

Together  
To  
**Absolute  
Zero**  
Functional



**Charting Calgary's Path**  
To the End of Homelessness

December 2018

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*Coming together is a beginning.  
Keeping together is a progress.  
Working together is success.*

*- Henry Ford*

*Individual commitment to a group  
effort - that is what makes a team work,  
a company work, a society work,  
a civilization work.*

*- Vince Lombardi*

# Acknowledgements

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR DEEP APPRECIATION TO ALL THOSE WHO MADE THIS DOCUMENT A POSSIBILITY. FIRST AND FOREMOST, OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE GOES OUT TO EVERY FRONT LINE WORKER WHO ATTENDED OUR ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS AND OFFERED THEIR STORIES WITH RESPECT, TRUST, AND VULNERABILITY. THESE STRATEGIC DIRECTIVES WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO BELIEVE IN A FUTURE WITHOUT HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY, AND THE COURAGE THEY HAVE TO DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO MAKING IT A REALITY. IT WAS A GREAT PRIVILEGE FOR US TO CAPTURE THEIR STORIES, THOUGHTS AND IDEAS, WHICH ALLOWS US ALL TO ADVANCE UPON OUR PRACTICES TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE OUR SERVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

We would also like to thank the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and City of Calgary for their unprecedented support for our collective mission and their substantial contributions to capital projects and programs which have allowed us to demonstrate tremendous success and arrive at the place we are today.

We also want to thank Indigenous Elders, Chiefs and Council, leaders and individuals who continually inform us to ensure we are culturally inclusive, and for always providing their truth and wisdom through honesty and vulnerability.

We thank those with lived and living experience of homelessness who share their stories, opinions and thoughts, and consistently give of themselves to help us craft a system of care that is focused on people first and meeting the needs of those we serve.

Many thanks to all Calgarians who volunteer, educate and participate in our collective vision of ending homelessness by gifting us with their time, talents and resources.

A vision to  
**end homelessness in Calgary**  
can only be achieved, **together.**

# Our Consultation Process

TO MARK THE CONCLUSION OF CALGARY'S 10 YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS, MEMBERS OF CALGARY'S HOMELESS-SERVING SYSTEM OF CARE (HSSC) AS WELL AS BROADER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS (PUBLIC, CORPORATE CALGARY, THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS, INDIGENOUS ELDERS, YOUTH AND ADULTS) WERE INVITED TO GIVE REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST DECADE OF ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY IN ORDER TO INFORM HSSC DIRECTIVES MOVING FORWARD.

Phase I of this engagement process involved 54 long-standing individuals within the HSSC who had extensive knowledge of Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. The purpose of these sessions was to identify the key topics to bring to discussions with the broader community. These discussions focused on the following questions:

- What's working?
- What's not working?
- What unique factors made this possible?
- What's most important?
- Is there anything we're missing or that we should be asking?

Discussions within the first phase sessions identified eight key topic areas to explore in Phase II of the engagement process:

1. Caring for the Front Lines
2. Data and Reporting
3. Empowering Calgarians
4. Homeless-Serving System Planning
5. Housing
6. Poverty and Homelessness
7. Shelter Visioning
8. Empowering Calgarians: The Public

Phase II called to all members of the HSSC, as well as broader stakeholder groups such as key members of the primary public systems, corporate Calgary, community volunteers, agency board members, agency executives, the public, and those with lived experience of homelessness to contribute their thoughts, stories, knowledge and opinions.

Each session focused on one of the topics listed above, and Phase II saw 12 engagement sessions attended by over 200 participants for a total of 53 hours. In addition, 42 public online surveys were completed.

All Phase I and II engagement sessions were facilitated by Nancy Loraas of Next Level Leadership. Remarks were collected in the form of minutes, written long-answer and short-answer forms, and online surveys.

Separate and complementary sessions were completed with Indigenous Elders, leaders, youth, and adults many with current or past experience of homelessness. Elders were consulted first, and guided subsequent conversations as participants were invited to give their reflections on the unique perspective of Indigenous homelessness in Calgary. These sessions were led by Indigenous facilitators: Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane, Ange Neil and Katelyn Lucas. Honouring oral tradition, remarks from these sessions were collected through video and voice recording.

**The directives reflect feedback received throughout the consultation process and the quotes included in this report are a few of the remarks made by engagement session participants.**

# Introduction: Together to **Absolute Zero** Functional

ON JANUARY 29, 2008, THE CITY OF CALGARY LAUNCHED A BOLD INITIATIVE TO END HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY. **CALGARY'S 10 YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS** WAS FOUNDED ON THE ASPIRATIONAL GOAL OF ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY IN TEN YEARS. AS A FIRST OF ITS KIND IN CANADA, THE ORIGINAL VISION OF CALGARY'S 10 YEAR PLAN WAS THAT ALL PEOPLE FACING HOMELESSNESS IN CALGARY WILL HAVE ACCESS TO SAFE, DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS WELL AS THE RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THAT HOUSING BY THE YEAR 2018.

While Calgary did not achieve its ambitious goal of ending homelessness, over the past decade our community has had many successes. We've housed almost 10,000 people, built almost 600 units of permanent housing with supports, and we've developed a well-coordinated homeless-serving system of care that the rest of the world consistently looks to emulate. Calgary is a leader in our country. Our city has consistently led the charge to end homelessness in Canada – and as we have collaborated and coordinated around Calgary's 10 Year Plan, we have learned a lot.

We have learned that Housing First does not equal housing only, and that many people may require wrap around supports to help them be successful. We have discovered that the true causes of homelessness come from external macro factors, and that prevention must predominantly occur in the primary public systems. We have created a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that allows us to better assess the state of homelessness in our city, and we have also learned that while the goal of a true **Absolute Zero** end to homelessness remains our collective aspirational goal we realize that this is not realistic in practice without significant changes within our primary systems. It makes more sense for us to focus on achieving what is now known as **Functional Zero** - whereby efforts are concentrated on reaching a point where there are enough services, housing and emergency shelter beds for everyone who needs them. This way, anyone who does experience homelessness does so only briefly, is rehoused quickly and successfully, and is unlikely to return to homelessness again.

**Functional Zero is a realistic and achievable goal in our city, if we all work together.**

This guiding document is a consolidation of a decade of knowledge combined with what we, as a community, envision as the primary strategic areas of focus crucial to achieving this collective goal. Through our Living Legacy engagement sessions participants clearly articulated what they felt are the most critical areas of focus for our city. Their collective knowledge directly informed the creation of the six core **Strategic Directives** within this guiding document that will take us **Together to Zero**.

These six **Strategic Directives** provide an intentional framework by which public systems, homeless-serving agencies, the public, corporate Calgary, and partners, can best utilize the shared knowledge gained over the last ten years to **adjust and align our individual agencies' strategic and tactical plans, governance models, initiatives, and programs to function better within the Homeless-Serving System of Care (HSSC) in order to best meet the needs of vulnerable Calgarians who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.**

While stopping homelessness before it ever begins will always be our shared goal, collectively aligning ourselves with the Strategic Directives outlined within this guiding document will help Calgary to achieve Functional Zero and empower our community to continue charting our path forward to the end of homelessness in Calgary.

# What is Functional Zero?

OVER THE PAST DECADE WE'VE LEARNED THAT WE REQUIRE A MORE AGILE SYSTEM, AND CONCURRENTLY, WE NEED A MORE AGILE VISION OF SUCCESS. THE MOVE AWAY FROM FIXED-POINT TARGETS TO INDICATORS OF PROGRESS ENABLED US TO THINK ABOUT SUCCESS IN A DIFFERENT WAY, AND WE NOW FRAME SUCCESS IN TERMS OF **FUNCTIONAL ZERO**.

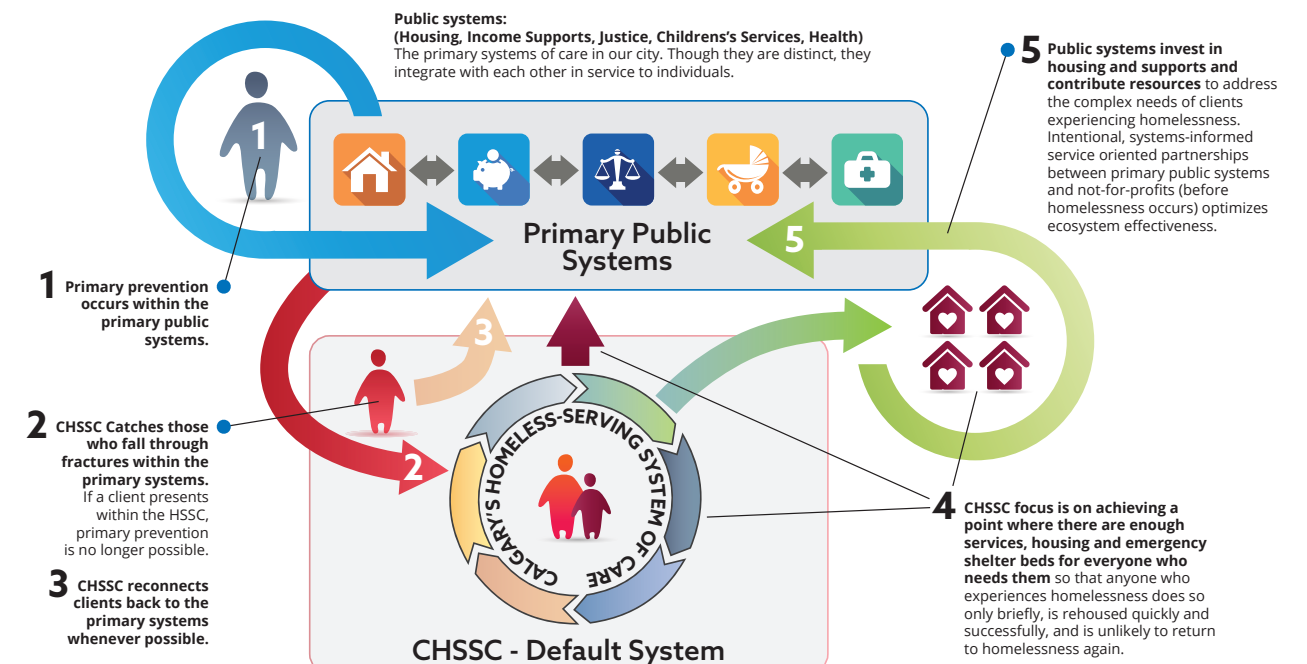
**A Functional Zero end to homelessness means that public systems and the HSSC have a systematic response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.**

**Functional Zero for Calgary** does not mean that no one will ever experience homelessness but, rather, as a system of care (public and HSSC) we will have the resources that allow us to measure the capacity, sustainability, and effectiveness of our system in real time. This, in turn, allows us to ensure that our

focus is on reconnecting clients to the appropriate public systems and achieving a point where there are enough services, housing, and emergency shelter beds for everyone who needs them so that anyone who experiences homelessness does so only briefly, is rehoused quickly and successfully, and is unlikely to return to homelessness again.

**It also means that as a community, we have absolute zero tolerance** for ignoring homelessness, normalizing it, doing nothing to prevent it, and doing nothing to stop it.

## Functional Zero for Calgary:



Calgary's Homeless-Serving System of Care (CHSSC) is a default system. The not-for-profit agencies in the HSSC can, with appropriate and guaranteed resources, provide services (right connecting or direct) to clients who have fallen through fractures within primary public systems. Growing the HSSC will never solve the broader systemic issues that cause homelessness.

# 1 PEOPLE FIRST

OF PRIMARY CONSIDERATION FOR ANY FUTURE EFFORTS, THE HSSC MUST REMAIN GROUNDED IN A PEOPLE-FIRST APPROACH. THIS MEANS THAT WE MUST CONTINUALLY REMIND OURSELVES THAT WHILE WE EXIST TO SERVE THOSE MOST VULNERABLE, WE MUST ALSO BE MINDFUL OF ALL WHO ARE INVOLVED IN OUR EFFORTS TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY.




## The Voice of Living and Lived Experience

IN 2015, CALGARY'S PLAN WAS UPDATED WITH A PEOPLE FIRST LENS, WHICH MEANS THAT WE MEET THOSE AT RISK OF, OR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WHERE THEY ARE, AND ALLOW THEM TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES FOR SERVICES AND HOUSING. AT ITS CORE, WE MUST CONTINUE TO FOCUS OUR EFFORTS AROUND ALLOWING THE VOICE OF LIVED AND LIVING EXPERIENCE TO CONSTANTLY INFORM THE WORK THAT WE DO. WHAT THIS ULTIMATELY MEANS IS THAT WE MUST CONTINUALLY LISTEN AT THE SERVICE LEVEL WHILE CONSISTENTLY SEEKING INPUT AT THE PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL.

It is clear that more can be done to diminish the gap between the recipients of our services and those who deliver and fund those services. We have long lamented the lack of service user input in program design – yet have only begun to implement measures that circumvent service-centric systems.

Moving forward, we need to explore the potential of a culture of innovation with the voice of people with lived experience at its core. Embedding their input at key points in the program development-delivery continuum will enable and facilitate an iterative improvement process that allows the HSSC to better meet the needs of clients.

*“The Homeless Charter of Rights is empowering. It's helping leaders understand what they need to support what people are going through, and it's what will empower people experiencing homelessness when they are in public.”*



*I think right at this point, what it means to be Indigenous is that we're all recovering. Maybe not necessarily from addiction but we are recovering from our own misery. And that has yet to be recognized as society, as a whole, or even acknowledged.*

*I'm intimidated going into a room full of white people even if it's all about recovery. I understand that comfort level with our own people, and that we need to be around our own people to heal.*

## Action on Truth & Reconciliation: The Effects of Colonization & Recognition of Cultural Differences

ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN CALGARY MUST ADDRESS THE HISTORY AND IMPACT OF COLONIZATION THAT IS A PRIMARY DRIVER OF HOMELESSNESS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, AND EFFORTS WILL ONLY BE EFFECTIVE WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF, AND AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN OUR COMMUNITY. THE TREMENDOUS OVERREPRESENTATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AMONGST MARGINALIZED GROUPS, INCLUDING THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, CLEARLY INDICATES THE ONGOING EFFECTS OF COLONIALIZATION. THE IMPACTS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLING, THE SIXTIES SCOOP, AND ONGOING RACISM CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA COMPOUNDING ITS EFFECTS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

Truth must inform reconciliation. This is not a check box exercise. A renewed focus on building partnerships and nurturing trust with First Nations is a crucial next step – as is building partnerships with Inuit and Métis communities. In support of this process, Indigenous Elders, youth and adults with lived experience provided specific feedback into the strategic directive development process to facilitate a better understanding of homelessness from an Indigenous perspective.

Many Indigenous Elders attributed the core issues that contribute to homelessness in the Indigenous community to the intergenerational trauma caused

by residential schools and colonization; a loss of connection to family, community and culture – including language, traditional values, spirituality and ceremony; as well as a lack of appropriate housing and government funding to create additional housing that is required on the reserves. Indigenous Elders also discussed the high occurrence of addiction to drugs and alcohol and prevalence of domestic violence. Many also highlighted that stereotypes still exist and that often this **stems from a lack of understanding and knowledge of history and culture.**

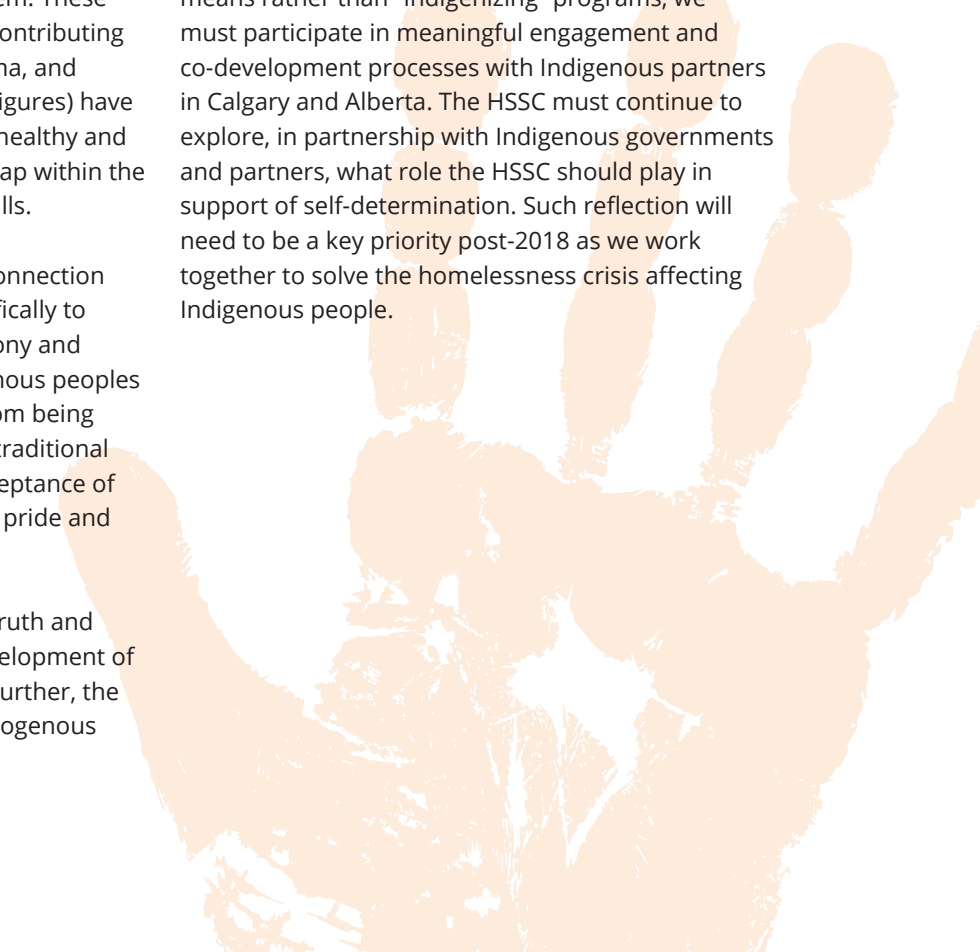
The Elders shared their view that the younger generations have lost their parenting skills as many

of them are repeating the parenting techniques learned within the residential school system. These parenting techniques are believed to be contributing to the continued cycle of abuse and trauma, and elder generations (typically grandparent figures) have had to step in to raise grandchildren in a healthy and traditional way to bridge the knowledge gap within the younger generations' lack of parenting skills.

Addiction for many is linked to a lack of connection and access to cultural engagement, specifically to history, language, land, traditions, ceremony and community. It was also noted that Indigenous peoples have an "identity problem." This stems from being disconnected from their community and traditional culture, which contributes to a lack of acceptance of their heritage and a diminished feeling of pride and self-worth.

Indigenous self-determination is core to truth and reconciliation and must underpin the development of homelessness programs and strategies. Further, the urban Indigenous community is non-homogenous

and there is a diversity of Indigenous culture. This means rather than "Indigenizing" programs, we must participate in meaningful engagement and co-development processes with Indigenous partners in Calgary and Alberta. The HSSC must continue to explore, in partnership with Indigenous governments and partners, what role the HSSC should play in support of self-determination. Such reflection will need to be a key priority post-2018 as we work together to solve the homelessness crisis affecting Indigenous people.



# Caring for the Front Lines

ONE OF THE MOST CONSISTENT THEMES THAT FLOWED THROUGH OUR ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS IS THAT OUR FRONT LINE WORKERS FEEL NEGLECTED AND WITHOUT SUPPORT. THROUGHOUT THE FEEDBACK PROCESS, IT CONSISTENTLY BECAME CLEAR WE NEED TO BEGIN TO GIVE THE SAME LEVEL OF ATTENTION AND CARE TO OUR OWN PEOPLE AS WE GIVE TO THOSE WE SERVE.

The challenges of working with high-complexity individuals experiencing homelessness continues to negatively impact our front line workers. The psychological stressors, and/or vicarious trauma of working with clients who have or are experiencing trauma, addictions and mental illness combined with the physical and environmental challenges factor into everyday life for those working on the front lines. Our staff are the primary advocates for those they serve, however, the burden on staff working with complex populations continues to take its toll.

In a CHF-commissioned study interviewing 245 staff in 13 agencies, Drs. Wagemakers Schiff and Lane (2016) assessed burnout and post-traumatic stress in Calgary's homeless-serving sector. The study points out that a disproportionate number of front line workers have minimal education and training for dealing with the complexity of the clients they are serving. Many staff have no training in counselling or intervention skills (particularly in addictions) prior to being hired into these critical front line positions. According to the study, about **25% of workers** in the homeless-serving sector in Calgary suffer from **burnout and compassion fatigue** that heavily impacts job performance and decreases their quality of life. Further, approximately **36%** of those interviewed reported symptoms that would very likely result in a **PTSD diagnosis**. This vicarious traumatization is likely the result of a combination of

prior traumatic experiences, traumatic work events, and being witness to client trauma.

This sentiment was reflected in our engagement sessions with participants stating that their jobs are constantly crisis-driven, which is highly stressful, and HSSC front line staff suggested a number of possible ideas to better support them in their work. They did reflect that collaboration among agencies was beneficial for their work life and that the strong sense of community within and among agencies is beneficial for their mental health. Individuals in supervisory roles acknowledged that more leadership training would also be highly beneficial, but also strongly suggested safer and more effective channels for front line staff to express concerns and feedback to leadership and executive levels within their respective organizations. Front line workers also expressed that peer-to-peer support, mentorship and talking with others who have had similar experiences is much more effective than third party counselling, and while front line staff recognized that existing training (such as the vicarious trauma workshops) was beneficial to ongoing work, there was an overall acknowledgement that gaps still remained.

Beyond 2018, leaders within the HSSC must review working conditions, professional capacity building, and training needs to meaningfully support those on the front line who are doing the extraordinarily difficult work.

*One of the challenges is often that we work in an environment that's always crisis-driven and staff is under stress. The challenge is that we don't turn around and acknowledge that and put resources in place that mitigate the crisis component. We don't turn our mission for clients around on ourselves.*

## People First Priority Areas of Focus:

### Living and Lived Experience:

- **Enhance client-centered lens** by integrating client feedback intentionally through program development, implementation, and evolution.
- **Continue to leverage the voice of lived experience by listening to people, committees and groups** such as the Client Action Committee and Youth Advisory Table, and allow their input to consistently inform the work that we do.
- **Intentionally seek out those living in homelessness to be more responsive** to real-time needs as their experiences are time, system, and landscape dependent.

### Caring for the front lines:

- **Review opportunities to enhance training** and peer-to-peer supports to augment frontline staff capacity.
- **Examine and create more opportunities for front line worker concerns and feedback** within homeless-serving organizations and throughout the greater system of care.
- **Continue collaborating and fostering a greater sense of community** between and among agencies within the HSSC.

### Action on Truth and Reconciliation:

- **Stop "Indigenizing" programs and start right connecting to existing Indigenous communities and services to foster greater self-determination** and participate in meaningful engagement and co-development processes with Indigenous partners within Calgary and Alberta.
- **Seek guidance from Indigenous Elders and partners** to increase awareness of culture and intergenerational trauma and their impact on people, structures, and policies within HSSC agencies and organizations.
- **Respectfully incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, oral tradition, ceremony, acknowledgement, and history** into more culturally-appropriate service delivery.

# 2 HOME FOR EVERYONE

OVER THE PAST DECADE THE HSSC HAS BECOME MUCH MORE ADAPTABLE AS IT'S SHIFTED TO MEET CLIENTS' NEEDS. HOWEVER, INCREASED FLEXIBILITY IS REQUIRED WHEN IT COMES TO THE HOUSING CONTINUUM IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THIS CLIENT-CENTERED LENS. HOUSING FIRST IS NOT HOUSING ONLY, AND HOUSING CAPACITY AND DESIGN MUST BE IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUALS WE SERVE.



## Housing First

CALGARY'S 10 YEAR PLAN WAS BUILT UPON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HOUSING FIRST. VERY EARLY ON, WE UNDERSTOOD THE NOTION OF HOUSING FIRST AS THE IDEA OF PROVIDING A PERSON EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WITH HOUSING, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY OFFERING THEM SUPPORTS TO ADDRESS COEXISTING ISSUES THEY MAY BE FACING.

Chronic health issues, (particularly mental illness, disabilities, and physical illness), increase risk for homelessness. Those experiencing housing instability often face a multitude of challenges – including mental health issues, addictions, domestic violence, limited education, barriers to employment, and involvement with multiple systems like Children's Services and Justice. Housing First works for people, public systems, and communities by delivering access to housing with wrap around supports. However, **Housing First is not housing only**. It is a people-centric approach that recognizes the unique needs of individuals and families, as housing and programs need to be adaptable and reflective of the changing dynamics of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Over the past decade the sector has primarily prioritized high-complexity clients, ensuring that limited resources were strategically utilized. We now recognize that housing and programming must be made available for mid-complexity clients as an intervention and prevention measure. The current housing continuum does not capture the differing needs within different program types and it has been expressed that a more comprehensive definition of "success" within a Housing First model is required as clients often found a space that they like and simply elected to stay there. We also need to examine opportunities to further incorporate an Indigenous lens into our housing strategies – such as providing multi-family dwellings with programming that promotes healing, community and culture.

A key learning over the past decade revealed that, while there are pieces of the service network that the non-profit sector can deliver more effectively and cost-efficiently on behalf of mainstream systems, it can only do so with adequate resourcing and collaboration

to achieve ongoing system coordination. The lack of capacity and access to public services such as counseling, mental health supports, and addictions services continue to be a key barrier for those experiencing homelessness. This is why we need other public systems to invest and operate in housing and supports as well – Health, Justice, Children's Services, and others can contribute resources to address the complex needs of clients experiencing homelessness.

For instance, the Collaborative for Health and Home (CHH) identified 900 complex, long-term homeless individuals who are in need of an integrated health and housing response as result of their complex mental health, addiction, and physical health challenges. The HSSC does not have the capacity, the expertise, nor the authority to build and operate such a facility; we need Alberta Health's leadership to address this need. Similarly, correctional facilities require additional community-based housing units and supports appropriate to the levels of need of the person released. Provincial and federal corrections systems must contribute to the development of housing stock and supports specific to the needs of shared complex service participants with housing instability. Youth leaving provincial foster care also need transition supports, including rent subsidies and access to affordable housing.

The HSSC can be a part of all of these solutions, however, it cannot be expected to take them on alone.

*Housing First wasn't in our philosophy 10 years ago. The person-centered supports are amazing, but it was disruptive to the system.*



# The Housing Continuum

A SHORTAGE OF AVAILABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS CONTINUES TO CREATE BOTTLENECKS AT ALL POINTS ON THE HOUSING CONTINUUM AS CALGARIANS STRUGGLE TO MOVE FROM TRANSITIONAL TO PERMANENT HOUSING, FROM NON-MARKET TO MARKET RENTAL HOUSING, OR FROM RENTAL HOUSING TO HOME OWNERSHIP. THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS ALSO A KEY PARTNER IN THIS EFFORT, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO NEED THEM TO DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS AND WORK WITH THE NON-MARKET HOUSING SECTOR TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO AVAILABLE STOCK. WE WILL ALSO NEED TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS TO EXPLORE NEW DELIVERY MECHANISMS THAT ARE FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE.

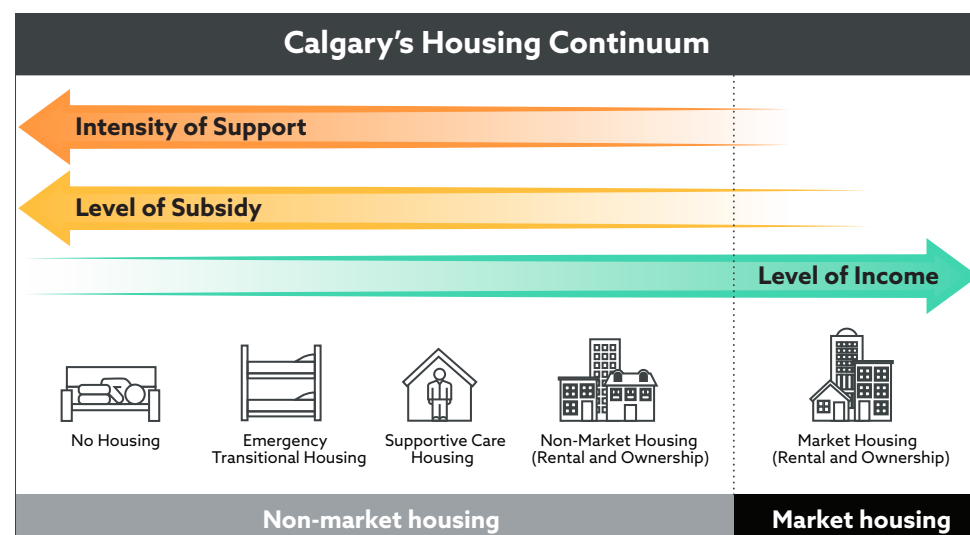
Calgary's Community Housing Affordability Collective (CHAC) represents an important first step for a sector that needs to advance its collaborative work towards an integrated and coordinated approach to better meet the community's needs. Enhancing the coordination of the housing continuum with the homeless-serving system of care will further ensure a seamless integration of these resources for clients at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Moving forward, addressing the unique needs of diverse groups will continue to be a priority at the program and system levels. Adding much needed affordable housing stock will meet the needs of some individuals, however other individuals experiencing homelessness will require long-term housing with on-site intensive supports delivered through supportive housing models with integrated public health care. Accordingly, housing units and program design will

need to be built across the housing spectrum in alignment with the diverse needs of the individuals we serve.

Finally, all citizens of Calgary should have a safe, secure, affordable and well-maintained home from which to realize their full potential and be contributing members of our community. Marginalized persons, such as those exiting homelessness, have the right to be protected from discriminatory practices which limit their housing opportunities. This view aligns with the recently released National Housing Strategy which declared "housing rights are human rights."

Applying a human rights based framework that fosters participation, inclusion and non-discrimination must be prioritized by all orders of government, with municipal leadership being critical.



City of Calgary Affordable Housing Strategy <http://www.calgary.ca/CS/OLSH/Documents/Affordable-housing/Corporate-Affordable-Housing-Strategy.pdf>

## Home For Everyone Priority Areas of Focus:

### Housing First:

- **Continue to focus on refining, perfecting, and adapting the Housing First model** to maintain and improve our client-centric approach.
- **Examine opportunities to further incorporate an Indigenous lens** into our Housing First strategies.
- **Increase housing sustainability by focusing our efforts on utilizing strengths-based approaches to fostering client resiliency and to empowering clients to optimize and/or build natural supports**, thus becoming less reliant on systems supports.

### The Housing Continuum:

- **Work with all orders of government leadership** (Federal, Provincial, Municipal, Indigenous) to develop policies that increase affordable housing options and apply a human rights based framework that fosters participation, inclusion and non-discrimination. Considerable efforts have more recently emerged at all orders, which is encouraging.
- **Engage the private sector** as a key partner in this effort. We will continue to need them to help develop affordable housing options and work with the non-market housing sector to enhance access to available stock.
- **Work with affordable housing partners to leverage common assets**, becoming increasingly innovative in our collective work.

# 3 DATA AND KNOWLEDGE

WE HAVE A CRITICAL BLIND SPOT IN OUR CAPACITY TO END HOMELESSNESS DUE TO THE LACK OF DATA INTEGRATION THROUGHOUT AND BETWEEN THE HSSC AND THE PRIMARY PUBLIC SYSTEMS OF CARE. IN THIS SENSE, WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH VISIBILITY IN THE FULL SCALE AND DYNAMICS OF THE ECOSYSTEM INVOLVED. MEASURING AND MONITORING SUCCESS REQUIRES A REAL TIME, SYSTEM-LEVEL LENS AND, DESPITE PROGRESS, A TRUE INFORMATION SYSTEM THAT TIES TOGETHER ALL SERVICES WITHIN THE ECOSYSTEM CURRENTLY DOES NOT EXIST IN CALGARY.

## Research & Real-Time Knowledge Dissemination

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE FUNCTIONAL ZERO, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE DEVELOP A SYSTEM THAT LEVERAGES REAL TIME DATA. USING DATA TO INFORM RESEARCH (WHICH IN TURN INFORMS PRACTICE) HAS ENABLED US TO BETTER TAILOR INTERVENTIONS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE CLIENTS AND ASSESS THE EFFICACY AND EFFICIENCY OF SERVICES IN ORDER TO ENHANCE AND IMPROVE CLIENT OUTCOMES.

However, even though we recognize the importance of data in developing agile responses to social issues, we are still working on the creation of an integrated ecosystem that truly closes the gap between evidence and practice.

We need to increase our capacity to respond to emerging and current requirements. Given that as many as 10,000 services exist in the Calgary ecosystem it is essential that we map this complexity and monitor its trends and outcomes. Access to real time data from

a larger network of services can drive agile system planning and help link all agencies within the HSSC together through our shared mandate.

We also know that sustaining an end to homelessness requires the coordination of the entire HSSC in partnership with the primary public systems, and advancing solutions in policy, interventions, and research will continue to be required to inform decision making.

## Data Sharing

WE'VE MADE GREAT STRIDES OVER THE LAST DECADE IN TERMS OF DATA COLLECTION AND UTILIZATION, AND WHILE WE HAVE FOUND THAT THE INCREASE IN DATA SHARING THROUGHOUT THE HSSC IS HIGHLY BENEFICIAL, WE STILL NEED TO DEVELOP NEW TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS TO SUPPORT MORE SEAMLESS DATA INTEGRATION ACROSS THE HSSC AND PRIMARY PUBLIC SYSTEMS.

We also know that our capacity to end homelessness relies on greater data integration between the HSSC and primary public systems such as Children's Services, Health, and Justice. This existing data disconnect results in having no way of knowing whether new service participants are coming into the system as a whole, or if they are cycling through various components. This hampers system planning and in turn, our capacity to respond appropriately and adjust in real time.

In order to move system planning forward, efforts to enhance coordinated service delivery are critical, and this includes having better visibility into all components within the system. The ability of service providers, multi-disciplinary teams, police officers and health professionals to respond in the most appropriate and beneficial manner to individuals in need also requires appropriate information sharing, and we will need to resolve this lack of integration if we are to move forward and enhance coordinated service delivery **across** systems, rather than simply within our own.

*I like the data sharing idea – one system, or more than one, integrated and accessible by different programs. You automatically build tighter community.*

## Measurement

UTILIZING EVIDENCE-BASED BEST PRACTICES, KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) ENABLE US TO BUILD A HIGH-PERFORMING SYSTEM OF CARE THAT STABLY HOUSES THOSE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC AND EPISODIC HOMELESSNESS, AND ALLOWS US TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO CALGARY'S UNIQUE NEEDS.

### Key Performance Metrics

Current KPIs are limited to measuring program performance within the HSSC, and while this is crucial for monitoring the efficacy of Housing First programs themselves, they don't capture the interaction between funded and non-funded agencies (shelters in particular). Our progress over the recent years has illustrated that **system-level** KPIs will need to be developed to measure alignment and coordination across the entire HSSC and into the public systems.

While the HSSC has developed and continues to refine our KPIs at a program level, it is essential that our performance management approach becomes more agile and able to inform adjustments in real time as part of a comprehensive approach that tackles the structural, systemic, community, institutional, interpersonal, and individual causes of homelessness. Moving forward we need to identify and start measuring system-level indicators in order to be more nimble in our planning and become more proactive in our collective response.

### Measurement Tools

As we work towards our goals, we require a way to measure our success. Historically, our HSSC has relied on tools such as our biennial Point in Time Counts (PIT) to measure the current state of progress. PIT counts are important for identifying trends but they only provide a snapshot of homelessness within a specific time period and are, therefore, of limited value as a lagging indicator. We need to develop more agile system planning mechanisms that effectively track inflow and outflow in real time, while providing an accurate picture of what is happening across services in terms of participant needs and outcomes. Future work in this area must focus on developing and implementing measurement tools, such as the Scope of Needs and Services List (Calgary's version of a By Names List) that allows us to have a real-time and more holistic snapshot of people experiencing homelessness along with their needs and the services that they require. These types of real time data tools are better equipped to capture the flow of individuals entering and exiting the HSSC, and allow us to better serve them by right connecting them to public systems or services, thus ending their experience of homelessness as quickly as possible.

*To measure impact, we have our agency impact, but as a system, what is the goal? Is it the systems impact or our program impact? The system impact needs to be something that agencies can actually measure within their programs. That's not happening right now.*

## Data and Knowledge Priority Areas of Focus:

### Data Sharing:

- **Maintain client autonomy and privacy while improving agency and program collaboration.** Use client-centered language to educate clients on their right to privacy, and give them a comprehensive understanding of how data sharing meets their needs, why their data is being collected, who can see it, and how it is being used.
- **Increase data sharing commitments and agreements** by all agencies within the HSSC and the primary public systems of care.
- **Investigate and examine technological solutions** to support data integration within and between the HSSC and primary public systems of care.
- **Enhance system of care visibility.** Ongoing efforts to enhance coordinated service delivery are critical; this includes having enhanced visibility of all components of the system. We need to develop workable and effective solutions in support of information sharing provisions and protocols.

### Measurement:

- **Develop and adhere to systems-level performance indicators** to inform real time systemic adjustments as part of a comprehensive approach that incorporates the structural, systemic, community, institutional, interpersonal, and individual causes of homelessness.
- **Integrate a Scope of Needs and Services List** that enables the HSSC to have a real time snapshot of the needs of, and services required by, the individuals we serve.

### Research & Real-Time Knowledge Dissemination:

- **Examine system mapping** to enable real time, full visibility of all services and agencies to all organizations within the HSSC.
- **Provide access to real time, actionable data to drive agile system planning** in order to link all agencies within the HSSC into a cohesive system of care through our common shared mandate.

# 4 AGILE HSSC PLANNING

AGILE SYSTEM PLANNING IS ABOUT MORE THAN SETTING TARGETS AND MONITORING PERFORMANCE. AN AGILE SYSTEM WOULD BEGIN WITH PREVENTION WITH A FOCUS ON BEING RESPONSIVE, NOT REACTIVE. FASTER, AND MORE STRATEGIC CYCLES OF DEVELOPMENT ARE NEEDED THROUGHOUT THE HSSC, NOT ONLY IN THE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION, BUT ALSO IN WORKING ALONGSIDE PRIMARY PUBLIC SYSTEMS.



## System Coordination

A SYSTEM PLANNING APPROACH WITH A NEUTRAL BACKBONE SYSTEM PLANNER ORGANIZATION TO DRIVE COORDINATION, AND WHERE APPROPRIATE, INTEGRATION EFFORTS AMONG THE HSSC AND PUBLIC SYSTEM PARTNERS (SUCH AS HEALTH AND JUSTICE) WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN FASTER, LEANER CYCLES OF DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM OF CARE. TO THAT END, AGILE HSSC PLANNING IS MORE THAN SETTING TARGETS AND MONITORING PERFORMANCE. IT REQUIRES A LEAD SYSTEM PLANNER ORGANIZATION TO DEVELOP A NIMBLE AND ITERATIVE APPROACH TO CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT.

At a programmatic level, and as the HSSC continues to advance (and the capacity of the system to deliver on client-centered outcomes related to housing referrals, housing placement and housing stability evolves) it is critical that we are measuring the right things and integrating what we learn into our agency-specific service delivery plans. As our community becomes increasingly data-driven, comparison and evaluation are major mechanisms for systems improvement, decision making and planning. Data, measurement and reporting doesn't always effectively capture progress made with clients – or alternatively, areas of concern. For example, there needs to be a better understanding of rehoused placements and the instances of Housing First graduates coming back into the system. Moving forward, a review and refinement of the indicators used to assess program performance will be important. This will need to be an iterative process that ensures program KPIs align with on-the-ground experiences of the front line.

Finally, we know that sustaining Functional Zero requires the coordination of the entire HSSC in partnership with primary public systems, and advancing solutions in policy, interventions, and research will continue to be needed. As shifts in our environment impact homelessness we need to course-correct in real time to ensure effectiveness, and as we relieve the current backlog in our system we can work with public systems to shift public system resources to enhance our focus on prevention, and move upstream to address the root causes of homelessness in a coordinated manner. Accordingly, the HSSC can play a critical role in creating service delivery models that right connect people to primary public systems and increase capacity and access to essential services for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

*We do need more funding allocated to preventative work, but if we're going to get into it, let's think about accountability and not take on the work that other agencies and system can or are already doing better.*



## Agile HSSC Planning Priority Areas of Focus:

### System Coordination:

- **Enhance our understanding of Housing First program graduation rates.** Utilize existing data to generate a better understanding of Housing First graduate rehousing to determine system capacity needs.
- **Explore primary public systems capacity and integration of Housing First program graduates** to understand recidivism patterns back into homelessness.
- **Explore strategies to intentionally manage the inflow** from mental health, addiction, health, and correctional facilities into homelessness and Housing First programs.
- **Explore opportunities to enhance and adjust current program KPIs** to align with on-the-ground experiences at the front line level. These indicators, as well our interpretation and reporting of data, will need to follow an iterative process that adjusts as needed based on real time inputs from front line workers.

*We need to tailor the scorecards and benchmarks according to programs. What if we looked at a positive change in client complexity rather than agency performance? It'd be a lot more client focused.*

## 5

ECOSYSTEM  
INTEGRATION

ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FACED IN OUR WORK ON HOMELESSNESS STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT HOMELESSNESS CANNOT BE SOLVED BY THE HOMELESS-SERVING SYSTEM OF CARE ALONE; IN FACT, THE HSSC ITSELF IS A SECONDARY, DEFAULT SYSTEM THAT EMERGED TO RESPOND TO THE GAPS AND FRACTURES THAT PEOPLE ARE FALLING THROUGH WITHIN THE PRIMARY PUBLIC SYSTEMS OF CARE.

Homelessness  
Prevention

OVER THE PAST DECADE, OUR EMPHASIS ON REDUCING CHRONIC AND EPISODIC HOMELESSNESS HAS FOCUSED THE HSSC'S INTERVENTIONS ON TERTIARY AND SECONDARY PREVENTION. HOWEVER, WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT WITHOUT ALL TYPES OF PREVENTION, SUCCESS IS VERY LIMITED. IN FACT, PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS WILL REQUIRE AN INTENTIONAL PREVENTION EFFORT TO IDENTIFY THOSE AT THE GREATEST RISK AND BEST MATCH THEM WITH APPROPRIATE RESOURCES BEFORE HOMELESSNESS OCCURS. THIS HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AND NON-PROFIT AGENCIES WHO ARE NOT WITHIN THE HSSC TO COLLECTIVELY RECOGNIZE THAT IN ORDER TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION, THEY WILL HAVE TO RETHINK SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF THEIR APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION.

While we continue to focus on ending long-term homelessness amongst those experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness, we must also enhance the system of care to efficiently house those at imminent risk of or who experience short-term homelessness as well. To meet our goal of achieving Functional Zero in Calgary, we need to stop people from becoming homeless in the first place.

As an example, the higher incidence of homelessness among those who exit Children's Services provides impetus to examine how that system prepares and supports young people for transitions to adulthood. In the case of Income Supports, inadequate shelter allowance exacerbates homelessness risk for those receiving social benefits yet who are unable to pay rent. This would suggest that this system could shift policy and procedures in this area to reduce homelessness long-term. The higher incidence of people experiencing mental illness in shelters also suggests a gap in the Health system that enables this issue to emerge in the first place. Similarly, the higher incidence of homelessness for people involved

with the Justice system points to the need to explore what might be done around Justice investment in appropriate housing as part of the release planning process.

It is very difficult to bring these systems together at the local level and engage in cross-system planning and investment coordination. This is partially to do with the accountability of systems beyond Calgary itself to the province or nationally, as well as their understanding of where accountability for homelessness lies in relation to ministerial or departmental mandates. Health might argue that homelessness is not a health issue and thus outside their responsibility realms; same could be said by Justice or Children's Services. However, all of these systems require significant policy shifts. While difficult, this work on cross-system leadership and ecosystem planning will continue to be a priority for Calgary to achieve its objectives on ending homelessness. This will require incremental changes to primary public systems as agile system planning requires new skills, will and knowledge.

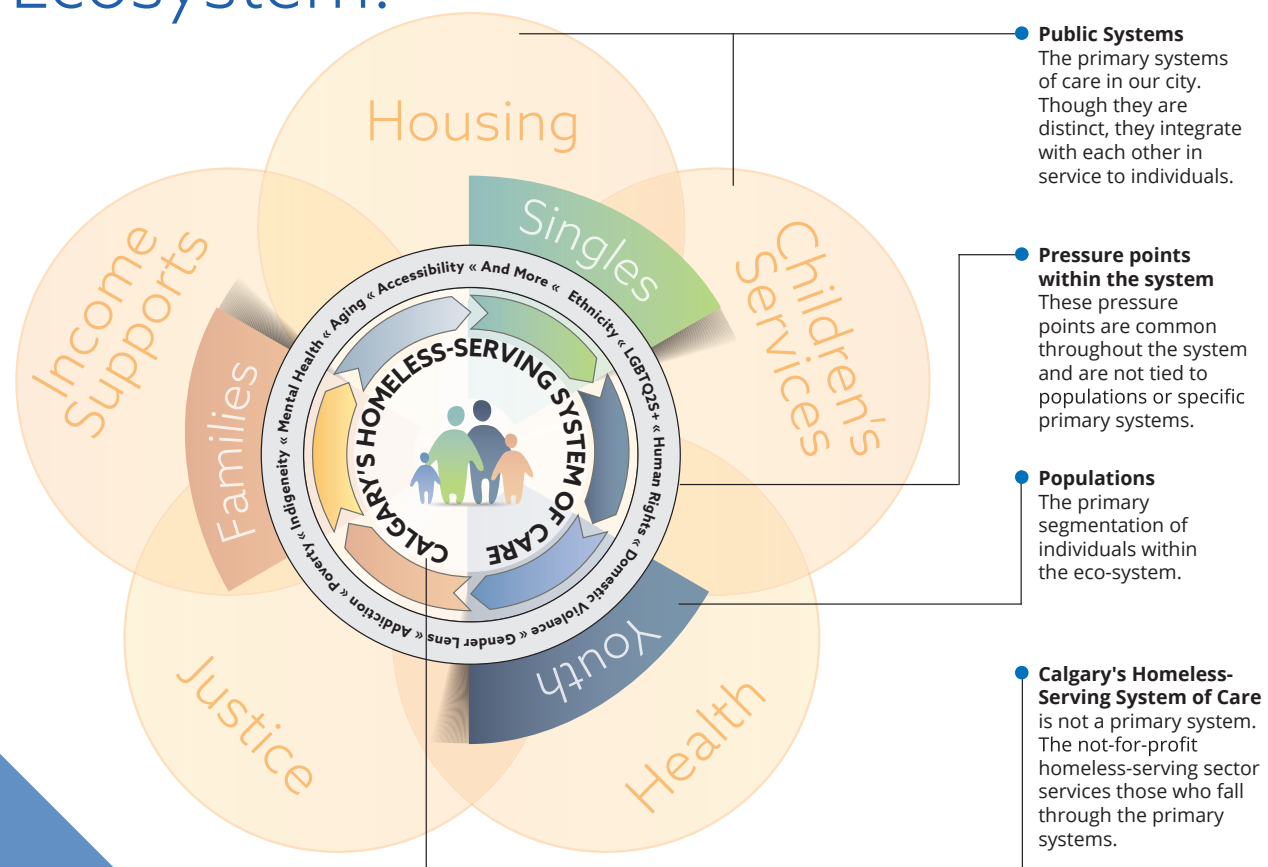
*We've increased our level of collaboration; we share a lot of information and build a lot of trust. We can expand this to the administrative and public systems too.*



Much more needs to be done to develop effective strategies on the primary prevention side to stem the flow of new cases of homelessness before they occur. This includes the development of more affordable housing, and changing policies to ensure vulnerable groups – such as youth leaving care – are not discharged into homelessness. In addition, we need to find ways to increase incomes for vulnerable populations, including enhancing income supports, access to living wage employment, and other poverty reduction measures that are specifically aligned towards ending homelessness.

However, it is important to remember that these issues and their solutions are not within the direct powers or accountability of the HSSC. In fact, **growing the HSSC will never solve these systemic issues within the broader ecosystem and primary public systems.** We need leadership within these systems to accept accountability and take action on addressing the gaps and drivers contributing to homelessness within their own ministries, programs and services.

## Calgary's Ecosystem:



## Ecosystem Integration Priority Areas of Focus:

### Homelessness Prevention:

- **Leverage Community Systems Integration (CSI) Table** to drive coordination, and where appropriate, integration efforts across the HSSC with our public system partners such as Health, Children's Services, and Justice to address the gaps and drivers within their own systems that are contributing to homelessness.
- **Leverage the Collaborative to Health and Home (CHH)** to continue to advance access to intensive case management and health supports including mental health and addictions services as homeless Calgarians transition into supportive housing.
- **Enhance the integration of the HSSC** with poverty reduction and affordable housing efforts being led by Enough for All and CHAC in order to maintain momentum beyond 2018.

## 6

STRATEGIC  
INVESTMENT  
& EMPOWERING  
CALGARIANS

WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF ALL ORDERS OF GOVERNMENT, THE SUCCESSES WE HAVE ACHIEVED TO DATE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE, AND MOVING FORWARD, SUPPORT FROM ALL ORDERS OF GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE ESSENTIAL. CRITICAL MASS IS REQUIRED TO AFFECT SUSTAINABLE CHANGE, BUT CRITICAL MASS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED IF ALL CALGARIANS PARTICIPATE IN OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO END HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY, AND ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITY.

Funder  
Engagement

GOVERNMENTS' TRUST AND ENABLING APPROACH TO LOCAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY ENTITY MODELS WAS A CRITICAL FACTOR IN CALGARY'S SUCCESS OVER THE PAST DECADE. THEIR SUPPORT FOR **LOCAL AUTONOMY IN BACKBONE ENTITY-DRIVEN SYSTEM PLANNING** ALONG WITH THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES AND ENABLING POLICY WERE CRITICAL.

The Government of Alberta supported (rather than dictated) directions to Calgary, and this created space for the emergence of local capacity to develop systems planning approaches appropriate to solve local complex social issues. This enabling approach was reinforced at the federal level by the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (now called **Reaching Home**) and the National Housing Strategy – which put the onus of community planning at the local level, rather than in government (provincial or federal).

Notwithstanding the above, the successes we have achieved to date would not have been possible without investment from all orders of government (Federal, Provincial, Municipal) and moving forward, support from all orders of government will continue to be essential. The Federal Government's National Housing Strategy has marked a momentous shift in the affordable housing sector, though the details of the rollout are yet to be determined. The Government of Alberta's Affordable Housing Strategy (2017), with a commitment of \$1.2 billion over five years to improve the system's 70,000 housing units and construct an additional 4,100 units by 2021 is a promising investment within the affordable housing sphere. We will also need The City of Calgary to continue to support policies that remove barriers and increase

affordable housing options and provide assertive leadership with federal, provincial and industry partners on tackling the affordable housing gap.

As noted, concerted coordination and integration efforts across the HSSC with our partners in Health, Justice, Income Supports, poverty reduction, mental health and addiction, affordable housing, and others will be required to maintain momentum beyond 2018. The levels of resources needed will require constant monitoring and adjustment to respond to shifting drivers of demand. We will need to develop common ways of measuring leading and lagging indicators provincially and nationally to ensure a consistent approach emerges. Though parts of the HSSC have been aligned through joint provincial, federal, and philanthropic funding to a high degree, resource infrastructure can and should be strategically examined from an ecosystem perspective. Failure to do so will continue to hamper efforts as we have no way of knowing whether diverse funders (governments, foundations, charities, etc.) are working at cross-purposes, duplicating efforts, or even whether we are serving different groups and to what effect. Moving forward, we need to ensure diverse funders are aligned across the HSSC and that KPIs and outcomes are co-created and shared.

*What's working is how well we work together collaboratively as agencies and as a sector; we have built off of that and started collaborating to determine how we can provide the best sector-wide support.*





ENDING HOMELESSNESS REQUIRES THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL CALGARIANS, EACH CONTRIBUTING IN A MANNER THAT FITS THEIR CAPACITY. BY LENDING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS, MANY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESSES WE'VE HAD OVER THE PAST DECADE THROUGH EMBRACING PERMANENT HOUSING WITH SUPPORTS IN LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS; PROVIDING VOLUNTEER HOURS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING BUILDINGS; AND BY FUNDRAISING TO PAY DOWN BUILDING MORTGAGES.

However, there is still a considerable lack of public knowledge on homelessness as well as a great amount of shame and stigma associated with the people who experience it, and innovative approaches to connecting, informing, and engaging with the public need to be developed through a comprehensive and collective communication vehicle. Unified messaging through a single brand will contribute to a stronger HSSC voice and minimize the confusion that comes from trying to navigate multiple messages from multiple sources.

Critical mass can only be achieved if all Calgarians participate in our collective efforts to achieve Functional Zero within our city, and actively engage in the betterment of our community. This requires that all Calgarians have a deeper understanding of homelessness and what causes it, and challenge the myths and stigma surrounding those experiencing it.

*We almost have a unified voice – a better ability to advocate. Because of that, we can work really well together, streamline services, and address the problem more effectively in the future.*

## Strategic Investment & Empowering Calgarians

### Priority Areas of Focus:

#### Funder Engagement:

- **Identify opportunities for better integration** of governance, funding, and policy across systems, services, and sectors to support more seamless access to, and transition among services.

#### I Heart Home:

- **Develop a collective communications mechanism** for the HSSC to work in concert with existing initiatives such as CHAC's Common Voice for affordable housing.
- **Create more public awareness** of the scope and causes of homelessness in Calgary, and the performance of programs that are delivering desired outcomes towards the collective goal.
- **Address the stigma and discrimination** associated with homelessness in Calgary through collective HSSC communication.

# Conclusion:

CALGARY'S HOMELESS-SERVING SYSTEM OF CARE IS COMPRISED OF A NETWORK OF AGENCIES AND PUBLIC SYSTEM PARTNERS WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT THOSE AT IMMINENT RISK OF OR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS HAVE TIMELY ACCESS TO THE RIGHT HOUSING WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORTS AT THE RIGHT TIME. THE STRATEGIC DIRECTIVES AND PRIORITY AREAS OUTLINED IN THIS GUIDING DOCUMENT ARE BASED ON THE LESSONS AND WISDOM GLEANED FROM OVER A DECADE OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT, COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION.

Complex social issues like homelessness are cross-cutting, whether we consider them through the lens of a government jurisdiction, department, or service delivery approach. Across and within the ecosystem, (including the HSSC), system of care service providers and programs continue to mainly operate in a fragmented manner. The strategic directives and priority areas outlined in this guiding document provide a strategic framework to drive alignment across system of care participants and enable co-ordination at the strategic and service delivery levels to achieve Functional Zero within our city.

As the system planner for Calgary's HSSC, Calgary Homeless Foundation is honoured to continue to collaborate with the HSSC to deliver services, housing and programs, and coordinate resources in alignment with the strategic directives outlined in this document.

No single agency, system or service can end homelessness alone. It's no longer sustainable to care solely about one's own organizational mandate and associated initiatives. To achieve transformational change we must drive for shared accountability and identify ways to co-ordinate at the ecosystem and strategic level as well as the service delivery level.

Together,  
We can get to  
**Absolute  
Zero**  
Functional

## We Will Have Ended Homelessness When:

- Each time a person or family at risk of or experiencing homelessness is supported to access and maintain permanent housing
- When there are fewer paths in and a timely path out, for everyone
- When our system response is such that: when a person falls into homelessness, the system finds them, treats them with dignity and respect, gets them into permanent housing with supports if/as needed, and does so in days and weeks – not months and years

- Diana Krecsy, CEO, CHF

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

- Andrew Carnegie

Together  
to  
**Absolute  
Zero**  
Functional



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