

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Family and Community
Support Services

Edmonton

FCSS

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is a municipal/provincial partnership that works to ensure that communities in Alberta are supportive, safe, inclusive and engaged. Edmonton FCSS works to achieve this by supporting the design and delivery of preventive services and programs that reduce social isolation, encourage connection and belonging within communities, and strengthen relationships and social support.

2021 was again a challenging year as the global pandemic continued. The programs and services offered through FCSS continued, using adaptive approaches to meeting the needs of their clients. During this past year there was an increased concern for the wellbeing of those working in the sector. Our team continued to provide support and connection to our funded programs and partnerships throughout the year.

Special thanks is extended to the Ministry of Community and Social Services for their continued support of the FCSS Program. Working together as partners helps us all make a positive impact in our community.

Thank you to all of our funded programs, staff members, and volunteers for your tireless efforts once again in 2021. It was a difficult year, but your support for our community is so valuable. Also thanks to our City of Edmonton FCSS team, our City colleagues, and community partners for their work in the community during these challenging times. We are stronger together.

The Community Services Advisory Board and the FCSS Committee truly believe that the lessons we have learned the past two years has helped us adapt our systems and program delivery to better serve our community. It is the hope that many of these changes will continue as we move forward.



Total Unique Participants - 231,768

Age Unknown - 117,526

0-5 year olds
5,832

6-12 year olds
10,521

13-17 year olds
18,947

18-24 year olds
8,657

24-64 year olds
52,013

65+ year olds
18,272

Indigenous Participants
16,228 (from 70 programs)

Persons of Colour Participants
12,882 (from 42 programs)

Total Agencies - 67

Total Programs - 94

Total community partnerships, including research and education - 12

FTE's* - 693

Program Staff Hours
1,441,440+

FCSS Committee - 9

Volunteer Hours
300

Program Funding

Allocated
\$16.5 million

Partnership Funding

Allocated
\$3.7 million

Practicum Students - 404

Practicum Student Hours
59,708

Program Volunteers
6,017

Volunteer Hours -
322,391

Equivalent Contribution:
\$5,835,277**

*Full Time Equivalents (FTE)

**Using a living wage calculation of \$18.10/hr

Pandemic Reflections and Learning

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present challenges for both community members and organizations in 2021. At the same time, the pandemic has provided unexpected opportunities to address new and existing challenges. During virtual agency visits, FCSS Liaisons received updates about program adaptations, unexpected successes and emerging opportunities. Through these conversations, and reviewing qualitative data from Common Outcomes reporting, the following themes emerged:

Resiliency

Participant Resiliency - The pandemic has created many life disruptions for participants (i.e., isolation, restrictions, worsening mental health). The following themes emerged from participant feedback:

- Participants reported a sense of normalcy, structure, less isolation, and community connection as a result of FCSS programs and services.
- Participants have learned and practiced new skills to help them navigate the COVID-19 pandemic more effectively.
- Some participants reported that participating in programming meant access to the latest COVID-19 information in their first language, from a trusted source, which created a sense of safety.

Organization Resiliency - Many leaders spoke highly of the resilience, dedication, and creativity of their staff, as well as increased attention to community needs.

- Organizations continuously responded to change, finding new and creative ways to pivot to support participants. Some organizational leaders noted that continuous change negatively impacted staff morale and wellness.
- Volunteer programs struggled to operate throughout changing restrictions, but volunteers showed resiliency and continued to support programs in whatever ways they could.

Unexpected Successes

- **Increased Programming Success** - Some agencies experienced success with new ways of delivering their programs (including texting, telephone, pre-recorded, and live online programming). In some cases, participants reported that programs were more accessible and inclusive, and therefore more meaningful than their traditional in-person programming.
- **Increased Participation** - Some agencies found that having a virtual or hybrid delivery model expanded their reach to more participants and/or allowed for more consistent participation. For example, online programming eliminated barriers to transportation, travel time, and the need for childcare. Some participants experiencing mental health challenges indicated they felt more comfortable attending programs virtually.

Emerging Opportunities

- **Maintaining Connections with Participants** - Some organizations struggled to maintain connections with participants, prompting them to find new ways to reach out to minimize isolation.
- **Rethinking Evaluation** - Some organizations found that they needed to adapt their evaluation methods as changes to program delivery evolved.
- **Greater Attention on Systemic Inequities** - The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many systemic challenges and inequities. For example, many lower paying jobs have been required to be in person, without a work-from-home option, increasing the likelihood of getting COVID-19 and mental health challenges from stress.

Impact Areas

Edmonton FCSS and its funded partners believe that strong individuals, families, and communities create a vibrant and caring community where everyone is able to thrive and succeed. The annual outcomes reporting contained in this report is a snapshot of the work accomplished each year and represents data gathered from a sample of program participants. Many programs are measuring outcomes beyond what is reported here to understand, evaluate, and improve services for citizens of Edmonton.

Resilient Individuals

Resilient Individuals have the ability to bounce back from challenges and the stress they face. According to Michael Ungar, resilience is *“the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways.”* (Ungar, 2008 and Ungar, 2011, <http://resilienceresearch.org/about-the-rrc/resilience/14-what-is-resilience>).

Children and youth reported that they had improved developmental skills

87%

of 9,466 children and youth

Respondents reported that they had improved skills to address identified issues.

84%

of 7,394 respondents

Thriving Families

Thriving Families work together to overcome challenges, learn, and develop. Caregivers within the family have the capacity to support the physical, social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual development of the children, youth, adult, or senior. Creating stable environments that promote quality interactions support achieving the goals for the family group.

Respondents reported they had improved family functioning

92%

of 4,618 respondents

Caregivers reported they had increased knowledge of child development

97%

of 310 caregivers

Caregivers reported they had increased knowledge of positive parenting skills

95%

of 1,501 caregivers

Caregivers reported they had improved positive parenting skills

87%

of 531 caregivers

Welcoming and Engaged Community

Welcoming and Engaged Communities are open, diverse, and inclusive. They ensure that all community members are active, connected, and supported in achieving their goals. They can be geographic or interest based depending on the program focus area.

Respondents reported increased awareness of social issues in the community.

92%

of 18,337 respondents

Respondents reported increased positive involvement in the community.

91%

of 1,874 respondents

Connections and Relationships

Strong relationships and connections are the glue between individuals, families, communities and the not for profit sector. It is through relationships that we can achieve a strong and supportive community where all people can thrive and contribute. Individuals and families have access to a network of community and social supports that can address their needs.

Respondents had increased knowledge of community resources

96%

of 13,914 respondents

Respondents reported that they accessed community resources that met their needs

93%

of 13,974 respondents

Respondents reported that they had improved networks of social support

92%

of 18,528 respondents

Strong Sector

Individuals, families, and communities exist and function within society. Within Edmonton and area the not for profit sector is critical to creating an integrated and connected web of supports to reduce and eliminate people falling through the cracks. Ensuring that individuals and organizations working within the sector have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be successful and healthy is critical. In 2021, some of the organizations funded to engage in this work included: Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Edmonton Social Planning Council, Mapping and Planning Support Alberta Capital Region, and Community University Partnership.

Respondents reported strengthened individual skills within organizations

92%

of 360 respondents

Respondents reported more effective community organizations

96%

of 323 respondents

Respondents reported enhanced collaborative efforts

96%

of 139 respondents

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships encourage innovative solutions to complex social issues, provide research through different approaches, and offer education and learning opportunities for organization staff and community.

Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Edmontonians, it is more important than ever that community organizations work together in new and collaborative ways, to leverage and utilize community resources more effectively, increasing their impact in the community.

Community research is also an important aspect of ensuring Edmonton FCSS and community organizations have the information they need to make the best decisions for the programs and services in our community.

Partnerships that Edmonton FCSS supported in 2021 include:

<p>All In For Youth</p>	<p>A holistic approach of social support for children and their families in eight schools, to increase the number of youth graduating from high school, therefore increasing their chances of having positive economic and health outcomes as adults.</p>
<p>Coordinated Home Supports</p>	<p>A coordinated, curated referral and connection service between community living older adults and businesses, organizations, and individuals whose services can assist older adults to remain in their homes longer.</p>
<p>Community Initiatives Against Family Violence (CIAFV)</p>	<p>CIAFV is a collaborative to provide information, training and resources to its members and the public for the prevention of family violence.</p>
<p>Community Mental Health Action Plan Implementation</p>	<p>The Community Mental Health Action Plan identifies goals and actions in System Integration, Service Delivery and Evidence foundation. The implementation project will create opportunities to improve, increase, and heighten awareness of existing mental health services and supports, strengthen collaborative practices, and undertake evidence-based innovations</p>

Community Partnerships (cont'd)

<p>Final Steps in Creating a City-Wide Model for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness</p>	<p>Five youth serving agencies came together to form a collaboration to improve delivery of services among agencies and create a strategic model for the prevention of youth homelessness.</p>
<p>Community and University Partnership (CUP)</p>	<p>CUP works with community organizations and agencies to address research and evaluation needs across the human services sector in Edmonton. The focus is on improving the well-being of children, you and families.</p>
<p>M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region</p>	<p>Supporting the sector in efforts to improve supports and services to residents, especially the most vulnerable. Work includes creating community mapping profiles; designing, implementing and/or reporting community based research; design and implement community engagement strategies; provide leadership, administrative support and training. Provides the Social Development Branch with neighbourhood maps of assets, organization and demographics focused on Branch priorities.</p>
<p>Edmonton Social Planning Council</p>	<p>Dedicated research position to support the social service sector with focus on the Edmonton FCSS Program and funded agencies to support their research needs.</p>
<p>Transform</p>	<p>An Intelligent Digital Assistant for the Social Services Sector. To build Transform, a shared tool for measuring meaningful outcomes; improving sector collaboration through targeted, effective referrals and sharing promising practises; and supporting equity through enabling client data sovereignty.. A partnership between IFSSA, Canadian Mental Health Association, Jewish Family Services of Edmonton and the Bissell Centre.</p>
<p>Empower U - Building Confident Futures</p>	<p>Provides financial literacy programs, with a matched savings component as well as the expansion of financial coaching. This funding supports one on one professional financial advice to participants working on improving their financial goals.</p>
<p>Housing Outreach</p>	<p>The Housing Outreach Team uses a client centred, strengths based approach to increase access to housing resources/information . It works to increase communication between housing services, Bissell programs, landlords and participants. The Housing Navigators triage incoming housing related inquiries, conduct client intakes and assessments, and make referral to both internal and external resources.</p>
<p>Practise as Ceremony</p>	<p>The Practise as Ceremony team offers Indigenous cultural teachings to Edmonton communities and agencies. The teachings support community acknowledgement and celebration of Indigenous history, culture and ceremony. The PAC team will provide teachings to FCSS funded agencies, as well, to build capacity to serve their clients with connection to Indigenous culture.</p>

Community Partnerships (cont'd)

The above partnerships involve organizations coming together around social issues, listening to diverse perspectives, innovating together to find solutions, and supporting each other to create meaningful and impactful change in the community. This collaborative approach builds trust among organizations, helps identify opportunity gaps in service, and supports more effective coordination across the social services sector.

The above list also includes organizations that are doing community research to support evidence-based decision making, and organizations providing learning opportunities in the social services sector. More information can be found on the website at www.edmonton.ca/fcss.

Throughout 2021, the Edmonton FCSS team and Social Development Branch staff continued to participate with our community colleagues to support these coordinated efforts in supporting individuals, families, and communities.

Common Outcomes Initiative

The Common Outcomes Initiative continues as a partnership between Edmonton Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), United Way, and over 100 funded community agencies.

The common outcomes report provides a tool to gather some of the inputs, outputs, and outcome measures that are rolled up and reported back to the community in order to demonstrate the social impacts these partners are collectively achieving. The reporting form has created efficiencies in the sector as reporting has become simplified and streamlined.

Edmonton FCSS and United Way are able to show individually and together the impact of the work they are supporting in the community, while allowing funded organizations to report to two funders at one time - collaboration and cutting red tape all rolled up together.

The full reports from the past few years are available at www.edmonton.ca/fcss. These reports represent a snapshot of the impacts of the partners.

City of Edmonton—FCSS Contribution

Programs, Services, and Initiatives

For over fifty years, the Government of Alberta, together with participating municipalities and Métis Settlements, have jointly funded preventive social services for Albertans through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. The Province contributes 80 per cent towards the local program and the participating municipality or Métis Settlement contributes a mandatory minimum of 20 per cent.

The City of Edmonton's mandatory contribution to FCSS consists of existing programs, services, and initiatives within the Community Services Department and any other funding provided directly by City Council to programs and/or projects that meet the provincial eligibility requirements. This includes:

- Edmonton FCSS Program Team
- Community Social Work Team
- Community Capacity Building
- Financial Empowerment Social Workers
- Tenant Support Services
- Community Safety Team
- Poverty Reduction initiatives, including funding to EndPoverty Edmonton
- Gender Based Violence Prevention
- Family Violence Prevention Team
- Community Wellness Team
- Suicide Prevention- Living Hope
- Homeless Prevention, including funding to Boyle Street Outreach
- Community Development with newcomer, refugee, and indigenous communities
- Community Services Advisory Board - FCSS Committee



Some Highlights from 2021

FCSS Strategic Alignment

In 2021, Edmonton Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) completed the strategic alignment that was initiated in fall 2019. This process intends to strengthen the program by:

- Clarifying the definition of prevention;
- Identifying clear priorities, expectations and outcomes for the funding program;
- Clearly describing the FCSS Program Theory of Change;
- Aligning with the City of Edmonton's goals and priorities , including the Social Development Branch and Provincial FCSS program expectations;
- Developing a transparent and stronger grant assessment process; and
- Opening the application process to all community organizations providing preventive social services.

From the review, four program priorities were identified:

- Healthy Social Emotional Development
- Healthy Relationships
- Positive Mental Health
- Poverty Reduction & Homelessness Prevention

Information on the process for the 2023-25 FCSS Funding Cycle began to be shared at the end of 2021, as the application process was starting in 2022. All information can be found at www.edmonton.ca/fcss

Financial Empowerment Program

In 2021, the Financial Empowerment Program began service delivery in a virtual environment. In addition to the typical challenges of beginning a new program, they also began working with participants during a COVID-19 wave and were limited in the types of services they could provide. Despite challenges, the social work team continues to work with Edmontonians to improve their financial well-being, further establishing the City as a leader in poverty reduction approaches.

Financial Empowerment Social Workers help individuals and families by providing a range of short and long term financial guidance, including mentoring, coaching, application support, and tax form guidance to help them meet their needs. The aim of this program is to reduce barriers by recognizing that underlying conditions such as mental health, addictions, domestic violence and abuse may need to be addressed so that individuals and families can move forward and prosper.

The City's services are free and confidential and include comprehensive, remote financial empowerment guidance to help ensure participants get connected to the right resources, education and information on financial matters.

Some Highlights from 2021 (cont'd)

Community Social Work Team

Community Social Workers are connectors and conveners, located in specific neighbourhoods and recreation centres throughout the city. The role is to collaborate with Edmontonians, to identify, plan and implement community-led solutions to community challenges. By working alongside individuals, schools, organizations, businesses, and faith, grassroots, cultural, and other groups, together we find innovative approaches to complex issues like social inclusion and poverty reduction.

In 2021, the Community Social Work Team was assigned to new communities where there is the greatest opportunity to create positive social change with community members, as well as the presence of City-leased Civiqa Community Centers and City-owned recreation facilities.

Community Social Workers (CSWs) conducted an overview of their new communities. The goal was to learn about the communities from those who live and work there, and to understand the strengths, assets, opportunities, and challenges present with a focus on connection and thriving. Five themes emerged across communities: food insecurity, Indigenous inclusion and representation, financial insecurity, meaningful employment connections, and youth resources and opportunities. These themes will be used as guides to inform our work, especially in relation to systems-level collaboration and team-based work.

Community Social Workers have a unique role in working with community residents, agencies, businesses, and many others to identify and work together to achieve outcomes important to their community. CSW community work is focused on:

- Increasing Social Inclusion
- Increasing Economic Inclusion
- Participating in systems-level work that advances community priorities

Evaluation 101

In November and December of 2021, The City of Edmonton FCSS team partnered with the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO) to offer Evaluation 101 training to organizations in the social sector.

The intent of the workshop was to provide organizations training on the basics of evaluation and to empower them to implement their own evaluation mechanisms. In general, the workshop was well-received by the fifty participants, with most reporting they increased their level of knowledge on one or more new concepts. As a result of this workshop, FCSS and ECVO are working together to develop new evaluation professional development opportunities in 2021.

Looking Ahead to 2022

The Edmonton FCSS Program continues to support and strengthen the preventive social services sector and improve the social well-being of individuals, families and communities in Edmonton. The connection has been especially important as the pandemic continues. We recognize that organizations have used innovation to adapt their program delivery to ensure continued service to those that need their services. Many of the FCSS funded organizations have identified that some of the changes/adaptations that they have made during the pandemic will continue into the future, because they have been well received.

During the 2022 year, Edmonton FCSS will implement the funding process for 2023-2025 that was developed based on community and City priorities for prevention with a focus on preventing issues that will be prevalent post-pandemic. The direction of programming strongly adheres and aligns to provincial legislation, requirements and expectation that funding is focused on primary and secondary prevention. We look forward to the new process and the ability for all organizations that offer preventive programs and services to apply. There will be lots of work in 2022 to prepare the funding for the 2023-25 program and support our community with the changes .

The FCSS Committee and the Community Services Advisory Board (CSAB) will continue to work towards positive outcomes, elevate and advocate for the work of FCSS in the community, foster coordinated efforts within our community and share the story of the positive impact that Edmonton FCSS programs have on the local preventive social services sector.

