

Chapter 4: Promote Transformation

Overview

Increasing community engagement to allow for multiple perspectives, including those with lived experience, will encourage a broader **understanding of human behaviour** as it relates to those living in poverty and allow our community to work together to break down existing barriers. Assets-based community development focuses on our community strengths and is a necessary step to create stronger links between support agencies and **existing systems and environments**. It is intended to encourage the development of a tailored package of services that will allow individuals to overcome the multiple challenges that are associated with poverty, one step at a time. Chapter 4 builds on the principle of embracing a long-term process of learning and change. It additionally serves to outline the Zero Poverty Oxford Plan commitment amongst the diverse group of local stakeholders involved and **identify any opportunities to support transformational change**. This chapter also serves as a beginning compilation of the existing structural assets in the community such as organizations and groups. This list will continue to be updated and expanded upon each draft of the plan.

Key Points

Local offices that have embraced multi-sectoral collaboration, integration and wrap-around supports must be identified as **community champions** and be encouraged to lead by example. Shifting to a person-centred approach – one that is flexible and easy to navigate – can better align our local programs to address the issues of those they are designed to help. The intent of this chapter is to determine what is possible versus what is wrong and establish what makes us healthy versus what makes us poor.

Human Behaviours and Understandings

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy identifies that communities naturally possess the capacity to effectively serve the needs of their members, and that community capacity building is one of the most effective ways to initiate the process of making change and begin the process of breaking down barriers. It is well recognized that ideas and partnerships are more easily developed at a community level and that communities can efficiently and effectively narrow down issues and challenges specific to their area. Strong communities have a positive influence, a shared interest in both health and economy and have the natural ability to influence social cohesion and mobility - as there is typically an accepted built-in willingness to "help your neighbour."

The Wellesley Institute's Submission to the Federal Poverty Strategy suggests that community programs targeted at vulnerable groups can strengthen peoples' connections to their community. Investing in vital community infrastructure, such as libraries, recreation centres, community health

centres and childcare facilities, and enabling them to deliver essential supports such as life skills training and recreational activities which will allow people to engage meaningfully with their neighbours and continue to build their capacities.

To make progress on complex social situations it is best to embrace an adaptive model of response rather than a more traditional model. Using an adaptive model approach allows for meaningful engagement with Oxford's key stakeholders, including those with lived experience, in all aspects of the development and implementation stages of the Zero Poverty Oxford Plan.

The Zero Poverty Oxford Plan has been designed to be an intentional framework that engages people with lived experience - in an ongoing nature to ensure an authentic strategy and to promote inclusion in our county. The Social Planning Council Oxford report in 2014 entitled "How are Oxford County residents REALLY doing" identified that there has been very little change since the 2008 Social Report that indicated some residents of our community feel isolated. In addition, the 2014 report explored democratic engagement and decision making and identified some of our residents did not feel they had a voice. The Zero Poverty Oxford Plan recognizes the importance of actively involving those living in poverty to have a better understanding of the barriers they face and to build both stronger community as well as relationships. **The mobilization of the recommendations and themes presented in this document will not be executed without receiving feedback from those living in poverty.**

Existing Systems and Environments within Oxford County

Key Point

Integration of various environments in our county will help avoid duplication and will allow for a more seamless service delivery.

Operating Partnerships

Community partnerships have been the success of many strategic initiatives in Oxford County. The mutual respect for each organization and the willingness to "pitch in and help" either out of necessity or genuine desire to find the greater good, has never been an issue in this community. This community wants to improve the quality of life for its citizens and have learned that working in collaboration certainly beats silo building and isolation. The membership of the steering committee for zero poverty is proof that working together can help to move initiatives forward.

This section refers to any person, group, or business that may be affected by, or participate in, the process of a transition to zero poverty. Listed organizations, groups and communities are examples only and not intended as an all-inclusive representation. This list will be updated on an ongoing basis.

Stakeholders are referenced in several sections of this plan; however, this chapter is designed to identify any and all parties who may have a stake in the process, and outcomes, of our transition. The partnerships to help move recommendations forward will be critical to the success of obtaining zero poverty. It is imperative that there is an accurate awareness of what services are available to assist

people living in poverty. Constant communication between all stakeholders and service providers along with an appropriate referral system is essential. For this reason, we ask that community organizations reading this plan, who would like to be included, contact the Zero Poverty Support Team at Oxford County.

Municipalities within Oxford

Oxford County is comprised of eight municipalities in total, with the upper tier Oxford County encapsulating all municipalities who lie within its boundaries. Oxford County is represented by the heads of council and other elected officials.

The eight municipalities that form Oxford County proper include five rural, primarily agriculture - based economies and three urban centres. All eight municipalities support a transition to zero poverty and continue to work together to develop a comprehensive Zero Poverty Oxford Plan.

Municipalities Outside of Oxford

Municipalities outside of Oxford essentially refer to upper or single tier governments within close proximity to Oxford. Middlesex, Elgin, Waterloo Region, Norfolk, Perth and Brant share a common border with Oxford; however other municipalities across Ontario are considered stakeholders and partners (in as much as they are inclined) in the quest for a zero poverty future. To ensure a concentrated networking effort with other key municipalities that are working on poverty solutions, Oxford has established a close working relationships with Tamarack's Vibrant Communities.

First Nations

First Nations communities are an important part of our national identity and the distinct nature of Aboriginal poverty poses unique challenges. Although Oxford does not have the benefit of a formal First Nations presence, we will reach to those in our community in the hope that they share in our journey to zero poverty and that we benefit from their traditional and spiritual perspective. The newly formed Indigenous Committee for Child Care in Oxford County will be contacted to receive their specific viewpoints with respect to poverty in Oxford County - viewed through their lens for themselves, their families and children.

Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations

Oxford County has the good fortune of having a very vibrant and engaged business community. We will continue to work closely with our local businesses, chambers and business associations, and value the important role they play within the community. Business and industry participation is a critical part of Oxford's economic and community success and an implementation of a living wage in Oxford will require their support. Additionally, Oxford County is fortunate to be in a position where there are many jobs for residents. The downside is many of these jobs remain unfilled due to a labour shortage. A primary action item with respect to chambers of commerce and business is to bridge that gap, which will definitely assist in the zero poverty plan.

Agricultural Groups

Oxford County is an agricultural hub. We have among the most fertile lands in Ontario, enjoy a significant share of the daily output, and appreciate the spirit of innovation inherent in the farming community. Local farmers have shown a willingness to donate left over produce surplus from the Woodstock's Farmers Market held every Saturday, and simply require the organization and the tools to get this surplus to the local food bank. Food security is integral for all residents residing in Oxford County and is one of the keys to alleviating poverty.

Educational Institutions

Educational institutions play a critical role in both public engagement and knowledge. The role of education in poverty eradication, in close co-operation with other social sectors, is crucial. We will revitalize ongoing partnerships with this sector in pursuit of meaningful and effective training forums around Oxford County. Educational linkages are also vital in having successful breakfast programs and other community based programs necessary to support all children and most specifically those living in poverty. The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Human Services department also plays a key role in funding and system planning child care spaces in Oxford County. If child care is not available for citizens to work, be trained and or educated, the cycle of poverty will be difficult to break.

Zero Poverty Stakeholder Groups in Oxford County

Canada Mental Health Association Oxford (CMHA)

The Canadian Mental Health Association Oxford is a community organization committed to building inclusive, healthy communities. CMHA Oxford is one organization in a group of agencies and individuals working in partnerships. The Oxford County Mental Health & Addictions Network identifies and plans for county mental health services and resources. It is important for all of us to be aware of these partnerships. Efficient and appropriate service planning and provision involves the co-operation, flexibility and commitment of many people. Mental health challenges impact one in five Canadians (CMHA 2018). Healthy individuals mean healthier communities and help to alleviate poverty for many.

Community Employment Services (CES)

A one-stop centre for employment services, job seekers, employers, newcomers, students and youth, CES has delivered federal, provincial and municipal employment and training programs in our community since 1994. CES has been an early **community champion** in recognizing the value of harnessing community assets, creating opportunities and providing innovative solutions. With locations in Woodstock, Ingersoll, Norwich, Plattsville, Princeton, Tavistock and Thamesford, CES embraces their role in Oxford County and is a perfect example of the power of community collaboration. CES strives to link both private sector and community sectors together in order to provide a variety of integrated government and community services to residents of Oxford County. Partners include Employment Ontario, Oxford County, Ontario's Youth Employment Network, Oxford Workforce Development Partnership and the provincial and federal government.

CES provides front line service for many programs, one of which is a resource centre which is often filled with people living in poverty. This organization is vital in assisting those living in poverty and helping to recognize meaningful ways to assist in the development and action of the Zero Poverty Oxford Plan.

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO)

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford is committed to ending the cycle of domestic abuse and helping families make the transition to lives free from violence and abuse. A safe, comfortable space for women and their children impacted by domestic abuse and/or homelessness at a 21-bed high-security shelter located in Woodstock, serving all of Oxford County. Programs and services include a 24-hour crisis/help line, psycho-educational support groups, sexual assault counselling, community outreach and violence education and prevention. All services are free of charge, confidential and accessible.

EarlyON

EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide opportunities for children from birth to 6 years of age to participate in play and inquiry-based programs, and support parents and caregivers in their roles. The centres offer a safe and welcoming environment with qualified professionals and quality programs. Families and caregivers will be able to find support, advice, make personal connections and access a network of resources.

Elgin Oxford Legal Clinics

The Elgin Oxford Legal Clinic (EOLC) opened its doors in 2002 to provide poverty law services to low-income residents of Elgin and Oxford Counties. Services provided by the clinic include traditional casework, summary advice, public legal education, law reform, and a wide range of community development activities. The clinic staff consists of both community legal workers and lawyers. The EOLC offer services from the main office located in St. Thomas and the satellite offices located in Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Aylmer, Ingersoll, and West Lorne. The clinic can assist with any of the following: landlord-tenant matters, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability assistance, Canada Pension Plan, Legal Aid Ontario, representation before courts or tribunals, summary legal advice, and referrals to other agencies who can help. All services provided by the clinic are free. However the clinic must sometimes pay others for things required to represent a client: for example, doctor's reports and court filing fees. Where the client can afford it, EOLC may ask that a client pay the clinic back for these expenses.

Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) – City of Woodstock

The FAIR program assists City of Woodstock's residents on a low income with the opportunities to participate in recreation and leisure activities provided by the city. To qualify, applicants must live in the City of Woodstock and have a family income that falls below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) for their family service. For families that qualify, a credit is placed on the City Recreation CLASS account, and can be used for recreational city programs for a period of up to one year. A new application is required each year.

Key Point

Recreational subsidies are available throughout Oxford County to increase mobility and reduce social isolation. Providers of recreation must be conversant with one another and pro-active in sourcing all funding opportunities that are available for low-income people, to ensure the subsidies are reaching as many families as possible to assist with the costs of recreation.

Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit, non-denominational housing organization that builds simple, decent, affordable homes for low-income families. ReStores are owned and operated by Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario and are stocked with new and gently used renovation supplies which are donated by homeowners and businesses. One hundred per cent of the ReStores revenues support the administrative costs of Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario. The Woodstock ReStore opened in 2013.

Key Point

Habitat for Humanity helps people with low income change their lives. As noted many times throughout this plan, safe and affordable housing is the key building block to a life outside of poverty.

Ingamo Homes

Ingamo Homes is a transitional program with housing that supports women and their children to turn their lives around. Ingamo assists with developing individual safety plans, providing information, support and advocacy, system navigation and providing parenting support as well as children's activities and programs.

Literacy Link South Central

Literacy Link South Central is a literacy information and referral network servicing the 6 counties of Oxford, Elgin, Middlesex, Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk. This agency refers people to literacy programs, increases awareness of the important role of literacy in everyone's life, develops resources for literacy programs as well as provides training for literacy program staff. As mentioned, education and literacy are key skills to allow people to participate fully in employment, training and educational pursuits. Literacy Link and the service providers throughout Oxford County assist with this goal.

Operation Sharing

Operation Sharing is a community outreach program working in partnerships with local groups to provide services for people and families in need. Operation Sharing believes that there are local solutions to solvable programs. They focus attention on bringing the people of the community into relationships with each other. Its activities are designed to break down the barriers caused by labelling through opportunities for all members of the community to participate in the life of a community. They

provide support for families trying to get out of poverty, Creative Concept Training for those who work with people who live in poverty, secular and non-secular crisis counseling, advocacy service and the Cynthia Anne Centre for Addictions program for people 16 and older.

Families and individuals in need of emergency food assistance receive a specially designed food card in pre-determined denominations as an alternative or supplement to the food bank. Individuals can use these cards to do their grocery shopping at any of the participating grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll. Funding for this program is through the donation of quarters by the public at the grocery stores. This method of providing food assistance is vital for those with special diets or serious health issues. Meeting Place Coordinators oversee the food card distribution.

Operation Sharing Seasonal Services

- The Inn of Woodstock (formerly known as the Inn Out of the Cold) is a year round homeless shelter for homeless males and females 16 years or older, 7pm to 7:30 am located at Old St. Paul's Anglican church
- Christmas Place Store
- Christmas Day Event
- Knapsacks for Kids offers free school supplies for children in need

Bullwinkle's

A buffet-style eatery lunch program as well as a gathering place every Tuesday and Thursday from 11:45-1:30. A joint creation of the Moose Family Centre, Salvation Army, and Operation Sharing, the café features a "pay what you can" sliding scale between 50 cents and \$7. The program also doubles as a culinary and hospitality teaching program for residents of Oxford County interested in boosting their culinary skills and adding skills to their resume. Bullwinkle's is a **community champion** that emphasizes inclusion and ensures dignity for those who need help finding a warm meal. Similar work is done at and by STICH Supper Club in Ingersoll, the Adelaide Soup Kitchen in Woodstock, and at other locations throughout Oxford County.

Oxford Coalition for Social Justice

For over two decades, the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice (OCSJ) has been dedicated to improving the social justice and the quality of life for residents of Oxford County through advocacy, education and action on health, education, environmental and aboriginal rights, fair wages, human rights, peace and safe and sustainable food issues. OCSJ are passionate advocates who strongly believe that food waste and hunger should not exist, and support the Ontario Health Coalition's battle to save public health from privatization.

Oxford County Community Health Centre (OCCHC)

The OCCHC employs interdisciplinary teams of health care providers such as nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians, health promoters and physicians. The OCCHC team members work collaboratively to provide primary care, health promotion and community development programs and services to priority populations.

The Oxford County Community Health Centre (OCCHC) is a **community champion** that has recognized the need for wrap-around, person-centered care and model a Health Links philosophy of care. The Health Links approach introduces new and improved ways to integrate care delivery for the people of Ontario who live with complex chronic illness, social determinants of health considerations and/or high cost conditions. The Health Links philosophy of care centres around a process called Coordinated Care Planning. Coordinated Care Planning (CCP) brings all the people a person needs for their care together in one meeting. The CCP is based on the person's needs as well as their goals.

Oxford County Human Services Department

The Human Services Department provides financial support, information and referral services to ensure all residents of Oxford County live the best quality of life possible. Human Services takes an integrated approach to helping clients. The focus is one client, one file, one client service worker. Human Services facilitates the financial assistance programs of Ontario Works benefits, child care subsidy and rent geared to income housing. It also provides discretionary benefits, recreation subsidies, Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funds as well as many rent supplement programs for housing.

The Human Services professional team considers many different factors when assisting a client. The Quality of Life indicators are assessed for each person to ensure everyone is assisted in a holistic way. The indicators include income, education, health, transportation, employment, safety/legal, and shelter. Every person who walks through the door is considered eligible for service. If someone is not eligible for financial assistance, they will not leave without assistance of some kind and a referral to services where the individual will be helped. The overall goal is to provide great service while helping clients enhance their quality of life and contribute to their community.

Oxford County Community Planning Department

The Community Planning Department of Oxford County involves reviewing development proposals and using planning tools to help balance social and economic interests while preserving and protecting the natural assets of our community. The Community Planning Office is responsible for providing a full range of land use planning services on behalf of the County and the eight area municipalities that comprise the County.

The services provided by the office include: developing and maintaining the [Official Plan](#) and [Area Municipal Zoning By-laws](#); responding to development inquiries; providing pre-consultation and development review services for all Planning Act applications; undertaking growth forecasts and maintaining growth land inventories; acquiring and maintaining various planning related data sets and statistics; developing mapping and other planning related resource materials. The office also assists the area municipalities in undertaking various planning related projects and programs, such as the development of Community Improvement Plans and Urban Design guidelines. The Community Planning Department is integral in promoting policies that allow for a variety of housing to be built in Oxford County that is safe and affordable and developed in a timely manner.

Oxford-Elgin Child and Youth Centre (OECYC)

A child's mental health organization providing services to the community from offices based in Woodstock, Ingersoll and Tillsonburg. CMHA is working with OECYC in the provision of the 24-hour

children's emergency response system. Staff from OECYC are also involved in the Community Mental Health Education Committee. Mental health agencies for all ages assist with greater overall health and lead to greater participation in community.

Oxford Workforce Development Partnership – Work in Oxford

The Oxford Workforce Development Partnership supports the community around issues of common concern by assuming a leadership role in helping in the identification and validation process of local labour market needs, issues, gaps, trends and opportunities. Most importantly, they engage local partners in a community-driven process to find solutions that contribute to the improvement of local labour market conditions in Oxford County.

The Situation Table

The Oxford County Situation Table was formed in May 2014. The Situation Table is a forum and framework for collaboration among human service providers. The table mobilizes existing resources to help individuals /families rapidly reduce acutely elevated risk. The roundtable meets weekly to identify situations, determine which agency will take the lead and which agencies will support the intervention. Their vision is collaborative, caring innovation for community safety and well-being. Partners around the table include Oxford County Public Health and Human Services, Woodstock Police Department, Canada Mental Health Association, Woodstock Probation Services, Youth Justice Services, Addiction Services of Thames Valley, Children's Aid Society of Oxford County, Domestic Abuse Services Oxford, Home & Community, South West LHIN, Oxford Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team, Oxford County Community Health Centre, Oxford Elgin Child & Youth Centre, Oxford Health Link, Oxford County Paramedic Services, Oxford Provincial Police Oxford Detachment, Thames Valley District School Board, Victim Assistance Services and Mental Health.

Social Planning Council of Oxford (SPCO)

The SPCO is an organization that uses research, evidence and community building to address poverty and marginalization throughout Oxford County. The SPCO's vision is "well-being for every resident of Oxford County" and the organization continues to move forward with the goal of bringing people together to actively participate in social development. The SPCO propels important social inequalities into the general public's view through education and dissemination. Food security, living wage, lack of adequate transportation, housing and childcare and public engagement are important areas for the SPCO. Their work in mobilizing community will help with the zero poverty movement.

Southwestern Public Health Department (formerly known as Oxford County Public Health)

The Southwestern Public Health Department (formerly known as Oxford County Public Health) is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the people who live in the community are healthy and safe. The Southwestern Public Health offers programs, clinics and classes that promote healthy lifestyles that aim to prevent illness and disease in the community. Programs are offered to keep people of all ages and places throughout the community healthy and offer anything from pregnancy and prenatal

programs, nutrition and non-smoking initiatives to environmental services, weather bulletins and ensuring our food and water are safe for consumption. Through programs in prevention and protection, Public Health works to keep the people in Oxford's communities healthy and safe.

South West Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN)

The role of Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN's) is to plan, integrate and fund local health care as well as deliver and coordinate home and community care. The South West LHIN covers an area from Lake Erie to the Bruce Peninsula and it home to almost one million people. The South West LHIN ensures that local people help to identify health care priorities and solutions based on local needs, wants, circumstances and expectation.

United Way Oxford

For over 50 years, United Way Oxford has been working to improve lives. Having evolved from their roots as a 'fundraiser' to a community convener, United Way mobilizes partners – business, labour, service providers, community leaders and residents – helping to create opportunities for a better life for everyone in our community and is considered an early community champion. United Way Oxford inspires people to come together and to make a lasting difference. Through community conversations, the United Way is working to achieve meaningful, long-term improvements to quality of life by addressing not only the symptoms of the problems, but also the root causes. The established relationships with the greater community - including many labour unions - help to fight the inequalities in the community and focus support to areas of need, including assisting those living in poverty, to move forward.

United Way Strong Communities Programs

Oxford County walk-in counseling & self-help supports with Canadian Mental Health Association

Accessible walk-in counselling and peer support. In collaboration with other walk-in counselling services, this initiative helps to ensure that individuals of all ages, have timely, local, relationship-based, accessible services available as well as opportunities to have safe and welcoming spaces.

This service provides incredible support for people by people with lived experience. The volunteer base helps people navigate through systems they have been through themselves. The feedback provided by this service will be vital to the Zero Poverty Oxford Plan.

Adult Mediation with Community Options for Justice

Resolution for justice issues. Designed to address a gap, this program uses volunteers to assist with conflict resolution and restorative justice. Identified adults, victims and community members come together to repair harm, rebuild relationships and gain a better understanding of the root causes of minor crime while holding the individual accountable. It equips clients with the skills, tools and guidance for a brighter future.

Therapeutic Horseback Riding with Jabez Therapy Ranch

Therapeutic horseback program for youth. The Therapeutic and Equine Assisted Psychotherapy program provides alternate support to children and youth dealing with, or at risk of, mental health challenges by helping clients experiment with horseback riding.

T:GO Transportation with Community Living Tillsonburg

T:GO Call-N-Ride is a five-year-pilot community bus providing low-cost rides within Tillsonburg. A collaborative community service to support all residents with an affordable means to get around for work, medical appointments, community programs, events, shopping and to meet up with friends. T:GO operates on set schedules and flexible routes offering a reliable, adjustable service to residents of Tillsonburg.

This service helps people get to work and access services they would otherwise not be able to. This allows for many social inclusion opportunities and makes the trip to work more affordable and advantageous, allowing people to get ahead through an increase in income. T:GO Call-N-Ride is a **community champion**.

United Way Poverty to Possibility Programs

Oxford Resident Support with Indwell Harvey Woods Lofts

Resident support for improved health and well-being. This program offers affordable housing to those with a disability and/or limited income. It ensures residents have access to supports for health and well-being, employment and community engagement.

Oxford Oral Health Access Initiative with Oxford Community Health Centre

Develop initiatives for oral health access. Oral health care is vital to health, self-esteem and employment readiness and is often not available for the most vulnerable. This program works to create community awareness and to develop supports to obtain resources. Oral health is considered a significant determinant of health and for obtaining and maintaining employment. Many hospital visits and missed days of work can be avoided through optimal oral health.

Oxford Street Outreach Program with Oxford Community Health Centre (Collaborative)

Homeless support through outreach and belongingness. An intervention program aimed at helping individuals experiencing chronic and persistent homelessness, or at risk of homelessness while creating clearer system access and coordination. This service works very closely with those most

vulnerable in this community. The wrap-around service provision and housing-first approach assists people to live a life outside of poverty.

United Way All That Kids Can Be Programs

Mentoring, Recreation and Social Cadet Program with Navy League & Sea Cadets

Social program with skills training. Programming ensures that children and youth have the opportunity to experience physical fitness, life-skill development, mentorship and belonging.

Education, Leadership, Recreation & Social Programs with Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre

Recreation and social opportunities through activity and technology. Programs that build knowledge and skills, positive relationships, a sense of belonging and increased self-esteem and resiliency offer variety to youth (ages 12-18) with an asset-based approach that ensures they receive the tools required to make a healthy transition into adulthood.

Oxford Student Nutrition Program with Ontario Student Nutrition Program

Student nutrition for school success. This inclusive school-based program ensures that children and youth in our community can attend school nourished and ready to learn.

Youth, Community and Site-based Mentoring Programs with Big Brothers Big Sisters Ingersoll, Tillsonburg & Area and Big Brothers Big Sisters Woodstock and District

Mentoring to build resiliency and empower youth. Programs work to empower children to reach their full potential by building resiliency and self-esteem through positive relationships.

Youth Horse Guided Learning Program with Community Options for Justice

Horse guided learning for at-risk youth. A unique intervention with a proven track record, this program is designed for youth at risk of further conflict with the law. It is targeted to youth facing significant barriers. It helps identify personal strengths, conquers limitations and increases self-respect.

Women's Employment Resource Centre (WERC)

For 20 years, the Women's Employment Resource Centre has been a sanctuary of support. WERC provides free employment service assistance to all women of Oxford County. Their 12-week Workplace Skills Development Program (WSDP) offers training in industrial sewing, effective communication, discovering career options, job search assistance and instruction in assertively interacting and handling

criticism. This program can be taken for the full 12 weeks or divided into modules for those who are only interested in certain topics.

Woodstock Moose Lodge 1329

At the core of the Moose organization is the saying “a burden heavy to one is borne lightly by many” and this core belief is what makes them unique in the local communities and charitable cities that they support. Since the early years, this fraternal organization has rapidly expanded to include valuable service to its communities. The Woodstock Moose Lodge in partnership with the Salvation Army and Operation Sharing opened Bullwinkle’s at their Woodstock location. Bullwinkle’s is a café open on Tuesday and Thursday’s that features a “pay what you can” sliding scale between 50 cents and \$7 and is designed to promote inclusiveness within the community while offering low income meals.

Youth Justice Services – Oxford-Elgin Child & Youth Centre

Youth Justice is a service provided through Oxford-Elgin Child & Youth Centre. The focus is to address issues and highlight supports to young persons with mental health and/or behavioral needs who are in the youth justice system. Young persons served are age 12-17 at the time of offense who have been found guilty and are currently on probation, conditional supervision or community supervision orders and have assessed mental health needs. Individual and family counselling is available.

4-H

The 4-H Club is a program offering youth between the ages of 9 and 21 the opportunity to make new friends and share new experiences, learn and try out new skills at local, regional and provincial level. In the process, youth learn skills for life (cooking, sewing, crafts and creativity), agriculture (livestock, machinery, and farm safety), the environment and conservation. Individuals also learn leadership and judging skills. All of this work is done by local volunteers who are screened and trained to ensure the very best experience for members. Each club must have two screened and trained volunteers minimum. There are clubs to teach life skills that are located in Brooksdale, Burgessville, Oxford Centre, Embro, Hickson, Tavistock, Mt. Elgin, and Thamesford as well as countywide. While these skills may seem rural in nature they provide life skills for all, assist with social inclusion and may assist with poverty reduction.

Key Point

That each partner review their missions and values with respect to what could be done specifically with people living in poverty. All of the above services play a significant role and share in the common belief that helping individuals achieve their best life and fullest potential will assist in the zero poverty goal.

Identify Opportunities and Support Transformational Change

Increasing the level of awareness among citizens through education and awareness campaigns is an important next step in promoting transformation in Oxford County. Celebrating our **community champions** and using these organizations as living role models will increase the level of engagement amongst stakeholders in our community and promote sustainable social change. It is also essential to raise the level of awareness among citizens in Oxford County through education and awareness campaigns and to continue to increase community engagement and capacity-building that will to promote transformation. Celebrating our strengths and our local champions will harness our community assets, reinforce local resources and cultivate continuing communication. Continuing conversations and discussion about why poverty exists and how to examine it will be necessary next steps to alter perceptions and stigma surrounding poverty and to move towards transformational change and pragmatic solutions that will eliminate poverty in Oxford County.

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy aims to create a province where every person has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. An important part of the Zero Poverty Oxford Plan is removing barriers and increasing opportunities for those who are living on a low income. People living in poverty often require multiple forms of government support as well as help from a variety of local services and programs. As a result, there is an identified need for assistance to further individual pathways of support throughout the wider services system, to ensure an ease of navigation. This can be done via service hubs, integration of departments within organizations as well as through service navigation. Oxford County took the lead in Ontario by bravely committing to a zero poverty future; however, our success will be built on the leadership and commitment of the public. The role of the Zero Poverty Oxford Action Committee is to lead by example, to inspire, to remove doubt and to eliminate barriers. However, the real change will begin only when individuals, groups and business owners engage and lead on their own terms.

Key Priorities

Better-connected community networks can result in a more effective and efficient poverty-fighting system. Continuing community-wide education will increase awareness and generate understanding about the root causes of poverty. Organizations that provide resources to those living on a low income should have trained system navigators to help individuals and families alike navigate the various support systems. This will ensure participants receive all the internal and external resources available to them in an efficient manner. Providing this continued wrap-around support for those moving out of poverty (and staying out of poverty) is an essential next step in a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Key Action

It will be critical to hear from the individuals living in poverty to know what is working from their perspective. Strategies derived from service providers who work with people living in poverty daily inspire many of the recommendations in this plan. The difference is ensuring interpretations by service providers matches what people living in poverty feel and experience. The adage "nothing about us

without us” will be a dominant theme in making lasting changes as the desire is to get continual advice, guidance and feedback to ensure good work is being done and that poverty is reduced in this community. This work will be the key to transformational change.