

Priority Areas

The following areas were identified as priorities for this Assessment to investigate. They are key areas in which the RDN is positioned to make a difference in the community, and align with TogetherBC's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

- **Programs for families, youth, and children:** The RDN 2019-2022 Strategic Plan goal for social wellbeing and outcomes of the Mid-Island Child Care Action Plan (2020) focuses on planning and programming that acknowledges the high childhood vulnerability statistics for the region.
- **Social supports and services:** While many key social supports such as health services, supportive housing, and family services are the responsibility of the provincial or federal government, the RDN can gain understanding of how it may be uniquely positioned to enhance or refocus RDN programs and services to better support residents.
- **Access to housing and reducing homelessness:** Development of a Regional Housing Strategy is a strategic priority of the RDN in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, which will be informed by the 2020 Regional Housing Needs Assessment and the Social Needs Assessment and Strategy.
- **Access to healthy and affordable food:** The ability to access healthy and nutritious food is essential to a person's growth and development. People experiencing social challenges face food insecurity; a lack of resources may limit secure access to foods that meet their nutritional needs.
- **Safe and affordable transportation:** In partnership with BC Transit, the RDN operates a regional public transit system. The Social Needs Assessment and Strategy project will be coordinated with the RDN transit system review launched in 2021.
- **Discrimination and stigma:** Discrimination and stigma are significant barriers preventing people from accessing opportunities and breaking the cycle of poverty. This Strategy sought to identify where discrimination and stigma are barriers, and how this can be addressed at the local government level.

Strategic Recommendations

In response to the findings from research and learnings conducted for this review, the following 8 strategies are recommended to address social needs in the region. These are tangible actions the RDN can take to address the gaps identified by the community. While the RDN will not be able to do this work alone, these recommendations offer a framework of action for taking a leadership and coordinating role, something identified as missing in the region.



Demonstrate leadership in convening and communicating across various community stakeholders and partners as part of implementing this Strategy. This involves:

- Hiring a social planner within the RDN to provide overall coordination of social issues for the RDN and increase collaboration across service areas and in the community



Amplify the Community Health Network's (CHN) role

- 'Join the tables' by participating in CHN and sitting at community action tables across the region (possible role of social planner)



Facilitate the integration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action as part of implementing this Strategy starting with:

- Gathering in person (where possible) with local First Nations and urban Indigenous organizations to deepen relationships and find opportunities to collaborate. The initial purpose should focus on gathering insight into how to support local First Nations and urban Indigenous peoples in addressing their social needs while respecting culture and governance protocols



Adopt social planning as a core practice within the RDN to support coordination and implementation of this strategy. This should involve the following approaches:

- Applying a systems change approach to regional social planning
- Creating and adopting of a Gender Based Analysis (GBA+) Equity Analysis lens for all local government service areas
- Convening and facilitating collaborative action among community partners across the region



Create and implement regional strategies for priority areas where additional planning and processes are required. This includes:

- Establishing a Regional Housing Strategy to address housing affordability and supply challenges
- Supporting community partners in implementing the Mid-Island Child Care Action Plan
- Exploring the feasibility of creating a regional food policy council to support ongoing food insecurities
- Regional transportation strategies for active transportation options (bikes, buses, walking)



Define key indicators for success and collective targets related to specific priority area actions in support of achieving Strategy goals, including:

- Committing to achieving BC's target of reducing poverty by 25% by 2024, by focusing on actions to reduce the rate of poverty, core housing need, and childhood vulnerabilities



Implement actions within the region that recognizes regional variations in social needs and leverages local expertise by:

- Continuing to identify and share variations in needs across the region and target actions where needs are highest
- Focusing on providing both physical and social infrastructure supports to increase access to services in rural areas and better connect services across the region
- Continue enabling local area action and community leader engagement through collaboration with CHN



Establish an accountability structure to monitor and track progress of actions occurring across the region by:

- Using targets to monitor the progress being made annually
- Hosting an annual, region-wide, community social infrastructure/ social services event to share data on the targets, convene stakeholders to inform them of progress, and assess where more work is needed