Everyone Belongs

2025-2030 Strategic Plan

HOPE
END HOMELESSNESS
WINNIPEG

LAND AND WATER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At End Homelessness Winnipeg, we honour the land and water that sustain life. We recognize that Indigenous peoples have lived in relationship with this land since time immemorial; through survival, shelter, sustenance, and in harmony with Mother Earth and her gifts. Land acknowledgment has always been integral to Indigenous prayers, ceremonies, and gatherings.

We are honoured to be located on Treaty One territory, at the sacred crossroads of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, a historic gathering place for the Anishinaabeg, Inninewak, Anishininewak, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline peoples, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge that the water we rely on comes from Shoal Lake and has been cared for by First Nations in Treaty Three territory for thousands of years.

As an Indigenous-led organization, End Homelessness Winnipeg is tasked with addressing homelessness in the city of Winnipeg, including the extreme over-representation of houseless individuals of Indigenous descent. Through this acknowledgment, we commit ourselves to being truth-tellers, stewards of the collective memory of Canada, and active participants in reconciliation. Acknowledging the ongoing impacts of colonization, we honour the sacred responsibility we share with generations past and present: to protect the land and water, to uphold the dignity of Indigenous peoples, and to work toward the restoration of belonging, dignity, and home.

Like Sweetgrass, We Are Rooted in Community and Guided by Teachings

Sweetgrass is one of the Four Sacred Medicines and holds a vital place in many Indigenous cultures. It is known for its sweet scent, especially when burned, and is used in ceremonies for purification, prayer, and healing. But beyond its ceremonial use, Sweetgrass carries teachings that speak directly to how we live, work, and serve, principles that ground the vision and values of End Homelessness Winnipeg.

Braided in seven strands, Sweetgrass symbolizes the wisdom of the seven generations who came before us, the Seven Sacred Teachings we are called to uphold today, and our responsibility to the seven generations yet to come. Its three braids represent the unity of mind, body, and spirit. Together, they represent healing and a holistic way of living that values balance and interconnectedness. These are qualities we are committed to weaving into our organizational culture and community work.

Sweetgrass is often understood to be the hair of Mother Earth, sacred and living; calling for reflection, respect, and gentle care in how it is gathered. The harvesting of Sweetgrass teaches us humility, care, and sustainability. Harvesters are taught never to pull the plant out by its roots. The roots must remain in the ground because they represent the community, which is its strength, continuity, and ability to regenerate. Only what is needed is taken, reinforcing the importance of not taking more than one gives and of respecting the natural balance. This teaching reminds us of the importance of ethical stewardship and relational accountability, key values for our work across the housing and houselessness sector.

Sweetgrass also embodies the importance of coordination and harmony. The braid is tied together with a binding band, which signifies unity of purpose. This reflects the role of End Homelessness Winnipeg as a connector that brings people, knowledge, and resources together in a respectful, coordinated way to support Indigenous-led solutions, amplify community voice, and foster systems of care rooted in culture and equity.

Like Sweetgrass, our work at End Homelessness Winnipeg is rooted in care, connection, and continuity, braiding past wisdom, present action, and future responsibility into every step we take with community. As we operationalize this Strategic Plan, Sweetgrass serves not only as a visual motif, but as a living guide, a moral and cultural compass reminding us to move forward with integrity, humility, and purpose. It represents who we are becoming as an organization and the path we are committed to walk together.

Disclaimer

This teaching reflects generational knowledge and practices shared by First Nations communities and is offered with respect and humility. We recognize that teachings, protocols, and relationships with Sweetgrass may vary among Indigenous Nations, and this reflection may not represent the diverse cultural understandings of all Indigenous Peoples. We honour the uniqueness of each Nation's traditions and invite continued learning and respectful engagement.

THE FOUR SACRED MEDICINES

Cedar. Tobacco. Sage. Sweetgrass. These Four Sacred Medicines hold deep spiritual and cultural meaning across many Indigenous communities in Canada. Each medicine carries teachings that guide healing, connection, and how we live in relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the land. For an Indigenous-led response to homelessness, these medicines offer more than ceremony. They offer a living framework for safety, respect, healing, and community that can shape our strategic direction and service philosophy at End Homelessness Winnipeg.

Cedar

Cedar is used for purification and protection, often in smudging or healing teas. It teaches us to create safe, supportive spaces—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—where people feel secure and can begin their healing journey.

Tobacco

Tobacco is offered in prayer and ceremony to show respect and seek guidance. It reminds us that all relationships must be built on consent, intention, and honour.

Sage

Sage is used to cleanse the mind, body, and spirit, clearing emotional heaviness and preparing for healing. It calls us to be honest, intentional, and compassionate in our work.

Sweetgrass

Sweetgrass is known for its sweet scent, especially when burned, and is used in ceremonies for purification, prayer and healing.

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WHO EHW IS

The process of researching, engaging, and creating this strategic plan has given new definition to how EHW will show up in the world, defining how others see us, and changing who we are as an organization. Underlying our strategic priorities are two essential components:

- Our mandate is grounded in the four fundamental questions by The Honourable Murray Sinclair: "Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? Who am I?" These questions reflect the journey of healing, identity, and purpose central to Indigenous peoples.
- A breakdown of how we will work throughout this strategic plan, and the issues that drive our work (that we will review every year).

Mandate

Where do we come from?

End Homelessness Winnipeg was created in response to a vital need in our city by a collective of organizations acting with urgency and intention. Their original vision was a way to address houselessness rooted in collective impact.

What is our purpose?

To end chronic houselessness by braiding together diverse partners—with their different resources, perspectives, experiences, and ideas— into a cohesive whole made stronger through a renewed focus on supporting the collaborative efforts of the sector.

What do we do?

For over a decade, EHW has brought together the houselessness-serving sector to provide leadership, support, and coordination to collectively end houselessness in Winnipeg. EHW is an Indigenous organization that serves the whole community.

Where are we going?

To further evolve EHW into an impactful, community-informed, reciprocal organization that both supports and relies upon this entire network to end chronic houselessness.

How We Will Work

Describing how we plan to work for the next five years will help every individual served, community we engage, and partner we work with understand what they can expect from us, and what our capabilities are going to be. Internally, describing how we will work will help fill in gaps and ensure everyone is working toward the same goals, on the same team.

Throughout this strategic plan, EHW will emphasize its commitment to interlacing the combined strengths of the sector to end chronic houselessness by dedicating operations to:

Making progress every day by providing support to the direct service workers in the sector

- Collecting, synthesizing and sharing data systems and reporting (such as numbers from the PiT count, HIFIS, and housing supply analysis, among others)
- Ongoing system planning and a renewed rededication to Coordinated Access
- Focusing on continuous training, resource sharing, and wellbeing programs for the sector
- Streamlining the administration of funding
- Evolving how our position as an Indigenous organization relates to and supports the entire community we serve.

Participating in changes to our broader social and economic systems

- Providing direction and leadership on ending chronic houselessness in Winnipeg, using up-to-date data and in-depth community input to be an essential resource and trusted voice for the needs and progress of the sector.
- Acting as an effective conduit between funders, governments, and community as the informed expert on housing and chronic houselessness in Winnipeg.

Leveraging our expertise and continuous input from our community to narrow EHW's work around the topics that will have the greatest impact on ending houselessness. Today, these topics are:

Inflow prevention

In order to address the growth of chronic houselessness, we must reduce the direct inflow from programs in Child and Family Services, Justice, and Health.

Person-centred approaches

Given the complexity of the work, a steadfast belief that a person-centred approach is the path to success for every individual we serve.

Housing access

Access to appropriate housing with appropriate supports is both the biggest gap and the most effective way to help individuals become and stay housed. This is an all-in approach to supporting housing access, with a focus on the number and quality of units available, increasing affordability, and a coordinated access program that supports each person on their housing journey.

Adapting these topics

This list is dynamic. In fact, for us to be an organization that weaves everyone together in pursuit of a greater collective strength, we must revise it regularly to reflect those we serve, those we work with, and the external pressures shaping our world.

As we put this plan into action, we will create opportunities to listen to our whole community. As part of a formal process for the board every year, we will review this list, determine what changes are called for based on feedback from the community, and share those changes.

These three commitments, while they can change on the basis of significant social, economic, or health upheaval (such as a pandemic or an unprecedented economic event), should remain steady throughout the life of the strategic plan.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Intended Outcome of This Plan

EHW exists to end chronic houselessness by braiding together diverse partners into a cohesive whole made stronger through a renewed focus on supporting the collaborative efforts of the sector, moving EHW toward being a more impactful, community-informed, reciprocal, and accountable organization.The next five years for EHW will focus on setting new standards to support the strength of a community where everyone belongs.

Everything this plan guides—from discussions at the board level, to operational planning, to the evolution of the core values of EHW—delivers on this intended outcome.

This five-year strategic plan consists of one foundational principle woven throughout the entire plan, along with four strategic directions outlining what End Homelessness Winnipeg will achieve over the next five years. These directions represent deliberate choices and commitments—they determine the path we have laid out to bring the community together to end chronic houselessness. Because we have made these choices, we cannot add new goals that could divert attention or resources from them.

THE SWEETGRASS BRAID:
Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing

Within the plan, there is a single foundational concept that weaves through to influence every other strategic direction: a commitment to incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing into everything EHW does. It applies the concept of EHW as an Indigenous organization into the fabric of all thinking, operational planning, governance, and practical application that results from this plan. This was determined to be the foundational priority of this plan because:

- **EHW is Indigenous-based,** supporting the whole community, and Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing provide a process for decolonizing that benefits all Peoples.
- **Being an Indigenous Organization does not just refer to the roles within the organization,** but also to the principles that guide the organization in its work. Committing to these values in the strategic plan, with meaningful measures and opportunities for reflection will strengthen this Indigenous approach to the work.
- **Indigenous over-representation of those experiencing houselessness in Winnipeg** provides unique connection and insight into solutions if we can incorporate this knowledge in as much of the plan's work as possible, including engagement with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.
- **We can make this commitment not just for the aspects of our visible Indigenous community,** but also are applying those values in all of our practices, and expand the understanding of how impactful Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing can be in any context, for anyone experiencing houselessness.
- **Through full incorporation,** EHW can advance its commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing are incorporated throughout the four strategic directions of this plan. But this is only a starting point—the Sweetgrass Braid will grow in both influence and application as the plan moves forward.

THE FOUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS OF EHW

The four directions of the EHW strategic plan focus the work of EHW to bring together diverse partners—with their different resources, perspectives, experiences, and ideas—into a cohesive whole made stronger through collective action with the goal of ending chronic houselessness.

The progress of these directions will be the responsibility of the board, while the EHW staff will develop operational plans for each to make them work in the real world.

Just like strands of Sweetgrass, these four directions strengthen and support one another to create a balanced, holistic path forward for EHW. Progress in one direction may first require progress in another, allowing the actions within each direction to build upon each other. By nature and by design, they are interconnected.

MIND: **Role Clarity and Relevance**

Re-establish EHW's role clarity and ongoing relevance in addressing chronic houselessness, with a commitment to being relational in our approach. We will define and commit to improving the work that is foundational to community impact, clarify our relationship with the sector, and evaluate our programming and processes to ensure we are providing value to the sector and our partners.

Purpose:

This direction will establish the foundation of EHW moving forward, particularly in helping set expectations with the community. Stewarding these relationships is an honour and a responsibility, and this will set a tone of clarity, transparency, responsiveness, and accountability that will influence all other priorities.

What we must do to establish role clarity and ongoing relevance over the next five years

- Update the governance model for EHW
- Develop an advocacy roadmap clarifying the focus and intended impact of EHW's advocacy
- Articulate and share a framework that identifies EHW's role, scope, and relationship with partners in the sector
- Update how we approach our core data and coordination functions to support person-centred and data-informed systems

Key Actions for the Next Five Years:

1. **Evaluate and adjust the governance model for EHW,** identifying key governance considerations and accountability mechanisms. This should include Indigenous models, the delineation of funder, community impact, and advocacy roles, and tools that support these functions

   a. Reaffirm the distinct and collaborative roles of the board and staff in the accountability and execution of the strategic plan

   b. Clarify how and when EHW seeks funding for its own initiatives and operations, and how that ultimately supports the sector via its mandate (ex. funding for data projects, to support Coordinated Access, etc.)

   c. Explore Indigenous governance models at the board, senior leadership, and staff levels that better align with the values of the organization (ex. Alternatives to Robert's Rules for board decision-making)

2. **Develop an advocacy roadmap for EHW,** clarifying the intended impact of EHW's advocacy. This should include the areas of focus that will guide that advocacy work, recognizing that one organization cannot and should not be the only voice of advocacy for the sector

   a. Focus advocacy topics around:

      - Improving data systems that work for the reality and capability of the sector
      - The spectrum of housing solutions, including Housing First with wraparound supports, and rapid rehousing
      - Sector health and wellbeing

   b. Support sector advocacy through:

      - Advocacy and leadership capacity building
      - Data sharing and public education
      - Policymaker education

   c. Establish MOUs with funders and partners to enable advocacy work without risking funding

3. **Develop and share a framework that identifies EHW's role,** focus areas, funding process, and relationship with the various partners in the sector

   a. Establish a relationship map that defines advisory tables, partners and EHW department roles

   b. Clarify how decisions are made that affect the sector

   c. Affirm its role as an Indigenous organization, with clear language and key messaging for the board, leadership, and staff that identifies how this framework brings in and supports all cultures and demographics, including emerging or underrepresented groups

4. **Review core community impact functions of data and coordination** to ensure person-centred care is maximized, data-driven advocacy is possible, and systems planning is optimized with adherence to OCAP

   a. Activate formal Coordinated Access and HIFIS review

   b. Work with governments, Indigenous partners, and the broader sector to establish a more effective, integrated data system

HEART: **Adaptability and Reciprocity**

Position EHW to be adaptable to create outstanding, responsive, and reciprocal external relationships. EHW will equip itself to build reciprocal relationships with key partners to ensure our actions and programs are informed by, supported by, and responsive to the sector, funders, and the social and economic landscape.

Purpose:

Prioritizing reciprocal relationships emphasizes the collective accountability required across the sector to end houselessness, and ensures that our work is not only adequately supporting the sector, but that the sector as a whole is moving toward systems change to end houselessness.

What we must do to be adaptable and build reciprocal relationships over the next five years:

- Develop engagement strategies for each sector partner group to allow for ongoing feedback and information sharing, and be transparent about EHW's expectations from and to the community
- Explore sustainable funding mechanisms to allow EHW to improve quality of services and respond quickly to emerging needs
- Facilitate collaboration with governments and advisory tables to develop a shared vision for a sector plan
- Ensure EHW programming, resource allocation, and organizational makeup aligns with community

Key Actions for the Next Five Years:

1. **Develop engagement strategies and response plans** for each partner group to allow for ongoing feedback and information sharing, and be transparent about EHW's expectations from and to the community

   a. Establish a reciprocal relationship with key partners to narrow and identify the most impactful focus areas for EHW based on resources and capacity on an ongoing basis

   b. This will require specific resources to ensure a consistent and sustainable presence, whether through participation in community-led tables or the facilitation of those community tables

   c. Clarify what EHW expects from community partners, and demonstrate an understanding of the community's expectations of EHW in return

2. **Explore sustainable funding mechanisms** via a funding/fundraising plan that will allow EHW to both:

   a. Ensure organizational stability to maintain quality and consistency for critical activities

   b. Respond quickly to emerging needs not addressed by existing funding streams

3. **Facilitate collaboration with governments and advisory tables** to develop a shared vision for a sector plan and shared targets

   a. Establish a foundation for shared accountability in ending chronic houselessness

   b. Set and support sector-wide targets that support key alignments, such as housing supply, reduction of inflow, reduction of chronic houselessness, etc.

   c. Recognize distinctions-based rights and support engagement with the diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities whose priorities intersect with EHW's in ending Indigenous houselessness

4. **Ensure EHW programming, resource allocation, and organizational** makeup aligns with the community (and the sector plan/targets when available)

   a. Ensure board, staff, and sector table makeup is reflective of the community, including emerging and underrepresented groups like newcomers and refugees

   b. Evaluate organizational activities to decide what to stop, start, and continue

SPIRIT: **Wellbeing**

Create a culture of wellbeing across the sector and at EHW rooted in Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing, by focusing on resource sharing, training, and capacity building. Wellbeing is multidimensional, and this direction considers aspects of physical, social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing. This means starting in our own home, doing the work internally at EHW to build a culture of trust, safety, and wellbeing rooted in Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing, and extending those supports for all peoples. It includes capacity building to address burnout, supporting culturally appropriate solutions, and taking steps to ensure no one is overlooked.

Purpose:

For the sector to be effective in ending houselessness, we need to do what we can to ensure those working in the sector are included, supported, and have the resources to do their jobs well.

What we must do to create a culture of wellbeing across the sector over the next five years:

- Develop an internal wellbeing framework for EHW
- Ensure access to Indigenous cultural supports, like Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and Ceremony to support the wellbeing of the sector
- Support capacity building by coordinating and providing connections to resources across partners, supporting opportunities for reciprocity

Key Actions for the Next Five Years:

1. **Develop an internal wellbeing framework for EHW staff,** rooted in Indigenous healing practices alongside Western approaches to ensure mind, spirit, body, and emotional needs are all considered. Policy review that specifically applies a lens for Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing

   a. Explore safety and accountability measures

      - 360 reviews, cultural safety training, Indigenous conflict resolution

   b. Develop communications and policy resources within human resources with wellbeing evaluation that aligns with the organizational understanding of wellbeing

   c. Create appropriate succession policies at the board and leadership levels

2. **Ensure access to Indigenous cultural supports,** like Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Ceremony to support the wellbeing of the entire sector and all the people they serve

   a. Explore ways of incorporating cultural supports into EHW operations, contracted agency programs, for sector staff, their clients, and external relationship groups

3. **Support capacity building by bringing everyone together** to coordinate services and provide connections to resources that help the wellbeing of the entire sector

   a. Ongoing relationship mapping and connection building to ensure everyone is brought in

      - Emphasize ways to welcome all cultural and demographic groups under EHW's Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing

   b. Share access to wellbeing resources and best practices for those working in the sector

   c. Encourage Indigenous capacity building for and with the sector

      - Explore opportunities to maximize EHW's on-reserve Status and support for Indigenous-led work, employment and capacity building for the organization and sector
      - Advise on and share Indigenous protocol and practices for the sector
      - Develop sector guidelines and tools to support relatives in a consistent way
      - Create MOUs that establish guidelines for non-Indigenous organizations to be able to provide resources and capacity to support Indigenous owned and led solutions

   d. Continue providing connection and knowledge sharing opportunities through service expos

   e. Provide a hub for centralized training for sector workers, informed by community-led best practices to ensure consistency and quality of care provided to clients and individuals served

BODY: **Trust And Transparency**

Build trust and create transparency through communications and sharing our story as a matter of ongoing practice.

EHW will position itself in specific areas as the clearest voice, ready and equipped to support the sector using that responsibility. In cases where EHW is not the authority, we will connect and elevate the voices that are within the sector.

Purpose:

For EHW to be able to speak on behalf of the sector, it will need to be both trusted by and adequately informed by the sector.

What we must do to build trust and transparency through sharing our story in the next five years:

- Develop an internal communications strategy to align and strengthen the collaborative impact of the sector
- Develop a sector-specific communications strategy to deliver on EHW's commitment to ongoing evaluation, accountability, and sharing
- Establish EHW as the centre point for providing information on ending chronic houselessness
- Increase EHW's presence and voice across the sector
- Develop a process for publishing annual reviews and reports back to the sector

Key Actions for the Next Five Years:

1. **Develop an internal communications strategy** so all facets of EHW are informed and working toward the same common community vision

   a. Establish regular communications reporting in internal communications initiatives and successes to a Board-level communications working group

2. **Develop an external communications strategy to deliver** on EHW's commitment to ongoing evaluation, accountability, and outcome sharing, including:

   a. CAB role and responsibilities to the sector

   b. What funding decisions are made, and how they are made

   c. Progress on plan

   d. Sharing our stories

3. **Establish EHW as the centre point for** providing information on chronic houselessness and housing supply in Winnipeg by communicating frequently about:

   a. SROI on housing and systems

   b. Communicate transparently about what EHW can and cannot do

   c. Positive stories and outcomes to shift perspectives

   d. Develop communications and engagement guidelines to leverage board and staff

4. **Increase EHW's presence in community and with agencies,** in media and at collective gatherings, and in government conversations

   a. Explore media and cultural training for key leaders, board members, and relevant staff

5. **Develop a process for publishing** annual reviews and reports back to the sector for:

   a. Governance structure

   b. Data and system coordination processes

   c. Advocacy roadmap

   d. Relationship map

   e. Programming alignment with strategic plan and sector needs

Everyone Belongs

We affirm a fundamental truth—that every person, no matter their story or their housing status, deserves to be seen, heard, supported and treated with dignity. When we come together to move this plan forward, we are making a commitment to build a world where no one is left outside the circle of care.

HOPE

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