





# Kickstand Impact Highlights

The Kickstand Network is making a measurable difference for youth mental health across Alberta. In this section, we highlight their impacts by drawing on data from 2024 and 2025 (until August).

## Increased Youth Support Access

- \* 489 young people visited Kickstand Centres on average every month.
- \* 131 young people visited Kickstand Connect on average every month.
- \* Kickstand Centres saw a 237% year-over-year increase in visits, going from 2,240 visits in 2024 to 7,541 service user visits in 2025 (until August).
- \* The Kickstand Network could expect 7,440 visits or more in 2026 (based on a simple average of monthly service user visits from the past two years).

## Alignment with Youth Service Needs

- \* 23% of young people said they would have 'nowhere' to turn to if they didn't access Kickstand services.

## Improved Youth Mental Health

- \* Average self-rated mental health scores increased from 1 to 1.4 for youth who accessed services more than once and provided data at both visits.
- \* 83% of young people agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better after participating in Kickstand services.
- \* 81% of young people said they were highly likely (9 or 10 out of 10) to recommend Kickstand programs and services to a friend.



# Introduction

Since launching the Kickstand Network and opening eight integrated Kickstand Centres, the initiative has worked to remove barriers, connect youth to the right supports at the right time, and build welcoming spaces grounded in accessibility and collaboration. In this report we share the story behind that journey—highlighting the early impact on service accessibility, alignment with youth needs, and improvements in overall mental health outcomes. We also take a closer look at the Kickstand Edmonton Centre, where a full continuum of care is being delivered to meet the needs of diverse youth populations and strengthen community-based support.

## The Kickstand Journey

Incorporated in 2020 as the Alberta Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health, Kickstand emerged in response to a clear need: young people in Alberta were struggling to access timely, mental health supports. Over just a few years, Kickstand became a central force in advancing a more connected and youth-centred approach to care across the province. Its work is grounded in continuous engagement with young people and communities, using their insights to shape services that reflect the realities of our provincial landscape and the diverse youth in Alberta.

Kickstand aims to ensure more young Albertans are connected to high-quality, youth-centred supports that enhance their health and well-being. To advance this goal, Kickstand launched the Kickstand Network—a province-wide collaborative effort that brings together local partners to offer services at Kickstand Centres alongside Kickstand Connect, the organization's virtual integrated youth services platform. Through this coordinated model, communities across Alberta can access in-person and virtual supports, making it easier for young people to find, navigate, and engage with the services they need.

Kickstand Centres are welcoming, youth-focused hubs where 11- to 25-year-olds can access free, confidential supports for mental health, substance use, primary care, and social services, as well as peer support, all in one place. Building on existing foundations in the community, development continued in 2023 with Kickstand leading the implementation and successfully opening Centres in Bonnyville, Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, and Grande Prairie. Ongoing implementation support helped maintain momentum, and the communities of Drayton Valley, Medicine Hat, Strathmore, and the Tri-Region formally joined the Kickstand Network. Each new Centre represents another community creating spaces where young people feel seen, supported, and connected.



# Measuring the Impact of Kickstand Services

Kickstand partnered with PolicyWise for Children & Families to assess the reach, accessibility, and impact of its services. We reviewed service user demographics and service-use information to understand who is accessing Kickstand Centres and how youth are engaging with them. Service user experience surveys and focus groups offered insight into young people’s perspectives on the accessibility and suitability of the services they received. To explore the initiative’s impact on youth well-being and mental health, we also analyzed youth self-assessments.

Before describing the findings, it is important to share context about the data. Information for this impact report was gathered from nine Kickstand Centres: eight in-person Centres and Kickstand Connect, the virtual platform. Kickstand Connect has operated since 2020, making it the longest-running Centre. While four in-person Centres opened in 2023, and four opened in 2025.

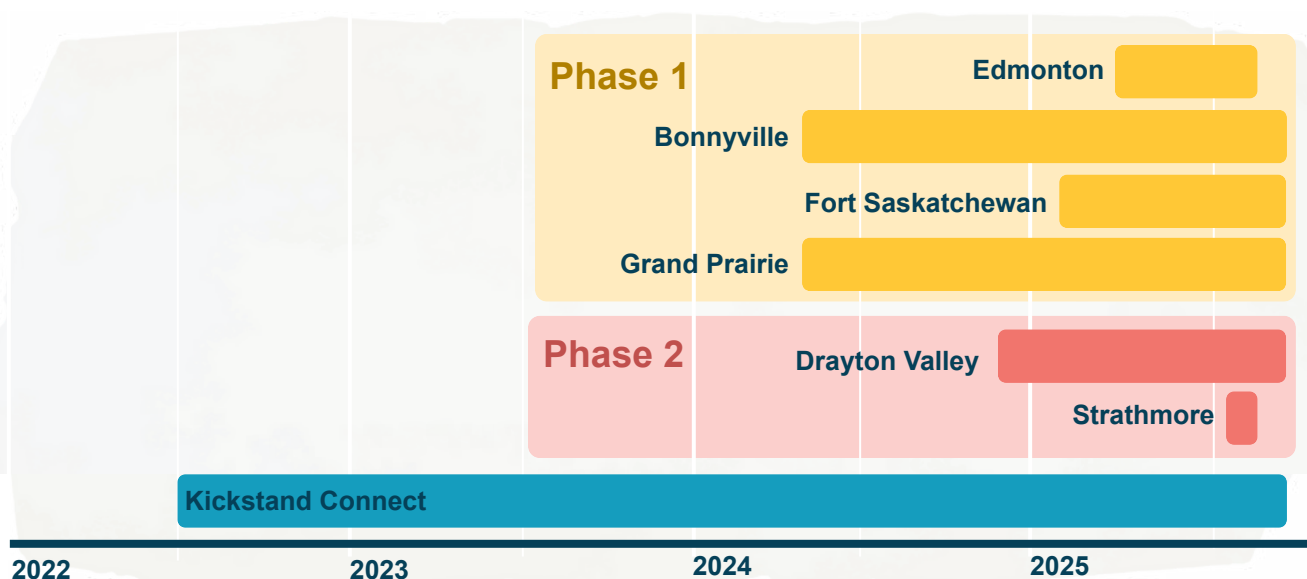


Figure 1. Timeline for Kickstand Network data collection

Many Centres are still in their early stages. They have had a relatively short period of time to launch services, attain full staff capacity, and begin collecting and sharing data using new systems and processes. As Centres strengthen these systems over time, their data becomes more accurate and consistent. As a result, some of the increases we observe in the findings likely reflect improvements in data quality.

This context also helps explain the amount of missing data in the dataset. Newer sites have more missing information. In contrast, Kickstand Connect—given its longer history—has very little. For our analyses of self-rated mental health and health, we excluded all missing data.



# Program Outcomes

## Increased Youth Support Access

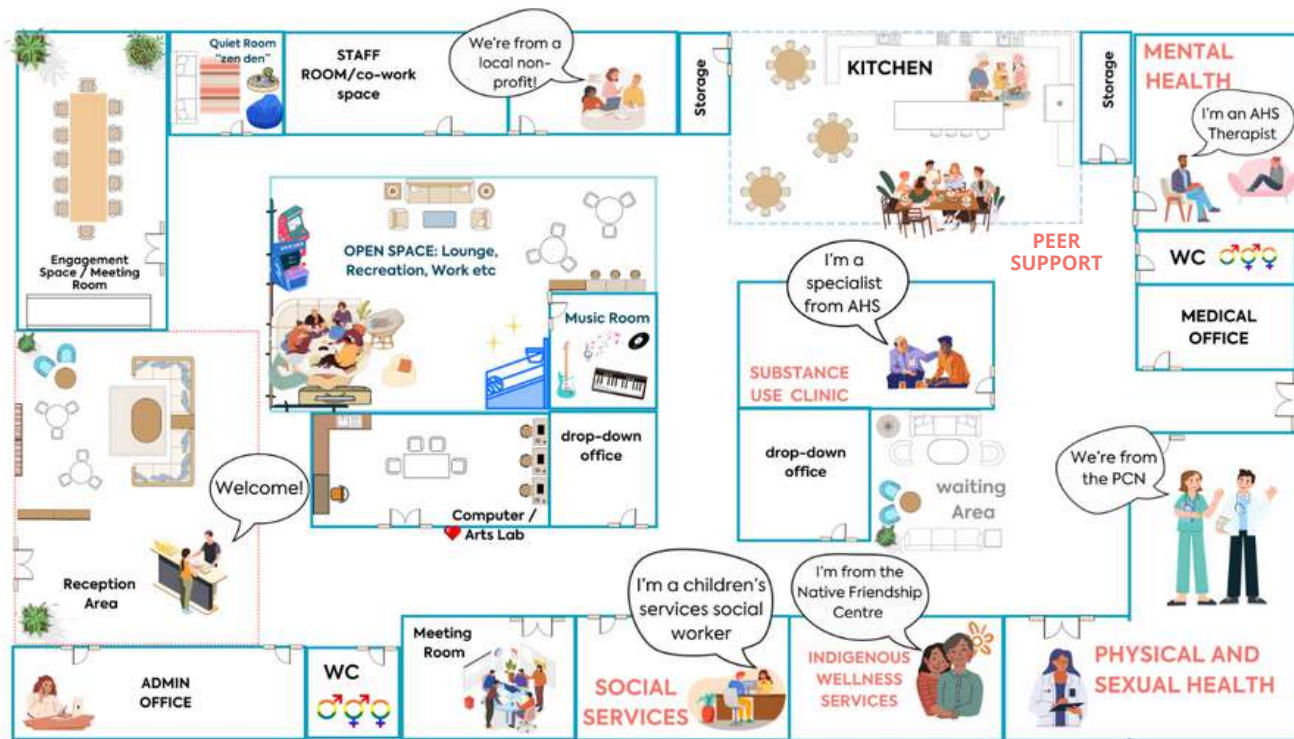


Figure 2. Example of Service Streams provided at Kickstand Centres (Source: [Kickstand](#))

Access to affirming services is crucial for supporting the long-term mental health and well-being of youth, particularly those who face barriers to care. Across all Kickstand Centres, visits booked and completed grew by 115% and 154% between January 2024 and August 2025. This growth reflects a meaningful improvement in access to mental health supports for youth and demonstrates growing trust and visibility in the services offered.

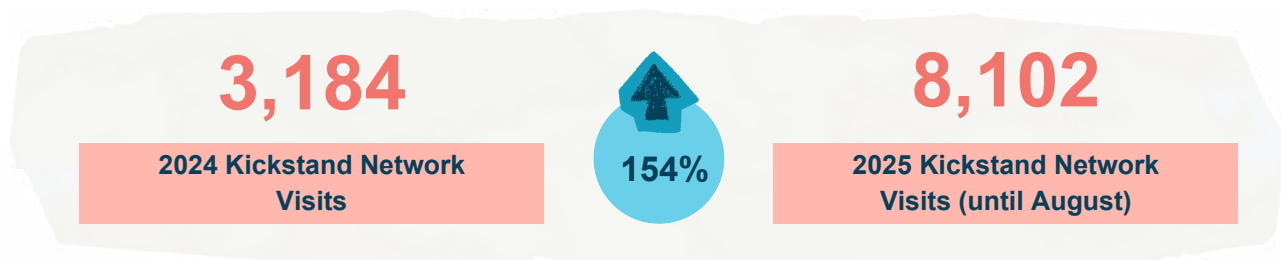


Figure 3. Total visit counts across all Kickstand Centres

## Expanding Reach and Inclusion

Kickstand Centres served a significantly higher proportion of underserved groups than estimated within the general population. For example, nearly 8% of service users identified as transgender or gender non-conforming (TGNC category)—far higher than the estimated 0.3% of the general population aged 15 and older. Additionally, 10% of service users identified as Indigenous, which is more than three times the provincial estimate of 3% (2021 Census). Amongst all gender groups, TGNC had the highest percentage of youth who reported poor mental health at first visit (47%). Together, these findings show that Kickstand has effectively reached young people with high levels of need who would benefit most from accessible, community-based services.

“The first time I ever came to Kickstand, [the staff member] was immediately “come sit down, do you need anything”, and it was a breath of fresh air that made me feel human to be treated with so much kindness when it came to mental health issues.”

– Kickstand Service User

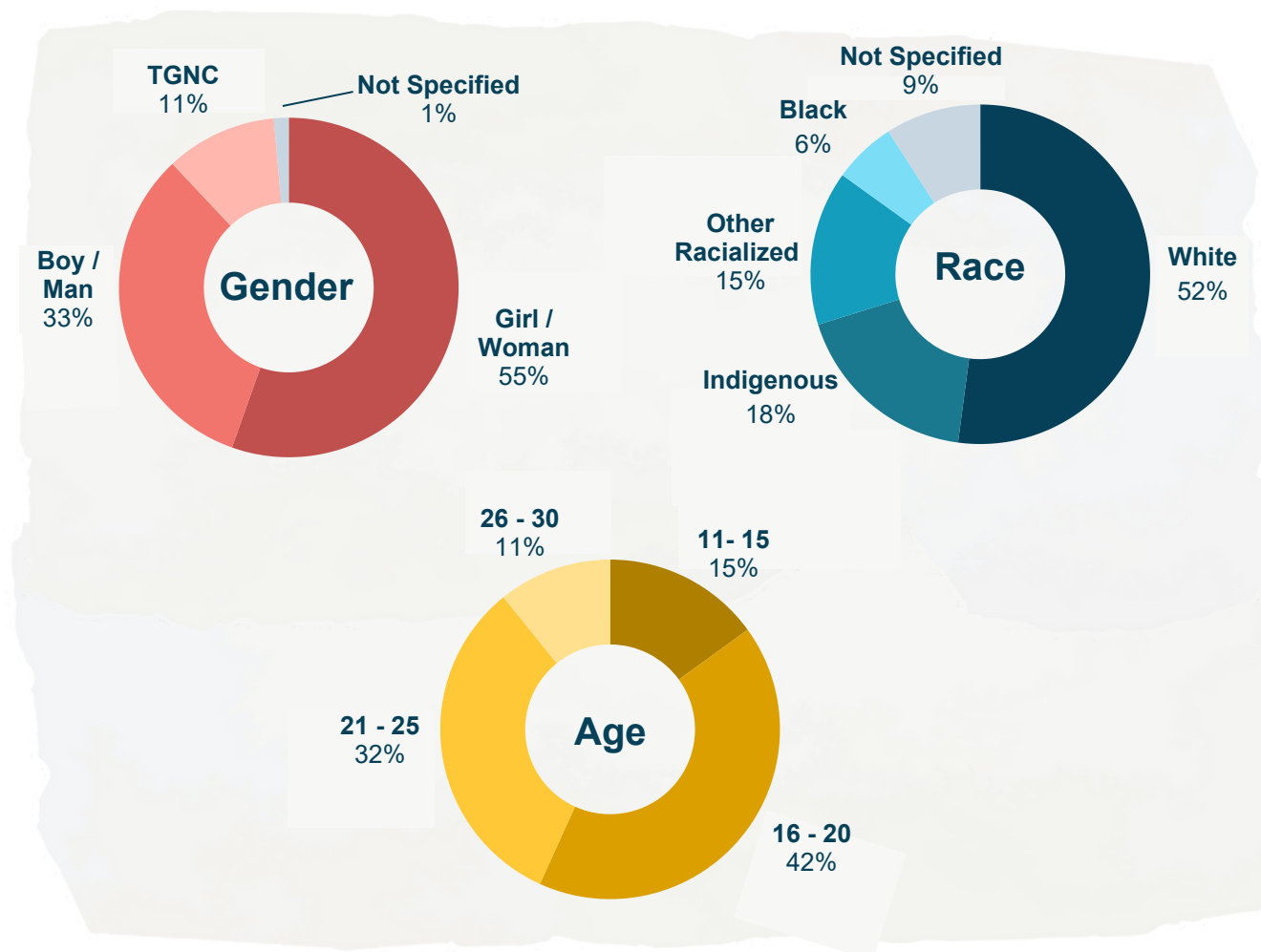


Figure 4. Summary of valid responses for Kickstand Network service user demographics

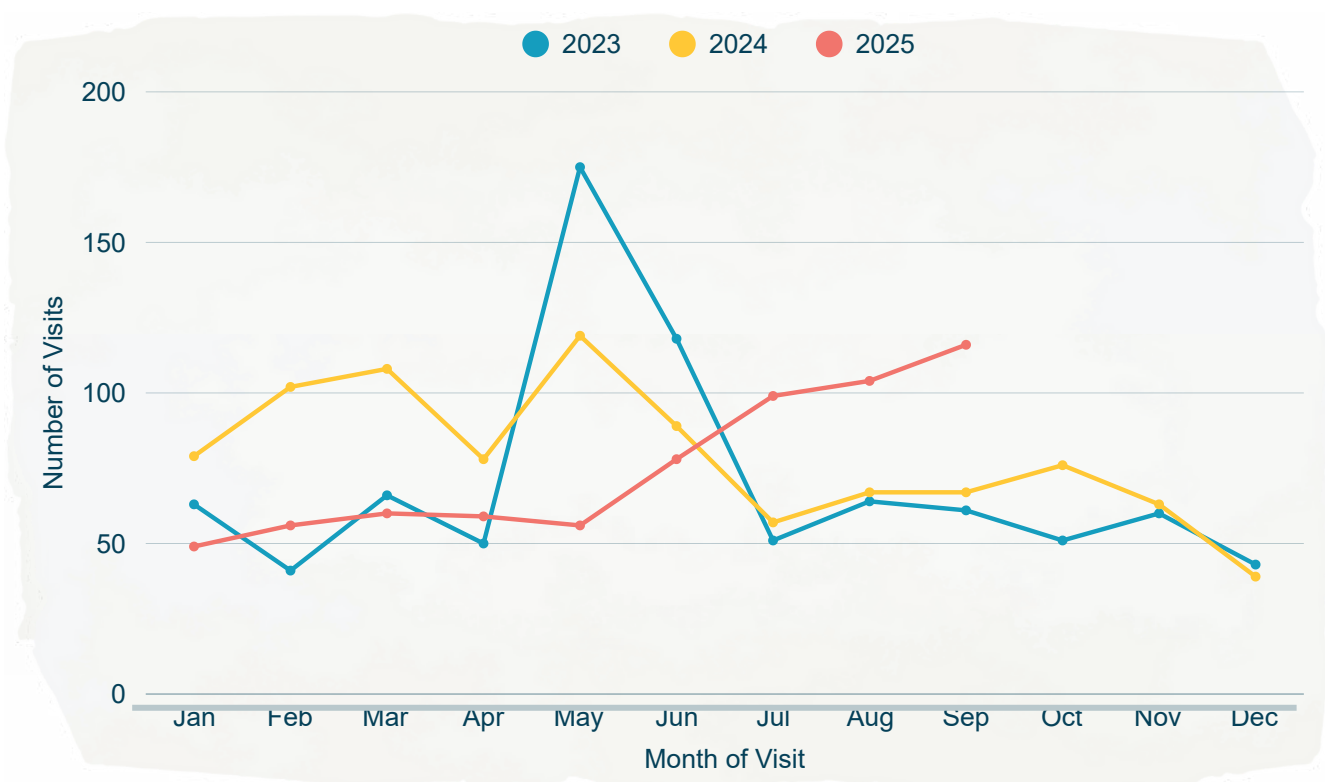
## Expanding Access Across Alberta Through Virtual Care

Kickstand Connect expanded access to mental health services for youth across Alberta by providing flexible and comprehensive virtual support. The number of visits booked through Kickstand Connect between 2023 to 2024 increased by 37%. Visits completed increased by 12% in the same period. We anticipate similar growth between 2024 and 2025 based on the data available for the first eight months of 2025.

Year	Number of visits booked	Number of completed visits
2023	1,297	843
2024	1,784	944
2025	1,108	561
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,189</b>	<b>2,348</b>

*Table 1. Kickstand Connect service user visits by year*

From 2023 to 2025, Kickstand Connect averaged 131 service user visits per month. Figure 5 details monthly service user visits by year. Notably, there was a sharp upward trend in 2025. Since July 2025, monthly visits have consistently exceeded the same months of the previous two years.



*Figure 5. Kickstand Connect client visits from 2023-2025*

## Creating Supportive Youth-Centred Physical Spaces

Kickstand's physical centres grew substantially since January 2024 as captured by service user visit counts over time (see Figure 6). Physical centres saw a 237% year-over-year increase in visits, going from 2,240 service user visits in 2024 to 7,541 service user visits up to August 2025. Since April 2025, monthly visits at Kickstand Centres often exceeded 1,000—more than double the less than 500 visits per month during the same period in 2024. Including data from both 2024 and 2025, physical centres averaged 489 visits per month. The growth in Kickstand Centre visits points to the importance of providing youth accessible, in-person community-based supports for mental health.

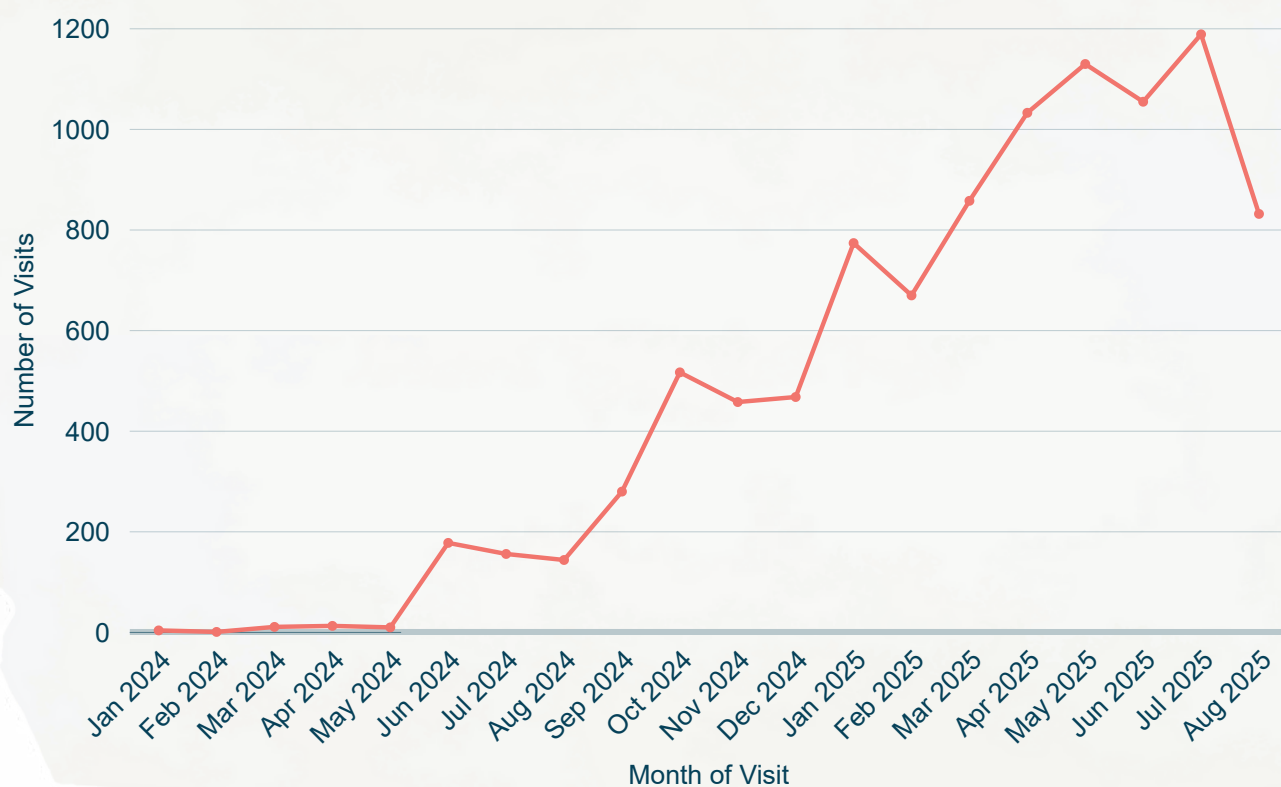


Figure 6. Monthly service user visits for Kickstand Centres

From 2024 to 2025, Kickstand Centres made up a growing share of total visits to the point where most visits occurred at physical locations in 2025. This may reflect a growing desire among youth for in-person community-based mental health supports. It also suggests the success of Kickstand Centres at providing a sense of safety and belonging for young people.

“Kickstand is one of the few places where I don’t feel judged. The space feels genuinely safe, and I actually feel like I belong every time I go. It’s comforting knowing there’s somewhere that feels this supportive.”

– Kickstand Service User



## Growing Access in the Future

Based on growth trends from the previous two years, Kickstand service usage is expected to continue increasing. Using a simple average of monthly service user visits at all centres over the past two years, Kickstand could expect about 7,440 service user visits in 2026. This is likely a conservative estimate, as continued improvements in data collection, the opening of new physical centres, and growing awareness of services are all expected to increase actual visit numbers.

If we assume that the increase in visits from 2024 to 2025 reflects both improved data collection and real growth, 2026 visits could be substantially higher. This is especially likely because several Centres that opened in 2025, such as Edmonton, Strathmore, and Medicine Hat, have just started collecting data and contributed less than 10% of the data we used to calculate the projections. As these Centres grow data collection in 2026, their contribution to overall visit numbers will increase substantially. For example, if one quarter of the 154% increase between 2024 and 2025 represents real growth, the estimated number of visits in 2026 would be approximately 11,220.

**Note:** These estimates should be interpreted with caution. The 2025 dataset (September–December) is not yet complete. In Figure 7, we present completed visit counts for 2024 and 2025, along with an illustrative estimate for 2026 based on continued growth.

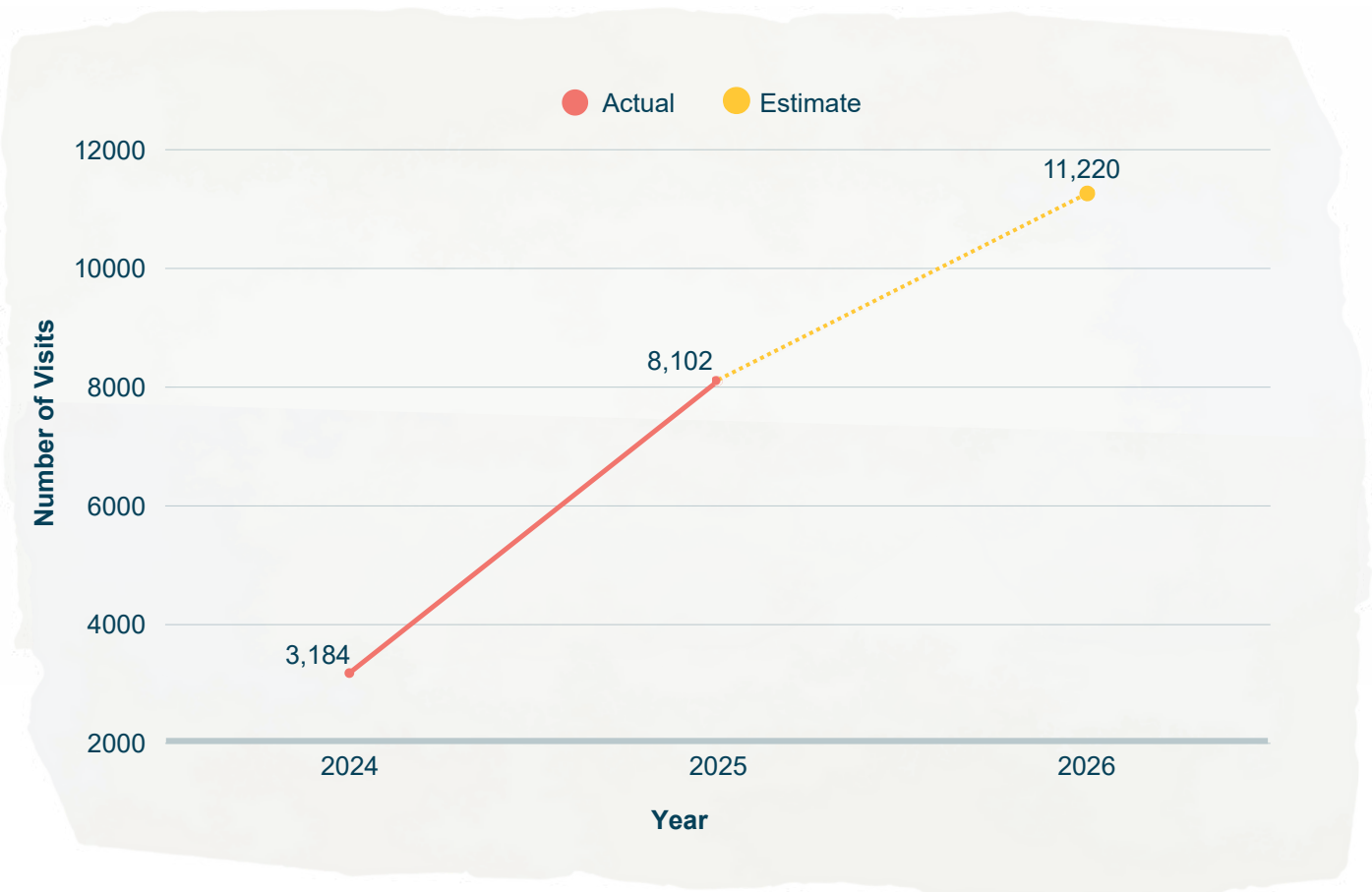


Figure 7. Actual and estimated yearly Kickstand Network visits

# Alignment with Youth Service Needs

The Kickstand Network effectively meets the unique needs of youth by offering integrated services within a single, accessible location. By bringing multiple services together, the Kickstand Network helps close service gaps, particularly in rural communities. It ensures youth have access to supports needed for positive mental health outcomes.

## Reaching Youth in Need

On average, Kickstand service users reported poor self-rated mental health on their first visit. This means that Kickstand successfully reached youth in need of timely and responsive mental health support. Looking at first visit mental health scores over time, we found that Kickstand's reach expanded to youth with different levels of need. In 2023-2024, most mental health scores ranged from 0 to 2 (poor to good) with one outlier at 3 (very good). In comparison, mental health scores at first visit ranged from 0 to 4 (poor to excellent) in 2024-2025.

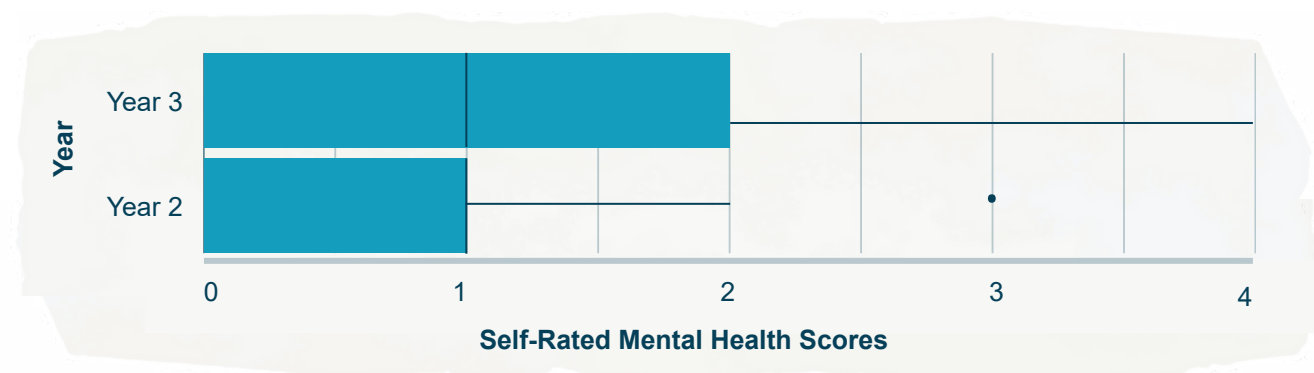


Figure 8. Self-rated mental health for Year 3 (2024-2025, n = 1,612) and Year 2 (2023-2024, n = 316)

## Addressing Service Gaps

Self-reported data from service users highlighted Kickstand's unique role in filling service gaps and meeting youth mental health needs. Fifty-seven percent of youth in Canada who need mental health supports are not getting the help they need. When asked where they would have turned without access to Kickstand services, nearly half (45%) of youth indicated personal connections such as friends, parents or caregivers, family or safe adults, school counselors or teachers, and spiritual or religious leaders. Another one-third (32%) of youth indicated they would have sought help from other health or community services, including community agencies, emergency services, health care providers, and helplines. Notably, nearly one-quarter (23%) of service users said they would not have gone anywhere. This was particularly true for youth in non-urban communities. Kickstand delivers essential support to youth who would otherwise go unserved, directly reducing the number of young people who aren't getting the help they need.

Youth responses to this question differed depending on their location. Only 5% of youth in Fort Saskatchewan and 18% in Grande Prairie responded 'nowhere' when asked where they would have gone. In contrast, youth in non-urban locations such as Bonnyville (29%) more frequently responded 'nowhere' to the same question. Compared to urban communities, non-urban locations often have less community support and limited resources to meet growing and complex service needs. Distance and lack of access to reliable and consistent transportation are also often barriers to youth. These findings suggest that Kickstand provides essential access for youth who may have otherwise had limited or no pathways to mental health support.

“Before Kickstand, I struggled to find services that were actually youth-friendly and easy to access. Kickstand filled a huge gap for me by having everything I needed in one place, and offering support that felt approachable and genuinely helpful.”

– Kickstand Service User

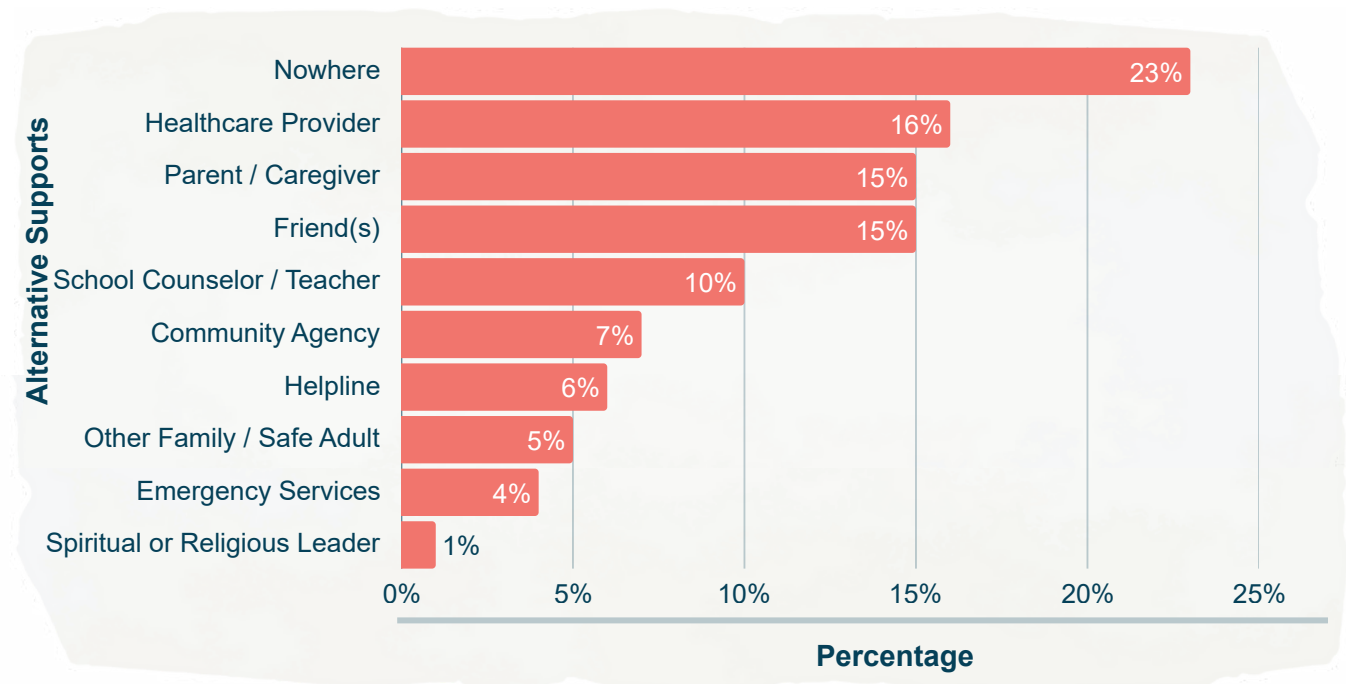


Figure 9. Alternative Supports for service users (n= 1,202)

“A huge reason why I have never accessed youth services before was truly because it always felt extremely daunting and "serious" to have to find a therapist, see them regularly and pay a large fee. Kickstand offering services which are easy to book same-day at no cost at all is extremely extraordinary and important. Young people knowing that there's options out there which are easily accessible and free are so much more likely to try to reach out and receive the help that they need. To me, that is truly the most important way in which Kickstand has addressed the service gap while also meeting my own needs. It's also amazing that so many services are so easily accessible, either online or at a single location; it makes it all the more low-barrier.”

– Kickstand Service User



# Improved Youth Mental Health

The Kickstand Network aimed to improve youth mental health and overall well-being by offering integrated services that reduce barriers and help youth connect with relevant supports before concerns become more severe. Youth self-reported data shows improved mental health, strengthened well-being, and positive experiences with Kickstand Network services.

## Improving Self-Reported Mental Health

Kickstand services had a meaningful, positive impact on youth mental health and overall well-being. Among the 140 youth who accessed services more than once and provided data at both visits, average self-rated mental health scores increased from 1 to 1.4. This finding demonstrates early improvements in youth mental health after engaging with the program, which is especially important given that many of the youth arrived with poor self-rated mental health.

“Kickstand has played a real role in improving my mental health. I feel more stable, supported, and understood, and it’s one of the first places where I felt like I wasn’t dealing with everything alone.”

– Kickstand Service User

“Through my experience here at Kickstand, I’ve always felt extremely welcomed and safe in the community. Not only does everyone work extremely hard to come to the table with empathy and understanding, you feel it through your interactions with the workers and fellow volunteers. Safety is never a question here at Kickstand. I always feel respected, my privacy and comfort zone regarding what I’m willing to share/do is always respected and never pushed.”

– Kickstand Service User

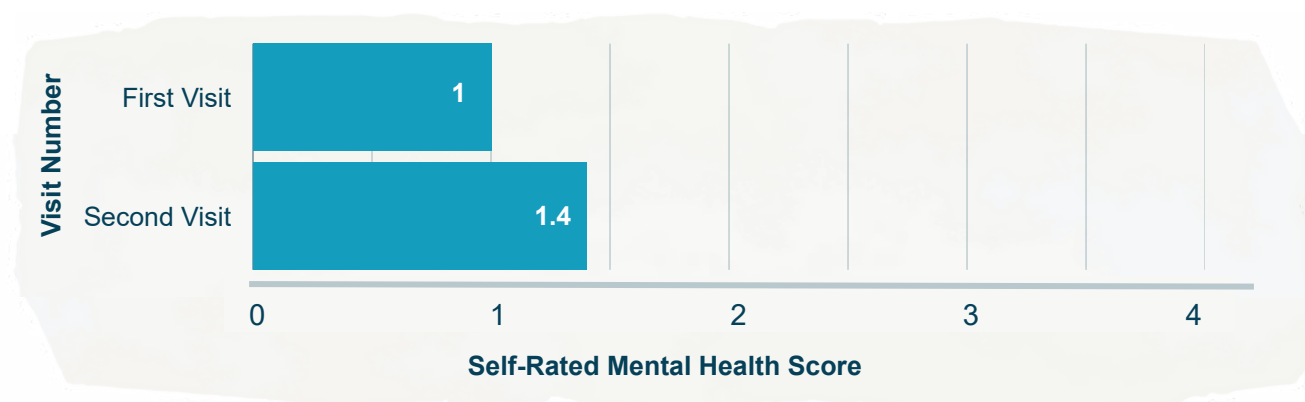


Figure 10. Average self-rated mental health score for two visits (n = 140)

## Elevating Youth Voice Through Positive Feedback

Most youth (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better after participating in Kickstand services. Additionally, 81% of service users said they were highly likely (9 or 10 out of 10) to recommend Kickstand programs and services to a friend. Collectively, these results demonstrate Kickstand's ability to reach youth in need and support real improvements in youth well-being.

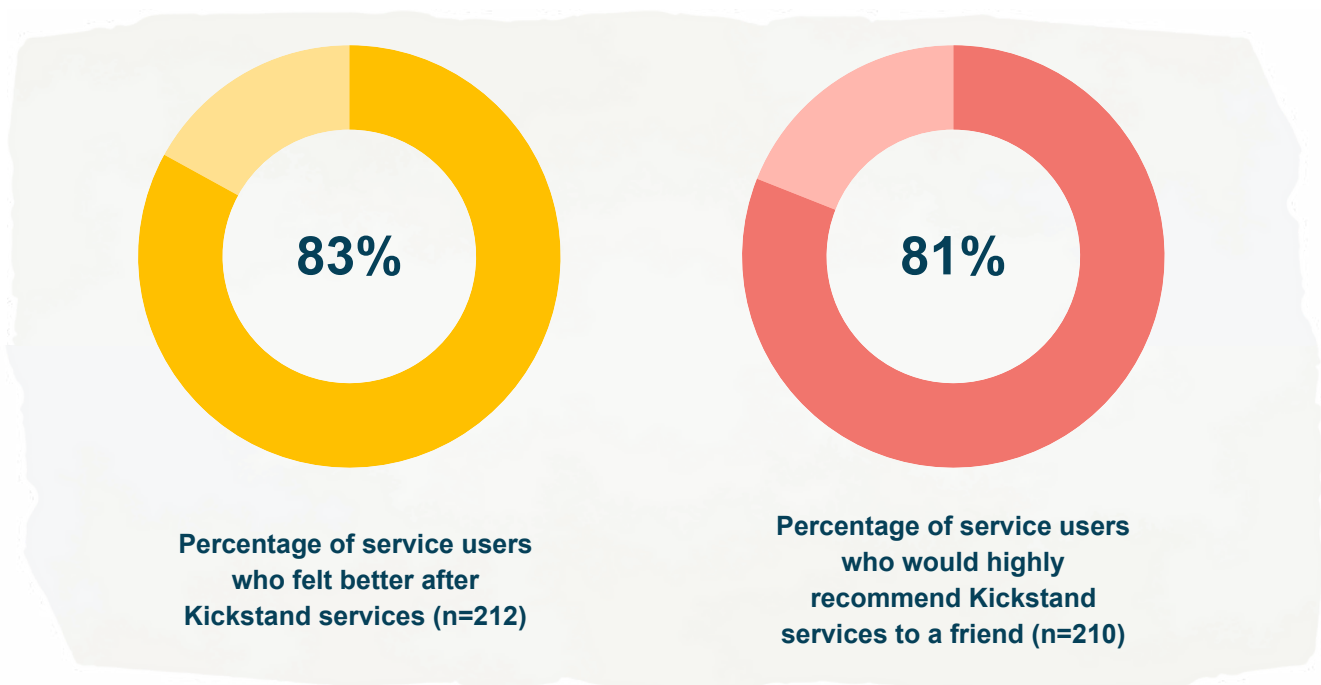


Figure 11. Summary of service user responses to experience questions

“Kickstand is the first mental health organization I have encountered that tries to work alongside youth and meet them where they are at in recovery and support journeys, creating flexible recovery and support structures for diverse youth needs. What I greatly appreciate about Kickstand is that all staff work hand in hand with youth in the province and beyond to co-create and include youth with lived experiences to build programming and supports to help their clientele. They acknowledge ongoing improvements and imperfect beginnings and celebrate progress with the focus on youth.”

– Kickstand Former Service User and Current Member of Youth Advisory Council

# Site Spotlight: Edmonton

In this section, we spotlight the impact of the Edmonton Kickstand Centre, which opened its doors on February 5th, 2025. We drew on data collected between February and August of 2025. The exception was self-rated health assessment, which included data only up until the end of July 2025. Kickstand Edmonton is entirely philanthropically funded and meets a much-needed service gap in mental health for youth. Alberta has one of the highest rates in the country of poor mental health and suicide. Alberta also has a rapidly growing population. Edmonton saw a 16% population increase over the past five years with 6% growth noted in a single year (2023-2024). Given that more than a quarter (27%) of the population is 11-30 years old, there is a clear and pressing need for the services that Kickstand Edmonton provides.

## Expanding Reach and Inclusion

Kickstand Edmonton programs are reaching diverse populations. The gender distribution of youth accessing mental health services shows that girls and young women represent the largest group of service users (32%), followed by boys and young men (22%). TGNC youth make up 7% of Kickstand Edmonton service users—a significantly higher proportion than their estimated presence in the general Edmonton youth population of about 0.2% (2021 Census). This means TGNC youth accessed Kickstand Edmonton mental health services at a rate more than 30 times higher than their population share, which highlights both a heightened level of need and a potential strength in service accessibility for this group.

Most young adults accessing services at Kickstand Edmonton fell within the intended age range of 11 to 25 years. Kickstand Edmonton also reached older youth, specifically those aged 16 to 25 years. This age group made up nearly 90% of service users. Clearly, there is ongoing need for services, transition supports, and continuity of care for individuals aging out of youth services. One youth participant highlighted that such services were unavailable to them as an older youth.

“When I came here, when they first opened, I was 24. Now I’m 25, so I’m on my last year and that makes me sad, because Kickstand is relatively new. If I was younger and I had these options back then that would have been really helpful. I feel like I would even be further along in the mental health. Even then I have an older brother that is 27 and he is suffering from mental health as well. If I was able to be like “hey, I know a place called Kickstand and you are able to get these mental health supports here too”, because we never had this kind of stuff growing up. It would have made such an incredible difference.”

– Kickstand Edmonton Service User



## Creating Supportive Youth-Centred Physical Space

Kickstand Edmonton reported 737 service user visits between February and August of 2025. The site saw consistent, month over month increases in service user visits with the exception of June and August. Just over half of these service users (56%) visited the site once while the remaining 45% visited more than one time. A few Kickstand Edmonton service users visited the site more than 20 times. These findings are early indicators that service users felt well-supported and chose to return to Kickstand Edmonton for additional services.

Kickstand Centres tracked drop-in visits separately from core service streams because of their distinct role in the continuum of care. About half of the Kickstand Edmonton visits were drop-ins while the other half provided more formalized supports. Excluding repeat visits, 236 unique service users visited Kickstand Edmonton at least once during the eight-month period of data collection. While not targeted mental health interventions, drop-in services provided youth with valuable support, engagement, and connection to resources. Dropping-in often served as a gateway to accessing more formalized services and helped young people feel safe and build trust with the Centre. This distinction allows Kickstand to demonstrate the specific impact of core service streams while recognizing the important bridging role of drop-in programming in connecting young people to care. The high number of drop-ins at Kickstand Edmonton demonstrates its role in the community as a welcoming and safe space where youth felt comfortable spending time and connecting.

## Reaching Youth in Need

We found that young people who accessed Kickstand Edmonton services had, on average, poor (0.7 out of 4) self-related mental health at first visit. This is lower than the average rating at first visit (1.1 out of 4) we saw across all Kickstand Network Centres and indicates the high mental health needs Kickstand Edmonton can support. As Kickstand Edmonton has operated for less than one year, we do not have substantial data on how self-rated mental health scores changed over time nor do we have information about engagement with the site. However, knowing how many young people arrived at the site with low self-reported mental health scores underscores how Kickstand Edmonton is successfully able to reach those most in need of support and provide early intervention before challenges escalate.

“Having Kickstand and everything that has provided to me has made such a difference and impact in my life, that I really want to hold on to it”

– Kickstand Edmonton Service User

## Elevating Youth Voice Through Positive Feedback

When asked to describe their experiences with Kickstand Edmonton in three words, youth emphasized the positive impacts, supportive relationships, and welcoming space. See Figure 12 for how youth described their experiences with Kickstand Edmonton in their own words. Together, these reflections show that Kickstand Edmonton is not just a service, but a trusted space where youth feel seen, supported, and empowered.

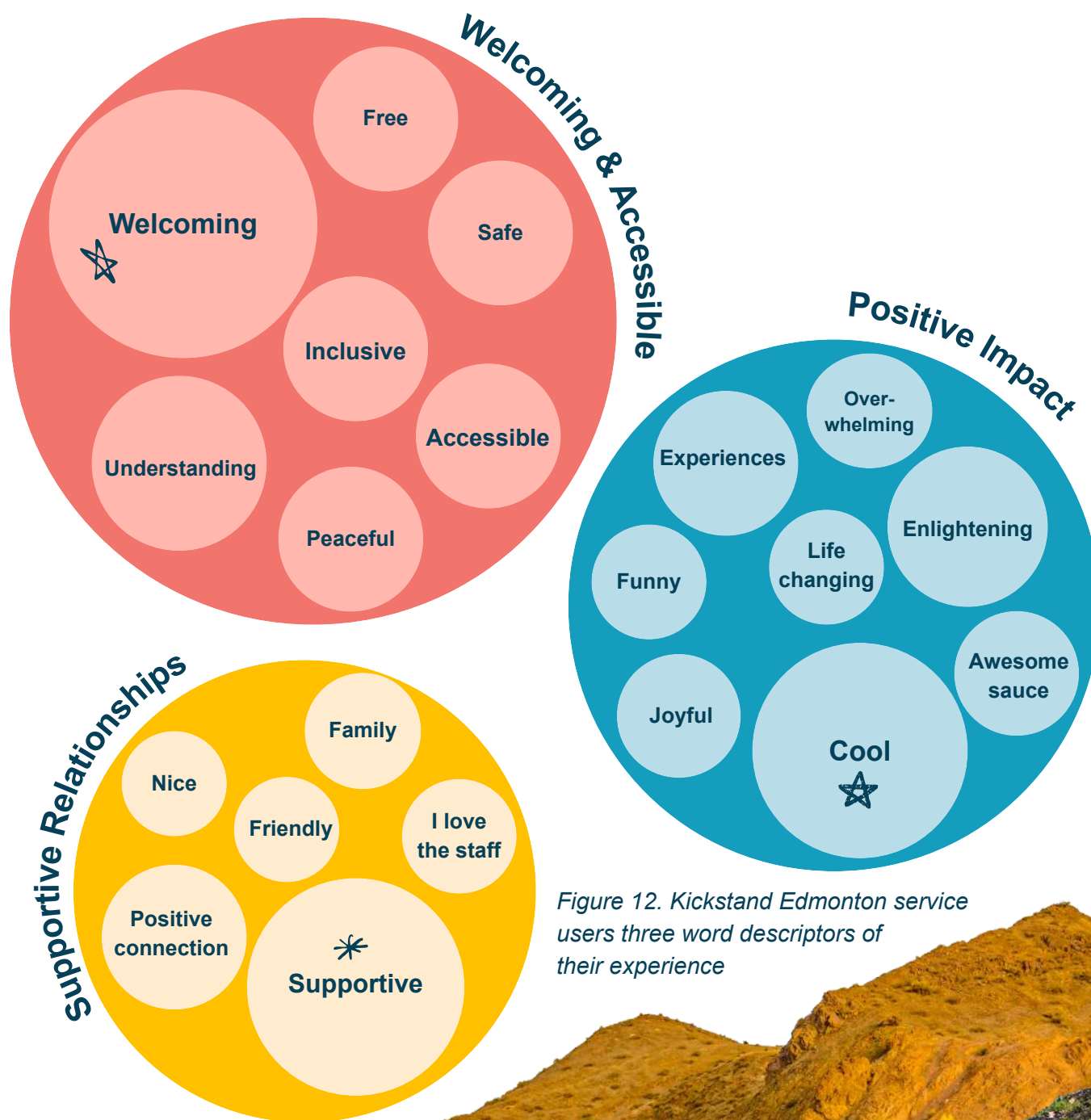


Figure 12. Kickstand Edmonton service users three word descriptors of their experience