

Alberta  
Government



# Alberta's Social Policy Framework

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# Alberta's Social Policy Framework

## INTRODUCTION

The Government of Alberta asked Albertans to help create a social policy framework. The result—*Alberta's Social Policy Framework*—is a vision for social policy that defines who we are as people and communities, one that reflects our aspirations for a province that offers all Albertans the opportunity to reach their potential and to benefit from the highest possible quality of life.

Developed with Albertans, the framework will direct the future of Alberta's social policy and programs, and it will guide how we come together to ensure that everyone has an opportunity for fulfillment and well-being. This framework is for all Albertans—it is a vision for Alberta and its people, and it is a call to action for everyone to work together to achieve the spirit and goals of the framework.

## WHAT IS A SOCIAL POLICY FRAMEWORK?

Policy frameworks are tools that can guide decision making, set future direction, identify important connections, and support the alignment of policies and practices both inside and outside an organization. In short, policy frameworks are blueprints for something we want to build or roadmaps for where we want to go.

We can think of Alberta's Social Policy Framework as having three main goals:

- > To **clarify** what we, as Albertans, are trying to achieve, how we are going to get there, and what the roles and responsibilities of the different actors and participants should be.
- > To **coordinate** activities within and between government departments, to harmonize work between government and other stakeholders, and to ensure that there is policy alignment and consistency.
- > To **influence** and guide our work of improving the lives of Albertans, providing overall direction to our planning and decision making.



*Over 31,000 Albertans participated in the creation of Alberta's Social Policy Framework—online, in community conversations, and through surveys. A full summary of input is available at [socialpolicy.alberta.ca](http://socialpolicy.alberta.ca)*



Alberta's Social Policy Framework was developed over the course of six months in 2012, during which more than 31,000 Albertans participated in a two-phase engagement process that brought together Aboriginal Elders, business leaders, communities, non-profit organizations, service delivery agencies, municipalities, elected officials, and Government of Alberta staff. Their discussion—often of complex issues—was supported by current research and analysis.

The resulting framework consists of six core components:

1. a statement of goals that establishes the foundation and purpose of social policy in Alberta;
2. a clear vision for the future of social policy in our province;
3. a list of the desired outcomes (or measurable results) to be achieved through social policy;
4. an expression of key principles to guide our collective efforts as we work towards these outcomes;
5. a description of the roles and responsibilities of everyone who wants to make these outcomes a reality; and
6. a core set of actions—priority commitments where the Government of Alberta has pledged to play a leading role—that we all must undertake in order to achieve success.

Fully achieving the framework's vision will require additional, complementary efforts from individuals, organizations, and communities across Alberta. See *Appendix A* for a one-page summary of the six components of the framework.

### What is social policy?

Social policy determines the kind of society that Albertans want for themselves, their families, and their communities. It expresses how we care for (and about) one another, and it influences our development as people and a society. As a result, social policy extends beyond a narrow definition of social services and supports: it is about how we work, live, and spend our time, and it helps determine how we come together to meet human needs like housing, employment, education, recreation, leisure, health, safety, and the care of children.

Social policies do not exist in isolation. Social, economic, and environmental policies interact and complement each other. For instance, a strong economy is sustained by having communities that are attractive and welcoming, and it is strengthened by having social policies that help Albertans maximize their full potential. Similarly, land use and development decisions are linked to economic and recreational opportunities at the local level, and the health of physical

environments—from clean air to safe drinking water—is related to the health of the people who live in them. Social, economic, and environmental policies contribute to an Alberta where we can live with pride and dignity, where we all have the opportunity to participate fully in and contribute to our communities, and where our children will want to live and work.

### How is social policy created?

Social policy can take many forms. It can be formal or informal, and it can consist of actions, guidelines, principles, laws, and regulations.

When it comes to designing and implementing social policy, we have several tools available to us. The appropriate tool depends on the circumstances, and considering these tools helps us understand which ones are best suited to our needs.

The tools currently available to us are:

- > voluntary action (e.g., volunteerism, charities, and fund-raising);
- > governance (e.g., information sharing, local decision making, advisory bodies, and networks);
- > information (e.g., public engagement and marketing);
- > direct expenditures;
- > tax policy (e.g., personal and corporate tax, or tax credits);
- > delivery of services; and
- > legislation.

Choosing the best tool for the job lets us create and apply social policy that is both successful and sustainable.

### Why do we need a social policy framework?

Social policy matters to everyone. Maybe you want to ensure that Alberta remains one of the best places to live, work, and raise a family, and that everyone has the opportunity to fully develop their skills and participate in our communities. Perhaps you are concerned by the economic toll that homelessness, poverty, and illiteracy take on our health, education, and justice systems, or you see the need for a highly skilled, growing workforce to support long-term economic growth. Whatever your concern, social policy—and the cohesion and opportunities that it creates—is integral to describing and achieving the quality of life we want for ourselves, our families, and our communities.





There are challenges to achieving that quality of life, and many of the social problems we want to solve are complex. Some conditions, such as low literacy rates, can affect an individual's overall well-being. When left unaddressed, these conditions can multiply: a person's educational level can affect their ability to earn a stable, adequate income, which can lead to other health and social challenges that can limit opportunities for their family.

Our system of social supports has been addressing challenges such as these, and there are many successes of which we can be proud. There are also areas, however, where we can do things better and where social challenges persist. We have an opportunity to build on our success by focusing our actions on these persistent social challenges.

Our current system of social supports is designed and operated based on assumptions that may no longer be true. Over the past decades, social policy efforts have tended to focus on addressing specific deficiencies and filling particular gaps; the result has been programs that address single issues or needs (e.g., specifically targeting child care, income support, labour shortages, or supports for seniors). Often, social supports were designed to lessen the negative impact of social problems rather than to prevent or reduce them, and they didn't always acknowledge the interconnected nature of the challenges that people faced. In order to achieve results that both reflect our current needs and solve persistent, complex social challenges, however, we need a new approach.

The need for a new approach to social policy is being driven by forces of change in our society, communities, and families. (See *Appendix B* for more information on the drivers of change). The need for a common social policy framework will only be intensified by the following pressures:

- > **Complexity:** The needs of individuals are becoming increasingly complex as the province's population becomes more diverse. The system of supports required to serve these individuals has similarly grown in size and complexity, making it difficult for many Albertans to navigate and access services. For example, there are over 4,000 contracted agencies that deliver government social services within Alberta. This complexity requires a citizen-centered approach and collaboration among organizations.
- > **A Growing Gap:** The gap between the rich and the poor is growing in Alberta, and certain populations are facing challenges resulting from this inequality. We now better understand the link between income inequality and health or social problems; we also know that rising income disparity diminishes social cohesion and challenges the idea that all Albertans have an equal opportunity to be successful.

- > **Changing Expectations:** Rapid changes in information technologies have created expectations that services should be portable, user-driven, and simple to administer. There is also a growing demand for government to change how it does business—Albertans want an open government that shares and communicates data with the public, and a system that gives everyone a greater voice in the decision making process.
- > **Sustainability Challenges:** Significant demographic changes and challenges to sustainability are emerging as a result of population growth, changing immigration patterns, and an aging baby boomer generation. These challenges are placing pressure on the cost, diversity, and types of services required by Albertans.

Much like the Government of Alberta’s economic and environmental policy directions, the social policy framework provides a cohesive picture of Alberta’s policy direction and the actions required to achieve success. This does not mean that it exists on its own—social, economic, and environmental development go hand-in-hand. For example, a strong economy is sustained by having communities that are attractive and welcoming to new people, and by having social policies that help Albertans maximize their full potential. This integrated approach more effectively addresses the diverse needs of Albertans and the different facets of their lives.



## THE SPEAK. SHARE. THRIVE. ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

### Engagement principles

In developing the social policy framework, the Government of Alberta undertook an intensive public engagement process between June 7 and November 30, 2012. This process—called *Speak. Share. Thrive.*—was grounded in the following principles of engagement:

- > **Collaboration:** Opportunities to hold a dialogue with non-government stakeholder groups, individual Albertans, and ministries of the Government of Alberta are maximized and encouraged.
- > **Community Ownership:** Framework development engages Albertans in a spirit of co-ownership.
- > **Integrated:** Framework development recognizes the integrated factors that influence the daily lives of Albertans.
- > **Evidence-based:** Decision making is informed by research, best practices, and insights gained from dialogue with Albertans.



- > **Practical:** A policy framework helps government develop and evaluate programs and policies in a proactive and preventative manner.
- > **Shared Responsibility:** The framework is owned by, and is a shared responsibility of, all Albertans.
- > **Transparency:** The process for developing the framework and engaging Albertans is transparent.
- > **Outcomes-focused:** The framework is oriented towards tangible, measurable results that will make a positive difference in the daily lives of Albertans.

These principles have also influenced the language used in this document. When the words “we” or “us” are used, it refers to **all Albertans**. These terms reinforce the collaborative nature of the process; since the framework is a document written by Albertans for Albertans, we refer to it as “our” document.

### Engagement approaches

The principles of engagement listed above recognize that the transformation of a system requires new ways of involving citizens. That is why *Speak. Share. Thrive.* offered Albertans multiple opportunities for (and methods of) participation, including the following core components:

- > **Network Mobilization:** Early on, it was agreed that any process would fail if it did not engage Albertans—the people who will have a vital role in implementing the framework. The Government of Alberta had to create a process that engaged people and made them feel a sense of ownership of the new framework. Across the province, interested individuals and organizations were already working together on many of the social policy issues that would be addressed by the framework; mobilizing these existing networks and relationships was an important step to fostering ownership of the framework among community partners. Making the most of these networks also was crucial to creating open discussion opportunities for clients and community stakeholders, and for reaching small and remote communities across the province.
- > **Community Conversations:** Conversations with communities—and by communities—were a core component of developing the framework. A discussion kit and \$750 grant (for non-profit groups) were available to support groups in holding these conversations. Over 380 community conversations were held, most by community organizations or citizen groups. A summary of each conversation was posted in the online library, where they could be read by all Albertans.



- > **Broad Reach:** Part of ensuring broader public input was developing a strong social media and online presence. This included surveys, conversation boards, a library space to share resources, and the ability to edit drafts of the framework through the first-ever Government of Alberta wiki. This also helped extend our reach to people who could not be present for in-person conversations.
- > **Focused Engagement:** The engagement approach recognized that while all Albertans have a stake in social policy, certain groups have specific areas of expertise, particular needs, or different preferences for how they are engaged. Focused engagement activities oriented to the unique needs of certain populations were organized and encouraged for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups, as well as clients, key stakeholders and partners, the business sector, youth, and Government of Alberta staff.
- > **Open Information:** A commitment was made by the Government of Alberta to post every piece of feedback received throughout the engagement process on the *Speak. Share. Thrive.* website. Weekly statistical reports and documents that summarized public input were also posted online. Making this information available helped to move the process from *consulting* Albertans to *engaging* them, creating a space that gave Albertans a voice in important decisions that affect them.
- > **Citizen-as-Editor:** Since the engagement process was designed around several different phases, it gave participants an opportunity for reflection and analysis. This allowed them to identify gaps that needed to be addressed for the process to move forward. It also enabled them to submit a continuous stream of feedback on a variety of issues, from previous discussions to their thoughts on particular issues (e.g., principles or roles). Much of this information was incorporated into subsequent drafts of the framework.

By the conclusion of *Speak. Share. Thrive.*, over 7,200 Albertans had participated in community conversations, and [socialpolicy.alberta.ca](http://socialpolicy.alberta.ca) had received nearly 27,500 unique website visitors. In total, over 31,000 Albertans were engaged by the process, and more than 14,000 had provided direct input that led to the development of the framework. This strong level of participation contributed to the development of a robust framework that more accurately reflects the view of a diverse range of Albertans.

The summary of engagement results is available online in the report entitled *Summing Up: Albertans' Perspectives on the Social Policy Framework*.





## A FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL POLICY

The framework contains the following elements that state and communicate our beliefs and aspirations about social policy in Alberta:

- > social policy **goals** that establish the foundation (or primary purpose) of social policy;
- > a clear **vision** for the future of social policy in Alberta;
- > **desired outcomes** (or measurable results) for Albertans and the social service system that can be achieved through social policy;
- > **principles** to guide decision making, actions, and behavior;
- > a description of the **roles and responsibilities** of everyone who is working towards achieving the vision expressed in the framework; and
- > **policy shifts** that will reflect the principles, outcomes, roles, and vision of social policy.

### Social policy goals

The social policy goals outline why we have social policy in Alberta. These goals help us achieve our vision by providing a foundation for identifying what social policy can do for all Albertans and how it affects both the government and the public. During the engagement process, participants identified four main goals for social policy:

- > reduce inequality;
- > protect vulnerable people;
- > create a person-centered system of high-quality services; and
- > enable collaboration and partnerships.

### A vision for Alberta and its people

The vision that inspires Alberta's social policy is:

*In Alberta, everyone contributes to making our communities inclusive and welcoming. Everyone has opportunities to fulfill their potential and to benefit from our thriving social, economic, and cultural life.*

### Desired outcomes

The ultimate purpose of the framework is to have social policies, programs, and systems that produce better results (also known as “outcomes”). These outcomes frame and set the overall purpose and direction of social policy in Alberta. They will provide the government and its partners with an effective tool for focusing social policy priorities and actions for the next 10 to 15 years.

There are two focus areas for outcomes. The first set of outcomes identifies what we desire for individuals and families—what social policy should achieve for all Albertans. It is recognized that some individuals may face barriers or challenges in their efforts to realize these outcomes, particularly First Nations, Métis, and Inuit persons, people with disabilities, and those living in poverty. To fully realize these outcomes for all Albertans, we will need to address issues such as access to services and supports, promote the concepts of dignity and inclusion in our efforts, and focus our energy on preventative actions.

### *Social policy outcomes for Albertans*

Albertans will be:

- > **Safe**—Live free from fear of abuse and violence.
- > **Healthy**—Achieve the highest attainable standards of health and well-being.
- > **Secure and Resilient**—Support themselves and their households through safe work and career opportunities, with access to effective income supports when in financial need.
- > **Lifelong Learners**—Develop the knowledge, skills, and commitment to learning necessary to realize their potential and participate in society.
- > **Included**—Feel welcomed in the communities where they live, learn, and work.
- > **Active and Engaged**—Explore opportunities to participate in recreational activities and cultural experiences, and to engage in Albertan society.

The second set of outcomes recognizes the important results we want to achieve within the system itself. These system and delivery outcomes recognize that the well-being of individuals and families requires a renewed system of social supports and services.

### *System and delivery outcomes*

The social-serving system will be:

- > **Aligned**—Policy is aligned across program areas so that tools and supports work together to solve complex challenges.
- > **Balanced**—Programs and services balance preventative actions and intervention, while supporting the whole person and recognizing both strengths and needs.
- > **Accessible**—Albertans have access to and benefit from cohesive, flexible, timely, and informed services and supports.
- > **Accountable and Sustainable**—Social programs and services are results-oriented, transparent, and sustainable.
- > **Complementary**—Roles are complementary, balanced, and work together to achieve outcomes.





## Principles

Principles are criteria that guide decisions, behaviour, and actions. When used as a foundation for action, a common set of principles helps everyone understand the appropriate direction to take and how to act in a way that will lead us to the outcomes we want. Understanding why certain principles have been adopted can help change attitudes, increase awareness about current challenges, and identify goals for policy, legislation, and service delivery.

By engaging Albertans to help produce the social policy framework, we wanted to create a set of agreed upon principles that are grounded in the actual experiences of real people. These principles could also be applied practically in multiple settings, whether through the Government of Alberta's work in policy making, service design, and legislative reviews, or in the work of others outside of government.

The eight principles presented below articulate the fundamental beliefs of government and Albertans that were expressed during the engagement process. Fully integrating these principles into different aspects of social policy work will take time, however, and it will require the dedicated efforts of everyone involved. Ongoing dialogue about these principles is crucial to ensuring that they remain relevant and that they continue to inform our decision making.

The following principles represent a set of equally important and mutually reinforcing statements about what Albertans want to be the basis of social policy decisions that affect them.

### *Dignity*

Everyone has inherent and equal worth. Everyone can expect to be treated with respect and empathy, and to be accepted regardless of their circumstances. Individuals must be respected for their contributions to society, and they must have their individual needs considered.

### *People First*

People should be the focus of service design and delivery. When we put people first, we are better able to meet their needs. Putting people first means that people can engage in decision making and that we value their experiences. A focus on the needs and experiences of people means that decision makers must put themselves in someone else's shoes. This results in simple, more accessible services that are designed and delivered based on the experiences of people. Higher quality services and supports lead to greater trust and credibility between the people who access services and the service providers.

### *Healthy and Strong Relationships*

The well-being of our province is linked to the well-being of individual Albertans, their households, and their families—in the many diverse forms they may take (e.g., blended families or extended families). Healthy, positive relationships sustain us and support our well-being, and they are the building blocks for safe, vibrant communities. When we promote healthy and strong relationships between individuals and within families, we recognize that individuals are intrinsically linked to their community and that they are strongly influenced by their surroundings.



### *Mutual Responsibility*

We all have a role to play in helping out where we can and creating environments for positive change. Governments and communities have important roles in enabling and supporting the conditions for individual and family success, and for ensuring the provision of supports. For their part, individuals have a responsibility to take advantage of those opportunities. Each generation has a responsibility to future generations, and this obligation should be taken into account when making decisions.



### *Inclusion*

Diversity encompasses a range of human experience, including age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, language, and physical or mental ability, as well as socioeconomic, immigration, and citizenship status. Inclusion promotes the full participation of all individuals in society, regardless of their traits, identities, or circumstances. In an inclusive society, we understand that diversity is one of our strengths, and we are able to build on our strengths together. When we act in an inclusive way, we promote the full participation of all individuals in our society and acknowledge varying perspectives.

### *Proactive*

Proactive approaches work over the long term to prevent or address social problems before they start. As a result, they often prove to be more cost-effective than reactive approaches. Proactive action acknowledges the interconnectedness of individuals, families, communities, and their environments. They also reflect the interplay between economic, social, and environmental policy. When we are proactive, we emphasize root causes and focus on creating conditions for success, and we anticipate and adapt to changing and evolving needs.



### *Collaborative*

Our capacity to achieve social policy goals depends on our ability to work together. Individuals and organizations across all sectors and all parts of the province have resources and expertise to contribute to resolving social challenges and achieving positive outcomes for Albertans. When we act collaboratively, we are open to new and alternative ideas, perspectives, and solutions. Our actions reflect that:

- > shared outcomes require shared action;
- > shared action requires shared ownership; and
- > shared ownership leads to shared results.

### *Accountable*

Accountability is accepting responsibility for—and supporting efforts to achieve—better outcomes for all Albertans. Ensuring accountability and acting in an accountable manner is a responsibility of governments, the non-profit and voluntary sector, service providers, businesses, and individual citizens. When we are accountable, we strive to be innovative and to provide the highest quality service possible. Transparency, citizen engagement, and decisions that are based on knowledge and evidence are key aspects of an accountable system.

Accountability can be considered as both a characteristic of the kind of system we want and a way of acting. Based on this input, we have included it as an outcome and as a principle to guide our actions.



### **Roles and responsibilities**

The success of the social policy framework requires collaboration. This section will outline the various roles and responsibilities that everyone—from individuals, families, and communities, to the private, non-profit, and government sectors—have in contributing to the achievement of the outcomes and actions that appear in the framework.

In arriving at the description of roles in this document, the following foundational assumptions were used:

- > Social problems and challenges are increasingly complex; in order to resolve them, collaboration across sectors is required. Solutions are rarely under the control of any one actor.
- > Communities, local groups, and organizations are often best situated to respond to social challenges. They can develop solutions that reflect their needs, priorities, and capacities.

- > Our society is founded on the responsibility that individuals and their families have to one another. The capacity of individuals and families to meet their needs, particularly among marginalized populations, is strengthened by community connections and services.
- > Respecting the unique roles, responsibilities, voices, and contributions of others—and being aware of the impact that your actions have on them—provides the foundation for constructive partnerships.
- > Some roles and responsibilities are defined and governed by law, including constitutional law. This legal basis includes documents such as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Laws may both constrain and enable social policy actions.

Albertans also told us that equity and fairness were important values that should be reflected in the framework, as should the responsibility to help the most vulnerable in our communities. In practice, however, ensuring equity will require a balance between individual and societal responsibilities.

Based on the foundational assumptions presented above, the following chart provides a brief description of the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in achieving social outcomes. These descriptions are not intended to be static—the roles have evolved over time and will continue to do so. Instead, they are presented to help show the connections and complexity of the relationships involved in social policy, while reinforcing the principle of shared responsibility. Role descriptions also may be used in future dialogue about other issues, such as additional collaborations or attempts to identify potential barriers to successful outcomes.





<p><i>Individuals, Families, and Communities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Promote their own well-being and care for their members.</li> <li>&gt; Are active participants in their community and broader society through actions such as social activities, community involvement, and workforce participation.</li> <li>&gt; Are change agents in their communities and champions of the vision, principles, and outcomes set out in the social policy framework.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide opportunities for participation and social inclusion.</li> <li>&gt; Are delivery agents of social services and supports that are responsive to local needs.</li> <li>&gt; Act as a bridge between government and the public.</li> <li>&gt; Provide a venue for collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and awareness.</li> <li>&gt; Assist local communities in developing their own place-based response.</li> <li>&gt; Non-profit and voluntary sector associations, foundations, and other funders also play a role in convening groups around shared interests and building system capacity.</li> <li>&gt; Champion the vision, principles, and outcomes of the social policy framework.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Business Community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Create opportunities for success in employment, training, and lifelong learning.</li> <li>&gt; Enhance productivity through promoting health and well-being.</li> <li>&gt; Contribute to the quality of life and economic status of Albertans.</li> <li>&gt; Respond to the changing demands of the economy (e.g., labour supply).</li> <li>&gt; Champion the vision, principles, and outcomes of the social policy framework.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Governments</i></p>	<p><b>LOCAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Promote the social, cultural, and economic well-being of local communities.</li> <li>&gt; Facilitate collaboration in their communities to respond to social issues or challenges that affect citizens.</li> <li>&gt; Champion the vision, principles, and outcomes of the social policy framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>PROVINCIAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide leadership in identifying and responding to opportunities and challenges.</li> <li>&gt; Convene groups and facilitate ongoing dialogue.</li> <li>&gt; Encourage and support communities in addressing local needs.</li> <li>&gt; Ensure vulnerable people are protected and safe.</li> <li>&gt; Empower and create opportunities for Albertans.</li> <li>&gt; Set standards and legislate to achieve social goals.</li> <li>&gt; Deliver services and supports (either directly or indirectly).</li> <li>&gt; Support the generation and sharing of information and knowledge.</li> <li>&gt; Provide resources and supports to enhance capacity.</li> <li>&gt; Foster the development of a province-wide culture that promotes the vision, principles, and outcomes of the social policy framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>FEDERAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Responsible for fiscal transfers to the provinces.</li> <li>&gt; Support and deliver programs and services (e.g., Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, and the Canada Child Tax Benefit).</li> <li>&gt; Develop and legislate policies related to immigration and relations with First Nations.</li> </ul>



## Policy shifts

The principles and other components of the social policy framework will drive six key policy shifts that represent a renewal of social policy in Alberta. This renewal will influence how the transformational initiatives under the framework are developed, and how social policy is developed, reviewed, designed, and implemented. Alignment between policies will be encouraged by focusing on the shifts identified below.

<i>Shifts in Social Policy</i>		
	Less of...	More of...
<b>FOCUS</b>	Policy and delivery are often crisis-oriented	▶ Policy balances prevention and intervention
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Policy addresses symptoms and deficiencies	▶ Policy supports citizens by providing the resources and competencies for success
<b>GOVERNMENT ROLE</b>	Government is a service provider, funder, and legislator	▶ Government is an influencer, convener, and partner
<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	Social policy is viewed as silos of need and service	▶ Social policy emphasizes the integration and coordination of resources
<b>USE</b>	Policy is a tool to control and regulate behaviour	▶ Policy is a tool to empower, facilitate, and create opportunity
<b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</b>	Focus on inputs and rules	▶ Focus on outcomes, quality, values, and dignity

In practice, the impact of these shifts will be visible in the better integration of policy and delivery systems, an enhanced focus on outcomes, and increased policy capacity and innovation. In some areas, these shifts will build upon work already underway; in others, it may require a completely new approach. (See *Appendix C* for a list of existing key Government of Alberta initiatives and strategies).





## A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

This section outlines how the Government of Alberta and its partners can work together through social policy outcomes to achieve our collective vision.

### Strategic directions

Achieving positive outcomes for Albertans and their communities will require a focused set of strategic directions.

Some of the required actions will affect the entire system of supports—the way it operates, its overall ability to deliver results, and how it makes progress towards the desired outcomes. Each of these directions reflect the strategic focus on creating a social policy system that delivers results, and they will be supported by the framework’s commitment to accountability and reporting.

In alignment with the social policy goals, three overarching directions that affect the entire system and its strategies will support the social policy framework:

#### *Transform*

- > We transform systems and relationships to produce better outcomes for all Albertans.
- > We orient practices, delivery systems, and culture to the principles and outcomes of the framework.
- > We implement transformational initiatives.

#### *Innovate*

- > We use the social policy framework as a tool to generate alignment across policy domains and tools.
- > We use policy as an outcome-based tool to create new opportunities in improved ways.
- > We incent and encourage innovation that achieves agreed-upon outcomes.

#### *Collaborate*

- > We work together to achieve positive social outcomes.
- > We develop broad coalitions to resolve challenges.
- > We all share a common language and a common vision for the future.

## Transformational initiatives

To complement the strategic directions, eight specific transformational initiatives have been identified to state how, in collaboration with partners, the Government of Alberta will execute the social policy framework through concrete and measurable actions. These actions will demonstrate the six policy shifts highlighted above. For example, a renewed approach to partnering with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities demonstrates the shift that government must take to act as an influencer, convenor, and partner, while the emphasis on supporting citizens by providing the resources and competencies for success will be reflected in the development of a poverty reduction strategy.

To identify priority transformational initiatives, a number of criteria (developed and validated through the engagement process) were considered. In particular, it was asked if initiatives would:

- > address an issue that affects a large number of people or an issue that significantly affects a small number of people;
- > succeed because of collaboration between individuals, governments, and communities;
- > affect more than one outcome in a positive manner;
- > address an issue that is important both now and in the future;
- > be implemented within a three- to five-year time frame and be sustainable over the long term;
- > address both short-term symptoms and long-term systemic changes; and
- > exist within the span of influence or control of those involved.

Based on these criteria and input from Albertans, the eight priority transformational initiatives are:

- > Early Childhood Development
- > Poverty Reduction Strategy
- > Common Service Access
- > Primary Health Care Initiatives
- > Results-based Budgeting
- > Partner with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities
- > Safe Communities
- > 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness



The Government of Alberta will fulfill its social responsibility in these areas by creating legislation, programs, and standards, as well as by bringing groups together to form new networks and by partnering with others to resolve social challenges.

It is important to note that while eight leading initiatives are highlighted, they are not the only way the Government of Alberta will enact the principles, policy shifts, and strategic directions of the social policy framework. In many ways, the framework will guide how Government of Alberta social policy is developed and implemented. It will guide how existing initiatives are implemented (see *Appendix C* for example of other Government of Alberta initiatives) and how new initiatives may emerge.

The Government of Alberta also has a duty to coordinate and collaborate across ministries in order to ensure that the principles of the social policy are embedded throughout government. This will ensure that its actions are consistent with the aims of the social policy framework. In particular, the framework provides an overall roadmap for ongoing government reviews of program relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Albertans also asked for a greater level of transparency and accountability in government. As a result, the Government of Alberta will report back on the actions and transformational initiatives in the framework. Executing the social policy framework will also provide government with an opportunity to express its commitment to engaging stakeholders in a transparent and collaborative manner.



## CONCLUSION: A LIVING FRAMEWORK

The purpose of Alberta’s Social Policy Framework is to inform social policy decisions and actions in Alberta. It is meant to be used as a blueprint for Alberta’s future by everyone involved in realizing our shared vision for social policy. To be effective, the framework needed to be co-created with Albertans, communities, governments, and partners, so that it could be owned and embraced by all. The result was a vision for the future and a set of principles, desired outcomes, and strategic directions that individuals, organizations, and communities across Alberta can own and use when considering how they plan, operate, or relate to others while achieving social outcomes.

This does not mean the conversation is over. As we move forward, additional discussions will be needed to clarify roles, address complex priority issues in a coordinated way, and identify the best ways to monitor and evaluate progress made towards the framework’s outcomes.

This framework will develop and evolve over time. While it is intended as a tool to guide efforts in social policy for the next 10 to 15 years, it is meant to be a living document and therefore cannot remain immune to the rapid changes of our world. Only continuous and open dialogue will help us see these shifts and respond to them together.

Ultimately, Alberta’s Social Policy Framework is more than a document. It represents both a government commitment and a call to action to make Alberta a land of opportunity for all. We welcome your response to this framework and encourage your personal commitment to our common good.



# APPENDIX A: ALBERTA'S SOCIAL POLICY FRAMEWORK OUTLINE

<b>Overarching Goals &amp; Directions</b>	<b>SOCIAL POLICY GOALS</b> These goals belong to all Albertans: individuals, families, communities, non-profit and private sectors, and governments	Protect the Vulnerable
	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS</b> Our common areas of focus and action	<div style="background-color: #70ad47; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"><b>Transform</b></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; We transform systems and relationships to produce better outcomes for all Albertans</li> <li>&gt; We orient practices, delivery systems, and culture to the framework principles and outcomes</li> <li>&gt; We implement transformational initiatives</li> </ul>

<b>SPF VISION</b> Overall direction for social policy in Alberta  .....  In Alberta, everyone contributes to making our communities inclusive and welcoming. Everyone has opportunities to fulfill their potential and benefit from our thriving social, economic, and cultural life.	<b>OUTCOMES</b> Frame and orient activities towards common goals	
	<b>Social Policy Outcomes</b>	<b>System Outcomes</b>
	<b>Albertans are ...</b>  <b>Safe</b> > Live free from fear of abuse and violence  <b>Healthy</b> > Achieve the highest attainable standards of health and well-being  <b>Secure &amp; Resilient</b> > Support themselves and their households through safe work and career opportunities, with access to effective income supports when in financial need  <b>Lifelong Learners</b> > Develop the knowledge, skills, and commitment to learning needed to participate in society and reach potential  <b>Included</b> > Feel welcomed in the communities where they live, learn, and work  <b>Active &amp; Engaged</b> > Explore opportunities to participate in recreational activities and cultural experiences, and to engage in Albertan society	<b>Systems are ...</b>  <b>Aligned</b> > Policy is aligned across program areas; tools and supports work together  <b>Accessible</b> > Albertans have access to and benefit from cohesive, flexible, timely, and informed services and supports  <b>Complementary</b> > Roles are balanced, complementary, and work together to achieve outcomes

Reduce Inequality

Create a Person-centred System of High-quality Services

Enable Collaboration and Partnerships

Innovate

- > We use the framework as a tool to generate alignment across policy domains and tools
- > We use policy as an outcomes-based tool to create new opportunities, in improved ways
- > We incent and encourage innovation to achieve agreed-upon outcomes

Collaborate

- > We work together to achieve positive social outcomes
- > We use broad coalitions to resolve challenges
- > We share a common language and a common vision for the future

**PRINCIPLES**

Guide decision making, programs and service delivery

**ACTIONS**

Priority transformational initiatives to realize change\*

**POLICY SHIFTS**

Influence and inform policy

**Balanced**

- > Programs and services are balanced between prevention and intervention, support the whole person, and recognize strengths and needs

**Accountable and Sustainable**

- > Social programs and services are results-oriented, transparent, and sustainable

Dignity

Early Childhood Development

1. Policy balances prevention and intervention
2. Policy supports citizens to have the resources and competencies for success
3. Government is an influencer, convener, and partner
4. Social policy emphasizes the integration and coordination of resources
5. Policy is a tool to empower, facilitate, and create opportunity
6. Focus on outcomes, quality, values, and dignity

People First

Poverty Reduction Strategy

Healthy and Strong Relationships

Common Service Access

Mutual Responsibility

Primary Health Care Initiatives

Inclusion

Results-based Budgeting

Proactive

Partner with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Communities

Collaborative

Safe Communities

Accountable

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

\* This is a list of leading Government of Alberta initiatives and not an exhaustive list of actions by government or other sectors.

## APPENDIX B: DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Drivers	Policy Implications	Sample Supporting Evidence
<b>GROWING COMPLEXITY AND THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION</b>	Needs of individuals are increasingly complex as the population becomes more diverse. This complexity requires a citizen-centered approach and collaboration among organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; One in five people experience a mental illness in their lifetime, and as many as 10% of people over the age of 15 may be dependent on alcohol or drugs.<sup>i, ii</sup></li> <li>&gt; In 2006, 47% of Alberta's population over 65 years of age experienced some form of disability.<sup>iii</sup></li> </ul>
<b>INCREASING COSTS OF LIVING</b>	Rapid increases in the cost of living and housing intensify the pressures on Albertans and increase disparity among them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The cost of living in Alberta increased by 11.4% between 2006 and 2011. It remains 4.8% higher than the national average.<sup>iv</sup></li> <li>&gt; Housing affordability is a growing pressure for low-income families. In 2008, an estimated 10.3% of urban households in Alberta were in core housing need, most of which were paying 30% or more of their total household income on shelter expenses.<sup>v</sup></li> </ul>
<b>INCREASING DISPARITY</b>	Rising disparity diminishes social cohesion and challenges the idea that all Albertans have an equal opportunity to be successful. Outcomes for Aboriginal Albertans continue to lag behind the overall population at a time when the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing in Alberta.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; In 2010, 8.4% of Albertans (305,000 people) were living in poverty, down from 10.1% in 2009, and 11% in 2000. An estimated 11.3% of children (91,000) were living in poverty in 2009, down from 13.3% in 2000.<sup>vi, vii</sup></li> <li>&gt; Alberta's depth of poverty is among the greatest in the country. In 2009, the average gap between disposable income and the low-income threshold was 38% in Alberta (versus 34% at a national level).<sup>viii</sup></li> <li>&gt; In 2011–12, an average of 12,300 children and youth per month received Intervention Services under the <i>Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act</i>.</li> <li>&gt; Approximately 59% of the children receiving Intervention Services are Aboriginal, and approximately 67% of the children and youth in care are Aboriginal.<sup>ix, x</sup></li> </ul>
<b>CHANGING TECHNOLOGY AND EXPECTATIONS OF GOVERNMENT</b>	Rapid changes in information technologies have created expectations that services should be portable, user-driven, and simple to administer. There are growing demands for open government that shares and communicates data for public consumption, effectively changing the way that government does business and giving Albertans a greater voice in an open and transparent system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Alberta's internet access has steadily increased from 63.9% in 2005 to 81.7% in 2009.<sup>xi</sup></li> </ul>
<b>DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY</b>	Significant demographic changes and sustainability challenges are resulting from population growth, changing immigration patterns, and an aging baby boomer generation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Alberta's population increased by 10.8% (to 3,645,257) between the 2006 and 2011 editions of the Census.<sup>xii</sup> If trends continue, Alberta's population is projected to increase 17.2% between 2010 and 2020.<sup>xiii</sup></li> <li>&gt; The median age of Alberta's population is anticipated to climb from 36 in 2010 to over 40 in 2050, with the number of people aged 65 and above more than doubling.<sup>xiv</sup></li> <li>&gt; The Aboriginal population is young and growing. Over half (50.8%) of Alberta's Aboriginal population was under 25 in 2006.<sup>xv</sup></li> <li>&gt; Between 2007 and 2011, the number of non-permanent residents in Alberta increased from 20,900 to 30,900 (48%), and the number of temporary foreign workers increased from 37,100 to 58,200 (57%).<sup>xvi</sup></li> <li>&gt; One in seven children lives in a lone-parent family—a proportion that has doubled over the last two generations.<sup>xvii, xviii</sup></li> <li>&gt; The majority of children live in families in which both parents work outside of the home. The labour participation rate for mothers with children less than 6 years old has risen from 35% in 1960 to roughly 70% in 2010.<sup>xix</sup></li> </ul>



## APPENDIX C: OTHER KEY GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA INITIATIVES

- > Aboriginal and Urban Aboriginal Strategies
- > Aging Population Policy Framework
- > Alberta Continuing Care Strategy—Aging in the Right Place
- > Alberta’s High School Completion Strategic Framework
- > Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce
- > Creating Connections: Alberta’s Addiction and Mental Health Strategy
- > Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder 10-Year Strategic Plan
- > Land-use Framework
- > Launching Alberta’s Energy Future: Provincial Energy Strategy
- > Primary Care Initiative
- > Safe Communities Initiatives
- > Shaping Alberta’s Future: Report of the Premier’s Council for Economic Strategy

More information on these and other strategies may be found by visiting [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca).

## APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Aboriginal**—Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, defines Aboriginal peoples as including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

**Albertans**—All persons (including new immigrants, temporary foreign workers, and non-permanent residents) living in the Province of Alberta.

**Business Community**—Individuals and corporations engaged in the for-profit sector, and associations or organizations that exist to support the sector or specific industries.

**Community**—A group of people who identify with each other, have common interests, or are viewed as forming a distinct segment of society. The term can also refer to a society as a whole.

**Equal rights**—A principle of human rights that mandates the equal (same) treatment of all persons. This includes the concept of fairness and respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings, as specified in Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

**Human Services**—See “Social Services”

**Intermediary Organization**—An agent that convenes local leadership and brokers relationships between multiple partners across multiple funding streams. Possible intermediaries include (but are not limited to) community-based non-profit organizations, faith-based and community organizations, employer organizations, community colleges, and community rehabilitation programs. For the purpose of this document, intermediary organizations are considered part of the non-profit and voluntary sector.

**Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector**—A section of the economy consisting of self-governing organizations that exist to serve the public benefit. While these organizations generate social capital, they do not distribute private profit to members, and they often depend heavily upon volunteers. Non-profit and voluntary organizations are most often independent or institutionally distinct from the formal structures of government and the profit sector. Organizations may be large and international (e.g., The Red Cross), while others may be small and local (e.g., an organization that advocates for people with disabilities in a particular city).

**Outcomes**—An outcome is the actual result or consequence that occurs through the achievement of the objectives. It is almost always quantifiable and measurable. For example: rates of violent crime decrease by 10%.

**Social Exclusion**—The process by which individuals and groups are wholly (or partially) excluded from participation in their society. This can be a consequence of a number of issues, from low income to restricted access to employment, social benefits, services, and other aspects of cultural and community life. It is important to represent the issue of exclusion as one of social and community concern, rather than one of individual and personal responsibility.

**Social Policy**—Laws, actions, regulations, principles, and guidelines designed and used to protect vulnerable people, reduce inequality, and create a system of supports for individuals and communities for the good of society. Social policy influences how members in a society live, work, and spend their time. It determines how human needs are met, such as housing, employment, education, recreation, leisure, health, safety, and the care of children.

**Social Services**—Government and non-government activities that address the needs of people through social policy or social protection (e.g., income transfers, health care, disability supports, and education are components of the social sector).

**Social-serving system or social-based supports**—A system of supports designed to meet human social needs. Examples of supports that are part of the system include health care, primary and secondary education, the justice system, and a variety of non-profit organizations.

**Vulnerable**—Individuals or groups who—due to age, poor health, minority status, or their otherwise disempowered position in society—may be open to physical, emotional, financial, or psychological exploitation or deprivation.

## APPENDIX E: ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> 2002. Health Canada. As referenced in: *Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy*. September 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Creating-Connections-2011-Strategy.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> 2010. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. *Mental Health and Addiction Statistics 2010*. As referenced in: *Creating Connections: Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy*. September 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Creating-Connections-2011-Strategy.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> 2011. Government of Alberta. *Pattern of Disability in Age Group 65+, Canada and Provinces, 2006*. Retrieved from: <https://osi.alberta.ca/osi-content/Pages/Catalogue.aspx?ipid=875&GOAViewMode=factsheet>
- <sup>iv</sup> 2012. Statistics Canada. *Table 326-0021—Consumer Price Index (CPI)*. CANSIM (database). Retrieved from: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&p2=33&id=3260021>
- <sup>v</sup> 2011. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). *The Canadian Housing Observer*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/pdf/67508.pdf?lang=en>

- <sup>vi</sup> Figures based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM), a measure of low income that considers the cost of a specific collection of goods and services in different communities across Canada. The Market Basket Measure (MBM) attempts to measure a standard of living that is a compromise between subsistence and social inclusion; it also reflects differences in living costs across regions. The MBM represents the cost of a basket that includes a nutritious diet, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation, and other necessary goods and services (such as personal care items or household supplies). The cost of the basket is compared to disposable income for each family to determine low-income rates.
- <sup>vii</sup> 2009. Statistics Canada. *Table 202-0802—Persons in Low Income Families, Annual*. CANSIM (database). Retrieved from: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&p2=33&id=2020802>
- <sup>viii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>ix</sup> Children and youth receive Intervention Services if their parents or guardians cannot ensure their safety or well-being. As long as the safety of the children is not at risk, and their parents or guardians are willing to work on the issues at hand, services are provided while the children or youth remain in the family home. When this is not feasible, the child or youth may need to be removed from the home and placed in care (which may be either temporary or permanent, depending on circumstances).
- <sup>x</sup> 2011. Government of Alberta. *Children and Youth Receiving Intervention Services, 2008–2009 to 2010–2011*. Retrieved from: <http://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/ChildrenandYouthReceivingInterventionServices.pdf>
- <sup>xi</sup> 2010. Statistics Canada. *Canadian Internet Use Survey*. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/110525/dq110525b-eng.htm>
- <sup>xii</sup> 2011. Statistics Canada. *2011 Canadian Census*. Retrieved from: <https://osi.alberta.ca/osi-content/pages/default.aspx>
- <sup>xiii</sup> 2011. Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Alberta Population Projections by Census Division, 2011–2050*. Retrieved from: <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/aboutalberta/demographics.html>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xv</sup> 2006. Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal identity population by age groups, median age and sex; 2006 counts for both sexes, for Canada, provinces and territories—20% sample data*. Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-558/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=01&Table=1&Data=Count&Sex=1&Age=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&Display=Page>
- <sup>xvi</sup> 2011. Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Canada—Permanent residents by province or territory and urban area, 2007–2011*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011-preliminary/02.asp>
- <sup>xvii</sup> 2007. Statistics Canada. *Family Portrait*. As referenced in: 2010. The Muttart Foundation. *In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta*. Available at: <http://www.muttart.org/reports>
- <sup>xviii</sup> In 2009, lone-parent families represented 14% of the total families in Alberta, and the number of lone-parent families increased slightly to 141,000 (up from 121,000 in 2002). Retrieved from: [http://www.finance.alberta.ca/aboutalberta/demographic\\_spotlights/2010-0728-census-families.pdf](http://www.finance.alberta.ca/aboutalberta/demographic_spotlights/2010-0728-census-families.pdf)
- <sup>xix</sup> 2009. LaRochelle-Cote, S and Dionne, C. *Family Work Patterns: Perspectives*. August. (Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 75-001-XWE). As referenced in: 2010. The Muttart Foundation. *In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta*. Available at <http://www.muttart.org/reports>



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