


10 ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE

A Guide for Including People in Poverty Reduction

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Section 1: Assess Your Readiness to Engage People with Lived/Living Experience ..	6
Section 2: 10 Really Good Ideas for Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience ..	9
Section 3: 10 Stories that Inspire.....	21
Section 4: 10 Really Useful Resources.....	37
Section 5: 10 Ways to Get Started	42
Moving Forward: Toward a Better Tomorrow	45
Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty	46

INTRODUCTION

10 – Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience

10 LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

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Multi-sectoral collaboration between governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, and people with lived/living experience of poverty has been recognized as a core principle of effective poverty-reduction work since the establishment of Vibrant Communities in 2002. This guide seeks to further support the inclusion of these diverse voices as an integral part of reducing and eliminating poverty.

Succeeding Tamarack's two previous 10 guides—*10 – A Guide for Cities Reducing Poverty* (2016) and *10 – A Guide for Businesses Reducing Poverty* (2017)—this practical guide responds to a strong demand from Cities Reducing Poverty (CRP) members across Canada who have expressed interest in deepening their practice in meaningfully engaging people with lived/living experience of poverty. It was written to support the social

justice and human rights imperative that people with lived/living experience of poverty must be included as equal partners in the development, implementation, and evaluation of solutions that affect their lives.

Governments, businesses, and non-profits are learning about how they can build on the grassroots social movements to end poverty that have traditionally been led by and for people with lived/living experience. Leaders across these sectors are coming together in a way that acknowledges the unique value and wisdom that people with lived/living experience bring to the table. These groups are increasingly recognizing that they can work together to leverage assets built through these movements and collectively drive poverty-reduction work forward in an impactful way.

“Isolation makes for unhappy communities. To build community, we need to commit to respect and kindness, move from ‘power over’ to ‘power with,’ and create as many places of contact as possible. It is about everyone being empowered. Everybody is worth it.”

- Lee Maidlow, HPE Poverty Roundtable Facilitator & 10 Advisory Committee

People with lived/living experience deeply understand the realities of poverty. Their stories and experiences serve as powerful tools for building compassion and for disrupting and clarifying a community's understanding of its root causes and scope. The recognition of people with lived/living experience as context experts alongside government, business, and non-profit counterparts challenges power imbalances and counters the tendency for practitioners in leadership positions to dominate agendas, discussions, and ultimately, decisions. The invaluable expertise of these individuals adds strength and resiliency to poverty-reduction work, and their first-hand knowledge of systemic barriers is invaluable in co-creating innovative solutions to overcome them.

This guide celebrates the potential that can be unlocked when people with lived/living experience are empowered to drive antipoverty work. It was developed to highlight leading practices, inspire new thinking, and serve as a reminder of how critical engagement of people with lived/living experience in poverty reduction truly is.

While this guide was written primarily for CRP members, it is applicable to all collaboratives interested in reflecting on their current processes, and who are seeking inspiring and impactful ideas to deepen their practices.

We have attempted to capture the momentum and leading evidence-based practices from the field in a very practical way.

On behalf of the 10 Lived/Living Experience Advisory Committee, we hope you will find it helpful.

10 LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A couple of notes on language:

1. Poverty-reduction groups employ a range of terms to refer to colleagues with lived and/or living experience of poverty. These include *First Voice, people with grounded expertise, and professors of poverty*. At least one community has moved away from using these terms entirely, based on the recognition that people should not be called out on their lived/living experience, but should instead be able to decide when and if to self-identify. As recommended by the 10 Lived/Living Experience Advisory Committee, this guide uses *lived/living experience* to inclusively recognize both people who have past lived experience of poverty, and those who continue to experience it.
2. This guide uses the term *group* to inclusively recognize cities, communities, roundtables, committees, boards, coalitions, collaboratives, and other agencies, organizations, and initiatives engaged in poverty reduction.

"Engaging in poverty reduction is not a job or a hobby; poverty is what is oppressing us."

– Member, 10 Advisory Committee

SECTION 1

Assess your readiness to engage people with lived/living experience

This section poses 10 key questions that can help you to better understand your group's readiness to meaningfully engage people with lived/living experience in poverty reduction. Use this quick self-assessment tool to reflect on what you are currently doing, then refer back to your results as you work through the rest of the guide.

Note: Do not be discouraged if your score is lower than you would like. This guide offers a variety of tools for groups looking to build engagement of people with lived/living experience, from any starting point.

Use the following scale to score your answers to the questions below:

1 = Not yet **2** = We are just starting **3** = We are part way there **4** = We are doing this **5** = We are there!

Asses your Readiness	Rank
1. Is your group prepared to learn about leading practices in equity and inclusion? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
2. Does your group promote diversity across your structures, processes, and activities? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
3. Does your group know how to create safer spaces that support all members to feel comfortable and included? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
4. Does your group recognize that it requires sufficient financial resources to support people with lived/living experience to participate (e.g. to provide food and to reimburse transportation costs)? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
5. Does your group have representation of people with lived/living experience of poverty (e.g. as part of your tables, committees and teams)? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5

Asses your Readiness	Rank
6. Does your group offer opportunities for people with lived/living experience to inform poverty-reduction work? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
7. Is your group willing to invest in training opportunities for all members on how to respectfully collaborate with people with lived/living experience? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
8. Is your group willing to invest in skill- and capacity-building opportunities for people with lived/living experience of poverty that support meaningful engagement? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
9. Is your group prepared to open up decision-making processes to people with lived/living experience? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
10. Has your group talked about how you will ensure that feedback from people with lived/living experience leads to action? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5

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

10-25 points – Do you see some ways that you could increase your score?

25-40 points – You have laid a solid foundation.

40-50 points – We want to learn from you!

What have you learned by doing this assessment?

Read on to consider your next steps...



SECTION 2

10 really good ideas for engaging people with lived/living experience

Here are 10 high-impact ideas from the 10 Advisory Committee that are highly effective for poverty-reduction groups to meaningfully engage people with lived/living experience. While not an exhaustive list, this section presents opportunities for groups at all stages of readiness to reflect on, refine, and develop inclusive processes and practices.

- 1 Commit to engaging people with lived/living experience
- 2 Create a culture of inclusion
- 3 Host accessible meetings
- 4 Create opportunities for engagement
- 5 Eliminate financial barriers to participation
- 6 Consider paying people with lived/living experience for their time
- 7 Take the time to build trust
- 8 Share power by opening up decision-making processes
- 9 Provide training and mentoring opportunities
- 10 Diversify representation and deepen engagement

1 COMMIT TO ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE

Create safer spaces that support open dialogue across diverse perspectives

Poverty-reduction groups that effectively engage people with lived/living experience build mutual respect and establish a level of trust that supports open dialogue across a diversity of perspectives. They ensure that everyone at the table feels comfortable and included, and they identify ways that each person can apply their unique talents and expertise to move the work forward.

A recommended first step from the 10 Advisory Committee was for groups to create safer spaces where individuals of traditionally marginalized populations feel welcome to participate. In collaboration with colleagues with lived/living experience, groups can reflect on current processes and practices, identify barriers they may inadvertently be reinforcing, and hold themselves accountable to overcoming them.



Employing appropriate language is also important, as words can either encourage or deter people with lived/living experience from participating. Poverty-reduction groups can commit to using more inclusive language in everyday conversations, in formal speaking, and in all writing.

The 10 Advisory Committee also recommended having a champion at the table. This person's role would include: welcoming new members to the group, providing ongoing communication and support, speaking out in the face of inequity, creating opportunities to engage, and elevating the voices of people with lived/living experience. The role of this champion is optimized when a person with lived/living experience has been trained, supported, and hired to take it on.

2 CREATE A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Nothing about us without us

Poverty-reduction groups that effectively engage people with lived/living experience embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values to their work. Borrowed from disability justice movements, *nothing about us without us* is an ideology that is often adopted by poverty-reduction groups when engaging people with lived/living experience. This approach challenges the status quo by moving away from sector professionals making decisions about projects, programs, and policies that affect people experiencing poverty without their meaningful inclusion.

← Source: City of Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy Office



A group can reflect on the inclusivity of their current practices by reflecting on the following questions:

- How ready, willing, and committed is the group to adopting an inclusive approach?
- Who is already at the table, and beyond organizational affiliations, who is missing?
- What personal experiences do members bring that support the group's work?
- Has space been created for group members to contribute these experiences?
- In what ways could the group advance inclusion within its structures, processes, and activities?

Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership's *Creating a Culture of Inclusion* (see Section 4) presents a Spectrum of Inclusion which allows groups to benchmark where they are at with respect to inclusive practices, determine which outcomes they would like to achieve, and identify ways to get there. It supports groups to move from a charitable model to a systems-and-policy approach, and suggests a number of relationship-based opportunities and strategies for engaging people with lived/living experience in policy, planning, and strategic leadership roles.

3 HOST ACCESSIBLE MEETINGS

Develop meetings and agendas with people in mind

Inclusive structures, policies, and practices help create safer spaces that promote full participation of people with lived/living experience. These include group norms, committee structures, roundtable agreements, meeting practices, and written policies such as diversity and social-inclusion plans.

To ensure that everyone feels comfortable and included at meetings, the 10 Advisory Committee recommended that agendas be co-developed by the group, and that groups consider meeting structure and logistics. For example, meetings should be held in physically accessible locations where food is provided. Venues should be conveniently located in spaces that are sensitive to people's life histories. Agendas should include a welcoming opening—including a land acknowledgement—and should present an opportunity for attendees to introduce themselves and share preferred pronouns.

One policy recommended by the 10 Advisory Committee that a group can establish is *absolute confidentiality*. This protects members with lived/living experience by ensuring that any information presented at meetings alongside community workers cannot be shared or passed back to their case managers.

Another recommendation was for groups to support people with lived/living experience to participate when they can and to the extent that they are able. This flexibility, for example to accommodate a member facing a change in life circumstances to take a leave of absence, demonstrates a group's appreciation for the continued value that that person brings to the table.



4 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Reframe the dominant narrative of poverty

Successful poverty-reduction groups not only value the unique wisdom that people with lived/living experience bring to the table but also create opportunities for these individuals to share their perspectives and, importantly, to influence decisions.

Groups can work toward including people with lived/living experience across all organizational structures, such as boards, tables, committees, sub-committees, and action teams. They can also create opportunities for participation across meetings, consultations, and other engagements.

One 10 Advisory Committee member provided an example from a community survey, where the perspectives of people with lived/living experience were essential in complementing the public voice. These voices yielded an authentic understanding to important issues such as racism, classism, isolation, and a lack of access to services and supports.

The 10 Advisory Committee recommended that instead of a group calling in people with lived/living experience on demand to advise on internal operations, that they consider resourcing autonomous and self-determining spaces for people with lived/living experience. These safer spaces allow the voices of lived/living experience to be heard. They empower people with lived/living experience to reflect on and discuss issues privately before bringing consensus proposals back to the larger group.

5 ELIMINATE FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Ensure that no one incurs a cost to engage

Ensuring that everybody at the table is fairly supported plays a major role in breaking down barriers to participation and in leveling the playing field between those who are and those who are not paid to engage in the work. Poverty-reduction groups should therefore first and foremost ensure that people with lived/living experience do not incur participation-related expenses.

At a minimum, this requires groups to provide for or reimburse partners with lived/living experience for food and transportation. Additional services such as childcare, interpretation, and note taking may also be required. For workshops and conferences, it is helpful if groups can cover costs of flights and accommodation, waive registration fees or offer scholarships, and pay per diems.

Poverty-reduction groups should work with partners with lived/living experience to understand these partners' individual needs and barriers. For example, a young mother may prefer to either bring her infant to a meeting or be compensated for childcare costs. By not making assumptions, groups re-value participants as individuals. This builds trust and encourages participation.

If a group is unable to compensate participation-related expenses, the 10 Advisory Committee noted that they then need to ensure that partners with lived/living experience are able to decide freely how and to what extent they would like to contribute their time. For example, it might be more appropriate for that group to create engagement opportunities that are open to all, instead of creating an advisory committee that cannot yet be adequately resourced.



6 CONSIDER PAYING PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE FOR THEIR TIME

Different people require different supports to participate

Poverty-reduction groups are comprised of a range of individuals that choose to invest time and effort into moving the work forward. Some people attend meetings and events as part of paid employment, while others contribute on a voluntary basis. While salaried individuals, such as government and non-profit staff are more likely to be paid, particularly when engagements take place during regular business hours, people with lived/living experience of poverty often donate their time. These individuals can face associated barriers to participation, such as living on modest fixed incomes, working for low wages, or juggling more than one job. They are therefore more likely to experience financial difficulties to participation, for example where attending an engagement leads them to miss paid employment.

Poverty-reduction groups are increasingly recognizing the complexity of the above dynamics, as well as the notion that different people require different supports to participate. Beyond covering participation expenses, as described in the previous section, some groups are taking compensation a step further by paying people with lived/living experience for their time. The 10 Advisory Committee noted how this compensation furthers the idea that everyone's time and contributions are valued from recognition to action. It demonstrates respect, supports diverse voices to be heard, disrupts power imbalances, and challenges some of the inequities that lie at the root of poverty.

Groups can compensate people with lived/living experience in a number of ways. They can pay wages or honorariums at living-wage rates, remunerate with gift cards, or provide stipends to individuals upon completion

of training programs. One 10 Advisory Committee member's group compensated a partner with lived/living experience in the form of a paid internship. This individual was able to include the contract on their resume, which helped explain a gap in employment, and supported future workforce opportunities. Another group hired a colleague with lived/living experience into a paid staff role with the local roundtable.

The type of compensation provided should be defined locally and administered in a way that works for all parties, including funders, the poverty-reduction group itself, and recipients. Processes must conform to legal requirements and should protect recipients by considering tax implications. For example, United Way Halifax compensates recipients in cash to reduce barriers faced by people in accessing a bank account, such as a lack of ID and user fees. The group worked with their community services department to confirm that dollars provided would not be clawed back from recipients' income assistance.

While many poverty-reduction groups understand the importance of fair compensation, resourcing constraints can serve as a barrier to moving this understanding to practice. Examples of ways that groups can fund compensation for people with lived/living experience are to include this expense in their operating budgets, fundraise from local governments, businesses, and community champions, and commit to sharing resourcing responsibility between partnering organizations. When submitting grant applications, groups can include compensation as a budget line and can embed a clear case for why it is important.



7 TAKE THE TIME TO BUILD TRUST

Advocacy is only heard once trust is built

Building and maintaining a foundation of trust is fundamental to the meaningful engagement of people with lived/living experience of poverty. In contrast, a lack of trust serves as a huge barrier to participation. People with lived/living experience may have had negative, trauma-based experiences in past interactions when working within human services systems. Trust within a multi-sectoral poverty-reduction initiative can therefore take a long time to build, particularly in instances where a person has been let down in the past, and where they feel like trust needs to be rebuilt.

Personal stories told by people with lived/living experience of poverty can serve as powerful tools in raising awareness of poverty and in challenging stereotypes. Still, while most practitioners are not expected to speak in first person or to provide examples from their own lives, partners with lived/living experience are often asked, or even expected, to share these personal experiences with colleagues, agencies, and in public settings. It is important that individuals with lived/living experience are able to choose when and under which circumstances, if any, they choose to share personal information.

Building a foundation of trust is a process that cannot be rushed. It requires substantial time, resource commitment, and visible actions to prove that a given space will differ from what an individual may have experienced in past interactions. A good place for practitioners to start building trust is by recognizing that some people with lived/living experience may require more support than others to come out of their

comfort zones. Recommendations from the 10 Advisory Committee on how to do this include: creating a welcoming culture, being patient and understanding at all times, listening respectfully, and building strong relationships that help people come to a mutual respect.

The 10 Advisory Committee noted that many of their groups had intentionally invested weeks or even months in building trust. One shared that before launching into any action, their group devoted their first few meetings solely to learning together, co-developing rules of engagement, creating a training agenda, and laying out how everyone would work together. Another invited city staff to sit in on lived/living experience group meetings to witness first-hand the value that the perspectives of people with lived/living experience brought to decision making. A number of city staff who attended these meetings have since built relationships with group members and now approach them directly to seek advice.

Last, the Committee noted that recommendations made by people with lived/living experience often do not make it to policy, and how this lack of follow-through greatly hinders the development of trust. They therefore recommended that groups specify how they would ensure that recommendations, decisions, and solutions from people with lived/living experience would be actioned. One way to do this is for a group to reflect on the extent to which they are comfortable, willing, ready, and able to take recommendations forward, for example by leveraging resources and networks, or by advocating for policy and systems change.

8 OPEN UP DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

Authentic engagement is about sharing power

No matter how well intentioned the group, power relationships creep into social spaces. Conventional decision-making processes can perpetuate power imbalances and disenfranchise those who already feel unheard. Voices are often accorded different levels of influence and speaking time based on status quo demographics, such as sector represented or professional status.

The 10 Advisory Committee recommended that groups critically reflect on how the power they hold marginalizes others, challenge these dynamics, then shift the way they think and act. For example, when power imbalances arise in group meetings, events, or other engagements, members can be intentional about calling them out, reversing them, and preventing them from happening again. Groups should also only make promises when they are able to follow through.

Groups can open up decision-making structures and processes to make them more transparent, accessible, and inclusive. For example, they can accommodate members who may need more time to understand what is being discussed, come to a decision, and provide feedback. Not rushing decisions supports all perspectives to be heard.

A recommendation from the 10 Advisory Committee to level power dynamics was to invite decision makers, such as Mayors and Councils, to conversations hosted in spaces deemed safe and comfortable by presenters with lived/living experience, rather than asking these individuals to present in more conventional spaces such as at City Halls.

9 PROVIDE TRAINING AND MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES

Drive engagement by mentorship, process, and support

Investing in capacity building, skill development and mentoring promotes teamwork and trust, and can support poverty-reduction groups to work more inclusively with colleagues with lived/living experience. Training builds confidence, deepens participation, and can support groups to move from service providers to collaborators to allies of people with lived/living experience.

Capacity-building opportunities include activities, reflections, discussions, training sessions, workshops, and events. Topics that may be beneficial to the larger group include: diversity and inclusion, conflict resolution, mental health and addiction, and trauma-informed practice.

Anti-oppressive training, ideally led or co-led by partners with lived/living experience, can deepen understanding of the invisible power relationships that manifest within and outside of a group. It can support groups to work more respectfully and effectively together, since instead of requiring colleagues with lived/living experience to fit into a group's current culture, this approach challenges the group to shift the way that they themselves work.

Partners with lived/living experience may also find value in training, for example in the areas of leadership, communication, public speaking, and advocacy. Combining training with engagement opportunities can support them to move from storytellers, to community advocates, to decision makers.

Mentorship and peer-support models promote mutual understanding and reciprocal learning across individuals and sectors. For example, one 10 Advisory Committee member's group engages an individual with lived/living experience who serves as a "cultural interpreter" between the group's coordinator and the group, and supports members directly by developing curriculum and facilitating training.

10 DIVERSIFY REPRESENTATION AND DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT

Foster an inclusive space that reflects the diversity of the community

Poverty-reduction practitioners understand that the face of poverty is complex. To better understand people's experiences of poverty, and to overcome tokenism and balance group dynamics, groups should aim to reflect the true diversity of their communities within the spaces of their own work.

The 10 Advisory Committee recommended that groups build representation of people with lived/living experience of poverty across all organizational structures. They also recommended that groups create pathways that empower these individuals to move into leadership roles, such as into Chair, Co-Chair, and facilitator positions. Last, they noted that groups should self-reflect on how they could deepen inclusive representation across voting, decision-making, and evaluation processes.

Groups can hold themselves accountable to more diverse and deeper engagement by establishing goals. Small, tangible targets can keep a group on track, while bigger, loftier targets can inspire longer-term actions.

The 10 Advisory Committee recommended that groups strive for 25% - 50% representation of people with lived/living experience across all boards, tables, committees, sub-committees, action teams, and engagement opportunities.

A number of 10 Advisory Committee members noted that over time, as engagement of people with lived/living experience deepens, local champions with lived/living experience become increasingly recognized in the community. As a result, they get called on directly more often for advisory purposes by governments, businesses, non-profits, and community members seeking their advice and expertise. This helps to embed their perspectives in decision-making processes across the community.





Formal agenda and structure

Process (method)

What is the goal?
What is the focus?
What is the role?

SECTION 3

10 stories that inspire

Here are 10 stories that illustrate how CRP members are meaningfully engaging people with lived/living experience across Canada. These stories will give you a taste of how these groups are championing the 10 Really Good Ideas from Section 2.

- ① **Hamilton, ON** – Applying social-inclusion principles to Speakers Bureaus
- ② **Halifax, NS** – Fair compensation that works for all parties
- ③ **Saskatoon, SK** – Disrupting power to build inclusive practices
- ④ **Toronto, ON** – Advising the development and implementation of a municipal strategy
- ⑤ **Chatham Kent, ON** – Building on individual strengths and passions
- ⑥ **Whitehorse, YT** – A training program to explore, understand and own one’s life story
- ⑦ **Edmonton, AB** – Honouring a traditional Indigenous approach to giving and gifting
- ⑧ **Hastings-Prince Edward, ON** – Allies with lived/living experience in decision-making roles
- ⑨ **London, ON** – Authentic engagement across democratic processes and institutions
- ⑩ **Grey and Bruce Counties, ON** – Elevating community voices across rural communities

← Source: *City of Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy Office*



1 HAMILTON, ON – APPLYING SOCIAL-INCLUSION PRINCIPLES TO SPEAKERS BUREAUS

“HRPR has helped me to find my voice and to empower others to know that they are not alone.”

– Member, HRPR Speakers Bureau

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR) recognizes the importance of engaging people with lived/living experience as context experts, ensuring that they are included in civic engagement and community collaboration processes.

HRPR's budget covers participation costs for people with lived/living experience, including food, bus tickets, and childcare. It provides honorariums for engagements including speeches, presentations, and media interviews. The Roundtable also supports members to attend local and national events, workshops and conferences by covering flights, accommodation, registration fees, and per diems.

Developed to overcome social exclusion, and co-authored by people with lived/living experience, HRPR's 2009 Social Inclusion Policy aims to achieve a balance of power between those paid to do the work and those living the experience. It lays the groundwork for building respect for all parties and voices across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, and financial status. The Policy defines how the group will create welcoming meeting spaces that are sensitive to cultural needs and physical accommodations, and ensures that people with lived/living experience have seats at all decision-making tables.

← HRPR's Living Proof Speakers Bureau at the 2018 North American Basic Income Congress

In alignment with the policy, people with lived/living experience are members of all HRPR working groups and committees. Currently, two people with lived/living experience are members of their Operational Steering Committee, and a number have served as chairs, co-chairs, or members of the larger Advisory Roundtable. These inclusive structures overcome “us and them” mentalities by creating space for individuals with lived/living experience to provide direct input on local activities, programs, policies, services, and goods.

Since its inception, HRPR has created two Speakers Bureaus. Both were initiated, coordinated, and launched by people with lived/living experience of poverty. Participants were provided with up to 12 weeks of training that brought them together to share stories and build leadership and advocacy skills. Ten Speakers Bureau graduates with diverse experiences of poverty are currently rostered to present at government and community meetings, functions, trainings, and at fundraising, awareness, political, and educational events.

A number of graduates of HRPR's Speakers Bureaus now sit on community committees and boards, where they advocate for policy change around areas such as housing, mental health rights, payday lending, basic income, and social-assistance reform. One HRPR member with lived/living experience was hired as a Campaign Coordinator. This individual is actively involved in the Roundtable's systems-level efforts and has become President of a national anti-poverty organization.

2 HALIFAX, NS – FAIR COMPENSATION THAT WORKS FOR ALL PARTIES

“In many cases, people with the most profound expertise also face significant barriers to participating in formal consultation processes.”

– Jennifer Wilcox, United Way Halifax

In 2017, United Way Halifax and the Halifax Regional Municipality's Poverty Solutions embarked on a comprehensive community engagement process which aimed to raise awareness of poverty, engage community members around a shared vision, co-create solutions, and foster a sense of ownership.

Of the \$50,000 provided by the Halifax Regional Municipality for this process, approximately \$30,000 was allocated to support engagement of people with lived/living experience. Engagement sessions were hosted at times and venues convenient to participants, and clear language was used in all consultation documents.

To address barriers faced by people with lived/living experience in participating in community events, engagements, and volunteer opportunities, Poverty Solutions developed an Honarium and Additional Supports Policy. This policy stipulates how financial assistance should be provided to individuals who contribute perspectives on living in poverty, or who are experiencing financial barriers to participation and are not being otherwise compensated by an employer or agency.

In line with this policy, people with lived/living experience who participated in the engagement process received food, drinks, and bus tickets. Where public transit was not a viable option, taxi chits or gas cards were provided. Childcare was either provided on-site or was reimbursed. Poverty Solutions also provided honorariums at a living wage to participants with lived/living experience.

The processes for administering honorariums were carefully researched, designed, and implemented in partnership with a number of parties. Payments were made in cash, in order to reduce barriers for recipients who did not have access to a bank account. United Way Halifax worked with their finance department to ensure that cash was distributed in a transparent and accountable manner. For example, it was determined that one staff person would witness a second placing funds into an envelope, then both would sign off on

a tracking sheet. The group also engaged community service partners to ensure that dollars received as honorariums would not be clawed back from participants' income assistance.



↑ Poverty Solutions community consultation.
Photo credit: Sandor Photography

unitedwayhalifax.ca/what-we-do/poverty-solutions

3 SASKATOON, SK – DISRUPTING POWER TO BUILD INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

“The work of inclusion is hard. It should be hard, because it’s about doing things differently.”

– Colleen Christopherson-Cote, SPRP

The Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) is comprised of more than 70 community partners from across sectors, demographics, and experiences. The group develops evidence-based policy and practice recommendations that offer solutions identified by people who are directly impacted by poverty.

Nothing about us without us has been a principle of SPRP since its inception in 2009. The group’s Inclusion Action Team believes that to achieve this, the status quo of the way things “have always been done” must often be disrupted. In response, they have developed, implemented, and adhered to promising practices associated with building a culture of inclusion across all aspects of SPRP’s work.

SPRP recognizes that building a culture of inclusion is a relationship-based process. They understand that power-based relationships lurk at every table, and that they are perpetuated when a person with privilege imposes their norms or ideals on process. These imbalances are reflected in who speaks, when they speak, and how much they speak. SPRP works to create balance by investing significant energy in building healthy, trusting relationships between all members, and by hosting conversations where members commit to identifying and owning the power that they each bring to the table.

SPRP schedules meetings in locations that are accessible, trauma-informed, and safe for diverse

voices. They respect the histories and experiences of each person at the table, and ensure that meetings are not held in places that trigger stress for those in attendance. For example, restaurants and bars are often considered off-limits to respect partners who struggle with substances abuse. Considerations for time of day, mobility restrictions, and geographic location are also taken.

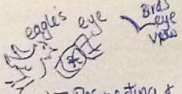
SPRP recognizes the first-hand expertise of people with lived/living experience on par with that of other experts. They equate the quality of information gleaned from colleagues with lived/living experience as equal to other forms of data, such as from academic research. The group’s Coordinator noted how people with lived/living experience “contribute critical and meaningful data to the evidence-based practices that SPRP advocates for.”

In recognition of the fact that funders sometimes underestimate the costs and value of inclusive practice, SPRP challenged their local funders to make inclusive practice a priority. The group built a mutual understanding with funders on how funding inclusive practice can level power and can support positive outcomes. Through this advocacy, the group was successful in convincing local funders to open up their financial practices, thus allowing groups to include inclusive practice in grant applications as a budget line, and therefore supporting them to adequately resource this essential aspect of their work.

MAXIMUM PERMITTED OCCUPANCY IN THIS ROOM AS PER ONTARIO FIRE CODE REG. 730-81 180

PR
 BUILD STRATEGY ON HISTORICAL CONTEXT
 Accountability
 REAL ACTION (enough to us)
 HOPE OPTIMISM (minimum)

Politics Matters

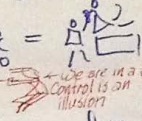


It is a disappointing experience poverty

to unlock the civic power of people with lived experience.

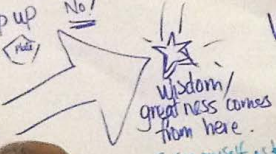
step up to PASS the buck? No!

When we collaborate, we create something new



Poverty affects EVERYBODY

conscious of the lens in which I see from / +



fight to defend social safety net - recognize rainy (days)

Open to partnerships with busi

Nothing About us without us

Courageous conversations



FRANCING against it Let's go!!

resourced to accomplish @ scale

Include INFORMED ppl with lived exp THROUGHOUT whole process



strat alignment based btm PLACE Policy + systems change

existing organized groups

Community comment back sheet

4 TORONTO, ON – ADVISING THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A MUNICIPAL STRATEGY

Toronto's poverty-reduction strategy, *TO Prosperity*, was shaped by engagements with almost 2,000 Torontonians. The Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) is one of the strategy's reinforcing accountability structures. Its coming together represents the culmination of years of input from community members who demanded better access routes for people with lived/living experience to participate in city processes.

The LEAG applies principles that puts people with lived/lived experience at its core, including: recognizing gender, race, sexual orientation, status, age, and abilities as influences on how people experience poverty; responding to diverse needs; providing residents with the power-building supports necessary to engage effectively; requiring sensitive behaviour from those who carry institutional power; promoting continuous and clear communication; and allowing new voices and new leadership to emerge.

LEAG members were elected through an open call for applications that clearly laid out the type and duration of commitment requested over a two-year term, including training, orientation, monthly meetings, and community engagements. The application identified benefits that participants would receive, including recognition, food, bus tickets, and child- and/or attendant care. It also specified that honorariums would be provided—at a rate of \$50 per meeting or \$100 per full day activity.

More than 350 applications were reviewed by City staff and volunteer residents. The 20 applicants selected for the LEAG reflect the vast diversity of perspectives and identities of Toronto. Successful applicants were orientated to City policy and budget processes, and received training in communications, conflict resolution, equity, and diversity.

LEAG members participate in a wide variety of City policy, program, and service-development processes. Acting as a conduit between City staff and communities, they organize and participate in presentations and conversations with City divisions, the private sector, community agencies, and residents.

After its first year, The LEAG developed and administered a self-evaluation designed to foster professional development, promote self-sufficiency, and improve programs. It asked members to reflect on the group's success in: creating a respectful, supportive, and empathetic environment; hosting open and honest interactions; understanding each other's perspectives without judgment; making space for people to ask questions; and achieving collaboration over competition.

The LEAG's success stems from commitment across all parties to do things systematically differently, committing to not just structure, but to an equitable and inclusive process.

← Source: *City of Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy Office*

toronto.ca/povertyreduction

5 CHATHAM KENT, ON – BUILDING ON INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND PASSIONS

“Working with people’s strengths and passions makes everyone an asset to your community.”

– Chatham-Kent Lived Experience Advisory Group

The Chatham-Kent Prosperity Roundtable recognizes that while reducing poverty is a complex challenge, working alongside those who experience it is not. They recognize the strengths and passions of colleagues with lived/living experience as the most important asset for poverty-reduction work, as these colleagues keep the work grounded in the daily realities of poverty.

In 2017, the Chatham-Kent Prosperity Roundtable established a Lived Experience Advisory Group to provide a space for people with lived/living experience to advise the Roundtable and local decision makers on poverty-related challenges in the community. The group started as a closed group, with 10 members. It held monthly meetings, with training opportunities for members available between sessions. Honorariums were provided to all members at Chatham-Kent’s living-wage rate. Transportation costs and food were also provided for each meeting and training attended.

Over its first two years, the Advisory Group has grown steadily. During this time, the group advised municipal and non-profit leaders on various projects and programs in the community and participated in large-scale affordable housing and social assistance advocacy projects.

While they enjoyed many successes, the group’s biggest challenge was finding a focus. As their work progressed, it became clear to members that their scope of work was too narrow. The Roundtable therefore began supporting

members to create projects that fit their individual strengths and passions. This resulted in the group splitting into two bodies.

The first half of the group’s members remained participants of the Lived Experience Advisory Group, which was redesigned as an open group to support the impact of individual voices. The other half of the group undertook the task of designing the curriculum for a lived/living experience leadership training program, which will support people with lived/living experience to participate as part of community decision-making committees. These members are also planning to establish a peer-support training program.

Both of the Roundtable’s groups empower individuals to enhance poverty-reduction work in Chatham-Kent in ways that are meaningful to them. While this shift created new challenges, the importance of supporting the Lived Experience Advisory group to establish a model that best amplified their individual and collective assets was clear.

By remaining flexible to its partners, the Roundtable has built the foundation for more impactful poverty-reduction work in Chatham-Kent. The group demonstrates how when work is founded on the skills and passions of people with lived/living experience, the community can grow stronger and more prosperous.

prosperityroundtable.com

6 WHITEHORSE, YT – A TRAINING PROGRAM TO EXPLORE, UNDERSTAND, AND OWN ONE’S LIFE STORY

“This group is exactly what I need right at this moment in my healing journey.”

– Participant, YAPC Influencing Change

In 2017, The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) launched Voices Influencing Change, a five-week program created to support participants to build capacity and gain opportunities to take part in decisions that affect them yet exclude them. Voices Influencing Change is open to people with lived/living experience of homelessness, poverty, and other forms of social exclusion.

With a cohort of like-minded peers, students explore, understand, and own their own life stories. They build public-speaking and leadership skills and learn to advocate for policy and systems change. Students learn to recognize the extensive knowledge they have to offer, and gain confidence in sharing their experiences, good and bad, that have shaped who they are today. Voices Influencing Change acknowledges that looking back on one’s life story can be traumatizing and triggering. A program facilitator described how they recruit and support participants who are ready to “speak from a scar, not from an open wound.”

Upon completion of the program, graduates meet every two weeks. Here, they access a network of peer support, build capacity, and are invited to participate as part of decision-making bodies such as boards. Graduates are currently supporting implementation of YAPC’s Safe at Home plan and are advocating for equitable treatment for those receiving income support. A program facilitator

commented that graduates have become a tight-knit group that has bonded around shared experiences.

Healthy lunches, bus tickets, and childcare are provided to participants for all training and follow up sessions. Participants are provided with an honorarium of \$500 for program completion, and \$100 per month for follow-up meetings and actions.

Successes of the program’s design include: having a co-facilitator with lived/living experience; hosting open discussions; and being flexible, responsive, and willing to adapt based on the strengths and assets that participants bring to the table. Graduates have expressed that the program has helped them know where to start on their healing journeys, how helping others has helped them, as well, and how they have been inspired to say and do more in the name of eradicating poverty.

Fourteen individuals were trained through the first two cohorts of the program, nine of whom remain passionately involved. Three trainings are planned for 2019, with the first receiving three times as many applications as spots available. As the community has grown familiar with the program, graduates have been increasingly called on by external partners to tell their stories and to provide advice.



7 EDMONTON, AB - HONOURING A TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS APPROACH TO GIVING AND GIFTING

"To be successful, to end poverty, this has to be a movement. It's about building a truly inclusive city for all."

– Mayor Don Iveson, City of Edmonton

EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) is committed to reconciliation and to the inclusion of voices of lived/living experience. The EPE Indigenous Circle contributes to and guides this work. The Circle is inclusive of diverse voices including those with lived/living experience, knowledge keepers, and cultural resource peoples. It encourages deep and authentic relationships, acknowledges the value of all contributions, and recognizes First Voice participants as equal partners in the goal to end poverty. The Circle understands that each person is impacted by different barriers in different ways and treats each person and situation as unique.

Circle participants developed the First Voice Inclusion and Equity Protocol in response to a recognized need to level the playing field between practitioners who were receiving payment for their time, and those who were sharing it voluntarily. It aims to eliminate stigmatization of financial barriers, for example by protecting members from having to justify their level of need or to disclose personal vulnerabilities. It also supports EPE's commitment that no individual should bear an unfair burden of participation and ensures that no one is excluded from the benefits of this participation.

The First Voice Inclusion and Equity Protocol borrows compensation and honoraria practices from Indigenous values around giving and gifting. It is based on respect for traditional Indigenous methodologies, and supports the Indigenous principle of reciprocity. In gift giving, the receiver, their family, and their ancestors are acknowledged. Appreciation is shown for the knowledge exchanged when those people with distinct abilities, such as Elders, provide guidance, advice, or assistance. Gifts include financial gifts provided at a living wage, as well as traditional foods and medicines. The Protocol is supported by an annual budget, and gifting occurs at the time of participation.

The First Voice Inclusion and Equity Protocol emphasizes that stories and experiences shared by First Voice participants provide critical insight for informing decision-making processes, research, and other endeavours. Its application demonstrates EPE's true commitment to reconciliation and to strengthening relationships with members of Edmonton's Indigenous community who have or who continue to experience poverty.

← Photo credit: Bissell Centre

endpovertyedmonton.ca/indigenous-circle

8 HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD, ON - ALLIES WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES

Formed in 2013, The Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward (HPE) was founded on the principle that solutions to poverty begin with addressing root causes in partnership with individuals who have or who are experiencing it. The Roundtable upholds the democratic right of people to participate in decisions that affect their lives and communities. They recognize that while people with lived/living experience of poverty understand it best, their power to affect change is limited.

The Roundtable engages people with lived/living experience of poverty as allies, leaders, organizers, decision makers, and contributors to action. These individuals are supported to gain power and shape local programs, services, and policies, in order to more authentically move the work forward.

People with lived/living experience of poverty engage directly as members of the Roundtable and indirectly as members of subcommittees whose advice feeds back to it. This structure aids in capturing the diverse experiences and perspectives of people living in poverty and reinforces the notion that “we are all in it together!”

A Facebook group was created by members with lived/living experience to share insights, discuss issues, and formulate collective responses to Roundtable issues.

This private space has proven effective in bringing out perspectives that some members may not have otherwise felt comfortable voicing as an individual to mixed-sector groups.

The Roundtable also hosts a Speakers Bureau that provides training, support, and creates participation opportunities for people with lived/living experience. For example, seven members from the Speakers Bureau were invited to set the agenda and make presentations at an out-of-town event. The Roundtable provided transportation, accommodation, and paid speaker fees. One member with lived/living experience expressed that this act of support made them feel genuinely valued and gave them confidence that the community was looking forward to hearing from them.

Members of the Speakers

Bureau also accompany representatives of the Roundtable at public consultations and local City Council meetings, where they co-present as delegates. The group has found that this approach of offering decision makers firsthand perspectives can be quite convincing, for example in terms of raising awareness of systemic barriers. One participant noted how they felt that a community voice is sometimes what is needed to inspire leaders to step up to change.



↑ *The Inside View* by Lee Maidlow, Artist, Advocate & 10 Advisory Committee

povertyroundtablehpe.ca

9 LONDON, ON – AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT ACROSS DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS

London is rallying around a growing resolve that “Poverty Ends Here.” The community’s strategy, *London for All*, grew out of a 2015-2016 Mayor’s Advisory Panel that engaged over 1000 Londoners to develop 112 recommendations. The strategy sets the ambitious goal of eliminating poverty within a single generation.

“Engaging people with lived experience in democratic processes and institutions,” one of the strategy’s recommendations, aims to increase the ability of people with lived/living experience to shape the future of the community. *London for All* is supported by London’s Child and Youth Network, which also has a systems-change strategy under the Ending Poverty priority that includes an initiative on ensuring the engagement of individuals with lived/living experience.

London for All recognizes that exclusion and stigma play a major role in the damage that poverty inflicts upon people’s lives. Implementation of the strategy prioritizes the voices of people with lived/living experience by: applying a rights-based, community-based, and equity-based understanding of poverty; ensuring members appropriately reflect the diversity of the community with respect to gender, sexuality, age, ability, culture, and race; and including people with lived/living experience with poverty as key decision makers at every level.

The City of London provides \$125,000 to support the implementation of *London For All*, of which \$25,000

is specifically allocated to supporting people with lived/living experience to implement the strategy. Participation expenses such as food, transportation, and childcare are covered. Compensation is paid at a rate of \$25/hour, and includes not only meeting time, but also time needed to prepare for meetings and review documents. Members with lived/living experience are able to request funds for coaching and training opportunities and are supported to attend local and out-of-town conferences and events.

London for All’s Project Manager creates learning, capacity building, mentoring, and engagement opportunities for colleagues with lived/living experience. She maintains an online list of meetings with decision makers and other community stakeholders, which Leadership Table members, Accountability Table chairs and co-chairs, and colleagues with lived/living experience can sign up to attend.

Within their first year, *London for All* had met 27 of 112 targets and had engaged more than 160 volunteers from diverse backgrounds. The group had engaged 38 individuals with lived/living experience of poverty as key decision makers, including five who are directly engaged as members of the Leadership Table. People with lived/living experience currently make up 50% of Leadership Table representation, and every Accountability Table co-chair has representation from people with lived/living experience.



10 GREY AND BRUCE COUNTIES, ON – ELEVATING COMMUNITY VOICES ACROSS RURAL COMMUNITIES

"Part of each person's story comes from the past, from where and how we live, from the people in our lives. We are all creating our future stories right now."

– Co-Chair, Bruce Grey Community Voices

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force works across 17 rural municipalities in partnership with more than 50 agencies, community groups, universities, institutes and policy makers. Members ascribe to the fundamental principle of building mutual respect across all sectors and economic classes.

The Task Force has adopted the term *grounded expertise* to refer to colleagues with lived/living experience, as it is seen as a meaningful title that is less intrusive to one's personal story, and that more explicitly affirms these individuals' equal status within the group.

Bruce Grey's Getting Ahead is an eight-week Bridges Out of Poverty program funded by Ontario Works. Offered four times per year, it supports participants to meet their basic needs, address personal challenges, and move from individual to community advocacy. The program is facilitated by graduates with grounded expertise, which creates a mentoring-style learning environment that promotes trust, respect, and open dialogue. Rural transportation barriers, such as a lack of public transit, are addressed as van transportation brings participants to sessions and taxi fares are reimbursed. Getting Ahead maintains relationships with its more than 200 graduates who are regularly invited to provide feedback on local programming and participate in local forums.

← *Community Voices Co-Chairs Tanya Butt and Renee Schlonies presenting the Equity and Inclusion position paper to the City of Owen Sound Council*

Community Voices was developed as a space for Getting Ahead graduates to come together to discuss barriers and actions, and to build collective understanding and consensus. The group advocates for equity and inclusion and envisions a poverty-free city where people living in poverty are actively involved in both city and community decision-making processes. Community Voices' co-chairs, who are also program graduates, take recommendations back to the Task Force. One member noted how this leadership structure has empowered her to speak as an equal among Managers and Directors who run the same programs and services that she accesses. Participants receive one \$25 grocery gift card for a half day engagement, and two for a full day session. As no van is available, participants must rely on friends and families for transportation to attend meetings and engagements.

While initially formed as an advisory group, Community Voices has made a name for themselves on their own merit. They have built credibility and relationships of mutual respect with influential decision makers, and the City of Owen Sound and community now reach out to engage Community Voices. The group has been involved in a number of provincial and university partnerships. They have also developed an Equity and Inclusion for People Living in Poverty policy which identifies inequities and barriers to prosperity and encourages the City of Owen Sound Council to take action on a number of local issues.

povertytaskforce.com



SECTION 4

10 really useful resources

This section includes a list of resources that can assist you in your efforts to engage people with lived/living experience in poverty reduction. They include tools, guides, case studies, protocols, and policies. Access these resources online at tamarackcommunity.ca/library/ten-2019.

- ① Social Inclusion Policy: Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- ② A Guide to Creating a Culture of Inclusion: Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership
- ③ Toronto Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG): Application Form
- ④ A Case Study in Authentic Engagement: Poverty Solutions Halifax
- ⑤ First Voice Protocol: EndPovertyEdmonton
- ⑥ Creating Community: Hastings Prince Edward Poverty Roundtable
- ⑦ Lived Experience as Expertise: Regional Municipality of Waterloo
- ⑧ Nothing About Us Without Us: Lived Experience Advisory Council
- ⑨ Lived Experience in Paid Staff Roles: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- ⑩ Rights-Based Participation and Accountability in Canada's National Housing Strategy

1 SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY: HAMILTON ROUNDTABLE FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Creating a healthier and more inclusive Hamilton

This policy addresses the inclusion of all citizens involved in the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction process of community engagement. It is framed by five principles: a level field of involvement reflecting equality and social integration; diversity of citizen representation including in civic engagement and community collaboration; strengthening and utilizing people's skill sets to enhance the collaborative experience; fostering human growth and development; and ensuring, promoting, and celebrating engagement. It also includes a helpful appendix on budget considerations.

2 A GUIDE TO CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION: SASKATOON POVERTY REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

Nothing about us without us

The perspectives of people with lived/living experience were integral to this practical guide, which was written for community groups and employers to include people with lived/living experience of poverty in their work. The wisdom of Saskatoon's Inclusion Action Team was engaged to capture stories, learnings, and examples of how people with lived/living experience can enrich community through policy and practice, and to offer organizations ideas for designing effective, relevant services and programs.

3 TORONTO LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP (LEAG): APPLICATION FORM

Informing a municipal poverty reduction strategy

Members of Toronto's LEAG use their personal lived/living experience with the realities, conditions, and impacts of living with poverty to inform implementation of the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The LEAG application form exemplifies some of the considerations that cities should take in recruiting to ensure that groups are diverse and representative of those living in poverty. It lays out eligibility and time requirements and specifies training opportunities, compensation, and how personal information will be protected.

4 A CASE STUDY IN AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT: POVERTY SOLUTIONS HALIFAX

A learning journey

This case study tells the story of Halifax's comprehensive community engagement strategy—one that can help other organizations design their own inclusive processes. Intentionally designed to co-create solutions based on input from diverse community members, this case study reflects on pitfalls of implementation and discusses how the group "failed forward" from listening to action. Key learnings include: plans and processes must be flexible and adaptive to new information, being open to tough feedback is an important part of the journey, and relationships are key—even over targets and deadlines.

5 **FIRST VOICE PROTOCOL: ENDPOVERTYEDMONTON**

Inclusion, equity and participation

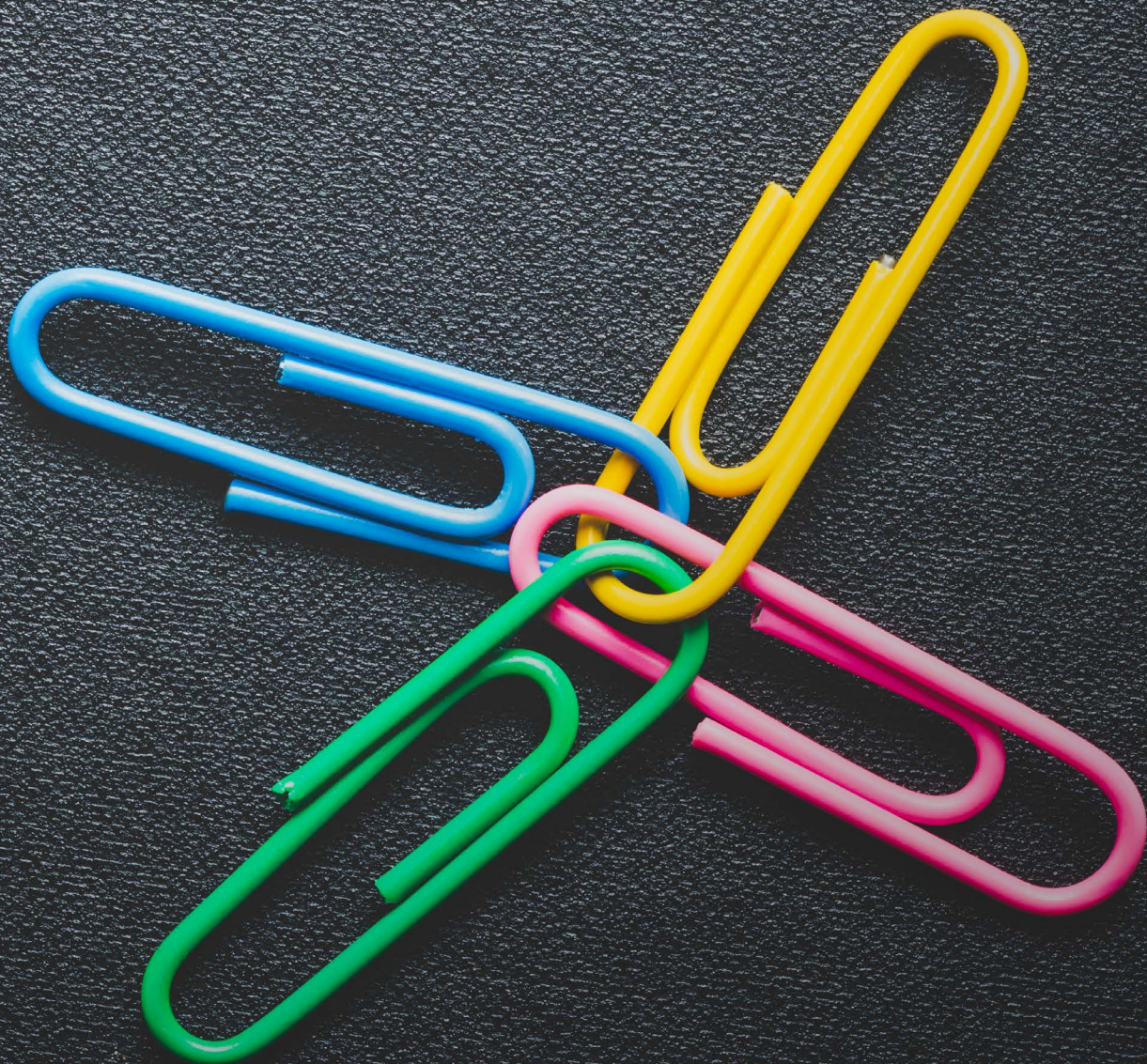
The Indigenous Circle First Voice Inclusion and Participation Equity protocol is based on the principle of participation equity that no individual should either bear an unfair burden of participation or be unfairly excluded from benefits of participation. It ensures that those with financial limitations are recognized as equal partners and have equal opportunity to share their wisdom. The protocol stipulates how people with lived/living experience will be equitably compensated for their time with respect to administration of financial and traditional gifting.

6 **CREATING COMMUNITY: HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD POVERTY ROUNDTABLE**

A tool for engagement

This practical tool was written to assist organizations to reflect on their potential to create opportunities for full engagement. It highlights the need to recognize people with lived/living experience as allies, leaders, organizers, decision makers and contributors to action. This tool challenges every group to create change by strengthening relationships, shifting power and reducing barriers, and to engage people with lived/living experience in decisions that guide the programs, services and policies that impact them.





7 LIVED EXPERIENCE AS EXPERTISE: REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WATERLOO

Developing an advisory group

No one-size-fits-all approach exists to developing advisory groups of people with lived/living experience. This manual discusses how expertise, preferences, and passions of group members combined with the unique needs of the broader community must be considered throughout a group's planning, development, and maintenance. Considerations include collaborative decision making and flexibility. It contains an example of a group Terms of Reference (ToR) and covers preparation, recruitment, meetings, facilitation, logistics, food, documentation, and sustainability.

8 NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US: LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Seven principles for leadership and inclusion

This document supports service providers, researchers, policy makers and people with lived/living experience to work together as equals. It features seven principles of First Voice inclusion: bringing the perspective of lived/living experience to the forefront; including people with lived/living experience at all levels of an organization; valuing time and providing appropriate supports; challenging stigma, confronting oppression, and promoting dignity; recognizing expertise and engagement in decision making; working toward equitable representation; and building authentic relationships between people with and without lived/living experience.

9 LIVED EXPERIENCE IN PAID STAFF ROLES: CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Paid staff roles in Housing First

This webinar recording explores how to involve people with lived/living experience in paid roles when implementing Housing First. It covers: getting an organization ready to involve people with lived/living experience in paid roles; hiring, training, and supporting staff with lived/living experience; the perspectives from staff with lived/living experience; issues to anticipate with staff with lived/living experience; and promoting an inclusive environment for staff with lived/living experience.

10 RIGHTS-BASED PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN CANADA'S NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY: EMILY PARADIS

A human rights-based approach to housing

This submission from Emily Paradis draws upon sources from scholarly literature, human rights experts, and people with lived/living experience of homelessness to develop a framework for a human rights-based approach to housing and homelessness in Canada. It reports back on consultations with lived/living experts in five Canadian cities on four topics relevant to rights-based participation and accountability in the National Housing Strategy: inclusive processes, access to justice, support for local initiatives, and representation.

SECTION 5

10 ways to get started

Here are 10 ways you can get started on your path to meaningfully engaging people with lived/living experience in poverty reduction.

1 COMMIT TO ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE

Self-reflect with your group on how ready, willing, and committed you are to adopting an inclusive approach. Identify who is missing at the table, barriers that you may inadvertently be creating, and ways that you can level power dynamics and advance inclusion across your current structures, processes, and activities.

2 CREATE A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Brainstorm with your group around how you plan to build diversity, equity, and participation. Commit to using inclusive language, to be patient and understanding, and to building trust and mutual respect. Define how your group will create safer spaces where everybody feels comfortable and where diverse perspectives are heard.

3 RECRUIT PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE

In inviting people with lived/living experience to engage, be mindful to keep application and engagement requirements and processes flexible and accessible. Define the time, duration, and type of commitment requested, and be clear about what training and compensation you will provide and what outcomes can be expected.

4 DESIGN MEETINGS WITH PEOPLE IN MIND

Schedule in-person meetings in physically accessible venues at convenient times where attendees feel comfortable. Start meetings with an appropriate opening, such as a land acknowledgement, and create a welcoming environment where members can introduce themselves and get to know each other.

5 COMPENSATE PARTICIPATION-RELATED EXPENSES

Eliminate financial barriers for people with lived/living experience to participate in poverty-reduction group meetings and other community engagements, for example by providing directly or by reimbursing costs of food, transportation, childcare, and other services as required.

6 CONSIDER HOW YOU WILL LEVERAGE RESOURCES

Recognize that resourcing is needed for a group to be successful. Identify ways that you can make resourcing inclusive practice a priority, include it as a budget line, and work with local funders, partners, and champions to leverage financial resources needed to ensure that everyone at the table is equitably compensated.

7 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE

Create opportunities for people with lived/living experience to inform poverty-reduction processes and activities, for example through autonomous spaces (e.g. Speakers Bureaus and advisory groups) and as part of a group's existing structures (e.g. boards, tables, committees, and teams).

8 BUILD CAPACITY

Create training opportunities that promote trust, teamwork, and collaboration within poverty-reduction groups, and that support people with lived/living experience to participate more deeply. Topics of interest may include diversity, equity, leadership, communication, and advocacy.

9 SET GOALS

Aim to grow diversity of representation within your group, for example across ethnic, cultural, and gender identities, and across Indigenous, immigrant, and disability status. Plan how you can deepen meaningful engagement of people with lived/living experience across all of your group's structures, processes, and activities.



10 JOIN VIBRANT COMMUNITIES: CITIES REDUCING POVERTY

Join this collaborative network of peers who are eager to share their experience with you. Our learning community supports more than 70 local initiatives representing more than 300 municipalities that come together to share ideas, resources, and strategies. Learn more at:

tamarackcommunity.ca/citiesreducingpoverty



MOVING FORWARD

Toward a Better Tomorrow

Over the last two decades, through my pioneering action research with Opportunities 2000 and Vibrant Communities, I have witnessed firsthand how a multi-sector, comprehensive, asset-based approach to tackling complex issues can positively impact the lives of families and individuals living in poverty. One of the key findings of this work is how *integral* it is for people with lived/living experience of poverty to have equal representation on multi-sector leadership roundtables along with individuals from government, business, and the charity sector.

We know that poverty-reduction groups benefit from having the perspectives of lived/living experience to make decisions and guide their strategy. Having the right people engaged from the start helps everyone own the process, which in turn helps the group work more efficiently toward a shared vision. This is why we have collected the stories and ideas presented in this guide—to help you work more effectively and efficiently through the shared real-life experiences of Cities Reducing Poverty members.

For example, for the past few years, I have worked with Cities Reducing Poverty members from the United Way of Central Iowa and their local partners to organize around the goal of having 70% of Central Iowans financially self-sufficient by 2020. A key factor in how they developed the *OpporUNITY Fighting Poverty Together* strategy was to invite and support people with low incomes to lead on the work. Over two years, people who were experiencing poverty helped guide the initiatives that were put in place, and identified roadblocks and challenges that may have otherwise been overlooked.

In just two years, the project has helped 25,000 Iowans out of poverty and 67% of Central Iowans are financially self-sufficient. Clearly, making social inclusion a priority can have profound benefits for the wider community.

As you flip through this guide and reflect on your organization or poverty-reduction groups' inclusion practices, I must ask for one more thing: that you have courage to see past the challenges of working with people who appear to be different, and look into every person's heart to see the strengths, talents, wisdom, and ambitions that they bring to the table. At the end of the day, we are all human.

I have met and worked with thousands of people to build better cities and communities and have found we all have three things in common, regardless of social class, political approaches, faith-based beliefs, or cultural understandings: we want to live in a safe and nurturing place; we want opportunity for ourselves and our children; and we want to live in an equitable, democratic world.

My experience is that even if people have vastly different views, we are far more the same than we are different. What we need is the opportunity to meet each other, to have a conversation from the heart, and to embrace each other's stories. After all, you never fear someone whose stories you know.

Let's lean in, listen closely to one another, and create the conditions for inclusion. Together, we can build more vibrant communities and all benefit in the process.

PAUL BORN

Founder and Co-CEO, Tamarack Institute

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Cities Reducing Poverty

Connecting local poverty reduction efforts through national support since 2002.

One of the ways the Tamarack Institute turns theory into practice is through Vibrant Communities' Cities Reducing Poverty, which has been building an extensive network of connected cities with local poverty-reduction strategies since 2002.

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

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

Today, local poverty-reduction efforts are being bolstered by the federal government's release of Canada's first poverty-reduction strategy, *Opportunity for All*, as well as provincial and territorial strategies and efforts to reduce poverty.

For a look at our current membership visit tamarackcommunity.ca/citiesreducingpoverty.

"Tamarack's Vibrant Communities' Cities Reducing Poverty network builds, holds, and transfers knowledge and key information and keeps all players connected. This function as a wide-reaching organizational backbone and umbrella truly keeps the work moving forward."

– Kerri Wall, Cranbrook BC

"Being a member of this national body offers added credibility to the work we do and enables us to see the broader picture of poverty reduction across the country. The access to learning, support, and current resources enables us to feel strengthened in our work while the opportunity to participate in something bigger reinforces us when we feel we are working in isolation."

– Dianna Souveny, Red Deer AB

Strengthening our collective ability to fight systemic poverty

Tamarack's Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty (VC-CRP) is a collective impact movement and network aimed at reducing poverty through the place-based efforts of multi-sector roundtables and the alignment of strategies at the municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal levels.

VC-CRP's primary purpose is to ensure that local poverty-reduction initiatives are successful. We aim to make the work of Cities Reducing Poverty easier and

more effective, with a focus on four areas of impact: supporting members to grow from concept to sustainability; developing a common agenda and community plan; tracking and reporting on outcomes; and achieving financial and leadership sustainability.

Every year more cities join this growing movement, thereby strengthening our ability to collectively learn from one another and effectively reduce and eradicate systemic poverty in our communities.

Join 70 local poverty-reduction initiatives representing more than 300 local municipalities in the fight against poverty, and become part of our incredible peer-learning community. The Vibrant Communities team is here to support your local goals. Your success is our success!

Vibrant Communities Canada offers Cities Reducing Poverty members access to:

- A regional Manager of Cities
- Tamarack's Expert Coaching Centre
- An extensive peer network of experienced convenors
- Annual summits and gatherings
- Online webinars and communities of practice
- Subscriptions to newsletters and policy digests
- Publications, articles, case studies, tools, and guides

CITIES REDUCING POVERTY | CITIES DEEPENING COMMUNITY
Vibrant Communities



tamarackcommunity.ca/citiesreducingpoverty

This guide celebrates the potential that can be unlocked when people with lived/living experience are included and empowered to drive antipoverty work. It was developed to highlight leading practices, inspire new thinking, and serve as a reminder of how critical engagement of these individuals in poverty reduction truly is.

While written primarily for Vibrant Communities' Cities Reducing Poverty members, this guide is applicable to all collaboratives that are interested in building inclusiveness within their group's structures, processes, and practices.

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