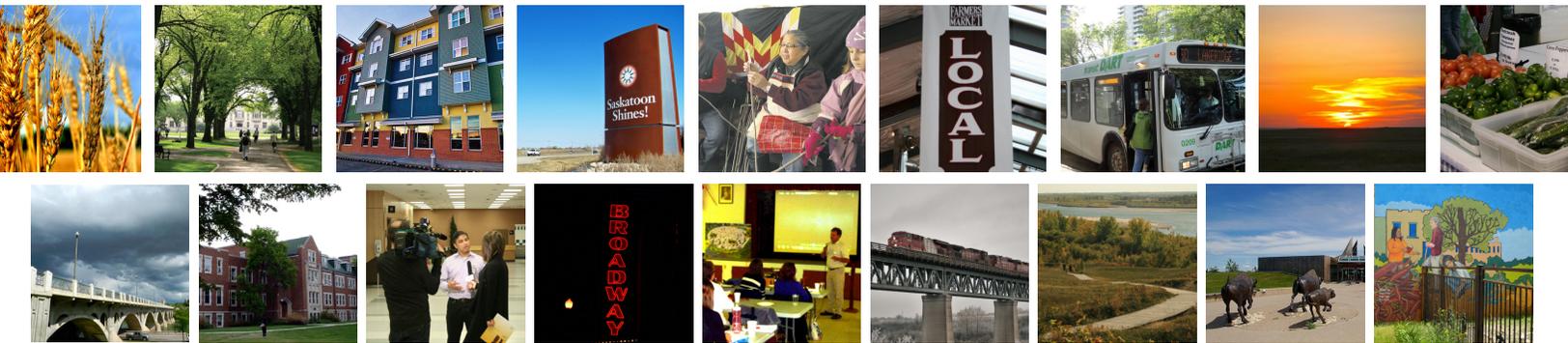




**CUISR**  
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

# Social Return on Investment Financial Proxies and the Saskatoon Poverty Elimination Strategy

Suresh S. Kalagnanam, Abdrahmane Berthe, and  
Isobel M. Findlay



## Community-University Institute for Social Research

### **Building healthy, sustainable communities**

Since 1999, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)—formally established as a university-wide interdisciplinary research centre in 2000—has remained true to its mission of facilitating “partnerships between the university and the larger community in order to engage in relevant social research that supports a deeper understanding of our communities and that reveals opportunities for improving our quality of life.”

### **Strategic Research Directions**

CUISR is committed to collaborative research and to accurate, objective reporting of research results in the public domain, taking into account the needs for confidentiality in gathering, disseminating, and storing information. In 2007 CUISR adopted five interdisciplinary strategies:

1. Saskatoon Community Sustainability
2. Social Economy
3. Rural-Urban Community Links
4. Building Alliances for Indigenous Women’s Community Development
5. Analysis of community-university partnerships

These strategic directions extend our research organized until 2007 in three modules—quality of life indicators, community health determinants and health policy, and community economic development—the result of efforts to address health, quality of life, and poverty that led to the formation of CUISR to build capacity among researchers, CBOs, and citizenry.

CUISR research projects are funded largely by SSHRC, local CBOs, provincial associations, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Beginning in 2007, CUISR’s reputation for high quality community-based participatory research (CBPR) enabled us to diversify our funding by responding to community agency requests to conduct research projects for them for a fee.

### **Tools and strategies**

*Knowledge mobilization:* CUISR disseminates research through newsletters, brown bag luncheons, reports, journal articles, monographs, videos, arts-based methods, listserv, website.

*Portal bringing university and community together to address social issues:* CUISR facilitates partnerships with community agencies.

*Public policy:* CUISR supports evidence-based practice and policy at these tables: provincial Advisory Table on Individualized Funding for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, and Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC).

*Student training:* CUISR provides training and guidance to undergraduate and graduate students and encourages community agencies to provide community orientation in order to promote positive experiences with evaluators and researchers.

# SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT FINANCIAL PROXIES AND THE SASKATOON POVERTY ELIMINATION STRATEGY

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AND ISOBEL M. FINDLAY



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University of Saskatchewan

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Printed in Canada

Cover and interior design by Wings to Fly Design

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Health Promotion Department of the Saskatchewan Health Authority for generously funding this research project. Our thanks too to all those who attended a December 2017 workshop at Station 20 West on Social Return on Investment (SROI) presented by Professor Suresh Kalagnanam and hosted by Community-University Institute for Social Research and expressed interest in learning more about financial proxies that might better help them tell their stories. Your interest helped motivate this study.

Our appreciation also extends to research partner Colleen Christopherson-Cote, coordinator of the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP), for convening and chairing the SPRP Evaluation and Monitoring Group who volunteered their time to help develop relevant indicators.

## ABSTRACT

An estimated 5.8 million people live in poverty in Canada. Poverty costs Saskatchewan alone \$3.8 billion annually. There is also a human cost—physical and mental health impacts, lost economic, social, civic, cultural, and educational opportunities—to those of us who live in poverty or who are at risk of doing so. Addressing the root causes of poverty, however, is a complex task requiring agreement on defining and measuring poverty. It also requires reliable, accessible data. Depending on the measure used—Low-Income Measure (LIM); Low Income CutOffs (LICO); the Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM); or the Market Basket Measure (MBM)—the resultant rates of poverty will vary. Focusing on income alone misses important measures of poverty such as material deprivation reducing access to essential services.

The Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) has since 2010 been at the heart of convening, catalyzing, and coordinating collective, multisectoral efforts to reduce poverty, which SPRP defines as “creating conditions which enable all members of the community to develop their talents & abilities, to have the choice to actively participate in economic, cultural and social life & to enjoy a good standard of living on a sustainable basis.” For SPRP, poverty “is a systemic issue that takes its toll on our communities, impacts all residents”; its guiding principles speak to the importance of inclusion, respect, connectedness, cohesion, and our shared responsibilities “to create an interdependent and fair society.” After significant consultation, literature reviews, and review of strategies from the local and regional to international, in February 2019 SPRP launched its 12 Bold Ideas—income, asset building, social enterprise, childcare, education, healthcare, transportation, good food, housing, justice, literacy, and system navigation—to eliminate poverty, aligning with provincial and national strategies.

As a result of the recommendations of the government-appointed Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction, the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services released its 2016 poverty reduction strategy choosing “a broad, holistic approach” and a target to reduce poverty for those experiencing poverty for two or more years by 50% by 2025 on a foundation of four pillars (“sustaining a strong economy, ensuring citizens have a higher level of disposable income to use at their discretion, removing the barriers to independence, and providing financial support to our most vulnerable citizens”). The strategy focused on six areas—Income Security; Housing and Homelessness; Early Childhood Development and Child Care; Education, Skills Training and Employment; Health and Food Security; and Vulnerable Families and Individuals—committed to a more detailed implementation plan on relevant targets, measures, and reporting, while reporting on

many or the initiatives already undertaken in the province.

Based on extensive consultation, the first federal poverty reduction strategy in 2018 is grounded in these pillars:

- Living in dignity
- Providing opportunity and inclusion
- Enhancing resilience and security

The strategy introduced an official poverty line (formerly the Market Basket Measure) on which are based these targets:

- Reduce poverty by 20 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030
- Reduce chronic homelessness by 50%
- End long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve by March 2021
- Reduce or eliminate housing need for 530,000 households.

The strategy also included timelines, indicators to measure and monitor progress, a commitment to establish a National Advisory Council on Poverty, to fill data gaps, and to launch an online dashboard of indicators that will allow Canadians to follow progress.

Whether organizations operate in the public, private, or third sectors, accountability, transparency, and governance are prominent concerns, extending from how they use resources to the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of those resources to improve the lives of people. In this context, accountability and evaluation frameworks have become vital tools to help drive action, monitor progress, and evaluate change. Some of these frameworks are grounded in the five conditions of collective impact—common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, backbone support—while others add a movement-building dimension and equity lens.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology is a principles-based methodology that can be invaluable in measuring the effectiveness of interventions to improve lives. An SROI analysis evaluates organizational performance using a variety of sources to assess how well the organization has achieved its financial and especially non-financial goals. The non-financial performance dimensions almost always include environmental, community, and social goals. It gives organizations an important tool to assess the outcomes of their efforts, to communicate their

successes and impacts, to manage their risks, and to support evidence-based decision making and optimal use of resources. An important objective of an SROI analysis is to assess whether, and how, one or more organizational actions/decisions affects beneficiaries (or key stakeholder groups).

SROI uses financial proxies or estimates of financial value to calculate social and other impacts, focusing on the triple bottom line of environmental, social, and economic value. The accuracy of financial proxies derived from reliable sources is essential to articulating the maximum value created as well as the credibility of the analysis and report.

In collaboration with the community partner Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP), the research team of faculty and research assistant associated with the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) designed the research and developed a list of close to 850 SROI financial proxies covering the areas of social services, justice, healthcare, and education, and a preliminary list of indicators relevant to the 12 Bold Ideas of the Saskatoon Poverty Elimination Strategy.

The study has these goals:

- To increase awareness of SROI
- To guide the SPRP and partner organization decision making
- To reflect the needs of the Saskatoon community
- To develop provisional indicators relevant to the SPRP 12 Bold Ideas.

In sharing the relevant financial proxies (drawn primarily from disaggregated and unitized publicly available cost and volume data) and preliminary indicators relevant to the 12 Bold Ideas of the Saskatoon Poverty Elimination Strategy, the study aims to equip organizations in Saskatoon and the province, who could not themselves afford to invest in the costly research process, with preliminary data to conduct SROI analyses that quantify (in monetary terms) the value of the services that they provide in order to support policy and program development.

## INTRODUCTION

An estimated 5.8 million people live in poverty in Canada (CPJ, 2018). Poverty costs Saskatchewan alone \$3.8 billion annually “in heightened service use and missed economic opportunities” (Plante & Sharp, 2014). If there is a dollar cost to all of us, there is also a human cost—physical and mental health impacts and lost economic, social, civic, cultural, and educational opportunities—to those of us who face systemic barriers and live in poverty or who are at risk of doing so. Women, Indigenous people, racialized people, people living with disabilities, and recent immigrants are among those disproportionately impacted by poverty: 47.4% of children in single-parent families, 23.6% of Indigenous peoples, 20.8% of racialized people, and 23% of single people with disabilities, for example (CPJ, 2018). Far exceeding the national rate of 18.5%, Saskatchewan’s child poverty rate is 24.6%, while 66% of Indigenous children live in poverty and 4.2% of Saskatchewan residents live on support benefits that are so low that they could never transition out of poverty (Canada Without Poverty, 2016). Although close to 90% of surveyed Saskatchewan residents supported a provincial strategy to reduce poverty (Plante & Sharp, 2014), addressing the root causes of poverty is a complex task requiring agreement on defining and measuring poverty. Addressing the root causes also requires reliable, accessible data, something impacted by historical, jurisdictional, and other factors in Canada’s costly “data deficit” causing ignorance in multiple areas that has been “decades in the making” (Andrew-Gee & Grant, 2019, p. A12).

**Poverty costs Saskatchewan  
alone \$3.8 billion annually  
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missed economic opportunities.”**

Depending on the measure used—Low-Income Measure (LIM) or household earnings of less than half the national median income; Low Income CutOffs (LICO) or the threshold below which households will spend higher proportions of income on food, shelter, and clothing; the Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM) derived from the T1 Family File; or the Market Basket Measure (MBM) based on the income to purchase a basket of essential goods and services, including a nutritious diet, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation, personal care items, and household supplies, for example—the resultant rates of poverty will vary. Those that focus only on income miss important measures of poverty such as material deprivation reducing access to medical care, child care, food, and early education, for instance (Notten & Mendelson, 2016).

Building on a history of community collaboration and activism, the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) has since 2010 been at the heart of convening, catalyzing, and coordinating collective, multisectoral efforts to reduce poverty, which SPRP defines as “creating conditions which enable all members of the community to develop their talents & abilities, to have the choice to actively participate in economic, cultural and social life & to enjoy a good standard of living on a sustainable basis” (SPRP, 2017, p. 2). In developing its 12 Bold Ideas to eliminate poverty in Saskatoon community plan (launched on February 7, 2019), SPRP has consulted widely, reviewed extensively, and aligned its local goals and strategies with the 2016 provincial and 2018 national strategies.

Whether organizations operate in the public, private, or third sectors at the local, regional, or national level, accountability, transparency, and governance are prominent concerns in today’s economy. In this context, accountability and evaluation frameworks have become vital tools to help drive action, monitor progress, and evaluate change. Some of these frameworks (such as that of the City of Toronto [2015]) are grounded in the five conditions of Collective Impact—common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, backbone support (Kania, & Kramer, 2011)—while others add a movement-building dimension along with a focus on community aspiration, strategic learning, high leverage activities, inclusive community engagement, and containers for change (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). Kania and Kramer (2015) underline “the equity imperative”; that is, adopting “an equity lens” to address structural inequities as critical to producing “lasting change” in Collective Impact.

The measurement imperative is clear: “What gets measured gets done” (Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion, 2013). Such measurement and reporting is popularly known as social impact analysis (SIA). In understanding and making visible the impact of organizational activities, social return on investment (SROI) can be invaluable. The principles-based SROI uses financial proxies to calculate not only financial but also social and other impacts, focusing on the triple bottom line of environmental, social, and economic value. The accuracy of financial proxies derived from reliable sources is essential to articulating the maximum organizational value created as well as the credibility of the analysis and report.

### **Study Purpose**

In collaboration with community partner SPRP, the research team of faculty and research assistant associated with the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) designed the research and developed a list of about 850 SROI financial proxies covering the areas of social services, justice, healthcare, and education, and, with the input of the SPRP Evaluation and

Monitoring Group, a preliminary list of indicators relevant to the 12 Bold Ideas of the Saskatoon Poverty Elimination Strategy.

The study aims to increase awareness of SROI, to guide the SPRP and partner organization decision making, and to reflect the needs of the Saskatoon community. In sharing the relevant financial proxies (drawn primarily from disaggregated and unitized publicly available cost and volume data), the study aims to equip organizations in Saskatoon and the province, who could not themselves afford to invest in the costly research process, with preliminary data to conduct SROI analyses that quantify (in monetary terms) **the value** of the services that they provide in order to support policy and program development.

This report elaborates the background and context for this study, before explaining the methodology and its limits, discussing findings, and presenting conclusions.

**The study aims to increase awareness of SROI, to guide the SPRP and partner organization decision making, and to reflect the needs of the Saskatoon community**

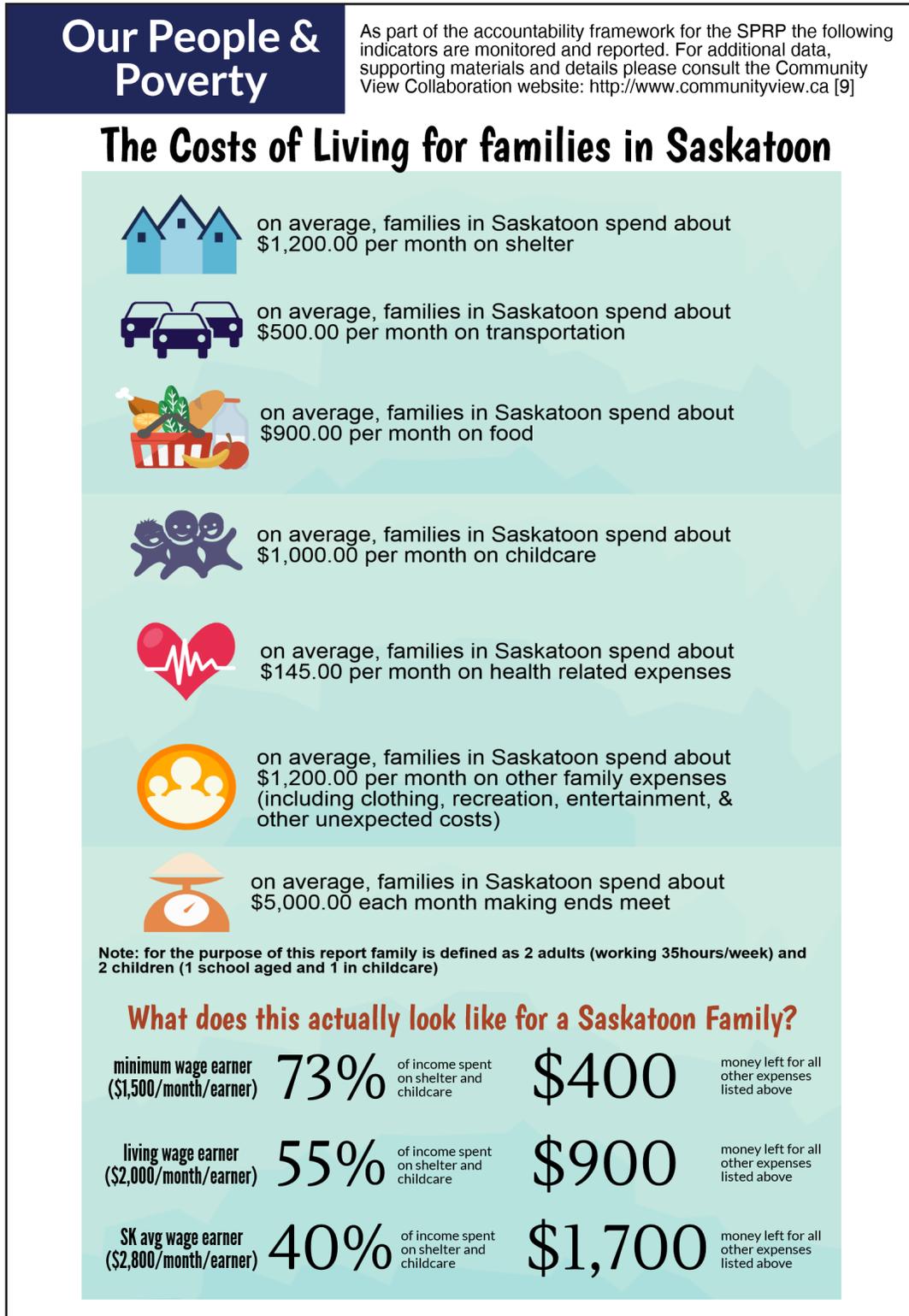
## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Poverty is a multi-dimensional construct (Alkire & Foster, 2008; Alkire & Santos, 2010; Sen, 1976). SPRP (2017) is clear that there is “more to poverty than meets the eye” and that “it is a systemic issue that takes its toll on our communities, impacts all residents” (p. 2). The guiding principles of the SPRP speak to the importance of inclusion, respect, connectedness, cohesion, and our shared responsibilities “to create an interdependent and fair society” (p. 4):

1. A city that bridges: A connected and cohesive community
2. We are all Treaty People: A community on a path of reconciliation
3. Nothing About Us Without Us: Fostering an inclusive and diverse community  
(2017, p. 3)

SPRP’s coalition of agencies, groups, and organizations with a shared vision for a poverty-free Saskatoon has been building on its five-year review in 2017 to identify and implement strategies to achieve its vision. Consistent with its principles, after significant consultation with diverse stakeholders (30 team meetings, 45 focus groups, 360 interviews, 90 written submissions), extensive literature reviews, and review of strategies from the local and regional to international, in February 2019 SPRP launched its 12 Bold Ideas to eliminate poverty, aligning with provincial and national strategies and adopting the official poverty line which varies in different urban, rural, and remote contexts (see Figure 1 for the figures for Saskatoon and Figure 2 for the figures relevant to Winnipeg).

Figure 1. The Poverty Line (Market Basket Measure) for a family of four in Saskatoon



Source: SPRP (2019)

The 12 Bold Ideas, described below (SPRP, 2019), represent a list of collective actions, policies, and practices.

<b>Income:</b>	People need basic income to support their basic needs.
<b>Asset Building:</b>	People need to be able to build and accumulate assets to support themselves and their families.
<b>Social Enterprise:</b>	People need access to meaningful employment and training opportunities.
<b>Childcare:</b>	People need access to flexible, affordable, and reliable childcare that reflects their diverse needs.
<b>Education:</b>	People need a school system that is youth centred and responsive to the needs of families and communities.
<b>Healthcare:</b>	People need access to a healthcare system that focuses on what they need to be healthy.
<b>Transportation:</b>	People need barrier-free public transportation.
<b>Good Food:</b>	People need access to healthy, affordable food in the neighbourhood they live in.
<b>Housing:</b>	People need support to find safe, affordable, appropriate and adequate housing.
<b>Justice:</b>	People need support and understanding to break the cycle of poverty.
<b>Literacy:</b>	People need skills and knowledge to improve their circumstances to break the cycle of poverty.
<b>System Navigation:</b>	People need access to broad community support, no matter where they turn for help, when they ask.

SPRP (2019) asks people to help “rewrite the story of poverty in Saskatoon” by reviewing critically policies and practices, challenging mandates, and determining what each of us can do and how we might work together to make changes that will help end poverty in Saskatoon.

Based on the following principles, the government-appointed Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction (2015) made recommendations in six areas (income security; housing/homelessness; early childhood development; education/skills training; employment; and health/food security) in a report that they regarded as “a living document”:

- Protect and promote the rights and dignity of all people in Saskatchewan (including

- addressing colonialism, residential schools, and ongoing racism).P
- People come first (including a “no wrong door” policy).
  - Build and support strength of individuals and families.
  - Partnerships are needed to achieve common goals (including government leadership and Health in All Policies).
  - Accountability is vital to the Strategy’s success (transparency, rigorous data, clear targets and monitoring process, and “independent central body to oversee and report”).
  - Balance the need for flexible, practical and concrete actions with a focus on innovation and excellence. (pp. 8-10)

As a result of the recommendations of the government-appointed Advisory Group, the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services (2016b) released its poverty reduction strategy choosing “a broad, holistic approach” and a target to reduce poverty for those experiencing poverty for two or more years by 50% by 2025 (pp. 4, 8) on a foundation of four pillars: “sustaining a strong economy, ensuring citizens have a higher level of disposable income to use at their discretion, removing the barriers to independence, and providing financial support to our most vulnerable citizens” (p. 7). Committed to a “no wrong door” policy, an expanded Hub model of collaboration, and “an integrated, co-ordinated, and multi-system response to support marginalized and vulnerable families” (2016b, p. 8), the provincial strategy retained focus on six areas, adding child care to early childhood development, employment to educations, skills training, and incorporating as its sixth area: vulnerable families and individuals. It committed to a more detailed implementation plan on relevant targets, measures, and reporting, while reporting on many or the initiatives already undertaken in the province. Many community members actively addressing poverty issues expressed disappointment in the lack of specifics or new targets, timelines, and measures (Fraser, 2016).

Based on extensive consultation, Opportunity for all, the first federal poverty reduction strategy, is grounded in “the belief that all Canadians deserve to be treated fairly and to have the means and abilities to grow and fully participate in the development of their communities” and based on these pillars:

- Living in dignity
- Providing opportunity and inclusion
- Enhancing resilience and security (ESDC, 2018, p. 2)

Aware of the need for “transparent indicators, clear targets and tangible actions,” the strategy

introduced an official poverty line (Figure 2) on which are based these targets:

- Reduce poverty by 20 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030
- Reduce chronic homelessness by 50%
- End long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve by March 2021
- Reduce or eliminate housing need for 530,000 households (ESDC, 2018, p. 17)

Figure 2. The Official Poverty Line (formerly Market Basket Measure) based on Winnipeg family of four



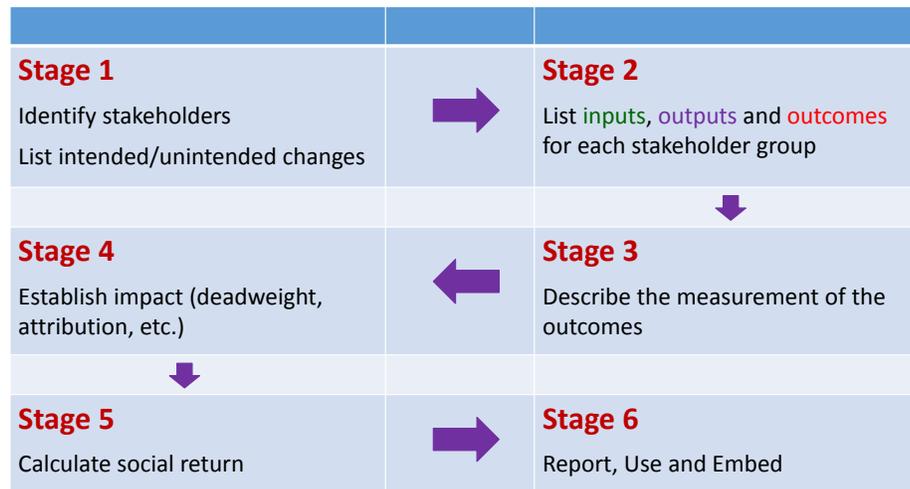
Source: ESDC, 2018, p. 11

The strategy also included timelines, indicators to measure and monitor progress, and a commitment to establish a “National Advisory Council on Poverty, enshrined into law” designed to advise, report, and foster public dialogue (pp. 3, 15-17). The strategy aligning with seven UN Sustainable Development Goals and equally sensitive to the need for a “distinctions-based approach” to Indigenous peoples’ “unique understanding and experience of poverty” and for designing programming “with and for” Indigenous peoples adopts a human-rights approach (pp. 15-16). The federal strategy recognizes the need for “aligned and complementary” efforts across “orders of government” (p. 43) and is committed to filling data gaps by expanding the Canadian Income Survey to the North, expanding Census and Statistics Canada collection of relevant data, establishing the Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics to track intersecting identities, and ensuing a gender-based analysis. An online dashboard of indicators will allow Canadians to follow progress.

In the context of increasing demand worldwide for accountability to stakeholders, focus has shifted from not only how resources are used but also to the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of those resources to improve the lives of people (Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion, 2013). The principles-based social return on investment (SROI) can be invaluable in evaluating organizational performance in broad-based terms and using a variety of sources to assess how well the organization has achieved its financial and especially non-financial goals (Waikar, Kalagnanam, & Findlay, 2013). It documents and measures changes (social, economic, environmental), in ways that are relevant to the people or organizations that experience it or contribute to it, enabling a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated (SROI Network, 2012). An SROI analysis allows organizations to communicate their successes and impacts, to manage their risks, and to support evidence-based decision making and optimal use of resources. It allows organizations to assess whether, and how, one or more organizational actions/decisions affects beneficiaries (or key stakeholder groups), signifying the impact of the investment of a dollar into an activity or intervention that leads to social returns.

SROI uses financial proxies (estimates of financial value) for outcomes (those incremental changes in behaviour that lead toward a goal: in this case, ending poverty) or impacts (or effects of outcomes on ultimate goals) that are difficult to measure and monetize in order to calculate social and other impacts, focusing on the triple bottom line of environmental, social, and economic value. The value and credibility of the SROI analysis and report depends on the accuracy of financial proxies derived from reliable sources. The stakeholder-focused methodology consists of six steps, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Six Stages of SROI Analysis



Source: Adapted from SROI Network, Guide to social return on investment (2012)

## METHODOLOGY

In developing financial proxies for this province, we have attempted to follow the methodology employed in an earlier CUISR study (Waikar, Kalagnanam, & Findlay, 2013). This has primarily involved using wherever possible publicly accessible standard cost rates provided by departments and agencies of the provincial and municipal governments. Wherever per diem figures were unavailable, aggregated cost data from the financial statements of government ministries, agencies, and Saskatchewan-based social economy organizations were used instead. Using cost accounting techniques such as average costing (whereby total cost is divided by total number of units) and allocation base approximations (by which agencies and organizations allocate overhead costs), these total costs were disaggregated into ‘per person’ or ‘per period’ amounts with the aid of secondary volume data found in statistical reports, quantitative academic research publications, and other relevant sources.

Additionally, within the social services, justice, and education sectors covered in the database, there are some financial proxies that are based on hourly wage rates. Depending on the availability, we have attempted to derive such proxies using the rates spelt out in job postings for such positions and/or collective bargaining agreements. In the event that this was not feasible, we have relied upon other publicly available sources relevant to the sector (for example, public service listings on <https://ca.indeed.com>). Users should be aware that all quoted wage rates are gross hourly rates. They do not account for benefits and other payroll expenses that the employer would incur.

### **The Limitations of Average Cost Data**

The use of average cost data poses certain limitations, the first of which is methodological. Secondary data are rarely available in the required level of detail. Therefore, the researchers were required to make some judgments in terms of disaggregating aggregate data. For instance, it is difficult for us to estimate what portion of the labour and overhead costs incurred by the Saskatoon Police Service directly relates to police callouts. Therefore, the use of aggregate data likely overestimates the monetary value assigned to a proxy.

Second, the demographic distinctions across the different regions in Saskatchewan mean that a single average cost number for the entire province should not be used. The denominator base to spread total costs on a per capita basis tends to be smaller in sparsely populated regions of the province, resulting in comparatively higher average per capita costs. Therefore, indicators that are based on average costs in some of the more densely populated regions may not be reflective of the

situation elsewhere in the province. Consequently, where possible, this study provides multiple values of an individual proxy, one for each region (for example, proxies in the social services sector).

Users are therefore cautioned to exercise discretion, by considering the specific circumstances of their individual organizations, when performing SROI analyses for specific regions using disaggregated province-wide averages.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We have constructed a database of financial proxies to facilitate preliminary SROI analyses in the areas of social services, justice, healthcare, and education. A major portion of this section of the report focuses on specific financial indicators within each category and outlines the process of arriving at the calculated figure (for a complete list of financial proxies, refer to Appendix A; the spreadsheets of data are available on the CUISR website at <https://cuivr.usask.ca/>). The discussion on financial proxies is intended to familiarize users with both the methodology and the limitations of these proxies. The final portion of this section discusses the development of poverty-related indicators; readers are cautioned that the listed indicators are preliminary in nature and are intended to generate meaningful discussion leading towards the development of a more concrete and relevant set of indicators relevant to the SPRP (2019), 12 Bold Ideas.

### **Financial Proxies for Social Services**

#### *Proxies Based on Per Diem Standard Rates*

The provincial government's Ministry of Social Services administers a wide array of schemes and programs intended to assist low-income individuals and families, and individuals living with physical and intellectual disabilities. The monetary value of benefits that each program participant (individual person or family) receives depends on criteria such as the category of benefits, income, family size, place of residence, and the severity of the recipient's intellectual or physical impairment (see Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services [SMSS], 2015, 2016a, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e). The standard rates for each category of social assistance programs have been entered into the database, segregated by the above-mentioned criteria (e.g., family size, income).

Users may approach these per diem rates in two ways. As a cost-reallocation proxy, the per diem rate would represent the cost savings to the Ministry of Social Services of reducing one person or family's reliance on the program. Alternatively, the benefit received could be treated as an input for SROI analyses at an individual or organizational level. For example, the monthly payment under the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES) program could be treated as a 'social investment' and measured against some form of an outcome indicator to quantify the 'social return.'

#### *Proxies Based on Average Costs and Cost Allocation Approximations*

Developing the financial proxy for 'Shelter Costs' in Saskatchewan required the application of cost allocation and average costing principles in order to reasonably estimate the cost per person per day. Amongst the social enterprises providing some form of shelter services in Saskatchewan,

the YWCA Saskatoon cost and volume data were judged to be the most reliable because an independently assured set of financial statements are associated with its annual report (YWCA Saskatoon, 2018a; 2018b).

According to annual report for the year ended 2017-18, the total expenditure on ‘Crisis & Shelter Residence’ was \$1,685,684, which made up 37 percent of total expenditures for the period and covered 11,033 days of housing for women, girls, and children and an average stay of 21 days (YWCA Saskatoon, 2018a). This proportion was treated as an allocation base and applied to the total expenses for 2017-18 in order to approximate the portion of costs allocated to the provision of shelter services for the year. Subsequently, the total cost was divided by the number of shelter clients served throughout the year to determine the average cost per person. This result was then further divided by the average length of stay to determine the average cost on a per person per day basis (YWCA Saskatoon, 2018a, pp. 11-12).

It is important to recognize that the allocation base of 37 percent has been applied to the total cost, which includes fixed and variable components. Therefore, it would not be feasible to treat this as a cost-reallocation proxy because reducing service volume incrementally would result only in a reduction in the variable portion of the total cost. Moreover, the above-mentioned methodological limitations of average costing, particularly with respect to disaggregating costs, are applicable to this example. Thus, as highlighted earlier, users are advised to exercise caution when basing their analyses on proxies developed with average costing.

### **Financial Proxies for Justice**

#### *Proxies Based on Per Diem Standard Rates*

The Ministry of Justice’s Tariff of Costs—issued in 2006 and amended August 1, 2015, May 1, 2018, and January 24, 2019—provides standard rates for a wide array of court processes such as filing an affidavit, simple and complex motions and pleadings. In addition, per diem costs for a variety of administrative procedures such as document certification and summons serving are also included. These rates are categorized by the type of legal proceeding undertaken, the type of court in which the case is heard, and the total legal fees billed, or damages claimed. The 2019 changes were made to reflect increased actual costs to the Ministry and also for consistency across provincial courts; “eligible low-income individuals are still able to obtain fee-waiver certificates at all three levels of court in Saskatchewan,” according to the Ministry (Piller, 2019). The various standard rates have been entered into the database on the basis of the categories used within the document for a total of about 822 specific indicators (up from 485 in 2013). Thus, by simply referring to the catalogue of financial proxies, a user can determine, for example, that the cost of filing an unopposed complex

motion in the Court of Appeal ranges from \$500 to \$1,250 depending on the legal fees billed.

The inclusion of these standard rates enhances the usefulness of the database of financial proxies because different legal proceedings may be undertaken in each individual case. The fact that individual cases may differ significantly from each other in terms of the processes and procedures suggests that meaningfulness of an overall average cost per case indicator would be limited. Instead, with available data, users can approximate court process costs in a manner that is more accurate and relevant to their individual circumstances.

#### *Proxies Based on Average Costs and Cost Allocation Approximations*

We have used the data in the Saskatoon Police Service's (SPS) annual reports (SPS, 2016; SPS, 2017) and crime statistics for 2016 and 2017 (SPS, 2019b) to create a financial proxy that represents the cost of each municipal police dispatch in the province. Amongst the various categories of expenses incurred for the year, the following were determined to be relevant to each patrol call out: regular constable wages; special constable (911 responders) wages; materials & supplies costs; vehicle costs; facilities costs; equipment & technology costs; and training & travel costs. From the information available in the annual report (SPS, 2017) and online salary and benefits (SPS, 2019a) and crime statistics reports (SPS, 2019b), we were able to determine that the total 'direct labour' cost amounted to \$ 30.8 million and the total cost of 'relevant overheads' was approximately \$ 14.5 million, resulting in a total of \$ 45.3 million. This was subsequently divided by the estimated 81,885 patrols dispatched in the year for an average per dispatch cost of \$ 553.36 (SPS, 2016; 2017).

In addition to the fact that we were unable to segregate the fixed and variable portions of the total costs mentioned above, the analysis also assumes that 100 percent of the 'relevant costs' pertained to dispatch work. As a result, we believe that the calculated financial indicator is likely to be an overestimation of the mean cost of a callout. In order to increase the accuracy of this proxy, it would be necessary to determine a basis to allocate portions of constable wages and 'relevant overheads' to dispatch work. Currently, it appears that the SPS does not follow a practice of allocating common costs to the various functions and services that it provides as part of its financial reporting. Therefore, any attempt on our part to determine allocation bases for the various cost categories would have been arbitrary at best.

#### **Financial Proxies for Healthcare**

##### *Proxies Based on Per Diem Standard Rates*

A significant change in the healthcare sector is the amalgamation of the individual health regions into a single health authority in December 2017. The primary challenge encountered in

developing financial indicators for the healthcare sector was the treatment of large pools of general overhead costs such as utilities, facilities maintenance, food, and so on. Our meeting with the Saskatoon Health Region's (SHR) financial controller in October 2012 confirmed the following: (1) total cost data for inpatient services are not disaggregated on the basis of specific healthcare services provided, and (2) common overhead costs are not allocated to particular hospital units, departments, or service categories. Instead, these items are consolidated as single line items by their nature and function within its audited financial statements. This protocol remains standard in the Saskatchewan Health Authority which replaced the health regions within which this practice was followed consistently (SHA, 2018, pp. 2 & 50). Therefore, most of the developed healthcare proxies encompass only costs that can be directly traced to a specific service. Without keeping this caveat in consideration, users may inadvertently underestimate the costs or returns being measured.

In order to facilitate cost-reallocation analyses, we have included only the direct variable component of the cost of performing a particular treatment procedure. In most cases, this is limited to the rates at which physicians are remunerated for performing a specific service that is insured under the health ministry's Medical Services Plan (MSP). We collected these data from relevant documents published by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health (SMH), such as the payment schedule for insured services performed by a physician (SMH, 2018). For illustrative purposes, consider the financial proxies for a psychiatric consultation and evaluation of an adult. A psychiatrist receives \$ 222 for the first consultation with an adult patient. Following the first assessment, the province is billed either \$ 154, if the patient was not referred by another doctor, or \$ 123.15. Subsequent consultations are charged at a rate of \$ 107 per visit, and the rate for follow up assessments ranges from \$ 50 (without referral) to \$ 59.30 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Health [SMH], 2017, p.46). In this case, the cost savings arising from serving one fewer patients is simply the per procedure rate which the physician is compensated at.

#### *Proxies Integrating Per Diem Standard Rates and Average Costing*

Determining the cost per outpatient hospital visit involved using a combined approach to disaggregate the total cost and volume figures. For this purpose, we used data pertaining to standard outpatient hospital visits made by non-residents. This is because the disbursements made in lieu of treatments provided to in-province patients represents only the portion attributed to physician compensation, whereas payments received by the SMH for services provided in Saskatchewan to patients from other provinces are, in effect, reimbursements for all the costs incurred to provide the necessary treatment (SMH, 2018). With the cost and volume data pertaining to out-of-province patients, we determined that each outpatient hospital visit costs the province \$ 269.20 on average. Upon deducting the \$ 83.40 that a physician is paid per non-resident outpatient consultation, the

remaining \$ 185.80 can be treated as the average indirect and overhead cost per outpatient visit (SMH, 2018).

As emphasised earlier, users should be cognizant of the fact that the average total and overhead costs presented above face the limitations associated with having fixed and variable components that cannot be distinguished at this point.

### **Financial Proxies for Education**

#### *Proxies Based on Average Costs and Cost Allocation Approximations*

Unlike the categories discussed above, financial proxies for the education sector have been almost entirely derived from the manipulation of cost and volume data with the aid of cost accounting methodology. This method is used because the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (SME) and various school boards across the province do not appear to have made publicly available the standard or per diem cost and volume rates used for budgeting. Therefore, we have frequently resorted to employing average costing, since total cost and volume data are readily available electronically. In particular, this applies to virtually all of the Educational Assistance and Public Expenditure indicators, which are unitized on a per student basis (SMAE, 2018; SME, 2018).

#### *Proxies Based on Data from Other Provinces*

Throughout this project, we have preferred to base the financial indicators for this province on the data available for Saskatchewan. However, in attempting to develop a set of proxies for special education funding, we were unable to determine the portion of total education expenditure that pertained to special education (SME, 2018, p. 10). Instead, we chose to include the standard rate of special education funding received annually by each student with a disability in Manitoba for two reasons: (1) the neighbouring province to the east is similar to Saskatchewan from an economic, demographic, and geographic perspective, and (2) Manitoba Education uses similar criteria to the SME for differentiating students with moderate and severe disabilities (Manitoba Education, 2017; SME, 2018, p. 27).

In Manitoba, each student with a moderate disability requiring special educational support receives \$9,220 in funding per year from the province. Each student with a severe disability receives \$20,515 per annum (Manitoba Education, 2017). In the event that the number of students requiring such funding and the total amount disbursed for special education funding in Saskatchewan become available, it could be proportionally allocated to students with moderate and severe disabilities using per student rates in Manitoba as a base ratio (approximately 1:2). Additionally, if the number of students requiring special education funding is disaggregated on the basis of severity, the financial proxy could be further decomposed on a per student basis for each grouping.

### **Poverty Indicators**

Poverty reduction/elimination is a widely discussed topic at global, national and local levels. As we have

seen, the Government of Canada's first poverty reduction strategy in 2018 aimed to reduce the incidence of poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030 (ESDC, 2018), while the Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2016 aimed "to reduce the number of people in Saskatchewan who experience poverty for two years or more by 50 percent by the end of 2025" (SMSS, 2016). The national strategy has chosen as its Official Poverty Line what was known as the Market Basket Measure. This measure "reflects the combined costs of a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living (see Figures 1 and 2). The basket includes items such as healthy food, appropriate shelter and home maintenance, and clothing and transportation. It includes other goods and services that permit engagement in the community, particularly for children, youth, parents and seniors" (ESDC, 2018, p. 11). Although the SPRP 12 Bold Ideas to eliminate poverty in Saskatoon community plan did not originate from them, they are aligned with the national and provincial strategies (see Appendix B).

The development of the 12 Bold Ideas is a solid starting point that must be followed by action items and measurement/monitoring. Appendix C lists possible action items that the SPRP can pursue in collaboration with key partners (for example, Ministries of Education and Social Services, Saskatoon Police Service) and potential indicators that could be used to monitor progress. For example, the bold idea labelled 'Education' is in response to the need of "a school system that is youth centered and responsive to the needs of families and communities" (SPRP, 2019). Possible action items in response to this need include (1) introducing a full-year school calendar in the K-8 system and (2) increasing the number and variety of non-formal educational programs. Indicators may include "access to education" or "school readiness" and "elementary and high school completion rate." Similarly, the bold idea of 'Asset Building' is a response to the need to enable individuals and families "to build and accumulate assets to support themselves and their families" (SPRP, 2019). Possible action items aligning with this bold idea include (1) increased access to financial institutions for individuals living in poverty and (2) increase the number of community banks or credit unions. Although direct indicators to measure such actions may include the number (and/or increase in the number) of community banks and the proportion of individuals living in poverty having a bank account, it is necessary to establish longer-term outcome measures such as asset level and asset growth. It is important to note that the Appendix C indicators are preliminary ones that require discussion, definition, development, and precise measures. Appendix D illustrates the alignment of the official poverty line (formerly market basket measure) with the local, provincial and national-level categories. Aligning with the provincial and national level strategies and indicators, although not a requirement, can be useful in establishing Saskatoon as a leader in poverty reduction.

- This preliminary work so far also raises a number of questions that are yet to be answered:

- What is the overall goal at the SPRP level?
- What are the individual targets for each indicator once they are established?
- Who establishes the overall goal and indicator-specific targets? Can we align the SPRP's goal/targets with the national and provincial goal/targets?
- How will the SPRP monitor progress? How often?
- Who is responsible for collecting data at the granular level? (Individual sector organizations?)
- What collaborations exist between the 'data collectors' and the SPRP evaluation team?
- Can the evaluation team initiate contact to establish what data already exists and what more needs to be done to collect relevant data?
- Where does the 'buck stop'?
- What accountability framework exists (or should be developed)?

In answering these questions, we might continue to draw on the experience of other cities that have been implementing and monitoring their strategies. The year-two evaluation (Hurlock & Milaney, 2017) of Calgary's Enough for All strategy (for which Vibrant Communities Calgary is the "backbone organization") emphasized the need for greater coordination through more strategic investment in relationships and ongoing learning, better integration of the Truth and Reconciliation calls, and some outcomes could be better recast as poverty reduction best practices for policy and system change. Though much had been achieved, economic and employment conditions had changed and fewer "aspirational and measurable" outcomes were recommended along with two or three related indicators (Hurlock & Milaney, 2017).

The progress report on End Poverty Edmonton's game changers is likewise instructive (End Poverty Edmonton, 2018). The game changers are:

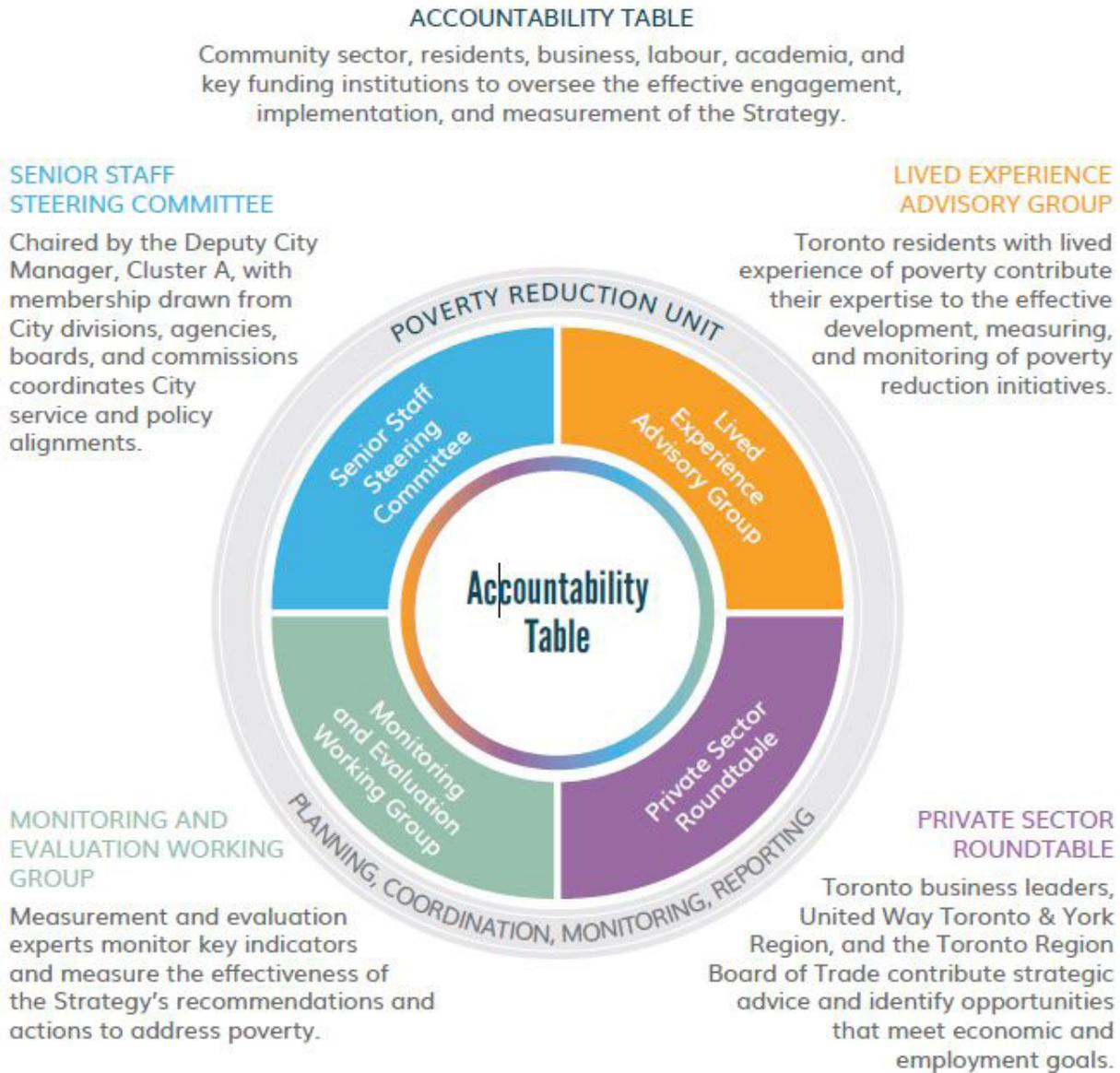
- Eliminate Racism
- Livable Incomes
- Affordable Housing
- Accessible & Affordable Transit
- Affordable & Quality Child Care
- Access to Mental Health Services & Addictions Support

In terms of livable incomes, for instance, year one witnessed these successes (End Poverty Edmonton, 2018, pp. 16-18):

- Through e4c's Make Tax Time Pay, more than \$11.5 million went back into the pockets of low-income individuals and families (2017).
- e4c's Make Tax Time Pay filed 4,800 tax returns for 4,230 people (2018)
- 125 people with low incomes saved \$132,518 through savings and matching grants they discovered through Empower U's financial literacy efforts aimed primarily at women with low incomes (2017).
- Over 70 financial employees provided training to almost 2,000 people who attended over 170 workshops to build financial literacy and independence
- Banking services were provided to empower over 800 of the most under-served Edmontonians
- The City of Edmonton drafted a living wage policy to be presented to Council, 2018
- 538 people per month access information about financial benefits and subsidies available to them through YouCanBenefit.ca
- I. A. M. Indigenous Artist Market Collective raise awareness and navigate barriers to selling their art

Grounded in the five conditions of collective impact, the Toronto poverty reduction strategy, for instance, has developed its Implementation Accountability Structure to ensure responsiveness, internal and external alignment, community engagement, effective coordination, and ongoing monitoring and reporting (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Accountability Table



Source: Toronto (2015)

In appendices, the Toronto strategy identifies actions (for instance, increasing investments in repairs to social housing units; strengthening minimum housing standards enforcement) as well as indicators for housing stability (percentage of city housing requiring no repairs; percentage of households with children under 18 and incomes below 40 % of national median, paying more than 40% of income on housing; number of affordable rental and ownership homes completed with federal, provincial, and municipal investment). For transit access, actions include children 12 and under ride free; Presto Pass technology that includes a fare-g geared-to-income capacity; compliance with access by 2025 requirements of Ontarians with Disabilities Act; indicators include cost of monthly transit pass as percentage of monthly minimum wage income; number of stops within 500 metres of the centre of a Census block and frequency of stops in an hour (Toronto, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

**B**y means of this project, we have developed a list of financial proxies for SROI analyses in the areas of social services, justice, healthcare, and education in this province.

The primary users of these indicators are expected to be Saskatchewan-based social economy organizations that are not currently disaggregating their own financial data to quantify the social value that the delivery of their programmes and services creates. In addition, other organizations such as government agencies could also use the SROI database for planning and/or evaluative purposes. All users, however, should be cognizant of the limitations and disclosures surrounding proxies that have been calculated through average costing and cost allocation estimates.

Assuming that the employment of SROI becomes more pervasive in this province over the coming years, we hope that users themselves will continue to learn from best practices in Saskatchewan and beyond to refine these proxies to fit the context, needs, and aspirations of their own organizations. Some of the steps that can be taken to further enhance the reliability of these proxies include the following: (1) using per diem standard rates, wherever these are available; and (2) obtaining as much disaggregated cost data as possible in order to minimize arbitrary cost allocations.

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## APPENDIX A

**List of Financial Proxies Investigated** (spreadsheet available on CUISR website at <https://cuisr.usask.ca/>)

<b>Indicator - SOCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>Indicator - HEALTHCARE</b>
Child care subsidy	Hospital visits - psychiatric
Sask. Assured Income for Disability	Hospital visits - outpatient
Social Assistance – single adult	Hospital visits - emergency
Social Assistance – couple no kids	Hospital visits – mental health
Social Assistance – family	Family Physician Visit
Housing Supplement	Psychiatric evaluations – initial assessment
Employment Supplement	Psychiatric evaluations – follow-up
Transitional Employment Allowance	Psychiatric evaluations – consultations
Seniors Income Plan	Psychiatric evaluations – complex evaluation
Respite for caregiver	EMS dispatches
Service Payments for the Developmentally and/ or Physically Disabled	Nursing home stay
Foster care placement	Detox
Respite – Foster Care, Therapeutic Foster Care and Extended Family Care	
Social Worker	
Child Welfare Worker	

<b>Indicator - SOCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>Indicator - HEALTHCARE</b>
Emergency Social Services Support	
Shelter – victims of abuse & homelessness	
Rental Housing Supplement for families and persons with disability	

<b>Indicator - JUSTICE</b>	<b>Indicator - EDUCATION</b>
Correctional Services	Special Education Funding
Court Process Costs (Fees Payable to Lawyers in the Court of Appeal)	Pre-K placement
Court Process Costs (Fees Payable to Lawyers in the Court of Queen’s Bench)	Saskatchewan student bursary
Family Law proceedings - Cost structure between parties to the litigation	Saskatchewan student grants
Fees Payable to Lawyers in the Court of Queen’s Bench Small Claims and Rentalsman Appeals	Speech Therapist - wage
Fees Payable to the Registrars, Local Registrars, and Official Administrators of the Court	Occupational Therapist - wage
Registrar’s and Local Registrars’ Fees (Court Fees Backgrounder 2019 update)	School Social Worker - wage
Fees Payable to Witnesses, Interpreters, Jurors, Physicians and Surgeons	Public cost of K-12 education
Fees Payable to Court Reporters	
Fees Payable in Matters Pursuant to the Small Claims Act, 2016	
Fees Payable in Matters Pursuant to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006	
Fees and Costs of Sheriffs’ Enforcement Services (Enforcement of Money Judgments Act)	

## APPENDIX B

### National, Provincial, and Local Poverty Reduction Categories

#### NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL LEVEL POVERTY REDUCTION CATEGORIES

- Overarching National Goal:** Reduce the incidence of poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030
- Overarching Provincial Goal:** Reduce the number of people who experience poverty for two years or more by 50% by 2025
- Overarching Local Goal:** No stated quantitative goals/targets (Overall vision is a poverty-free Saskatoon)

Three Main National-level Pillars		
DIGNITY	OPPORTUNITY & INCLUSION	RESILIENCE & SECURITY
<p>Lift Canadians out of poverty by ensuring basic needs are met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food insecurity</li> <li>• Unmet health needs</li> <li>• Unmet housing needs and chronic homelessness</li> <li>• Deep income poverty</li> </ul>	<p>Help Canadians join the middle class by promoting full participation in society and equality of opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy and numeracy</li> <li>• Youth engagement</li> <li>• Relative low income</li> <li>• Bottom 40% income share</li> </ul>	<p>Support the middle class by protecting Canadians from falling into poverty and by supporting income security and resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Median hourly wage</li> <li>• Poverty entry and exit rates</li> <li>• Average poverty gap</li> <li>• Asset resilience</li> </ul>
Six Key Provincial-level Areas		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing and Homelessness</li> <li>• Health and food security</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early childhood development and childcare</li> <li>• Education, skills training and employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income security</li> </ul>
SPRP's Twelve Bold Ideas		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Food</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> <li>• Justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• System Navigation</li> <li>• Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income</li> <li>• Asset Building</li> <li>• Social Enterprise</li> </ul>

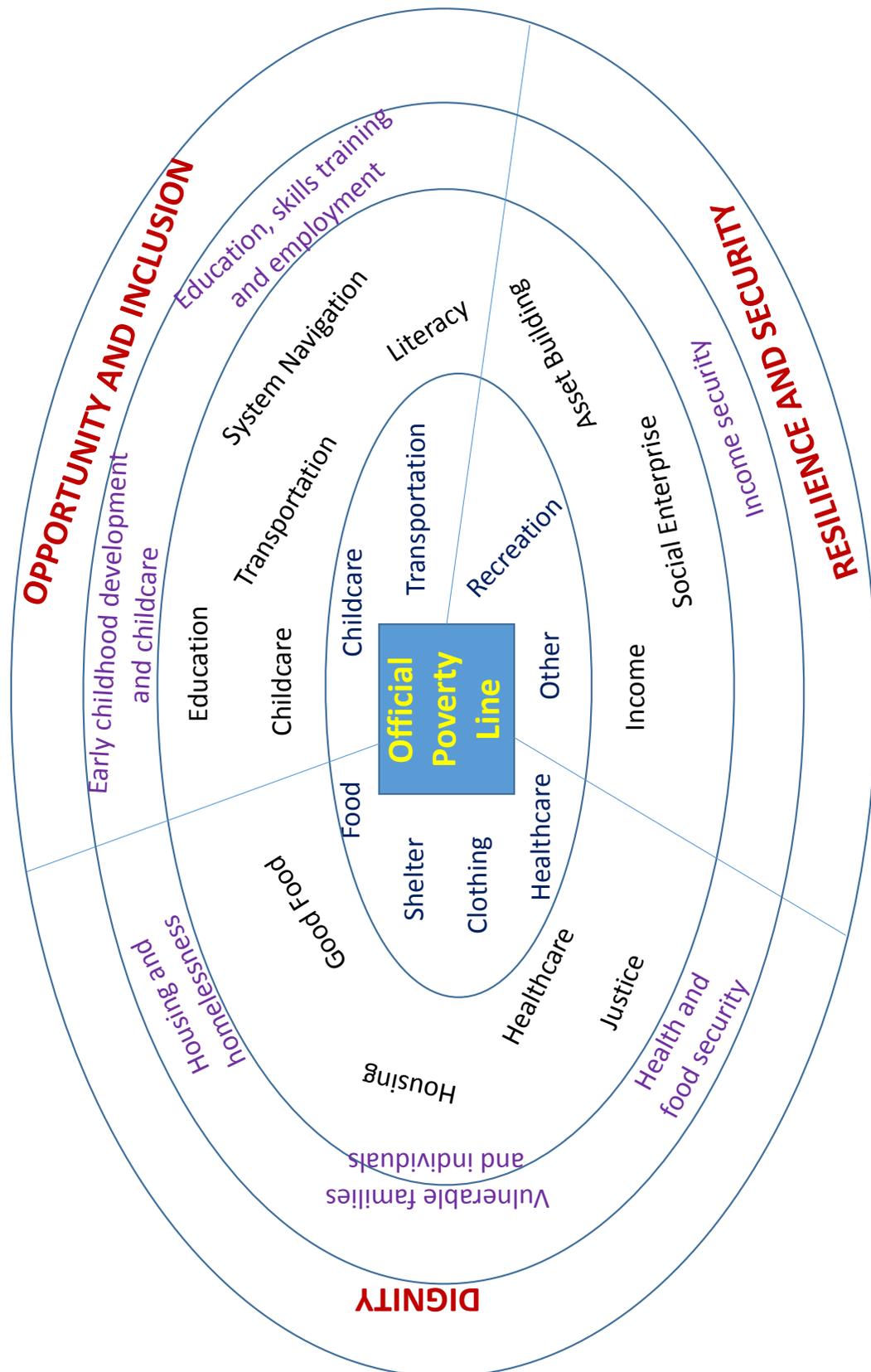
## APPENDIX C

### Ideas, Action Items, and Indicators

INDICATORS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL		
DIGNITY	OPPORTUNITY & INCLUSION	RESILIENCE & SECURITY
<b>Twelve Bold Ideas</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Food</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> <li>• Justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• System Navigation</li> <li>• Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income</li> <li>• Asset Building</li> <li>• Social Enterprise</li> </ul>
<b>Sample Action Items</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase resources available to existing housing initiatives</li> <li>• Poverty screening tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-year school calendar in the K-8 system</li> <li>• Increase the number and variety of non-formal educational programs</li> <li>• Bring 'childcare' home</li> <li>• Free public transit</li> <li>• Create an integrated system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access to financial institutions for individuals living in poverty</li> <li>• Increase community banks</li> <li>• Increase training programs and access to funds to start social enterprises (e.g. Enactus/Dragons Den)</li> <li>• Encourage micro-enterprises</li> </ul>
<b>Sample Output/Outcome Indicators</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to food, healthcare and housing</li> <li>• 'At risk' infants (and potentially children, adults and seniors)</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Housing stability</li> <li>• Incidence of violence among the 'poor'</li> <li>• Policing the 'poor'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to childcare, education, transportation and resource centres</li> <li>• Childcare affordability</li> <li>• Transportation affordability</li> <li>• School readiness</li> <li>• Language and quantitative literacy</li> <li>• Elementary and high school completion rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour force participation</li> <li>• Minimum wage</li> <li>• Minimum wage earners</li> <li>• Asset level</li> <li>• Asset growth</li> <li>• Presence of social enterprise</li> <li>• Growth in social enterprise</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX D

### Integrating the Official Poverty Line with the Local, Provincial and National-level Ideas



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