THRIVING FOR ALL:
Lower Columbia Poverty Reduction Plan

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Skills Centre

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Prepared by the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre
on behalf of the Poverty Reduction Planning Design Team**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This poverty reduction plan was developed for the people and organizations of the Lower Columbia Region, a cluster of communities with a population of 20,000, located in the Southwest corner of BC's West Kootenay region, close to the U.S. border.

Home to Teck Metals Ltd., one of the world's largest lead and zinc refining and smelting companies, the regional hospital and a number of outdoor recreation destination operations, it is a region in which many people thrive but is also a region in which too many do not. *Thriving for All: Lower Columbia Poverty Reduction Plan* is intended to be a roadmap for a region in which all members of the community have the opportunity receive an adequate income and to feel included in the community.

Developing a poverty reduction strategy for the Lower Columbia Region (LCR) has been a multi-stage process. The first step in the process was the development of baseline data. This was published in the report entitled ***Surviving Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region***. The report offers insight into who in our region is left out of the opportunity to thrive and feel included in the community.

In May 2017 a team of regional representatives – including a number of people currently living in poverty – worked through a facilitated Summit to develop a common understanding of key barriers for people living in poverty in the LCR. During this process a series of recommendations were developed to ensure that everyone living in the LCR thrives and feels included.

Ultimately strategies to reduce poverty and increase the opportunity to thrive fall into five themes:

• Housing;
• Food security;
• Social, heath and community services;
• Learning and Development; and
• Vibrant and inclusive economy.

The table below summarizes the findings and recommendations that have been included in the Lower Columbia Poverty Reduction Plan. Further discussion is needed on how the plan will be governed to ensure coordinated, systematic implementation. Additional resources will also be required to implement the strategies and to develop effective coordination, requiring the support of local and provincial government.

Thriving for All: Lower Columbia Poverty Reduction Plan
Building a community in which everyone is thriving and feeling included

Housing	1. Ensure the availability of data required to support affordable housing initiatives. 2. Facilitate coordination amongst organizations operating subsidized housing for low income households. 3. Develop mechanisms for low income households to access information on affordable housing options. 4. Increase the number of subsidized rental housing options for low income households. 5. Advocate for support by government to develop and operate affordable housing.
Food Security	1. Promote the development of community gardens to support poverty reduction. 2. Promote opportunities for low income households to earn livelihoods through the production and sale of food and food related products. 3. Promote opportunities for low income households to prepare nutritious food. 4. Encourage planning and communication amongst food security players that contributes to the reduction of poverty.
Social, Health and Community Services	1. Promote increased access to social and health services. 2. Promote barrier free access to transportation for low income households. 3. Promote barrier free access by lower income households to recreation, arts and culture.
Learning and Development	1. Improve access to learning and academic upgrading for low income individuals. 2. Improve the availability of and access to childcare. 3. Improve access to early childhood services/resources by low income families.
Vibrant and Inclusive Economy	1. Promote the living wage as a means of providing workers access to a good quality of life. 2. Promote employment of lower skilled individuals by supporting the development of workplace Essential Skills. 3. Support the development and diversification of the local economy.

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND PROCESS
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Context and Background

The Lower Columbia region is situated in the southwest corner of BC's West Kootenay region. The region consists of seven local governments (Cities of Trail and Rossland, Villages of Warfield, Montrose and Fruitvale) and Electoral Areas A and B of the Regional District Kootenay Boundary. At times, these communities work together as a region and at other times are more focused on local interests and priorities.

With a population of close to 20,000, the region's largest employer is Teck Metals Ltd. Other major employers include the Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital, Red Mountain Resorts and various forestry, financial, retail, social and education service providers. While the larger employers typically offer incomes exceeding the living wage[1], there are a considerable number of individuals and families dependent upon low wage employment, income supports or pensions. Typical of mainly smaller communities, the population of the Lower Columbia Region is older than the provincial average.

Many organizations have been involved over the years in the delivery of services for those living in poverty. A focus on developing a comprehensive poverty reduction plan, however, began in 2012 with the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre (Skills Centre) securing funding from Status of Women Canada for a project entitled Women Creating Change. Managed in collaboration with the Trail Family and Individual Resource Society (FAIR), the goal of this three year project was to address improved economic security for women, with a particular focus on lower income women. Key activities included:

- Baseline research examining the economic situation of women in the Lower Columbia Region. The findings were presented in a report entitled **_A Gender-Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity_**;
- Development of a community plan entitled **_A 2020 Vision for Women in the Lower Columbia Region_**. This plan is effectively a poverty reduction plan viewed through a gender lens;
- Calculation of the living wage for the Lower Columbia Region;
- **_PhotoVoice_**, a 7 minute video which captured stories of local women living in poverty; and
- Engagement of stakeholders through presentations to a wide range of organizations, educational programs and employers. As a result of those presentations 19 businesses and organizations became signatories to the **Lower Columbia Accord** which endorsed a series of principles related to improving economic opportunity for women.

Copies of the **_Gender Based Analysis_**, the **_Photo Voice A 2020 Vision for Women in the Lower Columbia Region_** can be found at **www.womencreatingchange.org**.

The project also involved implementation of two legacy initiatives:

- Establishment of the Stepping Out Bursary to assist women with incomes below the living wage to enroll in training or an education program that improves future opportunities for enhanced income; and
- The development of a supplementary plan to encourage the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in higher wage non-traditional employment as a means of encouraging them to explore options outside the typically lower wage service and retail sectors of the economy. This initiative led to a second Status of Women funded project

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1   The Living Wage is a standardized calculation of what is considered the minimum income necessary for a household to meet their basic needs. See the **Canadian Living Wage Framework for calculation methodology.**

known as Mining and Refining for Women. Delivered in collaboration with Teck Metals Ltd. and Bock and Associates, this 30 month project involved the development and delivery of a dynamic and highly successful mentorship model to support the retention and advancement of women in non-traditional work within the company.

Women Creating Change and the subsequent Mining and Refining for Women projects resulted in conversations within the community about poverty and gender. In the Fall of 2015, the Skills Centre and FAIR invited the Community Organizer of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to present at a meeting of representatives of 16 local organizations to learn more about efforts across the province to address poverty reduction and to explore next steps in poverty reduction planning for the region. Those in attendance included a range of social and health service providers, local government and educators. By the end of the workshop, there was unanimous support to find the resources to establish a Lower Columbia Poverty Reduction Network and to develop a plan and measures by which to gauge impact of that plan over time.

In the meantime, the Lower Columbia Region was invited by the Columbia Basin Trust to join three other communities (Revelstoke, Nelson and Cranbrook) in the Basin Region to participate in a working group on poverty reduction. Also joining this working group more recently has been the Rural Development Institute which has become a valuable resource to the communities by providing access to data and other documentation to support planning processes. This working group has led to rich conversations and relationships not only within the region but also with provincial and national organizations committed to poverty reduction.

Surviving Not Thriving: Reducing Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region Report

To initiate the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan, the Skills Centre compiled a report on indicators of poverty in the region with funding support from Teck Serve Student Internship program and advisory support from the Rural Development Institute,. The *Surviving to Thriving: Reducing Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region* report provides data on themes often reflected in poverty reduction plans in other communities including: demographics, income and employment, food security, housing, early childhood development, youth at risk, transportation and recreation.

Presentations of highlights of the report were made at local government Council meetings and to other community organizations. The data was used to reinforce awareness of the reality of poverty in our region and to engage participation in the upcoming planning process.

Surviving to Thriving Poverty Reduction Planning Summit

Recognizing the importance of community engagement in a poverty reduction planning process, the Skills Centre secured funding on behalf of the region from the Columbia Basin Trust, Teck Metals Ltd., Kootenay Savings Credit Union and Career Development Services to organize a planning summit which would incorporate the principles and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a cultural change method of studying and changing social systems, developed originally by David Cooperrider, Professor of Organizational Development at Case Western Reserve University. AI includes inquiry into the best of what already exists in a system; imagining what could be and developing the collective design of a desired and compelling future.

AI's focus is on co-creation of new ideas as opposed to problem solving and requires the wide-spread involvement of those who will ultimately implement the change. The process includes an emphasis on story-telling or narratives that stimulate new understanding and ideas and inspire the best in people and relationships. It tends to break down silos within a system and flatten hierarchy.

The AI process[2] involves four or five phases as follows:

- **Define:** the change focus and affirmative topic of the Inquiry. The affirmative topic (which subsequently becomes a question) needs to be written in a way that compels imagination and action.
- **Discovery:** discovering the best of "what is" related to the object of the inquiry; the positive core of the system. This phase involves a process of interviews with the participants intended to draw out their own "best of " stories. It's a powerful process that helps to engage the heart as well as the brain.
- **Dream:** envisioning what might be. Using a process of developing a "dream mural", this phase is intended to guide the group to create shared images of a preferred future.
- **Design:** finding innovative ways to create the future. This phase involves the development of concrete proposals based on elements of the Dream process.
- **Delivery/Destiny**: implementing and sustaining the change. In this phase, there is an emphasis on participants making self-chosen commitments to take action consistent with any design element.

The planning process was facilitated by Lynn Green, Principle of Lynn Green Consulting who has extensive experience with AI, having used it in senior leadership roles with the Vancouver School Board and the Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education. The process was guided by a Design Team made up of representatives of the Skills Centre, FAIR, Trail Mental Health, Trail Library, the Generation to Generation Society, Trail Hospice, Career Development Services, the Village of Fruitvale, Teck Metals Ltd. and the LeRoi Community Foundation.

In addition to helping with various aspects of event planning, logistics and marketing, the Design Team spent a considerable amount of time in the Define phase, honing the affirmative topic and related affirmative question, a key element of AI. That process included conducting a number of discovery interviews with key stakeholders (in particular, with people with experience living in poverty). The wording of the topic and question evolved from one that initially focused on "pathways out of poverty" to one focused on how people can "thrive and feel included", regardless of income. This shift recognizes that while a living income is important, it is only one indicator of poverty or poverty reduction.

Ultimately, the affirmative question for the inquiry process was expressed as follows: *How do we build a community in which everyone is thriving and feeling included?*

As the Design Team was gathering and processing the information and insights from these pre-Summit discovery interviews, discussions were taking place with Graphic Facilitator, Lisa Thiessen on ways she could add to the process. She created an initial set of images capturing key themes that were emerging from the interviews, and continued to do so throughout the Summit itself.

The Surviving to Thriving Summit: Creating Inclusive Communities took place over two full days: May 4th and May 17th, 2017. Summit participants included individuals representing a range of community services, local government, business and employers and people with lived experience in poverty. Close to seventy people participated in the process, fifteen of whom were people known to be *currently* living in poverty.

With a focus on the Discovery and Dream phases of the AI process on the first day, participants identified a wide range of creative possibilities, often expanding on existing strengths that would contribute to building a community in which everyone is thriving and feeling included. The process culminated in a number of teams creating *Dream Murals*, the contents of which were explained to the group as a whole.

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2   As summarized by Dr. Gervase Bushe

Immediately following that first day, the Design Team met and identified key themes or pillars which they felt emerged from the *Dream Murals* as well as overarching lenses through which to view strategies being developed. The themes identified were:

- Learning and Development;
- Transportation;
- Housing;
- Social and Health Services;
- Food Security;
- Vibrant and Inclusive Economy; and
- Recreation, Arts and Culture

The lenses identified through which to filter the plan included the following:

- ✓ "Un-otherness" (activities and resources which are inclusive of everyone, regardless of income as opposed to stigmatizing or marginalizing particular groups);
- ✓ Intergenerational;
- ✓ Lifelong learning and meaning-making spaces and opportunities;
- ✓ Accessibility;
- ✓ Regional as well as local solutions; and
- ✓ Compassionate, inclusive communities of belonging.

Summit participants repeated a common theme about the perceived lack of cohesive information regarding organizations and the services each provides. Participants expressed a desire to explore options that would see services congregated in a common space or hub. The logistics of establishing physical hubs are challenging, given the complexities of funding, facility ownership, staffing and organizational missions and history. Nonetheless, it was recommended that as opportunities emerge, efforts should be made to create hubs in which as many services as possible are co-located. In the meantime, however helping people navigate existing services has become a key focus of a Health and Social Services working group that has emerged as a result of the Summit.

Keeping these lenses in mind, on day two of the Summit participants engaged in Design activities related to each of the themes or pillars. The outcome was development of a range of strategies that would be further explored and defined following the Summit. Many of the participants committed to continuing their engagement in developing the plan and championing the changes that were envisioned. Less tangible in nature but equally important were the conversations amongst participants from different sectors of the community that resulted in increased awareness and forged new relationships.

Towards the end of the second day, representatives of a number of organizations were invited to come to hear about the emerging themes and speak to the convergence between the themes emerging from the Summit and the work of their respective organizations. This portion included representation from locally elected officials, Selkirk College, the Columbia Basin Trust, Service Canada (representing the federal Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development), Red Mountain Resorts and the West Kootenay Seniors Transportation Project.

In the months following the Summit, meetings were held with interested participants to further hone the plans developed during the large group gathering. Ultimately three of the themes (Social and Health Services, Recreation, Arts and Culture and Transportation) were clustered under the common theme of Social, Health and Community Services.

While strategies associated with each of the themes or pillars have been developed, it is important to recognize that further discussion and planning is required regarding a governance or decision-making structure which will allow each of the groups to find the means and mechanisms to work on the strategies while doing so within the context of the overarching poverty reduction plan. Additional resources will be required both to implement the strategies and to develop and maintain the governance structure.

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR THE LOWER COLUMBIA REGION

HOUSING

Access to safe, affordable housing is recognized as an essential element of poverty reduction. As one of the largest expenditures in the budget of most households, availability of appropriate housing options is a key component of breaking the dynamics that keep people in poverty.

An effective housing strategy in any community ensures the availability of options along a continuum, extending from short term, shelter options at one end through to privately owned housing at the other. Specific to poverty reduction, attention needs to be focused on emergency housing, supportive housing for various populations, subsidized rental housing and subsidized market ownership.

Key Indicators:

- For a household of two adults and two children, the estimated monthly cost of shelter is $1,169, the second highest expense[i] in the monthly budget for a household earning the living wage for the Lower Columbia Region.

- An important indicator of housing affordability is whether a household pays more than 30% of its pre-tax income on shelter. When a household pays more than 30% of its gross income on shelter it is referred to as in 'housing need'. In the LCR, close to 1,600 households (1 in 5) are in housing need of which 720 are housed in rental housing, a figure which represents 45% of the region's renters. The proportion of households in housing need increased by 3% between 2006 and 2011.[ii]

- The largest groups in housing need in this area are lone-parent families and "non-family households" with one or two unrelated residents. Of the lone-parent families, 40% are in housing need as compared to 10% of couples with children.[iii] For every lone-parent family led by a man, three are led by a woman[iv], many of whom work in low wage, traditionally female-dominated jobs such as those found in the retail, hospitality, social service and education sectors.

- By 2026, seniors will be the largest age group in the LCR, representing over 30% of all residents.[v] It is projected that by 2026, there will be 2,243 more seniors than in 2011. If we are to maintain the current average of 6.6 units per 100 seniors[vi], we will need an additional 148 units of subsidized housing for low income seniors.

- In the 2016 calendar year, the region's **Getting to Home** homelessness outreach program staff worked with 108 adult clients (with a total of 22 dependent children). Of those adult clients, 45 were housed within the same month as intake. With a tightening rental market, it is becoming more increasingly challenging to find appropriate housing for this client group.

- Use of the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) for working families earning less than $35,000 per year increased from 21 to 30 between 2011 and 2014. Over the same period, use of the Shelter Aid for Elderly Rentals (SAFER) subsidy increased from 45 to 51.[vii]

- The current age, condition and type of housing stock in the LCR has a bearing on low income households. The majority of the region's housing stock is older than the average in BC, with more than half (52%) of the dwellings built in 1960 or before as compared to 16% for the province as a whole[viii]. Of the current housing stock, 12% is considered to be in need of major repair as compared to a 7% average for the province[ix]. A further compounding factor is the relative lack of multi-family housing options with 79% of the housing stock being single detached houses as compared to 48% province wide.[x]

Current Initiatives:

There are a variety of organizations offering subsidized, lower cost housing and housing related services for various populations in the region. Despite the Lower Columbia Community Development Team Society (LCCDTS) identifying the need for an overall housing strategy for the region in its Attainable Housing Strategic Plan, there is no formal coordination and planning amongst the various housing providers.

- The LCCDTS has issued two editions of a Housing Need and Demand Study for the Lower Columbia Region and anticipates updating it following the release of the 2016 Census Householder Data. An Attainable Housing Strategic Plan, first issued in **2012**, is due for an update.

- The Lower Columbia Affordable Housing Society (LCAHS) owns and operates a total of nine, 1, 2 and 3 bedroom independent rental units for low income households. Six of those units are located in Trail and three (plus a fourth unit that is market rental) are located in Rossland.

- The Generation to Generation Society owns a building in downtown Trail that houses four, 1 and 2 bedroom independent rental units for low income individuals as well as two units for short-term rental by people from outside the region accessing regional health care services. On the ground floor of the same building the Society operates an out-of-school program for children aged 8-12.

- The Trail Family and Individual Resources Society (FAIR) operates the Women in Need Transition House as well 6 suites in Nova Vita, a Second Stage Housing program for women fleeing relationship abuse.

- The Canadian Mental Health Association of the Kootenays (CHMA Kootenay) owns and operates Silver City Manor in East Trail, providing 32 units for low income seniors, a site which includes dining and other supports. Also operated by CMHA is McBeth Manor with 4 bedrooms (with shared living space) of supported housing for individuals living with a mental health diagnosis.

- The Trail and District Senior Citizens Villa Society owns and operates the Villa which consists of 23 small studio and one-bedroom independent rental units in East Trail for low income seniors. The Board operating the Villa is exploring options for both upgrading the current supply and expanding the overall number.

- The Trail Elderly Citizens Housing Society owns and operates Jubilee Manor with 23 one bedroom independent rental units in downtown Trail for low income seniors.

- The Beaver Valley Manor Society owns and operates low cost, independent housing for seniors. There are a total of 40 units: 28 bachelor suites; 11 one bedroom; and a 1-2 bedroom live-in suite for the Building Caretakers.

- The Golden City Manor Society owns and operates 6 bachelor and 14 one-bedroom independent rental units in Rossland for low income seniors.

- The Trail Association for Community Living (TACL) operates 4 residential homes for individuals with a diagnosis of developmental disability.

- Career Development Services (CDS), an agency of TACL, operates the Getting to Home outreach support program for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed as well as La Niña Extreme Weather Shelter which has 6 beds available during the winter months. As an enhancement to housing stability, CDS provides outreach services to individuals with a diagnosis of developmental disability, FASD and/or autism. On behalf of 8 private property owners, CDS also manages

a total of 35 one to three bedroom units which they rent out to their client group. They are also seeking to purchase a small apartment building that would house up to 7 individuals with residential staffing support for clients with complex issues.

- The Interior Health Authority operates 6 beds at Harbour House in Trail for individuals with severe mental health issues.

The above listing does not include supportive, assisted or residential care operated by the Interior Health Authority and Golden Life Management for seniors and others requiring higher levels of care. The majority of the beds providing these levels of care provide subsidies for individuals who are low income. Also not included in this list are market housing options for seniors.

Priorities and Recommended Actions:

	Who is Responsible			
	Federal	**Provincial**	**Local Gov't**	**Community/ Other**
1. Ensure the availability of data and other information required to support affordable housing initiatives.				
• Update the current need and demand study	√	√	√	√
• Implement a regular homelessness count	√	√		√
2. Facilitate coordination amongst organizations operating subsidized housing for low income households.				
• Secure resources to develop a strategic plan that identifies the highest priority gaps and support initiatives to address those gaps.	√	√	√	√
• Promote on-going planning amongst agencies involved in affordable housing.				√
• Identify potential shared service options.				√
3. Develop mechanisms for low income households to access information on affordable housing options.				
• Explore need and resources for a shared website				√
• Explore need and resources for a central Housing Registry				√
4. Increase the number of subsidized rental housing options for low income households.				
• Research financing and service delivery models.				√
• Identify and access land, capital and operating funding to develop the additional units.	√	√	√	√
5. Advocate for support by government to develop and operate affordable housing.				
• Advocate for local government support in form of policy development, zoning decisions, tax relief and access to land.			√	
• Advocate for capital and/or operating funding for affordable housing from senior government	√	√		
• Facilitate communication between Ministries delivering services to clients and agencies that provide housing for those clients	√	√		

FOOD SECURITY

Access to healthy, affordable food is a foundational need and an on-going chal-
lenge for people living in poverty. It is difficult for those in the lower income
brackets to access healthy food, let alone being able to do so in a dignified man-
ner that accommodates personal taste and preferences.

Key Indicators:

- For a household of two adults and two children, the estimated monthly cost
  of nutrition is $840, the third highest expense[xi] in the monthly budget for a
  household earning the living wage for the Lower Columbia Region.

- From 2010 to 2016, the number of visits to the Trail United Church Food Bank increased from 1,744 to 4,845 per year.
  Open one day a week (except for the second week of each month), 80-90 people come to the Food Bank, accessing
  supplies that feed more than 125 people per week.[xii] Interior Health Authority outreach staff attend the food bank,
  making themselves available to assist food bank users as needed.

- The Salvation Army offers one hamper each month to clients, averaging 125 to 150 hampers per month although
  between September and December 2016, the demand increased by approximately 50%. They also provide bi-weekly
  school lunch hampers to an average of 26 families/month although as with the general food hampers, demand grew
  by close to 50% in the Fall of 2016. In addition, Christmas Hampers are offered on an annual basis with 284 hampers
  distributed in 2015.[xiii]

- Visits to the Rossland Food Bank over the past three years have remained relatively constant at slightly less than 400
  visits per year and the Beaver Valley United Church Food Bank reported a range of 17 to 28 visits per month for the six
  months starting in January, 2016[xiv].

- The Fruitvale Community Chest provides Christmas hampers for families and gifts for children in lower income house-
  holds. In 2016, they provided 120 hampers plus 80 gifts for children.[xv]

- Kate's Kitchen which is operated by the Salvation Army, provides an average of 30 low cost lunches per day, four days
  per week and a weekly dinner that serves 40 to 80 people.[xvi]

- The Trail United Church offers a free community dinner once a month for an average of 100 people per dinner.

- School District #20 operates a Student Nutrition Program that offers healthy no cost breakfasts, nutritious snacks and
  no cost or low cost lunches to students before and during school. Given the policy of universality, there is no means
  testing associated with the meals provided.

Current Initiatives:

- As reflected above, there are four organizations offering food bank services in the region: two in Trail, one in Rossland
  and one in the Beaver Valley. With the exception of the Salvation Army, all the food banks and community meals are
  operated by volunteers. Accessibility to the food banks and hampers varies from one location to the next as does the
  system for measuring usage.

- Community gardens are located in Trail, Rossland, Fruitvale and Montrose. With the exception of Trail, proceeds from
  the gardens go to the households that plant and tend them. In Trail, the proceeds go to the food banks and Kate's
  Kitchen. In Trail, there is the IncrEDIBLE Edible initiative, which consists of vegetable planter gardens installed and
  maintained by businesses and other organizations. Produce is available to whomever chooses to pick it – preferably,
  but not always, after it ripens.

- A Hunger Relief Initiative Breakfast Program and a School Lunch Program is offered at every school in School District 20. The Breakfast program is dependent on securing funding from a variety of sources external to the District, whereas the lunch program supported by the Community Links funding provided by the Province as part of the School District budget.
- Growing out of a recently completed Healthy Communities plan, funding has been secured to develop a Food Security Plan for the region. Initial meetings are taking place in the fall of 2017 to identify the key elements of a plan. Participants in the planning process are being encouraged to use the lens of poverty reduction as the plans are developed.

Priorities and Recommended Actions:

In the interest of not replicating the efforts of those involved in developing a Food Security Plan for the Lower Columbia Region, the working group focusing on food security in relation to poverty reduction. Members of the working group intend to participate in the Food Security Planning process, encouraging that those involved view food security through the lens of poverty reduction. The following goals will be taken into the local Food Security planning process.

	Who is Responsible			
	Federal	**Provincial**	**Local Gov't**	**Community/ Other**
1. Promote the development of community gardens to support poverty reduction.				
• Assist lower income households to grow nutritious food by providing access to resources including garden plots, supplies and equipment, seeds and gardening skills.				√
• Distribute produce grown in community gardens to food banks, food kitchens and other food related programs.				√
2. Promote opportunities for low income households to earn livelihoods through production and sale of food and food related products				
• Assist lower income households to sell nutritious food through local markets by eliminating booth rental fees, by facilitating access to commercial kitchens and by providing Foodsafe certification			√	√
• Develop programs or systems that reduce costs to low income households to purchase produce sold at farmers' markets				√
• Secure funding and create opportunities for employment and skill development through food service related social enterprises.	√	√		√
3. Promote opportunities for low income households to prepare nutritious food.				
• Secure funding and develop community kitchen programs located throughout the region.	√	√		√
4. Encourage planning and communication amongst food security players that contributes to the reduction of poverty.				
• Develop systems to redirect food "waste" to services that can use and distribute that food.				√
• Implement systems that measure the impact of a food security plan on low income households.				√

HEALTH, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Access to health and social services, recreation, culture, transportation and other services are critical for people in poverty, not only to address particular needs or issues but to have also a sense of inclusion in the community in which they are living.

Key Indicators:

- There are a wide variety of health, social and community services available in the region delivered by diverse organizations. While various committees, network and coalitions form from time to time to help streamline service delivery, it can be challenging for the average person needing services to navigate the system, knowing where to get what service from whom.

- While some services are delivered at the local municipal level, the majority of services are delivered at a regional level with the hub located in or near downtown Trail.

- The Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital is located in Trail, providing a range of tertiary health care services for people located throughout the region.

- The Trail Local Health Area ranks 55th out of 78 LHAs on the Composite Index of Youth at Risk, putting the region on the better end of the scale, in the top third provincially.[xvii]

- Local governments in the region take an active role in delivering recreation services. Warfield, Fruitvale, Montrose and Area A have recreation service agreements in place with the City of Trail which allow their residents to access services (including the Leisure Access Program) in municipal recreation facilities in Trail and which, in turn, allow Trail residents to access services in facilities in the other communities.

- Public transit in the region is delivered by BC Transit under the guidance of the West Kootenay Transit Committee which is made up of representatives of the various local governments in the West Kootenay region. While there are continuous efforts to refine and improve both routes and schedules, there remain on-going challenges with access to public transit on evenings (particularly after store closing times) and weekends as well the amount of time to get from one community to another in the region.[xviii] As a result, in a fleet made up mainly of full size buses, ridership is often low.

Current Initiatives:

Health and Social Services:

- This region has been the site of an action research project called *NCare* which was led by faculty of the University of British Columbia Okanagan. The overall goal of the study was to improve the quality of life of older adults. Specially trained volunteer navigators, in partnership with health care providers, over the period of one year, met regularly with elderly patients with a serious life limiting illness. The role of the Navigators was to advocate, facilitate community connections, coordinate access to services and resources, and promote active engagement of older adults with their community. Using the evidence-based outcomes of this research, the model developed could serve as a resource for the creation of navigation services for people in poverty.

- The Trail Family and Resource Society maintains an on-line directory, known as **Fetch Kootenay Boundary**, providing current information on Health and Community Services in the West Kootenay-Boundary Region. In addition to resources related to health, mental health and substance abuse issues, the directory lists other related services including: low income support; abuse and neglect; children, youth and families; education and employment development; government and legal complaints and advocacy; and cultural, recreation, social and religious services.

- Fetch KB also maintains a Seniors Services Directory (both in hard copy and on the KB Fetch site) that is proving to be very helpful for seniors (as well as their families) requiring information on various supportive services.

- The Lower Columbia Caring Communities Committee has developed and updates a hard-copy map of services for the region which includes brief descriptions, addresses and phone numbers. While developed particularly for individuals with substance abuse issues, the map has proven valuable to other groups and individuals needing to identify where to access what services.

- Guided by the principles of trauma-informed service delivery, some organizations are making adjustments to their practices to reduce barriers for clients. Given that it is not uncommon for low income individuals to have experienced trauma at some point in their lives, there is a need to promote greater awareness of the concept and related practices.

- With funding provided by Columbia Basin Trust, there are Youth Action Networks (YAN) in Rossland, Trail and the Beaver Valley for youth aged 12-18. In Trail, the role of the YAN Coordinator is to develop, facilitate and oversee a youth network and to work with agencies to address needs identified by the youth.

- Sanctuary is a unique out-of-school care program for youth aged 8 to 12. Operated by the Generation to Generation Society, the program is open to all youth free of charge. In addition to out-of-school recreational activities, youth are supported with a homework club and are provided an evening meal before going home. Although not means tested, many of the youth come from lower income households.

- With the goal of reducing lead levels in young children in the region, the Trail Area Health and Environment Program (THEP) has a Community Program Representative whose role is to work directly with families in targeted neighborhoods to reduce health risks from exposure to lead and other smelter metals. Some families who participate in THEP

programs are located in lower income neighborhoods and the Community Program Representative often helps those families navigate access to services which can help them address identified risks.

Transportation

- As part of the Kootenay Carshare Cooperative, one car is based in Rossland and is available to members of the cooperative. To join the co-operative, an individual must purchase a refundable share of $500 and have a valid driver's license and no at-fault accidents on his or her claims history, requirements often prohibitive to low income users.

- There was once a thriving network of co-operatively owned vans that provided workers with access to low cost transportation to and from work in the region. Unfortunately, this network no longer exists but is worthy of revisiting, particularly for workers needing access to transportation to and from work in parts of the region and at times not served by public transit.

Recreation, Arts and Culture:

- The City of Trail has a Leisure Access Program that provides residents who face economic challenges the opportunity to participate in programs and services delivered by Trail Parks and Recreation at reduced rates. The program offers a 50% discount on general admission and punch passes to the Trail Aquatic and Leisure Centre, 50% discount on admission to public skating and skate rental, and 50% discount on two eligible programs per year per person after all other funding sources (such as JumpStart, KidSports and Success by Six) have been utilized. City staff assist families with the application process for the various funding sources and partnering organizations in the community assist with the financial adjudication component.

- Staff of other recreation departments in the region also assist low income families to apply for funding sources (such as JumpStart, KidSports and Success by Six) to help reduce fees for programs delivered in their respective communities.

- Staff of the Trail Arts Council and the Bailey Theatre report providing passes and reduced rates to various performing arts events to lower income families with decisions generally based on informal communication with various service providers in the region. A single, commonly recognized access pass for lower income households would be more respectful of those living in poverty and would streamline administration and decision makers for the agencies providing reduced-barrier access to programs and services.

Priorities and Recommended Actions:

	Who is Responsible			
	Federal	**Provincial**	**Local Gov't**	**Community/ Other**
1. Promote increased access to social and health services				
• Secure the resources to develop, implement and assess the impact of a "navigator" model aimed at helping lower income individuals and households gain better access social and health services.		√		√
• Secure the resources for training that promotes awareness of "trauma informed" service delivery amongst agencies in the region.		√		√
• Encourage and support opportunities that lead to the co-location of services wherever possible.	√	√	√	√
2. Promote increased access to affordable transportation for low income households.				
• Secure the resources to prepare a white paper on transportation options with a focus on lower income households.		√		√
• Eliminate public transit fares for individuals in households below the Low Income Measure threshold, using a Community Access Pass to demonstrate eligibility.			√	
• Explore the expansion of cooperative transportation options, including carshare vehicles and a network of vans transporting people to/from underserved workplaces.				√
3. Promote barrier free access by lower income households to recreation, arts and culture in the region.				
• Promote the adoption of a Leisure Recreation Program by all local governments in the region.			√	√
• Develop and promote a Community Access Card that demonstrates eligibility by lower income households and individuals to barrier free access to recreation, arts, culture, transportation and other programs and services				√

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Access to opportunities for learning and development are key to developing the capacity for people to be active, engaged citizens in our community and economy. With several communities within the Lower Columbia Region, limited access to public transportation and a variety of service providers offering programs in different locations, knowing about and accessing those services can be a challenge.

Key opportunities are early childhood development, child care and adult literacy and essential skills upgrading, all of which will strengthen the capacity of lower income households to actively engage in our community and economy.

Key Indicators:

- For a household of two adults and two children (one aged four and one aged seven), the estimated monthly cost of child care is $1,410, the single highest expense[xix] in the monthly budget for a household earning the living wage for the Lower Columbia Region.

- In the Kootenay Boundary Regional District in 2013, there were 990 children living in poverty.[xx] (Due to a variety of limitations in available data, a discrete number cannot be provided for the LCR).

- The 2016 results of the Early Development Index (EDI), an assessment tool used to measure vulnerability in critical areas of development for children entering kindergarten, showed a vulnerability rate of 22% or 110 children in School District 20 compared to the average provincial vulnerability rate of 32.2%.[xxi] While local rates are lower than the provincial average, they are considerably higher than the 11% vulnerability rate of Revelstoke[xxii], a community which has systematically focussed on developing an integrated approach to early childhood development service delivery.

- Since 2013, 214 children have participated in the Ages and Stages early development screening events, with 47 or 22% of those children flagged for further surveillance[xxiii], directly correlating to the local EDI rate.

- Waiting lists for childcare spaces throughout the region are long. For families whose income-earners work on shift, access to childcare outside regular work week hours is effectively unavailable.

- 31.6% of individuals eligible for case-managed employment services through the local Employment Program of BC program are in the 21-30 age group.[xxiv] Many of these individuals are in need of basic or essential skills upgrading. These figures do not capture the needs of the "working poor" who are earning substantially less than the "Living Wage" but are ineligible for case-managed employment services.

- The percentage of residents in the LCR aged 24 and older who have no certificate, diploma, or degree ranges from 4.1% in Rossland to 19.3% in Fruitvale[xxv]. Individuals without a secondary school diploma are most likely to be without employment.[xxvi]

Current Initiatives:

- The Family Action Network (FAN) has been working on child-and-family-friendly community development initiatives with a particular focus on promoting early childhood developmental screening. Their goal has been to standardize the use of the Ages and Stages screening tool by a variety of service providers and to utilize data from the Toddler Development Index and the Early Development Index (population level tools developed and administered by UBC). In addition, FAN established a network of 'easy peasy' family friendly public washroom spaces as well as **the FAN website** that provides families and service providers with information on age-based developmental milestones and information about local early childhood programs, services and events.

- The Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL) in Trail works with a local planning committee to provide literacy programs for people of all ages, including a range of programs designed to promote early literacy, adult literacy and English as a Second language for newcomers. CBAL often works with Selkirk College and the Trail Library to share resources such as classroom space, child minding and instructional services.

- Movin' Mountains Therapy Services offers Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy to children, youth and adults. Their services include individual therapy sessions, group programs and workshops. Their staff work closely with families to support them to receive funding from various government agencies and charity organizations, including Movin Mountains' own therapy sponsorship fund, in order to ensure they can access the therapies they need.

- The Trail Family and Individual Resources Society (FAIR) offers a range of programs and services that support families with young children, including the Childcare Resource and Referral Program (CCRR), a pregnancy outreach program, early childhood development groups and family counselling.

- There are 5 Group Child Care Centres (ages 0-5), 4 After-School Care Programs (ages 5-12), and 11 Family Daycares (ages 0-12 years) in the region.

- Selkirk College in Trail offers a full range adult upgrading programs, ranging from developmental education for adults through to upgrading and secondary school completion. The Campus also offers Continuing Education and other certificate programs.

- The Kootenay Columbia Learning Centre of School District 20 offers a range of alternate school programs, primarily focussed on youth at risk but also including adults seeking to complete their high school diploma.

- The Skills Centre is the lead contractor in the region for the Employment Program of BC, providing a range of employment services and financial supports primarily for people who are unemployed or working less than 20 hours per week. Working with the Skills Centre to deliver portions of the EPBC program are Career Development Services, Community Futures and the Trail FAIR Society.

Priorities and Recommended Actions:

	Who is Responsible			
	Federal	Provincial	Local Gov't	Community/ Agency
1. Improve access to learning and academic upgrading for low income individuals.				
• Advocate for the elimination of all fees associated with Adult Basic Education courses		√		√
• Advocate for employment services benefits and for improved access to employment services for the "working poor"	√	√		
• Improve mechanisms for acquiring input from people living in poverty regarding access to learning and development services.				√
• Develop mechanisms for increasing awareness by individuals and agencies of resources available to assist with tuition and other learning support expenses;				√
• Increase access to and options for bursary funding to assist low income people to access education and training by promoting the creation of new bursaries and by advocating for greater flexibility in the use of existing bursary funds;				√
• Identify additional opportunities to combine child-minding services with academic upgrading				√
• Support individuals to improve "essential academic skills" by developing resources to prepare for employment related testing skills and by providing academic/essential skills upgrading in proximity to the job site.				√
2. Improve the availability of and access to childcare.				
• Advocate for funding to increase childcare spaces and to make childcare more affordable;	√	√		
• Encourage retention of ECE workers by advocating for living wages and promoting opportunities for professional development;	√	√		√
• Increase the availability of shift-friendly and/or extended hour childcare services		√		√
3. Improve access to early childhood services/resources by low income families.				
• Create mechanisms for improved sharing of information on early childhood services between agencies/staff				√
• Identify and encourage opportunities to cluster service delivery in the region and LCR communities				√
• Promote opportunities for early childhood assessment and referral				√
• Promote shared strategic planning (including data sharing and analysis) amongst early childhood development agencies and service providers.				√

VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Key Indicators:

- The unemployment rate in the communities of the LCR ranges from 5.5% to 9.5%. Fruitvale, RDKB Area B and Warfield have unemployment rates below the BC average of 7.8% and the other communities are above the provincial average.[xxvii] With annual average of slightly under 400, Trail saw a 15% increase in Employment and Income Assistance recipients from 2013 to 2016.[xxviii]

- In the Fall of 2016, the Living Wage for Lower Columbia Region was determined to be $18.21/hour, calculated using the Canadian Living Wage Framework.[xxix]

- While all the communities in the region are below the provincial average percentages for the Low Income Measure (LIM), Trail has the highest percentage of low income persons.[xxx]

- Lone-parents head 13% of the region's families and there were more than three times as many female led lone-parent families as male led lone-parent families in the LCR in 2011.[xxxi]

Current Initiatives:

- There are several agencies in the region whose mandates include promotion of community economic development, all of whom are represented on the Lower Columbia Community Development Team Society (LCCDTS), along with representatives of business and local government.

- The Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation (LCIC), a development corporation wholly owned by the LCCDTS, is actively and successfully working on strategies to support existing and new business development in the region.

- The Employment Program of BC (EPBC) provides a number of options for eligible unemployed and underemployed individuals to develop skills that help them secure and maintain employment or become self-employed. In the Lower Columbia Region, the Skills Centre is the lead EPBC contract holder with Career Development Services, Community Futures and the Trail FAIR Society providing sub-contracted services.

- There are a variety of wage subsidy programs available that assist employers to hire and provide on-the-job training for students or eligible unemployed adults. Used effectively, these programs can help lower income people gain a foothold into the world of work. Information on these various options is available through the Skills Centre.

- The Skills Centre works with some local employers to provide Essential Skills screening of new applicants or employees and with individual clients, helping them to strengthen their workplace Essential Skills.

- The Basin Business Advisors program provides support to local business and non-profit organizations to develop business skills and plans, including the development of social enterprise and social purpose businesses.

- The Skills Centre has committed to calculate the living wage for the region on an annual basis for the foreseeable future.

- Operated under the auspices of the Trail FAIR Society, the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program assists low income earners to file their annual tax return which, in turn, often triggers benefits associated with the filing of taxes. Clinics are held on a weekly basis in five locations throughout the region during the months of March and April of each year.

Priorities and Recommended Actions:

	Who is Responsible			
	Federal	**Provincial**	**Local Gov't**	**Community/ Other**
1. Promote the living wage as a means of allowing workers access to a good quality of life in the region.				
• Update the living wage calculation on an annual basis for the Lower Columbia Region.				√
• Partner with employers and agencies to promote increased awareness of the value and impact of living wage incomes and of public policies that have an impact the local living wage.				√
• Encourage local governments and other employers to pay their senior and contracted employees a minimum of the living wage.			√	√
2. Promote the employment of lower skilled individuals by supporting the development of workplace Essential Skills.				
• Advocate for funding and promote collaboration amongst K-12, post-secondary and employment services organizations to deliver curriculum and programs that provide training in employability and essential skills	√	√		√
• Promote awareness amongst employers of essential skills assessments and training that assist in the development of the essential skills of their workforce.				√
• Advocate for resources and support the development of social purpose enterprise that provides increased employment opportunities for lower skilled workers.	√	√	√	√
3. Support the development and diversification of the local economy.				
• Encourage community economic development organizations to promote economic development initiatives that contribute to increased opportunities for employment for individuals currently living in poverty.				√
• Encourage the incorporation of social needs and the perspective of people in poverty into community economic development planning.				√

ENDNOTES

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i   Expenses used to calculate living wage for LCR as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 14

ii   Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (NHS) Profile, 2011 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Need and Demand Assessment Update, 2015, p. 25

iii   Statistics Canada Census, 2011 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Housing Need and Demand Study Update, 2015, p. 26

iv   Statistics Canada Census, 2011 as cited in Gender Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity in the Lower Columbia Region,2013, p. 15

v   Statistics Canada Census, 2011 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Need and Demand Study Update, 2015, p. 8

vi   Lower Columbia Region Attainable Housing Needs Assessment, 2011, p. 45

vii   BC Housing, 2014 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Need and Demand Assessment Update, 2015, p. 31

viii   Statistics Canada Census, 2011 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Need and Demand Study Update, 2015, p. 21

ix   Statistics Canada Census, 2011 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Need and Demand Study Update, 2015, p. 22

x   Statistics Canada Census, 2011 as cited in Lower Columbia Region Need and Demand Study Update, 2015, p. 23

xi   Expenses used to calculate living wage for LCR as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 14

xii   Rakuson, Marylynn and Zol, Linda, Trail United Church Food Bank Usage for 2011 to 2016, September 2017.

xiii   Salvation Army Hamper Usage for 2016 as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 18

xiv   Rossland Food Bank Usage for 2013 to 2015 and Beaver Valley Food Bank Usage for January – June 2016 as gathered for Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 18

xv   Hall, Doug, Fruitvale Community Chest, 2016 Christmas hamper and gift data, 2017-10-15 email text.

xvi   Kate's Kitchen data as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 18

xvii BC Stats. Socio-Economic Indices as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 30

xviii Lister, L. & Lutz, H. Gender-Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity, Lower Columbia Region (2013) as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 56

xix   Expenses used to calculate living wage for LCR as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 14

xx   Statistics Canada. F-18: After-tax low incomes, 2010-2014. (2016) as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 11

xxi   Human Early Learning Partnership. EDI Interactive Map (2016) as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 25

xxii   Human Early Learning Partnership. The Early Development Instruments: Reports and Resources (2016) as cited in
         Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 26

xxiii   Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 27

xxiv   Work BC clients in the LCR by gender and ae group for April to July 2016 as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty
         in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 15

xxv   Statistics Canada. National Household Survey (NHS) Profile, 2011

xxvi   Lister, L. & Lutz, H. Gender-Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity, Lower Columbia Region (2013) as cited in
         Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p.32

xxvii   Interior Health Authority Local Health Area Profiles as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower
         Columbia Region 2016, p. 15

xxviii   Data BC. BC Employment and Assistance by Municipality (2016) as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the
         Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 16

xxix   Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 14

xxx   Statistics Canada. F-18: After-tax low incomes, 2010-2014. (2016) as cited in Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the
         Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 11

xxxi   Lister, L. & Lutz, H. Gender-Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity, Lower Columbia Region (2013) as cited in
         Surviving, Not Thriving: Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region 2016, p. 7

**Prepared by the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre
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