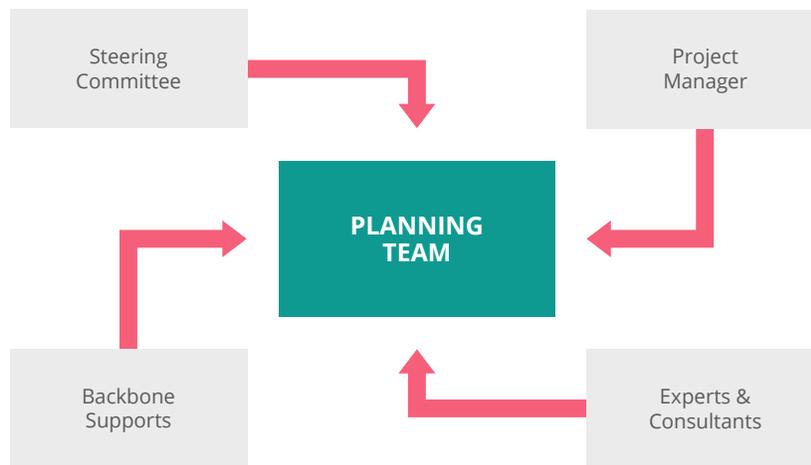


# GETTING STARTED

## BUILDING THE PLANNING TEAM

There are four main components of the planning team that you will want to consider: note, that you may have all of these roles or a combination thereof depending on local context and resources.

Figure 4: Planning Team



### 1. THE BACKBONE SUPPORTS

An essential early decision in the plan development process involves the selection of the ‘backbone support’ organization. At times, this can be a straightforward matter as various groups or individuals may already play a convening role in your community on similar issues. Common backbone supports for youth plans include Community Entities, United Ways, local governments and service provider agencies.

Backbone supports play convening roles in the plan development process. While they may have a stake and opinions with respect to the ultimate plan direction, they are not making decisions unanimously; rather, they provide the infrastructure necessary to undertake the research, consultation and solution-generating work of the broader community. These organizations have the capacity to organize meetings, bring together stakeholders, undertake research and analysis and write the actual plan document.

Table 9: Backbone Supports Activities &amp; Outcomes

<b>BACKBONE SUPPORTS ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES</b>	<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</b>
Guide vision and strategy	Stakeholders share a common understanding of youth homelessness and how to end it.	Stakeholders' individual work is increasingly aligned with the common agenda outlined in the Youth Plan.
Support aligned activities	Stakeholders increasingly communicate and coordinate their activities toward common plan goals.	Stakeholders collaboratively develop new approaches to advance an end to youth homelessness.
Establish shared measurement practices	Stakeholders understand the value of sharing data.	Stakeholders increasingly use data to adapt and refine their strategies on an individual and collective basis.
Build public will	Community members are increasingly aware of youth homelessness.	More community members feel empowered to take action on the issue of youth homelessness.
Advance policy	Policymakers are more aware and supportive of the plan's policy agenda.	Policy changes increasingly occur in line with the plan's goals.
Mobilize funding	Funding is secured to support the plan's goals.	Community and government funds are increasingly aligned with plan goals.

It is critical that the group responsible for the backbone supports is respected, trusted and capable of delivering on these essential functions. It is always a good sign when diverse stakeholders approach a potential organization to take on this work versus the organization self-selecting without community support.

This was the case in Edmonton, where Homeward Trust was approached by diverse groups to take on the backbone organization role and deliver a local plan with the input of a steering committee. Communities where organizations assume this leadership role without broader stakeholder buy-in have found their ultimate success hampered by the decisions made in the early stages of the plan development process. There is a need to carefully balance the need for action and leadership in community while respecting diverse views. While this may be obvious, it is often not done in practice. Plan development is fraught with tension as stakeholders wrestle with pre-existing issues of contention and legitimate threats to the status quo related to determining a new vision and managing funding implications of the plan.

This is why the role of backbone supports is so essential. Lead staff often negotiate this tension in community, act as the 'glue' pulling people together at the same table and move the process forward, while respecting diverse viewpoints.

Backbone supports are not necessarily located in one particular agency, however; in some communities, several stakeholders come together to share accountabilities for these functions. In Wellington County, three organizations worked together to perform the functions of backbone supports and included both public and non-profit partners. In Calgary, the Calgary Homeless Foundation, City of Calgary (FCSS) and United Way provided funding for the human resources needed to develop a renewed youth plan, while service providers and funders shared the workload involved in setting up consultations and overseeing the workplan and budget for the process.

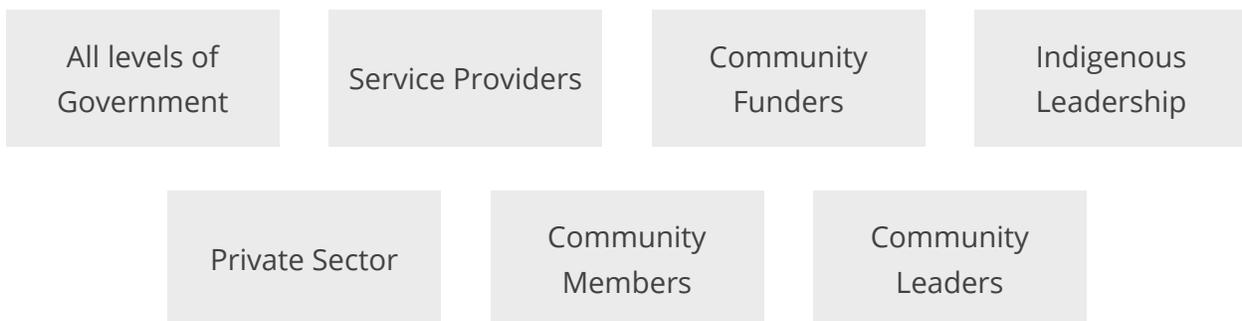
<b>COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE BACKBONE LEADERSHIP</b>
Visionary
Results Oriented
Collaborative Relationship Builder
Focused but Adaptive
Charismatic and Influential Communicator
Political
Humble

## 2. THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The group taking on backbone supports does not work on its own. The youth planning process is often led by a collaborative of stakeholders that come together to provide essential leadership for the plan. The committee's role is to provide community leadership to advance the youth plan by overseeing the consultation process with key stakeholder groups, research and analysis, plan development and launch.

Ideally, committee members are leaders from government and non-profit sectors, including public systems, community funders, the private sector and community. Membership should consist of representatives of key funders and public systems essential to ending youth homelessness, such as child protection, social services, education, corrections, health, etc. Members should include both on- and off-reserve Indigenous leadership, government representatives, those with lived experience, researchers and community members at large. For rural and remote communities, you will need to balance the representation regionally.

Figure 5: Steering Committee Stakeholders



Below is a list of groups you should consider representation from. Try to keep the committee between 10–20 members with scheduled meetings monthly and on a need-to-basis for the duration of the plan development process.

Engaging the right people on the steering committee can help you access critical information for the plan development work, but also open doors to potential allies in government that can push the plan forward in implementation.

Engaging influential public servants, for instance, can help champion the plan internally. This can go a long way toward ensuring your efforts land on the right decision makers' desks. Strong advocates from the private sector can similarly champion the plan publically and engage their respective networks to support plan activities during the early stages of development as well as into implementation. Such champions can help elevate the community's understanding of youth homelessness and how to end it and can advance innovative solutions, policy and systems change in their respective circles of influence and with government.

Table 10: Key Stakeholder Member Sources

SECTORS	POTENTIAL MEMBER SOURCES
Service Providers	Youth-serving agencies Homeless-serving system agencies (adult and youth) Poverty alleviation/prevention services
Public System Partners	Police service/RCMP Public & Separate School Boards of Education Child, youth and family services authority Metis child and family services authority Health services (mental health, addictions, emergency/ambulatory care) Correctional services Young offender programs Youth/adult probation Poverty reduction initiatives

<p>On- and off-reserve Indigenous leadership &amp; government</p>	<p>Local associations/formal groups working on youth, housing and homelessness issues</p> <p>Neighbouring Nations</p> <p>Nations within regional scope of the youth plan</p> <p>Nations whose members migrate to the community developing plan</p>
<p>Government of Canada</p>	<p>Indigenous Affairs &amp; Northern Development</p> <p>Economic and Social Development</p> <p>Canada Immigration &amp; Citizenship</p> <p>Justice Canada</p> <p>Public Health Agency of Canada</p>
<p>Provincial/Territorial Government</p>	<p>Child protection</p> <p>Indigenous relations</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Human/social services</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Homeless supports</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>Domestic violence</p> <p>Income assistance</p> <p>Persons with disabilities</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Municipal/intergovernmental affairs</p> <p>Status of women</p>
<p>Local/Regional Government</p>	<p>Community/neighbourhood services</p> <p>Social housing corporation</p> <p>Income assistance/rent subsidies</p>

<p>Community Funders</p>	<p>Lead organization on local plan to end homelessness</p> <p>Community Entity (if different from above)</p> <p>Municipal government community services</p> <p>United Way</p> <p>Local community foundations</p> <p>Philanthropists with interest in youth</p>
<p>Youth</p>	<p>Existing youth tables (Youth Advisory Committees, etc.)</p> <p>Key populations: Indigenous, LGBTQ2S, immigrant, etc.</p>
<p>Private Sector</p>	<p>Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Landlords</p> <p>Landlords Association</p> <p>Homebuilders Association</p> <p>Philanthropists with interest in youth</p>
<p>Broader Community</p>	<p>Research community (university, college)</p> <p>Faith community</p> <p>Influential community members at large</p>

Steering committee members should have key competencies which align with the previously identified collective impact principles, including:

1. **Commitment to ending youth homelessness:** Passion and belief that youth homelessness can be ended and the resolve to making this a reality.
2. **Collaborative leader:** Demonstrated personal and/or professional leadership in multi-stakeholder efforts by building consensus and drawing people into a process of change.
3. **Politically astute:** Broad non-partisan understanding of political and social issues influencing the public policy environment.
4. **Social change agent:** Desire to deepen understanding of complex social and economic issues that take complex solutions and willing to take action to address these within their sphere of influence.
5. **Strategic:** Understands the lay of the land and can work within it to advance collective goals.
6. **Decision maker:** Has the capacity, authority and willingness to make/influence decisions that advance an end to homelessness.
7. **Practical:** Has the ability to manage the details and get things done, while effectively managing shifting circumstances and arising risks.
8. **Influential communicator:** Able to share ideas and can serve as a bridge between the various communities and groups with an interest in the initiative.
9. **Knowledgeable:** Has demonstrated knowledge of relevance to ending youth homelessness.

## A NOTE ON RECRUITMENT

An individual may be an excellent champion, but unable to commit the time required to sit on the steering committee. You may therefore want to structure your steering committee into an overarching high-level group, with working committees that take on the bulk of the workload. The steering committee would have higher profile leaders meeting less frequently and providing general guidance, open doors to key decision-makers and maintain public visibility of the issue. Conversely, working committees take on key activities involved in plan development, such as research and consultations. This provides you with an opportunity to recruit members for your working group that provide additional technical expertise around policy, evaluation, youth voice, service provision, research, etc.

In this model, recruiting high profile champions will be essential. Your ability to secure commitment will be influenced by a number of factors:

- » Approaching the right individuals with a passion for ending youth homelessness at the right time, being mindful of their time commitments
- » Providing a compelling vision for the work ahead and demonstrating the potential contribution of the individual to ending youth homelessness
- » Leveraging social networks to seek members using existing relationships – in many ways, it’s who you know and finding personal connections that can help you recruit the right champions will be more effective than a cold call
- » Having a clear set of expectations laid out before you begin recruitment will be essential to help potential champions have a sense of the proposed workplan and expectations.



*The steering committee would have higher profile leaders meeting less frequently and providing general guidance, open doors to key decision-makers and maintain public visibility of the issue.*

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As is evident, someone has to oversee this recruitment process for the steering committee. It will likely fall to the backbone supports and dedicated project manager, with the assistance of other interested individuals on a more informal basis.

Put concerted efforts into recruiting a chair for the steering committee, who can then reach out to the larger pool of identified candidates for recruitment. This will require you to help identify target individuals early on and use a snowball technique to identify additional potential members as you go through the recruitment process.

Once the steering committee and working committees are established, Terms of Reference should be agreed upon. You may have already developed a draft used in the recruitment phase, but it is now up to the steering committee to finalize these.

The Terms of Reference for the steering committee essentially acts as the guiding document for the plan development process, as such they should have clearly delineated:

- » Purpose and activities for the steering committee
- » Membership and core competencies
- » Roles and responsibilities for steering committee members, backbone supports, working committee and the project manager
- » Workplan and budget with clear timelines for plan development and launch
- » Meeting schedule
- » Guiding principles for the work of the committee,
- » Committee approach to decision-making process, attendance requirements, confidentiality and conflict of interest.

### 3. THE PROJECT MANAGER(S)

Without doubt, the role of the project manager is essential to the development of the youth plan. Ideally, your project manager is almost exclusively dedicated to supporting the plan development process for a set period of time, though this may not always be feasible. Acting as the quarterback for the duration of the process, the person charged with this role will have tremendous impact on the overall success of the effort.

Ideally, the project manager will have experience providing leadership at the community level and will understand local community processes and youth homelessness. They are effectively responsible for overseeing all aspects of the planning process and delivering the workplan activities. Their role can include:

- » Ongoing liaising with the steering committee
- » Organizing community consultations
- » Completing key stakeholder interviews/ meetings
- » Providing project coordination support (note taking, meeting space, ongoing communication)
- » Undertaking research and best practice analysis
- » Preparing briefing documents, reports and proposals

The ideal candidate has experience in the non-profit environment and leadership experience with the ability to mentor, coach, engage and inspire colleagues and stakeholders. They have demonstrated capacity to negotiate with a variety of community stakeholders, excellent written and oral communications skills and interpersonal skills.



*Acting as the quarterback for the duration of the process, the person charged with this role will have tremendous impact on the overall success of the effort.*

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General competency requirements:

**Project Management Skills:** Proven strong project management skills with ability to multi-task and set priorities within tight timelines.

**Anti-discrimination Orientation:** Recognizes the need to be inclusive to women, LGBTQ2S, racialized minorities, Indigenous people, ethnocultural communities, etc.

**Credibility:** Demonstrated ability to build organizational trust in his or her professionalism, expertise and ability to create solutions and deliver desired outcomes.

**Culturally Congruent:** A passion for, belief in and communication of the vision, mission and guiding principles driving the plan to end youth homelessness. Will promote a transparent, ambitious, goal- and achievement-oriented culture. Demonstrates a strong work ethic and youth-centred approach.

**Building Effective Teams:** Creates strong morale and spirit in her/his team; shares wins and successes; fosters open dialogue; delegates appropriately to team; defines success in terms of the whole team; creates a feeling of belonging in the team.

**Collaborative and Collegial:** Works well with others, whether at the most senior levels, with direct reports or with others across the organization. Understands how to work with the community in a collaborative manner.

**Managing Change:** Ability to adapt and thrive in a changing environment; capable of maintaining high levels of performance under pressure.

**Results Oriented:** Sets high standards of performance including setting goals and priorities that maximize available resources to deliver results against the initiative direction, objectives and public expectations. Will monitor progress and make adjustments as necessary on an ongoing basis.

**Effective Facilitator:** Can manage the feedback process, engage multiple stakeholders, identify and lead critical conversations and build consensus.

Project managers require a high level of support from their home organizations in cases where the youth plan is added onto their existing workload. This means, first and foremost, that they are provided with the time to deliver on the youth plan. Having someone add the youth plan to their workload without taking something off will create an unrealistic expectation and ultimately impact the quality of the plan.

Another option is to second a staff to the project for a limited period or to hire an external contract project manager to oversee the process. In cases where the project manager role is being divided amongst steering committee members, the expectations of each contributor should be made clear to ensure mutual accountability is maintained as members depend on one another to deliver key activities. The role of the project manager can also be divided among several positions within the backbone supports, leveraging technical skill-sets and managing workload demands more effectively.

#### **4. WORKING WITH CONSULTANTS & EXPERTS**

As you contemplate resources, you will need to decide who will write various aspects of the plan. Communities often contract out part of their plan to consultants; while there are benefits to this approach, you should keep some considerations top of mind if you are moving in this direction.

There are definitely benefits to bringing in an external expert to help you with technical aspects of the plan such as cost modelling, which you may not have the on-hand capacity to undertake. Consultants can also lessen the time required of lead staff by taking on the research and consultation pieces or parts thereof. They can be important members of the planning team who work alongside lead staff and the steering committee.

However, consultants can also become barriers in the plan development process. First consider if you can do the work without external assistance. Ask yourself what benefits a consultant brings to the process. You have to do your homework to ensure you bring in the right person as well; someone who is divisive in community, has a history of missing timelines and/not delivering, etc. would obviously be a hindrance. Unfortunately, we don't always realize we have the wrong consultant until problems emerge. It would best to put in place processes that ensure you are not in this position in the first place.



*You have to do your homework to ensure you bring in the right person as well; someone who is divisive in community, has a history of missing timelines and/not delivering, etc. would obviously be a hindrance.*

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A Way Home and the COH are useful resources for identifying and selecting consultants you may want to leverage in this process as well.

Depending on what aspects you are looking to contract out, you'd look for a consultant with the following attributes:

- » Recognized expertise in the issue of youth homelessness
- » Able and willing to support your team's capacity building on technical issues
- » Respected and trusted by the diverse stakeholders involved in the plan
- » Excellent organizational, communication and interpersonal skills
- » Track record of outstanding work, delivered on time and on budget

In some instances, you may consider bringing in an external expert (paid or unpaid) to deliver key messages in your community – such as a keynote address during a community event to rally support for the plan. It can be useful to have a recognized, well-respected person in this role to kick-start the community's thinking in a new direction. However, depending on how the message is delivered and received, the external expert can also be discordant and cause further tension in the community. The planning group will have to consider risks when moving in this direction very carefully. It may be wiser to bring the external expert in on a more informal basis to give you advice on your proposed direction and 'look over your shoulder,' pointing out potential pitfalls and promising directions you may be unaware of.

A kick-off event with key officials and the external expert can get the issue in front of the media from the beginning. You can leverage this event to get to know your media contacts, raise awareness about the initiative with them and begin their engagement in the process. Having a media presence throughout the planning and implementation process will help keep the issue top of mind within the broader community, ultimately enhancing its likelihood for support and impact.

Some considerations in hiring consultants:

- » Does the plan team have capacity (expertise and time) to do the work without a consultant? This includes members of your steering committee who can take on pieces of the work.
- » What workplan items can be assigned to a consultant?
- » Do you have the resources to hire the right consultant?
- » Does the plan team have the capacity to manage a consultant and support the necessary knowledge gathering the consultant might require?
- » What items should not be done by a consultant? Are we missing out on building relationships ourselves by contracting out the community consultations?
- » How can we leverage the consultant's expertise to build our internal capacity to take on the technical aspects of the plan so we don't rely on external experts on an ongoing basis?
- » What are the drawbacks of relying on external expertise for this work?

If you hire a consultant, ensure an executed contract is in place that clearly outlines your respective roles and responsibilities in the project, their estimated scope of work, budget, timelines and deliverables.

At minimum, the contract should lay out:

- » Project scope
- » Proposed approach
- » Detailed workplan (tasks, timelines and hours)
- » Itemized budget

Ensure the contract includes a clause that enables you to use the knowledge generated by the consultant without their future permission. It is important for you to understand that the consultant owns the rights to the intellectual property they develop, even under contract with you, unless they explicitly allow your use of their product. It is advisable that you have ownership of the intellectual property developed; it would be recommended that you do not engage in agreements that do not ensure this.

**An example of such a clause could read as follows:**

*Any copyrightable works, ideas, discoveries, inventions, patents, products or other information developed within this project will be the exclusive property of "Your Organization Name."*

Another example that may be useful is including a clause around Open Source in your contracts. This would ensure that a shared understanding of Open Source is built into contractual agreements with facilitators and consultants and understood at the local level. Sharing and documenting includes sharing of local models, templates, data collection tools and other resources with the A Way Home program staff and the participating communities as they are developed, including those developed by partners or contracted partners, consultants and facilitators.

Use your legal counsel in these matters to ensure your organization is fully protected. If you do not have a standard contract form, have your lawyers draft one for you.

When you do run into troubles, consider whether the relationship is salvageable and take steps to redress your concerns. If these are not remediated, move quickly and explore your options for terminating the contract.

## DEVELOPING A WORKPLAN & BUDGET

Develop a workplan that gets you from start to finish in terms of plan development and gives some consideration to implementation and evaluation after its launch.

There are some major factors that will impact your timelines and workplan:

- » **Available Resources:** Without dedicated human resources to oversee the plan's development, it will be difficult to develop a solid plan in timely fashion. If developing the plan is an 'add-on' for staff, it will likely compete for their time with other priorities, impacting the work's quality and timeliness. It is advisable that you have a lead project manager dedicated to seeing the plan through to completion and overseeing various aspects of the process even if they are not necessarily doing all the work themselves. You will have to build a team to provide guidance to the project manager as well and may want to bring in external expertise where you need it. This, of course, has budget implications and may not be feasible with limited resources.
- » **Consultation Needs and Approach:** The number of stakeholders you need to engage and the level of engagement they require will impact timelines significantly and have budget implications. If your community is regionally spread out, you will have to develop a consultation strategy that reaches across communities as well. You may also have stakeholder groups that need to be approached individually for political reasons, thereby increasing the time you have to spend on engagement.
- » **Data and Research:** In some communities, data and information are abundant and readily available. This is unfortunately the exception rather than the norm; barriers to accessing the needed information to develop the plan will impact your capacity to deliver the final document. It will also impact its quality, especially if data is unavailable or poorly analyzed. In some cases, the plan development process will necessarily include a data collection component to make up for the lack of information – such as a youth survey or homeless count. Again, this impacts resource needs and timelines. Communities can engage the COH for support on this issue as well as local researchers where possible.
- » **Political Changes** that may impact the government's receptiveness to the plan should be considered. If a major change is afoot, such as a looming election, there may be opportunities to leverage these shifts to engage political players in the issue. Candidates may be willing to consider your asks around youth homelessness and may even incorporate them into their election platforms, giving you a critical entry into discussion about policy change and funding requirements to support implementation.

A typical workplan spans approximately one year from start to the launch of the plan, though communities, depending on various factors, can see these timelines be as long as two years in practice due to the complex various moving parts and approvals involved in finalizing the plan.

A solid workplan will outline the key components of the work involved, estimate hours needed to complete and identify responsible individuals and timelines. A sample workplan is provided below based on plan efforts completed in community.

Table 11: Sample Workplan

ITEMS	ESTIMATED HOURS	LEAD RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
<p><b>Research &amp; Policy Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Review and incorporate best practices and research</li> <li>» Review emerging policy documents in relation to current plan to identify areas of alignment</li> </ul>	40	Project Manager	January to February
Synthesize available local data specific to youth homelessness	20	Project Manager/ Consultant	January to February
Once research, policy, data review is complete, draft document to share during consultations with emerging findings	30	Project Manager/ Consultant	March
<p><b>Key Stakeholder Interviews</b></p> <p>It is very likely that some key stakeholders will need to be consulted on a one-on-one basis, particularly those in decision-making roles. We will need to build in time to ensure input of key individuals is appropriately sought before the plan is drafted. An estimated 20 interviews may be needed based on initial scoping.</p>	50	Project Manager/ Steering Committee	February to June

<p><b>Community Roundtables</b></p> <p>Facilitate a Roundtable session with all stakeholders to seek input on the proposed plan and affirm the shared accountability framework and actions. Hosting several discussion roundtables will solicit input from diverse groups of individuals (youth, funders, non-profit sector, public system partners, government and Indigenous leadership).</p>	30	Project Manager/ Steering Committee	June to July
<p><b>Youth Voice</b></p> <p>Facilitate sessions with youth with lived experience to gather their feedback on draft plan</p>	20	Project Manager	June to July
<p><b>Draft Plan Development</b></p> <p>Once input and research is complete, develop draft plan.</p>	80	Project Manager/ Consultant	September to October
<p><b>Plan Feedback</b></p> <p>Facilitate a full-day roundtable session with all stakeholders to seek input on proposed plan and affirm shared accountability framework and actions</p>	15	Project Manager/ Steering Committee	November
<p><b>Finalize Plan</b></p> <p>Revise plan based on stakeholder feedback into final draft ready for layout and design</p>	10	Project Manager/ Consultant	November
<p><b>Launch Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Finalize layout and print materials</li> <li>» Develop communications strategy, media release</li> <li>» Organize launch logistics and complete plan launch</li> </ul>	60	Project Manager/ Steering Committee	December

The next steps are to develop a budget to execute the proposed workplan. The main costs of plan development are outlined below for a range of plans.

Table 12: Sample Budget

ITEM	COST HIGH END	COST MODERATE	COST MINIMAL
Staff time (0.5 FTE/0.25/0.1 FTE)	\$30,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$6,000.00
Consultation fees	\$10,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
Consultation & meeting expenses (catering facility rental)	\$4,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00
Youth honoraria/incentives	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$200.00
Incidentals (printing, parking, travel)	\$500.00	\$300.00	\$100.00
Report layout & design	\$2,500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Plan launch event (catering, facility rental)	\$2,000.00	\$500.00	\$200.00
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>\$51,000.00</b>	<b>\$24,300.00</b>	<b>\$7,500.00</b>

Account for the approximate in-kind value of community contributions to the effort as well. Pending what's available, you may be able to reduce your budget accordingly.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS
Steering committee time
Working committee time
Researcher contributions
Key stakeholders participation
Charismatic and Influential Communicator
Facility costs provided in kind for consultations/meetings
Backbone supports administration/hosting costs
Backbone supports in-kind secondment of project manager time

## LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Your planning team should work out the foundational elements of the plan early on, particularly the vision, mission and guiding principles of the initiative. Even if these are developed as drafts to be verified in community subsequently, having a common agenda early on will be critical.

The youth plan should have a clear vision statement, which succinctly articulates the long-term desired end-state resulting from the proposed work. A mission statement describes the reason for the initiative or organization; the statement guides ongoing decision making about priorities and actions. You are likely familiar with vision and mission statements, but keep in mind that these should be concise, inspirational and memorable – ideally between five and 15 words.

In the example from Edmonton, you will note clear alignment between the community and Alberta’s provincial plan to end homelessness, though this may not always be the case – particularly if your provincial/territorial government does not have a plan in place.

Table 13: Vision/Mission Statement Examples

EXAMPLES	EDMONTON	GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA
Vision	An Edmonton where all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.	An Alberta where all youth have a safe, supportive and nurturing home.
Mission	To reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness and prevent further youth from becoming homeless by ensuring youth and their families have the services and supports they need.	To reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness in Alberta and prevent further youth from becoming homeless by ensuring youth and their families have the services and supports they need.

Again, not all plans have these elements clearly articulated, though it is recommended you include their development in your process explicitly to ensure diverse stakeholders can hold themselves and each other accountable to the agreed-upon vision and mission.

There will need to be agreement among diverse stakeholders to adopt these elements, thus it is imperative that you seek input on these notions early in your consultation process. These elements can be effective points of discussion in your consultation process, particularly at the onset, to support creating a sense of co-ownership among diverse groups.

Though not everyone will agree with the proposed vision and mission, being transparent about the foundational thinking that grounds the plan will ensure stakeholders are clear about the proposed direction. Your planning group should be familiar with these concepts and constantly check in to ensure your approach is being developed in alignment with your proposed vision and mission.

## DEVELOPING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

While the vision and mission statements are forward-looking and aspirational, the guiding principles of plans to end youth homelessness begin to frame the proposed approach. Guiding principles articulate the norms or ethics guiding stakeholders' actions in this work. These should be made explicit and serve as guidelines for decision making.

The principles we propose to uphold through the work of the plan will guide the type of strategies and actions we aim to undertake. As such, these principles not only have to resonate locally, but they also have to align with the existing body of evidence on effective responses to youth homelessness.

Table 14: Guiding Principles Examples

EXAMPLES	EDMONTON	ALBERTA	KAMLOOPS
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Housing First approach</li> <li>» Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>» Positive youth development</li> <li>» Individualized &amp; youth-centred supports focused on prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Engaging youth</li> <li>» Family support</li> <li>» Building on successful existing initiatives</li> <li>» Collaboration</li> <li>» A proactive approach, focused on prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Shift from managing homelessness to preventing and ending homelessness</li> <li>» Housing First philosophy</li> <li>» System planning</li> <li>» Healthy transitions to adulthood</li> <li>» Data collection and information management</li> <li>» Youth voice</li> <li>» Diversity</li> <li>» Wise use of resources</li> <li>» Private sector involvement</li> </ul>

Existing research has consistently affirmed several concepts to be foundational to good planning and practice. In this toolkit, we are highlighting a number of key concepts for you to consider as you develop the guiding principles that underpin your local approach to end youth homelessness. These are by no means the only options available; however, we strongly urge you to consider their applicability to your plan given the supporting evidence affirming their effectiveness. You are not limited to picking one principle to ground your plan – there is no reason why you cannot adopt a combination of the above, add to it and make it your own.

**Housing First:** Housing First as a philosophy emphasizes that everyone has the right to safe, secure and stable housing without any preconditions of readiness, with access to the supports needed to maintain it. As a programmatic intervention, Housing First can be an effective intervention for youth through appropriate adaptations focused on life skills development, meaningful engagement, access to education and employment, and strengthening social relations. [For more on Housing First for youth, see link.](#)

**A Human Rights Approach:** Youth plans generally set goals and standards for addressing homelessness, but rarely frame the issue in terms of human rights. The human rights approach would reframe ending youth homelessness as a long-term goal as a step towards realizing the right to adequate housing. Canada without Poverty provides an excellent guide to incorporating human rights in your plan. Building on the notion of the right to housing, consider linking your plan to other rights such as the right to education, personal security and privacy, equal access to justice and civil and political rights. In this case, you can make specific reference to human rights, articulate goals and standards in terms of human rights and ensure those responsible for implementing and executing the plan are trained in human rights. For more on human rights in planning, [see link](#). Note that A Way Home is working with the COH and Canada Without Poverty to develop a human rights guide specific to youth homelessness community planning that will be launched in 2016.

**Prevention-focused System Planning & Integration:** The response to youth homelessness must be coordinated among the diverse agencies, governmental bodies and systems that youth need and/or access. System planning proposes that we build intervention responses to homelessness in a coordinated fashion to ensure best outcomes at the system level, versus a program-by-program basis. Because the homeless-serving system cannot solve youth homelessness on its own, a youth plan must necessarily address the roles of mainstream services in an integrated fashion, such as child welfare, education, health care, housing services and corrections. Similarly, integration at the policy level must be re-aligned to meet ending youth homelessness objectives.

A prevention-focused system planning and integration approach to youth homelessness focuses on measures within the homeless-serving and mainstream systems at the service and policy levels to ensure that youth do not become homeless in the first place. When it does occur, responses are in place to ensure homeless is as brief as possible. Preventing youth homelessness has better long-term outcomes for youth, families and the community and is a more cost-effective approach than reactive interventions.

**Cross-sectoral Collaboration:** Ending youth homelessness is a collective responsibility achieved through collaborative action and solutions. Youth, government, academia, private, non-profit and faith sectors are directly impacted by youth homelessness and share responsibility for addressing it. Cross-sectoral collaboration and leadership will be essential to any sustained effort to address youth homelessness. By acknowledging good work already being done and building on existing knowledge, expertise, effective practices, partnerships and resources we can foster cross-sectoral collaboration further. Strong linkages and alignment with relevant policy levers can further system-level solutions with government as well.

**Youth-centred Approach:** Ending youth homelessness requires youth participation and shared decision making. The perspectives and voices of youth must shape proposed solutions. As such, youth should be engaged throughout all levels of planning, implementation and evaluation in a meaningful and productive manner.

Proposed interventions should be individualized, culturally appropriate, flexible and adaptable in response to the changing needs of youth. Young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness are not a homogeneous group; their diverse, complex and unique identities need to be recognized throughout. This includes the needs of Indigenous, immigrant and LGBTQ2S youth and youth with developmental disabilities, mental health and/or addictions issues.

Rather than simply moving young people toward independence, our approach should be tailored to their needs, preferences and developmental circumstances. Youth and their families must be supported and connected to ensure that whenever possible youth are able to stay with their families or with a caring, safe and nurturing adult. A comprehensive approach supports youth to empower themselves, form meaningful relationships with adults, build skills, develop leadership and contribute to their community as they transition to adulthood. As a strengths-based perspective, Positive Youth Development focuses on enhancing the social, cognitive, psychological and physical well-being of young people.