

10 A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES REDUCING POVERTY

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10 - A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES REDUCING POVERTY

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INTRODUCTION

10 - A Guide for Businesses Reducing Poverty

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This book is about what can happen when businesses large and small are engaged in reducing poverty. It contains inspiring accounts of how business leaders and their colleagues are having success in improving lives and community conditions.

In addition to stories of progress and success, you will be presented with ideas and practices that are emerging and having impact, and you will learn about key resources that can assist leaders and practitioners from all sectors to leverage talents and resources, to foster belonging, and to create real hope for a better tomorrow.

At Tamarack Institute and Vibrant Communities Canada, our deepest passion is to end poverty and build a future together where prosperity is equitable, and where communities are healthy, supportive, and economically sound.

For most of us, poverty happens to others. Living on the street, wondering how next month's rent will be paid, going without healthcare so one's children can eat — these are among the harsh realities millions of Canadians face each day. The causes are complex

and often overwhelming in their scope and depth. Solution-building seems slow and tends to be accompanied by setbacks, if not roadblocks.

Still, we see and affirm the growing commitment across all sectors to a collective approach to addressing poverty in Canada. We know in our hearts that poverty is about all of us. We know that our systems and public policies must do better than they currently are. We understand that services must be guided by bold visions and a culture of innovation, if we stand a chance of solving poverty. And we know that the impact of poverty that exists in our neighbourhoods, in our schools, and on the streets cannot be resolved without local leadership and cross-sector, collaborative efforts.

At our 2016 Poverty Summit in Edmonton, we published the first edition of *10: A Guide for Cities Reducing Poverty*, which was as much a case study as it was a guide for local leadership and the importance of municipal governments and their mayors and councils in reducing poverty. This edition of 10 also stresses local leadership and efforts, as well as how vital business leaders and the business community are in this work.

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All business is performed in and for community. Our economy relies on a business community that delivers services and products we need at competitive pricing, that produces profits that allow for continued investment in future business development, and that provides decent work and livable incomes to its workers. As well, the impact of business goes much further than profits and wages. The private sector also affects the environment, the vitality of social interactions, community health, and the possibilities for the future of our children.

If you are a business leader, a poverty reduction practitioner, a community activist, or a concerned citizen, this guide has been written for you. It is divided into five easy-to-read sections:

Section one includes an assessment that poses 10 key questions for business leaders to consider when exploring ways that their organizations and networks can engage in poverty reduction efforts. I encourage you to fill it out, perhaps collaboratively with others at work, in order to get started or deepen your current engagement.

Section two provides a list of 10 really good ideas on how your business can contribute to poverty reduction, and recommends ways in which community practitioners can engage business leaders in collective impact efforts to address poverty.

Section three highlights 10 exemplary cases in which businesses, cities and non-profit organizations have collaborated and successfully implemented the “really good ideas” found in Section 2. These insightful stories showcase how impactful community efforts can include business leadership and engagement.

Section four provides links to 10 organizations that provide exceptional resources for businesses interested in reducing poverty.

Section five offers 10 great tips for getting started if you are just beginning to engage in poverty reduction work.

Last year at the summit in Edmonton, business leader Ruth Kelly, CEO of Venture Publishing, challenged everyone in the room to include business leaders in poverty reduction work. Her challenge was taken to heart, and this year’s summit in Hamilton, Cities Reducing Poverty: When Business is Engaged, was the outcome of Ruth’s inspiration.

This publication, *10 - A Guide for Businesses Reducing Poverty*, was written to both acknowledge and inspire the thinking and work of businesses across our country, and to remind all of us of how critical business involvement in poverty reduction truly is. Speaking on behalf of everyone at Tamarack Institute, I hope you find it helpful.

SECTION 1

Assess Your Readiness to Engage in Poverty Reduction

This section poses 10 key questions that can help you assess your readiness to bring a poverty reduction lens to your business activities. Use this self-assessment to reflect on where you are at, what you are currently doing, and areas in which you would be interested in doing more. Keep these results in mind as you work through this guide to discover inspiring and tangible ways to move from readiness into practice.

Note: *Do not be discouraged if your score is lower than expected! This guide offers a variety of ways for businesses to get involved from any starting point on the readiness scale.*

Use the following scale to score your answers:

1 = Not Yet **2** = Just Starting **3** = Part Way There **4** = We Are Doing This **5** = Absolutely

10 Key Questions to Think About	Rank
1. Does your business have a sufficient understanding of what causes and perpetuates poverty in your community? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
2. Is the leadership of your business willing to host or engage in discussions about poverty with private sector peers? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
3. Has your business identified its responsibility as a corporate citizen, including what role it could play in developing strong, inclusive, and resilient communities? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
4. Does your business recognize social return on investment as a component of business success? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
5. Does your business invest in socially-minded community projects or activities that matter to your employees and customers? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5

10 Key Questions to Think About	Rank
6. Do your policies promote equity and inclusion and a workplace that is supportive of families and persons with disabilities? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
7. Is your business willing to commit to paying all its employees a Living Wage, and to ensure that adequate benefits are offered? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
8. Is your business willing to actively participate in a local poverty reduction roundtable, or if one does not currently exist, to help create one? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
9. Is your business willing to leverage its influence and networks to work toward systemic and policy changes that will help reduce poverty? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
10. On a scale of 1-5, how active is your business in reducing local poverty? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5

Add up your score to assess how well you are doing: _____

10-25 points – We can help you realize your goals **25-40 points** – You are well on your way
40-50 points – We want to learn from you

What have you learned by taking this assessment?

Read on to consider your next steps...

SECTION 2



10 REALLY GOOD IDEAS FOR BUSINESSES REDUCING POVERTY

Here are 10 high-impact ideas from businesses affiliated with Vibrant Communities Canada - Cities Reducing Poverty members. While not an exhaustive list, this section presents concrete opportunities for small, medium, and large businesses to meaningfully engage in poverty reduction.

- ① Participate as a key player in local multi-sectoral poverty reduction efforts.
- ② Champion local poverty reduction efforts by galvanizing the business community.
- ③ Explore the potential benefits to the community and to your business of engaging in social enterprise development.
- ④ Foster community economic development through deeply rooted place-based organizations.
- ⑤ Expand beyond charitable contributions by engaging in corporate citizenship.
- ⑥ Employ decent work policies and practices.
- ⑦ Implement a workplace policy to pay your direct and contracted employees a Living Wage.
- ⑧ Create and support an inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity of your community.
- ⑨ Mobilize your corporate communication and engagement channels to raise awareness of poverty in your community.
- ⑩ Deliver poverty reduction programs and supports that utilize your company's unique talents, resources, and networks.

1

MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATION

A Collective Impact approach brings sectors together to realize bold visions in new ways

Businesses are vital members of any community, and private sector participation is essential to a collective impact approach to tackling community issues. If we want to solve large, complex social and economic problems, like poverty, it will take all of us working together to leverage the knowledge, skills, and resources required to build and sustain a better tomorrow.

Collective impact models are advanced forms of collaboration that bring together governments, businesses, funders, the public sector, non-profits, and individuals, especially those with lived experience, to achieve shared aspirations for our communities.



A growing number of poverty reduction roundtables across the country are benefitting from the business sector's contributions to poverty reduction work. Business leaders provide a valuable for-profit perspective on issues and solutions, and bring additional personal know-how and passion to the table.

In some communities, businesses have been the first groups to independently form anti-poverty tables. These types of committees can provide business representatives with opportunities to formulate resolutions with like-minded peers, and explore sustainable solutions for reducing poverty that also strengthen the local economy. Such leadership not only produces results for people, it adds to the knowledge base that all of us need to maximize our capacity to solve poverty.

Multi-sectoral collaborations that include strong business involvement help to keep poverty on a community's political, social, and economic radar. Bringing diverse partners together to manage complex processes involves hard work, long-term commitment, and brave asks.

Despite the challenges, a collective impact approach yields great power in overcoming social issues, and strengthens a community's capacity to realize bold visions that support positive systemic change.

2

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP*Business champions amplify private sector engagement and impact*

Strong business engagement in local poverty reduction work is often ignited by a reputable and influential business leader who can champion the work.

Great local business champions lead by example and act as catalysts for change. They know how to use their experience, expertise, and networks to galvanize, educate, and involve their peers in poverty-related challenges and solutions. They also encourage other sector leaders to think about how they can contribute to local poverty reduction efforts.

For example, employers can inspire others through adhering to “decent work” practices in their workplaces, which might include achieving Living Wage certification and providing their employees with non-mandatory benefits.

When business leaders initiate positive practices within their respective workplaces and encourage others to invest in this way as well, it can trigger a cascading effect that amplifies positive change for employers, employees, and the community at large.

Business engagement, particularly through the leadership of a local champion, also lends credibility and influence to local poverty reduction work. In cases where business champions co-chair or convene a local poverty reduction roundtable, or take the lead or participate on a working group or committee, they can often leverage relationships and resources to advance the work.



3 SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND SOCIAL PURPOSE BUSINESSES

Business models that recognize social impact as a core metric to success

Positioned along the organizational spectrum between charitable and for-profit models, social enterprises apply entrepreneurial principles and business solutions to social problems. Their motives extend beyond financial gains to address social, cultural, and environmental needs, and they employ positive social returns on investment as core metrics of business success.

Social enterprises that support poverty reduction include grocery stores, coffee shops, thrift shops, recycling depots, bicycle repair shops, landscaping and painting companies, catering initiatives, printing services, and much more.

Social enterprises often provide education and training opportunities. They create meaningful jobs, particularly for individuals who are often excluded from the workforce. In economically depressed or rural areas, they contribute to local community economic development and stability.

The social enterprise model also supports non-profit sustainability, as self-generated revenues can alleviate the need for donations and grants, and can help organizations invest in their local poverty reduction initiatives.



4

ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS*Rooted place-based organizations with considerable economic clout*

Anchor institutions are large public and non-profit institutions that are strongly rooted in community and unlikely to leave. Representing some of their community's largest employers and purchasers of goods and services, they hold long-term, place-based economic authority, significant power as employers, and considerable economic clout.

Anchor institutions across the country, such as municipal governments, hospitals, and universities, are increasingly recognizing the substantial role that they can play in poverty reduction.

Procurement is one of the greatest levers at the disposal of anchor institutions. Their strategic deployment of even a small percentage of purchasing budgets can drive equitable local economic development. For example, inclusive

procurement policies can direct purchasing towards diverse vendors (e.g. Indigenous businesses) while bridging lines like race, gender, and income to make it easier for these suppliers to compete for contracts.



Other ways that anchor institutions leverage their assets include becoming party to community benefit agreements, incubating the development of local social enterprises, and implementing Living Wage policies.

Anchor institutions are well positioned to create a supply of decent work opportunities for individuals facing barriers to employment. They play a stabilizing role in the face of economic uncertainty, and serve as community role models, inspiring others to follow their lead.

5

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

Economic growth and vitality can fuel social change

Impactful community change strategies that move beyond traditional charitable models contribute to the recognition that poverty reduction work is connected to the right of every human being to live with dignity. Strategies formed from a corporate citizen mindset help to foster inclusion and participation, and empower people with the resources and means to lift themselves out of poverty.

Businesses across the country are moving beyond charitable donations toward corporate citizenship. More and more business leaders are connecting value propositions with social responsibility and are re-defining how they perceive their return on investment to include social and environmental gains.

A growing number of businesses are engaging in hands-on poverty reduction initiatives. They are scaling up their community investment programs, building connections between clients, non-profits, and community members in need, engaging in local training and mentoring opportunities, supporting non-profit research, and leveraging their communication channels and networks.

Corporate citizenship is as real and valuable as individual citizenship. It serves as a way to tap into what matters to employees, customers, and suppliers beyond a transactional exchange for goods and services. Finally, it supports equity through the sharing of economic success, and through fostering of healthy, prosperous, and resilient communities.



6

DECENT WORK

Communities need a strong economy that includes fair workplace practices and stable employment opportunities

The International Labour Organization defines decent work as “opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.” For individuals and families, decent work provides a stable, sufficient income that provides life’s basic necessities and fosters economic independence. In turn, this benefits businesses as well through increased consumer activity.

Employers across the country who are leading the way in decent work are offering or implementing:

- Non-mandatory benefits for full-time, part-time, and contracted employees (e.g. parental leave, sick leave, retirement contributions, mental health supports, and on-site childcare);
- Equal pay for equal work policies, with scheduling processes that provide steady, predictable work hours;
- Family-friendly policies such as job-sharing opportunities;

- Overtime work that is non-mandatory and fairly compensated; and,
- Training, mentorship, and advancement opportunities for all workers.

Businesses that champion decent work practices understand the critical linkages between, and the mutual benefits of, balancing employer and employee needs and how doing so advances community health and well-being.



7

LIVING WAGE

People who work full time should not have to live in poverty

Living Wage is the name of an international movement that supports families to meet their basic needs, maintain economic security, and participate in society, by way of an hourly wage that is calculated to reflect a family's basic household expenses within their local cost-of-living context.

Across Canada, businesses are voluntarily implementing workplace policies that commit to paying all their employees, whether direct or

contracted, a Living Wage. These Living Wage employers also champion the movement by encouraging and supporting other businesses to adopt a Living Wage policy.

Living Wage policies present widespread benefits for employers, employees, and the community at large.

Businesses that adopt a Living Wage are generally rewarded with increased employee productivity, decreased staff turnover, and reduced hiring and training costs; employees enjoy increased economic security and reduced stress and hardship; the community benefits from a larger taxpayer base and increased local consumer purchasing power; and, because working families tend to spend their dollars locally, Living Wage dollars are often injected right back into local economies.

Research is also increasingly finding that implementing a Living Wage policy can positively benefit the bottom line for businesses of all sizes.



8

INCLUSIVE HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT*Workplace policies that promote equality, inclusion, and diversity*

Economic security remains the most important factor in ensuring that individuals and families can meet their basic needs and build assets. Paid employment is the primary source of income for most Canadians, but many face barriers to accessing stable work.

Common drivers of precarious attachment to the workforce include weak language or literacy skills, limited work experience, a lack of professional networks, and structural barriers that arise out of discriminatory practices.

Employers across the country are responding to these challenges by tailoring their recruitment and hiring practices to embody equity, inclusion, and diversity. These policies support employees by providing better job readiness, as well as access to, and retention of, stable employment that pays a liveable wage. Examples of positive corporate policy include implementing accessibility plans, accommodating flexible work hours, and providing on-site childcare.

Businesses can champion inclusive hiring and employment practices by purposefully recruiting employees from diverse cultural backgrounds, maintaining realistic requirements for entry-level positions, recognizing foreign credentials, and valuing lived and volunteer experience alongside education and employment history. They can create training opportunities through internships and apprenticeships that offer practical, hands-on work experience, and can provide direct links to employment by committing to hire individuals who complete specialized training programs.

The business sector's involvement in inclusive hiring and employment practices presents a strengths-based approach that supports individuals to overcome barriers, be empowered to navigate complex job continuums, and achieve reliable incomes.

These practices increase the representation of typically under-represented groups in the workforce, and increase workforce participation, which in turn, decreases spending on social programs, and benefits us all.



9

RAISING AWARENESS

Fostering empathy can shift a community's perception of poverty

Stigma and discrimination toward people living in poverty is still deeply rooted in the thinking and systems of our society. Before a community can successfully reduce poverty, community members need to understand what it is like to experience it.

Business leaders play an essential role in increasing community awareness. They are credible, influential, and vocal advocates for poverty reduction work, and are leveraging

resources, communication channels, and technologies to raise awareness in the community.

Businesses across the country are supporting poverty reduction work in a variety of ways, such as by providing meeting spaces, offering in-kind assistance as event planners, contributing marketing and technological support for online and print materials, facilitating communication through extensive professional channels, and making human resource contributions. For example, a newspaper can publish poverty myth-busting articles and editorials, or a printer can support the design and printing of brochures and billboards.

Raising awareness of poverty and building compassion for those experiencing it protects against racism and discrimination and empowers people living in poverty to influence decisions that affect them. This benefits individuals, communities, and society, and goes a long way to support local economic development and poverty reduction goals.



10

LEVERAGING WHAT BUSINESSES DO BEST

Asset-based Development: Empowering positive decisions that foster bright futures

Business leaders often have a personal interest in seeing their communities prosper. A prime way for them to do this is to channel their assets to support low-income individuals who are struggling to access resources or opportunities in order to live more prosperous lives.

Common areas that businesses choose to contribute their assets to include food security, education, and financial literacy. For example, businesses across the country are supporting individuals living on low incomes to access affordable and healthy food, and are contributing resources for schools, early learning centres, childcare, literacy training, and parenting supports.

When it comes to financial literacy, many financial institutions and professionals donate time to run free income-tax clinics, provide financial empowerment training opportunities, and support matched savings initiatives. Financial

institutions are also helping to increase access to mainstream banking by offering alternative financial products, and are working to limit the exposure of low-income populations to predatory lenders.



SECTION 3



10 STORIES THAT INSPIRE

This section showcases 10 stories from across Canada that demonstrate successful business engagement in poverty reduction work. The stories illustrate insightful and socially responsible practices being pursued by private sector initiatives, in partnership with Vibrant Communities Canada - Cities Reducing Poverty members, that inspire real community change.

- ① **Vancouver, BC** – A credit union pays a Living Wage for social justice and financial inclusion.
- ② **Calgary, AB** – A social enterprise association unites for social impact and sustainability.
- ③ **Edmonton, AB** – Eight institutions collaborate to drive financial empowerment.
- ④ **Winnipeg, MB** – A collaborative delivers holistic training and employment supports.
- ⑤ **Hamilton, ON** – Communications and relationships are mobilized to raise awareness of poverty.
- ⑥ **Peel, ON** – Anchor institutions create decent work by role-modelling inclusive hiring practices.
- ⑦ **Toronto, ON** – A city's purchasing power is leveraged to do good through procurement strategies.
- ⑧ **Charlotte County, NB** – Small businesses mentor budding entrepreneurs to foster a sustainable rural economy.
- ⑨ **Saint John, NB** – A collective impact model is employed to close the education-achievement gap.
- ⑩ **Moncton, NB** – A multi-national business supports the local social inclusion plan through corporate social responsibility.



VANCOUVER, BC

A credit union pays a Living Wage for social justice and financial inclusion

"It's tragic that one in five children live in poverty in this province of abundance, so we are committed to working with advocates and allies on poverty reduction in our communities."

-Catherine Ludgate, Vancity

Vancity opened their doors 70 years ago with a social justice and financial inclusion mandate, and continues this mission in their core activities today. Modelled as a credit union, a type of financial cooperative controlled by members, they employ 2,700 people and reach 521,000 members over nearly 60 branches throughout Metro Vancouver and in Alert Bay.

The collaborative houses and provides operating support to three connected anti-poverty initiatives through their charitable foundation. Vancity actively participates in the community, acting as an advisory group member and employer certification board member for Living Wage for Families, and sitting on the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, where they collaborate with 300 members from around the province.

Vancity is a proud Living Wage employer whose staff has also been vocal in expressing their pride

about working for a Living Wage company. The credit union's commitment to a Living Wage makes an especially big difference for contract workers, where being paid a Living Wage rate, for example, greatly enhances their ability to make positive food choices and to obtain quality health care.

Vancity is also committed to supporting fellow and prospective living wage employers. With the Living Wage for Families Campaign and the community, they identify strong and naturally allied employers that have missions, visions and values that are aligned to adopt a Living Wage, and support them to achieve certification.

The credit union takes a systems-change approach to poverty reduction. Acting as a role model and champion for other employers, they aim to change public policy in a sustainable way that supports families to lift themselves out of poverty.

2 CALGARY, AB

A social enterprise association unites businesses for social impact and sustainability

Respect for the Earth and all People (REAP), a social enterprise and non-profit business association, emphasizes the importance of community in for-profit business management. REAP generates solutions that help local business owners avoid compromising the welfare of people for profits. Their 150 members represent more than \$21 billion in annual revenue and 8,300 Calgary-area jobs.

REAP champions poverty reduction initiatives by inviting businesses to take a seat at the table and presents options for them to have meaningful involvement in the work. In 2016, REAP partnered with Vibrant Communities Calgary, steward of the city's poverty reduction strategy, to connect employers through a local business forum.

They also host an annual awards program to recognize local businesses for their social-good efforts. For instance, each year REAP presents the Empowering Communities Leader award to a Living Wage employer that is reducing poverty for its employees and is sustainably enriching its community.

REAP is a Living Wage champion that encourages its members to support local Living Wage employers. To date, 17 REAP members have made a commitment to pay a living wage. Many are advocates for the living wage and demonstrate to

other employers how paying a living wage can support their bottom line. For example, Community Natural Foods tracks metrics which show that paying a living wage has supported their employee productivity and retention. In addition, BluPlanet Recycling has experienced tremendous benefits through reduced acquisition and training costs, as well as decreased staff turnover.

REAP represents an innovative model that incorporates social impact as criteria for membership, and seeks ways for their growing network to improve lives and community conditions. REAP is a story still unfolding about how local businesses can collaborate to generate a fair profit while contributing to healthy and prosperous communities.



3

EDMONTON, AB

Eight institutions collaborating to drive community financial empowerment

The Edmonton Financial Empowerment Collaborative brings together 25 organizations from the non-profit, government, and private sector as partners to support local financial empowerment initiatives.

A Financial Pathways Collaborative was initiated after leaders of three financial institutions brought together representatives from eight financial institutions to participate in a poverty simulation experience. The exercise fostered an understanding of the realities of living in poverty, and inspired participants to identify ways that they could work together to take tangible action to reduce poverty in their own community.

This Financial Pathways Collaborative currently consists of eight financial institutions working in partnership with United Way, the City of Edmonton and E4C on two priorities of the End Poverty Edmonton strategy: delivering financial literacy workshops in community, and assisting people with filing their taxes and receiving benefits through E4C's Make Tax Time Pay program.

Vancity Credit Union supported the collaborative by sharing its curriculum and expertise to train 26 of its staff members to deliver free workshops, primarily to people living on a low income.

Members of the collaborative are also engaged in their own poverty reduction initiatives. For example, ATB Financial has partnered with United Way and other organizations to deliver the Empower U Initiative, a matched savings program for women living in poverty.

ATB Financial, together with Boyle Street Community Services, also created Four Directions Financial, which ensures that Edmonton's inner city clients who are homeless or living in poverty can open — often for the first time — a bank account with a mainstream financial institution. Using biometric technology, Four Directions Financial is making banking more accessible than ever.





WINNIPEG, MB

Holistic training and employment supports for Indigenous self-sufficiency and prosperity

The Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD)'s vision is that Indigenous people in Winnipeg have a future of increased economic prosperity and self-sufficiency. The Centre offers rewarding training and career opportunities that enable clients to overcome employment barriers and pursue lifelong learning. CAHRD staffs 139 employees, and annually serves 2,000 clients, teaches 800 students, and makes 800 job placements.

Incorporating a holistic approach to education and employment, CAHRD supports seamless transitions from literacy and upgrading, through post-secondary education, to sustainable employment.

They have recently partnered with United Way and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council to adopt a collective impact model that will further engage industry, education and health institutions, government, and community partners in supporting employment for Indigenous youth.

CAHRD provides vocational training within high-demand industries that leads clients to well-paid

employment, with a focus on professions where Indigenous people are currently under-represented. Wrap-around supports at the centre include on-site affordable student housing and childcare services.

Working out of a large, historic Canadian Pacific Railway building, which is itself run as a social enterprise, CAHRD generates revenue through the leasing of space. They run Mother Earth Recycling which employs youth to refurbish and reuse computers, and have forged a partnership with the City of Winnipeg, IKEA, and Sleep Country to recycle mattresses.

CAHRD's innovative approach has encouraged relationships with businesses to support decent work, secure incomes, stable employment, and inclusion and diversity in the workplace. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by Indigenous students, CAHRD's Indigenous lens to business engagement promotes the collective health, growth, and well-being of the community, and supports a holistic meeting of people's needs where no one is left behind.

5

HAMILTON, ON

Leveraging communications and relationships to raise awareness of poverty

“The stories have been removed from this page to remind us that nearly 10,000 children, women and men live in poverty in Hamilton, people whose stories rarely make the front page. We’re going to change that.”
- from the front cover of the Hamilton Spectator published Oct. 5, 2005

When the City of Hamilton decided to tackle poverty, The Hamilton Spectator was one of the first partners to step forward in support of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction's (HRPR) community change effort.

One day in 2005, the Spectator removed all stories from the front page of a Saturday edition to draw attention to poverty issues in Hamilton. With that, the Poverty Project was launched to demonstrate the impact of poverty on the people in Hamilton. In 2010, The Spectator collaborated with McMaster University to produce the Code Red series, which examined health and poverty within local neighbourhoods, and changed the dialogue about poverty in Hamilton.

The Spectator's investigative report found that those living in Hamilton's lowest-income postal codes had life expectancies 21 years shorter than

those in the highest-income postal codes. Code Red inspired a speakers' series that drew Hamilton residents into an exploration of approaches to address institutionalized poverty. Motivated and driven by the investigative series, the City of Hamilton and community partners committed to investing more than \$2 million into targeted neighbourhood development.

In 2011, the managing editor of the newspaper was appointed as chair of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

The Spectator is a local change leader that not only takes on poverty from a journalistic perspective, but through a corporate commitment as well. The newspaper presents a powerful example of how a local business can be a community champion to the benefit of its most vulnerable citizens.

6

PEEL, ON

Anchor institutions role-modelling through inclusive hiring into decent work

The Region of Peel's vision is to be a livable community for all individuals and families. Serving 1.4 million residents and approximately 143,000 businesses in Brampton, Caledon, and Mississauga, the Region strives to create a community where everyone works together to build a poverty-free future.

They provide backbone support and co-chair the region's community-based, multi-sectoral poverty roundtable, The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, which raises awareness, advocates, tracks poverty, and keeps it on the region's political, social, and economic radar.

In 2010, former Mayor Hazel McCallion launched a summer job challenge that encouraged employers to hire young people with multiple barriers. The Region of Peel took on the challenge and became one of these employers themselves, hiring and paying wages for 60 youth. Now in its seventh year, the initiative is hiring 150 young people for employment at the Region of Peel or community agencies.

Their most recent initiative, the Peel as a Model Employer Pilot Project, hires individuals on social assistance for six-month mentoring and placements in full-time Living Wage jobs. It helps individuals ladder up to future employment and

provides job search supports. To ensure candidates' success, transportation and childcare are provided.

As a sizable regional government that employs a relatively large number of employees, and that manages a significant budget, Peel recognizes its role as a community anchor institution, noting that changes that they implement internally can create huge impact and ripple effects within the community.

Peel's program demonstrates how a regional government can serve as a role model to create equitable opportunities, sustainable economic growth, and inclusive community wealth.





TORONTO, ON

Purchasing power for good through social procurement programs

"Hiring individuals experiencing economic disadvantage and buying from a diverse supplier have opened our eyes to how we can help direct our budgets to feed back into the City's mandate to reduce poverty."

- David London, B&V

The City of Toronto's Social Procurement Program opens doors for large and small businesses alike to play a role in the community's poverty reduction efforts. It is a key initiative of the city's poverty reduction strategy, and was adopted by Council in 2016 as a way for the city to support diversity by implementing inclusive policies and procedures.

The program makes it easier for diverse suppliers, such as women, Indigenous individuals, and people with disabilities, to compete for city contracts. It also creates training and employment opportunities for people facing barriers to accessing the workforce, including youth and new immigrants.

Black & Veatch (B&V), a multinational engineering consulting firm, was one of the first to engage with the city's Social Procurement Program, through their bid for a large engineering and construction project. B&V's team considered ways they could incorporate the Social Procurement Program's priorities across project phases. They successfully

hired newcomer professionals for design phases, and will be engaging underemployed youth through industry apprenticeship programs for their construction phases. They also used the city's database of diverse suppliers to find and enlist printing services from an Indigenous company for materials, and contracted with a social enterprise for catering and meeting spaces.

With a current annual spend of approximately \$1.8 million for goods and services, it is clear that small percentages of the city's purchasing leveraged through social procurement can yield huge impacts in local poverty reduction.

The City of Toronto's social procurement program is an inspirational story that demonstrates the potential for procurement practices to be replicated within other public sector institutions. It also provides an accessible opportunity for businesses to serve as community role models, and to have a demonstrative impact on poverty at the local level.



CHARLOTTE COUNTY, NB

Small business mentoring for sustainable rural economies and communities

Business Bootcamp is a practical training program for newly self-employed business owners in rural Charlotte County. Local business mentors volunteer to conduct intensive training that helps low-income entrepreneurs get their businesses off the ground.

The program is a collaborative effort between the provincial government, municipalities, businesses, academic institutions, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC).

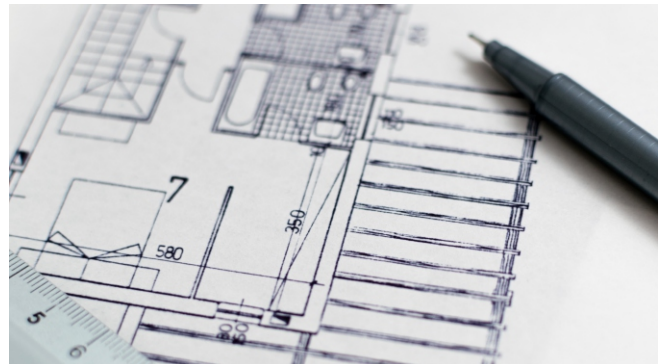
Business Bootcamp was initiated while the county was experiencing an economic depression. Market research, commissioned by the municipality and conducted by a local marketing company, identified the innovative idea that instead of just encouraging a large business to move in, the town could focus on nurturing small local businesses. The research identified that few local training opportunities existed. While the town housed many skilled people, those motivated to start a business could not access training to learn where to start.

In its first phase, Business Bootcamp generated exceedingly positive feedback, and demonstrated huge potential in terms of empowering local

entrepreneurs to generate reliable incomes to lift themselves out of poverty.

The program has been supported by Vibrant Communities Charlotte County, who through their partnership with ESIC, contributed resources to scale it up, conduct market research into local business niches, and support participating businesses with access to affordable rental space.

Business Bootcamp represents an innovative strengths-based approach that has created a context, culture, and tangible opportunity for business leaders to leverage their experience and expertise to invest in their community, and to assist low-income entrepreneurs on their journey toward a more prosperous future.





SAINT JOHN, NB

A collective impact model for closing the education gap

The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI) is a progressive movement of the Saint John business community aimed at helping the city “break the cycle” and end generational poverty.

Recognizing that lifelong poverty is unacceptable, and that business has a responsibility to help, BCAPI founders brought together 40 of Saint John’s most senior business leaders to tackle the systemic, root causes of poverty, and to overcome the severe social consequences and lost economic productivity associated with it.

BCAPI’s collective impact model engages people who live in poverty, community organizations, businesses, and municipal and senior governments to support Saint John’s priorities.

With a goal of helping every child succeed, BCAPI closes the education gap for low-income children. Serving five priority low-income neighbourhoods, local business employees co-lead with schools, neighbourhoods and community organizations to enrich the educational environment for Saint John’s children to enable them to thrive from cradle to career.

Recognizing that the non-profit world and the complex field of poverty reduction are often not a natural milieu for business leaders, BCAPI provides business leaders with their own table. This provides a safe space where business people can listen, learn, speak confidently, dispel myths about poverty, contribute ideas amongst like-minded peers, and formulate resolutions.

For two decades, the reputable BCAPI network has been learning about poverty and has been making critical and successful advances toward reducing it.





MONCTON, NB

Corporate social responsibility for implementation of a municipal social inclusion plan

The City of Moncton serves as a leader, facilitator, capacity builder, and strategic community partner with the aim of improving the quality of life for its citizens.

In 2016, the city dedicated \$50,000 of its 2016 budget toward the implementation of a social inclusion plan, “A Quality of Life for All Monctonians,” which facilitates local actions that reduce poverty and aim to increase the inclusion of its most vulnerable members. In addition, the city directed over \$200,000 toward social initiatives under its annual Quality of Life granting program.

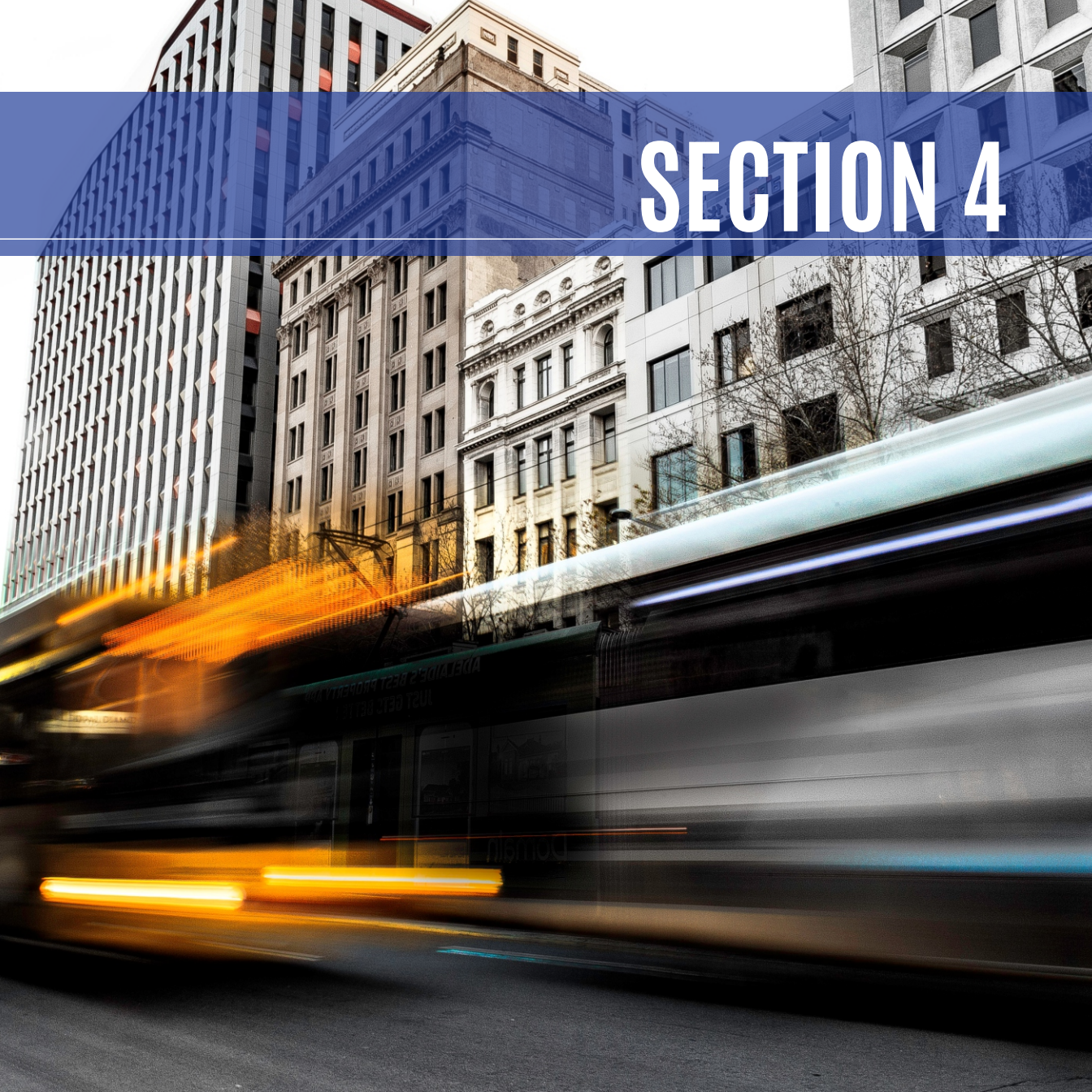
Based in Moncton, Dovico is an international software company that supports more than 100,000 clients with time management software and reporting solutions. Employing corporate social responsibility, Dovico supports implementation of the most pressing priority of Moncton’s social inclusion plan — housing choice and affordability.

The company founded Dovico Cares to build a connection between the company’s clients and community members who are in need. Dovico Cares supports the Humanity Project, a local non-profit that helps homeless individuals secure housing, feeds the community, and provides comprehensive wrap-around supports. To date, 64 people have been permanently housed and more than 60,000 meals have been served.

Dovico Cares contributes financially to the Humanity Project, serves as a corporate voice (i.e. by lending credibility and endorsement to the project in their liaisons with City Council), and leverages communication channels, for example, by helping the Humanity Project to achieve a monthly Facebook reach of over 200,000 people.

Dovico demonstrates how business investment can be scaled up, and exemplifies how corporate social responsibility can extend beyond charitable donations to corporate citizenship that aligns with city priorities, addresses local needs, and achieves community goals.

SECTION 4



10 USEFUL RESOURCES

This section includes a list of organizations that offer useful resources that can assist you in your poverty reduction efforts. These include learning networks, professional development opportunities, research, publications, and funding supports. Use the web links to follow up for more details.

- ① **Vibrant Communities Canada**
- ② **Tamarack Institute**
- ③ **Living Wage Canada**
- ④ **Maytree**
- ⑤ **National Campaigns**
- ⑥ **Foundations**
- ⑦ **B Corps**
- ⑧ **The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**
- ⑨ **Workers' Action Centre**
- ⑩ **Prosper Canada**

1 VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CANADA

Cities Reducing Poverty

Vibrant Communities Canada – Cities Reducing Poverty (VCC-CRP) is a collective impact movement of more than 56 cities, towns and regions, representing over 170 communities in Canada, that aims to reduce poverty through aligned poverty reduction strategies at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. VCC-CRP develops and supports learning communities to help people collaborate and co-generate knowledge to solve complex community challenges.

In addition to hosting an annual poverty reduction summit, VCC-CRP offers opportunities for online learning and networking throughout the year, including webinars, communities of practice, access to research and best practices, blogs by thought leaders from around the country, and access to a monthly e-newsletter on the latest news and developments from across Canada.

www.vibrantcanada.ca

2 TAMARACK INSTITUTE

Building a connected force for community change

Tamarack Institute works with business, government, non-profit, and community leaders to advance positive community change. The Institute teaches and writes about collective impact, community engagement, collaborative leadership, community innovation, and evaluating community impact, turning theory into action by connecting people — through networks, and working one-on-one with organizations to help advance specific agendas.

Communities, Deepening Community advances community change by exploring programs, policies and practices that strengthen neighbourhoods and enhance social capital.

Tamarack's website offers the latest thinking, resources, and interactive online practices to help leaders and practitioners grow their knowledge, expand their networks, and inspire innovation and collaboration.

Tamarack works in two practice areas to advance community change. In addition to Vibrant

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

3

LIVING WAGE CANADA*Wages that adequately reflect the cost of living*

Living Wage Canada is a web portal that facilitates learning and information-sharing among local communities to help build a national Living Wage movement. These communities advocate for families to earn an income sufficient to afford basic necessities of life, so they can live with dignity and participate as active citizens in our society.

The Living Wage Canada website includes a business case for living wage, information on launching a campaign, the Canadian Living Wage Framework (methodology for calculating a Living Wage), strategies for recognizing employers who commit to a living wage policy, and a listing of Living Wage communities nationwide.

www.livingwagecanada.ca

4

MAYTREE*Poverty. Rights. Change.*

Maytree is committed to advancing systemic solutions to poverty and strengthening civic communities. It believes the most enduring way to fix the systems that create poverty is to have economic and social rights safeguarded for all people living in Canada.

Maytree's work supports leaders, organizations and civic communities by

developing and sharing knowledge; strengthening learning and leading; and mobilizing action to further social and economic rights. Its website includes links to training and networking opportunities, and policy solutions and insights.

www.maytree.com

5 NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

These are campaigns that work to reduce poverty in Canada through a variety of approaches and perspectives. They all offer useful research and resources that add value to poverty reduction work.

Campaign 2000
www.campaign2000.ca

Canada Without Poverty
www.cwp-csp.ca

Citizens for Public Justice
www.cpj.ca

Dignity for All
www.dignityforall.ca

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
www.caeh.ca

6 FOUNDATIONS

United Way Centraide

More than 100 United Way Centraide offices across Canada work in local communities to meet immediate needs and create lasting change by investing in long-term solutions to our country's most pressing social issues.

By strategically investing over \$500 million each year in three key areas — moving people from poverty to possibility, helping kids be all they can be, and building strong and healthy communities — United Way Centraide creates opportunities for a better life for all Canadians. United Way Centraide as well as its local members work closely with corporate leaders and with employee groups to foster community change.

www.unitedway.ca

Philanthropic Foundations Canada

Philanthropic Foundations Canada (PFC) is a national association of more than 130 grantmaking foundations, charitable organizations, and corporate giving programs which promote the growth and development of effective and responsible private philanthropy in Canada through the provision of membership services, resources, and advocacy. The PFC website includes links to members and research on Canadian foundations and giving trends.

www.pfc.ca

6 FOUNDATIONS

Community Foundations of Canada

Community Foundations of Canada is a Canadian movement for community vitality with 191 local member foundations across the country. Together, they form a national network to help Canadians invest in building strong and resilient places to live, work, and play.

Vital Signs is a national initiative that leverages local knowledge to measure the vitality of communities and support action towards improving the collective quality of life. It emphasizes a local approach to poverty prevention and reduction that encourages the alignment of donor engagement and grantmaking with community needs and priorities.

Community foundations play many roles to support poverty prevention and reduction in their communities, including convening poverty reduction roundtables.

www.communityfoundations.ca

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is a leading supporter of poverty reduction and a catalyst for innovation that strengthens communities and improves lives. The Foundation's current focus areas are Cities for People, Sustainable Food Systems, WellAhead (integrating social and emotional wellbeing into K-12 education), Indigenous-Focused Philanthropy, and RECODE (supporting social innovation in post-secondary education).

The Foundation's Solutions Finance strategy is an integrated approach to deploying financial capital and adapting financial models to foster positive change. The Innoweave program offers training and coaching in new approaches to help charities and non-profits increase their effectiveness.

The Foundation's website includes links to research and current and previous initiatives, including a searchable grants database and application criteria for grants.

www.mcconnellfoundation.ca

7

B CORPS*Socially and environmentally certified corporations*

B Corps are for-profit companies that achieve certification by meeting rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, legal accountability, and public transparency. The B Corps concept was built on the simple fact that business impacts and serves more than just shareholders – that it has an equal responsibility to the community and to the planet.

B Corp certification to businesses is analogous to what Fair Trade certification is to coffee. B Corps work together to redefine success in business,

using the power of markets to solve social and environmental problems. Collectively, they lead a growing global movement of people using business as a force for good to create shared and durable prosperity for all.

The B Corps website includes news, videos, a job board, details on how to become certified, and a mapping feature to find a B Corp near you.

www.bcorporation.net

8

THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES*For a just and sustainable Canada***The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**

(CCPA) is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, economic and environmental justice. Founded in 1980, CCPA is one of Canada's leading progressive voices in public policy debates.

The Centre works with top-notch researchers to deliver peer-reviewed research and analysis that shed light on key issues facing Canada. It debunks myths and generates concrete and compelling solutions that support policymakers, activists,

business leaders, and Canadians at large to make informed decisions and press for social change.

CCPA's projects and initiatives include an Alternative Federal Budget, The Growing Gap, Labour Matters, and Making Women Count. Their website includes research, commentaries, fact sheets, and infographics relating to economy, poverty, health care, and education.

www.policyalternatives.ca

9

WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE

Organizing for fair employment

The **Workers' Action Centre** (WAC) is a worker-based organization committed to improving the lives and working conditions of people in low-wage and precarious employment. Focused on Ontario, WAC is committed to workplace fairness and dignity and works to educate employees to know their rights, and improve wages and working conditions.

Its website includes an overview of decent work issues and recommendations, employment action guides, and fact sheets on human rights and employment standards.

www.workersactioncentre.org

10

PROSPER CANADA

Financial empowerment

Prosper Canada is a national charity dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for Canadians living in poverty through program and policy innovation. As Canada's leading champion of financial empowerment, Prosper Canada works with partners in all sectors to develop financial policies, programs and resources that transform lives and foster prosperity of all Canadians.

The Prosper Canada Centre for Financial Literacy works in partnership to improve the financial knowledge and well-being of vulnerable Canadians by expanding access to quality financial information, education, and counselling. Their website includes access to publications, research, tools, and resources to support delivery of financial support programs.

www.prospercanada.org

SECTION 5



10 WAYS TO GET STARTED

Here are 10 ways you can get started on your path to reducing poverty in your community

1 REFLECT ON YOUR BUSINESS'S OWN POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Poverty reduction work starts within your own business. When you find ways to align your personal and business values with your recruitment, hiring and employment practices, you can support the well-being of both your enterprise and your employees.

2 REFLECT ON YOUR INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

What knowledge, skills, areas of expertise, networks and resources do you have? How do you currently invest in your community, and how could that be enhanced or expanded? Reflecting on these questions may inspire ways for you to draw on your individual talents to reduce poverty.

3 SEEK LEADERSHIP FROM A LOCAL BUSINESS CHAMPION

Do you know a local business leader who role-models socially responsible workplace and/or community values? Connecting with that person may provide the inspiration you are looking for with respect to how you can get involved and add value.

4 CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL POVERTY REDUCTION ROUNDTABLE

Your city or community most likely has a multi-sectoral poverty reduction roundtable or committee. Lending your business perspective to such a table can hugely strengthen and diversify local poverty reduction work.

5 BUILD ON LOCAL WORK THAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE

Cities and communities across the country are doing excellent work in reducing poverty. Building an understanding of what is already being done may help you funnel your energy and efforts in a way that is both meaningful to you and that best supports impactful poverty reduction work in your community.

6 ENGAGE WITH AND INVOLVE PEOPLE WHO HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED POVERTY

Poverty reduction practitioners commonly ascribe to the statement: “Nothing about us, without us.” Meaningfully engaging people who know what poverty is like, first-hand, brings wisdom, authenticity, and accountability to poverty reduction efforts.

7 ESTABLISH GOALS

Dream big! While you may be working on a small-scale initiative, setting ambitious goals can inspire yourself and others to invest the time and resources you need to make meaningful gains in your poverty reduction work.

8 MEASURE YOUR IMPACT

Recognizing the difference you are making, and aligning how you measure your success with your community's broader efforts, will help you to better understand your own contribution as well as the community's overall impact on reducing poverty.

9 SHARE THE GREAT WORK YOU ARE DOING

Sharing stories of your poverty reduction work with your customers, clients, co-workers, families, and colleagues can be incredibly powerful and motivating. Informal conversations, presentations, newsletters, and social and print media are great ways to raise awareness of local poverty and inspire others to get involved.

10 JOIN VIBRANT COMMUNITIES - CITIES REDUCING POVERTY

The Cities Reducing Poverty learning community supports more than 56 cities, towns and regions that represent over 170 communities across the country, who come together to share ideas, strategies, resources, and data. Join now to benefit from this collaborative network. Learn more at www.vibrantcanada.ca.

WALKING TOGETHER TOWARD A BETTER TOMORROW

Mark Holmgren

Director, Vibrant Communities, Tamarack Institute

All of us are many things, and have many interests and abilities. In addition to the work I have done and will continue to do to put an end to poverty, I am also a writer and an artist who is often inspired by stories and images.

“Walking together” represents a powerful image for me — and I hope for you, too. My love of that image is rooted in my recognition of the power and influence of social movements.

So many social movements were about people walking together towards their vision of a better tomorrow. Images of thousands of people walking with Martin Luther King, Jr., or joining together to walk for peace, or to celebrate women or Indigenous people — these images inspire and encourage us all to come together to act on common aspirations.

Whatever it is that you believe or have faith in, we are not here to be alone. We are not just here for ourselves. In the spirit of Nelson Mandela, each of us can only truly be a person with other persons; it is the act of being together that shapes our humanity.

This understanding is at the root of community. Being human together is what defines us and offers to each one of us the possibility to change, help, create and, when necessary, deconstruct what is blocking our journey together.

This book is one expression of many about how we need one another to overcome poverty and the human suffering it causes. It speaks of the incredible and powerful contributions that are ours to make when we come together as partners.

Sometimes we divide up our humanity into pieces or segments. We see our work to be confined in a sector or a profession and sometimes, if not often, such divisions polarize us. We see tensions emerge between business and non-profit leaders; we see tensions between political parties; and, people’s religions become antagonistic toward one another.

While we cannot be of one mind about everything, all of us want to belong to one another, to be included in life and its many manifestations. I suggest we all share a desire to be included in addressing social malaise and in efforts to create communities, and systems, and decisions that reflect our respective commitment to building and sustaining a better tomorrow.

While this book is focused on business engagement in poverty reduction, it is about much more than that. It is about being human together and figuring out how we can walk together.

THE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES STORY

The Tamarack Institute leads an area of practice called Vibrant Communities Canada, which has been building a pan-Canadian network of connected cities with local poverty reduction strategies since 2002.

In our first decade, we developed the technology and ideas around Vibrant Communities and place-based poverty reduction with 13 Trail Builder communities and three national sponsors. We worked with leaders from business, government, the voluntary sector, and citizens living in poverty, and in turn, effectively reduced poverty for more than 202,000 Canadians.

Several books have been written to document this period of learning, including *Opportunities 2000*, *Creating Vibrant Communities*, *Cities Reducing Poverty* and *Evaluating Vibrant Communities*. All of these can be previewed or downloaded at: www.vibrantcommunities.ca.

The local efforts of Vibrant Communities across Canada have been bolstered by the leadership of provincial and territorial governments as they adopt or renew their own poverty reduction strategies, as well as the current federal government's mandate to develop a Canadian poverty reduction strategy.

Today, we are well on our way toward meeting our goal of connecting 100 cities, towns, and regions that are partnering with Vibrant Communities to advance the work of Cities Reducing Poverty. For a complete look at our current membership visit: <http://vibrantcanada.ca/reduce-poverty>.

"As a result of Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (CAPRA) membership in Cities Reducing Poverty, we feel much more connected to a national body of communities working on innovative initiatives to reduce poverty... [which] inspires our poverty reduction efforts locally and increases CAPRA's credibility in our community."

– Dianna Souveny, City of Red Deer/Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance, AB

"Membership in Cities Reducing Poverty should be a foregone conclusion for agencies or community organizations committed to poverty reduction in Canada. One reason I say this is because we get more from our membership in terms of coaching or conference financial support than our membership actually costs. This is to say nothing of the professional support we get from the Vibrant Communities team through network development, informative webinars, and resources. The value of being a member is very apparent to us because we benefit so much from it. So I'd say do it!"

– Alex Henderson, Vibrant Communities Charlotte County, NB

HOW WE WORK AND THE BENEFITS OF JOINING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CANADA - CITIES REDUCING POVERTY

The Vibrant Communities Canada - Cities Reducing Poverty network is a growing collective impact movement of 56 member cities or regions, working toward becoming a network of 100 connected cities with local poverty reduction strategies. Together, we aim to reduce poverty through local interventions at the individual and household levels and by policy and systems change interventions.

Vibrant Communities Canada offers Cities Reducing Poverty members access to:

- Tools and resources through an interactive website, online and face-to-face seminars, regular virtual community of practice calls, and workshops;
- A Game Changer approach to poverty reduction strategy and evaluation;
- Professional coaching opportunities;
- Resource development assistance;
- Policy tools; and
- An annual in-person gathering.

Each year more communities join the Cities Reducing Poverty network, helping to strengthen our collective learning and national impact.

Please join. Together, we are better.

www.vibrantcommunities.ca



NOTES

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NOTES

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This book is about what can happen when businesses large and small are engaged in reducing poverty. It contains inspiring accounts of how business leaders and their colleagues are having success in improving lives and community conditions.

If you are a business leader, a poverty reduction practitioner, a community activist, or a concerned citizen, this guide was written for you. It was written to both acknowledge and inspire the thinking and work of businesses across our country, and to remind all of us of how critical business involvement in poverty reduction truly is.

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