

Poverty Reduction Strategy – Implementation Plan (2024-2027)

Phase 1 Stakeholder Engagement Summary

February 2023

Background

On November 25, 2021, Council approved the City's first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy (2021 – 2031). The Poverty Reduction Strategy is a plan, co-created with the community, that includes a practical approach to reducing poverty, increasing equity, and incorporating a “culture of caring” in all City endeavors over the next decade. The first implementation plan (2021-2023) for the Strategy includes 80 specific actions across City departments.

The City is now starting to write the second implementation plan (2024-2027) with the help of poverty reduction stakeholders and people with lived experience of poverty. The plan is timed so actions can be considered in the multi-year budget process.

Engagement

Phase 1 stakeholder engagement on the second implementation plan (2024-2027) explored how challenges to people in poverty have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. Ideas for projects to address the challenges since the pandemic were discussed and prioritized.

The City held focused conversations with a range of poverty reduction stakeholders and people with lived experience of poverty in December 2022. A list of organizations that the City reached out to is available in Appendix A and meeting notes from each conversation are available in Appendix B. Details on the stakeholder engagement conversations are available in Table 1.

Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Date	Activity	Participation
December 7, 2022	Indigenous Organizations Meeting	4 representatives
December 7, 2022	Community Resource Centres Meeting	2 representatives
December 9, 2022	Community Safety and Well-being Organizations Meeting	2 representatives
December 12, 2022	Poverty Reduction Advocates Meeting	7 representatives
December 14, 2022	Rossbrook House	1 representative
January 5, 2023	Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre	1 representative



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What We Heard

Changes Post-Pandemic

Stakeholders were asked if they noticed any changes to the challenges people in poverty face since the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders noted the following negative changes or existing challenges that were amplified:

- Housing (15 comments)
 - Increase in encampments and homelessness (5 comments)
 - Increase in the use of transit shelters for housing (5 comments)
 - Increase in vacant buildings (2 comments)
 - Lack of transitional housing (2 comments)
 - Lack of affordable housing in new neighbourhood developments (1 comment)
- Food security (7 comments)
 - Increase in costs/inflation (3 comments)
 - Higher demand on service providers for food; community kitchens and food banks struggling to meet the demand (2 comments)
 - More anger and frustration in grocery stores (2 comments)
- Mental health (6 comments)
 - Increased prevalence of mental health issues (4 comments)
 - Social isolation and social exclusion (2 comments)
- Substance use (6 comments)
 - Drug supply contamination (3 comments)
 - Lack of safe consumption sites (2 comments)
 - Increase in substance use (1 comment)
- Service interruptions (4 comments)
 - Services closed because of pandemic (3 comments)
 - Services moved online since the pandemic (1 comment)

- Assault, aggression, and domestic violence (2 comments)
 - Increase in domestic violence (1 comment)
 - Increase in violent crime and assaults (1 comment)
- First responders are stretched (2 comments)
- Lack of Indigenous involvement (2 comments)
- Security guard profiling, discrimination and prejudice (2 comments)
- Education (1 comment)
 - Reduce reading and writing skills in children due to remote learning (1 comment)
- Issues with coordination of an extreme weather response (1 comment)
- Lack of time for prevention (1 comment)
- More Indigenous reconciliation in programs (1 comment)
- Transportation (1 comment)
 - Gas prices reduced access to transportation for resources and services (1 comment)

Stakeholders noted the following positive changes:

- Attitudes and awareness (2 comments)
 - Leadership attitudes are changing (1 comment)
 - Residents' attitudes are changing now that people are back to work and seeing the issues (1 comment)
- Harm reduction and substance use (1 comment)
 - New harm reduction van operating through Sunshine House to provide drug testing (1 comment)
- Housing (1 comment)
 - Astum Api Niikinaahk tiny home project with 22 transitional housing units is open and has tenants (1 comment)
- Food security (1 comment)
 - Community kitchen now open (1 comment)

A full list of changes is available in Appendix C.

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Priority Goals

The eight Poverty Reduction Strategy goals (Table 2) were shared with stakeholders. Stakeholders were asked to identify a goal that should be a focus for the second implementation plan (2024-2027). These high-priority goals will help the project team develop projects to implement in the next four years of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The top three goals were:



1. The City actively plans for and partners in affordable housing (10 comments)



2. Equity and a culture of caring are demonstrated through strategy implementation and systems change (5 comments)



3. Food security and food system resilience is expanded (4 comments)

Stakeholders' top goals for the second implementation plan have changed since the first implementation plan, with the exception of affordable housing remaining the highest priority action area. Stakeholders were asked to prioritize the goals for the first implementation plan in 2021. The top three goals for the first implementation plan were affordable housing, community well-being supports, and equity in employment and income opportunities.

Projects and Programs

With priority areas identified, stakeholders were asked to share ideas for projects and programs that the City can lead to support people who are experiencing poverty. Table 2 includes a list of all ideas for potential projects and programs. The project team will consider these when drafting the second implementation plan. While some ideas in Table 2 may fall outside municipal jurisdiction, the City can have a role in advocating other levels of government and working with other levels of government to find solutions.

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Table 2: Project ideas for the second implementation plan (2024-2027)

Strategy Goals	Project and Program Ideas
1. Equity and a culture of caring are demonstrated through strategy implementation and systems change	Provide harm reduction, trauma-informed, de-escalation, and anti-oppression training for first responders and frontline City staff.
	Coordinate a Non-Profit Sector table, hosted by the municipality, to provide improved collaboration and more ongoing engagement between the non-profit sector and the municipality.
	Increase representation in staffing to help create more inclusive City services and facilities.
	Create a public education campaign about homelessness and poverty to minimize discrimination against unsheltered residents; build an understanding of why residents use bus shelters as housing.
2. The City actively plans for and partners in affordable housing	Transform vacant buildings into transitional and 'rent geared to income' housing.
	Set an annual construction target for new 'rent geared to income' housing units.
	Supportive housing with a harm reduction approach, providing mental health, medical care, and housing services in one location.
	Ensure low-income housing is clean and safe to meet housing suitability standards and safety standards, and through inspections and improved landlord accountability.
	Amend bylaws and policies to make it easier to build more diverse types of housing developments to meet the needs of all Winnipeggers (multi-generational families, transitional housing for single adults or couples, modular housing, etc.)
	Create an inclusionary zoning policy so that all new developments include low-income housing and establish champions for inclusionary zoning within City leadership.
	Increase coordination between the municipal, provincial and federal governments on housing projects.
	Work with the private housing sector and landlords to address housing issues.
3. Equity is embedded in all City employment and income opportunities	Consider income diversity when hiring for City jobs, similar to other inclusive hiring practices that consider gender, race, or disability.
	Increase communications and collaboration with community-led job readiness programs to increase success for youth seeking employment at the City of Winnipeg.
	Provide training to remove employment barriers.
	Build a safe consumption site with connections to resources and relationship building.

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Strategy Goals	Project and Program Ideas
4. Community well-being supports for those in greatest need are increased	Explore ways to provide support to people who are finding shelter in the bus shelters.
	Provide water fountains and enhanced access to public washrooms.
	Create a public education campaign to address misinformation around safe consumption sites and build public support.
	Conduct drug testing to ensure drugs are not contaminated and reduce overdose.
	Expand the Alternative Response to Citizens in Crisis program to increase community collaboration, and to provide enhanced mental health supports and culturally safe care during wellness checks.
	Develop a program to have dedicated ambulances, fire response, and police available in the neighbourhood where shelters are located to improve health outcomes for people who are unsheltered and address safety concerns.
5. Transportation system equity is enhanced	Extend transfer time from 1.5 hours to 4 hours on buses to support people using Transit for transportation outside of commuting (e.g. run errands without having to pay fare multiple times).
	Increase the WINNpass program reduced rate from 50% to 80%.
	Implement fare-free transit for all transit riders. Support low-income individuals and families in accessing services, and reduce violence towards transit operators.
	Re-introduce the free Downtown Spirit buses.
	Create a program to help people navigate complex systems when they visit Winnipeg to receive health care, and assist people in returning to northern communities that are in Winnipeg for medical purposes.
6. All City services are equitable, inclusive and accessible	Create a long-term extreme weather strategy and increase collaboration between the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Services and those operating shelters, for extreme weather responses.
	Open the Main Street public washroom 24 hours per day, seven days per week.
	Collaborate with Community Centres to offer free organized sport opportunities, expanding on the North End Hockey program that provides non-cost access to play on a hockey team.
	Transform City facilities into community resource hubs that offer a range of services, which could include food, shelter, health care, learning, cultural enrichment, play, and recreation, instead of City buildings with a single dedicated purpose (e.g. recreation, reading and learning, administration, etc.).
7. Food security and food system resilience is expanded	Build a hydroponic system to grow food and increase food security.
	Create more community kitchens and have food available at all City facilities.
	Provide education and learning opportunities about gardening.

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Strategy Goals	Project and Program Ideas
	Collaborate with community organizations providing food services, such as Manitoba Harvest and Mamawi, to develop new partnerships to address food insecurity.
	Collaborate with the Winnipeg Food Council to address food shortages and food security issues.
8. Equity in community safety is increased through collaboration	Introduce Community Safety Hosts at Portage Place Mall and additional public facilities as an alternative to security guards.
	Provide more holistic resources at encampments to be proactive and create safer conditions for residents.
	Collaborate with community organizations, such as the Downtown Community Safety Partnership, to provide medical response training that is a bridge between Emergency Medical Services and First Aid.

Next Steps

The project team will use the challenges, priority areas, and potential projects, initiatives, and services from the stakeholder engagement to develop a draft Implementation Plan 2024-2027. The draft plan will include proposed poverty reduction projects to complete in 2024-2027 and will be shared with stakeholders in Phase 2 engagement.

The draft and the proposed projects will be refined based on feedback from Phase 2 engagement. The Implementation Plan 2024-2027 is expected to be submitted for Council consideration in 2023.

Appendices

Appendix A – Stakeholder Engagement Results

Appendix B – Stakeholder Meeting Notes

Appendix C – List of Stakeholder Organizations