Alberta Rural Development Network

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO ESTIMATING RURAL HOMELESSNESS

Developed by ARDN for Rural and Remote Communities

2nd Edition

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Canada

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AUTHOR
Zain Abedin

MANAGING EDITORS
Abebe Essayas
Julia Juco

EDITORS
Dee Ann Benard
Jonn Kmech
Scott Travis

This publication is available for download in English and French at **www.ardn.ca**
For more information about this guide, please contact **info@ardn.ca**

www.ardn.ca

Alberta Rural Development Network

This mural by Edmonton street artist, AJA Louden, is inspired by our work on affordable housing and homelessness in rural areas of Alberta.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This step-by-step document has been developed by the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) for rural communities across Canada that wish to accurately estimate the number of homeless individuals in their community. ARDN is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the wellbeing of rural communities. Please visit our website www.ardn.ca for more information about ARDN and its mission.

This guide was first published in 2017 and was based on a review of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's Coordinated Point-in-Time Count (HPS PiT) Guide in Canada, case studies published on the Homeless Hub, as well as counts and estimations conducted in Cape Breton (Nova Scotia), Leduc County (Alberta), and rural communities in South Carolina (USA). This guide reflects input from a review committee comprised of front-line service providers, academics, members of advocacy groups, and government representatives from rural communities, including Indigenous communities, across Canada.

This is the 2nd edition of the guide and the survey questions and guidelines have been updated based on the learnings and feedback from the rural communities that utilized the first edition of the guide to conduct rural homelessness estimations. ARDN intends to continue updating the guide every two years based on further feedback from rural communities that conduct homelessness estimations using this guide.

DISCLAIMER: The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) encourages communities and organizations that intend to utilize this guide to approach us for further information and support to ensure they fully understand the estimation process. The guide should not be construed as providing any type of policy or legal advice. Communities and organizations utilizing this guide should provide proper reference to this guide and the methodology developed by the ARDN within any reports or documents produced. While a community or an organization may adopt the guide and methodology when conducting a homelessness estimation, the ARDN does not support or endorse any results produced, nor will the ARDN be held responsible for the integrity or outcomes of such estimations, including but not limited to the data collected, analysis, interpretations, or recommendations, without **explicit written consent** by an ARDN representative and a thorough review of the pre- and post-survey methodology that was utilized.

**Due to the unique circumstances of rural communities, the data obtained by following this guide to estimate homelessness is by no means a complete representation of all the homeless individuals within a community. It is possible that the methodology will miss homeless individuals who are completely hidden, and may not have reached out to any service agencies during the estimation time period.*

How to reference this document: Alberta Rural Development Network, Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness. (2019). *Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural Homelessness: Developed by ARDN for Rural and Remote Communities*. Retrieved from https://www.ardn.ca/estimation-guide/step-by-step-guide-to-estimating-rural-homelessness-english

PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

The homelessness estimation process outlined in this guide will require private organizations (including non-profit organizations) and public bodies to collect the personal information of individuals who have chosen to participate in the estimation. This personal information must be adequately protected by the collecting organizations and bodies in accordance with any applicable privacy legislation in the jurisdiction that the organization or body operates in.

While the developers of this guide have considered the importance of maintaining the privacy of individuals, and have developed a form of consent to be included with the survey, participating organizations and bodies are

required to review this guide in tandem with their own privacy policies and the privacy legislation(s) applicable in their jurisdiction. Organizations and bodies should consider their legal obligations, including the following:

a) Whether a privacy impact assessment should be conducted prior to the initiation of the homelessness estimation, or in circumstances where personal information will be handled differently from previous estimations conducted by the organization or body;
b) Whether data handling and storage will be done through a third-party (and whether appropriate service agreements are in place to address the protection of personal information and whether participants have been provided appropriate notice of how their information will be handled by these providers); and,
c) Ensuring appropriate physical and electronic safeguards are in place within the organization or body to maintain adequate protection of all collected personal information.

Upon obtaining the data from the surveys used to conduct the homelessness estimation, all original copies of surveys must be stored in a locked and secure location in order to lessen potential unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. Original surveys should be retained for as long as the organization reasonably requires the personal information for legal or research purposes, or by an amount of time prescribed by applicable privacy legislation.

In circumstances where original surveys need to be transferred to another body for further handling or processing, the organization or body must do so using a secure method of delivery, and ensure that survey participants have provided appropriate notification and consent for the disclosure.

Federal, provincial, and territorial Information and Privacy Commissioners and Ombudspersons are able to provide further specifics about an organization or body's obligations with respect to privacy protections.

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"A Step-by-Step Guide to Best Practices for Cost-Effective, Efficient, and Reliable Homelessness Estimates in Rural and Remote Communities Across Canada"

INTRODUCTION

This step-by-step guide has been developed by the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) to provide rural communities with the tools to estimate homelessness in their community. This guide incorporates cost-conscious, efficient, and reliable practices specific to rural and remote communities and their surrounding areas.

Homelessness is often hidden in rural communities and rarely presents like it does in urban centres, so collecting tangible data on this population has proven difficult. Consequently, rural communities are often met with disbelief when efforts to address homelessness are brought up due to the lack of tangible data on this population, affecting resource allocation and funding. This skepticism is the underlying motivation behind the development of effective and inexpensive practices to collect data and identify the scope of homelessness and housing insecurity in rural and remote communities in Canada and beyond.

What does the term "homelessness" mean?

Often, when people think of homelessness, the common perception is of people living on the streets in downtown areas, frequently in large urban centers. However, this is only a fraction of people who are now considered to be homeless.

This Guide utilizes the Canadian Definition of Homelessness as established by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH), as well as separate definitions that account for the unique experiences of youth and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) peoples in Canada. Taken together, they form a comprehensive definition of how Canadians are affected by homelessness or housing instability in a variety of social and cultural contexts.

Homelessness

Homelessness is the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, domestic violence, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing. Individuals who become homeless experience a range of physical living situations. These various living situations include:

- ***Unsheltered:*** Absolutely homeless, living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation. (e.g. living on sidewalks, squares, parks; in vehicles, or garages, etc.).
- ***Emergency Sheltered:*** People who are staying in overnight shelters due to homelessness as well as those staying in shelters due to family violence.
- ***Provisionally Accommodated:*** People with accommodation that is temporary or that lacks security for tenure (e.g. couch-surfing, living in transitional housing, living in abandoned buildings, living in places unfit for human habitation, people in domestic violence situations, etc.).
- ***At Risk of Homelessness:*** People who are not yet homeless but their current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards. (e.g. people who are one rent payment missed from eviction, people whose housing may be condemned for health, by-law, or safety violations, etc.).

Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Canadian Definition of Homelessness. (2012)

Youth Homelessness

Youth homelessness refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe, or consistent residence.

Youth homelessness is a complex social issue because some aspects of our society have failed to provide young people and their families with the necessary and adequate supports that will enable them to move forward with their lives in a safe and planned way. In addition to experiencing economic deprivation and a lack of secure housing, many young people who are homeless lack the personal experience of living independently and at the same time may be undergoing significant developmental (social, physical, emotional and cognitive) changes.

Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Canadian Definition of Youth Homelessness. (2016)

Indigenous Homelessness

Indigenous homelessness, according to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. **Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews, that includes a breakdown of relationships.**

These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.

The complex interactions between these factors in Indigenous homelessness produce situations that interact with the classification of the four kinds of homelessness which includes Unsheltered, Emergency Sheltered, Provisionally Accommodated, and At-Risk of Homelessness.

To learn more about the various elements of this definition, please refer to Jesse A. Thistle's definition of Indigenous Homelessness published by COH.

Jesse A. Thistle, Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. (2017)

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO ESTIMATE HOMELESSNESS?

Primary Benefits

There are multiple benefits to conducting homelessness estimations. The estimate can be used by communities to:

1. Track progress in reducing and preventing homelessness.
2. Direct public attention towards the issue of homelessness. Conducting a homelessness estimation enables communities to have a more holistic understanding of the issue and facilitates efforts that look beyond just those who are visibly homeless.
3. Improve organizational planning and program development that address homelessness and housing.
4. Reduce homelessness in communities by funneling the appropriate resources along the continuum of homelessness including those whom are at risk of homelessness.
5. Influence local, provincial, and federal policies and practices on housing, support services, etc.
6. Establish indicators for performance measurement and service delivery standards.
7. Provide data that will help the community and service providers accurately project service needs and allocate resources accordingly.
8. Help secure funding to improve resources to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
9. Provide demographic information to better understand who is experiencing homelessness and to identify where community resources are most needed. (e.g. additional support for veterans, seniors, or youth).
10. Help target interventions for sub-populations experiencing higher levels of homelessness or whom are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness or poverty.

Secondary Benefits

Some of the indirect benefits observed from estimating rural homelessness using this guide include:

1. **Enhanced collaboration among service agencies** within local and surrounding communities. A successful homelessness estimation process requires the engagement of several service agencies and local stakeholders through active participation and cooperation. Such a collaboration facilitates more open communication, increased resource-sharing, and information exchange which goes beyond the data collected. This can result in the beginning of a local Coordinated Access system which streamlines access to housing and wrap-around services for people experiencing homelessness. Communities can identify what services exist, the type of services that are most needed, and how to better address the gaps in between.
2. **Communities planning to conduct an estimation in their community can refer to reports published by comparable communities** that followed the guide in the past and may be able to reach out to them for guidance. Communities can then establish a supportive connection moving forward and may be able to use their learnings to determine post-estimation trajectory for service improvements within the community (e.g. starting a volunteer mat program as a temporary emergency shelter, securing funding for a community navigator or housing support worker, creating a local homelessness and housing task force, etc.).

METHODS TO ESTIMATE HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness can be estimated using two methods: Point-in-Time (PiT) count and Population Estimation. The method used to determine the number of homeless people in a particular area depends on the geographical area under consideration, resources available, and the capabilities of the parties involved.

Point-in-Time Count (PiT)

The Point-in-Time (PiT) count is now the standard, widely used method to count sheltered and unsheltered homeless people in a single period (typically 24-48 hours). Volunteers canvas throughout the community and count the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals by conducting surveys both on the street and in local shelters. This survey provides information on the characteristics of the local homeless population (gender identity, age, ethno-racial

background, etc.), which helps the community identify needs and develop strategies to implement resources to support the homeless population.

Population Estimation

Population Estimation (or Service-Based Estimation) can be used for the same purposes as the PiT count. The difference is that Population Estimation gathers information on the homeless population by using survey data gathered through service agencies. This data highlights the number of people who accessed services within a pre-defined time frame (e.g. one month), which gives an estimate of the number of homeless individuals within a service area. This method is mostly used when there are limited resources to conduct a PiT, where homelessness is mostly hidden, or where the population is spread out over a large area, making it difficult for volunteers to conduct a PiT count efficiently.

Survey Limitations

Both methods only provide estimations of homelessness in a community or region, and each has its own limitations.

Given that PiT Counts only count people over a 24-48 hour period, and only count people who are absolutely unsheltered or currently within a shelter system, it is effectively a "snapshot" of the situation, often conducted only annually or biannually. Therefore, many people who may be precariously housed and utilizing local services (ie. "the hidden homeless" or people at risk), as well as many people who are absolutely unsheltered and who were not counted during the period (as volunteers tend to only cover specific areas), are not seen in PiT Counts, creating an under-representation of local need and service utilization.

Population Estimations can be better at determining the scope of local need since the surveys are conducted over long periods of time, more people are surveyed and those who fall under "hidden homelessness" have more chances to access services during the duration of the survey. However, individuals who are absolutely unsheltered (living on the streets, living in cars or vans) but who aren't staying in "known locations" may be missed. It should also be noted that not everyone accessing services may consent to take part in the survey; not every person that accesses services may do so during the estimation period; and not every service agency in a region may choose to take part in the

estimation count.

Ultimately, there is no "perfect" method that will capture 100% of the individuals struggling with housing instability in a community. Therefore, it's important to understand the limitations of each method when using the data collected to make decisions about local service needs and measuring the success of community homelessness reduction strategies.

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR THIS GUIDE?

A number of rural communities across Canada have been attempting to conduct PiT Counts or Population Estimations for more than a decade to gather critical data to help them address housing and homelessness issues within their communities. Rural homelessness is unique as it rarely looks like it does in urban centres. This often creates distinctly rural obstacles when determining the extent of homelessness within the community, some of which include: large geographical areas; few or no resources to recruit; train and mobilize volunteers; little or no paid staff time to work on homelessness issues; and insufficient resources such as money; time and experience to plan and execute a traditional PiT count. These considerations are not reflected within the PiT guide which was developed with urban communities in mind. Therefore, data gathered through a PiT count would be insufficient, inaccurate, and not as useful for rural communities' efforts to understand homelessness and how it affects resource handling and service delivery.

There are various approaches to conducting estimation counts. Using different estimation methods may not provide accurate data and does not allow for comparisons to be made across communities over time. This limits the usefulness of data for quantifying homelessness and determining the allocation of resources, especially over the long-term. Different approaches will yield different results depending on the time of the year or even the time of day the count is held, the type of questions asked to conduct surveys, the places where the count is conducted, and the definition of 'homelessness' used to identify homeless individuals.

Keeping this in mind, there is a need to standardize the method of estimating homelessness in Canada. In 2016, the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) developed a guide to conduct coordinated PiT counts in Canada and carried them out in a number of communities in January/April 2016 and March/April 2018. Unfortunately, due to the unique circumstances of rural communities, the HPS' guide could not be applied as effectively for determining the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada's rural and remote communities.

THE RURAL PERSPECTIVE

Since the standard PiT approach is frequently ineffective for rural communities, a customized approach to the Population Estimation method should be employed to effectively gather the reliable data on rural homelessness. Through conducting thorough research and working extensively with representatives from multiple rural communities, ARDN has developed a standardized approach for rural communities.

"Service-based estimation with known location counts."

The Approach

Rural communities across Canada are limited in the resources they can access. Urban centres can allocate more resources to recruitment and have access to a larger pool of volunteers to walk the streets and conduct physical counts of individuals experiencing homelessness across the city. This gap in resources poses a major challenge to the ability of rural communities to collect adequate information about their local homelessness situation which affects their ability to advocate and obtain the proper resources required to support this local population.

'Homelessness' is a broad, multi-faceted term, and data collected by conducting physical counts of individuals living on the streets as the only ones qualifying under homelessness is not sufficient to understand the nature and scope of the issue in rural communities. Performing physical counts of individuals experiencing homelessness on the streets and in emergency shelters has numerous limitations, including that it only identifies those who are visibly homeless, and does little to identify those experiencing hidden homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless. Therefore, a unique,

efficient, and cost-effective alternative to estimate homelessness is required for rural and remote areas.

A service-based Population Estimation approach, as defined above **(pg. 4)**, estimates the number of individuals experiencing homelessness as well as those at risk of becoming homeless in a community by using data collected by service agencies over a defined period of time. Service agencies can include soup kitchens, food banks, outreach programs, social service agencies, income support services, etc.; that is, any agency that provides supports or services to individuals experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness. Communities may also recruit law enforcement, clergy, schools, and other community organizations to administer surveys collectively. Collaborating with multiple service agencies will present a more comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive snapshot of the members of the community who may require more supports. Please note that consistency is important; once the participating service agencies have been defined, it is advisable to enlist the same organizations again for all subsequent estimations, when possible.

An additional step characterized as "known location counts" may be incorporated into the homelessness estimation if there are certain parts of the community that act as informal residences for individuals experiencing homelessness (i.e. camping or RV parks, 'tent cities', etc.). Known location counts can be carried out if the community has extra resources to recruit and train volunteers. The known location count will help ensure that communities do not miss individuals experiencing homelessness who are not actively accessing service agencies or individuals who frequent service agencies but were unable to access them during the estimation period.

The specific environments of "known locations" may differ among communities and it is up to the community lead to secure all necessary precautions to ensure that known locations are accessed and counts are conducted in a legal and safe manner. Organizations and bodies organizing the count should consider consulting and working with local law enforcement agencies , to ensure the safety of all staff and volunteers conducting known location counts.

The Process

Service agencies within a particular community begin by forming a task force to ensure as many agencies as possible are on board and that the estimation process has been read and understood. The task force hires or assigns a coordinator who will manage the entire estimation process. The coordinator could be from one of the participating agencies, but if possible, the appointed person should **not** work directly in a frontline position with individuals experiencing homelessness to protect the privacy of clients. Alternatively, the coordinator could be someone who is hired on a temporary basis for the duration of the estimation. Once the coordinator has been assigned, all staff involved with the estimation at each participating service agency need to undergo training for the survey process and the survey itself. It is critical for agencies to understand the purpose and goals behind the process and how the count will benefit the community overall. Understanding the scope and benefits of the process will affect the number of surveys collected as it influences the amount of effort dedicated to the process by service agencies.

Service agencies should encourage each person coming in to access their agency for services to fill out a survey during the predetermined time period.

Individuals/families are expected to fill out the survey only once during the predetermined estimation period, regardless of how many service agencies they may have accessed or how many times they may have visited the same service agency. In the event that an individual has filled out a survey more than once, only the most recent survey shall be considered. If survey respondents feel uncomfortable at any point, they can skip any of the questions or opt-out at any time during the survey. In such cases, all of the client's information **must not** be included in the final results. However, service agencies need to keep track of the number of surveys that were started but not completed as this information will be reported on in the data analysis/reporting section.

Individuals and families who visit service agencies for support can be in vulnerable situations that prevent them from taking part in a survey at the time. Participating agencies should always focus on serving the immediate needs of the person and perform the survey only when they are in a more stable situation.

Each person who is surveyed during the estimation period is assigned a **'Unique Identifier'**, which will be a combination of their name, gender identity, and parts of their date of birth. The purpose of the Unique Identifier is three-fold:

1. It maintains privacy by keeping the identity of the participants confidential both in the records and to the coordinator who will be analyzing the data. This is particularly important in rural and remote communities, which are typically small and where people are more likely to know each other.
2. The Unique Identifier prevents duplication; for example, if John Smith (born on 15th November 1960) uses multiple service agencies or even visits the same service agency multiple times within the predefined period of time, he will ultimately only be counted once. If Unique Identifiers are not used, then John Smith will remain anonymous to the agencies and will be counted as many times as he uses the service agencies, which will skew the data and provide a false estimation for the community.
3. All the Unique Identifiers gathered over time (multiple estimations) may be used to identify trends and gaps in the services offered within the community. It is possible that if a certain Unique Identifier consistently shows up in the data, it can mean that this person has been unable to secure the proper supports to stabilize their situation. The community can then use the estimation data from past estimations to identify the various services this individual has been accessing and theorize possible reasons behind its recurrence and subsequently reinforce appropriate services, all without knowing this person's actual identity.

After the service agencies have collected data over the predetermined timeframe, the coordinator will gather all the information, conduct basic data analysis and determine the estimated number of homeless individuals within a community along with key data to address specific issues and trends in the community. Specific details of the entire process are outlined in following pages.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Follow these steps to find out how many people are homeless or at risk of homelessness in your rural community:

Step 1: Establish a Task Force

Implementation Timeline – 2 Months Before the Start of the Estimation

In order to accurately estimate the number of individuals experiencing homelessness within a rural community, it is essential to secure the participation of as many service agencies as possible (ideally all). More importantly, all parties involved in the process need to understand the reasons behind the estimation count and why the community needs to know how many members of the community are experiencing homelessness or are at risk, and how the estimation will benefit them and the community as a whole. This will ensure that all service agencies support the cause.

Many rural communities already have a task force in place where all service agencies meet, discuss, and plan future strategies. If your community does not have a task force in place, then the first step towards estimating homelessness is to establish one. It is also recommended that individuals with lived experience of homelessness be part of the task force to ensure all concerns and considerations are represented.

✓ Checkpoint

Do you have a task force?	
YES	Move to Step 2.
NO	Establish a new task force.

Note: Contact ARDN if your community doesn't have service agencies that regularly assist people. ARDN will assist your community in devising a customized approach to conduct a successful homelessness estimation.

Step 2: Assign a Coordinator

Implementation Timeline – 2 Months Before the Start of the Estimation

Assign an Estimation Coordinator who will manage the entire Estimation project for the community. This person can either be someone from one of the service agencies or a person hired short-term specifically for this project, but, if possible, the appointed person should **not** work directly in a frontline position with individuals experiencing homelessness to protect the privacy of clients. The Coordinator must read and ensure they understand the entire Estimation Guide, including the methodology therein. The Coordinator should contact ARDN if they are unsure about any aspects of the method, as this can affect data reliability and integrity.

The Coordinator will: 1) manage the entire estimation for the community; 2) be responsible for ensuring service agency representatives are trained; and 3) gather and collate all collected data for analysis and report to the community. It is important that this person does not know the identity of the clients and only works with the Unique Identifiers when analyzing the data. More information on Unique Identifiers is provided in Step 6: Estimation. This will maintain client privacy while reducing duplication.

✓ Checkpoint

Do you have an Estimation Coordinator designated and have they read and understood the estimation guide?	
YES	Move to Step 3.
NO	• Find a designated Estimation Coordinator who will manage and assume responsibility for the entire project; • If possible, ensure the chosen Coordinator isn't someone who works directly in the frontline with individuals experiencing homelessness and doesn't know the identity of the clients; and • Ensure that the Coordinator reads this guide thoroughly and understands the entire process.

Note: The Coordinator will be responsible for managing the estimation, training participants, gathering data for analysis, and reporting to the community.

Step 3: Understanding the Definition of Homelessness

Implementation Timeline – 1 to 2 Months Before the Start of the Estimation

It is critical for everyone to understand and use consistent definitions of homelessness as this would

directly affect how much effort is directed into the process. Additionally, consistent understanding of the definitions of homelessness can make results more comparable among other communities and/or the same community over time.

Rural communities should ensure all service agencies and their representatives understand the standard definitions of Homelessness, Youth Homelessness and Indigenous Homelessness in Canada as per the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (as shown on pages 1 - 2).

✓ Checkpoint

Do all the Service Agencies and their representatives, as well as the Designated Coordinator in your community, understand the various definitions of homelessness?	
YES	Move to Step 4.
NO	Ensure all service agencies in your community and their representatives understand the definitions of homelessness.
Note: All service agencies participating in the homelessness estimation in your community should have a clear understanding of the various definitions of homelessness and the different categories within it. This is mandatory to maintain consistency in the steps ahead and ensure the data collected is reliable.	

Step 4: Training

Implementation Timeline – 1 Month Before the Start of the Estimation

Training is paramount to the success of the estimation. It is vital to train all service agencies on the process and guidelines for conducting this estimation to ensure standardization across service providers and frontline workers. Preparing service agencies for the estimation will include ensuring clarity of the definitions of homelessness, the benefits of estimation, how to properly complete the survey and ask questions in a sensitive manner, such as gender identity and sexual orientation (Abramovich, 2019), and how to properly report the most accurate data for a successful estimation. Consistent and relevant data can only be obtained through training – this cannot be overemphasized. Training is the only way to ensure the consistency necessary to have high quality data. This training, if not possible to do in person, should be done through conference calls, web-based seminars or other approaches suitable for the community.

Every community works differently and, therefore, the training should be designed and implemented to meet the needs of the members of the task force. For example, one day of training delivered through lecture format should be adequate, but if the task force members require a more hands on approach, then an in-person training with mock estimations may be carried out over two days. ARDN recommends each training session have a maximum of 20 participants to ensure interaction among participants. However, the group may be tailored to accommodate the community size and capacity.

Training will focus on:

- Common language and definitions
- The purpose of the estimation;
- The approach and methodology, by introducing this step-by-step guide;
- The survey provided with this guide;
- The process of administering the survey to the participants;
- LGBTQ2S inclusion;
- Cultural competency, and
- The process and timeline for returning completed surveys back to the coordinator.

✓ Checkpoint

Have you provided sufficient training to all the service agencies within the taskforce?	
YES	Move to Step 5.
NO	Provide training to all the service agencies ensuring: • The definition of homelessness is understood; • The purpose of the estimation and the approach and methodology in this guide are clearly understood; • LGBTQ2S inclusion; • Cultural competency, and • Service agencies know how to correctly assist individuals to fill out the surveys and get survey data back to the Coordinator in a secure fashion.

Note: Conducting a training session is mandatory and key to obtaining consistent and relevant data. ARDN recommends in-person trainings; however, trainings can also be done via conference calls, webinars, or any other approach that suits your community's setting.

Step 5: Marketing

Implementation Timeline – 1 Month Before the Start of the Estimation

Sufficient marketing and communication are important to successfully estimate homelessness, as it creates awareness and encourages people to access services during the estimation period. Rural communities usually do this very well, due to their small size and interconnectedness. Communities should use a personalized approach, following the strategies known to work best for the community. It is ideal to involve community members with lived experience of homelessness (i.e. people who are experiencing homelessness currently or who have experienced homelessness in the past).

Based on experience, people tend to detest being labeled 'homeless', due to the stigma associated with homelessness, and may prefer not to participate in research advertised as "homelessness survey" .Therefore, it is *strongly recommended* that the survey be conducted in accordance with the steps outlined in this guide, but marketed to community residents as a **"Housing and Service Needs Assessment"** rather than an explicit Homelessness Estimation. This serves to decrease stigma and increase participation, while still providing an honest depiction of the estimation's purpose.

Some ways to promote and create awareness about the estimation include:

- Community gatherings (e.g. BBQ, special events, etc...);
- Newspaper advertisements;
- Radio advertisements;
- Flyers at local service agencies;
- Flyers in local convenience stores, or community halls and churches;
- Postcard-style handouts at known locations;
- Community social media pages;
- Service agency websites;
- Posters at participating agencies;
- Announcements in meetings (council, clergy, service groups, etc.); and
- Word of mouth.

✓ Checkpoint

Have you carried out enough marketing with a clear message to encourage people to access service agencies during the estimation period?	
YES	Move to Step 6.
NO	Raise the awareness within your community through different marketing campaigns to encourage people to access services during the estimation period.

Note: Due to the stigma associated with homelessness, people may prefer not to participate in a 'homelessness estimation'. Therefore, ARDN recommends marketing the estimation as a **"Housing and Service Needs Assessment."**

Step 6: Estimation

Implementation Timeline – The Month of the Estimation

The suggested timeline for the estimation is ideally a 30-day period between October and November, with March and April being the second option. These times have been strategically chosen as the best times to conduct the estimation. In the fall, people affected by

homelessness start looking for temporary shelters to sustain them for the winter as the temperatures begin to drop. Conversely, March and April are tax season, and individuals experiencing homelessness or those at risk may be more likely to access service agencies in order to get connected to supports or assistance. This strategy increases the likelihood that individuals experiencing homelessness will be actively accessing service agencies for support, resulting in a more accurate estimation.

During the estimation, frontline staff at participating service agencies will invite individuals visiting their service agency to complete a survey. The standardized print-ready survey, provided on **www.ardn.ca**, should be used for the estimation process by all rural communities looking to conduct an estimation, unless a customized approach is required (a copy of the survey is also included in this Guide for reference purpose). The standardized survey has been created to be filled out directly by the survey participants; however, clients should be reminded that in the event that they require assistance, a frontline staff member is available to provide guidance and is able to provide literary support as needed.

Note: *The survey that was included in the first edition of this guide was designed to be an interview-based process where a staff member will walk through the survey questions with the respondent. However, based on feedback from communities that used the first edition of the guide, it was decided that a self-report style survey, where further assistance can be provided if necessary, may encourage respondents to answer more openly.*

In the event that a front-line staff has been asked to assist a client in filling out the survey, refer to the following steps.

The survey begins with a **statement of consent**; all service agency staff must obtain consent before proceeding with the survey. Consent is required to ensure that the respondent understands:

- why the survey is being conducted (i.e. to assess housing and service needs in the community);
- how their information will be used; and
- assurance that their information will remain confidential and anonymous.

The survey contains two points where consent is required: once at the beginning and again at the end of the survey. After the respondent has answered all the questions and is aware of the information they have shared, securing their consent again ensure that they're comfortable with the information they have shared through the process.

Individuals/families should be counted only once during the 30-day estimation period, regardless of how many service agencies they may have accessed or how many times they may have visited the same service agency. In the event that an individual has filled out a survey more than once, their unique identifier would prevent duplication and only the most recent shall be considered.

If survey respondents feel uncomfortable at any point, they can skip any of the questions, or stop taking the survey and opt-out, at any time. In such an event, **all of** the client's collected information **must not** be included in the final results. Service agencies should keep track of the number of surveys that were started but not completed, as this information will later be required in the data analysis/reporting section.

The Unique Identifier is a key component to accurately estimating the number of individuals experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness in your community. The Unique Identifier is a code created by taking parts of the respondent's name, date of birth, and gender identity. This code has a three-fold purpose:

1) Concealing the actual identity of the respondent in the records and to the coordinator who will be analyzing the data. This is especially important in rural communities because people tend to know each other. Privacy is a primary concern for individuals who may want to minimize the social impact of community members discovering their situation.

2) Reducing the possibility of duplication. For example, if John Smith, a male born on 15th November 1960, uses multiple agencies within the predefined period of time, the code ensures that he will only be counted once. If Unique Identifiers are not used, then John Smith remains anonymous to the agencies and will be counted as many times as he accesses support services. This duplication will reflect in the estimation data and skew the real need in the community.

Unique Identifier	
First Two Letters of the First Name First Two Letters of the Last Name Sum of the Numbers in the Birth Day Last Two Numbers of the Year of Birth '**M**' for Male, '**F**' for Female, and '**X**' for Non-Binary	
Example: John Smith, Male born on 15th November 1960 – **JOSM0660M** • First Two Letters of the First Name – JO • First Two Letters of the Last Name – SM • Sum of the Numbers in the Birth Day – 1+5 = 06* • Last Two Numbers of the Year of Birth – 60 • 'M' for Male – **M**	**Example:** Mary Robert, Female born on 29th June 1978 – **MARO1178F** • First Two Letters of the First Name – MA • First Two Letters of the Last Name – RO • Sum of the Numbers in the Birth Day – 2+9 = 11* • Last Two Numbers of the Year of Birth – 78 • 'F' for Female – **F**
*If the sum of the numbers in the Birth Day of the individual is less than 10, add a '0' in front of the final sum, and if the resulting sum is greater than 10, record it as is (please refer to the examples above). This is done to keep the overall unique identifier length consistent among all survey participants with a total of 9 characters. **In case of any missing information to develop a 'Unique Identifier', please use "#" for the character representing the information that is missing.	

3) Identifying trends and gaps in services over time. Unique Identifiers gathered over time may be used to identify trends and gaps in the services being offered in the community. It is possible that certain unique identifiers, which repeatedly appear in the data over time, can indicate individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. This data can be used to identify the various services this individual has been accessing throughout the years and determine whether these services need to be revisited and improved.

Recording the proper unique identifier is critical to the success of an Estimation. The 2nd edition of the survey has been designed to include a "For Office Use Only" section for staff members to fill in upon receipt of completed surveys. Through this new addition, the following valuable information will be collected: the unique identifier in a standardized manner, an indication whether the respondent completed the survey on their own or with assistance, and a clear date of completion.

The Unique Identifier, which is also a part of the survey, should be developed based on the criteria listed above.

The survey questions are designed to give communities a more holistic snapshot of how homelessness affects their community. This survey contains questions beyond housing that pertain to the various factors that influence someone's housing status. This information can be used to develop strategies to tackle homelessness and bolster wrap-around services where immediate housing solutions are unavailable.

Ensuring respondents' anonymity and confidentiality is paramount to the success of the survey. As such, participating staff must not include **any** identifying information on the survey that could potentially reveal the identity of the respondent. The Unique Identifier, apart from reducing the possibility of duplication, will help the coordinator identify the demographics of those experiencing homelessness. This code provides the community insight as to who is accessing services within the community without exposing the identity of respondents.

Known Location Count – Optional Step

An additional step may be incorporated into the homelessness estimation if there are certain parts of the community that act as informal residences for individuals experiencing homelessness (i.e. camping or RV parks, 'tent cities', etc.). Characterized as "known location counts," they can be carried out if the community has extra resources to recruit and train volunteers. Volunteers would visit pre-defined known locations and conduct the surveys with individuals on-site.

Communities must determine their own appropriate safety protocols for conducting known location counts (such as going in teams of two, only going during the daytime, etc.). The specifics of "known locations" may differ among communities and it is up to the community lead to secure all necessary safety precautions, including contacting and working with local law enforcement agencies/security personnel, to ensure the safety of all staff and volunteers conducting such counts.

If the community chooses to conduct a known location count, it must be conducted on a specific set of days during the estimation time period. Communities would benefit by conducting the known location counts more than once to capture as many people as possible. However, understanding that resources may not be readily available, communities can still glean valuable data from at least one known location count.

Data from known location counts can be used to estimate the percentage of unsheltered individuals who access local support services. If the Unique Identifiers collected from the known locations are also found in the list of Unique Identifiers collected from service agencies, it indicates that these individuals access service agencies.

However, if the Unique Identifiers collected in known locations are not found in the list of Unique Identifiers created at service agencies, then it means that the individual has not accessed support services (at least during the estimation time-frame). Known location counts also provide an opportunity for the community to ensure that everyone is aware of the supports and services provided by local service agencies.

✓ Checkpoint

Do you understand how to correctly generate Unique Identifiers and complete the survey provided with the guide?

YES	Move to Step 7.
NO	• Review the Survey and ask for guidance or clarification from the ARDN or the local coordinator; • Follow the guidelines on how to properly generate a Unique Identifier and ensure all surveys have been filled out correctly including the 'For Office Use Only' section; and • Fill out surveys for individuals that require assistance / provide the survey to respondents to fill it themselves.

Note: Individuals using the service agencies complete the survey themselves, unless they ask for guidance when needed or request to have the entire survey filled out by a frontline staff member at a service agency. Ensure that the service agency has completed the 'For Office Use Only' section immediately after completing the survey.

Step 7: Data Entry and Analysis

Implementation Timeline – Within 1 - 2 Months After the End of the Estimation

Data entry and analysis is critical to the estimation and if not carried out correctly, it could mean the entire effort is wasted. To ensure accurate data entry and analysis, rural communities must have:

- A thorough quality control procedure to review all collected data;
- The ability to efficiently enter all data in a digital format (i.e. Excel spreadsheet, database, etc.); and,
- The expertise and tools necessary to analyze the data and eliminate duplication.

After the survey collection period has ended, all service agencies should ensure that all completed surveys are sent back to the appointed Coordinator in a timely manner (i.e. within a maximum of 1 – 2 weeks). Even though all surveys should only contain Unique Identifiers on them (i.e. no identifying client information), until the surveys have been sent back to the Coordinator (using a secure method such as tracked courrier mail), all paper surveys should be kept locked in a safe location. By keeping surveys locked and accessible only by authorized staff who worked on the Estimation, client privacy and confidentiality is maintained and the possibility of data breaches is minimized.

Data Input

Once the Coordinator receives the surveys from each service agency (or as they are being received), they must also be stored in a locked location.

Each community is different and will have differing abilities to manage the Data Input step of the process. It is the assigned Coordinator's responsibility to determine their Task Force's internal capacity to conduct a thorough data analysis that will make the most out of the data collected. It is recommended that communities reach out to ARDN or other third-party consultants when necessary for guidance on statistical analysis and data reporting.

If communities choose to analyze data internally, the Coordinator will review data from surveys where respondents have given explicit consent at the beginning and the end of the survey. Upon performing this initial review, the Coordinator will then go through the rest of the survey to analyze valuable information such as:

- The number of Unique Identifiers collected, which indicates the number of people in need in the community (whether or not they are experiencing housing instability, what support services are being accessed, etc.);
- The current living situation(s) of people accessing support services;
- If and why respondents feel their current housing situation is unstable;
- Time spent by the respondent in the community;
- The previous community the respondent moved from, if applicable;
- How transient respondents have been in a given time period;
- Whether shelter services have been needed, and reasons behind non-access;
- Where clients live on a seasonal basis;
- If they were born in Canada or entered Canada as an immigrant or a refugee;
- Their ethnic group;
- Their occupation and how they obtain different forms of income; and,
- Where gaps exist in the support services being offered in the community.

Note: for all collected surveys, double consent is a requirement for any further analysis (ie. consent at the beginning **and** the end of the survey). If a survey is missing a clear "Yes" to the consent question at either the beginning OR the end of the survey (ie. either marked No, or left blank), that survey should **not** be included in the final count, based on best practices for research ethics.

Although the Unique Identifier provides a number of individuals at-risk of/experiencing homelessness within a community, the rest of the data in the survey provides a more holistic snapshot of other community factors that impact homelessness and housing insecurity. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to ensure all the data is analyzed and presented in a way that will be beneficial to the community.

In order to reduce the amount of time and effort required for data entry and analysis, it is recommended that service agencies use an online software to conduct the survey.

If all participating service agencies have the capacity to conduct online surveys, the Coordinator can contact the ARDN for a template of an online survey which can be modeled onto an online platform such as Survey Monkey or Qualtrics etc. Service agencies can then collect surveys directly into an online platform which will make data automatically accessible to the coordinator. The online platform can compile survey results, making it easier and faster for the Coordinator to analyze all the data for the development of the final report.

Note: All data presented up to this point in the process, whether to town or regional council(s), must be labeled as 'Preliminary Findings'. This data has to be cleaned, analyzed, and interpreted before any kind of recommendations can be inferred from it.

✓ Checkpoint

Have you sent all completed surveys to the assigned Coordinator and has the Coordinator started reviewing and analyzing the data?	
YES	Move to Step 8 while analysis in Step 7 is on-going.
NO	Ensure all completed surveys and the data is sent to the assigned Coordinator. The assigned Coordinator shall start: • Entering all data into a computer if not already done; • Reviewing all data gathered from the surveys; and, • Analyzing the collected data.

Note: Please contact ARDN if your community doesn't have qualified personnel to perform data entry and analysis. ARDN may be able to connect you with the required resources using its network of post secondary institutions/partners.

Step 8: Feedback

Implementation Timeline – Within 1 Month After the End of the Estimation

In order to make the estimation process more efficient for future counts, the Coordinator should gather feedback from all participating stakeholders after the estimation period, while data entry and analysis are being conducted. This should be done immediately following the estimation process, while the experience is still fresh. Communities should do this to review what works and what doesn't and to adjust future estimations accordingly. Through this review process, any issues can be identified, captured, and addressed prior to the next estimation process.

✓ Checkpoint

Has the assigned Coordinator collected feedback from all stakeholders involved in the estimation process and is Step 7 complete?	
YES	Move to Step 9.
NO	The assigned Coordinator should collect feedback from all service agencies involved in the estimation process, while simultaneously completing the data analysis.

Note: Collecting feedback from all relevant stakeholders is essential to make future estimations more efficient and would help with buy-in. This shall be done within a month of the data collection period while the whole experience is still fresh among participants and data analysis is ongoing.

Step 9: Reporting

Implementation Timeline – 1 - 2 Months After the End of the Estimation

Once all the data has been analyzed, the Coordinator will draft a report that will inform a larger discussion to identify challenges and solutions to the community's efforts to tackle homelessness. It is up to the community to determine how to best use their data, and it is recommended that reports be shared with: the task force; local, provincial, and federal politicians; other service agencies not involved in the Estimation; the media; and members of the public by making the report available for download on a central website in the community. These reports can be used to advocate for increased resources to bolster support services and reduce homelessness within the community. Moreover, the information can be used to enhance partnerships and develop innovative solutions between various service agencies where client overlap occurs. Examples of which include: health care, mental health services, and affordable housing.

The format and design of the final report is the Coordinator's responsibility. However, in order to keep things simple, it is recommended that the report be no more than ten pages. The first to the fourth pages should highlight the results from the estimation, the fifth and sixth pages should include the details of the estimation process and data implications, the seventh and eighth pages should contain community recomendations from the data, and the remaining pages should list any changes in the processes for future estimations based on feedback, and timelines for future estimations. **Please ensure that the Unique Identifiers are not published in the report and are kept in a secure location for future reference.**

✓ Checkpoint

Has the Coordinator prepared a report highlighting the results of the survey and has the final report been shared with the task force and members of the community?	
YES	You have successfully completed the homelessness estimation project. Refer to Steps 10 and 11 for concluding remarks
NO	• The assigned Coordinator should prepare a report highlighting the results of the survey, details of the estimation process, and future plans. • The final report should be shared with the task force and members of the community and made available on a central platform / website in the community.

Note: Please contact ARDN if your community doesn't have qualified personnel to finalize the data analysis and prepare a final report. ARDN may be able to connect you with the required resources using its network of post-secondary institutions/partners.

Step 10: Access Resources

Implementation Timeline – Anytime Before or After the Estimation

Finally, each community should take every measure necessary to access all technical and volunteer resources available to them in their region for further support. **For example, the ARDN works to promote the wellbeing of rural communities across Alberta. ARDN helps communities identify the need and then develop affordable housing strategies to reduce homelessness** and resources like this should be accessed whenever possible, as they may already have solutions to the issues and challenges that your community may be facing.

Step 11: Repeat

Implementation Timeline – Every Two Years

If possible, each community should repeat the entire estimation process once every two years. It is important to estimate homelessness on a regular basis to identify local trends in homelessness, housing, and gaps in service needs to reduce homelessness in the community.

If communities wish to count individuals experiencing homelessness in known locations, they should revisit the list of known locations prior to every count as these can change over time and compromise the quality of the data.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Please visit www.ardn.ca to access additional resources that have been used in the past to conduct successful homelessness estimations in rural and remote communities.

ARDN is currently developing an online database that captures the estimation data collected across rural and remote communities in Canada. More information will be provided once the database has been developed. Please feel free to contact ARDN for more information at **info@ardn.ca**

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APPENDIX A

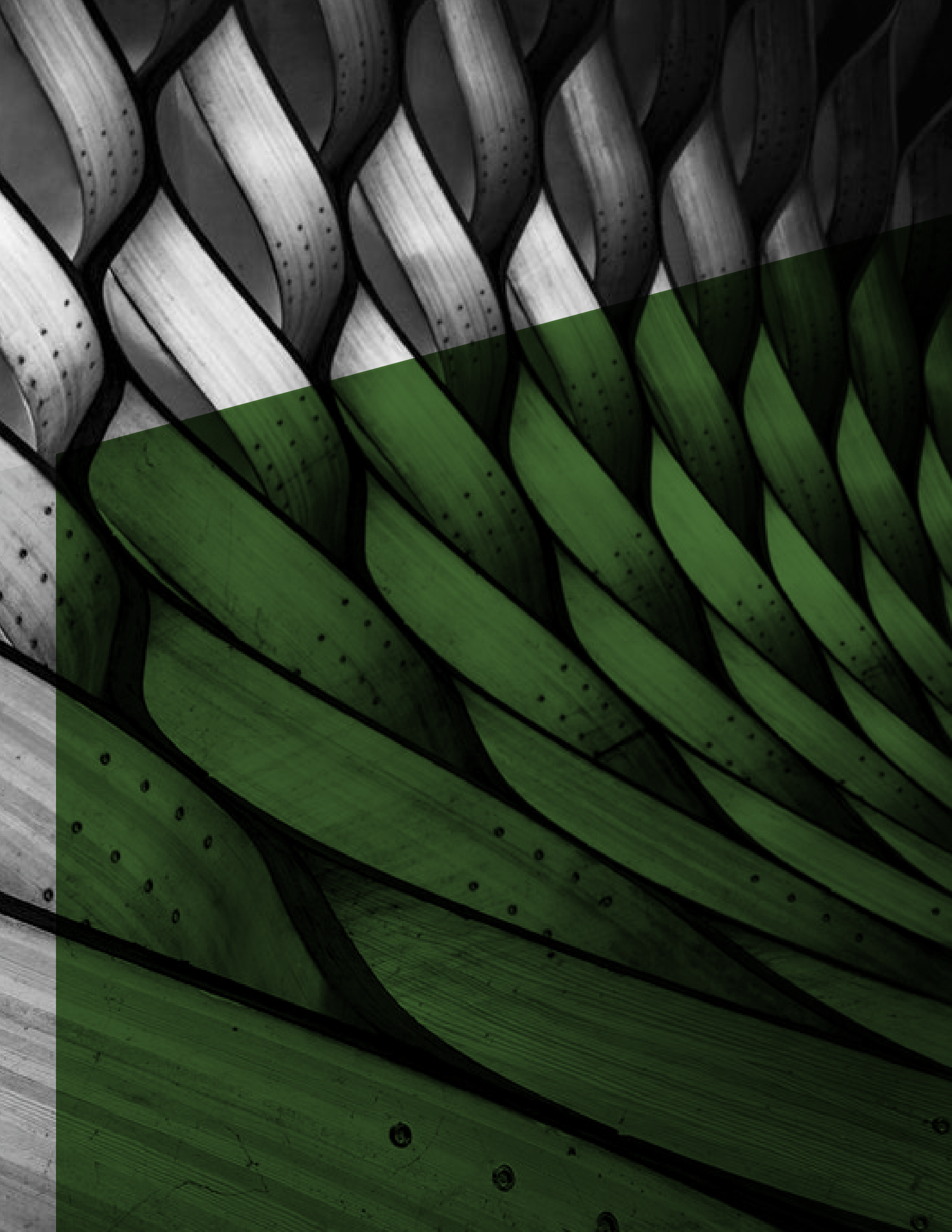
Experts and communities in Canada and abroad that provided guidance and contributed to the First Edition of the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimate Rural Homelessness:

Erin Forsey, Nova Scotia Health Authority, Sydney, NS
Laurel Fitzsimonds, Leduc County FCSS, Nisku, AB
Carla Liepert, Leduc County FCSS, Nisku, AB
Kathleen Turner, Grande Prairie County FCSS, Grande Prairie, AB
Annemarie Tocher, Western Rocky View Family & Community Resource Centre, Cochrane, AB
Jason Garagan, Western Rocky View Family & Community Resource Centre, Cochrane, AB
Cindy Easton, Mountain Rose Women's Shelter Association, Rocky Mountain House, AB
Kristie Gomuwka, Edson Friendship Centre, Edson, AB
Pavan Sonpar-Pahwa, Addictions & Mental Health / Edson Friendship Centre, Edson, AB
Ashley Grzybowski, Hinton Employment and Learning Place, Hinton, AB
Mandy Crespeigne, Hinton Employment and Learning Place, Hinton, AB
Corinne Burns, Cochrane Society for Housing Options, Cochrane, AB
Amber Forest, YWCA Banff, Banff, AB
Sachiho Miller, YWCA Banff, Banff, AB
Angie O'Connor, Fort Macleod FCSS, Fort Macleod, AB
Jody Francis, Fort Macleod Housing Support Program, Fort Macleod, AB
Valerie Campbell, Foothills Centre, Fort Macleod, AB
Agnes Gendron, Cold Lake Native Friendship Center, Cold Lake, AB
Wendy Theodore, Vulcan Regional Food Bank Society, Vulcan, AB
Bernice Mechor, Lakeland Out of the Elements Shelter, Lac La Biche, AB
Grace Miller, Lakeland Out of the Elements Shelter, Lac La Biche, AB
Darrell Lessmeister, Lac La Biche County, Lac La Biche, AB
Diahann Polege-Aulotte, Bonnyville & District FCSS, Bonnyville, AB
Emily Hickman, Drayton Valley and District FCSS, Drayton Valley, AB
Lola Strand, Drayton Valley and District FCSS, Drayton Valley, AB
Debra Bossert, Town of Drayton Valley, Drayton Valley, AB
Stella Keller, Brazeau Foundation, Drayton Valley, AB
Scott Fenwick, Advisor, Edmonton, AB
Joshua Bénard, Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN), Edmonton, AB
Jonn Kmech, Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN), Edmonton, AB
Tylor Galutira-Murray, Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN), Edmonton, AB

APPENDIX B

To date, ARDN has worked with the following communities to apply the methodology outlined in this Step-by-Step Guide:

Athabasca County
Banff
Canmore
Camrose
Conklin
Drayton Valley
Drumheller
Fort Macleod
Grande Cache
Greenview
Hinton
Jasper
Kainai First Nation
Lac la Biche
Parkland County
Peace River
Ponoka
Rocky Mountain House
Spruce Grove
Stony Plain
Strathmore
Wetaskiwin



Housing and Service Needs Estimation Survey

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

- This survey was created to help our community gain a better understanding of the needs of our residents and the services required to improve and enhance community well-being.
- Your answers will help us identify the type of services that are currently being accessed and which ones are currently seeing the most use, and what needs in the community aren't being met. We will use the information gathered from this survey to take steps to increase and/or improve the services offered within our community.

PROCEDURE

- Time required: 6 – 10 minutes.
- This survey contains questions regarding your current/past living situations, employment, and citizenship/immigration status.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you are free to skip any of the questions or stop the survey without affecting your access to services.
- Staff members are available to answer any questions regarding the survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

- By continuing with this survey, you consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of your personal information for the purposes described above.
- A unique identifier will be assigned to the information you provide in this survey and your full name will not be used in the survey.
- Physical and electronic copies of the data (where available) will be stored and protected using adequate safeguards like password-protected computers.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You can skip questions if you wish. If you skip questions, your responses to other questions will still be recorded.
- You can stop at any time without affecting your access to services. If you stop the survey at any point, none of your information will be used.

Knowing the information above, are you willing to take this survey right now?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, for which reasons?

- ☐ I don't have time today
- ☐ I have taken the survey before
- ☐ The survey is too long
- ☐ The survey is too personal
- ☐ The survey doesn't relate to me
- ☐ other

BEGIN SURVEY

Q1. Anonymous Unique Identifier
[ex. John Smith, born on 15th November 1964]

J O	What are the first two letters of your **FIRST** name?
S M	What are the first two letters of your **LAST** name?
1 5	What is the **DAY** you were born?
6 4	What are the last two numbers of the **YEAR** you were born?

Q2. How do you describe your gender identity?
- ☐ Male/Man
- ☐ Female/Woman
- ☐ Two-Spirit
- ☐ Trans Male/Trans Man
- ☐ Trans Female/Trans Woman
- ☐ Non-binary (including genderqueer & gender fluid)
- ☐ Don't Know
- ☐ Identity Not Listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q3. How do you describe your sexual orientation?
- ☐ Straight
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Asexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Two-spirit
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Questioning
- ☐ Identity not listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

DEMOGRAPHICS

Q4. Were you born in Canada?
- ☐ Yes *(please skip to Q5.)*
- ☐ No *(please answer Q4a. to Q4c.)*

Q4a. If no, how long have you lived in Canada?
____ days / weeks / months / years
OR
- ☐ ___ / ___ / ___ date of arrival (mm/dd/yy)
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q4b. Did you come to Canada as an immigrant, refugee, or refugee claimant?
- ☐ Economic Migrant Worker
- ☐ Landed Immigrant
- ☐ Permanent Resident
- ☐ Refugee/Claimant
- ☐ Student Visa
- ☐ Temporary Foreign Worker
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q4c. What is your current migrant status?
- ☐ Canadian Citizen
- ☐ Economic Migrant Worker
- ☐ Landed Immigrant
- ☐ Permanent Resident
- ☐ Refugee/Claimant
- ☐ Student Visa
- ☐ Temporary Foreign Worker
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q5. Which ethnic group do you identify with? *(check one)*
- ☐ African
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Indigenous
  - ☐ First Nations
  - ☐ Inuit
  - ☐ Métis
- ☐ Latino/Hispanic
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ Not Listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q6. Have you ever served in the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or any Emergency Services? *(check all that apply)*

Yes
- ☐ Canadian Armed Forces
- ☐ Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- ☐ Emergency Services (EMS, Police, Fire Dept.)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

HOUSING STABILITY

Q7. Do you consider your housing situation to be unstable or you feel you could easily lose your housing?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

HOUSING STABILITY (CONTINUED)

Q8. Thinking about your living situation this past month, which of these statements apply to you? *(Check all that apply)*

- ☐ I own the house I'm currently in
- ☐ I rent the apartment I'm currently in
- ☐ I live in accommodations provided by my employer
- ☐ I live in a house that is owned by/rented out by the Band
- ☐ I share a house/apartment with roommates
- ☐ I live in a house/apartment that I share with family/dependents
- ☐ I find it difficult to pay rent and I feel like I spend more than a third of my monthly income on my housing
- ☐ I live in housing that needs major repairs (heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.)
- ☐ There are not enough rooms for the number of people in the house I'm in
- ☐ I lived in supported housing (e.g. Housing First) in the past month
- ☐ I stayed in a medical/detox/rehabilitation facility in the past month
- ☐ I slept in a friend's/family's house because I had no other place to stay in the past month
- ☐ I stayed in a jail/ prison/ remand centre in the past month
- ☐ I stayed at a women's/domestic violence shelter in the past month
- ☐ I stayed with someone I didn't know because I had no other place to stay in the past month
- ☐ I slept in a shelter in the past month
- ☐ I slept in a makeshift shelter, vehicle, tent, or shack in the past month
- ☐ I slept in a public space (sidewalks, park benches, bus shelter etc.) in the past month

Q9. Why do you feel that your housing situation is unstable or why you feel you could lose it? *(please choose up to 5 answers)*

- ☐ Does not apply to me
- ☐ Abuse
- ☐ Addiction/Substance Use
- ☐ Conflict with: landlord, parent/guardian, roommate, spouse/partner *(underline)*
- ☐ Disability: mental, physical *(underline)*
- ☐ Domestic/Family Violence
- ☐ Family Rejection: due to gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression *(underline)*
- ☐ I can't afford my rent or mortgage payments
- ☐ I don't make enough money
- ☐ Illness/Medical Condition
- ☐ Lost my job/Spouse lost their job *(underline)*
- ☐ Mental Health Issues
- ☐ My housing needs major repairs (mould, etc.)
- ☐ My rent increased
- ☐ Racism/Discrimination
- ☐ Lack of Transportation
- ☐ Was in jail/prison
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q10. If you had to choose only one main reason why you feel that your housing situation is unstable, which one would it be? *Please write your answer in the box below:*

RECENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Q11. Have you stayed in an emergency shelter in the past year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q12. If you needed a shelter in the past year, and didn't access one, what were the reasons? (select all that apply)

- ☐ I didn't need shelter services
- ☐ The shelter was full
- ☐ No shelter in my area
- ☐ Don't feel safe
- ☐ Health concerns (i.e. bed bugs, dirty, etc.)
- ☐ Hours of operation
- ☐ Lack of disability accommodations
- ☐ Lack of transportation
- ☐ No pets allowed
- ☐ Separation from family member(s) or partner
- ☐ Reason not listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

RECENT ACCOMMODATIONS (CONTINUED)

Q13. How long have you been staying in your current living arrangements?

- ☐ Less than a month
- ☐ 1 to 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ More than 2 years
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

Q14. Have you ever been in foster care, in a youth group home, or under a youth/young adult agreement?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q15. Are you or anyone in your household currently pregnant?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q16. Are you currently a single-parent household?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q17. How many dependents under 18 years of age are staying with you tonight?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ Other: ____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q18. Please list out the ages/gender of the dependents staying with you:

e.g. 16-year-old boy

- ☐ Does not apply to me
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q19. How many adults are staying with you?

- ☐ None
- ☐ # _____ total number of adults
  - ☐ Parent(s)
  - ☐ Partner
  - ☐ Adult Children (18+)
  - ☐ Extended Family
  - ☐ Co-Workers
  - ☐ Not Listed: _____
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer

COMMUNITY LIVING

Q20. How long have you lived in this community?

- ☐ Always lived here
- ☐ Under a year
- ☐ Over a year
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Please answer Q20a. to Q20d.

Q20a. Where did you live before you came to this community?

- ☐ Another community in the province: _____
- ☐ A First Nation Community
- ☐ A Métis Settlement
- ☐ An Inuit Community
- ☐ Another province: _____
- ☐ Another country: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Does not apply to me

Q20b. How many times have you moved in the past 12 months?

- ☐ Have not moved in the past 12 months
- ☐ 1 to 2 times
- ☐ 3 to 6 times
- ☐ More than 6 times
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Does not apply to me

Q20c. What is the main reason you came to this community?

- ☐ Environmental displacement (flooding, fire, lack of clean drinking water, etc.)
- ☐ Fear for safety
- ☐ Family moved here
- ☐ I was looking for work
- ☐ I got a job here
- ☐ To access emergency shelter(s)
- ☐ To access services/supports
- ☐ To find housing
- ☐ To visit friends and family
- ☐ To attend school
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to Answer

Q20d. Would you have stayed in your previous community if you had access to better services/programs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

EMPLOYMENT

Q21. Are you currently employed?

- ☐ Yes *(please answer Q21a. to Q21b.)*
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q21a. If yes, is your position (check all that apply):

- ☐ Casual
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Not Listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q21b. If yes, which area is your job in?

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Forestry
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Restaurant/Food and Beverage
- ☐ Human Services
- ☐ Hunting/Trapping
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Oil and Gas
- ☐ Retail/Personal Services
- ☐ Technology
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Not Listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q22. What are your sources of income? *(Check all that apply.)*

- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Alimony/Child Support
- ☐ Child and Family Tax Benefits
- ☐ Disability Benefits
- ☐ Employment Insurance (EI)
- ☐ GST refunds
- ☐ Income Assistance
- ☐ Informal Income (e.g. bottle returns, panhandling, etc.)
- ☐ Money from family and friends
- ☐ Student Loans
- ☐ Seniors Benefits (CPP, OAS, GIS, etc.)
- ☐ My Partner or Spouse's Income
- ☐ Veterans' Benefits
- ☐ Not Listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q23. What is the highest level of education you've completed?

- ☐ No formal education
- ☐ Some grade school
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school diploma or GED
- ☐ Apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma
- ☐ College certificate or diploma
- ☐ Some post-secondary
- ☐ Post-secondary degree (bachelor's)
- ☐ Graduate/Professional Degree (Master's, PhD, MD, JD, etc.)
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

SUPPORT SERVICES

Q24. What is the main reason(s) for visiting the office today? (choose as many options as it applies to you)

- ☐ Basic Needs - food, shelter, clothing, etc.,
- ☐ Crisis Financial Support – eviction notice, utility bill problems, damage deposits, etc.
- ☐ Family/Parenting - child care, parenting/family issues, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals etc.
- ☐ Financial - employment, housing, training/education, etc.
- ☐ Health and Wellness - addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual/cultural, etc.
- ☐ Legal - separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanor, etc.
- ☐ Support Services– help with government forms, help with accessing government/other programs or services, access to technology, etc.
- ☐ Transportation Needs– access to basic services/education/employment, medical transportation
- ☐ All of the Above
- ☐ Not Listed: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

SUPPORT SERVICES (CONTINUED)

Q25. Of the areas listed in Q24, which ones do you feel you need the most support or assistance with? (list as many options as it applies to you)

Support Services

Q26. Does our community provide enough…	Yes	No	Not Sure
Employment opportunities	☐	☐	☐
Free/accessible recreational/social opportunities	☐	☐	☐
Sufficient social services	☐	☐	☐
Accessible affordable housing	☐	☐	☐

Q27. Knowing the information you've shared, do we have your consent to use this information to estimate the resources we need to support people in our community?

As a reminder, no identifying information will be used; all data will be treated securely and with respect; and saying "No" will NOT affect your ability to access services.

☐ Yes
☐ No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
(please fill in completely)

☐ Survey conducted by Staff Member
☐ Survey filled out by Client

Date Completed: M M / D D / Y Y Y Y
Service Agency Name: _____

Please create the **unique identifier** based on the information on **page 2** of this survey and as shown in the guidelines below.

Unique Identifier Guidelines

To safeguard respondents' identity and ensure their anonymity, please fill in the unique identifier box located at the bottom of this page as follows:

[Ex. John Smith, born on 15th November 1964]

J	O	S	M	0	6	6	4	M
A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E

(A1, A2) First Two Letters of the First Name

(B1, B2) First Two Letters of the Last Name

(C1 + C2) Sum* of the Numbers in the Birth Day

(D1, D2) Last Two Numbers of the Year of Birth

(E) 'M' for Male, 'F' for Female, and 'X' for Non-Binary

** If the sum of the numbers in the Birth Day of the individual is less than 10, add a '0' in front of the final sum, and if the resulting sum is greater than or equal to 10, record it as is. Refer to the examples above. This is done to keep the overall unique identifier length consistent among all survey participants with a total of 9 characters.*

*** In the case of any missing information to develop a 'Unique Identifier', please use "#" for the character representing the information that is missing.*

Alberta Rural Development Network
Edmonton, AB
780.964.2736 | info@ardn.ca | www.ardn.ca