



RESPONDING TO COVID-19

CITIES REDUCING POVERTY

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CITIES REDUCING POVERTY | CITIES DEEPENING COMMUNITY
Vibrant Communities

 TAMARACK
INSTITUTE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Through the COVID-19 crisis, Vibrant Communities - Cities Reducing Poverty (VC-CRP) has responded to meet urgent community needs through a variety of mechanisms and partnerships. Our 81 members, representing 328 communities, have demonstrated creativity, commitment, and compassion as they support their communities' most vulnerable.

CRP members are providing food and housing, supporting local businesses, improving access to transportation, expanding financial empowerment services, and fostering health and education. They are streamlining service delivery, coordinating information sharing, enhancing multi-sectoral partnerships, and initiating emergency response action teams. They are also creating advocacy opportunities for fellow members to engage in key policy proposals such as Universal Basic Income.

Through 60 stories of innovation and resilience, this report provides a point-in-time snapshot of how CRP member communities are responding to COVID-19 across Canada and the USA. It was written to acknowledge the innovative efforts of CRP member communities, and to provide members with fresh ideas and insights that they can use to build resilience and strengthen their own responses.

OVERVIEW OF HOW CRP MEMBERS ARE RESPONDING



Examples of Program Adaptations and Innovations

- Expanding food access and distribution
- Finding housing and safe shelter for vulnerable populations
- Supporting local businesses and non-profits
- Providing free transportation
- Expanding income supports and financial empowerment programs
- Supporting physical and mental health
- Adapting education and early childhood development services

Coordinating Service Delivery and Sharing Information

- Supporting expansion and adaptation of services that provide food, shelter, transportation, education, financial empowerment and mental health supports.
- Developing websites, infographics, fact sheets, and social media posts to share information about services and supports available, including emergency benefits.
- Acting as an information conduit from the province/territory to the community and vice versa, helping agencies adhere to public health regulations and to inform the government on how to adapt policies and resources to address gaps in support.

Supporting Vulnerable Populations During Isolation

Members are offering wellness checks for seniors, providing low-income families with access to internet and technology to stay connected, expanding capacity, opening up public and private spaces for shelter and self-isolation, and connecting volunteers with isolated individuals in need of support.

Mobilizing Funds for Local Response Efforts

Local, municipal and provincial governments are diverting funds and launching fundraising campaigns to support initiatives that urgently need funding to enhance and adapt their operations. This includes fundraising campaigns for food banks, utility deferrals and rent banks.

Engaging in Advocacy Campaigns

Member communities are identifying gaps in policies and supports, and are advocating to higher levels of government for policy changes including universal basic income, paid sick days, increases to social assistance, payday lending regulations, and bans on evictions.

CONCLUSION

The ability of CRP members to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 has been evident. While the crisis has exacerbated social and economic inequalities, it has also built momentum for collaboration. CRP's multi-sectoral poverty reduction roundtables from across Canada and the USA have partnered across sectors to adapt programming and drive policy and system change in a way that ensures that nobody gets left behind.

As the CRP network's focus shifts from emergency response to social recovery, our team remains committed to creating space for members to connect and to learn from each other. We would like to acknowledge each of our members that took the time to share your stories of innovation and resilience with us.

Access the [full report](#) to learn about the CRP member responses to COVID-19.