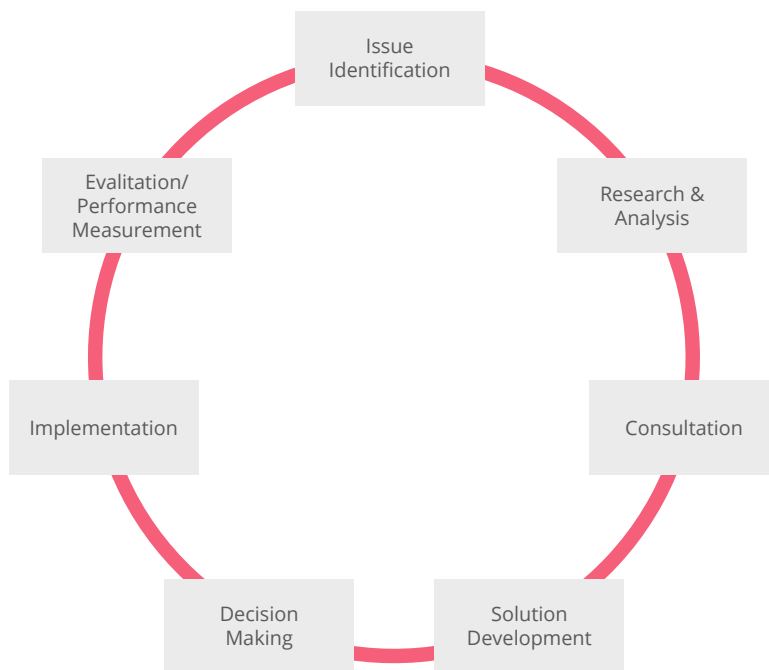# GETTING GOING

Once you have the infrastructure in place to develop the plan, you're ready to begin. To help you frame the process, it is helpful to consider the policy development cycle. Like public policy, developing a plan to end youth homelessness involves research, analysis, consultation and synthesis of information. It should also involve an evaluation of implementation and course correction. You don't have to go through these steps in sequence but consider each as complete the plan development process.

Figure 6: Policy Development Cycle

Likely, you've already identified youth homelessness as an issue and have a sense of what research is currently available. You may have conducted consultations to determine your community's readiness to develop and implement a plan to end youth homelessness. Additionally, you may know what solutions the plan should include. An effective plan pulls this knowledge together into a coherent strategy – a strategy supported by community stakeholders.

In some cases, the process may seem to move in reverse, from solution development back to research and consultation. This is common and not a sign of failure; you should be prepared to go back to the drawing board as new information emerges or the community context shifts. You will also have to consider what resources you have to complete these various activities.

As you consult, develop a means to share findings with stakeholders. Develop a 'what we heard' document summarizing learning and implications. Present results through a community forum or by seeking written feedback on the 'what we heard' document.

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Governments developing a youth plan may find it useful to consider the policy cycle process in Alberta. This comes from David French, manager, homeless supports initiatives, family violence prevention and homeless supports, Alberta Human Services who led the development of the Alberta Youth Plan (2014).

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

A Plan for Alberta – Ending Homelessness in 10 Years was approved as a direction-setting document to address homelessness in Alberta in 2011.

This plan identifies youth as one of the populations considered to be part of the 'hidden homeless.' It goes on to state that Albertans from specialized groups, including homeless youth, are dealing with particularly challenging issues and require targeted responses to be rehoused.

The broader provincial plan not only allowed government to become immersed in the groundswell of good work happening in the sector at the local level, but was a key opportunity for administration staff leading the plan's development to build trust with the sector.

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

An MLA-lead internal review of youth homelessness resulted in five options for policy consideration. These efforts initiated mandate alignment within the Government of Alberta to promote increased focus and a more integrated response to youth homelessness.

Within this phase, and as an outcome of the internal review, the Youth Homelessness Cross-Ministry Committee was created and would go on to achieve the following critical outcomes:

» Agreement of a definition of youth homelessness that was accepted across Government;

» Early prioritization of the issue within departments; and

» Early discussions about the reality of the issue. The need for a holistic response across government and our role as 'teachers' began within government.

Extensive research was undertaken to review programs and services across Canada and globally to identify promising and best practices for addressing and ending youth homelessness.

A research focus was also on identifying policy levers. Calgary released a dedicated youth homelessness plan in 2011, which closely aligns to the provincial youth plan. Both speak to a coordinated system required to prevent and end youth homelessness, emphasize the need for an expanded housing continuum to meet the current need and encourage an improved data system to assist with knowledge mobilization to influence public policy.

In 2013, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate released a special report on youth transitioning from care. We worked to ensure the plan met all five recommendations within the report; including (but not limited to):

» Ensuring young people leaving care have affordable, safe and stable housing options; and

» Supporting young people leaving care with access to counseling and/or mental health services.

CONSULTATION	Conversations with community, including youth who have experienced homelessness, identified the priorities that the plan would have to address to effectively respond to youth homelessness. In total, over 400 Albertans were consulted during the development of the plan. Albertans engaged included youth who had been or were currently homeless, service providers and cross-ministry partners. This is where Albertans 'got the pen' and had the opportunity to take control over the work and ensure it met their community's needs. This component was critical for the government, who recognized that solutions to the issue lie in community.
SOLUTIONS DEVELOPMENT	Continuous engagement of stakeholders occurred throughout the dissemination of the information collected through consultation. A 'what we heard' document was produced and shared with consultation participants as a means of validating input and facilitating ongoing engagement. Government remained accessible to community throughout the plan's development to ensure we were always listening and evolving as community evolved. The Youth Homelessness Cross-Ministry Committee was engaged throughout the development of the plan given they were going to be assigned key roles. Key government strategies were leveraged to inform the breadth of the issue across government – hence the early focus on identifying policy levers in the research phase. Key policy levers/strategies were referenced throughout the plan articulating that many components of this work weren't new; they existed in current strategies/plans and just needed focus on the youth homeless population.
DECISION MAKING	The decision-making phase is where contextually each province/state/community will be different. In Alberta, this is where we were well positioned based on the work we did leading up to this point. Alberta moved forward with Cabinet policy approval for the youth plan given it was identifying new policy related to the issue and was requesting new dollars to enhance the response. Within this phase, significant education was required. Briefing leadership, ministers and premiers to defend policy at the various tables was critical. Here, knowing your stakeholders and having strong relationships with them pays off. Some sound advice to keep in mind: "Be as resilient as the youth we work with."

GROUNDING YOUR PLAN IN EVIDENCE

You must develop a solid understanding of the body of evidence on youth homelessness and what it takes to end it. This involves not only becoming proficient in the existing research on youth homelessness and available local information, but also taking on additional data collection and analysis if needed. You will need to tap into any available information that can shed light on the local youth homelessness situation by firstly becoming familiar with 'what's out there.'

So, what type of information do you need and how do you get it? This will depend on the level of coordination and data sharing in your community, as well as your research and 'detective' skills to get a hold of necessary information. However, there are certain pieces of data you will be able to access as a starting point. Use this information to paint a comprehensive picture of community capacity and gaps, which you can confirm in the consultation phases further.

A RESEARCH AGENDA

Engage local researchers in the beginning of the process. Researchers can be part of your steering committee or working groups, as noted previously. Consider developing a local research agenda that identifies key research questions, aimed at enhancing your community's understanding of youth homelessness. Develop the research agenda collaboratively with the community and researchers. The research agenda should support planning and implementation of the plan by addressing gaps in knowledge, developing program evaluation capacity and by bolstering data collection systems and practices.

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A common starting point is to host a forum bringing together various researchers from your local universities and colleges, those working in government, public systems and service agencies. Refer to A Way Home for an example of a youth homelessness research agenda. The COH can provide additional examples from Canadian communities, as well as provide support and technical assistance to develop your own research agenda.

LOCATING INFORMATION

You may locate these key sources of information on your own or with the help of your steering committee members and contacts in the community and government. Be comprehensive, but be mindful not to become overwhelmed by information.

Table 15: Information Sources

INFORMATION	SAMPLE SOURCES	RELEVANCE TO YOUTH PLAN
Housing market information	CMHC rental report, housing market analyses	Gives you a sense of current market conditions impacting youth's ability to access housing and overall housing indicators for your community
Demographics	Statistics Canada, National Household Survey	Provides analysis of trends in your community around age cohorts, immigration, population growth, Indigenous people, income and housing affordability as context to youth homelessness
Extreme core housing need	Statistics Canada, National Household Survey	Ability to hone in on most at risk for homelessness groups (very low income, paying 50%+ on shelter), to provide you an estimate of overall youth groups vulnerable to homelessness
Homeless counts	Local Homeless Point-in-Time Count	If available, provides a snapshot of overall population experiencing homeless at a point-in-time, can be used to analyze proportion of youth and their characteristics
Shelter utilization	HIFIS, HMIS, local shelter reports	Annual shelter use rates can be analyzed to deduce what proportion is used by youth as well as their needs and characteristics
Service use	HIFIS, HMIS, local providers reports	Analysis of available data from local information systems and/or individual service providers can be mined to provide a sense of youth needs and scope of the issue locally; gaps may be identifiable in these reports as well

Best practice reviews	Homeless Hub search engine	Reviews of effective service models and community strategies are available in key documents available on the Homeless Hub; your role will be to distill this information for your local community
Policy review	Local, provincial/ territorial, federal government reports and websites	Scan the policy environment impacting youth homelessness. This includes Speeches from the Throne, Budgets, Ministry Strategic Plans and Business Plans, key policy documents and reports from departments connected to youth homelessness
Strategic Initiatives	Reports, plans, strategic documents produced by local funders, agencies, collaborative initiatives	Local plans to end homelessness, youth strategies, poverty plans, etc. that you need to be aware of and connected to in developing the youth plan
Local research	Academic or grey literature, surveys, workshop/ consultation results.	Research efforts may have already produced excellent information on youth homelessness locally; you should build on these efforts and complement them with additional research rather than duplicating.

Local researchers may have already produced an analysis of trends, gaps and resources on youth homelessness that you can use to build your plan. However, it is equally common to find very little synthesized information to help you. In some cases you may need to develop a research initiative, as part of your planning process, to gather critical missing information.

For example, in Wellington County, a report on rural youth homelessness identified the need for a youth-specific strategy and was the impetus for the County to apply to Mobilizing Local Communities for support to develop a youth plan. Their first step was to hold youth focus groups with 60 youth in nine locations across rural Wellington County. A report was generated from these consultations to identify gaps. The planning group synthesized key findings from both reports and two Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Counts and brought these findings to a community roundtable for input. In this manner, local research was a key part of the Wellington process to develop a youth plan.

local research was a key part of the Wellington process to develop a youth plan.

Similarly, in Edmonton, HMIS data and PiT Count reports were mined for youth-specific data, which was in turn used to develop the rationale for the local youth strategy. Edmonton Homeward Trust, who provided backbone supports to the initiative, conducted a literature review that they presented at a planning forum to kick-start the consultation process. Research and data on youth homelessness is important for two reasons. First, you must build a rationale for action. Why should youth homelessness be a local priority? Second, the solutions contained within your plan must be based on evidence. To prioritize youth homelessness, you must have a sense of the issue.

- » How many youth are experiencing homelessness?
- » What are their needs?
- » What are their demographics?
- » What are their pathways into homelessness?
- » What would work best for whom and when?
- » What are emerging trends we need to be aware of?
- » What solutions work well?
- » What solutions have proven to be less effective?
- » How do policies and practices within agencies and government departments impact youth homelessness?
- » What is the cost of the status quo?
- » What is the cost of resolving the issue?

While existing research can provide some important clues to help you answer these basic questions, the better your local data is, the more likely that your plan is appropriately tailored to make an impact.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH

In some communities, the lack of available local research has meant that the planning process had to include data collection and analysis. It is not uncommon for communities to undertake a homeless PiT Count during the plan development phase and use the results to inform the process.

This was the case for Saint John, Kingston, Wellington County, Yellowknife and Brandon. For instance, Saint John conducted a youth-focused homeless count that engaged schools and other key stakeholders. The homeless count process can be adapted strategically to simultaneously engage key stakeholders but also gather critical information. Be mindful to adapt the homeless count methods to ensure the youth population is adequately enumerated given the underrepresentation of youth common in the adult shelter system that standard count methodologies tend to focus on.

For more on homeless counts and adapting these for youth, the COH has developed a Youth Count Toolkit. Additional information is available from the Homeless Hub and USISCH and on homeless counts and engaging youth. For rural communities engaging in homeless counts, another useful resource provides information on PiT Count methods, challenges and best practices. Communities that conduct regular homeless counts will have some data on youth; this should be analyzed in a manner consistent with the Canadian Definition of Youth Homelessness (that is, unaccompanied youth 24 and under).

Administrative data, collected through HIFIS or HMIS, can be effectively leveraged to identify youth shelter and service trends. Such data will be more comprehensive than a homeless count and, where reliable and accurate, should always be your primary data source for analysis. Where administrative is not available, you can solicit local shelters for data on occupancy, service use, demographics, etc. during a designated time period. This can produce useful data to get things started in lieu of formal data management system.

There is significant research on best practice programs and strategies for ending youth homelessness; such analyses are readily available online through the Homeless Hub and are even developed as toolkits for communities.

With respect to best practices, it's important that you don't reinvent the wheel. There is significant research on best practice programs and strategies for ending youth homelessness; such analyses are readily available online through the Homeless Hub and are even developed as toolkits for communities. Section one outlines best practice resources. In section three, we will delve deeper into promising approaches. Remember, your role is not simply to cut-and-paste such recommended approaches, but to synthesize the available information, consider its relevance to your local context and develop specific solutions that will resolve youth homeless in your community.

Finally, consider these best practices within your local context. For example, it may be best practice to build new affordable housing, but is it realistic given the socioeconomic and political context in your community? Your job is to develop a strategic youth plan that is visionary and grounded in best practice, but can be practically implemented in your community.

POLICY ANALYSIS

You should be looking at government reports and information closely as well. Has child protection undergone a major review recently? Has the Speech from the Throne mentioned vulnerable youth or homelessness? Does the province have strategies for addressing youth in general or, more specifically, youth employment, involvement with the justice system, education engagement and achievement, etc.? Where does youth homelessness fit among government priorities? What are the key policy levers which you can tie the youth plan to? Have other strategies and plans been crafted that have direct intersections with the key systems youth experiencing homelessness may access?

Answer these questions by building on existing relationships with public servants and political allies and strategizing with your planning group. Incorporate a review of existing policy as part of the plan development process and present this information to your steering committee. Through this process you may identify additional stakeholders to consult. This will also provide you with a framework for policy changes and funding requests to support the implementation of the plan.

In your conversations with government representatives, probe for which areas are most likely to garner buy-in, develop an understanding of who's who and identify the most effective process for advancing change. An excellent example of funding 'policy levers' for ending youth homelessness can be found in the Government of Alberta's Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness: Appendix 1 and 3, which outline how the proposed direction aligns with broader government initiatives and the mandates and of various departments.

If you have committee members who are in government, leverage their expertise. They can point you to information, provide critical background context, facilitate access to reports and introduce you to key contacts. They can also point you in the right direction in terms of building support in government for the plan and advise on how best to approach the right decision makers. Of course, such allies may not be on your formal steering committee; you may have other relationships you can leverage to this end.

As a non-profit organization taking on an advocacy role, you may be diving into unfamiliar territory and may even feel uneasy about being perceived as adversarial to government. Or, you may be concerned about losing charitable status. Familiarize yourself with Canada Revenue Agency's regulations on charitable advocacy. A useful overview from Imagine Canada is available here.

If you are able to tie your activities and asks to existing government policy and direction, in many ways you are re-affirming their direction rather than 'calling them out.' By positioning your asks within existing frameworks, the youth plan can be a means of helping government enact their vision in community. The way you take on policy work should leverage and enhance your relationships with government, rather than strain them. We will look at this further in the coming section on Engaging and Influencing Government.

The way you take on policy work should leverage and enhance your relationships with government, rather than strain them.

ALIGNING WITH LOCAL INITIATIVES

Align with other local initiatives such as broader community plans to end homelessness, poverty reduction plans, additional and mental health strategies, etc. Connecting with such coalitions/lead organizations and developing a sense of their work and potential areas of alignment will help your plan development process while ensuring these groups are informed about your initiative.

When it comes to local homelessness initiatives, it is imperative that you are able to articulate how the youth plan 'fits' within the broader goals of the community. Where the potential for misalignment exists, a clear message developed ahead of time can go a long way toward alleviating misunderstandings and tensions in community.

Here are some thorny questions that can arise in these situations, which you may want to think about ahead of time:

» Why do we need a youth plan? We already have a local plan to end homelessness.

» What's different about a youth plan?

» Won't this take away from other groups?

» What about other populations, like women or families, do we need a special plan for them too?

As an example, let's look closely at Alberta, a province with a provincial youth plan in place. Alberta has a broader provincial plan for ending homelessness and all seven cities have local plans to end homelessness, but only Edmonton and Calgary have specific youth plans. Calgary was the first city to develop a youth plan, which was followed by the provincial government's youth plan in 2015 and then Edmonton's soon thereafter.

In Calgary's case, the initial plan was launched in 2011 and positioned as an extension of the Calgary Plan to End Homelessness focused on youth; it was launched as a collaborative endeavour between the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) and the youth sector. However, for a number of reasons, the actual implementation of the proposed actions was limited from 2011 to 2015 and the local youth sector sought to 'refresh' the plan given a number of key local changes. There was a general sense from participating stakeholders that the plan did not represent the collective will of the community to the fullest extent.

Since the plan was launched four years ago, considerable changes ensued that needed to be considered as the planning group embarked on the refresh process. These include the launch of the Alberta Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness (2015), which sets provincial policy direction and is driving new dollars to community to respond to the issue as well as the renewed Updated Calgary Plan to End Homelessness (2015). Both of these plans emphasize the critical role community ownership and joint accountability play in order to fully implement priority actions on homelessness.

The change in political leadership in Alberta to an NDP government also presented a unique opportunity to inform a new course for the province around social policy that advances an end to youth homelessness. The provincial youth plan signalled a new level of openness in government around policy and practice changes to advance common objectives, particularly relevant in the work with Child Intervention Services and Corrections.

The 2013 *Child and Youth Advocates Special Report* and the Human Services, Child and Family Services Division's work on a revisioned Child Intervention Practice Framework point to significant reform underway at a systems level around natural supports and transitions that aligns with our ending youth homelessness objectives. At a regional level, Calgary and Area Child and Family Service's work on developing a *Permanency Framework*, rolling out *Outcomes-based Service Delivery* and implementing the *Signs of Safety* approach further affirmed the need for re-thinking the local approach to ending and preventing youth homelessness leveraging this direction at the system level.

The work on the ground has also shifted as new learning emerges, particularly around family reunification, prevention and healthy transitions. There is unprecedented data and research available to inform a renewed direction and there are new partners at the youth sector table.

The change in political leadership in Alberta to an NDP government also presented a unique opportunity to inform a new course for the province around social policy that advances an end to youth homelessness

As a result, the planning group working on refreshing the youth plan undertook an initial policy scan to assist them in identifying levers for their work. The table below summarizes the key policy directions they identified with relevance to the youth plan refresh.

Table 16: Policy Lever Analysis Example

KEY POLICY/ STRATEGY DOCUMENT	DIRECTIONS RELEVANT TO YOUTH PLAN REFRESH
Social Policy	
Alberta Social Policy Framework	Safe: Youth live free from fear of abuse and violence.
	Healthy: Achieve the highest attainable standards for rehousing or family reunification
	Secure and Resilient: Youth support themselves and their households through safe work and career opportunities, with access to effective income supports when in financial need
	Lifelong Learners: Youth develop the knowledge, skills and commitment to learning necessary to realize their potential and participate in society
	Included: Youth feel welcomed in the communities where they live, learn and work
	Active and Engaged: Youth have opportunities to participate in recreational activities and cultural experiences and to engage in Albertan society
Homelessness	
A Plan for Alberta - Ending Homelessness in 10 years	Rapid Re-housing: Moving homeless youth from streets and shelters into permanent housing quickly
	Client-centered: Help youth obtain the assistance they need to restore their stability and maintain their housing
	Prevent Homelessness: Emergency assistance and adequate and accessible government programs and services for youth stem flow into homelessness
	Better Information: Collecting, researching and sharing essential information that focuses on outcomes

	Aggressive Assistance: Making sure youth have the resources they need to secure and keep stable homes
	Coordinated Systems: Ensuring governments, agencies and communities work together in an integrated, efficient way toward shared objectives
	More Housing Options: Increasing the quantity and variety of housing options so that every youth has a home
	Effective Policies: Implementing government policies that bring down barriers to re-housing and actively promote the goal of ending youth homelessness
Plan to Prevent and Reduce Youth Homelessness	» Youth have increased housing stability through rehousing and family reunification » Increased resiliency in homeless youth and youth at risk of becoming homeless » Prevention of youth homelessness through education and enhanced family and natural supports » Healthy transitions to adulthood
Child Protection	
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate – *Youth Aging out of Care Special Report*	» Young people leaving care should have affordable, safe and stable housing options and the financial resources to support themselves independently » Dedicated and trained caseworkers are in place to meet the unique needs of young people leaving care » Youth are effectively transitioned to the adult system to meet their service and support needs » Young people leaving care have access to counseling and/or mental health supports » Enhanced awareness of caseworkers, caregivers and service providers about resources for young people leaving care and support young people to access them » Young people leaving care have supportive adult relationships

Calgary Region Child and Family Services	» Partnering with communities to deliver right services at right time » Focus on preventative actions to enhance resiliency and reduce interventions » Recognize importance of relationship with families, communities and service delivery partners » Focus on supporting families using strength-based approach as best placement outcome for children; family unit as essential to children's long-term outcomes. Five key outcomes: » Vulnerable children are supported to live successfully in the community » Children in temporary care are reunited quickly with their family » Children in permanent care are placed in permanent homes as quickly as possible » Youth transition to adulthood successfully » Indigenous children live in culturally appropriate placements
Child Intervention Practice Framework	Six practice principles: » Aboriginal experience » Preserve family » Strengths-based » Connection » Collaboration » Continuous improvement
Permanency Framework	» Child- and youth-centered permanency planning as soon as family is engaged » All children and youth are entitled to a permanent family relationship » All permanency options for the child/youth are concurrently considered » The four domains of permanency planning (relationship, culture, legal and home) are honoured » Meaningful permanency planning for every youth, regardless of age, is continuous

Signs of Safety	» Increasing safety and reducing risk and danger by focusing on a family's strengths, resources and networks
Outcomes-based Service Delivery	» Collaborative practice » Flexible contracting and funding » Data about the outcomes of services provided
Other	
FASD 10-Year Strategic Plan	» Individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) require improved access to housing – including places to live that are affordable and provide structure and support » Improve access to services for individuals affected by FASD, including vulnerable populations who are not receiving the support they need, with a particular focus on youth in transition to adulthood
2015 Revised School Act	Section 16.1 specifically allows for organized activities that promote equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs

Source: Calgary Plan to End Youth Homelessness Refresh Strategy Overview Briefing, Jan. 16, 2016. Calgary Youth Sector – Refresh Committee.

SERVICE SYSTEM MAPPING

Mapping out the current service system for youth experiencing homelessness will give you a good starting place for understanding current resources and a basis for analyzing gaps. A system mapping exercise can be useful in identifying the potential organizations you need to engage. How you access the information to develop this system map can vary.

You may be in a small community where you know who the players are; you may be in a community where the resources are already well analyzed and organized in a youth street survival guide. But you may also work in a context where such information is not readily available. Devise a way to collate it anew. Consider an online survey to assess current capacity and perceived needs around youth homelessness. You can also host gatherings among diverse providers to collect this information and gather input on current trends, gaps and emerging opportunities.

Be strategic about how you engage with and assess youth homelessness when it comes to adult-serving agencies. It is essential that your plan address youth homelessness, not the youth-serving system. Homeless youth often access adult shelters and services. Failing to recognize and include such providers in your planning work will hinder your initial assessment of the local situation and the solutions you generate.

System mapping does not have to be an overwhelming endeavour – in fact, you may already have a solid inventory of various services developed – such as a Youth Street Survival Guide, a 211-resource directory or even your HPS Community Plan. Look to the St. John's System Mapping Survey as an illustration of how to collect this information in an online format (see the Resource section).

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Understandably, you will want to engage as many stakeholders as possible in your plan development. However, timelines, resources and levels of interest from stakeholders will dictate the scope of your consultation process. Carefully consider the 'who, what, when, where, why and how' of stakeholder involvement as you develop the consultation process.

DEVELOPING YOUR CONSULTATION PROCESS	
Who	Determining who needs to be consulted
What	What the subject matter of the consultation is
When	Determining the timing of consultations and when you have consulted enough
Where	Determining appropriate location(s) to hold consultations
Why	The purpose of the consultation helps shape the 'how' and 'where' of consultation
How	Determining best methods for consultation

For each stakeholder, consider the following:

» Are you simply letting them know that a youth plan is being developed?

» Are you seeking input into proposed strategies?

» Do you want the stakeholder to co-own the solutions?

There are distinct levels of consultation:

1. Inform;

2. Gather information;

3. Discuss or involve;

4. Engage; and

5. Partner.

Regardless of your approach, use the consultation process to build trust and goodwill.

Table 17: Consultation Levels

CONSULTATION LEVELS				
1. Inform	**2. Gather Information**	**3. Discuss or Involve**	**4. Engage**	**5. Partner**
» No opportunity to influence the final outcome/ No decisions required » Need for acceptance of a proposal or decision before a decision may be made » Information is necessary to abate concerns or prepare for involvement	» Purpose is primarily to listen and gather information » Decisions are still being shaped » No firm commitment to do anything with the views collected	» Two-way information exchange » Individuals and groups who have an interest in the issue and will likely be affected by the outcome » Opportunity to influence final outcome » Encourage discussion among and with stakeholders » Input shapes direction	» Stakeholders need to talk to each other regarding complex, value-laden issues » Capacity for stakeholders to shape policies and decisions that affect them » Opportunity for shared agenda setting and open time frames for deliberation on issues » Options generated together will be respected	» Empower stakeholders to manage process » Stakeholders accept challenge of developing solutions themselves » Planning group ready to assume the role of enabler » Agreement to implement solutions generated by stakeholders

There are diverse strategies you can employ depending on the stakeholder in question and the purpose of the consultation. Consider what would be most effective given your goals.

Table 18: Consultation Strategies

	1. Inform	2. Gather Information	3. Discuss or Involve	4. Engage	5. Partner
CONSULTATION LEVELS & STRATEGIES					
Consultation Strategies	**Communication** Advertising Calls for input Community mapping Fact sheets Information fairs/kits Media events Open houses Press releases Meetings				
	Consultation Community meetings Stakeholder panels Polling Public hearings/seminars Survey questionnaires Focus groups Interviews				
	Advisory committees Web-based surveys E-conferencing Online discussion groups Issue conferences Workshops				
	Engagement Charrettes Roundtables Retreats Panels Conferences Steering committees Study circles/groups Think tanks				

Use the table below as a template. Identify organizations and stakeholders in each category, determine at what level they'll be consulted and which strategies you'll employ.

Table 19: Consultation Stakeholders

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	WHO? KEY GROUPS/ INDIVIDUALS	WHAT? CONSULTATION LEVEL	WHERE? LOCATION	WHEN? TIMING	WHY? PROPOSE	HOW? CONSULTATION STRATEGY
Youth						
Indigenous leadership & government						
Service Providers						
Government of Canada						
Provincial/ Territorial Government						
Local Government						
Community Funders						
Public System Partners						
Private Sector						
Researchers						
Broader Community						

CONSULTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Do your homework

It is important to get grounded in the evidence first; don't begin consultations if your planning group (backbone supports, project manager and steering committee) is not familiar with the evidence on ending youth homelessness, does not have a general sense of the issue in community, or is unsure about the potential solutions required to address the issue. This does not mean you've developed a plan and are simply 'shopping it' in community for a stamp of approval. It simply means you've done your homework and are taking on consultations from a solid foundation.

A sound understanding of the issue does not mean your research is complete; rather, your data collection process should include reviews of existing literature, policy, data and consultations themselves. The consultation process will likely include a diversity of methods to collect information: one-on-one interviews, small informal/formal meetings, large community forums, surveys, etc. Your job will be to collate the diverse sources of information into a coherent synthesis that shapes the proposed response.

Help stakeholders prepare for consultations by providing backgrounders, research summaries and a resource guide for further reading.

A sound understanding of the issue does not mean your research is complete; rather, your data collection process should include reviews of existing literature, policy, data and consultations themselves.

Phase-in consultations

Consider how you want to break the information out to communities in a logical fashion. Most communities have at least two community sessions where broad input is sought for planning. During the first session, the focus is to set the stage: outline research findings, best practices and a synthesis of findings about youth homelessness locally. These events are generally larger in scale, inviting representatives across stakeholder groups to get informed and participate in an early dialogue about the youth plan. You can consider bringing in speakers from outside the community to give participants a sense of what is happening elsewhere in terms of promising practices and ultimately to inspire action locally. Winnipeg recently hosted such an event, where research was presented along with emerging areas of focus (see Resource section for their materials).

You can develop a facilitator's guide to outline areas where you want input early on from participants at the event. Ideally, participants should be broken into small groups and given questions to prompt discussion. A facilitator can either be selected ahead of time or by participants. These sessions are useful to get the participants engaged in emerging areas that will drive the content of the final plan. You can set up these sessions to delve into discussions about potential solutions as well, rather than going over the issue again. Over-engagement within this phase can streamline the authoring of the plan and the steps in the following phases.

Check what you heard

The more inclusive and mindful of your biases you are, the more the plan will authentically reflect stakeholder input. This will ensure the plan is grounded in evidence and increases the likelihood that it will be successfully implemented. At times it will be difficult to look past your own opinions. Other times, stakeholder feedback will contradict the research body of evidence. Additionally, you may think you've heard affirmation of your direction, when in fact you've missed a key point entirely. Remain open-minded and flexible throughout the plan development process.

You can consider coming back to community to affirm what you've heard in consultations. A 'what we heard' document summarizing community input is often used in plan development to ensure accurate reflection of input. This also provides community stakeholders with another source of communication about the process, keeping them abreast of plan development.

Fix it before you launch it

Once you have a draft of the plan, or a good sense of your direction, it is a good idea to go back to community stakeholders and 'check-in' on your assumptions. Again, you can ask for input on the proposed strategies and goals, but also begin the discussion on implementation issues and foster buy-in before you release the final plan.

This can provide excellent input on areas you missed or didn't consider adequately. The tone of the plan or even the way a particular group is written about can at times raise concerns. It is better to correct these issues in the draft stage than for these to grow into divisive points post-launch. These conversations can also serve as early testing ground for implementation as stakeholders begin to see themselves in the plan and may step up to 'own' particular actions before the plan is finalized.

Mind the buy-in gap

Do not frame consultations from a deficit lens. While it is important to articulate gaps and delve into the issues that contribute to youth homelessness, blaming is not conducive to buy-in or collaboration. Stakeholders need to see themselves in the plan; they need to see their role being valued and part of the vision for the future. Coming in 'guns blazing' on the faults of government, emergency shelters or other stakeholders will not do the broader movement any service. You need everyone willingly at the table; the tone of community and stakeholder consultations can make or break how certain groups buy-in to the plan. Alienating a key service provider early on can hurt implementation and it may cost you years of progress. Be mindful of the local politics as you set out on your consultation process.

Depending on where and when the backbone supports come in will determine if you are 'leading' or 'partnering.' For example, Alberta's youth plan was developed following strong leadership and innovation in the community. The Alberta government viewed themselves as 'partners' and not 'leaders' with respect to the transformation required to respond to youth homelessness.

Conduct separate discussions, early on, with potential stakeholders who do not support the plan and make headway on difficult conversations before the larger group meetings take place.

You can also consider how you want to celebrate local progress and expertise, rather than simply focusing on what's not working. A collaborative ending youth homelessness effort will be built on the foundation of existing efforts. Consider a way of acknowledging what is going well in your community and using conversations about the plan as an evolution of good work being done better, rather than labelling the existing efforts as entirely ineffective. While it is true that the status quo is no longer acceptable, blaming and faulting the stakeholders you need to build a reimagined response will undermine the new vision and way forward.

Maintain open communication

While you may have a formal schedule of meetings and community consultations, sometimes critical information will come to you through informal channels or happenstance. Make concerted efforts to be constantly available and open to communication with stakeholders. This will demonstrate that the planning group is open to collaboration and feedback thus, building trust and buy-in. Of course, formally communicating on plan progress through newsletters, email updates, verbal updates during stakeholder meetings, etc. is essential to maintain momentum in the community.

Excellent resources are available to help you develop your consultation approach, while taking account of best practice approaches for engaging groups such as Indigenous people, youth, government, the private sector and the media. This toolkit references these resources throughout.

The rest of this section outlines specific consultation strategies for the aforementioned groups. It draws on learning from communities who have developed or are developing youth plans to provide practical strategies for engagement.

Make concerted efforts to be constantly available and open to communication with stakeholders. This will demonstrate that the planning group is open to collaboration and feedback thus, building trust and buy-in.

ENGAGING YOUTH

It is essential to meaningfully involve youth throughout the development of your plan. Create a youth engagement strategy at the outset of the process and engage youth from planning through implementation.

As the real experts on their experiences, needs and interactions with organizations and systems, youth have unique perspectives on issues, are innovative problem solvers and can pose tough questions. Engaging youth will lead to more responsive and appropriate decisions to meet their needs.

From a human rights perspective, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) acknowledges the right of a child or youth to express their views, to be heard and to have their views given due weight according to their age and level of maturity. This promotes respect for children as active participants in their own lives and acknowledges their evolving capacity and gradual progression into adulthood. Further, it acknowledges the importance of a child or youth's input to informing the decisions affecting their lives, at both an individual and systemic level. 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 June 2016.

For information on engaging youth effectively, the *Youth Engagement Toolkit for Youth Homelessness Community Planning* produced by A Way Home and A Way Home Kamloops based on their planning process is available. Another resource is the Youth Engagement Toolkit Resource Guide, which provides useful guidance on engaging youth with diverse backgrounds. The Youth Voice section of the A Way Home website showcases the amazing work communities are doing to engage youth on the issue.

The resource provides guidance on:

» Establishing a clear framework and definition of youth engagement;

» Defining youth engagement;

» Outlining the characteristics, benefits and models of youth engagement practice;

» Ethical considerations; and

» Practical strategies to youth engagement, with special focus on those of diverse backgrounds (Indigenous, LGBTQ2S, newcomer youth, youth with special needs, young parents and youth in care or custody and experiencing homelessness).

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Effective youth engagement is undertaken in an ethical, respectful way. Tokenistic or superficial activities can make youth feel like they are not respected or involved. The following principles ensure youth engagement is ethical and effective:

1. **Youth engagement is not a program**: Youth engagement should be viewed as a natural way of working in the ending youth homelessness initiative rather than as a special program.

2. **Contributions match the initiative**: Young people and adults who are working with the planning group should be recruited for their knowledge, skills, interests and commitment to the initiative's mission.

3. **One person cannot represent many**: A young person should not be considered 'the youth voice' at the table – it should be acknowledged that everyone at the table brings different perspectives to the issue.

4. **Debate as a learning tool**: Debate is a key element of personal and organizational growth. The initiative should foster an environment where ideas can be raised freely, challenged and valued.

5. **Dignity and safety**: Under no circumstances should young people or adults feel that placing themselves in an emotionally, spiritually, physically or cognitively unsafe space is expected or required by the initiative.

6. **Avoiding false expectations**: It is important to be honest about the changing role of youth as a result of their engagement in the initiative, including recognizing that there are limitations that correspond to age, experience, education and training.

7. **Balance and accessibility**: Most people require workplace accommodations in order to support them in making the optimal contribution to their organization, including young people.
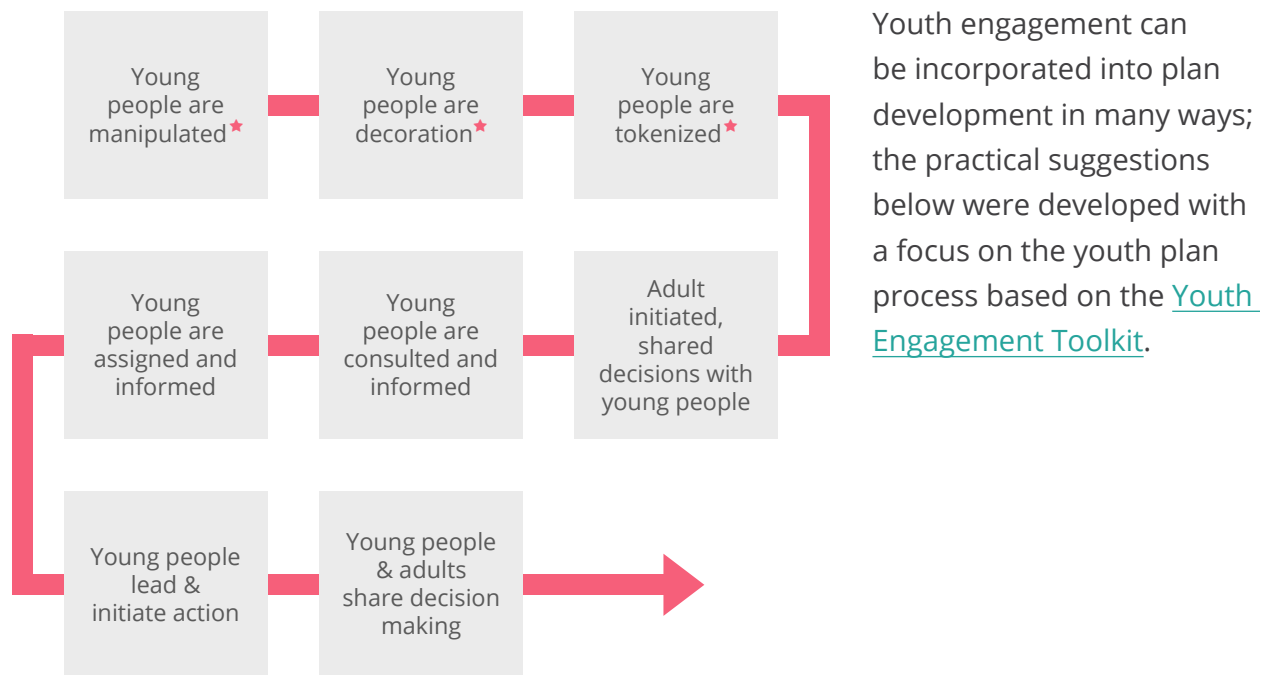
When thinking through your youth engagement approach, consider how you can facilitate:

» Opportunities for skill development and capacity building

» Opportunities for leadership

» Reflection on identity

» Development of social awareness

» Mutual ownership

» Positive youth-adult partnerships

» Organizational support;

» Achievable goals are celebrated

WAYS OF ENGAGING YOUTH

Be reflective of the level of participation you are creating through your approach; Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's participation outlines various levels you can assess your proposed approach against. Note that the first three steps are non-participation (adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship)

Figure 7: Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

Youth engagement can be incorporated into plan development in many ways; the practical suggestions below were developed with a focus on the youth plan process based on the Youth Engagement Toolkit.

Governance and policymaking: Youth can take part in key organizational decision making by serving on the steering committee or working groups. Youth can also participate in policy making, allowing their input to shape the policy agenda advanced in the plan.

Advice and guidance: Youth can offer their insights into different issues concerning the plan through youth advisory councils or youth forums. Youth can provide regular input to the planning team, can work on specific projects or can identify community needs and suggest service improvements.

Organizing and planning: Youth can help design and plan projects in lots of ways including determining service needs, developing action plans, conducting community outreach and evaluating outcomes.

Activism and outreach: Young people can work with the planning team to organize community members around issues. Youth often know how best to recruit other youth to get and stay involved.

Communication and media: Youth can help communicate key messages around the plan to the public by contributing to press releases, facilitating public forums, creating newsletters or using alternative media to tell a story.

Fundraising and philanthropy: Young people can become involved in raising and giving money through fundraising efforts. They can also become involved as volunteers during the plan development process, contributing particular skill sets to the effort.

Research and evaluation: Young people can contribute to research and quality improvement efforts by contributing their feedback. They can also be involved as evaluators and researchers by interviewing other youth or community members, working with staff to analyze data or presenting it to stakeholders.

Common strategies communities have used to involve youth in developing their youth plans include:

» Ensuring your representatives are part of the plan steering committee

» Encouraging a youth-led approach – create space for youth to generate ideas and take leadership roles in consultations

» Working with existing youth groups to gather information, seek input on solutions and confirm plan direction

» Creating space for dialogue on personal experiences and solutions with youth separate from broader tables though focus groups and/or individual interviews

» Ensuring youth are invited, welcomed and supported to participate in public forums, conferences, roundtables, etc.

» Providing access to multiple means of communicating input – including social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

» Ensuring an accessible, safe space for consultation

» Providing incentives and recognition for participation

» Ensuring representation from key populations of youth – particularly Indigenous, LGBTQ2S, immigrant youth, etc.

Note that you may experience pushback or even false impressions as to the level of previous/existing engagement. Service providers may report they engage youth all the time or very often, but when you probe this further, there may be few providers who have empowered youth in this way.

It's important to consider this as you build the infrastructure for engaging people with lived experience. Also, and possibly because of this, there may be pushback from agencies (or one's own staff) to engage youth, but you have to take a leap of faith and dive in: the payoff is huge as long as the underlying motivation is to flip the power structure and have those that should be leading playing a significant and substantial role (versus tokenism).

Engaging Youth in Edmonton

In Edmonton, youth were immersed in the plan development process in a unique way. Homeward Trust asked youth-serving agencies to identify and recruit youth who were experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Homeward Trust provided participating youth with $25 honoraria in recognition of their expertise and time.

To ensure the 20 youth could access the consultation space, the downtown library was selected as the location for the dialogue. After an initial presentation outlining key concepts addressing youth homelessness, the youth were divided into small tables to discuss:

What has stopped you from getting housing, healthcare, legal aid, school and jobs?
What has helped you get housing, healthcare, legal aid, school and jobs?
In a perfect world, what do we need to end youth homelessness?

Youth input was synthesized along with the broader stakeholder consultation to develop the plan's priority directions. Youth also led guided neighbourhood tours for broader stakeholder groups to help shed light on their daily realities. The youth-led tours were viewed as a catalyst for youth empowerment and a unique opportunity for youth to be at the forefront of service planning.

Before taking on these tours as a youth-led activity, Homeward Trust consulted with youth-serving agencies to determine the feasibility of the idea and identify any potential ethical issues. In preparation for the tours, four weekly meetings were held to develop the walking routes, personal narratives and ideas of how to address systemic issues and barriers. Meetings also resulted in trust and relationship building between Homeward Trust and youth and amongst youth. To incentivize and support participation, youth were provided with dinner, transit tickets and a $125 honorarium.

To be inclusive of those youth who wanted to participate and share their stories through alternative mediums, Homeward Trust offered the opportunity to share their viewpoints through Photovoice, which combines photography with community development and social action. Youth represented their perspectives by photographing scenes capturing the realities of youth homelessness. Again, youth were supported through honoraria and bus tickets to participate.

To help youth frame their story, we asked youth four questions. For each question, the youth took one photo and provided a written response.

» What places or things have meaning to you and that you think are important to youth around issues of youth homelessness?

» What are places you feel safe and don't feel safe?

» What are places and things that you would like to see changed?

» What does a 'home' mean to you?

For examples of the work produced by youth using Photovoice, see yegyouthstrategy.ca.

Table 20: Practical Youth Engagement Tips

TIPS ON PRACTICAL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	
Youth-friendly Meetings	Consider providing food, transportation and childcare.
	Break the ice. Provide lots of opportunities for group members to get to know each other (ice breakers, check-ins, etc.) and personalize the experience.
	Send out meeting reminders via a combination of text, email, phone call and social media sites, e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.
	Provide paper, pens and other materials to promote full participation.
	Keep resources for youth so that they do not have to carry binders of information with them to each meeting.
	Provide items for youth and adults to play or draw with as some people struggle to concentrate without them.
Youth-friendly Materials	Consult with youth and get their ideas on how to catch young people's attention.
	Use straightforward wording and keep it brief.
	Use examples and stories to emphasize key points.
	Use tables and graphs to summarize points.
	Include interesting quotes and consider pulling these points out of the document.
	Be clear and descriptive with your titles and headings to help focus the document.
	Provide details about where to find more information.
	Make documents available online.
	Ask youth to help format and design the layout of the document.

Incentives	Cash honorariums/gifts or gift certificates – the amount given will depend on the type and length of meetings and involvement.
	Transportation – youth may not have the financial resources to cover transportation costs so it's a good idea to have a ready supply of public transit tickets or to provide the transportation directly.
	Childcare – some youth may be parents and require funding to cover childcare costs.
	Food/refreshments – sharing food is a great way to build relationships and helps out many youth who may be having difficulty making ends meet.
	Non-financial incentives include job experience, mentoring, references and letters of support.
Creating Safe Spaces for LGBTQ2S Youth	Have a clear and consistent set of rules that draw boundaries of behaviour and respect, creating a safe and protected space for all.
	Use proper gender pronouns that the youth identifies with.
	Put up posters showing racially and ethnically diverse, same-sex couples or families, LGBTQ2S friendly stickers and symbols posted in offices or doors (e.g. safe zone stickers, rainbow flag, etc.)
	Provide at least one universal, gender inclusive or gender neutral restroom, so that people are not faced with the issue of choosing the right or wrong bathroom
	LGBTQ2S Toolkit is an excellent resource for more information relevant to this.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

It is important to acknowledge the experience of Indigenous people in Canada if we are to truly end youth homelessness, particularly in light of their consistent overrepresentation in vulnerable populations. Indigenous homelessness is notably different; the structural and systemic determinants associated with colonialism, the Indian Act, treaty making, residential schools and the Sixties Scoop have resulted in considerable discriminatory impacts that are in fact intergenerational.[4]

A sense of being homeless can be experienced from diverse perspectives: cultural, spiritual or emotional. It is more than a loss of housing. The impact of colonization, residential schooling, intergenerational trauma, ongoing discrimination and racism in Canadian society has contributed to the ongoing systematic marginalization of Indigenous people, including Indigenous youth.[5]

This is illustrated by the higher than average proportion of Indigenous people experiencing poverty, violence, core housing need, low educational attainment and poor access to services and housing. As Indigenous people move into cities from reserves, their settlement and cultural reconnection needs must be addressed, along with the jurisdictional vacuums that impact their significantly reduced access to basic services both on and off reserves. This is notably relevant to Indigenous youth as well.

Indigenous people's economic, spiritual and social development has been and continues to be negatively impacted by government policies and practices at the local, provincial, territorial and federal levels. In particular, the establishment of residential schools, reserves and the Indian Act resulted in a widespread and intergenerational loss of culture, language, community and identity still impacting today's Indigenous people.[6]

Some Indigenous youth respond to discrimination and stereotypes by distancing themselves from this part of their identity. Others have not had the opportunity to experience or develop a strong cultural identity due to the loss of teachings and traditions within their families or communities.[7] This is especially so for many urban Indigenous youth and those growing up in the child welfare system.

Recognizing these critical issues, A Way Home will, in the future, complement this toolkit with a more robust Indigenous module, which will include resources specific to Indigenous youth homelessness.

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4. Plan to End Aboriginal Homelessness in Calgary, 2012:1
5. Calgary's Updated Plan to End Homelessness, p. 23
6. Youth Engagement Toolkit Guide, p. 41
7. Youth Engagement Toolkit Guide, p. 41

Key terms used:

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. It is most frequently used in an international, transnational or global context. This term came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations (UN). In the UN, "Indigenous" is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement and settlement of their traditional territories by others. This the term we recommend using in the context of community planning.

Aboriginal: A collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

First Nations (non-status): People who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the Government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the Indian Act, either because they are unable to prove their status or have lost their status rights. Many Indian people in Canada, especially women, lost their Indian status through discriminatory practices in the past. Non-status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to Status Indians (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

First Nations (status): People who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act, which defines an Indian as "a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian." Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

Inuit: An Aboriginal people in Northern Canada, who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador. The word means "people" in the Inuit language — Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).

Metis: People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada).[8]

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8.   Calgary's Updated Plan to End Homelessness, p. 23

Due to the significant overrepresentation of Indigenous people among homeless populations in Canada, Indigenous communities should play a major role in all efforts to address youth homelessness. The planning process can create new opportunities for meaningful collaboration between mainstream and Indigenous communities, enabling diverse groups to come together to better understand the needs and experiences of marginalized community members.

The Homeless Hub has developed a summary on Indigenous homelessness in Canada and an overview of the causes of Indigenous homelessness.

Communities like Winnipeg and Yellowknife have pointed us toward resources that can help you in developing your engagement approach with Indigenous peoples. However, these communities have only recently engaged in the planning work. Their learning will greatly benefit our collective knowledge on this issue in the future.

One emerging insight from Winnipeg is that because many youth in the city have come from rural and remote areas across Manitoba, the engagement process must be broadened to include the region. Web-based and in-person consultations are being planned with Indigenous communities and youth across the province, which comes with additional resource needs but will ultimately enhance the effectiveness of the plan.

Another point to note here is that on-reserve Indigenous people may see rural and urban places as an extension of their traditional territories; as such, when we consider our approaches we can't simply assume we are assisting 'migrant' Indigenous youth not otherwise connected to urban centres. In reality, Indigenous people may not be 'migrating' to the city, "but rather returning to a place that they have always known, historically, economically and spiritually," says Albert McLeod of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

Further, we have to also be cognizant that the paradigm from which youth-serving agencies approach their work remains grounded in Western post-colonial legislation and policy. In other words, we can't assume that the established organizations that play a key role in addressing youth homelessness are necessarily aligned with Indigenous infrastructures' relations with governments economic development on and on-reserve and urban reserve development, etc. (Albert McLeod, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg).

The following list highlights just a few of the things to consider when engaging with Indigenous peoples. Currently, there are limited youth plans with a concerted focus on Indigenous people. This is key priority for future iterations of this toolkit.

Table 21: Considerations in Developing an Engagement Approach with Indigenous People

CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING AN ENGAGEMENT APPROACH WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FROM THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT	
Purpose	Are you clear about why you are engaging with Indigenous peoples? Do you have support for the level of engagement you are proposing?
Focus	Have you considered all relevant Indigenous voices on the matter? Are there overlapping interests on the issues(s) among Indigenous people? Ask those you hope to engage whether there are other people whom you should consider inviting to the table. This will help you better understand traditional social structures. Review the governing systems of those Indigenous communities you hope to engage to have a working understanding of any protocols that should be considered and followed. What are their protocols of engagement?
Youth	Youth may require additional orientation to help them prepare and contribute to discussions with those already familiar with and involved in specific projects. Keeping the orientation youth friendly and offering a variety of formats to familiarize them with the information is useful (online, written, verbal briefings, etc.). Try to make sure you include representation of both male and female Indigenous youth. Acknowledge the discrimination faced by youth due to both their age and their ethnicity. Another useful resource for engaging Indigenous youth that can be reviewed as you develop your approach is Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth: A Toolkit for Service Providers.

Elder involvement	Consider a face-to-face meeting with an Elder for introductions before the meeting.
	Have you allowed Elders the opportunity to speak first and last?
Gifting	You may want to consider gifting your distinguished and/or invited guests in addition to honoraria.
	Seek advice from communities of origin as to what might be considered appropriate.
Respect, reconciliation and the relationship	Acknowledge the traditional territory where a meeting is being held.
	Have you considered a 'neutral' location if you are involving multiple Indigenous communities?
	Do you know the traditional name of the group?
	If you are meeting with one Indigenous group, try to have the meeting in the location of that group.
	Traditional introductions are common among Indigenous cultures. Prepare to share your own family background at meetings.
	Ask as many questions as required in order to remain informed and respectful.
Urban	If your engagement issues impact urban Indigenous people, are you engaged with Friendship Centres?
	Are you mindful of other organizations, apart from Friendship Centres, that serve urban Indigenous communities and could be included in your engagement?
	Are you respecting local protocols even within the urban setting?
Women	Are you recognizing the role of women within Indigenous communities?
	Are you making efforts to capture the individual and collective perspectives of Indigenous women in your engagement?
	Are you ensuring that Indigenous women's political leadership and political organizations are being engaged?

Based on the Homeless Hub's toolkit for building partnerships with Indigenous communities in the context of a PiT Count, the following strategies are useful in considering your consultation during the youth plan development. These were adapted to include the input of communities consulted in the development of the toolkit, as well as learning from the Aboriginal Plan to End Homelessness in Calgary.

Table 22: Indigenous Engagement Strategy Examples

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RATIONALE
Inform Indigenous communities about the youth plan	» Build relationships with Indigenous services, Community Advisory Boards (CABs) and umbrella organizations » Distribute information at Indigenous cultural events and community/agency meetings » Distribute posters and pamphlets to organizations & agencies serving Indigenous community members » Utilize social media and email to distribute information	» Indigenous Peoples have the right to know about and be involved in research and responses impacting their communities » Informing community members early will increase Indigenous engagement, participation, and volunteerism »
Partner with local organizations	» Partnerships should begin early and be ongoing » Partnerships should be based in shared interests, benefits and goals Partner with: » Indigenous CABs » Indigenous umbrella organizations » Indigenous governments » Organizations/groups that represent the interests of urban Indigenous Peoples » Agencies/organizations serving Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness » Indigenously owned businesses	» Increases Indigenous participation and thus data quality and count accuracy » Partnering with multiple organizations and agencies will better reflect the diverse views of Indigenous community members » Partnerships can be mobilized in future efforts to address youth homelessness

Include Indigenous community leaders in your planning committee	» Indigenous Peoples should play leadership roles in the youth plan » Your steering committee should include as many Indigenous community members as possible » The steering committee should include or be led by an Indigenous community member who is well-known and recognized by local Indigenous communities » Partner with Indigenous community leaders to plan and implement Indigenous consultation events	» Indigenous leadership will likely increase Indigenous participation » Indigenous leaders are best positioned to anticipate and plan for engagement challenges
Ensure Indigenous feedback	» During consultations, communities should be asked how the youth plan research approach can reflect their concerns » Community meetings should be in a highly accessible location and provide childcare (organizers may want to provide transit tokens) » Community members should have multiple ways of providing feedback on the count (phone, email, office hours, etc.)	» Assists organizers in identifying and addressing local Indigenous communities' concerns about participation » Will help determine what additional research might be needed for the plan » Will help determine how the youth plan can provide benefits to both Indigenous participants and local Indigenous communities

| Plan content that addresses Indigenous homelessness specifically | » Guiding principles, vision and mission of initiative account for First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession; these are reviewed and agreed-upon by Indigenous community members in consultation rather than assumed by the working committee

» Indigenous homelessness is highlighted in the plan, with focus on history of colonization, inter-generational trauma and relation of these to overrepresentation among homeless population

» Research and analysis has an Indigenous lens to discern uneven access issues, overrepresentation, etc.

» Proposed plan direction and goals are considered with an Indigenous lens and specifically designed to meet unique needs | » Ensure Plan is tailored to meet the unique needs of Indigenous youth.

» Increases Indigenous control, ownership, interest and benefits in the youth plan |
| Ensure no harm to Indigenous communities | » Equitable partnerships with local Indigenous communities is a key step in preventing harm

Key considerations include:

» Mitigating any risks of harm

» Consent and confidentiality

» Providing benefits

» Returning research to the community

» Ensuring respect for participants | » Increases Indigenous control, ownership, interest and benefits in the youth plan |

Share plan with local Indigenous communities	» Work with mainstream and Indigenous media to disseminate the final youth plan » Youth plan should be sent to all Indigenous organizations, networks and agencies that serve Indigenous people experiencing homelessness » Translate findings into multiple report formats and languages (e.g. pamphlet, PDF, PowerPoint, video, website) to increase knowledge translation » Present findings at meetings of Indigenous umbrella organizations, Indigenous CABs, and Indigenous governments » Host a public meeting to share findings and receive feedback » Invite participation of Indigenous communities in activities to implement the Plan	» Improves public knowledge about Indigenous homelessness » Informs program and policy development » Findings can be used by organizations, advocates and agencies to advocate for additional funding
Partner with Indigenous communities to improve media coverage	» Partner with Indigenous CABs and umbrella organizations to craft media messages » Ensure Indigenous voices are included in media accounts	» Media coverage will reflect the interests and concerns of Indigenous communities » Message will reach a broader audience

WORKING WITH FUNDERS

Engaging funders early in the plan development process can ensure they have awareness and input into the plan, while creating space to discuss their potential involvement in the implementation of the plan.

Depending on your local context, you may be better off testing the waters first rather than approaching with a funding ask from the get-go. If you have a steering committee member or other engaged stakeholder who can help you bridge a connection with a funder, you may want to work through such existing relationships.

You're unlikely to get a positive response by 'calling out' funders during public meetings. You're better off approaching them on a one-on-one basis with clear asks. You may want a representative to sit on a committee or you may want the funder to co-sponsor the plan development costs. This is the approach taken in Calgary, where diverse provincial, municipal and local funders agreed to provide resources toward the youth plan.

Consider developing a 'funders table' that you can brief independently of other stakeholders. The funders table can be a vehicle to inform the group of developments and seek input into the plan. Funders' perspectives are different in many ways to those of service providers and at times it is useful to engage them in separate discussions where they can offer insights they may not readily share in open forums.

A Way Home is working to align national and provincial funders with a stake and interest in youth homelessness to strengthen the local funding relationships. As an example of the value of this alignment, A Way Home's partnership with the Home Depot Canada Foundation has enabled a concerted investment in various communities to advance local youth homelessness objectives.

A Way Home is working to align national and provincial funders with a stake and interest in youth homelessness to strengthen the local funding relationships.

Potential funders with a stake in youth homelessness include:

» All levels of government,

» Lead organization on local plan to end homelessness,

» HPS Community Entity,

» Local United Way,

» Local community foundation and

» Local Home Depot Stores or other local businesses.

From a funder's perspective, a youth plan can be an attractive investment particularly when they:

» Already have an interest/prioritize youth homelessness or vulnerable youth;

» Are looking to leverage collaborative, system change efforts versus programmatic interventions;

» Recognize the potential impact of a youth plan effort on their broader funding portfolios;

» May be looking to divest/recalibrate funding envelopes but require strategic direction and research; and/or

» Seek enhanced public profile, which the planning process can provide through media attention, public consultation opportunities, etc.

Funders often have multiple priorities, of which youth homelessness is but one. Be strategic in your messaging. Highlight why addressing youth homelessness is important, socially and financially. But also, identify the ways in which the funder will benefit from involvement in the process. How will their participation contribute to their own goals and overall mandate? Again, discussing your approach and key messages with individuals who know the funding organizations and key decision makers can go a long way in preparing a successful pitch.

Leverage your external experts in these contexts; a national advocate with a high profile can help you approach funders and bring public attention to the issue thus, raising its profile. In St. John's, Choices for Youth hosted a roundtable of local and national experts from A Way Home to do just that. They successfully leveraged the onsite presence of leading experts on youth homelessness calling for provincial action on the issue and gained enhanced participation from key decision makers. Funders Together to End Homelessness from the U.S. has some excellent resources for convening funders on the issue of homelessness; there is now a Canadian chapter as well.

There are inherent power imbalances involved in engaging funders, including government, in the planning process. Yet, without their involvement and ultimately alignment of resources to the plan, there will be little chance of enacting the type of transformative change needed to end youth homelessness. While community groups may wait to engage funders in the initial stages, the earlier you bring these stakeholders to the table, the better.

ENGAGING AND INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT

Prioritize engagement with the following government departments and system partners. Note that depending on your local community, the departments will differ and the functions may be delivered through varying levels of governments. You should ensure you map these out.

Provincial/Territorial Government

» Child Protection

» Education

» Health

» Human Services

On and Off-reserve Indigenous Leadership & Government Government of Canada

» Indigenous Affairs & Northern Development

» Economic and social development

» Justice Canada

Public System Partners

» Police service

» Public & separate boards of education

» Child, youth and family services authority

» Health services

» Correctional services & young offender programs

Local Government

» Community & neighbourhood services

» Social housing corporation

CREATING ALLIES

We have identified the key government departments you should engage when planning your consultation approach, but who within those departments should you contact? Unfortunately, there is no set rule for the right person to engage and best approach to doing so. There are however some considerations. Firstly, it's important to prioritize the target departments and decision makers you want to engage. You may have internal champions who have an interest in the issue or even have a mandate as part of their job to advance it. You likely know representatives of the key departments and public systems you want to engage, or you've started making those connections during the research phase of the plan. For an example of how provincial government can build a clear direction across departments, look to the Alberta Youth Plan under Appendix 3 for an example.

Identifying these allies and working to flesh out your engagement strategy with insider knowledge will be more effective than cold calls. However, in some cases you will have to make those calls in the absence of a facilitated introduction. If there is a person or group in government working on a related issue, include a meeting with such individuals early on to exchange information and potentially save each other unnecessary duplicate efforts and/or surprises. Identify potential allies through your personal networks or your planning team.

By fostering personal relationships with ministers, you can increase their ability to move certain issues.

Develop a strategy to engage elected representatives and various levels within the administration. By fostering personal relationships with ministers, you can increase their ability to move certain issues. They may frequent the same social scene for example. Ministers are also part of interest groups as well. You can also try to influence public opinion, which in turn gains attention from the government.

> Politics is all about people. While bureaucratic processes are designed to be open, fair and non-discriminatory; as with many other transactions, building positive relationships with the right people is helpful. It's much easier to ask for something from someone who already has a positive impression of you than from a complete stranger. The more you understand what motivates politicians, their staff and public servants as well as their plans and priorities, the more readily you'll be able to determine effective approaches to influence them.

In developing your approach, review available resources on advocacy plans and ensure you understand the policy making process.

To raise awareness of your ask and build relationships within administration, consider:

» Starting with who you know and work your way up

» If you're not getting the response you want, let your contact know you're going to the next level so they're not blindsided

» Taking new ideas to the executive level responsible for that area (usually a director or above)

» Finding someone who can make decisions, think outside the box and see the big picture

» Regional officials may not always be plugged into head office developments so ask them who might have the latest information or is the decision making-authority

KNOWING THE KEY PLAYERS

The Be HIPP manual provides useful summary of description of 'who's who' and their role in decision making.

Members of Provincial Legislatures

» Always best to start with the representative elected from your area

» Can help bring attention to your issue through making statements, asking questions in the legislature or lining you up with a minister or their staff

» Can assist in getting answers from the bureaucracy or advising on how things work

Ministers

» First and foremost, they are members of a legislature elected by constituents from a specific geographic area

» Influenced by their constituents, party values and platform, citizens' groups, community opinion leaders and the media

» Accountable to the legislature (provincial) or Parliament (federal) for the actions of his/her ministry

» Selected by the premier or the prime minister for various political reasons, not necessarily an issue expert

» Sets overall direction and priorities for the department based on government's agenda; tends to have a shorter-term perspective (e.g. one to three years)

Political Staff

Can offer political advice to you on departmental and party matters

Serve as a gatekeeper to how the minister uses their time, who the minister meets and how the minister might view people, issues and organizations – it can be helpful to develop a good rapport with those assistants responsible for your areas of interest

Usually have political connections and have been active in politics or bring specific related expertise

They look out for their minister's interests (e.g. their re-election, power and influence, constituency issues and party politics)

Can help get information from the bureaucracy, reconsideration of an issue or reversal of a decision

Can help ensure bureaucracy is accessible if you feel you're not being treated properly

Will look at issues from the perspective of how they will be received by the media, public and stakeholders

Public Servants

» Support and are accountable to the government of the day

» Analyze, consult, advise, evaluate and formulate policies for consideration by the government

» Carry out government decisions, administer and enforce laws and provide government services; hired and promoted based on merit (the skills and qualifications needed for the job) which excludes favouritism or political affiliation

» Are guided by such values as political neutrality, accountability, anonymity, responsiveness, fairness and equity, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness

» Have different levels of accountability and decision making depending on position in the hierarchy and whether in a national or regional office

» Are also differentiated by their role or function (e.g. may be in management, policy, operations or a specialist such as a legal advisor)

» As each may appreciate your issue from a different perspective, you'll need to find the right one in terms of function, level in the hierarchy and approach (e.g. are willing to consider opportunities and alternatives and remove possible barriers)

» Don't assume discussions with one public servant will be passed on to others you may be dealing with

Deputy Minister

» Provides managerial, technical and financial advice to the minister; is expected to take a longer term and government-wide view (e.g. impact of decisions on society over the next five to 10 years)

» Expected to be politically neutral, yet politically sensitive

» Has various levels of management reporting through a hierarchy (e.g. assistant deputy minister, director, manager, analyst, officer, clerk)

The Media

» Some political analysts and commentators believe that the media drives government agendas

» Public opinion is a powerful influencer and the media is often the most influential catalyst of public opinion

» Newspapers are widely read by politicians, their political staff and public servants to gauge public reaction to and the profile of various issues

Other Stakeholders

» The more credibility, resources, connections and profile, the easier it is for a stakeholder to get attention

» Governments often deal with alliances, coalitions and associations – these groups can serve as an intermediary for obtaining the perspectives of many others with similar interests and can offer a broader perspective than dealing with just one organization

BUILDING SUPPORT

So what do you want from government?

In an ideal world, government would commit to ending youth homelessness and co-develop an evidence-based approach with community stakeholders to achieve this vision within an aggressive timeline supported by adequate resources. Of course, that may not be feasible at the outset of the planning process. In fact, your plan may raise a new vision of what the government's role should be.

Carefully consider what you are seeking from various stakeholders in government during the plan development process. You may simply want to keep them informed and seek their participation in consultations. Or, you may indeed develop a covalent advocacy strategy around ending youth homelessness alongside your plan. You can develop a funding ask to support your plan process, test an innovative programmatic intervention or create a new funding stream specifically dedicated to implementing the plan. You may also have specific asks emerging around changes to policy in various ministries that you can advance.

You can also ask government to develop their own ending homelessness plan in conjunction with your community plan and even develop infrastructure mechanisms to facilitate cross-departmental dialogue and policy coordination to advance solutions.

The role of the government should be to:

» Establish a shared vision, provincial priorities and policy directions amongst all ministries;

» Facilitate collaboration among individuals, families and communities to prevent youth homelessness through education and awareness;

» Support the provision of coordinated and integrated supports and services at the community level;

» Provide the legislative and policy framework and funding support to address youth homelessness;

» Support opportunities to share knowledge between policy makers, academics and service providers; and

» Support existing best and promising practices and innovative research and programming.

In Alberta, a cross-ministry committee made up of key provincial departments supported the plan to end youth homelessness and to promote integration. See the Resource section for the Terms of Reference from this committee.

Consider that many people who work in government or within public systems are well aware of the system gaps and barriers youth face. Many share your frustration and want to support change. Personal, one-to-one meetings with casework supervisors or frontline managers (i.e. people connected to the frontline but also involved in systems/high-level work/strategy) can be great starting points for building allies. This, tied with alignment with system planning, can connect the dots between what is happening on the ground and what is being planned at higher levels. Also, if there are resources being allocated specifically to housing for youth this is a great carrot for systems to align, as most can dish out for supports but few can actually deal with housing. Another part of this is the potential reduction in workload for caseworkers/therapists – so many spend a large portion of their time working on housing issues. It's all about framing their involvement as 'what in it for you,' because as a community, there is a lot to be gained by developing more effective responses to youth homelessness.

You're more likely to have success if you:

» Develop a well-defined advocacy plan focused on one or two policy issues

» Adjust tactics to engage government, depending on how interested the government is in addressing homelessness in general and youth homelessness in particular

» Align your asks with existing government activities and priorities to increase the likelihood of government buy-in

» Focus on solutions-oriented advocacy. Either pointing out what government is doing wrong or just raising awareness are useful only if the government is not addressing homelessness, and even then, offer help, rather than simply identifying mistakes and shortcomings

» Align yourself with other communities doing similar work, and coordinate your asks and messages. This is more effective than having each community act on its own, especially given the competition between advocacy groups

» Produce well-researched positions and data to aid your ability to influence, especially if the government does not already have this information

» Recruit charismatic, well-positioned leaders who are respected by government and administration to help deliver your messages and requests

» Identify the right elected officials and administrations to approach. Work your networks for someone you already know in your community who might open a door for you, particularly with government ministers

» Leverage solid relationships fostered with policy-makers at different levels of government

» Be mindful of the economic environment: no matter how well-prepared you are, if you ask for funding during a time of restraint, you are less likely to get it

» Cultivate a reputation as a useful and credible source of information

Here is a useful example from Newfoundland and Labrador where Choices for Youth analyzed the new government's mandate letter relevant to youth homelessness. By understanding where government is at with respect to diverse social issues relevant to youth homelessness, you can find levers to hook your issue into as opportunities arise.

Table 23: Provincial Ministers' Commitments

HONOURABLE MINISTER SHERRY GAMBIN-WALSH

Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services
Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development
Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities

These combined departments and mandates are central to coordinating the collective efforts across all government departments in ending youth homelessness. Their mandates serve to support vulnerable and marginalized populations within our province. To effectively deliver a provincial plan to end youth homelessness, the role of provincial policy, specifically under the Youth Services Program, the provincial housing strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy, must maximize their combined impact.

To ultimately drive long term positive outcomes for youth a plan must also include tools and policies to complement existing child protection and apprehension models. These models are much needed crisis intervention tools but lack the support structures to help families stay together and avoid crises where possible. The addition of prevention, as well as housing and support policies would provide an overall better suite of solutions made available to the community.

The most effective way to tackle homelessness is to first house the individual. The Housing First Approach designed specifically for Youth is well established, successful and is already being effectively applied in St. John's. While a set of defined supports follow the youth as they secure housing, the first step is to ensure the young person has access to a range of affordable housing options. There is a demonstrable need for additional affordable housing options across the province, and the development of these units should form a key component of a provincial plan to end youth homelessness.

The upcoming legislative review of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act is a critical opportunity to integrate new ideas and best practices through community consultations and by applying a strong prevention, housing and support lens to the act.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

- » Youth Services Program review
- » Deaths and Critical Incidents - Children and Youth
- » Health Promotion and Healthy Living Strategy
- » Housing Strategy - Seniors and Youth as priority housing options
- » Poverty Reduction Strategy
- » Disabilities Act

HONOURABLE MINISTER GERRY BYRNE

Minister of Advanced Education and Skills

As the lead agency governing the Provincial Income Support system, this department has an existing mandate to act in the best interest of vulnerable populations. Additionally, this department's role in supporting and accessing the emergency shelter system is critical to broader coordinated efforts to end youth homelessness. Low-barrier access to educational opportunities (literacy) and employment have also been identified as foundational components in assisting youth transition to healthier, more stable and successful lives. Consistent with Alberta Plan to End Youth Homelessness, this department's commitment to family friendly policies will lay the groundwork to ensure the inclusion of a Family First approach.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Skilled Labour Force - Youth training programs
» Development of an Adult Literacy Strategy
» Improving supported and supportive employment for persons with disabilities, and implementation of family-friendly policies to promote gender diversity with a focus on affordable and accessible child care

HONOURABLE MINISTER DALE KIRBY

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

Building on the Australian Geelong project, early education and childcare are key preventative components of a provincial plan to end youth homelessness. As identified in the Australian example, there are critical opportunities within the education system for early identification and intervention to prevent and end youth homelessness.

Working in collaboration with AES, providing low-barrier access to learning opportunities will minimize disruptions to education and ensure better outcomes as youth transitioning into adulthood. Our experience and current research supports the fact that access to stable education, employment and housing are foundational components to ending youth homelessness.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Early Learning and Child Care
» Premier's Task Force on Education – improving educational outcomes
» Inclusive education on affordable and accessible child care

HONOURABLE MINISTER JOHN HAGGIE

Minister of Health and Community Services

Accepting the long-standing knowledge regarding the Social Determinants of Health, a plan to end youth homelessness must include policy and program approaches to ensure the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable youth. Building on the concept of primary healthcare - providing mental health, addictions, and physical health supports in a community-based and accessible environment that focuses on improving existing support mechanisms will ensure these efforts maximize the impacts derived. The policy opportunities represented in the commitments below must be combined with recognizing the challenges of making strategic decisions regarding the future health care spending.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Primary Health Care
» Health Promotion and Healthy Living - Innovative youth wellness program
» Innovative Youth Wellness
» Mental Health and Addictions Care - All party committee on mental health and addictions
» Eliminate the use of IQ70 to determine service needs and provision of autism related services

HONOURABLE MINISTER ANDREW PARSONSE

Minister of Justice and Public Safety
Attorney General
Government House Leader

It is well established that for youth who have experience with the Criminal Justice System, it is the end product of inconsistent responses and supports that begin at an early age. Additionally, 80% of individuals - including youth, who exit the prison system into homelessness - reoffend within a short period of time. The combination of social marginalization, poverty, addictions, low education levels, etc. are significant determinants in triggering what is ultimately a crisis response by the Criminal Justice System. In order to increase overall public safety, this department must add a focused effort to work in partnership across government to tackle these root causes.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Improve Social Services – Legislation - Supported Decision-Making
» Family Violence Intervention Court

HONOURABLE MINISTER PERRY TRIMPER

Minister of Environment and Conservation
Minister Responsible for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
Minister Responsible for the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board
Minister Responsible for the Labour Relations Agency
Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

For families and youth living in poverty, or at-risk of poverty, the pressures created by the elevating cost of living are compounded with financial instability. For these individuals, many of whom make up the unskilled labour force in the province, minimum wage and subsequently housing affordability are key factors in maintaining supportive and stable family environments.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

- » Provincial Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy
  Energy Retrofits - To Develop Pay-As-You-Save Programs
- » Minimum Wage - Consistent formula for calculation

HONOURABLE MINISTER EDDIE JOYCE

Minister of Municipal Affairs
Minister of Service NL
Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services –Newfoundland and Labrador
Minister Responsible for the Government Purchasing Agency
Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL
Registrar General

With a clear need for the additional affordable housing options across the province, it is important that Crown lands and land transfers be judged as viable options to support these developments. Working in conjunction with the NLHC such developments should be pursued as part of a Housing First Approach to ending youth homelessness in the province.

Additionally, by working in partnership with community organizations and the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, updates to the public procurement framework would unlock greater impact, innovation and opportunities for social enterprise.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

- » Premiers forum on Local Government
- » Crown Lands - Land Transfer
- » Public Procurement Framework

HONOURABLE MINISTER CATHY BENNETT

Minister of Finance
President of Treasury Board
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for the Human Resources Secretariat
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer
Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation

Family violence, domestic abuse, trauma and sexual assault are often the tragic and preventable experiences of young women who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Prevention of violence against women, as well as specialized, flexible and diverse supports that work for all women are pivotal pieces to not only reducing violence and providing safety, but also furthers the creation of a province where women can and do engage, contribute and participate effectively in society. For women who are mothers, combining this approach with family friendly policies can have massive inter-generational effects to create positive outcomes that directly tackle poverty, marginalization and homelessness.

Looking broadly at the community sector, multi-year funding arrangements are smart investments that provide long-term positive outcomes for our province. Good planning inevitably drives great impact. This is true for business, for government as well as for community serving agencies. By committing to multi-year funding arrangements with youth serving community based organizations, agencies can focus on long-term changes and systemic solutions to issues facing at-risk and homeless youth.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Shared Priorities - Multi-year funding arrangements with community based organizations
» Family-friendly policies for the workforce
» Prevention of violence against women and vulnerable populations

HONOURABLE MINISTER CHRISTOPHER MITCHELMORE

Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development
Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency
Minister Responsible for the Research and Development Corporation

Social enterprises provide youth serving agencies an avenue to directly showcase the potential of their youth clients. At-risk and homeless youth are often stigmatized and unable to secure employment. The social enterprise approach tackles both by providing meaningful training and employment, while breaking down stigma by providing services that the broader community can engage with. To sustainably create new opportunities for youth, having access to support and resources to launch and grow new social enterprises will be an important component of a provincial plan to end youth homelessness.

To allow this approach to flourish there is a need to accompany tools and resources for social enterprises with new social enterprise friendly changes to the public procurement framework.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Develop Provincial Social Enterprise Strategy in partnership with not-for-profit sector
» Young entrepreneur retention program

HONOURABLE MINISTER SIOBHAN COADY

Minister of Natural Resources
Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement
Deputy Government House Leader

A provincial plan to end youth homelessness must consider the whole province and the needs of our diverse communities. We know that the development and implementation of this plan must include working in close partnership with identified experts in government and other youth serving agencies. By working in partnership with the Office of Public Engagement, we can effectively gathering critical information, consult with groups across the province, and effectively articulate its vision and purpose to the community and government at large.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Public Engagement

HONOURABLE MINISTER PREMIER DWIGHT BALL

Office of the Premier
President of Executive Council
Minister for Intergrovernmental Affairs
Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

A provincial plan to end youth homelessness must specifically address our diverse communities. Aboriginal and LGBTQ2S* individuals are over-represented in homelessness statistics across Canada. As we develop a deeper understanding of their unique challenges in Newfoundland & Labrador, they must be met with unique approaches and solutions embedded within a broader focus on all youth.

Plans and policies across the country that tackle youth homelessness are shifting towards long-term and systemic solutions. The traditional approach of focusing on emergency responses is now understood to be important but insufficient. There is recognition across the sector and governments, backed by rigorous research, that homelessness can be ended by focusing on prevention and on housing and supports.

Our work and deep partnerships in the youth serving and homelessness sectors across Canada suggests that the development and implementation of a provincial plan to end youth homelessness requires first for us to believe that better is possible, and an internal call-to-action from the highest and most respected leaders in government. Such a plan would require a collective rally of ministers who believe in the plan, led by the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. We see this leadership and this vision within your government.

Our analysis of the ministerial mandate letters suggest that a provincial plan to end youth homelessness would align and propel the following departmental commitments:

» Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs - Ensure programs and services reflect the needs of Aboriginal people
» Government leadership

PUBLIC POLICY TACTICS

Effective advocates develop deliberate messages, use savvy lobbying techniques and build organizational capacity. Key strategies include press conferences, op-ed pieces and guest articles, phone calls and letters to elected officials. They also plan local events such as site visits and ceremonies.

You can increase support for the ending youth homelessness initiative by:

» Raising concerns; for example, point out the negative consequences of existing or planned actions,

» Swaying decision makers' thinking,

» Letting other opinion leaders know where you stand,

» Finding out about the priorities, concerns and interests of decision makers and who has decision-making power,

» Building new relationships, create a positive image, raise profile, build ongoing support and new allies,

» Offering solutions, exploring options and partnership opportunities,

» Raising public awareness and concern to build wider spread support for your cause.

PUBLIC POLICY TACTICS

The Be HIPP manual to engaging in public policy advocacy provides a number of useful tips for selecting your public policy tactics.

COMMUNICATIONS

Phone Calls

» When relaying a simple message

» As a follow-up to letters, concerns, invitations

» Alert to upcoming actions

» To try and secure a meeting date

» To relay the importance of an issue

» To get information (e.g. identifying who's the best person to deal with)

Letters

» Use to formalize invitations; advise of your interest in meeting; raise a concern; give recognition or show appreciation; pass on congratulations or thanks

Emails

» Can reach several people at once with the same message, making it easier to reply if your message is not complicated

» Useful as a quick reply to those comfortable with this technology

Strategic Mailings: Quarterly Updates/Newsletters

» Raises awareness, ensuring others know about your ongoing contributions to the community

» Keeps your organization on the radar screen

» Creates a positive impression

» Don't create information overload by sending irrelevant information that appears unprofessional

Invitations To A Special Event

» Opportunity to show what you do, others can see what success looks like and better understand what is required to succeed

» Allows politicians to hear firsthand from the front line and those affected by your issue

» Include politicians in fundraising efforts, educate them on how your work links to their constituents

Sharing Research Findings

» Adds legitimacy to your issue

» Gets your issue on the government's radar screen

» Reinforces other messages by demonstrating evidence, especially if it adds to existing evidence

Local Newspapers

» Write an op-ed piece, an opinion piece that appears opposite the editorial page, to raise public awareness and understanding about your issue

» Send a letter to the editor to correct any information that is wrong or to show your organization's support or position for an issue raised in the newspaper

EVENTS

Organizing A Tour Visit

» Raises awareness and understanding, builds relationships

» Invite politicians for breakfast or lunch or to see a part of your organization they would not normally see

» Allows people to see first-hand the impact of your work, especially if personal testimonials are included

Hosting A Community Forum

» Positions you as a leader, builds momentum

» Draws in others and gains their commitment and support

» Raises community awareness and concern

» Provides a venue for those affected to speak to decision makers

Attending Public Presentations, Hearings or Consultations

» Opportunity to provide technical information and advice and share knowledge or research

» Good for raising awareness, increasing support

Mobilizing Citizens/Rallies/Demonstrations

» Good for generating media attention, showing strength if other tactics are not getting desired attention

FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

Meeting Public Servants

» Gain information about what's happening

» Helps to better understand constraints, concerns, possible competing interests

» Explore possibilities; raise profile; build relationships

Bringing Program Participants To Meet Politicians

» Helps politicians put a human face to the situation and to see first-hand the realities

» Helps build greater commitment to addressing your issue

Meeting With Politicians

» Provides a forum to make your views heard and to raise any concerns

» Enables you to find out more about the government's perspective on an issue; to hear first-hand their concerns, priorities and interests

» To look for common issues and win-win opportunities; can explore opportunities for partnership

» Good opportunity to make your case and position your organization in their minds

» Recognize that meetings rarely lead to tangible commitments

Meeting With Political Aides

» Can help increase attention to the issue

» Can assist with securing a meeting with key people

» Can help build internal supporters or champions

» Get advice on how to proceed, other contacts and possible strategies

» Gain a political perspective for an issue raised in the newspaper

Meeting With Leaders In Other Sectors

» To gather support and build allies by building cross-sectoral support for your issue

» To raise awareness and increase understanding

» To line up representatives from sectors that normally would not be involved, to speak out, showing how widespread and mainstream is the support

BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Leverage the media and the private sector in the development of your plan. The media in particular can play a powerful role in bolstering initiatives to end youth homelessness. Thinking through your media strategy and being deliberate about when and what to communicate out can help build momentum for the issue, which can in turn, increase attention from government, funders and the broader community.

Thinking through your media strategy and being deliberate about when and what to communicate out can help build momentum for the issue, which can in turn, increase attention from government, funders and the broader community.

Knowing when and how to engage with media, getting your story covered in a meaningful way and cultivating long-term, positive relationships can go a long way toward supporting the plan and its implementation. There is an art to writing effective communications plans and media releases while cultivating a brand for your initiative. This guide for building your communications strategy provides guidance. For specific advice on social media, another useful resource for non-profits is also available. Leverage opportunities such as meetings or if you release research results. Learn to write a good 'hook' to engage the media (they are in the news business and want something newsworthy). Cultivate relationships with interested reporters in your community – they can become 'go-to' people. Finally, it is important to develop a social media strategy (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as this will this become a vehicle for directly engaging your community and help you to engage mainstream media, who tend to look to social media for leads and interesting stories.

Private sector foundations, corporations and individuals are another key source of knowledge, influence and resources for the initiative. Often, such allies and champions are already involved in committee and on non-profit boards. It's Everybody's Business: Engaging the Private Sector in Solutions to Youth Homelessness provides an overview of how to work with the private sector in this manner.

In Kamloops, private businesses provided early implementation support for the youth plan. Funds raised from these stakeholders were used to fund housing opportunities for youth. This leveraged private funds, but also allowed for the plan to be implemented in short order, without the need for major investment from government. It also showed results to the community, reinforcing support for the initiative.