



Together We Raise Tomorrow.

Planning Guide for Facilitators
Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children's Charter
June 2013

Alberta 
Government

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Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children's Charter

Purpose of the Community Discussions

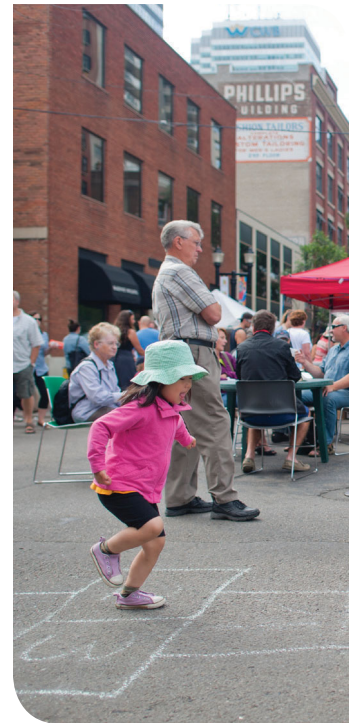
Under the *Together We Raise Tomorrow* banner, government will engage with Albertans to develop the foundation of the Children's Charter, inform strategies about reducing poverty, and explore concrete options for integrating the province's early childhood development systems. This is all in support of Alberta's children and their families, breaking down barriers and helping to create positive outcomes for children. An integrated agenda with coordinated engagements will bring many communities of interest together to identify local solutions that create better outcomes, with supports that are targeted to fit the unique challenges and diversity of Alberta's children and families in their own communities.

The *Children First Act* was brought before the Legislative Assembly on May 7, 2013 and passed third reading on May 14, 2013. The Act updates and amends legislation, and supports the health, safety, education, security, and well-being of children in Alberta by enhancing legislation and policies that affect children and youth. The Act also aligns with and supports the work of other initiatives including: Alberta's Social Policy Framework, Alberta's Approach to Early Childhood Development, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Information Sharing Strategy. As part of the Act, Human Services has been tasked with the development of a Children's Charter to ensure government policy puts children first. The Charter will establish government-wide principles, priorities, and roles to guide the development of policies, programs, and services affecting children.

The Government of Alberta is also leading the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy to eliminate child poverty in five years and reduce overall poverty in 10 years. The Poverty Reduction Strategy will provide recommendations to reduce poverty under the seven policy domains of affordable housing, early childhood development, education and literacy, income supplementation and replacement, assets, training and skills development, and place-based solutions. By aligning with the innovative and collaborative work already happening between non-profits, municipalities, businesses, community groups and government, the Strategy will build upon existing success to achieve better outcomes for all Albertans. It will also guide future decisions about how we work together as a province to ensure that all Albertans have the opportunity to succeed and contribute to our society.

It is important that parents, children, and individuals, including those with a lived experience of poverty, have the opportunity to share their ideas and help shape the Charter and the Strategy. We need your help to reach these individuals and ensure they have a safe and welcoming environment to share their experiences, ideas and opinions. This discussion kit is designed to help you lead a conversation with employees, volunteers, and the clients you serve. With your help, we can better understand both the challenges facing children and the experience of poverty in Alberta.

Please note that this discussion guide is specific to the Children's Charter and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. For more information on the Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development, please visit earlychildhood.alberta.ca.



This guide is designed to help you lead a conversation in your community.



Submissions from community-led discussions are requested by July 31, 2013.

Engagement Process and Timelines

The initial *Together We Raise Tomorrow* engagement process will run through the summer of 2013 (see Appendix 1 for an outline of the engagement process). Community discussions—like the ones you can lead with this discussion kit—are an important part of the engagement process. In addition, we are encouraging Albertans to share their ideas through the online survey, blogs and wiki¹ at socialpolicy.alberta.ca.

Transparency and dialogue are two important principles of the engagement (see Appendix 2 for our engagement principles). All community discussion summaries will be posted or quoted on the website for others to view. Submissions from community discussions are requested by July 31, 2013.

All the input, ideas and thoughts that are shared will be considered in the development of the Strategy and Charter. In the fall of 2013, we will go back to Albertans to hear your thoughts on the roles, responsibilities, and strategies needed to achieve our vision. The goal is to have a Strategy and Charter by late fall/winter that government, community groups, non-profits and others can begin to use as we all move forward on achieving a shared vision and outcomes.

Being a Facilitator

Roadmap to Success

This guide will take you through the steps of facilitating a community discussion. Your discussion will take between two to four hours, depending on how many questions you cover and if you choose to edit the wiki as a group (see “Having Your Conversation” later in this guide for options on how to hold your discussion).

Here are a few considerations:

- Act as a guide rather than a teacher, keeping conversation within the guidelines while still allowing creativity.
- Encourage and motivate all participants to share their perspectives and ideas.
- Jumpstart or redirect conversation if it stalls or gets off topic.
- Honour all contributions equally and remain neutral on content.
- Refrain from interjecting or contributing your own ideas.
- Avoid correcting the ideas or contributions of others.
- Listen actively and generate follow-up questions to learn more about a person’s ideas.
- Set and maintain a positive and comfortable atmosphere.
- Ensure notes are recorded on all group discussions and provide direction to note-takers.
- Monitor time for the group/event.

¹ The wiki is a place on our website where users can add, modify or delete the content for the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Children’s Charter. This allows a large group of to provide input and interact about the components of the Strategy and the Charter.

While it is important to reflect on current issues to help pinpoint the principles and attitudes of individuals, remember to keep the conversation forward-thinking. This discussion is not about individual programs or services; its goal is to envision social policy directions. We want to learn about the hopes and dreams of participants so that we can develop relevant, effective and efficient policies.

If someone is focused on a particular issue, a useful way to keep the discussion moving forward is to ask “*What is it about that issue that makes it important to you?*” You could also ask the person to write down his or her thoughts about a specific issue and send them by email to hs.socialpolicy@gov.ab.ca.

Planning and Preparation

Getting Organized

The space and resources you need for your discussion will depend on the number of participants. The conversation is designed for a group of five or larger. When planning your session, arrange a time and location that is most convenient and accessible for your group (e.g. after-school hours for adult learners).

When selecting a venue, consider:

- An open room with no obstructions between participants (e.g. no pillars or L-shaped rooms). This will ensure that everyone can see each other.
- Easy setup of tables and chairs, with enough space for refreshments (if provided).
- Access to a computer, screen, projector and Internet (if you plan to use the PowerPoint presentation or link to socialpolicy.alberta.ca during your discussion).
- Adequate parking and accessibility.
- Signs within the building to direct participants to the correct location (if the building is large or complex).
- Adequate lighting, sound insulation and temperature control.
- Accessible washrooms and water fountains. You may want to provide participants with bottled water.
- If you have participants with disabilities, consider the accessibility of the room and amenities.

You may wish to have the following materials available:

- Name tags;
- A sign-in sheet;
- Flip chart paper, flip chart stands, masking tape and felt markers;
- Post-it notes, or note pads and pens; and
- Laptop and a power source for the recorder.





Grants for Non-Profits

Non-profit organizations may be eligible for up to \$750 to help offset the costs of organizing their community discussion. The grant can assist with costs related to room rental, printing, refreshments, participant recruitment, facilitation, or child care and transportation for participants.

Application forms and full information on eligibility criteria are available online at socialpolicy.alberta.ca.

The Recorder

To help you keep track of your group members' contributions, recruit volunteers to record exactly what participants say during the conversation. We strongly advise that the recorders use a computer (to make note taking easier).

Rather than summarizing people's thoughts, the recorder should try to make the notes as thorough as possible. This is important because when you read the notes of the conversation at a later point, key points will be found in the exact words of the participants, not a summary of what they said. Also, it will be easier for the recorder to remain neutral and keep up with the conversation if he or she doesn't have to rephrase the discussion.

In addition to a recorder, you also may wish to have a scribe to capture the main discussion points on a flip chart. This will allow participants to see what is being written and correct the recorder if their comments were entered incorrectly.

Following the discussion, enter a summary of the feedback from the conversation in the Discussion Summary Form, which is available at socialpolicy.alberta.ca. This summary will be posted on the website for others to view. The organization facilitating the conversation will be identified, but your summary should not disclose the identity of the participants.

[Link to the website at socialpolicy.alberta.ca](http://socialpolicy.alberta.ca)

Spreading the Word and Inviting Others

The more people and perspectives you can bring together, the more valuable the conversation will be. Differing opinions not only challenge participants to think differently, but also to find shared issues and beliefs.

You may wish to consider inviting:

- People your organization serves;
- Business and political leaders in your community;
- Local non-profit and voluntary organizations;
- Service clubs and local service agencies;
- Representatives of other communities;
- Parents;
- Youth (16 and over); and
- Neighbours.

Invitations

Consider providing your invitees with important information, such as the:

- Purpose of the discussion;
- Link to the website at socialpolicy.alberta.ca;
- Confirmation of the time, length and location of the conversation; and
- Suggested things to think about. Depending on your audience, you may wish to email participants the Working paper, Discussion Questions, and Fact Sheets in advance (available at socialpolicy.alberta.ca).

Sample invitation letters are available online at socialpolicy.alberta.ca.

Articles, Posters, and Handbills

Sample articles and images are available on our website for you to insert into the newsletter of your community or organization. The articles include space for you to specify the time and location of your discussion. If you have an electronic newsletter, you also can hyperlink the image to socialpolicy.alberta.ca.

To promote your event in your community, you can access and print posters from socialpolicy.alberta.ca. The posters have a space where you can fill in the details about the time and location of your event. Post them at your local library, in your office, or at local cafes and other public spaces. A limited number of printed posters can be ordered by contacting hs.socialpolicy@gov.ab.ca.



With your help, we can understand the vision Albertans have for our province.



Having Your Conversation

Ground Rules and Atmosphere

Providing a few basic ground rules will help create a productive, open and collaborative conversation. Before you begin, remind all participants that:

- Everyone has wisdom, and we need everyone's wisdom for the wisest result;
- There are no wrong answers;
- It is important that participants listen to each other and try to understand the perspective of others; and
- The purpose of the conversation is to think about the future.

Remember to go through housekeeping items, such as the location of emergency exits and washrooms.

If the members of your conversation are unfamiliar with one another, go around the room and introduce yourselves. Be sure to indicate:

- Your name;
- Your occupation or role;
- Some basic personal background (previous locations, occupations, etc.);
- Why you want to be part of the conversation; and
- One thing that makes you memorable. This will help everyone in the room feel a bit of a personal connection. This question can be altered depending on the tastes of the participants (What is your favourite vacation? How many pets do you have?).

If you have your own icebreakers for group participation, you are welcome to use them (if they are appropriate).

Facilitating the Discussion

The Working Paper and Discussion Questions are included in the kit. There are four overarching areas to discuss: (1) The Experience; (2) Target Groups; (3) Roles & Responsibilities; and (4) Additional Ideas. Each question has additional probe questions that can help you move the conversation forward. You may wish to print copies for everyone or share them with participants in advance.

PowerPoint presentations are available to help you set the stage, provide background information and go through the questions. You can choose a presentation on the Children's Charter, on the Poverty Reduction Strategy, or on both. To download the PowerPoint of your choice, go to socialpolicy.alberta.ca.

If you have a large group (more than 15 people), consider splitting it into smaller discussion groups of five to eight people. After the groups have had a chance to talk about the questions, come back together at the end of the session to summarize and debrief everyone on the main points. Make sure you have a recorder and facilitator for each table or group.

4-Hour Version:

A full discussion of both the Children’s Charter and the Poverty Reduction Strategy is estimated to take four hours. We recommend taking 40 minutes to set the context (using the PowerPoint or discussion guide) and 30 to 40 minutes on each of the questions (plus 10 to 15 minutes for a break).

2-Hour Version:

Alternatively, you may choose to focus only on either the Children’s Charter or the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We recommend spending 30 minutes on setting the context and 30 minutes on each question.

Wiki Option:

Bring people together and edit the Poverty Reduction Strategy and/or the Children’s Charter working paper using the wiki on the website. If you choose this option, we recommend that you still use a recorder—this will allow you to capture some of the discussion during the editing process.

Continuing the Conversation

As you near the end of your discussion, thank all of the participants for being open and spending their time talking about this important topic. The information collected will help shape the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children’s Charter for Alberta and create a more positive future for our communities.

Advise participants that they can contribute more to the conversation through the Wiki, blogs and survey at socialpolicy.alberta.ca.



Submitting Your Feedback

After your discussion, review the notes to make sure they accurately capture the conversation. Please use the Discussion Summary Form available online and compile your notes into one document if you had several smaller discussion groups.

You can email your submission to hs.socialpolicy@gov.ab.ca by July 31, 2013. Please ensure that the Discussion Summary Form includes:

- 1. Details of the event (i.e. location, number of participants, hosting organization, etc.)**
- 2. Whether you discussed the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Children's Charter, or both.**
- 3. The completed summaries for each question discussed.**
 - a. If you did not discuss a question, simply leave the space under that particular section blank.
 - b. There is no limit to the number of pages that you may submit. If you need more room, simply continue typing on the next page.
 - c. Use of bullet points is recommended because it helps to differentiate comments and concepts.
- 4. Your personal feedback on facilitating this conversation and advice you may have on the process (optional).**

Your Summary Form will be posted or quoted online for others to view. For this reason, do not include names or other personal information that would disclose the identity of participants.

If you have any feedback regarding the Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development, please email this feedback to hs.earlychildhood@gov.ab.ca.

If you received a grant, please remember to complete and submit your final report so your grant file may be closed.

Thank you for your time and effort in facilitating a community conversation as part of *Together We Raise Tomorrow*. The input from your discussions will share the hopes and aspirations of your community and help create the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children's Charter for Alberta.

Stay tuned to socialpolicy.alberta.ca for news and updates about the development of the Strategy and Charter.

Appendix 1: Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children’s Charter Engagement Process

JUNE TO AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	LATE FALL/WINTER 2013	JANUARY 2014 ONWARDS
Engaging Albertans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Online survey ■ Wiki ■ Online conversations ■ Local community conversations (You are here.) ■ Government-led discussions 	Using your input to draft Strategy and Charter elements <p>Project team drafts options for the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children’s Charter.</p>	Re-engaging Albertans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sharing draft content to date and engaging further on strategies, roles and responsibilities ■ Drafting of the Strategy and Charter 	Implementation and ongoing engagement <p>Planning, collaboration, policy alignment and program review</p>

Appendix 2: Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children’s Charter Principles for Engagement

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
Collaboration	Opportunities to hold a dialogue with non-government stakeholder groups, individual Albertans, and ministries of the Government of Alberta will be maximized and encouraged.
Community Ownership	Strategy and Charter development will engage Albertans in a spirit of co-ownership.
Integrated	Strategy and Charter development will recognize the integrated factors that influence the daily lives of Albertans.
Evidence-Based	Decision-making will be informed by research, best practices, and insights gained from dialogue with Albertans.
Practical	A Poverty Reduction Strategy and Children’s Charter will help government develop and evaluate programs and policies in a proactive and preventative manner.
Shared Responsibility	The Strategy and Charter are owned by, and are a shared responsibility of, all Albertans.
Transparency	The process for developing the Strategy and the Charter, and engaging Albertans in the process, will be transparent.
Outcomes-Focused	The Strategy and the Charter will be oriented towards tangible, measureable results that will make a positive difference in the daily lives of Albertans.

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