

A Way Home Toronto: Towards a strategy to prevent, reduce & end youth homelessness in Toronto

Beth Hayward, City of Toronto & Cheyanne Ratnam, A Way Home Toronto
CAEH 2017, Winnipeg

If you only remember 3 things...

- **Build** on what's happening, but **create space** for doing things differently
- **Progress over perfection** in an evolving collaborative structure
- **Young people** as key stakeholders, partners, leaders, decision-makers

Art by Yael De Gale (@degaledesign),
funded through ArtWorks TO as part of
Toronto's Youth Equity Strategy



**You don't have to
walk in my shoes
to understand.**



A Way Home Toronto

Vision

- A city where all young people have a safe, supportive home from which to realize their full potential in a community that values & respects them

Mission

- To build responsive and coordinated systems that prevent and end youth homelessness in Toronto

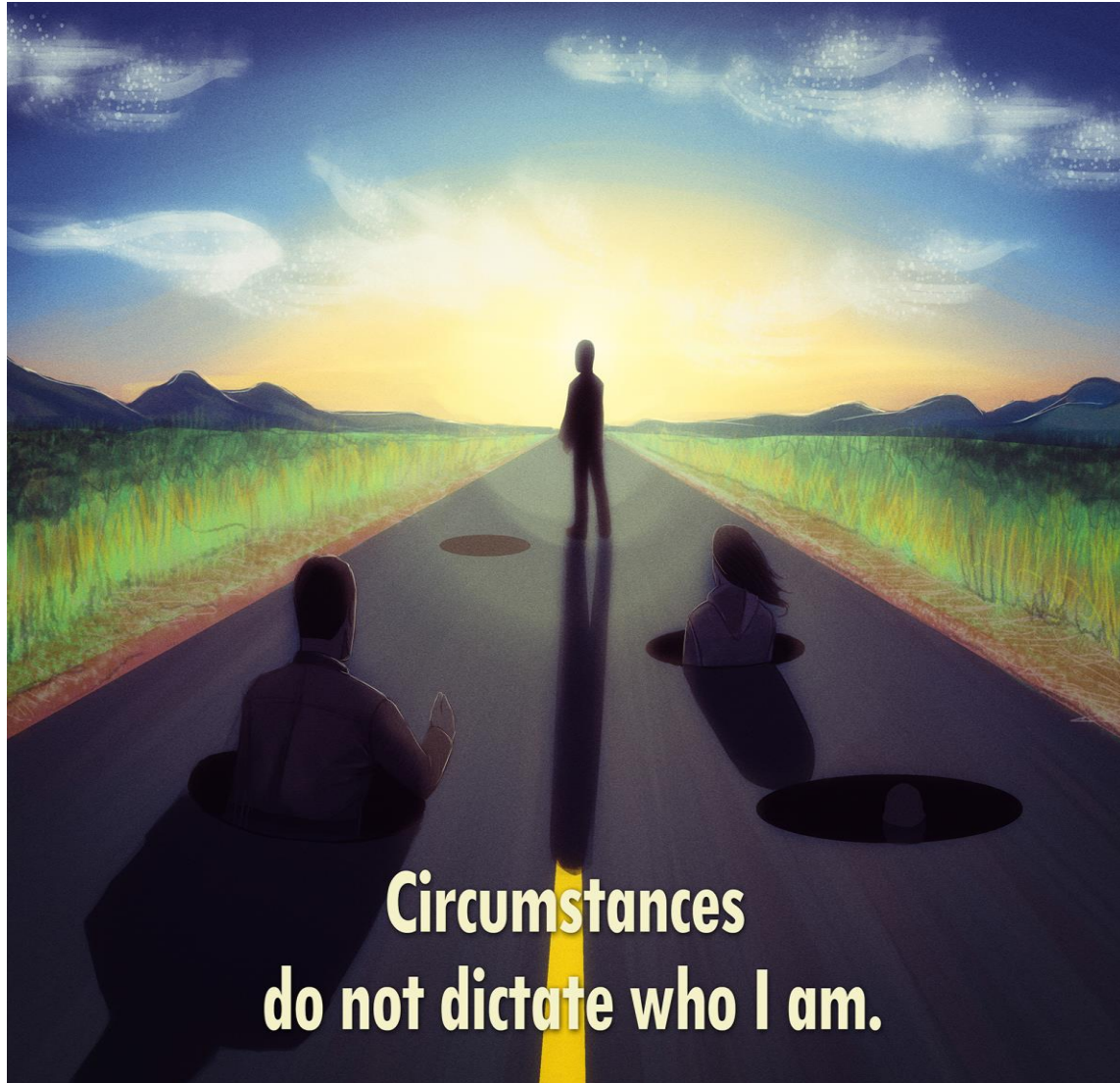
Goal

- To bring together diverse partners and young people to create a youth homelessness strategy for Toronto

‘Home’ means
having a
community full of
supports - people
to keep you
moving even
when you want to
fall, hide, or
disappear
altogether.

*~focus group
participant*

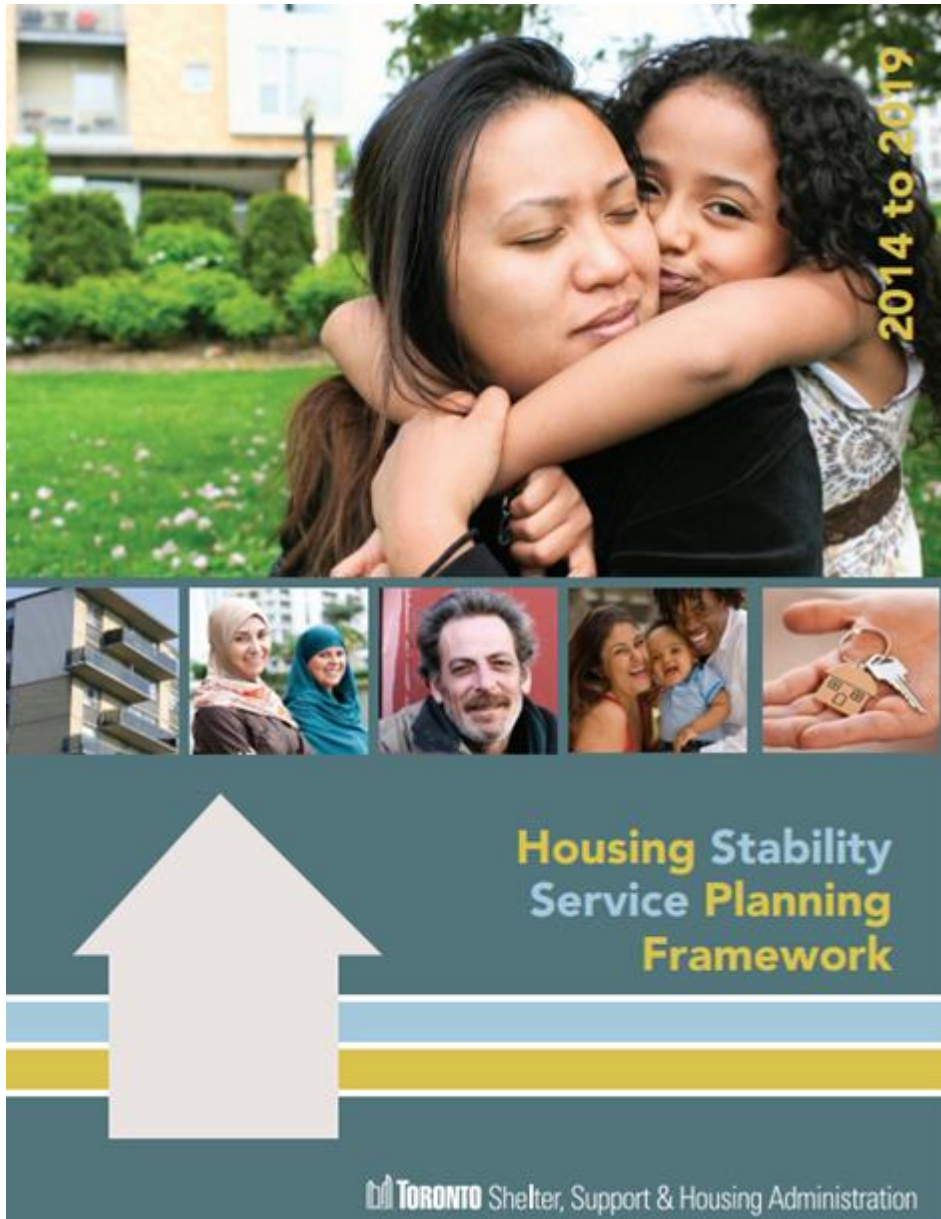
Why a youth homelessness strategy?



Because youth homelessness is

- ❖ A **distinct** problem
- ❖ An **urgent** problem
- ❖ A **solvable** problem
- ❖ A **collective** problem

Art by Yael De Gale (@degaledesign)



Alignment with Housing Stability Service System Transformation

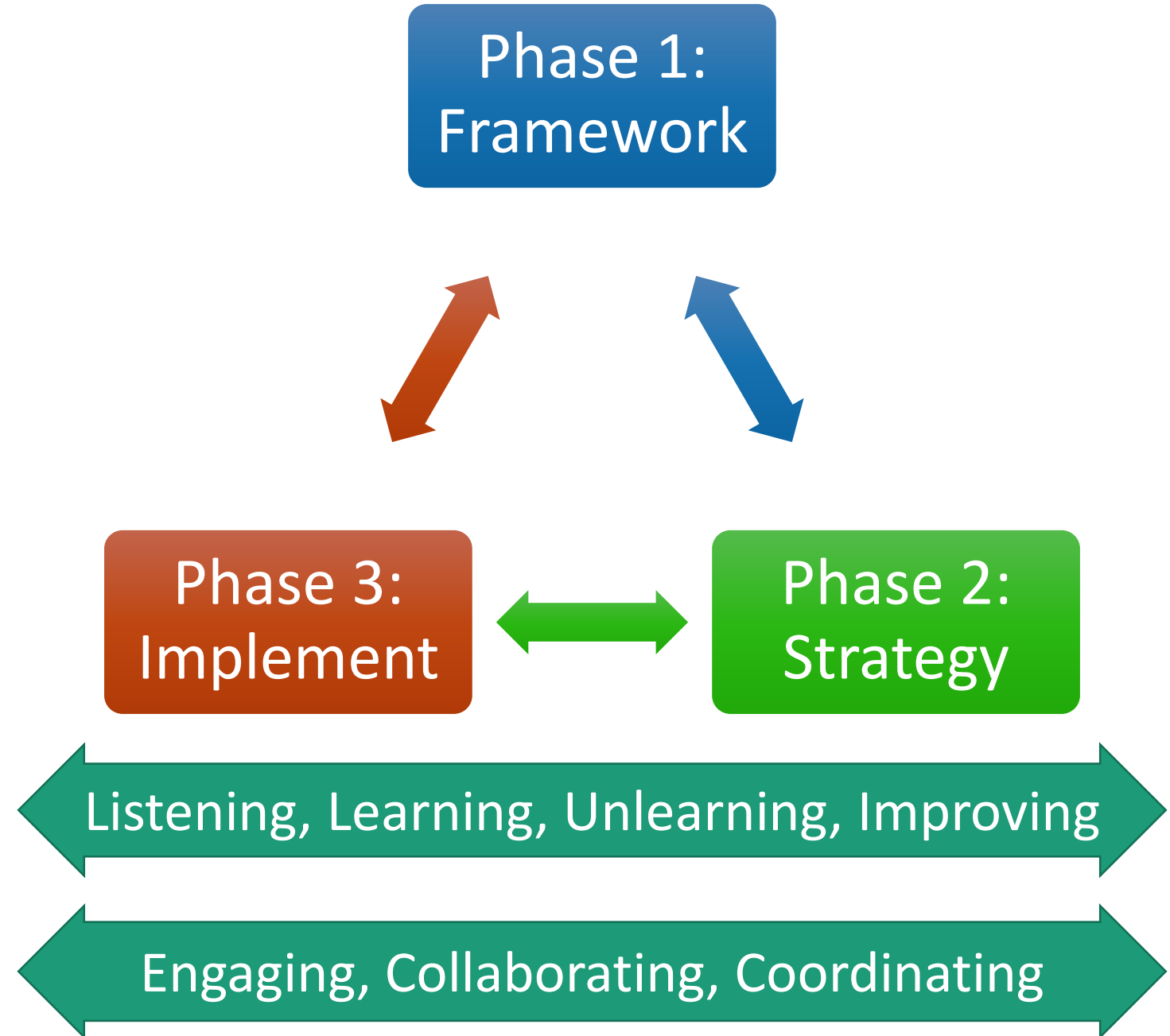
- ❖ Prevention
- ❖ Supporting transition to housing
- ❖ Creating housing opportunities
- ❖ System stewardship & innovation
- ❖ Improving access & equity
- ❖ Strengthening partnerships & coordination

A “fusion policy issue”: Context & alignment

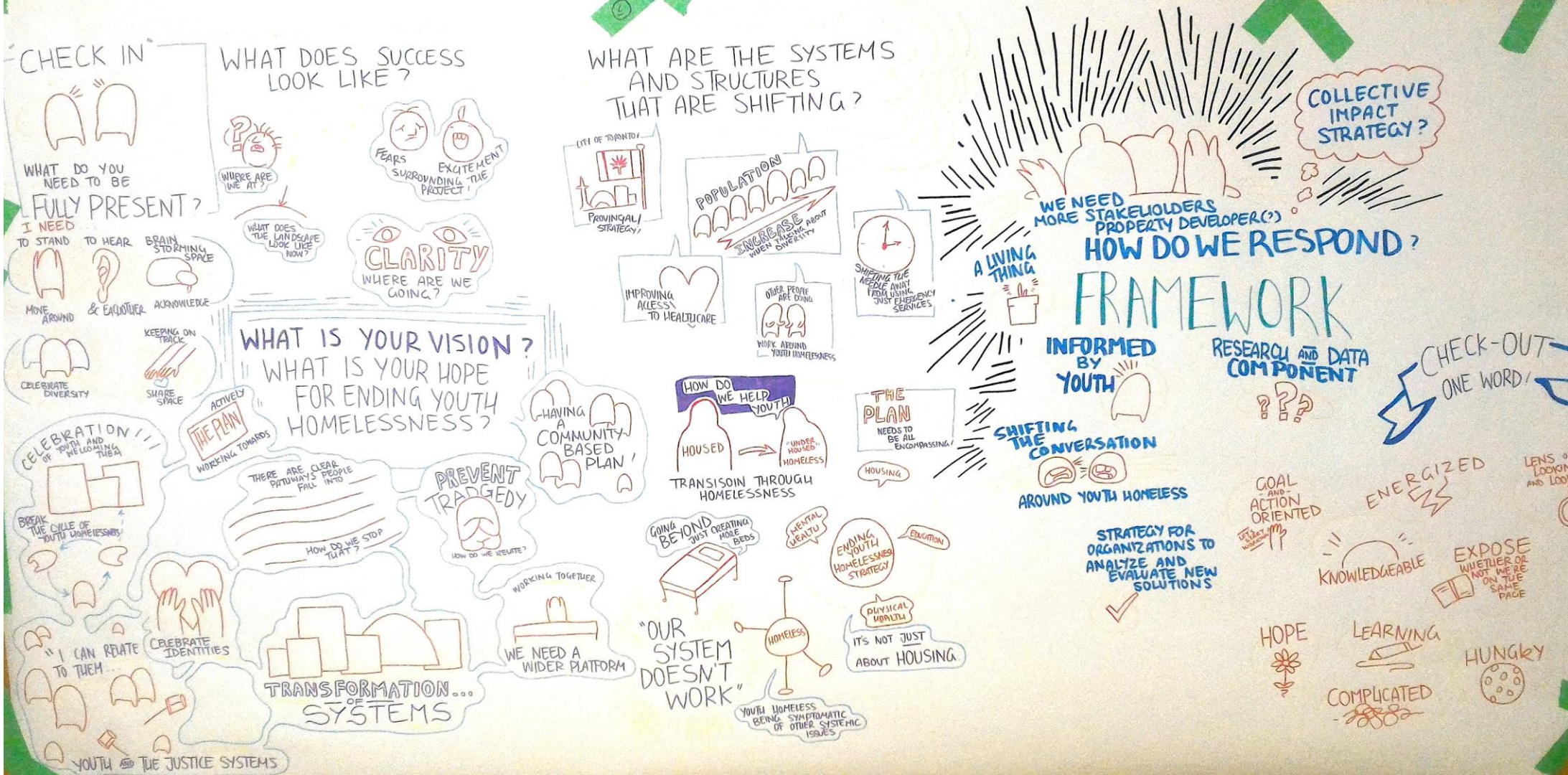
Municipal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Stability Service Plan• Toronto Youth Equity Strategy• Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy• Indigenous Health Strategy• Housing Opportunities Toronto & more...
Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poverty Reduction Strategy• Youth Action Plan• Youth Leaving Care Hearings• Mental Health & Addictions Strategy & more..
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (future) National Housing Strategy• TRC• Mental Health Strategy & more...
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human Rights frameworks



With so much already going on, how do we approach developing a strategy?



Phase 1: Listening, Learning, Connecting



Framework for a Youth Homelessness Strategy for Toronto

A Way Home Toronto

Vision

A city where all young people have a safe, supportive home from which they can realize their full potential in a community that values and respects them.

Principles

Young people
as key
partners

Human Rights

Anti-Oppression,
Anti-Racism, &
Intersectionality

Inclusive
Collaboration

Approach

Youth-Centred Collective Impact

Common Agenda // Continuous Communication // Coordinated Activities //
Shared Measurement // Backbone Support // Community Engagement

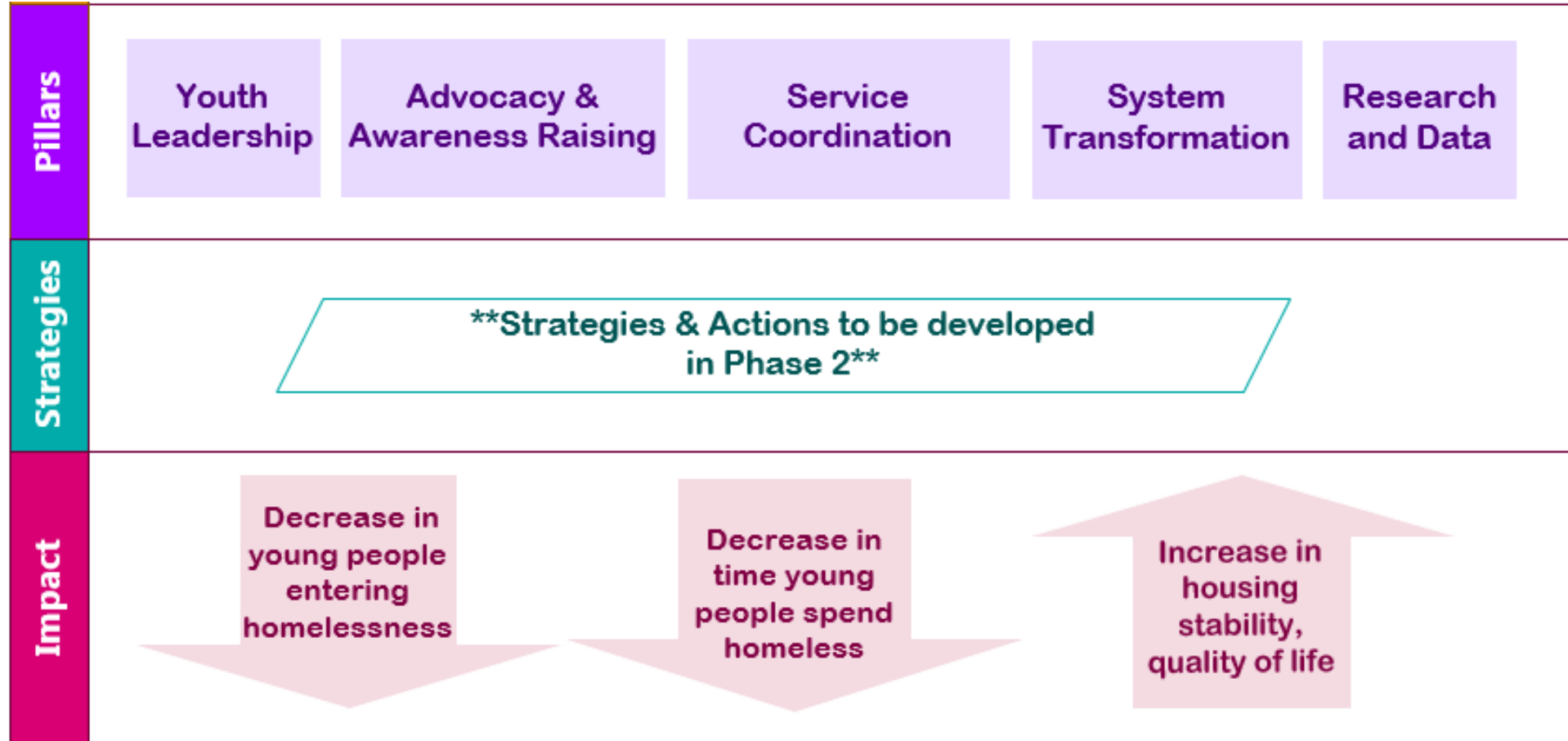
Goals

PREVENT
entry/return to
homelessness

REDUCE
duration and impact of
homelessness

END
homelessness
through housing &
support

Framework continued



Lessons from Phase 1

- Engaging government
- Engaging community partners
- Engaging young people

Art by Yael De Gale (@degaledesign)



Phase 2: Collaborative Strategy Development

Evolving AWHT Governance

Expert Table

Steering Committee

Community of Practice

Community-engaged planning

Community Forums

Solutions-generation
events led by Expert Table

Strategy & plan

Strategy

Phased implementation
plan

AWHT sustainability

Funded in part by the Government of Canada:

Canada

Phase 2 AWHT Structure



Closing advice from young people for strategy development

The best thing you are doing is trying to make a change. I wish it could be faster, but in all honesty it won't be fast.

We need to be taken seriously.

We need to be preventative instead of reactive. Help with housing before people become homeless.

Having instability in every part of life is such a struggle. Youth don't need to be told they're 'resilient' or condescended to. They need food, money, housing, support & respect.