Action Research on Chronic Homelessness (ARCH)

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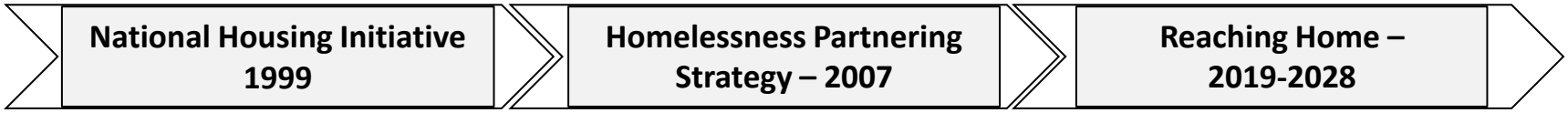
Overview

Federal responses to homelessness through Reaching Home



- As part of the National Housing Strategy, federal homelessness programming now represents a nearly $4 billion investment over 9 years since its launch in April 2019.
  - This includes additional funding for Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy announced through the 2020 Fall Economic Statement, Budget 2021 and Budget 2022; and approximately $400 million invested under the program as part of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan 2020-21.

- Reaching Home supports the goals of the NHS, in particular, to help the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2027-28.
- Reaching Home is a community-based program that provides funding and support to communities across Canada to help them address their local homelessness needs:
  - 64 Designated Communities (urban centres);
  - the 3 territorial capitals;
  - 30 communities and 7 regions with a focus on Indigenous homelessness; and
  - rural and remote communities.
- Reaching Home also makes funding available to distinctions-based Indigenous partners and modern treaty holders.

Beyond Reaching Home

Budget 2022

- The Government of Canada committed to eliminating chronic homelessness by 2030; however, current federal programming was not designed to meet this target and we can't do it alone.
- Budget 2022 invested $18.1 million to conduct research to identify further measures needed to help eliminate chronic homelessness, and contribute to broad learning and new approaches that can be used in communities across Canada.

Rationale for ARCH

- Communities continue to experience persistent barriers in addressing chronic homelessness even after implementing Reaching Home minimum requirements regarding the implementation of Coordinated Access and an outcomes-based approach.
- Through ARCH, we want to explore ways to address knowledge gaps in our current approaches to reducing and preventing homelessness identified by stakeholders and partners (e.g., best practices to enhance multisector alignment).

ARCH Objectives

- To carry out the research, Infrastructure Canada has selected eight Action Research on Chronic Homelessness (ARCH) sites across Canada. Each site will be supported to:
  - **Identify and document persistent barriers** to preventing and reducing chronic homelessness experienced by communities; and,
  - **Test potential approache**s to address persistent barriers and **document successes and challenges.**
- A key objective of the research will be **adapting and sharing findings** to enhance approaches to ending chronic homelessness at the community, provincial/territorial, and federal levels.
- Findings will inform the development of a broader strategy and identify actions needed to end chronic homelessness.

Guiding Principles

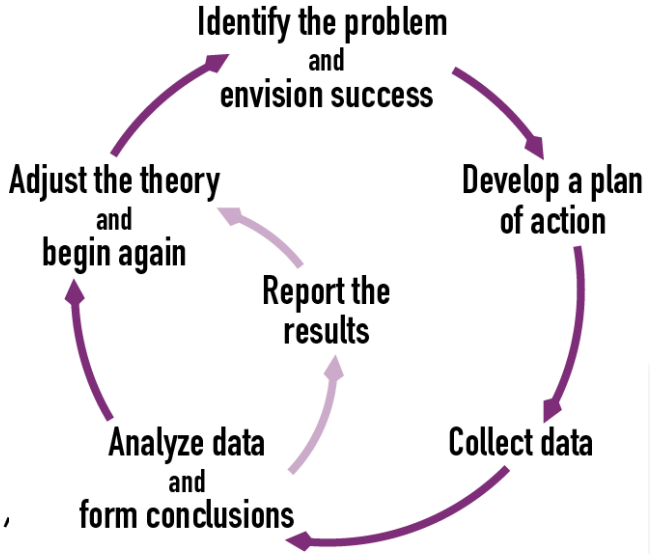
- Complement, not duplicate, existing Reaching Home funding
- Build on, not de-stabilize, existing local governance and planning efforts
- Leverage, wherever possible, other public systems and funding sources
- Following engagement with Indigenous communities, wherever possible embed Indigenous community-based and/or community driven research approaches and Indigenous research protocols into the design, implementation and evaluation of the project
- Involve, wherever possible, individuals and organizations with diverse perspectives (e.g., women, youth, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+), including those with lived experience of homelessness
- Embed trauma-informed, human-centred, and culturally appropriate approaches wherever possible

Action Research Approach

- The ARCH projects will use an **action research approach** to allow for communities to adjust course throughout the project.
- The goal is to inform local practice, problem-solve, and better understand a process within a particular context.

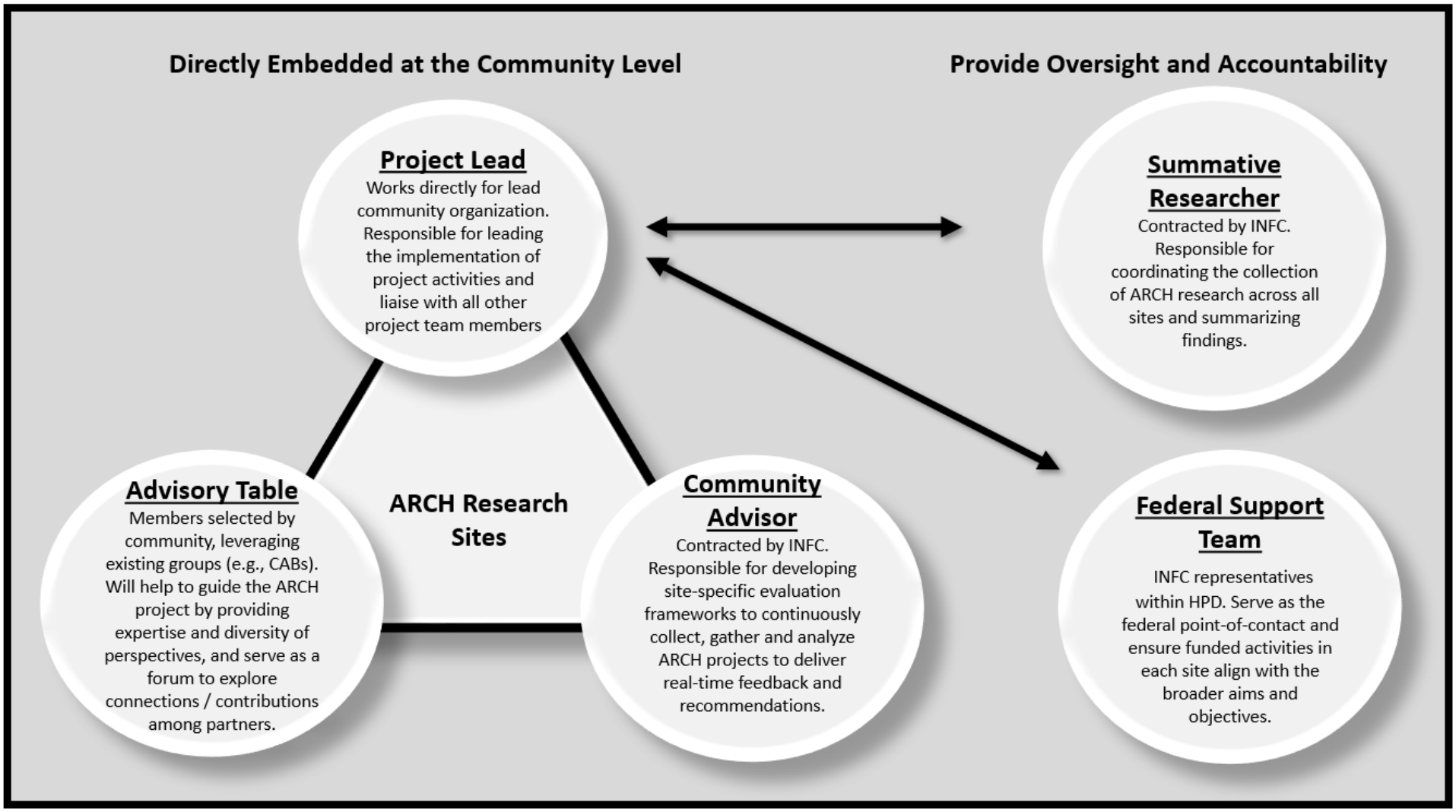
Key features

- Involves cycles of planning, action, evaluation, and reflection to **introduce improvements** to relevant practices.
- Collaborative action research can focus on a shared problem, with several actors working towards a **common goal**.
- Repeated cycles allow for improvements in projects through **iterative learning**, as well as improvements in collaboration and problem-solving capabilities.

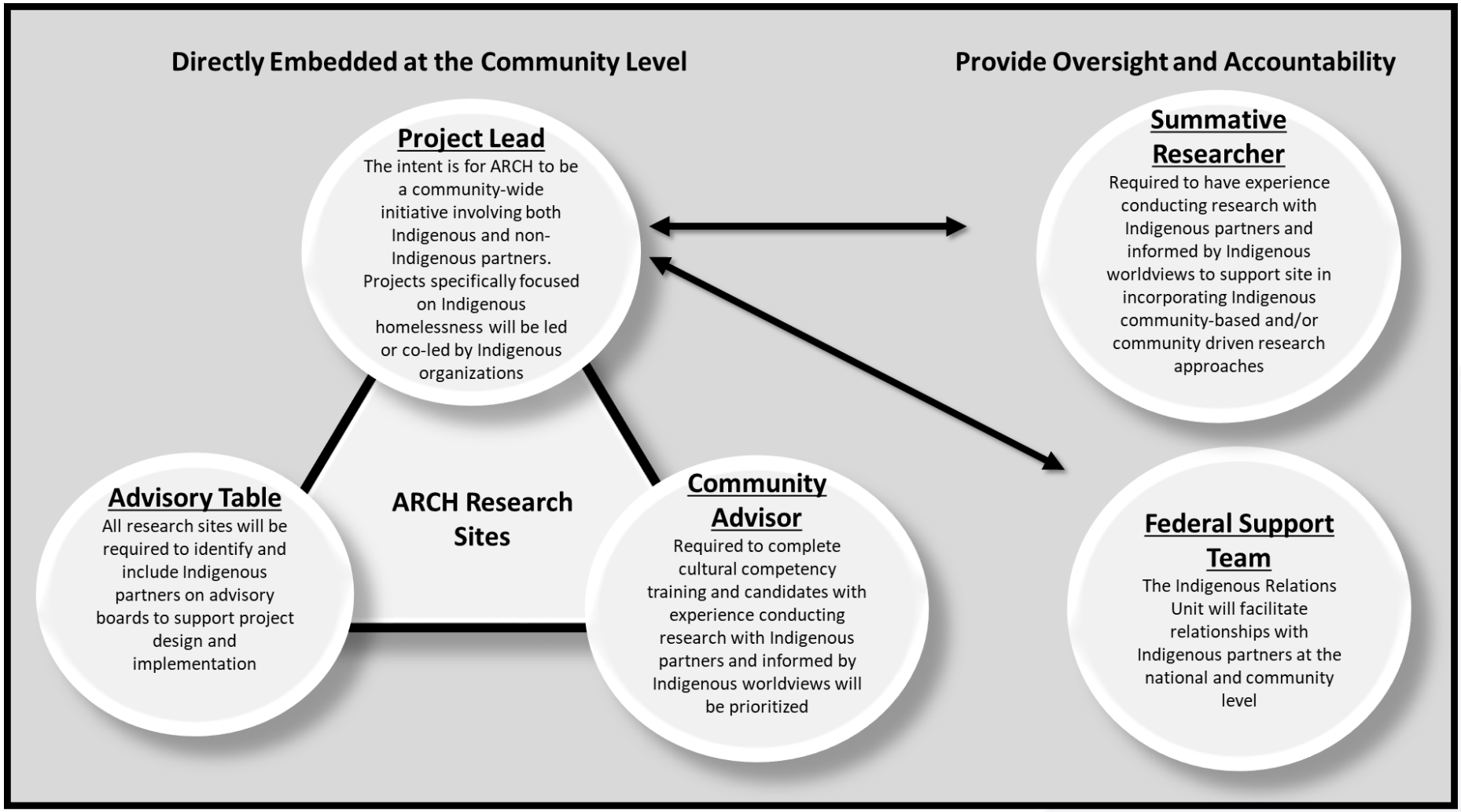


Source: Embrace Action Research from the Creative Educator

Research Structure



Research Structure: Integrating Indigenous Perspectives

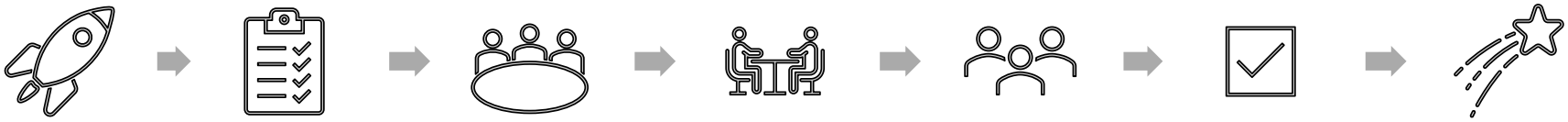


Co-development Timeline

Site Selection
Summer/Fall 2022

Explore and co-design
Winter/Spring 2023

Launch
Summer/Fall 2023



Engagement with Partners and Shortlisted Communities
- Discuss challenges, priorities, and collaborative potential
- Identify potential projects

Assessment
- Identify eight potential ARCH communities

Initial meeting
- Confirm participation
- Prioritize research topics
- Discuss collaboration and co-development process

Co-development Workshop
- Bring key project partners, and potential Advisory Table members together
- Identify problem statement
- Set foundation for application

Finalize Application
- Lead organization(s) meet with the Federal Support Team to finalize application including objective, activities, results, budget.

Final Review
- Share finalized application with Advisory Table
- Approval of concept, activities and budget
- Contribution agreement

Research Design
- Research and evaluation Framework/ methodology developed with lead organization, key partners, Community Advisor and Project Lead

Collaboration

- As ARCH is a community-wide initiative, where applicable, collaboration is occurring across funding streams
- Collaboration with Indigenous partners is essential in each ARCH community
- The ARCH initiative seeks to build partnerships beyond the homelessness serving sector through the Advisory Tables and collaboration with key partners including:
  - Different orders of government
  - Relevant sectors for specific projects
  - Subject matter experts

Project Sites and Topics

Selection of Sites and Projects

- The site selection process was designed to identify which potential sites would be in a position to test new processes or activities that extend beyond Reaching Home requirements and ensure that the communities and scope of projects to be undertaken are complementary.
- Projects were selected in collaboration with communities to fall within the following priority areas
  - **Collaboration**: explore ways to improve buy-in across actors; having relevant actors working together towards a joint plan-of-action
  - **System Alignment**: explore strategies to improve systems-level alignment (e.g., with healthcare, corrections, child welfare)
  - **Data**: enhancing available data on current knowledge gaps; explore solutions to address concerns related to data ownership and sharing
  - **Enhancing Indigenous supports**: exploring methods to enhance accessibility and culturally appropriate supports and services

ARCH Sites

- Whitehorse, YT
- Edmonton, AB
- Medicine Hat, AB
- Brandon, MB
- Sudbury, ON
- London, ON
- Hamilton, ON
- Fredericton, NB

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Collaboration

Whitehorse, YK • Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition	**Strengthening collaboration** amongst community partners to create greater alignment and consensus to house the unhoused.
Edmonton, AB • Homeward Trust Edmonton	Investigating ways of **reducing unsheltered homelessness** by innovating with **multidisciplinary outreach** teams, seeking to better understand factors contributing to homelessness, and using new knowledge to inform policy and program adjustments at the municipal and provincial levels.
Brandon, MB • Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation	Exploring **service navigation and connection hubs in rural areas**, and investigating the root causes of rural to urban migration in order to better support surrounding communities (i.e. through enhanced coordination within and across communities, and more comprehensive, tailored services such as one-on-one mentorship)

Data / Indigenous Supports

Hamilton, ON • Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership • City of Hamilton	Evaluating the process of building and implementing an Indigenous Cultural Capacity and Accountability Framework and Indigenous Data Liaison, focusing on the **co-development of data and service provision approaches** with Indigenous communities.
London, ON • Atlohsa Family Healing Services • City of London	Investigating **alignment between Coordinated Access and Indigenous Housing First** by improving coordination, building community support teams, and developing tailored tools, processes and training to meet the needs of Indigenous communities.

System Alignment

Medicine Hat, AB • Medicine Hat Community Housing Society • Miywasin Friendship Centre	Researching ways of better supporting high acuity clients by building **stronger connections between healthcare** and the organizations who serve these clients, as well as by **incorporating Indigenous healing** into the westernized healthcare system.
Sudbury, ON • City of Greater Sudbury • Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres • N'Swakomok Native Friendship Centre	Exploring ways to **improve alignment with the child welfare system** and **outcomes for Indigenous youth** through addressing needs such as enhanced supports tailored for youth, improved connections between agencies, and culturally appropriate service delivery.
Fredericton, NB • Saint John Human Development Council • Turning Leaf Foundation – Kolopehtuwan Mip	Exploring **alignment with the corrections system** to prevent discharges into homelessness by improving case management practices for people in corrections, enhancing resources towards Indigenous programing, piloting a systems navigator role to better support clients, and testing early intervention approaches for those at risk of homelessness.

Learnings and Next Steps

Mobilizing Learnings

- A **Learning Plan** is currently being developed to be shared with communities by fall 2023. The purpose is to share and use ARCH progress, findings and lessons learned, **between** ARCH sites, **outwards** to PTs and other Reaching Home, and **inwards** to advance shared priorities across HPD and the Government of Canada.
  - INFC is interested in input from communities, PTs, and external stakeholders as to what types of information and format of materials would be beneficial.

- INFC is establishing a **Community of Practice** for ARCH communities to come together, share findings, discuss challenges, make connections and provide insight from the action research process.
  - The first CoP is scheduled to happen in person at the end of the National Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) Conference, in Halifax, on November 10th.

Next Steps

- Finalize learning plan
  - Consulting ARCH partners, PTs, external partners and [Reaching Home communities]
- Begin sharing learnings externally winter/spring 2024
- Incorporate findings into strategic and programmatic work in HPD and beyond
- Build stronger connections across GoC partners through this initiative, and promote adaptation of the initiative in other subject areas

Thank you!

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