

Poverty  
Reduction  
Strategy

*Ottawa*

**RISE UP:**

# A Collective Impact Approach to Reduce Poverty

**2025–2029**



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# Land acknowledgment

We recognize that Ottawa is located on the unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation. The people of this Nation have lived on this territory for millennia. We recognize and honour their presence and stewardship, which continue to nurture this land. We also honour the diverse urban Indigenous communities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Ottawa and extend our gratitude for their vital contributions to this community, past and present. We recognize the continuous and intergenerational impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples and communities. We commit to continually educate ourselves, and to develop and maintain respectful, reciprocal relationships with the Host Anishinabe Algonquin Nation and urban Indigenous people in Ottawa. We commit to working together towards safety and well-being.



# A Message from a Community Advocate

I joined Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy through my work at the Parkdale Food Centre as the Community Advocacy Coordinator. My work involves connecting with individuals and groups to help them leverage their lived experiences of poverty into advocacy opportunities. The City's consultations for the Poverty Reduction Strategy had a similar approach: the City consulted and properly compensated the community, and we worked together to shape the content and direction of the Strategy. Shared ownership is representative of multiple perspectives and is an important part of the work.

While everyone brought personal commitment to the Strategy, the participants acknowledged early on that some had lived, or continue to live, in poverty. These voices are our most valuable assets, as they remind us of where we've been, the realities that our communities

continue to face, and the strengths that exist in our communities. Direct investments in such individuals and the communities they represent are a key component of poverty reduction.

This process created space in which front-line workers in social service were able to contribute their knowledge and experiences. The topics of advocacy and system-level change emerged, and we discussed the importance of front-line workers being more connected to municipal-level policy development, especially when poverty is such a crisis in our city.

We need to fund community organizations already doing this work. The workload is significant, and the workers are predominantly women, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour who are not equitably compensated. We need a well-supported workforce to do this work in a dignified way. To ensure support, the





Poverty Reduction Strategy needs to be in the municipal budget. We also need to see lived experience as an asset, and to hire from communities.

Minimum wages in our city and across Canada are not considered living wages. The income people receive while on social assistance is drastically below our national poverty line. We know that poverty is a result of policies that disproportionately under-serve marginalized populations. Poverty has poor health outcomes for communities—outcomes that cost the city a tremendous amount of money. We know all this, but it's time to act on this knowledge collectively. We need to work together to advocate with those living in poverty.

If there is one thing I learned while living, working and volunteering in social housing communities for 10 years, it's that the experience of poverty looks quite different depending on your situation. The opportunities I accessed were a result of community

connections, built by the strength of the people, and paired with initiatives that were direct investments from the City (social housing, community houses, food centres, the City's Community Development Framework, and Community Health Centres).

The Poverty Reduction Strategy roundtables gave our communities and partners an opportunity to share their realities in a safe, welcoming space, and to contribute to creating a city that continues to build social capital. Thank you to everyone who participated. The trust you built, the ideas you shared, will have lasting positive impacts on the City of Ottawa.

I want to give one final thank you to the social housing community of Morrison Gardens. I wouldn't be writing this today without you.

**Carissa Davis**

Community Advocacy Coordinator  
Parkdale Food Centre

# A Message from the Mayor

I am very proud to launch the City of Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy. We know that we continue to have too many neighbours who bear the heavy burden of poverty, struggling to make ends meet, stay healthy, be safe, feed their families and secure their futures.

The City of Ottawa, in collaboration with community partners, is dedicated to creating paths out of poverty through a collective and inclusive approach. This approach is rooted in dignity, equity, and social justice, aiming to reshape Ottawa into a place where everyone can thrive.

While this Strategy is new, the work has been ongoing for years beginning with the launch of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan in 2021. The Plan aims to create a sustainable community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, has access to services, and can meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression. Central to the Plan is a dedicated

priority for financial security and poverty reduction, with strategies to bridge the gap between our aspirations and current reality. The Poverty Reduction Strategy is a crucial step in bridging this gap, together.

I want to thank the Ottawa Poverty Reduction Strategy Community Advisory Group, community partners, and residents with lived experience who have partnered with the City on this important initiative as well as the numerous residents, community partners, subject matter experts and City of Ottawa staff who have helped inform this strategy.

As Mayor of Ottawa, I am committed to working with City Council and all our community partners to build a city that is free from poverty, ensuring that no one is left behind.

**Mark Sutcliffe**

City of Ottawa Mayor



# A Message from the City Manager

Investing in services to help all residents, especially those most in need, is a key priority for the City of Ottawa. The 2023–2026 City Strategic Plan outlines Council’s vision for a prosperous, sustainable, inclusive, and resilient community, with a critical objective to reduce poverty. The launch of the Poverty Reduction Strategy marks a pivotal step towards this goal.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy stands as a testament to our collective leadership, structured around five critical pillars: food security, economic development, financial security, employment, and integrated and simplified pathways to access essential social services and resources. These pillars guide our efforts as we partner with a range of sectors, institutions, agencies and partners to deliver on this critical work.

The strategy is a wonderful example of Team Ottawa working together for the greater good of our city. I extend my appreciation to City staff and community partners for their expertise, time and unwavering dedication in crafting a plan that will serve as the blueprint for meaningful change in our community. We look forward to driving this change as a collaborative effort.

I encourage everyone to spread the word about our Poverty Reduction Strategy, and to stay informed and connect with us at [CSWB/SBEC@ottawa.ca](mailto:CSWB/SBEC@ottawa.ca).

**Wendy Stephanson**  
City of Ottawa Manager



# Executive summary

Too many people in Ottawa know how it feels to experience poverty. In 2023, nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of Ottawa residents said their household financial situation was poor or very poor.<sup>1</sup>

Addressing pathways to and immediate effects of poverty is complex. With existing efforts underway, a city-wide poverty reduction strategy is needed now to ensure that future work to alleviate poverty is more equitable, impactful, and sustainable over time. As a result, the City of Ottawa co-led a strategy development process that involved experienced partners and advisory group members, strategic alignment with existing poverty reduction initiatives at all levels of government, the voices of communities who are most affected, and a review of data available on poverty reduction.

The City of Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy was developed through a collective-impact approach and will continue to be guided by this approach throughout implementation. Guided by the Advisory Group and validated through engagement, the Strategy has the following vision: People have the resources they need so they can make decisions about their well-being and pursue their full potential.

The Strategy is committed to the following ten principles: intersectionality, collaboration, evidence informed, gender lens, Indigenous rights, lived and living experience leadership, race lens, representation, rights based and trauma-informed lens.





The Strategy is inclusive of important considerations that respond to direction of Council motions, Advisory Group directions and engagement findings. These considerations include the following:

- Integration of a community wealth-building approach to the City's economic development work. This means that Strategy priorities support local community partners, and entrepreneurs own and manage assets while keeping the resources within communities.<sup>2</sup>
- Strengthening the wraparound services model to ensure that low-barrier integrated services are available to people living in poverty in one location to respond to the complex realities of poverty, homelessness, mental health and other challenges.<sup>3</sup>
- Integration of a race and gender lens so that disproportionate barriers facing Black, racialized populations and groups more at risk of economic abuse are addressed.
- Acknowledge the need to build collective support to a basic income and create synergies and collaborations to enable people living in poverty to access tax-related benefits.
- Ensure continued collaboration and alignment with Housing Services, so that efforts are complemented and not duplicated.
- Include actions that integrate a poverty lens to municipal services especially those named by the community to be high priority.
- Ensure that advocacy is done across levels of government for a basic income and a living wage. In addition, work with provincial education and health to ensure there is continued alignment.

The Strategy has five goals, which communicate the desired outcomes from the implementation in phases, ensure accountability, and are guided by strategic vision. Each goal corresponds to the focal areas or pillars of the Strategy, which are food security, employment, financial security, economic development, and integrated and simplified pathways. The Strategy goals are that people living in or at risk of poverty:

- Have equitable access to enough healthy, affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate food,
- Have access to consistent income and job security,
- Can acquire additional resources and benefits,
- Participate equitably in and benefit equally from economic growth, and
- Can access integrated services and supports they need and trust.

The fourth quarter of 2024 will be dedicated to pre-implementation using collective-impact principles such as establishing governance roles and responsibilities, an implementation plan, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. Upon City Council approval of the Strategy and associated recommendations, the first short-term implementation phase will run from 2025 to 2026, followed by a midterm review and re-engagement in 2027. After a mid-term report is provided to City Council, a second implementation phase of the Strategy will occur between 2028 and 2029. Finally, the Strategy will be refreshed with updated priorities and actions in 2030.

# Strategy at a glance



## 05

### Integrated and simplified pathways

- Expand and sustain wraparound supports in City-led and community hubs, ensuring people living in poverty are prioritized.
- Create sustainable community local partnerships focused on poverty reduction.

## 04

### Economic development

- Expand the diversity and equity lens in City procurement programs.
- Expand and sustain entrepreneurship opportunities for Black, youth, newcomer, and racialized entrepreneurs through access to financial capital and the labour market.
- Create navigation pathways linking economic growth trends with labor opportunities, including social enterprises, small businesses, artists and culture workers.

## 01

### Food security

- Address household food insecurity through policy making, funding and coordination.

## 02

### Employment

- Reduce barriers and discrimination in the workplace facing job seekers and employees from Black, 2SLGBTQ+, and racialized groups.
- Support people living in poverty to participate actively in the workforce.

## 03

### Financial security

- Increase access to tax-related benefits and support programs.
- Increase coordination of financial empowerment efforts and advocate for more resources to support financial literacy and address economic abuse.



# Strategy background



# Why a Poverty Reduction Strategy?

Poverty is a multifaceted issue that cannot be adequately addressed by isolated efforts or singular solutions. It stems from a web of interconnected factors, including lack of access to housing, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social safety nets, as well as systemic inequalities and economic instability. With the most recent increase in poverty rates in Ottawa,<sup>4</sup> tackling it requires a collective-impact approach, where various sectors—multiple levels of government, businesses, non-profit and communities—collaborate strategically, pooling resources, knowledge and influence.

This collaborative effort requires a clear, focused vision that targets the root causes of poverty rather than just its symptoms. By aligning strategies and resources, and fostering resilience among those affected, the collective-impact approach can create sustainable pathways out of poverty and drive meaningful change on a large scale.

The Government of Ontario's 2020 strategy aims to provide supports and services that increase the number of social assistance recipients moving to employment to 60,000 by 2024 (up from 35,000 in 2019).<sup>5</sup> As well, the Government of Canada's 2018 strategy hopes to reduce poverty by 50% in 2030, relative to 2015 levels.<sup>6</sup>



The purpose of Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy is to ensure that people living in Ottawa have the resources, choices, and power to thrive and achieve their full potential. This can be achieved by aligning efforts with existing municipal services and community resources to address the immediate impacts of poverty. Strategic planning will focus efforts on preventing the root causes of poverty through collaborative efforts and cross-sector partnerships. As such, the City of Ottawa's 2025–2029 Poverty Reduction Strategy focuses on collective action to address food insecurity, employment, financial security, economic development, and integrated and simplified pathways.

# What is poverty?

Poverty is the lack of the resources, choices and power that people need to participate in society. Poverty creates barriers for people who are trying to meet their basic needs and achieve their full potential. People's health and well-being is more likely to be at risk if they experience poverty.

Various factors influence our health and well-being. These factors are known as the social determinants of health:<sup>7</sup>

- Income and income distribution
- Education
- Unemployment and job security
- Food insecurity
- Housing
- Health services
- Social exclusion
- Early childhood education
- Social safety net

Discrimination, marginalization and racism increase the risks of experiencing poverty for some populations including those who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized, living with a disability, newcomers and single-parent headed households.

To reduce poverty, the Strategy must act on social determinants of health through:

- City services
- Policy and regulation
- Funding
- Leadership
- Stewardship
- Economic power



# Poverty in Ottawa

## Meeting basic needs

Material poverty occurs when people do not have the financial resources to satisfy their basic needs for food, shelter and other necessities. Structural barriers to resources and opportunities contribute to differences in the poverty rate between populations. For example, racial disparities in the ability to afford the cost of living in Ottawa have widened over time. While the percentage of racialized residents who said paying for their daily expenses was easy remained steady in 2018 (20 per cent) and 2021 (20.1 per cent), the share of non-racialized residents reporting ease grew over the same time from 25.5 per cent to 29.8 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

Poverty reduction efforts that target basic needs help make life more stable by reducing daily financial pressures. Co-locating services in one place such as a community hub may reduce structural barriers and make it easier for the community to meet people's basic needs.

**8,656**

people used Ottawa's emergency shelter system in 2023.



The average cost of healthy food and shelter is **20–25%** higher than the current ODSP rate.

**23.7%**

of households in Ottawa experience food insecurity (up from 14.8% in 2022).



“

*The poverty line is very watered down: you can drown in a puddle, and you can drown 200ft below, but we see it all as drowning.*

— Roundtable participant

”



## Participation in society

Social exclusion marginalizes people based on their gender, race, language or other sociodemographic characteristics. For example, gender-based barriers to labour force entry are both a consequence and a driver of poverty. Factors such as caregiver roles and lack of affordable child care contribute to the gender gap in employment and higher rates of non-participation in the labor force among women of core working age (25 to 54 years old). Higher percentages of non-participation among racialized and newcomer women indicate more barriers to labour force entry relative to other populations.<sup>9</sup> Other populations at risk of social exclusion include youth not in employment, education or training. These youth have a higher likelihood of long-term poverty due to conditions that impede their ability to acquire skills needed for gainful employment. Variation in the percentage of youth not in employment, education or training across populations in Ottawa highlight the unique needs of different communities.<sup>10</sup>

Poverty reduction efforts must address disparities in employment and wages by removing structural barriers that prevent participating in society.



**11%**

**of youth in Ottawa in 2020  
were not in employment,  
training or education.**



## People living to their full potential

Someone who lives to their full potential can pursue their goals and feel a sense of control over their life. Structural barriers to meeting one's full potential increase the likelihood of chronic poverty over the course of a person's life and between generations. For example, unequal access to learning opportunities at home is an important factor explaining gaps in academic achievement between students from high- and low-income households. Learning losses due to school closures during COVID-19 raise concerns about additional disadvantages that students from low-income households face and long-term implications for their employability and financial security.<sup>11</sup>

Poverty reduction work in this area focuses on removing disparities in early childhood development and educational achievement.

For more data on the multi-faceted aspects of poverty in Ottawa, see the report, [Data on the Current State of Poverty in Ottawa](#), September 2024.



### Covid-19 disruptions to early education

Across Ottawa school boards in the 2022–2023 academic year, the percentage of students not meeting the provincial standard in reading and writing was higher among those in Grade 3 relative to those in Grade 6. These differences may be explained by pandemic-related disruptions to early primary school education.

# Poverty reduction in Ottawa

Many people, agencies, organizations and sectors have worked to reduce poverty in Ottawa. For example:

- [Community Development Framework's](#) (CDF) Poverty and Hunger Working Group provides strategic planning and programming to support people affected by poverty.
- The [Neighbourhood Equity Index](#) and [Ottawa Neighborhood Study](#) bring attention to inequities in opportunities and resources across the city.

The current Strategy builds on these existing community assets and initiatives underway to reduce poverty. See [Appendix A](#) for organizations that participated in creating the Poverty Reduction Strategy.





## Ottawa's first Poverty Reduction Strategy

It's important to acknowledge previous poverty reduction efforts and build on them. The City developed its first poverty reduction strategy in 2010. [Poverty Affects Us All: A Community Approach to Poverty Reduction](#), was in place for a year and subsequently became part of the [10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020–2030](#). This earlier strategy focused on the knowledge and role of the municipal government with less emphasis on working alongside community members and organizations to align and advance the work together. The current Strategy is community led and owned, with roles for diverse sectors beyond government.

The work is multifaceted and ongoing. Advocacy, engagement, services, collaborations, research, programs and partnerships have continued to address the root causes of poverty and worked to ease its effects on people's lives. Certain important lessons have become clear along the way, including:

- Keep lived experience and knowledge at the centre.
- Explore and do what is within our control.
- Take a whole-of-community approach to act on poverty.
- Keep it community-owned and City-supported.
- Build on diversity, work together and move forward as a group.

# Strategy development process



# It started with a partnership.

In 2021, the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres of Ottawa (CHRCs), Ottawa Community Food Partnership, and Ottawa Food Bank got together through Tamarack Institute's Cities Ending Poverty (CEP) initiative. They began developing a poverty reduction strategy. The City of Ottawa's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Office joined the CEP initiative in 2022, fortifying the collaboration.

The City was bound to act. Municipalities across Ontario have a provincial mandate to develop community safety and well-being plans according to a framework established by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Ottawa's CSWB Plan, adopted by City Council in 2021, calls for the development of a municipal poverty reduction strategy.

Strategy development involved five components:

- Collective-impact approach
- Centering lived and living experience
- Alignment with existing strategies and plans
- Wide-scope engagement
- Poverty data analysis

To support the work, the CSWB Office established an Advisory Group representing networks and organizations. In 2023, the membership of the Advisory Group was expanded to include more members representing the diversity of Ottawa. See [Acknowledgements](#) for a full list of Advisory Group members.

The Advisory Group met regularly between April 2023 and September 2024 to provide advice on the process and the Strategy's content.

Members drew on their extensive resources and networks, ensuring broad, diverse and meaningful community engagement. Members also participated in roundtables and listening sessions. The CSWB Office staff served as a secretariat for the Advisory Group.

# Strategy development timeline



# Collective-impact approach

The presence of poverty reduction strategies at the federal, provincial and municipal levels shows that poverty reduction is complex and can only occur if systems change. To ensure work towards poverty reduction brings about systems changes, the Strategy takes a collective-impact approach. The approach focuses on collaboration that brings people together to focus on a common agenda and plan of action to effect change in a complex social problem.<sup>12</sup>

Collective impact requires residents, community organizations, agencies, service providers and all levels of government to work together. This approach is currently used by a third of members in the Cities Ending Poverty initiative, including Nelson, British Columbia and Winnipeg, Manitoba.<sup>13</sup>

The Strategy adheres to the conditions of collective impact in the following ways:

- During implementation of the Strategy, the governance model will have a **backbone support structure** that will oversee governance and decision-making and support initiatives.
- During the development of the Strategy, stakeholders developed a **common agenda** for the Strategy and agreed on a definition of poverty. During implementation, partners will have clearly outlined strategies within initiatives and a shared vision for change.
- During implementation of the Strategy, partners will have **shared action plans** to implement the strategy pillars and ensure that initiatives are coordinated.
- During both development and implementation of the Strategy, stakeholders and partners are **continuously engaged** in all phases.
- During implementation of the Strategy, all stakeholders will agree on **shared measurement** of poverty reduction indicators and ways to collect and use data.





# Centering lived and living experience

Efforts to address poverty must centre those who experience or have experienced poverty.

The Strategy was conceived through discussions and feedback from people who experience and have experienced poverty by:

- Active participation of people with lived and living experience of poverty from the beginning of the process, specifically the roundtables and listening sessions. Some listening sessions were organized separately by community partners.
- Working with the Alliance to End Homelessness to bring in members of the Alliance's Expert Steering Team, and Parkdale Food Centre to bring in community advocates.
- Compensating participants above the living wage rate for Ottawa to honour their time and effort, and to cover additional costs such as transportation or child care.

## Alignment with existing strategies and plans

Through broad engagement across City departments with 31 staff members, it was clear that there was existing action on poverty already underway and opportunities for further alignment. These engagements helped ensure the Strategy was shared widely among key departments, that input was gathered during strategy development, and that focus areas of the Strategy built on existing resources and expertise. The Strategy will continue to engage with City departments as it moves towards implementation. For a full list of consulted City departments and areas of alignment, see [Appendix B](#).

The Strategy will also consider the activities within Government of Ontario and Government of Canada poverty reduction strategies to ensure alignment when planning for implementation and evaluation.

# Wide-scope engagement

The CSWB Office and Advisory Group acknowledged existing work in the community to alleviate poverty and wanted to not only hear from those doing the work, but also to better understand how to align efforts and work together. To facilitate these discussions, the CSWB Office hosted

three roundtables and two listening sessions with the goal of fostering a shared sense of ownership for poverty reduction among everyone involved. In total, the CSWB Office and Advisory Group engaged 354 people through roundtables and listening sessions.

## Timeline of engagement



## Roundtables

The CSWB Office held three roundtables in June 2023, November 2023 and June 2024. Each roundtable took a whole-of-community approach: a wide representation of sectors gathered to begin drafting the Strategy, to build consensus on the priorities, and to focus the collective work.

### Roundtable 1

The first roundtable was held in June 2023 and invited participants to explore data and answer questions regarding how they can work together to reduce poverty in Ottawa. Taking an asset-based approach to change, participants were also asked to identify programs, services, projects, policies and campaigns to inform the discussion and identify themes, which would later form the basis of the pillars and priorities for the Strategy. In total, 54 participants attended the roundtable. See [Community Roundtable #1 What We Heard Report](#) to learn more.

### Roundtable 2

The second roundtable was held in November 2023 and encouraged participants to identify tangible actions for advancing each priority. The CSWB Office wanted to strengthen community ownership and momentum and avoid duplicating existing work. In total, 79 participants attended the roundtable. See [Community Roundtable #2 What We Heard Report](#) to learn more.

### Roundtable 3

The third roundtable was held in June 2024 and encouraged participants to review a draft of the Strategy, provide feedback on final language of strategic priorities and implementation structure, and to learn about next steps after submission to City Council. In total, 43 participants attended the roundtable.

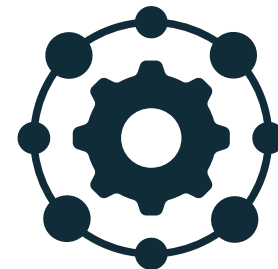
**354**

people engaged through roundtables and listening sessions.



**70**

organizations were represented through engagement.



## Listening sessions

The CSWB Office analyzed participant feedback after each roundtable and organized two listening sessions in September 2023 and February 2024 to share findings with the broader community and validate roundtable feedback. The first set of listening sessions following the first roundtable were held separately with 59 community partners and 59 City staff in attendance. The Financial Literacy Action Network Ottawa also held a listening session of their own.



Following the second roundtable, listening sessions were held separately with 87 community partners and 27 City staff. The Community Development Framework and the Coalition of CHRCs held their own listening session with people with lived and living experience of poverty.

In total, more than 70 organizations were represented through our engagement. Following the roundtables and listening sessions, the CSWB Office and Advisory Group revised the Strategy's actions and identified additional assets.

### Engagement with City Departments

The Poverty Reduction Strategy aligns with existing work plans and initiatives already being supported and, in some cases, funded and coordinated by City Staff.

### Engagement with Community Experts and Academia

To validate the findings and offer unique perspectives and ways to look at poverty, the CSWB Office worked in consultation with the Advisory Group to reach out to six key professionals who have extensive experience and knowledge of the Strategy pillars and could offer specified knowledge of their industry to confirm our findings and approach.

# Poverty data analysis

The Strategy incorporates evidence gathered through research and data. Participants in the first roundtable considered population data from Statistics Canada on poverty to kickstart and categorize discussions, and to develop priorities. The City's CSWB Office researched further. Staff conducted a comparative analysis with other local municipal poverty reduction strategies, and research to validate findings from the community. Work was also done to align with other municipal policies and gather an intersectional approach to the work (see [Appendix B](#)).



# Strategy considerations

## Indigenous Peoples

The Strategy strives to ensure that the presence, experiences and contributions of the diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples that make up the vibrant urban Indigenous communities in Ottawa are recognized and respected. The Strategy is deeply informed by an understanding of the enduring impacts of colonization. These impacts contribute to marginalization and discrimination, disproportionately affecting Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities face greater challenges in achieving financial security, accessing essential services and obtaining stable housing.

There is ample evidence demonstrating that Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by poverty. While the Advisory Group's commitment to reduce poverty for all disproportionately impacted populations is real and laudable, additional work must be undertaken to determine how poverty is measured, experienced and understood by Indigenous peoples. Given the breadth of the topic of poverty and its intersectional nature, the Strategy takes a broad look at the complexity of poverty and recommends high-level priorities within the contemporary context.

The Strategy recognizes the City's commitment to the Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan, and to recognizing how overlapping forms of oppression exacerbate the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous racism stems from the long history of colonialism and continues through its ongoing legacies, oppression, and impacts First Nations, Inuit and Métis People experiences to this day. This acknowledgement guides City's initiatives and respect of the rights, needs and interests of Indigenous communities, recognizing the disproportionate incidence of poverty they face.

While the Strategy does not include priorities specific to Indigenous Peoples, an intersectional approach is followed in its pillars and priorities.

## Equity

Systemic inequities such as racism, climate change and sexism affect certain groups more than others. These inequities also increase the chances of some people being affected by poverty.

**Black, racialized, newcomer and single-female-parent households, and households of people living with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by poverty.**

For example, systemic inequities can make it harder for people with disabilities to find work. Inequities can also affect their ability to access health and social services, acquire accessible and stable housing, and maintain their health and well-being.

Before the first roundtable, the City's CSWB Office connected with community organizations that work with or represent racialized people to ensure there is equitable gender and race representation in roundtables. The team also invited organizations that support or represent immigrants, newcomers, seniors, persons with disabilities, women, gender-diverse people and racialized groups.

## Francophone communities

In Ottawa, approximately 126,030 people speak French as their first language.<sup>14</sup> While the Francophone community in Ottawa has shaped the city of Ottawa offering many cultural, religious, and linguistic benefits, the community faces challenges with demographic changes, access to French services and preservation of language.<sup>15</sup> In its implementation, the CSWB Office will continue to recognize and work on the unique difficulties faced by Francophones living in poverty.

## Rural geographic areas

Rural poverty, particularly among seniors, exists in Ottawa but is harder to capture in the data because the number of people living in poverty is less concentrated and spread across different rural communities. To ensure rural considerations were made, the CSWB Office spoke with the Rural Affairs Office in Planning, Development and Building Department, and Economic Development in Strategic Initiatives Department to better understand the rural context and ongoing work in the [Rural Economic Development Strategy](#). Similarly to the feedback collected, there was alignment on supporting small- and medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurship, and a key focus on supporting youth employment opportunities. Through discussions, there was also a deepened understanding of the unique challenges rural residents face in accessing important services like health care, groceries, employment services and mental health supports due to limited service hours, inaccessible locations, and transportation challenges such as reduced transit services, availability of vehicles and high fuel costs to travel longer distances. This context aligned with feedback received during the consultations that access to services and affordable food staples were a challenge for rural residents.

To ensure rural poverty is understood and addressed, the CSWB Office will continue to work alongside the Rural Affairs Office and the Strategic Initiatives Department.





# Strategy in depth

City of Ottawa: Poverty Reduction Strategy 2025–2029



# Community aspiration

People have the resources they need so they can make decisions about their well-being and pursue their full potential.

The community aspiration for the Poverty Reduction Strategy was clear from the first roundtable and validated through subsequent sessions.



# Guiding principles

The strategy's 10 guiding principles were shaped over the past year in consultation with our community.

## **Intersectionality**

Understand the relationship between power, privilege and bias, and people who are unequally affected by poverty.<sup>16</sup>

## **Collaboration**

Collaborate within and across sectors, finding innovative partnerships and ways to work together.

## **Evidence informed**

Implement the Strategy according to successful existing models and lessons learned.

## **Gender lens**

Assess implications of policies, programs, or any planned actions for women and other gender groups. This ensures everyone is part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.<sup>17</sup>

## **Indigenous rights**

Work in partnership with Indigenous people to recognize their role as a right-bearing group, not equity-seeking, and continue to learn from their experience of historical trauma, colonialism, and issues affecting Indigenous individuals and communities.

## **Lived and living experience leadership**

Prioritize the voices of people who live in or have lived in poverty.

## **Race lens**

Ensure that services and decisions made are delivered equitably by assessing their implications on Indigenous, Black and racialized people.<sup>18</sup>

## **Representation**

Reflect the diversity of voices and experiences in the community.

## **Rights based**

A human rights approach to poverty reduction:

- Views poverty in terms beyond income.
- Respects people living in poverty and treats them with dignity.
- Acknowledges the range of experiences of people living in poverty.
- Identifies groups within the community who are uniquely impacted by poverty.<sup>19</sup>

## **Trauma-informed lens**

Recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviours to increase people's safety, control and resilience.

# Scope of the Strategy

The CSWB Office and Advisory Group acknowledge that the goals of the Strategy do not address all social determinants of health as some of them are not within the purview of this Strategy.

The strategic design included, within its scope, important considerations that respond to Council motions, Advisory Group directions and engagement findings. These considerations include the following:

- Integration of a community wealth-building approach to the City's economic development work. This means Strategy priorities support local community partners, and entrepreneurs own and manage assets while keeping the resources within communities.<sup>20</sup>
  - Strengthening the wraparound services model to ensure that low-barrier integrated services are available to people living in poverty in one location to respond to the complex realities of poverty, homelessness, mental health and other challenges.<sup>21</sup>
  - Integration of a race and gender lens so that disproportionate barriers facing Black and racialized populations as well as groups more at risk of economic abuse are addressed.
  - Acknowledge the need to build collective support for increased social assistance rates and basic income, and to create synergies and collaborations to allow people living in poverty to access tax-related benefits.
- Ensure continued collaboration and alignment with housing services and climate resiliency, so that efforts are complemented and not duplicated.
  - Include actions that integrate a poverty lens to municipal services, especially those named by the community to be of high priority.



# Our Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Strategy consists of five pillars, 10 priorities and 26 sub-priorities. Each pillar features a goal—what the CSWB Office and Advisory Group understand to be the community’s desired outcome.

## Pillars

The CSWB Office, the Advisory Group, and participants involved in the engagement process identified five pillars as crucial to address poverty in Ottawa:

-  **Food security**
-  **Employment**
-  **Financial security**
-  **Economic development**
-  **Integrated and simplified pathways**

## Priorities and sub-priorities

The design of priorities and sub-priorities have considered the following:

- While the Strategy aims to benefit all Ottawa residents, some sub-priorities name specific equity-denied groups. These groups are most affected by poverty, and efforts to reduce poverty must prioritize them.
- The sub-priorities are strengths based—meaning they link to areas where the City and the community already have certain resources and capabilities—to reflect promising practices that address complex, systemic issues.



## Pillar 1:

# Food Security

**Goal:** People living in or at risk of poverty have equitable access to sufficient healthy, affordable, safe and culturally relevant food.

Food security is a term used to describe reliable access to the availability of food, but also an individuals' ability to access it and gain positive nutritional outcomes. Achieving it relies on a functional, equitable and resilient food system that is resistant to shocks and stresses, not just locally in Ottawa, but worldwide.

Climate change will compound the risks of food insecurity. The price and availability of food will be increasingly impacted by global conditions such as crop failure due to drought or supply chain disruptions from extreme weather such as floods or storms. Food insecurity is also affected by local climate impacts, for example when power outages cause food spoilage in homes or food banks.

While food security is important for everyone, the specific focus here is addressing food insecurity for persons living in poverty. Food insecurity is about a lack of secure nutritious and affordable food, which can have negative impacts on employment, physical and mental health, and household income.<sup>22</sup> Food insecure households are at a greater risk of having multiple unmet needs, including housing and child care.

The focus of this pillar will be to continue working with community-led organizations to build on what exists and works in neighbourhoods to support food banks and community food programming while also ensuring policy makers consider the complexities of discrimination, racism and food insecurity when creating long-term plans and strategies.

### Research shows:

- In 2023, 8.7 million people, including 2.1 million children, in Canada were living in households that struggled to afford the food they need.<sup>23</sup>
- The risk of being food insecure was much higher among certain groups living below the poverty line. For instance, 62 per cent of families living in subsidized housing were food insecure, over three times higher than the overall average (18 per cent).<sup>24</sup>
- Single mothers, Indigenous families and Black families were at highest risk of food insecurity.<sup>25</sup>



## Priority 1.1

Address household food insecurity through policy making, funding and coordination.

### Sub-Priorities

- 1.1.1** Build a community-led and City-supported coordination mechanism involving all relevant partners and collaborators, and people with lived and living experience of poverty, working towards equitable access to nutritious and culturally relevant food for all Ottawa residents.
- 1.1.2** Ensure City-led strategies and plans address and improve multiple aspects of food insecurity, such as access, relevance and affordability to support persons living in poverty to gain nutritious food.
- 1.1.3** Increase funding to organizations and initiatives that address food insecurity, considering the significant increase of individuals and households facing food insecurity.





## Pillar 2: Employment

**Goal:** People living in or at risk of poverty have access to consistent income and job security.

According to the City's Official Plan, Ottawa is expected to add about 189,000 jobs from 2018 to 2046.<sup>26</sup> The job market offers opportunities, but one in six Canadians report experiencing discrimination when looking for work.<sup>27</sup> The focus of this pillar will be to address discrimination in the workplace and reduce barriers for people living in poverty who are active job seekers. A sub-focus will be on targeting skills development for Black and racialized youth who experience higher than average youth unemployment due to difficulties finding decent work and access to supports related to employment.

**1 in 6**

**Canadians report experiencing discrimination when looking for work.**



### Research shows:

- Relative to the general population, Black workers in Canada face barriers to employment and lower wages. The employment rate among Black people in January 2024 was 77.7 per cent compared to 84.3 per cent in the general population. The average hourly wage for Black adult workers in January 2024 was \$30.83 versus \$36.27 for the general population.<sup>28</sup>
- In Ontario, most single parent households in 2021 were led by women (88.5 per cent). The median income for female-led single parent households was \$43,042 compared to \$47,150 among male-led single parent households.<sup>29</sup>
- Youth not in employment, education or training are more susceptible to long-term poverty due to conditions that impede their ability to acquire skills and training needed for gainful employment. The percentage of these youth in Ottawa was similar between racialized (11.4 per cent) and non-racialized (10.7 per cent) populations in 2020. However, within the racialized population the range of youth varied from 5.3 per cent to 14.2 per cent when disaggregated by racial identity.<sup>30</sup>



## Priority 2.1

Reduce barriers and discrimination in the workplace facing job seekers and employees from Black, 2SLGBTQ+ and racialized groups.

### Sub-Priorities

- 2.1.1** Develop anti-racism and equity workplace policies and develop and disseminate tools that focus on organizational systems, leaders and peers, rather than company-wide policies, to focus on the role of relationships in fostering inclusion.
- 2.1.2** Fund skill development programs targeting Black and racialized youth facing barriers to employment in fast growing economic sectors that offer decent work.

Employment is not just about finding decent work. The CSWB Office heard in our consultations that low-income communities face complex barriers to stable employment.<sup>31</sup> The City, the Advisory Group, and community partners are seeing additional pressures on the Ottawa population, not only on employment but also on additional supports and services such as adequate transportation, child care and mental health services.

## Priority 2.2

Support people living in poverty to participate actively in the workforce.

### Sub-Priorities

- 2.2.1** Assess and evaluate existing municipal transit patterns, service and reliability, and supports for persons living in poverty seeking employment, and work with transit services and community partners and persons with lived experience of poverty to evaluate their effectiveness.
- 2.2.2** Prioritize Indigenous and equity-denied groups including persons living in poverty in the 2024–2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan, and focus on the creation of new child care spaces in areas and neighborhoods underserved and experiencing lower socio-economic status.
- 2.2.3** Develop evidence-based policies to support persons living in poverty experiencing mental health and substance use health issues, and establish mechanisms to reduce stigma among employers.



## Pillar 3:

# Financial Security

**Goal:** People living in or at risk of poverty can acquire additional resources and benefits.

Financial security can mean different things, but in its simplest form, it's about having enough money to cover your expenses and meet your needs. Two areas where implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy will address areas of concern are providing support for tax clinics and financial empowerment.

### Research shows:

- Ontario is home to the highest percentage (15.9 per cent) of non-tax filers compared to other provinces.<sup>32</sup>
- The number of non-tax filers is estimated to be higher among groups that can potentially benefit most from redistribution policies, including people receiving social assistance, people experiencing homelessness and First Nations populations.
- Barriers to filing taxes disproportionately affect Indigenous people and newcomers by preventing them from receiving the Canada Child Benefit and the Ontario Child Benefit.<sup>33</sup>

During consultations, community members with lived and living experience of poverty said they lack access to basic support services due to issues like missing identification documents and inaccessible service locations.<sup>34</sup> Feedback also indicated the administrative burden of living in poverty and having to navigate complex processes across different agencies, and raised concerns about a lack of support for self-employed individuals to get help filing their taxes.

Throughout the implementation of the Strategy, the focus will be on improving year-round awareness and support around filing income taxes, reducing physical barriers such as lack of transportation to attend clinics, and working with community partners to provide one-on-one support.

## Priority 3.1

Increase access to tax-related benefits and support programs.

### Sub-Priorities

- 3.1.1** Implement year-round initiatives that support targeted and accessible income tax clinics meeting people where they are. This includes information on benefits and credits, as part of filing taxes.
- 3.1.2** Provide support to sustain a backbone support system for tax clinic coordination among providers, to improve service offerings and reduce pressure on income tax filing.

While reducing barriers to accessing additional household income is one element of achieving financial security, supporting financial empowerment is another. Financial empowerment is about taking control of your finances and setting yourself on a path of financial safety and security.

There are several factors that reduce someone's ability to be financially empowered such as limited knowledge of financial topics and employment, social attitudes and the prevalence of economic abuse.

Economic abuse happens when someone gains control of a victim's finances, making it difficult for the victim to meet their basic needs without the abuser. Systemic barriers place some populations at greater risk of economic abuse, including people living in isolation, seniors,

people who identify as racialized and gender diverse, and people experiencing poverty.<sup>35</sup> Women bear more of the burden of poverty, and economic abuse only makes their lives worse. The needs of those experiencing economic abuse include: more staff for support services, affordable and safe housing, legal services, and awareness of economic abuse among financial institutions.

## Priority 3.2

Increase coordination of financial empowerment efforts and advocate for more resources to support financial literacy and address economic abuse.

### Sub-Priorities

- 3.2.1** Increase access to culturally sensitive financial literacy programs for racialized individuals, newcomers, seniors, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and women so they can make informed financial decisions.
- 3.2.2** Reduce economic abuse and support economic safety for survivors by building capacity for front-line workers in vital sectors such as social service and finance to recognize and address signs of economic abuse.



## Pillar 4: Economic Development

**Goal:** People living in or at risk of poverty participate equitably in and benefit equally from economic growth.

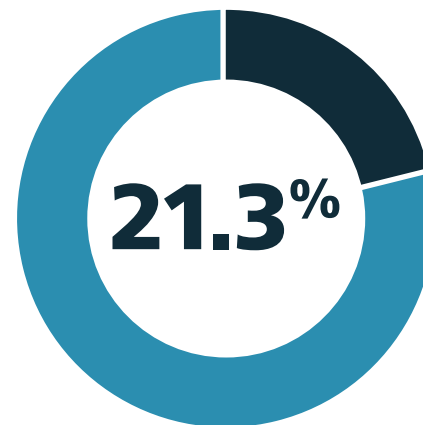
Economic development is a process to improve living standards through local economic growth that is sustainable through job creation and retention. The City of Ottawa will take the lead on the Economic Development pillar to ensure growth in the local economy is inclusive. This work will align with Ottawa's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, and Living Capital: An Agenda for Aligned Action.

This pillar will focus on adoption of a community wealth building approach to support social impact businesses, young entrepreneurs and a need for talent mapping and a rigorous assessment of growing economic sectors.

### Research shows:

- In Ottawa, women experience unemployment at higher rates than men, with racialized women experiencing the highest rate at 21.3 per cent.
- Youth not in employment, education or training are more susceptible to long-term poverty. They experience conditions that impede their ability to acquire skills and training needed to get jobs and contribute to economic growth.<sup>36</sup>

Feedback from the roundtable discussions recommended a community wealth-building approach to the City's economic development work. This means local community partners and entrepreneurs own and manage assets while keeping the resources within communities.<sup>37</sup>



**of racialized women experience unemployment—a rate higher than men and other women face.**



The City of Ottawa sees two opportunities to increase inclusivity and apply a community wealth-building approach:

- 1. Social procurement:** Social procurement offers opportunities where the organization can use its buying power to generate social value and create positive outcomes through the sale of goods and services.
- 2. Support for youth entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurs are self-employed and work in a wide range of occupations—from trades to business services to professions such as accounting. Working for yourself has several benefits including employment about which you are passionate, flexible work hours, and being able to take an idea and see it mature into a strong business.

## Priority 4.1

Expand the diversity and equity lens as applied to City procurement programs.

### Sub-Priorities

- 4.1.1** Improving equitable access and awareness around the City's procurement opportunities for social impact businesses, which includes local small businesses, diverse owned businesses and social enterprises.
- 4.1.2** Develop tools and resources to raise awareness about bidding on City procurement opportunities for goods and services, including standing offers, specifically targeting social impact businesses.
- 4.1.3** Support collective efforts to explore a community benefits framework to expand equitable economic opportunities for individuals living in Ottawa.

## Priority 4.2

Expand and sustain entrepreneurship opportunities for Black, youth, newcomer and racialized entrepreneurs through improved access to financial capital and the labour market.

### Sub-Priorities

- 4.2.1** Provide entrepreneurship support through existing and expanded local partnerships to young persons through culturally responsive services and programming.
- 4.2.2** Fund and coordinate skills development and entrepreneurship mentorship programs to support young people from equity-denied community groups with training and networking.

Through additional discussions with partners, collaborators and roundtable participants, the need for talent mapping and a rigorous assessment of growing economic sectors was also identified. These activities help ensure that people who want to work have the skills and opportunities to gain long-term employment and economic power.<sup>38</sup> There was also a call to assist artists and culture workers, who have lower median incomes, to ensure they remain in the city.

## Priority 4.3

Create clear navigation pathways linking current and future economic growth trends with labour opportunities including social enterprises, small businesses, artists and culture workers.

### Sub-Priorities

- 4.3.1** Map available talent and opportunities in growing economic sectors offering decent work. Make this information available to job seekers.
- 4.3.2** Increase access to funding and programming for racialized, newcomer and underrepresented communities, particularly youth, so that they can acquire skills needed in growing economic sectors offering decent work.
- 4.3.3** Increase access to funding and economic opportunities for arts and culture workers, particularly women and youth from underrepresented communities.



## Pillar 5:

# Integrated and simplified pathways

**Goal:** People living in or at risk of poverty can access integrated services and supports they need and trust.

Wraparound services are an important poverty reduction tool. Delivering multiple services in one location acknowledges the interrelatedness of poverty, homelessness, mental health and other challenges, including climate change.<sup>39</sup> Wraparound services are often tailored to a specific neighbourhood and offered in settings such as community health resource centres (CHRCs), community houses, City facilities, and neighbourhood health and wellness hubs.

While providing wraparound services makes it easier and more convenient, there remain challenges simplifying access and delivery of programs and services. Agencies face funding pressures due to inadequate funding to meet high and rising community demand, representation in staffing, challenges with data collection, and increased complexity and need for individualized support, especially for refugees, new immigrants and people who need assistance for mental health and substance-use related health issues.

Through the roundtables, participants identified challenges in providing convenient locations to access wraparound services, as most locations are in the inner city, with a few exceptions in the outer urban and rural areas of Ottawa. Some concerns were also raised about a lack of culturally appropriate and customized services that pose barriers to access for racialized people and those who speak languages other than English.<sup>40</sup>

**Wraparound services are offered in one location and are often tailored to a neighborhood.**



## Priority 5.1

Expand and sustain wraparound supports in City-led and community hubs, so that people living in poverty are prioritized and provided with wraparound services.

### Sub-Priorities

- 5.1.1** Determine growth patterns and service gaps within City-funded and existing social service organizations to ensure that persons living in poverty in outer urban and rural areas have access to wraparound supports and information on what benefits and programs they are entitled to.
- 5.1.2** Fund tailored service offerings at City-led and social service organizations that offer culturally appropriate wraparound supports that address the needs of low-income newcomers and refugees.
- 5.1.3** Develop and implement policies and conduct staff trainings for City of Ottawa employees, offering wraparound supports to create spaces that are stigma-free, anti-racist, trauma-informed and client-centered, while calling on social service organizations to adopt similar practices.
- 5.1.4** Leverage municipal revenue tools, like the Community Benefits Charge, to allocate funds for capital projects to improve development of and retrofits for places offering wraparound supports.

Feedback from roundtables and discussions with staff also suggested improvements could be made to promote data sharing between the centres and integrate services from other levels of government. It is worth mentioning that effective local level integrated systems require contributions from other levels of government.

## Priority 5.2

Create sustainable community local partnerships and alliances that focus on poverty reduction initiatives.

### Sub-Priorities

- 5.2.1** Establish a coordination mechanism to increase integration and data sharing among community hubs and between hubs in Ottawa to strengthen service offerings and access to consistent information.
- 5.2.2** Advocate to alleviate poverty through living wage and basic income within provincial and federal governments.



# Strategy implementation



# Governance

As a priority under the umbrella of the CSWB Plan, the Strategy will continue to be guided by the CSWB Plan's governance framework as approved by City Council on April 27, 2022 ([ACS2022-CSS-GEN-004](#)). This includes strategic direction through the established CSWB Advisory Committee.

The main role of the CSWB Advisory Committee is to advise staff who, in turn, report to the Community Services Committee and City Council. Members of the Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to review strategy progress, provide feedback and ensure alignment with the overall goals of the CSWB Plan.

The Strategy's implementation will be carried out using collective-impact principles through the collaboration of the following:

## Community-Based Advisory Group

The Advisory Group (AG)'s mandate will be to oversee the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Strategy.

Using the previous model of the AG that guided the development of this Strategy, a new AG will be sanctioned by the CSWB Advisory Committee. The AG will be comprised of representatives of multiple sectors (e.g., food security, employment, financial security, economic development, integrated service delivery), taking into consideration gender, race and equity. The AG membership will select a chair, and the CSWB Office will nominate a CSWB staff as co-chair.

## Community Safety and Well-Being Office

The CSWB Office will provide backbone support to the Strategy. The CSWB office will ensure cross-sector collaboration of partners during the planning, implementation and evaluation phases.

## Community Pillar Action Teams

During the planning phase of implementation, the AG and CSWB Office will use a transparent process to form working groups, called community action teams, based on the five pillars of the Strategy. The action teams will be led by either the City or organizations with expertise in each focal area and tasked with organizing larger teams to lead the various priorities and sub-priorities. The structure, given the complexity, strives to have leadership between community and other stakeholders.

Implementation of the Strategy will continue to centre the voice of persons with lived and living experiences of poverty. Community action teams will ensure they are compensated for participation in planning and implementation activities.

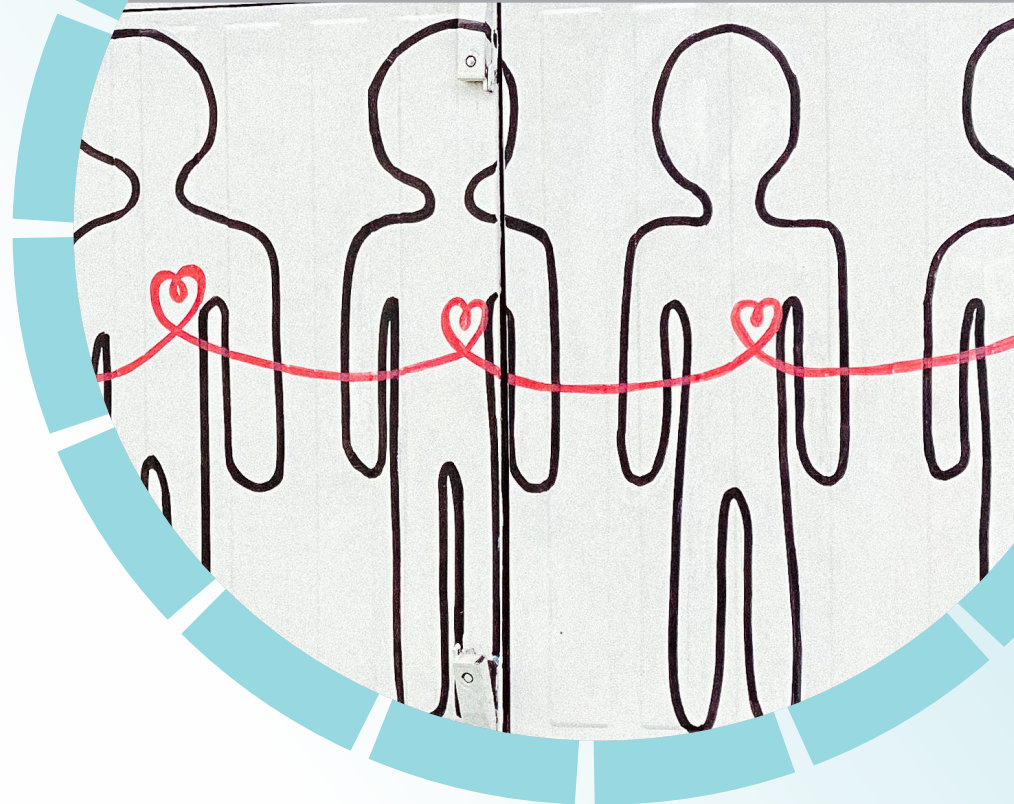
# Monitoring and evaluation

The Strategy will follow the CSWB performance measurement framework as outlined in the update to City Council on July 27, 2023 ([ACS2023-CSS-GEN-009](#)). The Strategy's accountability framework will be developed to reflect the complexity and level of details of the implementation action planning. Aspects of the framework include using population-based data to monitor poverty indicators, assessing the effectiveness of a collective-impact approach to poverty reduction, and evaluating specific initiatives. The community pillar action teams will report to the AG on a quarterly basis. Annual reporting to CSWB Advisory Committee and Council will take place against the Strategy's monitoring and evaluation framework. A robust evaluation will take place after three years of implementing Phase 1 of the Strategy.

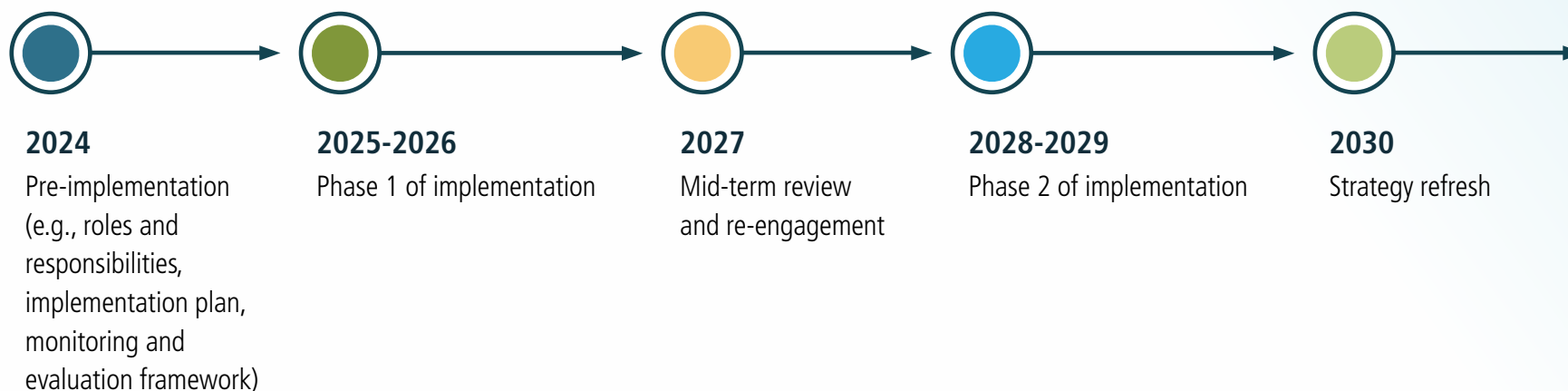


# Implementation

The third and fourth quarters of 2024 will be dedicated to pre-implementation work such as establishing governance roles and responsibilities, an implementation plan, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. Once Council approves the 2025 budget, the first short-term implementation phase will run from 2025 to 2026, followed by a midterm review and re-engagement in 2027. After Council approves the 2028 budget, a second implementation phase will take place between 2028 and 2029, followed by a refresh of the strategy including new pillars, priorities and sub-priorities in 2030.



## Proposed implementation timeline



# Risks and considerations



# Risks and considerations

Risk	Mitigation
<p><b>Economic fluctuations.</b> Inflation, oil price increases, job-replacing technologies and other wide-reaching factors may affect the economy.</p>	<p>The Strategy’s monitoring and evaluation framework will include steps at different points in time to better understand the impact of these factors in Ottawa. Under the mandate of the CSWB Plan Performance Framework, staff will continue to collect data on these fluctuations and on emerging economic barriers facing persons living in poverty to ensure that the Strategy is addressing them.</p>
<p><b>Complexity.</b> Poverty reduction is multifaceted and influenced by many factors. These include housing, education, employment, climate change, health and inclusion. Some of these factors may not fall directly within the municipal purview.</p>	<p>CSWB Office and partners will implement the Strategy in phases to share responsibility and work together. Joint advocacy efforts with other levels with government are included in this Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Systemic inequities such as racism, sexism and colonization result in marginalization and discrimination.</b> These inequities affect certain groups more than others and add stressors that affect their likelihood of being financially secure. Inequities also keep people from accessing services when needed, acquiring stable housing, being mentally well and being safe from gender-based violence.</p>	<p>Any efforts to increase individual and community safety and well-being, be they at the incident response, risk intervention, prevention or social development level, will apply an intersectionality lens and prioritize these groups.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p><b>Pressures on community actors.</b> Community partners and agencies often work under capacity and funding pressures. They will need extra support to implement the Strategy.</p>	<p>The CSWB Office will work with community partners to continue to identify funding opportunities and look for alignment across provincial and federal poverty reduction initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Climate change.</b> Climate change can lead to displacement, higher costs of food, physical and mental health impacts, and reduced access to services and employment.</p>	<p>Strategy partners will encourage the City to consider poverty reduction in its climate response, including the Climate Resiliency Strategy and Implementation Plan. Community partners will work together to build and integrate systems that can easily be rolled out during climate disasters or major events to support most at-risk populations.</p>
<p><b>Political.</b> Shifts in political priorities can result in reduced funding and support for poverty reduction initiatives. The primary risk for the CSWB Plan and the City of Ottawa in general is the possibility of raising community expectations without the means to deliver them. If the community interprets Council’s support as a commitment to immediate or tangible changes, there could be dissatisfaction and loss of trust in municipal leadership, when those changes do not materialize due to the lack of federal and/or provincial actions.</p>	<p>Strategy partners will work collectively and advocate with higher levels of government to mitigate any major changes in federal and provincial political direction. Staff will clearly communicate the nature of Council’s support and manage expectations. Staff will clearly define the role of the municipality and other levels of government and will emphasize that, while the City supports poverty reduction initiatives (for example, guaranteed basic income), its implementation depends on federal and provincial action. Staff would support the senate or federal working groups to provide the policy and funding framework to improve existing provincial financial assistance programs.</p>

# Acknowledgments

The City of Ottawa extends its heartfelt gratitude to all who helped develop the Strategy. We begin by honouring Advisory Group members, whose unwavering commitment to poverty reduction has been instrumental in guiding this work:

- Heather Norris, President and CEO, Ottawa Network for Education
- Hector Addison, Chief Servant Officer, African Canadian Association of Ottawa
- Henry Akanko, Director, Hire Immigrants Ottawa, representing United Way East Ontario
- Matthew Beutel, Executive Director, Lowertown Community Resource Centre, representing the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres
- Marc d'Orgeville, Executive Director, Centre d'éducation financière EBO, representing the Financial Literacy Action Network of Ottawa
- Michael Maidment, President and CEO, Ottawa Community Foundation
- Rachael Wilson, Chief Executive Director, representing the Ottawa Food Bank and its partner agencies
- Rebecca Dorris, Director of Advocacy, Parkdale Food Centre, representing the Ottawa Community Food Partnership, replacing Meredith Kerr on the Advisory Group in 2024
- Reuben Nashali, Executive Coordinator, Social Planning Council of Ottawa
- Sarah Taylor, Director, Community Safety and Well-Being, Policy and Analytics at the City of Ottawa





Our deepest thanks go to the 354 individuals who engaged in the roundtable discussions and listening sessions. Their dedication, commitment and invaluable insights have been pivotal in shaping the Strategy's approach and priorities.

The City also extends a special thank you to Elder Thomas Louttit, who attended the first roundtable, and Elder Irene Compton, who attended the second roundtable, as they ensured our work began the right way and led with an Indigenous focus.

Thanks to the people with lived and living experiences of poverty who participated in our engagements and leveraged their experience. Your courage in sharing your stories has deeply influenced this document, bringing authenticity and urgency to our collective efforts.

Thanks to Tamarack Institute for guiding the collective-impact approach and facilitating the roundtables. Thanks also to the various experts who lent their specialized knowledge to refine the pillars, priorities and sub-priorities:

- Tim Li, Research Program Coordinator, PROOF, University of Toronto
- Cassandra Olsthoorn, Executive Director, Arts Network Ottawa, Steering Committee member, Ottawa Cultural Alliance
- Jane Duchscher, Executive Director, Ottawa Community Loan Fund
- Grace Xin, Vice-President, Philanthropic Services and Community Building, Ottawa Community Foundation
- Hindia Mohamoud, Former Executive Director, Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership
- Jephthée Elysée, Associate Executive Director, Conseil Économique et Social d'Ottawa Carleton

Lastly, the City acknowledges the significant efforts of all City staff involved in the Strategy's development and consultations. Your leadership and expertise have been essential in drafting a strategy that reflects the community's needs and aspirations.

# Stay up to date

Thank you for reading the new Poverty Reduction Strategy. Follow strategy implementation, progress and news through the City's [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan website](#).



# Appendices



## Appendix A:

# Participating organizations

African, Caribbean and Black Wellness and Resource Centre  
Alliance to End Homelessness  
Alliance to End Homelessness—Expert Steering Team  
All Nations International Development Agency Food Bank  
Anti-Racism, Gender and Women Equity, City of Ottawa  
Capital City Mission  
Centre de Ressources Communautaires de la Basse-Ville  
Centre d'éducation Financière  
Centretown Churches Social Action Committee  
Centretown Community Association  
Centretown Community Health Centre  
Citizens for Public Justice  
Coalition of Community Developers  
Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres  
Comité Réseau d'Ottawa  
City of Ottawa City Council

City of Ottawa Community Safety, Well-Being, Policy & Analytics  
City of Ottawa Community and Social Services  
City of Ottawa Employment and Social Services  
City of Ottawa Housing and Homelessness Services  
City of Ottawa Planning, Development and Building Department  
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario  
Council on Aging  
Downtown Rideau Business Improvement Area  
Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre  
Financial Literacy Action Network Ottawa  
Gloucester Emergency Food Cupboard  
Harmony House  
Hire Immigrants Ottawa  
Housing Managers Collective  
Integral North  
Jewish Family Services of Ottawa

John Howard Society of Ottawa

Just Food

Keynote Group

Mooshu Ice Cream

Multifaith Housing Initiative

Nutrition Blocs

Operation Come Home

Options Housing Non-Profit Housing Corporation

Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition

Ottawa and District Labour Council

Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses

Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women

Ottawa Community Benefits Network

Ottawa Community Food Partnership

Ottawa Community Foundation

Ottawa Community Housing

Ottawa Disability Coalition

Ottawa Food Bank

Ottawa Network for Education

Ottawa Public Health

Parkdale Food Centre—Community Advocates

Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre

Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre

Salvation Army—Ottawa Booth Centre

The Door Youth Centre

The Ottawa Mission

Up with Women

Vanier Community Resource Centre

Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre

## Appendix B:

# Alignment with City Plans and Strategies

The table below outlines key municipal government strategies and plans that speak to poverty in Ottawa, and where the Strategy aligns with them. The consulted departments—and the specific plans and strategies discussed with them—are highlighted with an asterisk.

Title of plan/strategy	Department	Areas of alignment
<u>City's Strategic Plan 2023–2026</u>	All City departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic objective of “A city that has affordable housing and is more livable for all.”</li> <li>• Focus on improving access to services for health, mental health, emergencies, employment and substance use issues.</li> <li>• Prioritizes meaningful system-level change.</li> </ul>
<u>Official Plan*</u>	All City departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans for the greatest densities of housing to be near transit and ensures that these areas are mixed-use and walkable.</li> <li>• Prioritizes walking, cycling and transit, which advances local health and climate objectives.</li> <li>• Plans for 15-minute neighbourhoods “where daily and weekly needs can be accessed within a 15-minute walk.” The 15-minute neighbourhoods framework enables more resilient development through enabling diversity in affordable housing types, and making a greater mix of land uses more viable, including more access to food retail, community amenities, greenspace, public facilities and other local services.</li> </ul>

Title of plan/strategy	Department	Areas of alignment
<a href="#">Transportation Master Plan*</a>	Transit Services Planning, Development and Building Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong equity lens and commitment to apply it to planning, including transportation routes through priority neighbourhoods. People on low income are more likely to need and use public transportation.</li> <li>• Plans for a robust and accessible network of pedestrian and cycling facilities to ensure people of all ages and abilities have the option to walk and cycle to their destinations.</li> </ul>
Zoning By-law*	Planning, Development and Building Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater density and height permissions and reduced setbacks allow for more residential units to be built, particularly in key locations near local amenities (food, retail, transit, etc.).</li> <li>• Flexible land uses ensure that there are more opportunities for a variety of housing forms and non-residential uses, including home based businesses.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Housing and Homelessness Plan*</a>	Community and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves the same people as the Poverty Reduction Strategy.</li> <li>• Alignment identified across all pillars.</li> <li>• As people move through different types of housing and seek stability, they need different kinds of support. The Poverty Reduction Strategy addresses this need.</li> </ul>
Human Service Integration*	Community and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment with service review opportunities and human services integration projects</li> <li>• Alignment with emerging integrative approach to service coordination.</li> <li>• Working towards an integrated first point of access to social services and simplifying access to the wraparound services and benefits that individuals need.</li> </ul>

Title of plan/strategy	Department	Areas of alignment
<u>Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan</u> *	Strategic Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships with diverse economic development organizations (e.g., racialized, immigrant and Francophone communities).</li> <li>Connecting job seekers with employment opportunities, especially the economic integration of immigrants into the workforce.</li> <li>Support for creative job industries and small businesses.</li> <li>Ensuring economic development is equitable and inclusive.</li> </ul>
<u>Climate Change Master Plan, and Climate Resiliency Strategy</u> *	Strategic Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate change affects our communities, economy and natural environment. Low income and equity-denied groups face higher risks due to climate change, as they are frequently less able to prepare for or respond to major climate change threats (e.g. extreme heat, extreme weather events, flooding and power outages).</li> </ul>
Nutritious Food Basket*	Ottawa Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ottawa Public Health conducts the Nutritious Food Basket to measure the minimum cost of healthy eating and produces reports about income pressures and the inability to afford nutritious food by different population groups.</li> <li>Uses results from the surveys to advocate for policies to increase income to effectively address the root cause of household food insecurity.</li> </ul>
<u>Anti-Racism Strategy, and Women and Gender Equity Strategy</u> *	Community and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intersectionality</li> <li>Aligned understanding. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of demands placed on people experiencing systemic barriers</li> <li>The need for strategies to facilitate participation in development and implementation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Title of plan/strategy	Department	Areas of alignment
Rural Affairs* Portfolio	Rural Affairs Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration for people living in rural areas, including how assets, gaps and barriers are different in urban and rural contexts—for example, access to services, transportation and community networks.</li> </ul>

Other departments and service areas in the City that have been engaged including Children’s Services, Recreation, Culture and Facility Services, Employment and Social Services from the Community and Social Service Department, in addition to various service areas in Planning, Development and Building Department, Finance and Corporate Services, and Ottawa Public Health.

## Appendix C:

# Acronyms

<b>2SLGBTQ+</b>	Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and more. The Plus sign is inclusive of Questioning, Intersex, and/or gender diverse or non-binary)
<b>ARS</b>	City of Ottawa Anti-Racism Strategy
<b>BIA</b>	Business Improvement Area
<b>CHRC</b>	Community Health and Resource Centre
<b>CSWB</b>	Community Safety and Well-Being
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>OAC</b>	Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition

<b>OCFP</b>	Ottawa Community Food Partnership
<b>OCH</b>	Ottawa Community Housing
<b>ODSP</b>	Ontario Disability Support Program
<b>OFB</b>	Ottawa Food Bank
<b>OPH</b>	Ottawa Public Health
<b>OW</b>	Ontario Works
<b>PRS</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy
<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women
<b>WGES</b>	City of Ottawa Women and Gender Equity Strategy

# Appendix D:

## Glossary

### **15-minute neighbourhoods**

A place with a mix of land uses where people can access retail and services within 15 minutes by walking or using a walking-speed mode of transportation.<sup>41</sup>

### **Anti-racism, anti-racist**

An action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression. It is a process, a systematic method of analysis and a proactive course of action to eliminate racism as a system. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent, and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.<sup>42</sup>

### **Asset based**

Developed existing resources the skills of local residents, the power of local associations and the functions of local institutions.<sup>43</sup>

### **Backbone support**

Dedicated staff who perform key functions such as communications and event organization for collective-impact projects.<sup>44</sup>

### **Collective impact**

A form of collaboration that brings people together in a structured way to focus on a common agenda and plan of action to address a complex social problem.<sup>45</sup>

### **Community hub**

A public space in which several community and neighbourhood groups work together to offer a range of activities, programs and services.<sup>46</sup>

### **Community wealth building**

Using the skills of people and the capabilities of local organizations to help improve the community.

### **Community advocates**

People who have lived and living experience of hardships, barriers, discrimination and stigma. They carry unique knowledge from these experiences and share it to help solve problems such as poverty.

### **Economic abuse**

A form of violence in which an abuser controls, exploits or sabotages a victim's financial resources. Victims lose economic self-sufficiency, which threatens their financial security.<sup>47</sup>

## **Equity**

A principle and process that promotes fair conditions for all persons to fully participate in society.<sup>48</sup>

## **Evidence based and evidence informed**

Policies, programs and initiatives derived from or informed by the most current and valid empirical research, data and measurement.<sup>49</sup>

## **Food insecurity**

Inadequate or insecure access to sufficient, relevant and acceptable food due to a lack of money. Food insecurity ranges in severity from someone being worried about running out of food, to not being able to afford a balanced diet, to going hungry.<sup>50</sup>

## **Gender lens**

An analytical approach to assess civic engagement programs and materials with particular attention to gender imbalances or biases. Using a gender lens reveals how content and approaches are shaped by or biased toward the perspectives of people of one or another gender.<sup>51</sup>

## **Indigenous rights**

First Nations, Inuit and Métis are rights-holding as First Peoples of Canada, and do not consider themselves part of equity-denied groups.<sup>52</sup> There has been a significant change in understanding Canada's nation-to-nation and government relationship with Indigenous Peoples and a renewed focus on taking responsibility for truth and reconciliation.<sup>53</sup> As such, this strategy reconciliation. The PRS puts emphasis on recognizing

and acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' rights to the land, and committing to continuously working in partnership to understand historical disadvantage that continues to serve as a barrier to poverty alleviation.

## **Intersectionality**

An analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's identity—such as sex, gender, age and ethnicity—combine to create forms of discrimination and privilege.<sup>54</sup>

## **Labour market**

Where buyers of labour (employers) and sellers of labour (employees) meet to satisfy job requirements within the economy or marketplace.<sup>55</sup>

## **Lived and living experience of poverty**

Being directly affected by past or current experiences of poverty. People who have lived or living experience may be community advocates with insights to inform and improve programs, policies and systems.<sup>56</sup>

## **Living wage**

A wage rate that is locally calculated and considered adequate pay for individuals and families to live on. In contrast, a minimum wage is an hourly rate set by the province.<sup>57</sup>

## Low-income household

A household with an income that is 50 per cent below the median household income.<sup>58</sup>

## Poverty

The condition of a person who lacks the resources, means, choices and power needed to have and keep a basic living standard, and to participate in society.<sup>59</sup>

## Racialized

A person perceived as socially different from the majority based on skin colour, origin, language or other characteristics. In Canada, “racialized minority” usually refers to non-white people.<sup>60</sup>

## Racialized lens

An analytical approach that accounts for the way someone may be racialized. The City of Ottawa’s Poverty Reduction Strategy uses the racialized lens to see how people’s experiences of poverty may involve issues such as racism, stereotyping and racial profiling.

## Social determinants of health

Non-medical factors that influence health. They include the conditions in which someone lives such as income, housing, education, employment, food security and access to health care.<sup>61</sup>



### **Social enterprise**

A revenue-generating organization that strives to make a social impact such as reducing poverty, educating people or making services more affordable. Social enterprises include businesses that have a social purpose, charities that operate a related business and businesses that donate to charity.<sup>62</sup>

### **Social procurement**

Conducting procurement in ways that promote building healthy, diverse, and inclusive communities, which includes creating training and employment opportunities, promoting diverse workforces and supply chains, combatting poverty, and enhancing social inclusion.<sup>63</sup>

### **Strengths based**

A process that recognizes and builds on individuals' and community capabilities. The strengths-based process counters practices that reduce people and communities to their problems and what they lack.<sup>64</sup>

### **Structural and systemic**

Deeply embedded in social structures and systems such as laws, policies and practices. For example, structural racism describes policies and practices that exclude, marginalize, or exploit Indigenous, Black and other racialized people. Structural racism is supported by institutional power and by powerful and often unexamined ideas, which make racism look normal and justified. Structural racism allows individuals to perpetrate racism or reinforce racist ideas.<sup>65 66</sup>

### **Talent mapping**

A way for a group or community to match community members' skills to organizations that need them.

### **Wraparound services**

Assistance, referrals and other kinds of support to help people in all areas of their lives. For example, a community hub may provide primary health care, addiction-treatment services and referrals for housing options all in one service centre.<sup>67</sup>

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