

## VCC INITIATIVES LTD. (VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CALGARY)

**Mission:** Inspire change. Reduce poverty. Enhance well-being.

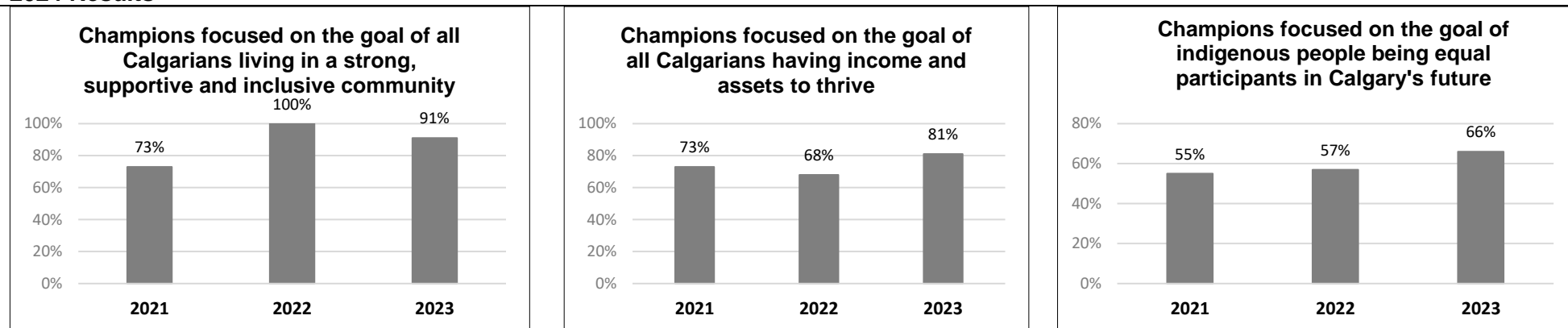
**Service Line:** *Community Strategies*

## 2024 City Investment

**Operating Grant:** \$521,480

**Operating Grant:** \$500,000 (one time)

## 2024 Results



## The story behind the numbers

- Data is provided up to 2023. 2024 data will be provided in the annual *Enough for All* Strategy (E4A) external evaluation, released in fall 2025.
- E4A is a collective impact, systems change strategy that uses a third-party evaluation that engages interested parties in a series of surveys, focus groups and interviews. The City of Calgary is a member of the evaluation committee. Survey participants were asked which of the E4A goals their organization aligns with.
- In 2023, 91 per cent of Champions who participated in the survey focused on the goal specific to strong, supportive and inclusive communities.
- VVC engaged Indigenous professionals in the non-profit sector to participate in teachings/workshops and discuss Indigenous perspectives on poverty reduction. These engagements drove a change of nine per cent for Champions seeing Indigenous people being equal in Calgary's future.

## Benchmarks

- The E4A evaluation uses a Principles-Focused Evaluation approach to assess the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts. This method, suited for complex social change, examines strategies, advocacy, policy and system-level interventions. The evaluation includes both process and impact assessments to measure collective progress and VCC's stewardship of the strategy.
- The 2024 evaluation assessed how many E4A Champions felt there was strong coordination and support from VCC, including resource sharing, poverty awareness, community discussion and collaboration with organizations.

## Looking ahead: 2025 highlights

- In January 2025, VCC launched the Enough for All Well-Being Dashboard. Developed in partnership with YYC Data, the dashboard brings to life vital information demonstrating Calgary's progress toward achieving its poverty-reduction goals.
- In 2025, VCC will continue its calculation and advocacy of the living wage, deliver policy priorities to candidates for the 2025 municipal election, and publish its research project on Alberta's gig economy with recommendations for future legislation.



**VCC INITIATIVES LTD.  
(VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CALGARY)  
2024 Civic Partner Annual Report**

**Civic Partner Name:** VCC Initiatives Ltd. (Vibrant Communities Calgary)

**Legal Structure:** Non-profit entity (Part 9 Companies Act)

**Manage/operate a City-owned asset:** No

**Mission/Mandate:** VCC works to achieve a substantial and sustained reduction in the number of Calgarians living in poverty. VCC works to grow the social, economic and political engagement of Calgarians in their community, and believes that everyone has a right to fully participate in their communities. There are important systemic factors that contribute to poverty, and VCC believes that the whole community has a vital role to play in changing these conditions.

**1. What 3-5 key results did your organization achieve in 2024 that contributed to:**

- a) One or more [Council Strategic Directions](#)- economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?

**Social Resilience:**

- i. ***No Place to Go* research report:** In collaboration with researchers from the University of Calgary and a leading expert in housing and homelessness, VCC conducted a research project to understand the factors contributing to social disorder on Calgary's public transit system. The study analyzed over 160 research papers, reviewed data on social disorder at train stations and substance-related deaths, and included interviews with individuals experiencing homelessness, transit workers, police officers, and community outreach staff. [No Place to Go](#) broadens our understanding of how poverty intersects with justice issues and outlines strategies for addressing these issues. This study informed conversations with key government officials and staff at the municipal and provincial levels and was [publicly released](#) with over 11,500 visits to its landing page. We are confident this research has directly and indirectly informed policy changes, with key partners noting that it has "opened doors" for exploring better approaches to homelessness support.
- ii. ***Collaborative policy advocacy:*** VCC co-chairs and backbones the [Calgary Social Policy Collaborative \(SPC\)](#), a group of community organizations committed to working together to inform the development and implementation of public policy that improves the economic and social well-being of Albertans. In 2024, the SPC developed a policy brief on improving the workforce in the Early Learning and Child Care sector, analyzed the 2024 provincial budget with an eye toward sector and E4A priorities, developed shared priorities for budget 2025, and began work on a research project exploring Alberta's gig economy and its impact on workers.
- iii. ***Unfold campaign on homelessness:*** In January 2024, VCC launched the [Unfold awareness campaign](#), based on [a study by the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy](#) that VCC funded in 2023. Using impactful storytelling to make research data accessible and compelling, this campaign focused on the realities of Calgarians living at risk of homelessness. The campaign received over 20,000 visits to its landing page.

**Economic Resilience:**

- i. ***Calgary's living wage calculation:*** VCC has published [Calgary's living wage](#) since 2008 as a resource for policymakers and employers. It reflects what a person needs to earn to maintain a modest standard of living based on the actual costs of living in a specific community. Calgary's

2024 living wage is \$24.45, nearly \$10, or 63%, higher than Alberta's minimum wage. VCC's living wage announcement resulted in interviews with 10 media outlets and over 70 media mentions across Calgary, Alberta, and BC. It was also mentioned in the Alberta Legislative Assembly, with MLAs quoting and referencing VCC's news release. VCC actively works with the Alberta Living Wage network to recruit and promote living wage employers and raise awareness of adequate and fair wages to support Calgarians' economic well-being.

- ii. **Understanding Alberta's gig economy:** In collaboration with the University of Alberta and the Alberta Centre for Labour Market Research, VCC is leading a Social Policy Collaborative research project on the impact of Alberta's gig economy on workers to provide evidence-based recommendations for future provincial legislation. **Work began in mid-2024, and the completed project will be published in the fall of 2025.**

**b) Your own organization's strategy?**

**Enough for All:**

VCC continues to steward Enough for All, Calgary's community-owned poverty reduction plan. In addition to the key results outlined above, VCC also achieved the following in furtherance of the Enough for All strategy:

- i. **Stewarding the Enough for All Champion network:** Enough for All had 62 [Champions](#) in 2024. The Champion network has quadrupled since 2019. VCC hosts regular convening opportunities for Champions, bringing together leaders from diverse sectors to discuss emerging issues, share best practices, and identify collaboration opportunities. These gatherings help align efforts, foster joint initiatives, build sector capacity, and prevent fragmentation and duplication in service delivery. In 2024, areas of focus included providing Calgary context to federal representatives from the [National Advisory Council on Poverty](#), political polarization, the link between loneliness and poverty, and community building through art.
- ii. **Kaleidoscope Spaces engagement strategy:** In 2024, VCC enhanced its community engagement practices to broaden the diversity and number of voices of lived experience that inform Enough for All. [Kaleidoscope Spaces](#) convenes community members in physical and online spaces to respond to emerging and ongoing issues that affect poverty in Calgary, broadening the reach and inclusivity of engagement activities. Engagement opportunities in 2024 included lived experience consultations on [mental health](#) and [employment](#), a [zine project](#) (small self-published works) that included workshops with community members and a public engagement event, an [interactive E4A-themed exhibit](#) at the Central Library, and an [audio play and animation](#) highlighting lived experiences of poverty in Calgary.

**2024-2027 Strategic Plan:**

VCC achieved the following to deepen awareness and advocate for policies and actions to reduce poverty:

- i. **Creating VCC's strategic plan:** In 2024, VCC developed its first organizational strategic plan to expand and enhance our work in poverty reduction. The VCC Board of Directors and Executive Director, along with input from interested parties in the Calgary community, created the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan from September 2023 to May 2024. It includes three focus areas: influence policies to reduce poverty, foster community collaborations to reduce poverty, and achieve sustainable resources. As an organization focused on long-term systems change, the strategic

plan provides a clear roadmap for VCC's work in influencing and contributing to impactful policies that help reduce poverty in Calgary.

- ii. **Raising awareness of poverty through media outreach:** In 2024, VCC was quoted in over 550 media stories, driving conversations on poverty and affordability and raising the public profile and credibility of its poverty reduction work. This represents a 37.14% increase in media mentions compared to 2023. Major releases like the No Place to Go report and the 2024 living wage announcement resulted in extensive media coverage, broadening public understanding of poverty in Calgary.
  - iii. **Policy advocacy to increase Alberta's minimum wage:** VCC developed an evidence-based policy brief on increasing Alberta's minimum wage and shared it with key government stakeholders. This report relied on VCC's living wage research from 2018-2023. The report is currently being socialized with the provincial government and will be published once stakeholder meetings conclude.
- 2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City's investment in a partner's operations, and support continuous improvement. What performance measures reflect your organization's impact in 2024?**

*Note: A detailed accounting of organizational outcomes will be provided in the annual Enough for All external evaluation from the University of Calgary which will be released in June 2024.*

	Performance Measure Name:	2022 results	2023 results	2024 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
<b>How much did you do?</b>	Number of unique research and policy briefs shared with decision-makers (does not include regular communication between government and VCC)	11	7	8	This shows how proactively we influence policy by offering research-backed recommendations.
	Number of engagements (workshops, sessions, community conversations, events) related to systemic poverty reduction	9	10	32	This shows how effectively we reach and involve Calgarians in poverty reduction efforts, indicating the breadth and depth of our community engagement.
	Number of individuals engaged in collaborative meetings (not unique individuals)	5173	4957	3657	This demonstrates how effectively we engage Calgarians in poverty reduction.
	Number of media mentions	92	412	565	This shows VCC is perceived as a subject matter expert on policy-related issues and VCC's research is reliable.
	Social media followers/subscribers	16,327	18,195	18,743	This shows the size of VCC's audience, which amplifies our reach and impact.
<b>How well did you do it?</b>	Percentage of Champions focused on the goal of Calgarians living in a strong, supportive, and inclusive community	100%	91%	Available in mid-2025	This shows how effectively we lead and bring Calgary-based organizations together to reduce poverty.
	Percentage of Champions focused on the goal of all	68%	81%	Available in mid-2025	This shows how aligned Champions are with our focus on financial well-being as a core strategy. It reflects the

	Calgarians having income and assets to thrive				impact of our leadership in rallying community partners to address poverty at its economic roots.
	Percentage of Champions focused on the goal of Indigenous people being equal participants in Calgary's future	57%	66%	Available in mid-2025	This measure shows how our leadership and advocacy efforts are inspiring more Champions to prioritize reconciliation and equitable opportunities for Indigenous communities.
<b>How are Calgarians better off?</b>	Decreased Market Basket Measure (MBM) poverty rate in Calgary compared to 2015 when the poverty rate was 15% (data is always two years behind)	2020 data shows a rate of 7%; a decrease of 8% compared to 2015	2021 data shows a rate of 7%; a decrease of 8% compared to 2015	2022 data shows a rate of 10%, a decrease of 5% compared to 2015	This highlights the progress we've made since 2015 through our collective efforts to reduce the number of Calgarians living in income poverty, an initiative led by VCC.

**3. Are there any additional stories or information you wanted to share beyond performance measures that demonstrate the impact of your organization's programs or services?**

**"Temperature check" on poverty and well-being in Calgary:** 2024 was a marathon year of community engagement for VCC, with multiple workshops, consultations, engagement sessions, and events providing Calgarians with the opportunity to share their lived experiences, concerns, and priorities for our city. Here's what community members told us were the most pressing issues:

- Housing, employment, income, and food security were overwhelmingly named as the top issues impacting our community.
- VCC and Calgary Counselling Centre engaged individuals with lived experience of poverty about [access to mental health services](#). Participants shared multiple barriers to accessing the care they needed, including high costs, lack of awareness, and complex navigation systems that particularly impacted marginalized groups.
- We heard that underemployment, financial strain from the gap between minimum and living wages, ageism, mental health concerns, and discriminatory hiring practices are [barriers to employment](#) for Calgarians living in poverty.
- Participants in VCC's zine workshops shared that accessing basic needs like food and housing continues to be a struggle, systemic barriers to healthcare, education, and employment persist, and poverty leads to emotional and social isolation. The zines created by over 160 participants formed the mural below (click to view a larger version):





**4. Does your organization use benchmarks to evaluate and improve performance and operations, and increase your organization's impact?**

**a) Examples of benchmarks:**

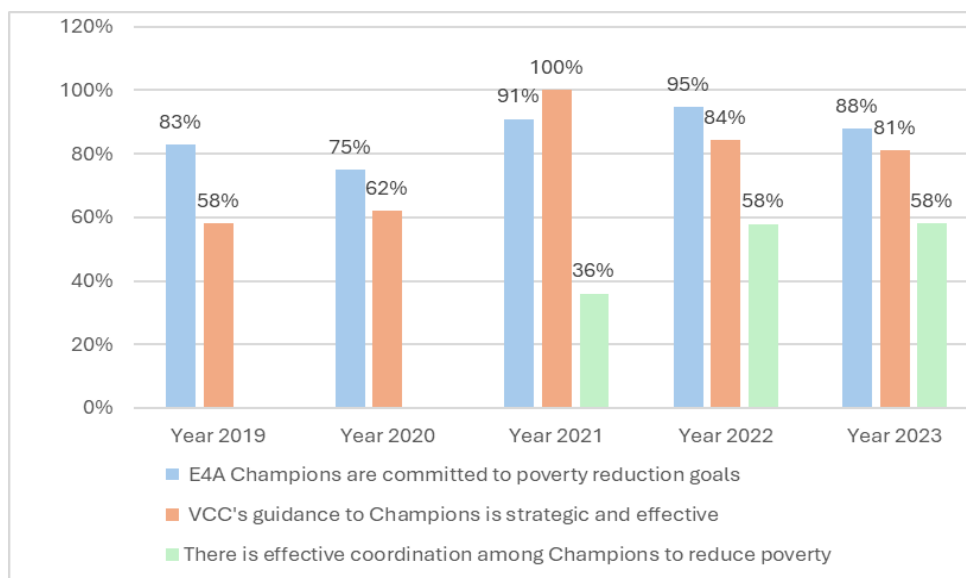
Enough for All is a collective impact, systems change strategy that requires a sophisticated evaluation that goes beyond traditional outputs (i.e., the number of people served by a program). To do this, Enough for All has been evaluated annually by an independent third party, Dr. Katrina Milaney, Professor in Community Rehabilitation and Disabilities Studies and Associate Vice-President (Research) at the University of Calgary. Dr. Milaney engages stakeholders in a series of surveys, focus groups and interviews and also completes a review of Enough for All Champion research and annual reports to compile indicators across all Levers of Change, including employment rates, income support caseloads, and program statistics, to understand how Enough for All is changing systems that hold poverty in place.

The Enough for All evaluation uses a Principles-Focused Evaluation (PFE) approach. PFE was developed by Michael Quinn Patten and is a helpful approach when trying to assess complex and dynamic systems approaches to social change. It is an appropriate method as it allows examination of strategies, advocacy campaigns, policy and system change and complex interventions. The E4A evaluation uses both a processes evaluation and impact evaluation to assess the collective poverty reduction work of E4A and the effectiveness of VCC's stewardship of the strategy.

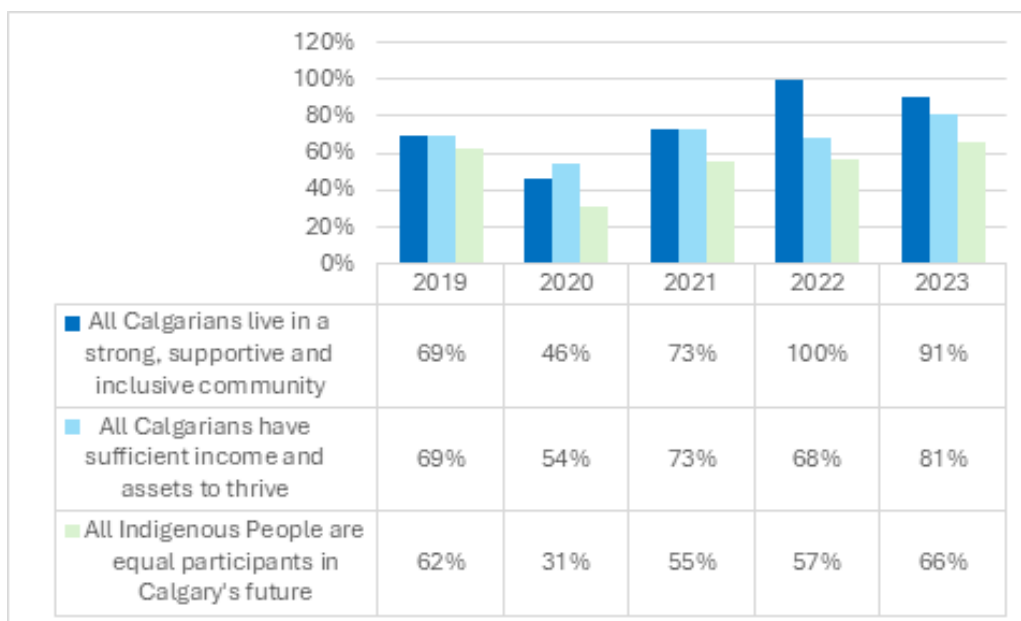
**b) What is your current and targeted performance in comparison to these benchmarks?**

The 2024 evaluation is currently underway, but examples of progress to benchmarks include:

Example one: E4A Champions' commitment to poverty reduction and VCC guidance and coordination, 2019-2023.



Example two: Percentage of Champions' response on the alignment of their organization with Enough for All goals between 2019 and 2023.



There are significantly more qualitative and quantitative measures captured in the annual Enough for All evaluation.

### c) How is this information being used to support continuous improvement?

VCC takes the robust evaluation information provided each year and uses that to inform our implementation of Enough for All in the subsequent year.

**5. How does your organization address equity, diversity or inclusion, or support racial equity?**

Ensuring equity for equity-denied groups is one of the key tenets of *Enough for All* implementation which considers how the *Levers of Change* may express themselves uniquely for racialized people, Indigenous people, women, youth, older adults, newcomers and refugees, and 2SLGBTQ+ people in our community. All of our research, convening, and awareness work integrates our anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles.

**6. How is your organization advancing Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation? (For example addressing specific calls to action in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) report or [The City's White Goose Flying Report](#))**

**Sector engagement and capacity building:** VCC provides Indigenous learning and engagement opportunities to Champions and partners. In 2024, we provided a smudge teaching workshop led by Elder Wanda First Rider. According to the 2023 Enough for All Evaluation, completed in 2024, E4A Champions reported a significant increase in their alignment with the goal that “All Indigenous people are equal participants in Calgary’s future”, rising from 31% in 2020 to 66% in 2023. Previous E4A evaluations have found that there is a disproportionate burden placed on Indigenous professionals to lead and action Truth and Reconciliation initiatives in the workplace. In 2024, VCC brought together Indigenous professionals in the non-profit sector to honour their work, participate in ceremony, and discuss Indigenous perspectives on poverty reduction.

**lih kanii tai staiiwa (“everything is there”):** VCC’s Indigenous Engagement Specialist continues to support Champions in actioning individual and collective Truth and Reconciliation efforts. By prioritizing Indigenous voices and culturally inclusive practices, VCC and E4A honour the path of Truth and Reconciliation with a commitment to create a city where Indigenous people are recognized, respected, and supported in their unique needs and aspirations. Because of VCC’s commitment to advancing Truth and Reconciliation and integrating Indigenous knowledge into poverty reduction work, Enough for All was gifted the traditional Blackfoot name [lih kanii tai staiiwa](#), meaning “everything is there” in 2023.

**Indigenous Gathering Place:** The vision for the Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP) is “a space where we share, connect, heal, renew and celebrate Indigenous cultures. A place to protect Indigenous practices, languages, and Elders’ wisdom, oral and written teachings among all nations and all our relations.” VCC staff have sat on this board for over five years and continue to strengthen relationships, support the implementation of guidance from Elders and Knowledge Keepers with respect to the IGP, and work to support the creation of the IGP.

**RESOURCES****7. Please estimate how The City’s operating funding was allocated in 2024.**

<b>0.1%</b>	Advertising and promotion
<b>12%</b>	Programs or services
<b>3.5%</b>	Office supplies and expenses
<b>7%</b>	Professional and consulting fees
<b>62%</b>	Staff compensation, development and training
<b>0%</b>	Fund development
<b>7%</b>	Purchased supplies and assets
<b>0%</b>	Facility maintenance
<b>6%</b>	Evaluation or Research
<b>2.5%</b>	Charitable Agency administration fee (January through April)



**8. Did volunteers support your operations in 2024? (including board and committee members)**

How many volunteers?	12
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	450

**9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2024, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight?**

N/A

**10. How did your organization address climate change in 2024, for example, operational or program changes that reduced green house gas emissions (GHG), air/water pollution, or waste that aligned with [The City's Climate Change Program](#) including Council's Climate Emergency Declaration?**

VCC is a key community partner in a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership grant project on designing inclusive, sustainable, and healthy cities titled "Quality in the Built Environment". Executed over five years, this research project involves 14 cities across Canada, with the University of Calgary leading the Calgary project. Calgary's approach to this research will focus on the urban core, and will consider the realms of inclusivity, sustainability, and health as critical drivers for positive change in our urban environments.

**11. Are there any projects, initiatives or plans for 2025 that you want to briefly highlight?**

- **Enough for All Well-Being Dashboard:** In January 2025, VCC launched the [Enough for All Well-Being Dashboard](#). Developed in partnership with YYC Data, the dashboard brings to life vital data demonstrating Calgary's progress toward achieving its poverty-reduction goals. It will be an invaluable resource for partners, researchers, and decision-makers to track progress toward building a strong, supportive, and healthy Calgary.
- **Evaluating Calgary's living wage movement:** VCC worked with an external evaluator to measure the [impact of its living wage advocacy](#) from 2019-2023 using an outcome harvest methodology. The evaluation was released in March 2025 and will inform VCC's future advocacy on the living wage. Employers reported that paying a living wage resulted in cultural, reputational, and economic benefits, while living wage-paid employees reported increased job satisfaction, greater economic stability and independence, and improved physical and mental health. The 2025 living wage calculation will be shared publicly in November 2025.
- **Engaging Calgarians on municipal priorities:** VCC is engaging extensively with community members to understand which social issues Calgarians consider the most pressing ahead of the 2025 municipal election. The perspectives and experiences of Calgarians will be incorporated into a platform document with policy priorities to be shared with candidates and the public.
- **Iih kanii tai staiiwa renewal ceremony:** VCC is working with Elders to plan a renewal ceremony for the Blackfoot name of Enough for All, iih kanii tai staiiwa ("everything is there").
- **Topical reports on local issues:** VCC will hold consultations with Calgarians who have lived experience of poverty to understand pressing issues in our community. Following each engagement, we will publish a report to share participants' experiences, insights, and recommendations with partners, decision-makers, and the public.

**THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS FOR CIVIC PARTNERS MANAGING CITY-OWNED ASSETS**

**12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

**Asset:** N/A