



**SDG 1** represents our global commitment to ending all forms of poverty everywhere for everyone.



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA

**The Learning  
Institute**

Many community foundations are exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their planning, granting, convening, Vital Signs and more. This Fact Sheet is part of a series that focuses on specific SDGs to engage and inspire community foundations of all sizes to deepen their work around these goals.

## What is this approach?

The **targets of SDG 1** include reducing all forms of poverty and ending extreme poverty by 2030, ensuring equal access to economic resources and basic services, and building the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change. Globally, there has been progress, with extreme poverty declining from 36% of the world's population in 1990 to 10% in 2015 ([source](#)). However, over 700 million people still live in extreme poverty ([source](#)) with over 150 million homeless ([source](#)). In Canada, as many as 300,000 people experience homelessness each year ([source](#)) and currently 1 in 7 Canadians is living in poverty ([source](#)). This rises to 1 in 5 among children ([source](#)) and 1 in 4 among Indigenous people ([source](#)).

**Most people in the world live in poverty. Eighty five percent of the world lives on less than \$30 per day, two-thirds live on less than \$10 per day, and every tenth person lives on less than \$1.90 per day.**

— [OUR WORLD IN DATA](#)



**At the national scale, Canada's approach to achieving SDG 1 is outlined in [Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), which addresses the multidimensional nature of poverty by focusing on three key pillars:**

- **Dignity:** Lifting Canadians out of poverty by ensuring basic needs — such as safe and affordable housing, healthy food and health care are met.
- **Opportunity and Inclusion:** Helping Canadians join the middle class by promoting full participation in society and equality of opportunity.
- **Resilience and Security:** Supporting the middle class by protecting Canadians from falling into poverty and by supporting income security and resilience.

Our national approach to SDG 1 recognizes that poverty persists and is concentrated in particular populations, including people with disabilities, single mothers, newcomers to Canada, gender-diverse people and Indigenous peoples ([source](#)).

**In order to address persistent poverty, Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy is committed to:**

- Concrete poverty reduction targets (relative to 2015 levels) of:
  - a 20% reduction in poverty by 2020
  - a 50% reduction in poverty by 2030.
- The creation and review of an Official Poverty Line, which will be used to track progress towards Canada's poverty reduction targets.
- The creation of a National Advisory Council on Poverty that is comprised of persons with lived experience, experts, academics and practitioners.

### SDG 1 and Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Indigenous children and families face specific barriers to overcoming acute poverty, including failed government policies, the continued impact of Canada's colonial history, effects of trauma from the Indian Residential School system and discrimination in certain settings. Closing socioeconomic gaps requires a holistic approach and a strategy that balances long-term transformative changes with immediate actions to address the most pressing gaps.

— [CANADA VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2018](#)

At the community scale, those working on poverty have long realized that it is a complex problem with multiple causes and solutions. Persistent poverty is intertwined with inequality (SDG 10), opportunities for employment and decent work (SDG 8), mental health and addictions (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), affordable housing (SDG 11) and confronting violence and injustice (SDG 16). At the community scale, we realize that we cannot achieve SDG 1 unless all these issues are addressed and that each of these challenges also presents an entry point for tackling poverty. Communities are responding to the challenge, and over 330 Canadian municipalities have joined the collective impact movement [Communities Ending Poverty](#).

#### Action on SDG 1 in our cities and towns includes:

- Developing and supporting poverty reduction strategies.
- Providing affordable housing options, low-cost rentals and pathways to home ownership.
- Supporting affordable public transport options.
- Providing addiction treatment and support services.
- Providing food banks and emergency support services.
- Providing mental health and counselling services.
- Supporting a living wage and decent work opportunities.
- Providing employment and retraining programs for those who are struggling to find work.
- Promoting affirmative action to ensure equitable employment opportunities for all people.
- Ensuring equitable access to basic services such as power, water, education and health.
- Providing shelters for women, men, two-spirit people and gender-diverse people who have been victims of violence.
- Supporting educational and training pathways that are accessible and appropriate for all.
- Tackling racism and discrimination in our communities and addressing all forms of inequality.
- Ensuring support for recently arrived immigrants and refugees, including language support.
- Strengthening relationships in communities and a sense of belonging and trust.
- Building coalitions of organizations working on the different aspects of poverty.

## Why is it important for grantmakers?

The work of community foundations has contributed to reducing poverty for decades and much has been achieved. Between 2015 and 2018, 1 million Canadians have moved out of poverty, the largest three-year reduction in Canada's history ([source](#)). But progress has not been equal, and we can learn as much from those who have been left behind as from what has been achieved. While the Canadian poverty rate is 14%, an intersectional lens reveals that 23% of women with disabilities live in poverty, 42% of non-permanent resident women ([source](#)) and 40% of Indigenous children ([source](#)), while 25%-40% of Canada's homeless youth identify as 2SLGBTQ+ ([source](#)). Often discrimination and exclusion lie at the heart of persistent poverty, and "leaving no one behind" will require us to address systemic inequality and our relationship to it.

### An Intersectional Approach to Poverty

Poverty is not neutral; it intersects with many identity categories such as gender, ability, age, sexual orientation and citizenship status, and disproportionately affects certain communities and individuals, such as newcomers to Canada and people with mental health issues.

— [POVERTY IN INDIGENOUS AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES](#)

### The importance of SDG 1 can be seen in the work of community foundations across Canada:

- Several community foundations have responded to the complex nature of poverty by participating in multi-year community partnerships and collective impact initiatives including in [Winnipeg](#), [Hamilton](#) and [Montreal](#).
- Several community foundations have partnered with their municipalities to tackle poverty reduction through innovative solutions ranging from [affordable housing grants in London to the creation of a Community Development Corporation in Edmonton](#).
- Many community foundations have engaged in impact investing to improve access to affordable housing, including in [London](#), [Edmonton](#) and [Hamilton](#).
- [Vital Signs reporting](#) plays a key role in tracking progress on poverty and has led many foundations to create dedicated poverty reduction funds, including the [Guelph Community Foundation](#).
- Community foundations have been key partners in municipal and provincial poverty reduction strategies and coalitions including in [Saskatoon](#), [Manitoba](#), [Alberta](#), [New Brunswick](#) and the [Acadian Peninsula](#).
- The Victoria Foundation supported [entrepreneur training for newcomers](#), including 14 refugees from Syria, and provided access to micro-lending and networking events.

Hamilton Community Foundation’s work on poverty reduction stands as one of the most innovative approaches in North America. Their work began with research into community needs and drew on studies from the Caledon Institute to identify and fund “pathways out of poverty” ([source](#)). The multi-year program focused on supporting “neighbourhood hubs” to address the multifaceted nature of poverty while also funding systemic and policy issues relevant across communities. The neighbourhood hubs supported the development of local action plans and encouraged the leadership of local residents in designing and implementing unique poverty reduction initiatives. The program culminated in a partnership with the City of Hamilton, which adopted the neighbourhood hub approach in its poverty reduction work ([source](#)).

## Common principles to get started

Ending poverty in Canada is within reach and doing so could advance progress across many of the goals that community foundations are working on. Confronting the intersectional and interwoven nature of poverty can also provide powerful insights into community well-being and identify other Sustainable Development Goals that are important for community grantmaking. Action on SDG 1 is an opportunity to develop partnerships with those most affected by poverty, to learn from, and follow the lead of, those working on the front lines, and to support collaborations that address the complex and multifaceted nature of persistent poverty.

### 01 Learn and understand

- Understand the multidimensional nature of poverty issues in Canada. Visit [Canada Without Poverty](#), the [Canadian Poverty Institute](#), [Campaign 2000](#) and the [Homeless Hub](#) for national, provincial and local reports.
- Use Vital Signs reporting and hold Vital Conversations to understand what poverty looks like in your community and who is most affected.
- Understand your city’s current commitment to ending poverty. Start by conducting a brief assessment using the [questions in this guide](#) (pp. 6–8). If you are not able to answer one or more of the questions, this is an opportunity to dig deeper.
- Carry out research and draw on existing studies to understand the different causes and pathways out of poverty in your community. The Edmonton Community Foundation partnered with the Skills Society Action Lab to launch [Shift Lab](#), which explores the interconnected issues of racism and poverty.

## 02 Strategic grantmaking

- Use Vital Signs, research and community conversations to identify and invest in strategic leverage points for poverty reduction. The [Winnipeg Foundation's multi-year partnership](#) focused on education; [Edmonton and Victoria have invested in entrepreneurship and business skills](#); [London has targeted affordable housing](#), and [Montreal](#) has focused on food security.
- Ground poverty reduction initiatives in the unique needs of local communities and support community leadership for developing solutions. [Hamilton Community Foundation's approach is built on neighbourhood hubs](#) with residents as leaders.
- Support the groups most affected by poverty such as the [Victoria Foundation's work with recent immigrants and refugees](#).
- Participate in the development of action plans for reducing poverty in your community and support their implementation. The [Lunenburg County Community Fund has supported an innovative plan](#) to revitalize the local economy by attracting new people to the community.
- Consider partnering with municipal governments to scale your impact. The work of community foundations in [Hamilton, London and Edmonton](#) has benefited from these kinds of partnerships.

## 03 Lead and collaborate

- Encourage your city to join the Canadian collective impact movement [Communities Ending Poverty](#).
- Consider adopting a multi-year approach to grantmaking similar to that of the [Winnipeg Foundation](#) and [Hamilton Community Foundation](#). This allows time to develop partnerships, better understand the issues and fund the long-term solutions needed to address persistent poverty.
- Pool your funds and partner with organizations working on different aspects of poverty reduction. The Foundation of Greater Montréal has partnered with the [Collective Impact Project](#), which has raised \$23 million to reduce poverty in neighbourhoods in Montreal.
- Consider scaling your impact through regional networks. The Fondation communautaire de la Péninsule acadienne supported the establishment of the [Acadian Peninsula community inclusion network](#), whose work is aligned with the provincial government's poverty reduction strategy.
- Shift power relations and involve grantees and community members in funding decisions. Review the principles guiding the [Emergency Community Support Fund](#) and see the work of the [Hamilton Community Foundation](#) and its neighbourhood hub model.
- Become a [living wage employer](#), champion the local living wage in your community and make sure your granting covers a local living wage for grantees. For more information, visit [Living Wage Canada](#).

## Resource list

### **A Guide for Cities Reducing Poverty**

- Pages 6–8 provide a self-complete questionnaire to assess your city’s level of engagement with poverty reduction.
- Pages 9–34 provide examples and case studies of community-scale poverty reduction.
- Pages 35–42 provide additional resources and simple steps to get started.

### **A Compendium of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Frameworks**

- An overview of poverty reduction strategies and approaches in North America.
- Pages 7–24 provide examples of strategies and frameworks for reducing poverty.
- Pages 25–28 provide tools for a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction.

### **Homeless Hub**

- Key facts on homelessness in Canada including specific communities by province.
- A solutions section with approaches to preventing and ending homelessness, supporting accommodation, integrating systems and working with priority populations.
- A research section that provides case studies including the report What Works and For Whom? which covers a range of promising practices for addressing homelessness.

### **Campaign 2000**

- A national campaign to end child and family poverty in Canada.
- Provides national and provincial/territorial report cards on child and family poverty.
- Provides resources including a Campaign 2000 toolkit, suggestions for advocacy and links to other organizations.

### **Canadian Poverty Institute**

- A website that contains key facts and resources on poverty reduction in Canada.
- Links to the Poverty Hub, which provides a research library on causes, impacts, policies and best practices in poverty prevention and reduction.
- The website’s Poverty in Canada section includes links to provincial poverty strategies.

### **Canada Without Poverty**

- Takes a human rights approach to ending poverty in Canada.
- Detailed facts on poverty in Canada that brings an intersectional lens.
- Tracking the impact of COVID-19 on poverty through national roundtables and reports.

### **Addressing Deep and Persistent Poverty: A Framework for Philanthropic Planning and Investment**

- A US-focused report that provides an overview of persistent poverty and the role of philanthropy in addressing it.
- Pages 13–22 cover different approaches for addressing deep and persistent poverty.
- Pages 23–28 provide guidance for identifying strategic priorities for poverty reduction.

**Community-Led Approaches to Reducing Poverty in Neighbourhoods: A Review of Evidence and Practice**

- A UK report that explores the evidence for community approaches to poverty reduction.
- The executive summary provides an overview of approaches and key findings.
- Pages 8–44 provide a detailed analysis of the evidence for poverty reduction at the community scale, including volunteer efforts, community organizing and community economic development.