

# Supporting Community-Led Development in Manitoba: Policy Alternatives for Inclusive and Participatory Community Renewal

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# Summary

DESPITE THE CURRENT challenges facing communities and research supporting the benefits of community-led development (CLD), Manitoba hasn't had a functioning, comprehensive CLD strategy or dedicated funding to support community development organizations since 2019. In the spring of 2024, the Manitoba government launched a new program, From the Ground Up – Safe Healthy Communities for All, to support CLD. This report provides the rationale for a CLD approach and recommendations for how such a community development program and fund can mobilize neighbourhood and community-led development and support the existing neighbourhood renewal corporation (NRC) model, facilitate program expansion, provide both core and project-specific funding to NRCs, and support funding for other key CLD agencies such as Indigenous organizations, women's centres, and family resource centres. These recommendations are situated in the historical development of the Neighbourhoods Alive! Program and its successes and limitations in relation to comparable CLD programs in Canada and internationally. A main finding is that the Neighbourhoods Alive! model that was ended by the Government of Manitoba in 2019 was in many respects a successful CLD model, exemplifying many of the principles of CLD best practices that could serve as the foundation for a new CLD program. Based on our analysis, we find that the From the Ground Up (FGU) program is an important and welcome first step in rededicating resources towards CLD in Manitoba and was implemented in an impressively short timeline after the election of the new government in October 2023. The program, however,

provides less support than what was previously available in the early 2010s under similar programs and its precursor, the Building Sustainable Communities (BSC) fund. It was also implemented without a formal consultation process and has a tenuous link to CLD practice. We put forward a number of recommendations to consider as the FGU program evolves, including that the FGU program funding envelope should be restored to the level of funding provided under the BSC program to meet the high level of need, and that the program should more clearly incorporate best practices of Neighbourhoods Alive! and other CLD models surveyed in our study, with a community-planning process centrally featured in the program structure to guide the allocation of funding.

# Introduction

MANITOBA HAD A successful and well-researched CLD model through the Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) program and its support for neighbourhood renewal corporations (NRCs; Bernas & Reimer, 2012; Coalition of Manitoba Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations, 2016; Dilay, 2016; Distasio et al., 2005; EKOS Research, 2010; MacPherson & McCracken, 2016; Manitoba, 2015), as part of the Manitoba government's broader community economic development (CED) policy initiative (EKOS Research, 2011; Kostyra, 2006; MacKinnon, 2006). NRCs continue to coordinate, plan, and often implement strategies or programming impacting local affordable housing development, community safety, food security, green space development, recreation, healthy living, formal and community-based training, and more. The priorities of NRCs are set by the communities they serve; they are often anchor institutions within their respective communities, and operate as a key source of community social/economic development and community safety initiatives throughout Manitoba (CCEDNet-MB, 2019). These organizations have been well-placed to serve their community due to their community-led and community-owned governance model, their proximity to the people they serve, their closeness to the impact of the challenges facing Manitoba communities, and their ability to provide community development programs and support to residents.

Despite the current challenges facing communities, and the successful NA! model from which to build, Manitoba currently has no functioning, comprehensive CED strategy and, until the introduction of the new FGU program, no dedicated funding to support CLD organizations. While always relatively

small scale, financial support for CLD in Manitoba was further constrained in 2016 when, under provincial government austerity (Hajer, 2023; Hajer & Fernandez, 2021), the NA! program was dissolved and its funding dispersed (MacKinnon, 2019, 2021; Silver, 2016b). This report examines the potential for a new CLD program that could support the existing NRC model, facilitate program expansion, provide core and project-specific funding to NRCs, and support funding for other key community-based organizations (CBOs) such as Indigenous organizations, women's centres, and family resource centres.

Currently in Manitoba there are twelve NRCs active in urban and rural communities characterized by high levels of poverty and other factors associated with older neighbourhoods and municipalities in need of revitalization. Municipalities include Thompson, Brandon, Flin Flon, The Pas, Selkirk, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie. In Winnipeg, neighbourhoods include West End, North End, Spence/Central, West Broadway, and Chalmers (Coalition of Manitoba Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations, 2016).

A 2017 report showed the impressive outcomes of NRCs since their inception in 2000. Between 2000 and 2017, NRCs collectively engaged nearly 560,000 community members – nearly half the population of Manitoba. In that same time, they helped create 1,226 jobs through direct employment, pre-employment volunteer opportunities and training, social enterprise development, and local procurement practice. Through NRC coordination, nearly \$9 million was invested in housing and nearly \$31 million leveraged in affordable housing investment. Nearly \$900,000 was strategically and effectively invested in community safety (Coalition of Manitoba Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations, 2017). A social return on investment study found that in 2019, NRCs leveraged \$1.7 million in core funding into \$12.6 million in additional community investment, a return of \$4.13 for every dollar invested by the provincial municipal relations department (Health in Common, 2020).

NRCs have continued to receive core funding from the Province of Manitoba. Prior to 2017 this funding was provided through NA!, and since 2017 through a direct allocation from the Department of Municipal Relations (recently reconstituted as Municipal and Northern Relations). Manitoba also continues to provide funding for core allocations to a handful of Indigenous-serving CBOs in urban and off-reserve communities, including women's centres doing CED work, some family resource centres, and a number of other organizations practicing CED. This funding is precarious and not guaranteed beyond a year-over-year approval process, and many receive approved provincial funding only after significant delays.

From 2019 until 2024, the Building Sustainable Communities (BSC) program was the primary provincial fund to which CED organizations were directed to apply. Unlike NA!, BSC required 50 percent matching funds and mainly supported capital projects. BSC was accessible to municipalities, which were better able to find matching funds. The BSC program has been shown to have primarily benefited wealthier communities and municipalities (MacKinnon, 2021). In April 2024, the Manitoba government’s FGU program was launched to support “community led response and revitalization efforts including capacity building, wellness and safety, community economic development, social inclusion, housing coordination and children and youth initiatives” (Manitoba, 2024), replacing the BSC program. The announcement of the new program has given the CED community renewed hope after the elimination of NA!. In this report we compare the FGU program with the previous NA! and BSC programs. We explore options and propose recommendations to strengthen the FGU program to better align with a CLD approach, adequately support CBOs practicing CLD, including NRCs, and foster the emergence of new initiatives in other communities.

This report is organized as follows: First, we outline the common outcomes (Section 1), the underlying need for (Section 2), and the principles and motivations (Section 3) of a comprehensive CLD program, highlighting that place-based solutions are key to addressing increasingly geographically concentrated poverty and social exclusion, as well as increasing social and political polarization. We then review of the previous NA! program (Section 4), and offer a comparative case study with other CLD programs in Canada and internationally (Section 5). Next, we review of the FGU program and how it compares to the previous BSC and NA! programs (Section 6). Finally, we put forward our conclusions and a number of recommendations.

Section 1.

# Targeted Outcomes of Community-Led Development or Renewal

AS SUMMARIZED BY researcher Melanie Crew (2020), community-led approaches have been adopted due to their success in:

1. Engaging disadvantaged people in programmes and services by creating new services and activities, raising awareness of existing services, tailoring activities to specific groups, and ensuring services meet people's needs in a more joined-up way.
2. Building supportive communities by ensuring people have positive personal support networks, including peer support from people with lived experience of social issues.
3. Building an infrastructure and creating the conditions for impact by developing leadership and organisational capacity, leveraging new resources, improving holistic partnership working, and building a community's capacity to respond to challenges. (pp. 1–2)



Crew (2020) highlights that CLD has been applied to address unequal access to “housing, employment, education, and health by tailoring programmes to specific groups, and combining the insights, knowledge and key strengths of multiple organisations to address diverse and interconnected challenges in local areas” (p. 1).

The Community Renewal Act in Manitoba sets out the governance framework and goals for CLD programming in Manitoba. It states:

Community renewal will depend on the identified renewal goals of a designated community but it may include one or more of the following: (a) increased participation of residents in community activities and a greater sense of community involvement and belonging; (b) increased economic development and enhanced employment opportunities; (c) reduced crime and increased public security; (d) an improvement in the quality and diversity of housing; (e) improvements to community infrastructure, such as parks, green spaces and recreational facilities; (f) increased access to recreational and wellness opportunities for residents.

The European Community Development Network’s 2014 publication *Community Development in Europe: Towards A Common Framework and Understanding* sets out a basis for classifying the multifaceted objectives of CLD. *Table 1* summarizes the key outcomes at the community, structural/governance, and legislative and government policy levels of CLD. We use this framework to help compile and analyze the success of our CLD case studies in achieving these outcomes, which are reviewed in the following section.

**TABLE 1** Community Development Outcomes Based on the European Community Development Network’s Common Framework for Community Development

<b>1. Outcomes at the Community Level</b>
a. Better quality of life
i. concrete physical improvement to community
ii. creation of new community services
iii. improved employment opportunities
iv. improved access to community services
b. Increased community leadership
i. increased engagement in community activities
ii. empowerment/critical consciousness of community members
iii. increased knowledge and skills of residents
iv. active participation in community decision making
c. Strengthened community capacity
i. communities are active and resilient
ii. able to engage/contest power
iii. able to develop plans and implement for community benefit
d. Improved overall community experience
i. recognized common problems and goals
ii. increased sense of belonging and solidarity
iii. strengthened sense of community ownership and joint decision making
iv. communities are inclusive and able to manage conflict
v. communities are entrepreneurial with increased fundraising capacity
<b>2. Outcomes at the Policy, Structural, and Governance Levels</b>
a. Community networks/partnerships form and are strengthened to support collective interests
b. Community issues are on the agenda of decision makers
c. Communities participate assertively and can influence decision making
d. Communities are supported to design and control solutions
e. Policy/practice changes that benefit marginalized communities are evident
f. Legislative change that benefits marginalized communities is evident
<b>3. Outcomes in Common Mindsets, Ideology, and Thinking that Inform Policy and Legislation Making</b>
a. Decision makers and public institution staff have a well-informed understanding of and approach to marginalized and underrepresented groups
b. Decision makers genuinely share power with community, including marginalized and underrepresented groups
c. Transparency is evident in decision making
d. Service agencies and institutions respond effectively to the needs of communities, including marginalized and underrepresented communities

Section 2.

## The Need for a Provincial CLD Program

CLD AIMS TO address inequities, marginalization, and exclusion, often with a focus on those living in communities with high levels of poverty. While not stand-alone solutions to poverty, CLD approaches can support the development of services and connections that help people exit poverty while also building the capacity and political power to lay the foundation for more transformative change. In addition to addressing poverty and economic inequality, CLD can also build solidarity in communities divided along racialized status, gender identity, and religious and political beliefs. Increasing inequality, the rising cost of living, the greater spatial concentration of poverty, and increased social and political polarization provides a rationale for increasing support for CLD approaches.

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### The Rising Inequality and Affordability Crisis

Increasing income inequality has been a growing problem in North America for over 40 years (Osberg, 2021). Recent data has shown that inequality was increasing in Manitoba before the COVID-19 pandemic, and at a rate faster

than Canada as whole (Hudson, 2023). While the massive boost in income supports provided by the federal government in response to COVID-19 initially compressed income disparities and dramatically reduced poverty rates, more recent projections suggest that poverty rates are returning to their pre-pandemic highs (Statistics Canada, 2021; Gustajtis & Heisz, 2023). Food insecurity is on the rise in both Manitoba and Canada, with self-reported levels in Manitoba well above the national average (Statistics Canada, 2022; Uppal, 2023), and food prices rising 22 percent from 2019 to 2023, 7 percent more than hourly wage gains over this period (Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024b). Housing and transportation costs have also outpaced wage gains, increasing 20 percent and 23 percent respectively (Statistics Canada, 2024a), while lack of affordable housing and homelessness and the rising cost of living have more generally become prominent issues of national concern (Policy Options, 2023). The number of Manitobans reporting a strong sense of belonging to the local community has trended downward over this period, falling from 75 percent in 2019 to 68 percent in 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2023), and in Winnipeg falling from 72 percent in 2018 to 61 percent in 2022 (Winnipeg Foundation, 2022).

High levels of inequality, poverty, and social exclusion are fundamental social failures that impose costs on society more broadly through higher health and social service costs, lower incomes and economic growth, and reductions in individual wellbeing, with variations in welfare states playing an important explanatory role (Silver, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011; Coburn, 2015). The rise of white supremacist, anti-immigrant movements and increased political polarization have also been linked to rising socio-economic inequality (Ausserladscheider, 2019; Jay et al., 2019; Proaño et al., 2022), specifically to growing inequality between geographic regions within countries (Marchand et al., 2020). In addition to moral and ethical grounds, there is also an important case to be made for reducing inequality, poverty, and social exclusion for reasons of social stability and sound public management.

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## **The Spatial Concentration of Poverty and Social Exclusion**

Income inequality in Canada at the neighbourhood level has also become increasingly geographically concentrated over time (Breau et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2012; Walks, 2013). At least one study suggests that Manitoba in

particular has a concentration of low-income communities with low levels of income mobility (Corak, 2017). Disadvantaged neighbourhoods have faced a host of interrelated barriers and challenges, such as low-quality housing and lack of access to affordable fresh food and other basic services such as banking (Slater, Epp-Koop, Jakilazek & Green, 2017; Buckland, 2012). Higher unemployment (Myers, Picot, & Pyper, 2020) and exposure to crime (Savoie, 2008) also tend to be common and residents in lower income neighbourhoods report lower levels of trust, social inclusion, and lower participation in voluntary organizations (Stick et al., 2023; Duncan, 2010). Furthermore, this spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion is racialized and sustained through discriminatory beliefs intertwined with Canada’s legacy of colonialism and dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Silver, 2016a).

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## Neighbourhood Effects as a Rationale for Place-Based Interventions

Programs aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion at the neighbourhood or community level (as opposed to programs targeted at individuals or households based on income, housing tenure, educational attainment, etc.) have been pursued for several reasons. One rationale is the presence of *neighbourhood effects*: discriminatory factors based on where one lives, a lack of access to services, exposure to crime, and group or peer effects at the community level that entrench disadvantage and disparity due to environmental factors, compounding and creating negative feedback loops (Musterd & Andersson, 2006). These neighbourhood “poverty traps” (Bowles et al., 2006, p. 2) can worsen or hold back people who may otherwise have better outcomes, as well as lead to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Empirically cited examples of these neighbourhood effects in Canada include health (Hou & Myles, 2005; Janssen et al., 2006; O’Campo et al., 2015), and child cognitive and behavioural outcomes (Boyle & Lipman, 2002; Curtis et al., 2004; Gagné & Ferrer, 2006; Kohen et al., 2009). Studies in other countries have also suggested neighbourhood effects exist with respect to income, education, employment, and social inclusion (Andersson & Malmberg, 2015; Brattbakk & Wessel, 2013; Buck, 2001; Chetty and Hendren, 2018; Clark & Drinkwater, 2002; Mellander et al., 2017; Musterd & Andersson, 2006; Sari, 2012; Vandecasteele & Fasang, 2021).

The importance of neighbourhood effects is contested and methodological challenges have led to divergent findings (Bolster et al., 2007; Durlauf, 2004,

van Ham et al., 2012). In the Canadian context, it has been suggested that stronger effects found in the US are not generalizable to countries with more robust social welfare states (Oreopoulos, 2008; Roos et al., 2010; Bradford, 2013; Howell, 2019). A related critique highlights the flaw of elevating the role of neighbourhood over and above the structural inequality generated in capitalist economies, forcing those with low incomes into impoverished neighbourhoods, suggesting the neighbourhood effects approach has it backwards. That is, instead of poor neighbourhoods generating further poverty, it is the poverty, disempowerment, and disinvestment inherent to capitalism that generates poor neighbourhoods. As a result, residents end up relying more heavily on and derive increasingly important collective benefits from others in their community through shared struggle and solidarity, instead of being harmed by negative peer-group effects (Slater, 2013).

Aside from possible neighbourhood effects, the concentration of poverty in geographic areas provides practical advantages to a place-based approach of poverty reduction and social inclusion initiatives because place-based initiatives allow for better targeting of limited resources. As summarized by Manley et al. (2013, p. 3):

The neighbourhood has long been a site of government intervention. This is because the neighbourhood represents a scale at which many government services and provisions are made (schooling, libraries and so on) and because political representatives are elected at this scale it represents a means to promote and enhance governance. The neighbourhood is a scale at which people can be persuaded to get involved and feel a sense of belonging.

The belief in neighbourhood effects also shapes the type of intervention pursued. The neighbourhood-effects-inspired “poverty deconcentration” through gentrification efforts to bring in higher income residents or the relocation of lower income individuals through housing vouchers and bussing programs, have produced very little evidence of success (Manley et al., 2013), and some have noted the potential for harm (Slater, 2013). Steinburg (2009) highlights that deconcentration programs suffer from a weak evidence base, dismiss the rights of individuals to self-determination in their own communities, and “ignore[s] or slight[s] the evidence that points to viable alternatives ... such as the work of thousands of Community Development Corporations in providing affordable housing for low-income people and contributing to the revitalization of inner-city neighborhoods” (p. 220). These “viable alternatives” are more consistent with the practices that have been advocated for and pursued in the Canadian context. Canada does

not have a tradition of national place-based neighbourhood revitalization or regeneration strategies. However, the initiatives that have taken place have been incremental and based on a more pragmatic recognition of the importance of place and the sufficiency of broader social supports, while acknowledging the significance of diversity among communities and the importance of incorporating place-specific local knowledge (Bradford, 2013).

### Section 3.

# Defining Community-Led Development

CLD IS A place-based approach to poverty reduction and social inclusion that has been developed through and informed by pan-Canadian experiences with neighbourhood development. *Figure 1*, produced by Lisa Attygalle of the Tamarack Institute, a leading CLD learning and networking organization in Canada, highlights how respect of self-determination and incorporation of local knowledge into place-based poverty reduction and social inclusion initiatives can vary in degree, putting forward a spectrum ranging from *community-owned* to *community-informed* change. As illustrated in *Figure 1*, *community-led* initiatives are those where local community members, either as individuals or together through CBOs, not only inform the process but have genuine power and control to set the parameters of the activity (Attygalle, 2020). In addition to not being dictated by outside organizations, genuine community-led action is defined by a “large and diverse number of community members ... involved in supporting, taking action, and decision-making for the work conducted by the community” (p. 2). CLD is a model based on broad community ownership and governance founded on respecting the right to self-determination, leading to more sustainable outcomes that better reflect



**FIGURE 1** Community- Versus Organization-Led Change



Source Attygalle, 2020.

local needs in a manner that is “closely aligned with Indigenous worldviews on leadership and shared decision-making” (p. 3).

Based on their experience researching and guiding large-scale initiatives in Canada, Torjman and Makhoul (2012) developed 10 principles of CLD, summarized in *Figure 2*. We use these principles as a framework to review both the evidence and structure of CLD, organizing them into four categories related to: community leadership and empowerment; the emphasis on an asset-based, capacity-building approach; the non-linear and iterative development path; and the role of government.

**FIGURE 2** Community-Led Development Principles

<b>Outcomes at the Community Level</b>	
<b>1. The voices and views of citizens lie at the heart of CLD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• concerns/preferences of citizens drive the articulation of community vision</li><li>• people in impoverished areas seek to rebuild their communities</li><li>• contributions from diverse backgrounds are valued; the process is inclusive and participative</li><li>• citizens identify and prioritize issues and determine appropriate interventions</li></ul>
<b>2. CLD seeks to empower community members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• inequality in power relations is addressed</li><li>• community capacity and competencies are developed</li><li>• consensus building and co-operation is sought</li></ul>
<b>3. CLD initiatives are guided by local leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• local governance bodies are co-created as a focal point for planning</li><li>• decision-making responsibilities are shared collaboratively with government</li></ul>
<b>4. CLD involves the identification of community priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• governance is a shared partnership between community and government</li><li>• the community identifies priorities</li><li>• after priorities are identified, the community determines the appropriate course of action</li></ul>
<b>5. CLD approaches have a common set of practice guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• funded activities within a CLD program also follow CLD practices</li><li>• there is a dual focus on both outcomes and processes</li></ul>
<b>Emphasis on an Asset-Based, Capacity-Building Approach</b>	
<b>6. CLD approaches have a common set of practice guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• communities are assessed in terms of strengths, rather than deficits</li><li>• natural, built, human, social, and financial assets are mapped</li></ul>
<b>7. Community assets are applied/harnessed towards a framework for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a vision statement of the intended pathway is developed</li><li>• steps to achieving the vision statement are determined</li><li>• areas where outside expertise is needed are identified</li></ul>
<b>Systematic, Evolving, and Non-Linear Processes</b>	
<b>8. CLD is an evolving process with specific steps moving towards goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• strategic steps are planned to advance community goals</li><li>• broad in scope, multiple issues are tackled to achieve a wide-ranging impact</li><li>• initiatives are comprehensive and holistic to create lasting transformative change</li><li>• longer timelines are accommodated for complex problems</li></ul>
<b>9. CLD is a non-linear process of continual learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the process includes ongoing evaluation adjustment and continual improvement</li><li>• learning and increased community capacity are valued outcomes</li></ul>
<b>Government as an Exemplar, Investor, and Enabler</b>	
<b>10. CLD requires an enabling environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• government as exemplar</li><li>• government as investor</li><li>• government as enabler</li></ul>

Source Torjman & Makhoul, 2012.

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## Principles 1–5: Community Leadership and Empowerment

Principles 1 to 5 focus on how CLD models emphasize the social processes of democratic community participation, empowerment, and relationship building. CLD models recognize that specific geographical locations have unique challenges, as well as unique resources and priorities. Community members have important local knowledge to draw on and discrepancies often occur if outside organizations assume they understand what communities' priorities are (Loha, 2023). Top-down interventions from outside the community are unlikely to accurately reflect local variables or priorities and as a result they frequently fail. Broad inclusive and participatory community engagement supports greater community buy-in, innovative and creative solutions, and the achievement of sustainable outcomes.

Successful CLD initiatives recognize that geographic communities are not homogeneous and that hearing voices from diverse backgrounds can be a rich source of expertise and information when planning community change. Democratic, inclusive processes aim to ensure that all voices are heard, but inclusion is often difficult to achieve and does not occur without intentionality. Many members may not feel welcome or face barriers to participation (Pothier, 2016). Co-operative and collaborative community engagement at all stages and in all processes ensures creative and innovative solutions, encourages community ownership, and strengthens the sustainability of the intervention (EKOS, 2010). Engagement also leads to a more informed community, ensures greater understanding of the decisions being made, builds trust between local partners and community, and builds capacity (EKOS, 2010). If successful, feelings of social isolation are replaced by increased social cohesion and a sense of belonging (Gorman, 2006).

Successful CLD models need “champions at many levels” (Gorman, 2006, p. 7). Local leaders and organizations are necessary but insufficient to drive community change. Bringing together groups of people with different skillsets who might not normally be involved in the same projects leads to greater program innovation. Community development corporations (CDCs) provide support to community initiatives as ‘bridge builders’, which Gorman describes as “individuals and local level organizations that function as intermediaries among residents, neighbourhoods and the larger ‘systems of support’” (Gorman, 2006, p. 7). Local CDCs can provide a focal point for change (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012), but lasting change requires many people, each collaborating based on their area of expertise, including government, community stakeholders, academics, private funders, international organizations, and other communities.

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## **Principles 6 and 7: Asset-Based Approach and Focus on Capacity Building**

CLD programs are asset based, including financial, physical, human, natural, social, cultural, and financial assets, emphasizing that all communities, no matter how impoverished, have capabilities, skills, and inherent resources on which to build a strong foundation (Torjman and Makhoul, 2012). Research has also shown that an asset-based approach to community change is more powerful than a deficit-based approach as it creates an abundance mentality rather than a poverty mentality (Gorman, 2006). By utilizing existing strengths, communities can harness and apply their identified assets to arrive at appropriate place-based solutions (Gorman, 2006). However, beginning from an assumption of inherent strengths does not ignore community deficits and deep-rooted challenges a community faces (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). Rather, by acknowledging existing assets that can be drawn upon, it is easier to identify areas where outside resources are necessary to compensate for deficits (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). Mapping assets has become a key methodology in successful CLD programs (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

Capacity building at both individual and community levels is essential for successful CLD. At an individual level, skills training and education may be required to take advantage of economic opportunities. At a community level, building capacity means ensuring community members and leaders have the necessary competencies for collective action, such as leadership skills to empower community members to pursue systems change (Loha, 2023), or the ability of citizens to engage effectively as partners for collaborating with government. Capacity building also includes building and maintaining networks, which can be a rich source of support and information for communities to make decisions (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

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## **Principles 8 and 9: Systematic and Non-Linear Processes**

Although the first step in the CLD process is to identify priorities, there is no single starting point for CLD. Since CLD models have different starting points, the results will necessarily be different as well, even when common CLD principles are followed. Community members decide where to start and what the priorities are (Loha, 2023). Once assets and community priorities have been identified, communities can go on to build a framework for change

(Torjman & Makhoul, 2012), which can guide the direction of the projects and be used as a measure of progress against initial project objectives.

Just as there is no single CLD starting point, there is no presumed destination to be reached. Interventions can take a decade or more (Gorman, 2006), but CLD is also more sustainable over time because it can gather and maintain resources and assets for long-term development. The processes of CLD are non-linear and iterative, and successful CLD recognizes that process is as important as outcomes and takes longer to resolve when problems are complex (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). This has important implications for evaluating effective CLD because evaluations must reflect open-ended initiatives. Although holistic approaches have been proven more effective than piecemeal interventions (Gorman, 2006), typical funding arrangements only focus on limited outcome indicators, which may not reflect results that are unexpected or difficult to quantify (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

Finally, CLD programs address complex social problems. Complex problems often change in unpredictable ways and have many stakeholders and no clear consensus on solutions or desired outcomes. As a result, they require comprehensive system-level solutions rather than piecemeal government interventions (Gorman, 2006). Because timelines for addressing complex problems are typically long, there may also be changes to the external environment — such as the addition or removal of government interventions or new economic opportunities that cause trajectories to change — and CLD models must be able to adapt (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). Torjman and Makhoul (2012) suggest that when considering interventions for complex problems, it is equally important to ask ‘why’ a program succeeded or failed in addition to the question of ‘what’ aspects of the program worked. This developmental evaluation approach to CLD assumes that mistakes will be made but supports innovative ideas and continual improvement by reducing the fear of consequences of failure, and is flexible for communities choosing different paths to achieving the same outcome (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

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## **Principal 10: Government as an Exemplar, Investor, and Enabler**

In addition to bridge builders, CLD also requires governments to play three key roles in advancing the work according to community-determined priorities (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). Governments have a role in a legislative capacity, working collaboratively across departments and through their own actions in

areas such as staffing diversity and procurement policies. Governments also play a role as enablers by providing stable assistance to local organizations in areas such as capacity building, planning facilitation, easing administrative burden, and providing access to information. Finally, governments play a vital role in providing funding that is patient, sustainable over time, supports core programs as well as capital projects, and encourages additional funding from other partners by taking a leadership role and being ‘first to the table’ (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). Torjman and Makhoul also write that successful CLD requires a shift from government to governance. This requires sharing power and co-creating solutions. Rather than individual programs with considerable bureaucracy and high administration burden, there needs to be broad, frame-setting legislation (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

## Section 4.

# Neighbourhoods Alive!

NA! WAS DEVELOPED as part of the provincial government’s long-term CED strategy to revitalize specific communities facing multiple social and economic challenges, including a lack of affordable housing, high rates of unemployment and crime, and concentrated poverty, by using a comprehensive CLD model. The program was targeted to specific communities in order to “maximize the impact of the initiative’s resources” (EKOS Research Associates Inc, 2010, p. 2). This intergovernmental program established in 2000 by an NDP government was dismantled in 2017 by a Conservative government, which continued to provide core funding for NRCs and limited project funding through a new BSC program.

NA! was a CLD program built on the belief that residents have the best understanding of their local challenges, the knowledge of available resource assets, and the ability to determine appropriate, long-lasting solutions through democratic, community-driven initiatives. Aligned with the broader provincial CED strategy, the NA! program focused on improving local employment and decision making, creating economic linkages with local businesses that would re-invest back into the community, and using local resources as the starting point from which to strengthen the capacity and cohesion of the community (EKOS, 2010). The three long-term outcomes that the NA! program sought were: for communities to have “leadership and capacity to

maintain sustainable neighbourhoods”; for communities to have “enhanced social economic, physical, cultural, and environmental conditions”; and for communities to “have adequate, affordable, safe, quality housing to meet their needs” (EKOS Research Associates Inc, 2010, p. 2).

NA! was unique in that the Government of Manitoba made a long-term – almost two-decade – commitment to foster neighbourhood renewal in challenged communities throughout the province using a comprehensive CLD model that created opportunities for meaningful resident engagement in the decisions that affect their lives (EKOS, 2010). The three central components of the NA! program were:<sup>1</sup>

1. Neighbourhood Development Assistance (average budget \$3.72 million/year in the years 2010/11 to 2015/16), which provided core funding to support the locally administered NRCs for 13 low-income neighbourhoods, including support for the development of five-year community plans.
2. Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (average budget \$3.6 million/year in the years 2010/11 to 2015/16), which provided government project funding to community organizations for projects that supported community renewal. The Fund supported four types of neighbourhood revitalization projects: capacity building; stability by improving local facilities and public spaces; economic development, including local business opportunities and employment opportunities; and well-being activities that promote neighbourhood safety and cohesion. It was intended to be used to support objectives identified in the five-year community plans developed by NRCs (EKOS, 2010).
3. Neighbourhood Housing Assistance (average budget \$615,000/year in the years from 2010/11 to 2015/16), which provided government funds to support local housing-improvement initiatives (EKOS, 2010).

In addition, there were several other resources under the umbrella of NA! available for varying periods of time including:

1. the Community Initiatives Program (average budget \$261,000/year from 2010/11 to 2015/16);
  - training initiatives (average budget \$448,000/year until 2014);
  - community youth recreation (average budget \$82,000/year);



- the Localized Improvement Fund for Tomorrow (LIFT) (average budget \$351,000 until 2014).;
- the School Resources Officer Program;
- lighthouses;
- urban arts centres;
- small grants; and
- residential and exterior fix-ups and storefront improvements.

The cumulative expenditures for all components of the NA! program from 2000 to 2016 was approximately \$96 million, or approximately \$6 million per year.

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## Evaluation

Overall, results from an evaluation by EKOS Research Associates concluded that the NA! program had successfully implemented CLD principles within the provincial CED framework and community results had been positive. Furthermore, the individual components of the NA! program, including Neighbourhood Development Assistance, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and Neighbourhood Housing Assistance, were found to be appropriate and complementary in supporting a comprehensive approach towards revitalization. Government funding and the requirement of high community participation in the CLD model were both identified as essential to the success of neighbourhood revitalization. However, insufficient funding to support program administrative capacity and a focus on short-term project funding were both identified as hindrances to the process of revitalization. Competing community priorities and changing government policy were also identified as potential program weaknesses. Finally, the EKOS report found that the NA! model was regarded as a ‘best practice’ for neighbourhood revitalization (EKOS, 2010).

## Neighbourhood Development Assistance

The EKOS evaluation reported that NRC capacity generally grew as the NRCs became more established in the community, but this was often dependent on the strength of key personnel and Neighbourhood Development As-

sistance funding was seen to be insufficient to maintain skilled staff, meet the increasing needs of communities as more projects were taken on, and provide sufficient resources for undertaking more complex CED projects. Results showed that NRCs played a valuable role in establishing linkages between communities and other stakeholders, including various levels of government, local service providers, and additional funders. The NRCs were seen as providing trained personnel who are a source of information on both government services available to communities and existing resources within communities.

### **Neighbourhood Housing Assistance**

From 2000 to 2010 the provincial government committed \$12.7 million to the Neighbourhood Housing Assistance fund for housing renovation and new construction, which was leveraged with other sources of funding. The EKOS report found that Neighbourhood Housing Assistance has helped rehabilitate housing stock in designated NA! neighbourhoods, but it was difficult to isolate the impact of the NA! program on housing stock because there are many other contributing factors, such as other government programs, interest rate changes, and changes on overall housing prices. Availability of appropriate affordable housing was found to be a serious problem in all of the NA!-designated neighbourhoods, and improvements in housing quality were frequently associated with decreasing housing affordability through processes of neighbourhood gentrification. A positive result of housing renewal through the Neighbourhood Housing Assistance program was that it provided training and employment opportunities for community members facing multiple barriers to entry into the workforce.

### **Neighbourhood Renewal Fund**

As the biggest fund available for neighbourhood revitalization, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was found to be a critical component of the NA! program, enabling access to funds for a wide range of projects connected to community priorities that would not have occurred without it (EKOS, 2010). Although the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was seen as being flexible enough to include a wide range of projects that often supported multiple community goals, the application process was described as lacking clarity and transparency, and the short-term nature of project funding was problematic for the sustainability of successful activities. Although most Neighbourhood

Renewal Fund projects required additional funding, the Fund was able to provide a “platform of stability and gives ... viability” (EKOS, 2010, p. 35) for other project funders. Between 2000 and 2010 approximately 630 projects received \$20 million from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund for increasing revitalization efforts in NA! designated communities. The most common Neighbourhood Renewal Fund projects included improvements to community spaces and beautification activities, which supported the goal of community stability. These projects were seen as straightforward and providing visible examples of community improvement that increased community pride and encouraged residents to become more engaged in their community. Many Neighbourhood Renewal Fund activities were also identified in the EKOS report as promoting the goal of neighbourhood capacity building, including neighbourhood consultations and outreach activities, individual skills-building activities, and collective activities that increased social development and community pride. Most projects were seen as promoting the goal of improving a sense of community well-being. However, projects aimed specifically at crime prevention and safety were often found to have mixed results. The NA! goal of improving neighbourhood economic development was found to be the most challenging goal and achieved only limited success for Neighbourhood Renewal Fund projects. The main reasons given for this outcome were that the NA! neighbourhoods typically had “low capacity in business” (EKOS, 2010, p. 40) and the NRCs lacked expertise in supporting more complex economic development initiatives. There was some success in NRC policies of hiring local community members and in providing training and skills building for community members, especially youth.

Turning to the community experience as reported in focus groups and survey data gathered in 2010 (the ten-year mark for one half of the NA! communities and the five-year mark for the other half) the EKOS report found that the NA! program was generally considered modestly successful by residents. Sixty-six percent of respondents were unfamiliar with the NA! program overall, but 60 percent were familiar with the NRCs or had heard of such an organization in their community. 78 percent of those who knew about the NRCs found them helpful, although a few commented that they were underfunded. 60 percent had participated in one or more NRC community activity the previous year, which was higher than both provincial and federal averages. Half of surveyed residents said they would like to become more involved in community activities, and of the half who said they were not interested, the most common reason given was lack of time. 83 percent of residents felt that they were at least somewhat well-informed

about neighbourhood programs. Just over half of respondents had noticed revitalization projects going on in their neighbourhood, particularly beautification and greening projects, and 91 percent felt that these projects were helpful for the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the most noticed improvements over time were: housing renovations and the overall appearance of the neighbourhood; residents taking initiative and an increased focus on community; improved or increased access to public facilities, recreational activities, and cultural/traditional activities; and improved infrastructure. Perceived negative changes over time included housing affordability and crime and safety, with 33 percent reporting that crime and safety were still big challenges. Finally, almost all focus group participants reported that overall, they were happy with their community and had no plans to leave. Forty-three percent of survey respondents reported being more satisfied with their community in 2010 than in the past, and 13 percent of survey respondents reported being less satisfied with their community in 2010.

## Section 5.

# Comparative Case Study of CLD Programs

A TOTAL OF eight CLD models were examined in addition to NA! for comparative purposes. The other Canadian models included: the Vancouver Agreement, Vancouver, BC; Action for Neighbourhood Change, pan-Canadian; Neighbourhood Action Strategy, Hamilton, ON; and Vibrant Communities, pan-Canadian. The four international models were Inspiring Communities/Community Led Development Program, Aotearoa/New Zealand; New Deal for Communities, England; Building Healthy Communities, California; and the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Table 2* summarizes the key attributes of each program. Inclusion in our sample required a commitment to CLD principles and published evaluation literature. A more detailed review of program details and evaluation outcomes by program are found in the online Appendix.

**TABLE 2** Summary of Jurisdictional Scan Programs

Program Name	Vancouver Agreement	Action for Neighbourhood Change	Neighbourhood Action Strategy	Vibrant Communities	New Deal for Communities	Inspiring Communities	Building Healthy Communities Initiative		Minneapolis Neighbourhood Revitalization Program	Neighbourhoods Alive!
Location	DTES, Vancouver	Pan-Canadian	Hamilton, ON	Pan-Canadian	United Kingdom	New Zealand	Richmond, CA	East Oakland, CA	Minneapolis, MN	Manitoba
Years of Program (Extensions)	2000–2005 (2010)	2005–2007 (disc. 3 years early)	2011–2016	2002–2010	2001–2010	2016–present	2009–2020	2009–2020	1991–2011	2000–2016
Government Partner(S)	federal/provincial/municipal	federal	municipal	none	central government	federal	municipal	none	municipal	provincial
Funding Model/Primary Funder	unfunded	federal	Municipal/Hamilton Community Foundation	Tamarack & McConnell Foundations	central government	federal government	foundation	foundation	municipal	provincial government
Lead Community Partner	local 'coordination unit'	local United Way	neighbourhood planning teams	local 'convenor organizations'	local NDC partnerships	Department of Internal Affairs (dedicated support staff)	BHC representative	BHC representative	neighbourhood association	neighbourhood renewal corporations
Community Targeted or Self-Selected	targeted	targeted	targeted	self-selected	targeted	self-selected	targeted	targeted	targeted	targeted

## Comparative Analysis of Case Studies

*Table 3* compares outcomes of the nine CLD case studies. The outcome criteria used was established by the European Community Development Network and is broadly reflective of outcomes commonly expected from CLD programs. However, given the diversity of the CLD case studies examined, the outcomes measured in *Table 3* may align more closely with some studies than with others. The scale developed for evaluating outcomes was as follows: ‘yes’ (or ‘no’) indicates that there was clear evidence in the available literature that an outcome was achieved (or not achieved) by the majority of the communities participating in the study; ‘somewhat/variable’ indicates that an outcome was either inconsistently achieved by a single community, or there were varying results between communities in a case study with multiple locations; and ‘unknown’ indicates that available evaluative information did not address a particular outcome. The case studies examined were each unique interpretations of CLD principles. The studies differed significantly in terms of design, scope, funding models, duration, number of communities involved, measurements of success used, and how and when evaluations were performed. These differences make comparisons challenging and

**TABLE 3** Case Study Outcomes\*

Program Name	Vancouver Urban Development Agreement	Action for Neighbourhood Change	Neighbourhood Action Strategy	Vibrant Communities	New Deal for Communities	Inspiring Communities	Building Healthy Communities (Implementation Phase)		Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program	Neighbourhoods Alive!
Location	DTES, Vancouver	Pan-Canadian	Hamilton, ON	Pan-Canadian	United Kingdom	Aotearoa New Zealand	Richmond, CA	East Oakland, CA	Minneapolis, MN	Manitoba
Study Evaluation (Author / Date)	Bradford (2013)	Bradford (2013)	Neighbourhood Action Evaluation/City of Hamilton (2018)	Caledon Institute of Social Policy (2007)	Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (2010)	Dovetail/Kinnect Group (2021)	Rosen et al. (2018)	Rosen et al. (2018)	Fagotto and Fung (2006), Holzer (2017)	EKOS Research Associates (2010)

**Outcomes at the Community Level**

Better Quality of Life										
concrete physical improvement to community	yes	unknown	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable	unknown	unknown	yes	yes
creation of new community services	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable	unknown	yes	yes	unknown	somewhat/variable	yes
improved employment opportunities	yes	somewhat/variable	no	somewhat/variable	no	unknown	no	no	unknown	somewhat/variable
improved access to community services	yes	unknown	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	unknown	unknown	somewhat/variable	yes
Increased Community Leadership										
increased engagement in community activities	somewhat/variable	unknown	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	no	somewhat/variable	yes
empowerment/critical consciousness of community members	somewhat/variable	no	no	somewhat/variable	no	yes	unknown	unknown	no	yes
increased knowledge and skills of residents	unknown	somewhat/variable	unknown	yes	no	somewhat/variable	yes	no	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable
active participation in community decision making	no	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	yes	no	yes	somewhat/variable	no	somewhat/variable	yes
Strengthened Community Capacity										
communities are active and resilient	somewhat/variable	unknown	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	no	somewhat/variable	unknown	unknown	unknown	yes
able to engage/contest power	no	no	somewhat/variable	unknown	no	somewhat/variable	no	no	no	somewhat/variable
able to develop plans and implement for community benefit	no	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes

**TABLE 3** Case Study Outcomes\*, Continued

Program Name	Vancouver Urban Development Agreement	Action for Neighbourhood Change	Neighbourhood Action Strategy	Vibrant Communities	New Deal for Communities	Inspiring Communities	Building Healthy Communities (Implementation Phase)	Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program	Neighbourhoods Alive!	
<b>Improved Overall Community Experience</b>										
increased sense of belonging and solidarity	unknown	unknown	no	unknown	no	yes	unknown	no	unknown	yes
strengthened sense of community ownership and pride	yes	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	yes	yes	unknown	unknown	unknown	yes
communities are inclusive/able to manage conflict	unknown	unknown	no	unknown	no	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	no	no	yes
increased fundraising capacity	no	somewhat/variable	unknown	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	yes	no	no	somewhat/variable	yes
<b>Outcomes at Policy, Structural, and Governance Levels</b>										
Community networks/partnerships form to support collective interests	yes	yes	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	yes	no	somewhat/variable	yes
Decision makers consider community issues	somewhat/variable	yes	yes	yes	no	somewhat/variable	yes	no	yes	somewhat/variable
Communities are able to influence decision making	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	no	yes	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable
Decision makers support community plans	no	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable	no	yes	no	no	yes	somewhat/variable
Policy changes benefit marginalized communities	yes	yes	somewhat/variable	somewhat/variable	unknown	unknown	yes	no	no	yes
Legislative changes benefit marginalized communities	unknown	yes	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	no	no	yes
<b>Outcomes at a Policy Lens Level</b>										
Service agencies and institutions respond effectively to community	yes	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	yes	unknown	yes	yes
Decision makers meaningfully share power with community	no	somewhat/variable	no	somewhat/variable	no	somewhat/variable	no	no	somewhat/variable	no
Transparency is evident in decision making	unknown	somewhat/variable	unknown	unknown	unknown	somewhat/variable	unknown	no	unknown	no
Decision makers have a well-informed understanding of community issues	unknown	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	unknown	unknown	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable
Public servants have a well-informed understanding of community issues	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	unknown	yes	yes	somewhat/variable	yes	somewhat/variable

\* Based on European Community Development Network Common Framework for Community Development, 2014.



somewhat subjective, however it is also indicative of the broad application of CLD principles.

Although *Table 3* cannot be read as a ‘scorecard’, it can broadly be understood as highlighting relative strengths and weaknesses of some CLD models compared to others according to the outcome criteria. By the outcome criteria listed on *Table 3* it is clear that the NA! program fared very well, particularly in areas of community level outcomes, with positive outcomes in better quality of life, increased community leadership, strengthened community capacity, and improved overall community experience. NA! also had positive outcomes for forming networks/partnerships to support collective interests, and there were indications that service agencies/institutions effectively responded to communities under the NA! program. Furthermore, both policy and legislative changes under the NA! program were found to benefit marginalized communities. Taken collectively, the positive results indicate that NA! was in many ways a best practice for CLD programs.

If there were areas of the NA! program that could be strengthened, they were at the policy, structural, and governance level, and at the policy lens level. Structural outcomes of decision makers considering community and community plans influencing and informing governments saw only variable outcomes. A review of NA! demonstrates that decision makers were not seen to meaningfully share power with communities and decision making was not deemed to be transparent. As noted in the report recommendations, a renewed provincial program in Manitoba can strengthen this outcome through envisioning NRCs as ‘anchor institutions’ capable of contributing to provincial policy goals and working with CLD initiatives and organizations to gain important community insights, support provincial programming, and inform strategy.

Turning to outcomes for our other case studies, we found that the Building Healthy Communities study in California shows that even within a CLD program, two similar communities can have very different outcomes. This case saw significantly more positive outcomes for the Richmond community compared to the East Oakland community, particularly at the policy lens level and policy, structural, and governance level. Program evaluation attributed this to the different role of municipal government in each community. Although government did not provide funding to either community, Building Healthy Communities representatives had a much closer working relationship with government representatives in Richmond, which enabled them to align program goals and reinforce communication with community

to the benefit of all stakeholders. The municipal government in Richmond was a more effective enabler of the foundation-funded CLD program.

Of all the case studies considered, the New Deal for Communities program in the United Kingdom fared the worst based on the outcome criteria used, with only two definitively positive results at the community level and none in either the policy, structural, and governance level or the policy lens level. These results are likely partly due to a misalignment between the outcome criteria used in *Table 3* and the evaluation criteria used by the New Deal for Communities study. However, this very large and long-term UK program also had the most top-down governance design of all the CLD studies examined, with an emphasis on local New Deal for Communities partnerships working with primary service delivery agencies but not engaging extensively with community.

The most recent CLD program evaluated on *Table 3* is the Inspiring Communities program in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The development of the Aotearoa/New Zealand program benefited from the learnings of earlier CLD programs, particularly in Canada, and the large number of positive outcomes at all levels of evaluation suggests that the program has been quite successful so far. This program emphasizes community self-determination, community engagement, and inclusivity, and is supported by dedicated government staff who provide administrative and technical support. The program provides five-year funding, with the expectation that other funding sources will be found to continue community projects at the end of the term. This was one of only two cases reviewed that is not a targeted model, requiring the community to apply to the government program, which means that communities that self-select may not be the communities in greatest need. This leads to a high number of ‘somewhat/variable’ outcomes for this study and reinforces CLD ideas that different communities, with different assets, pursuing different visions will necessarily lead to different outcomes.

Although the literature indicates that a targeted approach is a best practice for using limited resources effectively, there is still the issue of how to determine which communities are chosen. Generally, the communities with the greatest level of poverty are chosen. There are also questions regarding the appropriate size and boundaries of communities. In the New Deal for Communities program it was suggested that community boundaries, which averaged 10,000 residents, should be decided along lines of other service delivery agencies such as police jurisdictions for ease of working partnerships (Batty, et al., 2010). Within the NA! program, a similar question of boundary lines for communities was raised when considering how

‘shoulder’ neighbourhoods could best be supported (EKOS, 2010). From our survey, the number of locations does not seem to be a factor in successful CLD implementation; however, observations from numerous programs report that having multiple communities in a program can provide a rich source of peer knowledge.

The other case study that did not use a targeted approach was the Minneapolis Neighbourhood Revitalization Program. In this program, all of the city’s existing 81 neighbourhoods were included, however, each neighbourhood self-selected from one of three city-determined categories (protection, revitalization, or redirection neighbourhoods), representing different levels of physical decline. The city then applied a formula that incorporated size, population demographics, poverty levels, and housing conditions to determine funding levels that benefited more impoverished neighbourhoods (Holzer, 2017). The results of this method seem to have been mixed. On one hand, some evaluations felt that by including all neighbourhoods the program achieved a high level of legitimacy and that, collectively, the voice of neighbourhoods has been institutionalized in municipal governance to a degree not found in more targeted programs. On the other hand, there were significant power differentials within many neighbourhoods along the lines of homeowners versus renters and minorities, which favoured homeowners (Fagotto & Fung, 2006; Filner, 2006). Minneapolis may have had mixed outcomes at the community level, but the Neighbourhood Revitalization Program model had strong outcomes at both the policy, structural, and governance Level and the policy lens level. These results are almost the exact opposite of the NA! model, suggesting that a new CLD program in Manitoba could benefit from a closer examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the Minneapolis program (see the Appendix for further details of the Neighbourhood Revitalization Program model).

Action for Neighbourhood Change was a two-year (cancelled three years early by the incoming Stephen Harper Government), pan-Canadian program led by the federal government. Despite its short duration, *Table 3* shows the Action for Neighbourhood Change program had very positive outcomes at both the policy, structural, and governance level and policy lens level. The Action for Neighbourhood Change program was particularly focused on opening up communication and learning between many stakeholders. Intentional ‘policy dialogues’ were initiated directly between community and multiple federal government departments in an effort to build relationships and understand what policies hindered CLD program outcomes. Not only did procedures change as a result of Action for Neighbourhood Change, but

there was also an acknowledgment that CLD on its own was insufficient and required ‘up-stream’ preventative policies to ensure meaningful lasting change.

*Table 3* also highlights outcomes that may be easier or more difficult to achieve using CLD principles. Under community level outcomes we see that among the most difficult outcomes to achieve is ‘improved employment opportunities’. This was specifically mentioned in the New Deal for Communities study, which found that ‘people-based’ outcomes are harder to achieve than positive ‘place-based’ outcomes, such as community beautification. However, since at least one study (the Vancouver Agreement study) did have notable success in improving employment opportunities, it remains a viable goal of future CLD programs.

NA! reports a variable outcome on the employment measure. Some programs, such as social enterprise, youth skill-building and first-jobs initiatives, training programs, and employment at CLD organizations themselves have been successful in this regard, but future programs based on NA! can strengthen programming and funding availability to achieve this outcome. For an NRC to deliver this workforce development activity, it is important to keep in mind that it is more typical to be successfully pursued as a later stage activity of an NRC after several years of relationship, networking, and planning activities demonstrating a clear community desire to pursue this type of work. There remain questions regarding whether employment goals, particularly those for non-youth and those with significant barriers to employment that require accommodation, are best addressed at a larger geographic scale in partnership with, for example, work integration social enterprises.

Another community level outcome that was difficult to achieve was ‘communities are inclusive/able to manage conflict’. This reflects the findings of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy study in Hamilton, which has consistently found that, despite inclusivity being a stated part of their mandate and ongoing work, hidden barriers to resident participation along class and racial lines continued to reproduce the power imbalances they were seeking to eliminate (Cooper, Fletcher & City of Hamilton, 2019). Specific problems included feelings of tokenism, vague language of inclusivity, not explicitly addressing power imbalances, barriers to participation, and divergent neighbourhood goals. By comparison, *Table 3* also shows that the NA! program had very positive outcomes on measures of community engagement. Community members reported having many opportunities to be involved in different projects and events at whatever level they desired (EKOS, 2010). Taken together, these findings suggest that community en-

agement is challenging to achieve, should not be taken for granted, and requires ongoing commitment.

Finally, a community level outcome that none of the programs examined were able to achieve consistently was the ability of community to engage/contest power. There could be a few reasons for this result – such as ambiguity in the literature or because CLD models did not intentionally design programs with this outcome in mind – however, given the high number of definitive ‘no’ outcomes, it seems likely that this is a difficult outcome for CLD programs to achieve. NA! was among the initiatives reporting ‘somewhat/variable’, demonstrating a platform on which to build a future program. The asset-based development approach of a renewed CLD program in Manitoba can help contribute to the goal of building the power of communities to engage and contest power, for example, in the face of gentrification and government austerity.

## Section 6.

# From the Ground Up Program

IN SPRING OF 2024, the Province of Manitoba launched the From the Ground Up — Safe Healthy Communities for All (FGU) program. Introduced in the 2024 budget with an allocation of \$12.5 million, the program is aimed at building safer communities by investing in youth programming and crime prevention in the inner city and other high-needs communities. The program supports “a broad range of community renewal efforts including capacity building, wellness and safety, community economic development, social inclusion, housing coordination and children and youth initiatives” (Manitoba, 2024, p. 1). Non-profit organizations, municipalities outside of Winnipeg, and Northern Affairs Community Councils can seek financial support from the program. The program has three streams of funding support: community renewal initiatives; community spaces; and healthy, safe, connected children and youth. *Figure 3* outlines the criteria for each of the funding streams, while *Figure 4* presents the criteria against which proponent applications are assessed.

The FGU program replaced the Building Sustainable Communities (BSC) program. BSC was launched in 2019, amalgamating funding from and replacing a number of programs, including NA!, Community Places (a

### FIGURE 3 From the Ground Up 2024–25 Program Guidelines

#### 1. Community Renewal Initiatives Stream

- Non-profit organizations and Northern Affairs Community Councils: up to 80% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$100,000.
- Municipal governments: up to 50% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$100,000.
- Supports community development projects including:
  - community and organizational capacity building and planning;
  - community economic development initiatives;
  - wellbeing and recreation activities to promote neighbourhood safety and cohesion;
  - anti-racism, bridge building and inclusion initiatives; and
  - housing and safety coordination supports.

#### 2. Community Spaces Stream

- Non-profit organizations and Northern Affairs Community Councils: up to 80% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$100,000.
- Municipal governments: up to 50% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$100,000.
- Supports capital projects that extend, improve or enhance interior and exterior public-use community facilities and spaces.

#### 3. Healthy, Safe, Connected Children and Youth Stream

- Non-profit organizations and Northern Affairs Community Councils: up to 80% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$50,000.
- Municipal governments: up to 50% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$50,000.
- Supports targeted children and youth projects including outreach, wellness, recreation, youth internships, training, and leadership development. Eligible projects and activities may include:
  - planning, feasibility, and needs-assessment projects;
  - capital projects that add to, extend, improve, or enhance community facilities and spaces;
  - activities and training that support the development of leadership and organizational capacity;
  - new or enhanced community initiatives (e.g., new programs, organizational start-ups, prototyping and pilot projects);
  - hosting of a community event (e.g., symposiums and workshops); and
  - equipment (e.g., furniture, sports equipment, and technology).

Source Manitoba, 2024.

capital grant program for non-profit organizations focused on recreation and wellness), Hometown Manitoba (a capital funding program for smaller towns and rural communities to invest in community amenities including public gathering places, character building exteriors, and green spaces), the Community Planning Assistance Program (financial assistance to cost share development plans undertaken by municipalities and planning districts), the Community Support Small Grants Program (project funding for non-profit organizations and CBOs), and Partner 4 Growth (rural economic development funding support for community non-profit entities). These programs together in 2011/12 totalled \$17.1 million in expenditure.<sup>2</sup> By 2015/16, program funding had fallen to \$10.5 million, and when the BSC was launched in 2018, available resources remained effectively frozen at \$10.9 million (\$7.8 million for the grant fund and \$3.1 million for continuing to fund NRCs). While the total funding remained about the same with the creation of BSC, program parameters changed, with the grant fund excluding much of the community

## FIGURE 4 From the Ground Up 2024–25 Application Assessment Criteria

### 1. Project benefits for the province, municipality, and community/neighbourhood:

- Fulfills the responsibilities under provincial legislation or strategies to address government plans and priorities.
- Addresses the key provincial, municipal, Northern Affairs Community Council and community/neighbourhood priorities that support broad community impact.

### 2. Project benefits to community/neighbourhood renewal:

- Supports wellbeing by enhancing community safety and crime prevention.
- Strengthens supports and opportunities for children and youth to reduce at-risk behaviour (e.g. recreation programs).
- Contributes to better wellness/health practices, increases equity and social inclusion, and improves community co-operation.

### 3. Project viability, planning, and financial feasibility:

- Demonstrates that sufficient planning and financial resources are available to complete the project.

### 4. Partnerships and collaboration:

- Demonstrates a commitment to working in collaboration with key partners and community organizations, such as neighbourhood renewal corporations, to maximize project benefits/impact and strengthen neighbourhood coordination.
- Builds on best practices to address community issues and is responsive to community needs.

### 5. Targeted investment:

- Assists community/neighbourhood organizations in addressing a broad range of locally planned initiatives that support capacity building, community economic development, health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and housing coordination and stability (revitalization and beautification) in designated neighbourhoods/communities.

Source Manitoba, 2024.

development programming that was previously supported through NA!. Program eligibility was expanded to municipalities and focused mainly on capital projects, requiring 50% matching funding. This left CBOs working in low-income neighbourhoods at a structural disadvantage, and much of the funding was diverted to higher income communities outside of inner-city neighbourhoods (MacKinnon, 2021).

The FGU program departs in significant ways from the previous BSC program, returning towards program eligibility criteria similar to the collection of provincial programs operating in the early 2010s that were merged into BSC. With respect to similarities to the pre-BSC regime, specifically NA!, FGU “will focus on community-led response and revitalization efforts” (Manitoba, 2024, p. 1), funding programming in addition to capital projects and placing emphasis in the assessment criteria on collaborative partnerships with CBOs such as NRCs. The FGU program references targeting investments in designated neighbourhoods/communities, although these remain undefined in the program guidelines. One continuity with BSC is the province-wide eligibility: Where pre-BSC programming ensured that targeted low-income communities had dedicated support, FGU does not explicitly carve off resources for these areas. Like the BSC, FGU allows municipalities to participate, however the



terms are more favourable to non-profit organizations, with lower matching requirements that can be met in-kind.

With respect to the total amount of funding available, FGU is a step backward. While BSC was not a CLD program or targeted at lower income communities, resources available did increase over its four-year span, increasing to \$25.7 million in expenditures in 2022/23, not inclusive of \$3 million in core funding support to the NRCs. The launch of the FGU program, with an expanded mandate beyond capital and to support youth-focused programming, reduced the funding available to \$12.5 million. Not only is this a large year-over-year cut, but it is below the total level of support in 2011/12 of \$17.1 million in expenditures in this area<sup>3</sup> that, when adjusted for inflation, is the equivalent of \$22.9 million in 2024 (inclusive of NRC funding).<sup>4</sup> The lower amount of funding under FGU is likely to be insufficient to meet the demand for support.

The high demand for limited funding will likely cause additional challenges given the lack of a CLD process in determining priority areas for investment. The previous NA! program had the creation of five-year community plans as a central feature, helping set priorities for a limited funding pool. FGU's stated purpose is to support CLD, and the assessment criteria values collaborative work with CBOs and alignment with community/neighbourhood priorities, with specific references to NRCs. The five-year plans facilitated by NRCs, however, are no longer central, and other factors such as provincial government priorities are also considered. How the province will meaningfully and transparently incorporate community priorities, without any formalized community input or planning process, remains a question.

Section 7.

# Conclusions and Recommendations for a Renewed Manitoba Community-Led Development and Neighbourhood Renewal Program

THE CLD MODEL is based on several principles and desired outcomes. These principles include the understanding that local residents and organizations have the best insight into what their communities need. Using these principles, communities are encouraged to collaborate to prioritize community needs and support local organizations to realize community goals. Manitoba's NA! was a successful longstanding CLD model that empowered people to take the lead in improving their communities. The NA! program provided government support for established NRCs and other key CBOs, including

Indigenous organizations, women’s centres, and family resource centres. Building on the successful NA! program, FGU should support the existing NRC model, facilitate program expansion, and provide project-specific and core funding for NRCs and other key CBOs.

A CLD program should recognize that because each neighbourhood has its own strengths and its own set of priorities, successful community renewal will look different in each neighbourhood. The best ideas for neighbourhood renewal come from the community. A new provincial program should build on the strengths of the community, helping to improve community health, safety, and stability. While successful CLD programs position the government as an investor, exemplar, and enabler, communities are the ones who lead and plan. Our study highlights that this commitment to genuine community empowerment is not only in alignment with respecting self-determination but also with achieving sustainable outcomes. This process takes time and investment in planning resources but has many advantages.

Outcomes of CLD initiatives and organizations in Manitoba include helping facilitate connections between people in order to strengthen empathy and combat polarization, as well as ameliorating poverty and increasing social inclusion. Neighbourhoods are physically transformed through housing improvements and greening projects. Recreational, cultural, and arts programs are created to offer young people positive alternatives. Revitalized public spaces provide opportunities for residents to gather, which helps strengthen community relationships and pride.

CBOs supported through an enhanced FGU program, including NRCs, Indigenous-led organizations, women’s centres, and place-based development organizations, can be leveraged to contribute to and help implement the provincial government’s social, economic, and climate strategies and goals, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Climate Action Plan, and Housing and Homelessness Strategy. A CLD approach can also contribute to reducing social and political polarization in Manitoba communities, in line with the “One Manitoba” vision as articulated by Premier Kinew. Leveraging NRCs and CBOs to support these broader priorities would strengthen the structural and governance outcomes of a new CLD program, positioning CLD initiatives to influence and implement broader government priorities.

Our comparative case study analysis determined that the NA! program was largely an example of best practice and offers a strong starting point for a renewed plan. While the policy, structural, and governance lens and policy lens outcomes of the program were more variable, overall, the program demonstrated strong outcomes in comparison with other similar programs, particularly at the

community level. A small number of community-level outcomes, specifically employment opportunities and skill building, could have been strengthened, but such outcomes are commonly hard to achieve through CLD initiatives. A renewed program should consider carefully the role of CLD in supporting education and employment outcomes and how these outcomes may be better achieved. Given that most of our case studies show challenges in this area, CLD efforts may wish to focus on collaboration and partnerships with larger non-profit organizations and social enterprises specializing in employment and education, particularly for adults and those facing significant barriers to employment.

The provincial government's new FGU program takes some important steps in reversing their retreat from targeted CLD programming support. The changes made through the BSC program had negative equity implications and redirected resources away from lower income to wealthier communities. Focusing on capital funding left many important community development interventions without a provincial funding source to which to apply. The FGU program reinstates eligibility for non-capital CLD programs and introduces some measures to prioritize support for marginalized communities. Going forward, the program has the ability to improve and build on the past success of the NA! model. In order to achieve the important potential outcomes of the CLD model, the following recommendations directed at the Government of Manitoba are proposed:

**1. Refocus the FGU program with a targeted, evidence-based approach based on the best practices of the NA! program.**

This should include incorporating more explicitly a focus that identifies and invests in key neighbourhoods and communities in the greatest need of physical, social, and economic revitalization under the structure set out in the Community Renewal Act, with the requirement to undertake a formal community-planning process to identify community desires and needs in CLD fashion. In addition to producing better and more sustainable outcomes, it will help prioritize the allocation of the limited pool of funds available.

**2. Restore the funding provided under the FGU program to amounts provided under the previous BSC program it replaced, adjusted for inflation.**

In 2022/23, \$25.7 million was allocated through BSC, which restored expenditures comparable to 2011/12 levels for this type of work, in inflation-adjusted terms. This level of support should be maintained and increased with the rising cost of operations.

### **3. Increase core funding to NRCs through multi-year funding agreements.**

In addition to the increased FGU grant pool, increases in core funding to match the rising cost of operations due to inflation should be provided to NRCs through multi-year funding agreements, to a maximum of five years, for demonstrating government commitment to NRCs as core ‘anchor institutions’ facilitating CLD and supporting provincial policy goals and strategies. Funding should support the following:

- The development of innovative five-year plans based on CLD principles.
- Community engagement and capacity building using an asset-based approach.
- Local board and leadership development, including supporting capacity to engage in CLD as well as with government to share information and influence decision making in relation to community priorities.
- The implementation of plans, including funding for administrative, program, and project costs, program salaries, evaluation and outcome reporting, cost-of-living increases, and long-term, effective NRC projects. Funding should be predictable based on an agreed-upon and adhered-to payment schedule, helping NRCs leverage funding from other non-government sources and enabling more organizational stability and sustainability.

### **4. The FGU program should prioritize and set aside funds for CBOs.**

*In addition to more explicitly targeting low-income communities*, funding should be set aside for CBOs, including Indigenous-led organizations, women’s centres, family resource centres, place-based non-profits, and neighbourhood groups, as well as non-profits who represent residents, strengthen local capacity, and revitalize communities through a broad range of locally planned and supported initiatives.

### **5. Introduce a mandate for government departments to work inter-departmentally with FGU to transition successful ongoing initiatives.**

Those initiatives with a demonstrated track record should be transitioned to long-term, multi-year provincial government funding to free up FGU funding for new emerging and innovative initiatives.

**6. Increase emergency support, staffing, and programming to address the housing, mental health, and addictions crises.**

NRCs are struggling with the consequences of seven years of provincial government austerity and the resulting impact at the community level. Many NRCs have seen their capacity to engage in CLD planning diminished, stepping in as frontline service providers to respond to the need for emergency services to address the lack of health and social housing support. These services need to be dramatically scaled up by the provincial government through dedicated and appropriately staffed organizations so NRCs and other CLD organizations can return to their mandated roles as originally envisioned.

**7. Fund sector development and networks or member associations to strengthen collaboration and capacity building among community development agencies and those receiving funding.**

This would promote effectiveness, professional development, sustainability within the sector, and an ‘ecosystem’ approach to the community development network in Manitoba through organizations offering these services. In turn, peer learning would grow and the CLD model could expand to more communities in Manitoba. A goal of this sector development should also include developing the capacity and advocacy skills to meaningfully share power with government decision makers and ensure that the voices of marginalized communities are represented in government decision making more broadly.

**8. Establish a built-in program review to determine the potential need for expanding the proposed targeted focus in the future.**

Incorporating additional neighbourhoods with pockets of poverty where circumstances are deemed promising for CLD is a vehicle for promoting poverty reduction and social inclusion, and for accessing government services linked to the government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, climate action plan, and housing and homelessness Strategy. Opportunities should also be explored to support CLD across the province in all communities, aimed at reducing social and political polarization, division, and exclusion based on racialized status, gender identity, and religious and political beliefs.

**9. Consider options at the policy, structural, and governance levels to improve the transparency of internal government decision making around FGU and other CLD programming.**

These options should include project selection criteria and mechanisms to meaningfully share power with communities in decision making, supporting greater capacity building for advocacy.

**10. Create a strategy and dedicated financing to develop social enterprises and co-ops.**

While the FGU program should support place-based opportunities for employment and labour-market training, including through the use of social enterprise, youth jobs programs, and employment skills programs at a community level, further support in this area is required. Specifically, there is still a need for a strategy and funding to develop social enterprises and co-ops to support larger enterprises and enterprises that service multiple communities.

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## Endnotes

**1** Budget data from Government of Manitoba Housing and Community Development Annual Reports from 2011–2016.

**2** Expenditure amounts cited in this section are calculated based on figures from Manitoba government annual reports for the departments responsible for agriculture, housing and community development, and municipal/local governments.

**3** The collection of provincial programs operating in the early 2010s that were merged into BSC.

**4** This amount also underrepresents the provincial investment in community development support at the time, given the additional investments made through other programs such as the \$3 million Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy targeted at inner-city renewal and the Building Communities Initiative program that provided a total of \$10 million cost shared with the City of Winnipeg between 2010 and 2013 for community infrastructure, and \$3.1 million in support through the previous Department of Children and Youth Opportunities for recreation and crime-prevention programming.



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