Enclosure 1

Youth/Young Adults Needs Assets Assessment

Executive Summary Presentation of Research Results

STRATHCONA COUNTY

Yardstick Research

Project Background and Objectives

Project Initiation

Environmental Scan

Services and Assets Review

Public Engagement

Internal Review

This work is in response to the following City Council motion:

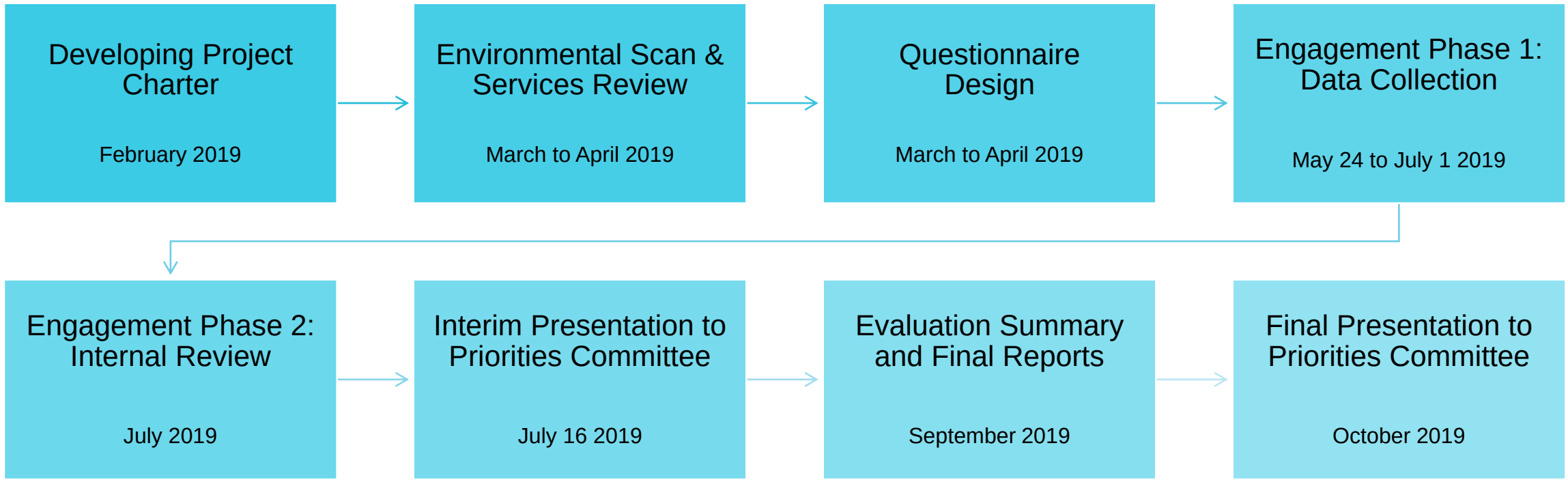
"THAT Administration work with the Community Living Advisory Committee to prepare a report on how Strathcona County is currently serving the needs of resident youth and young adults, ages 14-29, and identifies potential gaps in these services; and that this report be provided to Council by the end of 2019."

STRATHCONA COUNTY

Yardstick Research

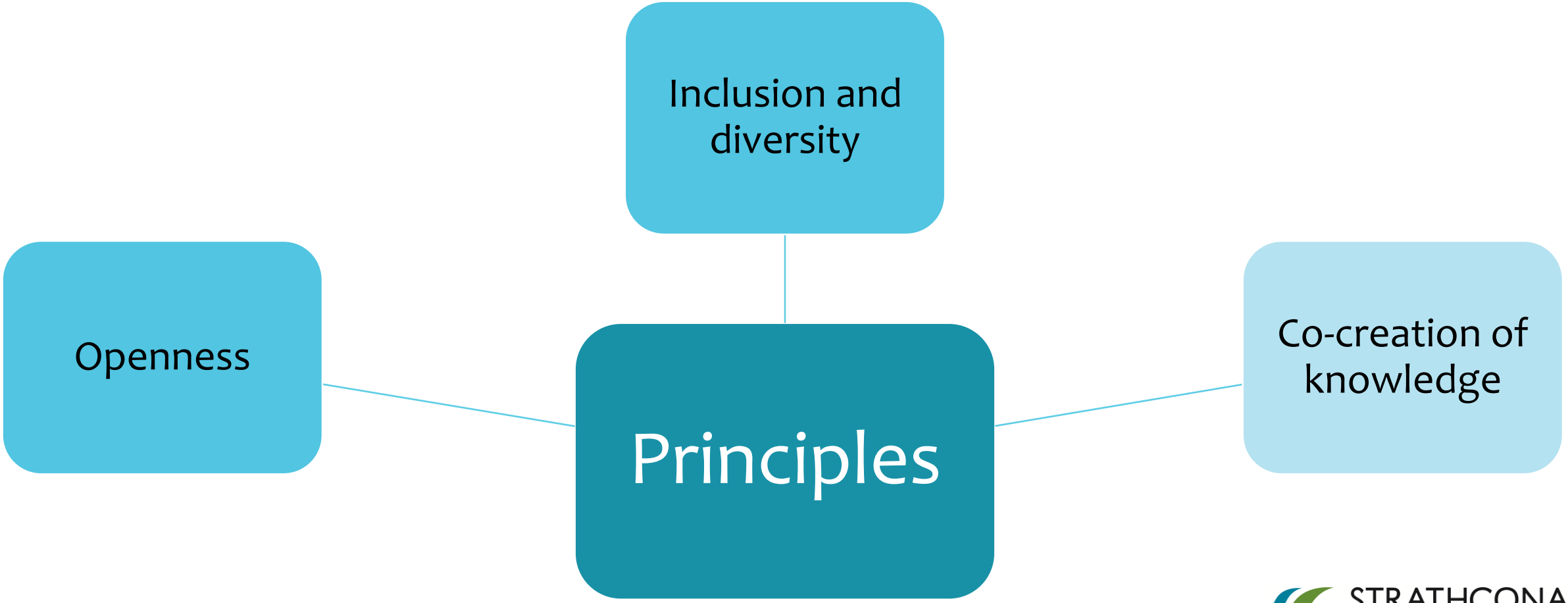
Project Background and Objectives

Project Timeline



Project Background and Objectives

Principles Guiding the Project



Environmental Scan and Statistical Profile

Statistical Profile

- Yardstick developed a statistical profile of youth and young adults in Strathcona County and comparison communities.

Literature Review and Online Scan

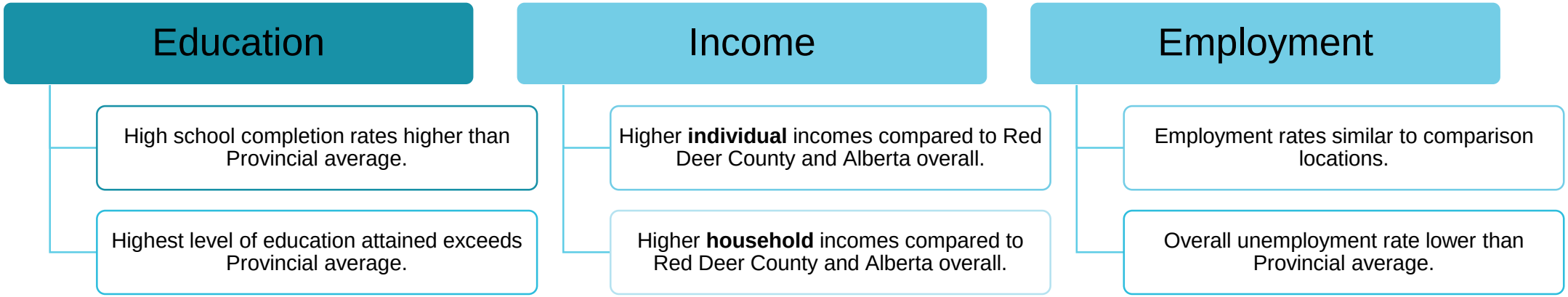
- The scan was completed to evaluate the community needs of resident youth and young adults.

STRATHCONA COUNTY

Environmental Scan and Statistical Profile Main Findings

Statistical Profile

- Youth and young adults have a similar statistical profile to comparison communities with exceptions in a few areas.



Literature Review and Online Scan

- Revealed opportunities for more unprogrammed space to engage youth and young adults.

Environmental Scan and Statistical Profile Main Findings

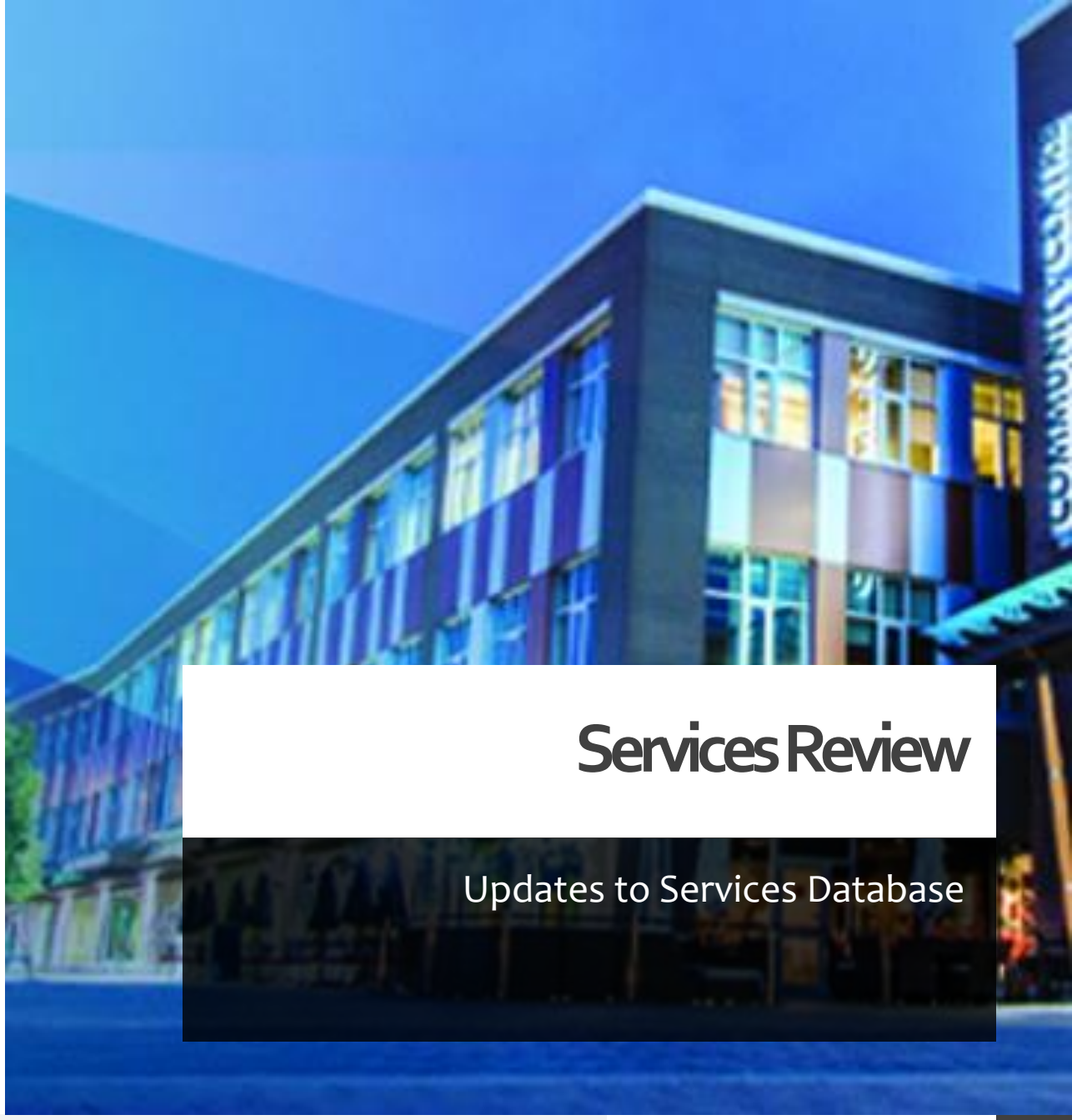
Challenges Faced by Youth and Young Adults

- Struggles with **mental health**, bullying, and dealing with stigma;
- Lack of youth- and young adult-specific services, activities, amenities, and **spaces**;
- Limited access to **affordable** housing, affordable childcare, and transportation; and
- Building and maintaining healthy and trusting **relationships** with adults and authority figures.

STRATHCONA COUNTY

Yardstick Research

- **Review and update** of pre-existing inventory provided by Strathcona County.
- **Inclusion** of service providers and programs located within Strathcona County, Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Key Provincial Services.
- **Targeted research** to ensure the database included information related to Indigenous and other ethno-cultural groups, rural populations, as well as gender diverse youth and young adults, where possible.



Services Review

Updates to Services Database

Public Engagement

Phase 1

Audiences

- YYA ages 14 to 29
- Parents of YYA ages 14 to 29
- Agencies/service providers dealing with YYA

Methods

- Online Surveys
- Intercept Engagement
- Engagement in urban and rural settings

Timing

- May 24 to July 1, 2019

Phase 2

Audiences

- YYA ages 14 to 29
- Parents of YYA ages 14 to 29
- Agencies/service providers dealing with YYA

Methods

- Community Partner Engagement
- Parent, Youth, & Young Adult Engagement
- Project Coordination Committee Engagement

Timing

- August 7 to August 19, 2019

Survey Data Collection

Main Findings: Areas of Concern

Youth & Young Adults

Affordability, mental health, transportation, and communication.

Parents

Influences on their children, mental health, financial literacy, and transportation.

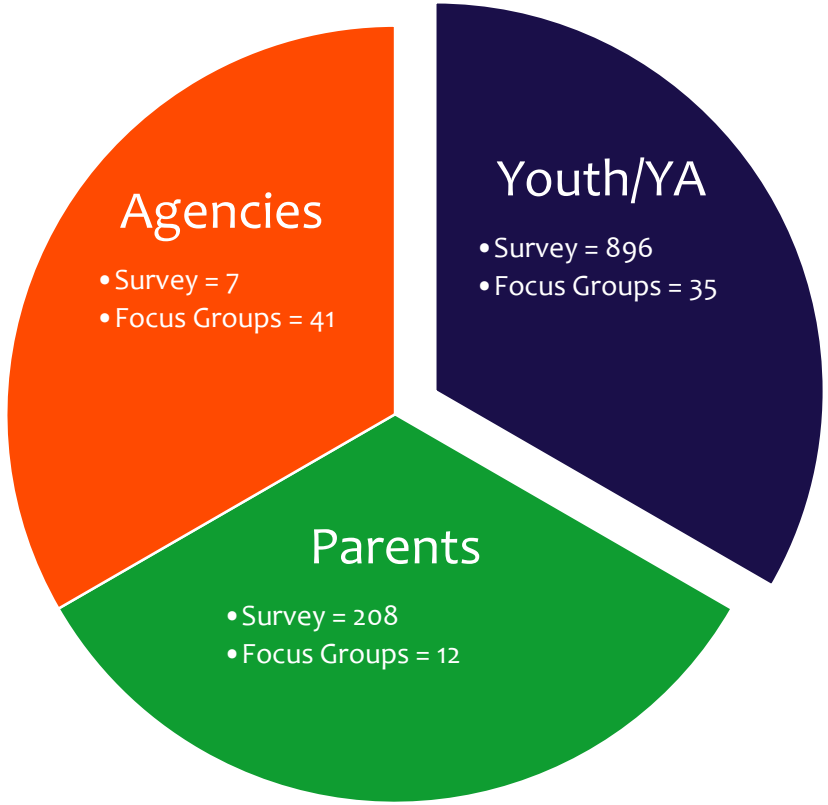
Agencies & Stakeholders

Communicating information, mental health, and collaboration.

Main Findings: Areas of Satisfaction

Public Engagement Data Collection

Main Findings



Existing Services Anchored by the Social Framework

A strong **collaborative system** to address the needs of youth and young adults.

Existing programs and services are being **utilized by** the youth and young adults.

Minor adjustments in current offerings and collaborative efforts will serve to **strengthen** the services provided in the County.

STRATHCONA COUNTY Yardstick Research

Recommendations

All recommendations stem from the collective commitment that:

Youth and young adults feel connected, included and supported and access a range of programs and services that meet their needs without having to leave Strathcona County.

STRATHCONA COUNTY Yardstick Research

Overarching Recommendation

Create a community-led collaborative strategy to guide implementation of recommendations, including youth and young adult representation.

STRATHCONA COUNTY Yardstick Research

Recommendation Areas

- Communication & Engagement
- Collaboration
- Mental Health
- Gathering Spaces
- Transportation
- Affordability

STRATHCONA COUNTY Yardstick Research

1. Communication & Engagement

What We Know

- Young people aged 15 to 24 are the highest users of social networking sites and are twice as likely to use the Internet to follow current affairs.
- The County currently maintains several social media accounts, but few appear to be implementing a youth- and young adult-focused approach.
- Young Canadians are active citizens, involved in community organizations and political causes and are increasing in their voter turnout.

What We Heard

- Survey data revealed parents, some agencies, and 74% of youth and young adults are already using social media and would prefer to be informed via the platforms they are already using (i.e., Instagram).
- As part of the engagement, some youth participants called attention to environmental concerns (both locally and globally) and questioned what the County could do (or do better) to address issues.
- Youth and young adults shared as part of the engagement they want to be heard and included in addressing issues that affect them.

1. Communication & Engagement

Recommendations

- Develop an **engagement plan.**
- Increase the use and diversity of existing social media accounts and other **innovative means to communicate.**
- Foster a context where youth can **advocate and connect** with the Mayor and Council on issues of importance to them in a variety of ways both formal and informal.

2. Collaboration

What We Know

- The literature review highlighted the importance of community engagement, social inclusion, and capturing the voice of youth and young adults in creating youth-friendly communities.
- Strathcona County and community partners share a commitment to community outcomes through the Social Framework and work together to create opportunities for community members in an efficient and collaborative way.
- The efforts of Strathcona County to foster and create the current network with partnering agencies and municipalities have been successful and serve as a strong foundation moving forward.

What We Heard

- Agencies shared collaboration is currently happening but could be enhanced through increased awareness of each other's mandates and expertise.
- Agencies would welcome increased opportunities to facilitate collaboration with youth and young adults as well as with other agencies to produce a greater focus on shared outcomes, with the integration of different service and efforts.
- Businesses have an opportunity to play a role in supporting youth. Some engagement session participants noted local businesses are an untapped resource when it comes to supporting youth and young adults.

2. Collaboration

Recommendations

- Continue to lead agency **collaborative efforts** and expand the reach.
- Identify **common outcomes** among youth- and young adult-serving agencies that inform collective priorities to encourage agency collaboration over competition while including youth and young adults in the conversation.

3. Mental Health

What We Know

- Mental health issues are taking a heavy toll on youth and young adults.
- Factors that promote positive mental health and protect against mental illness include strong coping skills, adequate housing, peer support, a strong social network, and involvement with the community.
- Access to counselling is important and is currently provided by the County and community partners.
- There are growing calls for programs, initiatives, and systems to recognize the effects of adverse experiences and for the development of trauma-informed approaches to lessen potential harms.

What We Heard

- Supports for mental health was listed by 22% of parents and 20% of youth and young adults as something that is missing in Strathcona County.
- As part of the engagement sessions, both youth/young adults and agency representatives raised mental health concerns as a challenge.
- Agency representatives raised that youth and young adults may not be aware of nor and have access to existing services, and that there are insufficient crisis response services available.

3. Mental Health

Recommendations

- Promote existing mental health supports through social media and **increase access** to preventative resources.
- Explore options for access to short-term **emergency housing** supports for at-risk youth and young adults.
- Connect with service organizations and help address gaps for **mental health for high-risk youth and young adults**.
- Facilitate **training** for public-facing staff throughout the community.
- Ensure the **strategy moving forward** helps to support collaboration among mental health supports.

4. Gathering Spaces

What We Know

- Youth identity is strongly tied to feelings of connection and belonging with social groups is an important contributor to physical and mental health.
- Informal gathering spaces for youth and young adults can address multiple needs.
- Strathcona County has an established Youth Advisory Committee and delivers youth- and young adult-focused initiatives.
- Youth hubs or informal gathering spaces are becoming a popular means in Alberta for counties and communities to integrate services and make considerations for the physical and psychological safety of youth and young adults.

What We Heard

- During public engagement, youth and young adults noted the importance of having "gently supervised" spaces to interact with other youth and young adults where they can build connections.
- Agencies are aware some youth and young adults are hanging out in public spaces, including parking lots of fast-food restaurants and basketball courts. Wi-Fi access was also identified as a priority for youth/young adult spaces.
- The survey findings reinforce that parents (22%), as well as youth and young adults, have a desire for more youth-friendly, non-programmed areas where they can interact.

4. Gathering Spaces

Recommendations

- Increase social connections in progressively **"gently supervised spaces"** in partnership with local agencies and businesses.
- Seek ways to **support youth- and young adult-identified** gathering spaces by working with local business owners.
- Engage with rural residents to foster honest **conversations around spaces** that would be popular with rural youth and young adults.

5. Transportation

What We Know

- The Strathcona County Transit Master Plan final report (2018) contains goals to ensure that transit services are available, accessible, and affordable for all residents regardless of age, ability, or means.
- Public engagement conducted for the Strathcona County Transit Master Plan revealed many people wanted to see a variety of bus routes as well as increased accessibility.
- The County currently offers discounted transit fares for seniors and youth, as well as a newer program called Safe Bus to help all riders feel more safe riding transit.

What We Heard

- Accessible and affordable transportation is a large concern for rural youth and young adults (67%).
- Agencies noted examples of transit drivers supporting youth and young adults in need, for example stopping at the Youth Emergency Shelter in Edmonton.
- Some engagement participants wondered if existing other types of mobile services could be leveraged (for instance using the Bookmobile as additional transportation for rural youth and young adults) or if there could be a “will call” bus.

5. Transportation

Recommendations

- Continue to implement **strategic directions** from the Strathcona County Transit Master Plan.
- Consider the feasibility of non-traditional transportation options for **rural citizens**.
- Facilitate **mental health training**, specifically with transit operators, to recognize signs of distress and provide them with resources for youth and young adults in need.

6. Affordability

What We Know

- While the median income is relatively high in the County, housing prices in the County are higher than the provincial average.
- Some of the County's population (4%) is considered low income. The youth and young adults unemployment rate is close to double the overall unemployment rate in Strathcona County.
- Post-secondary student debt is taking a toll on many young people, tuition rates are increasing, leaving students in more debt than ever before.

What We Heard

- Affordability is a concern in Strathcona County (42%) and young adults would like to see more services and support around finances and cost of living (14%) and/or affordable housing (14%).
- Some parents reported that affordability can keep them and their children from participating in activities in Strathcona County.
- Parents shared concerns over their children's financial literacy.

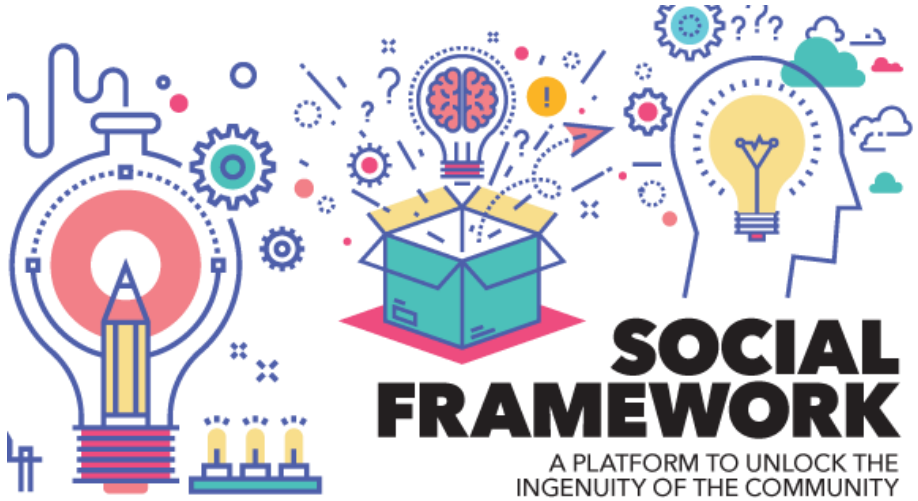
6. Affordability

Recommendations

- Explore resources and supports for younger people between the ages of 18 and 24 to assist them in planning their **financial future**.
- Explore and develop more options for supporting young adults with **affordable housing** and subsidized childcare.
- Explore **entrepreneurship and employment** supports that target youth and young adults.

Conclusions

Next Steps

Taking Action

- Address recommendations through a **community-led implementation strategy**.
  - Work in collaboration with internal and external partners, including Strathcona County departments, community organizations and agencies, Youth Advisory Committee, and youth/young adults.
  - Implementation strategy to be grounded in the Social Framework principles.