Alberta Homelessness Research Agenda (2011-14)

Produced by the Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium

Background

A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years has changed how homelessness is addressed in Alberta. Through coordinated efforts at community, municipal, and provincial levels, the Plan aims to transition efforts away from managing homelessness to ending it by means of 17 strategies. The 'housing first' approach, which prioritizes moving homeless people into permanent housing with the supports they need to sustain their housing, is a pillar of the Plan.

About the Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium (AHRC)

The AHRC supports the objectives and strategies within *A Plan for Alberta* by generating new knowledge, disseminating relevant findings, and translating existing research into practical solutions for those who are collaborating to implement the Plan. It also serves a forum to facilitate collaboration and partnerships among peers and colleagues across Alberta who work in diverse fields, but share a commitment to better understand and end homelessness.

> *The role of the AHRC is to increase the extent to which research is embedded in the implementation of* **A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years***.*

By providing an evidentiary basis for decisions made within the context of the Plan, and by engaging research-policy-practice communities, and by, the AHRC facilitates innovative solutions that result in more effective resource allocation and program development.

The AHRC is managed by the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, which monitors the implementation of *A Plan for Alberta* and provides strategic advice to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs that will ensure its continued success.

> *Themes of the Alberta Homelessness Research Agenda (2011-14)*
>
> A. *Effective Interventions*
>
> B. *Homelessness Data and Information*
>
> C. *Prevention*
>
> D. *Exploring the Context of Homelessness*
>
> E. *Dissemination and Engagement on Issues*
>
> F. *Economics of Housing and Homelessness*

About the Alberta Homelessness Research Agenda (2011-14)

The AHRC's activities are guided by the Alberta Homelessness Research Agenda (2011-14), which identifies the research priorities among those who are collaborating to implement the Plan.

The chart below encompasses the six priority themes of the research agenda, and identifies the most closely related strategies from the Plan. The full-text version of the Plan, including strategy details and guiding principles, can be found on the website of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness. While some strategies have been accomplished, (e.g. Strategies #1, #2 and #3), they include on-going components to which research may contribute. The Plan is viewed as a living document, and implementation is subject to continual monitoring and improvement of outcomes.

The domains explore the most pertinent issues within each priority theme. Examples of research questions are provided, but the agenda is not limited to these alone. Themes are not presented in order of priority; community partners will determine the local priorities within the research agenda.

Theme A: Effective Interventions	
Domains	**Sample Questions**
• Examine Housing First: conduct front line evaluation focusing on program fit and effectiveness • Identify best practices in alternative housing and support programs (program fit and effectiveness) • Analyze policy: map provincial, federal, municipal policies	1. Is the local housing first project design appropriate for its clients? 2. What are the value added successes that clients are realizing through their participation in Housing First projects? 3. What are the municipal, provincial, federal policies that affect the ability of Alberta communities to achieve intended outcomes?

A Plan for Alberta **Strategy Alignment**

#9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness.

#10: Support community plans to end homelessness.

#11: Increase availability of permanent housing with supports.

#12: Work with all levels of government to create additional housing options.

#13: Shift expectations and develop outcome measures for emergency shelters in Alberta.

#17: Identify legislative and regulatory changes to advance the objectives and elements of the Plan for Alberta.

Theme B: Homelessness Data and Information

Domains	Sample Questions
- Identify, consolidate, analyze and disseminate housing and homelessness data that are already being collected - Develop and sustain province wide processes for data collection, analysis and knowledge mobilization	1. What data are being collected in Alberta and what is accessible for research? 2. How can HUA-collected Housing First data be accessed for research projects, analyzed, and utilized by communities?

A Plan for Alberta Strategy Alignment

#1: Develop standards of data collection about homelessness including common definitions, methods and counting.

#2: Establish a provincial electronic information management system and provide funding for its development.

#3: Establish a research arm to inform policy development and share best practices.

#4: Measure outcomes and track progress on a regular, ongoing basis.

#14: Develop approaches for homeless serving agencies to share client information.

Theme C: Prevention

Domains	Sample Questions
- Define prevention, (within visible and invisible homeless communities) - Identify prevention programs and policies that exist and analyze the gaps - Identify best practices	1. What does prevention mean within the context of homelessness? 2. What are the homelessness prevention programs, policies, and practices in Alberta? To what extent are they effective?

A Plan for Alberta Strategy Alignment

#5: Continue employing emergency assistance programs in order to prevent homelessness.

#6: Reformulate Alberta government assistance programs to ensure they achieve the coordinated objective of providing Albertans with housing stability.

#7: Make it easier for clients to connect with Alberta government programs and services

#9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness.

#10: Support community plans to end homelessness.

#11: Increase availability of permanent housing with supports.

#12: Work with all levels of government to create additional housing options.

#15: Simplify personal identification requirements for accessing programs and services.

#16: Examine ways of reducing poverty to prevent homelessness.

Theme D: Exploring the Context of Homelessness

Domains

- Identify people (e.g. Aboriginal, youth, families, women fleeing violence, immigrants, veterans, working homeless, seniors)
- Identify places (e.g. rural, urban, reserves, geographic)
- Identify issues (e.g. client-systems interactions, such as health, corrections, foster care)

Community-developed questions within the three domains.

(e.g. What are the differences between and commonalities among specific populations that require specialized housing and support services?)

A Plan for Alberta Strategy Alignment

#1: Develop standards for data collection about homelessness including common definition, methods and counting.

#2: Establish a provincial electronic information system and provide funding for its development.

#3: Establish a research arm to inform policy development and share best practices.

#6: Reformulate Alberta government assistance programs to ensure they achieve the coordinated objective of providing Albertans with housing stability.

#9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness.

#10: Support community plans to end homelessness.

#11: Increase availability of permanent housing with supports.

Theme E: Dissemination and Engagement on Issues

Domains

- Promote communication through relationships, knowledge mobilization and transfer
- Explore attitudes, NIMBY, methods of engaging the public

Sample Questions

1. What are the models of knowledge translation that are effective for community mobilization?
2. What are the best practices for the AHRC and the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness to utilize?
3. What are the public perceptions of homelessness?
4. What are the community/municipal barriers to developing affordable housing?

A Plan for Alberta Strategy Alignment

#8: Review and revise funding and administrative arrangements with homeless serving agencies.

#3: Establish a research arm to inform policy development and share best practices.

#17: Identify legislative and regulatory changes to advance the objectives and elements of the Plan for Alberta.

Theme F: Economics of Housing and Homelessness	
Domains	**Sample Questions**
• Examine the market drivers that impact housing availability and homelessness • Define the role of the government, non-profit and the private sector in the development and maintenance of housing stock and delivery of support services	1. What policies and practices promote and/or impede the development of private rental housing? 2. What are the socio-economic and public policy factors that impact the incidence and prevalence of homelessness? 3. What support does the non-profit sector require to develop and sustain affordable housing and delivery of services?

A Plan for Alberta Strategy **Alignment**

#6: Reformulate Alberta government assistance programs to ensure they achieve the coordinated objective of providing Albertans with housing stability.

#11: Increase availability of permanent housing with supports.

#12: Work with all levels of government to create additional housing supports.

#17: Identify legislative and regulatory changes to advance the objectives and elements of the Plan for Alberta.

Development of the Alberta Homelessness Research Agenda (2011-14)

A variety of sources were accessed to develop the provincial research agenda:

- **Community input** was the primary source. Those who play a role in the Plan's implementation within Alberta's seven major municipalities (Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer) contributed their perspectives on research topics that would have the biggest impact on local efforts to end homelessness.

Secondary sources included:

- **Government of Alberta research priorities:** As a primary beneficiary of homelessness-related research, provincial government perspectives are reflected in the research agenda.

- **Homelessness-Related Research Capacities in Alberta: A Comprehensive Environmental Scan (2010):** Produced by the AHRC, the Scan noted key research gaps and challenges Alberta, as identified by those who are engaged in homelessness-related research.

- **Strategic Guidance of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness:** In its annual reports to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Secretariat has noted key challenges to be addressed in order to continue to advance the Plan. Research can potentially contribute to effectively addressing these challenges.

- **Collaborative Research Agendas:** There are opportunities to collaborate with regional or topical research networks that are engaged in similar research priorities within Alberta, Canada, and internationally.