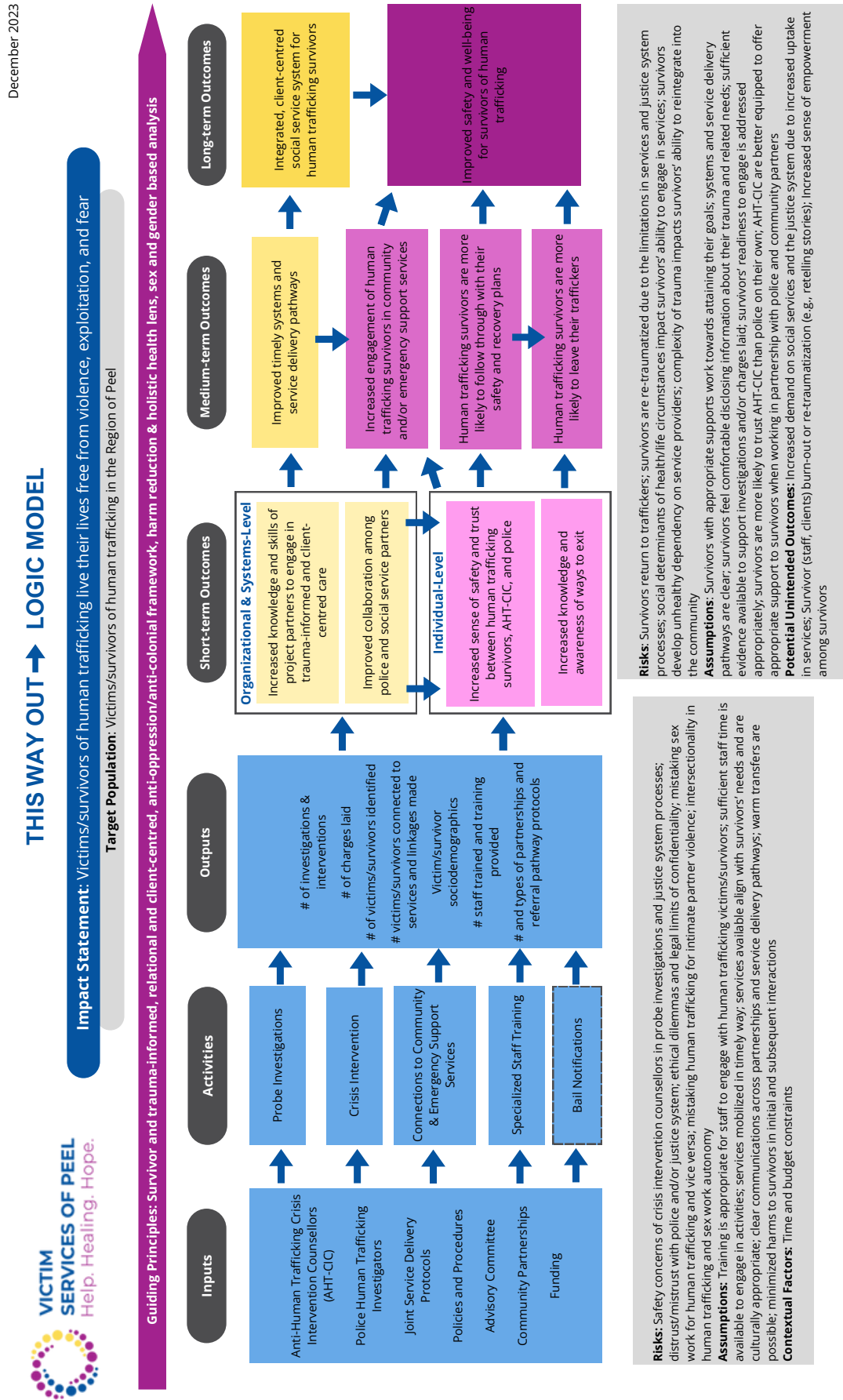
The long-term outcome is to have an integrated, client-centred social service system for human trafficking survivors. TWO hopes to contribute to this long-term outcome by increasing the knowledge and skills of project partners to engage in trauma-informed and client-centred care and improve collaboration among police and social service partners leading to improved timely systems and service delivery pathways.

Individual-Level

The long-term outcome is to improve the safety and well-being for survivors of human trafficking. TWO hopes to contribute to this long-term outcome by increasing the sense of safety and trust between survivors, AHT counsellors, and police; and increasing survivor's knowledge and awareness of ways to exit. These short-term outcomes will precipitate survivors' connection to community and emergency support services and increase the likelihood that survivors will follow through with safety plans and leave their trafficking situation.

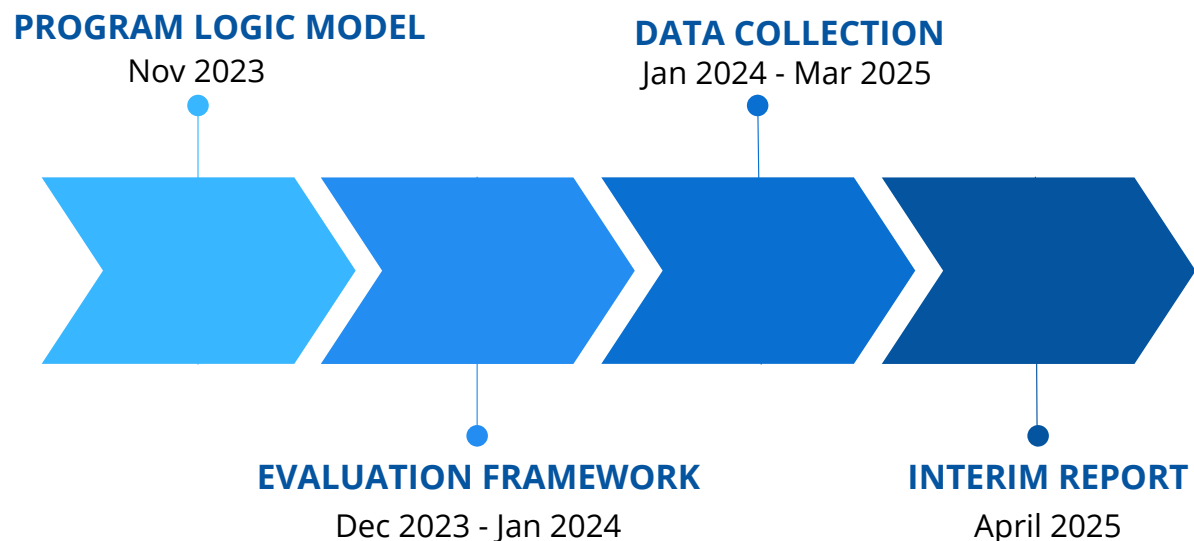
Refer to Figure 1 for a full description of TWO's program logic model.

Figure 1: TWO Logic Model



Evaluation Framework

To develop an evaluation framework, Collective Results engaged with VSOP project leads, AHT counsellors and the TWO advisory group made up of agency partners including Peel Regional Police, referral partners, and an Indigenous elder to develop a program logic model (Figure 1). The purpose of the logic model was to clarify the key components of the program and how they connected to the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of the program. The logic model also highlighted some of the risks, assumptions, potential unintended consequences, and contextual factors related to the program. Following the development of the program logic model, Collective Results worked with VSOP project leads and AHT counsellors to develop the evaluation questions, indicators, methodology and data collection tools.



Evaluation Questions

The focus of this evaluation was answering the following questions:

1

How well is the project being implemented based on promising practices? How culturally responsive is the project?

2

To what extent are the outcomes being achieved?

- **organizational and systems-level outcomes**
- **individual-level outcomes**

Methods

The evaluation used a mixed methods design collecting both quantitative and qualitative data using three tools: 1) VSOP client tracking data; 2) TWO promising practices assessment tool; and 3) key informant interviews with VSOP, police, and partner agencies. It should be noted that a client survey was also developed, however, findings from the survey will not be reported for this interim report due to a low response rate.

Data Collection Tools

Client tracking data

AHT Counsellors tracked and recorded client data including how clients were identified, attempts to exit, external referrals, and demographic information.

TWO Promising Practices Assessment Tool

The TWO promising practice assessment was a survey tool that assessed the extent to which TWO was aligned with the promising practices for collaborative service delivery to survivors of human trafficking. It contained questions that refer to each of the 10 promising practices that were identified in the literature review, *Exploring Promising Practice for Collaborative Service Delivery to Survivors of Human Trafficking* (Collective Results, 2024). Each member of VSOP's project team was asked to complete the assessment tool.

Key Informant Interviews

A total of 17 Interviews were conducted with VSOP's project team (i.e., counsellors, manager, VSOP Executive Director), Peel Regional Police Human Trafficking Vice Unit, and referral partner agencies. The interview questions were tailored to each person's role in the project but included questions about the project's alignment with promising practices; cultural responsiveness; achievement of organizational/systems-level outcomes; project strengths; and project challenges/areas of improvement.

Client Survey

The client survey has three sections. The first section asks about client's experiences receiving support from the AHT counsellors. The second section asks about the client's current human trafficking status. The third section asks some demographic questions. Note that findings from this survey will not be included in the interim report due to low response rate. Future consideration will be discussed.

Data Analyses

Descriptive analyses were performed with the client tracking and quantitative assessment tool data. Thematic analyses were conducted with the interviews and qualitative assessment tool data.

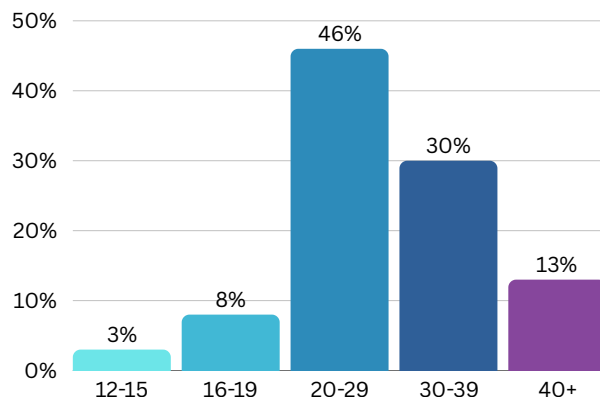
TWO Clients

From November 2023 to March 2025 a total of **309 client files were opened** and **254 of these clients were unique individuals**. In addition, there were **97 secondary clients** (e.g., family members) that were identified.

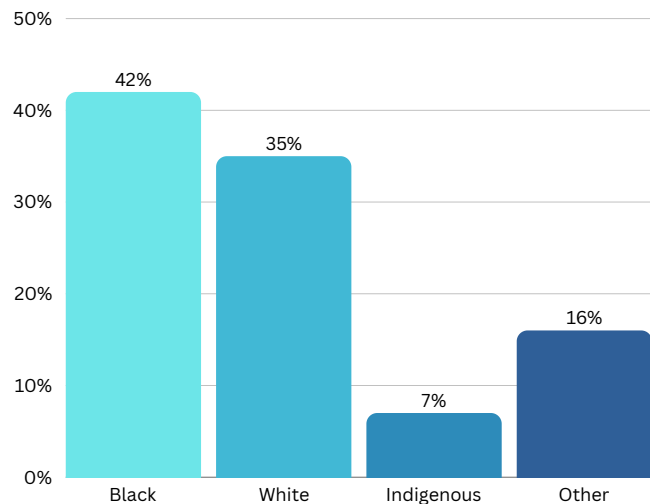
Participant Demographics

The vast majority of participants identified as **female** (97%); 2% identified as male; and the remaining 1% identified as non-binary or transgender. The age category with the largest number of clients was **20 to 29 years old** (46%) followed by **30 to 39 years old** (30%). For those clients whose racial identity was known, the largest racial group was **Black** (e.g., African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean) (42%) followed by **White** (e.g., English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Slovakian).

Age



Race*



*Racial identity was collected from 43% of clients. Clients with unknown racial identity were removed when calculating percentages.

KEY FINDINGS - SECTION 1

Promising Practices

Summary

From January to March 2024, Collective Results conducted a literature review that described ten promising practices for collaborative service delivery to survivors of human trafficking entitled, *Exploring Promising Practices for Collaborative Service Delivery to Survivors of Human Trafficking*. These promising practices were used as a basis to evaluate the implementation of TWO for this interim report described in the sections below. Table 1 lists each promising practice and the degree to which TWO was aligned with the practice (low, medium, or high) based on the findings in this report.

Table 1: Overall Alignment with Each Promising Practice

Promising Practice	Alignment Rating
1 - Involvement of survivors in direct response & program development	High
2 - Single point of contact and warm transfers	High
3 - Co-location	High
4 - Client-centred and trauma-informed services	High
5 - Meeting essential needs of survivors	High
6 - Referral network and community asset mapping	High
7 - Formalized structure and direct channels of communication	High
8 - Specialized Training	High
9 - Proactive approach to identify survivors	Low to Medium
10 - Coordinating body/advisory board	High
Cultural responsiveness*	Medium to High

*Considered in the context of the relevant promising practices listed.



Promising Practice 1:

Involvement of Survivors in Direct Response & Program Development

Alignment: High

Brief Description

The meaningful involvement of human trafficking survivors in direct response (e.g., as counsellors) and in the ongoing development and implementation of the collaborative service delivery model is considered important for building trust with survivors and delivering a trauma-informed and client-centred practice. If director survivor involvement is not possible, it is important that team members receive specialized human trafficking training (review Promising Practice 8: Specialized Training).

Achievements

The VSOP project team indicated that TWO has an adequate involvement of human trafficking survivors in direct response (e.g., as counsellors) and in developing the project (e.g., procedures, practices). One AHT counsellor self-identifies as having human trafficking survivor experience and all three counsellors have received specialized training for their role (review Promising Practice 8: Specialized Training).

Challenges & Opportunities

The VSOP project team acknowledged that there would be benefits to have greater racial representation on the direct response team (e.g., AHT counsellors) to better represent the racial diversity in Peel and among human trafficking survivors.





Promising Practice 2: Single Point of Contact & Warm Transfers

Alignment: High

Brief Description

Having a consistent single support person for the human trafficking survivor allows the collaborative team to build trust and a seamless continuum of support. Warm transfers also support survivors by guiding them directly to service providers rather than expecting them to seek support on their own.

Achievements

The VSOP project team, Vice Unit, and agency partners felt that the client's point of contact with the AHT counsellor was clear and consistent. In addition, it was noted that the counsellors take a team approach to finding supports for clients, are aware of the circumstances for each other's clients, and are able to maintain continuity of care even when the assigned counsellor is unavailable. Overall, the AHT counsellors reported providing **26 warm transfers/referrals** and **95 accompaniments** to appointments, court appearances, etc. The number of reported warm referrals and accompaniments reported are likely an underrepresentation of the true numbers due to the difficulty of tracking these activities reliably. Agency partners also reported warm transfers and accompaniments as a vital aspect of the project:

Even though we've accepted them, it's not like here you go, I'm done, but definitely staying on.

It's not just someone behind a desk sort of navigating and arranging transportation but having those boots on the ground workers available.

Challenges & Opportunities

The main challenge identified regarding having a single point of contact was that, due to the small team size, there were some times after hours or on weekends when the AHT counsellors were not available. While all urgent matters were responded to by VSOP, the AHT counsellors were not available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Promising Practice 3: Co-location

Alignment: High

Brief Description

Co-location of the collaborative team members (police and victim services) has been shown to facilitate collaboration and cooperation, promote relationship-building, allow timely resolution of problems, and facilitates investigations and prosecutions.

Achievements

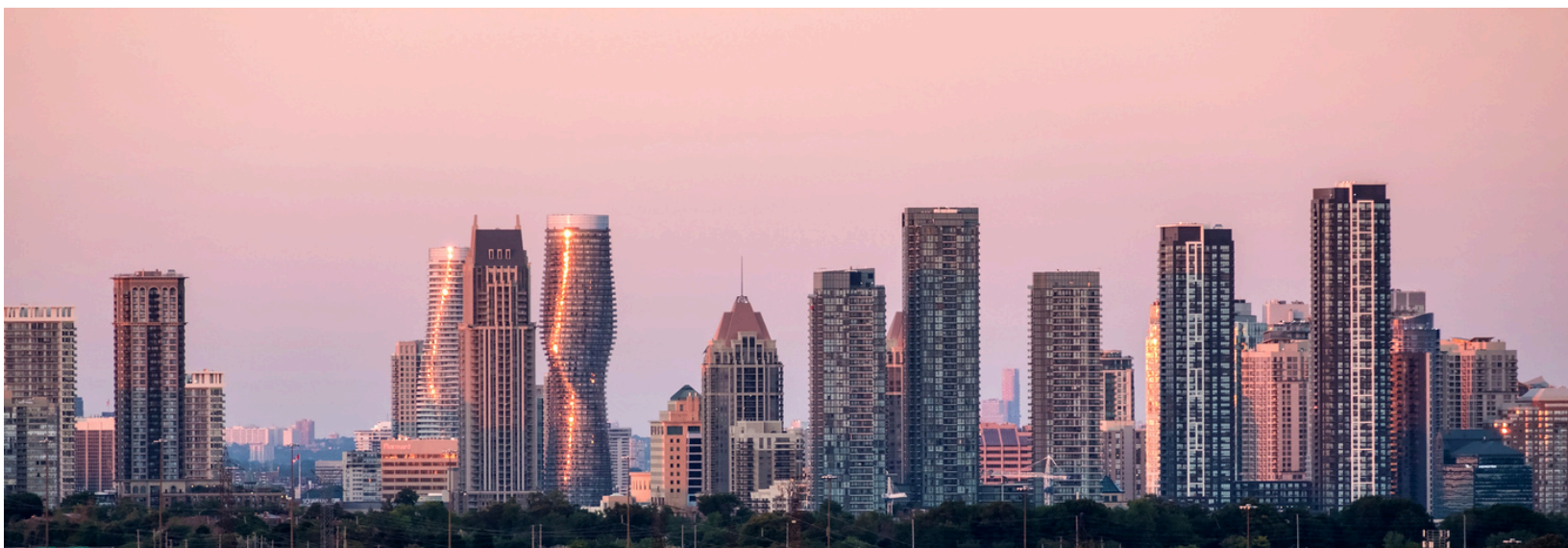
VSOP and Peel Regional Police offices are located on separate floors within the same building. The VSOP project and police described this as an asset to their collaboration and partnership. It provided easy access for warm transfers with clients, discuss or problem-solve cases, and face-to-face interpersonal interactions.

We can gel with them a lot more being here in this building.

We can just walk downstairs and say hi to them and they can walk up and we can grab coffees if we want.

Challenges & Opportunities

No challenges or opportunities were identified for co-location.





Promising Practice 4: Trauma-Informed & Client-Centred Services

Alignment: High

Brief Description

Providing client-centred care and trauma-informed services is considered essential to the success of the collaborative service delivery model. Principles of client-centred and trauma-informed care include non-judgment, informed consent, empowerment, safety, transparency, confidentiality, and cultural responsiveness.

Achievements

Applying a client-centred and trauma-informed approach was identified as a particular strength of TWO by the VSOP project team, police, and partner agencies. It was discussed in the context of providing an accessible, low barrier service – one that does not place any burden on the client to provide extensive information or meet certain criteria to receive services. In addition, there was an intentional effort to create a safe environment for survivors that minimized the risk of re-traumatization and ensured that all interactions with clients provided choice about the services and support they would like to receive. It was also reported that the counsellors provided a culturally responsive approach to their survivors ensuring that their unique needs were considered and they were connected to culturally appropriate services.

All of the trauma-informed principles [are being used] in every interaction. Providing choice, empowerment, creating a safe environment for them.

One of our biggest things is meeting clients where they are at.

We remove a lot of asking for details about things.

This is probably the biggest strength of [TWO] is having a trauma-informed and client-centred approach.

It's trauma informed, it's person-centered. I will say they're very good at that—treating everyone like an individual.

I think that they are very culturally aware and sensitive and responsive to the needs [of survivors].

Challenges & Opportunities

The VSOP project team and agency partners identified the potential for TWO to become more culturally responsive through project improvements in three areas: 1) more training (see Promising Practice 8: Specialized Training); 2) more racially diverse representation on the team (both counsellors and police); and 3) strengthening partnerships with organizations serving racialized groups. It was also recognized that the police Vice Unit may not have the same level of trauma-informed, client-centred skills as counsellors who have more training and experience in this area. AHT counsellors also faced barriers when connecting survivors to services that were not as client-centred or trauma-informed (e.g., extensive intake process, need to disclose details about trauma) underscoring the need for ongoing advocacy for human trafficking survivors.





Promising Practice 5: Meeting Essential Needs of Survivors

Alignment: High

Brief Description

Meeting the essential needs of survivors quickly including shelter and food, financial assistance, medical care, and substance use treatment is critical for survivors to successfully exit their trafficking situation.

Achievements

Overall, the VSOP project team indicated that TWO is mostly successful at meeting the essential needs of survivors within a short time frame. TWO is particularly successful at meeting the needs in the following areas: transportation, safety devices (e.g., phone), food/basic necessities, hotel accommodations, and medical care.

Challenges & Opportunities

Those essential needs areas that were more difficult to find immediate support were for shelters, financial assistance, and substance use treatment or detox. The barriers to shelters and substance use/detox treatment were similar including limited space available; lack of capacity to handle the complexity of needs for human trafficking survivors; other accessibility problems (e.g., extensive intake process); or the client is not ready to accept these services. In response to these challenges, VSOP has started to strengthen their partnerships with these types of agencies both within and beyond their geographical area. In terms of financial assistance, basic financial needs were usually met but there were still challenges for certain survivors (e.g., undocumented or out-of-province residents). While some of these challenges implicate larger systemic issues, like the lack of shelter space, the VSOP project team recognized the importance of continuing to build strong referral partnerships in these areas and undertaking advocacy efforts to reduce systemic barriers for survivors.



Promising Practice 6: Referral Network & Community Asset Mapping

Alignment: High

Brief Description

The development of vetted referral networks and community asset mapping are important for delivering a seamless continuum of care to survivors of human trafficking.

Achievements

Partner agencies reported a clear strengthening of their referral partnership with VSOP as a direct result of TWO. Agencies report that referrals to them from TWO have been appropriate with a smooth transition. As mentioned in Promising Practice 3: Single Point of Contact & Warm Transfers, some interviewees noted the value of warm transfers and accompaniments being provided by the AHT Counsellors. Furthermore, referrals from partner agencies to VSOP/TWO have been described as low barrier and seamless.

I think having the dedicated team makes the world of a difference because they understand the topic and they are responsive.

Very straight seamless process

They are so accessible and so low barrier. I think they're one of our easiest community partners to get in touch and get help from.

It was not the same before This Way Out because now I know where I can go.

In addition to these observations, several interviewees noted the AHT counsellors “resourcefulness” and ability to “think outside the box” to find supports and services for the survivors. As evidence of this resourcefulness, the VSOP project team have made referral connections beyond social service agencies to other needed services such as a tattoo removal clinic, dental clinic, tax clinic, and a bank (to support debt removal). Table 2 shows the number of referrals and referral partners by organization. The highest number of referrals has been to the Victim Quick Response Program Plus (VQRP+) followed by the Transitional and Housing Support Program and Shelters/Residential Support.

Table 2: Number of referrals and referral partners by organization

Organization Name or Type	# of referrals	# of orgs
Victim Quick Response Program Plus (VQRP+)	205	1
Transitional & Housing Support Program	77	1
Shelter / Residential Support (including Our Place Peel & EFRY)	67	At least 9
nCourage	33	1
Ontario Works (OW)	24	1
Other Victim Services	23	At least 6
Residential Treatment	11	7
Defend Dignity Grant	8	1
Other Community Supports (e.g., counselling, primary care, etc.)	19	16
TOTAL	474	43

Challenges & Opportunities

There have been some challenges identified with establishing referral pathways for human trafficking survivors. The VSOP project team noted that some agencies have barriers that often make it difficult for survivors to access their services, including an extensive intake process, lack of responsiveness (especially outside regular business hours), lack of space, and lack of capacity to take on the complex needs of a human trafficking survivor. Partner agency interviewees also mentioned that the AHT Counsellors, given that there are only three of them, are also not always available after hours or on weekends. Both the VSOP project team and partner agencies recognized the importance of continuing to build more formal referral pathways with agencies to prioritize accessibility for human trafficking survivors particularly shelters and safe housing. Interviewees also identified the need to develop referral pathways to community organizations that serve specific racial or ethnic communities.

The VSOP project team and partner agencies also discussed the difficulty fully transitioning clients from VSOP's care to other agencies partly due to accessibility but also due to gaps in services and clients' reluctance to end the support they have been receiving from the AHT counsellors. As of March 2025, there were 122 open human trafficking case files for VSOP to manage. There was general concern from respondents about the implications for the AHT counsellors in terms of managing large caseloads. Suggestions for successfully transitioning clients along the continuum of care included, clearly articulating the care pathway for clients and the criteria for transition; communicate the care pathway to clients to increase their understanding and acceptance of moving on; and continue to build strong partnership with referral agencies to increase confidence in the care pathway.



Promising Practice 7: Formalized Structure & Direct Channels of Communication

Alignment: High

Brief Description

A collaborative service delivery model should have a formal team structure, clear roles and responsibilities, and consistent communication channels to discuss clients.

Achievements

Overall, both police and the VSOP project team felt that their respective roles and responsibilities were clear and there was easy, clear and consistent communication between police and VSOP. The police noted that the AHT counsellors were highly responsive to their calls/texts and quick to connect with survivors.

They respond to the victim right away and then they let us know that they've reached out to the victim. So as far as communications, I never have to guess.

It's very clear, when you break it down to what our job is and what victim services can provide.

We have open dialogue of communication

I think everybody for the most part stays in their own lane.

Challenges & Opportunities

The main challenge identified by both police and the VSOP project team regarding roles and responsibilities was regarding client confidentiality. In general, police do not abide by the same strict client confidentiality rules as the social services sector. Interviewees described situations where police were requesting client information that AHT counsellors would not divulge due to confidentiality policies. From the police perspective, the requested information may be important for the safety of the police officer, support an investigation, or simply to alleviate concerns about the survivor. From the perspective of the VSOP team, maintaining confidentiality was important for building trust with the survivor and avoiding re-traumatization, preserving survivor privacy, and maintaining professionalism in their job. Despite this identified challenge, most police interviewees expressed an understanding of the importance of maintaining client confidentiality. It was clear that there had already been meetings between VSOP and police to help clarify the confidentiality policies that AHT counsellors were bound by, and the rationale for having them.



Promising Practice 8: Specialized Training

Alignment: High

Brief Description

The collaborative crisis intervention team should have human trafficking specific training and an understanding of best practices for interagency collaboration.

Achievements

Overall, the VSOP project team reported that they received adequate training to prepare them to handle most HT crisis situations; to implement a trauma-informed and client-centred approach to their work; and to be culturally responsive to individual needs. The police Vice Unit also mentioned the value of the training they received from VSOP. In particular, some Vice Unit members thought that the collaboration between VSOP and the Vice Unit to provide probe investigation training to the police college was particularly effective. Table 3 provides a summary of the training completed by the counsellors and police.

Challenges & Opportunities

The VSOP project team identified several areas where they thought the counsellors and Vice Unit could benefit from additional training. It was recognized that, in an effort to get the project up and running quickly to meet the demand pressures, the counsellors/Vice Unit did not have the time needed to provide a fulsome training curriculum to the TWO team. Table 3 outlines the training needs that were identified by the VSOP project team and Vice Unit.



Table 3: Training Completed & Training Needs

Training/Learning Completed	Training/Learning Needs Identified
AHT Counsellors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training provided through previous social work education and roles • Anti-oppressive practice • Crisis prevention and response training (e.g., Crisis Prevention Institute, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) • Trauma-informed practice • Human trafficking specific training • Lived experience (one counsellor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Indigenous and other racialized groups • Newcomers and settlement • Understanding different types of human trafficking (e.g., familial, labour) • Mental health and substance use (including harm reduction) • Safety protocols and procedures • Administrative training (e.g., case management for human trafficking clients, case noting and maintaining database)
AHT Counsellors with Police Vice Unit	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human trafficking conferences • Vicarious trauma • Teaching probe investigations at police college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the boundaries of confidentiality in the social service sector
Police Vice Unit/Other Police Units	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed practice for Vice Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional trauma-informed practice training for the Vice Unit and other related units (e.g., Special Victims Unit, Intimate Partner Violence)



Promising Practice 9: Proactive Approach to Identify Survivors

Alignment: Low to Medium

Brief Description

Taking a proactive approach to identifying survivors was identified as an important component of a comprehensive collaborative human trafficking response model.

Achievements

At the time of this report, it was unclear if the proactive approach (referred to as probe investigations) was a successful approach to identifying survivors. From November 2023 to March 2025, five human trafficking survivors were identified through probe investigations. At the time of the interviews, AHT counsellors and police had not conducted enough collaborative probe investigations to be able to fully assess their success. For those probe investigations that were undertaken using a team approach, the VSOP project team and police felt that they went well – their roles and responsibilities were clear and police felt that the counsellors were an asset to the team.

We are better at it with them [the counsellors] than we are without them.

Sometimes [the women/girls] don't want to talk to us so having that tool, that offer, is huge.

It's really beneficial to have someone there right then to talk to that person...and then they can build their relationship and trust and hopefully, eventually, tell their story.

It was also noted that probe investigations may have other positive outcomes in addition to identifying survivors such as building awareness and trust in the community for VSOP and the other supports available to them. The AHT Counsellors have capitalized on this opportunity by creating care packages to provide to people while on probes.

Challenges & Opportunities

One barrier to conducting more collaborative probe investigations from the Vice Unit perspective was the coordination, planning, and scheduling required to have both counsellors and police conduct the probes. It was also noted that access to a vehicle for the counsellors would likely facilitate the probe investigations allowing greater flexibility and a more clear delineation between counsellors and police from a survivor perspective. For those collaborative probe investigations that did occur, individuals tended to decline services. However, as mentioned, more probe investigations are needed to determine their value for building trust and awareness and identifying survivors. It remains unclear if probe investigations are a promising practice for TWO.



Promising Practice 10: Coordinating Body/Advisory Board

Alignment: High

Brief Description

A coordinating body or advisory group is important for ensuring that there is an effective intersectoral and interagency collaboration when responding to human trafficking.

Achievements

TWO has an advisory group composed of the VSOP project team, representatives from three agency partners, one police representative, an Indigenous Elder consultant, and the evaluator. The advisory group has met on a monthly or bimonthly basis throughout the duration of the project. Overall, the interviewees who were also members of the advisory group felt that the group was effective for facilitating connections and relationships between agencies, bringing multiple perspectives together, successfully promoting the project, and providing strategic direction for the project.

Shows that it is a collaboration.

I think the breadth of who's around the table was well thought out and beneficial

It was really important in building relationships and rapport and trust because, in human trafficking, it's all about trust, even amongst service providers

Challenges & Opportunities

Some interviewees felt that there could be more opportunities for the advisory group to problem-solve together and develop advocacy strategies. Interviewees also discussed potential opportunities to expand the group to more partners including organizations that focus on particular racial groups.

KEY FINDINGS – SECTION 2

Outcomes

Summary

The evaluation assessed the extent to which TWO is achieving six short and medium-term outcomes (both organizational/system-level outcomes and individual-level outcomes). The following table summarizes the current status of each of the outcomes based on the data collected from November 2023 to March 2025. The key findings for each of the selected outcomes are described below.

Table 4: Summary of Status Ratings for TWO Outcomes

Outcome	Status
1 - Improved collaboration among police & social service partners	On track (exceeding expectations)
2A - Improved timely systems & service delivery pathways - crisis intervention	On track (exceeding expectations)
2B - Improved timely systems & service delivery pathways - connection to supports	On track (meeting expectations); more data needed
3 - Increased sense of safety & trust between human trafficking survivors, AHT counsellors, and police	On track (exceeding expectations); more data needed
4 - Increased engagement of HT survivors in community and/or emergency support services	On track (exceeding expectations)
5/6 - HT survivors are more likely to follow through with their safety and recovery plans and leave their traffickers	On track (exceeding expectations)



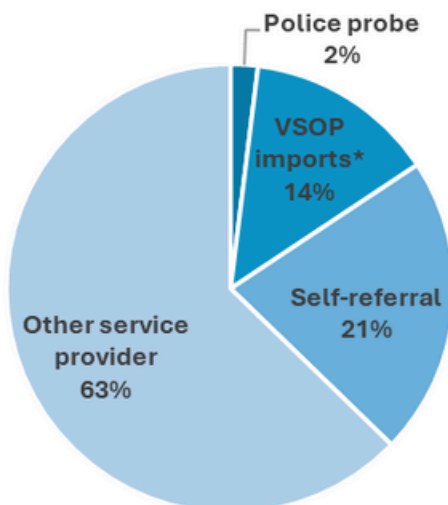
Organizational- System Outcome 1: Improved Collaboration

Overall

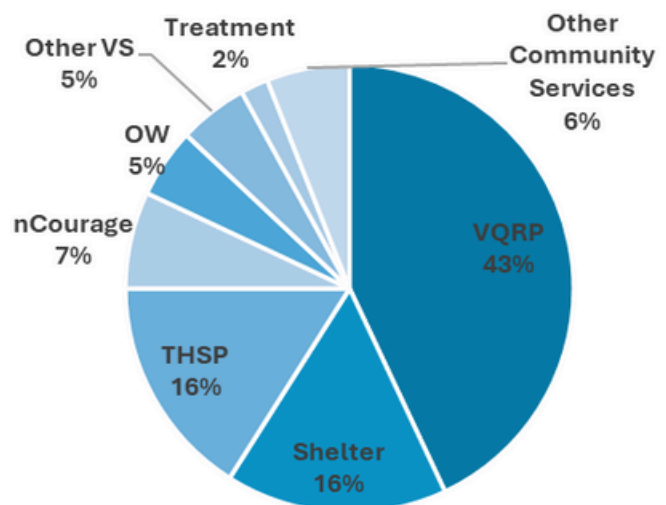
Status: On Track (exceeding expectations)

The VSOP project team, police and partner agencies interviewees all described the development of new collaborations and the strengthening of existing collaborations as a result of TWO. Interviewees described a feeling of being “in it together” and supporting clients together with each having their own role to play. Both police and partner agency interviewees noted that TWO took some of the burden they had been facing when supporting human trafficking survivors. They also felt that they were able to have open conversations with TWO project team including difficult conversations. The graphs below show the type of referrals into and out of TWO by percentage of clients. The majority of human trafficking referrals into TWO are coming from external service providers (63%). For referrals from TWO to other agencies, there were 474 referrals to over 43 different organizations from TWO (see Table 2). Table 5 provides some examples of the collaborations developed as a result of TWO.

Referrals In



Referrals Out



*Includes those identified through police occurrences, intimate partner violence & sexual assaults.

Collaboration with Police

The police described the development of a strong partnership with the TWO project team over a short period of time. The police interviewees noted how much they valued the partnership with VSOP and described how the AHT counsellors have become integral to performing their job as police officers in the human trafficking Vice Unit. They also noted the value of having individuals who specialize in human trafficking to support survivors.

It's hard to fathom my job and my work within this unit without the three of them because we've done so much.

The amount that we rely on them for our victims is immeasurable.

I cannot conceive of us doing our job without them.

They try to take on as much on the victim side so we can concentrate on what we have to do.

They're able to bridge a gap [because] there is always a bit of trepidation with our victims in terms of speaking to police.

We work very well as a team together.

Collaboration with Social Service Partners

All partner agencies who were interviewed felt that their agency's collaboration with VSOP had been strengthened as a result of TWO. In most cases, it went from a weak or limited collaboration to a true partnership. Similar to the police, some partner agencies felt that the VSOP project team had alleviated some of the burden they were feeling when supporting human trafficking survivors.

We've worked hand in hand as partners with them to support multiple clients.

They did a phenomenal job building partnerships and building a community of support.

So it's a sense of camaraderie and we see each other at the same kind of events and we're aligning more. So I think it's expanded our relationships, which is always a good thing.

It's brought us closer together, to be honest, because I think it's a mutual need, especially for such a unique population.

Our staff feel more prepared to address it because they know they're not alone now.

Table 5: Examples of Collaborations from TWO

Organization	Description of Collaboration
Peel Regional Police	Connect all human trafficking clients who are seeking support to VSOP; have initiated a similar collaboration for sexual assault survivors.
Ontario Works	Access to a point person who provides an expedited process to access financial assistance.
Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres	Dedicated space for residential treatment for human trafficking survivors at a cost that can be covered by VQRP funding.
Children's Aid Society	Access to a point person that can provide specialized support to human trafficking survivors.
VQRP+	Ongoing collaboration with VQRP to ensure legitimate expenses related to human trafficking cases are accepted (e.g., branding removal).
External to Social Services	Dental clinic to provide low cost dental treatment. Bank to provide debt removal support. Tattoo removal clinic to provide low cost removal of branding tattoos.

Challenges & Opportunities

Interviewees noted that they saw more opportunities for collaboration particularly for organizations that focus on racialized communities (e.g., South Asian, Black, Indigenous). Some partner agencies also discussed the benefits of ensuring that there is clarity on VSOP's and other agencies' roles and responsibilities in order to set expectations for clients and prevent duplication of services. Partner agencies would also like to better understand the boundaries of TWO in terms of when survivors would no longer be in their care. For police, it was noted that there was less awareness of human trafficking and less collaboration with VSOP outside the Human Trafficking Vice Unit.



Organizational-System Outcome 2: Improved Timely Systems

Crisis Intervention

Status: On Track (exceeding expectations)

The VSOP project team, police, and partner agencies described TWO as responsive, quick, and providing a seamless connection for survivors to immediate crisis intervention.

We have their numbers and can text them right away instead of having to call into the victim service number and talk to a random person.

I think, just them being able to assist right off the bat. That's a lot that these victims need.

There's never been any pushback. They've always been, 'let's see if we can make it work one way or another.' And they always seem to

They're very quick. As soon as we get a hold of them, they're on it. And I mean, on it.

We didn't know what to do with people in the middle of the night who were coming trafficked. So having victim services have those services specifically available has been really helpful for us.

Emergency & Other Support Services

Status: On Track (meeting expectations); more data needed

As discussed in the previous section, Promising Practice 5: Meeting Essential Needs of Survivors, AHT counsellors were mostly successful at connecting survivors to supports within a short time frame. Data showed that **33%** of clients received emergency support within 3 hours of referral, however the percentage of clients who needed emergency support who received emergency support is unknown.

Challenges & Opportunities

As mentioned in Promising Practice 2: Single Point of Contact & Warm Transfers, there were some times after hours or on weekends where the AHT counsellors were not available. While all urgent matters were responded to by VSOP, there may have been some delay in response from the AHT counsellors during these times. As mentioned in Promising Practice 5 and 6, there are also many barriers to receiving immediate emergency support including limited space available; lack of capacity to handle the complexity of a human trafficking survivor; other accessibility problems (e.g., extensive intake process); or the client is not ready to accept these services.



Individual Outcome 3: Increased Sense of Safety & Trust

Overall

Status: On Track (exceeding expectations)

To assess whether clients felt a sense of safety and trust in the AHT counsellors and police, data was gathered on whether clients accepted the support being provided and if they were willing to speak to police. The vast majority of clients accepted the support and one in five clients (68) were willing to speak to police.

88%

accept support being provided

20%

willing to speak to police

Other indicators that clients had trust in the human trafficking support being provided by VSOP were the number of self-referrals and the number of clients who returned to VSOP after their files were initially closed. Overall, almost a quarter of clients in TWO were self-referrals (22%) and 33 clients returned at least once (11%).

68

self-referrals

33

returning clients

Challenges & Opportunities

The findings would be strengthened with some direct feedback from clients about their experiences with police and the AHT counsellors.

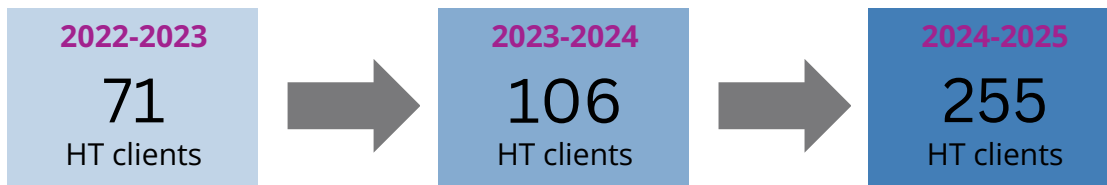


Individual Outcomes 4-6: Increased Engagement in Support Services, Safety Planning, & Exiting

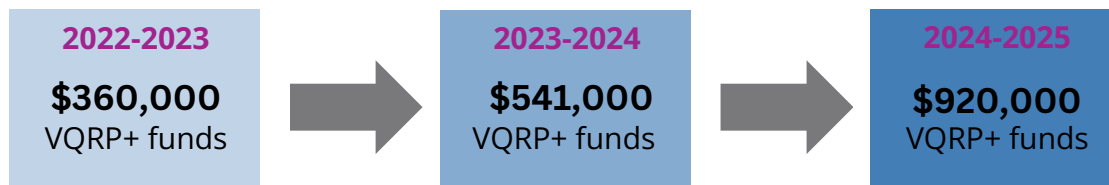
Engagement in Support Services

Status: On Track (exceeding expectations)

The number of human trafficking (HT) clients that have been engaged by VSOP has increased dramatically as a result of TWO. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year (April to March), prior to the implementation of TWO, VSOP had 71 HT clients. In 2023-2024, the year TWO was launched (November 2023), HT clients increased by almost 50%. In 2024-2025, HT clients more than doubled from the year before and more than tripled from 2022-2023.



Additionally there was a substantial increase in the use of VQRP+ which is a Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' program that provides survivors with funding for immediate emergency expenses (e.g., food, transportation, accommodation, emergency devices) as a result of TWO. In 2024-2025, there was more than 2.5 times the amount spent in VQRP+ funding than 2022-2023, the year before TWO was implemented.



Safety Planning & Exiting

Status: On Track (exceeding expectations)

To assess whether clients engaged in a safety plan and were more likely to exit their trafficking situation, data was gathered on whether they made a safety plan and entered safe housing (including shelter, treatment, or emergency accommodations). The vast majority of clients made a safety plan (90%), 26% were provided with a safety device (e.g., cell phone) and almost a third of clients entered safe housing at least once. In addition, the majority of clients attempted to exit their trafficking situation at least once and about 1 out of 10 clients made more than one attempt.



Challenges & Opportunities

No challenges or opportunities identified.



Unanticipated Outcomes & Challenges

Demand for Services & Capacity

The main unanticipated outcome expressed by interviewees was the number of human trafficking survivors that were referred into VSOP. TWO was launched in November 2023 with two counsellors and then a third counsellor was added in January 2024 in order to keep up with demand. As mentioned, the number of human trafficking survivors identified by VSOP has more than tripled when compared to the year before TWO was implemented. Since TWO was launched, 61% have had their files closed which leaves 187 clients on the current caseload--a ratio of approximately 62 clients for each counsellor.

There was general concern expressed across the interviews (VSOP project team, police, and partner agencies) about the capacity of the counsellors to manage the large workload and avoid burnout. Suggested solutions to this challenge included increasing the number of counsellors, finding ways to transition clients out of VSOP's care to another agency, and ensuring AHT counsellors have the appropriate supports in place to avoid burnout.



Evaluation Limitations

Lack of Client Feedback

For the interim report, we were not able to include direct feedback from clients in the findings due to low response rates for the client survey. Being able to include client feedback would provide additional support to the individual-level outcomes. It is hoped that client feedback will be included in the final report.

Interviewee Selection Bias

Interviewees were selected based on their strong connection to the project and their willingness to participate. These individuals may have more positive views of the project than those who had weaker connection to the project or did not volunteer to participate.



Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall, for this interim report, TWO has achieved high alignment on almost all promising practices and is on track towards achieving both organizational-system and individual-level outcomes. In response to the challenges and opportunities identified in this report, the VSOP project team developed the following recommendations to be implemented in 2025-2026.

New Partnerships & Collaborations

1. Identify and develop/strengthen partnerships with organizations serving South Asian, Black, and Muslim communities. Examples include Oasis Centre des Femmes, Sakeenah, Nisa Foundation, and Armagh.
2. Explore additional partnership opportunities including client pet care and low cost transportation.

Additional Training

3. Identify training opportunities to strengthen cultural responsiveness with a focus on South Asian and Black communities, refugees, and international students.
4. Offer human trafficking training to other police units (beyond the Vice Unit).

New Proactive Approaches

5. Explore alternative approaches to proactively identify survivors such as community engagement or outreach.

Managing Capacity

6. Collect data to better understand current workload (e.g., number of files that have high, moderate, and low activity).
7. Develop criteria for clients who can be transitioned to other service providers and transition clients who meet the criteria.
8. AHT counsellors engage in regular clinic consultations to support their work.
9. Increase administrative support to TWO (i.e., administrative assistant).
10. Identify other administrative tools/processes needed to make workflow more efficient, for example, process for invoicing, tracking and uploading for VQRP+; time management tools; and tracking mileage.

Advocacy

11. Offer training and education opportunities to service providers and educators through the Peel Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee

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