

Project Overview

The Manitoba government recognizes that we need to improve our approach and better support people who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed. In the 2021 Speech from the Throne, we committed to developing a provincial homelessness strategy based on consultations with Manitobans.

In December 2021, Manitoba Families released a discussion paper¹ as a starting point for the community engagement process. The paper incorporated feedback from earlier provincial consultations on housing, mental health and poverty reduction as well as ongoing conversations with community organizations. It outlined a whole-of-government approach to end homelessness that is community informed, emphasizes reconciliation through Indigenous-led responses and includes five pillars:

- Modernizing our emergency response
- Ensuring housing is provided with supports
- Focusing on prevention
- Developing person-centered, seamless service navigation and delivery
- Understanding the unique nature of homelessness in rural and northern Manitoba

In the first three months of 2022, Manitoba Families hosted engagement sessions with stakeholders and supported organizations to facilitate sessions for people with lived experience of homelessness. This report summarizes participants' feedback around nine themes – housing, income, other services, transitions, prevention, service delivery, non-profit funding, role of the private sector and accountability.

A glossary of terms used in this report is included in Appendix A.

Defining Homelessness

Participants in our sessions shared many different understandings of homelessness. Some understood homelessness in a conventional way – people who do not have a permanent address and a place to live on a daily basis. Others understood homelessness as less about an address, and more about having a “home”, and all of the comfort, security and inclusion that comes with being part of a community. Some Indigenous participants and stakeholders relied on an Indigenous understanding of homelessness as separation from land, culture, relations and identity as a result of colonialism and residential schools. Taken together, we

¹ Available at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/homelessness/index.html>

heard from participants that as each person experiences homelessness in a unique way, so too is each person's understanding of what being homeless means.

Engagement Overview

Between January 12 and March 3, Manitoba Families hosted 32 online sessions with 407 participants (see Appendix B) to solicit feedback on the discussion paper and their recommendations for strategies and actions in the areas of: prevention, emergency response, housing, other services and systemic changes.

Several agencies also hosted sessions for people with lived experience. The format was open-ended and flexible. In total, 90 people participated in 12 community conversations: six in Winnipeg and six outside of Winnipeg.

What We Heard

Participants across the province expressed the urgency of the situation and the need for immediate actions to address homelessness. They advocated for a strategy based on dignity, inclusivity and respect to ensure we meet people where they are at and provide services that address their actual needs. They recommended the following approaches in the delivery of homelessness programs:



Recommended Approaches in the Delivery of Homelessness Programs:

- ✓ Low-barrier
- ✓ Person-centred
- ✓ Harm reduction
- ✓ Trauma-informed
- ✓ Culturally appropriate and responsive
- ✓ Advancing reconciliation
- ✓ Decolonizing
- ✓ 2SLGBTQ+ affirming
- ✓ Gender lens
- ✓ Intersectional
- ✓ Relationship-based
- ✓ Accessible
- ✓ Community-informed and led
- ✓ Human rights-based

In the spirit of reconciliation, participants emphasized providing culturally-appropriate services for Indigenous people in all areas of the strategy. They spoke about cultural safety and reclamation as ways to foster healing. Access to elders, ceremony and other cultural activities are critical to overcoming intergenerational trauma. Participants support a focus on Indigenous-led organizations delivering new and expanded services. They highlighted the importance of providing elements essential for success including adequate resourcing and capacity building.

The underlying approach to ending homelessness must be rooted in equity, integrating an intersectional lens to address how colonization, racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, poverty, and other forms of oppression contribute to homelessness. Provincial service systems must continually strive to enhance their capacity and competency for operating through a lens of harm reduction, trauma-informed care, and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, to undo legacies of harm and suffering created by colonizing and punitive responses to community service needs. – Community-based organization

Housing

Social housing

Participants from all organizations and across the province spoke about the need for new social housing and improvements to existing units. They emphasized that a major expansion of social housing is required to meet current needs. The ability to rapidly rehouse people is contingent on an adequate supply and without it reducing homelessness is impossible.

Rural and northern stakeholders noted that the need for additional social housing is particularly acute in their communities.

Ideas raised included re-purposing facilities used for isolation during the pandemic, tiny homes and portable shelters. They highlighted the additional benefit of new social housing contributing to community revitalization. When choosing locations for new housing, participants recommended considering accessibility to services and recreation.

Feedback on social housing was consistent with that received by Manitoba Housing during their consultation in the summer of 2021.

Transitional and housing with supports

There was widespread support for developing a range of housing options with different levels of service intensity (a tiered approach of community and clinical supports) and lengths of tenancy from short-term to permanent. Participants recommended supports to meet cultural, emotional, mental and physical needs.

People advised that on site, 24/7 support workers are critical for people with high needs. Partnerships between staff of government and community agencies would enhance service delivery.

Stakeholders noted that some non-profits successfully operate (owned or leased) entire buildings and provide supports to residents. They suggested providing surplus or vacant land at no cost to non-profits for this purpose. Others recommended using hotels, as during the pandemic, for transitional housing. Integrated housing options were also recommended.

[Staff in the transitional housing program] treated me as an equal, gave me the opportunity to be myself, supported fitness in my life. The clients themselves were really inviting; it felt like a family.... To persevere throughout life, youth need to be given leniency but with expectations that push them to motivate themselves. [They need to learn] ways to deal with anger. With it being a family-like structure, it provides what youth need to develop socially.... I still think about ... what they taught me during my brief period there, I carry it with me now. I would like to see more programs like this, as I don't want another child to go through what I've been through. – Person with lived experience

For people with high needs or those who are experiencing chronic homelessness, participants highly recommended a Housing First approach. They suggested that the government needs to fund the approach in all areas of Manitoba and cautioned that organizations require adequate staffing to meet the range and intensity of participants' needs.

Participants spoke about offering service options that meet the diverse needs of people:

- physical and cognitive disabilities including acquired brain injuries
- chronic illnesses including mental health and addictions
- actively using controlled substances
- youth exiting care, pregnant or new parents and transitioning from First Nations communities
- 2SLGBTQ+ people
- couples and families with children
- women and men
- older adults
- escaping family violence or sexual exploitation
- pets (which can be a barrier to finding housing)

Both service providers and people with lived experience noted the importance of understanding that participants will have setbacks and should not be expelled from a program automatically.

Stakeholders spoke about the importance of developing congregate and independent housing. Congregate living, with individual bedrooms or suites and shared spaces for cooking, relaxing and programming, is ideal for people not ready or willing to live independently. Congregate housing can provide community, belonging and family.

Service providers noted this model is well-suited for people exiting Child and Family Services (CFS) care, violent relationships or prison, moving to urban centres and reunifying with their children. It aligns with Indigenous cultural practices – supporting communal living and providing opportunities to live alongside relations. Participants cautioned that congregate models may not be appropriate for people who have had negative experiences and trauma related to this type of setting.

That idea of choice and a variety of approaches to housing is critical....For example, we have some transitional housing with supports in place, it's congregate-style where we're creating a community together. There were a lot of questions by external folks around whether it should look differently, whether it should be individual apartments. But when we ask the folks that come to us who need support, they want to live together. Eventually they may want their own place, but at this point they do need to live in a community that feels safer, that supports each other. – Service provider

Homeless shelters

Emergency shelters are a critical component of the response to homelessness. Participants indicated that we need to maintain, and improve, shelter services while working towards the end of homelessness.

Stakeholders spoke about the need for shelters to provide a sense of safety, dignity and privacy. People with lived experience often noted that they felt unsafe in shelters and shared experiences of violence. Shelters vary in the amenities they provide – some have open shower rooms and sleeping mats placed closely together on the floor. People with lived experience indicated that a clean change of clothes would be helpful so that they can launder the clothes they arrived in.

As well as improved facilities, participants highlighted the importance of sufficient funding to be able to hire case managers, housing support workers and other service providers. These employees are essential for rapid re-housing and avoiding entrenchment in homelessness. Participants from smaller communities noted that their shelters are particularly under-resourced and a provincial strategy needs to ensure equity with urban areas. Participants from communities without shelter, advised they are needed to support community members and slow the migration to urban centres.

Participants indicated that women and 2SLGBTQ+ people especially feel unsafe in homeless shelters. Segregating people into female and male areas is a barrier for gender-diverse individuals and couples who wish to stay together. Participants suggested that homeless and family violence shelters conduct safety and inclusion audits with diverse individuals to inform standards, policies, and practices to address these concerns.

Many participants spoke about the need for low barrier shelters so every person experiencing homelessness has a safe place to stay. Others also noted that dry shelter options are needed for people recovering from addictions. Participants highlighted the importance of harm reduction and trauma training for employees in shelters.

Participants recommended that the government pursue alternatives including facilities with individual, secure rooms and funding based on outcomes rather than bed nights. They also suggested a review of legislation and services for people who are intoxicated.

Finally, participants recommended facilitating connection, collaboration and mentorship among shelters across the province and forming a group that includes homeless shelters, family violence shelters and organizations with housing workers.

Private market rentals

Participants advocated for more rent-geared-to income (RGI) in well-maintained, private rental properties. They noted “affordable housing” is often not accessible for people with low incomes. They spoke about the role that the private sector could play in expanding availability of RGI housing. Ideas raised included incentives such as grants, tax increment financing and pooled investment vehicles to develop new and renovate existing housing.

Property managers advised that they are challenged by rent control legislation and the reality of rising operating costs. They suggest provincial rent supplements to enable landlords to provide RGI units.

Another prominent theme was the importance of building relationships with landlords to reduce housing insecurity. Some service providers noted it is difficult for landlords to risk renting to someone with negative or no rental history because damage deposits may not cover all expenses. In addition, the requirement for guarantors and criminal record checks are barriers to renting. Stakeholders suggested a program to cover damage costs could help mitigate risk and overcome landlords’ hesitancy to accept vulnerable people. Stakeholders also proposed that local non-profit organizations could partner with landlords to offer supportive programming for tenants.

Finally, participants expressed a need for accountability for landlords who discriminate against applicants and do not maintain their properties. We heard stories of racism and discrimination against Indigenous people, single parents, people exiting the care of Child and Family Services and people on social assistance.

We have unsheltered individuals who are trying to make positive changes in their life... and have taken steps, [but when] they come back to the community, they continue to be unsheltered. It's almost impossible to expect them to sustain change when they don't have adequate housing. – Northern service provider

“Everything stalls out because there isn’t enough housing. As long as this is the case, we’re going to be spinning our wheels.” – Private sector participant

“When someone is ready to move toward stability, we need to have something available. If they end up on a waiting list, that window of opportunity is missed.” – Private sector participant

Income

Service providers advised that being low income places people in a continual state of precarious housing. They stated that people need sufficient income to find adequate and suitable housing. Without the financial means to choose appropriate housing, people end up living in unsafe, poor quality housing that does not meet their needs. This increases the risk of needing to be re-housed or returning to homelessness.

Service providers, people with lived experience, and private sector landlords stated that it is impossible to charge rent at the low levels funded by Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). They identified the need to increase EIA, Rent Assist and minimum wage, and to ensure they keep pace with inflation over time. As well, they are awaiting expansion of the Homeless Stream of the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit (CMHB) outside of Winnipeg.

Some participants felt that the existing supports (EIA, Rent Assist, CMHB, and the Manitoba Rent Relief Fund/rent bank) represent a piecemeal approach, and should be combined into a single program akin to a basic income.

Stakeholders spoke extensively about barriers to accessing EIA and suggested ways to streamline access: ensure timely enrollment, adopt a person-centred approach and review policies that may inadvertently contribute to homelessness. In particular, they pointed to the need to address the “welfare wall” by increasing the amount of money people can earn before their EIA benefits are clawed back. As well, service providers felt that it was timely for EIA to return to in-person intakes and other pre-pandemic practices.

Participants identified services to support low-income Manitobans including financial counselling and literacy, debt help, assistance to access benefits, tax filing, and setting up bank accounts. Service providers recommend that government provide flexible, fast and barrier-free funds that service providers use to meet clients’ immediate needs. They also recommend the government expand the building services program that provides flexible funding and resources to help with re-housing and maintaining tenancies.

Participants stressed the important role that volunteering and employment can play in building confidence, self-esteem and stability. Employment counselling, work readiness and skills training, and child care were suggested as ways to help people exiting homelessness prepare for and access these opportunities. They also discussed working with the private sector to create opportunities, growing the social enterprise sector and adopting a social procurement approach. They suggested that any construction projects related to social housing include jobs and training opportunities for vulnerable people.

Other services

Services for people who are homeless

Many service providers stated the need for low-barrier, daytime drop-in spaces where people can access services, basic needs (meals, showers, washrooms and laundry) and connect with one another. They also noted that recreational activities would improve well-being and facilitate relationship building with staff. Recommended sites included homeless shelters, Access Centres or other service hubs. Brandon service providers highlighted their work to coordinate services and ensure safe, supportive spaces are available 24/7.

Street outreach was also identified as a best practice. Stakeholders noted that outreach has a positive impact, and provides an opportunity for early intervention, but there is little funding available. They recommend funding street outreach in Brandon, Thompson and more areas of Winnipeg. They also suggest the government expand StreetReach (outreach for children and youth) to additional communities.

Participants advocated for initiatives to address the over-representation of people with cognitive disabilities and acquired brain injuries among the homeless. They recommend closer collaboration between Community Living disABILITY Services (CLDS), homeless shelters and outreach teams to re-connect disengaged and street-involved CLDS participants with their agency placements.

Finally, people with lived experience often mentioned that finding information on services is challenging. They recommend providing information in print because many people do not have internet access to find information online.

[It would help if] all the wraparound services could be combined into one place in each neighbourhood. It was extremely stressful to have ten different workers and keep in touch with all of them. I wish I had one worker who could be connected to all the services that I received, to help keep everything in order and help me reach my goals. It is incredibly important for a vulnerable person to keep in touch with at least one person who they trust, because it's not easy to open up to ten different workers and having to relive the trauma of telling your story over and over again. Eventually you just give up because you feel like you're not getting anywhere. – Person with lived experience

Stakeholders spoke about the correlation between mental health, addictions and homelessness. They discussed the importance of treatment being available when a person is ready for change. They noted, however, that these services are overburdened, involve long wait times, and are lacking outside of Winnipeg. They also identified the lag time between detoxification and admittance to treatment as problematic. They advised that we need more and tailored options for specific groups including youth, families, Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQ+ people, men and women. Finally, many stakeholders highlighted the need for harm reduction services: managed alcohol, supervised consumption and safe supply.

The drug epidemic is feeding homelessness. – Service Provider

Personal identification documents were identified as a barrier to accessing services. Participants recommended broadening access to identification clinics and identification banks (including rural and northern areas), providing identification at no or low cost, and developing a free, government-issued photo identification.

Participants across the province raised concerns about stigma and discrimination. They noted that these attitudes dehumanize people experiencing homelessness and are a barrier to their reintegration – preventing access to employment and housing. Participants recommended raising awareness of the root causes of homelessness (e.g. trauma, systemic racism) and why people make certain choices (e.g. to sleep in bus shelters or encampments) could encourage empathy and foster community support. Rural and northern participants noted that stigma is amplified in small communities.

We are traumatized and we already feel like a burden. Kindness, compassion, and treating people like humans goes a long way. We want more than anything for our lives to move in a positive direction. – Person with lived experience

Participants from northern and rural areas expressed frustration with the lack of services available in their communities. They noted that leaving your home community to access services means leaving the support of your family and friends. This is difficult and often results in cyclical movement between home communities and urban centres without ever adequately meeting people's needs. Stakeholders advised that people who return from

accessing services in urban centres find it very difficult to maintain positive change because they lack the clinical supports and housing in their home communities.

Rural and northern stakeholders noted the challenge of travelling in and between communities, especially for low-income people, with the lack of bus service.

Northern stakeholders highlighted the importance of recognizing that while there may be commonalities between the rural areas of the north and south, each have unique needs.

Rural and Northern Manitoba are in dire need of the same access to supports as Winnipeg. As soon as you pass the perimeter in Winnipeg, supports and access changes dramatically for people. – Private sector representative

There really needs to be long-term investment and resources put into the north.... [Services like] housing with clinical supports... are only going to be effective if we can access those in our area. It is not effective for individuals in need of support or clinical services to leave the community to access them. – Northern service provider

Transitions

Support during major life transitions facilitate stability and prevent these events from being “pipelines to homelessness.” Stakeholders identified the following transitions as points of particular vulnerability:

- youth aging out of CFS care
- families having their children taken into care
- people being discharged from health facilities especially after longer admissions
- people exiting incarceration
- youth with cognitive disabilities and complex medical conditions reaching the age of majority
- people relocating from remote First Nations communities to urban centres

Case management and service coordination were identified as facilitating smooth transitions for those involved with multiple systems. Stakeholders highlighted that identification, housing, and a source of income are critical to have in place prior to transitions. They also recognized importance of maintaining connections with family and friends.

Youth aging out of CFS care

Many service providers and people with lived experience spoke at length about strengthening supports for youth during and after their time in care. They suggested exit planning should start no later than age 15 and extensions of care should be available until age 25. As well, they recommended that government review eligibility requirements and guidance to CFS Authorities on extensions. Youth should have to opt-out of extensions rather than opt-in. Finally, people with lived experience stressed the importance of wraparound supports for youth exiting care.

We need to really implement change at a young age, so that when we transition to adulthood we aren't unprepared. – Person with lived experience

I can't stress enough how RaY's housing has helped me. [There should be] more transitional housing! It's such a stepping stone and it saved me from becoming a homeless youth aging out of care. – Person with lived experience

We want to meet youth's needs, not set them up for failure. It feels like we're doing the latter if we're not providing appropriate supports. – Service provider

Families having their children taken into care

Stakeholders noted that when children are apprehended, their guardians may be required to relocate to a smaller social housing unit, or if in private rental housing, their Rent Assist is reduced. This can result in homelessness, and also poses a barrier for reunification if parents have moved into a unit that is deemed to small for the children. They recommended that Manitoba Housing prioritize parents with reunification plans and EIA reinstate shelter benefits at least three months prior to reunification.

Discharge from health care facilities

Discharges following extended stays in hospital, addictions or mental health treatment can also result in homelessness, if rent is no longer paid or if tenancies are lost. Stakeholders suggested enhancing service coordination so no one is discharged into homelessness.

Prevention

Participants highlighted primary and secondary cost-effective ways to improve health and wellness. They noted that parenting supports can enhance family functioning and well-being, helping children to have a good start in life. Addressing root issues, such as trauma and poverty, and early intervention for addiction, domestic violence, mental health, and parenting can prevent situations from reaching a point of crisis.

Stakeholders spoke about the preventative role of the education system. By fostering empathy and personal wellness while developing life skills and job readiness, schools can improve outcomes for all young people. Educators can intervene early to support youth who are disengaging, demonstrating behavioural issues and other vulnerabilities.

Eviction prevention

Participants stated that people who are homeless, and in particular, those who have been deeply entrenched in homelessness for long periods, often struggle to adapt to living in rental housing. Eviction prevention initiatives can help vulnerable people develop the life skills needed to be successful tenants and meet their responsibilities as renters.

Service providers and private sector representatives spoke about the benefits of educational programs about the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. New Journey Housing's Rental Workshop, which provides certificates of completion for prospective renters, was highlighted as a best practice that could be expanded.

As well, property managers and service providers noted that vulnerable renters often need ongoing support and outreach. They stated that too often, individuals receive assistance to find housing, but then are left without support to maintain their tenancy. Scaling up the practice of listing community-based organizations on rental records as a contact for their

clients was recommended. When tenancy issues arise, these agencies can provide support and mediation to prevent evictions.

To help maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness, participants recommended that social housing providers offer more assistance for tenants struggling to meet their obligations. Examples included assistance to prepare for pest treatments and to deal with hoarding.

Finally, emergency assistance for rent payments was highlighted as a best practice. Stakeholders recommended scaling up supports such as the Manitoba Rent Relief Fund.

Service Delivery

Service coordination

Participants spoke about the need to improve collaboration within government and communities. Splintered efforts and haphazard, siloed approaches to service delivery limit effectiveness and lead to duplication. This work needs to be done at a systems level and not rely solely on the good will of individuals.

Participants indicated that a province-wide application of the federally mandated database (HIFIS) and intake process (Coordinated Access) under Reaching Home could assist with improving service delivery.

Stakeholders suggested that using consistent definitions of housing types and operating models across all sectors and levels of government would enhance service coordination and fidelity.

I think if all these community centres and programs would work together...that could really make a big impact on homelessness in Manitoba. – Lived experience participant

Currently, there is a competitive environment between agencies that deliver the same or similar services.... This siloed environment is not delivering maximum value for the dollars in the system as a whole, and leaves vulnerable clients reliant on a complex network of overlapping agencies. – Private sector representative/former service provider

Community mobilization hubs

Hubs are a delivery model that provide a “one stop shop” for a range of services in the community. Stakeholders advocated for this model to be developed or expanded particularly in rural and northern areas. They suggested hubs could be located in community centres, family resource centres, schools or other community organizations. Staff provide information and referral, advocacy, service navigation, case management and capacity building activities. Employees from other agencies can attend regularly to provide their services such as EIA, CFS and Manitoba Housing.

Rural communities with strong mobilization hubs, funded by Justice, highlighted their benefits of fostering service coordination. Communities without hubs shared that there is a lack of connection between organizations. They need a formal mechanism to facilitate relationships.

We have multiple, not for profit agencies... but no connectivity between us. [While] there's some dialogue, it's very minimal. It's not that individuals aren't willing to have collaborative working relationships, it's just that the structure doesn't exist within our community. Those connections would enable us to help individuals in a more productive, timely and proactive manner. – Rural service provider

Provincial government

Barriers and wait times for government services, such as EIA and Manitoba Housing, were identified as problematic. Service providers emphasized the importance of timely services when clients are ready for change. They noted that if the window of opportunity is missed, clients may become more entrenched in homelessness and their lives more unstable.

Barriers to access included the onerous amount of required documents, inability to submit documents electronically, scheduled appointments rather than drop-ins and difficulty reaching staff. Service providers noted that accessing government services should not require so much advocacy. More seamless, accessible services would benefit clients, and allow service providers to focus their time on meeting clients' other needs. Some rural communities felt that local control over wait lists and decision-making would increase efficiency.

Service providers noted that government offices can be intimidating for marginalized people. They suggested government explore ways to make these buildings more welcoming.

Finally, stakeholders encouraged the government to involve employees of diverse backgrounds in developing and implementing the strategy and initiatives.

Interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration

Stakeholders highlighted the need for government to better coordinate policies and programs within and across departments; especially, Families, Finance, Health, Justice and Mental Health.

Participants welcome greater clarity on the roles of all levels of government. They noted the province needs to collaborate with municipal, federal, and Indigenous governments to maximize the impact of efforts to end homelessness.

Stakeholders recommended that the provincial government advocate with Indigenous governments for the federal government to increase social services and housing for Indigenous people in First Nation communities and urban centres.

Non-profit funding

Participants advocated for increased, multi-year provincial funding for non-profit organizations who provide critical supports to community members including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

They stated that chronic underfunding and no cost of living increases have resulted in service reductions, inability to attract and retain staff, and increased staff burnout. Service providers are unable to offer salaries that reflect the difficult and taxing nature of the work. Northern participants noted that funding allotments should include remoteness allowances.

Service providers highlighted that ongoing staff turnover negatively affects the quality of services and ability to sustain trusting relationships with participants. Inadequate funding forces service providers to focus on “putting out fires” rather than preventative services. The lack of funding also creates a gap in staff training on motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, harm reduction, mental illness and addictions.

Limited resources reduce organizations’ capacity to meet reporting requirements and seek out new funding opportunities. Time-limited or project funding adds administrative burden and requires considerable time spent seeking funds to maintain programs. When ongoing funding cannot be secured, beneficial programs may cease and take years to rebuild.

Service providers also expressed frustration with situations where capital funds are available but not operating. They noted that housing programs require funds to sustain physical premises and service delivery to be successful.

Participants advised that the existing model of a call for proposals creates an environment of competition between non-profit organizations rather than fostering collaborative relationships. They recommend that government give service providers flexibility in their use of funds so they respond to people’s individual needs and quickly to changing community needs. They suggested approaches such as community-administered funds, cost avoidance modeling and social enterprise delivery.

Organizations are working hard, they're at their limit; so to take on additional responsibilities of doing all the legwork . . . to develop new services is oftentimes beyond their capacity....Funding is needed to hire staff to assist with feasibility exploration, community engagement, all of those foundational pieces that have to happen before the project can get off the ground. – Service Provider

What ties harm reduction to a funding model or grant proposal is flexibility. That's one thing that we haven't historically had, but we actually did have pockets of flexibility during the pandemic, which was really interesting. The need was so great that funding was given to [non-profit organizations] in sort of a block funding model and they said do what you need to do, get people housed, and it untied our hands for a minute and the results were amazing. – Service provider

Role of the Private sector

As noted above, private sector landlords and housing developers have an important role to play in housing people. Private sector participants also discussed opportunities for philanthropic contributions and partnerships with business.

Business leaders who participated in the engagements were eager to offer their support. In addition to financial and in-kind contributions, they noted that members of the private sector could advocate, use their platforms to raise awareness and volunteer as board members.

They also suggested that the business community could partner in the development of supportive employment and work experience programs for people transitioning out of

homelessness. They suggested wage subsidies to incentivize hiring and offset mentoring costs.

“There is a willingness and interest from the business sector in being a part of the solution. However, they are unsure how to get involved in a meaningful way. – Northern representative

[There are] a lot of leaders who care deeply, but there hasn’t been a way or means by which a common approach can be coordinated that people can tap into. – Private sector representative

Accountability

Opportunities for ongoing involvement

During engagement sessions, facilitators told participants that the government would create advisory groups to support department employees with developing and implementing the homelessness strategy. Dozens of participants volunteered. Stakeholders welcomed opportunities for ongoing input, collaboration and co-design. Rural and northern participants advised that local involvement is particularly important to ensure that initiatives meet the needs of their communities.

Participants recommended advisory and working groups include diverse voices, such as people with lived experience, service providers, businesses, philanthropic organizations and all levels of, including Indigenous, governments.

Service providers highlighted the importance of engaging people with lived experience in a respectful, dignified way that includes compensation for their participation.

Measuring Progress

Stakeholders asked that measurable targets and timelines be identified within the strategy document, and that government publicly report on progress on a regular basis.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact The Department of Families’ Homelessness Team at homelessness@gov.mb.ca.

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

2SLGBTQI+ – Two spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other identities

Coordinated Access – a process through which individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are provided access to housing and support services, based on standardized set of procedures for client intake, assessment of need, and matching and referral to housing. This process is required for all projects funded by the Designated Communities stream of Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy.

Harm reduction – working with people without judgement or requirement that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) – an electronic data collection and case management system that securely stores information about homeless populations.

Housing First – an approach that provides homeless people with immediate access to stable housing along with support services, without requiring a transition period, sobriety/abstinence, or participation in these services to remain in the housing.

Housing with supports – housing that provides a physical environment that is specifically designed to be safe, secure, and provides support services in order to maximize residents’ independence, privacy and dignity

Integrated Housing – housing that includes people who need supports to live independently residing amongst other tenants

Lived experience – people who have experienced homelessness (in the context of this report)

RGI housing – housing where the rent charged is equal to or less than 30% of a household’s gross income (rent geared-to-income)

Social housing – housing where rents are reduced as a result of government subsidies

Transitional housing – housing that is considered an intermediate step between emergency shelter and permanent housing. The length of tenancy is typically between three months and three years

Trauma-informed care – supports that account for trauma and promote environments of healing and recovery

Appendix B: Engagement Sessions

Meetings with Minister of Families

Business leaders
City of Winnipeg, Mayor and Councilors
Family Violence and Women's Resource Centres
Indigenous leaders
Rural mayors

Private Sector

Landlords in the private market, Winnipeg
Property managers, Winnipeg (two sessions)
Winnipeg BIZ Zones, Winnipeg (two sessions)

Lived Experience

Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation/ Manitoba Harm Reduction Network
Canadian Mental Health Association, Swan Valley
Housing First – Manitoba Metis Federation, Southwest Region
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, Selkirk
North End Women's Centre
Portage la Prairie Community Revitalization Cooperation
Red Road Lodge
Resources for Adolescents and Youth
Siloam Mission
Swampy Cree Tribal Council
Thompson Crisis Centre

Community

Brandon
Dauphin
Family Violence and Women's Resource Centres
Francophone organizations
Health Care providers, Winnipeg
Homeless sector funders, Winnipeg
Housing First providers, Winnipeg
Indigenous-led organizations
Newcomer and immigrant organizations, Winnipeg
Non-profit housing providers, Winnipeg
Portage La Prairie
Poverty and Education Task Force
Selkirk

Community (continued)

Shelters and outreach teams, Winnipeg

Supportive and transitional housing providers, Winnipeg

Swan River

The Pas

Thompson

Youth and other service providers, Winnipeg

Government

Department of Families (Manitoba)

Departments of Education, Families, Health,
Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations,
Justice, Mental Health, Wellness & Recovery
(Manitoba)

Employment and Social Development (Canada)