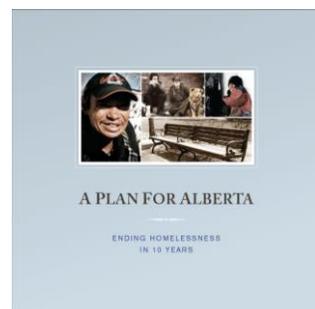


# A Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy for Alberta:

## Supporting *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*



Submitted to:  
Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness

Prepared by:  
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## **Executive Summary**

This *Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy for Alberta* is presented to all those interested in advancing our knowledge and understanding of housing and homelessness in Alberta. The purpose is to bring together researchers, practitioners, policy makers and decision makers from across sectors in common purpose to meet the goals of *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*, by 2019, which outlines a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable approach to ending homelessness in Alberta. The research partnership between the Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research will support the provision of better information through the development and use of data and the mobilization of knowledge generated from primary research and ongoing evaluation and monitoring.

### **Research Priorities**

The vision of this research strategy is to put research and evaluation in the service of policy and practice to prevent and end homelessness in Alberta. Three research priorities, with specific areas of emphasis, emerged from an extensive review of the literature and consultation with stakeholders. The unique needs and special circumstances of vulnerable populations and Aboriginal Peoples are to be studied in relation to each priority, and priorities should be set within a framework that considers and allows for research directed at the individual, program and system levels.

As housing and homelessness are part of complex social systems supporting health and well-being, the identified priorities often interlink and overlap, and must be considered in relation to other policy initiatives in Alberta, including the Social Policy Framework, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Early Childhood Development, Mental Health and Addictions, a Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta and other health, social, justice, planning, housing and employment policies and practices that impact the social determinants of homelessness. Identified research priorities and specific areas of emphasis are:

#### **1. Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention**

- A. Structural Factors
- B. Gaps in Systems of Care and Support
- C. Migration and Employment
- D. Identification of Those At-Risk

#### **2. Effectiveness of Interventions**

#### **3. Continuum of Housing and Homelessness Supports and Services**

- A. Rural Homelessness
- B. Coordinated Planning for Long-Term Housing and Supports
- C. Community Support, Engagement and Mobilization for Homelessness

### **Implementation Framework**

This implementation framework represents a shared vision of how to generate and mobilize the research. The four pillars of this framework identify next steps for putting research and evaluation in the service of policy and practice to prevent and end homelessness in Alberta:

**1. Knowledge mobilization**

- Establish a centralized hub for Alberta homelessness research
- Develop Communities of Practice to inform and support knowledge mobilization within their fields
- Create opportunities for knowledge exchange across sectors

**2. Data development and use**

- Develop and house a provincial homelessness data resource centre
- Link administrative data from health, social, employment and justice ministries to measure system outcomes of funded Housing First programs
- Refine the standard dataset to enhance its analytic value and utility, and continue to develop a framework for system-level performance measurement

**3. Primary research**

- Conduct a feasibility study for a multi-site research demonstration project
- Develop research guidelines, identify and implement research projects in partnership with Aboriginal communities
- Build capacity of community-based research to better understand community and regional differences and support multi-site demonstration projects

**4. Evaluation and monitoring**

- Build upon the current Alberta Human Services Evaluation Framework to expand the scope of system and program level performance measures tracking the *Plan for Alberta's* progress towards ending homelessness in Alberta by 2019.

## 1 A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in Ten Years

Alberta is a leader and innovator in addressing homelessness. It was the first province in Canada to develop a strategic and integrated response that supported systemic and change at the community and provincial level and included Housing First as a key operational principle. The Government of Alberta committed to *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years (2009-2019)* and its vision and implementation have been recognized with a number of national awards (Alberta Secretariat, 2013, p. 4). Seven Alberta municipalities (Calgary, Edmonton, Wood Buffalo, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Medicine Hat) also have multi-year plans to end homelessness that address local priorities and align with the 10-Year Plan and the Housing First philosophy. The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness (the Secretariat) developed and monitored the implementation of *A Plan for Alberta* from 2009 to 2012.

### 1.1 Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness

Established in February 2013 by the Premier of Alberta, the Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness is guiding the next phase of the 10-Year Plan.

The Council is a unique partnership between community leaders and all orders of government. It has been tasked with identifying systemic barriers, developing solutions, and providing strategic recommendations to the Government of Alberta, through the Minister of Human Services. The IAC's approach to leadership is shared, collaborative, strategic, and intentional in its efforts to ensure community involvement in providing advice to the government.

In its first year of operation, the IAC identified five outcomes, each with a designated committee, to advance its priorities going forward (Alberta Human Services, 2014):

- Aboriginal people, youth, seniors, women fleeing violence, newcomers, people with disabilities and other sub-populations have access to specialized housing and support services that are tailored to their unique circumstances and experiences.
- Prevention of homelessness is adequately resourced and successful.
- Sustainable investment strategies are in place to achieve the successful implementation of *A Plan for Alberta*.
- Integrated case management and service delivery are characteristics of local homeless-serving systems.
- The root causes of homelessness are addressed through integrated service delivery and public policy.
- The development and execution of a provincial, strategic housing and homelessness research agenda.
- The generation of adequate and reliable data related to homelessness.
- Evidence informs decisions made within the context of *A Plan for Alberta*.

Supporting these outcomes are research-specific priorities:

- The development and execution of a provincial, strategic housing and homelessness research agenda.
- The generation of adequate and reliable data related to homelessness.
- Evidence informs decisions made within the context of *A Plan for Alberta*.

## 1.2 Achieving Results

In 2014, progress made on the Plan's implementation, indicated that between April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2014 (Alberta Human Services):

- 9,451 homeless Albertans were provided with housing and individualized supports to help them remain housed
- 73% of Housing First clients have remained housed for at least 12 months
- 3,037 people "graduated" from Housing First programs (meaning they have achieved housing stability)
- Self-reported changes in utilization of public systems of Health and Justice among Housing First clients:
  - Interactions with EMS: reduced 61%
  - Emergency Room visits: reduced by 54%
  - Days in hospital: reduced by 67%
  - Interaction with police: reduced by 59%
  - Days in jail: reduced by 85%
  - Court appearances: reduced by 52%

Significant investment has been made by the Government of Alberta, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and service agencies to move from minimal reporting to an outcomes-based, provincially standardized data collection system (2013, p. 21). These results demonstrate the substantial work undertaken to develop and use data to measure performance.

## 2 Building Research Capacity

One of the six key recommendations from the report on the *State of Homelessness in Canada 2013* identifies the need for comprehensive data collection, performance monitoring, analysis and research, and states:

*"Research can have an impact on the solutions to homelessness by providing those working to end homelessness with a deeper understanding of the problem, strong evidence for solutions and good ideas from other countries that can be replicated and adapted locally. Research has also helped us understand how and why people become homeless. (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 41)*

Alberta has researchers in related disciplines that are tackling important research questions. However, considering the size and scope of the need for knowledge to inform policy and practice on the complex issues related to housing and homelessness, current capacity is limited. It is time to build on the substantial foundation laid to date, and use our current research capacity strategically and effectively going forward.

### 2.1 The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research

The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (The Centre) was established in 2003 as a partnership between Alberta's universities, the community and

the Government of Alberta. It develops and integrates evidence to inform, identify and promote effective public policy and service delivery to improve the well-being of children, families and communities in Alberta, Canada and internationally. The Centre focuses on:

- Engaging in research, evaluation, communication and knowledge mobilization
- Conducting, funding and building capacity in applied research
- Linking, analyzing and managing data
- Managing resources and strategic relationships

While The Centre's primary relationship is with the Human Services Ministry of the Alberta Government, research and knowledge mobilization efforts involve working with all of Alberta's children and family-serving ministries, including, Health, Education, Advanced Education, Justice and Solicitor General, and Aboriginal Relations.

As a funder of policy driven research, The Centre has developed processes and mechanisms to build research capacity. Implementation of this research agenda will:

- Engage junior researchers and graduate students
- Support community-based research
- Increase research funding through strategic partnerships
- Promote evidence generated through research and program evaluations

## 2.2 A Provincial Research Strategy Partnership

To build research capacity in the areas of housing and homelessness, Alberta Human Services facilitated a partnership between the IAC and The Centre to develop a provincial housing and homelessness research strategy. This research strategy will serve to generate and mobilize evidence to inform IAC priorities, decisions and recommendations relevant to *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*. It includes both a research agenda and an implementation framework.

## 2.3 The Need for this Research Strategy

This strategy is designed to support an effective provincial response by:

- **Fostering partnerships:** Partnerships are needed among policy-makers, practitioners and researchers across sectors and jurisdictions, particularly in Aboriginal communities, in order to develop an effective provincial response in communities across Alberta.
- **Serving local and regional needs and priorities:** Alberta's communities are diverse and have unique issues and needs, which requires research and evaluation to serve local and regional needs and priorities.
- **Understanding the root causes of homelessness in Alberta:** A person's well-being is the result of the interplay among complex economic, social and environmental factors. These factors, understood as *social determinants of health*,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Public Health Agency of Canada describes the *Social Determinants of Health* as factors that influence the health of populations. They include income and social status; social support networks; education; employment/working conditions; social environments; physical environments; personal health practices and coping skills; healthy child development; gender; and culture (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2014).

must be better understood if we are to end homelessness and improve well-being at the individual and population levels.

- **Effectively translating knowledge into action:** Mobilizing knowledge and translating it into effective policies, practices, and services requires intentional effort to uptake and apply new knowledge.
- **Adopting innovative funding and investment strategies:** Ensuring stable, affordable housing is accessible in communities large and small, urban and rural, will require the identification and development of innovative responses.

This research strategy will also support linkages and strengthen connections with other related Alberta frameworks, strategies and policy priorities and initiatives, in order to effectively leverage new knowledge and link it with related priorities and partners. Such linkages include, but are not limited to:

- Alberta's Social Policy Framework
- Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Early Childhood Development
- Children's Charter
- Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy
- Safe Communities Initiative
- A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta
- Common Service Access
- Alberta's Information Sharing Strategy
- Results-Based Budgeting Process

## 2.4 Literature Review and Stakeholder Engagement

The process to support the development of this research strategy involved building on existing knowledge, generating new knowledge, and engaging in consultations with communities, academics, and agency and government stakeholders. Further consultation and data collection was built on the foundation of research and consultations undertaken by the Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium (AHRC) under the direction of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness from 2009-2012 (Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium, 2011).

In addition, and with initial guidance provided by the IAC, 36 key informants were interviewed and a review of both academic and grey literature was conducted. Regional Alberta research agendas developed with community input were also integrated. A preliminary framework for the research strategy was developed and then shared with two groups of housing and homelessness service providers in Edmonton and Calgary in March 2014, and 14 leading national and international experts on homelessness. (See Appendix A for a list of research activities conducted to develop this research strategy.)

## 2.5 A Canadian Definition of Homelessness

In 2012, the Canadian Homeless Research Network established a Canadian Definition of Homelessness. This definition provides clarity by offering a common language for understanding the issue of homelessness, a means of identifying strategies and

interventions, and measuring outcomes and progress (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 12). This definition states:

*“Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual / household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing”* (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012, p. 1).

## **2.6 Causes of Homelessness**

In their report on *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013*, the authors state that, *“Homelessness is usually the result of the cumulative impact of a number of factors, rather than a single cause,”* (p. 13) and explain the interconnection of these factors as follows:

*“The causes of homelessness reflect an intricate interplay between structural factors (poverty, lack of affordable housing), systems failures (people being discharged from mental health facilities, corrections or child protection services into homelessness) and individual circumstances (family conflict and violence, mental health and addictions). Homelessness is usually the result of the cumulative impact of these factors”* (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 4).

## **3 Alberta’s Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy**

### **3.1 Vision**

*Putting research and evaluation in the service of policy and practice to prevent and end homelessness in Alberta.*

### **3.2 Principles**

- The unique interplay of social, economic, and environmental factors that lead to homelessness are diverse and must be understood at all levels, including the community level.
- Diverse research paradigms are supported, which include Aboriginal ways of knowing and indigenous research methods.
- Collaboration is facilitated among local, provincial, national and international research communities.
- Evaluation of current policies and practices is balanced with research to identify and advance leading policies and practices.
- Knowledge is accessible and rapidly mobilized to support timely translation into leading policies and practices.

### 3.3 Types of Research

Discussions with stakeholders revealed three types of research they would like to see conducted. Data from any of these levels can be rolled up to produce indicators for evaluation and/or monitoring of the 10-Year Plan.

- **Level One - Individual:** This type of research involves the collection of data on individual and groups of homeless people, including information on pathways into homelessness, circumstances, criteria for service eligibility, response to interventions, and the social determinants of health and homelessness.
- **Level Two - Program:** This type of research focuses on programs and providers, and contributes to toolkits, capacity building, and the consistent use of program-level data collection tools in order to maximize the value and use of data relevant to frontline services.
- **Level Three - System:** This level of research addresses policy options and system responses, including childcare, poverty, income supports, rent subsidy, etc.

### 3.4 Cross-cutting Themes: Populations with Unique Needs

In this research strategy, cross-cutting themes refer to specific populations whose issues are relevant to all types of research and should be considered a focus under each identified research priority. These groups align with the specialized populations currently recognized by the IAC: youth; seniors; women and families fleeing violence; immigrants, in-migrants and refugee newcomers; persons with disabilities and Aboriginal people.

#### 3.4.1 Vulnerable Populations

The homeless population in Canada is diverse in terms of age, gender, and ethno-racial background, with some groups having unique needs or special circumstances in relation to homelessness or to their risk of homelessness. These include youth, women, persons with disabilities, seniors, families, immigrants and refugees, sexual minorities and those experiencing domestic violence. Four groups emerged from the consultation with Alberta stakeholders requiring specific attention because of their vulnerability to poverty and the potential for preventive strategies that involve other government systems:

- **Youth (defined here as between the ages of 13 and 24):** There is currently a lack of research about best practices for interventions for youth. Their pathways into homelessness, its impacts, and the types of interventions used are often distinct from adults because of their stage of development. New models are being piloted in Alberta and an opportunity exists for evaluation.<sup>2</sup>
- **Women and families:** When women become homeless, they are at increased risk of violence and assault, sexual exploitation and abuse (Gaetz, O'Grady, and Buccieri, 2010; Paradis and Mosher, 2012; Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, and Gulliver, 2013). The national *Homes for Women* campaign highlights that the existing gender gap in research should be addressed to ensure initiatives reduce the homelessness of women and girls (YWCA Canada, 2013). Family homelessness is largely underpinned

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<sup>2</sup> Examples include pilots in Calgary and Edmonton, which includes elements of the Foyer model evaluated by Gaetz and Scott (2012) in Australia, the USA and the UK.

by structural factors, including inadequate income, lack of affordable housing, and family violence (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013). The sharpest increase in shelter use has been amongst families (in most cases headed by women) and therefore children (Segaert, 2012). The increasing incidence of family homelessness is a concern to many in Alberta.

- **Persons with disabilities:** This group is especially vulnerable to poverty and homelessness. In Alberta and nationally, there is a large gap in research with respect to this population and their vulnerabilities to homelessness. According to the Segaert study (2012), single adult males between the ages of 25 and 55 account for almost half of the homeless population in Canada (47.5%), and the characteristics of this group include greater incidences of mental illness, addictions and disability, including invisible disabilities such as brain injury and FASD (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 25).
- **Immigrants, refugees and migrants:** Alberta's economy and employment opportunities have produced patterns of inter-provincial and international migration that are unique in Canada. Homeless-serving agencies have identified gaps in Alberta's service system for immigrants, refugees, refugee claimants, and temporary foreign workers, and a corresponding gap in related research and information.

### 3.4.2 Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) are over-represented in the homeless population in Canada and in Alberta. While the research in this area is scarce, there is also recognition that urban Aboriginal homelessness is impacted by housing on-reserve and in other Aboriginal communities, as well as migration between different communities. In order to develop effective prevention and intervention services there also needs to be recognition and consideration of the Aboriginal experience of colonization. This experience has resulted in intergenerational trauma, extreme poverty, lack of opportunity, ongoing discrimination, racism and systemic oppression that continue to affect Aboriginal People's access to services, programs and supports (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 26).

Alberta's stakeholders agree that any research undertaken in the area of Aboriginal homelessness should be developed, designed, implemented and disseminated in partnership with Aboriginal communities. Nationally, there are models for research that emphasize Aboriginal ownership, control, access and possession of data and information, and considerations for ethical research practices (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2012; At Home/Chez Soi Winnipeg Site). These principles need to be built into research conducted into Aboriginal homelessness. Several examples of such research in Alberta and Canada demonstrate how these principles are implemented to create meaningful research partnerships with the Aboriginal community.<sup>3</sup> There are also innovative services in Lethbridge, Red Deer, Calgary and Edmonton that have been

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<sup>3</sup> Examples include: Blue Quills First Nations College, St Paul, Alberta - Ethics Policy (Blue Quills First Nations, 2009); (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2013).

created in partnership with Aboriginal communities to ensure these homeless-serving supports and services are culturally appropriate and accessible.<sup>4</sup>

## 4 Research Priorities

Three priority themes, with specific areas of emphasis, emerged from the literature review and from consultations with stakeholders. As highlighted earlier in this document, the unique needs or special circumstances of vulnerable populations (youth; women and families; persons with disabilities, immigrants, in-migrants, and refugee newcomers; and seniors as identified by both stakeholders and the IAC) and Aboriginal Peoples should be carefully considered as priorities in relation to each of these research priorities (see cross-cutting themes, Section 3.4 above). It is important to note that housing and homelessness are part of a complex system supporting health and well-being; therefore the priority themes and areas of emphasis often interlink and overlap:

1. **Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention**
  - A. Structural Factors
  - B. Gaps in Systems of Care and Support
  - C. Migration and Employment
  - D. Identification of Those At-Risk
2. **Effectiveness of Interventions**
3. **Continuum of Housing and Homelessness Supports and Services**
  - A. Rural Homelessness
  - B. Coordinated Planning for Long-Term Housing and Supports
  - C. Community Support, Engagement and Mobilization for Homelessness

See Appendix B for a table that summarizes information under each research priority and specific area of emphasis, including linkages to five priority areas identified in *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*. See also the **annotated bibliography** that list research projects and reports published from 2010 to 2014 relating to each research priority and specific area of emphasis (Roberts, Felix-Mah, & Adair, 2014).

### 4.1 Priority 1: Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention

The *State of Homelessness in Canada 2013* emphasized that: *"The line between being homeless and not being homeless is quite fluid. In general, the pathways into and out of homelessness are neither linear nor uniform"* (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter and Gulliver, 2013, p.13). Stakeholders identified the need for research on:

- Pathways into homelessness.
- Structural factors that can prevent or reduce the amount of time spent homeless.
- Effectiveness of preventive interventions.

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<sup>4</sup> See Homeward Trust Edmonton ([homewardtrust.ca](http://homewardtrust.ca)); Lethbridge Social Housing in Action ([lethbridge.ca](http://lethbridge.ca)); Calgary Homeless Foundation ([calgaryhomeless.com](http://calgaryhomeless.com)) and City of Red Deer and Red Deer and District Community Foundation ([www.reddeer.ca](http://www.reddeer.ca); [www.reddeer.ca/socialplanning](http://www.reddeer.ca/socialplanning))

#### **4.1.1 1A: Structural Factors**

Structural factors responsible for homelessness are identified as *"economic and societal issues that affect opportunities and social environments for individuals"* (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter and Gulliver, 2013, p.13). Stakeholders want to better understand:

- How to influence structural factors in order to change resulting adverse outcomes.
- Levels of support (adequacy) needed to address structural factors, such as adequate income supports, adequate benefits for those with disabilities, adequate employment income, adequate labour market participation supports, adequate health care coverage, and an adequate supply of affordable housing.

Structural factors are also the focus of other initiatives in Alberta, such as the Social Policy Framework, Children's Charter, Poverty Reduction Strategy, and Addiction and Mental Health Strategy. Research undertaken or mobilized under this priority should link to these other initiatives.

#### **4.1.2 1B. Gaps in Systems of Care and Support**

Gaps in systems of care and support can cause homelessness when vulnerable people turn to homeless supports when other mainstream services fail them (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter and Gulliver, 2013, p.13). Stakeholders indicated an interest in research on how to address these gaps, including:

- Key transitions from youth to adult supports and services when individuals turn 18
- Difficult transitions within and from child welfare
- Inadequate discharge planning from hospital, mental health facilities, addiction facilities, and corrections
- Barriers to the uptake of promising practices in discharge processes
- Lack of continuity of support for those experiencing domestic violence, mental illness, or addictions
- Transitions between different immigration statuses.

#### **4.1.3 1C. Migration and Employment**

Alberta's unique economy and labour market has meant a surge in migration from other provinces and from other countries. In 2012, only two provinces and one territory experienced population growth due to inter-provincial migration, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Yukon (Alberta Finance, 2012). This has locally impacted housing markets, especially in resource-based communities. Stakeholders identified the need for research to understand:

- The interplay of issues related to migration, mobility and employment and its impact on resource-based communities and the availability of affordable housing.
- Influence of the housing risk (on and off-reserve) and the labour market on Aboriginal homelessness and mobility.

#### **4.1.4 1D. Identification of Those At-Risk**

A robust system is needed to identify the needs of individuals at-risk of or experiencing homelessness to ensure their needs are met. Stakeholders suggested that such a system would help to reduce chronic homelessness. Research in this area will also help

to address structural factors, such as income support, rent supplements, etc. Stakeholders indicated an interest in research that will:

- Improve screening and assessment for homeless supports and services.

#### 4.2 Priority 2: Effectiveness of Interventions

A number of recent research studies have been published on best and promising practices, such as Housing First (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2013b). The *At Home/Chez Soi* research demonstration project is a made-in-Canada unique model for how to conduct policy-relevant intervention research in homelessness. Stakeholders in Alberta want research that:

- Investigates how these practices are being applied in Alberta to determine which strategies are found to be effective in different community contexts.
- Provides standardized homelessness counts as one indicator of reduced homelessness at the community level.
- Evaluates the health and societal benefits of interventions for people who were once homeless with outcomes related to their quality of life and community functioning.
- Uses economic analyses to measure economic impact of achieving desired outcomes.
- Expands the longitudinal research begun by *At Home/Chez Soi* to include Alberta initiatives and supports to allow for comparative analysis of results achieved by Alberta's Housing First programs with findings of the *At Home/Chez Soi* study.
- Provides coordinated and systematic assessment of the needs of clients so that services can be appropriately allocated according to need.
- Measures the impact of prevention approaches (for example, an examination of emergency rent supports that prevent or reduce subsequent shelter use).

#### 4.3 Priority 3: Continuum of Housing and Homelessness Supports and Services

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Company (CMHC) housing is considered to be affordable when a household spends less than 30% of its pre-tax income on adequate shelter.<sup>5</sup> The term "affordable housing," however, can refer to any part of the housing spectrum, ranging from non-market temporary housing (such as emergency shelters and transitional housing) to market permanent housing (such as rental housing or home ownership).<sup>6</sup>

A report on affordable housing and homelessness policy in Canada (Snow, 2008) indicated that the inability to pay for housing has replaced substance abuse and mental illness as the most-cited reason for being homeless in Canada, and suggested there is a disconnect between affordable housing and homelessness policies. Structural factors affect the availability of affordable housing include vacancy rates, population growth, and

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce\\_021.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce_021.cfm). April 22, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce\\_021.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce_021.cfm). April 22, 2014.

evidence-based policies that encourage or discourage affordable housing development, such as apartment conversion practices, and secondary suites. See Appendix C for a table describing Alberta's housing and supports spectrum.

#### 4.3.1 3A. Rural Homelessness

Unique local dynamics in rural Alberta communities call for a regionalized approach to ending homelessness that ties together urban and rural responses. A lack of research on rural homelessness is a challenge, though emerging promising practices among Alberta's smaller centres can provide input to develop a regionalized strategy that recognizes local rural dynamics, as well as migration impacts. Developing a knowledge base on rural homelessness in Alberta is key to developing a regionalized policy and a system response that uses a comparative frame to analyze lessons learned from the literature and evaluation of current practices.

The *Rural Alberta Homelessness: Final Report* (Waegemakers Schiff & Turner, 2014) identifies a number of research priorities. As rural homelessness has distinct dynamics from its urban counterpart, and little is known about local dynamics in Alberta, the report recommends Alberta-specific research using a comparative and regionalized approach, including:

- Baseline information on rural homelessness
- Standardized homeless counts
- Needs assessments
- Macro-economic impacts in rural communities related to the oil and gas and recreation/tourism industries on rural homelessness in Alberta and its interrelatedness to migration dynamics.

#### 4.3.2 3B. Coordinated Planning for Long-term Housing and Supports

An adequate supply of affordable housing for rent or purchase is needed for individuals with low incomes, including students, young families, lone parent families, and some seniors. Those with more complex needs due to physical and developmental disabilities, including mental health and addiction issues, brain injury, and FASD, require *supportive housing*, which refers to supports and services integrated into the housing to aid recovery and/or support independent living. Others need access to *supported housing*, where economic, social, health and psychological supports are readily available in the community and arranged off-site of accommodation, to help prevent re-entry into homelessness. Supported housing programs may include rent subsidies, employment and income support programs, social supports or outreach programs, and may be temporary or may be needed across the lifespan.

Stakeholders identified the need for research to understand how to sustain a full range of housing types in a context of constrained resources, such as:

- The effectiveness of alternate funding models for sustaining housing and supports
- Policy and planning mechanisms at both municipal and provincial levels of government that can facilitate the increase and maintenance of housing supply across the housing spectrum
- Analysis of the most cost-effective mix of housing and supports

- Effective collaboration models to support coordinated planning of housing projects, ensuring capital, operational and programming investments are available to meet the spectrum of housing needs.

### **4.3.3 3C. Community Support, Engagement and Mobilization for Homelessness**

There are challenges in engaging the public, and those outside the homeless sector, to be supportive of initiatives that can prevent and reduce homelessness. Stakeholders are interested in research to identify strategies that are successful at gaining community support for affordable housing and homeless-serving housing projects and related supports and services. Identified areas of research include:

- Impact of affordable, supportive, or supported housing on property values and crime
- Addressing "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes with respect to social housing projects
- Effective consultation approaches for housing development
- Effective social marketing for housing and homelessness issues
- Benefits of inclusive and integrated communities on desired municipal outcomes.

## **5 Implementation Framework**

This implementation framework represents a shared vision of how to generate and mobilize the research. The four pillars of this framework identify next steps for putting research and evaluation in the service of policy and practice to prevent and end homelessness in Alberta.

### **5.1 Pillar #1: Knowledge Mobilization**

Knowledge Mobilization (KM) describes the complex, non-linear social and political processes that mediate the movement of inputs (evidence) into outcomes (decisions or practices) (Levin, 2008). Knowledge mobilization is not an organic process, but requires intentional, sustained effort to create pathways and learning environments through which knowledge is mediated. This pillar focuses on creating these pathways and learning environments.

Stakeholders identified the desire for three types of research (individual, program and system levels, see Section 3.3 for details). This aligns with the literature on learning, and corresponds to multiple-loop learning (single-, double- and triple-loop learning) that support successful adaptation based on developing shared understanding and collective intelligence at the individual, program and system levels (Senge, 2012; de Loë, Armitage, Plummer, Davidson., and Moraru, 2009). Continuous evaluation, measurement and research add critical data to experience and reflection, and are key to supporting multiple-loop learning. Qualitative experience is integrated with quantitative data, supporting a culture of learning, reflection and integration (Folke, Hahn, Olsson, & Norberg, 2005).

The partnership between the Centre and the IAC will support knowledge mobilization between sectors, including the research, government, Aboriginal, and community sectors, including community-based organizations (CBOs). Each sector both generates

and mediates knowledge in order to affect policy and practice. Processes and pathways will be developed to share and discuss research findings, build relationships and foster collaboration through networks, roundtables, webcasts, social media platforms, forums, policy-researcher sessions, and conferences.

This pillar will build on and contribute to strengthening existing research networks in Canada and Alberta. Nationally, networks include: the Canadian Homelessness Research Network (CHRN), which manages the Homeless Hub website ([homelesshub.ca](http://homelesshub.ca)); the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness; Raising the Roof/Chez Soi; the National Housing Research Committee; and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Alberta has several research networks centred locally in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and Lethbridge, as well as related subject matter and discipline-specific research networks focused on, for example, inner-city health, Aboriginal Peoples and poverty. Importantly, contributions of those with lived experience of homelessness will be a focus for inclusion in both research generation and mediation.

### 5.1.1 Next Steps

Based on the research conducted with stakeholders, the following steps are recommended to build capacity and support knowledge mobilization activities:

- Establish a centralized hub for Alberta homelessness research in association with the Homeless Hub website ([homelesshub.ca](http://homelesshub.ca)), ensuring strong linkages between national, international and local researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.
- Support the development of research area-specific Communities of Practice (CoPs) to foster and strengthen relationships and communications between provincial researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. These CoPs can inform and support knowledge mobilization activities within their fields and serve as conduits for consultation, feedback and expertise sharing for those involved in homelessness research.
- Create opportunities to engage junior researchers and graduate students in homelessness research that is connected to collaborative multi-site research projects.
- Build capacity of community-based research conducted in smaller communities by facilitating partnerships with post-secondary institutions, collaborations with other researchers, and by supporting quality and consistency of data collection.
- Create opportunities for knowledge exchange through forums and conferences.

## 5.2 Pillar #2: Data Development and Use Strategy

There is increased recognition of the importance of data to inform approaches to address homelessness. The *State of Homelessness in Canada 2013*, recommended “*more comprehensive data collection, performance monitoring, analysis and research,*” and more support for “*effective and reliable program evaluations,*” as well as a set of specific steps toward implementation of homelessness information management systems (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, pp. 41-42).

These recommendations are founded on the recognition that intelligent collection of thoughtfully designed datasets can be used for multiple purposes. They can not only provide descriptions of the population and pathways in and out of homelessness, but

can also be used to document progress after intervention at the individual level, evaluate and improve processes at the program level, and determine whether policy and programs are producing desired outcomes at the system level.

Alberta is recognized as a leader in the use of data to prevent, reduce and end homelessness. Alberta was among the first to recognize the importance of information for ending homelessness. This recognition is enshrined in *A Plan for Alberta*. It is not only stated as a principle (p. 15), but **Better Information** is the first of five priority areas for action, and is operationalized through four strategies: developing data standards, establishing a provincial information management system, establishing a research arm, and measuring outcomes (Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, 2008, pp. 18-21). The Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium (AHRC) echoed those strategies in its 2011-2014 research agenda (Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium, 2011).

Good progress has been made toward achieving better information, including: a scan of research produced in Alberta from 1990-2014 (Kovacs Burns and Richter, 2011; Roberts, Felix-Mah, and Adair, 2014); many funded community-based research projects; the development of a standard minimum dataset for funded programs, which is being expanded to shelter programs and youth programs; work on cross-agency data collection systems and policies; improvements in point-in-time (PIT) count methods (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2012); and conceptualization of a systems approach to services (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014). As a result of these and other efforts, it was possible to report systematically measured reductions in homelessness (Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, 2013), described above in Section 1.2 of this report. Alberta has been commended for its use of data in the service of ending homelessness, and its *“planned, evidence-based response rooted in research.”* (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p. 34).

### 5.2.1 Next Steps

There is now more potential than ever in Alberta to advance this work. The IAC has been given the mandate to support *“research and data collection to ensure advice is evidence-based and enhances outcomes-based reporting to demonstrate accountability to the Minister, the public and communities”* (Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2012, p. 3). The Centre, in partnerships with Government of Alberta Ministries, has done ground-breaking work on linking administrative data across multiple datasets held by child and family-serving Ministries, developing technical expertise and processes that can help decision-makers tap information across datasets that has not previously been possible. Based on the research conducted with stakeholders, the following steps are recommended to build capacity and support the development of a Data Development and Use Strategy:

- Develop a provincial homelessness data resource centre to house and support analytic needs for housing and homelessness research priorities.
- Support the Quality Improvement Project for homeless research involving the Ministries of Health, Justice and Human Services linking administrative data for the measurement of system outcomes of funded Housing First programs (in the planning stage).
- Prioritize policy questions that can be answered by data, assess the sources and types of data needed to inform those questions, and operationalize the approach to

analysis and reporting. This initiative is predicated on the belief that research questions should drive the type and format of data to be analyzed or collected and that maximizing the analytic potential of existing data (as well as determining where new data are needed) requires systematic assessment of existing data sets for their separate and combined utility for answering important practice and policy questions.

- Refine the standard dataset to enhance its analytic value and utility so that it is more able to serve broader and local purposes.
- Continue the development of a framework for system-level performance measurement, which includes routine processes (such as Housing First fidelity) and outcome measurement using indicators/measures that are now available internationally, nationally and locally.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3 Pillar #3: Primary Research

Primary research involves the collection of data directly from new sources. Secondary research relies on data collected by others, such as through service delivery. Both are important in this research strategy. Focus will be placed on mobilizing knowledge where evidence already exists (e.g. promising or best practices), and where there are wide gaps in knowledge, or relevance to the Alberta context is uncertain, research will be undertaken to address these gaps. As one approach to generating evidence to inform innovative interventions, this research strategy encourages the development and implementation of multi-site demonstration research projects.

#### 5.3.1 Multi-site Demonstration Research Projects

Primary data collected over time for a defined priority population and intervention, across agencies and linked with administrative data, has enormous power to answer a range of research questions. Research demonstration projects aimed at addressing a suite of related policy questions can generate information that is more difficult to collect routinely because of privacy regulations and insufficient capacity on the ground. These types of research projects must engage a range of key stakeholders in design and implementation, including researchers, policy makers, practitioners and people with lived experience. Research questions are identified collaboratively, focusing on measurable outcomes and practical change. Demonstration projects integrate research activity across the traditional stovepipes of primary academic research, service-level evaluation and quality improvement, local-level research, system-level policy analysis, economic analysis and outcomes. Data collection processes are systematized and aligned with privacy legislation to enable ongoing performance measurement while protecting individual privacy.

Multi-site demonstration research projects can create common frameworks for measures at the client and program levels, develop research partnerships among different centres in Alberta, and can be a model for how administrative data can be modified and used to inform local program development. Research design and implementation of these types of projects should follow the guidelines in *What Works and For Whom (Part 2): A Framework for Designing and Implementing Promising Practices Research* (Canadian Homelessness

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<sup>7</sup> Indicators/measures are available from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (Department of Health and Human Services, 2003), the Canadian Homelessness Partnering Strategy (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014) and the National At Home/Chez Soi Final Report (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014).

Research Network, 2013b) to conceptualize the scope and breadth of the demonstration project. This framework ensures the research identifies practices that have the explicit goal of ending homelessness and addresses how the intervention integrates with other services or systems addressing homelessness issues. Local research capacity is developed and collaboration among researchers, decision makers and practitioners is enhanced.

In Canada, the *At Home/Chez Soi* research demonstration project has shown how powerful demonstration project research can be in terms of its ability to test the effectiveness of new service innovations (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014). In just five years, the knowledge base on Housing First for adults in Canada (including adaptations for Aboriginal Peoples, ethno-cultural minorities, and rural settings) has been expanded exponentially, such that Canada is now considered a world leader in knowledge about Housing First. Alberta is well-positioned to launch more strategic, comprehensive research which, like *At Home/Chez Soi*, is multi-disciplinary, province-wide in scope, and multi-purpose.<sup>8</sup>

### 5.3.2 Next Steps

Based on the research conducted with stakeholders, the following steps are recommended to build capacity and support the development of primary research of housing and homelessness in Alberta:

- Identify priority research projects for implementation based on the identified priorities and specific areas of emphasis of this research strategy.
- Building on processes already developed in Alberta, develop research guidelines with Aboriginal communities and determine research projects in partnership with Aboriginal communities.
- Conduct a feasibility study for a multi-site research demonstration project that includes collaborative proposal development, selects the frame and focus for the project, and investigates opportunities for research and funding partnerships.
- Build capacity of community-based research to better understand community and regional differences and support multi-site demonstration projects.

## 5.4 Pillar #4: Evaluation and Monitoring

Stakeholders expressed interest in regular measurement and reporting of progress towards achieving outcomes of *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*. Government ministries have accountability processes in place for this purpose.

Human Services implemented an Evaluation Framework in 2010 to assess whether the province is on track to reaching the goals set out in Alberta's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The Evaluation Framework seeks to determine:

- Progress towards ending homelessness
- The effectiveness of Plan implementation and service delivery
- The factors which influence effective Plan implementation and service delivery

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<sup>8</sup> *Families First Edmonton* is an example of an Alberta demonstration project where a longitudinal research program involves stakeholders from many sectors and jurisdictions (Families First Edmonton, 2014).

- Results of government investment

Evaluative data can contribute, along with other sources of information and expertise of the IAC, to identifying gaps in implementation and priority actions. Additionally, stakeholders believe this information will contribute to the effective implementation of regional strategic plans and quality improvements. These monitoring processes can be used as a foundation to enhance how we measure the impact of strategic investments at the program and population level.

#### 5.4.1 Next Steps

Based on the research conducted with stakeholders, the following steps are recommended to build capacity and support the development of regular and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of Housing First programs and clients:

- Build upon the current Alberta Human Services Evaluation Framework to expand the scope of system and program level performance measures tracking the *Plan for Alberta's* progress towards ending homelessness in Alberta by 2019.

## Appendix A: Research Conducted to Develop this Strategy

### ***New research generated:***

- Dr. Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff and Dr. Alina Turner. (March 2014). *Rural Alberta Homelessness: Final Report*.
- Building on the Environmental Scan conducted by Kovacs Burns and Richter (2011), a literature review was conducted with a focus on research conducted between 2010 and 2014: Erica Roberts, Roxanne Felix Mah, Carol Adair. (2014). *Annotated Bibliography: Studies Completed between 2010- 2014 by Albertan Researchers in Identified Research Priority Areas*. Prepared for the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research.

### ***Stakeholder consultations***

- **Key informant interviews** with 36 individuals from service provider agencies, community-based organizations, municipalities, provincial government and academic institutions within multiple sectors, including health, justice, housing and social policy. We also interviewed members of the Interagency Council on Homelessness and individuals from across the province.
- **One focus group discussion** with individuals representing the Alberta's seven cities (Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Edmonton and Calgary) was also used as an opportunity to gather input.
- **A preliminary framework for the research strategy** was presented to two groups of housing and homelessness service providers in Edmonton and Calgary in March 2014 for validation and refinement.
- **Input from 14 leading national and international experts** on homelessness was also solicited to identify any gaps in the research framework, as it emerged during the research activities.

### ***Document review of Albertan reports specifically related to research included:***

Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium (2011). *Alberta Homelessness Research Agenda (2011-14)*.

Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium. (2013). *Southern Alberta Housing and Homeless Research Forum in Lethbridge, Alberta*. Lethbridge, Alberta.

Bird, C., Goulet, S., Oelke, N., Thurston, W., Turner, D. and Woodland, A. (2010). *Aboriginal homelessness research project: Report on the Aboriginal homelessness community gathering, March 19, 2010*. Calgary, Alberta: Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary.

Calgary Homeless Foundation. (2011). *Making Research Matter: A Progress Report on Calgary's Research Agenda to End Homelessness*. Calgary, Alberta.

Choy, J.Y. (2011). *Red Deer's Homelessness Research Agenda*. Red Deer, Alberta.

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- Kovacs-Burns, K. and Richter, S. (2010). *Homelessness-Related Research Capacities in Alberta: A Comprehensive Environmental Scan 1990-2010 Final Report*. Calgary, Alberta.
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- Spragins, W. (2012). *Roundtable Discussion Session at the Calgary Homeless Foundation 2012 Research Symposium*. Prepared for the Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium. Calgary, Alberta.

**Document review of Albertan reports related to content of identified research priorities included:**

- Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness (2008). *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years*. Alberta: Government of Alberta.
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- Calgary Homeless Foundation. (2014). *System Planning Framework*. Calgary, Alberta.
- Hanson, T., Vandenberghe, C., and McLean, S. (2014). *Community inclusion framework for vulnerable populations and strategies for combating Not In My Back Yard Attitudes Toward Social Housing: An annotated bibliography*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research.
- Waegemakers-Schiff, J. and Turner, A. and (2014). *Rural Alberta Homelessness: Final Report*. Calgary, Alberta.

**Document review of Canadian reports related to content of identified research priorities included:**

- Aubry, T., Tsemberis, S., Adair, C.E., Veldhuizen, S., Streiner, D.L., Latimer, E., ... and Goering, P. (*accepted Psychiatric Services*). Comparing the Effectiveness of Housing First and Treatment As Usual for People with Severe Mental Illness and a History of Chronic Homelessness in Five Canadian Cities: A National Randomized Controlled Trial.
- Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation (2013). *Canadian Housing Observer*. Canada

- Canadian Homelessness Research Network. (2013a). *What Works and For Whom (Part 1): A Hierarchy of Evidence for Promising Practices Research*. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Canadian Homelessness Research Network. (2013b). *What Works and for Whom (Part 2): A Framework for Designing and Implementing Promising Practices Research*. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C.E., Kopp, B., Latimer, E. ... and Aubry, T. (2014). National At Home/Chez Soi Final Report. Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada.
- Echenberg, H. and Jensen, H. (2008). *Defining and Enumerating Homelessness in Canada. Publication No. PRB 08-30E*. Ottawa: Library of Parliament.
- Gaetz, S. (2012). *The Real Cost of Homelessness: Can we save money by doing the right thing?* Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., Richter, T. and Gulliver, T. (2013). *The State of Homelessness in Canada*. Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Gaetz, S., Scott F. (2012). *Live, Learn, Grow: Supporting Transitions to Adulthood for Homeless Youth - A Framework for the Foyer in Canada*. Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
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- Mosher, J. (2013). *Housing First, women Second? Gendered housing First - A Brief from the Homes for Women Campaign*. Homes for Women, [www.homesforwomen.ca](http://www.homesforwomen.ca)

- Noble, A. (2014). *Child and Family Homelessness: Building a comprehensive framework to address child and family homelessness in Canada: Phase I, an environmental scan*. Toronto: Raising the Roof.
- Noble, A. (2012). *It's everybody's business: engaging the private sector in solutions to youth homelessness*. Toronto: Raising the Roof.
- Patrick, C. (2014). *Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review*. Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.
- Pomeroy, S. (2013). *Approach to End Family Homelessness in Waterloo Region Report Project: A Literature Review*. Waterloo, On: Regional Municipality of Waterloo.
- Segaert, A. (2012). *The National Shelter Study 2005-2009: Emergency Shelter Use in Canada*. Ottawa: Homeless Partnering Strategy, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.
- Snow, D. (2008). *A Roof Over Our Heads 2008: Affordable Housing and Homelessness Policy in Canada*. Canada West Foundation.
- Wellesley Institute (2010). *Precarious Housing in Canada*. Toronto, Canada.
- YWCA Canada, (2013). *Housing First, Women Second? Gendered Housing First – A brief from the Homes for Women Campaign*. Toronto, Canada.

**Document review of International reports related to content of identified research priorities included:**

- Culhane, D.P., Kane, V. and Johnston, M. (Eds.) (2013). Homelessness research: shaping policy and practice, now and into the future (editorial). *American Journal of Public Health, Supplement 2* (103), s181-183.
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## Appendix B: Summary Table of Research Priorities and Next Steps

Types of research to be conducted across all priorities and areas of emphasis:  
*Level One - Individual; Level Two - Program; Level 3 - System*

Themes that cross all priorities and areas of emphasis:  
*Vulnerable Populations and Aboriginal Peoples*

<b>A PLAN FOR ALBERTA: PLAN PRIORITY AREAS</b>	<b>RESEARCH STRATEGY PRIORITIES</b>	<b>SPECIFIC AREAS OF EMPHASIS</b>	<b>RATIONALE</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: SELECTED NEXT STEPS</b>
<b>Effective Policies</b>	1. Homelessness Prevention and Early Intervention	A. Structural Factors	Research will Identify factors that need to be addressed through policy.	Requires longitudinal research involving multiple sectors, which will impact other areas of Alberta social policy.	Establish a centralized hub for Alberta homelessness research.
<b>Coordinated Systems</b>		B. Gaps in Systems of Care and Support	Transitions a key time of vulnerability and offer opportunities for prevention.	Research requires cross-ministerial coordination. Findings have implications for many systems. There is an emerging body of knowledge and recommendations from two pilot projects in Alberta supported by a Cross-Ministry Committee.	Create opportunities for knowledge exchange.  Link administrative data for the measurement of system outcomes.  Develop an evaluation framework with system- and program-level performance measurement.
<b>More Housing Options</b>		C. Migration and Employment	Alberta's unique economic and labour market creates pressures on the housing sector.	There is a lack of research on migrants. A coordinated data collection system is needed understand employment demand, migration patterns, and its impact on housing availability.	Conduct a feasibility study for a multi-site demonstration project.
<b>Better Information</b> <b>Aggressive Assistance</b>		D. Identification of Those At-Risk	Screening and assessment tools needed ensure interventions are reaching appropriate populations and are applied effectively.	Testing of tools to be adapted for appropriate use in the community context. Two tools are currently being tested in Alberta communities.	Develop research/evaluation guidelines and determine research/evaluation projects to be conducted in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

**Types of research to be conducted across all priorities and areas of emphasis:  
Level One - Individual; Level Two - Program; Level 3 - System**

**Themes that cross all priorities and areas of emphasis:  
Vulnerable Populations and Aboriginal Peoples**

<b>A PLAN FOR ALBERTA: PLAN PRIORITY AREAS</b>	<b>RESEARCH STRATEGY PRIORITIES</b>	<b>SPECIFIC AREAS OF EMPHASIS</b>	<b>RATIONALE</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: SELECTED NEXT STEPS</b>
<p><b>Effective assistance</b></p> <p><b>Better Information</b></p> <p><b>Coordinated systems</b></p> <p><b>Effective policies</b></p>	<p>2. Effectiveness of Interventions</p>		<p>Interventions need to be evidence-based, effective and efficient.</p>	<p>Alberta has existing research projects and data sets that can facilitate further intervention research. There are national and international recommendations for outcomes of interest for policy and community response interventions. Alberta is piloting two youth homelessness projects (with elements of the Foyer model).</p>	<p>Develop research area-specific Communities of Practice to support/inform knowledge mobilization.</p> <p>Build capacity to conduct community-based research.</p> <p>Develop and house a provincial homelessness data resource centre.</p> <p>Develop an evaluation framework with system- and program-level performance measurement.</p> <p>Conduct a feasibility study for a multi-site research demonstration project.</p> <p>Determine evaluation projects in partnership with Aboriginal communities.</p>

**Types of research to be conducted across all priorities and areas of emphasis:  
Level One - Individual; Level Two - Program; Level 3 - System**

**Themes that cross all priorities and areas of emphasis:  
Vulnerable Populations and Aboriginal Peoples**

<b>A PLAN FOR ALBERTA: PLAN PRIORITY AREAS</b>	<b>RESEARCH STRATEGY PRIORITIES</b>	<b>SPECIFIC AREAS OF EMPHASIS</b>	<b>RATIONALE</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: SELECTED NEXT STEPS</b>
<b>More housing options</b>  <b>Better Information</b>  <b>Effective policy</b>  <b>Coordinated systems</b>  <b>More housing options</b>  <b>Aggressive assistance</b>	3. Continuum of Housing and Homelessness Supports and Services	A. Rural Homelessness	Unique local dynamics in rural Alberta communities call for a regionalized approach to ending homelessness that ties together urban and rural responses.	Emerging promising practices among Alberta's smaller centres can provide input to develop a regionalized strategy that recognizes local rural dynamics, as well as migration impacts.	Determine research projects in partnership with Aboriginal communities.  Develop research area-specific Communities of Practice to support/inform mobilization.
		B. Coordinated Planning for Long-Term Housing and Supports	Without sustained housing and supports, homelessness cannot be ended. A coordinated planning approach will ensure limited resources are used effectively and efficiently.	There is a lack of research on the effectiveness of coordinated approaches and alternative funding models in the housing sector, particularly for people with disabilities. There is some research on policy mechanisms. There are emerging models of homelessness services for Aboriginal peoples in Alberta and for research partnerships.	Build capacity to conduct community-based research.  Develop an evaluation framework with system- and program-level performance measurement.
		C. Community Support, Engagement and Mobilization for Homelessness	Public support is required for continued investments and policy mechanisms that prevent and end homelessness.	There is some research in this area, but effectiveness of interventions depends on community context.	Conduct a feasibility study for a multi-site research demonstration project.
<b>Better information</b>  <b>Effective policies</b>					

## Appendix C: Housing and Supports Spectrum

Prepared by the Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness (IAC)

		Homeless			Housed				
Housing Circumstance	Unsheltered	Emergency Sheltered	Provisionally Accommodated	At-Risk of Homelessness	Supportive Housing	Supported Housing	Social Housing	Housing Subsidization	
Description	Living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation	Shelters for people who are homeless, and Women's Shelters	Accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure; includes transitional facilities and people accessing private, temporary accommodation	Sheltered individuals whose current economic and/or housing situation is dangerously precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards	Combines accommodation with on-site supports and care. May be congregate or independent living units	Accommodations with supports arranged off-site	Units are owned and operated by government or non-profits	Accommodations with subsidies	<b>Pure Market Housing</b> <i>Out of Scope</i>
Access to Supports	Outreach services that connect with people where they are	On-site essential services; facilitated access to supports	Where accommodations are provided by government/agencies, on-site access to supports may be available	Typically required to be initiated by the individual	On-site staff provide or co-ordinate supports of varying intensities to residents	A range of supports services customized to client needs to increase/maintain housing stability	Supports accessed through mainstream services accessible to all Albertans	Housing-specific financial support	Supports accessed through mainstream services accessible to all Albertans

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Housing Examples (not exhaustive)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public spaces</li> <li>- Squatting in private spaces</li> <li>- Vehicles, attics, garages</li> <li>- Makeshift shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emergency Shelters</li> <li>- Women's Shelters</li> <li>- Youth Shelters</li> <li>- Respite</li> <li>- Community Crisis beds (Health Services)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Penal institutions</li> <li>- Medical/mental health institutions</li> <li>- Community Residential treatment facilities</li> <li>- Foster care</li> <li>- Youth group homes;</li> <li>- Refugee/newcomer accommodation centres</li> <li>- Transitional Housing</li> <li>- Second Stage Housing</li> <li>- Staying with others/'couch surfing'</li> <li>- Hostels, rooming houses, motels</li> <li>- First Nations comm. temp. housing</li> <li>- Disaster relief housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Those whose employment is precarious</li> <li>- Those experiencing sudden unemployment</li> <li>- Households facing eviction</li> <li>- Housing with transitional supports about to be discontinued</li> <li>- People with severe and persistent mental illness, active addictions, substance use and/or behavioural issues</li> <li>- Breakdown in family relations</li> <li>- People facing, or living in direct fear, of violence/abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residential living – group homes and harm-reduction housing</li> <li>- Seniors lodges</li> <li>- Assisted and enhanced assisted living facilities</li> <li>- Rent Supplements</li> </ul>	<p>Housing First (e.g. Intensive Case Management/ Assertive Community Treatment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home care for seniors and those with physical/developmental disabilities</li> <li>- Rent Supplements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seniors Self Contained Accommodations</li> <li>- Community housing managed by Housing Management Bodies</li> <li>- Co-op/Co-Housing</li> <li>- Rent Supplements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rent supplements</li> <li>- Habitat for Humanity</li> <li>- Co-op/Co-Housing</li> <li>- Employer-supported housing</li> <li>- First time home buyers programs</li> <li>- Affordable Housing</li> <li>- Private Sector housing</li> </ul>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Pure Market Housing</b> <i>Out of Scope</i></p>
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**HOMELESS –**

**Individuals and families residing in these locations are considered to be homeless, in that they are “without stable, permanent, appropriate housing of the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.”**

**Canadian Homeless Research Network (2012)**

*Canadian Definition of Homelessness*

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