



# GUIDE | DEVELOPING A COMMON AGENDA FOR A POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN

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This guide will help groups to collaboratively establish the foundations for a poverty reduction plan by developing a community-wide common agenda. It presents a proven, appreciative inquiry approach that Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing poverty has developed through coaching engagements with a diverse range of cities and communities across Canada and beyond.

## USING THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU:

- Differentiate between a strategic plan and a common agenda
- Understand the purposes and benefits of an appreciative inquiry approach
- Visualize a 12-month roadmap to developing a common agenda
- Recognize how Cities Reducing Poverty can support your efforts

## OVERVIEW

While municipalities and community organizations traditionally create *strategic plans*, this guide proposes a collaborative approach to developing a *common agenda*. This [appreciative inquiry](#) approach engages the whole community in identifying key issues and root causes and brings people together to propose collaborative solutions. The strength of this approach stems from its process, which builds on existing community assets and talents, and where listening and dialogue build excitement, engagement for a shared future, and commitment to change. It sets a community up so that by the time their plan is launched, it is already being implemented by a diverse group of partners.

## CITIES REDUCING POVERTY (CRP) MEMBERSHIP

CRP membership includes access to Tamarack's Expert Coaching Centre where members can obtain intensive support towards developing a common agenda and poverty reduction plan.

For more information:

- Review the [2020 CRP membership package](#)
- Learn more about [Expert Coaching](#)
- Read a [success story](#) from Central Iowa
- Contact Alison Homer at [alison@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:alison@tamarackcommunity.ca)

*This guide was written for municipalities and communities that plan to apply to the Government of BC's [Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program](#) to develop or renew a poverty reduction plan. For additional information, tools and resources to support these applications, see **Appendices I, II and III**.*

## WHY A COMMUNITY-WIDE COMMON AGENDA?

Poverty reduction practitioners recognize that poverty is complex in nature and that no one sector or organization can solve it alone. To move the needle, we must engage individuals and organizations from across all sectors – public, private, non-profit and citizens. As diverse partners bring varied perspectives, motivations and aspirations to the work, they may not all agree with or readily undertake a vision that was developed without them.

STRATEGIC PLAN	COMMUNITY-WIDE COMMON AGENDA
Focus is on writing a plan	Focus is on building a common commitment
Involves 'experts'	Involves everyone who cares
Planning mentality	Arousing and following curiosity
Planning quickly	Taking the time for broad engagement

The common agenda approach detailed in this guide encourages a strategic and collaborative approach to developing a common vision that embeds a comprehensive community engagement process and, builds buy-in from its onset. This foundational engagement work empowers partners to co-identify priority areas, undertake quick wins, and set themselves up for the development of a common agenda that all parties agree to.

A common agenda has three purposes:

1. To serve as the outcome of a shared vision that was derived from broad-ranging consultations and research that mobilizes communities to change. This vision is representative of what partners have learned throughout the community's engagement process.
2. To form a common understanding and rationale for the key goals and strategies that a network of partners has identified and chosen to work on together.
3. To serve as a roadmap for how partners have agreed to work together that includes a budget and a description of governance structure.

Benefits of a common agenda approach include that:

- It prioritizes community engagement and effectively mobilizes communities to realize change.
- It allows us to think, learn and plan in partnership with four key sectors (government, business, non-profit and lived/living experience), where each one's voice is heard equally.
- It provides a systematic way of recognizing who is not at the table and ensures they are invited in.
- It brings individual and organizational assets and talents together to a space where the sum is greater than its parts.

- It allows us to release old patterns, and accept new approaches and ideas.
- It embraces emergence, which fosters exploration and creativity.

## A 12-MONTH ROADMAP TO DEVELOPING A COMMON AGENDA

Key Milestones by Month											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Convening a Core Team and Taking Stock	Planning Your Top 100 Event		Hosting Your Top 100 Event	Revising Your Governance Structure and Engaging the Whole Community				Writing Your Plan	The Big Event: Launching Your Plan		

## MILESTONES AND ACTIVITIES

### 1. Convening a Core Team and Taking Stock

#### a. Convening a Core Leadership Team

A common agenda approach to developing a community-wide poverty reduction plan is usually driven by an initial core leadership team that is comprised of three to five motivated individuals. This group commits to listening and learning together and creating a short-term (3-month) workplan that includes:

- Recognizing which of the four key sectors (government, business, non-profit and people with lived/living experience) are not yet represented or are under-represented at the table, and creating a plan for inviting them in.
- An agreed-upon approach for working together (e.g. adoption of a collective impact model with community engagement identified as a top priority).
- Identifying key milestones and activities leading up to a Top 100 event.
- Identifying required financial resources for the first year and a plan to acquire needed funds.

#### b. Taking Stock: Reflecting on Four Pre-Conditions for Success

The core leadership team should reflect on the following four pre-conditions for the success of a common agenda approach. Where conditions are not met, the group should discuss and act on steps needed to meet them.

- A strong history of collaboration in the community (e.g. Identify examples where community collaboration has worked well).
- Poverty reduction is a priority for the community (e.g. Identify examples where the community has demonstrated will and understanding of the need to tackle this issue).

- iii. Community leaders are supportive. (e.g. List which key government, business, non-profit and people with lived/living experience would support a community poverty reduction plan).
- iv. Funders are engaged (e.g. List who you would approach for support).

## 2. Planning Your Top 100 event

The core leadership team plans for a Top 100 event. On a 12-month timeline, this gathering should be held around 4-months into the collaborative process. This event introduces the common agenda approach and engages community leaders across sectors in 1.5 days of structured learning, listening, discussing, and brainstorming around poverty and poverty reduction.

To prepare, the core leadership team identifies community influencers across each of the four key sectors, by undertaking the [Top 100 Partners Exercise](#). These influencers will form the invitation list for the event. The core leadership team then selects one known and respected community leader from each of the four key sectors to invite to serve as a signatory to the event invitation.

The core leadership team prepares for three event presentations by: gathering data that paints the picture of local poverty; identifying examples of previous successful collaborative efforts in the community; and, preparing an introduction to the common agenda approach, which should include case studies of where it has proven effective in poverty reduction efforts in other communities.

The Top 100 event takes place over one evening and one full day. On Day 1, the group learns together via the above three presentations. On the morning of Day 2, small groups work through a series of questions and exercises that address: *What is happening in the community right now?*; *What is the change we want to see?*; and *What can we do together?*. On the afternoon of Day 2, attendees brainstorm solutions at stations themed by previously-identified focus areas.

At the close of the event, participants complete commitment forms to denote their interest in being part of the continued conversation. This commitment could range from joining the communications database to taking on one or more leadership roles as part of a revised Leadership Roundtable, the Data Team, the Listening Team, the Communications Team and/or some Action Teams.

Following the event, a report is shared back with participants that communicates the event's outcomes and continues to build on the energy and momentum that it created.

## 3. Revising Your Governance Structure and Engaging the Whole Community

The Top 100 event evokes a huge amount of excitement and energy beyond the core leadership team, and marks the completion of the group's first major consultation. Now is the time to keep the momentum going! Following the event, the governance structure of the initiative is revised and expanded. Each team should have representation across each of the four key sectors, and should embrace emergence, exploration, and creativity in this new and collective way of working together. Revised teams include:

### Focus areas that align with BC's Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program:

- Housing
- Education and training
- Income supports
- Families, children & youth
- Employment
- Social supports
- Mental health & addictions
- Food security
- Transportation
- Access to health care

- A *Leadership Roundtable*, which stems from the original Leadership Team, serves as the steering committee for the initiative, and engages in strategic partnerships with funders and donors. This team produces a strategy and timeline for the launch of the plan that maps out required actions, and ensures that the community-wide common agenda and community plan are ready to launch at The Big Event.
- A *Data Team* collects and analyzes quantitative data, and identifies with partners what local data is being collected, what is being used to make decisions, and what is missing. This team will recommend measures, indicators and thresholds to be included in the community plan.
- A *Listening Team* works with each Action Team to lead a broad range of additional local community and stakeholder engagement opportunities that deeply engage partners, donors, and citizens to share feedback on your initial findings and that ensure that all voices are heard.
- A *Communications Team* develops a community and stakeholder engagement strategy that continually grows a database of supporters, and reports back to the community regularly on the initiative's progress and successes.
- *Action Teams* are formed around a list of focus areas that was revised at the Top 100 event. Each team is comprised of all four sectors and takes on an 8-month mandate to tackle quick wins that involve all and can be completed by the time of the Big Event. One co-chair from each Action Team joins the Leadership Roundtable to report back on outcomes, capture learning to take back to their own team, and inform the community plan.

#### 4. Writing your Plan

The common agenda approach culminates in the writing of a community plan which will be launched at the Big Event. Boiling down the wealth of data, stories, and information gathered over the better half of a year, across all teams, and across a wealth of engagement opportunities, is no small task. A small number of Leadership Roundtable members may volunteer to take the lead on this process.

The completed Community Plan should include:

- **What We Heard report (Listening Team):** Ideas, stories and learning from the engagement period.
- **What We Heard report (Data Team):** What data is being used locally, what is missing, and recommendations for definitions, indicators, thresholds, and shared measurement opportunities.
- **Common Agenda:** Agreement on the big change you want to see (e.g. a common agenda articulated in one clear goal) that is reflective of a common community vision.
- **Organizing for Success:** Agreement on a long-term governance structure, including which teams will be continued, adapted, or discontinued, and how they will work together (e.g. to apply the five conditions of collective impact including the backbone role).

#### A Plan Outline:

- Executive Summary
- Listing of all partners
- How the plan was developed
- What we Heard (Listening team)
- What we Heard (Data team)
- Common Agenda
- Organizing for success
- Priority areas
- Measuring impact
- Budget and fundraising plan
- Call to action
- Appendices

- **Priority Areas:** What strategic areas you will focus on, including sub-goals in each priority area. These should stem from community priorities, break the mold of what work was already being done, and embed new approaches and strategies.
- **Measuring Impact:** Which measures, indicators and thresholds you will use to track and report on outputs, outcomes and impact.
- **Budget:** A proposed budget with fundraising plan, stemming from partners and donors that have been engaged throughout the engagement process.
- **Call-to-action:** A plan to strengthen partnerships, to build momentum, and to grow community, stakeholder, and funder engagement.

Once compiled, the draft plan should be shared first with the Leadership Roundtable, then across the other teams. This offers an opportunity for influencers to vet and strengthen the plan, identify any gaps or inaccuracies, and make recommendations. This will ensure that the final product is reflective of what was learned across all teams over the course of the engagement process.

### 5. The Big Event: Launching your Plan

The Big Event is the culmination of 12 months of community-wide engagement where the community plan is launched! This event creates an opportunity to formalize partnerships and donor commitments, and for stakeholders that have been engaged over the last year to formally sign onto the plan. A new *Implementation Roundtable* is launched to take the place of the Leadership Roundtable. *Implementation Teams* take the place of Action Teams.

It is critical for communities to smoothly carry momentum from the launch of the plan through its implementation. Implementation Roundtable and Team members should be rested and ready to hit the ground running. Where existing team members choose to retain leadership roles, the Big Event provides them with an opportunity to refresh, re-energize, and renew their commitment as part of this new phase. While core team members can be identified in advance of the event, seats should be kept available for emerging influencers to take on leadership roles that drive implementation forward.

Key Resources for the Common Agenda Approach to Developing a Community Plan	CRP Expert Coaching Resources <i>(contact Alison to access)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication   <a href="#">How to Develop a Common Agenda for a Collective Impact</a></li> <li>• Case Study   <a href="#">Central Iowa's OpportUNITY Plan</a></li> <li>• Guide   <a href="#">Foundation for Building a Common Agenda</a></li> <li>• Tool   <a href="#">Top 100 Partners Exercise</a></li> <li>• Tool   <a href="#">Developing Poverty Reduction Timelines</a></li> <li>• Event Report – <a href="#">Vibrant Revelstoke's Top 100</a></li> <li>• Publication   <a href="#">Compendium of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Frameworks</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a Community Plan Community of Practice (CoP) 3-Part Series: Webinar Recordings, PowerPoints and Resources</li> <li>• Event Templates – Top 100 &amp; The Big Event: Agendas, Letters of Invitation, and Presentations</li> <li>• Compendium of CRP members' poverty reduction plans</li> <li>• Book   Community Conversations</li> </ul>

## WORKSHEET: FIRST STEPS TOWARDS DEVELOPING A COMMON AGENDA

**Core Leadership Team:** *Who will you bring together to form a core leadership team, how will you work together, and how will you meet resource requirements?*

1. Which three to five motivated partners will come together to form a core leadership team (e.g. who genuinely cares about the issue, is invested in a collaborative approach, brings influence to the work, and is able to volunteer the time required to build the initiative)?
2. Which of the four key sectors (government, business, non-profit and people with lived/living experience) are not yet represented? How will you bring them in?
3. In what ways will the group agree to work together?
4. What financial resources will be required for the first year? How will you meet them?

**Taking Stock:** *To what extent are each of the pre-conditions for success of a common agenda met? What steps are needed in order for your community to meet them?*

1. A strong history of collaboration in our community. Where has collaboration worked well?
2. Poverty reduction is a priority for the community. What are some examples of where the community has demonstrated will and understanding of the need to tackle this issue?
3. Community leaders are supportive. Which key government, business, non-profit and people with lived/living experience would support a community poverty reduction plan?
4. Funders are engaged. Who will you approach for support?

**What's next?** Contact Alison at [alison@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:alison@tamarackcommunity.ca) to access [Cities Reducing Poverty membership](#), Tamarack's [Expert Coaching Centre](#), and to start planning your Top 100 Event.

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Canada

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

## APPENDIX I – BC’S POVERTY REDUCTION PLANNING & ACTION PROGRAM

The Government of British Columbia’s Poverty Reduction Planning and Action program will provide \$5M over three years to support local governments to reduce poverty at the local level. The program was developed based on a recognition that local governments are crucial partners that see the impact of poverty and play a central role in developing collaborative local solutions.

Stream 1 of the Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program supports communities to develop or update poverty reduction plans that address one or more of the six priority action areas identified in [TogetherBC](#), BC’s 2019 Poverty Reduction Strategy (Housing; Education and Training; Income supports; Families, Children & Youth; Employment; Social supports), and that support the strategy’s principles of affordability, opportunity, reconciliation, and social inclusion.

### Stream 1 At-a-Glance

- ☑ **Application Deadline:** February 28, 2020. Applicants will be notified within 60 days of the deadline.
- ☑ **Budget:** Up to \$25,000 per municipality or \$150,000 per regional district. No matching required. Eligible expenses include honoraria for people with lived/living experience; consultant costs, staff and administration costs; and public information costs.
- ☑ **Timeline:** Projects must be completed within one year from the date of grant approval.
- ☑ **Applicants:** Local governments (municipalities and regional districts). Community-based initiatives must obtain a Council or Board resolution that indicates local government support for proposed activities and their willingness to manage the grant (e.g. fiscal management and reporting).
- ☑ **Eligible plans and policies:** Official Community Plans or community or neighbourhood plans; zoning and other policies; development permit requirements; emergency response, evacuation and/or emergency support services plans; food security and food systems planning; community planning processes related to social determinants of health (e.g. affordable housing, homelessness, etc.).
- ☑ **Engagement:** Applications should demonstrate direct participation of people with lived/living experience of poverty, as well as partnerships and demonstrated community support from community-based poverty reduction organizations, people with lived/living experience of poverty, businesses, local First Nations and/or Indigenous organizations.
- ☑ **Anticipated outcomes and impact:** Applications should include specific deliverables (e.g. policies, practices, plans and/or documents to be developed). They should demonstrate how the project will be evaluated, including what specific performance measures and/or benchmarks will be applied to track and report on specific intended outcomes and impacts, and how these will in turn help reduce poverty at the local level.
- ☑ **Application package:** Application form; detailed project budget; board resolution(s). Optional: Up to three letters of support as evidence of partnership or collaborations with community-based poverty reduction organizations, people with lived/living experience of poverty, businesses, local First Nations and/or Indigenous organizations.
- ☑ **Review of applications:** Scoring considerations include: Alignment with the intent and objectives of the program; anticipated outcomes, direct participation of people with lived/living experience of poverty; partnerships and demonstrated community support; and cost-effectiveness.

### Key resources:

- [News Release: Province funds local government poverty reduction strategies](#)
- [UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program grants](#)
  - [Program & Application Guide](#)
  - [Stream 1: Poverty Reduction Plans & Assessments Application Form](#)
  - UBCM contact – Sasha Pryn: [lgps@ubcm.ca](mailto:lgps@ubcm.ca) | (250) 952-9177



## APPENDIX II – BUDGET EXAMPLE: BC'S POVERTY REDUCTION PLANNING & ACTION PROGRAM

Applications to Stream I of the Government of BC's Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program must demonstrate cost-effectiveness. Local governments are eligible to apply for up to \$25,000 per municipality or \$150,000 per regional district.

The following expenditures are eligible:

- Honoraria for community members that are direct participants in funded activities and who have lived/living (LE) experience of poverty
- Consultant costs
- Incremental staff and administration costs
- Public information costs

The following expenditures are ineligible (see the [Applicant Guide](#) for a complete list)

- Regular salaries of applicant staff or partners
- Routine or ongoing operating costs (e.g. heating and lighting; security; telephone; internet)
- Existing programs with established, designated funding from other partners
- Fundraising

Example Budget: Stream 1: Developing a Community Plan	
<b>Coordination – Coordinator and backbone support</b>	
Coordinator (5 hour/week @ \$25/hour X 39 weeks [months 4-12])	\$4875
<b>Meetings</b>	
Leadership Roundtable meeting room rental (\$/meeting X 9 meetings [months 4-12])	\$0 (in-kind)
Leadership Roundtable member time (\$/meeting X 9 meetings)	\$0 (in-kind)
Data, Listening, Communications and Action teams meeting room rental and member time	\$0 (in-kind)
Honoraria (10 people with lived experience @ \$30/meeting X 9 meetings) *50% in-kind	\$1350
Transportation, childcare, and other costs to support people with LE	\$0 (in-kind)
<b>Events – Top 100 Event and The Big Event</b>	
Facility and equipment rental (\$730/day X 2.5 days)	\$1825
Facilitation including travel/accommodation expenses (\$320/day X 2.5 days)	\$800
Snacks and refreshments (100 people @ \$40/day X 2.5 days) *50% in-kind	\$5000
Honoraria (25 participants with lived/living experience @ \$120/day X 2.5 days)	\$7500
Transportation, childcare, and other costs to support people with LE	\$0 (in-kind)
Event Participant time (100 people @ \$/hour X 2.5 days)	\$0 (in-kind)
Graphic design, typesetting and printing	\$500
<b>Capacity Building and Training</b>	
<a href="#">2020 Cities Reducing Poverty membership</a> (includes Expert Coaching and two complimentary seats to Tamarack's annual poverty reduction summit) (\$1500 / year)	\$1500
Travel – Annual poverty reduction summit (flight and parking for 2 people) *50% in-kind	\$700
Accommodation – Annual poverty reduction summit (1 shared room X \$150 X 3 nights)	\$450
<b>Community Engagement Costs</b>	
Room and equipment rentals, snacks and refreshments, and prizes	\$0 (in-kind)
Data sourcing, purchasing, packaging, publishing and printing	\$500
Honoraria, transportation, childcare, and other costs to support people with LE	\$0 (in-kind)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>

## APPENDIX III – RESOURCE COMPENDIUM: BC’S POVERTY REDUCTION PLANNING & ACTION PROGRAM

Theme	Tamarack Resources	CRP Member Resources (contact <a href="#">Alison</a> to access)
<b>Making the Case and Engaging Local Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">10 – A Guide for Cities Reducing Poverty</a>   A concise overview of how cities are reducing poverty. Includes stories, strategies, resources, and tips for organizing a city-wide initiative</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Toolkit for Local Communities</a>   BC Poverty Reduction Coalition’s guide that supports municipal governments to develop high-impact, upstream applications for provincial poverty reduction funding</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Building Your Case for A Neighbourhood Strategy</a>   A guide for municipal staff and community groups interested in building the case for the development of a neighbourhood strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poverty Profiles, Report Cards and Infographics from the CRP network</li> <li>▪ Case Studies and Success Stories from the CRP Network</li> <li>▪ Examples of and Resources from Poverty Awareness Campaigns</li> <li>▪ Examples of Letters and Presentations to Municipal Councils</li> </ul>
<b>Multisector Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">10 – Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience</a>   A guide to support poverty-reduction groups to engage people with lived/living experience in a meaningful way</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">10 – A Guide for Businesses Reducing Poverty</a>   This book both acknowledges and inspires the thinking, work, and involvement of the businesses sector in poverty reduction</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Authentic Engagement: A Learning Journey</a>   A case study highlighting a comprehensive local community engagement plan including its pitfalls. It exemplifies how being open to the toughest feedback is amongst the most important aspects of the collective impact journey</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Turf, Trust, Co-Creation &amp; Collective Impact</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Collaborative Leadership</a>   Resource Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diversity, Equity, and Social Inclusion Plans, Policies, Guides, and Charters</li> <li>▪ First Voice Protocols</li> <li>▪ Equity in Municipal Decision-Making Resources</li> <li>▪ Guides for Creating Inclusive Cultures</li> <li>▪ Guides for Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience in Consultations and Events</li> <li>▪ Lived/Living Experience Advisory Group Resources (e.g. Terms of Reference)</li> <li>▪ Ideas for Funding Inclusion (e.g. Honoraria Policies)</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Impact Reporting: From Activities to Outcome</a>   Supporting groups to move from reporting on activities and outputs to developing an evaluation that supports them to determine whether an initiative is achieving intended results and is moving the needle</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Evaluation Impact</a>   Resource Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting to Impact 6-Module Series (Webinar Recordings, PowerPoints and Workbooks)</li> <li>▪ Examples of Progress and Impact Reports from the CRP network</li> </ul>