

Moving UPP!

The User Pathways Project

Final Report

Prepared by Connect2Knowledge Inc.

Blue Petties and Natalie Duchesne, PhD.

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Executive Summary

The Moving User Pathways Project! (Moving UPP!) is a collaboration between the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa (ATEHO) and the Ottawa Social Housing Network (OSHN). The project's goal is to develop promising solutions for improving pathways from precarious housing and homelessness to permanent and successful housing.

Co-design was a fundamental part of the Moving UPP! project, shaping the design of activities and goals, decision-making structures, and the implementation of the project plan. This approach involves sharing power and engaging in an iterative process that combines consultation with active co-design activities. Moving UPP!: How can we use current resources to create the best possible pathway(s) from housing precarity and homelessness to permanent and successful housing? What roles are needed? What policy framework is needed?

For Moving UPP!, decision-making power was shared by the Expert Steering Team (EST) and an Advisory Committee. The Expert Steering Team (EST), part of ATEHO, consists of a diverse group of individuals with lived experiences of precarious housing and homelessness and was involved in the project from its conception. This early and ongoing involvement allowed the project to centre their direct experiences, connections, and insights. The Advisory Committee included representatives from ATEHO, OSHN, the City of Ottawa, the youth sector, justice, affordable housing providers, and supportive housing providers. Together, the Advisory Committee and the EST provided oversight for the project, including approving the process, supporting analysis, and reviewing results from each phase.

Moving UPP! was structured into four phases. The early engagement phase set the foundation by defining the project scope and engaging key stakeholders to generate enthusiasm and commitment. This was followed by an environmental scan, where best practices were collated and local insights gathered to shape the project's direction. A co-design sprint with interested parties was then used to collaboratively identify and explore solutions to improve pathways. Finally, the consolidation phase synthesized the insights from the project to formulate three actionable solutions for creating streamlined pathways to permanent and successful housing.

- **Enhancing Shelter Diversion:** Targets people who are facing imminent homelessness or are recently homeless and helps them identify and access safe and appropriate housing options, allowing them to avoid shelter entry or a prolonged shelter stay.
- **Fostering Shared Ownership in Digital Projects:** Advancing the principles of shared ownership and co-design in future digital projects, in collaboration with the sector and the City.
- **Increasing Sector Collaboration & Coordination:** Building on Moving UPP! and other recent collaborations between ATEHO and OSHN, the sector will come together on projects like creating a case management community of practice and addressing issues with people being evicted from their homes due to subsidy loss without the ability to pay market rents. These projects will significantly improve pathways to successful and permanent housing.

Context

The Moving User Pathways Project! (Moving UPP!) emerged from this collaboration. It aims to create better pathways from precarious housing and homelessness to permanent and successful housing in Ottawa. Moving UPP! is funded by the Ottawa Community Foundation.

ATEHO and OSHN hired Connect2Knowledge Inc. to lead a co-design process with the sector and other interested parties to develop effective solutions for improving pathways to permanent and successful housing. Co-design is a collaborative method that involves sharing power between housing sector leadership, direct service providers, and service users as well as using an iterative process, to identify integrative solutions that work for all. The project has three deliverables:

- Identify solutions to improve pathways from precarious housing and homelessness to permanent and successful housing in Ottawa.
- Determine the role of ATEHO and OSHN in implementing the identified solutions.
- Create policy recommendations to support the sector's efforts in improving pathways to permanent and successful housing.

This report relates to the first deliverable. It outlines the most promising solutions for better pathways that emerged from Moving UPP! and the co-design process to develop them. Policy recommendations can be found in Appendix A.



Co-design approach and methodology

Early Engagement Phase: Defining the project scope in partnership with the EST and engaging key stakeholders

Environmental Scan: Gathering best practices and local insights to shape the project's direction

Co-design Sprint: Identifying and exploring solutions with stakeholders, culminating in two codesign sessions with frontline staff and people with lived experience, and sector leaders, respectively.

Consolidation Phase: Using project insights to design three core pathways to an improved system, and a series of recommendations to support these goals.



Moving UPP! employed a co-design approach to find solutions for improving pathways from precarious housing and homelessness to permanent, successful housing. **Co-design is a collaborative approach that incorporates power-sharing, iterative processes, and a blend of consultation and active co-design activities.** This approach ensures that solutions are grounded in the realities of those experiencing housing precarity and homelessness, and incorporate the expertise of frontline staff, local organizations and other interested parties.

In **co-design**, sharing decision-making power means involving all interested parties, especially those with lived and living experience of housing precarity and homelessness, in every stage of the process. For Moving UPP!, decision-making power was shared by the Expert Steering Team (EST) and an Advisory Committee. The EST, part of ATEHO, consists of a diverse group of individuals with lived and living experiences of precarious housing and homelessness. The Advisory Committee included representatives from the ATEHO, OSHN, the City of Ottawa, the youth sector, justice, housing providers, and supportive housing. Jointly, the Advisory Committee and the EST provided oversight for the project, including approving the process, supporting analysis, and reviewing results from each phase.

An **iterative process** refines a project's outcomes through continuous feedback and adjustments. In Moving UPP!, each phase was built on the results of previous work. Emerging themes and ideas were shared with key informants, networks, the Advisory Committee, the EST, and other interested parties. This iterative approach helped validate early ideas, focus the dialogue, and build a shared understanding of the issues at hand.

Finally, Moving UPP! employed a mix of **consultation and co-design** activities, allowing interested parties to participate meaningfully while respecting their time, capacity, and expertise. These activities were organized in four phases: Early Engagement, Environmental Scan, Co-Design Sprint, and Consolidation. The next sections detail each phase.



Early Engagement

The goal of the early engagement phase was to refine the scope of the project and generate excitement among interested parties. As a first step, the consultants met with the EST, the ATEHO Board, and OSHN to define the shared design challenge:

How can we use current resources to create the best possible pathway(s) from housing precarity and homelessness to permanent and successful housing? What roles are needed? What policy framework is needed?

Alignment was achieved through collaborative discussions to integrate each group's priorities and perspectives. For the EST, it was important to centre the experiences of service users. The priority for the ATEHO Board was to create a coordinated and systematic approach that effectively leveraged existing resources and partnerships. For OSHN, the emphasis was on integrating the knowledge and expertise of affordable housing providers to create sustainable solutions.

The EST further contributed guidance on the principles that would guide the work:

- **Centre the service users' experience** by creating pathways that are accessible, culturally affirming, trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and free from stigma.
- **Use an intersectional lens** to ensure that solutions consider the experiences and needs of diverse populations.
- **Build pathways that work for both service users and providers** to improve the experience and outcomes for all.

In addition to these early consultations, the ATEHO met with a broad spectrum of organizations and networks to inform them about the project and generate excitement. They met with the Coalition of Community Health and Resources Centres, the Food Security Network, the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition, the Justice Network (HSJCC), the Ottawa Youth Justice Services Network, the Supportive Housing Network, the Day Program Coalition, the Coalition of Community Houses, and a table representing Women's Shelters.



Environmental Scan

The second phase was an environmental scan of promising practices in Canada, together with insights and potential solutions to the design challenge identified above. The consultants partnered with the EST to create an annotated bibliography of relevant literature and worked with project partners to identify nine municipalities known for their successful housing initiatives.

The hope was to interview key informants from organizations involved in systems planning and coordination from the nine identified municipalities. Unfortunately, there were not many responses to interview requests. The consultants conducted key interviews with representatives from the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness and End Homelessness St. Johns. The EST met with the Client Action Committee, a lived experience group based in Calgary that has a similar structure to the EST.

Due to challenges in interviewing key informants, the project changed its approach to finding promising solutions. To complete the environmental scan, the consultants utilized publicly available data and reports. They then pivoted to interviews with local thought leaders and conducted a survey of frontline staff.

The consultants met with **25 local thought leaders** to discuss potential solution areas and build trust in the process. Interviews included perspectives from shelters, transitional housing providers, supportive and affordable housing providers, youth-serving organizations, a 2SLGBTQ+ serving organization, and a mental health organization. The key themes from these conversations were:

- There is a need to increase the number of affordable housing units that are accessible to people with very low and low incomes.
- The necessity of providing comprehensive support services alongside housing. Addressing

mental health, substance use health, and social integration is particularly important in shelters and transitional housing contexts. Enhanced support is crucial for individuals exiting homelessness to housing, ensuring they receive the necessary assistance to stabilize and succeed in their new living situations. It will be important for services to follow folks as they move into permanent housing.

A survey of **62 front-line staff** provided additional insights by identifying how the sector might improve various points in client pathways through the housing and homelessness sector. The survey covered service promotion, referrals, intake, and service delivery. The key insights were:

- **Barriers to Collaboration and Need for Intentional Meeting Spaces:** There was consensus on the benefits of fostering informal relationships and networking through consortiums, lunches, and meetings to share strategies and experiences across organizations.
- **Issues with Annual Eligibility Rules to Maintain Housing Subsidies:** People are losing their housing due to challenges in proving their eligibility for subsidies on an annual basis. In consequence, they lose the subsidy and have to pay market rent. Because they can't afford market rent, they risk being evicted. If the process were less burdensome, or if households didn't have to worry about a rise in total family income leading to housing instability, (for example when a teen gets a job or a new partner moves in), this wouldn't be such a problem.
- **Improvements in Service Access:** Suggestions were made for enhancing how services are accessed, including better referral processes and stronger partnerships among organizations. There is a noted gap in clients' understanding of available services, underscoring the need for clearer communication at initial contact points.

While meeting with additional key informants from across Canada would have provided broader insights, the adapted strategy yielded significant benefits. It increased clarity in the sector around the project's aims, and trust among participants in the project's process. And, it nurtured a sense of shared ownership for results among interested parties.

Co-design Sprint

The third phase was a co-design sprint. It's a collaborative, time-bound process that brings together interested parties to creatively address complex challenges. The consultants approached the co-design sprint in three steps:

- **Persona and pathway development:** Developing detailed, realistic personas and client journeys to understand the diverse needs of people experiencing precarious housing and homelessness.
- **Co-design with EST and frontline staff:** Brainstorming ways to improve service interactions with the goal of more effective pathways.
- **Sector-wide co-design session:** Exploring and refining three distinct solution areas to improve pathways: enhancing shelter diversion to minimize entries and duration of stays, optimizing the application process for subsidized housing to boost successful tenancies, and developing case management standards through shared knowledge to improve the continuum of care.

Persona and Pathway Development



Wren (they/them)
25 years old



Rosie (she/her)
23 years old



Carrie (she/her)
28 years old



Amaruq (he/him)
38 years old



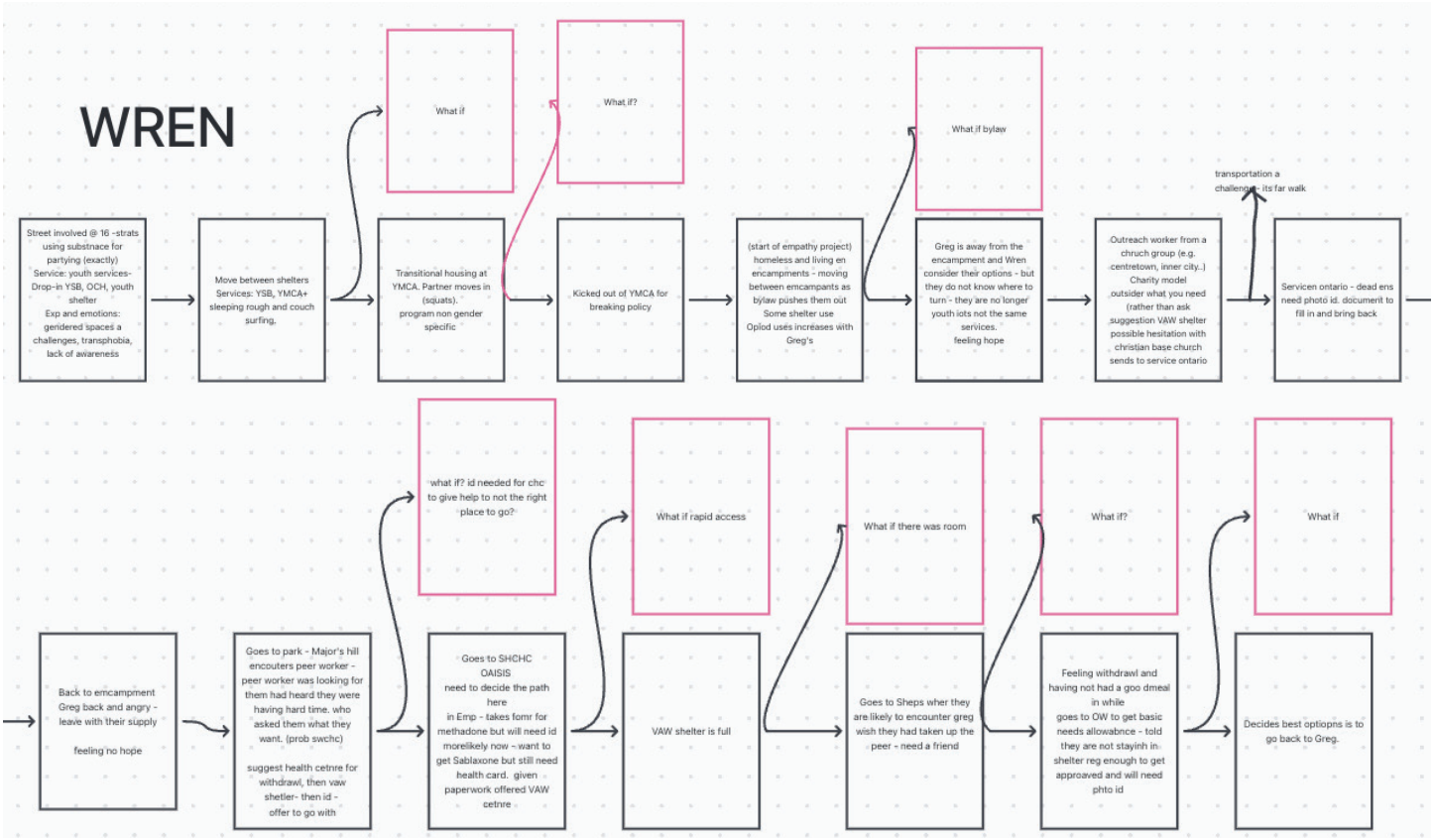
Abike (she/her)
38 years old



Tom (he/him)
45 years old

Developing detailed personas and their respective client journeys through the housing and homelessness system was an essential point of departure for finding the best solutions to improving pathways in Ottawa. The consultants leveraged profiles created by the EST for the Alliance's Empathy Project. The Empathy Project is an experiential learning experience in which participants use personas and activities to step into the shoes of those facing precarious housing and homelessness. In total, six personas were used. They represented a variety of intersectional experiences, such as a young adult Jewish non-binary individual living in an encampment, a young mother experiencing gender-based violence and a newcomer with three young children.

The next step was to develop each persona's client journey in the housing and homelessness sector to trace current pathways. The consultants worked with the EST to identify each persona's service interactions from the moment they experienced precarious housing to the moment they had stable housing. The EST used their extensive experience and knowledge of the current system to trace each persona's journey. An example is below:



Co-design with EST and Frontline Staff

The co-design session drew upon the expertise of five members of the EST and ten frontline staff. It is important to start with this group of people because they are closest to services and know how they work out in the real world. This group completed a deep dive into various service interactions. To gain a better understanding of the experience of both the client and provider in each service interaction, the group completed an empathy-based exercise. This information was used to highlight moments that matter. These were moments that, if improved, could have a big impact on the pathways for these personas. The main takeaways from the day were:

- Frontline staff learned from each other through exercises and took away practical insights to better serve their clients. This shows the need for more intentional spaces to come together and share information.
- Participants highlighted the need for more coordination between organizations, including case coordination. Frontline staff emphasized referrals as a key part of the client journey.
- Frontline staff and EST expressed the need for their inclusion in governance and planning at higher levels. Their perspectives should be integrated into the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT). The HHLT has been co-developed by the City and the sector to function as an Advisory Committee to plan, design, and oversee an integrated housing and homelessness system.

Based on the work done through Moving UPP! the consultants identified three key moments in housing and homelessness pathways. Consideration was given to solution areas that would address the concerns of the EST, the sector, and interested parties, as well as those that were within the sector's circle of control, and had the potential to positively impact pathways. The importance of these moments in client pathways was validated by the EST and Advisory Committee. They became the focus of the second co-design session:

- Arrival into shelters and opportunities to enhance shelter diversion.
- Applying to the social housing registry until the final steps of signing a lease or receiving a housing subsidy.
- Case management and the potential for the sector to create its own service standard funding to share with the city.

Sector Co-Design Session

The last activity in the co-design process phase was a sector co-design event that brought together 75 sector leaders to explore three promising solution areas. Each area had its own design challenge to focus participants' discussions. The streams were:

- **Stream one - Enhanced shelter diversion:** How can we restructure current resources to reduce the number of people entering shelters and the average time they stay there?
- **Stream two - Support needs assessments:** How can we make the most of the application and allocation process for subsidized housing to increase successful tenancies?
- **Stream three - Case management service standards:** How can we cooperate and share knowledge to build a community of practice and enable/explore a better continuum of care?

The first stream considered enhanced shelter diversion. The goal of shelter diversion is to reduce the number of people entering shelters and the average time they stay there. These areas were chosen in part because of promising work in the sector at Matthew House Ottawa and the Shepherds of Good Hope.

Participants were from community health centres, supportive housing providers, gender-based violence services, youth service providers, shelters, and day programs. The main themes that emerged from the day were:

- **Targeted supports** are crucial for specific groups like newcomers and refugees, requiring agency training on their needs and improved data on wait times and successful strategies, coupled with more comprehensive mental health and substance use health services and follow-up coordination for those exiting housing.
- The need for **government support** to ensure the sustainability and scalability of shelter diversion efforts.
- Participants also strongly desired **improved systems coordination** to create a more seamless and integrated network of services. They highlighted the need for a robust referral network to efficiently connect individuals to the necessary resources.
- The discussion focused on **supporting the existing shelter system while providing alternative pathways to shelter stays**. Ethical considerations around resource prioritization must be carefully addressed. Namely, careful thought must be given when allocating resources to people who are entering the shelter systems and those who are experiencing chronic homelessness.
- **Challenges** with implementing shelter diversion include high caseloads with insufficient staffing leading to retention issues, a lack of culturally inclusive policies, and a need for stable funding for the prevention of chronic homelessness.

Stream two focused on making the most of the application and allocation process for subsidized housing to increase successful tenancies. The participants in this stream were from supportive housing providers, youth-serving organizations, and affordable housing providers. The main themes that emerged from the day were:

- Participants were motivated to pursue coordination among different organizations to streamline processes. The conversation focused on improving clients' experience navigating a complex system by enhancing their access to housing support.
- Participants recognized the value of developing partnerships and relationships with key organizations (e.g., Registry, OW/ODSP).
- The desire is to improve communication and coordination between housing providers, case managers, and a centralized registry to streamline access to services and ensure better support for individuals in need.
- There was discussion around coordinating processes at a higher systems level between housing, healthcare, social services, and other sectors that interact with those needing housing support.
- Participants highlighted the need to share best practices for collecting and maintaining tenant consent to communicate with relevant government and community providers. This will ensure housing benefits are maintained, and promote successful tenancies.
- The group highlighted the need for better coordination between organizations providing housing support to reduce duplication and make the best use of limited resources.

Stream three participants began by exploring the development of case management service standards, through discussion they shifted focus to establishing a community of practice model. This model would facilitate ongoing collaboration, relationship building, and knowledge sharing between organizations.

Participants included people from veterans' services, shelters and housing services, refugee and settlement programs, and women's services. The main themes that emerged were:

- Improving the continuum of care for clients, including creating a robust inventory of practitioners, designing transition of care models between organizations, mapping current service delivery, and exploring funding options within the sector's control.
- The transition of care emerged as a unifying topic that could be addressed both through developing standards and as a priority project for the new community of practice.
- The need for ongoing knowledge sharing, relationship building and training opportunities between organizations beyond just standards was highlighted.

The complete notes for this co-design session can be found in Appendix B.

How to Improve Pathways to Permanent Successful Housing

Consolidation

The consolidation phase of the project synthesized insights gathered during the previous phases into several solutions to improve pathways. The consultants worked with the Advisory Committee to prioritize and further refine the chosen solutions to maximize their impact. The solutions that came out of the co-design and the rest of the project were brought to the EST to make sure that they aligned with their objectives:

- Centre the service users' experience by creating pathways that are accessible, culturally affirming, trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and free from stigma.
- Use an intersectional lens to ensure that solutions consider the experiences and needs of diverse populations.
- Build pathways that work for both service users and providers to improve the experience and outcomes for all.



Codesigned Solutions

Enhancing Shelter Diversion:
Helping newly or imminently homeless people access safe and appropriate housing options so they can avoid shelter entry or a prolonged shelter stay.

Fostering Shared Ownership in Digital Projects:
Advancing the principles of shared ownership and co-design in future digital projects, in collaboration with the sector and the City.

Increasing Sector Collaboration & Coordination:
Bringing the sector, including frontline staff, together to build capacity and work on important projects like:

- Developing an interim housing plan template
- Sharing best practices around shared consent to facilitate annual eligibility review of housing subsidies
- Developing a support needs assessment tool for people waiting for affordable housing

Enhancing Shelter Diversion

Shelter diversion targets individuals and families at imminent risk of homelessness or who have recently experienced homelessness and helps them to retain their housing or be rapidly rehoused. Enhancing shelter diversion in Ottawa will build upon efforts at Matthew House Ottawa, and the Shepherds of Good Hope. The aim is to develop best practices for enhancing shelter diversion that can be adapted and expanded to all local populations.

Enhancing shelter diversion would reduce the number of people who enter the shelter system and become chronically homeless. This upstream approach streamlines the pathways to permanent successful housing by providing immediate alternatives. Furthermore, by providing resources and direct support individuals avoid unnecessarily long shelter stays. For individuals who are diverted, this creates a simpler pathway to permanent successful housing. For shelter staff, this streamlined approach frees up resources and time. By making the best use of shelter resources shelter diversion ultimately enhances the overall effectiveness of the sector.

Two local projects can be supported, used as inspiration, and expanded on to tailor the approach to new target populations. Matthew House Ottawa has developed a promising model for where newcomers share a rental home instead of entering shelters. Matthew House's program is a source of inspiration for using rapid reintegration into community. Matthew House provides a bed, food and essential support in a family-style atmosphere at their eight reception houses and twelve transition houses. The Shepherds of Good Hope Pilot project aims to bring shelter diversion to its shelters. It is a collaboration between the shelter, ATEHO and Mike Lethby, an outside consultant with experience in shelter diversion, notably as the executive director of The RAFT Youth Shelter in St. Catherine's. The Shepherds serves populations with complex needs that face many barriers to housing. As such, the results from this pilot may not be as high as in other settings. However, the shelter and broader sector will benefit from the insights gained through the pilot.

The Advisory Committee identified that the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT) will need to play a governance and oversight role to support the successful implementation of shelter

diversion. The HHLT has been co-developed by the City and the sector to function as an Advisory Committee to plan, design, and oversee an integrated housing and homelessness system. The Advisory Committee hopes that the HHLT will recommend that shelter diversion be incorporated into the City's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan. Doing so will ensure that it is prioritized and integrated into broader housing strategies. The HHLT will also serve as a platform for advancing collaboration between the City and the sector on shelter diversion. ATEHO's role will be to coordinate the implementation of shelter diversion by ensuring all five major shelters are engaged and by facilitating knowledge exchange.

There are two important success factors for shelter diversion in Ottawa. First, there is a need for government support and funding to sustain and scale efforts. Second, ethical considerations around resource prioritization must be carefully addressed. Namely, careful thought must be given when allocating resources to people who are entering the shelter system and those who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Fostering Shared Ownership in Digital Projects

Advancing the principles of shared ownership and co-design in future digital projects requires effective collaboration between the sector and the City. A co-design approach entails collaboratively developing solutions with all interested parties, including service users and providers, to ensure the outcomes are user-centred and collectively endorsed. This shared ownership and commitment leads to innovations that are leading-edge, client-focused and increase sector-wide efficiencies.

An example of a digital project is the ongoing efforts to replace Lotus, the Integrated Housing System (IHS). The Social Housing Registry uses this system to manage a waitlist of households eligible for subsidized rental housing units. The City has been working to design and implement a new version of the IHS for the Social Housing Registry. Moving UPP! highlighted the need for continued progress in this digital project with a focus on shared ownership.

This digital project will allow the Registry to make better use of limited resources and simplify pathways for clients and staff. From a client perspective, this initiative will make it more straightforward to navigate the housing system and maintain a spot on the waitlist. From a staff perspective, this project will streamline internal processes, automate repetitive tasks, and enhance staff efficiency. This digital transformation will also improve the quality and accuracy of referrals by connecting people to the right services they need faster.

The quality of collaboration between the City and the housing and homelessness sector has continued to improve over the past few years. Future digital projects present opportunities to integrate and enhance collaboration with the principles of shared ownership and co-design. To continue momentum on this, the City and sector partners will need to closely collaborate and share decision-making power in the development process of digital solutions.

This approach will create a more unified approach to completing digital projects. The commitment to shared ownership will make the housing and homelessness sector more efficient and responsive so they can meet the needs of both clients and staff. To support this work, the HHLT can prioritize further facilitating the collaboration between the sector and the City.

Sector Collaboration & Coordination

ATEHO and OSHN will bring together the sector, including frontline staff, to increase the sector's collective capacity to move forward on important areas of improvement. Through Moving UPP! the need for intentional collaborative spaces and communication was identified as an opportunity to better use limited resources.

Creating intentional spaces for collaboration and improving communication will contribute to simplified pathways for both clients and staff. For staff, it will facilitate greater connectivity among service and housing providers and promote more knowledge sharing on available services, eligibility criteria, support offered, vacancies, and specific client inquiries. For clients, it will mean receiving more accurate, timely information, and getting better referrals.

This enhanced sector collaboration, led by ATEHO and OSHN, will allow the sector to advance four projects: creating a case management community of practice, developing an interim housing plan template, sharing best practices around shared consent to facilitate annual eligibility review of housing subsidies, and developing a support needs assessment tool for individuals waiting for affordable housing. These four areas were identified through the co-design activities and validated during the consolidation phase.

Moving UPP! highlighted the sector's desire for a **case management community of practice**. This community of practice will increase successful tenancies by better using current case management resources and spreading best practices throughout the sector. It would serve as a space for case collaboration. This initiative would need a dedicated convenor like ATEHO or the Evidence Exchange Network.

The second key area is the creation of an **interim housing plan template**. An interim housing plan could be used when an individual or family is at imminent risk of losing their housing. This template would build upon models such as interim safety plans used in the gender-based violence sector. The aim is to provide resources clients can receive housing in the short-term, while longer-term solutions can be put in place.

The third project addresses tenants losing their subsidies due to not being able to complete **annual eligibility reviews for housing subsidies**. Landlords can facilitate the process when they have consent to reach out to agencies like ODSP. The project will start by spreading data-sharing consent models or templates, which can be used by housing providers to gain access to consent at the time of the lease signing. By making the process of establishing eligibility every year easier for tenants and housing providers, the sector can prevent tenants from losing their housing.

The fourth project is a **peer-developed assessment tool** to measure the support needs of individuals and families about to enter subsidized or affordable housing. This collaboration will increase the number of new tenants who are successful by ensuring they have their support needs met. Partnerships will need to be made to ensure effective implementation.

Appendix

Appendix A: Policy Recommendations

Federal Recommendations

Support Ottawa in meeting an annual target of approving at least 1,000 non-profit affordable homes locally through funding and making surplus lands available

To effectively address the critical shortage of affordable housing, it is vital to commit to an annual target of approving at least 1,000 non-profit affordable homes in Ottawa. To meet this target, the City of Ottawa and its community partners need the support of the federal government, including funding and loan programs, making surplus federal lands and buildings available for development.

There was consensus on the need to increase the number of deeply affordable units throughout Moving UPP! Without such measures, efforts to improve pathways into permanent and successful housing will not have the desired impact. Meeting this target would benefit efforts to enhance shelter diversion by increasing diversion options and reducing the number of precariously housed households that can't afford market rents.

Provincial Recommendations

Increase the minimum wage to a living wage

Increase the minimum wage in Ontario to reflect the real cost of living, including housing. In Ottawa, the current living wage is $21.95 (Ontario Living Wage Network). By increasing the minimum wage, families would experience reduced financial stress, which would decrease the risk of homelessness and improve overall housing stability. This would especially benefit folks with low-income and those who are precariously employed.

While it was important to all interested parties, it was particularly present for people with lived and living experience of homelessness and front-line staff who every day see the impacts of housing insecurity and scarcity. By increasing the minimum wage, we reduce the number of households that are precariously housed and ensure once people get housed they have the funds needed to have a successful tenancy.

Unfreeze the Ontario Universal Basic Income pilot and collect data

Reinstate the Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot to allow data collection on its impacts. In 2017, Ontario initiated a UBI pilot program intended to explore the effects of providing a guaranteed income, but this pilot was prematurely cancelled in 2018 before conclusive data could be gathered. This pilot is crucial for understanding how a stable, guaranteed income can positively impact housing stability.

Throughout Moving UPP! all interested parties noted the effects of low wages on individuals' ability to access and maintain stable housing. A more comprehensive and overarching system of guaranteed minimum income could help address the disparities that make it difficult for people to afford rent. By unfreezing the UBI pilot, greater housing flexibility would be enabled, allowing individuals to find solutions that work best for them. This change would address one of the biggest barriers to housing: affordability.

Increase and recalculate rates for the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works Program

Increase and recalculate rates for ODSP and OW programs to better align with the real costs of living, including housing. The current rates provided by these programs are often insufficient to cover basic living expenses in Ottawa, this is particularly pronounced in urban areas where the cost of living is higher. This recalibration would provide adequate financial support to afford housing and other necessary expenses.

Moving UPP! built a strong consensus around the need for increased support for those on social assistance. Case managers, frontline staff, and others who directly support those on social assistance highlighted the current programs' inadequacies in meeting the basic income needs of recipients. This change would allow individuals on social assistance to afford housing and access items and services so their tenancies are successful.

Increase and coordinate funding for mental health and physical health supports for supportive housing

Increase funding for both the development and operations of supportive housing and funding for the case managers and support workers. This has historically been a challenge, as multiple ministries need to agree on the funding at the same time. Increasing and coordinating this funding would have a positive impact on the effectiveness of supportive housing programs, and foster successful tenancies.

While moving UPP focused primarily on upstream preventative measures and rapid re-housing, all interested parties also underlined the importance of providing appropriate care for people exiting homelessness. Engagement with housing providers highlighted the many challenges of promoting successful tenancies when people don't have access to proper mental health supports.

Municipal Recommendations

Collaborate with Community Partners on Digital Solutions

Work with community partners to ensure that digital solutions and data-sharing practices are designed and implemented to meet the needs of those who will use them. The impact of this would be simplified pathways to permanent successful housing, shorter waitlists and reduced time needed by clients, sector staff, and Social Housing Registry staff.

Moving UPP! has validated the need for simpler, shorter pathways to housing. Participants in both co-design sessions highlighted the burden that the current system places on both clients and staff. As solutions like HIFIS and Lotus Notes are updated and replaced, there must be shared ownership by the city and the sector in their creation. This is a step toward ensuring the solutions are tailored to the users' needs.

Support the development and implementation of shelter diversion programs tailored to specific populations

Support the development and implementation of shelter diversion programs tailored to specific populations by funding and supporting programs that address the unique needs of Indigenous peoples, youth, newcomers, and individuals experiencing gender-based violence (GBV). These programs would provide immediate support to prevent homelessness.

This solution was supported throughout Moving UPP!, especially by sector leaders at the final co-design event. This would also mean rallying behind existing efforts like those at Matthew House, the Shepherds

of Good Hope Pilot to build on their successes. The impact of this would be significant: reducing the number of shelter entries, and lowering the average length of stay in shelters.

Meaningful collaboration with people with lived experience and frontline staff in governance structures and decision-making processes

Include people with lived and living experience and frontline workers in policy-making processes and governance structures. This integration enables more meaningful collaboration, as these individuals bring a depth of understanding and practical insights that cannot be replicated by theoretical knowledge alone.

This recommendation was supported by all interested parties in Moving UPP!. In particular, the EST and frontline staff advocated for their involvement in governance structures and decision-making processes. By prioritizing, and involving lived experience the city can foster a more collaborative approach that enhances decision-making. This approach respects and incorporates the expertise of those directly impacted by decisions and ensures that the policies crafted are grounded in the real-world complexities and needs of those they aim to serve.

Work with the Indigenous community and resource them appropriately

Partnering with Indigenous leaders and organizations at the local level is essential for developing and implementing programs that effectively address homelessness within Indigenous communities. This collaboration should focus on supporting their resourcing in ways that they deem appropriate, ensuring that all initiatives are culturally sensitive and tailored to meet community-specific needs.

Moving UPP! confirmed that pathways to permanent successful housing need to be culturally affirming. Supporting and resourcing Indigenous-led organizations is a concrete step toward the continued success and sustainability of Indigenous-led housing initiatives.



Appendix B: Sector Co-design Event Notes

Stream one: Enhancing Shelter Diversion

Stream one focused on reshaping current resources to reduce the number of people entering shelters and the average time they stay there.

The objectives for the day were:

- Bring organizations that are on the periphery of housing and homelessness into the work of shelter diversion.
- Generate excitement for the pilot and surface useful information.
- Decide how the broader sector will be engaged throughout the pilot & knowledge transfer.
- Explore what shelter diversion could look like for youth.

Main themes

- Participants expressed a strong desire for enhanced collaboration in the future, emphasizing the need for ongoing inclusion and representation from all interested parties. They envisioned a transparent and communicative environment, where concerns and ideas could be freely shared and addressed.
- Participants also strongly desired improved systems coordination to create a more seamless and integrated network of services. They highlighted the need for a robust referral network to efficiently connect individuals to the necessary resources.
- The discussion focused on supporting the existing system while providing alternative pathways to shelter stays.
- Participants expressed the need for a balanced approach that addresses immediate support needs while planning for long-term systemic changes.

Current state - Aspirational state

Current state

- Ottawa shelters experience unsustainable caseloads and high volumes of new entrants. Contributing factors include the influx of newcomers, poverty, healthcare gaps, and domestic violence.
- There are numerous challenges, including inadequate assessment skills and lack of culturally appropriate assessments, insufficient trauma-informed care, and complex navigation for accessing services.
- Because of these issues, shelters are at maximum capacity, and people are not getting the support they need. This is especially the case for populations that face barriers, like women who use substances, people with traumatic brain injuries, and parents with acute needs.
- Family shelters have less focus on diversion
- Youth shelters tend to be places where youth congregate.
- Newcomers try to avoid shelter and instead go to drop-ins.

Aspirational state:

- The aspirational state for shelters in Ottawa envisions a tiered system where individuals are placed in appropriate housing based on their needs, with smaller shelters offering clients more choices and support.
- This vision includes universal basic income, more affordable housing, and comprehensive education, training, and job support for newcomers.
- A coordinated, well-resourced system, with government and non-profit collaboration, aims to prevent homelessness through upstream measures, integrated services, and wrap-around supports, ultimately reducing the burden on shelters and promoting autonomy and control for individuals.

Solutions to Implement Enhancing Shelter Diversion

- **Coordination, ownership, and oversight:** There is a lack of a coordinated system for managing housing vacancies and integrating services across agencies, leading to inconsistent application processes and insufficient support. Diversion efforts need to be implemented before individuals enter shelters, with a focus on prevention such as mediation with landlords. There is a need for oversight to ensure adherence to the model, along with buy-in from all levels of government and funders to support ongoing assistance rather than one-time subsidies.
- **Increasing Housing Supply & Options for Diversion:** There is a need to increase shelter diversion options, including options outside of the downtown core, more supportive and permanent housing, co-ops, and social enterprise providers, and incentives for developers and landlords to create transitional housing. Strategies are needed to prevent homelessness due to arrears and allow people to age in place. Addressing barriers to housing beyond financial issues, such as mental health care, is crucial.
- **Population-Specific Solutions:** There is a need for more targeted support for specific populations, such as newcomers and refugees, with training for agencies on their unique needs and better data on wait times and successful approaches. Additionally, there is a need for more mental health and addiction services upstream and better coordination and follow-up services for individuals after leaving housing. Diversion strategies should focus on populations with higher success rates. Diversion is very effective for youth experiencing their first instance of homelessness, as that is usually the first time experiencing individual homelessness. If the adult system focused diversion efforts on prioritizing those experiencing their first-time homelessness, the number of people that could be diverted would not be large but would be very impactful in preventing long-term homelessness.
- **Addressing Staffing and Organizational Challenges:** Staffing and organizational challenges include a lack of inclusive policies, cultural awareness training, and resources. There is a high caseload with insufficient staff, leading to retention issues and inadequate support for diversion and rapid rehousing. The need for stable funding, geographical considerations, and balancing prevention efforts with chronic homelessness resources are also critical challenges that require attention.

Outcomes of the day

- Key issues included the fractured referral network and the lack of adequate places to send people.
- Clear governance structures and accountability mechanisms were highlighted as essential to ensure that plans and proposals lead to actionable outcomes. There was a strong desire for models that allow for real-time information sharing and collective decision-making.
- Participants advocated for recognizing and compensating the expertise of community bodies, frontline staff and people with lived and living experience of homelessness.
- To build off of this work, participants identified the following next steps:
  - Enhancing communication strategies to better engage all interested parties and address concerns about prioritization and inclusion.
  - Focus on practical solutions to improve the referral network, ensuring it is robust and can efficiently connect individuals to the necessary resources.
  - Explore and implement models that facilitate real-time updates, shared knowledge, and collaborative decision-making.
  - Develop clear governance structures and accountability mechanisms to ensure that proposals are actionable and lead to impactful outcomes.

Stream two: Support Needs Assessment

Stream two focused on making the most of the application and allocation process for subsidized housing to increase successful tenancies.

Objectives were:

- Prioritize the area(s) to explore further
- Expand and what will be needed to move this idea forward
- Determine who, what, and when for the next steps.

Main themes

- Participants were motivated to pursue coordination among different organizations to streamline processes. The conversation focused on improving clients' experience navigating a complex system by enhancing their access to housing support.
- Participants recognized the value of developing partnerships and relationships with key organizations (e.g., Registry, OW/ODSP).
- There was discussion around coordinating processes at a higher systems level between housing, healthcare, social services, and other sectors that interact with those needing housing support.
- The group highlighted the need for better coordination between organizations providing housing support to reduce duplication and best use limited resources.

Potential interventions to explore

- **Communication & Collaboration:** Improve communication and coordination between housing providers, case managers, and a centralized registry to streamline access to services and ensure better support for individuals in need. Have frontline staff collect client survey data to inform policy changes.
- **People with Lived and Living Experience:** Include peers in developing housing needs assessments, develop a self-assessment tool, and use shared consent forms to facilitate better engagement and service provision.
- **Shared Consent:** Implement broader use of shared consent forms across services and programs, using plain language to explain the purpose and benefits of information sharing.
- **Applications:** Enhance registry applications to make use of current technologies and include comprehensive supports like mental health and addiction services, use plain language, and create a one-stop-shop model for housing needs.
- **Ongoing Supports:** Provide mobile and adaptable services, learning opportunities, tenant rights education, life skills training, and comprehensive support services to assist individuals in maintaining housing stability. Providing a location where staff and resources are centralized for easy access.

Identify what the sector can move quickly on

All of the above interventions were deemed to have had a high impact. The groups chose two low-hanging fruit to explore further.

Shared Consent

- How might we implement this? Implement shared consent through clear wording, tie it to public-funded support receipt, review and integrate consents, renew annually, and use plain language to explain its purpose.
- Potential challenges? Challenges include withdrawal of consent, supports not being listed, administrative time to share consent forms, privacy concerns, and willingness.
- How do we overcome challenges? Overcome challenges by understanding the impact of withdrawing support, creating an integrated system, and ensuring clear communication about the benefits and necessity of shared consent.

Listserv

- What would it take to implement this? Establish parameters for eligibility, closing mechanisms for vacancies, a two-way subscription system, choose a platform, enable automatic subscribe/unsubscribe, transfer responsibilities, and collect data through mandatory fields and user surveys.
- Potential challenges? Challenges include determining who gets the unit, accidental forwarding, maintaining consistent and up-to-date information, ensuring response, and avoiding the sharing of confidential information.
- How do we overcome challenges? Overcome challenges by dedicating a group to oversee and moderate, setting clear parameters for shared information, encouraging subscriptions, leveraging free IT services, and establishing initial rules and communication protocols.

Outcomes of the day

The group would like to explore the following:

- **Shared consent form:** Creating a process or intervention for sharing consent forms between different organizations like OW, ODSP, healthcare providers, and service providers. This was seen as a way to increase successful tenancies by making relevant information more readily available to support providers. Sarah Lorenz took responsibility for coordinating a meeting by the end of June to plan the goals, objectives, and implementation of this consent form-sharing process.
- **Email listserv:** Creating a listserv for people in the housing and housing support sector to share opportunities, vacancies, and other information. This idea could build off the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa's current email list.

Stream three: Case Management Service Standards

Stream three participants began by exploring the development of case management service standards, through discussion they shifted focus to establishing a community of practice model. This model would facilitate ongoing collaboration, relationship building, and knowledge sharing between organizations.

- **Original Objective:** How can we collaborate to create community-developed case management service standards that increase successful tenancies?
- **New Objective:** How can we cooperate and share knowledge/build a community of practice to enable/explore a better continuum of care?

Main Themes

- Key themes around improving the continuum of care for clients were identified, including creating a robust inventory of practitioners, designing transition of care models between organizations, mapping current service delivery, and exploring funding options within the sector's control.
- The transition of care emerged as a unifying topic that could be addressed both through developing standards and as a priority project for the new community of practice.
- The need for ongoing knowledge sharing, relationship building and training opportunities between organizations beyond just standards was highlighted.

What would we need to solve to develop shared case management service standards?

- **Funding:** Different funding models exist with disparities; there is a lack of funding for staff wages and burnout, a need for agency sharing, and a necessity to fund both crisis intervention and prevention for more stable funding.
- **Mandate Synergies / Dissonance:** Communication gaps exist in case management practices, creating challenges in aligning priorities and mandates with system goals.
- **Client-centred Lens & Approach:** Adopting a client-centred approach involves meaningful involvement of individuals, respecting lived experiences, and navigating the challenges between medical and social work approaches.
- **Cultural Competencies:** The development of cultural competencies involves different training approaches, addressing cultural differences that lead to systemic failures, and overcoming challenges in hiring culturally competent workers.

- **Data:** Effective use of data and assessment requires identifying existing gaps, considering whether additional data gathering is needed, and integrating findings to enhance service delivery.
- **Staff Support:** There is a notable lack of support for addressing client trauma and the vicarious trauma experienced by staff, necessitating improvements in staff retention and training.
- **Customization:** Services need to be customized to meet the diverse needs of different populations, including mental health, disabilities, and age-specific requirements, especially for youth transitioning to adulthood.

What challenges would we face in creating shared case management service standards?

- **Ethical Standards/Care/Support:** Establishing clear note-taking practices, boundaries within the group, and trauma-informed approaches. The group will need to ensure proper evaluation systems, define roles and access methods, and provide specialized training to effectively support diverse client needs.
- **The Transition of Care/Support:** Creating a centralized transition system to prevent service isolation, ensuring warm client-centred transfers, and prioritizing high-acuity individuals for consistent support while fostering collaboration across diverse service philosophies.
- **Working within Existing Models & Contextual Relevance to Ottawa:** Addressing capacity and data issues, defining research-based standards, updating models in response to current crises, and evaluating system-level outcomes to improve coordination of housing and support services.
- **Collaboration:** Navigating service silos, providing culturally affirming Indigenous-specific services, facilitating knowledge exchange, developing centralized intake systems, and fostering a culture of cooperation through Ottawa-based forums and events.

How will we collaborate on CoP and what resources do we need to advance this work?

- **Defining Collaboration Priorities and Values:** Establish clear priorities, values, and functions for collaboration to ensure all interested parties are aligned and working towards common goals.
- **Identifying and Retaining Experts and Practitioners:** Maintain an inventory of experts and practitioners, focusing on retention strategies to keep skilled staff within the organization.
- **Service Mapping and Reducing Duplication:** Continuously refresh service mapping to identify and eliminate duplication, ensuring resources are used efficiently.
- **Funding Strategies:** Explore various funding strategies, including tiered systems and collaborative funding applications, to ensure financial stability and support for CoP.
- **Transition of Care Models:** Develop and refine models for the transition of care, ensuring continuity and support as individuals move between different levels of service intensity.
- **Support Systems and Interventions:** Implement Critical Time Interventions and Peer Support systems with lived experience navigators to provide targeted support during critical periods.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Develop and provide comprehensive training programs, including peer training and trauma-informed practices, to build capacity and improve service delivery.
- **Resource Management and System Knowledge:** Compile and manage resources, such as an inventory of existing training, service provider rosters, and systems knowledge, to support informed decision-making and service provision.

Outcomes of the day

- Participants used smaller breakout groups to discuss topics in depth and identify priority areas and barriers to collaboration.
- By the end of the day, the group had generated a list of priority functions, tools, and resources needed to facilitate the future community of practice.
- The group discussed the need for developing a governance structure that:
  - Allows for flexible participation (varying bandwidth)
  - Has the backing of the organizations involved
- To build on this work, participants will:
  - Review the notes from this co-design session
  - Reconvene to review and validate priorities
  - Scope key projects like a transition of care modelling



