COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS REPORT SUMMARY
CITY OF LETHBRIDGE **2023-2024**

The Community Homelessness Report (CHR) is an annual Reaching Home reporting deliverable that supports communities to prevent and reduce homelessness using a more coordinated, systems-based and data-driven response. The CHR was designed to support local discussions and decision making, using all of the information about homelessness currently available at the community level. Communities are encouraged to use their CHR data to develop clear plans of action that help them to reach their homelessness reduction targets and to leverage the collective efforts of service providers working across the community, regardless of how they are funded.

This is a summary of the CHR for the 2023-24 reporting cycle. It shows the community's self-assessment of Reaching Home implementation, which includes the following key components:
• meaningful collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners (see Section 1);
• community-level governance, coordinated service delivery (Coordinated Access) and use of a Homelessness Management Information System or HMIS (see Section 2); and,
• an Outcomes-Based Approach (tracking community-level outcomes and progress against targets using person-specific data; see Section 3).
If the community was able to report on outcomes and targets, this CHR Summary also includes results for each of the five core outcomes of Reaching Home (see Section 4).

Section 1. Community Context – Collaboration between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Partners

a) Specific to Coordinated Access, the HMIS and the Outcomes-Based Approach, has there been ongoing, meaningful collaboration between the DC CE and local Indigenous organizations, including those that sit on your CAB, over the reporting period?

→ Coordinated Access:	Yes
→ HMIS:	Not yet
→ Outcomes-Based Approach:	Yes

Describe this collaboration in more detail.

While the CE engages with the Indigenous CAB on a semi-regular basis and consistently prior to bringing forward funding requests forward to the larger CAB, it is recognized that greater engagement with Indigenous Peoples & Communities regarding HMIS implementation (HIFIS) is required. This work will begin now that the City of Lethbridge has been granted approval from the Government of Canada to use and implement HIFIS.

With the HIFIS license being approved, the CE will ensure dialogues with the HIFIS consultant, Acre Consulting, regarding how to best engage equity-deserving groups in HMIS implementation will be considered. Borrowing from these best practices, the CE anticipates engaging Indigenous Peoples & Communities in the following capacities:

1. Indigenous-serving funded service providers: As implementation timelines become clearer, CSD will arrange meetings with currently funded Indigenous-serving organizations to gather feedback. During these discussions, providers will be invited to share any gaps or concerns about current data tracking and compilation methods and suggest potential improvements.

2. Blood Tribe Department of Health: CSD will collaborate closely with the Blood Tribe Department of Health, acting as the shelter operator, to ensure effective dissemination of any changes related to the implementation of HIFIS.

CSD also plans to work more closely with the City's Indigenous Relations Office and the Reconciliation Lethbridge Advisory Committee as Coordinated Access and HIFIS continue in-tandem to increase opportunities for Indigenous-serving organizations and Indigenous perspectives to provide feedback.

Indigenous-serving organizations play an integral role within the coordinated access system. Specifically, the Blackfoot Resource Hub has become a crucial partner in developing cultural competency resources aimed at enhancing the capacity for working with Indigenous participants across the coordinated access system. Indigenous perspectives are consistently incorporated into ongoing ICA implementation and maintenance. This involves active engagement with Indigenous organizations in the community by the ICA leads, as well as regular meetings with funded Indigenous organizations as part of performance management and quarterly review processes. These measures ensure that feedback loops between the CE and key Indigenous partners are maintained.

Describe how this collaboration will happen over the coming year in more detail.

See above. As HIFIS is not yet implemented as the HMIS, engagement will occur over the coming year regarding user needs.

a) Specific to the completion of this Community Homelessness Report (CHR), did ongoing, meaningful collaboration take place with the local Indigenous organizations, including those that sit on your CAB, over the reporting period?	Yes

Describe this collaboration in more detail.

Indigenous members serving on the CWSS Advisory Committee were engaged individually in Spring 2024 to review the draft CHR and provide any additional input/insights.

This report was reviewed and approved by the CWSS Advisory Committee (inclusive of both DC CAB and IH CAB members) in Spring 2024 and an opportunity for input on community trends and needs for the narrative sections was provided. The CWSS Advisory Committee Chair approved this report, and the rest of the Advisory Members received the full report and a summary presentation with an opportunity for feedback. Additionally, the CE engaged with the City of Lethbridge Indigenous Relations Office and our two Indigenous organizations (Blood Tribe Department of Health and Blood Tribe Administration) in Spring 2024 to review information contained throughout the draft CHR. It is the CE's hope that updated data provided in the CWSS and MHS updates will also provide strategic direction in enhancing engagement and collaboration efforts with Indigenous Peoples and Communities.

Section 2. Coordinated Access and Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) Self-Assessment

Section 2 Summary Tables

The table below provides a summary of the work your community has done so far to meet the Reaching Home minimum requirements for Coordinated Access and an HMIS under the 2019-2024 Reaching Home funding cycle.

	Completed	Started	Not Yet Started
Number of minimum requirements	13	5	0

The table below shows the percentage of minimum requirements completed for each core Coordinated Access component.

Governance and Partnerships	HMIS	Access Points to Service	Triage and Assessment	Resource Inventory	Vacancy Matching and Referral with Prioritization
67%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Section 2 Summary Comment
Highlight efforts and/or issues related to the work your community has done over the last year related to the Reaching Home minimum requirements for Coordinated Access and an HMIS.
Coordinated Access: The Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region (CMHA, ASR) is the lead implementation agency of the ICA system in our community. ICA was developed as a decentralized coordinated access model. This model refers to a system for organizing and delivering services to individuals in need that involves multiple service providers working collaboratively but independently across various locations. There is no centralized authority or single point of entry for accessing services; instead, coordination occurs among various decentralized entities. A broad spectrum of service providers from diverse sectors operates within the ICA system, facilitating efficient access to essential services via systematic navigation and referral pathways. Continuous improvements and implementation of the ICA system gained more traction with stakeholder engagement sessions being a priority. In October 2023, the City of Lethbridge, with the CMHA, ASR, organized the first ICA Service Fair. This event brought together various service providers in a unified effort to improve access to essential community services and served as a platform for networking, resource sharing, and learning among service sector organizations, with a focus on supporting the community's most vulnerable populations. With over 170 participants from 45 different service provider organizations, attendees participated in presentations, engaged in networking opportunities, and explored resources at dedicated tables, emphasizing the importance of enhancing coordination, fostering collaboration, and addressing complex issues through a coordinated and effective approach in Lethbridge. Additionally, the www.lethbridgeica.ca website functions as a central hub, offering comprehensive information on community services, resources, referral pathways, system navigators, a housing registry, an events calendar, and more, essential for keeping the community informed about ICA progress. Recent improvements have focused on enriching the site by integrating additional insights and resources into priority population pages through linked content, fostering knowledge exchange, and providing access to supplementary materials. HMIS: In March 2024, the CE received confirmation for its use of HIFIS. While awaiting this confirmation, the CE has made some efforts to improve data collection (i.e., data sharing agreements, BNL) to better transition to HIFIS. Over the 2024-25 fiscal year, the CE will be working to implement HIFIS to replace the current HMIS, Efforts-to-Outcomes (ETO). It is anticipated that the use of HIFIS will facilitate better data collection and analysis to support decision-making.

Section 3. Outcomes-Based Approach Self-Assessment
Section 3 Summary Table
The tables below provide a summary of the work your community has done so far to transition to an Outcomes-Based Approach under the 2019-2024 Reaching Home funding cycle.

Step 1: Maintain person-specific data	Step 2: Maintain real-time data	Step 3: Maintain comprehensive data
Not yet	Yes	Yes

Step 4: Can report monthly outcomes and set targets using data (reporting monthly data in Section 4 is mandatory for 2023-24 CHRs)			
Dataset was in place as of January 1, 2024 (or earlier)	**Can generate monthly data**	**Has set targets**	**Has an Outcomes-Based Approach in place**
Yes	Outcome 1: Yes	Outcome 1: Yes	Yes
	Outcome 2: Yes	Outcome 2: Yes	
	Outcome 3: Yes	Outcome 3: Yes	
	Outcome 4: Yes	Outcome 4: Yes	
	Outcome 5: Yes	Outcome 5: Yes	

Step 4: Can report annual outcomes and set targets using data (reporting annual data in Section 4 is mandatory once annual data can be generated)			
Dataset was in place as of April 1, 2023 (or earlier)	**Can generate annual data**	**Has set targets**	**Has an Outcomes-Based Approach in place**
No	Outcome 1: No	Outcome 1: No	No
	Outcome 2: No	Outcome 2: No	
	Outcome 3: No	Outcome 3: No	
	Outcome 4: No	Outcome 4: No	
	Outcome 5: No	Outcome 5: No	

Summary Comment
Highlight efforts and/or issues related to your community's work to implement, maintain or improve the Outcomes-Based Approach under Reaching Home.
The efforts made to enhance person-specific data over the past year have been highlighted, including the establishment of a BNL Working Group, entering into data sharing agreements, refining processes for data entry to the BNL, and fostering ongoing collaboration and engagement. In the coming year, the CE will continue to actively participate in these crucial collaborations to ensure that the BNL data remains usable, current, and well-maintained. As the implementation of HIFIS commences, the CE will transition the BNL data into this system. Our aim is that by centralizing the database for person-specific data, not only will the validity of the data be improved, but it will also enhance accessibility for other providers to contribute relevant data to the BNL.

2023-24 COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS REPORT
APPENDIX A: LONG-FORM ANSWERS EXPANDED

1.1a

a) Highlight any efforts and/or issues related to the work that your community has done to **prevent and/or reduce homelessness** and **increase access to safe, adequate housing** over the last year.

Ongoing Implementation and Improvements of Integrated Coordinated Access (ICA) System: The Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region (CMHA, ASR) is the lead implementation agency of the ICA system in our community. ICA was developed as a decentralized coordinated access model. This model refers to a system for organizing and delivering services to individuals in need that involves multiple service providers working collaboratively but independently across various locations. There is no centralized authority or single point of entry for accessing services; instead, coordination occurs among various decentralized entities. A broad spectrum of service providers from diverse sectors operates within the ICA system, facilitating efficient access to essential services via systematic navigation and referral pathways.

Additionally, the www.lethbridgeica.ca website serves as a hub, providing comprehensive information on community services, resources, referral pathways, system navigators, a housing registry, an events calendar, and more, crucial for keeping the community updated on ICA progress. Recent efforts have focused on enhancing the site by incorporating additional insights and resources into priority population pages through linked content, enriching knowledge exchange and providing access to additional content. With approximately 10,511 unique visits and 15,813 total visits from April 2023 to March 2024, it has proven to be a reliable and utilized resource. Changes to the website, informed by the Community of Practice's (COP) feedback, included the redevelopment of referral pathways for better navigation, development of a Stabilization Fund webpage, and updates to various pages and resources such as the Getting Connected digital guide, Priority Population Navigator pages, and Counselling Service Providers list. Positive feedback has been received from service providers and the COP regarding these changes. The website usage saw a spike in visits which is attributed to trained system navigators accessing the resources on an ongoing basis as well as connections made at the ICA service fair event. Finding new opportunities to improve the website and ensure information remains relevant and accessible to those navigating services in Lethbridge is a consistent effort. An example is establishing connections to other initiatives like the City of Lethbridge's Fee Assistance Program. This program offers information to Lethbridge residents facing financial barriers with the opportunity to participate in Recreation and Culture programs and activities, as well as other services offered through Lethbridge Transit at a subsidized cost.

The implementation of a decentralized coordinated access system proved to be beneficial in response to the transition of provincial funding for housing programs from the City of Lethbridge to the Lethbridge Housing Authority (LHA). As LHA assumed the role of the Community Based Organization (CBO) for OSSI funding and became the primary funder for numerous programs, various adjustments ensued within the system.

A notable change was the discontinuation of the Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool (SPDAT) for housing program referrals, replaced by the introduction of the Coordinated Access Round Table (CART) facilitated by LHA. CART, established collaboratively with community and funded agency partners, focuses on housing placements, and manages referrals to that program. Its primary objective is to reduce

barriers for individuals seeking housing support by overseeing access, assessment, prioritization, and placement processes. Additionally, to enhance collaboration and streamline efforts, the Integrated Coordinated Access Partnership (ICAP) table, previously facilitated by the City of Lethbridge, was disbanded, with most members now participating in the CART forum.

Before this transition, the primary distinction between Tier 2 and Tier 3 system navigators was the training in the administration of the SPDAT tool for housing referrals. However, LHA empowered community members to utilize the CART tool for these referrals. Consequently, the tier system navigator training underwent a comprehensive overhaul, removing the SPDAT component and consolidating Tier 2 & 3 training into a unified tier. This revamped training now includes referral processes through CART and system navigation for other programs and services.

In January 2024, a motion was presented to the Lethbridge ICA COP to officially abolish the Tier 3 designation, given the narrowed gap in training and roles between these tiers. The motion received unanimous support, leading to the removal of Tier 3 and all that encompassed it.

Priority Population Support Navigators: Since 2021, funding has been allocated to various agencies to provide navigation services tailored for Youth, Seniors, and Indigenous populations. These roles specialize in directing support towards these groups and advocating for their needs with system partners. All relevant Priority Population Support Navigator (PSN) training has been developed and is delivered quarterly. Over the past year, PSN trainings were organized by the Lethbridge ICA network, with 20 participants in the Youth PSN training, 42 participants in the Seniors PSN training, and 13 participants in the Indigenous PSN training. Cultural Safety training, a crucial component of this initiative, is led by the IPSN team. This training fosters a culturally sensitive and respectful environment, ensuring effective support and service access for Indigenous populations by acknowledging and addressing their distinct historical, social, and cultural perspectives. A comprehensive training schedule for 2024, covering all relevant ICA training sessions, is accessible on the lethbridgeica.ca website. Additionally, in 2023, the introduction of the Shelter Population Support Navigator role at the Lethbridge Wellness Shelter & Stabilization Unit has significantly aided unhoused participants. This PSN role facilitates connections to the continuum of care, provides referrals, offers follow-up support, and assists with system navigation to enhance access to resources and makes referrals to the OSSI CBO's Coordinated Access Round Table (CART) for service placement. The Shelter PSN role has been crucial in facilitating shelter diversion and ensuring shelter participants are connected to the resources they need to improve their access to safe, appropriate housing and housing supports throughout their shelter duration.

Stabilization Funding: The Stabilization Funds Program is now fully operational, providing essential support to City of Lethbridge residents facing housing stability challenges. Offering up to three months of financial assistance for rental support only, the program prioritizes assistance for youth, seniors, and families with children. Managed in partnership with community organizations and administered by the CMHA, ASR, the program ensures prompt and effective aid for those in need. From April 2023 – March 2024, the stabilization fund program processed 112 applications for individuals and families.

System-Level Collaboration/Performance Management: As part of coordinated access efforts, the CE has been active in collaborating with both funded and non-funded service providers in the community. Notably, in 2023, the first-ever Integrated Coordinated Access (ICA) Service Fair was held that permitted providers both within and outside the ICA system to share information and build capacity. Further, as part of the CE's performance excellence framework, funded providers are met with quarterly to discuss sector

partnerships, service gaps, or other programming areas. This frequent contact with providers ensures that both opportunities and barriers in providers' efforts to address homelessness are considered.

Gaps in Services/System-Level Deficiencies: The ongoing need for more housing and shelter options within the community has remained a priority. Quarterly reviews with Reaching Home-funded service providers have revealed persistent deficiencies at the system level, emphasizing the urgency of addressing this issue.

Encampment Response: The Encampment Response Team (ERT) has observed several trends since their inception in 2023. Contrary to prevailing community perception, encampments were found not only in the downtown area but also in various parts of the city. As temperatures dropped in 2023, the team noticed an increase in nuisance fires within encampments, necessitating proactive management to address safety concerns. Notably, during a severe cold snap when temperatures plummeted to -50°C with wind chill, the ERT took proactive measures to safeguard vulnerable individuals by completing wellness checks and supports for transportation to shelter. July of 2023 saw the highest number of encampment reports, totaling 117, with 49 unique encampments identified. Encampment reports in the coulees were more frequent during warmer months, while the ERT also addressed related issues like fires, vacant properties, and wellness checks during extreme wintry weather.

By-Name List: Over the past year, CSD has engaged in data-sharing agreements with the Blood Tribe Department of Health and Lethbridge Housing Authority to uphold a comprehensive community By-Names-List. By formalizing these agreements, our goal is to cultivate seamless collaboration among all participating entities. This guarantees that vital information circulates smoothly, empowering us to promptly address any gaps in the system. As the BNL is a vital resource for tracking individuals experiencing homelessness and/or at risk of homelessness, ongoing discussions and collaboration are necessary to ensure data is up-to-date and usable (i.e., for service prioritization). As of March 31, 2024, there are 391 unique individuals on the BNL.

Unsheltered Homelessness Response Top-Up Funding: In early 2024, the CE received notice of a funding top-up available through Reaching Home to support our local unsheltered homelessness response. This funding was allocated towards numerous resources (i.e., stabilization funds, shelter drop-in services, system navigation and referrals, provision of basic resources, enhancement of culturally appropriate resources for Indigenous participants).

Community Advisory Board (CAB) Governance: The CE continues to work collaboratively with City Administration, the community, and the current CAB members (CWSS Advisory Committee) to improve governance structure of the CAB. Changes to the structure will simplify the mandate to better clarify and align with Reaching Home (RH) expectations and reducing the membership number to enhance streamlined decision-making.

CWSS & MHS Updates: In Fall 2023, the CE procured Urban Matters to update the City of Lethbridge's Community Wellbeing & Safety Strategy (CWSS) and Municipal Housing Strategy (MHS), with completion slated for Spring 2024. Critical to these strategic updates will be completion of a community needs assessment to provide updated, relevant datasets to facilitate strategic funding decisions surrounding housing and homelessness.

Other: Through the BNL and other related/upcoming initiatives (i.e., Point-in-Time Count Planning; HMIS implementation), the CE is committed to continuing its collaborative relationship with the OSSI CBO, LHA, in our collective efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness in Lethbridge.

Lastly, as of March 2024, the Government of Canada has granted approval for the City of Lethbridge to acquire the HIFIS (new HMIS) license. Currently, an extensive plan for development and implementation is underway, with collaboration from a consultant and pertinent stakeholders, to drive the initiative forward.

1.1b

b) What **impact** did these efforts and/or issues have on your community-level outcomes over the last year (as reported in Section 4, if applicable)? This impact may or may not be related to the efforts and/or issues identified in 1.1(a). Please enter "N/A" if the impact is not known currently.

Ongoing Implementation of Integrated Coordinated Access (ICA) System: Through continuous improvement and performance management measures for all contracted service providers, CSD can effectively monitor ICA system deficiencies and opportunities for improvements.

Priority Population Support Navigators: The Population Support Navigator program has demonstrated a positive impact on the community, enhancing the effectiveness of the Coordinated Access system and offering targeted support for participants. In 2023, the CE expanded the PSN program by establishing two additional Population Support Navigators—one stationed at the Shelter and another dedicated to serving Seniors experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These new positions have proven invaluable, addressing the service gap previously identified. All PSNs continue to operate within the Coordinated Access system.

Stabilization Funding: This funding provides temporary subsidization for individuals and families at imminent risk of homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness, serving to divert individuals/families from the shelter system. The impact of stabilization funding has been significant within the community, with the funding resources often depleted very quickly. This speaks to gaps within the housing continuum in the community and demand for support in this realm. In 2023-24 Q4 alone, 71 unique participants accessed the stabilization funds.

System-Level Collaboration/Performance Management: The City of Lethbridge and CMHA ICA leads have received positive feedback regarding the enhanced system collaboration (i..e, through efforts such as the ICA Service Fair). Additionally, funded agencies have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to regularly check in with the CE.

By-Name List: The City of Lethbridge has initiated and continuously updated the comprehensiveness of the community By-Name List. The BNL has been capturing individual-level data and the number of individuals on the BNL supports our PiT count data. Next steps for the BNL are to understand where system gaps exist, take steps to collect more information on individuals experiencing hidden homelessness and continue system planning. The anticipated impact is to enhance data sharing, better understand inflows/outflows to/from homelessness, and enhance service prioritization for the community's most vulnerable residents.

Encampment Response: Over the past year, the City of Lethbridge's proactive initiatives to address encampments have significantly impacted the community in several ways. The establishment of the ERT and its collaborative efforts with various city departments have led to a more strategic and effective approach in managing encampments. ERT's engagement with the public through the 311 platform has

resulted in a surge of reports, providing valuable insights, and enabling swift action. Through close collaboration with law enforcement and programs like the Clean Sweep Program, ERT has successfully addressed encampments occurring in various parts of the city, dispelling the notion that they are solely concentrated in the downtown area. The ERT works with individuals residing in encampments to prevent entrenchment and support access to the care system facilitated as a respectful and orderly approach to encampment management. Their responsiveness to public safety reports, including instances requiring emergency medical services and the safe return of vulnerable individuals, highlights their dedication to ensuring the well-being of all residents. Furthermore, ERT's partnerships with internal and external stakeholders have strengthened the city's overall response to encampments, fostering a collaborative environment focused on addressing community needs effectively. Overall, the ERT's efforts have not only improved the city's ability to manage encampments but have also positively impacted the community by enhancing safety, addressing emerging trends, and providing support to those in need. Their proactive measures and commitment to continuous improvement reflect a concerted effort to create safe and enjoyable spaces for all residents of Lethbridge.

Unsheltered Homelessness Response Top-Up Funding: Impact not known at this time, as the funding was only recently implemented and reporting results will not be submitted until the next fiscal reporting period. However, the CE anticipates sustained or improved level of service for impacted program activities due to small budgetary reductions in the 2024/2025 funding year (i.e., expanded drop-in shelter activities and resources; expanded resourcing towards the stabilization fund).

CAB Terms of Reference: Impact not known now, as this work is underway.

CWSS & MHS Updates: Impact not known at this time, as this work is near completion. However, the CE anticipates having improved datasets accessible to facilitate data-driven decision-making and funding allocation.

1.2

How has the community's approach to addressing homelessness changed over the last few years?

Communities are strongly encouraged to use the ***"Reflecting on the Changing Response to Homelessness"*** worksheet to help them reflect on how the approach has changed and the impact of these changes at the local level.

As of April 1, 2023, the City of Lethbridge ceased its role as the community-based organization (CBO) responsible for administering the provincial OSSI grant funds aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness. Instead, it focused solely on managing the Reaching Home and provincial FCSS grants. This shift reduced the scope of Community Social Department (CSD), prompting a reassessment of its operations. Additionally, it required a realignment of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) due to changes in funding. CSD was committed to collaborating with stakeholders and the new administering organization to minimize service disruptions caused by the loss of OSSI funding. This included initiatives like establishing data sharing agreements to ensure accurate system planning based on real-time information regarding housing challenges.

As LHA assumed the role of CBO and became the primary funder for numerous programs, various adjustments ensued within the network. A notable change was the discontinuation of the Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool (SPDAT) for housing program referrals, replaced by the introduction of the Coordinated Access Round Table (CART) facilitated by LHA. CART, established collaboratively with community and funded agency partners, focuses on housing placements, and manages referrals to that program. Its primary objective is to reduce barriers for individuals seeking housing support by overseeing access, assessment, prioritization, and placement processes. Additionally, to enhance collaboration and streamline efforts, the Integrated Coordinated Access Partnership (ICAP) table, previously facilitated by the City of Lethbridge, was disbanded, with most members now participating in the CART forum. Before this transition, the primary distinction between Tier 2 and Tier 3 system navigators was the training in the administration of the SPDAT tool for housing referrals. However, LHA empowered community members to utilize the CART tool for these referrals. Consequently, the tier system navigator training underwent a comprehensive overhaul, removing the SPDAT component and consolidating Tier 2 & 3 training into a unified tier. This revamped training now includes referral processes through CART and system navigation for other programs and services.

In 2023, the City of Lethbridge introduced an Encampment Strategy and formed the Encampment Response Team (ERT), resulting in a noticeable reduction in entrenched encampments. As winter 2023-24 approached, the primary focus was on providing temporary housing and preventing fire hazards in encampments. As the landscape of homelessness shifts and changes, the ERT plans to build upon its experiences from the previous year to enhance its strategy to better support those living in encampments (i.e., enhanced capacity to provide housing-related and service referrals, where needed; particularly in the face of lacking outreach services within the community in 2023-24).

The ongoing need for more housing and shelter options within the community had remained a priority. Quarterly reviews with Reaching Home-funded service providers had revealed persistent deficiencies at the system level, emphasizing the urgency of addressing this issue.

Another initiative that has gained momentum, altering the community's approach to homelessness, is the expanded use of stabilization funds. These funds have become more readily available for service agencies and their participants, leading to a notable rise in uptake during 2023-24. The utilization of these emergency funds not only underscores the demand in our community for transitional accommodation solutions but also has influenced our community's response to imminent homelessness by providing an extra avenue to divert individuals and families from the shelter system. Two recent cases highlight the tangible impact of stabilization funding on individuals facing housing instability. In the first instance, a

single mother balancing full-time education with childcare responsibilities found herself in financial distress and unable to pay for her accommodations. With this program's support, she applied for one month of stabilization assistance which provided crucial relief during a critical period. This support enabled her to continue her education and secure employment to continue paying for her accommodation which provided stability for herself and her child and prevented them from entering into homelessness. In another case, a single mother courageously fled an abusive partner, facing financial hardship due to illness and disrupted employment. The Stabilization Program provided funding to cover her rent during this crisis period, which also prevented her from entering into homelessness and the assistance facilitated her transition to safety and stability and connected her to other available support services.

These success stories underscore the vital role of stabilization funding in providing immediate support to vulnerable individuals, allowing them to overcome adversity and secure temporary housing in order to prevent entering into homelessness as research demonstrates the likelihood of moving out of the shelter system becomes more challenging once it has begun and prevention is the most fiscally and ethically advantageous approach.
Looking to future years, the CE foresees an improved ability to address emerging community trends by accessing updated datasets from the CWSS and MHS updates and implementation/use of HIFIS. Strategy updates will also include updated priority populations, enabling the CE to better plan and support intersectional challenges faced by equity-deserving groups in Lethbridge. This ideally will facilitate constructive changes in addressing homelessness within the community in the years to come. Also, by having a reliable database to oversee Coordinated Access data, the CE expects positive enhancements in its homelessness response efforts soon.

1.4
c) In your response to 1.4(a) you noted that collaboration has occurred with Indigenous partners. As a follow up to this, please describe the collaboration that took place in more detail. Your response must include the following elements:
   • When it occurred (e.g. "in February 2024" or "on an ongoing basis since 2022");
   • Who it was with (e.g. "the IH CE", "organization A");
   • What aspects of Coordinated Access, the HMIS and/or the Outcomes-Based Approach were discussed; and,
   • How Indigenous perspectives influenced the outcome.

While the CE engages with the Indigenous CAB on a semi-regular basis and consistently prior to bringing forward funding requests forward to the larger CAB, it is recognized that greater engagement with Indigenous Peoples & Communities regarding HMIS implementation (HIFIS) is required. This work will begin now that the City of Lethbridge has been granted approval from the Government of Canada to use and implement HIFIS.

With the HIFIS license being approved, the CE will ensure dialogues with the HIFIS consultant, Acre Consulting, regarding how to best engage equity-deserving groups in HMIS implementation will be considered. Borrowing from these best practices, the CE anticipates engaging Indigenous Peoples & Communities in the following capacities:

1. Indigenous-serving funded service providers: As implementation timelines become clearer, CSD will arrange meetings with currently funded Indigenous-serving organizations to gather feedback. During these discussions, providers will be invited to share any gaps or concerns about current data tracking and compilation methods and suggest potential improvements.
2. Blood Tribe Department of Health: CSD will collaborate closely with the Blood Tribe Department of Health, acting as the shelter operator, to ensure effective dissemination of any changes related to the implementation of HIFIS.

CSD also plans to work more closely with the City's Indigenous Relations Office and the Reconciliation Lethbridge Advisory Committee as Coordinated Access and HIFIS continue in-tandem to increase opportunities for Indigenous-serving organizations and Indigenous perspectives to provide feedback.

Indigenous-serving organizations play an integral role within the coordinated access system. Specifically, the Blackfoot Resource Hub has become a crucial partner in developing cultural competency resources aimed at enhancing the capacity for working with Indigenous participants across the coordinated access system. Indigenous perspectives are consistently incorporated into ongoing ICA implementation and maintenance. This involves active engagement with Indigenous organizations in the community by the ICA leads, as well as regular meetings with funded Indigenous organizations as part of performance management and quarterly review processes. These measures ensure that feedback loops between the CE and key Indigenous partners are maintained.

1.5

(c) Specific to the completion of the CHR – please describe the collaboration that took place in more detail. Your response must include the following elements: How were Indigenous peoples engaged in these discussions; When did the collaboration occur; Who it was with (i.e., IH CE); What sections of the CHR were informed by Indigenous input and/or perspectives.

Indigenous members serving on the CWSS Advisory Committee were engaged individually in Spring 2024 to review the draft CHR and provide any additional input/insights.

This report was reviewed and approved by the CWSS Advisory Committee (inclusive of both DC CAB and IH CAB members) in Spring 2024 and an opportunity for input on community trends and needs for the narrative sections was provided. The CWSS Advisory Committee Chair approved this report, and the rest of the Advisory Members received the full report and a summary presentation with an opportunity for feedback. Additionally, the CE engaged with the City of Lethbridge Indigenous Relations Office and our two Indigenous organizations (Blood Tribe Department of Health and Blood Tribe Administration) in Spring 2024 to review information contained throughout the draft CHR. It is the CE's hope that updated data provided in the CWSS and MHS updates will also provide strategic direction in enhancing engagement and collaboration efforts with Indigenous Peoples and Communities.

1.7

As outlined in the Reaching Home Directives, communities are required to make a summary of the CHR publicly available. How will the public have access to this information? For example, which website will be used to publish the results?

The annual CHR will be published on the City of Lethbridge - Community Social Development webpage.

https://www.lethbridge.ca/community-services-supports/community-social-development-csd/

2.21

Highlight efforts and/or issues related to the work your community has done over the last year related to the Reaching Home minimum requirements for Coordinated Access and an HMIS.

Your response should include:"

- An update about your community's efforts to implement, maintain and/or improve the Coordinated Access system and the HMIS;
- Information about changes made to the Coordinated Access system and/or HMIS related to one or more minimum requirements that were identified as "completed" in a previous CHR, if applicable; and,
- Information about how people with lived experience of homelessness were engaged or will be engaged in one or more aspects of the Coordinated Access system or HMIS (e.g., taking on a governance role).

Your Summary Comment is an opportunity to provide additional context about your Section 2 Summary Tables results.

Coordinated Access: The Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region (CMHA, ASR) is the lead implementation agency of the ICA system in our community. ICA was developed as a decentralized coordinated access model. This model refers to a system for organizing and delivering services to individuals in need that involves multiple service providers working collaboratively but independently across various locations. There is no centralized authority or single point of entry for accessing services; instead, coordination occurs among various decentralized entities. A broad spectrum of service providers from diverse sectors operates within the ICA system, facilitating efficient access to essential services via systematic navigation and referral pathways.

Continuous improvements and implementation of the ICA system gained more traction with stakeholder engagement sessions being a priority. In October 2023, the City of Lethbridge, with the CMHA, ASR, organized the first ICA Service Fair. This event brought together various service providers in a unified effort to improve access to essential community services and served as a platform for networking, resource sharing, and learning among service sector organizations, with a focus on supporting the community's most vulnerable populations. With over 170 participants from 45 different service provider organizations, attendees participated in presentations, engaged in networking opportunities, and explored resources at dedicated tables, emphasizing the importance of enhancing coordination, fostering collaboration, and addressing complex issues through a coordinated and effective approach in Lethbridge.

Additionally, the www.lethbridgeica.ca website functions as a central hub, offering comprehensive information on community services, resources, referral pathways, system navigators, a housing registry, an events calendar, and more, essential for keeping the community informed about ICA progress. Recent improvements have focused on enriching the site by integrating additional insights and resources into priority population pages through linked content, fostering knowledge exchange, and providing access to supplementary materials.

HMIS: In March 2024, the CE received confirmation for its use of HIFIS. While awaiting this confirmation, the CE has made some efforts to improve data collection (i.e., data sharing agreements, BNL) to better transition to HIFIS. Over the 2024-25 fiscal year, the CE will be working to implement HIFIS to replace the current HMIS, Efforts-to-Outcomes (ETO). It is anticipated that the use of HIFIS will facilitate better data collection and analysis to support decision-making.

Section 3: Outcomes Based Approach- Supplemental Information

Data not comprehensive enough for mandatory answering of these sections, but CE attempted to answer where possible based on available BNL data.

3.1.4

Under the Outcomes-Based Approach, data comprehensiveness refers to data that reflects community-level homelessness. Compared to other sources of data about homelessness, how comprehensive is the person-specific dataset? Does it accurately reflect community-level homelessness? If not, which population groups may be missing?

The person-specific dataset is quite comprehensive, capturing unique client identifier, housing history, service referral details, assessment details, and demographic information (age, racial identity, gender identity, immigrant status, veteran status). Further, the By-Name List is starting to trend in alignment (with 391 unique individuals as of March 31, 2024) with the 2022 Point-in-Time Count data (454 individuals experiencing homelessness). As such, the CE believes that the BNL data is relatively accurate in reflecting community-level homelessness. Greater nuance (i.e., qualitative data/narrative) pertaining to immigrant and newcomer inflows/outflows to/from homelessness (i.e., what services and resources may be lacking for immigrants and newcomers when they arrive to the community?) may be warranted later, as currently, the CE is only tracking immigrant status through the BNL.

3.21 (e) What is the plan for improving data completeness in the year ahead? (re: Interaction with the homeless-serving system data – activity and inactivity)

The CE regularly collaborates with both the Shelter Operator and OSSI CBO to uphold the BNL. These partnerships have led to enhancements in the BNL, improving its data quality and enabling participating agencies to gain deeper insights into participant activity and inactivity, such as the processes for logging participant inactivity. In the upcoming year, the BNL Working Group will begin laying the groundwork for policies and procedures aimed at further supporting data integrity, including the development of an Inactivity Policy.

3.22 (d) What is the plan for improving data completeness in the year ahead? (re: Housing history)

The CE will continue to engage and collaborate with the BNL Working Group. The implementation of HIFIS in th coming year is also expected to improve data completeness in our community.

3.23 (c) Wha tis the plan for improving data completeness in the year ahead? (re: CA and filling vacancies)

The CE will continue to engage and collaborate with the BNL Working Group. Additionally, funded ICA-participating providers will continue to be met with regularly to identify system-level gaps in service. Coordinated Access and vacancy matching could be discussion items added to these routine check-ins.

3.36 Data collection and entry process – Describe the process(es) used by service providers to collect and enter data about people currently experiencing homelessness into the database.

The Blood Tribe Department of Health (BTDH) has been contracted by the City of Lethbridge to collect, clean, and maintain the BNL data on a master list. When participants at the Shelter are conducting intake, they also consent to providing their information to the BNL. The BNL Coordinator then inputs participant information to the master list.

While the CE was awaiting HIFIS approval, the master BNL was created in an Excel document. In the absence of a unified HMIS, this protected Excel document is currently housed within a secured OneDrive for live-editing purposes.

Other participating agencies (Lethbridge Housing Authority as OSSI CBO, CMHA) update their BNL data by the 10th of the subsequent month to the master list. Subsequently, once agencies input their data, the BNL Coordinator undertakes data cleaning and verification to ensure that, monthly, the list remains accurate and consistent. All participating agencies adhere to the same BNL consent form. Discussions regarding the structure of the BNL and efforts to enhance data integrity take place during the monthly BNL Working Group meetings.

3.29 Highlight efforts and/or issues related to your community's work to implement, maintain, or improve the Outcomes-Based Approach under Reaching Home. Your response should include: (a) efforts to start collecting, maintain, and/or improve person-specific data over the last year; and (b) plans to start collecting, maintain, and/or improve person-specific data over the next year.

The efforts made to enhance person-specific data over the past year have been highlighted, including the establishment of a BNL Working Group, entering into data sharing agreements, refining processes for data entry to the BNL, and fostering ongoing collaboration and engagement. In the coming year, the CE will continue to actively participate in these crucial collaborations to ensure that the BNL data remains usable, current, and well-maintained. As the implementation of HIFIS commences, the CE will transition the BNL data into this system. Our aim is that by centralizing the database for person-specific data, not only will the validity of the data be improved, but it will also enhance accessibility for other providers to contribute relevant data to the BNL.

Section 4: Improving Data Quality

Data not comprehensive enough for mandatory answering of these sections, but CE attempted to answer where possible based on available BNL data.

4 (b)

How did your community use data to inform actions? Please provide specific examples. Your response should include: Examples of how data was used to develop and/or update clear plans of action for reaching your reduction targets; and/or Examples of how data was used to inform action in policy-making, program planning, performance management, investment strategies, and/or service delivery.

The Community Social Development (CSD) department frequently leverages data gathered from service providers to assist in guiding strategic investments, new proposed initiatives, and in conducting evaluation and planning at the program-level. A few specific examples over the past year are noted below:

Encampment Response: The establishment of the Encampment Response Team (ERT) in 2023 has enabled the CE better access to data surrounding locations of where unsheltered individuals may be

residing. This has supported a more holistic response to conducting outreach and supporting individuals living in encampments.

Strategic Investments: Past performance metrics integrated into service provider agreements funded by Community Social Development serve as a valuable tool for identifying program-level obstacles, service gaps, and areas for enhancement. These metrics, along with data obtained from providers, assist the department in fulfilling its fiduciary duty as the Community Entity (CE) to make informed decisions regarding social funding allocation. An exemplary illustration of this data-driven investment prioritization is the stabilization fund program. This program, which offers up to three months of rental support exclusively, prioritizes assistance for youth, seniors, and families with children. Managed collaboratively with community organizations and overseen by the Community Mental Health Association (CMHA – Alberta South Region), the program ensures timely and efficient aid for those in need. After an evaluation of the data from the stabilization fund program, it was determined that additional funding was necessary to (a) meet the increasing demand for uptake and (b) comprehend the medium-term outputs, trends, and outcomes of the program. The chart below presents data and demographic information for stabilization funds covering the period from April 2023 to March 2024:

Yearly Total

# stabilization applications authorized in the year	**112**
# applications for single individual	**64**
# applications for families	**26**
# authorized applications resulting in hotel/motel stay	**39**
# authorized applications resulting in transitional housing	**6**
# authorized applications resulting in other residential housing	**50**
Stabilization funds yearly total	**$ 172,724.21**
Stabilization Applications denied	**45**
System-Level Indicators	
Chronically/episodically homeless	**43**
At risk of homelessness	**74**
Indigenous	**34**
Experiencing domestic violence at time of application	**20**
Children (0-17)	**37**
Youth (18-24)	**27**
Adult (25-59)	**73**
Senior (60+)	**23**
Families with dependents	**22**
Immigrants and refugees	**8**

Data from providers, such as this aggregated table above, aids the CE in making programmatic adjustments, which directly influences how the CE tracks progress and addresses evolving community needs. Particularly noteworthy is the trend indicating the increasing number of youth participants accessing stabilization funds, which may prompt heightened system-level advocacy for youth support within the community.

Program Evaluation, Performance & Planning: Likewise, performance metric data obtained from funded service providers enables the CE to fine-tune programs to better serve participants and the broader community. Program evaluation is strengthened by the submission of quarterly quantitative and qualitative reports from these providers, which not only highlight the impact of programs aligned with Reaching Home directives and mandates but also facilitate data-driven decision-making at the local level. Furthermore, the systematic alterations to ICA trainings throughout 2023-24 were informed by data collected from service providers engaged in the system. This underscores the importance of relational feedback mechanisms for both funded and non-funded providers involved in coordinated access efforts.

4.1 (M) Outcome #1 – Fewer people experience homelessness – if NA for any datapoint, provide rationale:

Historically, the CE had not had a comprehensive BNL due to data sharing limitations with the previous shelter operator. Consequently, previously established baselines may not have been entirely accurate without this individual-level data. As the BNL data is indicating a trend towards validating the 2022 Point-in-Time Count data, we anticipate being able to provide more accurate baselines and reduction targets over this next fiscal year.

4.2 (M) Outcome #2 – Fewer people were newly identified (new inflows to homelessness are reduced – if NA for any datapoint, provide rationale:

Processes for determining activity/inactivity, such as an Inactivity Policy, are currently underway.

4.3 (M) Outcome #3 – Fewer people return to homelessness (returns to homelessness are reduced) - if NA for any datapoint, provide rationale:

Processes for determining activity/inactivity, such as an Inactivity Policy, are currently underway.

4.5 (M) Outcome #5 – Fewer people experience chronic homelessness – if NA for any datapoint, provide rationale

Historically, the CE had not had a comprehensive BNL due to data sharing limitations with the previous shelter operator. Consequently, previously established baselines may not have been entirely accurate without this individual-level data. As the BNL data is indicating a trend towards validating the 2022 Point-in-Time Count data, we anticipate being able to provide more accurate baselines and reduction targets over this next fiscal year.