



2026 - 2028 ACTION STRATEGY REFRESH

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES REPORT

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Prepared for
Nelson at its Best, Together Nelson

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Contents

Summary	3
Consultation Overview	5
Consultation Outcomes	7
Analysis of Outcomes	11
Recommendations	
Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area, 2026 - 2028	13
Appendix A	
Community Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area Impact Report, 2022 – 2024	14
Appendix B	
Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area, 2022 - 2026 Summative Infograph	28

Summary

The purpose of this community consultation was to refresh *Together Nelson's 2022 – 2026 Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area* to ensure the Action Strategy's Pathways to Change for 2026 – 2028 are relevant to today's realities and consistent with available poverty data.

Nineteen people representing 15 Nelson-based organizations and living expertise were invited to participate in a community consultation to identify current poverty-reduction needs and the top three poverty-reduction priorities to inform *Together Nelson's Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area, 2026 to 2028*. Of 19 people invited, 11 attended resulting in a high participation rate (58%) indicating substantial interest in poverty-reduction amongst the relatively small group of local organizations conducting work in this area.

Participant representation reflected the current distribution of organizations furthering work in each Pathway to Change. Access to Services and the Education & Skill Building pathways had the highest representation. Employment & Income, Affordable Housing, and Transportation pathways had very low representation. The Transportation pathway had the lowest representation.

Ten participants identified 25 needs across all five Pathways to Change. The top two priorities receiving the majority of priority points were:

- #1 Mental Health & Wellbeing – add this area as a new Pathway to Change
- #2 Access to Services – support development of a community drop in / coordinated hub

The third priority was less clear with notably lower priorities on:

- #3 Affordable Housing – address affordable housing challenges
- #4 Education & Skill Building - increase opportunities tied to current community job training needs
- #5 Employment & Income – increase access to extended health benefits

Transportation received no points, reflecting no priority given to this pathway by this group of attendees.

Participants' closing responses reflected three themes on the value and impact of this consultation. The highest value was placed on data/information sharing. The second highest value was placed on both collaboration and on momentum.

Outcomes of the Community Consultation 2026 and the Impact Report 2022-2024, combined with consultant expertise, resulted in six recommendations for the refreshed, 2026 - 2028 Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area:

1. **Strengthen engagement and partnerships** with local organizations invited but unable to attend the consultation and with individuals and single parents with living/lived expertise.
2. **Explore Mental Health & Wellbeing** as a potential new Pathway to Change.
3. **Focus on the Access to Services** Pathway to Change by advocating for and/or supporting development of a:
 - a. Coordinated drop-in service that includes access to mental health & wellbeing, education & skill building, cash employment, health services, social connection and peer support.
 - b. Community health & wellbeing network that strengthens knowledge and information sharing, connection, collaboration, and momentum across organizations working to reduce poverty in Nelson and area.
4. **Continue to maintain focus on the Education & Skill Building** and the **Employment & Income** Pathways to Change by:
 - a. Identifying and exploring education & skill building initiatives that are tied to current community needs.
 - b. Broaden access to annual, free, less-than living-wage income tax preparation clinics to increase the number of people who are aware of, participate in, and benefit from the clinic.

5. **De-emphasize the Affordable Housing and the Transportation** Pathways to Change by reducing focus on initiatives while continuing to monitor changes in these pathways. Re-visit focusing on these pathway's needs and priorities in the 2028 Action Strategy refresh.
6. **Focus new, innovative, poverty-reducing initiatives on low-income individuals and single parents**, the two groups experiencing the most challenges with living in poverty in Nelson and area.

Consultation Overview

This report documents outcomes of a 2.5-hour community consultation held on March 5, 2026 aimed at:

1. SHARING the impact of poverty reduction work conducted between January 2022 and December 2024 and highlighting what poverty reduction needs were arising in Nelson and area as of December 2024.
2. COLLABORATING with participants to identify the top three poverty-reduction priorities in Nelson and area for the next two years.
3. STRENGTHENING collaboration and potential partner relationships with community-based, decision-makers in poverty reduction aligned organizations.

Nelson and area organizations with recent or current delivery of programs that support one or more Pathways to Change were invited to the consultation. People invited to participate represented community members with lived or living expertise of poverty, Indigenous, municipal/regional government, and Nelson and area-based decision makers from non-profit organizations whose mission, services and/or programs reflected or supported poverty reduction activities. Table 1 highlights organizations and community members who were invited, participated, sent regrets, or sent a staff member to attend in lieu.

Table 1 – Organizations and Individuals Invited & Participated

Invited	Role	Participation Status
1. City of Nelson	Chief Librarian	Attended
2. Community Member	Lived Expertise	
3. Nelson CARES	Executive Director	
4. Nelson Medical Clinic	Social Worker	
5. Nelson Medical Clinic	Social Worker	
6. Nelson Women's Centre	Executive Director	
7. St. Saviour's Church	Reverend	
8. Together Nelson	Member	
9. Together Nelson	Member	
10. COINS	Executive Director	Aboriginal Outreach/Engagement Coord attended in lieu
11. Selkirk College, (SOAR) Steps to Opportunities, Academic, Readiness	Instructor	Program Coord. attended in lieu
12. Nelson Community Services	Executive Director	Registered & sent staff in lieu who then sent regrets
13. ANKORS	Executive Director	Registered & sent regrets
14. Kootenay Career Development Society	Executive Director	Registered & sent regrets
15. City of Nelson / RDCK	Local Gov. Rep.	Sent regrets
16. Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy	Executive Director	Program Coord attended in lieu
17. Nelson CARES	Kootenay Seniors Transportation Coord.	Sent regrets
18. Kootenay Career Development Society	Community & Employer Partnership Manager	
19. Salvation Army	Program Coord.	No response

Participants learned about the impact of poverty reduction activities conducted in Nelson and area from 2022 to 2024 via *Together Nelson's Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty Impact Report*. This report was *Community Consultation Outcomes Report*

circulated one week prior to the community consultation (Appendix A). The consultant presented a high-level overview of the *Impact Report* at the consultation.

Through small group discussions, participants were asked to identify answers to the below question:

What current poverty reduction needs are you noticing in each of the current Action Strategy's five Pathways to Change that can be addressed at a local level?

Pathways to Change:

1. *Access to Services (coordination and navigation of existing services)*
2. *Affordable Housing (that meets the continuum of community needs)*
3. *Education & Skill Building (to support sustainable livelihoods)*
4. *Employment & Income (opportunities that increase income & income earning potential)*
5. *Transportation (local & regional)*
6. *New pathway (a prompt to consider a new pathway not identified above)*

After discussing and documenting current needs in each of the six areas noted above, participants were invited to help shape *Together Nelson's* refreshed *Poverty Reduction Action Strategy 2026 – 2028* by:

Prioritizing the top three needs identified at this consultation to reduce poverty in Nelson and area over the next two years.

Finally, during the consultation's closing, the two *Together Nelson* members present at the consultation invited participants to strengthen potential partnerships in poverty-reduction work by visiting and considering joining *Together Nelson's Poverty Reduction Leadership Table*.

Participants were also invited to attend a future presentation on *Together Nelson's* refreshed *Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson and Area, 2026 to 2028*. A strategy that reflects the outcomes of the community consultation reported on in this document.

Consultation Outcomes

1. Participant Representation

Nineteen people representing 15 local organizations were invited to participate. Of the 19 people invited, 11 attended which is a 58% participation rate. Of the 10 decision-makers invited, four attended, one left early prior to the prioritization activity commencing, resulting in only three local organization decision-makers participating. Participant representation for each Pathway to Change who were invited and who participated are noted in Chart 1 & 2. People with living/lived experience were considered to have expertise in all five Pathways to Change.

Chart 1 – Expertise invited

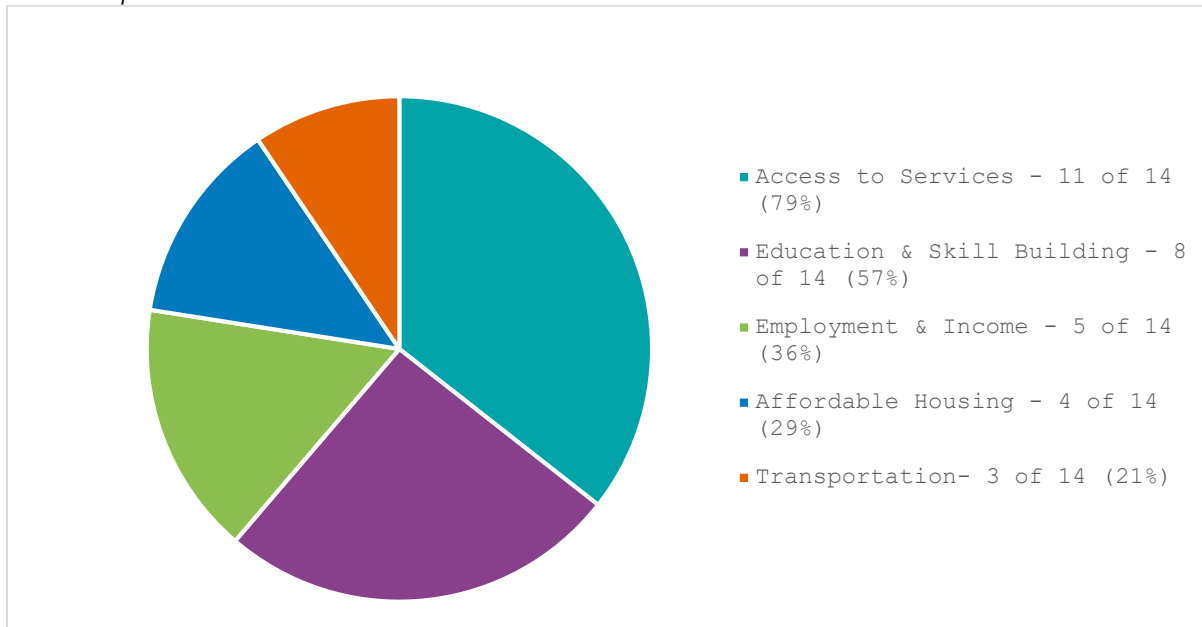
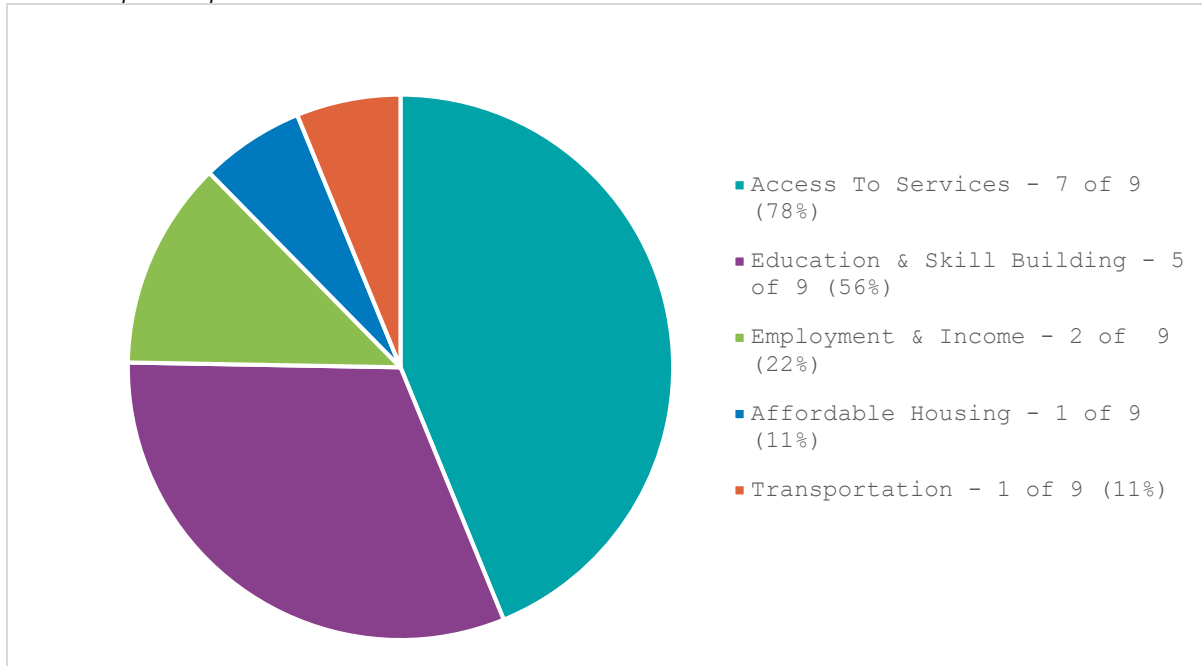


Chart 2 – Expertise represented



2. Priority Areas

Consultation was focused on identifying current poverty reduction needs and priorities by asking participants to identify responses to question A, then prioritise those responses by responding to question B below.

QA - What current poverty reduction needs are you noticing in each of the five Pathways to Change that can be addressed at a local level?

QB - What are the top three needs identified today to reduce poverty in the next two years?

Each participant identified the top three priorities over the next two years across the 25 participant-identified needs that impact poverty levels in Nelson and area. Priorities were valued at 3 points for 1st, 2 for 2nd, and 1 for 3rd priority, totalling 60 points. Needs identified and their priorities are captured in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Poverty reduction needs and priorities

Pathway to Change / Needs Identified	Priority			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
Access to Services				
1. Drop in spaces / coordinated hub <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased and consistent access and availability to employment, health/medical, and mental health services ○ access to knowledge and capacity-building resources ○ access to more sheltered, safe, public spaces and care options e.g. overuse of library for winter / heat escape 	3	4	1	8
2. Affordable childcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ stronger support for and increased availability of affordable childcare initiatives e.g. \$10/day childcare ○ more after school care 	3			3
3. Non-profit sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ investment in financially sustainable non-profit service delivery models to address concerns like consistent access to services, including food security. e.g. the current, local food bank service delivery model cannot support poverty alleviation demands 		2	1	3
4. Team-based care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increase team-based care to alleviate burden on families 			1	1
5. Services awareness, availability & consistency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ poor service awareness, availability, and consistency across multiple services. e.g., not enough availability of supported housing to meet the need for this service. 	No priority votes received			
6. Access to health care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improved public access to health care, medical services, and family doctors 				
7. Government supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased leveraging for retraining & upskilling 				
8. Social prescribing initiative in the Primary Care Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an initiative that empowers people to manage their well-being, reduce isolation, and improve mental/physical health through personalized, holistic support ○ healthcare providers refer patients to non-clinical, community-based services to address the social determinants of health e.g. art classes, gardening, financial counseling 				
Affordable Housing	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
1. Affordability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ cost of housing (market and rental) continues to rise ○ middle to low-income individuals cannot afford housing 	3	4	1	6
2. Vacation homes cap			1	1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o vacation homes are taking up potential rental and housing spaces 				
3. Housing 1st model to end homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a recovery-oriented approach that recognizes the inter-relationship between housing, income, education, and success. 			1	1
4. Availability of affordable housing, rental & workplace housing units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o huge waitlists o vacancy rates are at an all-time low o too many moving out of Nelson due to availability / high costs o need more workforce housing and housing for middle income earners 	No priority votes received			
5. Community planning & regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o plan and build an integrated, intentional community o simplify land use regulations 				

Education & Skill Building	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
1. Increase access to education / skill building opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o tied to current needs in community o including training between jobs 		2	2	4
2. Access to educational supports that meet community needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o keep community members living in the Nelson area through knowledge & empowerment e.g. successfully finding and completing education and skill building opportunities that meet community needs 		2		2
3. Availability of opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o there are not a lot of skill building opportunities that lift people out of poverty e.g. Work BC education upgrades are short and quick programs that are not impacting poverty 	No priority votes received			
4. Eligibility Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o very limiting criteria e.g. need to have income below a certain amount to be eligible 				
5. Job Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o not enough opportunity that matches people’s skill level – people take jobs just to have a job, even if over-qualified 				

Employment & Income	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
1. Access to extended benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o need more jobs with benefits (if sick, many people are one pay cheque away from poverty). Access to things like healthcare plans and benefits for small business employees and self-employed individuals 		2	1	3
2. Living Wage Grants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o for small businesses to hire employees at livable wages – improved navigation of resources available to them 				
3. More full-time employment opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o high reliance on tourism resulting in multiple part time jobs to survive 	No priority votes received			
4. Cash work				

Transportation	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Total
1. Access to increased, consistent, and reliable public transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o local and regional o medical transport (for appts), local and regional o Sunday service 	No priority votes received			
2. Free public transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o within certain radius o for medical purposes and all low-income individuals 				

Mental Health & Wellbeing <i>(new pathway)</i>	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
1. Access to mental health care and well-being services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of services in this area 	21	4	3	28

Analysis of Consultation Outcomes

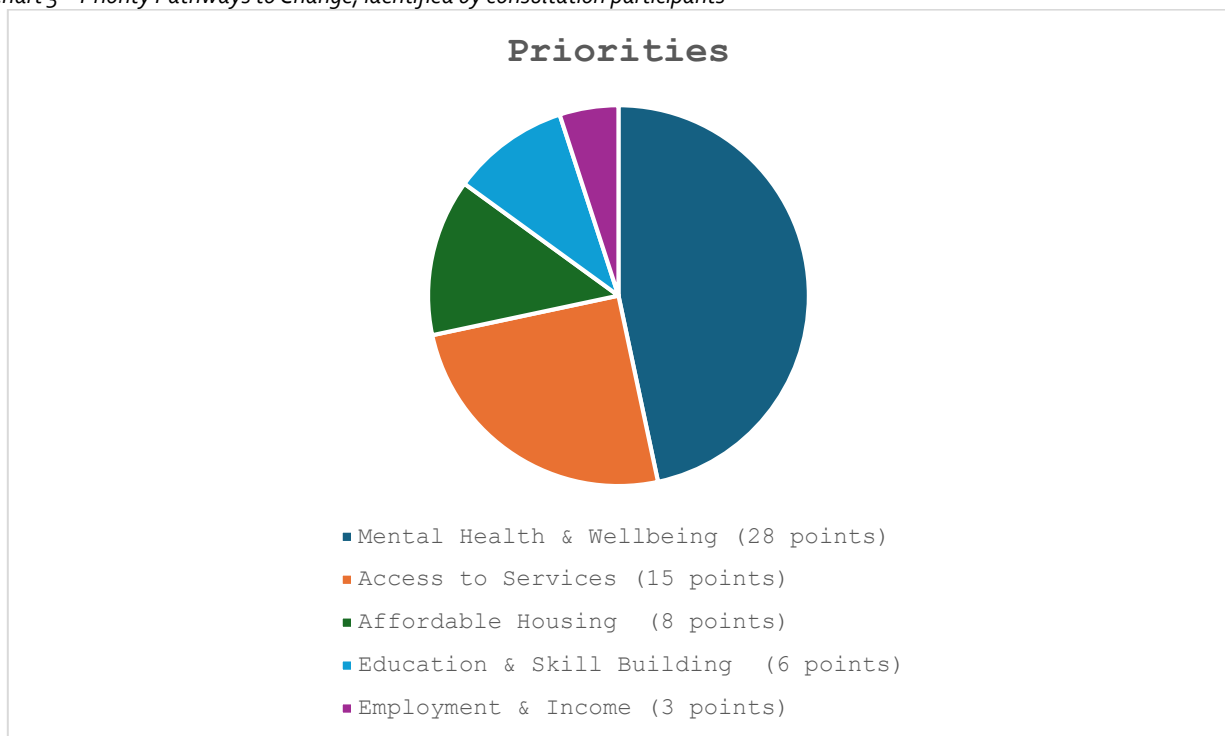
- 1. Participation Rate** - A 58% participation rate is considered high attendance indicating substantial interest in poverty-reduction amongst the relatively small, local, group of organizations conducting work in this area. Municipal consultations consider 10% to 14% a good participation rate, noting that these types of engagements attempt to capture input from a much larger group of people than this consultation attempted to capture.
- 2. Participant Representation** - Access to Services and Education & Skill Building had the highest while Transportation had the lowest representation. Employment & Income, Affordable Housing, and Transportation all had a decrease in participation resulting in very low representation.

When considering participant representation at this consultation, it's helpful to know organizations in Nelson and area that support programs in the five Pathways to Change primarily focus on Access to Services and Education & Skill Building services. Affordable Housing, Employment & Income, and Transportation only have 3 – 4 organizations that support these pathways. Consultation results, aside from Affordable Housing, all reflect the existing landscape of organisations providing services/conducting work in Nelson and area in the five Pathways to Change.

Organizational diversity reflects existing distribution of organizations furthering work in each Pathway to Change.

- 3. Priorities, Pathways to Change** - Ten participants prioritized the 25 needs identified across all five Pathways to Change with priority results noted in chart 3 below.

Chart 3 – Priority Pathways to Change, identified by consultation participants



Mental Health & Wellbeing and Access to Services received the majority of points indicating these two pathways as high priority for consideration in the Action Strategy's focus for the next two years. Affordable Housing, Education & Skill Building, and Employment & Income received nominal points - 8, 6 & 3 respectively - a notable gap between the two highest priorities, indicating a relatively low priority on these Pathways to Change. Transportation received no points, indicating no priority on this pathway.

The Transportation Pathway to Change had limited participant and no organizational representation. This resulted in participant's personal knowledge and understanding being reflected in this pathway, in turn influencing identification of needs and priorities in this pathway.

4. **Priorities, Initiatives within Pathways to Change** - Of the 25 needs identified, the highest priority was a community drop-in (6 points) combined with a coordinated hub* (2 points) resulting in 8 points. The second highest priority identified the importance of addressing affordable housing challenges. The third highest priority identified was increased access to education and skill building opportunities tied to community need and job training.

**A coordinated hub was located in Nelson and was closed in 2025 due to a lack of consistent funding, after being run for two years. The service supported Nelson's most vulnerable community members, offering mental health, substance use, and homelessness supports.*

5. **Value and Impact of the Community Consultation** - At the end of the engagement session, participants were asked:

"What is a key takeaway, learning or something you're excited about from today's consultation?"

Participants' closing responses identified three key themes of value to participants – data, collaboration and momentum.

Theme	Mentions (from 10 people)
1. Data / new information gained / new perceptions	6
2. Importance and value of connection, collaboration, teamwork	3
3. Hope for action, change and increased momentum	3

Interestingly, information gained from the *Impact Report* presentation and consultation discussions received the most mentions, indicating that the #1 takeaway from this consultation was data and new information gained.

Although most of the consultation time was spent connecting and collaborating with participants, this area had half the mentions compared to information gained. Connection and collaboration as one of the top three mentions indicates value on these outcomes. Why the value of collaboration vs information/data received is unknown. However, it may reflect the need for/ appreciation of immediately applicable support to organizations with respect to areas such as day-to-day program planning. Given that connection and collaboration were repeatedly mentioned, dedicating more time and resources to strengthening and supporting future connection and collaboration opportunities may be beneficial.

Recommendations – Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area, 2026 - 2028

The below recommendations are put forward for consideration for refreshing *Together Nelson's, Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area based on the Poverty Reduction Impact Report* (Appendix A), the *Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Nelson & Area, 2022 – 2026* (Appendix B), community consultation outcomes documented in this report, and consultant expertise.

1. **Strengthen engagement and partnerships** with local organizations and with individuals and single parents with living/lived expertise by:
 - a. Engaging Executive Directors of Nelson's key community service organisations, invited but not present at this consultation (Kootenay Career Development Society, Nelson CARES, Nelson Community Services, and ANKORS), to share the Impact Report's findings and identify needs/priorities in the five existing, and one new proposed Pathway to Change highlighted in this report, as well as to invite their continued partnership.
 - b. Establishing financially remunerated partnerships with at least two community members with lived expertise from the two highest demographic groups living in poverty in Nelson and area: individuals and single parents. The aim of these partnerships would be to provide ongoing (over the next two years) input and advice on the development, implementation, and review of local poverty-reducing initiatives.
2. **Explore Mental Health & Wellbeing** as a potential new Pathway to Change by identifying what can be done locally to meaningfully effect change in this area including potential initiatives, community partners, and funding opportunities.
3. **Focus on the Access to Services** Pathway to Change by considering *Together Nelson's* and local resources to advocate for and/or support the development of a:
 - a. **Coordinated, safe, supportive, drop in service** that includes access to mental health & wellbeing supports, education & skill building, cash employment, health services, social connection and peer support.
 - b. **Community health & wellbeing network** that builds on a key initiative recommended in the 2022 – 2026 Action Strategy aimed at building on relationships that create a shared sense of understanding, investment, and ownership in our community's wellbeing. This proposed network would strengthen knowledge/information sharing, connection, collaboration, and momentum across organizations working to reduce poverty in Nelson and area.
4. **Maintain focus on the Education & Skill Building and Employment & Income** Pathways to Change by:
 - a. Identifying and exploring initiatives that increase access to skill building opportunities that reflect current community needs.
 - b. Broadening the annual delivery of free, less-than living-wage, income tax preparation clinics recognizing the potential to reach more community members in Nelson (2,100 LIM census families, 2023 census).
5. **Monitor the Affordable Housing** Pathway to Change by tracking effort and change in this pathway, acknowledging the level of development that local organisations, municipal, and provincial government have made in this area over the past five years.
6. **Monitor Transportation** as a Pathway to Change in the Action Strategy recognizing the systemic/structural challenges in locally influencing this area as well as the limited data available to monitor change.
7. **Focus new, innovative poverty-reducing initiatives on low-income individuals and single parents**, the two largest groups living in poverty in Nelson and area.



IMPACT REPORT
2022 to 2024

Prepared by
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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
BACKGROUND	4
POVERTY REDUCTION INDICATORS	6
POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVES	9
SUMMARY	11
REFERENCES	14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Together Nelson respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather is located within the intersecting traditional territories of multiple First Nations and is now home to diverse Indigenous People, including the Métis and Inuit. We support truth and reconciliation, equity and social justice in this beautiful place where we live, learn, and work.

We applaud and thank all local organizations that tirelessly continue efforts to reduce poverty in Nelson, British Columbia with special thanks to non-profits who were able to contribute to this report. Your input is valuable and essential in supporting the way forward to identify and focus efforts to reduce poverty in Nelson and area.

1. City of Nelson, Library & Planning Department
2. Kootenay Career Development Society
3. Kootenay Kids Society
4. Nelson Community Food Centre
5. Nelson & District Credit Union
6. Salvation Army Food Bank
7. SHARE Nelson Food Bank
8. St. Saviour's Food Pantry

Special thanks to *Tamarack Institute's Communities Ending Poverty Learning Network* for connecting *Together Nelson* with communities across Canada in the pursuit of innovative, impactful, best-practice poverty-reducing efforts.

We also thank Together Nelson's Leadership Table members: Alex Hawes, Alison MacDonald, Cynthia Fraser, Emma Dresen, George Chandler, Katie McEwen, Kelly McCafferty, Ken Bourdeau, Kim Bater, Laura Harris, Peter Schramm, Rona Park, Samantha Zaytsoff, Sean Ryan, and Tracey Therrien.

We are deeply grateful for funding from the Vancouver Foundation's Community Prosperity Fund (via Osprey Community Foundation) and the Regional District of Central Kootenay ReDi Grants in support of the creation of this Report.

BACKGROUND

This report aims to understand the impact of local, provincial, and federal poverty-reducing activities conducted during the first three years of *Together Nelson's, Nelson & Area Four-Year Poverty Reduction Action Strategy 2022-2026* (Action Strategy) spanning 2022, 2023, and 2024. *Together Nelson* is a poverty reduction initiative of *Nelson at its Best*. This report also supports an Action Strategy refresh in 2026. An overview of the Action Strategy can be viewed at <https://www.bestnelson.org/together-nelson/>.

Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction encompasses initiatives that permanently end poverty through structural, systemic changes and comprehensive, innovative, niche strategies that support economic growth for people experiencing poverty. Equally important and valuable poverty alleviation efforts that provide immediate relief and improve quality of life for people currently living in poverty are beyond the scope of this report.

Poverty Reduction Indicators

Indicators are drawn from Statistics Canada's last census (2021) and 2021, 2022, 2023 tax filer data, referenced at the end of this report. Tax filer data for 2024 is not available for this report as it is scheduled for release in August 2026.

Indicators are highlighted for three reasons. They:

- provide a comparison from 2016 census data reported on in the Action Strategy
- clarify what's changed in Nelson, BC's landscape of poverty between when the Strategy was launched and its first three years of implementation
- have been consistently collected, and are expected to continue to be collected, supporting consistent, reliable long-term comparison

Poverty Indicators Gaps

Data used to understand poverty reduction indicators reflects census families that completed the last Statistics Canada census (2021) and filed their income tax returns (2022 & 2023). We acknowledge people who did not complete the last census or file their returns have not been captured in Federal and Provincial data collection, therefore are not reflected in this report. That being noted, census and tax filer data represent highly reliable and the most inclusive, on-going, community-wide data available.

Statistics Canada census data includes, but tax filer does not include, information to understand First Nations, Indigenous, Metis & Inuit poverty-reduction indicators. It is recognized that First Nations, Metis, Inuit & Indigenous community members comprise a relatively small portion of Nelson's demographics (approximately 5% identified through the 2021 census), but that small portion often experience the highest levels of poverty. The 2026 census will enable *Together Nelson* to gain a better understanding of poverty in First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and Indigenous community members which can then be considered for and reflected in the next Action Strategy.

COVID 19's Influence

The 2021 census was conducted during COVID 19. As such, government income supplements and expenses limitations that occurred as a result of self-isolation policies and practices, likely have a notable influence on indicators reported during 2021. We look forward to re-visiting indicators after the upcoming 2026 census once post-COVID trends are gathered, analysed, and released in 2028.

Poverty Reduction Initiatives

The *Nelson & Area Four-Year Poverty Reduction Action Strategy, 2022-2026* is the first-ever Action Strategy developed for Nelson and Area. As part of this Strategy, *Together Nelson* is committed to assessing impact throughout the four years. To better assess the effectiveness of current and future poverty-reduction efforts, local programs and service providers, ideally, need to work collaboratively to establish consistent and meaningful impact measures. Hence, this

report highlights select indicators available, along with participant voices highlighted through organisations who were able to respond to a community questionnaire and/or phone interviews that supported the preparation of this report.

The impact of initiatives is drawn from a community questionnaire responded to by 9 of 15 local, non-profits plus municipal government. These organizations were identified through local knowledge from *Together Nelson's* Leadership Table and the writer of this report.

Initiatives reflect what has been occurring in our community during the Strategy's first three years of implementation, including a spotlight on innovative, niche and high impact initiatives reported on in community questionnaires.

Many factors outside of *Together Nelson's* sphere of influence contribute to reducing poverty. We hope this report serves as a baseline for measuring ongoing local progress influenced by local, regional, provincial, and federal initiatives.

INDICATORS

The following table (Table 1) highlights census and tax filer poverty-reduction indicators in four of five Pathways to Change identified in *Together Nelson's Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty*. These are:

1. access to services
2. employment and income
3. education and skill building
4. access to affordable housing

Transportation, the fifth pathway, is not included in Table 1. This reflects that meaningful, reliable poverty reduction indicators on transportation are not available through census, tax filer, or community-based data.

New indicators, *noted in blue italics* on Table 1, are indicators that were not identified in the Action Strategy. They have been added to reflect current and on-going, meaningful measures that can be consistently reported on here and in future efforts to understand poverty in Nelson and area.

Table 1 highlights both local and provincial poverty rates, identifying movement of the needle to reduce poverty locally within the broader context of poverty reduction efforts across the province of British Columbia.

The change from pre-Action Strategy implementation to the end of 2023 or 2024, dependant on data availability for 2023 or 2024, is highlighted in the 'Change' column. Below is a description of what arrow directions and colours mean:

1. Up increase in the indicator's measurement since Action Strategy implementation
2. Down decrease in the indicator's measurement since Action Strategy implementation
3. Green positive trend in an indicator's measurement, supporting poverty reduction
4. Red negative trend in an indicator's measurement, supporting poverty increase

e.g. BC's poverty rate has a red, upward facing arrow.

This highlights that an increase in the indicator is a negative trend that reflects an increase in poverty.



Affordable housing has a green, upward facing arrow.

This highlights that an increase in housing is a positive trend that supports a reduction in poverty.

Overall, the hope is to see positive trends in reducing poverty. Negative trends reflect areas that indicate poverty is on the rise, or that the indicator hasn't moved in a direction that would support poverty reduction.

Table 1 – Nelson & area poverty reduction indicators, census and tax filer data

Indicator	Strategy 2016 Census	Impact Report			Change 2021 – 2023/24
		2021 Census Pre-strategy baseline	2022 TF data	2023 TF data & 2024 community data	
Poverty Rates BC* Nelson	8.9% 2018 MBM 18.6%	11.9% 2021/2022 MBM ¹ 15.5% 2021, CFLIM** ² 1,970 census families	17.3%, CFLIM-AT 2,250 census families	15.9%, CFLIM-AT 2,110 census families	 140 more census families
Access to Services - Improve access, coordination, and navigation of existing services					
<i>Affordable childcare – total spaces</i> <i>Childcare Fee Reduction Initiative spaces</i> <i>\$10-a-day spaces</i>	Not reported on	391 327 64		389 244 (83 fewer than 2021) 145 (81 more than 2021)	 2 fewer spaces
Food bank usage Nelson Community Food Centre (NCFC), St Saviors (St Svrs), Salvation Army (SA)	55 visits/day, 2019 ⁷ 19,927 visits (NCFC 13,866 St Saviors 3,299, SA 2,762)	Not available	44 visits/day, 2022 15,948 visits (NCFC 9,500 St Svrs 2,221, SA 4,227) ⁷	36 visits/day 2024 13,317 visits (NCFC 8,115 St Svrs 3,133, SA 2,069)	 19 fewer visits a day since 2019
Employment & Income - Create opportunities that increase income & income earning potential					
Low Income, 1. Single Parents, CF-LIM 2. Children/Youth, 17 & under, LIM-AT 3. <i>Seniors, 65 and older, LIM-AT</i> 4. <i>Individuals</i>	1. 4.7% (820 people) 2. 2.4%	1. 30.6% (410 CFs) 2. 14.9% (320 ppl) ^{3a} 3. 15% (400 ppl) ^{3a} 4. 31.6% (1,040 ppl)	1. 35.1% (460 CFs) ⁴ 2. 17.5% (380 ppl) ⁴ 3. 15.8% (430 ppl) ⁴ 4. 34.3% (1,170 ppl) ⁴	1. 32.8% (430 CFs) ⁵ 2. 15.9% (340 ppl) ⁵ 3. 11.8% (330 ppl) ⁵ 4. 31.8% (1,120 ppl) ⁵	 20 more single p. families, children, youth, 70 fewer seniors, 20 ind's
<i>CVITP*** eligibility - Total income:</i> <i>Private households, under \$35,000</i> <i>Private households, under \$45,000</i> <i>Individuals, after tax, under \$35,000</i>	Not calculated, 2016 Census Profile	18.8% (930 of 4,950) ³ 26.4% (1,305 of 4,950) ³ 47% ^{3a} 4,910 of 10,440 tax filers	45.2% 4,840 of 10,710 tax filers	41.4% 4,500 of 10,980 tax filers	 410 more private households have a higher income
<i>Kootenay Career Development Society</i> <i>Financial supports disbursed</i> <i>People served</i>			\$4,987,200 2022-2024 2,600 2022-2024		
Education & Skill Building - Create opportunities that support sustainable livelihoods.					
No poverty reduction indicators were identified via census or tax filer data. This Pathway relies on long-term indicators to reflect impact of education & skill building on employment & income, which are challenging to gather. Although no indicators are reported here, personal stories sharing the immediate effects of initiatives in this Pathway are highlighted on pp 14. Suggestions to include # student loans allocated to Nelson residents or # of people who upgrade skills through local College courses were considered, but not gathered as reliability for meaningful indication of poverty reduction along with ongoing accessibility is low.					
Indicator	Strategy 2016 Census	Impact Report			Change 2021 – 23/24
		2021 Census Pre-strategy baseline	2022 TF data	2023 TF data & 2023/24 community data	
Affordable Housing - Support affordable housing development that meets the continuum of community needs.					

Spend 30%+ income on shelter costs (rent/mortgage/heat), 25% sample data	47% renter 21% owner	(22.8%) 1,125 of 4,940 ³ 35.5% renter 15.4% owner ⁴	Only available via census, next census is 2026 with data available in 2028		
Homeless Sheltered Unsheltered	94,2018 ⁶	Not collected / reported	88 ⁶ 76 ⁶ 12 ⁶ COVID/undercount	122 ⁶ 2024 78 ⁶ 2024 44 ⁶ 2024	 28 more people are homeless, since 2018
Affordable Housing Units**** Cooperative units Subsidized / Non-Market Units Rent assistance / Private market units	268 31 ⁶ 237 ⁶			362 31 ⁶ 236 ⁹ 126 ⁹ In the works, 196: 153 market/affordable / 43 supportive housing units	 125 new units built, since 2018
<i>% households in core housing need</i>	Not reported in 2016 Census Profile	10.4% (520 of 4,950) ³ 5.3% (166) owner 19.4% (354) tenant	Only available via census, next census is 2026 with data available in 2028		

Transportation - Enhance access to and affordability of local and regional transportation.

No poverty reduction indicators were identified through census, tax filer data.
Suggestions to include other data sources were not identified.

* BC's poverty rate is an approximation, based on Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2025/2026 – 2027/28 Service Plan, which stated the # of British Columbian's living in poverty (MBM measure) in 2022 was 597,000 and that BC's poverty rate was approximately 11% in 2022. This poverty rate was calculated at 11.94% based on the 2022 MBM of 597,000 and Statistics Canada, 2021 census of population reporting BC's population as 5,000,879.

** CFLIM – AT refers to 'census families, low-income measure, after tax'. Census families refers to a married or common-law couple (same-sex or opposite sex) with or without children, or a lone parent with at least one child, all living in the same dwelling.

*** CVITP refers to 'Community Volunteer Income Tax Program'.

**** Doesn't include emergency shelters/housing for homeless (147 units), transitional & supportive/assisted living housing (seniors, special needs, women & children fleeing violence (113 units), City of Nelson, Housing Report, October 2023.

INITIATIVES

A questionnaire exploring Nelson-based poverty reduction initiatives was circulated to 15 organizations. It inquired about objectives, participant numbers and demographics along with quantitative, qualitative and estimated levels of changes that occurred as a result of local poverty-reducing initiatives. Six organizations (40%) responded. An additional three organizations were contacted with specific questions that reflected part of the community questionnaire, increasing the total number of organizations that supported the creation of this report to 9 organizations, a 60% response rate.

Eight poverty reduction initiatives were identified through these community questionnaires. Three initiatives aligned with the affordable housing pathway to change, two aligned with the education and skill building pathway, two with the access to services pathway, and 1 with the employment and income pathway. Table 2 below highlights select information about these initiatives.

Table 2 – Select Nelson-based poverty reduction initiatives commencing in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Initiative	Impact	Level of Change*	Delivery Organization
Access to Services			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Free online professional training – LinkedIn learning / Gale courses such as small business finance, social media marketing, job searching, visual effects, video editing, project management / introduction to Quickbooks, accounting fundamentals, MS Excel. Tech hub - Two tech rooms at the library completed in 2023. A recording studio for entrepreneurs to take product photos, record podcasts/music, and do voiceover work for YouTube videos. A media studio equipped with Adobe Creative Cloud software, for graphic design, video editing, web development and photo editing. 	<p>840 people served 2021, 2022, 2023</p> <p>Improved confidence and tech skills</p>	1	City of Nelson, Public Library
Initiative	Impact	Level of Change*	Delivery Organization
Education & Skill Building			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Literacy - Presentations to local high-school and college students, at-risk youth. 	Not identified.		Nelson & District Credit Union

<p>4. Loonies and \$ense – Customized financial literacy training program for low-income adults, including income assistance supplements.</p>	<p>- 16 adults, aged 33 to 73 years old participated, reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased ability to meet basic needs (e.g. buying food, afford housing), find/maintain employment, feelings of inclusion, and access financial services. - increased knowledge of and confidence in personal budgeting, banking, community resources and navigating options for saving and investing 	2	<p>Kootenay Career Development Society in collaboration with Together Nelson, Nelson at its Best.</p>
Employment & Income			
<p>5. Enhanced tax clinic – Free income tax preparation for less-than living wage community members, that included filing self-employment and up to 10 years of back taxes</p>	<p>101 people supported \$82,446 total refunds \$75,000+ economic benefit <i>(refunds minus balances owing)</i></p>	3	<p>Together Nelson, Nelson at its Best</p>
Affordable Housing			
<p>6, 7, & 8. Three affordable housing initiatives are reported on in the indicators section reviewed earlier in this report.</p>			
Transportation			
<p>No responses received on public transit or community-based transportation initiatives.</p>			

**Level of Change is a subjective, estimated contribution to reducing poverty for participants, provided by community-based organisations delivering the initiative.*

Ranking scale from 1 – 5 is:

1 – created little to no change

2 – nudged small changes to happen, was a minor contributor in creating change

5 – primary reason for change, was a significant factor in making change happen

3 – created moderate change, was one of several important factors in creating change

4 – created notable change, was a key factor in making change happen

Information on initiatives do not reflect systemic approaches in reducing poverty. This may be a reflection that systemic approaches often require broad, long-term, and large-scale initiatives resourced by larger urban-based organizations, provincial and federal governments. In contrast, community-based initiatives tend to represent smaller-scale innovations that strengthen local leadership and build community capacity, helping to initiate or sustain modest but meaningful change. These community-driven efforts often influence individuals on a more personal level, making their long-term impacts more difficult to measure.

SUMMARY

Since 2021, data in Table 1 indicates Nelson's poverty rate has increased by 4%, with single parent and individuals experiencing the highest levels of poverty, 32.8% and 31.8% respectively. Table 1 reflects good news with 20 fewer single parent families and 20 fewer children/youth living in poverty. However, this is a small group lifted out of poverty relative to the 430 single parent families and 340 children/youth still living in poverty (also noted in Table 1).

Nelson has seen a notable increase in affordable housing units developed through the support of BC Housing with collaboration from the City of Nelson and local non-profits to address the affordable housing gap, with 125 affordable housing units built since 2021 and another 153 in process of being built. Although affordable housing initiatives have seen a notable increase, homelessness is on the rise with 28 more people living without a home or permanent housing. Affordable housing units are an important initiative on the continuum of housing initiatives. Supportive housing (long-term, wraparound support services for high needs individuals living with mental health challenges, disabilities or without a home) is absent in Nelson. This gap is being addressed at the time of writing this report with a supportive housing initiative nearing completion. A significant portion of community members live in unaffordable housing with 23% (1,125 of 4,940) households spending 30% or more of their household income on shelter (rent/mortgage/heat).

Additional good news is poverty has decreased for seniors. Seventy seniors (3.2%) were lifted out of poverty between 2021 and 2023. This may be related to the 10% increase in Old Age Security pension for seniors over the age of 75 that occurred in July, 2022. However, data to support whether the OAS increase lifted a portion of Nelson seniors out of poverty is not available.

There were fewer food bank visits, which declined by 19 visits a day between 2021 and 2024. Interestingly, this decrease doesn't indicate an increased demand which would be expected with an increased poverty rate. Other considerations such as access to or awareness of the existence of food banks may play a role in decreased visits. Why visits have declined is not clear.

Two of Nelson's childcare spaces have been lost but 21% of spaces (81 of 389 spaces) have become more affordable by moving from being childcare fee reduction to \$10/day spaces.

One Pathway to Change was difficult to assess and out of scope of influence for Together Nelson – Transportation. Transportation indicators and initiatives were not identified or available. Hence, the impact of any transportation initiatives is not assessed in this report.

Levels of change primarily focused on community initiatives that prioritized:

- Niche / innovation, individual changes
- strengthening leadership / community capacity

Systems level change was only reflected through community-based, municipal and provincial collaboration driven by provincial / BC Housing's current focus on supporting affordable housing developments in the province.

Most notable change agents among organizations delivering initiatives were:

- capacity, resource availability, and mission-based imperatives to reduce poverty
- innovative, responsive, flexible, design and delivery that included people with lived/living experience
- provincial and federally funded initiatives

Organizations who contributed to this report self-ranked the impact of their poverty reducing initiatives. They assessed their impact as 'creating little to no changes' or 'nudging small changes' except in two initiatives - tax and benefits clinics & customized financial literacy training. These two were ranked as 'creating moderate change'.

Together Nelson

Community Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty
Impact Report Overview, 2022 to 2024

We are collaborative leaders, partnering with community organizations and local government that use multi-sector input and a collective impact approach to end poverty in Nelson, BC.

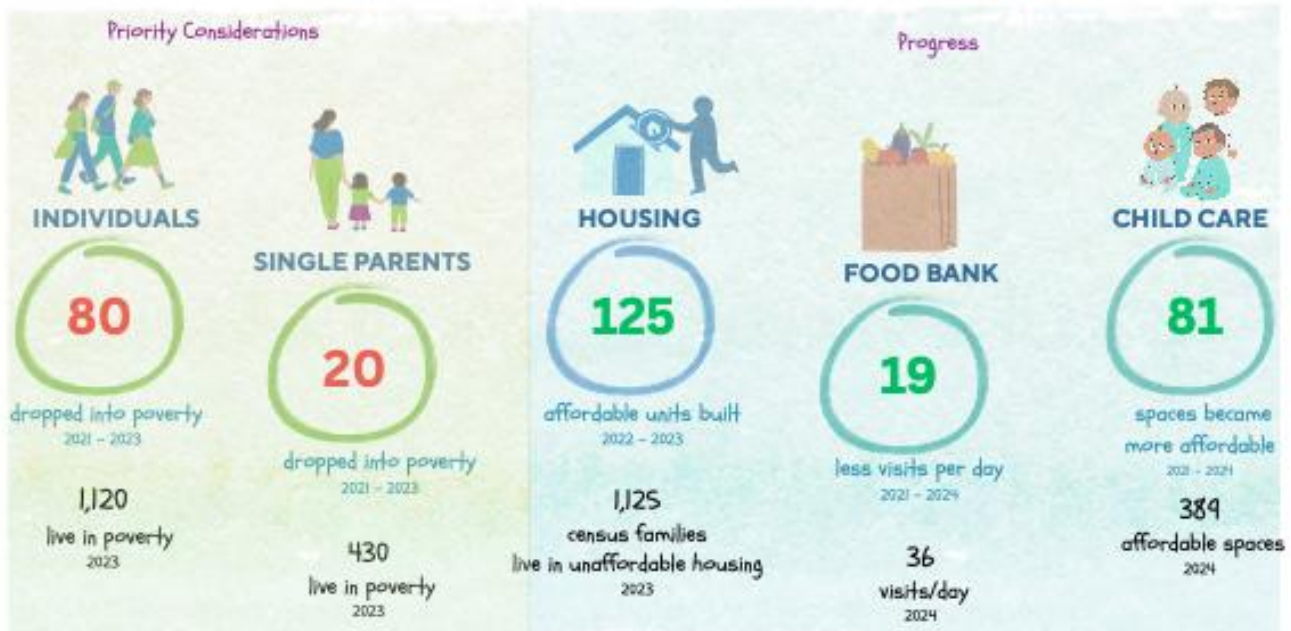
Our goal and pathways to reduce poverty by 2026



Poverty reduction INDICATORS tell us



dropped into poverty
2021 - 2023



Learn more & read the full Action Strategy at bestnelson.org/together-nelson
Stay Connected @bestnelsonbc

An initiative of



Together Nelson

Community Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty
Impact Report Overview, 2022 to 2024

We believe ending poverty is a shared responsibility where community has an important role to play.

Spotlight on INITIATIVES tell us Innovative, niche, community-based initiatives created change

Loonies & \$ense

Customized financial literacy training, pilot, 2022/2023

Eliminate Debt Budget Save Invest

This initiative built a functional, customised financial literacy program for adults experiencing poverty, including opportunities for economic inclusion and participation in program design and delivery. The curriculum included:

- personal goal setting & credit
- connecting with community-based financial resources
- participation stipends, transportation, and childcare financial support

Participants said...

I stabilised my budget, paid down a loan, increased my credit ratings and brought my banking together in one institution and I was able to save extra funds. The trajectory it has put me on is life changing for me and my son. Being able to see how patterns in spending, saving, or investing over time - what they amount to - is so impactful.

17

People reported

Less challenges

- buying food
- affording housing
- finding/maintaining employment
- accessing financial services

Increased confidence

- personal budgeting
- borrowing money
- navigating savings & investment options

Enhanced Income Tax Clinic

An enhanced Canadian Volunteer Income Tax Preparation clinic, pilot, 2024

101

people



received
saved



in refunds
in preparation fees

This initiative put money back into people's pockets and the local economy with a free income tax preparation service that supported more people through higher income eligibility thresholds that reflected the local living wage, preparation of self employment and back tax returns.

Participants said...

Greatly impacted. The free service saved me over a hundred dollars in fees. I now have...funds for my child's RESP.

Fast Facts

91%

received a refund/had nil owing

37%

never used a tax preparation service

25%

live alone

Learn more & read the full Action Strategy at bestnelson.org/together-nelson

Stay Connected @bestnelsonbc

An initiative of

nelson
at its best

REFERENCES

Community Consultation, Outcomes Report

Indicators

¹ Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0112-01, Individual Market Basket Measure (MBM) poverty status by demographic and economic family characteristics of persons: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts, Based on the 2018 base of the MBM, Canada's official poverty line.

² Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, Table I-13, Individual data – After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low-income measure, CLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by composition, 2021. State of the Basin, Low Income Measure Report, 2021/2021 located [here](#).

³ Statistics Canada, Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Low income and income inequality in 2020 – Prevalence of low income based on the low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT %)

^{3a} Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, Table I-7C Individual data – Tax filers and dependents with income by after-tax income and age groups.

⁴ Statistics Canada Tax Filer Data, Table I-13, Individual data – After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low-income measure, CLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by composition, 2022.

⁵ Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, Table I-13, Individual data – After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low-income measure, CLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by composition, 2023.

⁶ 10th Report Card on Homelessness, Nelson Committee on Homelessness, 2018. (Revised data, Kootenay Independent Safe Supply Society)

⁷ 14th Report Card on Homelessness, Nelson Committee on Homelessness, 2022.

⁸ 15th Report Card on Homelessness, Nelson Committee on Homelessness, 2024. Bridging Belonging: Nothing about us Without us.

⁹ City of Nelson, Housing Needs Report, October 2023.

Summary Overview

¹ Measuring poverty is based on low income-after tax (LIM-AT)

² Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, Table I-13, Individual data – After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low-income measure, CLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by composition, 2021. State of the Basin, Low Income Measure Report, 2021/2021 located [here](#).

² Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, Table I-13, Individual data – After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low-income measure, CLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by composition, 2023.

³ Census families include individuals and couples with 1, 2 or 3+ children.

⁴ Statistics Canada, Tax Filer Data, Table I-13, Individual data – After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependents (census family low-income measure, CLIM-AT) for couple and lone parent families by composition, 2023.

⁵ 22.8% of census families living in unaffordable housing (spend 30%+ of total household income on rent/mortgage/heat) taken from 2023 tax filer data, highlighted below:

47% to 35.5% renters

11.5% decrease in renters

21% to 15.4% owners

5.6% decrease in owners

⁶ Estimated cost of preparing a single, simple return \$125 ea.

Appendix B
Action Strategy to Reduce Poverty In Nelson and Area, 2022 - 2026
Summative Infograph

The infograph is located [here](#).

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