

Reaching Home:

City of Hamilton Homelessness Plan

2019 – 2024

Note:

All communities receiving funding from Designated Communities stream are required to use this template in order to complete the community plan under Reaching Home. In completing this template, communities are encouraged to develop comprehensive community plans that reflect the contributions of all funding partners, including other orders of governments, not-for-profit organizations, and the for-profit sector.

Please note that in communities that receive funding from both the Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness streams, cross-stream collaboration is expected to promote the adoption of a community-wide planning process and support the achievement of community-level outcomes reflecting the needs of the whole community. To support communities in completing their community plans, a Reference Guide has been developed. It is recommended that this be reviewed prior to completing your community's homelessness plan to ensure understanding of the requirements and completeness.

The Community Plan for Reaching Home must be approved by the Community Advisory Board (CAB) of the Designated Community before it is submitted to Service Canada. If your community is developing a joint plan with the Indigenous Community Entity, both Community Advisory Boards must approve the community plan.

In addition to the core requirements provided in this template, communities may also wish to include other components that provide insight into the community's housing and homelessness context or contribute to community-level homelessness challenges, such as a map of the community's current homelessness services and/or gaps in homelessness services or infrastructure (e.g. housing stock). Communities have full flexibility in drafting these sections.

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1. Community Engagement

Please identify the steps taken to engage your community stakeholders in developing this plan.¹

The City of Hamilton has engaged with a wide range of community partners and stakeholders throughout the development and implementation of Hamilton's homelessness system planning framework. Through this process, the City held various focused drop in and engagement sessions, in addition to ongoing consultation through existing advisory groups and boards. This included regular meetings with the Indigenous Community Entity over the past year focused on collaborative Reaching Home implementation strategies alongside the work of the Aboriginal Community Advisory Board and the Designated Community – Community Advisory Board, which includes representation from the Indigenous Community Entity.

Our community direction was strengthened in 2018 when the City joined other Canadian and American partners as part of the national Built for Zero initiative. Stemming from this, multiple community consultations and forums took place to progress us from agile action labs to the beginnings of systems planning implementation. Elements of education, onboarding, consultation and the establishment of a dedicated Community Liaisons table were all critical elements that we invested in to realize the goal of ending chronic homelessness. The systems planning framework that Hamilton has developed is the result of years of coordinated community engagement coming to fruition.

To this end, the City engaged service providers and funders in government and non-profit/charity sectors to determine next steps and priorities for the systems planning framework. We leveraged Hamilton's 5-year Housing and Homelessness plan update that serves as the foundational document for this system's planning framework. We consulted our lived experience advisory groups to provide us with invaluable perspectives. We also engaged diverse groups representing Indigenous peoples, youth, women, and families.

Through this consultation, ongoing dialogue occurred with the Indigenous community in Hamilton including two Indigenous-focused public events, several meetings with the Hamilton Executive Directors Aboriginal Coalition and the City's Aboriginal Advisory Committee, as well as meetings with individual Indigenous community leaders. An on-line in-depth survey of housing sector experts, such as agency management and front-line staff, also included local Indigenous organizations. In depth responses informed all aspects of the Housing and Homelessness plan update, and subsequently Hamilton's Systems Planning Framework and Community Plan.

¹ Engagement with local Indigenous organizations, and the Indigenous Community Entity and Community Advisory Board is expected in the development of this community plan.

Specific engagement sessions that have been held to engage the broader community in Hamilton's Community Plan include: Systems Planning Launch (April 2018) which included service providers and funded agencies discussing the development of a coordinated homelessness-serving system; presentations with population-specific Planning Tables and the CAB regarding Hamilton's Plan to End homelessness (Dec 2018); Systems Planning Session (Feb. 2019), outlining the emerging vision and engaging community stakeholders in developing the key tenets of the systems planning framework; Drop in Session (April 2019), an open forum for all in the community to review and provide feedback on Hamilton's priorities; three population-specific prioritization workshops (May 2019); and Intervention Sessions (June 2019) which were focused on the key priority intervention areas which Hamilton would be focusing on through the release of the homelessness funding call for applications (CFA).

In the engagement process, several emerging findings and priorities for the new systems planning framework emerged and influenced foundational values, and strategic action. These were designed with a deliberate focus on agile development and ongoing refinement through implementation and learning. Prior to its release, the Systems Planning Framework itself was reviewed by the Indigenous Community Entity who provided feedback on the document, including an endorsement of the outlined definition of Indigenous homelessness.

A rights-based approach to housing guides the City's approach to ending homelessness. The National Housing Strategy's recognition of the right to housing marks a critical turning point as it challenges previous views of housing as a privilege to be earned. The essence of Housing First is a right-based and recovery-oriented approach that operationalizes the right to housing in practice: Housing First interventions focus on quickly moving people from homelessness into housing and then providing supports necessary to maintain it.

While acknowledging strength and resiliency of unique populations, there is also an awareness of unique and differing structural and institutional barriers that each group may experience linked to systemic discrimination and oppression. This may include experiences related to discrimination in employment, education or the housing market, limited access to social or health supports, and restricted access to various public and private settings. Housing responses must not be a one-size-fits-all approach and should be able to be effectively adapted to meet the specific needs of the people they serve, transferring equity, diversity and inclusion principles into practice.

Aligning with rights-based, intersectional approaches that are grounded in strength-based and person-centred values, broader feedback led to the development and identification of the following strategic actions:

- Advance approaches delivered with an **intersectionality** lens to meet the needs Indigenous people, youth, women, those fleeing violence, LGBTQ2S+, seniors, newcomers, and other groups.
- Continue to build relationships and trust with Indigenous community partners and make intentional and transformative steps in response to the **Reconciliation** Calls to Action.
- Continue focusing on **youth** through tailored programming following best practices including Housing First for Youth and prevention.
- Enhance our engagement of public systems, natural supports and informal networks to support **wellbeing** beyond immediate housing.

Community consultation and the strategic actions and values led to the following community priorities that will be applying to the CFA process. Through the CFA we will continue to invest and enhance effectiveness and efficiency of diverse housing-focused homelessness interventions grounded in principles of Housing First, including:

- Homelessness Prevention and Shelter Diversion
- Outreach
- Rapid Rehousing
- Intensive Case Management
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Transitional Housing

Intervention priority areas will contribute to the following community-wide outcomes:

1. Ensure 100% of chronically homeless individuals have access to appropriate housing options by 2025.
2. Provide homelessness prevention interventions to stabilize a minimum of 15% of those presenting at imminent risk.
3. Provide housing interventions to 25% of those experiencing homelessness presenting for service through Coordinated Access.
4. Reduce returns to homelessness from housing interventions to less than 15% across funded programs by 2025.
5. Enhance service quality and impact through ongoing performance management, living/lived experience and frontline engagement.

Hamilton's CFA process is informed by guiding principles including: coordination of resources, systems integration, and enhanced data quality. In order to promote these principles, the CFA and the alignment of the identified intervention priority areas will assist Hamilton to:

- Develop and promote **systems alignment** across the homeless-serving system through processes, quality assurance and technology.
- Improve **funding coordination** to leverage existing resources.
- Explore the expansion of **Coordinated Access** across the social safety net in a phased manner.
- Support efforts to **Indigenize Coordinated Access** practices led by Indigenous community partners.
- Develop a holistic and **strengths-based approach** to matching, to ensure people are provided with the right level of support and types of services based on their individual needs.
- Continue efforts in **systems mapping** and leverage systems planning and integration for maximized client impact.
- Improve **data quality** and monitoring across funded programs using Key Performance Indicators complemented by service standards.
- Develop approaches to enhance the **sharing of information** across the homeless-serving system and broader social safety net.
- Leverage **new and emerging technologies** to support systems planning

2. Investment Plan

In the table below, please outline your planned allocation of Reaching Home funding (including funding from the Designated Community stream *and* Community Capacity and Innovation stream) from 2019-24 by investment area. Please note that it is acceptable that your community’s funding priorities change over time. This investment plan is to demonstrate that your community has a vision moving forward for the allocation of Reaching Home funding. An example has been included in the Community Plan Reference Guide.

The chart outlines the preliminary funding allocations through Hamilton’s homelessness funding CFA. 20% of program dollars are distributed to the Indigenous community for self-determination in program funding allocation. The 17% allocated to “Support Services” in the chart is a placeholder and accounts for this Indigenous funding amount to be distributed through the Indigenous community (specific allocations to be determined). Each of the proposed percentages are subject to change based on applications received through the CFA process and year to year changes in identified community priorities.

Annual Allocation:

2019-2020: \$5,735,928

2020-2021: \$5,718,428

2021-2022: \$6,181,799

2022-2023: \$6,174,669

2023-2024: \$6,174,669

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Housing Services	54%	52%	52%	52%	52%
Prevention and shelter diversion	20%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Support Services	0%	17%	17%	17%	17%
Capital Investments	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Coordination of Resources and Data Collection	11%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Administration	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3. Cost-Matching Requirement

In the table below, please outline all funding for homelessness initiatives your community plans to receive from external partners from 2019 to 2024. This includes both financial and in-kind contributions. If your anticipated community contributions do not project to cost-match funding from both the Designated Community stream and Community Capacity and Innovation stream for each year, explain the circumstances below the table and include a description of the steps you will take to meet the requirement. An example has been included in the Community Plan Reference Guide.

The table in this section identifies the expect amount of annual funding from other sources in order to cost-match the Reaching Home Designated Communities stream funding.

Through the Designated Community funding stream, Hamilton will receive \$5,735,928 in 2019-20, \$5,718,428 in 2020-21, \$6,181,799 in 2021-22, \$6,174,669 in 2022-23 and \$6,174,669 in 2023-24, all through Reaching Home. Through additional provincial and municipal contributions, we are on track to match this funding through 2023-24.

Projected External Funding towards Homelessness Initiatives						
Funder	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2019 - 24
Government of Ontario - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative	\$19,455,174	\$19,645,911	\$19,645,911	\$19,645,911	\$19,645,911	\$98,038,818
Government of Ontario - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Home For Good	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$5,000,000
City of Hamilton	\$4,959,180	\$4,959,180	\$4,959,180	\$4,959,180	\$4,959,180	\$24,795,900
TOTAL	\$25,414,354	\$25,605,091	\$25,605,091	\$25,605,091	\$25,605,091	\$127,834,718

4. Coordinated Access

Please discuss the steps you will take to implement a coordinated access system in your community. If your community has a coordinated access system in place, please describe how it presently functions. Note: Please also ensure you discuss how Indigenous Organizations have been engaged on the design of Coordinated Access, or how they will be engaged.

Hamilton currently has elements of a Coordinated Access (CA) system in place along with an existing Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS), however further work is necessary in order fully implement and continue to improve additional elements of CA that align with Reaching Home Directives. Implementation of Hamilton' CA system began in 2017 which included the development of a local by-name list (BNL) in November of that year, with information initially populated by emergency shelters,

transitional housing, outreach and housing first providers on all known individuals experiencing homelessness.

Hamilton continues to have CA Implementation Table which meets regularly, and includes representation from the Indigenous Community Entity. This group will continue to meet through 2019-2020 to ensure that the ongoing development of the CA system in Hamilton reflects Reaching Home Directives and identified community priorities.

Access points have a common intake process which includes standard consent and confidentiality protocols. The Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Tool (VI-SPDAT) is the common assessment tool used utilized through these access points. Homelessness programs add individuals to the BNL manually, or enter up to date information through HMIS, and the City generates a Priority List of those ready to be housed. The community currently prioritizes chronically homeless individuals by acuity score. A series of community workshops already underway will allow us to further identify additional prioritization criteria per intervention type and population group.

In order to support the ongoing development of CA and equitable access to assessment, the City of Hamilton and community partners continue to expand access points and develop connections throughout Hamilton to be more confident that all known individuals experiencing homelessness are added to the BNL. The City also continues to identify and build relationships with organizations, including human service providers outside of the homelessness serving sector, which may serve as the primary point of access for individuals/families experiencing homelessness to ensure they have a way to gain access to support through Hamilton's CA system. This includes programs or services beyond funded agencies.

As part of the ongoing development of CA in Hamilton, the City requires funded programs to onboard and utilize HMIS (HIFIS 4.0) through the implementation of Reaching Home. Funded agencies will migrate to HIFIS 4.0 in fall 2019, and all successful homelessness funding applicants will be onboarded to the shared HMIS on April 1, 2020. With all partners on a shared database, Hamilton's inactivity policy will be updated to include a protocol for assessors to cross-reference the Inactive List when they are entering client data; to check if the individual already has a unique identifier or has been on the Master BNL previously. The shared HMIS will also provide more current and accurate information on where and when an individual has last come into contact with the system, allowing for more accuracy in locating the individual before they are moved to the Inactive List.

Well-articulated system-level policies and processes can facilitate more appropriate participant referrals and reduce frustration and duplication of services. Ultimately,

ensuring participants have quick access to the right program at the right time leads to better outcomes for them and the homeless-serving system. CA is an evolving practice and new research, models, and processes are continually being created. Hamilton's CA will continue to be flexible and responsive to new information about more effective approaches and will strive to implement changes and improvements through evaluation, considering additional guidance from stakeholders.

5. Community-Wide Outcomes

If you would like your community to measure progress on additional outcomes beyond the [federally mandated outcomes](#), please identify those outcomes. Please provide your proposed indicators, targets, and methodology for each of the additional identified outcomes.

Through Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 5-year Update consultation, aligning with Reaching Home directives and measuring against our By-Name List data, Hamilton commits to:

- End Chronic Homelessness by 2025
- Reduce Homelessness by 5% overall annually
- Reduce new inflow into homelessness by 10% per year
- Less than 15% of individuals or households return to homelessness each year

Community wide outcomes reporting will also specifically address the systemic over-representation of Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness, and will focus on overall reductions in Indigenous homelessness. Acknowledging our Indigenous partners' autonomy and self-determination, the development of specific indicators, targets and methodology, as well as assessment of and reporting on Indigenous focused outcomes will be done through ongoing collaboration with the Indigenous Community Entity and the local Aboriginal Community Advisory Board.

The regular reporting of community wide outcomes will continue to allow for the City of Hamilton and community partners to work together to build and implement a responsive, sustainable and well-performing homeless-serving system informed by evidence-based research and best practice that is effectively integrated into the broader social safety net.

6. Official Language Minority Communities

The Government of Canada has a responsibility under the Official Languages Act to ensure that programs and services meet the needs of [Official Language Minority Communities \(OLMCs\)](#). Please describe the steps that you will take to ensure that the services funded under the Reaching Home take the needs of the [OLMCs](#) into consideration where applicable.

All contracts for funded programs will include specific requirements in order to meet the needs of Official Language Minority Communities. To meet these needs, funded programs in Hamilton will be required to: make any announcements to the public concerning the project in both official languages; actively offer program-related services to members of the public in both official languages; make available in both official languages any documents or other information for the general public relating to the program; enter into HIFIS the preferred language of service as a required data field; and provide its services, when appropriate, in such a manner as to accommodate the specific needs of both official language communities. Funded programs will be regularly monitored to confirm that the aforementioned contractual requirements are being met in order to encourage members of both official language communities to actively participate in the sub-projects. The City of Hamilton, as Community Entity, will also continue to follow the same requirements within Reaching Home related to support for official languages through ongoing engagement with the CAB and community stakeholders regarding planning and implementation of services, while also performing systems level analysis on data and trends related to program use to ensure that specific needs of Official Language Minority Communities can be identified and addressed as they arise.

7. Additional Local Context

Using Census 2016 data, we estimate that approximately 16,400 people spend more than 50% of their income on rent, with incomes of less than \$20,000/ year. Some, but not all, may use shelters or sleep rough: we estimate using HIFIS data that about 1,900 will have a short period of homelessness in the course of a year, while a further 820 will experience chronic homelessness.

Current data in Hamilton's homeless serving system demonstrates consistent totals with an average of 2852 unique individuals accessing shelters in each year since 2015. Analysis also shows trends around decreases in inflow (unique people entering the shelters) and increases in outflow (unique people exiting the shelters) over time. Shelter occupancy has remained consistently high through 2018-19, except for the youth system which has seen significant decreases in overall occupancy. Despite these pressures, promising trends regarding inflow and outflow of unique shelter stayers are

important to highlight as Hamilton looks to ensure that homelessness is a brief and non-reoccurring experience.

The shift in inflow/outflow in 2015 can be attributed partly to a broader system shift toward Housing First, both as a philosophy and as a practice. In 2015, four specific Housing First Programs began operating in Hamilton serving men, women, youth, and Indigenous populations. From 2015-2018, these Housing First programs collectively housed 888 individuals, while overall demonstrating effectiveness, with less than a 10% recidivism rate (people leaving the program, returning to homelessness).

In addition to program level data, Hamilton's participation in the last nationally coordinated Point in Time (PiT) Count conducted in April 2018 also provides a contextual snapshot around specific demographics regarding people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton. As part of the of the PiT Count activities, an Indigenous-led and designed Point in Time Connection event was held to specifically connect with the Indigenous community. By better understanding Indigenous homelessness, our community continues to affirm Indigenous people's right to access housing and services. Data collected through both activities provide insight to both the City and Indigenous leadership in our partnership to reduce and end homelessness. Of the 386 total people identified as experiencing homelessness, almost two-thirds spent the night at an emergency shelter or violence against women shelter (65%). Survey results also continued to highlight overrepresented populations experiencing homelessness including those who identified as having Aboriginal ancestry (22%).

When examining demographics of those surveyed, there is an acknowledgement that a person's experience of homelessness is impacted by intersecting aspects of their identities related to race, gender identity, and sexual orientation, which may also lead to an underrepresentation of those engaged through a PiT Count. While acknowledging strength and resiliency of unique populations, there is also an awareness of unique and differing structural and institutional barriers that each group may experience linked to systemic discrimination and oppression, which requires the use of an equity, diversity and inclusion framework to appropriately assess Hamilton's approaches to using data and evidence to inform funding, policy and programming decisions.

Note: ESDC has removed all personal and identifying information for members of the Community Advisory Board from this document. To validate or change this information, please contact your Service Canada representative.