



# TOOL | POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY TIMELINES

REQUIRED TIME: 0.5 – 2 HOURS

This tool provides a compilation of Cities Reducing Poverty members' anticipated vs. actual timeframes for developing their community-wide poverty reduction strategies. Review the areas of work that tend to bubble up, gain advice from the lead organizers, and readjust your own workplan.

## OVERVIEW

One of the most common lessons we hear from Cities Reducing Poverty (CRP) members, is the unexpected amount of time it takes to create and launch a poverty reduction strategy.

As such, this compilation of timelines from five CRP members provides a comparison of their anticipated vs. actual amount of time it took to develop and launch a community-wide poverty reduction strategy, including a summary of the most un- or under-anticipated areas of work that took extra time.

While each community will encounter its own unexpected twists and turns, the goal is to provide organizers with a few points-of-reference and insights from across Canada to assist in planning and setting expectations.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Discover the most commonly reported areas of unexpected time – Page 2
2. Explore how much additional time each area of work took in each community – Pages 3 - 7
3. Select one, two or more timelines that are most similar to your own workplan, and read their narrative(s) to learn more about each community's experience navigating the strategy development and gain advice from the organizers – Pages 8 - 12
4. Reflect and make revisions to your own workplan based on your learnings – Pages 13 - 14
5. Dive into resources that will help you navigate the trickier areas of work – Page 15

“ The slow  
overcomes  
the fast.”  
- Lao Tzu

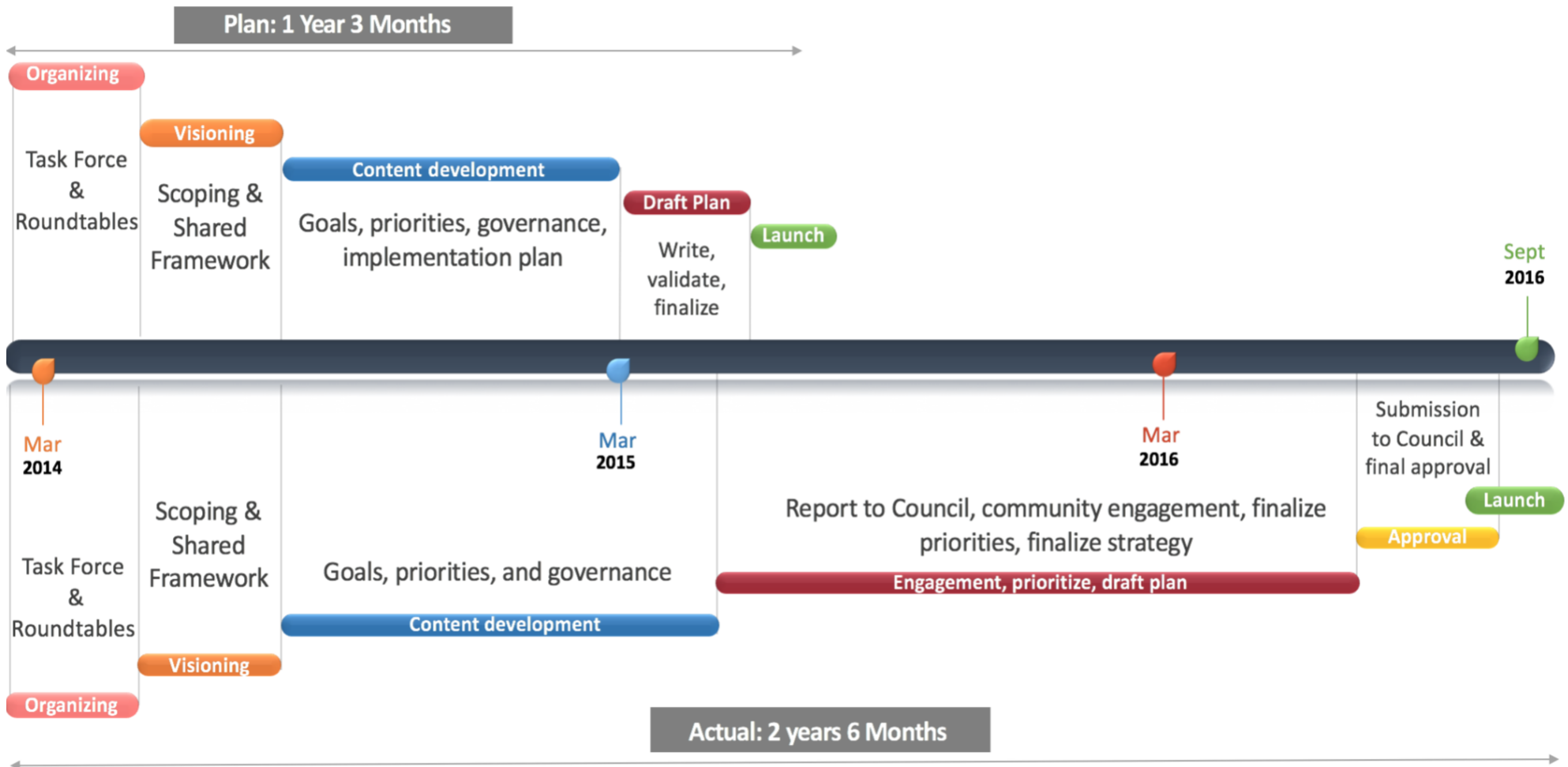
## SUMMARY: UNEXPECTED ISSUES/AREAS OF WORK TAKING TIME

The table below contains a summary of unexpected issues and areas of work requiring more time, as reported by lead organizers of five Cities Reducing Poverty communities.

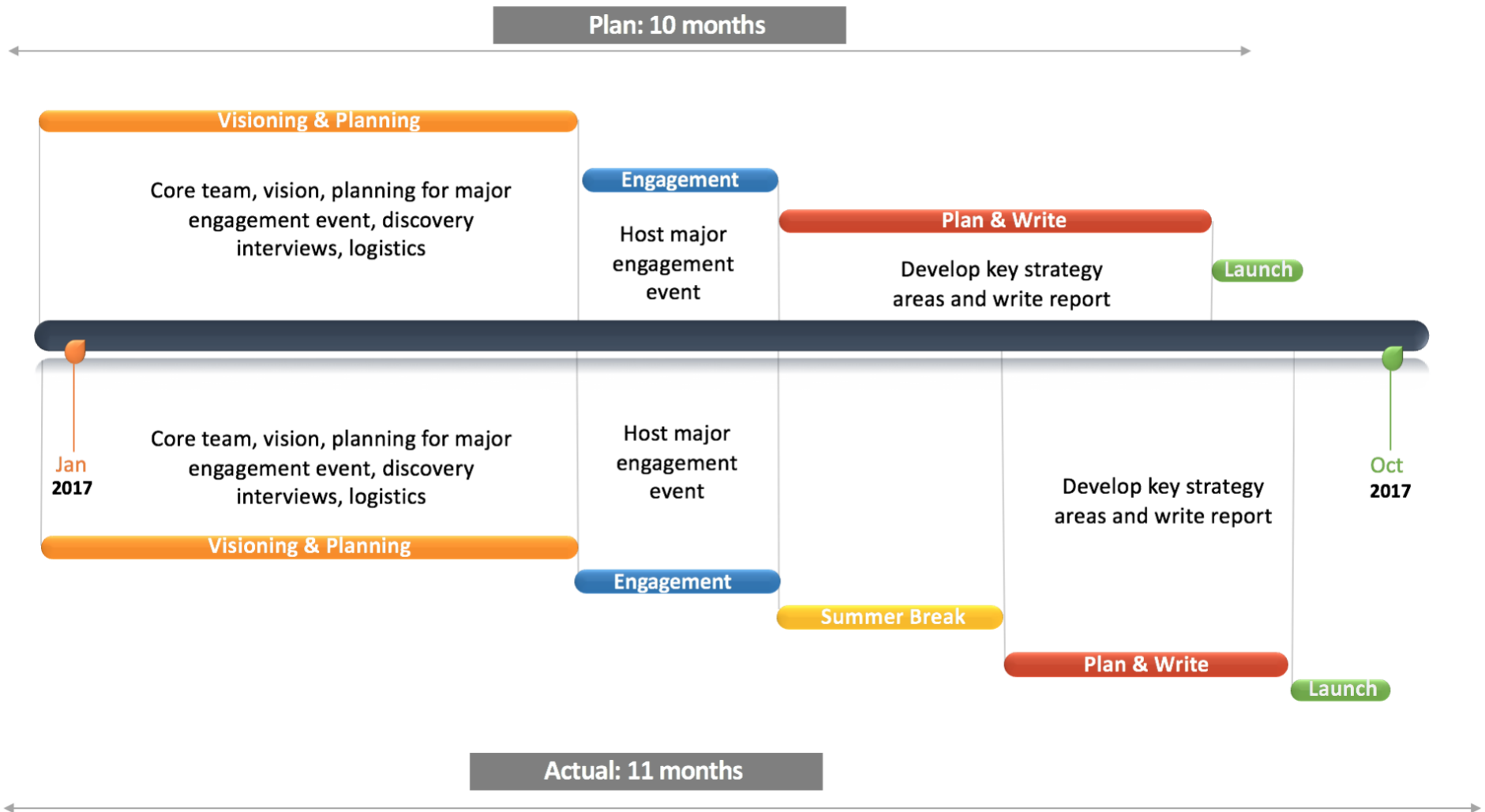
Issue	Significance
<b>Establishing a shared vision</b> – Getting the Roundtable and/or Leadership Team on the same page with an overall goal and approach.	Create a sense of commonality, build trust, and give coherence to diverse activities.
<b>Momentum</b> – Unexpected level of excitement in the community and snowballing engagements.	Gain as much support as possible for the strategy development and implementation by accommodating individuals, groups and sectors that come forward wanting to engage with the initiative, often for the first time or in a new way.
<b>Targeted community engagement</b> – Engaging people with lived/living experience and marginalized communities.	Including the expertise of beneficiaries and empowering people with lived/living experience to participate all along the way and without undue burden builds credibility, trust, shared ownership, and a better informed strategy.
<b>Personal engagement</b> – One-on-one engaging key people, ideally from the beginning, but all throughout the strategy development, as champions and/or partners of the initiative.	Personal buy-in and commitment leads to sector-wide/widespread commitment.
<b>Community engagement logistics</b> – Event planning for major consultations (Ex. Venue, food) and coordinating and organizing with working groups.	Support community members to convene and have a positive experience collaborating on the strategy.
<b>Government timeframes</b> – Securing meetings, processing reports, waiting to present to Council.	Political buy-in.
<b>Language</b> – Use of language internally, and particularly, publicly. (Ex. Working definitions, strategy drafting, letters of invitation, etc.)	Shared, inclusive, accessible conceptualization of the vision, issues, goals, approach and activities.
<b>Holidays</b> (Summer and Winter breaks) – Meeting with partners and receiving replies slows down; convening and decision-making with the Roundtable often pauses completely; no public launches.	Inclusion of partners in every aspect of the planning, development and launching of the strategy.
<b>Compiling, writing and editing the strategy report</b> – Writing with appropriate language, styling and formatting, gaining validation from partners, and incorporating revisions.	Everyone who has contributed to the development phase sees themselves in the strategy and feels it is useful.
<b>Staff transitions</b> – Changing staff positions within the organization providing backbone support.	Continuity challenges – Reduced capacity, new team members getting up to speed, re-establishing relationships, etc.

*Of note, three commonly reported accelerators of strategy development included: already having the right people at the table, previously completed research, and federal/provincial initiatives (esp. the opportunity to contribute to poverty reduction strategy consultations).*

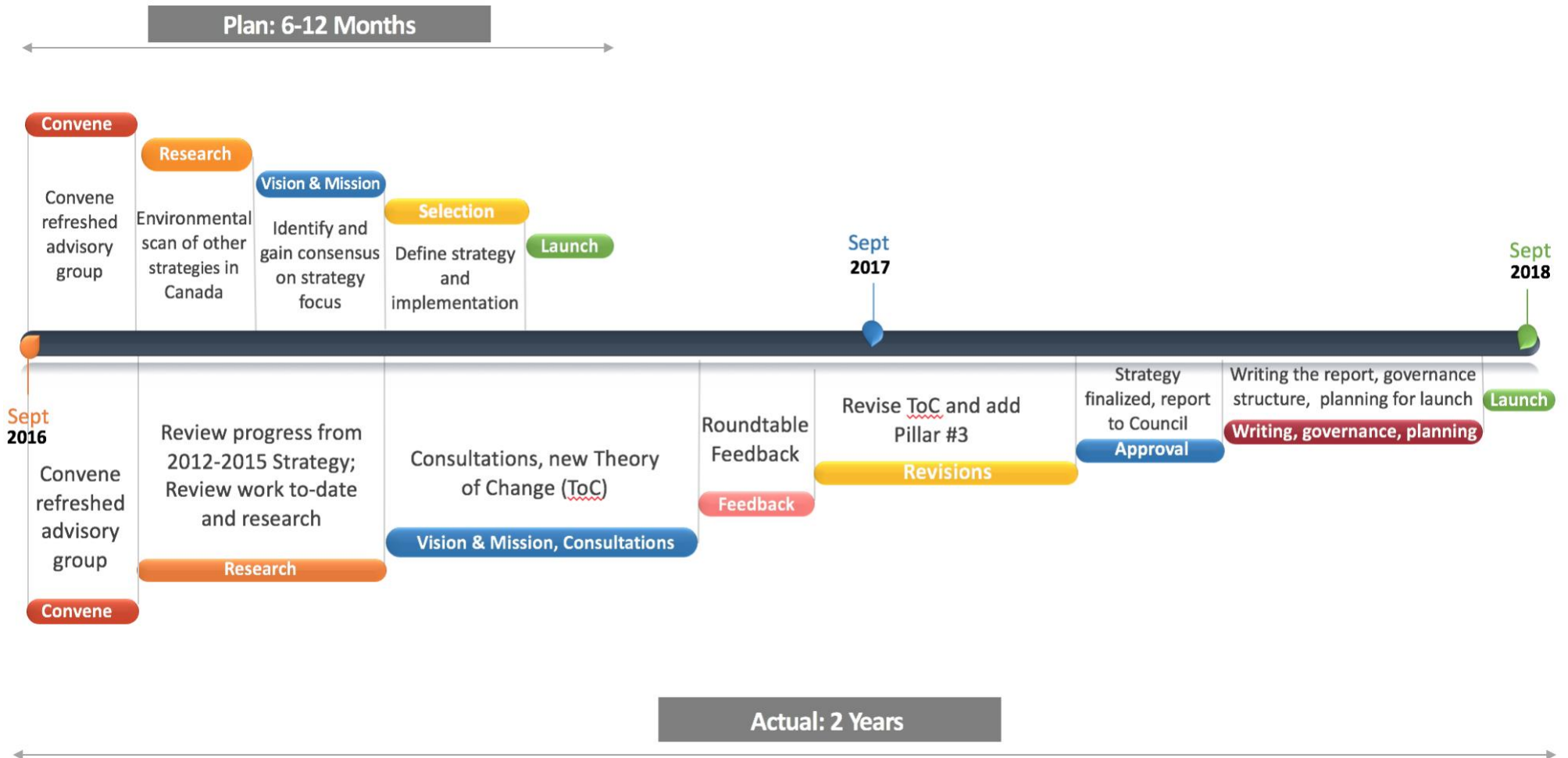
## END POVERTY EDMONTON: MARCH 2014 – SEPTEMBER 2016



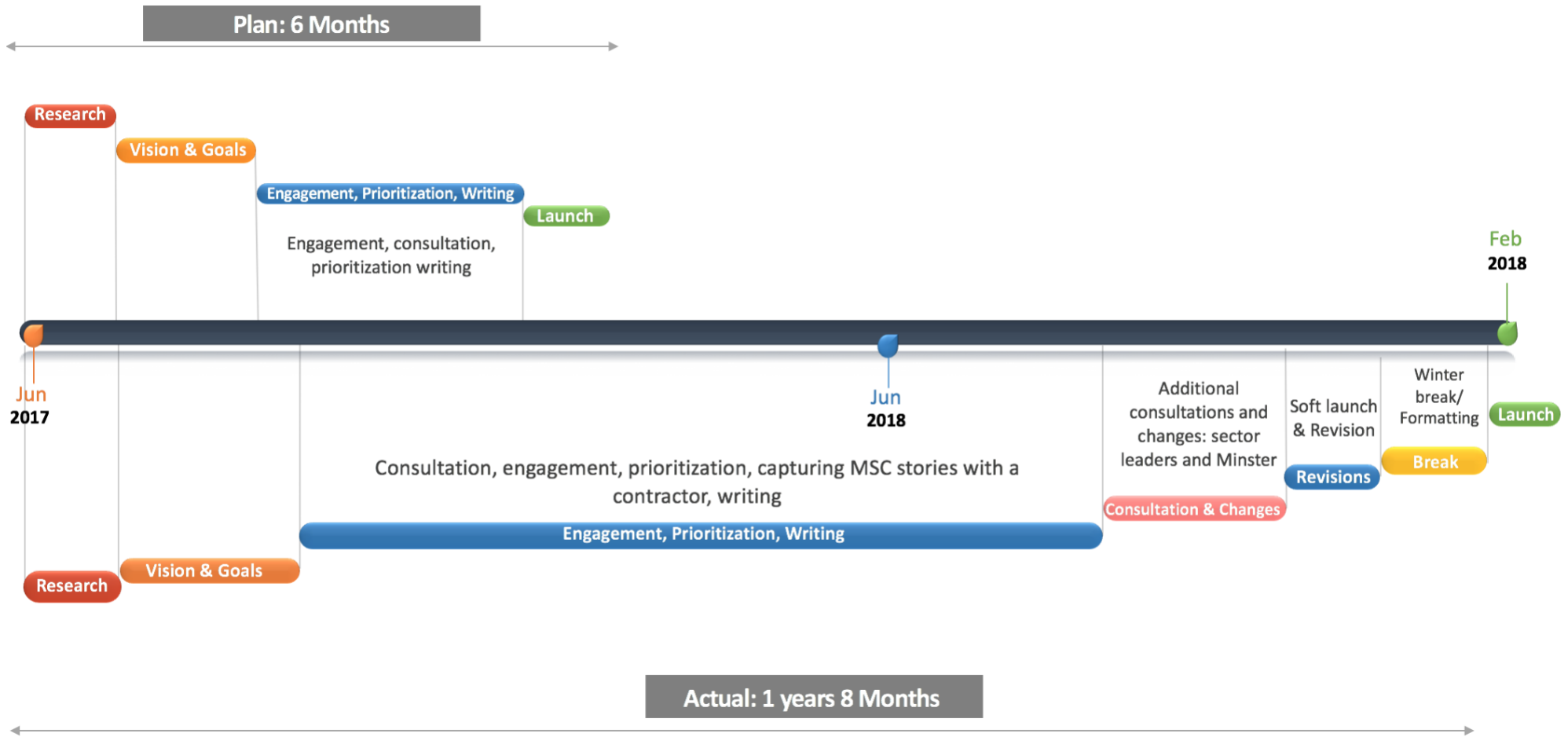
## THRIVING FOR ALL, LOWER COLUMBIA POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN: JANUARY 2017 – OCTOBER 2017



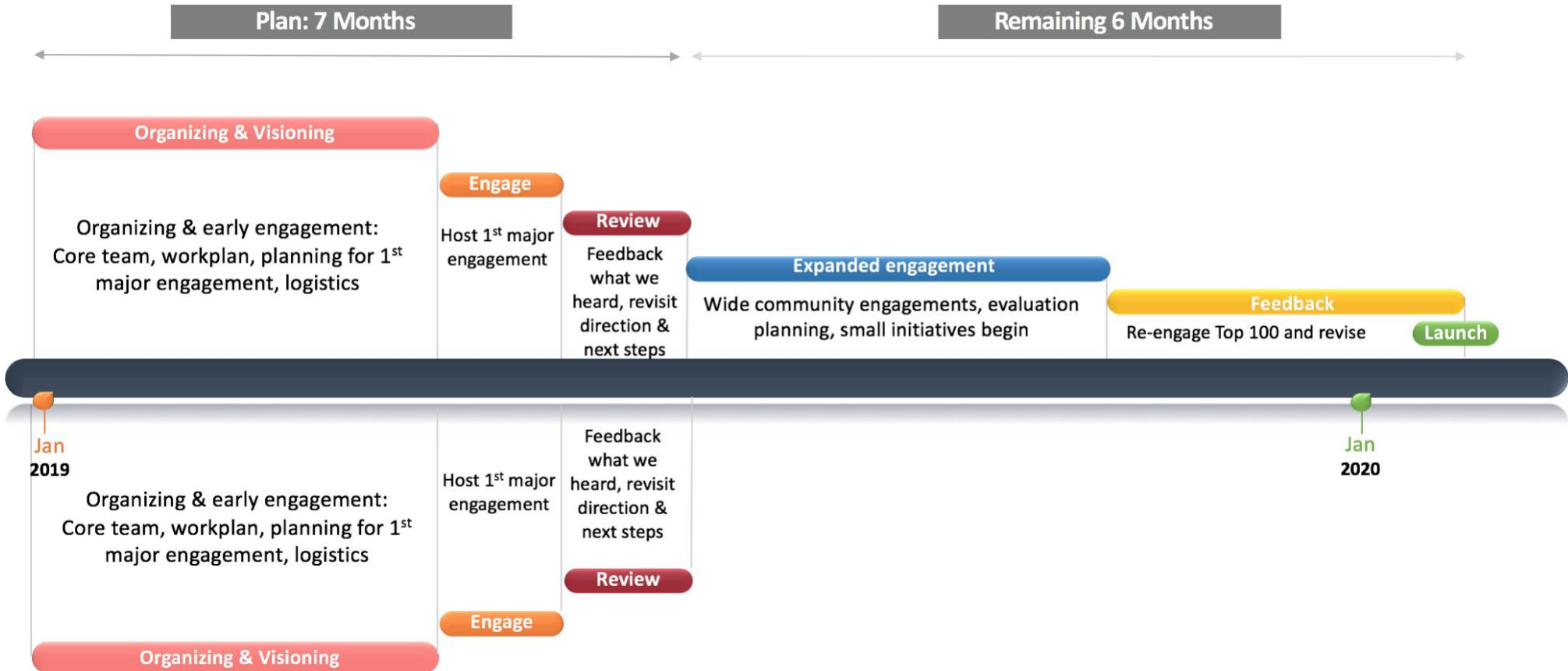
## PEEL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY: SEPTEMBER 2016 – SEPTEMBER 2018



### SASKATOON POVERTY REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP: JUNE 2017 – FEBRUARY 2019



## CHATHAM-KENT PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE: JANUARY 2019 – FEBRUARY 2020 (IN PROGRESS)



## END POVERTY EDMONTON

**Plan:** 1 year 3 months (Actual: 2 years 6 months)

**Timing Rationale:** Workplan based on similar planning processes of strategic initiatives within the City

**Characteristics:** High-level workplan; 3 FTE; led by municipality

Areas of Unexpected Time	
Issue	Significance
<b>Priority Scoping.</b> Issue-based Working Groups operated at uneven levels when organizing meetings, collecting and digesting information, developing solutions, and report writing. Largely dependent on how much prior work had been done on their issue (ex. existing committees).	More accountable to supporting Working Groups to develop recommendations that were really important to them, than to the original timeframe.
<b>Prioritization.</b> Hired two consultants to narrow down 400 recommendations; and the Taskforce did a two-day workshop identifying criteria.	Participatory planning grounded their prioritization process in theory and methodology. Narrowed from 400 to 80 actions.
<b>Additional community engagements.</b> Interviews, focus groups and surveys engaged 3,000 people from all sectors to give feedback on recommended actions and priority areas.	Working Groups wanted to be sure they identified priorities and actions most important to the whole community.
<b>Municipal government timelines.</b> Strategy completed in June 2016; waited three months for the report to go through all departments, for Council to have time to read and then approve.	Municipal processes and validation.

The development of the End Poverty Edmonton strategy began in March 2014 when Mayor Don Iveson made a public commitment to a poverty reduction strategy. A Mayor’s Taskforce on Poverty Elimination was formed and – because of the previous engagement work by the former Poverty Elimination Steering Committee – they focused primarily on planning and strategizing, building on the wealth of knowledge from previous work.

Working Groups were developed to explore issues more deeply and create recommendations around six priority areas previously identified by people with lived experience. Each Group spent a significant amount of time organizing, researching, and summarizing recommended actions; based on their conversations, they also created another priority area/Working Group that needed time to catch up.

They concluded with 400 recommendations, went through an intensive participatory planning process to narrow down 80 actions under 5 priority areas, went back to get community-wide feedback, and finally published the strategy following City Council approval in September 2016.

### **What I wish I would’ve known before I started:**

- Get to know more about each of the Leadership Team/Taskforce members and their perceptions of poverty and poverty reduction, and design a process to generate their best ideas.
- Give the Leadership Table time to reach a shared vision that reflects their collective wisdom.
- Use the body of knowledge on poverty and convening poverty reduction efforts that Tamarack Institute has now.



## LOWER COLUMBIA: THRIVING FOR ALL

**Plan:** 10 months (Actual: 11 months)

**Timing Rationale:** Foundations created and opportunities to inform the federal and provincial strategies

**Characteristics:** Workplan outline; 0.25 FTE; led by community organization; small town

Areas of Unexpected Time	
Issue	Significance
<p><b>Designing engagement.</b> Crafting an appreciative inquiry question for the consultation led to discussions around shifting the goal from poverty reduction to creating an inclusive society.</p> <p>Conducting discovery interviews/circles with target groups.</p>	<p>Developing a shared vision helps the work land with all partners and personalizes the journey for them.</p> <p>Including insights from people with lived experience who did not attend planning sessions.</p>
<p><b>Finding a venue.</b> Finding the right venue to accommodate everyone and their requirements were tough.</p>	<p>Bringing the community together all at once for a consultation creates excitement and is a relatively quick way to inform the strategy.</p>
<p><b>Summer break.</b> Summer vacations made convening difficult. Paused for two months.</p>	<p>Availability and inclusion of people who want to be included.</p>
<p><b>Strategy editing.</b> Drafting, editing, and polishing fell to the responsibility of the Coordinator.</p>	<p>Communication.</p>
<p><b>Staff transitions.</b> Coordinator retiring.</p>	<p>Continuity challenges.</p>

The Lower Columbia Region began their poverty reduction strategy journey in January 2017 and it rolled out in reality very similar to what they had planned. This was largely due to:

- A prior four years of work focused on women in poverty and a 2016 local poverty profile that started the conversation, built momentum, and brought the right people to the table.
- The urgency at the national and provincial levels to contribute to the new poverty reduction strategy consultations.
- Using an appreciative inquiry process to intentionally plan one major consultation. They critically examined *who* should be there and *how* to engage them in the visioning process. As a result, they got the priorities right the first time around.

Their pre-engagement planning included developing a vision, identifying the right invitees through stakeholder mapping, making invitations and presentations to key organizations, crafting an appreciative inquiry question, and engaging target groups. They engaged the community in identifying priorities and solutions over a two-day summit, and the Coordinators validated the community got it “right” by comparing their priority areas against other community poverty reduction strategies.

### **What I wish I would’ve known before I started:**

- A short timeframe can prevent people from drifting away.
- Make the case to funders about everything involved and how much time it takes, particularly when seeking to maintain the momentum after the strategy is developed.
- Emphasize engaging with business people as early as possible in the planning process to better engage their participation.

## PEEL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

**Plan:** 6-12 months (Actual: 2 years)

**Timing Rationale:** Including the perspectives of committed partners in the process

**Characteristics:** Informal workplan; 3 FTE; led by independent collaborative; regional-level support

Areas of Unexpected Time	
Issue	Significance
<b>Theory of change.</b> Backtracking to create a Theory of Change, informed by stakeholders on a one-on-one basis.	Added rigour and reason to their methodology - forced to think critically about their vision, mission, guiding principles, outcomes and to bring together statistics and narratives to confirm assumptions.
<b>Incorporating Feedback.</b> Added a priority area and revised the Theory of Change (ToC) after feedback from the Roundtable indicated the ToC presented in the draft strategy didn't represent all the issues they wanted to address.	Although the ToC is the foundation of the strategy, it was important to be flexible and include the perspectives of the partners to ensure everyone sees themselves and the work of their organizations in the strategy.
<b>Writing and editing the report.</b> Reviewing and editing the supplementary sections of the final strategy report, and working with the communications and design team to finalize it.	Validation by all the stakeholders who contributed to ensure the report is useful to them after it is published.
<b>Summer break.</b> Vacations slowed the rate of meetings and response times during the writing and editing of the report.	Validation by everyone who's contributed, so that they see themselves in the strategy and it is useful to them.

Preliminary discussions envisioning a renewal of the 2012 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy began in 2015-2016. Work got off the ground in September 2016 when a staff member was assigned to refreshing the strategy. A Refresh Advisory Committee was convened. This group was tasked with identifying the strategic priority areas and rationale for selecting the priority areas. Their community consultations included information from local, provincial and national poverty reductions strategy consultations, survey feedback evaluating the first strategy and suggesting changes to the second, researching strategies in other Canadian cities, and local conversations.

They took a few steps back and forth throughout 2017, creating a Theory of Change (ToC) eight months into the process, revising their ToC based on feedback from Roundtable partners, and finally submitting a summary to Regional Council for support and endorsement by their January 2018 deadline. Council endorsed the strategy three months later, and after significant back-and-forth with partners to write the final report, the strategy was publicly launched in September 2018.

The development of a governance structure was also a parallel piece of work being done during the writing and editing of the strategy so that it could be included in the strategy report.

### **What I wish I would've known before I started:**

- It is important to have the "right" people at the table from the *very* beginning of the strategy development and continuously engage them throughout the process so that their perspectives are included in the strategy. Remain flexible and build in adequate time for capacity building, particularly when a technical approach is being used with a non-technical audience.

## SASKATOON POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

**Plan:** 6 months (Actual: 1 year 8 months)

**Timing Rationale:** Well-established relationships and a history of partners working well together

**Characteristics:** Loose internal workplan; 0.5 FTE; led by independent collaborative

Areas of Unexpected Time	
Issue	Significance
<b>Establishing a common vision with partners.</b> New partners from sectors new to the table used different language. Particularly conceptualizing their goal as poverty reduction vs. elimination.	Everyone sees their role. Buy-in from champions in every sector helps reach more people and build momentum. As a result, they haven't had to "sell" the priorities to anyone.
<b>Engaging people with people with lived experience.</b> People with lived experience wanted to contribute more than they had in the past. Supported them to convene a committee, share all voices, and write the report appropriately.	Beneficiaries of the strategy contribute significant expertise to identifying challenges and solutions, and are empowered to have their voices heard throughout the process.
<b>Engagement momentum.</b> Did not want to limit ideas from people who had never been at the table before and were eager to contribute.	Supporting everyone's voices to be heard increases our knowledge of issues and solutions, and increases widespread buy-in.
<b>Evaluation team.</b> Recommended changes to priority and action items based on what is measurable.	Changed anything wildly unmeasurable from the outset, to prevent getting years down the road and not being able to report impact.
<b>Provincial government timelines.</b> New provincial government was disengaged, but the strategy included recommendations and implications at a provincial-level. Delayed launch until they could schedule a meeting with the Minister.	Political will and relationship-building.
<b>Additional Engagements.</b> Feedback from the Minister revealed gaps between recommended solutions and sector leader perceptions. Held several conversations with leaders and made changes until recommendations were accepted.	Widespread multi-sector buy-in.

Saskatoon began developing their poverty reduction strategy in June 2017, simultaneously convening a multi-sectoral roundtable and an evaluation team that was responsible for considering implications for measurement and reporting all along the way. After considerable discussion, a vision for poverty elimination was affirmed and upstream and downstream engagements began by the Fall. They did an environmental scan by conducting asset and process mapping, looking at what is already being done and why, who's funding, who's being targeted, and what the gaps are. They compiled 8 maps into 1 and used the information to identify priority areas. Goals and actions were developed by working groups, and after late feedback and revisions by the province and sector leaders at the end of 2018, SPRP's 12 Bold Ideas for Action were publicly launched, following the winter break, in February 2019.

### What I wish I would've known before I started:

- People want to contribute but they are busy. Surveys are a great tool to get feedback without holding meetings.
- Find a balance between going slow and taking action.

## CHATHAM-KENT PROSPERITY ROUNDTABLE

**Plan:** 13 months (In progress)

**Timing Rationale:** Comparing timeframes against other CRP members who have used this method

**Characteristics:** Detailed workplan; 1 FTE; led by independent collaborative; rural

Areas of Unexpected Time	
Issue	Significance
<b>Personal engagements.</b> Engaging sector leaders to be public champions of the strategy through informal one-on-one meetings. Got to know them better and their interests in the work.	Buy-in/commitment and longer-term relationship building.
<b>Invitation letter.</b> Crafting the right message to excite invitees to join. This delay pushed back dependent work (finding signatories, sending the invitation).	Grabbing attention and enticing invitees to participate in the first major consultation.
<b>Finding a venue.</b> Finding an accessible, appropriate, affordable, community space available for their target timeframe and with the capacity to host a large consultation.	Secure an appropriate space that is accessible to all and supports a large conversation.
<b>Sector leaders' timeframes.</b> Work with letter signatories' and politicians' schedules.	Signatories must be available to attend the event before making a final decision on timing.
<b>Event conference logistics.</b> Writing the booklet, creating nametags, and other event planning.	Provide a great first experience for community members engaging with the plan.

Chatham-Kent's Prosperity Roundtable began developing a Community Plan in January 2019 after it became apparent that to meaningfully engage the business sector and people with lived/living experience, they needed to include them in building the strategy from the ground up.

The Prosperity Roundtable accessed Tamarack Institute's expert coaching center to help them set and achieve their goals, and found the first phase nearly seamless. The Board's involvement and their direct connection to the most influential people in the community was central to getting all 100 invitees in the room relatively easily. They spent several months planning whom to invite, how to invite them, and what questions to ask everyone.

Now, they are entering the 'Emergent' phase, characterized by sustaining the momentum, starting small actions, planning for evaluation, and doing widespread community engagements. While they may push their engagement phase by an extra 1-1.5 months to connect with and hear from everyone who wants to be engaged, they gave themselves a three-month publishing window and are still projecting to launch it on time in February 2020.

### What I wish I would've known before I started:

- Plant seeds early. Build momentum by telling people about the plan, even if they are not included in the first round of engagement, so they are ready when you invite them. People need to hear something seven times before it sinks in.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and check your assumptions, even on small details such as terminology. You can miss the *why* of your actions easily. Tamarack has staff that can assist you.



### EXERCISE: WORKPLAN TEMPLATE

Outline your revised workplan, incorporating new timing considerations.

Stream of work	Activities	Lead(s)	Timeframe
Ex. Phase 1: Organize, plan, initiate contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Draft workplan</li> <li>- Develop core team</li> <li>- Co-generate a common vision and framework</li> <li>- Est. evaluation team</li> <li>- Create engagement plan</li> <li>- Identify and engage champions</li> <li>- Identify and engage key partners/individuals</li> <li>- Logistics planning</li> </ul>	Roundtable Coordinator  Core Team	Jan – May 2019  (Consultation must happen prior to June)

## RESOURCES

Need help advancing the trickier pockets of time? Explore the resources below.

**Community Vision for Change**, by Tamarack Institute. This tool helps diverse collaboratives develop a strong shared vision. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/community-vision-for-change-tool>

**Right-Sizing Your Ask**, by Lisa Attygalle. Sustain momentum by providing multiple ways for people to self-select their commitment level. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/right-sizing-your-ask>

**TEN: Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience**, by Alison Homer. A guide for meaningfully engaging people with lived/living experience. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/ten-2019>

**Stakeholder Engagement Wheel**, by Tamarack Institute. Adapt this tool and use it as a prompt when discussing roles and level of commitment with key partners or champions. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/stakeholder-engagement-wheel>

**How to Lead Collective Impact Working Groups**, by Daniela Uribe, Carina Wendel and Valerie Bockstette. A toolkit from FSG on building and running Collective Impact working groups. <http://www.psnpalalto.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/How-to-Lead-Collective-Impact-Working-Groups-1.pdf>

**The Language of Inclusion**, by Liz Weaver. A blog exploring why and how to use more inclusive language. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/the-language-of-inclusion>

**A Collection of Poverty Reduction Strategies**, by Vibrant Communities Canada. A compilation of sample poverty reduction strategies across Canada. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/summary-select-poverty-reduction-strategies>

**Top 100 Partners Exercise**, by Paul Born. A guide to help you bring the “right” people to the table. <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/top-100-partners-exercise>

Funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnership Program.

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