

10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Refresh – Sector Session Report-Back

Insights from Community Sessions

Hosted by the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table

October 6th 2025

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Connect2Knowledge 

Housing & Homelessness
Leadership Table

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Overview

On October 6, 2025, 111 leaders from the housing and homelessness sector—and from related health, social-service, and community-support sectors—came together for a full-day session to help shape the refreshed 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. This session marked the final opportunity for broad sector input before the plan is finalized and presented to City Council in spring 2026.

The session was hosted by the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT), a governance body co-designed by the City of Ottawa and sector partners to steward the plan and advance a system-wide response to housing and homelessness in Ottawa. Participants represented a diverse mix of service organizations, funders, and system partners whose collective knowledge and experience are essential to building a shared path forward.

There were three key presentations during the event. The first was a fireside chat between four members of the HHLT, who reflected on their experience refreshing the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and continuing to strengthen relationships between sectors and between those sectors and the City of Ottawa. Participants included HHLT Co-Chairs Kaite Burkholder Harris, Executive Director of the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, and Kale Brown, Director of Housing and Homelessness at the City of Ottawa, along with Mark MacDonald, HHLT Member and Lived Experts Sector Representative, and Marc Maracle, Executive Director of Gignul Non-Profit Housing. The conversation offered a transparent account of the process to date, highlighting how the table arrived at its current approach, as well as the tensions and opportunities that lie ahead.

Next, members of the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC) — represented by Joan Riggs, Facilitator with the Coalition, and Marc Maracle, Executive Director of Gignul Non-Profit Housing — presented an update to the Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Plan. The plan was co-created by members of the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition and outlines a strategic path forward to address Indigenous homelessness in Ottawa in the coming years.

In the third presentation, Leah Pobodnik and Tina Mallard, two members of the Expert Steering Team (EST), spoke about their work engaging people with lived and living experience of homelessness. Their discussion explored what makes the lived expertise “sector” unique, how the EST has been engaging People With Lived and Living Experience (PWLLE) around the 10-Year Plan, and how they plan to continue these conversations moving forward.

The day was designed to build trust, clarify roles, discuss the Plan’s measures, and identify what meaningful progress looks like across the system. It provided space to listen across sectors, examine where goals align, and explore how to measure success in ways that reflect the realities of organizations doing the work every day. Discussions throughout the session emphasized shared ownership, collaboration, and accountability as the foundation for the next phase of implementation.



Objectives of the Day

- **Build Trust Through Transparency:** Provide a clear, honest account of the planning journey to date — including what’s been done, what’s evolving, and what this next phase asks of sector leaders.
- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities in Implementation:** Share the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table’s role in stewarding the refreshed plan and explore how sectors will be meaningfully engaged going forward.
- **Align Around Meaningful Measures of Progress:** Reflect on available data and what it does and doesn’t tell us — and engage sector leaders to surface the metrics that matter most to them and their organizations.
- **Foster Cross-Sector Insight and Collaboration:** Create space to listen across silos, identify areas of alignment, and begin shaping shared actions that can move us forward, together.

Context for the Day

The 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is Ottawa’s roadmap for ensuring that everyone in our city has a safe, affordable, and stable place to call home. Under provincial legislation, the City is required to maintain this plan and refresh it every five years to reflect changing realities, new data, and evolving community priorities.

Why a Refresh Now

The housing and homelessness landscape has changed significantly since the plan was first launched. Rising housing costs, growing service demand, and ongoing workforce and infrastructure pressures have intensified challenges across the system. At the same time, new partnerships, data tools, and approaches to collaboration have created opportunities to do things differently. This refresh, to be completed by spring 2026, is about aligning efforts across sectors and building a stronger foundation for shared accountability.

The Role of the City and the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT)

The City of Ottawa serves as both the **Service Manager** under the provincial *Housing Services Act* and the **Community Entity** under the federal *Reaching Home* strategy. It is also a key player in other municipal strategies such as the *Anti-Racism Strategy*, *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, and *Community Safety and Well-Being Plan*.

To strengthen collaboration and ensure the refreshed plan reflects the realities of those doing the work, the City and community partners co-designed the **Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT)** in 2024. The HHLT brings together 18 members representing key sectors across the housing and homelessness system. Members represent sectors rather than individual



organizations, with backbone support provided by the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa. The table operates through a collaborative governance model grounded in shared values, transparency, and the right to housing.

What Has Been Done So Far

Over the past year, the HHLT and its 10-Year Plan Working Group have met regularly to:

- Develop consensus on the guiding principles, priorities, goals, and outcomes of the plan; Review available indicators and identify gaps in data;
- Map the system and determine where alignment is most needed; and
- Design strategies for sector engagement.

City staff have worked closely with the HHLT to develop the plan's framework, ensuring it reflects both legislative requirements and the lived realities of the sector. This included integrating feedback from earlier consultations held in spring and summer 2025.

What We Heard: *Making the Measures Meaningful*

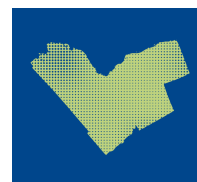
This activity focused on understanding what matters most to organizations when measuring progress. Participants were encouraged to share what they currently track or wish they could track.

The most commonly tracked indicators were:

- **Housing outcomes:** number of clients housed, rehoused, or moved to permanent housing.
- **Length of stay & stability:** time in shelter/building/program, time subsidized, tenancy duration.
- **Client satisfaction & quality of life:** surveys like the Ontario Perception of Care Tool or the Ontario, and a variety of custom tools.
- **Service use and requests:** applications, referrals, counselling sessions, case management.
- **Occupancy & turnover:** unit counts, vacancies, bed counts, waitlists.
- **Demographics & equity:** age, gender, race, country of origin, risk factors.
- **Financial/asset tracking:** costs, arrears, maintenance, capital repairs.
- **Health/wellness:** clinical outcomes, overdose interventions, hospital visits, staff wellbeing.

The most frequently cited leadership priorities were:

- **Long-term housing outcomes & stability:** transitions to permanent housing, number of households housed, tenancy retention, diversion outcomes.
- **Client satisfaction & quality of life:** surveys like the Ontario Perception of Care Tool or



the Ontario, and service quality.

- **Occupancy & turnover:** vacancies, unit completions, shelter length of stay, turnover rates.
- **Financial health & sustainability:** budgets, arrears, cash flow, asset management, dollars invested.
- **Equity & demographics:** representation on boards, diversity, equity and inclusion indicators, cultural connections, Indigenous data.
- **Organizational health:** staff satisfaction, leadership satisfaction, governance participation, volunteer capacity.
- **Program impact:** connections formed, community engagement, graduation to independence, and well-being of families/children.

The most frequently mentioned gaps in data were:

- **Long-term outcomes:** stability after discharge, rehousing, whether clients re-enter homelessness, and life after program graduation.
- **Employment and income:** steady jobs, career progress, income and savings growth, financial autonomy.
- **Equity and demographic detail:** racialized groups, Indigenous individuals, newcomers, gender, immigration status, trafficked survivors, couch-surfing vs rough sleeping.
- **Health and wellness:** mental health, addictions, hospital use, overdoses, cumulative wellbeing, primary health care.
- **System and flow metrics:** average wait times across agencies, registry movement, cross-system flows (health, justice, housing), benchmarking against other providers.
- **Housing data:** renovictions, unit losses, repair times, costs per door.
- **Organizational sustainability:** staff burnout, capacity limits, fundraising, referral effectiveness, and administrative burden.

The most frequently mentioned needs were:

- **Improved data systems:** more reliable, user-friendly, customizable systems – often improvements to or alternatives for Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).
- **Shared tools and platforms:** integrated databases, dashboards, and reporting tools accessible across the sector.
- **Common definitions:** clarity and consistency around terms like “case management,” “success,” “diversion,” and “affordability,” so that data is comparable.
- **Funding and resources:** dedicated funding for tools, staff, dashboards, research, and longitudinal tracking.
- **Training and capacity:** staff training on data literacy, key performance indicators, and consistent use of systems; admin support to reduce reporting burden.
- **Collaboration and data sharing:** cross-sector agreements, coordinated working groups, inclusion of smaller orgs, human trafficking services, and survivor voices.
- **Protected, trauma-informed systems:** safe handling of sensitive client data, confidentiality safeguards, and survivor-centred design.



- **City/provincial access:** access to large datasets already sent to government, less duplication in reporting, alignment with City-level decision systems.

The most common reflections and examples of how data were used were:

- **Advocacy and funding:** service demand data and food insecurity data leveraged to secure new resources, justify staffing, or obtain donor and foundation support.
- **Program planning and service delivery:** data on client needs, demographics, and community feedback used to shape new programs, refine supports, and decide when to shift focus (e.g., moving families to new sites, focusing on food pantries).
- **Accountability and reporting:** Key performance indicators developed and published, data used in annual reports, AGMs, donor and grant reporting, and monthly municipal reports.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Diversity, equity and inclusion committees using dashboards and data stories to guide priorities, highlight gaps, and demonstrate progress.
- **Operational and asset management:** rental analysis papers, building condition assessments, reserve fund tracking, and capital asset data used for long-term planning.

What We Heard: *From Insight to Alignment*

Participants engaged in two rounds of mixed-sector discussions, sharing insights, challenges, and opportunities from their respective sectors. The first round focused on understanding different experiences and identifying overlaps, while the second round explored how to collaborate more effectively on shared challenges and what supports were needed. Below are common themes

Theme 1: Funding & Sustainability

Organizations shared that funding remains one of the most pressing issues across the sector. Many rely on project-based grants, which provide short-term support but do not address long-term sustainability. This creates cycles of instability for both clients and staff. Reporting and compliance processes take significant time and resources, with smaller Organizations feeling this burden the most. There is also strong competition for the same funding pools, which can undermine collaboration.

Theme 2: System Flow & Coordination

Organizations shared that the sector feels fragmented, and people often repeat their stories as they move between services. There is a desire for smoother handoffs and clearer pathways. Information sharing is inconsistent, and there is a call for a central coordinating role or body at the system level to help address these gaps.



Theme 3: Data, Measurement & Learning

Organizations shared that while data is essential, it is often incomplete, hard to collect, or resource-intensive to analyze. Important gaps include data on survivors of trafficking, Indigenous families, eviction prevention, and demographic information. Without this information, it can be difficult to make informed decisions or demonstrate impact.

Theme 4: Person-Centred & Equity-Based Supports

Organizations shared that supports should not end once housing is secured. Many people need ongoing help to maintain housing, overcome isolation, and understand their rights. Barriers such as language and cultural differences add to these challenges. Some approaches, such as diversion, work differently depending on context (for example, youth shelters versus GBV shelters).

Theme 5: Capacity, Workforce & Assets

Organizations shared that staff turnover is a common issue, affecting the consistency of support for clients. Smaller organizations in particular struggle with administrative and reporting demands. At the same time, there is interest in building workforce capacity through shared training opportunities, especially for peer supports and people with lived experience.

