

# Chapter 1: Activate Local Resource Potential

## Overview

A community wishing to embark on an initiative to eliminate poverty, such as a Zero Poverty Initiative, should **perform preliminary assessments** to understand the local context within which they are operating, so that any ensuing framework or policy is tailored to the needs and assets of the local population. It is also helpful to **mobilize local resources** to leverage the knowledge and expertise of partners and stakeholders to **identify opportunities for supports and assistance** that can aid the Zero Poverty Initiative.

## Perform Preliminary Assessments

Performing preliminary assessments are important initial steps to planning a zero poverty initiative. These are carried out to understand the current poverty context within Oxford County and to establish relevant baselines (i.e., those that stem from agreed upon outcomes and indicators) that can be used to monitor, measure and evaluate progress and maintain accountability throughout the initiative.

A situational assessment is a form of a preliminary assessment that can be conducted to better understand a population of interest and inform planning decisions. The assessment highlights trends and issues that may affect the implementation of a program or service and identifies the wants, needs as well as assets of a particular population of interest. The situational assessment for the zero poverty initiative has included gathering relevant poverty data, calculating a living wage for Oxford County, the synthesizing of current evidence and the completion of a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to understand the initiative's internal strengths and weaknesses, its opportunities for growth and external threats to project planning.

## Key Point

Review identified outcomes, indicators and baselines, so that the plan can be established and move forward to mobilization.

## Mobilize Local Resources

Cross-sector collaboration is an important step towards effective poverty elimination. This form of collaboration leverages the knowledge, expertise and resources that partners across different sectors and stakeholder groups (e.g., business, government, non-profit and community members - including those who have experienced poverty) possess and uses their varied strengths to work towards the common goal of eliminating poverty in Oxford County.

Collective impact is a cross-sector collaboration approach used for community change. It uses a framework consisting of five key elements – determine a common agenda, develop a shared measurement system, employ mutually reinforcing activities, engage in continuous communication and provide a backbone support<sup>1(p.19)</sup> – to address complex challenges such as poverty. Collaborators structure their initiatives around these key elements to enhance the well-being of area residents by advocating for system and policy changes.

### Key Point

Continue to identify and contact potential collaborators from various sectors and encourage continued participation in steering committee work.

## Identify Opportunities for Support and Assistance

It is important that collaborators explore existing or future initiatives relating to poverty reduction or elimination that may be occurring for residents of Oxford County. A scan of local, provincial and federal programs and services may identify potential supports for the zero poverty initiative. Additional resources and supports may also be available through organizations whose missions are to build capacity in poverty elimination.

### Key Point

Continue to explore opportunities for support via existing or future anti-poverty initiatives and reach out to organizations whose missions are to build capacity in poverty elimination.