



**United Way**  
Thunder Bay

# A COMMUNITY IMPACT PLAN

IMPROVING LIVES, BUILDING COMMUNITY

**PEOPLE'S  
BASIC NEEDS  
ARE MET**

The Community  
Impact Plan  
strives to achieve

**3 CORE  
GOALS:**

**A  
CONNECTED  
AND  
INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNITY**

**A  
COMMUNITY  
WHERE ALL  
YOUTH GRADUATE**

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# BACKGROUND

In 2017 the United Way of Thunder Bay began the development of a Community Impact Plan that would help guide our decision-making and the allocation of funding to address community priority areas.

A Community Impact Council was established to begin the work of crafting a plan, using information from prior community planning efforts, most notably the Thunder Bay Counts project.

Our Community Impact plan is also informed by current national efforts to “transform” the United Way movement in Canada to ensure that our work is relevant and focused on community needs and that our efforts to raise funds and build capacity are nimble and include new approaches.

## PLAN BASED ON COMMUNITY RESEARCH:

### THUNDER BAY COUNTS RESEARCH AND THE SHARED AGENDA FOR CHANGE

One of the first steps in developing the Community Impact Plan was to understand Thunder Bay’s strengths, challenges and most pressing issues like poverty, mental health challenges, addictions, racism and homelessness. Thunder Bay Counts was designed and carried out by the United Way to pull together, summarize and share existing information about important local social issues and to identify a set of shared goals that resonate with all residents of Thunder Bay.

From 2015-2017 Thunder Bay Counts worked to develop a Shared Agenda for Change and identified a set of high-level community indicators that can be used to track change over time. This work has included extensive research and community consultation.

The Shared Agenda for Change is a set of statements about key things that need to change in Thunder Bay in order to address social issues that are intended to be positive in tone, measurable, and meaningful to people from various sectors of the community.

To view the full Thunder Bay Counts document please go to [www.uwaytbay.ca](http://www.uwaytbay.ca) Through this collaboration of community partners and the work of Thunder Bay Counts, the Community Impact Plan was developed. It sets goals for a positive future, identifies strategic priorities and defines measurable indicators for success.

While we support the Shared Agenda for Change that was identified in Thunder Bay Counts, we will focus our attention on providing resources and support in areas that are the best “fit” with our United Way, on initiatives where our financial support, along with funds that we are able to leverage from other partners, can make an important difference.

Given the traditional roles that United Ways (including Thunder Bay) have played for many years, it is recommended that we focus our primary attention on addressing the root causes of poverty and alleviating its debilitating effects on people in our community. In order to build pathways out of poverty it is also recommended that we focus attention on building an inclusive and connected community and support children and youth to succeed in school.

# GOALS, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

The United Way Community Impact Plan will serve as a strategic guide for our investments. It will also focus our advocacy efforts and help us secure and align financial, human and other resources required to address key community concerns.

It is the intent of United Way to facilitate, lead and focus on a few priority strategies while encouraging and supporting other entities in the community to take the lead where appropriate. Strategies will be reviewed on a periodic basis and may be adjusted as necessary from “lessons learned” over time to increase likelihood of success.

The United Way cannot fund everything nor can we meaningfully participate in all local social planning tables. The plan does not discuss all social needs in the community, and we know that priorities may change over time. This plan highlights the United Way of Thunder Bay’s main area of focus: “A community free from poverty” and the relating community priorities, strategies, areas of investment and long-term outcomes as they exist today.

In order to make a meaningful difference in addressing the root causes of poverty and “moving people from poverty to possibility”, the United Way will fund a collective impact approach. This will include working together with people and organizations (community partners) who support and share this goal and approach.

Beginning in 2020, with a staged approach, the United Way will use our allocation process to fund community partners from multiple agencies to deliver services and programs, in specific neighborhood locations in Thunder Bay. Services and programs will be focused on working towards the United Way Focus Area: A community free from poverty and our 3 goal areas: People’s basic needs are met; A connected and inclusive community and A community where all youth graduate.



## A COMMUNITY IMPACT PLAN:

# A COMMUNITY FREE FROM POVERTY

Poverty is a complex set of stubborn, intertwined social issues. The burden of poverty is profound, and those who are confronted with it face deeply entrenched social barriers to their success. According to 2016 Census data, we know that more than 16,000 or 13.8% of residents in Thunder Bay live below the “low income measure” poverty line.

We also know that those who live with low income experience discrimination and social isolation. Poverty is not just about income. It is also about inequality and exclusion. Although interventions supported by the United Way of Thunder Bay may not be enough to overcome poverty completely, they are designed to help people experiencing poverty develop plans and prepare for a better future – to move people from poverty to possibility. As such, decreasing numbers of people living below the low-income cut-off is a positive indicator of population wellbeing.

Financial resources need to be targeted to areas where we (and our donors) can see a clear impact. We should focus on local projects, on needs identified in our community and we should attempt to leverage financial and other resources where possible.

While we need to help meet the basic needs of vulnerable people in our community, we also need to ensure that some of our investments and advocacy are related to addressing the root causes of poverty, to help people build a better life for themselves and the people they support.

## TARGET POPULATIONS:

We believe that all people have the right to live in a strong and caring community, and that everyone can at different times in their lives be at risk of one or a number of challenges. However, we must focus our limited resources for the greatest impact. To this end we focus on those people most vulnerable and/or marginalized.

# THE BASIC NEEDS OF PEOPLE ARE MET.

Our focus in this area is on helping meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable people in our community. Emergency services are essentially those services necessary to sustain health and/or life for people without the resources to continue to do so for themselves. Poverty is associated with many challenges to wellbeing like lower levels of physical and mental health, less access to nutritional foods, educational opportunities and poorer living conditions. In 2017, 10.2% of Thunder Bay District households reported being food insecure.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** People have access to basic needs and emergency community services.

**THE UNITED WAY WILL FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHENING THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

- Emergency and affordable nutritious food provision
- Knowledge and skills building regarding nutrition, food preparation, and managing food insecurity
- Access to emergency shelters and/or transitional housing
- Emergency support for those affected by addictions and mental health challenges
- Supports to find safe and stable housing
- Programs that offer low-cost or no cost transportation

## **OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE:**

People's basic needs are met through:

- Enough healthy food
- Emergency shelter and short-term housing
- Emergency mental health and addiction services
- Transportation to get to where they need to go





## SAMPLE INDICATORS:

Program and community-level indicators can measure both the extent of the need for emergency services and their effectiveness – Measurement in the following areas over time will indicate if need is decreasing or increasing.

- The extent of homelessness in the community (determined by admissions to shelters, winter counts of sleepers in the open, soup-kitchen meals served)
- Changes in the number of people on welfare or disability income
- Patronage of food banks and other food-distribution centers, number of people receiving food vouchers, number of people fed through programs
- Length of waiting lists for various types of subsidized housing, availability of affordable housing in the community, average percentage of income paid for shelter by people on public assistance
- Admissions to shelters and other services – counseling for victims of domestic violence
- Number of people seen by emergency mental health services
- Number of bus passes or bus cards given out, number of taxi vouchers given out
- Number of Emergency Room visits to deal with symptoms of mental health challenges

# A CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

A connected community is one where all people can get the help they need, find opportunities to contribute and feel they belong. Connections to supports focuses on strengthening the ability of individuals and families to access and navigate formal community resources, while also developing the social connections that provide informal supports. Connecting people to supports may involve working with vulnerable people individually to help them build social connections and navigate support systems.

An inclusive community is one where all people are honoured and included. Diversity is valued and racism and discrimination are not accepted. Some individuals are more commonly excluded, based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability status or a combination. Exclusion itself does not directly result in inability to access and benefit from services, although it can lead to lower social standing, leading to lower income, reduced access to employment, and reduced connections to social supports and participation in community life.

The emphasis of these strategic priorities is on increasing quality of life of people and addressing underlying root causes of poverty.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY: People have access to collaborative services that are seamless, accessible, inclusive, welcoming and culturally appropriate.**

## THE UNITED WAY WILL FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHENING THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Counselling and supports that help families and individuals manage the effects of poverty and /or underemployment
- Short and long-term support for those affected by addictions and mental health challenges
- Domestic violence prevention and support services
- Supports to build safe and welcoming neighbourhoods
- Literacy, financial literacy and financial management skills
- Opportunities for skill development
- Transitional services to move people from emergency shelter to safe stable housing





## OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE:

- People who need service receive service
- People have the skills and knowledge to meet their needs and address challenges
- People have mental well-being and thrive
- People live a life free of addictions
- People can care for themselves and their families
- People are engaged in community life and feel they belong
- People can get good jobs
- People are financially secure
- People have safe and affordable housing

## SAMPLE INDICATORS:

- Number of people on program waiting lists
- Availability of affordable community mental health services
- Number of referrals, 211 call logs, record of: 211 usage frequencies, purpose of calls and met or unmet needs
- Number of people who are participating in and have meaningful relationships with organizations and social networks
- Percentage of people in the community who are employed and receive a living wage
- Number of adults enrolled and complete adult literacy, basic education, or majority-language-learning programs
- Availability and use of transition services – housing, employment, and support – for those recently released from prison
- Number of individuals served who receive job skill training/ % of those individuals who gain meaningful employment

# A COMMUNITY WHERE ALL YOUTH GRADUATE

Success in learning is one important way in which children and youth realize their potential, and it is one of the most visible and most easily measured dimensions. However, there are alarming trends in areas like social disengagement, lack of positive role models, mental health challenges, substance use and violence underscore some of the many reasons why children and youth struggle to become engaged in learning and do not succeed in school. These challenges prohibit them from furthering their education and contribute to the high school drop-out rate. But there is hope. By creating a support system around these areas, doors to success and empowerment can open for youth in need.

People with a higher level of education tend to experience better health, higher incomes, more secure employment, and better working conditions than people with less education. Achieving a Grade 12 diploma is a vital step in helping young people become prepared to compete in the labour market and lead healthy fulfilling lives. Moving from high school successfully and entering higher education or trades can help youth increase their income earning potential and be a route out of poverty for many youths living in low income situations.

According to the 2016 Census, 21.5 per cent (4,095) of children and youth aged 0-17 in Thunder Bay were living in low income households.

In Thunder Bay 12.9 per cent of children and youth aged 0-29 report having an emotional, psychological or mental health condition (e.g. anxiety or depression).

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY:** Children and youth are connected to positive adults, peers and activities that help them be engaged and involved in their community, be healthy, make good choices and adapt to change.

## THE UNITED WAY WILL FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHENING THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Supports to address family violence, addictions and/ or mental health challenges
- Children and family counselling programs focused on healthy decision making, coping skills, building self-esteem and resiliency
- Programs that strengthen positive parenting skills and a supportive family environment
- Access to positive role models, mentors and leadership development programs
- Recreation programs that provide a safe and supportive environment where youth can build strong positive peer relationships and develop a sense of belonging



## OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE: SAMPLE INDICATORS:

- Families are strong and supportive
- Children and youth live a life free from violence, addictions and mental health challenges
- Children and youth are ready to learn
- Children and youth move successfully through elementary and secondary school and access post-secondary education/ training.
- Young people have a positive view on the future and are motivated for life-long learning.
- Local high school graduation rates
- School attendance rates – less missed days in elementary and high schools
- High school dropout rates
- College and University enrollment rates for local students
- College or University completion rates
- Number of youth neither in school nor employed.

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