



# Strathcona County

## Community Safety and Well-being Strategy

October 2023



## **Territorial acknowledgement**

Strathcona County is located on Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Regions Two and Four. Strathcona County honours the First Peoples of this land.

We recognize that we stand upon land that carries the footsteps of Cree, Métis and Blackfoot amongst many other Nations, who have been here for thousands of years. Therefore, Strathcona County has an inherent responsibility to foster healthier relationships with First Peoples and further the Calls to Action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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# Introduction

## This isn't your typical strategy

Welcome to the Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Strategy, we're glad you're here. Before you dive into this strategy, there are a few things we think you should know: this isn't your typical strategy.

First, we are going to take you on a journey to explain where we came from and how we ended up at the strategy you are reading today. Next, we are going to provide an overview of what CSWB means to our community and highlight the vision and five strategic priorities that came out of our community conversations and engagement sessions. Then we're going to share our desired outcomes with you.

Addressing Community Safety and Well-being priorities in Strathcona County is an important and complex job. After reading this document, you will be able to understand our aspirations for building a community that is safe, supported and connected for all and the key components of the common agenda we are building together towards safety and well-being in our community.





# History

## It all started with Strathcona County's Social Framework

In 2016, economic conditions were changing and creating challenging social pressures for many families in Strathcona County. To better understand our residents' priorities, perspectives and experiences, we began an in-depth community engagement project called Community Talk.

In 2017, the findings from Community Talk were shared with local community leaders from the non-profit, public and private sectors to learn from and take action.

As a result of those meetings, discussions and partnerships, Strathcona County's Social Framework was born. The Social Framework is both a policy and a document that helped organizations and businesses in the community work together to address four main priorities:

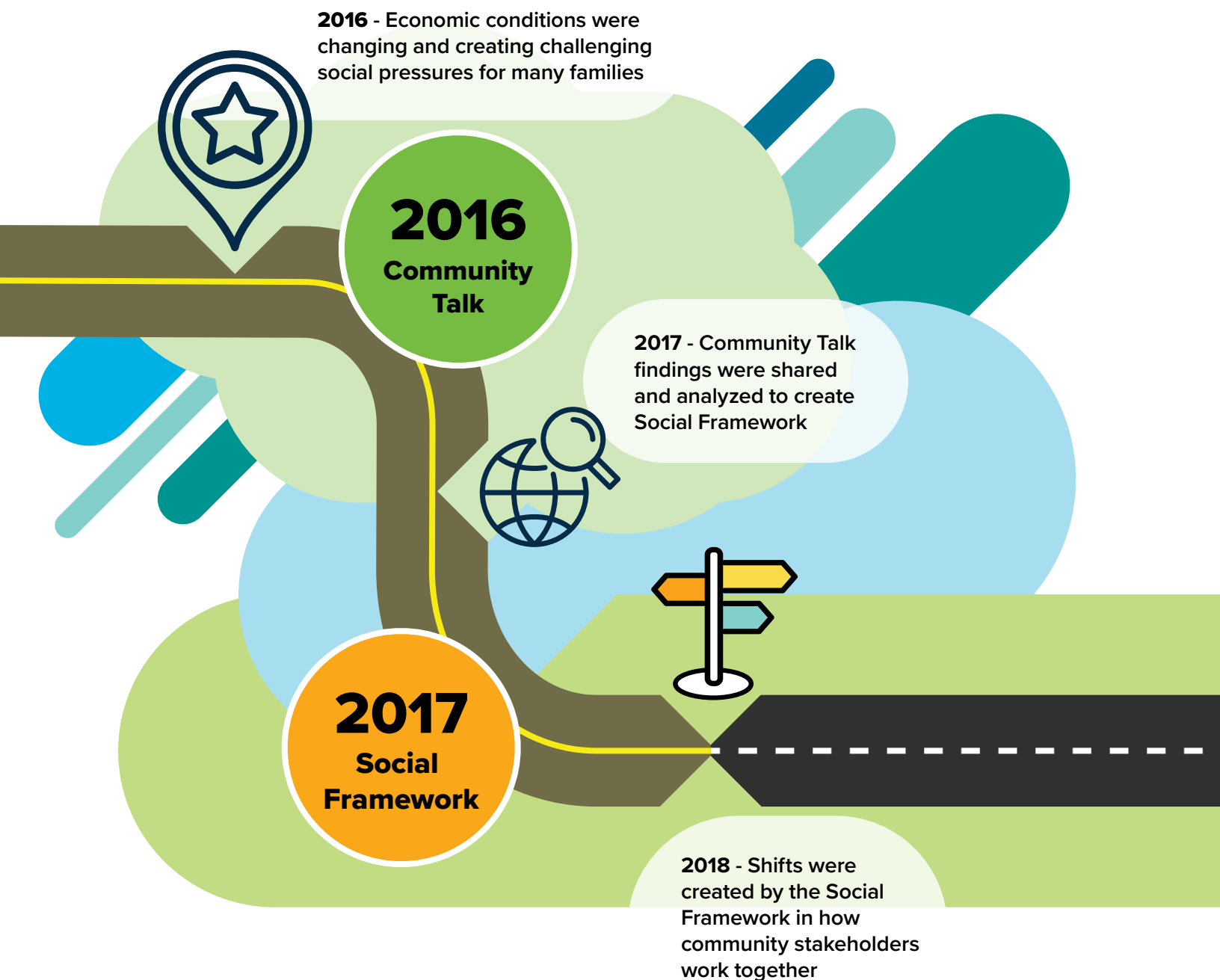
- **Affordability**
- **Access to programs and services**
- **Safety and connectedness**
- **Inclusion**

The framework also outlined specific shifts to define how community organizations could work together in innovative ways. By shifting the way community stakeholders and leaders came together, thought and behaved, the Social Framework created a new direction forward. The following shift in principles occurred:

| <b>From:</b>                                      | <b>To:</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>Programmatic responses</b>                     | <b>Systemic thinking</b>                           |
| <b>Do for people</b>                              | <b>Do with people</b>                              |
| <b>Incremental, organizational level outcomes</b> | <b>High aspiration and community-wide outcomes</b> |
| <b>Working in silos</b>                           | <b>Collective ownership</b>                        |
| <b>Focus on symptoms</b>                          | <b>Focus on root causes</b>                        |

# The CSWB / Social Framework Connection

While the Community Safety and Well-being strategy and the Social Framework might sound like two separate projects, in reality, CSWB is the next step in the journey already laid out by the Social Framework.

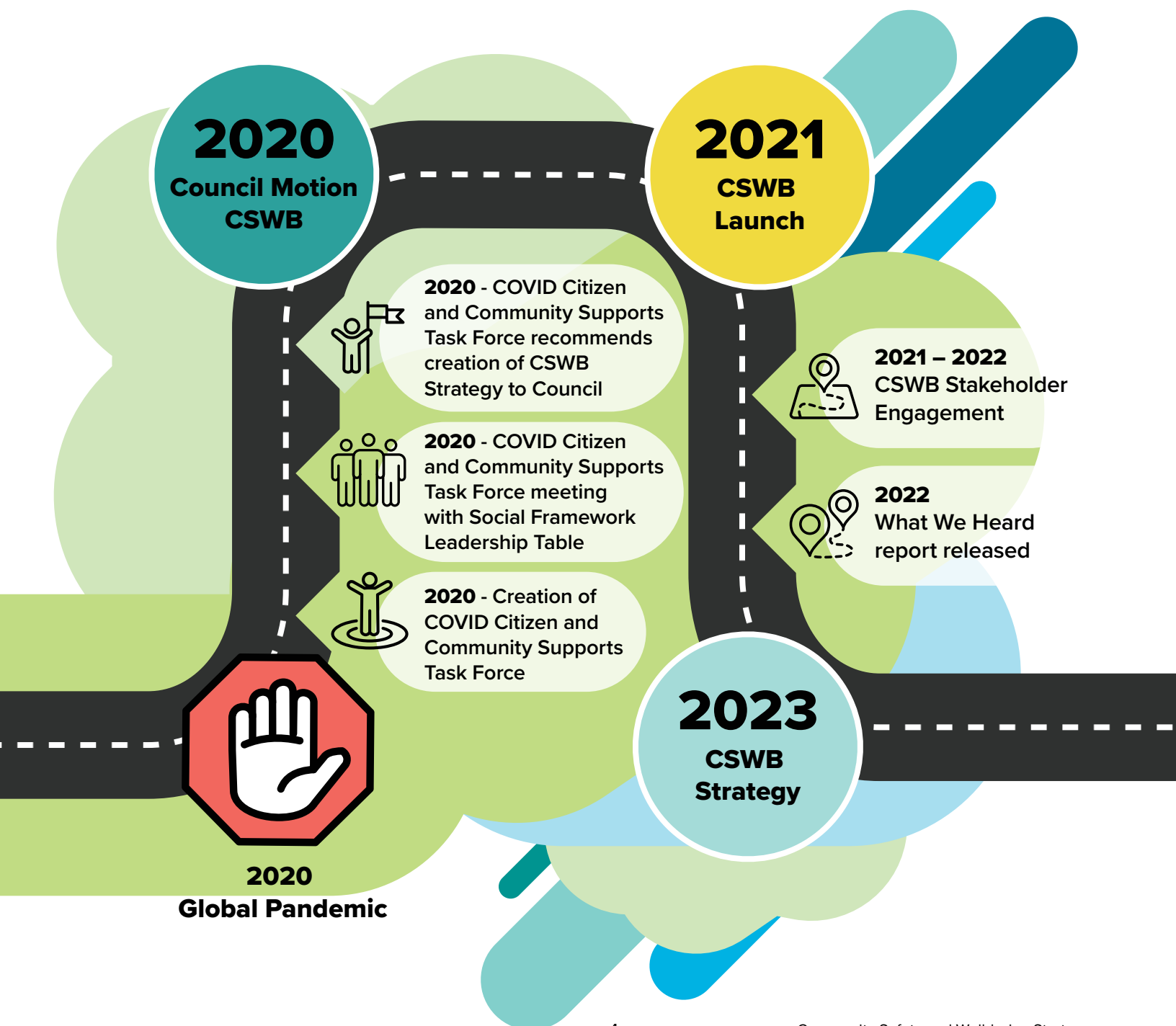


Implementing the Social Framework has created a strong foundation for the CSWB strategy to lean on, including:

- A strong network of organizations across many different sectors in Strathcona County.
- The ability to bring our partners together quickly in order to collect and analyze information about what is happening in the community and at a systems level.

- The ability to be nimble and adapt to the community's changing needs through innovative partnerships and sharing resources across different sectors.

With the Social Framework as our foundation and the ability to work with our existing community partners across sectors, the CSWB strategy will move us forward in our desire to respond to the community needs and opportunities uncovered during our CSWB community discussions.



# Introducing Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB)

**In 2020, we were living in a reality not one of us could have predicted.**

For many, the COVID-19 pandemic led to fear, loneliness, lost jobs, tense relationships and financial stress. Our community was, and still is, at an increased risk of mental health challenges, substance use and violence, with more long-term effects to come. And that's just the pandemic. Our world was also having discussions about race, equity, and safety while our overburdened systems simply couldn't meet the needs of our families and neighbours.

As a response to the existing and emerging social needs, and as a way to support the people of Strathcona County, a Citizen and Community Support COVID Task Force was created.

The task force met with the members of the Social Framework Leadership Table (SFLT), a group of local leaders who had come together in 2017 to guide development of the Social Framework. The SFLT is deeply connected to the community and provided the task force with information about challenges in the community and how the task force could best provide support. After learning from SFLT and conducting additional research, the task force recommended to Strathcona County Council that a Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) strategy be developed.



The strategy, they shared, would be a way to address the immense impact the pandemic and other social and economic forces were having and would continue to have on the well-being of the community. Communities across Canada and around the world had begun to develop CSWB Strategies as a mechanism for addressing the root causes of negative social outcomes, including crime, and for building a continuum of prevention and improving coordination of responses at a systems level <sup>1</sup>. Strathcona County's CSWB Strategy would include lessons learned from other communities and most importantly, reflect the unique qualities and strengths of the community.

The Strathcona County CSWB project was launched in early 2021 after Council motioned in late 2020, that administration provide a report on options and next steps for developing a CSWB Strategy for Strathcona County. To lead the development of the strategy a CSWB Steering Committee was created, consisting of members from different sectors including the RCMP, social services agencies, health care, and education.

The first step in the development of the CSWB Strategy began in October 2021. With direction from the Steering Committee, Strathcona County's CSWB project team launched a series of focused stakeholder engagements, meeting with local groups and organizations, to deeply explore their experiences of safety and well-being in the community.

Over five months, we held conversations with more than 300 individuals from 66 different groups and organizations. We connected with healthcare workers, first responders, schools, businesses, faith communities, social services, seniors' groups, rural and urban community groups and networks of new Canadians and immigrants who shared their time, thoughts and experiences with us. The summary of these deep discussions can be found in the *CSWB What We Heard Report*.

1) Nilson, C. (May, 2018). Community Safety & Well-Being: Concept, Practice, and Alignment. Community Safety Knowledge Alliance



Thanks to the openness of the people who were part of the CSWB engagement, the findings painted a rich picture of the issues, trends, concerns and opportunities that exist at this time in our community and affect the well-being and safety of our community members.

The priorities voiced by our community members have become the strategic priorities of the developing CSWB Strategy:

**Community safety**



**Complexity**



**Mental health and addictions**



**Basic needs**



**Connection**







# An overview of the CSWB Strategy

## What does Community Safety and Well-being mean anyway?

The term CSWB can have many different meanings, depending on who you ask. Who are we talking about when we say community? What kind of safety are we referring to? And what about well-being? Is that mental health? Physical health? Both? We know, it's complicated! While there may be no simple definition for CSWB, what we can agree on is that it is complex, and all interpretations and experiences we explored during our community conversations are valid.

CSWB is both a conversation and a plan. We started by reaching out to residents and organizations to hear their challenges and hopes. Now we've collaboratively built a strategy outlining the vision, priorities, and outcomes that will guide our work together. **Overall, the goal is to lessen risk and harm, while promoting safety, well-being and resilience.**

Addressing the complexities of CSWB in the community requires change at a systems level. We need to shift the way we approach this challenge by accepting its complexity and the way each outcome is interconnected. So, where do we start and how do we create the changes our community wants to see?

As you follow along in this document, you will begin to understand the core components of our strategy including our vision, priorities, and desired outcomes.

In building this strategy, we have aimed to:

- Recognize and build upon the Social Framework's legacy including the strong relationships created across the community and the ability to work together to respond to emerging community needs quickly.
- Inspire system level change and create a common agenda to achieve collective outcomes in support of safety and well-being.
- Be action-oriented and create opportunities to test new and innovative ideas together.





# **Community Safety and Well-being Common Agenda**

# CSWB Vision for Strathcona County

When we set out to learn about safety and well-being in Strathcona County through our engagement, we intentionally met with people of diverse ages, genders, ethnicities, religions and worldviews. When we analyzed our conversations with these individuals, a vision for the community arose. This vision serves as our guiding star:

To build a community where everyone feels safe, respected and heard, where differences are seen and celebrated, where we all know we belong, and where we all can thrive.

And to work together across sectors in new and innovative ways to help individual organizations succeed in their mandates and to find ways to better support belonging, safety and well-being in our community.

## Strategic Priorities

The five strategic priorities of CSWB were developed from the themes we saw in the experiences and challenges shared with us by the community. **These five key areas provide us with both the opportunities and challenges we need to address in order to achieve our vision.**

Community safety



Complexity



Mental health and addictions



Basic needs



Connection



As you read through this strategy, it is important to remember that our priorities and vision are rooted in the wisdom and knowledge of our community members. The voice of our community has shaped this strategy and also shown us the importance of addressing these priorities through a lens of diversity and inclusion.

# Desired Outcomes: What will we achieve?

As we began building this strategy, we recognized that the outcomes developed for the Social Framework in 2017 aligned well with our CSWB strategic priorities. However, we could also see how these outcomes have shifted and changed in response to changes that have deeply affected our community including the pandemic, growing mental health needs and increased recognition of the need to focus on diversity and inclusion.

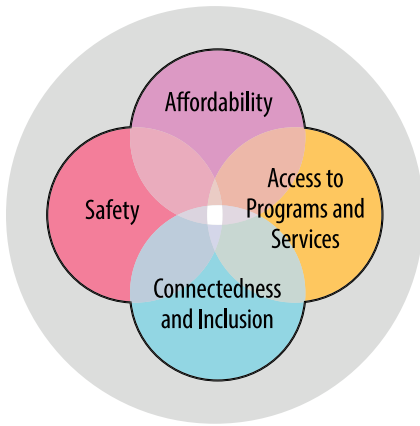
To address the current CSWB needs in Strathcona County, we have established two levels of desired outcomes (what we will achieve) for each strategic priority: Ultimate Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes. These outcomes capture our aspirations and what we wish to bring about through our work together. In the future, we will also be creating a measurement framework that will help us understand the impact of implementing our strategy and track our collective progress as we work towards our outcomes and overarching vision.

- **Ultimate Outcomes** are the high level, overarching goals for each priority. These outcomes represent our ideal state.
- **Intermediate Outcomes** are smaller outcomes that will help us to reach our overarching goal or Ultimate Outcome. These outcomes represent goals we need to achieve to get to our ideal state.

We have included a chart on the next few pages to help illustrate the different desired outcomes for each priority and how the Social Framework outcomes have pivoted to become the CSWB outcomes we are working toward today.







## Social Framework Outcomes

## CSWB Strategic Priorities and Ultimate and Intermediate Outcomes

(developed from engagement findings)

### Affordability

- Citizens have increased capacity to meet their basic needs

### Strategic Priority: Basic Needs



#### Ultimate Outcome:

- All community members have their basic needs met

#### Intermediate Outcomes:

- All community members experience housing security
- All community members have an opportunity to earn a living wage
- Affordable recreation and leisure opportunities are available to all community members
- All community members experience food security
- Specific supports are in place to help populations made vulnerable to meet their basic needs

## Access to Programs and Services

- Citizens have straightforward access to programs and services that are easy to find

## Strategic Priority: **Complexity**



### Ultimate Outcome:

- All community members, including those with complex needs, are supported by a responsive system of programs and services that is straightforward to navigate

### Intermediate Outcomes:

- All community members are supported to navigate complex systems
- System gaps are addressed through stakeholder collaborative innovation
- System integration is realized through stakeholder collaborative innovation

Please note: Complexity was one of the most frequently mentioned challenges identified in the CSWB engagement sessions; it is also the most difficult to define. We continue to uncover and understand the many interrelated causes of complexity. As a result of this ongoing work, we expect additional intermediate outcomes will be developed out of our future research.

## Strategic Priority: **Mental Health and/or Addictions**



### Ultimate Outcome:

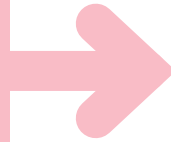
- All community members experience mental well-being and have access to mental health and addiction support when needed

### Intermediate Outcomes:

- Affordability barriers to accessing mental health supports are removed
- Targeted mental health supports for children and youth are provided
- Mental health and addiction supports are accessible to all community members

## Safety

- Citizens feel physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally safe



### Strategic Priority: **Community Safety**



#### Ultimate Outcome:

- All community members are able to live as their authentic selves without fear of harm, rejection, exclusion, or discrimination

#### Intermediate Outcomes:

- All community members feel safe from gender-based violence
- All community members feel safe from acts of racism, discrimination, and hate
- All community members feel safe from crime
- All community members feel safe to participate in expressions of their culture

## Connectedness and Inclusion

- Citizens are connected to one another and their individual differences are valued and respected



### Strategic Priority: **Connection**



#### Ultimate Outcome:

- All community members are connected to neighbours and other community members and can access support in the community when they need it

#### Intermediate Outcomes:

- Diverse community members experience belonging and connection in Strathcona County as a whole and within their neighbourhood
- Diverse community members experience celebration of their culture and a sense of cultural belonging
- Community members know what supports are available and how to access supports in their community

# Next Steps: Where do we go from here?

Often when people read a strategy like this, they wonder, “what’s next?” As we wrap up this strategy, we are excited to share a few next steps in our CSWB journey with you.

1. Now that we have completed our CSWB Strategy for Strathcona County, we are ready to move into the strategy implementation phase. A detailed plan is being developed for bringing the strategy off paper and to life.
2. The work of implementing the strategy will be supported by a CSWB Stewardship Committee composed of community leaders. The Stewardship Committee is currently developing their social contract or in other words, their shared commitments regarding CSWB implementation.
3. Over the next year, a measurement and evaluation framework will be established for CSWB that will ensure we are capturing the impact of our work and progress toward the CSWB intermediate and ultimate outcomes.
4. Finally, a plan will be developed to share progress and impacts during the first year of implementation of the CSWB strategy followed by regular yearly updates on progress toward CSWB outcomes.





# Closing

Thank you for beginning the CSWB journey with us by taking the time to read this strategy. We are excited about the ways that implementing the CSWB Strategy will potentially impact our community and we're looking forward to sharing those impacts with you as our implementation journey begins.





