

Stronger Municipalities, Stronger Canada

A Prevention Academy for Municipalities and Communities – Countering Hate, Social Polarization and Extremism in Times of Global Crisis

The Context:

Successive national and global crises have put considerable strain on Canadian municipalities as they face rising levels of unrest and dissatisfaction, along with a sharp uptick and hate, social polarization, and discrimination, often fueled by disinformation, grievances, and conspiracy narratives, in the wake of entrenched conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. Local authorities are particularly concerned about the threat of online harms, including mis- and disinformation, hybrid ideologies that embrace violence, and ideologically motivated extremist groups' online activity which has the potential to mobilize individuals to offline violence. Municipalities increasingly recognize that due to their immediate proximity to these incidents and understanding of affected residents, they have an important role to play in addressing these challenges. **Prevention Academy – Canada**, which is being funded by a grant from Public Safety Canada, will help participating municipalities activate this role.

Goals:

Prevention Academy – Canada will allow mayors, councilors, and municipal staff and community partners from 10 municipalities across Canada each year to:

- Better understand and identify the on- and off-line threats, needs and vulnerabilities in their municipalities related to hate, extremism, and related threats to social cohesion;
- Appreciate the benefits of a [public health approach](#) to prevention and the essential role they play in operationalizing and sustaining it, including by leveraging municipality-led efforts in related fields, e.g., community safety, well-being and violence prevention;
- Understand how to apply such an approach in their municipalities, including through the development of whole-of-municipality approaches to prevent hate, extremism, and social polarization that are driven by the needs and priorities of local communities.

Features:

Municipalities enrolled in the program will be supported through:

- A series of **10 learning modules (in-person and virtual)**, complete with technical support to advance each municipality's work in operationalizing a comprehensive



approach to addressing hate, extremism, and social polarization

- Standing **biweekly “Office Hours”** to assist municipalities with issues related to hate and extremism as they arise and/or assist with longer-term efforts
- A dedicated **Subject Matter Expert (SME)** for each municipality to serve as a mentor and resource for the duration of the Academy
- Access to the **Strong Cities “Help Desk”** to receive real-time guidance from the Prevention Academy Team to handle crises as they arise
- **Guides and resources** provided by Strong Cities, partners, and SMEs for support in the application of the knowledge shared during the course.
- Each participating municipality will receive support with:
 - Developing a directory of local stakeholders and programs that can be leveraged for preventing hate, extremism, and polarization, and
 - Identifying and developing a prevention policy or program deliverable.

Examples of Module Topics:

Leading by Example

The Role of Mayors and Councils in Preventing Hate

Community-Driven Prevention

Engaging Diverse Voices and Building Trust

Building a Prevention Network

Engaging Stakeholders and Leveraging Resources

Intervention and Support

Referral Mechanisms and "Wrap-Around" Services

Countering Online Hate

Digital Literacy and Community Empowerment

Sustaining Prevention

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Public-Private Partnerships

Navigating Crisis

Effective Communication and Post-Incident Response

Small Municipalities, Big Impact

Prevention Strategies for Smaller Municipalities

Understanding the Hate Landscape

Data Collection and Threat Assessment

Municipality Involvement:

To participate in Prevention Academy - Canada, each municipality or group of municipalities will designate five individuals (including elected officials and municipal staff). While all municipal staff are welcome at virtual training modules, this core set will ensure consistent knowledge acquisition. Each municipality will sign on for the full year with a commitment to actively engage with Prevention Academy - Canada programming and to produce one, actionable deliverable with support from the Prevention Academy - Canada Advisory Team.

Contact:

For more information about the Academy, including on how to register, please contact Owen Foster, Strong Cities North America Hub Coordinator (OF@strongcitiesnetwork.org)

