



# Fourth International Housing First Conference: Knowledge Mobilization of Evidence-Based Housing First Practices

October 5-7<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Final Report to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, National Housing Strategy Research and Planning Fund

February 8, 2022

Lead researcher: Dr. Branka Agic, Director, Knowledge Exchange and Education, Provincial System Support Program, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Co-researchers: Dr. Geoff Nelson, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University;  
and Dr. Tim Aubry, Faculty Research Chair, University of Ottawa



uOttawa



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## Executive summary

Pathways Housing First (HF) is an evidence-based approach that helps people with complex health and social needs who are chronically homeless achieve housing stability quickly. The goal of the “*Fourth International Housing First Conference: Knowledge Mobilization of Evidence-Based Housing First Practices*”, was to enhance capacity to implement HF programs in Canada and internationally with a high level of fidelity to the Pathways HF model, as well as share and learn from adaptations of the model. The conference objectives and intended outcomes focused on:

- 1) Promoting knowledge mobilization related to the Pathways HF model and implementation fidelity to enhance capacity to implement high-quality programs.
- 2) Providing capacity-building opportunities for stakeholders across Canada to enhance local capacity to implement the Pathways HF model.
- 3) Providing networking opportunities for stakeholders across Canada to facilitate the creation of HF networks across regions and sectors.
- 4) Helping identify needed policy changes and the role of local and provincial networks in creating policy change to facilitate the development of public policies that enhance the ability of HF programs to deliver effective services and supports.

The conference was originally scheduled to take place October 2020 as an in-person event in Toronto, Canada. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was delayed for a year and switched to a virtual format. The bilingual virtual conference took place October 5 – 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 10am – 1pm EDT each day. During the three-day conference, there were 462 registrants from across 19 countries. Over 16 sectors attended, with Housing Services, and Community Mental Health and Addictions sectors being most represented. Sixteen stakeholder groups were also represented, with social workers, counsellors and other service providers having the most participants in attendance, followed by Housing First providers, then agency leadership.

The conference included three keynote presentations, 10 poster presentations, 32 concurrent presentations, 7 workshops/panels, one networking session, and mentorship pairings. The conference was able to achieve the objectives by delivering a program focusing on themes related to the HF model and programs, including:

- fidelity methods and applications
- operations, adaptations, and innovations
- outcomes and impacts
- program innovations / strategies in response to COVID-19
- program and stakeholder partnerships
- networking and communities of practice
- advocacy related to policy change.

One main takeaway from the conference is that participants very much appreciated the switch from an in-person conference to a virtual format. This allowed more stakeholders from different countries to attend, furthering the reach and knowledge mobilization of evidence-based HF practices. As well, all of

the keynote presentations, concurrent sessions, and poster presentations were recorded and have been made available for full public access.

## Methodology

The *Fourth International HF Conference* was originally scheduled for October 2020 as an in-person event in Toronto, Canada. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was delayed for a year. The planning committee decided in January 2021 to revise the original plans of hosting an in-person international conference, and moved to a virtual conference format. The conference planning committee also decided not to link our virtual conference to the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) conference, since both conferences are now virtual and being engaged in an online conference for an entire week may not be feasible to everyone.

The virtual conference took place October 5 – 7th, 2021 from 10am – 1pm EDT each day. This bilingual conference included workshops, panels, research symposiums, poster presentations, mentoring, and networking that enabled HF program staff, people with lived experience, policy-makers, and researchers to connect and share evidence-based practices and adaptations of the Pathways HF model, and expertise on how to link research with practice.

## Key activities

The project team developed a project plan, communications plan, knowledge mobilization plan and evaluation plan to promote, develop, and execute the conference. These plans helped the project team identify key stakeholders and project objectives, meet event objectives, and gather evaluation data to determine whether the conference has met the project objectives. The project team’s key activities were:

- Convening an International Steering Committee and a Program Planning Committee consisting of project team members, representatives from partner organizations, and people with lived experience. The diversity of membership in the committee ensured that the conference content addresses the concerns, challenges, and capacity-building needs of HF program stakeholders from across Canada and internationally.
  - Members of the international steering committee included:
    - Tim Aubry (Co-Chair, Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest, OHFRN-Col)
    - Geoff Nelson (Co-Chair, OHFRN-Col)
    - Angela Yip (CAMH Evidence Exchange Network (EENet) Knowledge Broker)
    - Sam Tsemberis (Founder, Pathways Housing First Training Institute)
    - Sue Baker (Director, Vancouver MPA Society)
    - Jolanta Krysiniski (Program Manager for ICM Team, RainCity Housing and Support Society)
    - Tim Richter (CEO, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness)
    - Lucille Bruce (CEO, End Homelessness Winnipeg)
    - Eric Latimer (Research Scientist, Douglas Mental Health University Institute; Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, McGill)
    - Ronni Greenwood (Course Director B.A., University of Limerick, Ireland)

- Vanesa Cenjor del Rey (Directora Estrategia Internacional & Agile Coach, International Affairs Director & Agile Coach, Hogar Si)
  - Samara Jones (Program Coordinator, FEANTSA Europe)
  - Saija Turunen (Research Manager, Y-Foundation)
- A Program Planning Committee was brought together to develop the call for abstracts, review and score the submissions and finalize the program.
    - Members included:
      - Tim Aubry (Co-Chair, OHFRN-Col; Professor, University of Ottawa)
      - Geoff Nelson (Co-Chair, OHFRN-Col; Professor Emeritus, Wilfrid Laurier U.)
      - Angela Yip (CAMH EENet Knowledge Broker)
      - Sam Tsemberis (Founder, Pathways Housing First Training Institute)
      - Sue Baker (Director, Vancouver MPA Society)
      - Cilia Mejia-Lancheros (Post-doctoral fellow, St. Michael's Hospital)
      - James Lachaud (Post-doctoral fellow, St. Michael's Hospital)
      - Al Wiebe (Peer/Community engagement/ motivational speaking, Of no fixed address)
      - Don Robinson (Customary Care Coordinator, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority)
      - Samara Jones (Programme Coordinator, Housing First Europe Hub)
      - Eric Latimer (Douglas Research Centre; Full Professor, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University)
      - Wally Czech (Director of Training & Technical Assistance program, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness)
      - Maryann Roebuck (Doctoral Student, University of Ottawa)
      - Lisa Medd (Program Manager, CMHA Ottawa)
      - Branagh O'Shaughnessy (Doctoral Student, University of Limerick)
      - Ronni Greenwood (Senior Lecturer, Psychology Department; Chair, Education & Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Limerick)
      - Vanesa Cenjor del Rey (Directora Estrategia Internacional & Agile Coach, International Affairs Director & Agile Coach, Hogar Si)
      - Saija Turunen (Research Manager, Y-Foundation)
  - Developing conference save-the-date promotional material to continue momentum and awareness of the postponed conference. The promotional material was disseminated to target audiences (in the late winter and spring 2021):
    - Housing First program staff and leadership
    - People with lived experience of poverty/homelessness and mental illness, including racialized persons or communities, individuals identifying as LGBTQ+, veterans, and young adults
    - Individuals from Indigenous communities
    - Researchers in the area of housing, homelessness, poverty reduction from different disciplines

- Professionals in the housing, health, human services, poverty reduction, social inclusion, and justice sectors
  - Professionals working in homelessness/housing/poverty reduction
  - Policymakers/system planners (municipal/provincial/federal)
  - Post-doctoral fellows and graduate students
- Hosting a [series of four webinars](#) to increase interest in HF, promote the conference, and build relationships with new and existing stakeholders.
  - Conducting a needs assessment survey with stakeholders to determine themes, topics, formats, virtual conference duration and formats. This survey was launched January 4th, 2021 and closed January 21st, 2021 with 272 responses.
  - Contracting the University of Toronto Continuing Professional Development (U of T CPD) department to assist in hosting the conference virtually, using the Pheedloop platform.
  - Developing and updating the conference website for promotion and to ensure participants have up-to-date information about the conference in [English](#) and [French](#)
  - Launching the call for abstracts on June 10th, 2021 and closing on July 15th, 2021. A total of 55 submissions were received.
  - Launching registration on August 6th, 2021 and kept open throughout the conference
  - Continued promotion to increase conference registration via listservs, twitter #HousingFirst2021; and partners' avenues.
  - Notifying presentation submitters on August 23rd, 2021 that their presentation was accepted, with a request to confirm their intent to present by September 6th, 2021.
  - Finalizing the [conference program](#):
    - The conference opened with ceremonial drumming, and each day with a land acknowledgment
    - Three keynote sessions were simultaneously translated from English to French:
      - Opening session: All Our Relations: An Indigenous Perspective of Homelessness in Winnipeg, Canada (Presenters: Lucille Bruce, Betty Edel, Jino Distasio)
      - Day two keynote session: Housing First in Finland, Saija Turunen
      - Closing keynote session: The Future of Housing First, Sam Tsemberis
    - 10 poster sessions (originally 11, but one withdrew)
    - 32 concurrent sessions (30.5 sessions in English; 1.5 sessions in French). Simultaneously translation to English/French was available for the sessions with dual language presentations.
    - 7 workshops/panels (originally 8, however one was not able to present due to unforeseen circumstances)
    - One scheduled networking session on the development of an International consortium of organizations focused on HF. Additional networking sessions/meet-ups/activities will be available during the entire duration of the conference.
    - 14 mentoring connections – participants indicated “I am a researcher interested in providing a mentorship opportunity”.
    - 12 mentees connections, participants indicating “I am a student/post-doctoral fellow interested in a mentorship opportunity”.
  - Conference tweeting for promotion, continuing conversations, and further networking and reach, using [#HousingFirst2021](#)

- The conference platform with all the recordings, session information, networking, and resources will be available to all registered participants for one month after the conference.
- All recordings, abstracts, summary bulletins and resources have been migrated to the [Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest website](#). This will allow open-access to additional stakeholders, and will also ensure all the content after the conference platform is no longer available.
- Discussions and development of the International HF Consortium, and additional follow-up knowledge mobilization activities will continue to take place after the conference.

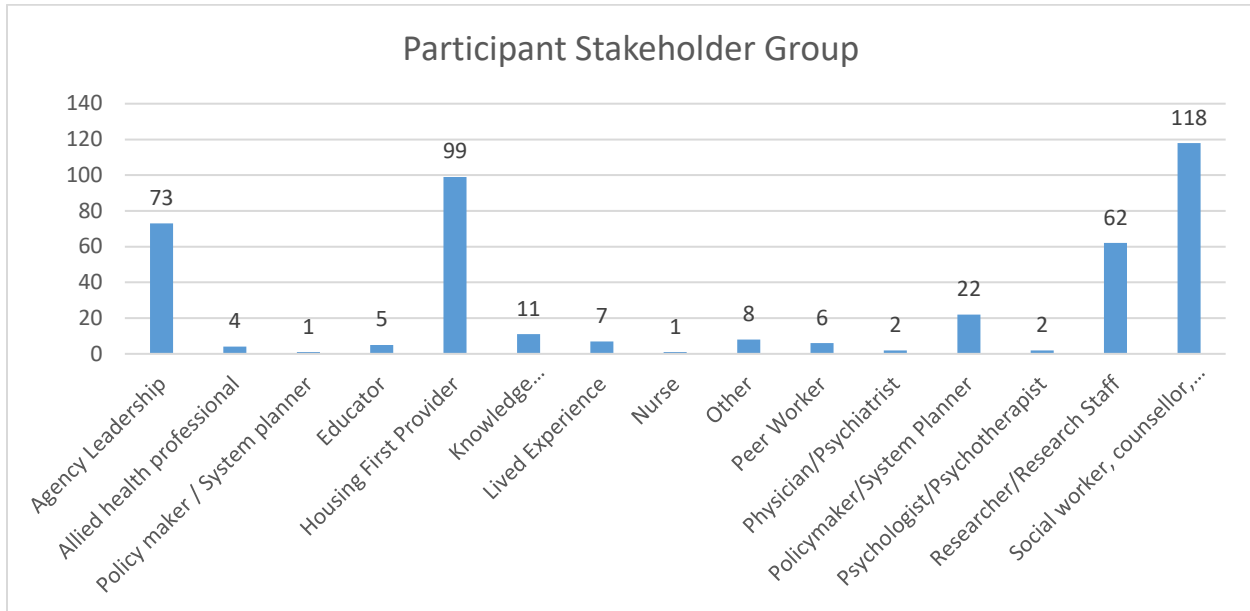
## Findings

### Participant demographics

The conference included 462 registrants from across 19 countries, including:

- Australia
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Canada
- Spain
- Liechtenstein
- England
- Northern Ireland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Namibia
- Poland
- Portugal
- Scotland
- USA
- Wales

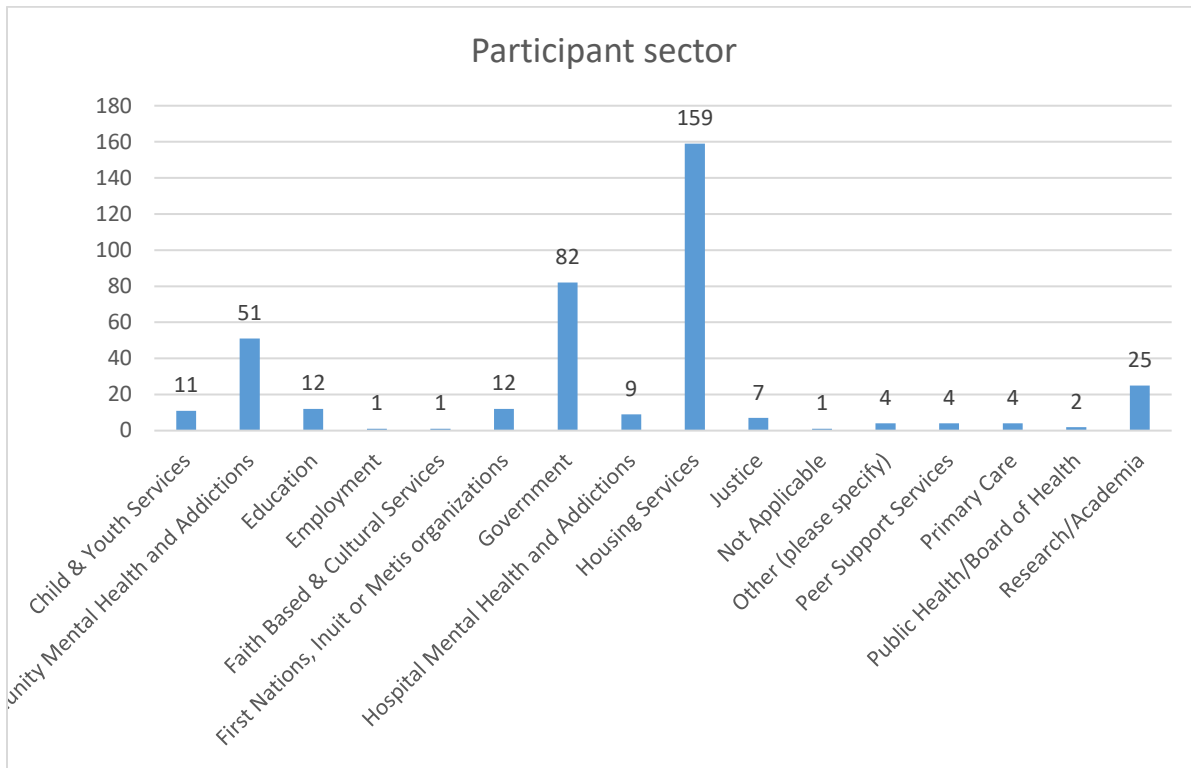
In the registration form, participants were asked to identify their main stakeholder group. The graph below indicates the number of participants in each group.



Participants, including in the 'Other' category, further specified their main role(s) as: Acting member; Amin support and stats; Board Director; Board Member; Caseworker; Client Service Worker; Communication expert; Communications professional; Data Evaluation; Funding Coordinator for Housing First projects; fundraiser; Furniture Bank Support Service; HF ICM team manager; homelessness NGO Director; Housing and Homelessness Service Provider; Housing Specialist; Interested individual; Interpreter; Knowledge keeper; Lead backbone for Housing First collective; Legal; Manager Homelessness Initiatives; Non-Profit Organization; Outreach /support - Rough Sleeping; Outreach Worker; Parent; Policy Officer for Membership Organisation; Programme Coordinator; Project coordinator/facilitator; Public Servant; Reaching Home Community En; Regional Housing Coordinator; Services Development Manager for Welsh Women's Aid; several of the above; Shift Leader; Street Outreach Counsellor; Supervisor Programs; Supervisor Social Assistance; Support; Systemic Prevention; Trainer. Note that the responses listed above include those from the 'Other' category, as well as participants who selected their main role, but further specified the additional roles they identify as, or indicated their specific role(s) within the options available in the registration.



Participants were also asked in the registration to identify the sector in which they work. The graph below highlights the range of the different sectors represented at the conference.



Participants, including in the 'Other' category further specified their sector as: Participants Business District; Developmental services; Domestic Abuse; Domestic Violence; Drop-in services; Family; Federazione Italiana Organismi per le Persone Senza Dimora; Gender-based violence; Health and Housing Systems liaison; HF ICM team; Homeless Social Services; Homelessness; Housing and Homelessness Training, Education, and Advocacy; Housing Lead for social services HUB; Housing Provider; Interpreter; Legal; local coalition; Mental Health and Housing; Municipal Drug Strategy; not for profit agency; several of the above; social justice; Supportive Housing & Homeless Shelter; Third sector/NGO; VAW Shelter; Violence Against Women / Housing; Voluntary 3rd sector; Women's specialist sector. Note that the responses listed here include those from the 'Other' category, as well as participants who selected their main sector listed in the registration options, but wanted to further share and specify the multiple sectors they represent.

### Session attendance

The number of participants that attended each session is in the table below.

Session	Number of attendees
<b>Day one: Tuesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021</b>	
Welcome, Ceremonial drumming, Opening keynote: All Our Relations: An Indigenous perspective of homelessness in Winnipeg, Canada	184
<i>French simultaneous session</i>	18

Session	Number of attendees
Concurrent session 1: HF Communities of Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication as a way to implement Housing First programs</li> <li>• It takes a network - building the Housing First Europe Hub to support our partners to end homelessness</li> </ul>	189
Concurrent session 2: HF for youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing First for Youth</li> <li>• Housing First for Youth – Europe</li> </ul>	100
Concurrent session 3: Scaling up HF in Scandinavia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing First Development Network – promoting scaling up of HF</li> <li>• The Norwegian Housing First network sparkles and shines. Housing First brings services together.</li> </ul>	61
Concurrent session 4: Enriching community supports in HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing social integration of homeless people: relevant outcomes of Housing First – Italy</li> <li>• Innovative strategies in delivering housing support: The case of Italian cities</li> </ul>	120
Concurrent session 5: Beyond housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beyond Housing: Enhancing coordination and supports to complement case management in Housing First</li> <li>• Housing first and antifragility: a possible common path</li> </ul>	104
Concurrent session 6: HF in Australia and New Zealand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 years of housing and recovery in Australia: an expanded approach to Housing First applications</li> <li>• Adapting Housing First for Aotearoa New Zealand – a Māori (Indigenous peoples) perspective</li> </ul>	94
Concurrent session 7: HF during COVID-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You Didn’t Just Hand Us Off”: The Innovative Partnerships Driving Successful Client Outcomes of Toronto’s Rapid Rehousing Initiative</li> <li>• Phone/smartphone-based intervention Guideline</li> </ul>	107
Concurrent session 8: Coordinated access systems in HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Shelter Board’s Unified Supportive Housing System</li> <li>• Coordinated access and coordinated entry system processes in the housing and homelessness sector: A critical analysis of current practices</li> </ul>	137
Concurrent session 9: Pathways Vermont’s rural implementation of Housing First: An overview	55
Concurrent session 10: Housing First for individuals with opioid use disorder	Session cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances with presenters
<b>Day two: Wednesday October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021</b>	
Concurrent session 11: HF for survivors of domestic violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing First for women experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in England</li> </ul>	126

Session	Number of attendees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing First &amp; Women - Creating Safe &amp; Suitable Housing Opportunities for Women Impacted by Violence</li> </ul>	
Concurrent session 12: Harm reduction in HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harm Reduction in Housing First: Research Outcomes, Practices, and Evidence Gaps</li> <li>Harm Reduction in Housing First</li> </ul>	122
Concurrent session 13: Systemic responses to growing HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the Things You Wanted to Know About Toronto's Supportive Housing Growth Plan but Were Afraid To Ask</li> <li>CMHC Research and Program Outputs: What We Have Learned About Successful Socially Inclusive Housing</li> </ul>	73
Concurrent session 14: International adaptations of HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining fidelity amid homelessness transformation in Wales</li> <li>Ending homelessness through independent, permanent and scatter houses in the community: Up-scaling Housing First in Lisboa/Portugal</li> </ul>	39
Concurrent session 15: Lived experience and Housing First: Peer and Indigenous perspectives	57
Day two keynote presentation: Housing First in Finland <i>French simultaneous session</i>	246 9
<b>Day three: Thursday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021</b>	
Concurrent session 16: Housing First in the UK and Ireland: Challenges and opportunities	130
Concurrent session 17: HF for people with developmental disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just Enough Support: Partnerships for the Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Welcoming Nonprofit Housing Communities</li> <li>Building Bridges to Housing – Adapting Housing First Practices For Homeless Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities</li> </ul>	94
Concurrent session 18: Predictors of housing instability among recipients of Housing First <i>Simultaneous translation room</i>	77 44
Concurrent session 19: Understanding how Housing First affects costs	63
Concurrent session 20: Achieving fidelity in HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balancing Fidelity and Adaptation: Collaborative Housing First Fidelity Assessment- a Pilot Approach</li> <li>Fidelity Findings from the Arrels Foundation Housing First Programme in Barcelona, Spain</li> </ul>	49
Concurrent session 21: The Restart Project: The experiences and contributions of a youth with lived experience advisory committee	96
Concurrent session 22: Achieving recovery in HF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a home - building the foundation for health and well-being</li> <li>Operations &amp; Innovations: Facilitators and Challenges to Promoting Housing First Clients' Well-being and Connectedness</li> </ul>	96

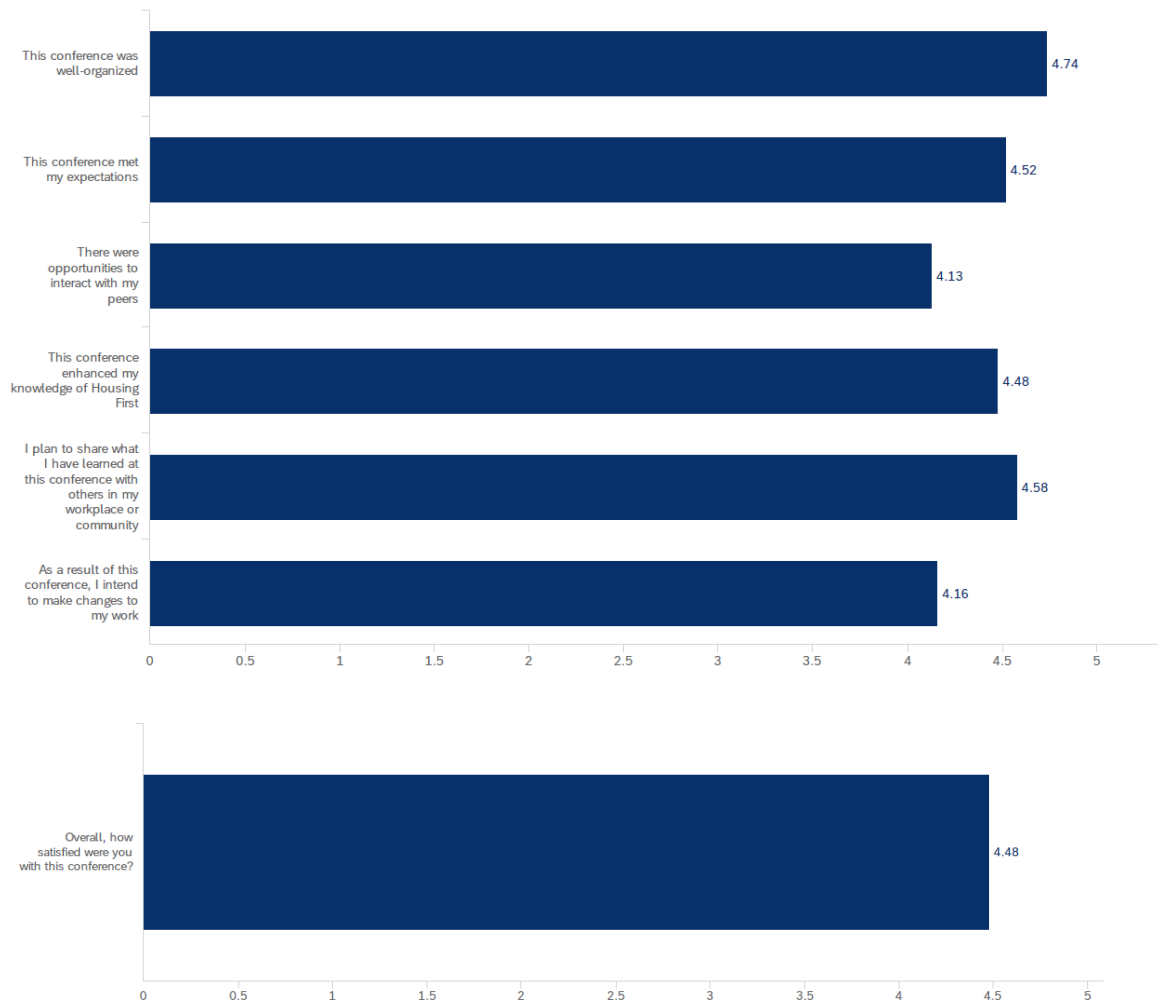
Session	Number of attendees
Concurrent session 23: Frameworks, relationships and real-world challenges	79
Concurrent session 24: Scaling up HF in European cities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing First scale-up as a long-term and health response to tackle chronic homelessness during COVID-19 pandemic</li> <li>• La mise à l'échelle du Logement d'abord sur la métropole lyonnaise : enjeux et épreuves pratiques / The scaling up of Housing First in the Lyon metropolis of Lyon: issues and practical</li> </ul>	29  16
Concurrent session 25: Homelessness policy in different countries	74
Closing keynote presentation and remarks: The Future of Housing First	171
<i>French simultaneous session</i>	9

### Conference evaluation

The evaluation plan addresses the conference objectives by assessing relevant outcomes. An end-of-conference evaluation form (in English and French) was included as a pop-up survey on the conference platform, as well as in communication emails to registrants. As well, all conference sessions were evaluated. The purpose of the overall evaluation was to assess conference outcomes, including creation of new HF networking opportunities, increased knowledge about HF, improved understanding of HF fidelity and adaptation, and identification of policy needs and strategies related to HF. The evaluation form asked about participants' overall experience of and satisfaction with the conference. Three levels of evaluation were examined by asking participants to score statements on a 5-point scale, including:

1. Knowledge acquisition. Participants scored a 4.48/5 on the statement "This conference enhanced my knowledge of Housing First" (n = 31).
2. Satisfaction and relevance. Participants scored:
  - 4.74/5 on the statement "This conference was well-organized" (n = 31)
  - 4.52/5 on the statement "This conference met my expectations" (n = 31)
  - 4.13/5 on the statement "There were opportunities to interact with my peers" (n = 31)
  - 4.24/5 on the questions "What was your satisfaction with the poster presentations?" (n = 17)
  - 4.5/5 for the mentoring portion (n = 2)
  - 4.17/5 on the networking session (n = 6)
  - 4.48/5 for the question "Overall, how satisfied were you with this conference?" (n = 29)
3. Intended use. Participants scored an average of 4.16/5 for the statement: "As a result of this conference, I intend to make changes to my work" (n = 31). They also scored a 4.58/5 on the statement "I plan to share what I have learned at this conference with others in my workplace or community" (n = 31).

The graph below highlights the overall conference evaluation, with 31 participants completing the survey.



## Results and impact of the conference

The aim of the conference was to address the National Housing Strategy priority area “Housing for Those in Greatest Need”, through helping communities involved in scaling up HF programs across Canada achieve a high level of fidelity to the Pathways HF model. The conference objectives and outcomes focused on:

1. Promoting knowledge mobilization related to the Pathways HF model and implementation fidelity to enhance capacity to implement high-quality programs.
2. Providing capacity-building opportunities for stakeholders across Canada to enhance local capacity to implement the Pathways HF model.
3. Providing networking opportunities for stakeholders across Canada to facilitate the creation of HF networks across regions and sectors.

4. Helping identify needed policy changes and the role of local and provincial networks in creating policy change to facilitate the development of public policies that enhance the ability of HF programs to deliver effective services and supports.

The conference was able to achieve the objectives by delivering a strong program focusing on themes related to the HF model and programs, including:

- fidelity methods and applications
- operations, adaptations, and innovations
- outcomes and impacts
- program innovations / strategies in response to COVID-19
- program and stakeholder partnerships
- networking and communities of practice
- advocacy related to policy change.

The review and selection process for the presentations also ensured knowledge mobilization of the Pathways HF model. All presentations were scored by the review committee and selected based on the direct relevance to the [Pathways HF model](#) and/or the [Core Principles](#) of the Housing First Europe Hub. Presentations were also selected based on emphasize of the links between research, evaluation, and practice. There were two sessions specific to fidelity to the HF model (session 14 and session 20), with 88 participants in total for both sessions. Some sessions did include adaptations of the Pathways model implemented in different countries. These sessions proved to be a value-added element to the conference.

The three-day program included keynote presentations, workshops, concurrent sessions, poster session, mentoring, and networking. A session was also hosted to develop the International Housing First Consortium to continue the momentum of the conference and collaborative conversations bringing together stakeholders from various groups, sectors and countries. The International Housing First Consortium has developed a draft terms of reference and also scheduled the first meeting to take place at the end of January 2022. The Consortium currently consists of representatives from nine countries. This was developed as a result of networking at the conference. Although we do not know the exact number of connections made as a result of the networking opportunities provided and during the presentation discussions, we feel that the number of connections made was strong and will also continue as a result of post-conference activities. These informal connections were made during the presentations in the chat box discussions, as well as on the network page and individual poster pages of the conference platform. Specific connections were also made between mentors and mentees on the platform. Also, the Ontario Housing First Regional Network, Community of Interest, worked closely with the European Housing First Hub and the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANSTA) in developing and marketing the conference. In this context, the collaboration strengthened the relationship between these organizations.

As of January 2022, post-conference web analytics show that there were 39 page views for conference resources from [day one](#); 44 page views for the [day two webpage](#); and 78 page views for the [day three webpage](#). For the session recordings, there were 128 views. The project team and international partners will continue to share out these resources, as these are now available to additional stakeholders who did not attend the conference. The conference platform was also available for access to registered

participants one month after the conference. Participants were able to view the recordings, presentations and additional resources there, while the project team worked to transfer all the resources to the open access site on EENet.ca.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fourth International Housing First Conference switched to a virtual platform. Previous conferences were held in person and hosted by European partners. The first conference was held in Lisbon, Portugal in 2013. The second conference was in Limerick, Ireland in 2016, and the third conference was held in Padova, Italy in 2018. In our needs assessment survey conducted in January 2021, 252 respondents indicated that they had not attended any of the previous conferences. Six respondents attended the Lisbon conference, 16 attended the Limerick conference, and 11 attended the Padova conference. Based on our contact with previous conference organizers and their involvement on our conference committees, it was estimated that the average number of participants at previous conferences was 100-120. This is the first time the conference was hosted in Canada and due to conference being virtual, participants noted that they were able to attend, so our reach was much higher with over 400 participants from numerous countries. Participants noted numerous times during the conference that they appreciated the virtual platform, allowing them to join as their participation would not have been feasible if the conference was in-person. It is clear that virtual modality extended the reach of the conference to include more practitioners from a sector that is not well-resourced.

## Lessons learned

The main unexpected challenge was the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused a shift from an in-person conference to a virtual conference format, as well as a year in the delay of hosting the conference. However, the virtual conference allowed for a much greater reach than expected. The previous three International Housing First conferences included about 100-120 participants. With the Fourth International Housing First Conference moving to a virtual format, participants noted that this allowed them to attend, as travel expenses were now unnecessary. Participants further requested that this format be incorporated into future events to continue to facilitate participation from around the globe.

We estimate the number of participants due to the virtual environment to be at least double the amount of in-person participants. Previous annual provincial forums hosted by the Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest included about 100 participants. We estimated that about 100 participants would travel internationally from other countries to attend this conference. With the conference being virtual, we reach a registration of 462 participants including all presenters, keynote speakers and invited guests. As a result, the attendance represented a significant increase from previous international conferences (i.e., over 4X the number of participants). Participants requested that future conferences be a hybrid model, including both in-person and virtual components, so those abroad would be able to attend. The Fifth International Housing First Conference will likely take place in Europe. We noted to participants and future hosts that although a hybrid model would be ideal, it may not be possible, as this requires a lot of additional funds and resources. We did not anticipate a virtual conference to be so costly, but the virtual platform used (Pheedloop) and all the technicians supporting the event made it very successful and enjoyable for participants. One participant commented in the evaluation:

*“Great conference! It was my first virtual conference and it exceeded my expectations. As a presenter, I found the technical support to be exceptional and the platform itself was great to use. Looking forward to the next one!”*

The evaluation survey response rates were low, as expected. We usually receive about a 20% response rate with feedback surveys, so this was anticipated. Participants may also have experienced ‘screen fatigue’ so did not want to spend more time online completing the surveys after the sessions. In future conferences and events, we will also include a 5-10 minute break time in between sessions, so participants have more time to complete the surveys after the session, instead of immediately switching to the next conference room. In other conferences, there are also draws to encourage participants to complete the surveys. So in future conferences, we could incorporate a ‘free-of-charge conference registration ticket’ draw to participants who complete the survey.

## Financial statements

### Expenses

Item	Vendor	Amount
French translation (save the date flyer)	Liliane Cote	\$68.65
French translation (conference website; URL below)	Liliane Cote	\$94.28
domain: fourthinternationalhfconference.ca	Hover	\$15.41
website hosting platform	Wix	\$207.07
Honoraria PWLE program planning committee	Al Wiebe	\$50.00
Honoraria PWLE program planning committee	Al Wiebe	\$50.00
U of T CPD virtual conference platform	U of T CPD	\$5,500.00
Honoraria PWLE program planning committee	Al Wiebe	\$70
U of T CPD virtual conference platform - Invoice 2	U of T CPD	\$5,500
Simultaneous translators	Equity Department, CAMH	\$3,860
U of T CPD virtual conference platform – Final invoice	U of T CPD	\$47,513
Honoraria for closing keynote	Sam Tsemberis	\$1,500
Honoraria for day 2 keynote	Saija Turunen	\$1,500
Honoraria for opening keynote panel	Lucille Bruce	\$500
Honoraria for opening keynote panel	Betty Edel	\$500
Honoraria for opening keynote panel	Jino Distasio	\$500
Ceremonial drumming to open conference	Steve Teekens	\$250
Honoraria PWLE presentation at conference	Al Wiebe	\$150
Honoraria PWLE for planning/program committee member participation, abstract review and selection, presentation at the conference	Don Robinson	\$320
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$68,148.41</b>



## Revenue

The registration revenue is \$21,250. This amount will be used to support the expenses incurred and for additional post-conference knowledge exchange activities, including the development and activities of the International Housing First Consortium, which was a networking session during the conference. The conference revenue will also be used to conduct a survey intended to help with the development of an inventory of Housing First programs across Canada.

## Post-conference resources

The conference recordings, PowerPoint presentations for the keynote sessions and concurrent sessions, poster presentations, summary bulletins are available to registered participants on the [virtual conference platform](#).

[Presentation session recordings](#), abstracts and summary bulletins have also been posted for open-access on the [Evidence Exchange Network's Vimeo page](#) and the [Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest webpage](#). Due to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the PowerPoint presentations cannot be posted on the EENet OHFRN-Col's webpage, as the submitted presentation formats are not fully accessible. However, all presentations are archived and are available upon request. Knowledge mobilization activities will continue through dissemination of the conference resources, stakeholder networking and linkages, the development of the International Housing First Consortium, additional international webinars on HF, and the development of an inventory of Housing First programs across Canada.