

A photograph of a park at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The sun is low on the horizon, partially obscured by a large tree. In the foreground, there's a paved path with several wooden benches. A person is lying in a hammock strung between two trees. In the background, a few people are walking or sitting on the grass. A city skyline is visible in the distance on the left.

Family & Community Support Services 2024 Annual Report

FCSS
Family & Community
Support Services

Edmonton

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside, is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, and Blackfoot peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

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Introduction

What is FCSS?

The Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) is a partnership between the Government of Alberta and participating municipalities to provide local preventive social services to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. The program is governed by the Family & Community Support Services Act and Regulation, as well as the FCSS Accountability Framework. The City of Edmonton has been involved since the beginning in 1966. As part of their mandate, the City's Community Services Advisory Board (CSAB) and the FCSS Committee provide leadership and support in ensuring preventive social services are provided in our community that align with City and provincial outcomes.

The overarching priority for Edmonton FCSS is to increase social inclusion and equity by funding preventive programs and services, community development and strong sector initiatives. This includes working with funded organizations to ensure their organization and programs reflect our community and those we serve.



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Introduction

FCSS programs and services are required to be focused on primary (universal) prevention that addresses root causes, promotes protective factors and enhances social inclusion and community connections; and secondary prevention that addresses issues at an early stage, strengthens capacity to reduce risk factors and connects people to appropriate resources and skill development.

Prevention is a proactive process that strengthens the protective factors of individuals, families, and communities to promote well-being, reduce vulnerabilities, enhance quality of life, and empower them to meet the challenges of life.

Social inclusion means creating an environment in which all individuals feel like they belong and are valued for their unique perspectives and skills; differences are considered opportunities for individual and organizational growth; and everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources that can contribute fully to our city's success.

Theory of Change

Increasing Social Inclusion & Equity through: Preventive Programs and Services | Community Development Initiatives | Social Infrastructure

TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTIONS FOR:



Resilient Individuals & Thriving Families

Are able to “bounce forward” from challenges and stress, and support each other holistically.



Welcoming & Engaged Communities

Are equitable, diverse and inclusive; they support strong relationships and connections.



A Strong Sector

Ensures individuals, organizations, and broader civil society have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to provide a coordinated, collaborative and connected web of support, also able to facilitate policy and systems change.

**RESULTING IN ENHANCED SOCIAL WELL-BEING
OF INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES**

By providing funding for preventive programs, services, and community development initiatives, Edmonton FCSS will strengthen relationships and connections, which creates:

- **Resilient Individuals and Thriving Families**
- **Welcoming and Engaged Communities**
- **A Strong Sector**

This provides our community with enhanced social well-being.

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Strategic Priority Areas

HEALTHY SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



POVERTY REDUCTION AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Edmonton FCSS, working with the Community Services Advisory Board (CSAB) and the FCSS Committee, initiated a strategic alignment in 2019 for the 2023 - 2025 funding cycle.

To identify program priorities, FCSS engaged with community agencies, community funders, internal partners, the Community Services Advisory Board, the FCSS Committee, and the Government of Alberta.

It was important to ensure that the program priorities would align with the City of Edmonton's goals and priorities, including the Social Development Branch and Provincial FCSS program expectations.

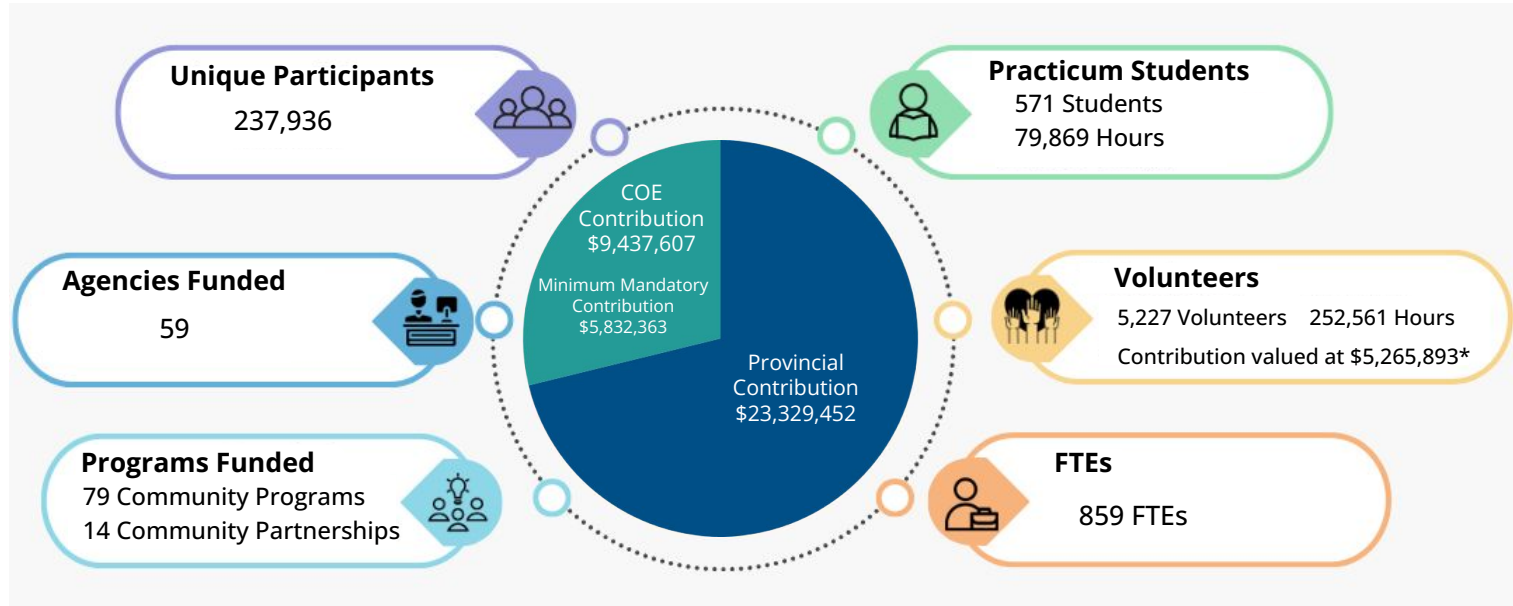
Research included a literature review and snapshots on specific issues. The project also used existing community-based research, outcomes data and trends, and issues identified through a wide variety of sources, including data and research on the impacts of COVID-19.

The FCSS Committee influenced the work and made the recommendation to CSAB; these priorities were also approved by City Administration.

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FCSS Data at a Glance



**Using a living wage calculation of \$20.85/hr*

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Funded programs provide this reporting to the City of Edmonton as part of their annual reporting. For a full list of FCSS-funded programs, click [here](#).

How Did We Do?

Outcomes Summary based on quantitative and qualitative data reported by funded programs



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Key Trends

Agencies shared that they, and the community members they serve, experienced the following in 2024:

- **Rising Costs:** Food insecurity and access to stable, affordable housing continued to be significant obstacles for participants. Similarly, many agencies experienced funding challenges.
- **Mental Health:** Access to affordable, timely, and culturally appropriate mental health support was a significant concern, particularly for equity-seeking communities.
- **Complexity of Needs:** Individuals presented with increasingly complex needs, often involving multiple issues such as mental health, addiction, housing instability, and financial difficulties. This required more intensive and integrated support.

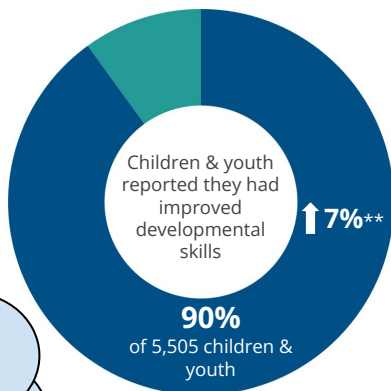
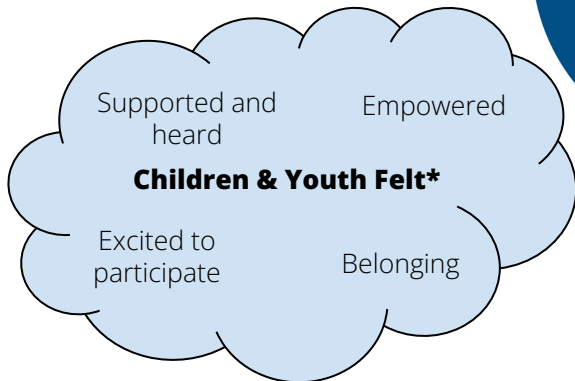
To address these challenges, agencies:

- Increased outreach and visibility, and adapted programs to address changing needs.
- Utilized partnerships and collaborations to expand reach, provide comprehensive support, and share resources.
- Invested in technology, data collection and evaluation to support informed decision making.

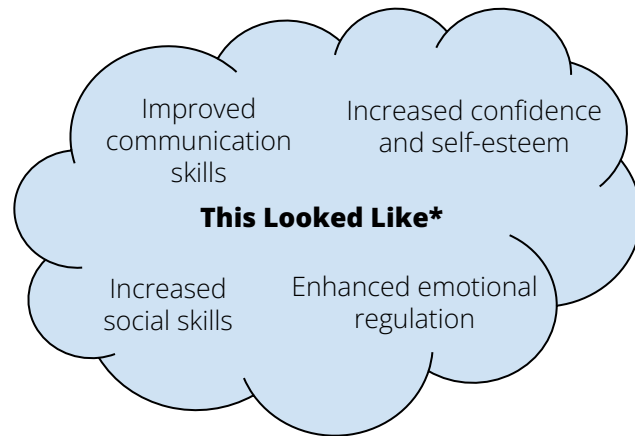
As a result, agencies and participants have achieved significant outcomes in each Strategic Priority Area, as outlined in the following pages.

Healthy Social Emotional Development

"My child has blossomed socially and the initial concerns about his speech and language development have been resolved. He is expressive and his vocabulary is growing."



"I love all of my coaches at the program, they help me to become a better version of myself."



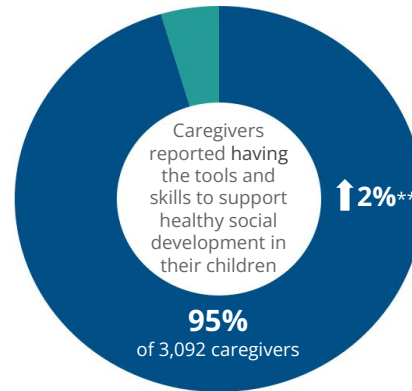
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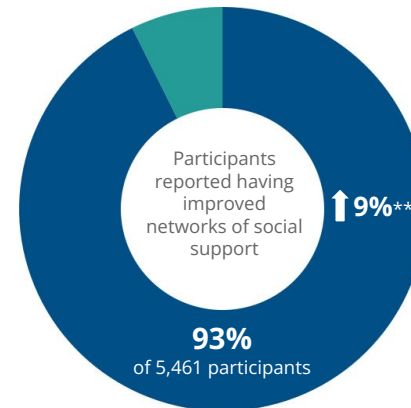
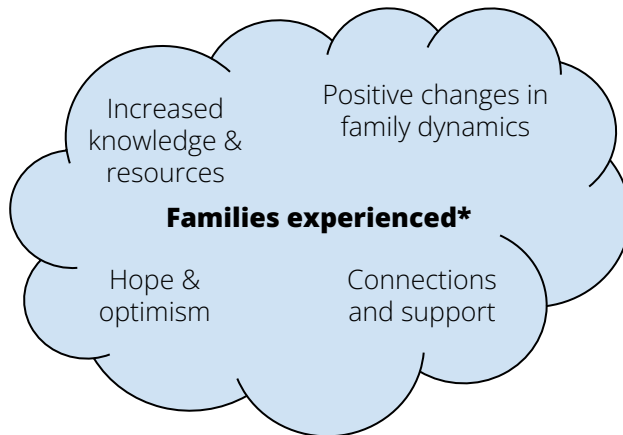
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"The tips at the end of each class are very helpful and give me lots of ideas. Reading has always been important to me but now I know more about why it is important and how to make learning fun and more interactive with my family... With the kits provided we now have all of the tools we need and make the time to do more as a family together."



"We are connecting within the community. We've learned about other programs through each other and can spread the word. They say it takes a village - well, this is our village."



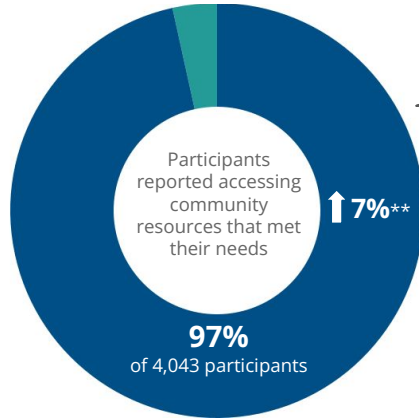
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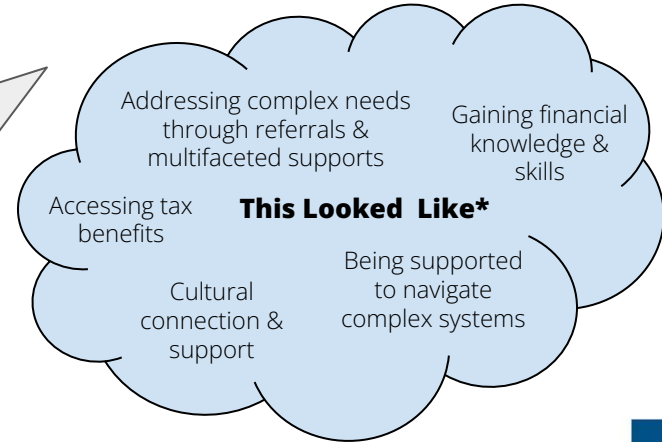
Poverty Reduction & Homelessness Prevention



"My sister and I participated in this workshop and the cultural camp. We made connections with people who can help us and [the agency] is now helping us find a new apartment. My granddaughter is registered for their youth summer group too."

"Attending the financial literacy workshop helped me better understand RRSPs, basic budgeting, and strategies to build financial assets."

"I didn't know about the subsidies I could apply for, but now I'm using the benefits to help cover my utilities, which has taken a lot of pressure off me."



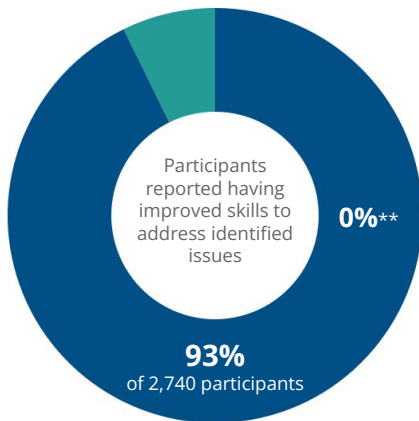
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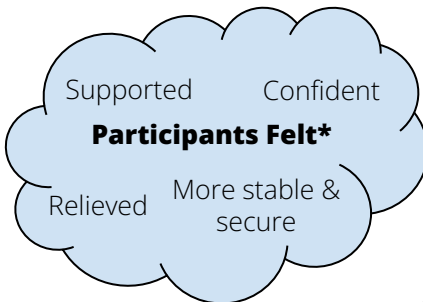
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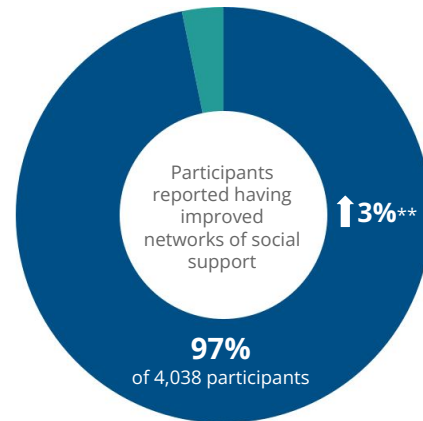
"By attending networking events and activities, I feel more confident to leverage the connections and essential resources for my employment goals."



"I wish people understood the youth here. It's not just for homeless youth. It's a place where everyone accepts you. These people give me guidance to be better."



"The program connected me with Elder Joanne and helped me learn my ways through traditions. I stay in contact with Kokum and many of the people from the program now."



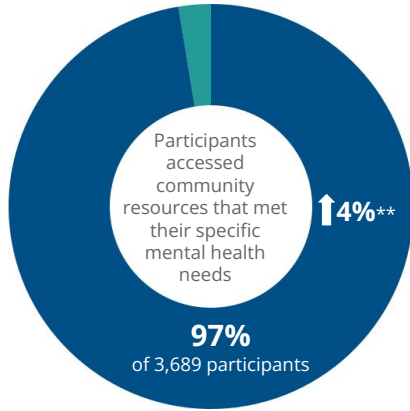
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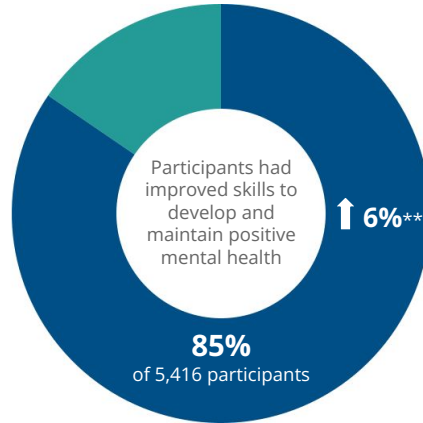
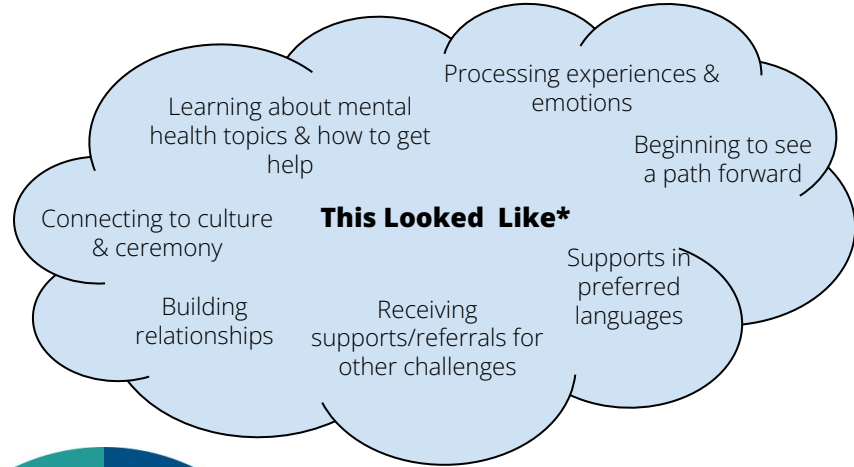
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Positive Mental Health



"[Staff person] and I share the same language and culture, and it is so helpful to be understood and heard about my issues."



"[Staff person] has done a wonderful job of helping me work through some obstacles while equipping me with the mental tools to confront these issues in my life on my own."

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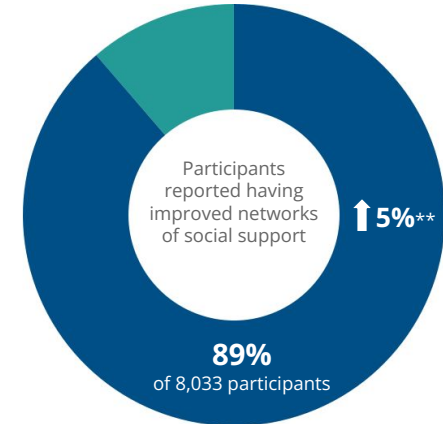
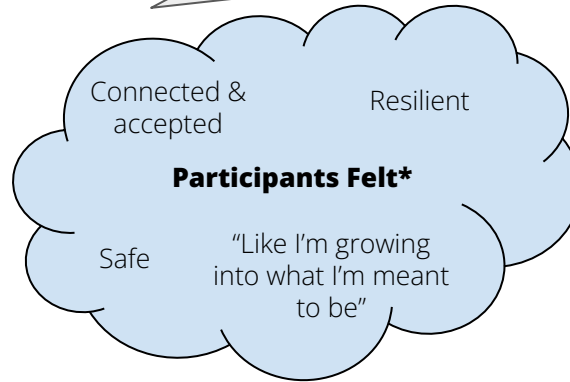
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"Thank you for helping me, respecting me as a person, and taking the time to help calm me while I was struggling. You helped relieve a lot of the stress I was feeling when I came in for support by providing all the information I needed, helping me understand my options, and find the supports I needed."



"Participants share their gifts with each other and in the agency. Participants not only tell us, but we observe them taking action towards improving their lives through making connections, accessing other resources, becoming involved in other programs, seeking out educational and volunteering opportunities."

- Program Staff

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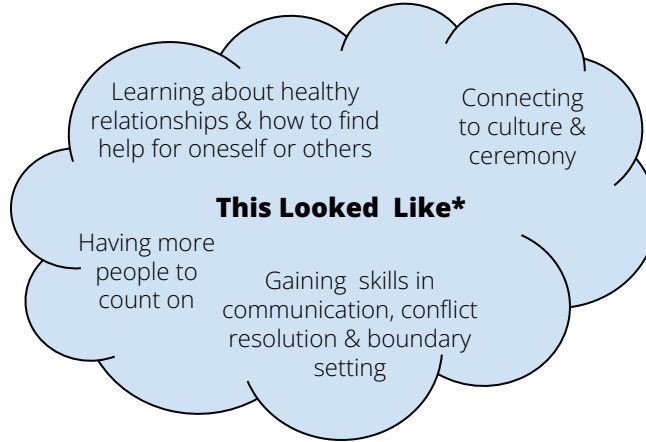
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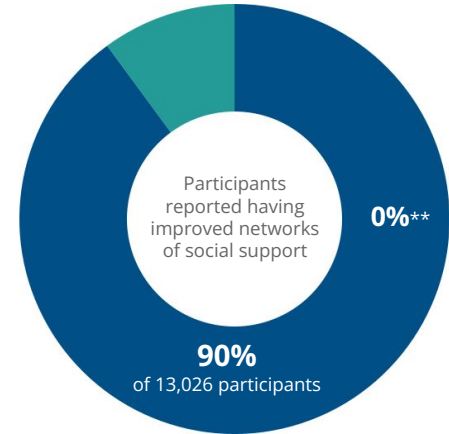
Healthy Relationships

"Before the program, I cared more about what people thought of me and did things to please them. I realized that I shouldn't do things to please others and to not be so worried about what they think of me."



"Getting to know that other Black people are going through the same thing as me through their period and the safe space to share my thoughts."

"I have expanded my support network, am keeping heritage language & I have some friends I can talk to."



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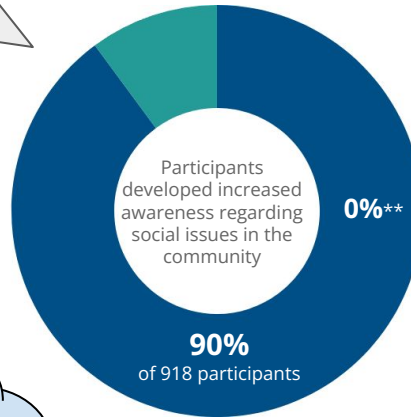
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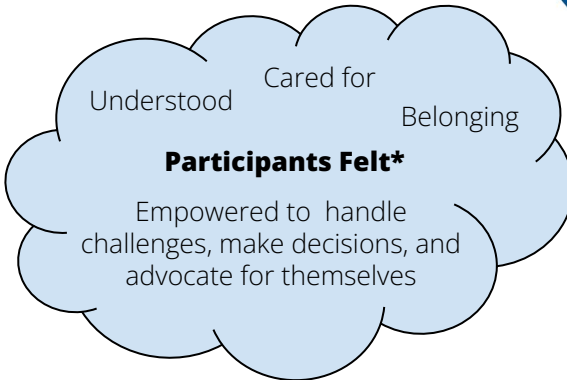
"Understanding wahkohtowin~kinship & feeling included and welcomed ~ the more they felt safe to share which bloomed into very important discussions on topics such as sobriety, colonialism, self-care and understanding stigma around mental health & wellness."

-Program Staff



"Participation in cultural events has opened an exploration of heritage and broadened the perspective of relationships with family, ancestry, and history, strengthening participants' sense of self. Supportive access to cultural practice and ceremony has provided peace and inner strength, enhancing participants' ability to cope with difficult emotions, navigate challenging situations, and overcome social anxieties."

-Program Staff



"I think I can avoid more unhealthy relationships because of what I learnt today, and I will look for signs of unhealthy relationships with friends, family or others and try to support."

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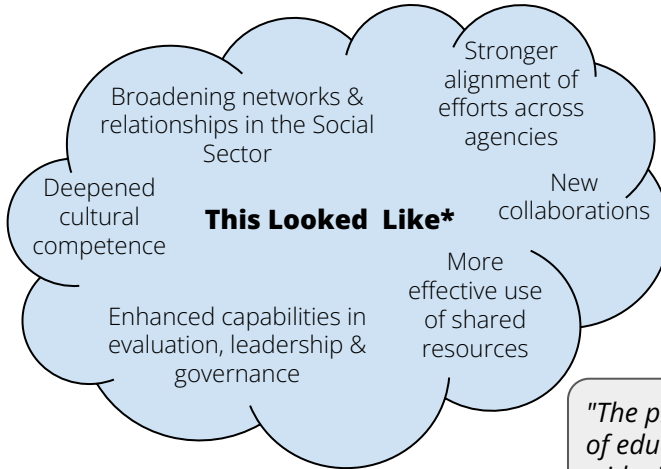
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Evolving the Social Sector & Capacity Building

"It gave me a bigger insight into research and my own data collection, and how to evaluate things from an Indigenous perspective"



"I have gained extensive knowledge of leadership techniques and have developed a clearer understanding of the dynamics involved in designing effective board meetings."

"The platform is great, we owe them everything in terms of education, having access to more resources, of widening our network."

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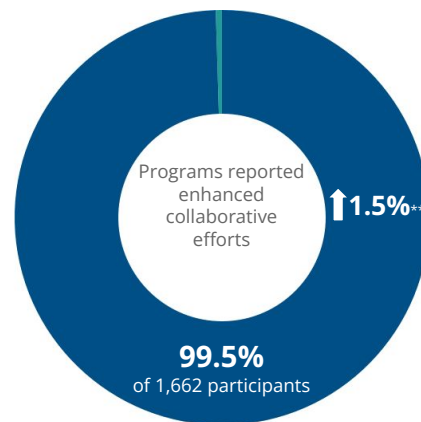
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"One of the most important elements of the collaborative for us is being able to connect with and form relationships with other agencies in our service areas who are providing adjacent services to alike clients. This strengthens the overall network of service providers in the city and personally benefits our clients through the ability to perform meaningful referrals when necessary."



"Positive change has shown up in a variety of ways as organizations continued to address large strategy and operational questions fundamental to their purpose. Challenges such as major staff changes and ED transitions, location moves, and funding uncertainty were common themes. The program supported organizations in understanding their current state, envisioning a future state, and building a path for the journey to get to where they desired to be."

-Capacity Building Program Staff

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Success Story

BD is an Indigenous community member who was always actively participating in the art workshops at Boyle Street, but it took staff a while to build a relationship with her. She opened up after a screen-printing workshop; we had a long conversation and she told me about her family problems with health concerns, her difficulties with her kids, and how she feared for the future of her kids while facing housing insecurity. She mentioned she was an artist but always suffering from not thinking her art was good enough to be shown anywhere. The screen-printing facilitator overheard her say this and asked her to show some of her art and we could use it as a screen for the activity.

One week later BD brought a beautiful drawing for the next screen-printing project. It was a hit in the community and the art was used on orange T-shirts in September to bring awareness and the spirit of hope to honor residential school survivors, their families, and communities. BD was extremely happy while seeing

people wearing the T-shirts in the drop-in and expressed the desire to sell her art, as she faces financial instability.

To help her start selling her art, we made connections between BD and an Indigenous store at Kingsway Mall. We supported her in starting her business with 12 T-shirts and 10 tote bags and today, the drawing she created is printed on T-shirts and tote bags that are sold at this store. This shows the improved self esteem and connection to resources that could promote BD's sense of stability. This is allowing her to share her artwork with the world.

Boyle Street Community Services:
Community Wellness Connection Program

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Success Story

A woman was referred to 211 by her utility company after receiving a disconnection notice. She called 211 during a winter cold snap, distressed and worried that her power was about to be shut off. During the call, the 211 Community Resource Specialist provided a safe, non-judgmental space for her to share her concerns, offering empathy, active listening, and de-escalation techniques to help support her.

The specialist referred her to an emergency financial assistance program to help with her utility bill. While continuing the conversation, she disclosed that she had ongoing medical needs and struggled to access transportation for essential medical appointments. Since April, she had been trying to follow up on her AISH application but had not been able to move forward.

The 211 specialist connected her with the Medically at Risk Driver Centre program, which arranged transportation for her medical appointments. Additionally, the 211 specialist

offered resources to help assist her with her AISH application and lastly offered to follow up in a week to check in and provide any further support.

During the follow-up call, she shared that things had improved significantly. She had successfully applied for an emergency food benefit, which was issued quickly, and emergency medical assistance to obtain her prescriptions. She had also applied for Alberta Works and was approved. Finally, the emergency benefit for her utility disconnection was granted, ensuring her power remained on. She expressed deep gratitude, stating that the resources provided by 211 helped her regain stability and access the essential supports she needed."

Canadian Mental Health Association - Edmonton Region: 211

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Advancing Equity and Intersectionality

In the 2023-2025 funding cycle and beyond, Edmonton FCSS is committed to prioritizing funding organizations that demonstrate an ability to deliver programs with an intersectional lens and/or those that are equity-led. Recognizing that this shift requires time and commitment, FCSS is dedicated to fostering a social sector that reflects our community at all levels and to support our funded organizations as they work to provide services to anyone who walks through their doors.

Equity-Led: An equity-led organization includes all of the following:

- Equity seeking cultures central to daily operations.
- Equity seeking leadership at all levels - board, management, and staff.
- Programs developed with people with lived experience.
- Programs delivered by equity seeking people.
- Organization and program has legitimacy and profile with key beneficiaries, neighbourhoods and partners.

Intersectionality recognizes how those multiple forms of discrimination combine and overlap in complex and cumulative ways, based on the many aspects of a person's identity (like gender, race, and sexual identity).

Advancing Equity and Intersectionality

Some examples of actions organizations are taking:

- “Over 50% of our participants self-identify as Indigenous. We aim to provide spaces for teen parent families to learn cultural teachings and ceremonies from Indigenous role models...In 2024, 60% of participants engaged in cultural activities with their children, and 81.25% felt part of an inclusive environment. Building relationships with Indigenous role models fosters cultural pride and healthier lifestyles. Our supports included daily smudge, weekly beading, and ribbon skirt making.”
- “Indigenous clients appreciate our smudge station in the reception area and that all our staff are knowledgeable and encourage Indigenous approaches to wellbeing and ceremony. For the LGBTQ2S+ community, clients are appreciative that we go to the Pride Centre twice a week to support with session there - they report feeling more safe to access support there. Newcomers appreciate resources provided.”

Advancing Equity and Intersectionality

Some examples of actions organizations are taking:

- “A major success of the project was removing language/cultural/financial barriers to mental health counselling by securing counsellors who speak a dozen ethnic languages. So far, we have offered 200+ counselling sessions to 40+ clients, an in-kind value of \$40,000, provided at no cost to the clients. This has greatly contributed to the settlement of equity-deserving immigrants and refugees, women and children, and racialized/ marginalized groups facing intersecting vulnerabilities, i.e., financial and language barriers, pre-migration trauma, disabilities, and discrimination or persecution due to gender diversity.”
- “The program recently marked a significant milestone by completing the third full-day Indigenous Engagement training, with 53 members of the organization participating, learning, and sharing. This training is essential for building cultural sensitivity and competency.”

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FCSS Internal Contributions

The FCSS partnership involves shared resourcing – the Province contributes 80% and the City provides a mandatory contribution of 20% to the program. The City of Edmonton FCSS contribution consists of existing programs, services, and initiatives within the Social Development Branch of the Community Services Department and any other funding provided by City Council to programs and/or projects that meet the provincial eligibility requirements.

This includes:

- Edmonton FCSS Program Team
- Community Development Social Workers
- Community Capacity Building
- Tenant Support Services
- Community Safety Team
- Poverty Reduction initiatives
- Neighbourhood Empowerment
- Family Violence Prevention
- Gender-Based Violence Prevention
- Suicide Prevention
- Homelessness Prevention
- Community Development with newcomer, refugee, and Indigenous communities
- Community Services Advisory Board - FCSS Committee

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FCSS Feedback from City staff

"Kinistinaw Park was an area of focus for the Healthy Streets Operations Centre Community Safety Liaisons . Following a safety walk and presentation for senior residents, the liaisons arranged for Tai Chi classes in the Park. Over the course of the sessions we saw many beautiful interactions across differences, ranging from curious observance to people joining the classes and actions of respect towards the seniors."

"The Ben Calf Robe Powwow exemplifies the critical value of cultural events by providing free, accessible, and traditional experiences that connect people with their heritage. This annual gathering strengthens community bonds and showcases the enduring power of cultural practices, enriching lives and preserving traditions for all generations."

"The 2024 FCSS Learning and Gathering Sessions successfully engaged 260 attendees from 105 organizations, fostering valuable relationship building, knowledge sharing on key social sector topics like equity and evaluation, and inspiring potential actions and future collaborations among participants."

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Special thanks to the volunteers of the 2024 FCSS Committee

Community Members:

- Ashton Raeyr (resigned March 2024)
- Bonnie Chan-Maier
- Mary Frances Smith (resigned March 2024)
- Sarah Barber
- Victoria Smith

FCSS Association of Alberta

City of Edmonton Representative:

- Bette Gray (resigned Oct.2024)
- Luke Statt (appointed Oct.2024)

Community Services Advisory Board Members:

- Azumme Degun
- Bette Gray (resigned Oct.2024)
- Donna Brock (ended term April 2024)
- Francisco Yu
- Luke Statt (Chair)
- Samuel Mammen
- Sheineen Nathoo

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For more more information regarding the City of Edmonton FCSS Program,
visit **edmonton.ca/FCSS** .

For questions about this report, please contact **fcss@edmonton.ca** .

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