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The Institute of Urban Studies,
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The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

AMR Associates

End Homelessness Winnipeg

Advancing Coordination of the Winnipeg Homeless Sector

Final Report

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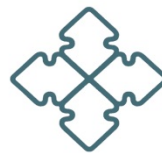
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Executive Summary

Over the last year, there have been efforts in the homeless serving community to map out service gaps and needs, and to discuss the alignment between the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funding and its administration and the priorities of the community. The current project, *Advancing Coordination of the Winnipeg's Homeless Sector*, advances these efforts to integrate more community knowledge, planning, and engagement into HPS funding processes. The project is designed to identify service gaps and coordination opportunities that can be utilized by the Community Advisory Board (CAB) and Community Entity (CE) in their roles relating to HPS funding and administration.

Purpose of the Project:

1. Identify gaps, incongruities, and challenges within Winnipeg homeless sector, and opportunities to address them
2. Support the CAB and CE in proposal review for 2017-19 and beyond
3. Develop a shared understanding of alignment opportunities
4. Support CAB and CE with information and community input to make recommendations and decisions for the future

Methodology:

Five separate discussion groups were held (lived experience, frontline services, Housing First services, Indigenous-led organizations, and system-level stakeholders), offering multiple opportunities for people across the sector to participate. Following an analysis and preliminary report on the discussion groups, individual interviews were held with key system level stakeholders and leaders in other jurisdictions. Additional information was gathered through system mapping, analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report, and reviews of documents from the system level stakeholders and from other jurisdictions.

This Executive Summary draws together the key themes from the research, and summarizes the recommendations based on the themes and analysis:

1. The Distinctiveness of Indigenous Homelessness
2. Governance, Roles, Planning, and Coordination
3. Policy, Administration, and Funding
4. Programs and System Development
5. Fostering Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Clarifying Communications

Each of these has a number of specific and detailed recommendations, based on suggestions from service providers, stakeholders, and other jurisdictions. These recommendations are further summarized and prioritized into a Guiding Principle and the "Top 5 Recommendations" to assist the CAB and CE in planning out their first steps over the year.

1. The Distinctiveness of Indigenous Homelessness

For the Indigenous-led organizations working with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness Indigenous culture cannot be separated from service delivery. It “is and should be part of everything.” Culturally appropriate service delivery goes beyond specific activities or programming. As representatives of Indigenous organizations noted, Indigenous cultures involve ways of knowing, understanding, and being that are rooted in connections to and relationships between people, other living things, and the earth.

The extent to which service delivery is culturally appropriate cannot easily be measured, because whether or not it exists depends on the experience of individuals receiving services, that is, whether or not they feel culturally safe, welcome, or have a sense of belonging or connection to the people or organization from which they receive services. To support this, organizational staff members must know the population they are serving and understand the intergenerational impacts that historical and present-day experiences of personal and systemic racism, marginalization, exclusion and violence may have had on Indigenous people. For some, these impacts include homelessness, trauma, addictions and other complex needs. These experiences and impacts are understood to be at the root of the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the population experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Winnipeg.

When attempting to assess whether or not culturally appropriate services are being provided, consider:

- The cultural identity of staff, and how many are in leadership or decision-making positions
- The extent to which Indigenous people influence program development and service delivery
- Do the values and actions of individual staff members and the organization as a whole align with Indigenous ways of knowing, understanding and being?

An additional way to determine way whether culturally appropriate services exist is to question whether Indigenous people receiving those services feel culturally safe:

- Do they feel welcome? Do they have a sense of belonging or connection to the people or organization they’re receiving those services from?
- Or do they feel like their access to services, the quality of their services they are receiving, or the outcomes that might result from the services they are receiving, are compromised because they are Indigenous people seeking services in a system that was not designed to meet the distinct needs of Indigenous peoples?

Reconciliation and the Homelessness Sector

In *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada defines reconciliation as “an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships” that requires “following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change” (p. 121). It offers ten principles to guide this process, including several that can be taken up by CAB and the CE and other bodies that advise and oversee the allocation of funding within the homelessness sector; including the right to self-determination and the right to participate in decision-making, the right to improvement of their economic and social conditions and the right to be actively involved in developing, determining and administering housing and other economic and social programs that affect them. CAB and the CE and other bodies that advise, administer and oversee the homelessness service system have the opportunity to show leadership and take action that will move that system forward on the goal of generating equitable outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous

people. The principles developed and presented by the TRC are consistent with principles that were developed to guide the homelessness sector in Winnipeg.. In reviewing the findings and recommendations developed from this project, we found that the nature, scope and scale of work being done by Indigenous organizations and Indigenous-serving organizations are significantly different from those of most other organizations:

- Generally speaking, Indigenous organizations are attempting to generate equitable outcomes in the population they serve by providing culturally appropriate services and culturally safe service experiences that meet the culturally distinct needs of Indigenous clients in the context of a system that has not been designed to do so.
- Given that Indigenous people are grossly overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness in the city, generating outcomes for Indigenous people that are equitable to those generated for non-Indigenous must be central to any plan to end homelessness in Winnipeg.

We also understand, from our consultations, that CAB, the CE, and other bodies that advise, administer, oversee or resource the homelessness sector are making significant efforts to support the allocation of funding to Indigenous organizations that reflects the scope, scale and nature of the work that they are doing. There is an apparent misalignment between the experiences and perceptions of these bodies with those of Indigenous service providers. To support equitable outcomes for Indigenous people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the following considerations ought to guide the implementation of all recommendations put forward in this report:

- How the recommendations can be implemented in ways that affirm Indigenous peoples' right to participate in decision-making and the development, determination, and administration of the programs we support;
- The extent to which programs address the ongoing legacies and destructive impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people (that is, the root causes of the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the population experiencing homelessness);
- Progress made towards closing the gaps between outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
- The value of culturally appropriate service delivery, culture-based approaches, and the cultural safety of participants; and
- The extent to which activities support the development of trust, accountability, transparency and joint leadership in their relationships with Indigenous organizations and Indigenous people.

2. Governance, Roles, Planning, and Coordination

Homelessness is often described as a fusion policy issue because there is no one department, agency, or body that is solely responsible for addressing it. The people who most frequently fall through the cracks or experience barriers to accessing supports from most mainstream social service systems are also the people who most frequently experience homelessness. This is why coordination related to preventing, reducing, and ending homelessness can be so complex. With the creation of Winnipeg's Plan to End Homelessness and the shift towards a Housing First (HF) framework, the roles of different stakeholders in the homelessness sector have also shifted, with the lines of responsibility often blurring as service providers and system-level organizations work together differently. These are positive changes because it means more shared responsibilities towards addressing homelessness. However, shifting and unclear roles come with their own challenges, often due to unstated expectations that arise in misunderstandings, communication, and accountability.

There is a recognized need for more coordination across the sector, but there is not common agreement about what should be coordinated or how. This is balanced or occasionally resisted by a strong fear of a centralized, unresponsive, or bureaucratic system. Additionally, there is confusion across many in the sector about the roles and responsibilities of key system stakeholders. This confusion erodes understanding and cooperation. Participants in the project agreed that the main challenge to coordination is the lack of an organized and understood structure for it to take place. Although there are multiple tables where coordination activities currently take place, there is limited communication between them. Moreover, there is either a lack of clear purpose for some of them, or too constrained a purpose for others. It is also important to note that none of these planning and coordination gaps are the responsibility of any single body.

Throughout this project, a number of challenges and gaps in coordination were raised:

- Lack of a community driven ‘vision’ for the future and common understanding of how the sector should evolve
- Misunderstandings related to coordination terminology and processes between stakeholders. There is not common understanding regarding the terms alignment, coordination, collaboration, and centralization
- Unclear roles and purposes related to coordination (who is doing what and what we are trying to achieve together)
- Lack of formal coordination and communication mechanisms between funders, government agencies, and community-based organizations. Where mechanisms exist, they are exclusive to some service providers (e.g. coordination based on funding source or Housing First designation)
- The Call for Proposal (CFP) process of the CE and HPS limits coordination, creates a culture of competition, and is not well-suited to developing the holistic ‘system of care’
- Limited tools to assess coordination between agencies regarding proposal and outcome evaluation, particularly regarding shared services

The above suggests that there are varying levels of coordination required to address homelessness in Winnipeg. These include a governance structure whereby there are clear decision-making processes and shared accountability, a planning body, a common funders’ table, and the creation of a community of practice among direct service workers (frontline staff).

Governance, Roles, Planning, and Coordination Recommendations

It is recommended that the various ‘system level’ stakeholders meet to develop a strategy for planning and coordination that all stakeholders agree on. This strategy should include:

- Establish a single ‘Planning and Coordination Table’
- Move forward with the proposed ‘Common Funder’s Table’
- Create a ‘Community of Practice’ among direct service workers in the sector

Additionally, the CE should consider:

- Hiring an Indigenous liaison to develop and expand the Indigenous funding portfolio
- Publicly post the Terms of Reference, minutes of meetings, Plans, research reports, and activity reports of the CAB and CE; preferably on a website

Over the long term, as a whole the community should work towards a governance structure that facilitates a coordinated, comprehensive, complete system of care.

3. Policy, Administration, and Funding

The CE and CAB's administrative roles can better foster the collaboration needed for the planning and coordination processes to be effective. This is where the CAB and CE can have the largest impact. Shifting administrative processes can build trust and provide a clear reason to bring people to a common table. The challenges and opportunities for CAB and CE include:

- Misunderstandings on the use of indicators and burdens associated with their use. This limits the use of the indicators to inform planning and coordination
- The burdens associated with financial reporting are problematic for some organizations, especially smaller ones. The burden lies in the level of detail required, the high level of knowledge necessary, the lack of budget flexibility, and the amount of time involved

Policy and Administration Recommendations

- Collaboratively improve outcome reporting priorities, processes, and tools to reduce the burden on organizations and collect meaningful, consistent data as a community
- The Planning and Coordination Table with the Funders' Table should decide on the outcome priorities and benchmarks that are most important to all stakeholders
- Address financial reporting burdens
- Address misunderstandings and confusion relating to HPS and CE policies and procedures
- Modify the Call-for-Proposal (CFP) process to reduce unnecessary competition, and to foster trust and collaboration (see below)
- Over the Long Term: All stakeholders develop shared system indicators

Call-for-Proposal (CFP) Process and Funding

The CFP process in use for the Winnipeg HPS funding has been almost universally identified by stakeholders as problematic for advancing coordination. It was widely felt that CFPs contribute to increased competition amongst service providers and exacerbate existing silos in the system. The CFP process does not lend itself to clearly 'targeted programming', resulting in general proposals that fit within the HPS eligibility, and can result in random and inconsistently operated programs. The current process does not support submissions that have potential to address homeless but require further development, skewing the process to larger organizations. The current process undervalues partnerships within the sector, and there is a lack of transparency around the selection process.

CFP and Funding Recommendations

To address the barriers some smaller, Indigenous-led organizations face in developing successful proposals and services:

- Provide opportunities for development of proposed programs/services
- CE should develop an open and fair process to develop weaker proposals
- Funding to Indigenous Organizations should reflect the scope and scale of the work being done
- CAB and CE should consider inequities when expecting matching funding (smaller and Indigenous organizations often don't have a donor base)

To improve coordination across the sector:

- CE should increase the value placed on partnerships as should CAB's assessments
- CE should target gaps in the system with CFPs
- CE should publish the selection criteria and process for proposals online
- CE should undertake analysis of proposals and submit to CAB

Medium Term: CE should develop a new process to fund programs that reduces competition. One alternative suggested is *Qualification Based Selection*.

4. Programs and System Development

A number of gaps in systems and services were identified throughout this project. Some of these gaps relate to populations that are underserved, others relate to services that people need but are not provided. HPS funding, since 2014, has been focused on “using a Housing First approach to prevent and end homelessness.” For this reason, many of gaps focused on in this report relate to a housing first system of care, recognizing that HF “programs” are only one part of the overall system. The CAB and CE need an inclusive and ongoing process to gather information about existing gaps in services and prioritize how, in partnership with other funders and with service providers, they can be filled. Addressing gaps in services should be seen as an ongoing process of system development.

Identified gaps include:

- not all services are available to all service providers (for example, only HF providers were said to be able to access housing procurement services, intake and assessment services).
- the provincial rent supplement program is still developing, resulting in an inability to transition people in HPS funded HF programs off emergency rent supplements.
- new HF programs are not assessed for fidelity, which has consequences for the services participants can expect to receive.

Community representatives also expressed frustration with access to HF services for the participants they serve, both due to the narrow definitions of chronic and episodic homelessness established by HPS and the acuity requirements established by Winnipeg's centralized intake body¹. People who experience homelessness for fewer than 180 days per year or with less than 3 episodes per year are ineligible. The same is also true for people experiencing hidden homelessness and those in abusive relationships, regardless of the risks they face or how high their acuity is. Service providers also report situations where people who they believe would greatly benefit from HF supports but whose acuity level was identified as 'low' were denied services, while others needed less intensive housing supports than a HF program offers, but few are available. These challenges are exacerbated by the lack of a rapid re-housing

¹ Winnipeg's centralized intake body, Doorways, utilizes the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool developed by OrgCode to assess acuity.

program in Winnipeg, which would handle many people with lower acuity or short-term homelessness. Finally, people with complex support needs or specialized support requirements were also identified as a population that is not served well by existing services. This is surprising given that HF is an intervention designed specifically for this population. To some extent, this gap relates to HF programs' inability to connect people with other clinical or specialized services.

In other communities, a planning group sets priorities for the population HF should serve first, such as the chronically homeless, youth, veterans, or, families. Some in the sector thought it would be beneficial to have community consensus and a shared vision on priorities for HF services, and thereby resolve the discord regarding who is eligible for services in Winnipeg.

Programs and System Development Recommendations

- CE should work with the Planning and Coordination Table to create a targeted CFP to support Rapid-Rehousing Programs
- CE should work to ensure 'system wide resource' services are available to all providers in the sector
- Manitoba Housing should prioritize creation of provincial rent supplement program
- The Planning and Coordination Table should support the development of information sharing protocols with Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), Manitoba Housing, Health and Justice systems
- The CE should work towards improving assessment of programs, including fidelity, and long-term cost analysis

5. Fostering Collaboration, Capacity Building, Communication

Several stakeholders observed that HPS funding, through its administrative and CFP processes, favours larger organizations that have received funding previously or have the capacity and resources to undertake proposal writing. Small organizations without those advantages are easily excluded, in spite of the fact that many small organizations are successful and efficient providers. Indigenous organizations in particular tend to have shorter organizational histories, lack a donor base, rarely have core funding, and yet bear supporting the larger portion of the homeless population. While the CAB, CE, and HPS make significant efforts to fairly and transparently address conflicts of interest, additional process changes could make the overall process more equitable. The timing of the CFPs (which is driven, in part, by federal budgetary processes) has also been criticized by service providers. Most stakeholders agreed that short timeframes for CFPs reduce the ability to coordinate as a sector or partner appropriately, which furthers the need for detailed and ongoing planning in advance of funding cycles.

All of the previously discussed areas of action (responding to the distinctiveness of Indigenous homelessness, coordination, planning, and collaboration) require organizational capacity. There is

therefore **a need to build capacity amongst smaller organizations** so they can play an effective role in Winnipeg's system of care.

There is an underlying problem of clear communication amongst all the stakeholders on issues of: roles, goals, policy, priorities, procedures, best practices and responsibilities. Communication is about accountability, building trust and relationships amongst the stakeholders through a foundation of understanding and open dialogue. There is a huge opportunity to clarify understanding amongst stakeholders and thereby help build relationships and trust. Examples of opportunities for clearer communication:

- Widely and clearly communicate the meanings of Alignment, Collaboration, Centralization, and Coordination so discussion can begin
- Articulate the roles of the principle system stakeholders
- Continue to inform service provider organizations about the HPS funding and what activities can be funded
- Continue to inform service provider organizations about project budgeting and flexibility for unanticipated costs (re-allocation policies and procedures)
- CE should hold regular information sessions on accessing HPS program funding
- CE continue to inform service providers about the link between selecting activities-performed, and resultant indicators to be reported on
- Clarify how HPS funded programs can access services provided by Housing Plus, including requirements for meeting Provincial standards

Conclusions

All agree that more coordination is needed in Winnipeg's homeless sector, but many spoke of coordination as if it was a thing 'to get', a single management activity, a distant goal, or an almost idealized state, and therefore difficult to comprehend or act upon. But "coordination" is a process; it is the means, not the end goal. The results of coordination will take time, and continue indefinitely. And coordination activities should not be overwhelming. They should be understandable, practical, and recognizable, because they are actions familiar to the not-for-profit sector such as yearly planning, and working with partners. Yet each action will imperceptibly improve the coordination of the system as a whole, and ease burdens. Coordination activities are already occurring - and can be brought together under one umbrella to be more strategic, inclusive, and impactful. So let us begin by **building a process called coordination**. Towards that end, the following guiding principle and recommendations are intended to be concrete, achievable actions that improve the functioning of the current system and contribute to a coordinated, comprehensive, and complete system of care.

Guiding Principle:

When implementing the recommendations it must be kept in mind that Indigenous people constitute approximately three-quarters of the population experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg. Ending homelessness in Winnipeg will not happen unless the distinct needs of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous organizations are addressed, and distinct rights of Indigenous peoples upheld. It bears restating, then, that the following considerations should be incorporated into the development of any plans to address the recommendations presented in this report and, more generally, into future funding-related decision-making:

- ❖ How does this affirm Indigenous peoples' right to participate in decision-making and the development, determination and administration of the programs we support?
- ❖ To what extent do activities and programs address the ongoing legacies and destructive impacts of colonialism, which is the root cause of Indigenous overrepresentation in the population experiencing homelessness? Will this help make progress towards closing the gaps between outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?
- ❖ Does this support the provision of culturally appropriate services, culture-based approaches, and culturally safe service experiences for Indigenous people?
- ❖ To what extent will this support the development of trust, accountability, transparency and joint leadership in our relationships with Indigenous organizations and Indigenous people?

Top 5 Recommendations

1. **Develop a Planning and Coordination Table**
2. **CE should reduce the competition inherent in the CFP process**
 - a. **Stage 1 is ongoing information sharing with proponents emphasizing a non-competitive nature, principles such as paying a standard living wage, and making sure there is adequate funding for all activities; while supporting greater partnerships and accountability**
 - b. **Stage 2 will be a shift to an alternate open and transparent funding model such as Qualification Based Selection, or other process**
3. **CAB / CE / Service Canada should prepare for 2019 funding cycle end. Confirm and stabilize a long-term CE**
4. **CE should continue and expand efforts to reduce and/or improve financial reporting requirements**
5. **Improve communication and information sharing through information sessions, feedback sessions, publication of policies and procedures, and the development of a website to host the information**

