

# **2019 Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Advocacy Toolkit**

**Prepared by  
The Inter-City Forum on Social Policy**

**Customized by  
the Community Services Advisory Board for  
Edmonton FCSS**



## Inter-City Forum on Social Policy

The Inter City Forum on Social Policy is comprised of cities across Alberta. Its purpose is to address social policy, program and service issues that are of concern to Alberta urban municipalities. Inter City Forum members decided to proactively engage the new government to ensure they are aware of the Family and Community Support Services Program and the key role it plays providing preventive social services in communities across Alberta. To this end, Inter City Forum on Social Policy has developed the 2019 FCSS Advocacy Toolkit as a resource for municipalities. The toolkit consists of key messages, an Alberta FCSS Fact Sheet, a Local Fact Sheet (to be populated with local FCSS statistics that are relevant and tell the local FCSS story), Letter to the MLA template and common questions. We invite you to consider any or all of these tools in the upcoming weeks and months.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me at 780-496-8136 or via email at [bev.esslinger@edmonton.ca](mailto:bev.esslinger@edmonton.ca).

Yours truly,

Bev Esslinger  
Chair  
Inter City Forum on Social Policy

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## **Inter-City Forum on Social Policy**

**Dear FCSS Program Representative,**

Attached is the 2019 FCSS Advocacy Toolkit prepared by the Inter-City Forum on Social Policy, and customized by the Community Services Advisory Board for use by the City of Edmonton FCSS funded agencies, partners, program participants and friends. This kit will assist FCSS funded organizations, including staff, board members, and volunteers, to increase the profile of FCSS across the province.

In order to have the greatest impact possible, we are committed to the idea of a one-voice strategy, working to coordinate our key messages from FCSS funded programs across Alberta.

A number of documents are attached to make it as easy as possible for you to engage with your elected officials:

1. FCSS key messages
2. FCSS Alberta fact sheet
3. Edmonton FCSS Local Fact Sheet
4. Letter to MLAs template
5. Common questions from elected officials

Included in the Fact Sheets are common social media logos into which you can embed hyperlinks to any active social media accounts you have. Links to FCSSAA accounts have already been included in the Alberta Fact Sheet. We encourage you to post on your social media accounts, using the hashtag #FCSSworkshere. You can also tag @FCSSAA in your posts. We encourage you to share this information with board members, employees, partners, family, friends and volunteers and ask them to help promote the critical need for sustainable funding for preventive social services.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF STABLE

# FCSS FUNDING

Why is Secure & Stable Funding for  
**Family & Community Support Services**  
Critical to Albertans?



## Together, Making Life Better For Albertans

- **FCSS** responds to social issues by helping individuals and families before they reach a crisis point.
- Albertans feel a sense of belonging, meaning, security and control over their lives through **FCSS** programs and services.
- With overall support for those struggling with addictions, homelessness, social isolation, poverty and violence, **FCSS** can show measurable results for short term and long term goals.



## Social Well-Being Creates Economic Prosperity

- Strong, stable and supported employees allow our business communities to thrive. **FCSS** programs support the health and wellbeing of individuals to give them the confidence and ability to get back to work.
- Businesses are more likely to locate in a community with a strong, healthy work force and positive social conditions. **FCSS** is creating healthy communities that attract new and diverse businesses.
- **FCSS** strategically invests in programming that helps to reduce crime, reduce health care dependency, reduce employment barriers for vulnerable Albertans and enhance our economy.



## Communities Know What is Best for Themselves

- **FCSS** leverages local knowledge and relationships, to ensure that investments are directed to the programs that will make the greatest impact for all Albertans.
- By using a coordinated approach, **FCSS** connects non-profit groups and the volunteer sector, with public and private sectors, to meet the unique needs of each community.
- **FCSS** programs create local accountability to tax payers. Direct contact with the organizations means increased accountability for producing measurable outcomes, to better the communities.

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## Inter-City Forum on Social Policy

# FCSS Alberta Fact Sheet

### Background

For over 50 years, the Government of Alberta, together with participating municipalities and Métis Settlements, have jointly funded preventive social services for Albertans through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. The Province contributes 80 per cent of the cost of operating a local program and the participating municipality or Métis Settlement contributes a minimum of 20 per cent. This unique provincial partnership program leverages municipal funds to greatly magnify their impact. Designed to allow communities to create customized programs that meet the specific needs of the local community, FCSS's preventive programs and services promote well-being, resilience, and active participation in the community for people of all ages.

- 315 municipalities and Métis Settlements participate in FCSS, organized into 206 local programs, under the FCSS Act and Regulation.
- FCSS programs support the delivery of comprehensive community-based preventive social programs. Almost all 4.33 million Albertans can access an FCSS program; less than one percent of the population lives in communities without an FCSS program.
- FCSS funding allocation in 2018 was less than 0.18% of the total provincial budget.
- FCSSAA brings together FCSS programs from across the province to promote collaboration and learning. FCSSAA supports and strengthens FCSS programs through evidence-based research, common evaluation, professional development, current tools and resources, and communication and coordination.
- FCSS programs are vigilantly striving to respond to community needs despite tight times.
- Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that for every \$1 invested in preventive services, \$7 - \$12 dollars in future spending is saved. Long-term spending is reduced for justice, health care, and addiction treatment.
- Preventive social programs have demonstrated across sectors and countries a positive impact on health and well-being through reducing depression and isolation, improving community cohesion and participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2), 114–128.

- FCSS builds community; promoting volunteerism as a method for citizens to contribute directly to their community. Across Alberta, FCSS programs report over 50,727 volunteers contributing 2,362,194 volunteer hours annually, equivalent to \$35,432,910 at minimum wage.
- FCSS Programs contribute to Albertans' economic prosperity. For instance, many communities provide a free income tax filing service through FCSS. Of the 24 programs that were surveyed, there were 5,954 tax returns filed, impacting 259 children, 266 seniors, and 2,426 low income individuals. A total of \$26,999,593 from just these 24 programs was brought back into Alberta communities.

***Follow us:***



## City of Edmonton

### FCSS

### Fact Sheet

**Edmonton FCSS** supports approximately **250,000** community members every year through funding local preventive social service programming, working in and supporting innovative partnerships and by delivering internal programs and services. Edmonton FCSS programs and services support individuals, families and communities at all ages and stages, striving to improve overall social well-being and connectedness to resources and community supports.

- The Community Services Advisory Board, and the FCSS Standing Committee provide oversight to Edmonton FCSS and provide advice to City Council and the Citizen Services Department. The Board and committees consist of volunteer community members interested in improving the quality of life for Edmontonians and ensuring preventive social services are available in our community.
- Through Edmonton FCSS the City of Edmonton provides leadership by:
  - working in partnership with the community to identify and address community social needs and build community capacity,
  - translating knowledge and information,
  - bringing a variety of groups together to explore preventive social services solutions, build collaborations, develop partnerships and provide learning opportunities to better meet the needs of citizens,
  - working closely with other funders to support the social infrastructure in the city.
- The Edmonton FCSS team actively participates in **over 18 partnership tables supporting complex initiatives** like EndPovertyEdmonton , All In For Youth, Communities United, the Community Mental Health Action Plan, Prevention of Family Violence, Housing Outreach and Financial Empowerment.
- In 2018, **225,079 participants** benefited from participating in one of the **101** community-based programs funded by **Edmonton FCSS**.



- In 2018, **11,692** volunteers contributed **504,365** volunteer hours to Edmonton FCSS programming. If each hour of volunteerism was paid at the minimum wage of \$15.00/hour, the contribution to the sector would be valued at **\$7,565,475**.
- FCSS creates meaningful jobs for skilled professionals. In **Edmonton**, approximately **707** jobs are supported in part or in full by FCSS funding within the non-profit sector. FCSS also supports the development of new professionals, providing education and support to over 500 students *each year*.
- Edmonton FCSS funded agencies and internal City of Edmonton programs funded under the FCSS budget manage over **98,000** referral requests (phone, email & walk-in), over **500,000** information sharing activities (newsletter, website, social media) and interacted with over **16,000** participants at information fairs or community-based engagement events.
- Through a comprehensive evaluation system, **Edmonton FCSS** has been able to determine its positive impact in the community in a number of areas. Some of the impacts reported by Edmonton FCSS funded programs in 2018 included:
  - **31,659** of program participants surveyed have reported an increase in their network of social support
  - **1,557** of surveyed children have developmentally appropriate skills
  - **2,652** of surveyed families reported they have increased positive interactions as a family
  - **11,195** of surveyed adults reported that they now have improved skills to address identified challenges in their life
  - **3,520** of surveyed seniors reported they have made new connections in the community and/or have one or more new people they can turn to for support
- The FCSS Grant Program from the Government of Alberta **leverages** the funding provided, **\$22,324,834**, with a commitment from the City of Edmonton to contribute a minimum of **\$5.6 million** for preventive social services. The City of Edmonton along with many other municipalities exceed this minimum contribution on a regular basis.



## What is the impact?

Edmonton FCSS has a significant impact on the lives of Edmontonians; particularly those facing barriers or difficult life circumstances. This is best reflected through individual stories of transformation and change.

All of our programs and services have stories that speak to the importance of prevention and intervention and how important these are for individuals and families in Edmonton, and our annual report speaks to that as well.

Find the City of Edmonton FCSS 2018 report [here](#).

Success stories provided to Edmonton FCSS are available on the [Edmonton FCSS website](#).

## From the Voices in the Community: Why FCSS?

- **Strong Social Service Sector**

*"FCSS is one of the most flexible funders we work with and they really understand the local context. They also are great at bringing organizations together through the sector meetings and learning events. They play a valuable role being a catalyst for collaboration, creating spaces where we can talk about reducing duplication, and discussing how we can work more effectively with families and communities."*

- **Sustainable Funding**

*"These grants help ensure the stability of our organization and ensure we can offer programming on an ongoing basis. They also guarantee we will be able to serve 100% of the people requesting programming and service - because we can keep fees and cost at an accessible level."*

- **Overcoming Challenges of the Economy**

*"FCSS is our major funder, and we would have had to close our doors this year had it not been for the help of FCSS. 2017 was a difficult year to receive grants and fundraise, so this funding was essential to our ability to operate. We have had an increase in demand for our services and a decrease in clients ability to pay for services."*

- **Prevention is for Everyone**

*"Without this funding, we would be limited in who we could serve."*

*"It allowed clients to receive support or services to deal with a current problem or concern timely and in an effective manner. Prevention is a big part of early intervention and dealing with concerns quickly allows you to manage the situation before it expands."*

Learn more about Edmonton FCSS:



**FCSS**  
Family & Community  
Support Services





## Inter-City Forum on Social Policy

### Letter to MLAs Template

Dear **(MLA Name)**:

On behalf of **(Organization Name)**, we are writing to request an opportunity to speak with you about the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Program. FCSS is an innovative, made in Alberta approach to delivering preventive social programs. Although it has been around for 50 years, you may not have heard much about FCSS. We often don't hear about preventing drug and alcohol abuse, preventing crime, preventing isolation, because when prevention works - and in Alberta it works like nowhere else - it's not widely broadcast. Avoiding a crisis isn't news.

The FCSS program is a vital resource in the social and economic health and wellbeing of the province which supports the Alberta Government's vision of making life better for all Albertans. FCSS Edmonton supports approximately 250,000 unique individuals through \$27,906,043 in funding for preventive social services. These programs help isolated seniors access supports to keep them safely in their homes for longer; they help women and newcomers build the skills they need to participate more fully in the workforce; they help keep children and youth engaged in positive programs during crucial after school hours; and they help young families connect to resources and supports in their local community.

Participants in FCSS programs have felt the pinch in Alberta's economy. Although the FCSS program has not received an increase in funding for four years, FCSS programs have sought creative ways to meet increasing demands. FCSS programs consistently seek out innovative opportunities for collaboration in order to leverage existing funds for greater impact. Ensuring that future policies prioritize prevention as a best practice allows us to address social issues before they arise, reducing long-term costs in other areas such as the justice system, children's services, health care and addiction treatment.

As the **(position name)**, I would like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss how we can best advance our shared vision of healthy Albertans supported by a province that encourages all to succeed, and is the very best place to work, start a business, and raise a family.

We look forward to your response. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

**(Your Name)**

**(Contact information)**



## **Inter-City Forum on Social Policy**

### **Common Questions from MLAs**

**Question: Why are there so many organizations? Isn't it true that there is a lot of duplication?**

**Answer:** While many organizations have similar mandates, they have different service philosophy and approaches to address the varying needs of the people served. Sometimes similar programs will be offered by different organizations, in different parts of a city, to ensure equitable access to services. There are many examples of organizations sharing resources such as space, information, services and administrative support.

**Question: Couldn't we consolidate some organizations to save money? Can't services offered by smaller organizations be delivered as well, or better, by larger organizations or government directly?**

**Answer:** Not necessarily. FCSS-funded organizations are constantly evolving into collaborations and new partnerships. However, bigger does not necessarily ensure better outcomes. The complexity of preventive service delivery, and the need for more accessible, community-based programs demand services that are closer to where people live, delivered in a culturally-appropriate manner. The notion that size automatically ensures best practices and outcomes is not defensible.

**Question: How do you know you are making a difference?**

**Answer:** All FCSS programs report back based on the FCSS Outcomes Model, meaning that we have an understanding of the impact of the program across the province using the same outcomes. At a high level the outcomes of FCSS are to improve the social well-being of individuals, families and communities. Improved social well-being is measured through indicators of success such as: personal well-being, connectedness with others, children & youth developing positively, healthy family functioning, connectedness to resources and supports, and community issues being addressed. In addition, many of the programs across the province collect or collaborate for local data strategies and evaluation above and beyond their reporting requirement. This additional work supports measurement and communication of additional impacts in the community, how the program is leveraging partnerships, and opportunities for continuous improvement.



## **Inter-City Forum on Social Policy**

**Question: A priority for the Alberta Government is building civil society. How does FCSS contribute to building civil society?**

**Answer:** The requirement for volunteer involvement in FCSS programs has created an opportunity for tens of thousands of Albertans to get involved in every aspect of civil society, from governance to service delivery. Further, in many communities, civil society organizations (not-for-profit organizations) work with

FCSS to provide programs and services. Many times these organizations embark upon partnerships and collaborations within the not-for-profit sector as a result of their relationship with FCSS, enhancing the communication and coordination of social services beyond those provided by FCSS. FCSS is a strong, and cost-effective vehicle to build and strengthen Alberta's civil society.

**Question: How does FCSS respond to emerging social issues?**

**Answer:** The principle of local autonomy allows FCSS programs to respond to the unique needs in the community. Through local needs assessments and local priority setting processes, FCSS responds to these unique needs through the response that is most aligned with those needs.

**Question: Why does the municipality (City of Edmonton) need to be involved?**

**Answer:** The City of Edmonton FCSS provides administration and oversight for grants to over 100 programs and many partnerships. Including the municipality as a partner in the FCSS grant program leverages networks and opportunities for collaboration that ensure a more effective and efficient response to complex social issues.

The City of Edmonton FCSS Program:

- Works with all of the programs to provide information, support, and act as a resource.
- Ensures that programs are working together to provide programs and services informed by best/emerging practice in a coordinated and complementary manner.
- Supports and provides access to community data and research, including community based research, that allows organizations to focus on service delivery.
- Supports strong organizations with effective Boards, strong policies and procedures and programs that are responsive to community needs.