How to Estimate Homelessness in Rural Communities and Generate the Missing Data

28th May 2019

What is ARDN?

Not-for-Profit Organization
Founded in 2009 by 21 Albertan PSIs

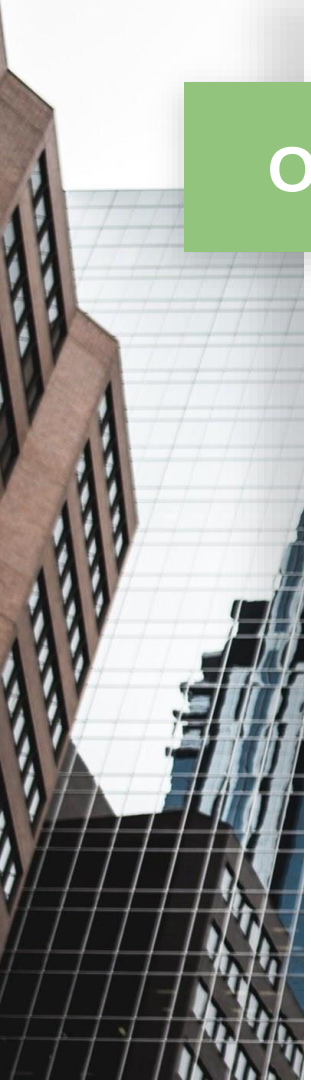
The ARDN uses the combined expertise of Alberta's post-secondary institutions to support rural development in Alberta and to help communities grow through research & learning.

WE ACT AS A PROJECT FACILITATOR BY:

- **Providing** innovative solutions
- **Supporting** new partnerships
- **Leveraging** existing resources

ARDN strives to be Alberta's **premiere rural development organization**

OUR MEMBERS AND PARTNERS



Athabasca University

Keyano College

University of Lethbridge

Lethbridge College

GPRC

Medicine Hat College

Portage College

University of Calgary

Northern Lakes College

Our Partners & Collaborators:

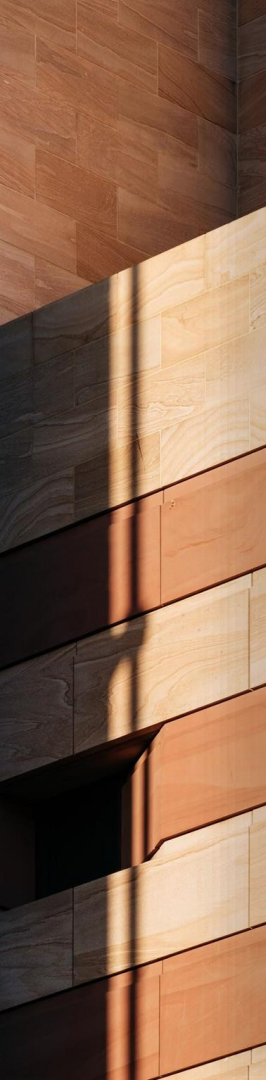
Alberta Real Estate Foundation

Canada
Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy

CMHC SCHL

Alberta

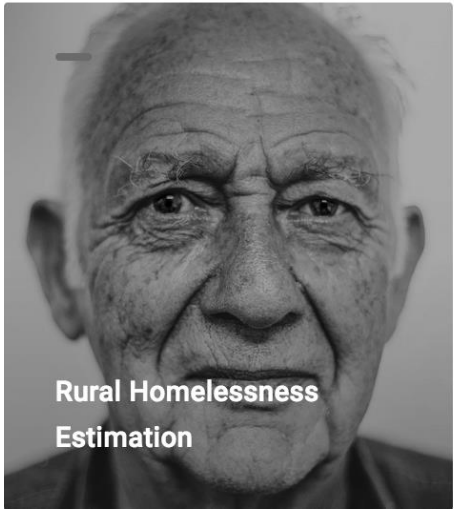
Energy Efficiency Alberta



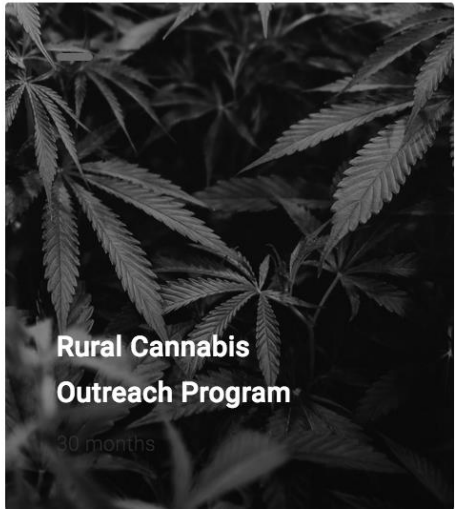
Canadian Association on Rural and Remote Housing and Homelessness

Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI)

Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)


Rural Homelessness Estimation

Alberta Rural Coalition on Housing & Homelessness (ARCH2)


Rural Cannabis Outreach Program
30 months

CRRHH

CANADIAN
RURAL AND REMOTE
HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS
SYMPOSIUM

1st symposium was held in October 2018

- 250+ attendees
- Representation from all across Canada
  10 provinces and 3 territories

2nd symposium in 2nd quarter of 2020

SUSTAINABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

The ARDN under its Sustainable Housing initiative helps communities develop affordable housing

- Pre-development Work
- Potential Funding
- Project Management

SUSTAINABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

- **Toolkit to develop Affordable Housing**

HOMELESSNESS PARTNERING STRATEGY (HPS)

The ARDN is the rural and remote community entity for the federal government's new Reaching Home homelessness prevention and reduction program

- We focus on funding homelessness projects that fall outside the 7 cities
- Call for Proposals is open right now until **June 28, 2019**

RURAL CANNABIS OUTREACH PROGRAM

ARDN aims to **educate youth** (grades 10 to 12) in rural communities on the health risks associated with cannabis-use during adolescence and young adulthood

- **Reinforce Health Canada's messaging** on health and safety facts about cannabis and associated risky behaviors

ALBERTA RURAL COALITION ON HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS (ARCH²)

MISSION

We speak with one united voice to increase information sharing, access to affordable housing and services to address rural homelessness

VISION

An affordable home for every rural Albertan

PRINCIPLES

- Committed to improving the lives of rural Albertans
- Dedicated to speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves
- Providing rural solutions to solve rural issues

Step-by-Step Guide

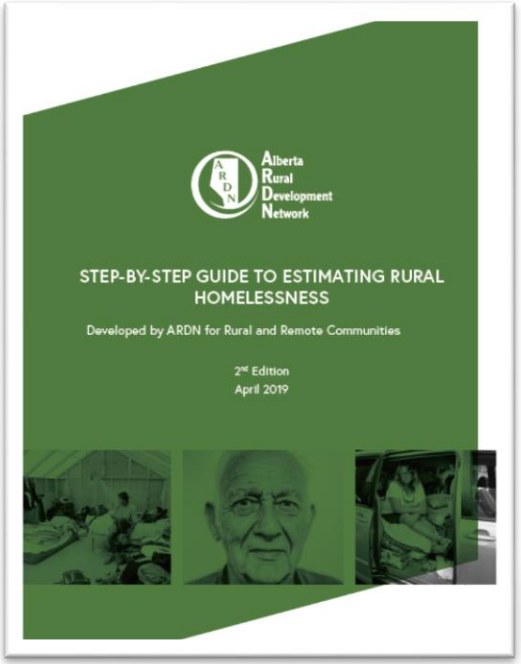
Rural Homelessness Estimation

RURAL HOMELESSNESS ESTIMATION

1st Version Published in June 2017

2nd Version out Now - April 2019

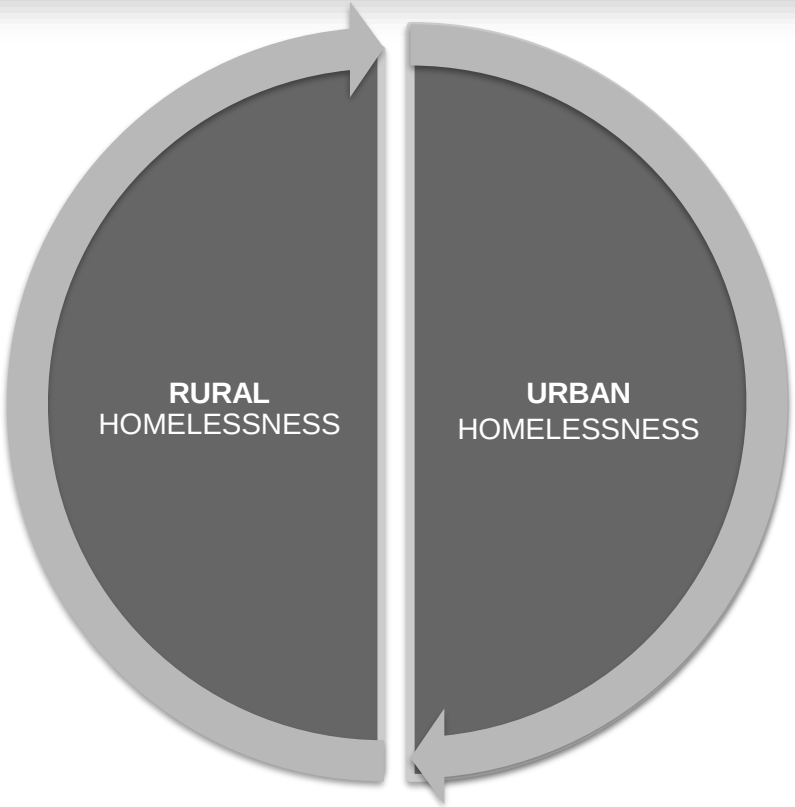
- Extremely limited data on rural homelessness
- “Living document” of best practices developed in consultation
- Free to download for anyone, in both English and French
- Developed for Rural Canada!



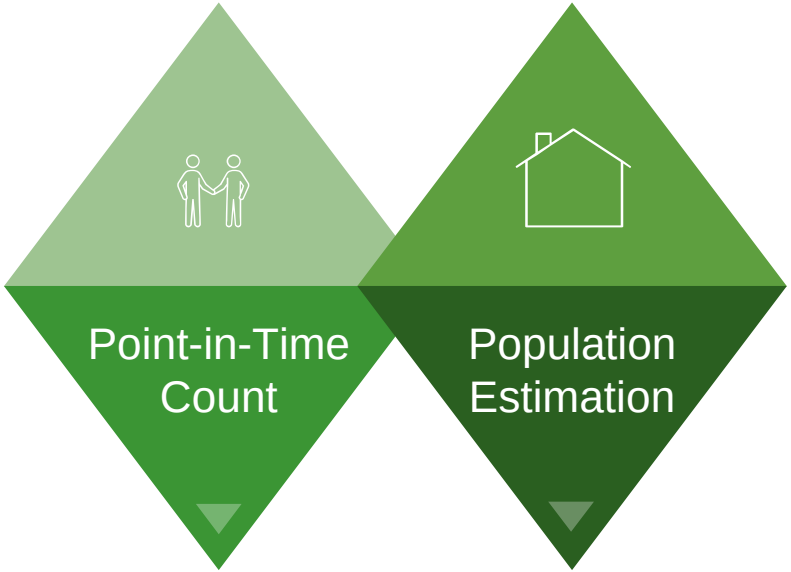
THE PROJECT

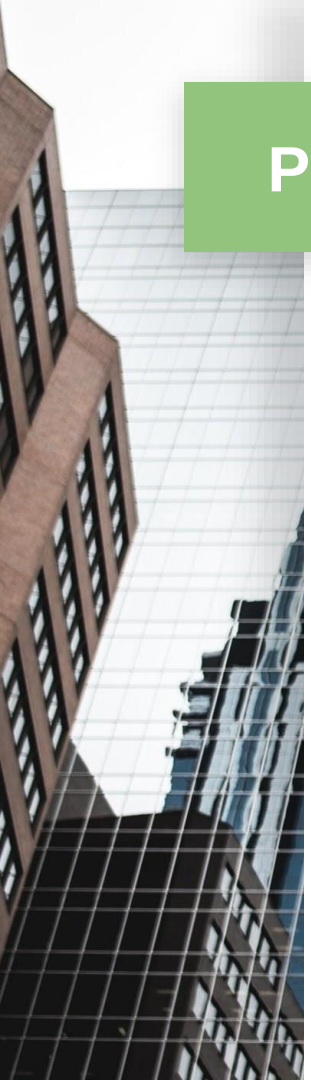
Develop cost-conscious, efficient, and reliable **practices to estimate the number of homeless** individuals in **rural Canada**

INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE RURAL AND URBAN

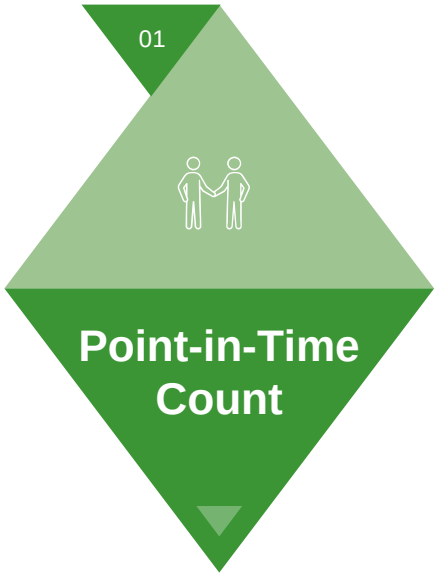


METHODS TO ESTIMATE HOMELESSNESS



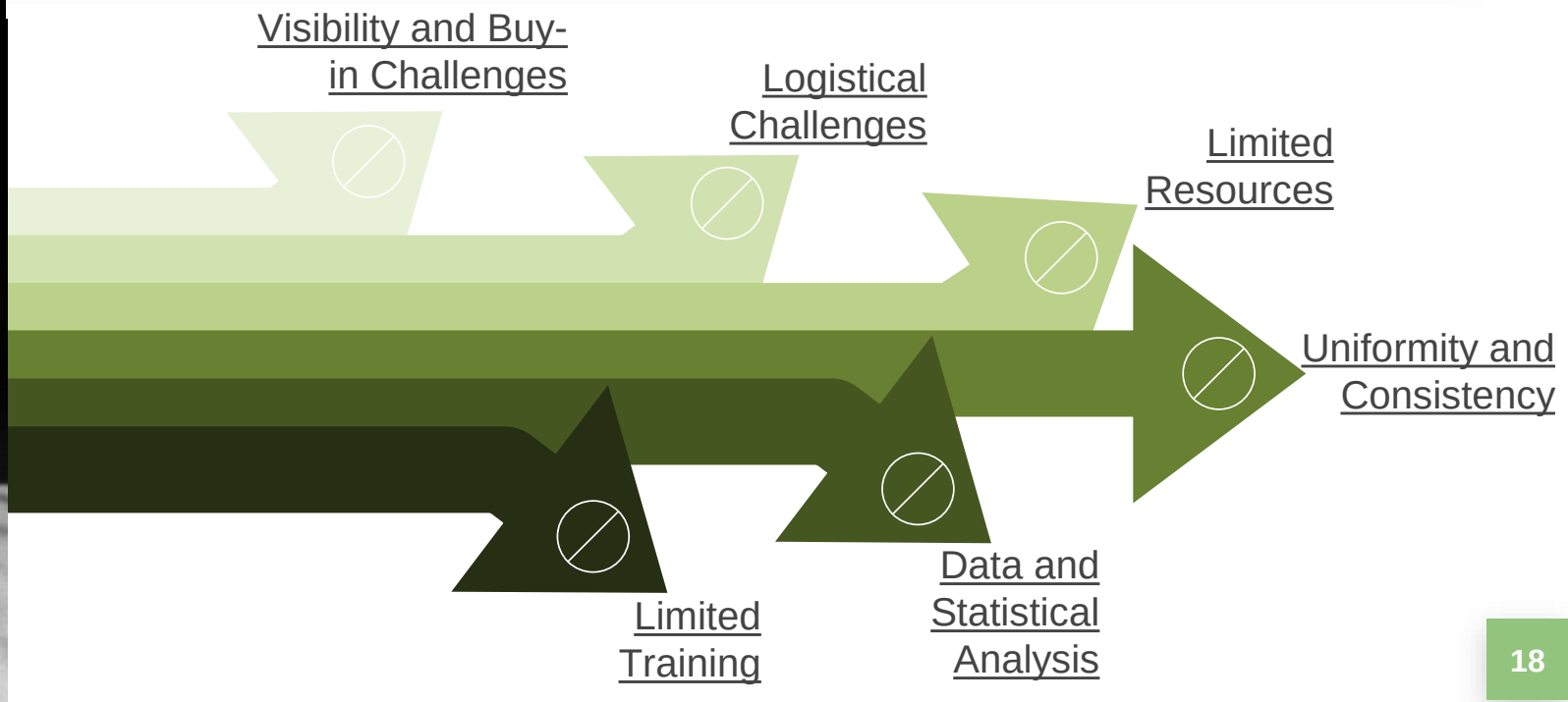


POINT-IN-TIME (PiT) COUNT



- Count Sheltered or Unsheltered homeless in a single night
- Volunteers on the streets conduct surveys
- Surveys provide the information and characteristics of the homeless
- This helps communities develop strategies and implement resources

LIMITATIONS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES



POPULATION ESTIMATION

02

Population Estimation

- Homeless population estimated based on data from service agencies
- Number of people who used the service in a pre defined time frame (e.g. one month)
- Used when there are limited resources or when population is scattered over a large area

SERVICE BASED ESTIMATIONS

The number of homeless using service agencies for support over a period of time

Additionally, if the community has enough resources then estimate the number of homeless in known locations as well

Service agencies complete a survey and develop unique identifiers for each of their clients over a period of time, report the data and an analysis reveals the number

UNIQUE IDENTIFIERS

John Smith, Male born on 15th November 1960 – JOSM660M

- First Two Letters of the First Name: **JO**
- First Two Letters of the Last Name: **SM**
- Sum of the Numbers in the Birth Day: **1+5 = 06**
- Last Two Numbers of the Year of Birth: **60**
- ‘M’ for Male, ‘F’ for Female, ‘X’ for Non-Binary: **M**

ESTIMATION CONDUCTED AT A CONFERENCE
Unique Identifiers

labu2679F
TAKN987F
SHSM361F
ROBE989M
ABHO390F
ANCU481F
MASH889F
SAMA876F
KALU451F
LITH0976F
SHHO688F
MIKI883F
ZABA283M
dsds670x
JIHA167M
KIST753M

nobu2179M
NOVA1088M
ABGW351M
STSTA460F
EDPA388M
ESTH0615F
BEHI875M
TEMA411F
ESTH0615F
SHTH0676M
EMCO182M
eses760x
VISU287F
DASH663M
SCTR185M
jobl100m

11 STEPS TO ESTIMATE HOMELESSNESS

STEP 1
Establish a Task Force

STEP 2
Assign a Coordinator

STEP 3
Understand the Definition of Homelessness

STEP 4
Training

STEP 5
Marketing

STEP 6
Estimation

STEP 7
Data Entry and Analysis

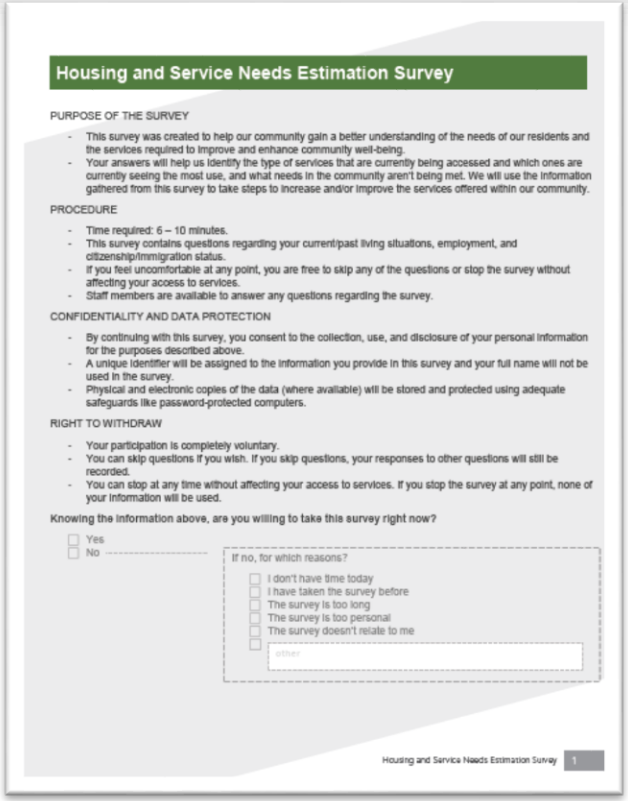
STEP 8
Feedback

STEP 9
Reporting

STEP 10
Access Resources

STEP 11
Repeat

ESTIMATION SURVEY
Based on Version 2



Housing and Service Needs Estimation Survey

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

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

PROCEDURE

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

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

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

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

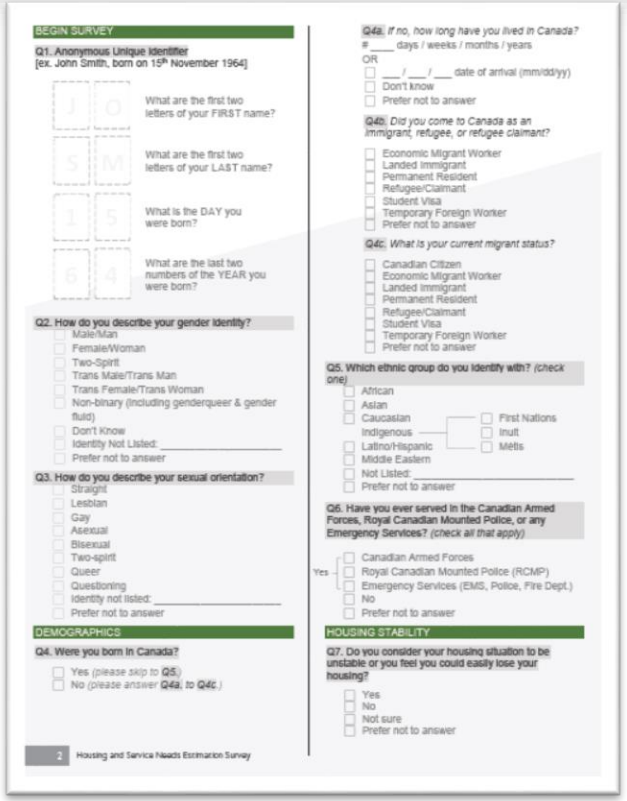
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You can skip questions if you wish. If you skip questions, your responses to other questions will still be recorded.
- You can stop at any time without affecting your access to services. If you stop the survey at any point, none of your information will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

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

☐ Yes
☐ No ——— If no, for which reasons?

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

Housing and Service Needs Estimation Survey 1



BEGIN SURVEY

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

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

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

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

DEMOGRAPHICS

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

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

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

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

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

Q6. Have you ever served in the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or any Emergency Services? *(check all that apply)*
☐ Canadian Armed Forces
Yes → ☐ Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
☐ Emergency Services (EMS, Police, Fire Dept.)
☐ No
☐ Prefer not to answer

HOUSING STABILITY

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

2 Housing and Service Needs Estimation Survey

BENEFITS OF KNOWING THE NUMBERS

Track progress in reducing homelessness

Identify places where resources are most needed

Direct public attention to the homelessness issue

Improve service agencies' planning programs

Inform local, provincial, and federal policies

Establish standards for performance measurement

Provide data for community and service agencies

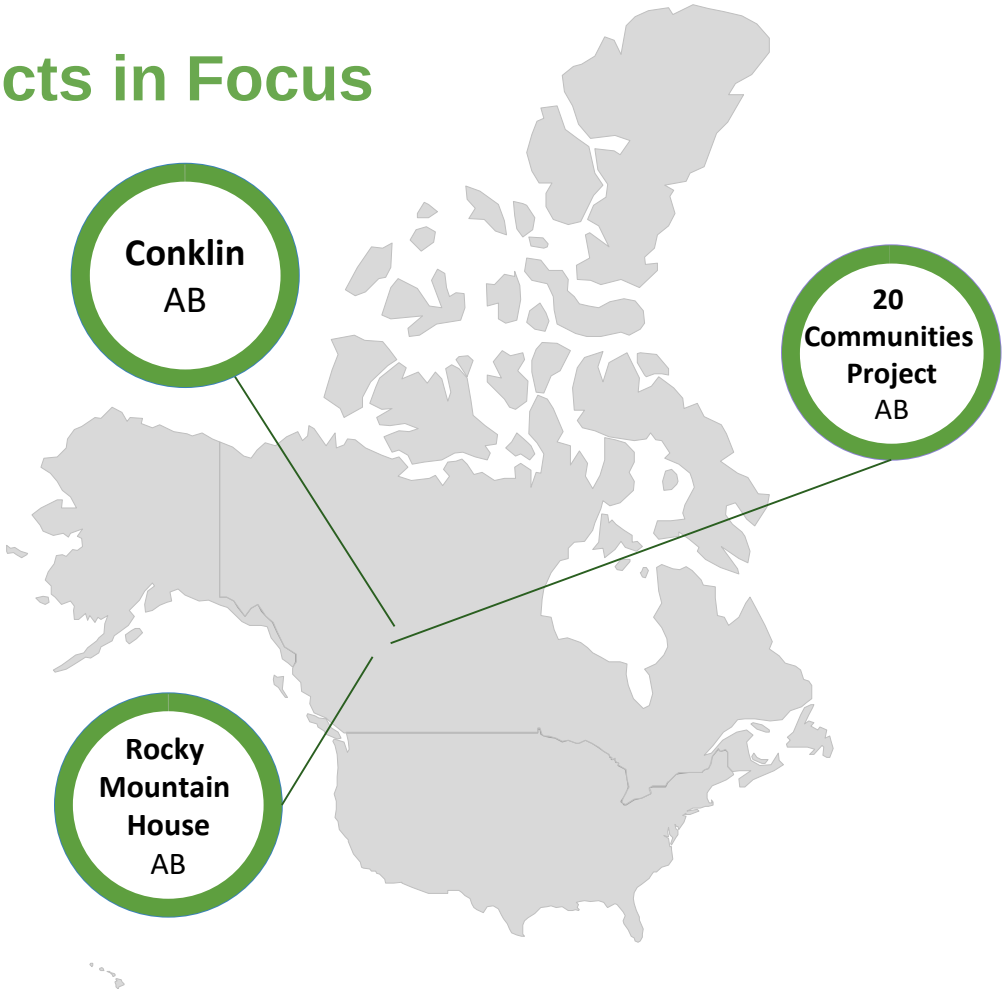
Secure funding to help the homeless

Secondary: Collaboration amongst Service Agencies

Step-by-Step Guide

Practical Application

Projects in Focus



ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE, AB ~ Pop. 6,429

Pilot Project: Funded by ARDN

PiT

- 11 potential counts
  - **2 out of 11 in unstable situation**
  - 700 volunteer hours

Estimation

- 57 surveys conducted
- **44 out of 57 in unstable situation**
  - 39.13% due to Mental or Physical Health
  - 34.78% due to Family Conflict
  - 13.04% due to addictions
  - 8.70% due to Unsafe Housing and Job Loss

CONKLIN, AB ~ Pop. 185 to 375

Customized Project – Preliminary Results

- 54 surveys conducted
- **92 individuals in unstable situation**
  - Inadequate housing supply
  - Unemployment (40 unemployed)
  - 35% of vulnerable residents b/w the ages of 1 & 20

Inconsistencies in National Census, RMWB and primary data

2018 Rural Homelessness Estimation Project

ALBERTA RURAL HOMELESSNESS ESTIMATION PROJECT

In conjunction with Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSSAA)

- 20 communities
  - 14 communities HPS funded
  - 5 self-funding
  - Kainai First Nation
  - Online survey platform + paper surveys
  - Pilot study

THE 20 COMMUNITIES

1. Athabasca
2. Camrose
3. Canmore
4. County of Grande Prairie
5. Drayton Valley
6. Drumheller
7. Fort Macleod
8. Greenview
9. Hinton
10. Jasper
11. Lac La Biche
12. Lacombe
13. Moses Lake / Kainai First Nation
14. Ponoka
15. Peace River
16. Tri-Region (Stony Plain, Spruce Grove & Parkland County)
17. Grand Cache
18. Okotoks
19. Strathmore
20. Wetaskiwin

Population – Census 2016

Biggest Population: Tri-Region **(83,352)**

Smallest Population: Fort Macleod **(2,967)**

Average Population: **(13,020)**

Survey Revision (June – August 2018)

- Survey expanded and revised version of 1st Edition of the Guide
  - Revised wordings of both questions and responses
  - Solicited service agency feedback

- Adapted survey to online platform (Co-Lab)

TRAINING AND ADVERTISING

- Training
  - All communities required to read the Step-by-Step Guide, understand the method
  - Training document sent out to communities
- Advertising
  - Posters at service agencies and community centers
  - Newspaper ads
  - Word of mouth with clients

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Data collected over 30-day period of community's choosing, September to early December 2018
- Paper copies input into online survey platform
- Data Analysis/Clean-Up
  - Duplicates removed based on Unique Identifier
  - Paper surveys reviewed for input errors/discrepancies with online data

RESULTS

- **1771 surveys** completed total
  - **Average surveys per community:** 88

- **1098 respondents housing-unstable**
  - Answered “yes” or “not sure” to the question “Do you consider your housing situation is unstable or feel that you could easily lose your housing?”

  - **Average per community:** 54

RESULTS (Cont.)

- **1098 housing unstable respondents**
  - 905 children staying with them
  - 994 adults staying with them

- **2,997 potentially housing unstable people**

RESULTS (Cont.)

- Employed respondents: **335 (30% of those surveyed)**
  - **149** (**13% of those surveyed**) full time
  - Indigenous peoples (FN, M, I)**: 381 (35%)**
  - Under 24 years old: **168 (15%)**
  - LGBTQ2S: **66 (6%)**
  - LGBTQ2S under 24**: 16%**
  - Veterans: **26 (2%)**

RESULTS (Cont.)

- Reasons given for unstable housing (people could give more than one response):
  - **33%** low income
  - **12%** job loss
  - **11%** unable to pay rent/mortgage
  - **9%** personal conflict

- Very conservative

INTERESTING COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

- **Tri-Region (Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, Parkland County)**
  - highest proportion of men who were in the Canadian military at some point (14.9%, n=10 out of)
- **Peace River**
  - highest proportion of women looking for services related to domestic violence (27.9%, n=5 out of 18 respondents)

Interesting Community-Specific Findings

- **Lac La Biche**
  - highest proportion of men who had no source of income (43.9%, n=17 out of 39)

- **Banff and Canmore**
  - highest proportion of both men and women who were employed and unstably housed (Men: 73.0%, n=27; Women: 72.3%, n=34)
    - Also highest for men and women who are employed full-time (Men: 46.0%, n=17; Women: 38.3%, n=14)

Limitations, Challenges, Learnings

- **Training Not Sufficient**
  - Standardization issue
  - Messaging inconsistent
- Self-Report vs. Worker Conducted
- Online vs. Paper
  - Shelter Question Missing Online
- Lead Agencies Still Doing Most Work

Secondary Benefits

- Increases in funding
- Increased collaboration amongst agencies
  - Many found they weren't talking to each other; didn't know what others in region offered
  - Potential beginning of rural Coordinated Access systems
- Respondents Felt Included in the Community

QUESTION
Best Practices on Small Datasets?

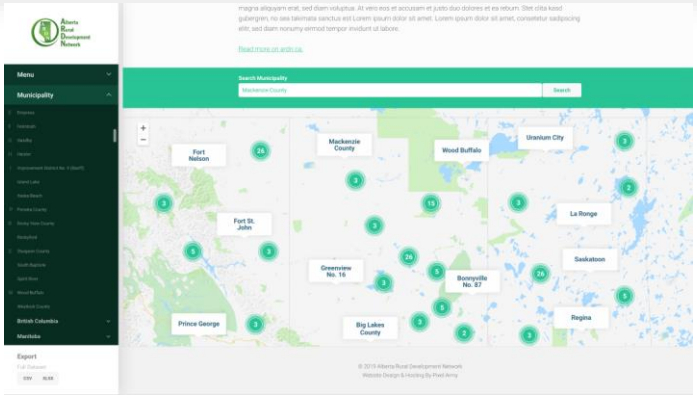
- With regard to confidentiality

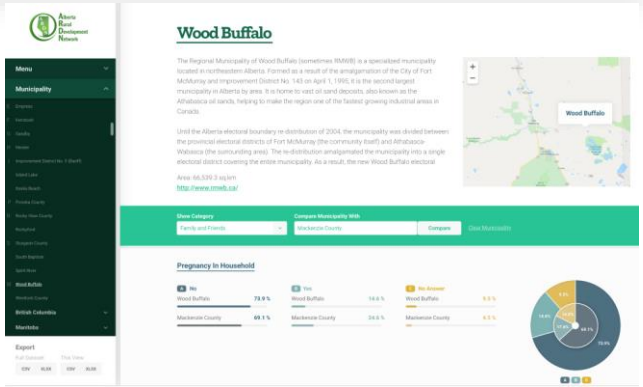
- **Example:** One community had only two female respondents

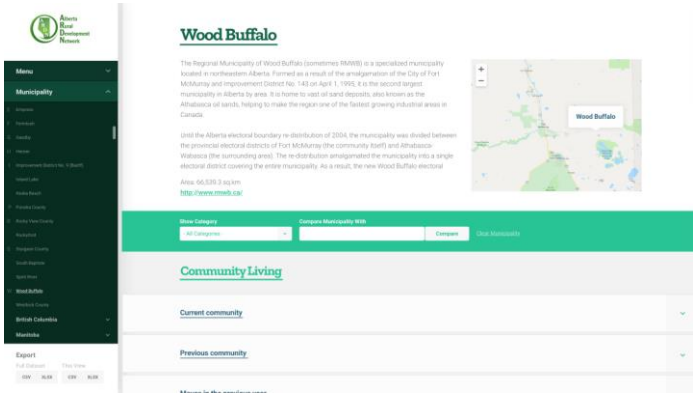
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

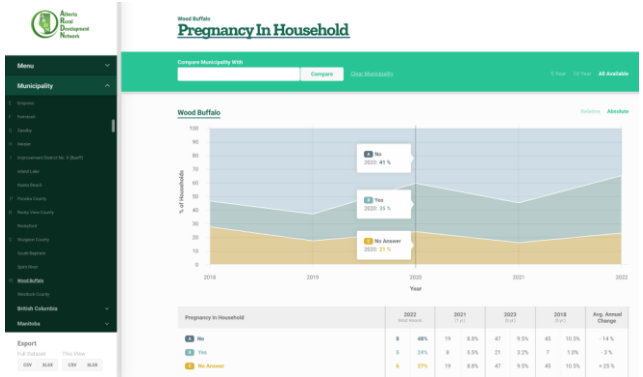
- Community reports nearing completion
- Provincial report out by end of June
- 2nd Edition of Guide out
  - Vastly improved survey
  - Revised with many lessons learned from this project
- Many more communities have expressed interest
- Collaborations with Cities, National PIT Count?

ESTIMATION DATABASE – Under Development





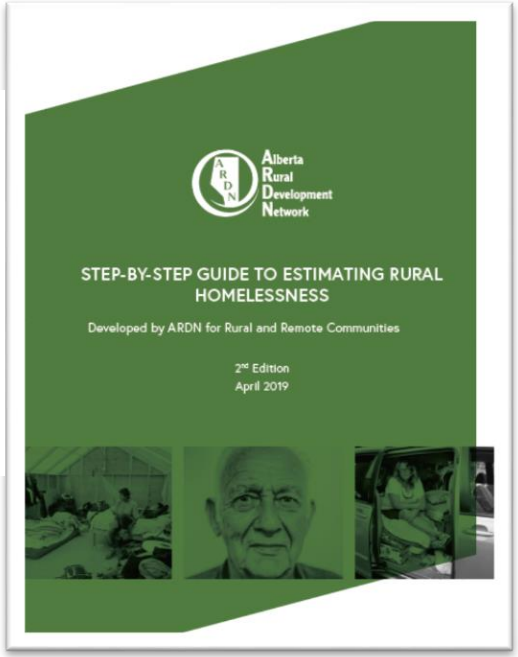




RESOURCES

Developed for Rural Canada!

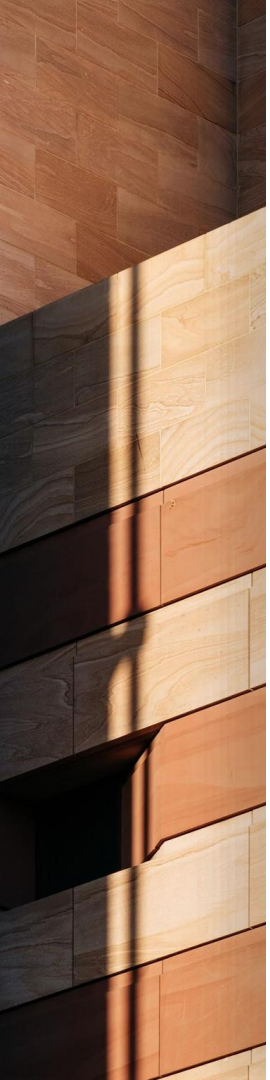
- Download for Free from www.ardn.ca
- English & French



- **Customized Estimation Surveys**
- **Data Analysis & Research Support**
- **Recommend Solutions**
- **Provide Overall Support**

Step-by-Step Guide

Survey the Audience Member



THANK YOU!

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