MULTI - DISCIPLINARY AND OUTREACH ECOSYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION

That the June 19, 2023, Community Services report CS01453, be received for information.

Requested Council Action	Information Only

ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	**ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals**
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	**Healthy City**

City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	**Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities**	Community Safety and Wellbeing
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	- Community Safety and Wellbeing - Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Update - Updated Affordable Housing Strategy		
Related Council Discussions	- CS01637, Enhanced Encampment and Unsheltered Homelessness Response Plan, Community and Public Services Committee, April 11, 2023 - CS01762, Edmonton's Approach: Supporting Those Experiencing Homelessness, Community and Public Services Committee, May 1, 2023 - Upcoming - CS01673, Updated Affordable Housing Strategy, Community and Public Services Committee, October 30, 2023		

Previous Council/Committee Action

The following motion was passed at the August 15/17, 2022, City Council Meeting:

7.5
ROUTING - Community and Public Services Committee | DELEGATION - J. Flaman / S. Gellatly / C. Kjenner / H. Quan
June 19, 2023, Community Services CS01453

1

MULTI - DISCIPLINARY AND OUTREACH ECOSYSTEM

That Administration provide a report that outlines and maps the landscape of multidisciplinary teams in the city, their results to date, effectiveness, governance structures, funding sources, interactions with each other, and other formal and informal organizations and networks bodies in the ecosystem, and opportunities for greater alignment and consistency, to supplement the progress report for Healthy Streets Operation Centre.

Executive Summary

- The outreach landscape is made up of a variety of unique programs that have a significant impact on social service delivery to many populations, including vulnerable people.

- Outreach teams provide value in a number of ways, but primarily they keep the most vulnerable populations safe and alive, connected to community and more dignified, and better equipped to navigate social services systems. Typically, services are delivered using one of three models: proactive, targeted or hybrid.

- Expectations for the outreach system should reflect the limitations of what the services can reasonably deliver. The barriers faced by outreach organizations are much the same as those experienced by other social services: staff capacity, service capacity, communication with enforcement, funding, burnout, and client transiency.

- Administration will continue to support collaborative conversations with outreach services to aid in their future success. Informed by these types of conversations, Administration identified how to aid the multidisciplinary and outreach ecosystem in Edmonton.

REPORT

Outreach is a practice conducted by outreach workers who meet clients where they are and prioritize relationship-building, with the aim to develop a sense of trust that can be leveraged to connect people to services, such as healthcare or housing support. Outreach services grew in prominence to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the purposes of this report, the scope of work is focused on outreach teams that work with vulnerable people who are less likely to engage with formalized services, or vulnerable people who are focused on their daily survival. These outreach programs respond to barriers to service, to address systemic issues such as encampments or drug poisoning, or are focused on a location that is frequented by vulnerable people but lacks internal resources to respond to them appropriately (eg. a shopping centre or library).

While outreach teams exist in many models, the programs referenced in this report all work with people who are experiencing homelessness — and often sleeping rough — as well as those who engage in high-risk behaviours and/or experience crises in public.

Types of Outreach

Although the outreach ecosystem is complex and features a multitude of programs with individualized mandates, there are generally three models of outreach:

MULTI - DISCIPLINARY AND OUTREACH ECOSYSTEM

1) Proactive Outreach

Proactive outreach helps vulnerable people stay safe and stay alive. It ensures that people have access to the necessities of life (e.g., food and clothing) and the means to stay as safe as possible when they are experiencing a crisis or emergency (homelessness, mental health, etc.) or engaging in high-risk activities (using drugs or sex work).

The major characteristics of proactive outreach include:

- Working quickly and responding to crises with communities of vulnerable people rather than supporting any one person;
- Operating within geographic areas or locations with pronounced need;
- Providing information on resources, contact information of service providers, and advice on system navigation but with limited capacity for individualized follow-up, and;
- Emphasizing quantitative data collection (e.g., how many overdoses were overturned; how many safe supplies were distributed, etc).

2) Targeted Outreach (Case Management)

Targeted outreach workers engage more intensively with a caseload of people who need support with system navigation. It focuses on offering case management, similar to what is offered on site at social service agencies, to those who do not access such agencies.

Targeted outreach workers typically:

- Work at a setting convenient for their participants (e.g., at an encampment or coffee shop) and transport and accompany participants to appointments;
- Receive participants through an established referral source;
- Connect participants to resources, such as acquiring identification, securing a regular income, accessing health services, legal supports, and housing;
- Focus on individual participants in their caseloads regardless of their whereabouts rather than proactively engaging whole communities of people or a certain location; and
- Keep qualitative case notes with relevant personal information and report on the resources they were able to help acquire.

3) Hybrid Outreach

Outreach programs can also engage in both proactive and targeted outreach. Hybrid outreach teams assertively canvass a geographical location to help people meet their immediate needs while also accepting interested individuals onto a caseload for more intensive system navigation.

Some outreach programs are hybrid by design, a benefit for the participant who does not need to wait for a targeted worker to become available and then developing trust in this new interaction. Other programs become hybrid because there is not enough capacity amongst targeted outreach workers to accept all the referrals from the proactive workers, or because of overlapping organizational mandates or unclear expectations from funders. Targeted outreach requires the time intensive management of a caseload of people, creating limits to the capacity of a targeted outreach worker. Considering the expectations of funders and system partners, it is important to

strike a balance between referrals from the proactive outreach workers and the capacity of the targeted outreach workers in a hybrid model.

The Outreach Ecosystem in Edmonton

Programs

Administration engaged 17 agencies with funded outreach programs and three unfunded mutual aid[1] groups (see Attachment 1). The results from these consultations underscored the breadth of the outreach landscape. The 17 funded organizations operate 23 outreach programs with 165 total outreach full-time equivalent employees (FTEs)s and involvement from 13 unique funders.[2] The largest program (Crisis Diversion) had 32 outreach FTEs, while the smallest (University of Alberta) had one FTE. One mutual aid group reported more than 100 volunteers.

SYSTEM RESPONSE	LOCATION BASED	HOUSING	HEALTH	BASIC NEEDS/ CONNECTIONS
Teams that are part of a larger effort to address emergent issues, such as encampments or transit safety.	Teams that focus on a certain geographic area.	Teams that focus on securing appropriate housing for people experiencing homelessness and/or supporting them to retain it.	Teams that support people struggling with mental health and/or substance use as well as overdose and harm reduction programs.	Teams that ensure people have access to core necessities as well as liaising with businesses.

Each of these programs is involved in one of the three outreach types detailed above: Proactive, Targeted, or Hybrid, with a focus on one of five following categories:

Overall, there are nine proactive teams, six targeted teams and 11 hybrid teams. The health category has the highest number of programs, many of which are proactive and oriented around safer drug use and overdose prevention/response, and have recently expanded due to the impacts of drug-poisoning.

Outreach Funders

There are currently six primary funders[3] of outreach programs in Edmonton that collectively account for 16 of the 23 programs and 150 of the 165 FTEs in the outreach ecosystem[4]. Of the six primary funders, the City of Edmonton is the top funder, with funded contracts for a total of 42 FTEs across six programs. For the purposes of this report, funders have been defined as organizations, governments, etc. that directly fund outreach team FTEs. The City of Edmonton funds six programs directly that have 42 outreach FTES, but also contributes overarching funding

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[1] Mutual aid groups are generally understood to be grassroots, volunteer-led groups engaged in collective action to address community needs. (CS01174, Mutual Aid Organizations, Jun 27/22 Community and Public Services Committee)
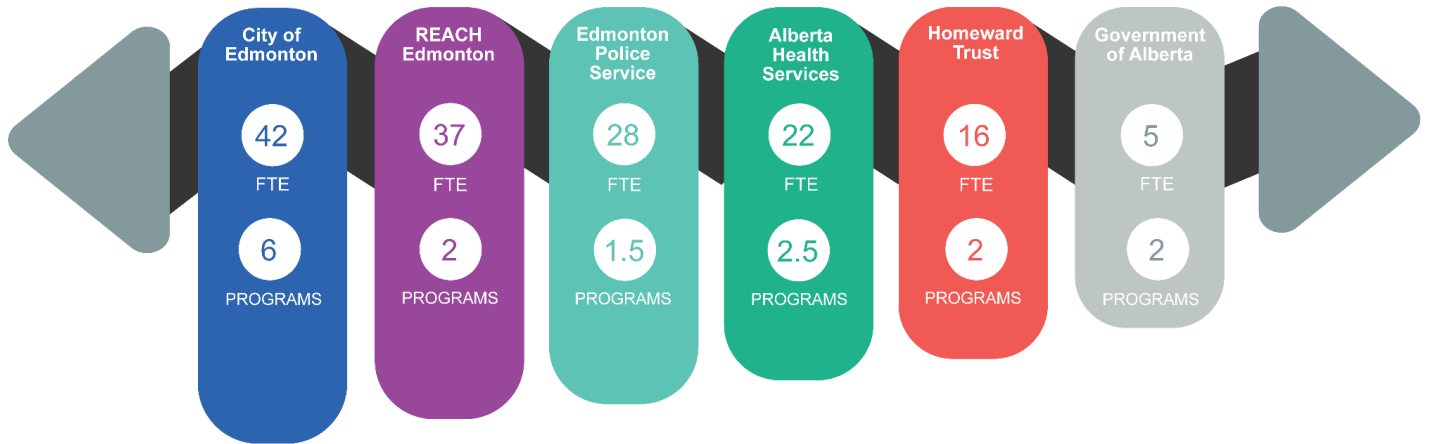
[2] Number of funded organizations, outreach teams and FTEs accurate as of February 2023.

[3] City of Edmonton, REACH Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service, Alberta Health Services, Homeward Trust, and the Government of Alberta.
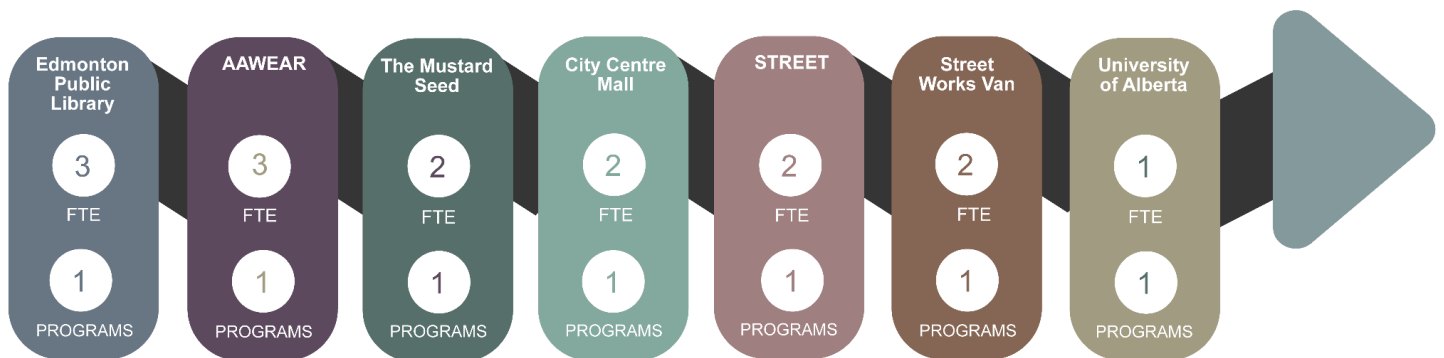
[4] Number of funded programs and FTEs according to consultations are accurate as of February 2023.

MULTI - DISCIPLINARY AND OUTREACH ECOSYSTEM

to REACH Edmonton, Edmonton Public Library and Edmonton Police Service (EPS). For the purposes of showing how many individual programs and FTEs each organization is responsible for, administration has developed the graph below. The Government of Alberta also contributes overarching funding to Alberta Health Services (AHS) and Homeward Trust - administration has identified the funding that goes directly to an outreach team versus one of the partnering agencies. A detailed breakdown of City of Edmonton contributions is in the Budget/Financial Implications section and Attachment 1 contains a more detailed breakdown of the outreach programs by type, geography, and funder.

City of Edmonton	REACH Edmonton	Edmonton Police Service	Alberta Health Services	Homeward Trust	Government of Alberta
42 FTE	37 FTE	28 FTE	22 FTE	16 FTE	5 FTE
6 PROGRAMS	2 PROGRAMS	1.5 PROGRAMS	2.5 PROGRAMS	2 PROGRAMS	2 PROGRAMS

The remainder of the outreach ecosystem - seven programs with a combined total of 15 FTEs - is funded as follows :[5]

Edmonton Public Library	AAWEAR	The Mustard Seed	City Centre Mall	STREET	Street Works Van	University of Alberta
3 FTE	3 FTE	2 FTE	2 FTE	2 FTE	2 FTE	1 FTE
1 PROGRAMS	1 PROGRAMS	1 PROGRAMS	1 PROGRAMS	1 PROGRAMS	1 PROGRAMS	1 PROGRAMS

Funding sustainability is a key consideration and concern for many agencies as 12 out of the 23 funded programs are considered temporary and nine of these 12 teams acknowledged feeling uncertain about funding renewal.

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[5] Information verified with these programs during the consultations.

Geographic Coverage

Citywide

The eight largest outreach programs operate citywide and include:

- Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT);
- Street Outreach;
- Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership Unit (HELP);
- REACH Crisis Diversion;
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT);
- Police and Crisis Team (PACT); and
- The two Housing Outreach Prototype Program (HOPP) teams.

The Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT) and Street Outreach teams engage in proactive outreach while the other six programs are targeted and respond only to individuals referred to them through internal mechanisms. Street Outreach is responsible for locating and responding to encampments across Edmonton and COTT operates within the entirety of the transit system.

These eight programs account for 120 outreach FTEs out of the total 165. [6]

Downtown

Nine other funded teams primarily work downtown: four safer drug use/overdose teams, one addictions support program, one encampment team, and one housing program, along with the outreach teams at Edmonton Public Library (at the Stanley A. Milner branch) and City Centre Mall. These teams are funded through a mix of City funding and external organization funding.

These nine programs account for 33 FTEs out of the total 165 . The three mutual aid groups that spoke with Administration also devote the majority of their time to vulnerable people downtown.

Old Strathcona

One team operates in Old Strathcona, while the University of Alberta program focuses on the main campus and attends to other properties owned by the University, as needed. Three additional teams follow established geographical routes to best serve their particular participants, and one engages Business Improvement Areas in and around downtown.

These six programs account for 12 FTEs out of the total 165.

Other

Although certain teams engage vulnerable people in the west end and northeast of Edmonton as part of their work, seasonally or when referrals necessitate, there are currently no outreach resources dedicated to those areas.

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[6]Programs that attend to people and/or issues citywide have been included only in the citywide category, recognizing that some would also cover the Downtown and Old Strathcona neighbourhoods.

MULTI - DISCIPLINARY AND OUTREACH ECOSYSTEM

Multidisciplinary Teams

Multidisciplinary teams have the ability to offer outreach participants a diversity of expertise and have the potential for more impactful advocacy, both on behalf of individual participants and to mobilize different systems to address gaps.

Of the 23 funded outreach programs, nine include at least two disciplines:

- Four programs partner a nurse with an outreach worker or peer worker;
- Three programs partner outreach workers with a police or peace officer;
- One program partners a police officer with a mental health or psychiatric nurse; and
- One program is a comprehensive multidisciplinary program featuring psychiatrists, nurses, cultural support workers, social workers, and peers.

Multidisciplinary teams that feature staff from the EPS or AHS have the ability to access and share information about clients through agreements with client information consents, which helps locate participants and coordinate interventions more effectively. AHS also has other services that are generally accessible only through internal referrals. Integrating peers and cultural support workers in an intentional way is a valuable way of earning trust and credibility for formalized programs.

Multidisciplinary programs, particularly those with multiple funders where the priority is on alleviating pressure on certain systems (e.g., health, justice, etc.), do experience tensions around where to focus the team's efforts. Furthermore, if multidisciplinary teams lack access to system resources, they too are subject to many of the same challenges that other outreach programs face. For example, an outreach team that employs a nurse independently of AHS may be able to offer more adequate frontline healthcare, such as wound care, but will not necessarily have improved access to the broader healthcare system.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

Administration invited organizations involved in the outreach ecosystem to participate in engagement sessions about their outreach work. In total, 17 of the 20 invited agencies with funded outreach programs took part, as well as three of six mutual aid groups. The results of the engagement work, including key themes, is detailed in the Community Insights section of this report.

Further conversation and research, including a jurisdictional review, are needed for Administration to definitively establish the municipality's role in outreach work in general, and how to best aid the multidisciplinary and outreach ecosystem unique to Edmonton. In the meantime, Administration has identified the following potential areas for near-term focus.

Outreach Database

The concept of the creation of a shared database could be explored, similar to the "Inner City Check-in App," which was developed during the pandemic when the collaborative service hub was opened at the Expo Centre. It was created to track unique individuals and frequency of visits and

is still used today.[7] Administration could explore the viability of an outreach-oriented version of this program.

Although each organization will need to determine their level of participation, it may be possible to create a program to extract pertinent information from each system to share with authorized users. If this is pursued, data privacy and confidentiality would be a top consideration. The City, as a public body, must comply with privacy legislation, including the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, in the collection, use, and disclosure of information, and these obligations would be a key consideration in any outreach database in which the City participates. External organizations may have separate privacy obligations to consider that impact their ability to share information or data with other organizations.

Outreach Hub

There is a need for collaboration between the system planners in the outreach sector, including focus areas like homelessness, health care and justice. Creating an outreach hub for these agencies to collaborate as intermediaries between frontline programs, service providers, and funders has the potential to improve the following:

- Addressing barriers to the accessing of resources;
- Advocating to funders and service providers for coherent service delivery;
- Supporting system navigation and tracking changes to eligibility and intake processes;
- Ensuring clear referral pathways for proactive outreach workers to targeted outreach workers for casework and clear timelines on service provision for targeted workers;
- Creating a forum where the case management of participants with complex needs can be discussed collaboratively by relevant stakeholders from across systems, while respecting privacy and confidentiality considerations; and
- Establishing goals for outreach work, accountability to those goals, and a formalized mechanism to review systemic gaps and concerns from stakeholders.

Direct Pathways

There is a need for outreach teams to have direct pathways to provide immediate resources to participants.

Since 2021, Homeward Trust has been funding two specialized encampment housing teams. Instead of depending on the capacity of traditional housing teams to address a new participant through the By-Names List, outreach teams are enabled to directly refer participants to the encampment housing teams, which have special expertise and mandates to work effectively with unsheltered populations. Homeward Trust is now looking at expanding this model so that some bridge housing units would be reserved for the encampment housing teams.

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[7] The app is currently administered by Boyle Street Community Services. Boyle Street, along with Bissell Centre and The Mustard Seed, jointly use the app to enter and track data pertaining to their day services. Homeward Trust and George Spady Society can view the data as well.

MULTI - DISCIPLINARY AND OUTREACH ECOSYSTEM

Geographic Division of Labour

As homelessness is now present throughout the city, the scale of outreach work has become difficult to manage. As mentioned in the 'geographic coverage' section, only two outreach teams proactively serve all of Edmonton and they struggle to meet the need. Some areas of the city do not have dedicated outreach services at all.

There is a tendency, especially since the pandemic, for agencies and other stakeholders to create outreach programs of their own to respond to a localized need. These programs are typically small, under-resourced, not sustainably funded, and can be disconnected from the larger outreach ecosystem. Although the intention of these operating agencies is to provide support, the introduction of another service can be confusing for an individual needing assistance.

Administration facilitates a quarterly meeting with funded outreach programs and mutual aid groups to help coordinate efforts, and will continue to work to formalize alignments and communication wherever possible.

Dividing the city into zones of service with adequately-resourced proactive and targeted outreach teams dedicated to each one could be a potential option. A geographic division of labour could help achieve the following:

- Consistent support for vulnerable people in all areas of Edmonton;
- A greater continuity of service to participants and enhanced familiarity amongst outreach workers with the relevant stakeholders in their community; and
- A decrease in the number of siloed outreach programs and an overall simplification of coordination.

Healthy Streets Operation Centre

The Healthy Streets Operation Centre is a multidisciplinary pilot, including members from EPS, Fire Rescue Services, peace officers, paramedics and Community Safety Liaisons. The goals of Healthy Streets Operation Centre are to increase health and wellness for people living in the area, reduce criminality and victimization and help community members feel more safe living, working and being in the area. The pilot currently does not have internal caseworkers to facilitate system navigation, however individual referrals to services are made to different social agencies. In addition, various outreach teams such as housing outreach and street outreach are already actively working within the same geographical zone as Healthy Streets Operation Centre..

Performance Measurement

Due to the complexities of outreach work (outlined below) and the difficulties in quantifying the relationship-building efforts on which best practice depends, it can be challenging to determine the overall effectiveness of an outreach program. This is often exacerbated by a lack of firm targets in funding agreements. While all outreach programs track their main outcomes, some more comprehensively than others, established goals to which those outcomes can be compared in order to measure success are largely absent. Since demand invariably outweighs resourcing, a shortage of reasonable goals can also contribute to outreach teams feeling unproductive or overwhelmed, another factor that impacts staff morale, turnover, and burnout. Developing

targets that are agreed upon by funders, system planners, and frontline providers is important future work.

Budget/Financial Implications

In direct support of the six outreach programs encompassing 42 FTEs listed on Attachment 1, the City of Edmonton has committed more than $3.6 million in combined funding to Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Boyle Street Service Society, Bissell Centre and Boyle-McCauley Health Centre Society in late 2022 and 2023. Additionally, $4.1 million was provided to REACH for their YEG Ambassadors and 24/7 Crisis Diversion programs in 2023 which will increase by $0.8 million each year in 2024, 2025 and 2026. The City is also a primary funder of EPS and Edmonton Public Library, both of which have established outreach programs within their organizations.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

The major challenges faced by outreach programs and key barriers to outreach coordination are discussed in detail in the What We Heard Outreach Ecosystem Report (Attachment 2) and are summarized briefly here.

Theme #1 - Volume of individuals requiring assistance

Like many social services, outreach programs are struggling to properly support people experiencing homelessness. The number of people on Homeward Trust's By Name List that are unsheltered and more likely to be outreach participants, has grown by 77 per cent since March 2020 (from 426 in March 2020 to 754 as of April 28, 2023).

Theme #2 - Escalating intensity of need

Alongside the number of people in need, the intensity of need has also escalated. Outreach teams are trying to respond to this greater need while often being short-staffed due to emotional, physical and mental exhaustion, difficulty recruiting staff, and challenges around staff retention. The temporary funding structures common to these programs only exacerbate these issues.

Theme #3 - Case management complexity

Compounding staffing and funding challenges, outreach participants do not consistently check in at drop-ins and shelters and are subject to pronounced transiency due to weather, enforcement, safety concerns, etc. Being able to locate a participant is of critical importance because system navigation is based on the timing and sequence of resource provision. For example, a participant will need identification and a regular income in order to acquire housing, but may also need a note from a doctor stating they are unable to work before they can obtain Income Support. Lining up each resource is key to case management but depends entirely on being able to locate the participant and enabling the participant to be appropriately prepared for professional appointments.

Theme #4 - Barriers to data sharing

Outreach teams often cannot collaborate to help each other locate participants due to two barriers. Firstly, numerous outreach teams use unique software to collect data and there is

currently no mechanism for that information to be extracted and shared. Secondly, there is a great deal of sensitivity and legislation around the confidentiality of participant data and as such, different information-sharing agreements/consents are needed for various organizations.

Theme #5 - (In)ability to provision resources

The most challenging identified barrier may be a result of the outreach workers' relationships to resource provision. The vast majority of teams have no control or direct access to the resources their participants need and have to engage with other service providers to access them. Outreach workers build relationships with vulnerable people, help maintain their safety and provide support through crises, while waiting for opportunities for their participants to engage with formalized services. When those opportunities present themselves, outreach workers may be faced with complex intake procedures and long waitlists. They often lack clarity around timelines that they can relay to the participant. To many outreach participants who already lack trust in formalized systems, unclear processes present an additional barrier to establish trust with outreach participants.

GBA+

Every person experiencing homelessness is unique. There is not one way into homelessness and there is not one way out. The overall population is incredibly diverse in terms of age, gender, ethno-racial background and educational attainment. However, of those individuals currently experiencing homelessness, 58 per cent[8] identify as Indigenous.

Administration is committed to increasing Indigenous representation in the services provided by the City. To advance Indigenous representation, the City funded Jasper Place Wellness Centre to co-create bridge/transitional housing and shelter spaces, which involves a collaboration with Tipeemso Development Limited Partnership. The City is also exploring an Indigenous-led shelter and just launched an Indigenous Housing Grant program.

When it comes to public safety, people experiencing homelessness are generally at an increased risk for victimization from both within the community and outside of it.

Historically, 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, as well as other at-risk groups, including youth, seniors, Indigenous People, newcomers, and/or people with mental health or addiction issues have accounted for a large percentage of Canadians who are homeless, at risk of being homeless, or in core housing need.[9] In Edmonton, consistent with national research, Indigenous adults and youth experience a higher rate of unsheltered homelessness, compared to non-Indigenous adults and youth. Indigenous women experiencing homelessness face significant risks of both physical violence and sexual assault[10].

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[8] "Data, Analytics & Reporting". https://homewardtrust.ca/data-analytics-reporting/. Homeward Trust. Cited April 6, 2023.

[9] "2SLGBTQIA+ Housing Needs and Challenges." https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2022/2slgbtqia-housing-needs-challenges. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Cited March 7, 2023.

[10] Heidinger, Loanna. *Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit women in Canada.* Statistics Canada. April 26, 2022.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Outreach Consultations - Types of Outreach and Programs (FTEs)
2. What We Heard Report - The Outreach Ecosystem in Edmonton