

Strategic Plan

2022  
2025



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### Land Acknowledgment

e4c acknowledges that we are on Treaty 6 territory, the ancestral and traditional lands of the nêhiyawak (Cree), Dene, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakoda Isga (Stoney Nakoda) and Métis peoples. We acknowledge and celebrate the many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people whose footsteps have marked these lands for generations, and whose histories, languages and cultures continue to influence our work and our communities.<sup>1</sup>



### Photos

Photos in the enclosed report were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, or with the appropriate social distancing and PPE in place.

# An Invitation to Walk With Us

e4c's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 represents the result of a year-long disciplined process of strategic analysis, reflection, sense-making, and shaping our choices in a complex strategic environment.

We recognize the strength and resiliency of our organization, staff, volunteers, and the people and communities we serve, as we journeyed through the unprecedented territory of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Board saw the importance of being strength-based, helping people build assets, and working with communities and systems to address the causes of poverty.

This 4-year Strategic Plan acknowledges that the impact of the pandemic is still playing out. It reinforces and continues our successful approach of rapid adaptations to support people through the pandemic. At the same time, it creates the space for the consideration and understanding of any lasting impact of the pandemic on poverty. The Strategic Plan will align our program areas, guide our key operational and budget decisions, maintain our relevance to the people and communities we serve, and build our capacity to fulfill our mission and vision.

e4c invites you to join us in our strategy to help people live healthy and fulfilling lives, and to help build community where people welcome and care for one other. You can do this by getting to know us better and sharing your gifts with us, such as your time, knowledge and connections. We welcome your help!

# Who We Are

## Our Vision

Our vision is ultimately the elimination of poverty.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to change lives and grow communities.

## Our Core Values

### Courage

We stay true to our principles and thrive in the face of challenge and change.

### Compassion

We meet people where they are at, and we are present in our relationships.

### Connection

We journey with people and communities because we are stronger together.

### Commitment

We are dedicated to our promises and accountable in our actions.



## Who We Serve

Every person has a unique life story that led them to where they are today. The people we serve span all ages, races, genders, and cultures. Many have experienced struggles with their physical and mental health, and their financial, housing, and food security. Many have also experienced discrimination, social exclusion, and marginalization. For some, these are common experiences across their families and generations. While everyone we serve has their own personal experience, we are continuously inspired by their courage.

## Where We Serve

Our services and supports are available to people living in Edmonton. We are connected and aligned with provincial and national networks of partners with whom we learn, plan, and advocate together.

### Our Definition of Poverty

Our definition of poverty helps us understand both our Mission and Vision. We have embraced two rigorously articulated definitions of poverty:

Opportunity for All - Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy defines poverty as:

*The condition of a person who is deprived of resources, means, choices, and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic standard of living and to facilitate integration and participation in society.<sup>2</sup>*

A definition of poverty developed by the Edmonton community:

*Poverty is defined as when people lack, or are denied, economic, social, and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community.<sup>3</sup>*

Both definitions suggest that each of us needs a variety of assets and conditions to live a life free of poverty.

# What We Do

As we look to the next four years, it is important that we ground our future on our learnings from our past and present journey. Our history continues to influence and shape our work. e4c has its roots in the 1970s with four downtown churches who shared a strong desire to promote individuals' and families' spiritual well-being, health, education, and welfare, and to assist them to develop their cultural, social, and economic resources.

Collaboration with communities, to identify and address gaps in supports and services, has been at the core of e4c since our beginning. Programs that launched in our first decade, the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC) and the School Snack Program (now known as the School Nutrition Program), reflect the importance of collaboration in our efforts to change lives and grow communities.

Our work today addresses poverty for individuals and families holistically, increasing their well-being, and personal, social, and financial resources. This work centres around four Focus Areas. These Focus Areas ground our integrated approach to wrap people in the right supports, at times and in places that work for them.

e4c is a long-standing, active partner in solutions-focused efforts to end poverty. Strong partnerships, programming, and operational capacity allow us to move forward to achieve our vision.



# Our Foundational Commitments

Eliminating poverty requires a comprehensive approach, which considers the intersectionality of factors that cause and keep people in poverty. e4c has adopted four foundational commitments to better serve people who lack or are denied economic, social, and cultural resources. These commitments inform how we view our strategic context, reflect on opportunities and challenges, and plan, design, and carry out programs and services.

## Human Rights Lens

Every person has their own priorities, the right to make their own life decisions, and the right to have a voice in policies and programs that affect them. A person in poverty is denied multiple human rights, such as safety, security, food, shelter, or a life free from discrimination. Using a human rights lens means all that we do, including planning, programming, community partnerships, and investment, should advance human rights for the people and communities we serve.<sup>4</sup>

### Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics that overlap and create intersecting systems of discrimination or oppression.<sup>5</sup> We all experience the world differently based on our overlapping identities, so it is important for us to consider that every individual has their own unique experiences of oppression and discrimination.

Adopting an intersectional lens allows us to better centre the narratives and experiences of marginalized voices in our community while planning with our partners and the people we serve toward realizing a better future.

## Fostering Sustainable Livelihoods

e4c's work focuses on people's and communities' strengths. We support the people we serve to increase their personal assets, including basic needs and services, skills and knowledge, finances, community connections, and their sense of self and belonging. We will collaborate with communities and systems to build community assets to break system and life cycle biases that cause people to be vulnerable.

### Personal Assets



### Sustainable Livelihoods

The sustainable livelihoods framework defines livelihood as comprising a person's capabilities, material and social resources, and activities required for a means of living.<sup>6</sup> A livelihood is sustainable when a person can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain their capabilities, resources, and activities both in the present and for the future.

People and their communities thrive when they have enough of the assets they need, including finances, basic physical needs (like food, housing, clothing, childcare), skills and knowledge, community connections, and a positive sense of self. By building personal assets, people develop their capacity to cope with the challenges they encounter and to meet their needs on a sustained basis.

The sustainable livelihoods framework also acknowledges the vulnerability context that impact people's capabilities and access to resources and opportunities. In the context of ending poverty, this means understanding the factors that cause people to be vulnerable.

e4c works with many government, non-profit, neighbourhood, and business organizations to help people connect with the supports and services they need to build their assets toward their goals, and to support changes at the organizational, community, and societal levels to reduce the vulnerability contexts that adversely impact sustainable livelihoods.

### Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

The collective trauma of residential schools and colonialism impacts a large proportion of people and communities. Across multiple generations, Indigenous people and their families have been denied the economic, social, and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in society. e4c works in allyship with Indigenous people and community partners to recognize this truth and to support the actions prompted by the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>7</sup>

### Livable Incomes as a Cornerstone to Ending Poverty

Organizations working to end poverty recognize everyone needs a livable income that is enough to provide the basics for themselves and their families. In 2021, approximately 10% of Edmontonians could not afford to pay for a basic standard of living.<sup>8</sup> e4c supports people to become financially empowered so they can realize their life opportunities and participate meaningfully in their community.

### Financial Empowerment

Financial empowerment<sup>9</sup> is an approach to poverty reduction that focuses on improving the financial security of people with low income. It increases their opportunities and knowledge, and fosters behaviours that are critical to their economic security, and their ability to invest in their future.

The opportunities, knowledge, and new behaviours help people to grow their incomes, to improve their credit scores and debt levels, and to build assets and wealth through education, employment, and entrepreneurship. Financial empowerment focuses on helping people with low-income participate and feel included in our financial system.



# Our Current Strategic Context

To inform our strategic thinking, we sought to understand the internal and external factors which affect our current and future context. We also developed a series of environmental scans and engaged the people we serve, our staff, and volunteers.

## Development of Environmental Scans

Our environmental scans focused on housing and homelessness, early childhood development, the local poverty ecosystem, and the impact of COVID-19. Our process included identifying appropriate publications from community partners, all levels of government, news outlets, and scientific journals.

Important themes from the environmental scans include:

- Poverty in Edmonton is still an issue, with current data showing 1 in 10 Edmontonians live with a low income<sup>10</sup>;
- Impacts of the pandemic have exacerbated social issues such as economic stress, social isolation, and food insecurity<sup>11 12 13 14</sup>;
- Impacts of the pandemic have resulted in reduced access to social services, affordable childcare, and other supports;
- There is decreasing mental health and wellness in our community<sup>15 16</sup>;
- There is a need to involve people with lived experience in creating effective community solutions;
- Collaborations and partnerships are critical for poverty reduction and elimination; and
- The human services workforce has been disrupted by COVID-19 prevention measures and staffing shortages, and has faced increasing complexity in the lives of the people we serve.<sup>17 18</sup>

### Nothing About Us Without Us

"Lived experience is direct, firsthand experiences, past or present, of a social issue and/or experience."<sup>19</sup>

We all have unique perspectives that result from wisdom we have gained due to the circumstances of our lives. Organizations that recognize, celebrate, invest in, and learn from people with lived experience of the issues and challenges they are working to solve are better positioned to deliver successful services and supports for the communities they serve.

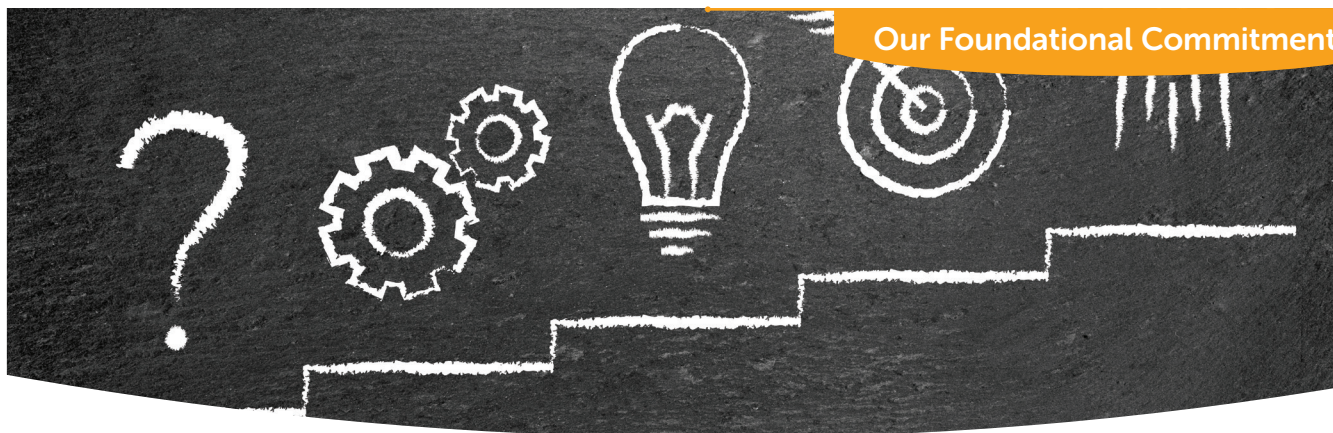
As e4c strengthens our person-centred services, we will continue to bring the perspective of lived experience to the forefront. Ensuring greater equity in our work will help us challenge stigma, confront oppression, and promote dignity.<sup>20</sup>

## Engagement with the People We Serve, Our Staff, and Volunteers

Through an engagement process, we learned from the people we serve, our staff, and our volunteers about the diverse lived experiences of community members. We also learned from the people we serve how e4c can build on our strengths to serve them better. Important themes from the perspectives of both the people we serve and our staff include:

- e4c is a community of individuals with shared values working toward common goals;
- The services we provide have a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve;
- A continuous, person-centered relationship with support providers is important; better access is needed to housing, cultural, and mental health supports;
- Internal and external services need to be more seamless and integrated; and
- The overall well-being of our staff (due to the pandemic) is of concern. The themes identified through our engagement work were in alignment with the results of our environmental scans.





## Strategic Thinking and Decision-Making with the e4c Board of Directors

e4c is governed by our Board of Directors through a strategic governance model, where management and the Board are jointly responsible for overall strategic planning. The e4c Board of Directors has been engaged throughout our strategic planning process, contributing their perspectives and wisdom in the identification of organizational opportunities and threats, informing and approving our Strategic Assumptions, and setting our overall Strategic Direction and Priorities.

Important themes that emerged from our collaborative strategic conversations include:

- The strategic environment in which e4c operates is becoming increasingly complex;
- Taking an adaptive approach to our planning in the short-term, considering the current levels of change, complexity, and uncertainty;
- Continuing with a model that builds and contributes to collaborative efforts across community partners;
- Further exploring the root causes of poverty as they relate to our balance of prevention and intervention efforts;
- Strengthening the voice of the people we serve in support of a collaborative decision-making model;
- Further integrating technology into our service delivery; and
- Considering how reconciliation, inclusion, and social justice may influence our direction setting.

There is strong alignment of these themes with the themes generated from our environmental scanning and engagement work.

### Strategic Governance

At e4c, the CEO and the Board Chair are jointly responsible for strategic planning. All Board Members are involved in the strategic thinking and decision-making that informs our strategic plan. The Board of Directors brings an outside perspective, tests the consistency of management's thinking, provides review and approval of major decisions, approves the strategic plan, and monitors the progress of key initiatives and the achievement of strategic objectives and outcomes.

Overall, the Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction of e4c, and our CEO and the leadership team are responsible for determining how we will achieve the strategy and its articulated outcomes.

# Our Strategic Assumptions

After reflecting on our strategic context, we arrived at a set of Strategic Assumptions to ground e4c's proposed strategic direction for the next four years.

***The COVID-19 pandemic presents a strategic environment of change, complexity, and uncertainty.***

We cannot yet articulate the pandemic's sweeping and long-term impact as there are still many unknowns, including the pace and shape of recovery, the resiliency of our community, and the impact of new and enduring societal adaptations. We do know the pandemic has increased the vulnerability of many people experiencing poverty.

***The COVID-19 pandemic has caused harm to many people on an individual level.***

Many determinants of health have been affected, including employment, education, social supports, cultural participation, and access to health services. Individuals have experienced increased emotional and mental distress, and more social isolation and disconnection.

***e4c is well-positioned to design and deliver comprehensive services to people experiencing poverty.***

A core strength of e4c is our understanding of the complexity of poverty – its causes, implications for persons served, societal costs, as well as leading approaches to poverty reduction and prevention. We understand the complexity of people's experience of poverty requires a person-centered and holistic service approach to have a lasting impact.

***Addressing poverty has become established in our cultural consciousness.***

Collectively, as a community, city, and country, we believe poverty needs to be and can be resolved. Perceptions about addressing poverty have become broader and more inclusive of diverse viewpoints, including social return on investment, social determinants of health, building social capital and quality of life, corporate social responsibility, and a rights-based approach to social services.

***There is a greater need and opportunity for stakeholders to collaborate on complex social issues.***

The complexity of addressing poverty in communities and for individuals requires us all to work together. There are ongoing efforts by the partners across the poverty landscape to co-create and co-deliver comprehensive services to address the causes of poverty and to make systemic change. There will be more opportunities for collaborative efforts in our future.



**We understand the complexity of people's experience of poverty requires a person-centered and holistic service approach to have a lasting impact.**

***The human services sector workforce will be diminished in the short term.***

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disruptive and negative effect on the human services sector workforce. Home and workplace stress and fatigue are diminishing staff's wellness and capacity to serve people. Many workers are leaving the workforce, or changing their careers, leaving a gap in qualified personnel with the required competencies to meet the increasing complexities of the work.

***Technology will transform the way we interact with partners and the people we serve.***

Adoption of enhanced virtual communication and other information technologies can be leveraged to improve service accessibility, community collaboration, and information and outcomes management. It is important to use digital technology in ways that do not further marginalize people who lack access or capacity.

***Public investment in poverty reduction will be maintained in the short-to medium-term.***

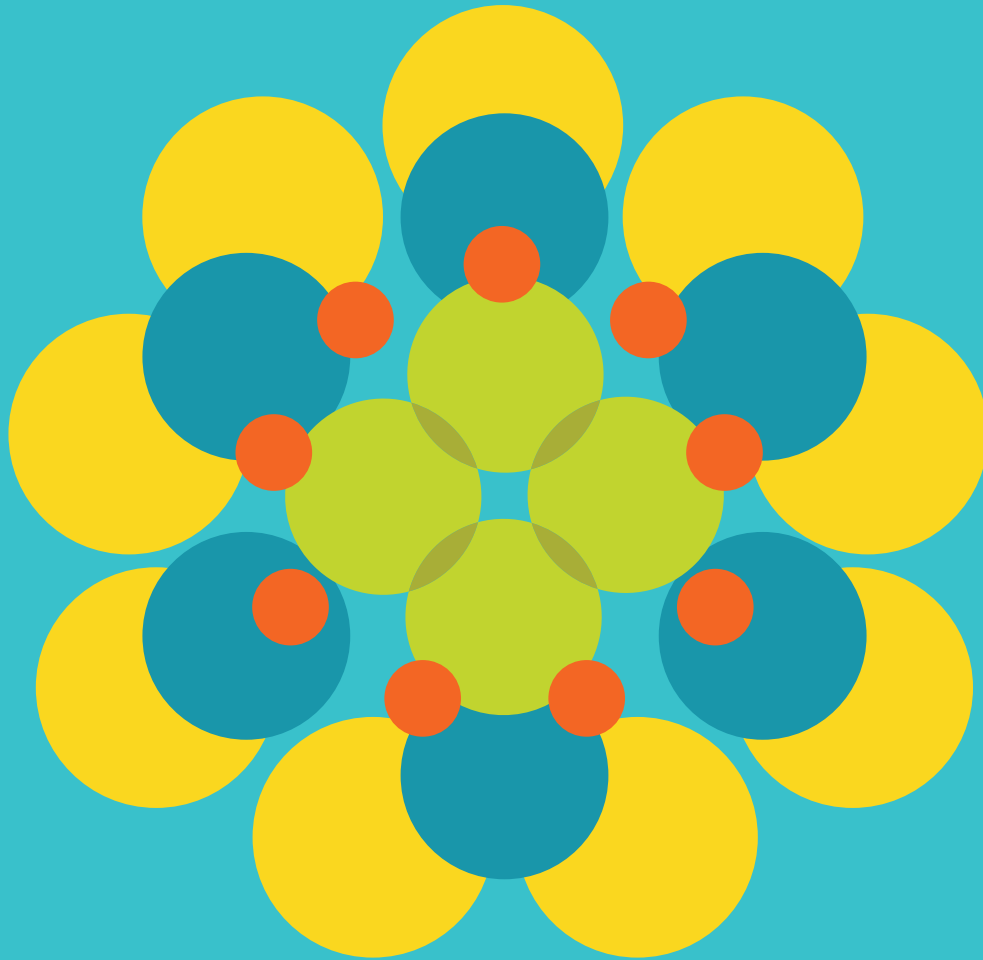
e4c's contribution to poverty reduction has been primarily through success with operations and the demonstration of our impact on people and communities. We are funded for providing services that are prioritized through public policy discourse and development, and often in collaboration with government funders that have key accountabilities for achieving our shared public policy objectives.



**It is important to use digital technology in ways that do not further marginalize people who lack access or capacity.**



# The Next Four Years



## e4c's Strategic Direction 2022-2025

We continually adapt to support people's immediate recovery from the pandemic, and at the same time deepen our understanding of effective poverty reduction strategies in the post-pandemic landscape.

## Strategic Priorities

The degree of change, complexity, and uncertainty in the strategic environment requires an adaptive approach. e4c will continue to progressively improve and leverage opportunities in our core areas of focus and remain nimble in our adaptation to emerging challenges. Concurrently, we will take the time and space to intentionally discover and learn how the nature of poverty, the people and communities experiencing poverty, and the poverty ecosystem have been impacted by the pandemic.



The degree of change, complexity, and uncertainty in the strategic environment requires an adaptive approach.

## Strategic Objectives

These Strategic Objectives paint a picture of what e4c will look like as we make progress in pursuit of our four Strategic Priorities. In most cases, progress means we are doing the things we already do, better.





## Strategic Initiatives

e4c will pursue the following Strategic Initiatives to enhance the capacity and impact of our staff, programs, and organization, with the people and communities we serve. A phased implementation of these initiatives and associated actions will ensure we achieve our Strategic Objectives during the four-year duration of this strategic plan.



### Initiative 1

#### *Develop a Consistent, Comprehensive, Person-Centered Service Delivery Model*

e4c staff work to meet people where they are at. This means engaging without judgment of their values, needs, or choices. Person-centered approaches require us to be consistent and comprehensive in our service delivery. As we continuously improve our person-centered service delivery model, we will work to address people’s expressed needs for access to seamless and integrated services and supports. This will be done in collaboration across programs, and with community partners, to support people in identifying their strengths, building their personal assets and capacity, and improving their well-being and social connections.

We will do this by:

- Articulating a principle-based framework to inform program specific person-centered service delivery;
- Applying a theory of change methodology to inform program models and development toward the achievement of strategic fiduciary measures and long-term outcomes;
- Increasing our community partnerships to support the people we serve in accessing and transitioning to the resources they need;
- Integrating efforts between Housing Services, Financial Empowerment, Community Development, and Wellness Network programs to strengthen seamless support experience for people we serve; and
- Expanding continuous improvement standards and procedures through accreditation of eligible programs with CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities).



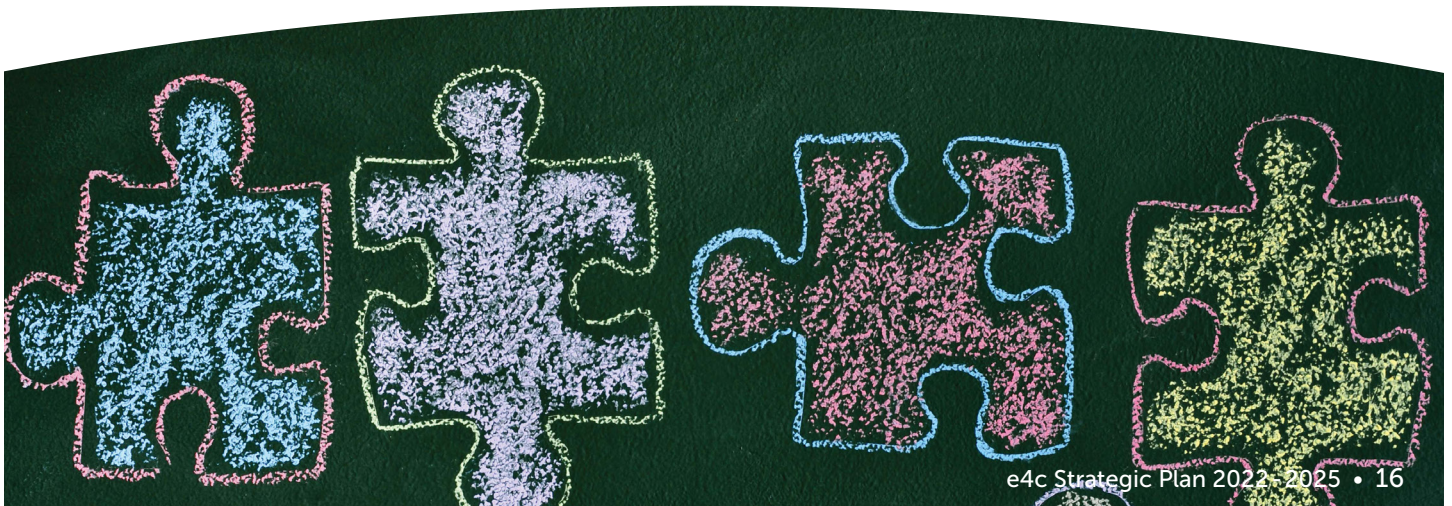
## Initiative 2

### *Develop a Rolling Pandemic Transition and Recovery Plan*

We are constantly adapting our work as we learn about the new realities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's impact, as it becomes more known, will add to the foundation of e4c's strategic direction. Through the development and continual update of a Pandemic Transition and Recovery Plan, we will provide guidance for programs and services to support the physical and mental health and wellness of the people we serve and our staff to move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will do this by:

- Continuously updating the e4c Pandemic Plan through the Transition Phase;
- Monthly reporting at program level to capture observations and possible trends as people transition and move beyond the pandemic;
- Creating a semi-annual environmental scanning process to better understand the incremental and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on people and communities experiencing poverty;
- Developing and implementing e4c program adaptations based on our learnings through existing annual processes such as the budget development cycle;
- Scanning national, provincial, and local poverty reduction strategies and evidence to inform our organizational learning; and
- Convening community gatherings and creating public education opportunities to share e4c's learning.





### Initiative 3

#### *Develop a Person-Centered Engagement Framework*

Our work brings to light the strength of diverse lived experiences of poverty, which will inform the refinement of our person-centered services. Being respectful of people's willingness to participate, and in alignment with articulated outcomes of programs, we will ensure e4c's work is empowered by the experience and perspectives of the people we serve.

We will do this by:

- Learning about our unique relationship with Indigenous peoples in order to welcome their knowledge, culture, and wisdom into our organization;
- Learning about the unique challenges experienced by marginalized people and communities in order to advance allyship, equity, and inclusion;
- Developing principles of engagement with the people we serve and who have diverse lived experience to build, grow, and strengthen our program and services; and
- Initiating program-driven activities which seek to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people and marginalized people in our community.



### Initiative 4

#### *Strengthen Data and Outcome Management*

Understanding how our work contributes to achieving outcomes and creating meaningful change in people's lives requires us to regularly collect and analyze information and to evaluate our impact. We are also adapting quickly to the growing need to embrace technology in expanding people's access to our services. To ensure e4c service adaptations are timely and appropriate, we will strengthen our data and outcomes management. Important considerations will be: reducing manual processes, refining access to information, and leveraging data and analytics to inform improvement toward achieving comprehensive person-centered services.

We will do this by:

- Creating a data collection and management system with real-time reporting capabilities;
- Modernizing our existing information technology and platforms;
- Integrating processes and functions across e4c business units;
- Creating a collaborative outcomes measurement and evaluation plan;
- Implementing program specific assessment of a person's progress related to strategic fiduciary measures and long-term outcomes; and
- Developing an analysis and sense-making process which enables effective planning and improvement of programs, services, and business operations.



**To ensure e4c service adaptations are timely and appropriate, we will strengthen our data and outcome management.**



## Initiative 5

### *Expand Collaborations and Relationships*

e4c has built strong partnerships and collaborations in the community, contributing the strengths of our own work toward collective impact in a common pursuit of ending poverty. To build awareness of e4c in the community, and to demonstrate our collective efforts to reduce poverty, we will expand collaborations and relationships toward initiatives that reduce poverty and build community assets.

We will do this by:

- Involving e4c leaders with key community working groups and existing local communities of practice which align with e4c's work;
- Pursuing collaborative efforts in communities with increased risk factors to improve network and increase people's access to resources and social infrastructure;
- Contributing to community development efforts with vulnerable communities in Edmonton where we can make an impact;
- Participating in local, provincial, and national poverty reduction efforts, bringing value, ideas, and knowledge; and
- Collaboratively developing and offering training opportunities with key partners.



**e4c has built strong partnerships and collaborations in the community, contributing the strengths of our own work toward collective impact in a common pursuit of ending poverty.**



## Initiative 6

### *Develop and Offer Solutions for Sector-Based Core Competencies*

e4c staff are committed to ending poverty. Our staff live our Vision, Mission, and Core Values every day. We are dedicated to helping strengthen their assets in doing our important work. As we advance e4c's Human Resources Framework, we are developing and offering solutions for sector-based core competencies. Resilience, technical, and leadership training will build competencies and strengthen our capacity to meet the needs of people we serve and improve service outcomes.

We will do this by:

- Building e4c's workforce competency framework;
- Establishing leadership training to build strategic management capacity;
- Implementing technical and relational training to increase capacity and competency of staff to meet the needs of the people we serve;
- Developing recruitment and hiring practices dedicated to the demonstration of individual and team competency, and the ongoing development of these competencies;
- Fostering communities of practice around housing, early learning, wellness and recovery-oriented practices, and financial empowerment; and
- Enhancing e4c's learning and development activities to align with accreditation standards, promising practices, and sectoral trends.



## Measuring Our Success

We have articulated a set of Fiduciary Measures to monitor the progress of our 2022-2025 Strategic Priorities. Progress with these measures indicates that e4c continues to change lives, grow communities, and reduce poverty.



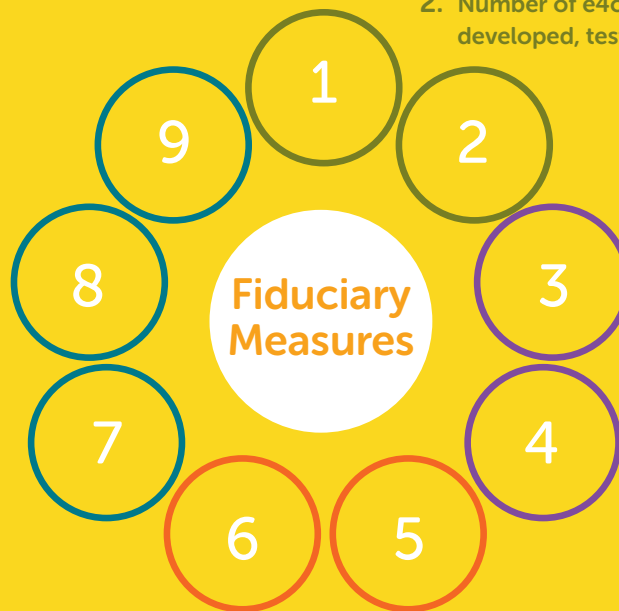
### Changing Lives

1. Number of persons served who:
  - Identify and make progress on their personal goals;
  - Gain skills and knowledge to better themselves and their families;
  - Improve their social supports and networks; and
  - Increase their housing security, food security and financial security.
2. Number of e4c service adaptations/innovations developed, tested, and implemented.



### Organizational Capacity

7. Qualitative progress report on the development of e4c's automated, real-time data management system.
8. Monthly reports of cash flow, revenue, and expense against budgeted targets.
9. Percentage of e4c staff who meet job competency requirements and percentage of e4c job vacancies.



### Growing Community

3. Number of collaborative services/initiatives toward shared poverty ecosystem outcomes where e4c is a core partner:
  - Progress report on e4c contributions toward shared poverty ecosystem outcomes (policy, movements, sector/ cross-sector action).
  - Progress report on stakeholder perception of e4c's impact and any direct benefits experienced (funder, donor, partners, community).
4. Number of persons who:
  - Influence e4c's service delivery, adaptations, and/or innovations; and
  - Co-create service adaptations and/or new service innovations with e4c.



### Eliminating Poverty

5. Semi-annual environmental scan of the poverty ecosystem with analysis and recommendations.
6. Number of persons and groups (stakeholders) who engage e4c to learn and work toward shared poverty ecosystem outcomes.

# Beyond 2025

e4c's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 embraces an adaptive approach. Leveraging our core strengths, refining our person-centered service, building an inclusive organization, and sense-making the pandemic's impact position us well to tackle what is to come.

In the long-term, when we see:

1

People we serve are connected to important relationships and self-identified communities;

2

People we serve have strengthened and new assets to improve their well-being;

3

e4c service adaptations are timely and reflect community circumstance;

4

e4c is an innovator and co-creator of collaborative comprehensive services;

5

Communities are inspired and facilitated by e4c to develop understanding, resources, and transformative approaches to reduce poverty; and

6

The pandemic's impact, as it becomes more known, adds to the foundation of e4c's future strategic direction.

We will have contributed to important individual, family, group, community, organizational, and systemic outcomes toward ending poverty.



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