

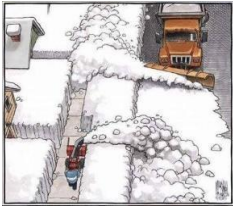
## Section 2

## A Systems Primer

### Understanding Some Important Concepts:

For this discussion and the activity that will hopefully follow it, we first need to take a look at some concepts or principles that have been applied to the consideration of doing things differently. While there are many amazing philosophies and ways of thinking about things, we will be focusing in on a powerful few. Systems thinking, collective impact, outward accountability, the holistic nature of humans, and the stages of change. We are looking not at what we do, but how we do it. We are looking at how to get into a frame of mind and way of being that will change the way our communities operate.

**Setting the Stage for Systems Thinking:** In an example from the news: A 2016 report by Alberta's auditor general Merwan Saher highlighted numerous problems with the AISH system such as excessive delays between levels of approval, complicated and indecipherable application forms, rejections due to minor details that could have easily been resolved earlier in the process, and clients receiving lower benefits than they were entitled to. The bureaucratic nightmare was such that, at the time, Saher concluded, "The department does not know what it needs to change to improve the program."



At the time of this news story, the government had taken measures to streamline the process and was now considering how to properly resource it to ensure sustainability and prevent staff burnout, which was a step in a good direction. However this serves as an example of how a system can be so dysfunctional that it can't see how to fix itself, which often leads to continued ignoring and shifting or avoiding responsibility until a crisis occurs that can't be ignored (in this case over many years and at a cost to vulnerable Canadians, the people who work in the system, as well as taxpayers).

The change was mandated from the outside to improve that system's interaction with others and the crisis was so severely felt internally that the system was open to making changes, even though things would be uncomfortable for a while. If the action follows through and those resources are found and provided, things might be looking up. Although to be cynically realistic, in another systems story, this time a "tragedy," the bottom line of the cost of this "resourcing" might mean less increases for the AISH payment in the foreseeable future. This will occur if more money is put into hiring more administration to deal with the symptoms of the problem and not enough investment is made in administration looking to see what their practices and inefficiencies may be contributing to the problem.

**Systems Thinking for Social Change:** We have adapted much of the concepts and treatment of Systems Thinking from David Peter Stroh's Systems Thinking for Social Change with supporting documentation from other sources.



Systems thinking influences and drives change within a change management framework. Incorporating systems thinking into a systems approach is helpful within these scenarios (Stroh, 2015):

- A chronic problem has been resistant to best efforts toward a solution
- Diverse stakeholders with shared intentions are having difficulty aligning their efforts
- Parts of a system try to optimize their action without understanding the impact on the rest
- Short term efforts work against the intended outcome

- There are a large number of different initiatives happening at the same time
- Continuous learning is being stunted by the promotion of particular solutions

All of these scenarios describe the current situation in homelessness management for many if not all communities in Canada, even the ones that are making progress and gains toward “Ending Homelessness.” It must be noted that when expressing that phrase, most stakeholders, in any sector recognize that there will always be a certain element of homelessness. Things happen that even the best run community cannot control so that there may be short episodes of homelessness. But if a community is set up in the right way those episodes are few and short lived. For our purposes here, it is the effective processes of identifying underlying causes and working with individuals and families to provide “Homefulness” options and pathways to housing sustainability that is universally identified as “Ending Homelessness.” Perhaps more appropriately it could be referred to as “Ending Hopelessness.”

A five “stage” model for leading systemic change (Stroh, 2015) consists of:

- Creating readiness for change
- Understanding and accepting the current reality
- Committing to make the change
- Doing the work to move from current reality to the shared vision.
- And then continuing in a pattern of learning, assessing and mutual accountability to keep things flexing forward.

An expanded treatment of this process can be found in Section 4.

**The Value of Alignment:** At the Social Impact Exchange 2017 Annual Conference on Scaling Impact, Atul Gawande, a surgeon, renowned writer and public health researcher, made a case for alignment. He stated that we are not making progress against the great social problems of our times, not because we don’t know what works, because we do. And it is not due to a lack of resources either. It is due to a lack of a system to implement what works.



Gawande shared his research in finding out “what are the good systems doing?” In one study they realized that in successful hospitals teams behaved, well... more like teams. His researchers found 19 key practices, mostly around communication that set successful hospitals apart from others. In situations of complexity, Gawande suggests, we often want to subdivide the jobs, which leads to a sense of pulling in different directions- demoralization, burnout, anger, frustration. When we pull in the same direction, and these teams that were successful were doing that, it becomes almost effortless, beautiful and fun. And outcomes improve. In another study they found that aligning care with the goals of the individuals being served decreased depression, even increased length of life and quality of life. (Gawande, 2017)

**Innovation without follow through:** Gawande addresses a fixation with breakthrough innovation and not enough on follow through innovation, or understanding systems and working out how to scale those breakthroughs to increase their reach and make real differences on a broader scale. (Gawande, 2017) This is a theme that has echoed through our research and experience with communities. The demand for more innovation is beginning to be challenged by a cry for resources and support to take these great ideas and implement them in more places on a larger scale. It is not enough to have good ideas and great innovation if they cannot be repeated or more broadly applied. But implementing them on a large enough scale to make a difference



requires systems changes that are often not taken into account, or resourced. As Patrick McCarthy of the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggests “A bad system always trumps a good program.” However, what many are voicing in the area of social change is that when we get people together with the right mindset, focus on relationships, and convene all the voices in the right way with the right attitudes, intentions and good information, the solutions happen.

**Overcoming systems barriers to scaling:** In an introduction of the topic of Systems Change at the same conference, Fay Hanleybrown, a Managing Director of Financial Services Group states that although the accepted model has been to “pilot, prove, scale,” many interventions have not been able to be scaled because the system dynamics involved work against it. She shares some collected advice from Foundation CEO’s who are beginning to confront the system at the start of their efforts.



- Focus on building relationships and networks. Influencing rather than trying to control will increase ability to effect change within other entities.
- Build and strengthen relationships between entities that are part of the system and creating or affecting the problem.
- Look for leverage points which are sometimes outside of the non-profit sector.
- Understanding motivations and incentives can help influence the behaviour of entities in the other sectors and help change policy.
- Elevate the voices of those with lived experience.
- Work to understand and inform the narratives that underlie public response to the problem.
- Motivate the public to think differently about the problem in such a way that causes them to change *their* behaviour to solve the problem rather than imposing popular programmatic solutions.

(Hanleybrown, 2017)

### Scaling up our own awareness and behaviour to “be the change we wish to see:”



Jamshid Gharajedaghi, author of *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity* (2011), discusses five principles that will contribute to readiness for understanding and treating the systems within which we work.

- *Open systems* (of which human beings are one example as a subsystem within populations, or organizations which are subsystems within communities, which are also systems) can only be understood in the context of their environments. Some elements can be controlled, others not, but some can be influenced. This means that we must be willing to look through other lenses than our own, at the elements present in the environments of others. And as a community, our particular context must be considered within any intervention or innovation.
- To be *purposeful* means to be responsive and autonomous rather than reactive, to be driven by values, free will, adaptation and creativity, rather than reacting to occurrences in our environment.
- *Multidimensionality* is really the ability to see how things that seem to be opposing can coexist, interact and be complementary. It requires empathy and compassion as well as humility.

- *Emergent properties* are the “whole” versus its separate parts, but are also a product of the interactions of the parts rather than the sum of the actions of the parts. So, they are not only understood in terms of being, but also as a process of becoming. This means that the process or journey is (at least) as important as the “destination.” Understanding this concept can help us create added value to our activities by teasing out the layered opportunities for more than one population or sector in our community that is engaged with or impacted by our solution making activities.
- *Counterintuitive behaviour* refers to the state in which actions intended to produce a certain outcome might lead to a different result. There are a number of layers involved in this. First, we may apply an action to a problem, thinking it should solve that problem, but in actual fact it makes it worse. Think about prisons, shelters, meal programs. Each of these may seem like a good means to an end of something. But if not done in the right way (e.g. receiving funding for cells or beds filled, or disempowering individuals and families) it actually leads to increasing the use of these things, rather than diminishing them. Conversely, we may think that decreasing meal provision or prisons, or shelter beds might be problematic, but doing so opens the way to solutions for the actual problem those things were meant to fix.

Social systems are resistant to change due to comfort level, fear or uncertainty about what comes next for those working within the systems, and the phenomenon that creates benefit from an obstruction to those who are charged with moving it. Industries and economies are created around the problems we are trying to solve as passive adaptation to deteriorating environments and unsustainable solutions lead us slowly to disaster. Our only hope to stop the madness and have the resources to move beyond it and into new experiences as humanity is to change the paradigm and shift our industry and economies around the activities that lead to the amelioration and prevention of the core causes of those symptomatic at best “problems.”

You can find a link to Jamshid Gharajedaghi ‘s book here:

[https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=b0g9AUVo2uUC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=systems+thinking+stories&ots=CDUc2wbG9s&sig=IXLciUx\\_WmaK8vPt9Bvr1TuOdGk#v=onepage&q=systems%20thinking%20stories&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=b0g9AUVo2uUC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=systems+thinking+stories&ots=CDUc2wbG9s&sig=IXLciUx_WmaK8vPt9Bvr1TuOdGk#v=onepage&q=systems%20thinking%20stories&f=false)

Obstacles to developmental processes and social change are on page 63. Obstruction to development is covered on page 79-80

In a talk at the Social Impact Exchange 2017 Annual Conference on Scaling Impact, David Peter Stroh provided some powerful insights and the pathways required to scale up solutions. He started with the posit that systems seem to have a life of their own with us providing input and systems doing what they want. There are elements and forces at work within systems and we have to learn how to work with them or we unconsciously work against them. We may understand the idea of openness, that everything is connected to everything, but we don’t really know what to do with those connections. We notice the counterintuitive results of social and justice efforts such as homeless shelters perpetuating homelessness, food aid increasing starvation, tough prison sentences that don’t actually reduce the social ills they are designed for. But we don’t really know how to do things differently to get different results and move the outcomes forward. So, what is happening? (Stroh, 2017)

### Conventional versus Systems Thinking:



Conventional thinking, according to Stroh (2017), tells us that when we apply a solution to a problem it fixes the problem. Conventional thinking tells us that we should apply more of the solution when the problem persists. Short term gains can fool us into thinking that whatever we do is working and we should do more of it. But if conceived of and implemented without the big picture (how all the parts fit together and relate to each other), these solutions lead to long term consequences that ultimately undermine the gains we have seen in the short term.

Systems thinking, and our history with big social problems tells us that most quick fixes are not going to make a sustainable difference and can actually make things worse. Stroh suggests we can get caught in a trap of “better before worse” when in actuality, worse before better usually works best. If it’s hard, we are making investments, feeling the short-term pain, creating opportunity for accountability for more than the “helpers”, creating fuel for cognitive dissonance and crisis that motivates different behaviour, and having to work at it before we see the results, then that means we are changing something.

It is hard to see or admit that what we are doing is contributing to the problem or is a barrier to the solution. Conventional thinking is linear- cause and effect. Systems thinking recognizes that there is a difference between the system as we see it and the root causes of that system. Conventional thinking shifts the burden to the intervener, disempowering and entitling the subject of the intervention (Stroh, 2017). Systems thinking recognizes that we are each, however unknowingly, in small or big ways, part of the problem, but also part of the solution, too! And this shifts the burden to... everyone. There is a clear recognition that there is something everyone can do, which leads to empowerment and accountability, increase in resources and opportunities, shared weight of the responsibility and pathways into synergy. Stroh suggests in *Systems Thinking for Social Impact* (2015) that the first leverage point is to be aware of and challenge our own intentions, thinking and behaviour.

Conventional thinking suggests treating and quantifying each part separately. Systems thinking works from a place of improving the relationships between each part of a system. We can all recognize that the correct application of lubricant in an engine prevents so many “symptoms,” enhances the performance and extends the life of that engine. When the relationships between the parts are healthy, the problems seem to dissipate. The way of being of each element of the system naturally eliminates the frictions and “symptoms” that we used to see as the actual problems that needed to be fixed. Conventional thinking leads us to believe that when problems are so big and complex, we should throw everything at them as fast as we can. Systems thinking recognizes that systems respond better through leverage with a few “key, coordinated changes sustained over time” (Stroh, 2015).

### Convening:

Convening, or organizing the gathering, for a purpose, of stakeholders, plays a key role in developing solutions. First, it helps increase and strengthen relationships, providing safe places for important conversations. Second, it provides opportunity for participants to work through and toss around the very best of what they are doing in their worlds with the added context of everyone else’s world. If entered into with openness and humility it can increase understanding of each other’s challenges and what impacts their abilities to do what they do. Then a picture develops of how each can adjust what they do and how they do it to provide greater alignment and cohesion.

### Outward Accountability:

With an inward mindset, (we) may think only about (our own) needs, challenges, and objectives relative to a given problem. Organizations (and communities) may become more siloed, more conflict-prone, as departments and offices focus on solving their piece of the puzzle. (It is common practice to) try to protect (our current resources) at the expense of organizational (or community) interests... (and) blame others for our inability to solve the problem.

With an outward mindset, (we) focus on collective results... (and) can have difficult conversations about resource allocation, roles, and responsibilities without feeling the need to protect...siloes, defend...decisions, or appear in certain ways. (We) might frame the problem differently, allowing (us) to see new possibilities for solutions and new directions for problem-solving. (Arbinger Institute, 2017. Parentheses added)

### Way of Being as key in communication:



As authors and practitioners in the area of marriage and family therapy and psychology, namely communication, Helen LaKelly Hunt, Ph.D. and Harville Hendrix, Ph.D., have been doing some interesting field study in this area. They spoke about this in an interview on *Marie TV* in October 2018. They are interested in scaling up the effects of their developing best practices and creating a movement toward a more relational civilization wherein everyone is equal and safe and where all conversations are safe. They have found on a couples, organizational and community level, that simply practicing a relational method of communication actually eliminates the “problems” that people were feeling that they needed to solve.

They suggest that as human beings we have a strong need to be heard, understood and to feel safe. When this need is not met, negativity, judgement and justification ensue and this interrupts creativity, exploration and curiosity, all elements that are required in solution making as well as problem preventing, for that matter! If we can talk without judgement we can connect beyond our differences (Hunt, Henrix, 2018).

We discover in ourselves what others hide from us, and we recognize in others what we hide from ourselves-Luc de Clapiers (18th century French writer and moralist)

So, it is the space between us where much of the problem often lies and if we can bridge that, problems can be eliminated. In the Dallas Project, as part of the Mayor’s Taskforce on Poverty, this was demonstrated on a community scale, in one of the most socioeconomically challenged parts of the community. They found that the communal dialogue introduced by Hunt and Henrix began healing the connection between the different cultures and groups in Dallas. Even (and this is without actually being part of the initial study) between the groups in their target area and other population groups within the city as people began using these skills within the context of other interactions and relationships (Hunt, Henrix, 2018).

In practice, simply coming together over problems in the ways that we have described, much of the “problems” that have been perceived, based on assumptions perpetuated within systems dynamics, actually disappear. In other



words, when we can make changes in the way we operate within a system, we can change the systems in which we are operating. Thusly, we can change the outcomes. It becomes about connecting as human beings and sharing our stories.

These ideas are not new. They have been being practiced for decades, but they are not as common as they need to be today. And these are some of the innovative solutions that need to be “scaled” into a culture and way of being in community care and social support. Our way of being with each other has as much, if not more impact on solving social problems as anyone or series of “innovative interventions.” Changing our way of being as a community can change our systems, and that is what the Momentum Project hopes to help communities get to a place of being able to do. This is also what Indigenous ways and teachings encourage us to do. A subject that will be undertaken in “chapter 2” of *The Story of Us*, found in Appendix 1.

### **Building a shared vision: feel the power**

Beginning with the end in mind, having everyone rowing in the same direction, and other sage epithets, demonstrate the need for creating a shared vision from which everyone can work and into which everyone is able to weave what matters most to them. The concept of creating a shared vision is something most who are involved in collective impact or supporting change have heard and participated in. It is key in collective impact and systems thinking. According to Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, the building of a shared vision lacks a critical underpinning if practiced without systems thinking.



“The problem lies not in shared visions themselves, so long as they are developed carefully... The problem lies in our reactive orientation toward current reality. Vision becomes a living force only when people truly believe they can shape their future. The simple fact is that (many) do not experience that they are contributing to creating their current reality. So, they don’t see how they can contribute to changing that reality.” (Peter Senge, 1990, parentheses added).

From the perspective of the Momentum Project, the innovation and the ability to scale it up occurs in how we incentivize and support communities to come together, change their existing paradigms and create sustainable practices that align their sectors and systems around the success and thrive-ability of each community member. Knowing and trusting that in this process, which can be as diverse as each community, but contains several universally applicable concepts, everyone will get what they need and more by and through the processes and practices that are organized and adopted.

### **Understanding the mechanics of change**



Change is the easiest and the hardest thing we, as human beings, have to do. When we think about it, one tiny adjustment in an attitude, a physical direction, a perspective, can impact what comes next and even more so down the line. Think of flying a plane and adjusting the heading by even half a degree. It doesn’t take long before we are on a different course, that if not adjusted, will take us somewhere different from where we were initially headed. In order to bring each adjustment into being, there is a process of behind the scenes activity undertaken by our brain and nervous system, sometimes long, and considered, and sometimes more primal and instinctive, that involves a number of elements.

As human components of the systems in which we engage, and each of us unique, with varied inputs into the sum of who we are, the process becomes even more complex. But humans are systems that also tend toward homeostasis, which means we, as a system seek equilibrium between the interdependent elements. It is a strong physiological aspect, that can lead to apathy or adapting to the lowest point, but physiology is affected by our mental and emotional states. This means we have a choice. We have to consciously, intentionally and consistently make the choice to do things differently, that we see as best to do, even if it is uncomfortable for a bit. Change doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens because of certain things that are going on in our internal and external environments, a complex mix of events, pressures, and influencers. If this is true, then we literally *can* be the change we wish to see, especially when we work together. And that is very encouraging, indeed.

In any situation involving or requiring change, it is important to determine how ready we are for it. It is the same for individual humans as it is for organizations or communities. The Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the late 1970s has been adapted or tapped into for many successful applications along the lines of change management. It provides a quick readiness assessment that would be helpful for any community embarking on systemic change activity to help gauge where in the process different elements in the community are, personally, as organizations and as a community as a whole. This can be the first step in figuring out how to move forward. Sometimes we can convince others to work with us and sometimes we have to find "work arounds" and leveraging points to help us, and everyone else, get to next steps.

#### **The Transtheoretical Model (or Stages of Change):**

Stage	State of being
Precontemplation	No intention of taking action, not considering consequences, fearful of making any changes, avoiding new information.
Contemplation	Some sort of crisis has happened that creates some dissonance. The price of staying the same starts to outweigh the cost of change, accepting responsibility for and therefore power to make some changes.
Preparation	Moving toward making a commitment, learning, gathering resources,
Action	Significant changes in behaviour are occurring, assignments have been made
Maintenance	The hardest part is over, is now the work of holding ground and laying a foundation for more growth. We have changed the status quo but we don't want to stay there so we look for other opportunities to tweak and improve what we do and start the process over again.

#### **Using the stages of change and development to form a community model of care:**

In Appendix B- 4 Directions community planning, we have paired the Stages of Change model with a developmental model, adapted from the Medicine Wheel, depicting four stages of development. Note: There are numerous Indigenous cultures each with their own variations on a theme, and we are using one version or teaching of that model to help us represent the holistic nature of a community continuum of care. In one iteration of the Medicine wheel we identify the cycle of life: birth, youth, adulthood, and eldership. These represent chronological life phases but can also describe where a person is at in any life domain.



- Babyhood can represent crisis: As babies we are dependent on others, often with high and demanding needs. It is the role of society and our families to take care of us and guide us as we grow to greater ability and self-reliance. A person in crisis is vulnerable and fragile, like an infant, and requires a lot of concentrated care to help them get past the crisis, but they also have the potential to be a contributor, if they get the right kind of help. In this phase they are moving from a state of precontemplation into one of contemplation. Crisis has created a situation where they are considering whether the price of change is greater or less than the cost for staying the same and contemplating what either would look like. As a community we need to help make the price of change easier to bear, if we want to see different outcomes. (physical)
- Youth is a time for learning, so in the next phase the person has grown enough past their initial needs to start moving forward in their lives. They need to learn some things and acquire some tools and resources to help them do so. This equates with the preparation stage described in the Stages of Change. (mental)
- Adulthood- Once a skill is learned, it needs to be mastered by practice in the real world. Adulthood is equated with the period of mastery as we take on more responsibility and accountability and apply what we have learned. It equates with the action phase of the Stages of Change. (emotional)
- Eldership is a time of wisdom sharing and transcendence. After a skill is mastered, in order to continue to keep it fresh and vibrant, we mentor, or teach others. This phase equates with maintenance. We have made the commitment, we are set in our new way of doing things and now we can walk with others, lending our strength to their journey. This adds a new layer to who we are and to our experience. (spiritual)

Relapse, as part of the Stages of Change, can occur at any time along this continuum. When this happens, and it usually does, to some degree, we pick things up at an accessible point on the continuum and continue to move forward. We can come into this continuum at any stage, depending on where we are at in any domain, and this determines the types of concerns and activities we will be having within that domain. People can be at any stage of this continuum in a given domain, and often are at different stages in different domains at the same time.

The potential that comes with multi-sector community alignment adds another layer to this. In our model we have also imposed concentric rings that represent the different sectors of a community or society. This demonstrates the potential links between sectors and the opportunities and accountabilities that are inherent in an intentional, mindful, examination of the stages of change and continuum of development against a social challenge such as homelessness and its contributors. Elders, mentors, teachers, are there for the learners, and those who are mastering skills can assist the ones in babyhood or crisis. They need opportunities to help, to serve, to strengthen their skills. In Appendix A: The Story of Us, we have provided information about the various populations, entities and sectors involved in community. A developmental treatment of a community can help us think about and envision:

- That each different phase of development offers something to the other. And each sector takes a role in that process.
- The ways in which every person or entity in a community has things they need at their particular point in their journey, and things they can offer to the journey of others.
- How walking with learners can help those who are mastering skills, they in turn can be supported by a mentor.

- How those who have reached eldership in a domain are able to, in their wisdom and experience, be patient and understanding of the foibles of someone in babyhood in that same domain, who, in their turn, are grounded and stabilized in the authentic regard offered to them by those who remember what it was like and know there is a way forward.

This layering allows us to create a mindful and comprehensive template for asset mapping, gap analysis and community that gives us a picture of how the sectors are performing and integrating, and what they are requiring to fill their role in a community continuum of care or collective impact.

- In Appendix B we organized a spectrum of community care needs in a table according to each sector's role or accountability, either directly or by supporting another sector, in relation to those experiencing homelessness and its contributing factors (in black).
- Each community will have their own set of needs and related needs and activities.
- There are also domain needs identified (in red) where others have a responsibility to those sectors to help them fulfill their role.

To assist further in community mapping, Appendix C is an example of a spreadsheet that allows space to list who is doing, or needs to do, whatever has been identified in that phase of development in your community.

- It is a way of creating a picture of the integrated nature of the work of each sector, organization, and individual in a community.
- It is a way of taking a look at the entire community and identifying potential resources that can lead to creative solution making and enhanced collective impact.
- It is a way to envision the different aspects of an action and assign them to others in the community to make the most of each opportunity, meeting needs, and therefore stretching resources, through the meeting of other needs.
- Your community can organize it and populate it in the ways that work for you, respective to what you are trying to achieve.

### **Laying the foundation for systems change through understanding the human components**

Introduction: When we talk about systems tragedies and dysfunction, especially in relation to homelessness and its contributing factors, we are talking about impacts on human beings. Individuals in crisis, whatever their personal skills and strengths, often have difficulty managing information, organizing themselves, making decisions and even moving or taking action. Normal emotional reactions or coping strategies are either amplified to the point of dysfunction or compromised to the same end. Sadly, there are two important things to consider. The first is that most of the systems designed to "help" the end users, are staffed by fellow human beings that could also find themselves in the same predicament chronically or episodically due to the nature of the human existence and the stress of unhealthy systems dynamics. Second, these systems can be operating in such a way, or from such a perspective as to make it very difficult for the end users (and those who are supposed to be helping them) to engage successfully.

Many of our human care systems are box checking, criteria filled and unforgiving. David Stoh, author of Systems Thinking for Social Change, suggests that systems are perfectly designed to accomplish what they were designed to

accomplish (2015). The irony is that systems evolve naturally to serve themselves in those tasks, and while this isn't true of all, many have evolved away from having the very people they were designed to help at their centre. There are also inconsistencies across the "human interfaces" of these systems that lead to varied outcomes for systems users. And we need those human interfaces! To fully automate something as personal and human as the social supports we are considering here would be problematic on a number of levels. The disconnected, siloed nature of many of our human care systems are a navigational nightmare for compromised and challenged individuals and the people who are trying to help them. There are too many ways these systems tragedies unfold to detail them here. What might be more useful is to first describe the systems interactions that have shown the best outcomes and then to list a few criteria or considerations for anyone working with vulnerable populations.

Best Practices tell us that systems successes in addressing homelessness (or any complex social challenge) come from such elements as:

- Intentionally creating community environments and interactions that spawn and support mutual respect and accountability, where client and service provider work as a team, and service providers are supported and resourced well.
- Interactions where the power dynamic is balanced and people are able to develop the capacity for self-reliance during their journey through the community continuum of care.
- The services that people do connect with being networked, informed about and able to connect clients to other relevant services and opportunities to create synergy.
- Holistic or wraparound services, supports and resources through coordination with numerous relevant services and sectors.
- Having adequate numbers of sustainable, affordable, and appropriate housing options.
- Services, or more rightly, systems of services that anticipate and are connected into and ready for the next steps when their clients are ready to move forward.
- A shared vision or plan that creates a big picture view which includes all community sectors and stakeholders and informs and creates accountability for the community as a whole.

You may look at these best practices and identify many or all of these within your own organization, and your experience or perception of how you interact with others in the community. But chances are, if you have not yet solved all of those complex social challenges, this is not the case for your whole community. Starting with a really honest and comprehensive check in to see how everyone is experiencing community is the first step to recognizing the systems changes that might need to be made in your neck of the woods. Ensuring that the above described experience is universal in your community will open up new worlds of perspective, possibility, and potential you never dreamed possible. If you are willing to do this you may not need to read farther. But just in case you need them, we have compiled a number of insights and tools to assist, or at least inform, your journey.

### **Criteria and Considerations for your community support activities:**

Addressing Silos: Are we perpetuating siloes or blasting them open? Our investigation and experience with community development and while carrying out this project makes it clear that in spite of some huge community victories, and some gains and progress in this area, or at least some increased awareness, "siloism" is still alive and well in many communities. There are a number of negative consequences of operating this way, including waste of resources, burnout, gaps in support, inefficiency and inconsistency in interventions, service navigation challenges. It is also easier for individuals to abuse disconnected systems, as there is decreased accountability from service

providers, and difficulty in tracking users and outcomes. There are some policy and operational elements that need to change in order to eliminate silos, or the same practices will continue to perpetuate the problem. A multi-sector, systems thinking approach as a community, including three levels of government, humbly, honestly, and intentionally reviewing policy and practice in terms of desired outcomes will go a long way to making more of existing, and helping to prioritize any additional, resources.

Maximization Strategies: Are there more layers of opportunity that can be explored? Meaning, can we meet the needs of one individual or population through meeting the needs of another? For example, someone who is in the mastery phase in a particular domain, can benefit by volunteering in a related capacity within a program that is assisting people who are in crisis in that area. Employment pathways can include peer support opportunities. Another example of this might be creating intergenerational engagement opportunities, where seniors are helping mentor youth while the youth are helping bring social connection and service to the seniors. This has applications for day program and accommodations.

Intentionally engaging persons in recovery from addiction or mental health challenges in community service increases local resources to provide grass-roots, natural community support systems as well as opportunities for meaningful activity that increases connection which fills the voids that fuel addiction. Doing this kind of thing in an organized, cohesive way, with a big picture, multi-sector view, helps communities identify, track and amplify positive outcomes, while decreasing burn out of existing systems and connecting a broad spectrum of elements for opportunity and sustainability.

In a multi-sector context, a community housing project can engage numerous private sector businesses, through contract work. But take it a step further by using this opportunity to develop relationships, increase understanding of the purpose and intent of the project and educate those connected businesses on aspects of the issues being addressed. This can lead to increased capacity and awareness in the private sector to assist vulnerable populations, discussions and collaboration about next steps such as employment pathways development, volunteer opportunities for team building, donation and sponsorship or board service. It can also lead to mentorship and capacity building for social sector organizations regarding private sector engagement and how to do it best, as well as other principles and concepts from the business world that can assist those organizations in next steps and sustainability.

Accountability: Is everyone aware of and being held accountable for their own responsibilities in the activity? This includes the client as well as those providing the services and goes beyond to other means and ways of sustainably supporting the service. It also includes being willing to recognize where services are not achieving outcomes and need to be re-assessed, or re-formed. There is a multi-sector potential and necessity here as we look at how outcomes are being determined, operationalized, evaluated and funded. This includes those with lived experience through to three levels of government and all sectors in between.

Flexibility in funding, for example, can help organizations move with the needs. An integrated, cohesive community system can also help flex across the spectrum of needs more seamlessly, making the best use of the right resources and helping to assess future needs, funding allocations, and deployment of community resources. Best use, allocation, and accountability for staff hours can stretch funding scope and effectiveness. Real-time, on the ground information from lived experience individuals, frontline, formal and informal supports inform these processes. But this only works if, first, people are talking to each other, and second, there is willingness to honestly and authentically work through systems dynamics.

**Realizing Human Potential:** Most importantly, are the people who are being helped being considered as valuable, contributing members of the community and accountable participants in their own solutions? When we operate with this lens we can see beyond the immediate crisis, we see more than deficits. We hold a strengths-based perspective that allows us, even compels us to include clients in their own solutions. This practice leads to considering and including their inherent strengths and characteristics in the community arsenal of (as-yet-to-be-fully) identified and tapped community resources made available through creative, sustainable solution making.

People in these vulnerable populations really, first and foremost, need to be seen and treated as the valuable and capable human beings they are. This theme will repeat over and over in this work, and it should. Systems, and the people who are “cogs” in the machines tend to fall into patterns and practices that work best for the system. Convenience, efficiency, standardization, defaulting to fit the average user, are among many practices that can lead systems to become out of touch from and inaccessible to the kinds of individuals with the kinds of challenges seen in homelessness. It requires consistent effort and mindfulness to begin to enact the right kinds of changes on toxic systems, where practical. It requires humility and bravery to create new ones where necessary. And it requires passionate attention to keep systems centred around the real meaning and mandate of human thriving.

Housing First, as an example, was designed around that uniqueness of need, of the unique situations, different speeds and styles of the individuals being served. When done right, it is very successful, producing the expected outcomes for the most part. But it is not a magic bullet, one-size-fits-all-solution. It is a tool to be used toward a solution. Unless a community is geared toward inclusion, creating opportunities and pathways, walking with and helping to nurture people as potential contributors, more people will fall through the cracks. It can, like any other good intervention, become an entity unto its own self, where lip service is paid to its original intentions, without diligent effort and the awareness that ending homelessness takes a community.

**Overcoming Systems Traps:** There are numerous examples of success stories where individuals and families have moved beyond their crisis and into better circumstances. Many do continue in stability, but a common systems tragedy unfolds when many participants “graduate” from those “successful” programs and no longer have the supports that have helped those programs achieve and report the outcomes they were designed for, and cannot sustain those gains on their own. This doesn’t have to be the case. An important question to ask is why, when the program ends, do we see a continued measure of “recidivism?” Here are a few suggested, systems related answers to that question, gleaned from our research and experience:

**Masking symptoms versus curing the disease:** There are complex needs and deficits, both within the individuals served and within the communities in which they are being served that have been “masked” by an enabling rather than empowering set of supports, and which remain unresolved. This is a common system “archetype,” commonly known as “fixes that backfire.” The seeming “solution” decreases the “symptoms” and renders the problem relatively invisible, so it is deemed to be solved, when in fact there have only been reductions in symptoms. This is comparable to taking symptom medications to feel better from an infection. A person can continue in relative comfort but at some point, the infection, left untreated, defies the effect of those convenient medications. There is a price to be paid, and it is usually the individuals we are trying to help that bear the brunt of it. This systems story bears out eerily like an addiction. Supporting a barriered individual to stay in housing with a swarm of helps with a limited window of time, if the focus is to keep them in housing, can lead to some dependencies on symptom relief that don’t necessarily equip the individual or their community for long term “health.”

Limited and short-sighted funding mandates: Often, there are limited or no efforts toward “next steps” because funding is not flexible in its mandates. So, you will see people perpetually circulating around a set of supports and not being able to move on from there. Funders with good intentions can get in the way of true solutions when they limit the scope of the dollars they are applying to a social problem. If it is aimed at a symptom rather than the cause, it creates a “trough” at which many feeds, but doesn’t lead to lasting change. Organizations spring up or follow the money to deal with a social challenge because there is money to address that challenge. The average model of not-for-profit leads to a dependence on outside funding. That funding is earmarked and organizations are held accountable to use it for the purposes outlined by the funders. Outcomes must be demonstrated, quotas filled, and funders satisfied. When this becomes the “outcome” of funding, we can lose site of the real purposes for it, and the success of a funded approach can be misrepresented.

Different organizations compete for the same funding, or divide it to survive, in a system archetype called “tragedy of the commons.” Where so many are using the same “grazing ground” that it overwhelms the source and limits the sustainability and growth of resources. Prevention work has historically been difficult to quantify and thus justify for funding. This leads to competition and other conditions which erode effectiveness and limit activity to effectively deal with the contributing factors or core causes of that social challenge. It limits the ability of organizations and communities to plan for next steps that solidify gains and lead people forward out of crisis, into stability, and on to thrive-ability. And an uncoordinated social support environment that is not connected outward to other sectors limits the kind of alignment and coordination that can do exactly that.

Systems “sentience” and self-preservation: In the ultimate systems tragedy, organizations or approaches become their own “systems” and begin to exist to perpetuate themselves, losing sight of the good they were made to do. And in fact, lasting change, while it gets more than lip service from many human components of these systems, can actually be undermining to those systems themselves, which, left without checks and balances, will always innately, and unimaginatively, steer themselves toward perpetuation and system preservation. Silos develop, communication all but ceases, and all that precious and finite funding and human capital misses the mark, which is namely to create solutions for those in our society who are vulnerable and suffering. Homelessness has become a billion-dollar business, reporting great gains to justify the expense (and there are great gains, to be sure), but yet people are still ending up homeless, even if it isn’t the same people, which it sometimes is. There are issues that have yet to be resolved in order to stem that tide. Shelters, who get their funding based on beds used, are set up to perpetuate the need for shelters in order to survive. They often come with strict mandates that preclude flexibility that can lead to other more permanently viable solutions. This can be true of any intervention and the systems set up to carry it out.

Those with the most get more: The deficits these vulnerable populations experience play into a common systems “tragedy” in which those that have more get more while those that have less lose out. Besides the usual situations where some opportunities are out of reach for some based on socio-economic disparities, for almost every manufactured advantage that is created in a community, there are people who, for various reasons, are not eligible, cannot access, or do not get picked for the intervention.

This happens with people and it happens with organizations. So, we end up with organizations, that are actually not as effective or efficacious than others, gaining the lion’s share of attention and resources due to their very size and reach and skills that are unrelated to the work needing to be done. If we are going to reverse trends and cycles that lead to homelessness, we need to reverse this mentality and find ways to give those with less the opportunities they



will need to get more. Sustainable ways, that can be counted on to be perpetually available and that help people move out of risk and crisis into stability and self-reliance.

Embedding this mindset and its accompanying principles and practices into the everyday of community activity becomes an imperative. Research and best practice show us that integrated solutions, involving more than one organization and sector in a community can provide the resources and pathways needed to breach these inequities and level the playing field. This is what truly breaks cycles of poverty, underemployment, mental illness, addiction and intergenerational trauma.

There are solutions: There are solutions to these and other systems tragedies. They include taking a good hard look at how and why we are doing what we do, and determining if and how we can do things differently. One important best practice that has emerged from this kind of assessment is that integration leads to sustainability. Focusing on, supporting and scaling up strengths rather than honing in, with band aid solutions, on weaknesses and liabilities helps us have a more holistic view and leads to greater equity and integration of services. This works for individual humans and for communities.

Every person that comes through our doors seeking assistance and support is an individual, unique, and valuable to the community. A strengths-based and value based rather than deficit-based view for all who are serving and assisting them will change everyone's experience. Why we do what we do and how we do what we do become even more important and powerful than what we do. What we do is going to be based on available resources and opportunities, and is often tied to funding. Changing the paradigm can help a community shift from a limited perspective based on funding mandates and scope to considering as a whole what can be done based on the unique needs of the individuals we are currently serving, with the combination of resources that are available.

This perspective allows us to elevate our view from our own grinding wheel to creatively look for other potential resources that can help those we work with be more successful. This way we are constantly looking at how to make up for deficits (those of the people we serve as well as those within our own program or organization), rather than limiting what we do and how effective we can be, because of them.

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### Section 3: Supportive Best Practices Review

The following Best Practices have been identified as important to and interrelated with Systems Thinking within the context of social change and significant to multi-sector community alignment around a continuum of care.

**Collective Impact**-Five conditions recognized as essential for Collective Impact are:

- common agenda or shared vision for the change which includes understanding the problem and a joint approach to its solution;
- shared measurement or agreed upon ways of measuring and reporting outcomes and successes;
- mutually reinforcing activities or key activities that will move people forward in the changes or solutions that have been identified;
- continuous communication across the many players for consistency, cohesiveness and common motivation
- backbone support either within one organization or housed across multiple organizations to help support and guide the vision and strategy of the initiative (*Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011)

**Principles of Practice for Collective Impact**- Collective Impact Forum produced a summary of some Principles of Practice they believe need to inform and be added to the Five conditions to help prepare the ground for change and increase the effectiveness of Collective Impact. The summary suggests:

- 1.) Designing an initiative with an emphasis on equitable outcomes for all populations
- 2.) Including community members whose lives are most affected by the challenge being addressed in the initiative in the collaborative. In his critique of the “top-down” mentality of Collective Impact, *Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets it Wrong*, Wolff suggests engaging the most powerful and the least powerful people in a community and finding ways for them to work together to address community priorities (Wolff, 2016)
- 3.) Recruiting and co-creating with cross-sector partners as appropriate and relevant;
- 4.) Continually using data to learn, adapt and improve the problem-solving process, which is what collective impact essentially is
- 5.) Cultivate leaders with unique system leadership skills who are willing to change their own organizations in service of the group’s agenda, are good at building relationships and trust among players, with knowledge and understanding of the complex and non-linear process of systems change. Wolff suggests that if policies are not changing in order to change systems, the work is going to continue to be fragmented and that this should be considered an essential and intentional outcome. He further states that community psychology, civic engagement, racial justice, public health, political science and organizational development are among numerous resources that build the tools for coalition (2016)
- 6.) Ensure to focus on program and systems strategies Wolff (2016) suggests a focus on the root causes as well as critical social justice issues that address systemic attitudes and contributions to a community issue.

- 7.) Build a culture which fosters relationships, trust and respect. This speaks again to the need for ensuring that all that are impacted by a community challenge are given equitable consideration and opportunity to contribute.
- 8.) Being willing to customize the initiative based on local context. Wolff recognizes that a community may not fit nicely into the five requirements set out as conditions for Collective Impact (2016) Truthfully, with dialogue and understanding many seemingly disparate agendas can find common ground. Perhaps a new iteration, labeled Community Impact, might be a good way to look at a more multi-sector approach for meeting needs.

These best practice recommendations speak directly to the value and incorporation of Systems Thinking into any initiative to support these key principles to strengthen the efficacy and outcomes of Collective Impact.

**Using the Functional Zero measurement, rather than Absolute Zero measurement** ensures a more reasonable target for municipalities working with the homeless population. (FZ – housing and support services match or exceed the need of the homeless population; AZ – all people are housed; homelessness is completely eradicated). Achieving FZ moves communities along the continuum towards AZ.

**Appreciative Inquiry-** David Cooperrider, the originator of Appreciative Inquiry argues that we need forms of inquiry and change that are generative: they help us discover what could be, rather than try to fix what is wrong. (Kessler 2013) A.I. advocates collective inquiry into the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be, followed by collective design of a desired future state that is compelling and thus, does not require the use of incentives, coercion or persuasion for planned change to occur, Busche, 2013. Appreciative Inquiry:

- As a research method is not interested in discovering what is as much as allowing a collective to uncover what could be. Bushe, Gervase, 2012 A.I Practitioner, Volume 14, Number 1 February 2012
- Is a model of inquiry that engages stakeholders in self-determined change. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, or using a deficiency model of inquiry, and identifying what is dysfunctional (leading to blame, justification and learned helplessness), we focus on what works (leading to the generation of ideas and expansion of best practices)
- Can lead us to speak to end users who have been successful, or satisfied employees, or team members that have accomplished their planned outcomes, for example, to find out how they were best helped and what elements needed to be in place for their success, including their own accountability
- Can lead us to examine our approaches and pick out the best parts of them to focus on. It can lead us to accept responsibility for what went wrong and identify changes we can make. We map our next steps by continuing to do the things that work and by doing things differently where necessary, identifying and using our collective and existing strengths and resources in different ways to achieve the outcomes we are looking for.
- Is strengths-based and focuses on what the good elements are and use that information to build toward the future. They help motivate us by recognizing our assets so we can use our power for good! In this way the survival and coping skills of an individual or organization can be reframed toward positive and constructive

action. Gervase Bushe posits that the key to successful A.I. is the creation of new ideas that give people new ways to address old problems. Addressing problems that concern people enough to want to change (2012)

- A.I. is based on the assumption that organizations (and communities) are socially constructed phenomena, which have no tangible reality, and that ways of organizing are limited only by human imagination and the agreements people make with each other. It seeks to create processes of inquiry that will result in better, more effective, convivial, sustainable and vital social systems. It assumes this requires widespread engagement by those who will ultimately implement change. From E.H. Kessler, (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*, Sage Publications, 2013
- Appreciative Inquiry is a common practice which has yielded positive results and more powerful outcomes when applied in business, community, and in helping individuals, to move forward in a strengths-based way.

An application of Appreciative inquiry could look like developing a shared vision of what we want, then working backwards from that vision to what is already in place or available to achieve it. Then what needs to happen for those elements to be utilized optimally. In this way each person or organization involved can take their place in the vision, accept their parts in the work that must happen to achieve that vision, take responsibility and accountability for their part in helping things move forward, identify what strengths and resources they have to achieve that responsibility, and take steps to eliminate the elements and activities that keep them from using those strengths and resources as well as identify what, if any, other resources they need to pull in. This can lead to restructure or reframing of mandates, priorities and systems. It can lead to collaborations, partnerships, coalitions, and enhance collective impact.

The five principles of A.I. are:

1. The *constructionist principle* proposes that what we believe to be true determines what we do, and thought and action emerge from relationships. Through the language and discourse of day to day interactions, people co-construct the organizations they inhabit. The purpose of inquiry is to stimulate new ideas, stories and images that generate new possibilities for action.
2. The *principle of simultaneity* proposes that as we inquire into human systems, we change them and the seeds of change, the things people think and talk about, what they discover and learn, are implicit in the very first questions asked. Questions are never neutral, they are fateful, and social systems move in the direction of the questions they most persistently and passionately discuss.
3. The *poetic principle* proposes that organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and the story of the organization is constantly being co-authored. The words and topics chosen for inquiry have an impact far beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, understandings, and worlds of meaning. In all phases of the inquiry effort is put into using words that point to, enliven and inspire the best in people.
4. The *anticipatory principle* posits that what we do today is guided by our image of the future. Human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. Appreciative inquiry uses artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis to refashion anticipatory reality.

5. The *positive principle* proposes that momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding. Sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility. They also promote the strong connections and relationships between people, particularly between groups in conflict, required for collective inquiry and change.

Taken from Bushe, G.R. (2013). In Kessler, E., ed. [\*The Appreciative Inquiry Model\*](#) (PDF), from The Encyclopedia of Management Theory.

Appreciative inquiry attempts to use ways of asking questions and envisioning the future in order to foster positive relationships and build on the present potential of a given person, organization or situation. Its aim is to build – or rebuild – organizations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. This can lead to fundamental change rather than mere “band aid,” or coping activity.

### **Asset Based Community Development**

John McKnight, a recognized community development “guru,” and founder of ABCD Institute, suggests that starting from a needs basis actually weakens a community and reduces the effectiveness of the resources being applied to the community.

In this line of thinking, communities have three main assets- the people who live in the community/neighbourhood, neighbourhood associations, and institutions. Each have their roles and each have things they can offer.

Start by asking: what do we need to do to support community members in caring for each other? What needs to be in place in their neighbourhoods? Who can provide this? A key question becomes: Can you tell us what people have gotten together to do here that have made things better?

Here is a link to a talk by John McKnight

[https://www.abundantcommunity.com/home/videos/abcd\\_festival\\_keynote\\_speech.html](https://www.abundantcommunity.com/home/videos/abcd_festival_keynote_speech.html)

### **Trauma-informed care and practice**

The concept and practice of trauma informed care comes from the recognition that a majority of addiction and mental health challenges stem from some sort of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). And that ACE have a high correlation with mental and physical and behavioural disorders seen in adults. Without the right kind of management and handling, the systems practices in intervention and treatments have the potential for re-traumatizing individuals with a history of trauma. Five principles of trauma-informed care have been identified, each interrelated and leading into the other in a beautiful logic that allows individuals in intervention or care to advocate for themselves. It also informs how care and intervention frameworks are set up, within a systems context, to assist in decreasing re-traumatization and helping empower individuals in their own care.

- Safety- Including creating spaces for individuals to feel culturally, emotionally, and physically safe, but also having an awareness of and respect for an individual’s discomfort or lack of ease

- Transparency and Trustworthiness- As an important part of feeling safe in engaging with services. This includes providing full and accurate information to individuals in care about what is happening and likely next steps
- Choice- Involving a recognition of the need to consider and honour the individual's dignity and autonomy in any approach. Utilizing informed consent in interventions and respecting individuals' rights to refuse an intervention or approach. This leads to;
- Collaboration and Mutuality- Recognizing the need for partnering relationships and shared decision making to ensure a healing environment. Individuals need to feel seen, heard, understood, respected, and walked with and not acted upon
- Empowerment-Strengths-based interactions where the abilities and assets of the person are identified, validated, respected and built upon

### **Promising Practices for Homelessness Support in Studied Communities**

- Rapid rehousing program – used by all municipalities studied- supports individuals and families whose tenancy must be terminated to quickly find and secure new housing
- Housing First program – used by all municipalities studied- supports individuals and families on a need's acuity basis with a continuum of services and supports to help them find, secure and maintain stable housing
- Wraparound supports – creating an integrated system of supports for greater access, effectiveness, and efficiency. Essentially creates a no-wrong door approach in which end-users can engage at whatever step on the continuum of need works best for them
- Harm Reduction- Used by all municipalities studied to varying degrees- meeting participants where they are at, maintaining housing is a priority and all supports are geared to mitigating effects of behaviours that tenants are not yet ready to address- keeping them safe, and protecting their tenancy. Involves working with all of the other promising practices listed here, closely working with Landlords
- Landlord Liaison and support- Each community is practicing this to varying degrees. Open communication between CBO, municipality, and landlords coupled with education/training for landlords
- The most successful communities have an active dedicated staff to work with Landlords as partners in the process of developing adequate, appropriate, accessible, affordable housing options for a spectrum of needs, hear their concerns, help them work solutions through funding and tenant engagement, understanding, awareness and knowledge.
- Trauma Informed Care- Used by all municipalities studied, to varying degrees- A recognition that presenting behaviours have a basis in past and re-occurring trauma and ensuring that supports, resources, framework for care, and opportunities for healing are present
- Effective community advisory boards - used by all communities to varying degrees of success. The best Community Advisory Boards are populated from all sectors, equitably represented, with a community agenda in the forefront and a person-centred focus



- Centralized and standardized intake - used by all communities in varying degrees
- Training and support for intake workers and managers at point-of-entry agencies and programs
- Quality control and assurance oversight by city department responsible for housing/homelessness

Used in Community that is most successful in mitigating homelessness

- Community Summit: engaging community members, agencies, businesses to collaborate, discuss, become informed, and solicited to participate in the homelessness solution
- Specific engagement of Aboriginal community
- Aboriginal Housing First Impact Initiative
- Housing First programs are recovery-oriented and focused on quickly moving people from homelessness into housing and then providing supports necessary to maintain the housing

Identified in another community experiencing success

- Exit plans, or release plans for participants graduating from Housing First program
- Housing First agency check-ups to ensure accuracy and consistency of intakes through review and evaluation of documents and processes
- Creation of a Community Housing Coordinator (city employee)

Used in Seattle and included here as a promising practice which is being considered or piloted in other communities

- Progressive Engagement: Utilizing a progressive engagement model is a national best practice in addressing homelessness and a hallmark of person-centered service delivery and efficient use of resources. Progressive engagement provides customized levels of assistance to households and preserves the most expensive interventions for those with the most severe barriers to housing success, enabling service providers to effectively target resources. This approach is supported by research that household characteristics such as income, employment, substance use, etc., cannot predict what level of assistance a household will ultimately need to exit homelessness.

It should be noted that the successful activities in all of these communities, are still relatively isolated programs involving some collaborations between stakeholders, none have as yet developed a comprehensive consistent and cohesive way of operating as a community. While one community at the time of this writing had a system in place to effectively deal with chronic homelessness, none evidenced a multi-sector way of being that supported the success of each member. What we are seeing is that the bulk of this work still resides in the Social Sector, and still relies on funding for “programs.”

Best Practices from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness ([www.caeh.ca](http://www.caeh.ca))

CAEH states: 10 Year Plans should identify: (note: these are covered in the framework we are developing)

- a single point of accountability for implementation;
- a process for systems organization, planning and coordination;
- a process for monitoring the effectiveness of the homeless-serving system; and a plan for adapting to environmental changes, learning, best practices and improved information.
- Building a research capacity into community Plans to End Homelessness creates understanding of the dynamics and effectiveness of the local homeless-serving system and unique community needs.
- Effective means of collecting homelessness data, and information on the functioning of your homeless system of care to the community is essential. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is used in National Homelessness work.
- Ten Year Plans challenge the status quo and will have controversy, detractors and difficult conversations. Anticipate conflict in the planning process and ensure planning committee has a measure of independence, a balance of perspectives, a focus on action and results, an agreed upon process and, importantly, a deadline.
- Ensure connection to and support of local financial assistance services as necessary links for people exiting homelessness.
- Include a thoughtful and methodical prevention strategy that includes: early detection, emergency assistance, system coordination, housing and support services, and access to the income necessary to sustain housing (through employment or mainstream income support programs as required). Integrate with existing support systems or adopt your own if they are not available in your community.
- By creating a clear path to housing and support from those institutions – in the form of case management, access to services or housing assistance programs – we can reduce the role that state-run institutions play in creating homelessness.
- A spectrum of housing options including low-demand and supported housing is needful
- Housing locators to search local housing markets and build relationships with landlords. Successful program components include:
  - incentives to landlords to rent to homeless households;
  - creative uses of housing vouchers and subsidies to improve affordability; and
  - links to resources to help clients maintain their housing.
- Invest in creating affordable, appropriate housing; utilize market rental housing with support services and subsidies, and develop options with on-site supports.

These recommendations speak not only to the value, but to the necessity of purposeful and intentional multi-sector engagement in assessing and adjusting systems to provide a cohesive, connected, and consistent strategy for engaging the entire community on all of the levels and approaches indicated in effectively ending homelessness.

### **Social Sector “Bionics:”**

Bionics basically is the practice of using concepts in one field or realm to assist in another. In this case it is the combination of biology and technology. Think “Six Million Dollar Man.”

Applying business models and principles to social support services can be termed as Social Sector “bionics,” taking the best parts of something good and making it better, stronger, faster, and in this case, more sustainable and self-reliant by adding in parts from something else. The work of the social sector is to help humans, families and communities to increase capacity and be self-reliant within the context of wellness, mental health, social behaviours, economics and integration, to reach their maximum potential. But in relation to social sector bionics it becomes a case of “physician health thyself” for the sector. In a 2013 article in The Guardian, international Edition, entitled: *Eight Ways in Which Social Sector Organizations Can Improve*, Dame Mary Marsh talks about eight ways social sector organizations can improve by engaging in social sector bionics.

1. Strengthen governance- Boards need to increase diversity, and thus their capacity to understand and deal with today’s challenges. It is important to ensure that boards have a broad multi-sector representation. There is work that can be done, in an aligned community, to provide the kind of expertise social sector boards need.
2. Attract and develop leaders- This speaks to leadership capacity across all levels of the organization, not just at the top- funding should reflect support for this need. Marsh suggests that “the quality of leadership is at the heart of success in the social sector.” (2013)
3. Routes into and through the social sector- making the social sector attractive and accessible to qualified people, but also hiring people for their potential and then assisting them to qualify. Again, funding should consider this aspect.
4. Sharing skills- this speaks to sharing within the social sector as well as sharing between the social sector and the public and private sectors. This introduces new thinking and “cross-pollination” of ideas that can assist growth, but it also increases and strengthens connections between sectors
5. Digital fluency- In order to engage more effectively with end users, supporters and other stakeholders, the social sector needs to take advantage of new technology and be open to mentoring and skill sharing with “digital natives.”
6. Data-informed social change- As with the public and private sectors, the ability to gather, manipulate, learn from and share data, informs and drives the most successful and effective organizations.
7. Enterprise capability- The financial game is changing and new sources of revenues and capital are emerging, or need to be accessed. Funders can support the development of the capacity to imagine, access and manage that access as part of an investment relationship

8. Collaboration- can allow flexibility in horizontal structures, combining respective strengths to yield greater value. Basically, helping end users move through the continuum is better served by collaboration. Merger is not necessary in a collaborative environment.

### **Disempowerment, a cautionary tale:**

When we do too much for people we can, in another example of a systems tragedy, actually end up disempowering them. Creating dependence on services perpetuates the need for those services. When they are taken away, say, because an arbitrary time limit has been reached, or funding is no longer available, or any other reason, the individual is unable to function at capacity and loses ground. Entitlement becomes a double-edged sword which slashes the effectiveness of programs designed to help people out of crisis and into functional contribution. Yes, people are entitled, as human beings, to certain needs being met, for example. But personal responsibility and accountability must be included or a dependence on the system occurs.

The key to functional contribution to community, in any life domain, is self-reliance. Self-reliance is built in a supportive environment where the ingredients for success exist, a connection to those ingredients is available, and a responsibility and accountability is present for the individual to make use of the ingredients, along with support for that accountability. Babies don't learn to walk if they are constantly carried. If desirable items are not put in their sight but just out of reach, they do not stretch and problem solve to get them, thus exercising and coordinating the muscles and neural pathways they will need to do even more. Intrinsic motivation, which is motivation that comes from an internally motivated place, is much more powerful than extrinsic, or outside, motivation. While the second can help lead to the first, it can also create a negative feedback loop wherein the inner drive to try is not developed. Successes help build intrinsic motivation, but they need to be carefully and thoughtfully orchestrated so as not to stunt the growth of the growing being.

It is hard, when services are funded per the number of people using them, or are based on an externally identified or "cookie cutter" need, not to get caught in the trap of disempowerment, creating a different kind of addiction cycle. Continually looking and working toward next steps as a connected, aligned community will help keep the stream of end-users steady. But after a while of concerted coordinated effort, the hope would be that some services would no longer be needed and the resources that have fueled them can be turned toward another step on the pathway to success. It becomes then, not only a community practice but a broader policy-related consideration to be concerned with providing for the development self-reliance in any given domain and then next steps once it has been achieved. Continually building capacity of end-users and the rest of the community will eventually end never-ending cycles of social need.

### **For Profit Social Enterprise and the Social Business Model**

The idea of being able to do good in the world without having to rely on government funding, endless fundraising, and the constant challenge of doing more with less, while actually making a living for oneself is an appealing prospect. Sustainability and self-reliance for a social serving organization is as important a concept as it is for a person trying to leave homelessness behind. And both can be served by utilizing a business minded approach. The need for this kind of thinking in social support provision has become apparent in best practice and over the course of the Momentum project, and is something we have been interested in exploring. It is difficult for social agencies to cross over into a business mindset, but that is exactly the solution of the future.

A business mindset is about sustainability and generating returns in growth, expanding and satisfied markets, and profit. Affordable and social housing has always been and continues to be a challenge. In most conversations about how we are going to end homelessness, the comment has been made that we don't have enough affordable housing. All the great programs in the world are not enough if there are not enough housing units to house people. And underemployment continues to be a contributor to homelessness, which homelessness definitely creates difficulty for stable employment. These and other challenges continue in an unending, negatively reinforcing cycle. But they also provide some exciting business opportunity for intrepid organizations and communities.

### **Housing Solutions that do more:**

Historic solutions to the challenge of affordable housing stock include government funding and managing of affordable and social housing. Having low cost housing is difficult to maintain to high standards. Substandard environments impact the health and well-being of people who are already compromised. More government money is required to improve or replace failing buildings. As well, its "corrals" people with similar challenges but maybe different reasons for those challenges into closed groupings that can pose their own unique challenges. Even when people move forward and improve their economic situation, they are "rewarded" by having to leave their home and neighbourhood support system because they no longer qualify to live there.

Another solution has been the offering of government funding to private developers to build housing that is affordable for a certain number of years, after which they can go to market housing. This solves the problem for the short term but when the rents finally go up, we start the cycle all over again. And the profits, if there are any, go into private pockets while more government and philanthropic dollars are poured into social programs with no financial return. What if we could solve all of these problems and make money to provide stability and sustainability in the continuum of care, as well?

Recently we have seen the idea of government "investment" where government owns part or all of the project. This can become problematic for a community or investor group that sees itself losing control of its investment. There are limitations and constraints placed on use, and then there is the question of where the net revenues end up. For communities that typically don't see much government funding, the problem is three-fold. Getting help to begin with, limitations in use preventing the kind of revenues that lead to sustainability without more government commitment, or, if there are revenues, the fear of those dollars going back into government coffers and being unavailable to a community that typically doesn't see government funding. There are usually agreements in place for that third contingency, but it can never be a certainty.

Mixed use, mixed income housing is one way to address this issue, and to be fair, the concept is being considered and piloted by government. This means that there are some units in a housing complex or apartment building that are rented at affordable or social rates and others that are rented at market housing and commercial rates. This brings in more revenues. And creating social enterprise around housing, a basic need that will always be there, allows social serving organizations to provide perpetually self-sustaining and regenerating housing that is higher in quality. It also allows for a mix of residents that can provide a natural layer of support and reinforcement for recovery and cycle breaking through positive modeling, healthier support networks, healthy expectations as a neighbour, and safer and healthier housing environments. It provides for added value features that can help people move forward like easier access to services and amenities, and even employment close to home.

The business of housing people also opens up some spin off markets that savvy, entrepreneurial organizations can tap into for more social enterprise opportunities. Renovation and repair, furniture reclamation, moving, cleaning, landscaping, maintenance, are services that someone has to be paid to do. And that business might as well benefit the social continuum. Being able to employ people helps them be successful and stable renters, and it helps them move on from crisis.

There are communities being designed to provide a local live, work, play environment for their residents. One challenge of these types of communities, if it is not intentionally planned for, is that they can become exclusive to higher socio- economic demographics and crowd out the lower income earners. But it is possible to provide for all levels of need and ability in these types of communities and housing developments. Planning mixed use, mixed income housing development to include affordable and supportive housing situations and sustainability opportunities for those who need them brings added value to the entire community. Now we have amenities, services and community capacity building opportunities coming into a neighbourhood. We have social programs with trained support workers who can assist with integration working right in the neighbourhood. And to be clear, not everyone who needs help with housing has a serious addiction, mental illness, or behavioural challenge that requires constant support. For the few that do, that embedded and sustainable support can benefit the neighbourhood.

Social enterprise housing, providing social benefit while operated at a profit with that profit going back into more social benefit can offer other advantages. Social benefit profits can be used to hire support workers, start other social enterprises, invest in other housing development, and enhance the continuum of care. In this way, social benefit organizations can take advantage of government offers to provide affordable housing and keep that housing affordable perpetually while offering greater advantages to those they are serving than just a place to call home.

The lower the financing costs, the more revenues can be generated to do better. Convincing governments and philanthropists to provide one-time startup funding for a system of housing that sustains itself makes sense. There are successful supported housing programs with employment pathways, but they are often run in isolation and require constant fundraising.

The value of integration has been demonstrated. Creation opportunities for integrated supported housing makes sense, especially when that integration can provide sustainability. As well, continued local investment to develop more housing provides economic opportunities right in the community. Cooperatives are not a new concept, but are becoming an emerging solution to provide the capital for sustainable solutions to local needs while growing local wealth, and making it more accessible to a broader spectrum of economic situations.



## Section 4: A Systems Thinking Guide for Multi-sector Community Alignment

Through the course of the Momentum Project, we have examined best practice, historical data, observed and engaged with communities, and applied and considered the concepts we have shared here within that context. Through this work, a model and framework for community alignment has emerged. We have experienced barriers, failures, insights and victories alike. This section will take you through an expanded process of using systems thinking and align it with the stages of change as it relates to community collective action and impact toward mitigating homelessness. Systems Thinking for Social Change by David Peter Stroh (2015) is a fantastic resource for using systems thinking to address community systems work and has been heavily relied in our considerations. We will provide you, also, with insights and learnings we have gleaned regarding enhanced collective impact through multi-sector community alignment. Additionally, within the Appendices, we have included some of the tools we have developed to assist with this work, that may be useful, or help you create your own.

(See Appendix M for a framework visual)

**Precontemplation-** In this “pre-stage,” a person has no intention to change or take action any time soon. Head in the sand, the individual is uninformed and kind of wants to stay that way, about the consequences of their behaviour. Or, they have tried previously to change behaviour and been unsuccessful. They shy away from receiving any new information that seems to influence them to make the change. A community in precontemplation is going to sound a bit like this: “What will it look like to maintain the status quo? Is it really so bad? What can be done to get by?” We will see justification and the blaming of others, trying to foist the responsibility for what is happening on other shoulders while blithely continuing in the same activities. With a social challenge like homelessness, it is easy for some of the other sectors in a community to leave it to the public and social sector. But think of a person in addiction getting the help they need to recover and then being thrown back into the same dynamic that led to their addiction in the first place. Does it not make sense that the entire “community” of that person be involved in what it takes to support their recovery? The same goes for homelessness or any other social “symptom” or core cause. Helping to change community systems means realizing the big picture of that challenge and helping other sectors to see their part in it. When this happens, real progress can be made.



Enter crisis: the “gateway drug” that can lead to change. In the life of every person or community there will always come a time when the lack of action toward needed change clashes with the consequences for not making a change, and crisis occurs. At this point the person or community is ready to consider doing things differently. In a change environment, we are seeking to bring the subject into this crisis state. Introducing some cognitive dissonance, providing some opportunities for considering the cost for change against the price of staying the same.

As individuals, communities and entities, we need to ask ourselves... are we working hard to maintain the status quo? Do we engage in an overage of research and dialogue with little action? Do we change as little as we can with band aid solutions and convince ourselves that we are doing something about anything? Do we lay the blame on external elements over which we have no control? Or leave it up to others? Or worse, feel frustrated in our attempts to make changes because no one else in our silo is? Are we unprepared to admit what really needs to change because the price seems too high? These are harsh questions. They need to be asked, honestly answered, then followed up with “So, now what?”

In order to help a person, move from precontemplation to the next phase or stage of change, something needs to happen; a crisis, a wakeup call. But research and experience tell us that in order for this to have the best effect and not lead to learned helplessness or worse, the “patient” needs to have access to a foundation upon which to enact the change. There must be awareness, knowledge, skills and a framework in which certain things can happen so that, when the moment for decision comes, there is safety, confidence, support, and resources available to help the person move naturally and logically to the next phase.

Systems thinking for social change suggests that in order to instigate the change we seek we need to first build a foundation for change. Information and awareness, finding ways to engage, developing relationships built on authentic mutual regard and common ground, as well as tools that build capacity for imagining and achieving the solutions required for the desired change all set the stage for those “cross-roads moments” for end-users and community entities alike, where the “road less travelled” suddenly seems possible and maybe even preferable to staying on the current path.



Moving a community in this direction and supporting its transformative moments requires a handful of intrepid, authentic, humble, visionaries with enough of the big picture to see and share the grand vision of possibility as well as the potential contribution everyone can make to it. It requires people who are willing to see past paradigms and operate outside of boxes to change the systems within which they work to help create that “incubator” required for the transformations to take place. The chrysalis that aids the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. These people often know who they are, but don’t feel they have the authority or even “space on their desks” to do it. They must be inspired, supported and resourced! This cannot happen if isolation and silos continue. Spaces (mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and even financial) must be made for these folks to meet, mingle and mix it up.

**Community Alignment Component 1- Build a foundation for change-** Building relationships and a safe space to make



the changes is an important part of laying a foundation for change. Getting the current picture is also important and involves examining historic documentation, finding like-minded folks to start the process with you, and engaging with the community to get a firsthand glimpse of what is going on.

Each of these can assist the other. It helps to start first with those on the front line of the issues being addressed. Then expand to those connected into that work, or that you recognize should be, generally through the relationships of your key participators. It requires applying some principles and practices that create a safe space to converse about hard things in positive ways. And this, in turn, helps build strong and resilient relationships that can withstand the pressures of change management. The length of time this foundation building takes depends on a number of factors from community buy-in to strength of mandate and leveraging points.

A mandate for community alignment might be more palatable as criteria for funding, especially if it comes with tools and resources to help the community align in support of better outcomes.

1. Engaging key stakeholders- identify who they are, figure out how you will engage them as a group and also individually- This may be a complex process, time consuming and at times frustrating. It is hard to get people to buy in to creating something they might not yet know they are missing. In communities where there are divided priorities, and lack of enthusiasm to change the status quo, this can take some time and work. This is where a mandate and some leverage would come in handy. For funders and policy makers- embedding a community plan as criteria for funding, could go a long way to incentivizing the change you are wishing to see. Engaging an intrepid few requires some strategizing to see who are the movers and shakers, the visionaries, and what do they need from you to get motivated to champion the cause. Starting with one key and emotionally charged issue and developing solutions that engage more layers of the community can be the way “in” to start the evolution of alignment. People are more willing to work with you when they can see a light at the end of the tunnel (and it’s not a train) as well as, and often more importantly, being made aware of what good this will do for their part of the system. Knowing your community stakeholders and understanding what is important to them and for them will help you work their needs and interests into a plan for engagement and a growing vision of what could be.
- Introduce the project and invite participation- those who want to take part are who you want to initially invite to the table. Find champions within each sector. Form and strengthen relationships with them by meeting them where they are at, taking an authentic interest in their work, helping them with tasks,

valuing the work they do. Others will become engaged as you work through the next phases of this stage. It is important to balance your efforts. While you need to be persistent, you cannot spend all your energy and resources chasing unwilling participants. The best thing to do is show them how things can be, how they can get there, and be willing to walk alongside, offering resources to help. But be willing to work on multiple fronts so you can walk away and work around tough to move spots and break ground or create space and resources for future progress.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;  
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead

- Create a safe space for meaningful dialogue. Go through the concepts that have been identified in Section 2 and 3 (and others you feel are important) as foundational knowledge to create a willingness for authentic conversation and humble inquiry. As a group you need to be willing to do what you want the rest of the community to do. Let go of the status quo and embrace something different and sometimes challenging, but that will pay dividends.
2. Find common ground- through discussion, sharing stories, looking at the historical information and best practices, develop initial pictures of where things are at right now and how they compare to what people would like to see.
- Gather and review historical documents, anecdotal information, interview representatives from the different sectors, administer surveys. Begin an asset map or work from one that has already been created, in order to paint a full picture that includes what is working, what is not, and the potential resources, opportunities, collaborations and pathways available.
  - Analyze your big picture to map out the systems dynamics at play, that hinder but also that can help things work better. In this way you can create an assessment of the situation that you will be able to present to your community collaborators and which might motivate more to come to the table, when they see how things can be successful.

(See Using the Stages of Change and Development to Form a Community Model of Care, in Section 3. Also, Appendices B and C provide some tools that might be helpful)

This free online resource demonstrates a number of different kinds of mapping: <https://medium.com/disruptive-design/tools-for-systems-thinkers-systems-mapping-2db5cf30ab3a> .

David Peter Stroh's Systems Thinking for Social Change also provides some ideas and resources for creating a map of your systems dynamics

Advice that is commonly given for mapping is to ignore your need to solve and just embrace the chaos. First you will be collecting and compiling the data of what is, then you will be analyzing the relationships and potentials between all the players. As in all parts of this process, openness, humility, and making space for the experience of others, not passing judgment, will help the group extract and organize the collective knowledge needed to form a complete picture of the area under examination. Types of systems mapping that could be helpful in this context include behaviour over time graphs, connected circles, causal loop diagrams and the iceberg model. Examples of these can be found through the link provided.

Increasing and deepening our levels of understanding of a system increases our ability to leverage for change. We see the events or symptoms; these are most visible. We react to events and over time or by looking more deeply, patterns of behaviour emerge and we can be proactive in our responses to them. But we are still simply responding to what is happening. Looking even deeper we can see what actually is producing those actions, as well as their consequences or effects on other parts of the system. This enables us to alter the source of a problem versus simply dealing with the symptoms. This is where systems thinking resides. Archetypes are the systems stories we need to be able to see and understand if we are to make headway in leveraging systems change.

Here are the links to two great resources for understanding systems thinking and archetypes:

[https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01\\_pk.pdf](https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01_pk.pdf)

on page 8 you will find a chart entitled systems archetypes at a glance

<https://www.saybrook.edu/unbound/systems-archetypes/>

3.) Build capacities for collaboration- Help people to think systemically by looking at the big picture and the systems dynamics you have noted, to communicate constructively about the issues, and to take responsibility for their part in the way things are

- Engage key stakeholders in assessing and refining your big picture view, as well as your analysis of the historical data. Encourage honest and open dialogue, leave ownership, ego and emotion at the door. This is an intellectual exercise designed to ignite a desire for change, there is no room for hanging on to the past, or being loyal to an idea or way of doing things. Only room for assessing what is working and what is not working in moving the community toward that vision. Do we want know if we are on the right track or if we have to make some changes? And if we do need to make some changes, do we want to be part of the solution or part of the problem?
- Reflection and responsibility- have conversations, ask open ended questions, about what is happening systemically in their world, how their activities and intentions align and collide and how their visions can be adjoined and aligned into a shared vision they can see the benefits of and commit to working toward. Continually encourage those whom you are engaging to assess and acknowledge their responsibility and accountability for the way things are. This doesn't always have to be negative!

“Unlike any other creature on this planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced. They can think themselves into other peoples’ places.

“We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.”

— **J.K. Rowling**, [Very Good Lives: The Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination](#)

Tips from the Trenches: what we have learned from enacting the Momentum Project and previous community development experience



1. When people ask for help for a friend or loved one, they believe is experiencing a mental health disorder, the best advice to give is to provide information. People in a state of precontemplation need compelling information to begin to create the cognitive dissonance that can lead to the desire to change. People who are trying to help people they feel are in pre-contemplation need to be willing to recognize the ways they, too, are in that state of being. We need to be willing to ask and answer the questions that are being required of our “target audience.”



2. Be prepared for this to take longer than you think it will. Change is hard for many, and systems are often precious to those participating in them, even when they are clearly not functioning optimally. There will be some who will embrace the idea for change and others who will maintain a stranglehold on current ways of doing things, and be suspicious and resentful of the idea that things need to change, or feel that their part is doing well, it is everyone else that needs to change. Justification is a great coping tool, but does not help bring about the change we wish to see.
3. Have a clear framework. When we began the Momentum Project, we didn't yet have that roadmap, this made it difficult to engage in the ways we envisioned. The purpose of the project was to create a framework for this process, which is what we have now done. Your community will be able to start where this project left off, and adapt it to your community situation.
4. Foundational work is key. Relationship building, knowing the community, finding ways to get the buy-in and support for a systems assessment takes time. Some communities may have already been involved in this process and are looking for the "how" of next steps. Others are starting from a realization that things need to change and are looking for yet others who feel the same to start making waves.
5. Your initial group need to be like-minded in recognizing the need for change, open to new ideas and out of the box perspectives, but also connected in to the sectors you wish to address in your efforts. They will be champions of the work you want to do. Knowing your community, you will be in a good position to find those individuals.
6. It is important that you are well informed about both the history and status quo of a community in this area. Take the time you need to get to know how the different elements work or don't work together.
7. Being positive and supportive about what is working and coming from a place of using some new principles to support continued learning, understanding and improvement of a systems framework will be more helpful than suggesting things are just not working (which can feed into the blame game).
8. You may have to do a lot of work first. People who are tired and jaded need clear sightlines to the outcomes they are seeking to encourage them to engage.

9. It might be helpful to prepare the ground by seeding principles and ideas, finding organizations who will work with these concepts or who already do, and introducing them in a non-threatening way. In the Momentum Project, we made the mistake of not doing this before engaging our first “working group”. In hindsight, it would have made a difference to take the time to compile and then introduce some systems education and a clearer vision of what we wanted to accomplish so that people could see within their realm of experience where these principles are being applied and helping, and where they might be applied to areas that are not working well.
10. Successful systems assessment must be accompanied by a willingness to bear responsibility for the status quo, even, and especially, when the status quo is not working so well, or may have outgrown the initial approaches. A supportive and forward-thinking environment and culture rather than blame and justification will help. In the end, everyone wins. Taking responsibility and being open to making change paves the way for a collaborative, supportive process. The climate for this kind of community soul-searching needs to be formed. What we found was that this takes time, study, and relationship building before launching into the engagement piece. After stepping back from engaging, and covering the foundational bases through the course of the project, we began to see, a year in, the beginnings of some peripheral change and awareness, and a team began to emerge. And from some unexpected places.
11. This work will go much better if sanctioned by a community authority, or as part of a requirement to qualify for further funding. We found the lack of this to be a barrier in the progress of our project. The intent of the project was to engage a community with this process. What we were able to do was create a guide that can now be enacted with a community that has buy-in. This guide could be adapted as a Funding Framework and readiness and outcomes assessment tool for communities to develop a plan in order to receive funding. Motivation is essential in change work.
12. Executive Directors, unless they have the space and ability to take on the role of Community Champion in this work, are not always the best to work with going forward. They are busy and beleaguered within the expectations of the current system. Encourage those E.D.’s that are “with” you to identify someone in their agency they trust with the process, who can spare the time to do the work. Encourage participating organizations to “put their money where their intent is,” and look for ways to scratch out a few hours of staff time to dedicate to the process. This can be part of an important initial exercise where participating organizations are recognizing their contribution to the current problem and their accountability to its solutions by taking the opportunity to assess their systems, find ways to realign their missions, mandates,

processes and practices, within the context of this growing shared vision of what needs to and can be. Our first initial group of trepidatious but willing people were mostly executives of their organizations and did not have the time or energy to engage fully unless there were strong tangibles happening for them. They just did not want to continue the same high-level discussions they had been having and seeing little or no progress from. It wasn't until we were more than halfway through our project timeline, with more foundational work done, that we had the beginnings of a working group.

13. The more persistent, confident, and strategic that you can be, the sooner you will see progress. Hindsight is always 20/20. With the groundwork done and the facilitation developed, we have been able to increase and improve in these areas. But we have missed some key opportunities along the way. That being said, any movement forward is progress and with persistence and consistent efforts, elements build on each other to a tipping point.
14. An important tool in helping individuals move from precontemplation to contemplation, as discussed previously, is to introduce them to others who have had success in similar change processes. When participating organizations and entities can share their successes with the principles and demonstrate the benefits of moving forward, it will spark confidence and inspiration for others to follow. Being our best selves inspires and lifts others, giving them permission to move into different arenas. (Marianne Williamson best describes the power of this phenomenon in "Our Deepest Fear"). In some communities this is possible because there are successful projects happening, where the principles you are trying to float are at play. In others, you will have to share inspiration from elsewhere to help the people see themselves in the vision.

**Stages of Change Stage Two: Contemplation-** With an awareness of the consequences of the behaviour but also the



positive and negative effects of making a change, the person is uncertain which direction to go, what to try, and procrastinates or is unable to move toward change. Is remaining in the status quo going to be less painful than pushing toward change? Is the cost of staying the same greater than the price that needs to be paid for something different? The main thing, at this juncture, is that there is a recognition beginning to dawn that the person (or organization, or community) has some choices to make, and some responsibility needing to be taken, in that growing awareness.

This might be where a community will create a systems or philosophical framework- this is what we want things to look like, these are the philosophical underpinnings of our forming vision. These are the wrongs we want to right and the reasons we need to do things differently. This may occur within different organizations and systems in a community and can create stress and frustration if done in isolation. There may be a fairly broad agreement to that

framework and philosophy. But it cannot stop here. If it does, the cycle begins again at precontemplation. And repeats itself until momentum toward change builds again, and the elements are present that will kick it into the next stage. For many, it feels like banging your head against a brick wall repeatedly. But understanding why these cycles of awareness and enthusiasm happen and then fizzle can help individuals, organizations and communities do some work to inject the right elements into the environment to help grease the wheels of the change engine. In the systems thinking world, these can be identified as leveraging activities that help inch the process along.

In systems thinking for social change this would be where we enter stage two: understanding and accepting responsibility for the current reality- knowing that something needs to change, accepting our role in things getting to this point, and our responsibility in making the change that we see needs to be made. Spending time in this stage is important. When we are converted to the big picture and see the logic in transforming, it is easy to want to forge ahead. And in fact, pockets of this happen all the time within “siloes”. Good ideas are introduced and even mandated by well-meaning policies while systems are built up around the latest and greatest “best practices.” Some improvements are seen, reinforcing us in our addiction to creating solutions, being right and making a difference. But we need a coordinated and cooperative effort informed by the big picture and dosed with accountability and humility to see how we each have contributed to the status quo. Without it, those surface applications begin to chafe against the grain, produce discomfort, create inefficiencies and frustrations. We can then find ourselves re-entering the cycle again and spiral around through the first three stages of change readiness until the next crisis rings the bell on another wake-up call.



When is a crisis reached? When questions arise that can't be answered. Rizzared Kapuściński  
Crises and deadlocks when they occur have at least this advantage, that they force us to think.  
Jawaharlal Nehru  
Man is not imprisoned by habit. Great changes in him can be wrought by crisis -- once that crisis can be  
recognized and understood. Norman Cousins

### Community Alignment Component Two:



#### **Understanding and Accepting responsibility for the Current Reality**

This component involves participating in and organizing focus groups, sector discussions, multi-sector forums. Paul Born, from the Tamarack Institute developed a 5-step guide to develop a common agenda for collective impact. In it, he suggests 25% of an initial working group coming from each of the four main sectors: community or not for profit, business, government and people with lived experience. Here is a link to that publication:

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/CommonAgendaforCollectiveImpact.pdf>.

1. Gather Community Systems Information:

Decide who to interview about the history of the current situation and which questions to ask- This is where we hone the story, focus in on specific points, starting to identify where the changes may need to be made and asking key questions from the context of moving toward that shared vision that is starting to take shape as you engage people in these conversations. Organize and improve the quality of information- with your smaller, selected and committed group, refine the picture.

2.) Pave the way with Pre-Analysis:

Analyze the system dynamics (how different parts of the system have interacted over time to support or undermine achievement of the vision- with a small group of knowledgeable people. It is important to be able, when presenting the big picture and showing where the changes may need to happen, that you have some background for your observations. Try to identify the systems archetypes at play. Systems archetypes are universally recognizable patterns of behaviour. One typical example of a systems archetype has been identified as “the tragedy of the commons.” In this system story a common resource is used by everyone for their own purposes with no thought to its sustainability. Think of logging companies in a patch of forest, or a bunch of free-range cattle ranchers putting their herds on the same free range. Without coordination and forethought, those “available” resources are used up and forever lost to everyone, when they could be sustained and even increased through a cooperative effort. Resources such as finite funding pockets, social and human capital, community spaces, available housing units can fall into this archetype. Systems Thinking for Social Change by David Peter Stroh is a good resource to learn about other important systems archetypes your community might recognize!

Here are the links again to resources for understanding systems thinking and archetypes:

[https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01\\_pk.pdf](https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01_pk.pdf)

<https://www.saybrook.edu/unbound/systems-archetypes/>

If people can identify how things went wrong, or where current approaches fell short, or didn't flex with the needs, they can find their way back to getting things moving in the right directions. Conversely, if a community can recognize systems behaviours that work toward sustainable, successful outcomes, they can be scaled up or more broadly applied for greater impact. This is where the seeds of solutions start to germinate.

### 3.) Inform and Support Self-Analysis:

Stroh (2015) suggests using your initial findings, to engage others in their own analysis as much as possible- through consultations, focused discussions, asking them to help you refine your information. This includes not only an assessment of what is happening and how it relates to the shared vision, but also contributing to that vision by injecting multiple perspectives to form a more holistic and complete plan. We can begin here to prioritize about what is important to put our resources and attention to and what will naturally change from the key leverage activities that result from this.

### 4.) Mental Models:

Systems thinking literature introduces some mental models that explain the behaviours.

- **Feedback Loop:** This is one of the most common and easy to spot mental models we run into with any system, human, organizational, or societal. There are two types of feedback loops. The balancing feedback loop, also known as homeostasis, leads the system toward equilibrium, which is good for maintaining the status quo, but creates resistance to change. The reinforcing feedback loop leads the system to change, either to grow or to atrophy. They can be *virtuous*, where feedback reinforces positive action. For example, self-reliance practices leading to permanent movement out of crisis. Or they can be *vicious* where feedback reinforces a negative response. Think of learned helplessness, where individuals or community entities are continually made to feel powerless with no discernable ways of making a difference, or the efforts they have made continually shut down by other individuals or community entities.
- **Bottleneck:** In the Theory of Constraints it is recognized that every system has one constraint that is tighter than the others. This is the bottleneck. This is a sticking point that holds everything else up. Think of a "traffic jam" on a highway caused by an accident at some point which closes a lane or two. Until it is cleared, the traffic will continue to be slowed and backed up. Each individual, organization, or community, needs to work out what these are for them and resolve them enough to keep the change machine moving along. It can be resource, process, or mindset related. If we are feeling stuck, we need to ask and assess what is holding up progress? Taking the time to work through these will be important time and energy well spent to get things

moving again in good directions. They can't be avoided. They are opportunities. They can lead, first to a connected multi-sector community alignment process, and then to creative and sustainable solution making.

- **Leverage:** Talk of bottlenecks leads directly to conversation about leverage. When we are experiencing a block to forward movement, we have to have the right elements and resources in place to solve that blockage. Sometimes, most of the time, we have to be strategic about this and the shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line, especially in a complex system like a community. Where can we apply the most meaningful pressure to get the gain or movement we seek? Sometimes we have to apply pressure at small leveraging points (for example, sharing insights, data, or learning to help increase awareness and cognitive dissonance to incite or “insight” a desire for change) in order to adjust the environment or mindsets enough to get to a place of being able to have a larger leveraging point. It is important to watch for these leveraging opportunities, where we use what we have now in such a way as to help us move to the next level.
- **Second-order Thinking:** This follows logically from the previous mental models. It includes the act of utilizing those models in our perception and conceptualization of our systems situations. Rather than simply reacting to what is in front of us, we are looking ahead to what will come from our potential actions, and considering it holistically. It moves us from reactivity to responsiveness. It fits with outward accountability in that we are considering how what we do will impact or is impacted by other elements in the environment. This, of course, is an important mental model for community alignment and collective impact. It introduces a much more advanced and mature way to operate, rather than just reacting to circumstances or focusing on our own small piece of the grand puzzle.

Here some links to other information about mental models:

<https://medium.com/@SparksRemarks/systems-thinking-the-essential-mental-models-needed-for-growth-5d3e7f93b420>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/senges-mental-models-definition-lesson-quiz.html>

<https://fs.blog/mental-models/>

## 5.) Conversations:



Create times and spaces for conversations that are catalysts for awareness, acceptance, and alternatives. Design engagements for each sector as well as for multi-sector discussions. This can be done by intentional participation in existing forums and venues, or by organizing specific gatherings or convenings. These can be great leveraging activities that take small amounts of resources but can result in big gains. They create space and support for second order thinking. They can help dispel bottlenecks and provide relevant and appropriate feedback loops. All of these are engines to keep our systems dynamic and flexible, moving in good directions. Determine and invite focus groups. This is where you can start to engage your key players for your working group in specific conversations that introduce concepts and allow for exploration of them within the various parts of the current environment as well as with a community big picture focus.

#### Tips from the Trenches:



1. In this stage of the process, you will probably have found and continue to discover like-minded organizations and individuals that are already doing this work in a limited way within their own organizations or focused partnerships. It is important to identify those models and dynamics at play, and work with what already is happening in the community rather than introduce new activities.
2. The work you do in Component 2 will help you evolve a focused and carefully crafted presentation to the community that will engage them where they are at. You will be helping them apply these principles to familiar territory, from their own deeply held intentions, challenging them to stretch their thinking and take on some accountability for it, rather than introducing foreign ideas, alienating potential change champions, and perpetuating damaging systems archetypes and mental models.
3. You will also be ready at this point to help clarify not only where these principles need to be applied, but how they can be, and what the outcomes could be. It is a well identified positive leadership trait to bring solutions when discussing problems. Experience has shown that many meetings and gatherings, unless they have an intentional action and accountability component are simply information sharing times with a list of shoulds and coulds and little or no action resulting. Your team, coming from and being influential in many of these areas, can infiltrate community gatherings and instigate the right kinds of conversations, pushing for clear and determined action items to come from these gatherings.

4. Providing a picture of the way things are, reinforcing the concepts discussed here, and identifying some ways forward has the potential to encourage motivated engagement, rather than discourage and overwhelm already overwhelmed and discouraged people. Even if the solutions you bring don't end up being adopted, (and you have to be willing to let them go) they will lead the participants to enlightened solutions that work for them. They will provide a "light on the path" that can help the community alignment effort move forward incrementally.
5. Use your champions and their activities within the scope of your project- you don't own this process. Your job is to help it happen in a community. Nurture the seeds where they sprout, cultivate the ground so they can spread. Support promising activities and try to connect them. Help people recognize and accept the parts of the process they are going through. This has been one of the most challenging parts of the Momentum Project. When you think you have a good idea or a way forward, but it doesn't fit with where the majority or community dynamic is at, you have to work organically and sensitively with what is. You can find strategic "workarounds" and ways to leverage incremental changes that can benefit and help maintain the good directions a community is taking.
6. Be observant and take note- not all information will be given directly to you. You will glean much usable "intel" by just watching and listening. In this way, your engagements with people and entities do not always have to be manufactured.
7. Consider the potential of solutions to obvious challenges rather than rehashing or opening old wounds. Challenging processes, looking for ways through and around the challenges inherent to the changes you are proposing, and that people have identified as necessary. This is where understanding mental models can come in handy.
8. Relationships are building in this stage and you will get farther with positive, authentic and vibrant relationships. Find those you can rely on and support them in their work.
9. Continue to assess who still needs to be at the table. Find your way in to those sectors and areas. Your networks are enlarging, constantly look for potential connections as you interact with the gathering players. And don't be discouraged if you lose people. Your initial contacts may not be who you continue on with. You want people who are not only committed to making change happen, but have room in their lives and "on

their desks” to do the work necessary. The rest will come back around when things start moving in a positive direction, they can justify themselves getting involved with.

10. Accept the efforts made and look for other ways to get things done, or encourage and support informal partnerships/collaborations between people from different organizations or even sectors as appropriate. Multiple perspectives are better than one in creating a common vision and agenda. Here is the link to the Tamarack Institute publication by Paul Born, once more.

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/CommonAgendaforCollectiveImpact.pdf>

**Stages of Change Stage Three: Preparation-** In this phase, the vision of what can be is formed enough, and the decision has been made and the person is ready to commit to the price of change. There is an intention to take action very soon. There are, however, some things that need to be assembled or prepared to help support the success of that action, so this is not a stage we want to skip. We are gathering the resources that we will need to change the behaviour. This requires some work around what needs to be addressed, what exists and what needs to be acquired or created, to address it- each community that is at this stage is going to look a bit different. This is the place where we consider and apply those mental models that can impede or assist the change we wish to see.



For an organization or community, this is where the common vision starts to increase in form and substance. This stage requires leadership. For a community to be successful, there must be a leadership group or entity that helps the community get itself organized. This is where promising best practices that seem like they could fit within community ability are assessed and adopted. Sharing these success stories, showing how similar things can be done in your community and encouraging messages all help increase self-efficacy and motivation.

It makes sense that this work be done by a group that represents the community as a whole, all of the interests, needs and resources of each sector in order to form an accurate picture of where the community is starting and how they can achieve the desired outcomes or vision. A plan of action is created, that considers and addresses those interests, needs and resources within the context of the challenge that started the process. It is then presented to the larger group for feedback, then taken back into the smaller group and refined based on that feedback.

From here, the individual parts are organized, assignments made, and resources identified, allocated and gathered. At this point, for an individual, is where the commitment to action forms, based on a sense of having all the bases

covered, everything in place (or enough to be getting on with); an environment that is tuned for success. Without action, that piled up arsenal of resources is useless and eventually starts to feel like it is messing up the landscape. All of the pieces of the puzzle can be present, but if they are not put together with action, then confusion, inefficiency, frustration, cynicism, distrust, apathy, and entropy descend. From the research and observation, we have undertaken, this is where many organizations or communities may find themselves at the end of a funding period, or as the years of a strategic plan are coming to a close if those strategic plans have not been fully resourced and operationalized.

To alleviate this paralyzing situation, all the players instead need to commit to take their parts and play their roles, taking their own share of accountability for the whole. Being able to make a commitment is an important result of and motivator for preparation. If this doesn't happen, and isn't continually supported, movement fizzles, mandates become confused, people become bored or disenchanted and momentum is lost. The feedback loops that lead to homeostasis and the path of least resistance pull us once again into a "status quo", maybe for a time slightly better than it used to be, with many good tools and resources within our reach. But without intention and consistent oversight, eventually the cycle returns to its dysfunctional normal until a new crisis reminds us once again that we need to take this more seriously and try something different.

Current economic and social crisis, evident across the globe, tell us that whatever we have been doing, we either haven't yet hit on the best solutions, new elements have emerged that need to be accounted for in our practice, or we haven't put the right pieces together in the right way. More likely it is a combination of these. If we are honest, and have the right mindset, we will agree that solutions and the resources to achieve them are present if we will just look with fresh, creative, collective eyes and a germ of belief that we can be successful. That "we will be alright, but we all have some work to do."

Systems thinking for social change will tell us, at this point, that we are entering Stage 3: committing to make a



change- We now have a committed multi-sector vision and leadership that has been formed out of the previous work of accepting responsibility and accountability and are now willing to pull together the arsenal required to be ready for action. Paul Born, a Collective Impact expert out of the Tamarack Institute reminds us that a common agenda is more about building commitment than prescribing an exact plan. What we are trying to do is create a culture of awareness, accountability, and commitment. Within that culture, with the big picture view of outcomes and how we operate together providing some parameters and guidelines, the players will naturally identify and coordinate their roles and pieces of the action. This is because they recognize the value that moving toward the shared vision has to their own mandates and can then commit to be part of the team. Born posits that a common agenda is "more about building a collective

commitment to community change than it is about having a plan.” (Born, 2017). The work of Hunt and Henrix on relationships confirms this. In the right environment, with the right way of being, among connected, collectively minded individuals, entities and organizations, much of the change we wish to see will begin to happen naturally. This is why making that commitment as a community, with the full picture and with every sector at the table is so important.

### **Community Alignment Component Three- Committing to make a change**



This happens within the context of a committed multi-sector representative group that has been formed out of all of your discussions and consultations up to this point. You will have feedback from enough sources that will provide the background for this next phase. You will have had some focused activities with key members of that group, and done some preparatory work with the entire community previous to the formal engagement. How long this takes will be different for each community. It depends on what opportunities and resources are present in the environment as well as the buy-in or mandate from community. The literature for systems thinking within the context of social change suggests the following steps:

#### **1. Engage and evaluate-**

- As a community leadership group, with representation from all sectors, identify the case for staying the same and the cost of change and compare this with the case for change and the cost of staying the same- from the collective results of your discussions and analyses,
- At this point you are ready to create solutions that achieve the benefits of both or be willing to make the trade-offs for choosing between them. You don't have to do everything all at once. In your community it may look like many baby steps and smaller leveraging activities. Or there may be some big things that are on the horizon that can be undertaken to galvanize the community and see those encouraging gains and victories that help motivate continued efforts. Generally, it is a combination of both.
- Make an explicit choice and move into operationalizing the vision that has been created. People should feel called or impelled by this vision (Stroh, 2015) and see the ways they can bring it to life within their spheres and scope.

#### **2.) Formalize and fortify-**

- This is where formal agreements could be helpful, not necessarily to line up a specific plan of action, although that can be a way of going about it, if there is buy in to that plan. But mostly as a commitment to the process, with roles defined, resources allocated, assignments for accountability to certain outcomes given. This is a way of creating that safe, mutually supportive environment that Hunt and Henrix suggest actually helps to

eliminate perceived problems and encourages meaningful and efficient interaction within relationships and communities. Maybe it looks like a detailed strategic plan with specifically assigned and named collaborators.

- Set up a system of regular check-ins and consistent communication to determine how things are progressing and what each entity can do to help the process from their position, situation, and role. This is where a model or framework for multi-sector community alignment can come into play. Collective Impact requires communication. Every community has sectors and naturally occurring alliances that can be more formally organized into a communications and leadership framework to inform, support, and motivate continued change efforts. We have created a sample model that can be found in Appendix G.
- An outwardly accountable mentality, such as that shared by the Arbinger Institute, can fortify that mutually supportive environment where a community or group of organizations can develop a supportive infrastructure. Here is a link to a YouTube video from Arbinger that introduces the concept of the outward mindset: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Qkh5gMRnr4>

Tips from the trenches:



1. Depending on your community, your experience with a working group can be formal or informal. Without a strong mandate within the community, where people see the value of making formal time for this work, your experience may be one of “spot engagement” where you are working individually with agencies or stakeholders, or participating in existing activities. The same work can still happen, although it can take longer.
2. In this case, make sure to log and share the “state of the union” information you have gleaned from your interactions and give the community a picture of its own readiness. You will be having conversations with people, injecting ideas, receiving validation for the insights you are forming.
3. The time it takes for preparation is the time it takes. Don’t be discouraged but do develop a good picture of solutions and the community’s ability to enact those solutions.
4. When you reveal your findings, you will also reveal the potential solution action that can take place. What you see as already achievable given the different parts of the puzzle that you have observed to exist in the community. This works so much better than just giving a “report card,” stating the obvious about the status quo.
5. People are resistant to change (remember homeostasis and human nature) for numerous reasons. In this context those reasons include:

- They have been disappointed too many times and are experiencing stakeholder burnout
  - They are not yet seeing how this helps their mandate or bottom line
  - They are overwhelmed by immediate and pressing concerns and pressures and can't get above it to see the big picture
  - They are in a system that is micromanaged and have no clear way of stepping outside of the box
  - They want to see that there are motivations and resources that will help them make the change, be it community leadership and buy-in, support for their time, dollars, a motivating mandate like criteria for funding, a board priority and direction
  - Funding pressures and the siloism that current funding systems perpetuate, as organizations focus on keeping their funding and don't want to rock the boat
  - Some will not join in until they see successful activity in that direction
  - Some don't want to increase their workload, or are in a good place where they don't have to work too hard and don't want to rock the boat.
  - Sadly, there are those that see solving problems as the end of their own jobs, which is why we need always to be looking for and having support to flex toward next steps, for everyone.
6. It is clear why this kind of process really needs to be done on a multi-sector level to minimize the barriers and open up possibilities that each sector or organization could not imagine on their own.
7. There is always a "tipping point" no matter how long it takes, where the information you have gathered tell the story well enough, and the potential and hope for actually being able to change some things creates sparks in a few places that can be fanned into flames of change.
8. Make sure your information is as complete and compelling as possible and that you share it with the right people- by now you should have an idea of who those people are. The right people are people of influence- the ones that are respected in the community. These people may not be in positions of recognized "power" or authority, although that can definitely help if there is respect and good relationships exist with that authority. They are people who are directly related to the areas you are looking at for change. They are people who can envision the big picture.
9. Share your information and findings as you go, with key people. Help to build the vision in their minds of what the potentials are so they will be more prepared and thus enthused about working on solutions. You



may not readily see it, but there is movement and progress happening. Everything that is done to challenge the status quo and inject new ideas or germs of solutions, has some effect on the internal and external environment and landscape of the community.

10. It is amazing what can be accomplished if you don't care who gets the credit for it. Remember that the "bottom line" in this case is creating a community where everyone can succeed.
11. It is also amazing what you can accomplish if you don't believe you can't.

**Stages of Change Stage Four: Action-** The plan is in action; everyone has their part and systems are in place to



support all the working parts. There are significant modifications being made in behaviour and way of life to move the person (or community) toward change. "Begin with the end in mind," is often the advice we receive. What is it going to take, to see the outcomes we are hoping for? What needs to be in place, in process, in the environment to support those outcomes? What actions are needed to make those things happen?

1. Operationalizing action- This is where we move from a shared vision into real world activity that moves us toward the vision, in which all can engage. That vision has become a common agenda for mutually desired outcomes. Action starts with an idea of desired outcomes which leads to planning steps forward, or creating a roadmap based on what we think it will take to achieve those outcomes. From that roadmap, each moving part, with the vision in mind, takes a piece of the puzzle that makes sense in their world, having or developing a clue or two about how what they do impacts everyone else and what that means for their performance.
2. Establishing and communicating accountability- To be successful in the change we wish to see, there must be accountability attached to each of those pieces. The model for multi-sector community alignment, with a multi-sector representative community leadership group, discussed in Stage 3, can be adapted within the natural structure of a community to communicate and support that accountability.
3. Outcomes measuring and reporting- We know the action is successful when we see those outcomes come into fruition. A shared way of measuring outcomes and a clear way of communicating or reporting them is an important part of the change process and collective impact. Best Practice and experience tells us that clearly measuring and reporting outcomes provides important information for deciding if what we are doing is getting us

where we want to be. It helps us justify our priorities and resource allocations, and get support for what we are trying to achieve.

4. Evaluation- Evaluation is a systematic determination for the worth and significance of something, based on criteria governed by a set of standards. It is a way of providing checks and balances to the action we have undertaken, and the systems we create and operate within. It is necessary to ensure they are not only accomplishing what we intended them to accomplish, but that they are doing it in the way we intended.



Systems Thinking requires that we move forward at this point. Even incremental changes are better than cycling around again and regurgitating rhetoric. This is the place where individuals, groups, organizations, communities sputter and stall unless steps forward are taken. It might not be perfect, but the act of doing something will help us iron out the wrinkles of how we work together and what is really needed, discover new reserves, resources, and realities that fuel our journey forward. What we do is going to be based on what is available within the environment- the parties that are engaged, the clarity of the shared vision, the needs, the challenges or barriers, the commitment level of those involved, what tools or resources are available. These are changeable, dynamic elements that will adjust with each step toward the outcomes being sought. And each adjustment will inform and effect the next steps.

#### **Community Alignment Component Four: Action and Activity**



The working group consults with key community entities (based on need as well as willingness to engage) and implements the action plan. Remember that sometimes changing systems is not within our power, but we can do some workarounds that will still impact the situation and prepare the way for further engagement in the change process down the line. We have to start somewhere and this is where we decide where we can start. Everything we enact is designed to move us from the way things are toward the collective vision of what can be that has been created. This can include actual actions as well as simply mindsets, frames of reference, attitudes and ways of being and doing. Anything that is different, in positive ways, from how we did things before will help move us in good directions.

1. Design Leverage: With community input, propose and refine high leverage activities to: increase awareness of how the system currently functions; rewire causal feedback relationships that have been identified, shift mental models, reinforce the chosen purpose by updating goals and plans, metrics, incentives, authority structures and funding. Even if it is just hypothetically, it can be presented.

2. Enact Leverage Activities: Community Projects which require the input and participation of multiple if not all sectors are wonderfully galvanizing, leveraging, and help align the moving parts of a community naturally and organically. Especially when there is mindfulness in our way of being with each other. These projects can create real world perspective in support of that alignment. They lead to opportunities to utilize systems thinking tools, refine attitudes and processes, create successes that feed and build momentum toward the common vision. They also build relationships and a community culture that will increase community capacity for continued change, envisioning next steps, evaluating and improving community response to continuing and emerging needs.
3. Common Vision as Frame of Reference: Work together as a community, from a common vision that includes and supports the success of all, using that vision as a benchmark and a frame of reference.
4. Center of Excellence: Systems Thinking best practice, if change is to continue and the individual, organization or community wants to avoid the entropy trap, reinforces the need to establish a plan for continuous learning, monitoring, and outreach to maintain and increase engagement. At this point you will have a committed group that can carry this on, but they need a plan and resources. The focus needs to be sustaining the momentum through consistent and repeated use of the previous steps, continually asking the key questions, refining the vision, education and awareness, ensuring that the right people are involved and finding ways to engage them. What we are talking about here is a Center of Excellence that can be incorporated into a Community Alignment Framework. A sample is provided in Appendix G. Setting up a sustainable community oversight or leadership committee:

Start with naturally forming or formed alliances and coalitions. These alliances are the germs of systems thinking in a community. They come together for a reason. The oversight committee can start as representation from each of these and from each sector... This doesn't always have to be the same person, and could be a shared role, situational depending on what is the emerging concern. Within our model for a community alignment framework, each sector supports and sends their best minds for the task at hand, armed with the information they feel is relevant for the determination required. What needs to be determined comes from the work of alliances and individual entities within the sectors which informs the big picture view. In each community there may be natural entities that could be utilized as an oversight committee. There are varying views as to which. It is something your community will have to consider carefully so as to encourage, rather than stifle, forward movement.

- This group must be multi-sectoral in nature, with good representation from each sector.

- They cannot be tied up in bureaucracy. They must come with authority from the entities they represent (sectors or alliances) to make decisions within acceptable parameters. This changes the nature of the meetings from informing and sharing to providing prior information and background, focuses and questions so participants are coming prepared to make decisions, with the expectation that the work of consideration for any particular area of focus has been done within the fields they represent.
- They must be seen as a good community bridging and relationship building entity, and not an ultimate authority (although, if things are done right, they will be able to make decisions, or at least powerful and trusted recommendations for the community).
- They must be less prescriptive and more influencing and supportive of creativity.
- They need to be able to extract the information they require from their interactions with the community alliances and strike a balance between appropriate research and overthinking.
- Their role is to keep things moving in good directions, not tie up the process with too much control.
- They are conveners and suggesters, the big picture view, and
- They are not micro managers.
- They inform and send suggestions to the alliances, sectors and other community entities, which would then, within the collective wisdom of their ranks be able to operationalize, assign, and support action.

Tips from the Trenches:



1. Each community has to figure this out for themselves.
2. City government does not always have the dollars that can support the work needing to be done, but they may at least have staff hours that can be allocated. In a full community alignment effort, using systems thinking to make the most of every resource, city government, and other community entities from each sector can take a look at their department and systems responsibilities and allocations and take their related pieces of the puzzles, along with everyone else.
3. Along that note, in many communities, there is a lack of confidence and trust in the bureaucracy of government entities. So, leadership for this kind of heart-wrenching, soul-searching and life changing work may be better coming from some other source in the community, with support and participation from bureaucracies as participants, rather than being seen as authorities. Everyone will benefit, everyone will learn and increase capacity to do their jobs better. And relationships, which are key in any kind of change work, will be better going forward.

4. Due to existing mindsets and conditions in a community it may be that a concrete project rather than a hypothetical or theoretical discussion gets more engagement to start. The act of pulling together for a tangible community benefit, such as a new housing project, or a multi-sector effort to do more with what resources and opportunities currently exist to increase community safety by supporting the needs of people with lived experience can help jumpstart and create a framework for community alignment work.
5. But there is also a starting point in the hypothetical and theoretical. And there are champions in your community that you will not find unless you broadcast your questions challenges and ideas and invite others to take a look at the challenge and see how their work ties into it.
6. Regular convening is required to check in, gauge successes (and celebrate them!), explore and assess the activities and see how the community landscape can continue to evolve, in which directions you need to go and what may need to be revisited and “tweaked” a bit. With some “second-order thinking” and community coordination, this can be intentionally embedded into activities that are already in process. This is what a Center for Excellence can do.

**Stage of Change Stage Five: Maintenance-** The hardest part is over, we have changed behaviours and opened up a



whole new world of possibility. We have resources and supports prepared and ready to go, and we are on a committed path of action and activity toward our vision of what could be. But while we may have some room to breathe, now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Now we are working to prevent relapse. This activity includes continuous learning and growing toward the

ideal; refining and solidifying behaviours, patterns, ways of being. It requires vigilance and mindfulness. It requires humility, trust, and a reliance on those strong, healthy relationships we have built with ourselves and with our community collaborators. The process is the same for individuals, organizations, sectors and communities. Each of the separate parts of a community collective impact effort have their own work to do within their own systems to stay engaged with the processes and maintain that way of being that has allowed so much progress to be made. System entropy is always just around the corner and must be checked and harnessed to keep things moving in good directions. Keeping the change engine engaged in consistently assessing and being proactive toward next steps, expanding the scope of what we can fix, upgrade, update, or scale up, will help a community in this stage to maintain gains and best utilize the dynamic nature of systems work.

Systems Thinking suggests that in this stage, efforts need to be made to keep things moving in good directions.



Creating a Center for Excellence, with Communities of Practice will assist with this. As previously mentioned, our model for multi-sector community alignment could help a community organize itself around these concepts. A multi-sectoral committee that feeds information back and forth between the community coalitions and the Big Picture will be invaluable. It is through this community oversight group that a model for a Center for Excellence and Communities of Practice can naturally flow and be supported. (See Appendix G).

### **Community Alignment Component Five: Continuous Learning**



To maintain hard won change and keep a community flexing for next steps, it is important to be constantly assessing how systems are functioning, seeking better ways of doing things, sharing information on approaches, challenges, solutions, and outcomes. There are numerous ways this can be organized and resourced, and that will be determined by each community. In our model, the Center for Excellence functions as a quality standard-holder for the overall community collective impact activity. It is an information exchange and brokers community training and enrichment. It would support mindfulness around way of being, keep, evolve and manage accountability to, the shared community vision.

The Communities of Practice refer to the collective learning that occurs within each focus area and within Sectors. They are concerned with shared competencies within particular domains, interactions and relationships among members, and the actual practice and expertise in each particular area of focus. But they are connected, informing and strengthening each other. These help to keep the process of change dynamic and cohesive. They require intentional leadership and support through a backbone structure. Here is a link to an introduction to communities of practice: <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

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## Section 5: A Vision for a Connected, Intentional, Sustainable System of Community Care: A Model to Develop and Support a Multi-sector Community Alignment and Collective Impact

### Introduction and Summary:

In all its separate parts, this model is not looking at doing anything that isn't already being considered or done. The “innovation” is in the combination and synergy of a number of things working together intentionally and embedded within each other for maximum impact and advantage. We are tackling crisis while paving the way for prevention and sustainability. We are looking to leverage existing opportunities in people, places, practices, and perspectives. We are seeking out and creating a system of support and capacity building for collaborators and community champions who are tired of the status quo and see the benefit of working outside the box. We are using a business model to sustainably tackle a social challenge and challenge social systems.

While carrying out the Momentum Project, we have learned that there are needs as well as opportunities in most communities. The goal of this project has been to provide a plan and facilitation to help communities align multi-sectorally in a sustainable system of community care to help decrease homelessness and its contributing factors. Reviewing best practices and observing a number of communities, we have recognized a few opportunities that provide leverage toward positive systems change through some collective impact activity and sustainable housing options within strategic partnerships. Systems Thinking and other best practices have been applied to develop an enhanced Collective Impact/Action Model that we offer here as a starting point for moving toward your vision of a community that cares enough to leave no one behind.

SILOS and SOLOS: A continuing barrier to full effectiveness if it remains at the status quo, and the way out of the current social crisis if it can be recognized and addressed, is the siloed nature of community care and activity. But there are four layers of activity that can make a big difference NOW, that we present as an action model for communities that are wondering what they can do. Some, or even a lot of what we discuss in the next few pages may already be happening in your community.

There are more than likely many in your community who would say “we have that,” “this is already being done,” or, “we don’t have the resources for that.” But the reality is:

- In most communities, things can always be done better, there are gaps, and activity and consideration are limited to a few leaders and agencies.
- Just because something is being done does not mean it is available to all who need it.



- Because of the tendency to operate in silos, many communities are not fully tuned into the resources they actually do have.
- Ironically this is often exacerbated by current funding models and a lack of understanding as to how integrated a community really is, for good or ill, and sometimes a lack of imagination.
- It comes down to the way a community operates together, more than what is or is not happening, that leads to greater success and better outcomes.

Many times, you will hear in a community about big ideas that have not come into fruition or haven't lasted, or you will hear repeatedly about needs and the lack of resources. A long, hard, honest, multi-sectored look around at each other may bring some surprising insights as to as yet unseen opportunities or how people have been getting in each other's way in providing what was needed. You may not have all that you need, but in the process of assessing and re-imagining as a community you will come closer than you ever did before, and will be better able to articulate and justify what you need to ask for. The following activity areas can be adapted as a framework for action and leverage toward aligning systems and sectors and enhancing collective impact for solving homelessness and its contributing factors while moving the community toward a changed way of being.

- Build a "highway of hope"
- Engage in systems analysis
- Align services and sectors
- Pursue a sustainable business model to resource the change work on multiple levels.

#### **Activity number one: Build a "Highway of Hope"**

Call it what you want, this is just the tagline we are giving it. Any community can come together on a multi-sector level and take stock of what is available, right now, in terms of funding, existing programs, spaces, staff hours, materials, expertise, interests, community businesses, agencies, entities and individual members that can provide opportunities for, or have relevance to the needs or experiences of vulnerable populations. These are natural leverage points for systems change, because they are readily available but also require some honest accountability, collaboration and creative problem solving outside of silos. They provide inroads into relationship building and creating a foundation that underpins the individual and systems changes we want to see.

Interviews and feedback from people with Lived Experience have told us that it is important for communities to consider and ensure the right opportunities are available for everyone in the homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, catchment. They are very clear that there is a spectrum of need and change readiness in that group and to "lump" them all together in one place, or to see them all as addicts or people with mental health challenges

who are a risk to the community and themselves is to do a disservice. Frankly, it is a disservice to almost every person in that group. Most people in crisis would like to find a way out of it. We can create a broad, effective navigable “highway” that supports travel at varying speeds, with helpful off ramps to services and well-marked exits to change destinations, rather than tiny, obscure mountain paths to help people move forward in hope.

Some of these types of opportunities may already exist in some form, but a process can be undertaken to map and calendar them, so people can know where and when to go. Also, there are potential opportunities that can be created through some collaborative effort and creative combining of people, places and things. Getting the entire community involved will open up new avenues of resources never before considered. It also gives an opportunity for education and information which can dispel the ignorance that leads to apathy, discrimination, and judgement which keeps people from being open to possibilities. In this section you will learn the why and how of this activity and be provided with some tools that can be adapted to your community.

“But how to soothe souls inflamed by the intense torment imposed first by childhood experiences almost too sordid to believe and then, with mechanical repetition, by the sufferers themselves? And how to offer them comfort when their suffering is made worse every day by social ostracism—by what the scholar and writer Elliot Leyton has described as “the bland, racist, sexist, and ‘classist’ prejudices buried in Canadian society: an institutionalized contempt for the poor, for sex-trade workers, for drug addicts and alcoholics, for aboriginal people.”

— Gabor Maté, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#)

Maté is writing about addiction but the same systemic ostracism for any other human challenge is a subject that could fill volumes. Mate asks: “how to soothe the souls inflamed...?”

Mate has his insights and theories in that regard, of course, but a community Highway of Hope is the beginning of the answer to that question. Because we, as a community, can’t change anything but the environment for a bruised and battered human being, and turn it from a place of “institutionalized contempt” to a patient, compassionate, nutrient filled garden for growth where every person has the same chance as the next to reach their potential and achieve their dreams. Stripping away judgement is not an easy task, especially for those who have not walked a particular path, and sometimes for those who have experienced it differently for whatever reasons.

Where communities go wrong is when they stop seeing their vulnerable community neighbours as deserving human beings with the potential to contribute, the right to the best life they can experience and the inherent knowledge

about what that looks like and what works for them to achieve it. Even in helping, we can exacerbate that “institutionalized contempt” through an imbalance of power brought on by a false sense that “we are helping and they need help.” We do such a disservice to people; we take away their power and strip them of dignity when we prescribe the way and put distinctions on it. The truth and reality are that we ALL are bringing what we have to the circle and have the opportunity to take away what we need. Let’s say that again in another way. Everyone has something to offer to, and something they need from, community. Everyone. Think about it.

Does this mean we let people take advantage of the system? Certainly not! Many of us have met people with lived experience that are very angry with peers who are abusing systems and the people working in those systems who let them or even tell them how, in order to achieve their own ends. It is a symptom of struggling, broken, or failing systems. But a connected, aligned, intentional system of care and support for success can create room for both the compassion, *and* the accountability required to build an empowering environment designed for success for everyone. This environment gives room and freedom for the authentic, sincere, participant, and reveals very clearly those that are in a different stream. We need to be careful though, in our judgement, because still within that “system abusing group” are people who are doing what they do for reasons related to deficits in their environment that, if solved for, could change things for them as well. Accountability and Community are powerful tools for motivating and supporting the change we wish to see.

#### Creating “way stations”

Community entities can assess and coordinate existing resources to create and support an intentional, organized spectrum of engagement points. The engagement points or ‘way stations’ would provide meaningful, resilience and resource building activities that vulnerable community members can engage with while they wait for housing to be available. These activities can be organized into three main groups or types or stages. Each stage is connected to the next and traversing them is not a linear experience. Each stage is necessary and needs resourcing. Doesn’t it make sense to make the effort as a community to organize, enhance and augment these types of activities and maximize the chances of getting people back on their feet in the minimum amount of time? Being intentional about how we organize ourselves around these things will pay huge dividends.

“Boredom, rooted in a fundamental discomfort with the self, is one of the least tolerable mental states.”

— Gabor Maté, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#)

#### First Stage Engagement

Outside of a supported and programmed 24 hour shelter, these opportunities can include “come as you are,” harm reduction day time spaces that can provide an emergency shower, laundry, meal, some activities for healing, creativity, and a safe place to wait out a “high,” or any kind of crisis that involves behavioural or safety needs. A community may decide and find a way to resource it, that the local shelter can be used for this purpose with extended hours. Or it may be practical for these activities to take place elsewhere, perhaps in different locations for further local need and impact. Whatever is decided, isn’t it much more efficient if the whole system is connected and the people who are supposed to be using it know where to go, when to go there, and what to expect from the engagement? Having the right people and services popping in and out of these particular “way stations” can initiate that process of relationship building that has been proven to encourage movement along a continuum of change. Again, your community may very well have something like this already happening, and that is great! However, take a really good, honest and out of the box look at how the community can really make the most of this kind of first engagement point.

- Do people feel welcome, and valued in these spaces no matter what they are presenting?
- Are they going to be and feel safe? Is there someone there that can help them moderate emotions or behaviour? Not everyone who presents difficult social behaviours is high or drunk. Some are experiencing symptoms of untreated, undertreated, or misdiagnosed mental illness.
- Do you have someone in the space that is able to either help people work through their current crisis, and knows when to call for more intense intervention?
- Are true harm reduction principles being used?
- ( Here is a little one page intro to harm reduction from the harm reduction COALITION\_ <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/> and a link to the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition web page with further links for more information and perspectives on harm reduction that can inform your action: <http://drugpolicy.ca/issues/harm-reduction/> )
- Are there supplies and amenities that can help ease physical, emotional, mental and spiritual discomfort?
- Are there opportunities for information and links to other relevant services?
- Are there opportunities for information and links to other stages of engagement so your guests can see what else is available?
- Are there opportunities for them to find meaning and regain contact with their own strengths, interests, passions, humanity and to connect with community?
- Are there opportunities for other community members and sector representatives to have contact, relationship building, awareness and education experiences?
- Are there opportunities and support for food, rest, healing, and compassionate self-inquiry?

- Are there alternative “hole fillers and soul food” available? For example, music, art supplies, non-judgmental or demanding conversation, good things to eat, craft or trades type activities.

If we put the human being in the center and work the situation based on compassionate acceptance of their reality, we can creatively set things up to change their experience in ways that can positively impact their trajectory. But we have to be patient and accept that the major work done to make a change is done by the person themselves. We only set the stage. And set it we must.

Some more Gabor Mate quotes that might inspire and inform how first stage engagement can be operated and maximized:

“Not why the addiction but why the pain.”

— Gabor Maté

“It is impossible to understand addiction without asking what relief the addict finds, or hopes to find, in the drug or the addictive behaviour.”

— Gabor Mate, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#)

“We may not be responsible for another’s addiction (*or mental illness*) or the life history that preceded it, but many painful situations could be avoided if we recognized that we are responsible for the way we ourselves enter into the interaction. And that, to put it most simply, means dealing with our own stuff.”

— Gabor Maté, [In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction](#) (*italics added*)

It takes the right kind of people to be stewards over such sacred spaces of safety and calm for people who are having difficulty finding that for themselves in the chaos and pain of their situation. An aligned community effort can ensure that the right people are in the right positions to provide the right environment. And ensure that this environment is connected onwards to next steps with bridging and relationship building supported and resourced. You may have organizations already operating in your community whose main purpose is to promote and resource harm reduction for substance users. They and others are well-versed in trauma-informed care and can assist your community in setting up spaces and opportunities.

Research and best practice are catching up to the fact that for most people, the best way to help them overcome an addiction or gain mastery over a mental illness is by providing them with a way to fill the deficits they are

experiencing which have led to the addiction or are exacerbating their mental state. The right kind of first stage engagement for folks who chronically have trouble fitting in or managing themselves in any other social setting will help people get their feet under them and start to lay a foundation for the changes we (and they) wish to see in their lives.

### Second Stage Engagement:

This kind of engagement, in this context, refers to engagement opportunities that have some criteria and expectations attached to them. Requirements that participants be sober and able to manage their behaviour, but not necessarily needing to be “clean” or “well” to be there can be designed to authentically nurture, support, and encourage “the shift” that precipitates real and lasting change, by providing resources with some accountability. These engagement opportunities are especially important for those who are *not* abusing substances or experiencing severe mental illness, that also need some relief from the chaos of the shelter or street environment. Some may be trying to remain in recovery and absolutely need safe spaces to nurture their wellness and continue to make gains.

These kind of engagement spaces can provide opportunities such as showers, laundry, art, music, learning, crafts, sharing circles, hobbies, computer work, or a chance to use trades skills, etc. to help people reconnect with their interests and abilities, and have meaningful daily activity. They don’t have to provide everything in one place. In this way agencies, organizations, businesses can pool resources and create specific kinds of opportunities based on the available expertise, interest, passion, space and supplies within that particular collaboration. It also works well for assisting in motivation, relationships and network building for job pathways when members of business or industry in a community are participating in the act of actually helping open up pathways for potential future workers. And the multi-sector collaboration opens the way for multi-sector community alignment

It would be great for participants to have opportunities to volunteer or do some paid work. If outreach workers and agency staff are able to engage in these spaces with the participants, relationships and connections for the “warm transfers” to other services and more formal reclamation and recovery activities can take place. Lived experience input is necessary for solution making and in this kind of aligned community environment there are opportunities to create conversation cafes or a peer advocacy group that can connect into the big picture view.

These spaces could be open to all community members to encourage inclusion and foster understanding and relationships. But they would be designed to help those who are most vulnerable to preserve their dignity and safety, and be personally accountable to respect themselves and others as well as the space. This assists them to continue building a foundation for moving forward and upward. Some good questions to ask include:

- Do these engagement opportunities continue to support safety and wellbeing?

- Do they empower participants with just enough support but not too much to get in the way of personal growth, creativity, exploration and compassionate self-assessment?
- Do they set the stage and supply resources for all of the above?
- Do they have just enough expectations to produce a sense of safety and security but not too rigid or directive so as to discourage full and open participation?
- Are they able to follow through consistently with consequences of a breach in a participation agreement, and just as easily forgive and forget for the next chance?
- Do they provide room for participants to explore, experiment and express safely while being accountable to the safety and peaceful enjoyment of others in the space?

Supporting this activity intentionally and honestly as a community will help create a foundation for the process of aligning sectors and services around a community of care. Through improved and increased working relationships, enacted with outward accountability, focused on maximizing what already exists in the community we are doing systems change work. If we can purposefully nurture and resource natural support networks, individual capacity building, and collective action, we would help more people experience more positive progress. We could increase our effectiveness in crisis management, and intervention and prevention work by creating environments which empower participants as advocates and even leaders in the process of creating their own solutions. From here, with a community that is working better together, there are natural links to third stage engagement that has higher criteria and more formal, focused and specialized purposes.

#### Third Stage Engagement:

For our purposes here, third stage engagement refers to more specific and specialized engagement that is completing the transition from crisis into stability, from dysfunction and disconnect into functional inclusion. These generally exist to some extent in any community, although difficult to navigate, with stiff criteria for entrance, and either under-utilized or overwhelmed. With some effort, organization, and community will, these services can become connected to previous stages of engagement and pathways and a chain of relationship intentionally formed.

Employment, medical, mental health, addiction recovery, financial and educational services and programs can be connected into the moment people are ready for next steps because a process and relationship exist, eliminating gaps and navigation challenges, supporting momentum, and more than likely speeding up the process of change.

There is an opportunity to pool resources, be strategic and intentional, make better use of what we already have available to us, and create more spaces, opportunities and room for the vulnerable populations we support to move closer to where they want to be while waiting for all the pieces to fall into place.



Within a housing context:

In this environment communities can also, through collective strategizing, take better advantage of immediately available housing options and get the right tenant “matches” into currently empty housing units with a reduced rent as an investment by forward thinking landlords into stable tenants. The practice of agencies “hoarding” landlords for their own clients (if those clients are not a good fit for their units) can lead to frustration and landlord burnout. Sadly, this runs counterproductive to the intention to provide housing for those clients. Opportunities can be better taken advantage of based on relationships, advocacy, and good old-fashioned practicality. Clients then get the best fit for *them*, and those generous and socially minded landlords, trusting those recommendations and knowing their tenants are connected to the right pathways to support their success, get a tenant that is a good fit for their unit and management practice.

We have provided a visual guide and some helps to assist with this collective impact action which requires representatives from agencies, community groups and organizations, business, lived experience individuals and the community at large, to be part of a working committee to assess what is available and what is needed, help operationalize current and potential engagement points and then create a “map” for folks in need to use. These can be found in Appendices H and I.

#### **Activity number two: Engage in systems analysis**

On a multi-sector level, engage in a systems analysis, using the framework laid out in Section 3, or some other systems assessment process. To recap the suggested framework:

Stage

State of being

Precontemplation	No intention of taking action, not considering consequences, fearful of making any changes, avoiding new information.
Contemplation	Some sort of crisis has happened that creates some dissonance. The price of staying the same starts to outweigh the cost of change, accepting responsibility for and therefore power to make some changes.
Preparation	Moving toward making a commitment, learning, gathering resources,
Action	Significant changes in behaviour are occurring, assignments have been made
Maintenance	The hardest part is over, is now the work of holding ground and laying a foundation for more growth. We have changed the status quo but we don't want to stay there so we look for other opportunities to tweak and improve what we do and start the process over again.

Before engaging in this change work, a community is in Pre-contemplation stage- where things are maintaining at a status quo. But systems and communities don't exist, and certainly don't thrive, in a vacuum so when elements shift

or are introduced into the environment create crisis, we move into a place of chaos where change is not only possible but also needful. This is a process that will be continually repeated and can be managed through a Community Alignment Framework and Centre of Excellence such as that described in activity number three.

This five “stage” model for leading systemic change (Stroh, 2015) consists of five phases that coincide with the Transtheoretical Model of Behavioural Change, or the Stages of Change.

- Building a Foundation for Change -coincides with pre-contemplation and is an engine for readiness
- Understanding and accepting the current reality- coincides with Contemplation
- Committing to make the change-coincides with Preparation
- Doing the work to move from current reality to the shared vision- coincides with Action
- Continuing in a pattern of learning, assessing and mutual accountability to keep things flexing forward- coincides with Maintenance. and includes creating a community alignment framework or process that can continue to feed the change engine and support maintenance of gains and growth into next steps for the community.

Use or adapt Section 4: A Systems Thinking Guide for Multi-sector Alignment to help your community accomplish this. Appendices A through E can help. Or find another approach or program that works better for you. There are multiple Social Change and Systems oriented organizations and think tanks that provide guides, insights, and facilitation that can be matched to your community’s capacity and budget.

### **Activity number three: Alignment of services and sectors**

After coming together to tackle the crisis, and with the right kind of leadership, a community can begin using its existing governance systems, alliances and coalitions, to feed into a multi-sector community “brain trust” to share information, look at the big picture, make priorities and plans, then make suggestions and assignments back down the chains. This would enable the community to be much more efficient in their activities, assist with supporting individuals and families along pathways to success, increase local resources to handle local needs, fill in gaps in service and support, increase economic opportunities.

Every community has a combination of coalitions, networks, alliances in each sector that are operating at some level on a spectrum from loosely connected and purely informational to highly coordinated and purposeful. An initial assessment of community systems can provide some insights into where and how these naturally occurring entities actually and potentially connect and collide. There may already exist a multi-sectoral body in your community that can collect information from those entities to form a big picture view of the community.

This becomes a system of assessment, strategy and action planning that considers and provides for next steps for the entire community and develops a way of being which naturally solves problems and meets challenges while continuing to build community capacity, self-reliance, resource sustainability, and empowerment to thrive. With a self-sustaining leadership group (through training and succession planning) to help keep things consistent, different representatives from the coalitions could attend depending on the topics of focus. This way, concerns, ideas, and resources that land outside of the scope of each alliance, can be addressed, accessed, and allocated, with the big picture of community able to inform priorities but also provide more and better targeted resources toward solutions. (See Appendix G).

#### **Activity number four: Pursue a Local Housing and Community Development Coalition or Cooperative**

In order to generate sustainable housing solutions and revenues that will support Actions 1, 2 and 3, expand resources, provide growth, healing, recovery and economic opportunities, and help community members to develop resilience, self-reliance and empowerment.

It is clear, from our past experience and through what we have learned and observed through this project that even when there is a shared vision of what is needed, organizations will still “do their own thing,” pursuing whatever opportunities look to be in their best interest, and within their mandate. As an aligned, collectively acting community, the chances of developing viable options are increased. and most importantly, what does happen can be more effective. A community that is communicating multi-sectorally has an increased scope for more effectively using and enhancing existing opportunities, finding locations, keeping development and building costs down, and putting a plan together to apply for funding and financing both locally and externally.

Mixed use, mixed income approaches are currently at the forefront of best practice in housing for a number of reasons. The revenues from these endeavours, depending on the financing costs, and how clever a community is at maximizing revenues through mixed use and mixed income will help them grow more housing, develop sustainability activities and support the previously mentioned activities. At the same time, mixing socio-economic populations in a building provides added layers of and opportunities for social benefits, if intentionally enacted and properly supported.

Gather interested community entities to form a collaboration. Use an existing entity or create a Cooperative, and make a pitch for municipal, provincial, federal and local investment and support. While cash is nice as well as necessary, there are more ways than just money for community entities to contribute. There could be an unused existing building that is sound and could be repurposed, for example. With cooperation from community government, and with local creativity and expertise, there can be ways found to make it work. If not, there may be

community land that can be allocated, or land that can be donated or sold cheap or in combination with other benefits the community can come up with for the seller.

While there may be some similarities, every community is different, too. What we hope this section offers you is some inspiration and motivation, and maybe a few effective tools to look around at each other and see what you can do together.

There are a number of principles that apply to this type of activity, but there are two important areas we will cover here. First, is the need for sustainability and self-reliance in providing affordable housing and other activities as foundations for sustainable added value community development. Second, the idea of local Cooperatives as a way to achieve this and more.

### Sustainability and Self-reliance

The Oxford definition of sustainability is “the ability to be maintained at a certain level or rate.” For the individuals we are trying to help, this means helping them to maintain their gains and trajectories of growth and success. Within the context of providing social supports and affordable housing required to help end homelessness, sustainability means being able to perpetually provide what supports are necessary to help those we serve to sustain their gains and trajectories of growth. This includes being able to pay for the development, upkeep and eventual replacement of housing.

Both of these aspects of sustainability involve finding clever ways to produce revenues from what we do, or for what we do. It also means meeting our needs without keeping others from meeting their needs. From this perspective, to create a sustainable community means that everyone be willing to give a little to the whole. Whether off the bottom line of private business revenues, through giving of time or supplies, or simply by contributing positively wherever we are, there are many ways that every community member can be accountable for and contribute to sustainable community development. The act of contributing, in itself, creates added value in social returns and benefits.

The lower the financing costs of a community project, the greater the surplus revenues that can go to its continuation and security as well as continued community development. Local contribution can happen in numerous forms, and local financing done right, if financing is needed, keeps more local money local. But even with outside financing, a project that is dedicated to social benefit provides value into the community rather than solely to private or outside interests.

Three types of sustainability to consider:

- Environmental- the systems within the environment can continue to renew themselves at the same rate they are used
- Economic- Independent human communities with access to the resources and opportunities they need to help every member thrive
- Societal-Universal human rights to have adequate resources in support of a healthy and safe community, with cultural, labour and personal rights upheld for every person

Self-reliance means “the ability to rely on one’s own powers and resources rather than those of others.” For the humans we are trying to help, this means helping to set up the community environment for them to be as independent and autonomous as possible with the least amount of formal or paid supports necessary within the parameters of their abilities and challenges. It means setting up housing, communities and neighbourhoods in such a way as to foster and support that self-reliance naturally, as much as possible. Within the context of providing social supports and affordable housing it means being able to do as much on our own as possible, as individuals, organizations and communities, and not being dependent on outside sources to continue.

Obviously, there are varying degrees of self-reliance, based on the particular challenges of the individuals, organizations and communities. As communities it makes sense to plan and prioritize, be creative and strategic to be able to be the least dependent as possible on unpredictable and inconsistent outside sources, and provide a constant stream of resources. This means different things for different communities. What your community is able to do will depend on what opportunities are available in your environment. It could be housing or it could be a local business, turned into employment opportunities and a social benefit revenue generator.

It does take some input from others to get sustainable projects going. But the right projects are the ones that after the initial influx of capital and other assistance, can support themselves indefinitely. Consider a supported housing project that could, if funding for support workers ended, continue to support its residents who require permanent case management. Or that could afford support staff out of its revenues so that limited government funding for case management could be used in other ways in the community. To support market landlords who are willing to offer lower rents, for example. Better yet if they can create more revenues and opportunities in addition to just maintaining themselves with only a social return on investment (although for many, this would be enough).

Creating sustainable community development means creating an engine of self-reliance, whether it be increasing the capacity of people, places, or ways of being human together. Capacity for self-reliance is an important foundation of sustainable community development that is worth investing in. Developing a business plan for such an enterprise, as an aligned, connected community with multi-sector collaboration with a clear, shared vision is a good start in garnering public and private dollars and other support and contributions. If we can, as communities, help our

governments make better use of our tax dollars, we are expanding the potential and impact of systems change and fostering a broader sustainability that will provide its own return on investment for our communities.

In a 2006 paper *Principles for Self-Reliance and Sustainability: Case Study of Bangladesh*, Dora Marionva and Amzad Hossain posit that there are five characteristics of self-reliance that tie into sustainability: *Simplicity, Responsibility, Respect, Commitment, and Creativity*.

The abstract of their paper can be found at this link:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/252625110\\_PRINCIPLES\\_FOR\\_SELF-RELIANCE\\_AND\\_SUSTAINABILITY\\_CASE\\_STUDY\\_OF\\_BANGLADESH](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/252625110_PRINCIPLES_FOR_SELF-RELIANCE_AND_SUSTAINABILITY_CASE_STUDY_OF_BANGLADESH)

These characteristics aptly set the tone for a multi-sectorally aligned community participating in enhanced collective impact. They also lead nicely into a discussion about Cooperatives as an added value way community can achieve the change we wish to see.

### Cooperatives

We are looking at financing and supporting sustainable housing or other backbone project that can contribute to local sustainable development, with accountability to local needs and environments, and the greatest impact locally. Does it not make sense to look for ways to finance it locally? In this way, the return on investment remains in the community, adding to its economic health. The concept of a co-operative has been around for quite a long time. It is an important sustainability and self-reliance option to consider for raising support and capital for a locally run and benefiting project and being able to perpetually safeguard that project until it is no longer needed. As well, it provides a greater opportunity for flexing the project (at least until all of our systems are morphed enough) to provide for emerging needs and next steps in a social support “economy” where redundancy is a valued commodity. It provides for an ebb and flow of participation, with members free to join and leave at any time, in a dynamic responsiveness to needs and community visions, rather than reactivity. It also provides for broad, multi-sector oversight and governance of sustainable community development. It creates, if groups are willing to be carefully creative, opportunities for different kinds of investments that can translate “sweat equity” so to speak, into economic gains. This creates access to a larger portion of the community to benefit in more ways than just economic, but in that way too.

There are some benefits as well as challenges to starting a co-operative, and different types of cooperatives that could be started. It is important to take the time to learn about this option, within the context of the need you are trying to fill and the projects you would like to undertake, in order to determine good fit. The information provided

here is cursory, collected from a few different sources. We have provided a few website links. Most provinces have a Cooperatives Association that can provide information, guidance and assistance in setting things up to provide the best protection and economic safety for local investors. There are a number of iterations available from numerous sources of why and how to set up a cooperative. Here is an amalgamation of several we found:

Groups organize themselves into cooperatives for a number of reasons including:

- improving bargaining power
- reducing costs
- obtaining products or services
- creating new and expanding existing markets and opportunities
- improve quality of products and services
- increase income.

By their very nature they can be sustainable collective impact engines that can provide for all three levels of sustainability discussed earlier. The very act of creating and running a cooperative venture in itself contributes to the systems changes we wish to see.

Stage 1- Determine economic need- what is it going to take to make what you want to have happen a reality? What is the vision for the change you wish to see? What will it require for you to make it a reality?

Stage 2- Determine if a cooperative is the solution- This requires educating the group about cooperatives, kinds of cooperatives, and how they can be set up, and considering if there is a good fit in relation to the project or vision you have in mind.

Stage 3- Determine if there is interest in membership- are there people in your locality that have the interest and ability to invest in the project on the terms you are looking at. Who needs to be invited to the table? Who do you need on your team? You are then going to have to convince people to join you, which leads to stage 4.

Stage 4-Is the cooperative plan feasible? Prepare an in-depth business plan identifies project, costs, risks and mitigations of those risks, feasibility considerations, and an organizational map (incorporation and bylaws) about how the organization will operate. What will be your processes and policies for gathering, using, and providing a return for the capital you are seeking. This should answer any questions your potential collaborators might have, and will lead you to setting up the checks and balances required to keep risk to a minimum. The risk is born locally, but the benefits will be felt locally.

Stage 5 - Getting commitment of capital or other investment such as business volume, materials and supplies, expertise, etc.

Once you have been able to do these things, you will be ready to get started making the difference you have envisioned.

In the model suggested by the Momentum Project, a multi-sector group of individuals and organizations comes together to create mixed use, mixed market, mixed income value added housing that produces revenues to fuel continued sustainability and self-reliance development and activity. Creating economic opportunities that can be accessible to a broader base of community members while meeting immediate and emerging social needs will lead to sustainability.

See Appendices J and K for more details.

Here are a few links to discussions about Co-operatives:

[http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Steps\\_to\\_starting\\_a\\_cooperative](http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Steps_to_starting_a_cooperative)

[https://www.cdsconsulting.coop/start\\_coop/4\\_cornerstones\\_in\\_3\\_stages/](https://www.cdsconsulting.coop/start_coop/4_cornerstones_in_3_stages/)

<https://www.startnonprofitorganization.com/form-cooperative-steps/>

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/CIR45-14.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJeh1C0Z2-g>

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## Epilogue:

I have had a few conversations in the last few days of putting the final touches on this first iteration of this work. They were with people who, as soon as I mentioned that I was doing a project related to homelessness, closed up and glazed over, stating that there were just some that couldn't be helped. Comments were made along the lines of "they deserve to be where they are," or "They want to be homeless." This is something we have seen and heard over and over during this project.

These kinds of comments speak the lack of understanding about what it means to be in, enter, or be at risk of homelessness and just who those humans are that are in those categories. There is little understanding of the countless elements that exist which can impact individual and family health and well-being, employment, housing affordability, and the cost of living. Or, in these uncertain times, how tenuous a hold most of us have on stable housing. Those kinds of comments also speak to a lack of vision and understanding about how a community can operate so that the capacity and resilience of individual, family, community, and sector systems improves enough to mitigate the impact of those elements. For all of us.

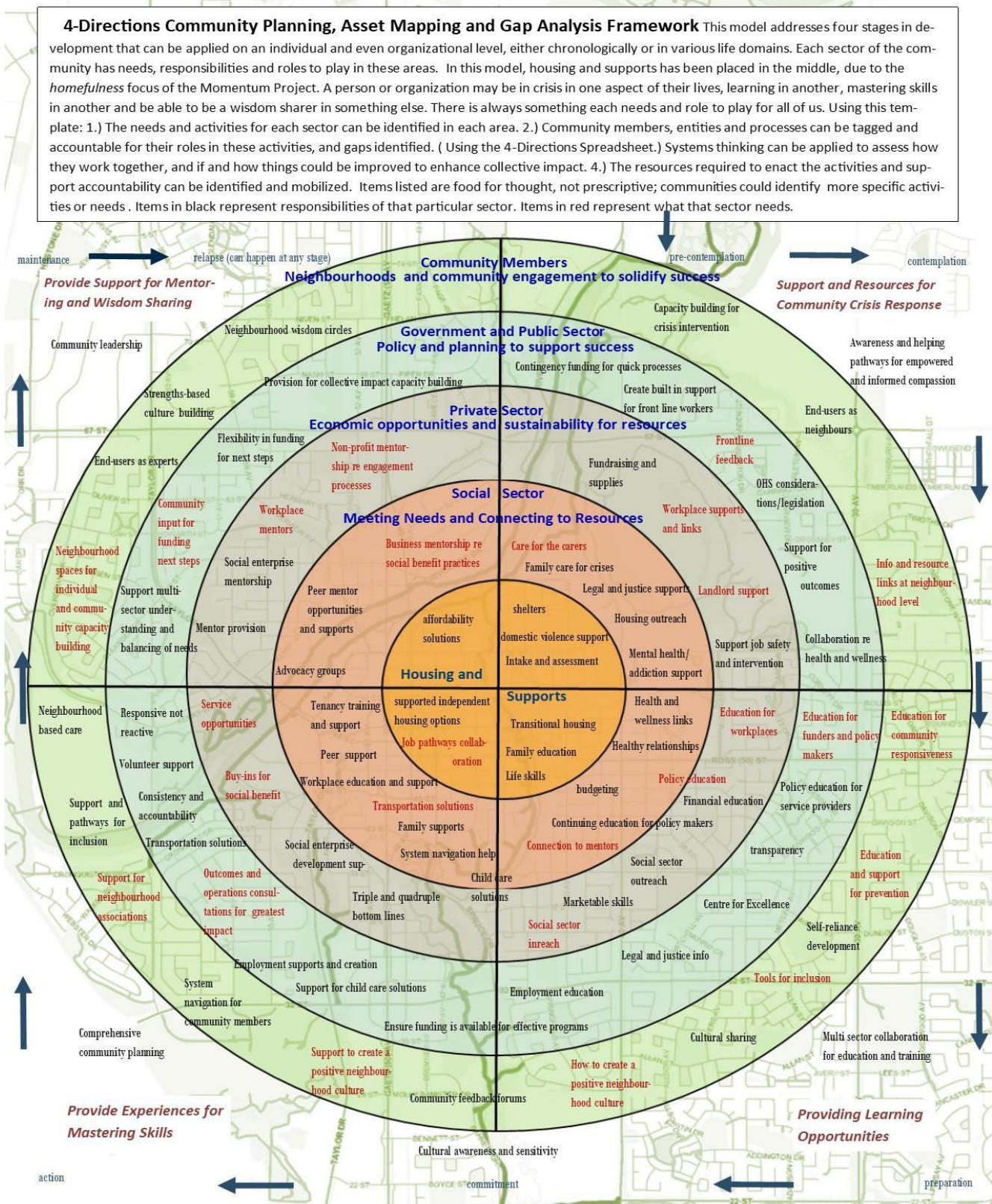
Those comments are based on deeply held beliefs based on misinformation, ignorance, and lack of accountability. A few small examples have reinforced or justified those beliefs and biases. The view from the tip of the iceberg is limited.

As a final wish and prayer for this document: we are all in this together, on this tiny planet in a vast expanse. But we are not alone. May we, together, find the answers that are within us, around us, and between us. They lie deep under the surface of what we can easily and comfortably see, think, feel, and do. May enough of us be willing to explore those frontiers, to chart new paths and courses into a brave new world of true, vibrant, dynamic, living community, and help others on their journey to be the change they wish to see.

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Appendices:

## Appendix B: Four Directions Community Planning Framework Visual



## Appendix C 4 Directions Spreadsheet (As separate Excel file)

### Appendix D Questions to Ask:

- Why, after we have been working on ending homelessness for so long, does it still exist?
- What areas are we falling short, individually and as a community?
- What were our honest motivations and “pay-offs” for being involved in this work?
- What aspects did we feel “called to?”
- What were we prepared to give up or share control of in order to see success in this area?
- What underlying assumptions and world views do we have regarding people who are homeless, or at risk of it; about other entities and stakeholders in our community; about root causes, accountability, responsibilities and roles?
- What do we see as the core contributions to the current crisis?
- What part, if any do we, within our sectors, organizations and as community members, through policy. perspective or practice, play in perpetuating the core contributors to homelessness? Or the current condition of siloism?
- What activities are working well and helping people, and how can we scale them up, given the resources we have available?
- What other layers of value can we add to our activities through collaboration?
- What are we doing, or could we do within our sectors and as a community to be the change we wish to see?

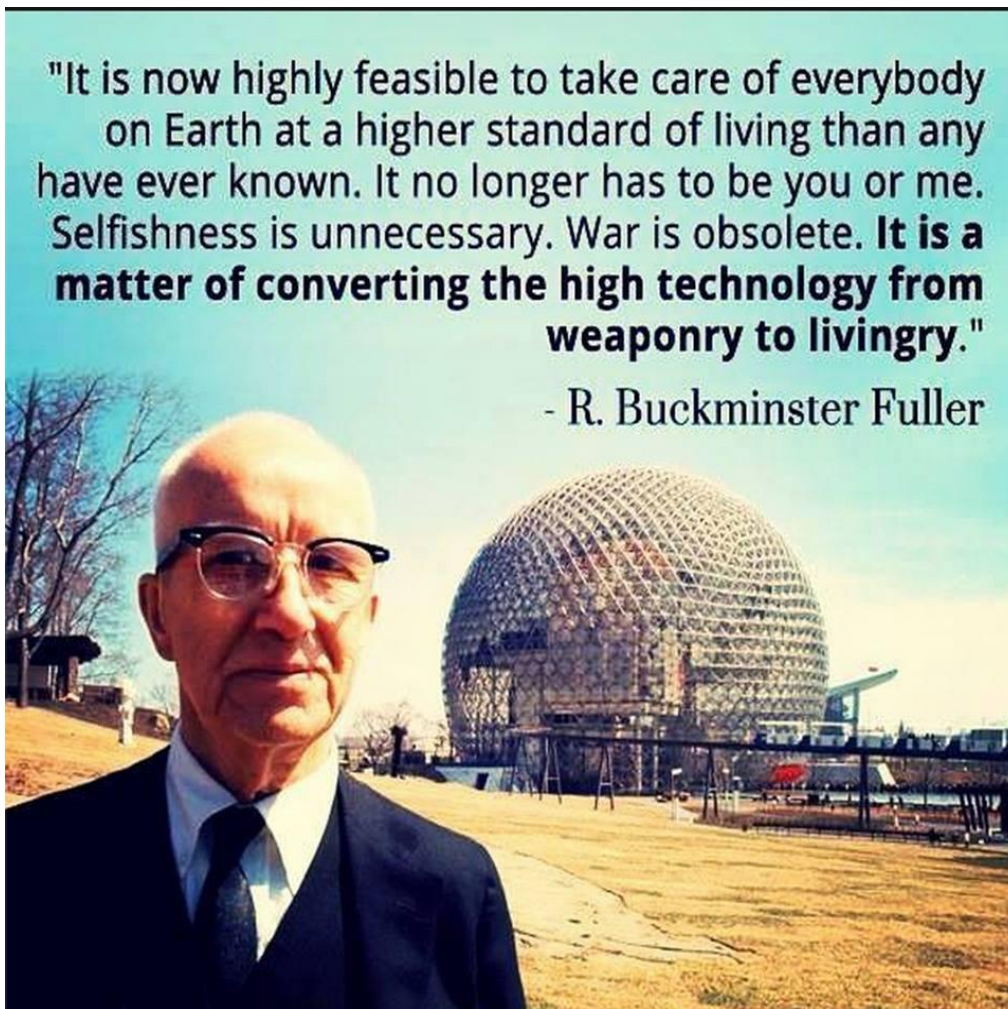
What if we don’t try to solve homelessness at all? What if we go beyond that and look at how we can create a community that can work collectively to solve, or at least alleviate, some of the contributing factors to homelessness (and any identified issue), and help every member thrive?

- What would a community that is able to support people to thrive look like?
- What deficits would need to be removed and what assets would need to be introduced or scaled up in order to break the cycles that were leading people into a situation of homelessness, or being at risk of it?
- What resources (existing and potential) do we have present in the community, when we expand our view to multiple sectors and get creative?
- How would we need to integrate and interlink those resources in order to decrease gaps and ensure that people could navigate the resources and opportunities?
- What organizations and sectors are currently engaged in ending homelessness and its contributing factors?
- What are the dynamics and interactions between organizations or sectors and their results?
- How we might be getting in each other’s ways?
- What important resources were missing to help end-users move out of crisis?
- Where were the missed opportunities and inefficiencies?
- Who else do we need at the table?
- What potential resources could we have if all sectors were connected in a shared vision?

Does your community have any other questions you would like to have answered, and that could lead you to the change you wish to see?



Appendix E- Some Mind Opening Visuals and Food for Thought:



- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10160661025090652>
  - The danger of a single story, there are so many pieces of the puzzle still floating around, undiscovered, or at least unassigned to the context of homelessness
  - "That is how to create a single story- show a people as one thing and one thing only, over and over again, and that is what they become."
- [https://ceres.org.au/?fbclid=IwAR25bmSCR8txX9MKjNNNmwwLrA2FjDtv1Q6bdXiC\\_AAxpPrIwTg7ZePeGb0](https://ceres.org.au/?fbclid=IwAR25bmSCR8txX9MKjNNNmwwLrA2FjDtv1Q6bdXiC_AAxpPrIwTg7ZePeGb0)
  - people are doing it, just add housing! There are spaces in almost every community that could be used for this, in varying combinations and scope. Imagine every neighbourhood as a learning station for sustainability!
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=800383373489534>
  - more community solutions that can save money for housing and boost community economies
- <https://www.facebook.com/ABCNews/videos/728055904263637/?t=0>
  - An inspiring look at a simple, no-cost thing one business is doing to help build capacity in their community, and help their own bottom line.
- <http://www.greenenergyfutures.ca/episode/geothermals-promise-of-endless-heat-for-agriculture?fbclid=IwAR03PgTa97Tqw1Dv8YYdOryQ9sl1L77jcpqQN9GI3phfTsiAw-EVAMtjos8>

- another idea for using what is already present but not yet considered, and a testament to the need for multi-sector communication and collaboration. This has food security and social enterprise implications for poverty reduction but could have direct sustainable affordable housing application.
- Whether it can happen or not, it is an example of how creativity and opportunity is enhanced when we break out of our silos and explore possibilities.
- <https://www.facebook.com/cnn/videos/2320166888266638/UzpfSTExOTU1NTQxMzI6MTAyMTkwMzYzOTU1OTk1NzA/>
  - A designer who saw an opportunity in the wasted spaces between what others were doing.
  - “I cried in the bathroom because I felt like I was part of a (systemic) problem.”
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1681409515227834>
  - one city’s “leap of faith” solution-
  - There are other jobs and assignments that people who are on social assistance, or need to connect into the workforce incrementally can do.
  - If we get our heads together as communities we can find viable and meaningful solutions that work for everyone.
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2027383067280809>
  - An example of meeting needs through meeting needs (social need being met by an environmental solution), and a community being willing to figure out how to make something that makes sense work.
- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2027383067280809>
  - Another example of meeting needs through meeting needs, finding and using opportunities that help bring a community closer together.
- [https://themindunleashed.com/2019/03/a-detroit-church-is-paying-homeless-people-to-clean-up-the-city.html?fbclid=IwAR14\\_Kf0sqzHA4Yqq2Tk1PDLH-kOCmgOdcntP5RclV4u8fqlu0XkEmcVBKY](https://themindunleashed.com/2019/03/a-detroit-church-is-paying-homeless-people-to-clean-up-the-city.html?fbclid=IwAR14_Kf0sqzHA4Yqq2Tk1PDLH-kOCmgOdcntP5RclV4u8fqlu0XkEmcVBKY)
  - and again.
- [http://yupthatexists.com/pestalotiopsis-microspora-plastic-eating-mushroom/?fbclid=IwAR0k8B6N3zQUzZ29SP9tEekQNGdh-Y\\_bPIQ4weBx7nTHMFVJbKBgl0bHcFks](http://yupthatexists.com/pestalotiopsis-microspora-plastic-eating-mushroom/?fbclid=IwAR0k8B6N3zQUzZ29SP9tEekQNGdh-Y_bPIQ4weBx7nTHMFVJbKBgl0bHcFks)
  - This is a bit of stretch as a metaphor, but here is an example of letting nature lead the way to solutions. Our human nature, our humanity, the very core, fundamental parts that are the same in all of us, and connected to natural laws, hold the keys we are seeking.
- <https://fox13now.com/2019/02/02/a-5th-graders-boredom-while-visiting-her-moms-job-led-to-70000-for-the-elderly-in-need/?fbclid=IwAR03hwU6VjoAWBh9vO5E0XJ5pRPWFvWf9WDwYjlpGHRD758ywImYbZaykcl>
  - that thing one child, (who was out of the systems box) did, that engaged a bunch of other community members and is making a huge difference in the lives of some seniors in her town.
- <https://medium.com/s/story/if-connection-is-our-core-human-need-then-why-are-we-so-bad-at-it-a904ae486a48?fbclid=IwAR2KWZINnYMwdZofa7AtPK1T306NtoipdtW-h8xR-pi5mMbXqcuwOfPndas>
  - An article about connection and the importance of relationships

### Some hopefully inspiring quotes to warm us up and help fuel our enthusiasm:

“Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.” L.R. Knost- award-winning author, feminist, and social justice activist.

“Strengthening families (and neighbourhoods, and communities, which are like families) helps decelerate the pernicious effects of poverty and bolsters the economic health of the city.” Regine Montoya -Chair, Mayor Mike Rawling’s Task Force on Poverty, (parentheses added).

“What we want for the future is not going to come from great legislation, it’s not going to come from business... It’s going to come from relationships. “Senior Pastor Richie Butler, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, re: Mayor Mike Rawling’s Task Force on Poverty

“Safe conversations can be applied between husband and wife, parents and children, but more than that, it can be brought between your peers and our workplace, between your neighbours, between your community and other communities.” Dr. Hind Jarrah, Texas Women’s Muslim Foundation re: Relationships First, Safe Conversations project.

“When you think about relationships, you can start at a micro level, looking at families and couples and children and that relationship there. And it goes all the way up to a very wide community level and how we converse with each other across different sectors.” Susan Hoff, United Way-Dallas.

“If we keep playing by the old rules, we will never change the game.” Abby Wambach, soccer legend and author of *Wolfpack*

“I think what we need to come to is a realization that it’s not just fixing an economic or political system, but it’s a basic worldview, a basic understanding of who we are that’s at stake.” David Loy, Philosopher, regarding the Overview or Big Picture effect (seeing the Earth in its entirety from space, and the perspective it can give us)

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” C.S. Lewis

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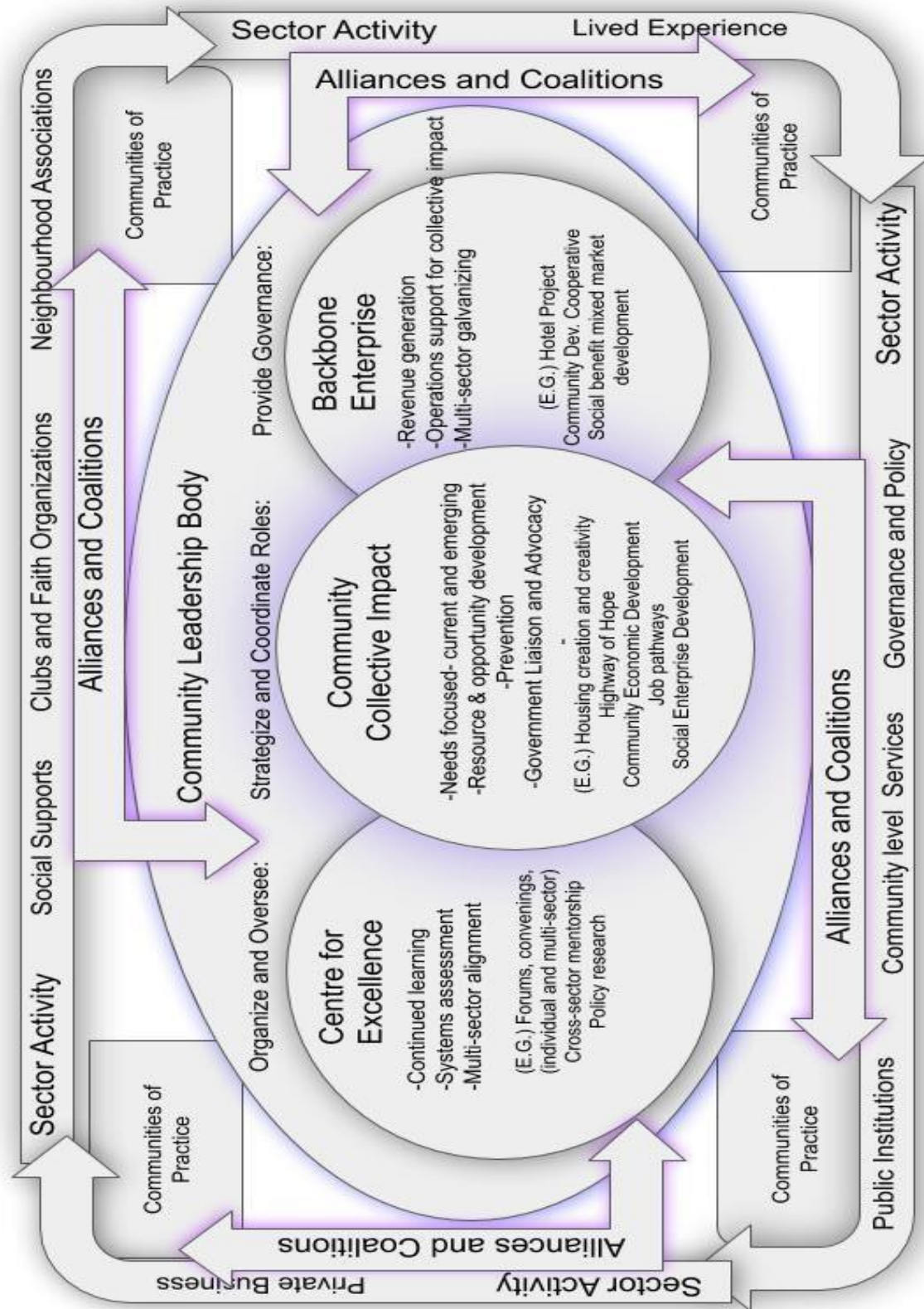
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Appendix G: Sample Model for a Multi-sector Alignment and Collective Impact Framework Visual



Explanation of Visual

**Sector Activity-** Every individual, organization or business belongs to a particular sector with sector related activity and mandates. We have included examples here as well as included Lived Experience to demonstrate their accountability and contribution to their own solutions within a collaborative community environment. Indigenous, different ethnic and cultural, and special needs individuals and groups are included within these broad categories in the full spirit of inclusion.

**Alliances and Coalitions-** These are naturally occurring in any community when related or connected entities create a collaborative group for some purpose. Whatever those purposes are, we can add enhanced collective impact to them in order to connect them into a multi-sector effort toward a shared vision.

**Communities of Practice-** Within each sector or alliance, there are groups that learn and grow together through various activities. These can be connected into a community Center of Excellence.

**Community Leadership Body-** Whether it is an existing entity or something that is uniquely created by a community, it consists of representation from every sector, through those alliances. It's responsibilities are:

- A. Organize and oversee the Community **Centre of Excellence** which:
  - Takes in information from the sector activity through the alliances (consultation)
  - Leads systems assessment and advises change management as part of that continued learning and growing for the sectors (evaluation/assessment)
  - Creates learning opportunities for best practice, determining outcomes and their measurement, and disseminates information back to the sector alliances (intervention)

This would be done through:

- Forums and convenings, both individual and multi-sector depending on the subject matter
- Cross-sector mentoring
- Best Practices and Policy Research.

- B. Provide Governance for a **Backbone Enterprise** (or Enterprises) which will supply:

- Revenue Generation to support Community Development from a Social Benefit Perspective
- Operation and Administrative Support for Community Collective Impact
- Opportunities for multi-sector engagement to help galvanize community attention and activity to increase and enhance Collective Impact potential

○

This could potentially consist of:

- A Hotel/Housing project, a Manufacturing business or other local business that could be dedicated to social benefit.
- Community Development Cooperative
- Social Benefit, Mixed Market Enterprise Development

- C. Strategize and Coordinate **Community Collective Impact** which would consist of:

- Needs focused activity- based on sector input and accountability for local needs- be it social, economic, or otherwise
- Resource and Opportunity Development to help fill those identified needs and build and maintain community resilience, capacity, integration, sustainability and self-reliance



- Provide a unified voice to communicate with external entities such as Government, Philanthropic organizations, Corporations and Economic entities interested in or beneficial to local activity and growth.

This would be done through:

- Processing Big Picture information provided from community sector representatives from the work of their alliances regarding current and emerging needs and trends
- Considering as a multi-sector body with feedback and mandates for decision making provided from their respective sectors, the holistic impact and imperatives for the community
- Developing strategies to solve for determined needs or outcomes
- Using the Center of Excellence and Backbone Enterprise to help support the activity required
- Make assignments and assign roles with recommendations within those strategies and send out to Alliances/Coalitions to operationalize on a community level
- Receive feedback and evaluate progress
- 

(Consider this pattern: Consultation, Evaluation/Assessment, Intervention)

This would support:

- Housing creation and creativity in utilizing existing housing stock through collaborative work among community partners, including landlords, developers, trades, and other services
- Community Economic Development to enhance local resources, and opportunities
- Job Pathways through collaboration and best practices to help people who have barriers find ways to be self-reliant and contribute to the local economy (and their own)
- Cross-sector mentorship to “cross-pollinate” ideas, concepts, practices in order to enrich perspectives and increase capacity
- Social Enterprise Development to assist local support organizations in sustainability while providing flexible work experience and career entry for participants.

## Appendix H: Highway of Hope Concept Visual

### Introduction:

There is always room for improvement and increased resources in support of “ending” homelessness, but there are still things that can be done now, or that are in place but just need to be better coordinated. Needed resources and opportunities may already exist, which we are not aware of. Some collective attention to this will improve outcomes while we wait for increased affordable housing. And can help us get people into existing housing opportunities.

We have heard from Lived Experience peeps that it becomes easier to fall back onto lifestyle habits they are trying to escape when there are not enough alternative options. Just having safe, clean, substance-free spaces to socialize, have some quiet time, engage in art, music, or other forms of expression, healing, personal interest and soul-building, has an impact on getting their feet back under them and starting the rebuilding process. When they are ready to tackle next steps, they already have trusting relationships and a healthy, supportive “community” in place. An intentional effort to provide for this, can help them get to that point sooner! This is an important part of the story of those who have been successful in moving forward from homelessness. They have found those opportunities. We can formally organize them.

**Proposal:** Coordinate as agencies, entities, and individuals in this community and bring what we have to the circle of care. Then, with some help from other community sectors and entities, provide for and map an organized and intentional spectrum of meaningful daily activity, enhanced support and opportunities for people while waiting for housing, and to help them maintain momentum in housing.

### Outcomes:

- A better collective picture of what exists already to support vulnerable and at-risk community members
- A clearer idea of what is needed so we can make better plans and strategies for the future (housing, employment pathways, community capacity building)
- Increased engagement of more community members, entities, and sectors than ever before with a cohesive plan and vision for them to identify with and that fits with what they can do to help
- Increased safe and more effective engagement points for vulnerable community members, that lead into a connected, cohesive system of help, care and support, when they are ready
- While people are waiting for larger needs to be met, they will have more opportunities to engage in activities that will help them move along the continuum from crisis to thriving.
- Pathways into next steps for housing, employment, health and well-being, engagement and inclusion are more accessible, trusted, and coordinated to make the best use of available resources
- Better relationships with the people we are trying to help and greater ability to advocate for them in housing “match-making”, wellness care, employment, and other areas of focus as required
- Decrease in vagrancy and visible risky activities, and more opportunities for safe spaces where people can feel free from “predators” and supported to leave behind unhealthy and risky alternative coping

activities, even if it is just for a while.

- People will have more resources around them to help them when they are ready to commit to the next steps on their journey. The support will be there at the “cross roads” moments.
- Improved understanding for the greater community, of the stories, situations and needs as well as strengths and potential contributions of our vulnerable neighbours
- More opportunities for our vulnerable neighbours to shine, be included in the regular everyday of being human, in order to escape their current reality for a while, in healthy ways, and find some steps and ways out of it.
- The current sense of antagonism will begin to change into mutual respect and moving forward together as stigmas lift and the reasons for them disappear

(see visual on page 147)

Appendix H (continued): Highway of Hope Visual



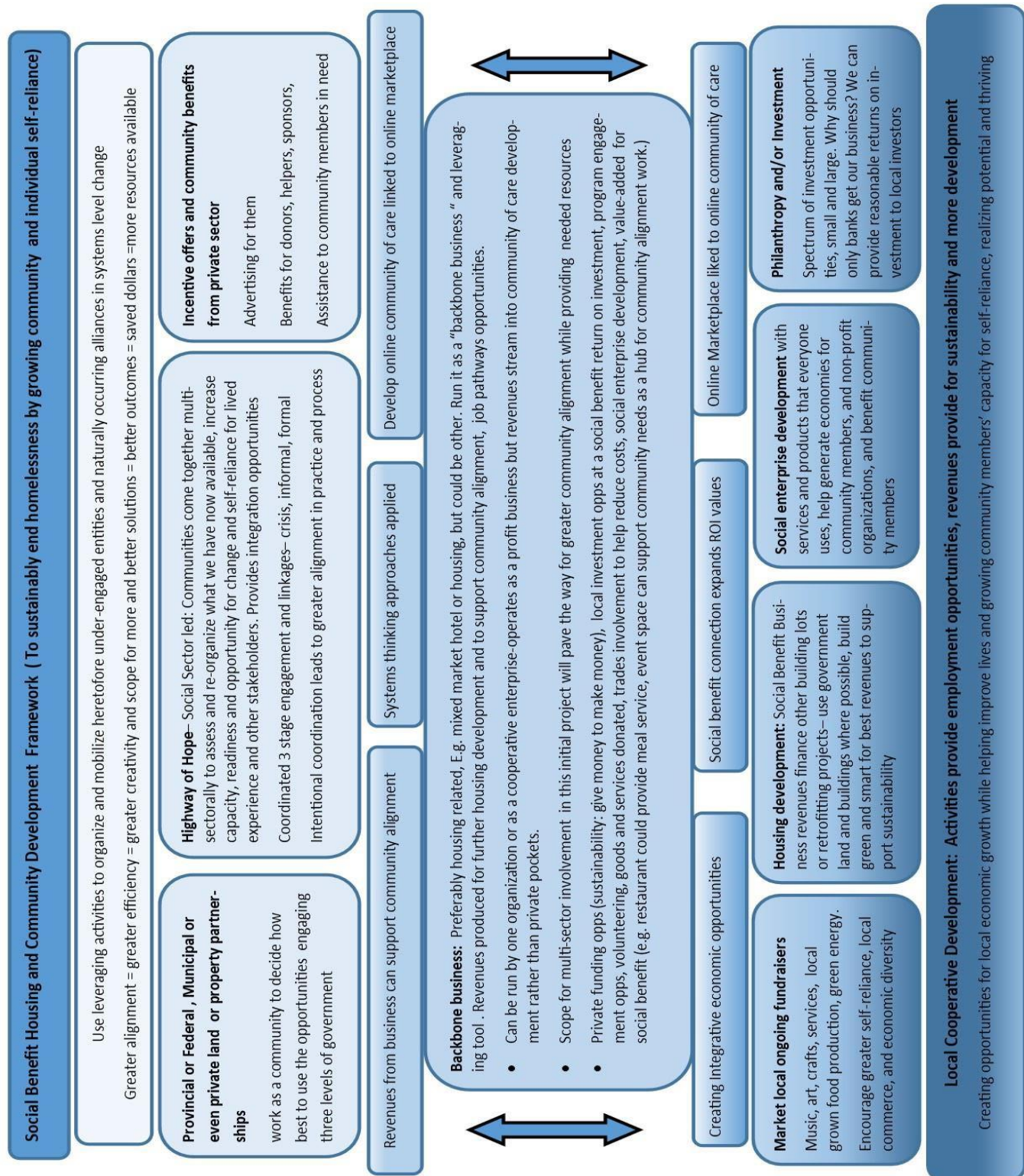


### Highway of Hope Development Template (to adapt or use as inspiration)

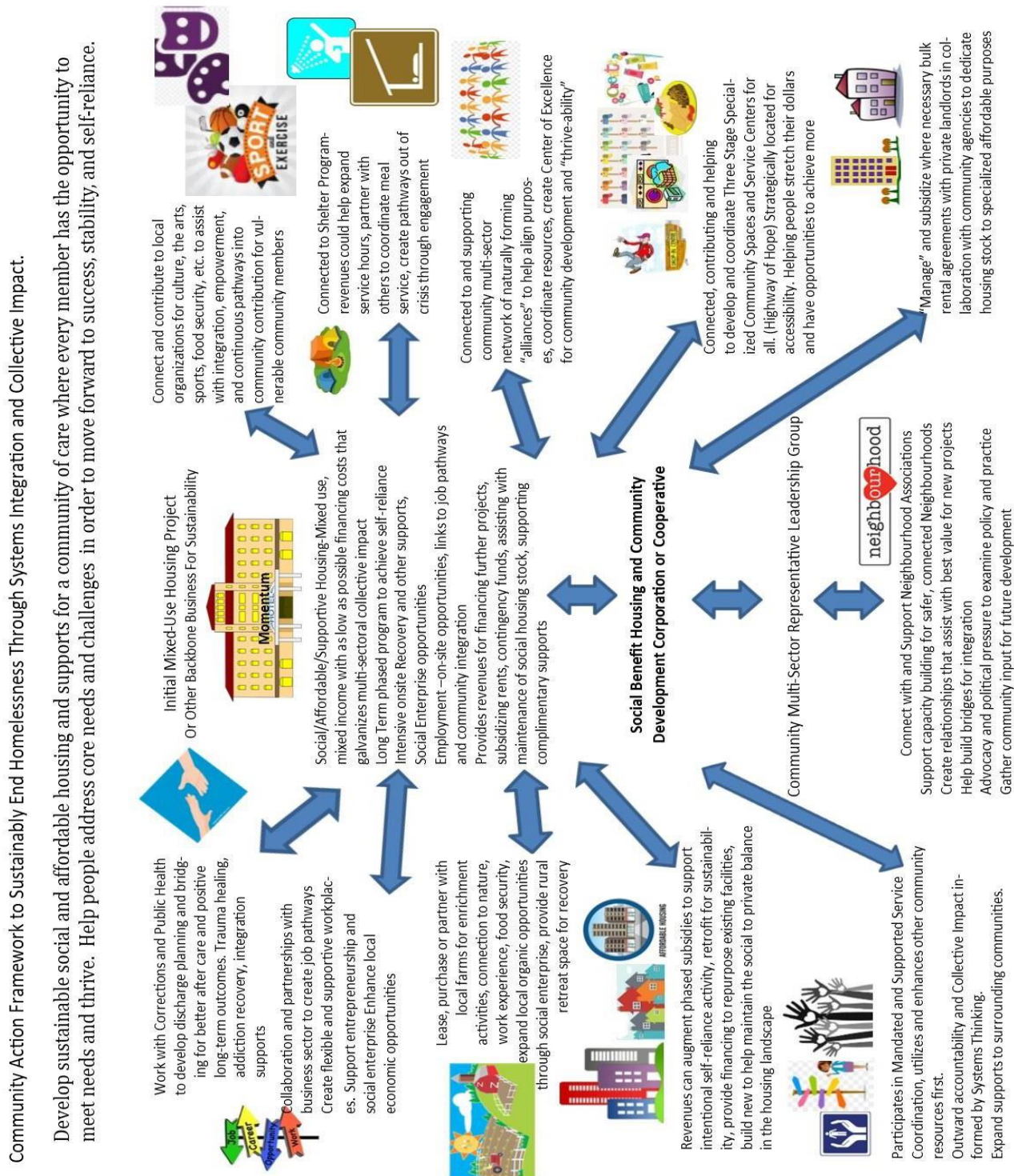
Please take the time, with your team, to fill in this table from your perspective. We will then correlate the information we receive to inform an action plan to link/enhance/create and map a series of engagement opportunities for the vulnerable folks we are trying to support, using the opportunities and resources that are available. We will also approach other community sectors and entities to help fill in the resource gap. Please return your completed table to \_\_\_\_\_ at:

Existing Activity	Where and when is it happening?	Who is it meant to engage? (demographic? harm reduction or situational sobriety required)? Is it well utilized?	What are your challenges?	What could make it better or more utilized?
Needed Activity	What kind of space is required?	Who is it meant to engage? (demographic? harm reduction or situational sobriety required? ) urgency?	What is needed to make it possible? What pieces might your organization have?	When should it happen?

## Appendix J: Social Benefit Housing and Community Development Framework Visual

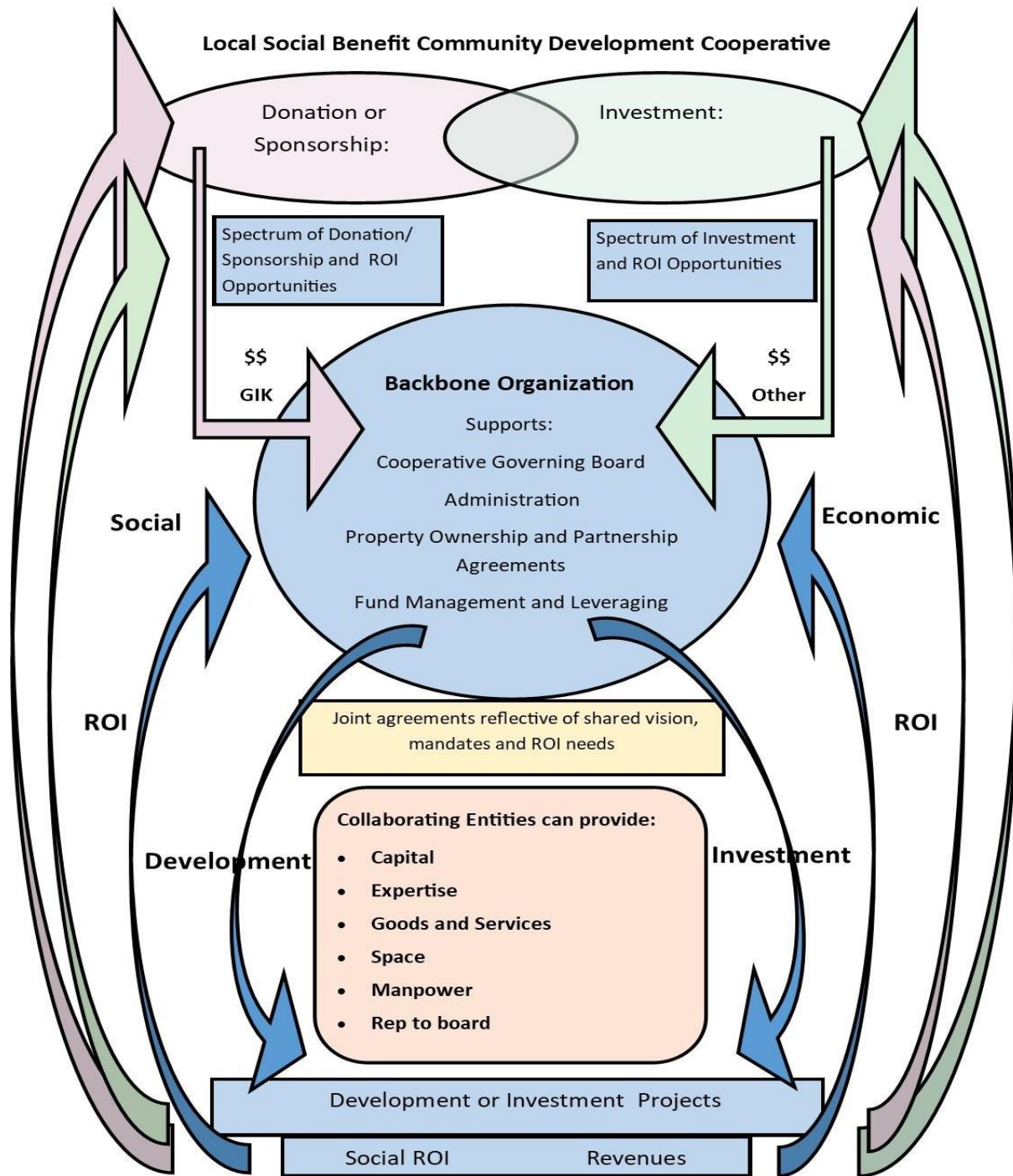


Appendix K: Another View: Community Homefulness Action Framework (End homelessness by focusing on building a community of care, sustainable support and thrive-ability)





Appendix L: Social Benefit Housing and Community Development Cooperative Visual



Appendix M: Systems Thinking Framework for Enhanced Community Collective Impact- Visual (Includes reference to the Stages of Change)

