



CALGARY
FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNITY, FOREVER

POVERTY REDUCTION IMPACT REPORT

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honour and acknowledge Moh'kinsstis, and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Stoney Nakoda Nations: Chiniki, Bearspaw, Goodstoney and Tsuut'ina Nation. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 and 6. Finally, we acknowledge all Nations – Indigenous and non – who live, work and play on this land, and who honour and celebrate this territory.

This sacred gathering place provides us with an opportunity to engage in and demonstrate leadership on reconciliation. Thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment to join our team on the lands of Treaty 7 territory.

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WHO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY ON THIS LAND AND HELP
STEWARD, HONOUR AND CELEBRATE THIS TERRITORY.

VITAL PRIORITIES

In 2015, Calgary Foundation initiated a collaborative re-examination of issues facing community to ensure current and emerging needs were effectively being addressed, and add strategic focus, alignment and impact to our collective work. Through multi-pronged consultation and extensive analysis of research, five vital priority areas were identified that require increased leadership, profile and innovative solutions:

1. Reducing Poverty
2. Encouraging Mental Health
3. Living a Creative Life
4. Pursuing a Sustainable Future
5. Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities

These priorities contribute to Calgary Foundation's vision that we exist to nurture a healthy, vibrant, giving and caring community that values diversity and supports all people, a community where citizens are engaged, and where a strong and sustainable charitable sector serves the current and emerging needs of the community.

Since that time, Calgary Foundation has thoughtfully examined its contribution in each of these priority areas as we made grants to community, supported capacity building opportunities, and developed learning initiatives designed to enhance and build on lessons along the way. As a learning organization, Calgary Foundation recognizes the importance of meaningful reflection on progress to help develop a path forward.

What is a learning Organization?

A learning organization continuously adapts to the changing environment and facilitates ongoing development and learning amongst staff. Originally coined by notable author Peter Senge, a learning organization, "is a group of people working together collectively to enhance their capacities to create results they really care about."¹

Calgary Foundation recognizes that our grants make an important difference to community, but as a community foundation, we can't ignore the work that also needs to be done at systems-level. We understand that our role must evolve to tackle some tough questions about the health of our community if we truly want to build it forever. Our evaluation process considers these tough questions and examines the changes in community through the process known as Outcome Harvesting.

Calgary Foundation is committed to being a learning organization. The Foundation is a place where people continually grow and develop their abilities to achieve their goals. A learning organization emphasizes five key disciplines: systems thinking (seeing the big picture), personal mastery (individual growth), mental models (challenging assumptions), shared vision (common goals), and team learning (collective growth). A learning organization fosters continuous improvement, retains talented employees, enhances collaboration, adapts to change and boosts overall performance, making it more dynamic, innovative, and resilient in a rapidly changing environment.

Allison Shulz, VP Capacity Building

WHAT IS AN OUTCOME HARVEST

Outcome Harvesting is unlike other evaluation methods as it does not measure progress towards a certain goal, but “collects evidence and works backwards to understand complex change dynamics, and contributions brought to it by a variety of inputs.”

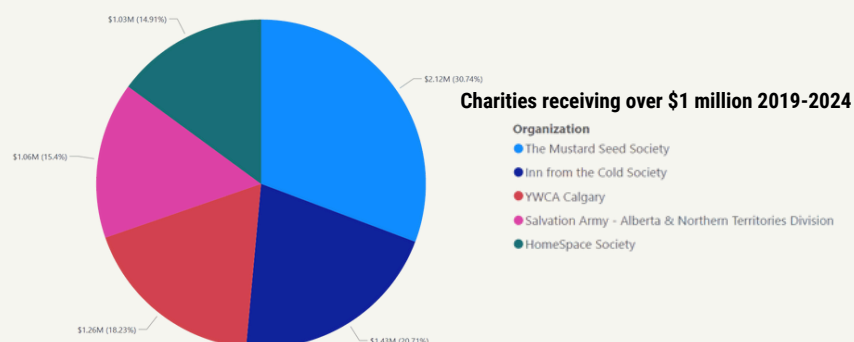
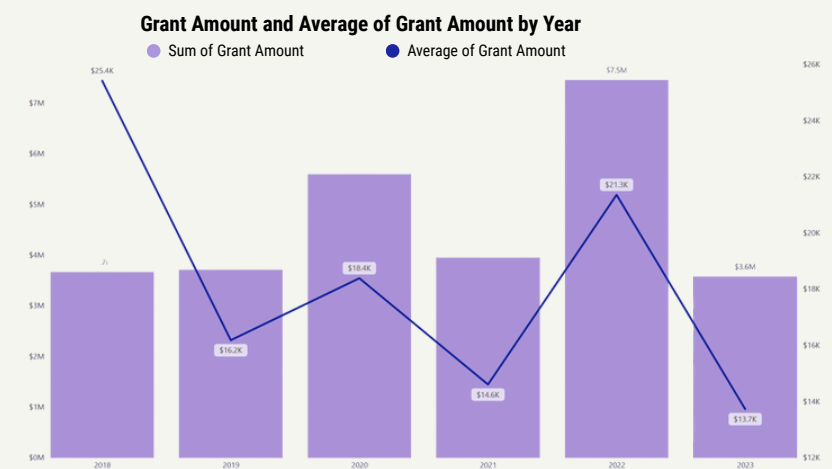
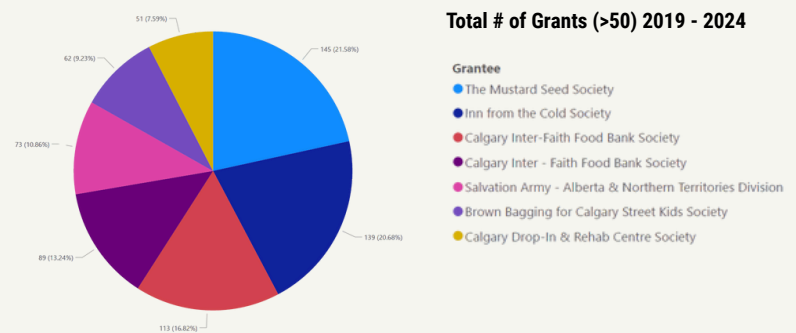
This reflective approach allows staff to examine a large amount of varied data across thematic areas. As it's been 10 years since the Vital Priorities were identified, another benefit to the Outcome Harvest model is its usefulness as a 'developmental evaluation' tool, a model that supports innovation and adaptation in a complex environment, and an approach that works well as Calgary Foundation examines these priorities to shape future strategies.

Poverty Reduction Evaluation

Process: To guide the questions that would help gain deeper insights and surface common areas of change, Calgary Foundation used a reflective approach to review grants to poverty reduction projects and organizations between the years 2019-2024. Utilizing a process known as substantiation, frontline organizations reviewed the Calgary Foundation's initial findings to consider statements and provide corrections and additional context. The substantiation process was completed through one-on-one interviews with local organizations.

According to the Canadian Revenue Agency, the relief of poverty, “means to bring relief to those experiencing poverty. People experiencing poverty are those who lack the basic necessities of life or simple amenities available to the general population.”

When Calgary Foundation established the Vital Priorities, the Foundation's vision for poverty reduction was “Calgary is a city where all citizens thrive, and the root causes of poverty are addressed.” Since 2015, much has changed on the landscape of reducing poverty, the economy has fluctuated multiple times, political parties have come and gone, and the world went through the COVID-19 pandemic. All of these shifts have affected Calgary and its residents, the charities and non-profits working with community, and our efforts in poverty reduction.

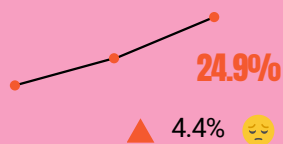


CHAMPION OF THE ENOUGH FOR ALL CAMPAIGN

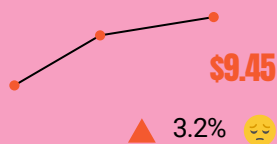
As an Amplifier Champion, Calgary Foundation supports Calgary's Enough for All 2.0 campaign and the overall collective strategy that will reduce the number of Calgarians living in poverty. Calgary Foundation will:

- Strive to model the 9 principles within the strategy
- Advance systemic and policy changes required in achieving the aspirational goals of Enough for All 2.0
- Educate and deepen awareness of the impact of poverty
- Spotlight and celebrate success
- Share learning from failed initiatives

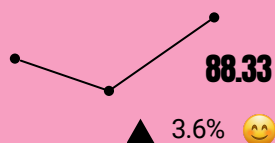
FOOD INSECURITY (2022)



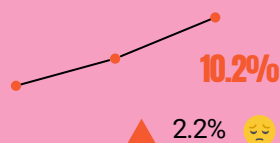
LIVING WAGE GAP (2024)



FINANCIAL HEALTH (2024)



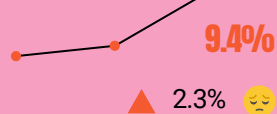
POVERTY RATE (2022)



AFFORDABLE HOUSING GAP (2020)



UNMET HEALTH NEEDS (2022)



FIVE YEAR REFLECTION

Increased Organizational Capacity

Over the past five years, local organizations have significantly enhanced their operational capacity to better serve the community in reducing poverty. These enhancements encompass both strategic capacities, such as strategic planning and staff training, and capital improvements, including website development and communication materials. Grantees emphasized the value of capacity building, not only for immediate outcomes but for long-term success. Staff and Board development were identified as key contributors to the sustainability of the organization and its programs. Leveraging technology to add capacity when staffing numbers are limited is an important strategy to meet more clients. The benefit of these efforts is that organizations are better equipped with the tools and knowledge to address the needs of their clients and the broader community.

Calgary Foundation assisted in this development by offering flexible funding options to suit organizational needs. Smaller organizations are able to apply for funding to support new and expanded programming, existing programming, and capacity building needs. The suite of grant programs is conducive to short-term organizational and programmatic development and longer-term planning and implementation.

The data/visuals were sourced from the Enough for All Well-Being Dashboard, built by Vibrant Communities Calgary and YYC Data Society Community Datahub.

POVERTY REDUCTION & WELLNESS

In the last five years, poverty reduction efforts have become intertwined with individual mental and physical wellness that encompasses the skills and tools to live and thrive in southern Alberta. These wellness building efforts include financial literacy and management, family and individual resiliency, and strong ties in community connection.

Success comes from building skills and 'social capital' that allows community members to improve and maintain their quality of life. Social capital (vs economic capital) is about building a network of social connections (not social media) that includes friends, work colleagues, and family. Social capital is the depth of connection that increases an individual's resilience when assistance is needed and times when an individual can help others. It is the glue that holds communities together. Social capital can build community resilience.

Grant recipients built strong partnerships with other charities, non-profits, and community groups to ensure that these efforts are individually designed and culturally appropriate. Language and modesty needs are met through relationship and awareness building. Calgary Foundation contributed to this change by becoming a relationship-focused funder with grants staff exploring new ways for charities to apply for funding, adopting software options to allow for easier communications, and focusing on helping charities draft effective applications.

Calgary Foundation staff offer assistance for both capacity building and racial equity and Reconciliation strategies.

Increasing Complex Needs

In the last five years, the needs of those experiencing poverty, addiction, and homelessness have become increasingly challenging due to a rapidly changing world. The COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation, massive swings in inflation, and political turbulence across the globe compounded the complex needs of those in community.

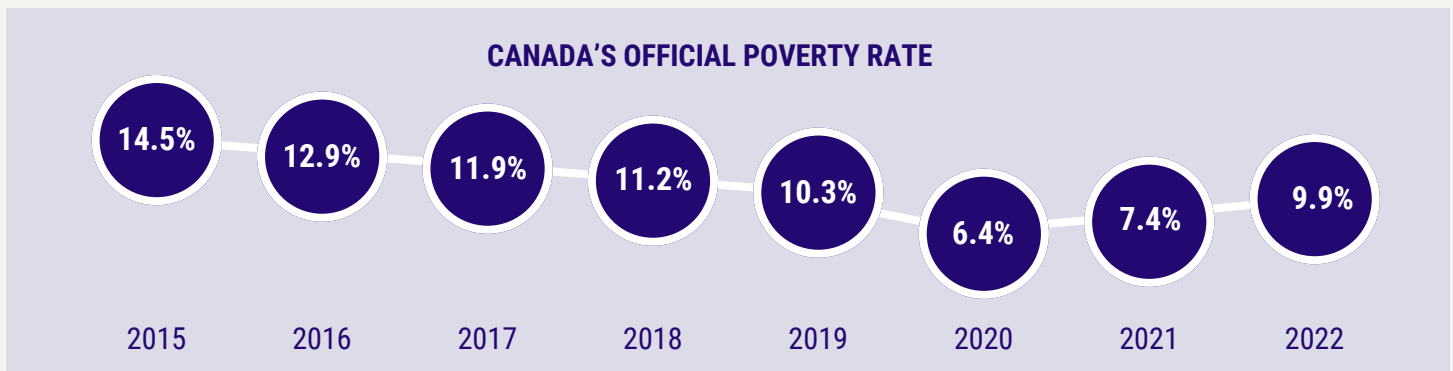
One charity stated that the term "poverty reduction" creates a lot of assumptions about an individual's personal wellness. "It is the context, not the person" was a common theme through all of the interviews. Many charities are taking the strength-based approach to assisting their community members that focuses on a person's strengths and potential, rather than their deficits. This holistic approach can be used in many settings, including social work, healthcare, and education. "We are building on the good" stated one interviewed charity. Approaching skill-building with dignity and a strength-based lens helps individuals build a better life. Several charities mentioned increasing social capital had a positive effect on an individual's optimism of their future.



POVERTY REDUCTION & POLITICS

Over the past five years, the Canadian government has taken many steps to reduce poverty.

Launched in 2018, the Opportunity for All strategy aimed to reduce poverty by 20% by 2020 and by 50% by 2030 relative to 2015 levels. Some key initiatives included the enhanced Canada Child Benefit, and the Canada Workers Benefit which have contributed to a notable decrease in poverty rates, especially among families. Closer to Calgary, the Alberta government has implemented several measures to combat poverty in the last five years including the introduction of the Alberta Child Benefit and the increase and indexing of income supports. Despite these initiatives, reports indicate that poverty is on the rise. Over this period, Calgary Foundation support has focused on funding programs that alleviate symptoms of poverty as well as advocacy efforts by charities seeking to influence government policy.



Charities working in poverty reduction recognize that data collection is a critical element towards influencing policy. As one charity reports “we are not fighting poverty, it’s too big, we are fighting against scarcity, that’s something we can work towards”. To collectively address community concerns, charities are working in collaboration to collect and share current data with the intention that governmental organizations will consider the data as further programs are developed and launched at provincial and federal levels.

Canada's Official Poverty Dashboard of Indicators

Trends, April 2024

Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy introduced the Official Poverty Line for Canada and a dashboard of 12 indicators to track progress on poverty reduction for Canadians and their households.

Indicator	Most recent value	Previous value	Trend	Percentage change	Reference periods
Deep income poverty (Persons whose family disposable income is below 75% of Canada's Official Poverty Line)	5.0%	3.6%	▲	+38.9%	2021 to 2022
Unmet housing needs and chronic homelessness - Unmet housing needs	10.1%	12.7%	▼	-20.5%	2016 to 2021
Unmet health needs (Persons 15 years and older who reported not receiving health care when they felt they needed it)	9.2%	7.9%	▲	+16.5%	2021 to 2022
Food insecurity (Persons living in households that reported moderate or severe food insecurity)	16.9%	12.9%	▲	+31.0%	2021 to 2022
Relative low income (Persons living in households whose median after-tax income is below half the Canadian median after-tax income)	11.9%	10.6%	▲	+12.3%	2021 to 2022
Bottom 40 percent income share (Share of total after-tax income held by the population in the bottom 40% of the income distribution)	21.1%	21.8%	▼	-3.2%	2021 to 2022
Youth engagement (Persons aged 15 to 24 who were not in employment, education or training)	9.0%	9.6%	▼	-6.3%	2022 to 2023
Literacy and numeracy - Low literacy (15-year-olds) - Low numeracy (15-year-olds)	18.1% 21.6%	13.8% 16.3%	▲ ▲	+31.2% +32.5%	2018 to 2022 2018 to 2022
Median hourly wage - All - Women - Men	\$28.75 \$26.44 \$30.77	\$28.05 \$25.98 \$31.04	▲ ▲ ▼	+2.5% +1.8% -0.9%	2022 to 2023 2022 to 2023 2022 to 2023
Average poverty gap (Average shortfall below Canada's Official Poverty Line for those living in poverty, expressed as a percentage of the poverty line)	32.4%	31.6%	▲	+2.5%	2021 to 2022
Asset resilience (People who are able to cover unexpected expenses or reduced income, by drawing from assets [e.g., a bank account] for a period of three months)	67.1%	66.6%	▲	+0.8%	2016 to 2019
Low income entry and exit rates - Entry rates (All persons) - Exit rates (Persons in low income)	5.5% 29.1%	3.4% 39.7%	▲ ▼	+61.8% -26.7%	2019/2020 to 2020/2021 2019/2020 to 2020/2021

- The indicators based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM) use the 2018 base.
- The concepts and dimensions of poverty are dened in detail in Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy.

[Source](#)

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the main strengths of the Outcome Harvest approach is the opportunity to connect with charities serving community and test the assumptions of change in community.

The Outcome Harvest also highlighted the importance of prevention and stabilization in programming. Carrying over the importance of context, individuals also need to have a stable environment (financially and socially) in order to move onto (or into) programming designed to improve one's life skills. Funding that only focuses on preventative programming inevitably leads to communities 'falling through the cracks' when individuals are beyond the preventive measures and facing new, complex, needs. Funding organizations (government and otherwise) have to collaborate to better understand the ebbs and flows of community needs.

The topic of funders needing to work together was a reoccurring theme. With charities and other organizations often focused on how to best collaborate and serve community, funders should be taking a similar approach. While there are existing 'funding tables', funding organizations should consider how to share data in open platforms. This approach can help the broader community further understand the complexity of poverty reduction; including what efforts are making a difference, where additional help is needed, and how to best work together.