BLACKFALDS

SOCIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

JANUARY 2024

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Executive Summary

A Social Needs Assessment (SNA) was carried out in an effort to determine the social needs of residents and youth in the Town of Blackfalds. This SNA involved the development of a community profile, a review of key documents, and the collection of data through a comprehensive engagement process consisting of resident surveys, working sessions, and in-depth interviews.

The information assembled during this assessment was summarized into findings and key themes. These findings and key themes suggested that a significant number of social needs within Blackfalds can be addressed if the following ten priority areas are attended to. Priorities are ordered by relative importance.

1. Mental Health
2. Bullying and Abuse
3. Isolation and Loneliness
4. Substance Use and Addiction
5. Basic Needs
6. Support for Seniors
7. Affordable Housing
8. Connections and Collaborations Amongst Local Agencies
9. Communications
10. Support for Parents and Families

The results of this process were used to generate a SNA. This SNA can be used to improve the social wellness of Blackfalds and improve the quality of life of residents. For this SNA to realize its potential, effective collaboration involving the municipalities, non-profit agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders is necessary. It is recommended that all partners unite their efforts and work as a collective to carry out the following seven implementation strategies.

1. Host a "launch", information, and implementation planning session for all SNA stakeholders in Blackfalds to increase awareness and knowledge of the SNA.
2. Formation of an SNA implementation committee that will have responsibility for supporting the implementation of the plan over time. The committee will act to ensure that evaluation of results and potential changes and updates to the plan occur as required. For Blackfalds, the implementation committee role may fall to the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Board.
3. Encourage all non-profit agencies, organizations, funders, and other stakeholders to incorporate the SNA priorities into their strategic and annual operational plans and identify key indicators from their organizations' perspective to measure progress toward priority outcomes.
4. Create an annual review process that engages all non-profit agencies, organizations, funders, the municipality, and other stakeholders in reviewing the progress made on the priorities and collectively plan for the upcoming year based on the results achieved.
5. Provide an annual progress report to the FCSS Board and Town Council as well as to all agencies and organization so that they can update their respective boards and committees about the status of the plan and their respective current and anticipated contributions.
6. Develop additional, ongoing methods of engaging residents in providing information about portions of the plan and/or specific strategy areas under consideration and development including an ongoing SNA page on the Town's website.

7. Plan and budget for a review of the plan and process to update the document based on current changes in the social, economic, and environmental environment in Blackfalds.

As an established, trusted, and well-respected entity in the Town, Blackfalds FCSS is well-positioned to stimulate efforts to address the ten social priority areas. In some circumstances, Blackfalds FCSS may also be able to facilitate the development of services and resources that address these social priority areas.

The social priorities identified during the SNA are complex and will require dedicated attention across the entire community to adequately address in the months and years ahead. As an established, trusted, and well-respected entity in the Town, Blackfalds FCSS is well positioned to stimulate and initiate efforts to address these social priorities. In some circumstances, Blackfalds FCSS may also be able to facilitate the development of services and resources that work to address social priority areas.

To effectively support implementation of the SNA the following functions may need to be emphasized through reallocating resources, staff training and development and/or identification of new sources of funding:

- Facilitating community engagement.
- Program and service development based on SNA priorities.
- Project leadership and management.
- Provision of outreach supports.

It is important to note, when considering the context of the social priorities identified in the report, that when survey respondents were asked to identify the strengths that they felt currently existed in Blackfalds their top ranked responses included.

- Living close to a large city (i.e., Red Deer) (76%).
- The small-town atmosphere (69%).
- The variety of recreation and social opportunities (48%).
- The safety of the community (47%).
- The community spirit and pride in the Town (27%).

In addition, most respondents (87%) and 68% of youth who participated in the surveys reported they were happy or very happy with their quality of life living in Blackfalds.

Project Description

In early 2022, the Town of Blackfalds FCSS sought the support of a consulting team to conduct a Social Needs Assessment (SNA) for the Town of Blackfalds. The purpose of this project was to determine the preventative social needs of the residents of the Town of Blackfalds and the level to which their needs are presently being met. Prior to this project, the Town of Blackfalds' previous SNA was completed in 2016.

The key deliverable of the project was a SNA that the Town of Blackfalds FCSS, in conjunction with key partners within the community, can utilize to address identified social needs in a thoughtful and strategic way. The consulting team assembled this SNA by carrying out the following key activities.

- Assessing the demographic and societal trends as they apply to the Town of Blackfalds and creating a community profile.
- Reviewing key documents and resources provided by the Town of Blackfalds.
- Implementing an engagement process which included resident and youth surveys, in-depth interviews and working sessions.
- Identifying opportunities for collective impact and strategic partnerships to initiate the development and implementation of new services and resources.
- Exploring potential improvement relating to existing services and resources, volunteer and leadership development, staffing needs, and a suggested long-range timeline for future consideration.
- Evaluating existing social needs and gaps in programs and services aimed at addressing these existing social needs.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE PROCESS

The consulting team adopted a core set of guiding values and principles to guide its efforts in the completion of the study. These values and principles were rooted in the team's previous experience developing and implementing needs assessments and social policy reviews. At a fundamental level, the team believed the project success would be driven by the following.

- Co-creating an approach with the target sector, which builds an ongoing process to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement across a wide cross section by participating in the planning and engagement activities and that enables all parties to share ownership of the recommendations and directions.
- Integrating and building on principles, goals and strategies associated with social development found in existing strategic frameworks in the Town of Blackfalds.
- Using evidence-based information, strategies, and recommendations to identify issues and their root causes as well as provide a foundation on which to build sustainable options and direction for consideration.
- Ensuring that the work of the project contributes to the ability to anticipate future issues and build capacity to both prevent and address issues and opportunities effectively and efficiently.

Further, the consulting team operated in accordance with the following principles:

- The definition of "preventive social services" was consistent with the definition set out in the FCSS Act and Regulation.

- Inclusion and diversity were supported by seeking to engage broadly with rural and urban residents, agencies, and organizations.
- Deliverables and results would be co-created by sharing knowledge, providing education, and creating understanding of the information with residents, agencies, and organizations.

Finally, the consulting team believe that any policies, strategies, and recommendations that emerged from the project must lead to change-oriented action to have value and be effective. It is hoped that the results of this project will leave a legacy of community engagement and increase social wellness and well-being. The energy and resources that all parties who contributed to this project will have been well invested if this goal is achieved.
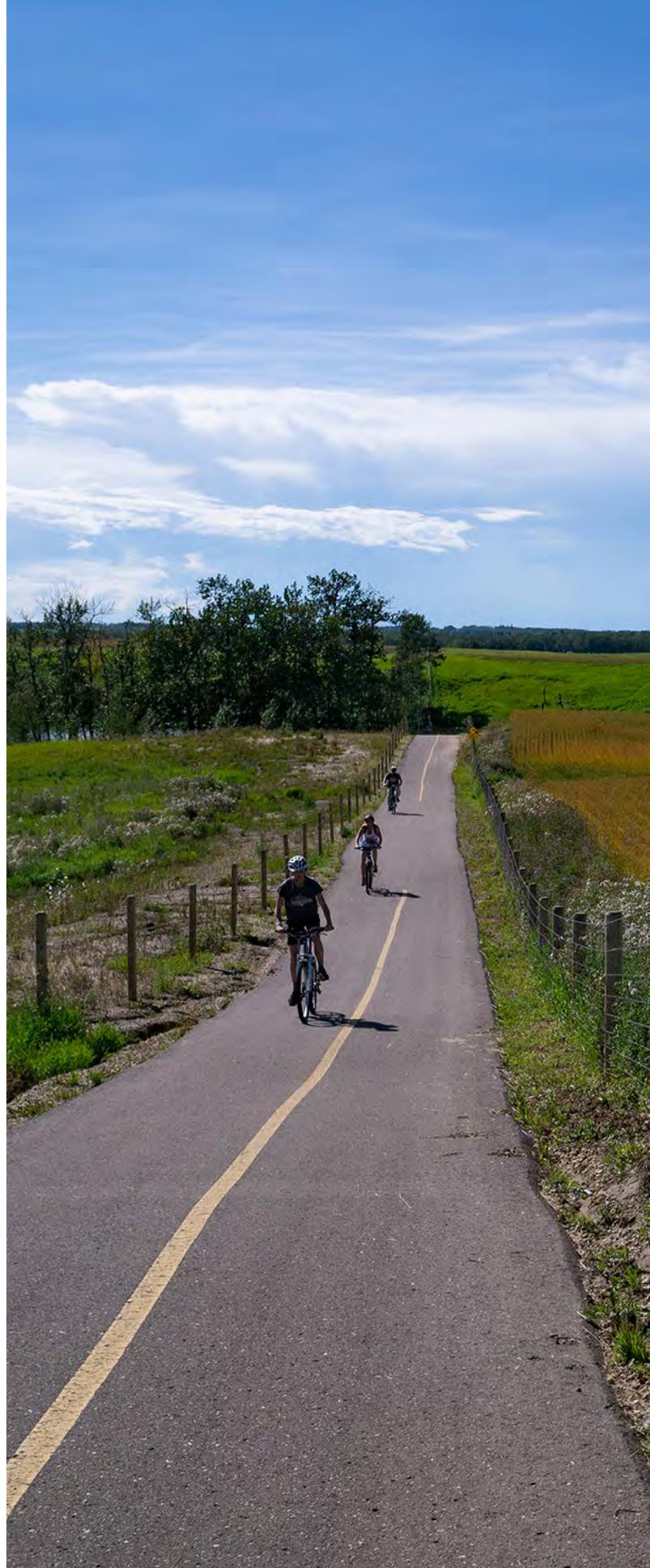
Methodology

The consulting team utilized a mixed method approach that consisted of both quantitative and qualitative strategies to gather, analyze, and interpret data from multiple sources. The specific strategies utilized for each component of the project are outlined below.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Data from Statistics Canada and the 2021 municipal census were used to construct a comprehensive community social profile. The profile describes the key characteristics of the population that resides within the boundaries of the Town of Blackfalds (e.g. size, age, family status).

DOCUMENT AND RESOURCE REVIEW

The Town of Blackfalds provided four key documents and resources to review. The text, figures, and charts within these documents and resources were carefully scrutinized, and pertinent information related to social needs was extracted. This information was then themed and summarized to generate a clear summary of learnings and to formulate priorities for action.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The engagement process consisted of semi-structured stakeholder interviews, intercept surveys, agency and community working sessions and online surveys.

Interviews were conducted with 22 individuals in the community including representatives from the human services and social non-profit sectors, school personnel, Blackfalds Town Administration and the Mayor.

Two online surveys were administered including a resident survey and a youth survey. To maximize response rates, postcards with URLs and QR codes directing residents and youth to the surveys were distributed. A total of 285 responses to the resident survey and 168 responses to the youth survey were received.

Intercept surveys were conducted with youth, individuals and families during Blackfalds Days. A total of 8 youth and 27 individual/family intercept surveys were completed.

Overall, 488 unique individuals shared their input to the SNA through a survey.

In addition, four community working sessions were held to provide further opportunities for agencies, schools, Town Council and Administration with opportunities to contribute input and discuss the social needs and opportunities in Blackfalds. A total of 26 persons participated in the working sessions. A breakdown of the types of participants in the working sessions can be found in appendix 5.

The overall participation in the SNA process through the engagement processes was 536 persons.

NEEDS, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

The data and qualitative information generated from the document and resource review, interviews and surveys were collated and summarized into findings, key themes, and priorities. The resulting list of priorities from each review and engagement activity were analyzed based on their respective rankings and additional qualitative information, resulting in the identification of program and service priority areas. These areas represent the social wellness needs, gaps, and opportunities in the Town of Blackfalds.

Town of Blackfalds Comunity Profile

The Town of Blackfalds is a municipality in central Alberta. Blackfalds is located approximately 14 kilometers north of Red Deer, Alberta. According to the 2021 municipal census, the population of Blackfalds is 11,015. The proportion of males and females in this population is nearly even with 49% of the population identifying as male and 51% of the population identifying as female. The population of Blackfalds has grown by 12.2 percent since the 2016 Federal Census when the population was 9,328.

The age distribution of the population within Blackfalds can be found in the table below. Significant proportion of the population are children and youth, and their families.

Age	Population
0 to 5	1307
6 to 20	2336
21-40	3835
41-55	1717
56-65	803
Over 65	489
Undeclared	538
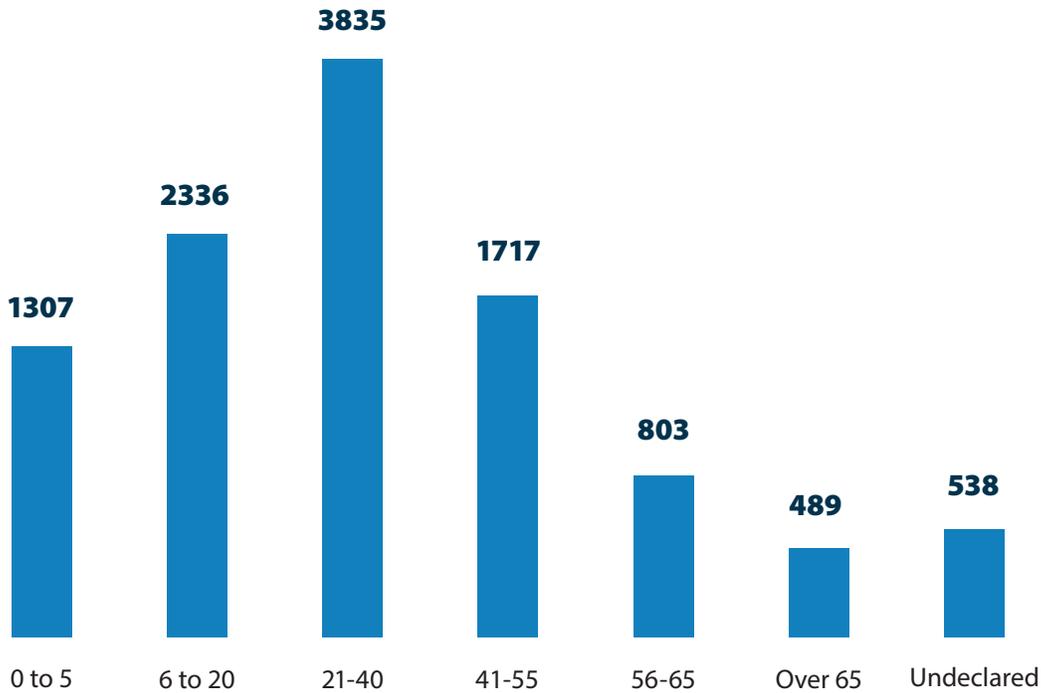
Federal Census comparing Blackfalds to Provincial figures and trends.

CHARACTERISTIC	BLACKFALDS	PROVINCE OF ALBERTA
Indigenous Population	9%	16%
Visible Minority	4%	11%
Average Age	32	38
Married or Living Common Law	64%	59%
Not Married or Living Common Law	36%	41%
Household Size	2.8	2.6
Couple Families	83%	84%
Lone Parent Families	17%	16%
Median After-Tax Income of Families	$89,000	$99,000
Unemployment Rate	12.7%	5.5%
Education – No Certificate, Diploma, or Degree	22%	21%
Education – Secondary School Diploma or Equivalent	39%	30%
Education – Post-Secondary Certificate, Diploma, Degree	39%	49%

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

TOWN OF BLACKFALDS
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Document and Resource Review

Four foundational documents were reviewed as part of the SNA process. The documents were:

- Town of Blackfalds Social Needs Assessment Master Plan – 2016.
- Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan - 2020.
- Town of Blackfalds Report to the Community 2019 - 2020.
- Town of Blackfalds Economic Development and Tourism Strategy - 2021.

A detailed summary of the Document and Resource review can be found in Appendix 1.

PRIORITIES AND ALIGNMENT IDENTIFIED FROM DOCUMENT AND RESOURCE REVIEW

There are several priorities and opportunities for alignment that are evident based on the review of the aforementioned documents. They include:

- Continue to build and support ongoing community engagement.
- Build awareness of FCSS program, services, results and how to access.
- Increase community pride and identity.
- Focus on community safety.
- Engage and support newcomer residents.
- Expand transport support for residents to attend social programs and services.
- Build and sustain community partnerships and collaboration.

- Shared positive quality of life findings.
- Increase access to local health providers particularly mental health across all ages.
- Increase affordable housing options.
- Increase housing options for older residents.

Program and Service Inventory

There are numerous programs and services available to residents of Blackfalds to address their social needs. The following table presents an inventory of these services and is structured according to Town and FCSS services, and other services available.

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
The Town of Blackfalds and Blackfalds FCSS	**Blackfalds FCSS**	Ensures that every student has access to the supplies needed to be successful at school.	Back to School Program: provides school supplies to students	Blackfalds students in grades Pre-K to 12	Various
	Blackfalds FCSS	Free drop-in after school programs.

Activities provide opportunities to build upon social skills, positive values, and self-esteem. | Blackfalds Youth Crew (BYC), providing barrier free youth programs afterschool on Monday (Grades 4-6), Tuesday (Grades 7-12) | Blackfalds youth in grades 4 to 12 | Various municipal facilities |
	Blackfalds FCSS in partnership with Beyond Food Community Hub / Blackfalds Food Bank & Fire Department	Helps eligible Blackfalds families and residents celebrate and enjoy the Christmas season.	Christmas Bureau Distribution of Christmas hampers, including food & gift cards for children's gifts	Low-income eligible residents	Beyond Food Community Hub
	Blackfalds FCSS	Ensure residents have access to Provincial and Federal benefits and credits.	Community Volunteer Income Tax Program	Residents with low to moderate income with a simple tax solution	Various
	Blackfalds FCSS	Volunteer coordination and management.	Volunteer Recognition, coordination of volunteers, volunteer programs.	Volunteer organizations/ individuals operating in Blackfalds	Various

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
The Town of Blackfalds and Blackfalds FCSS (Continued)	Blackfalds FCSS	Engaging seniors and supporting them to participate in a variety of activities that help them stay active and engaged.	50+Walking Club, 50+ Fit and Functional, Snow Angels, Seniors Week Activities, 50+ Chair Yoga, More Than Just a Movie	Seniors	Various
	Blackfalds FCSS	In partnership with Mountain Warehouse, all eligible children and youth in Blackfalds are provided with a new winter jacket.	Winter Coat Program	Children and youth	Various
	Blackfalds FCSS	Barrier Free Community Events.	Family Easter event Community Info/Expo Youth Night Out	Children youth families	Various
	Town of Blackfalds	Providing space for people to plant and tend their own gardens.	Garden plots available	Individual & families	Aspen (37) & Pine Crescent (35) Community Gardens
	Town of Blackfalds	Helping youth gain the knowledge and skills they require to provide safe care to infants and children while babysitting.	Red Cross Babysitting Certification Program	Children and youth	Abbey Centre 2x annually
	Town of Blackfalds	Providing children and youth recreational opportunities outside of school hours and during summer holidays.	Camp'd (PD day camps for children 6-11), Camp Curious & Camp Curious Mini's summer day camps for children 3-11	Children and youth	Abbey Centre

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations	Anam Rural Youth Association	Offering supports to youth, young adults, and families in need.	One on one support for youth ages 13+ and young adults, mental health supports assistance for parents in conflict, high conflict divorce, bullying, inappropriate social media.	Children, youth, and families	Anam Rural Youth Association
	Alberta Health Services Mental Health Supports	Providing health services to the community.	Adult counselling, youth counselling, youth health promotion, tobacco cessations, addiction support, and trauma counselling support	Blackfalds residents	Former FCSS building (youth counselling 1x every second week) Adult mental health 1x per week starting May 2023
	Alcoholics Anonymous	Peer support to overcome alcoholism.	Peer Support Group	Adults	Local church
	Beyond Food Community Hub & Blackfalds Food Bank Society	Provides food to families and individuals.	Provides food to residents including one hamper per month, affordable market, weekly lunchbox program, (continuing pandemic response program with FCSS). Serving families with children in Blackfalds & area, Grad Dress Program, MEGlobal Community Kitchen.	45 to 60 families per month	Beyond Food Community Hub
	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lacombe & District	Provides positive adult mentoring to children in school and in the community. BBBS strives to provide positive one on one adult mentors to children in need and that any child who could benefit from a mentor will have a mentor.	In-school mentoring program and in-community mentoring Summer camps: Go Girls, Kids and Kops Adopt a family at Christmas Traditional Big Brothers Big Sisters	Children aged 6 to 17	Community Centre

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations (Continued)	Blackfalds Senior's Club	Providing activities and social gatherings for seniors in the Blackfalds area.	Lunch Floor Curling Carpet bowling Host Celebrations, outings Participations in community events Monthly card night	Residents of 50 years and older	Various
	Blackfalds on Demand Local Transit (BOLT)	Regional public transit providing service to Blackfalds, and Red Deer.	Regularly scheduled and on demand services throughout the community with two stops in Red Deer (North end, Red Deer Polytechnic) and one in Lacombe County (Aspelund)	Residents of Blackfalds and area	Various
	Care for Newcomers	Helping new immigrants and refugees adjust to their new life in Central Alberta.	English as a second language settlement support in schools. Translation, interpretation and referral. Engage Immigrant Youth Program, Immigrant men's and various women's support groups, focused on different topics and needs.	New immigrants and refugees	Various, but based in Red Deer
	Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association	Support for immigrant women and their families during the settlement process.	Youth and family programming. Employment and skills training for immigrants.	Immigrant women and their Families	Various
	Central Alberta Victim and Witness Support Society	Support, information and referrals for victims and witnesses of crime and tragedy.	Crisis support Court support Information referrals for victims and witnesses of crime and tragedy.	All individuals	Various

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations (Continued)	Central Alberta Youth Unlimited	Provide activities for youth.	Blackfalds Youth Centre Opening Fall 2023	Youth 10 to 15 years old	Former After the Grind facility
	Golden Circle Seniors Resource Centre	A vibrant hub for seniors to meet, build community and enjoy the company and support of their peers.	A variety of programs, activities, information, resources, and outreach including Community Volunteer Income Tax Program. 2022/23 Outreach Pilot Project offering information & referral, home maintenance & housekeeping, assistance accessing support programs, rides for medical appointments, grocery delivery.	Older adults, their families, and caregivers in Red Deer area	Own facility in Red Deer & outreach services to Blackfalds residents
	Kids Konnection	Licensed family day home.	Placement of children into childcare programs and day homes; 24-day homes	Young children	Individual day homes
	Kids3 Daycare	Provide daycare services.	Daycare	Children too young for school	Kids3 Daycare
	Kidsport	Grant funding to support eligible Lacombe County (including Blackfalds) youth to cover sport registration fees.	Youth sport registration fees.	Children and youth	Various
	Lacombe & Area Family Resource Network (McMan Central)	Offering a variety of prevention and early intervention services for families with children 0-18 years of age.	Early child development, child and youth development, parent education, family support and home visitation, family support for children with special needs, and grandparent support	Children, youth, families	Blackfalds Community Centre

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations (Continued)	**Lacombe and District FCSS**	Light housekeeping, occasional meal prep, assistance and groceries.	Home Support (Contracted and subsidized through Blackfalds FCSS)	Light housekeeping services due to age, disability, hospital discharge, or age	Individual's home
	The Lacombe Foundation serving all of Lacombe County	Provides safe and affordable housing to seniors and families.	Operates affordable housing units in Lacombe, community housing in Lacombe & Blackfalds, lodge living in Eckville and Lacombe, and seniors apartment living in Blackfalds.	Seniors and families in Lacombe County	Tower Manor in Blackfalds (4 suites; wheelchair accessible) & 16 affordable housing units
	Little Star Playschool and Out of School Care	Instill self-esteem and self-worth; child development and childcare.	Playschool, before and after school care, out of school programs, kindercare, and summer care programs.	Playschool for ages 3 to 5 years; afterschool care for children ages 5 to 12	Little Star Playschool
	Optimist Club of Blackfalds	Friends of youth in the community.	Local non-profit that fundraises to provide financial assistance for youth and projects of interest to youth. Specifically skatepark, inclusive playground, mini rink in Eagle Builder Centre, school playgrounds.	Blackfalds youth	Various

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations (Continued)	RCMP School Resource Officer (funding provided through Town of Blackfalds operating budgets)	Increasing youth awareness and influencing youth behavior through behavior modeling, mentoring, active learning, and engaging youth to positively influence their peers, school, and community.	Dedicated RCMP officer assigned to a school, building healthy relationships serves as key contact for youth, parents, and teachers. Focus on domestic violence, drugs, alcohol, bullying, child pornography.	Blackfalds youth, their families, and the school community	All Blackfalds schools
	Servus Credit Union Public Library	Providing library services to all residents of Blackfalds and the surrounding area.	Children and youth programming (book/ reading club, afterschool programs (LEGO club). Parenting programs. Large variety of online/ in person afterschool programs.	Entire community	Servus Credit Union Public Library
	Shining Mountains Living Community Services	Provides a range of community services for people at risk for and who are living with HIV/AIDS and/or HCV, homelessness, domestic violence, and addictions.	Cooking and nutrition skills, housing, counselling, referrals, networking, HIV/ AIDS programming.	Anyone whether or not they are First Nations, Metis, Inuit, or status from anywhere in the Red Deer area	Own facility in Red Deer

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations (Continued)	St. Gregory the Great Catholic School	Family School Enhancement Counsellor Program.	Various forms of counselling and mental health support such as: Counselling and mental health support for those with disabilities, domestic abuse support, elder abuse support, family capacity building, foster care program, immigrant and refugee support, addiction recovery support, family support, spiritual care.	All individuals	Various
	Taking Off Pounds Sensibly	Weight management support.	Weekly community support group	Adults	Former FCSS building
	The Outreach Centre (Women's Outreach)	Working to end family violence and poverty by supporting people in their pursuit of a safer, healthier more secure life.	Supporting women and families experiencing domestic abuse/violence, difficulties in meeting their basic needs and identifying barriers to reaching their personal goals. Programs and services offered include: Outreach programs, domestic violence, housing support, suicide prevention, children & youth trauma support programs, legal information.	Women and their children	Own facility in Red Deer

SERVICE PROVIDER	ORGANIZATION	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAMS	TARGET MARKET/ MARKET SERVED	FACILITY UTILIZED
Other Organizations (Continued)	**Wolf Creek Public Schools** **Iron Ridge Elementary Campus** **Iron Ridge Intermediate Campus** **Iron Ridge Junior Campus & Secondary Campus (opening in 2024)**	School Social Worker Program	School Social Workers seek to create healthy families. Counseling services can cover many areas including social skills development, relationship and friendship issues, family violence, family conflict, suicide prevention, sexual abuse, substance use, self-esteem issues.	Pre-K through Grades 9. Secondary Campus (grades 10-12 opening in 2024)	Iron Ridge Elementary Campus (preK-3), Iron Ridge Intermediate Campus (4-6), Iron Ridge Junior Campus (7-9), Iron Ridge Secondary Campus (10-12)
	Vantage Community Services	To build capacity in people by creating opportunities and instilling hope and confidence.	Counselling, transitional housing for youth, life skills training, mental health support, and youth outreach.	Youth, adults, and families in Central Alberta	Various including own facility in Red Deer

Engagment Findings - What We Heard

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

DESCRIPTION

Interviews were conducted with 22 individuals in the community including representatives from the human services and social non-profit sectors, school personnel, Blackfalds Town Administration and the Mayor. These interviews were carried out over the duration of the project. Representatives interviewed included a diverse array of individuals with leadership, management, and front-line program and service delivery experience. These individuals possessed a high degree of experience developing and implementing programs and services aimed at addressing social needs within the Town.

During the interviews individuals were asked to share their views on the strengths and assets that exist within the Town of Blackfalds. They were also asked to describe how these strengths and assets could be leveraged to address social needs. The individuals were then asked to identify and comment on the issues, challenges, and barriers that they see in relation to social needs. Program and service gaps were explored. And finally, these individuals were asked to provide a recommended course of action that the Town of Blackfalds can take to overcome issues, challenges, and barriers and fill program and service gaps in the future.

FINDINGS

The information collected during interviews was analyzed using a ground theory approach. This approach allowed themes to emerge from the results without undue bias from a preconceived set of theories or expectations. A summary and set of recommendations for each of these themes is presented below. Specific comments from the individuals who participated in interviews are in Appendix 2.

Themes from Interview Participants

Strengths
- The spirit of connectivity in the community.
- FCSS does great work and has a great reputation.
- Actively connecting people in the community.
- Events held in the Town bring people together.

Program and Service Priorities
- Engage people with lower income levels in appropriate supports and services.
- Increase arts and culture programs and activities for children and youth.
- Children and youth support for positive relationships and positive communication.
- Increased programs and services for families who have children with disabilities.
- Increased support for parenting.
- Need for local mental health psychologists and counsellors.
- Programs and service for seniors.

Opportunity Priorities
- Repurpose available spaces for social programs and services.
- Engage the new high school in social supports for students.
- Increase regional collaboration.

Agency and Community Organization Working Sessions

DESCRIPTION

Four working sessions involving agency and community organizations, schools, the FCSS Board, members of Town Council and Town Administration were held in Blackfalds. In total 26 individuals attended and actively participated in the working sessions.

Participants worked through five question areas including identifying strengths, agency and organization challenges, social issues and opportunities, prioritization, and identification of high-level success indicators. The participants also discussed possible strategies and actions that may work to help resolve the identified social issues and take advantage of the potential opportunities. The summarized and themed findings included below are to be viewed in context with the other streams of engagement leading up the SNA. Specific comments from the individuals who participated in the working sessions can be found in Appendix 3.

FINDINGS

Strengths

- In-home supports.
- Rural outreach.
- Working relationships with schools.
- Businesses support to events.

PROGRAM AND SERVICE THEMES

Children and youth

- Bullying, online and face to face.
- Adult role models and community leaders.
- Community safety.
- Support for children and youth with disabilities.
- Intergenerational opportunities.

Families

- Parenting supports and early years parenting courses.
- Support for families when one parent is away working.
- Positive family dynamics.
- Increased affordable childcare options.
- Affordable housing.
- Events that provide opportunities for families.
- Recreation facilities including Abbey Centre, parks, and community spaces.
- Town Administration and Council open to listening to ideas.

OPPORTUNITY THEMES

Communication

- Increase awareness of existing social programs and services.
- Target communication to reduce volume.
- Option for online communication.

Volunteers

- Build the pool of volunteers.
- Volunteering as community engagement.

Schools

- Engage new high school in SNA implementation.

Faith Communities

- Faith communities to connect on social priorities.

Community Identity

- Community is struggling with identity due to high growth.
- Increased population diversity and proximity to major centres driving identity struggles.

Resident Survey

DESCRIPTION

A survey was fielded with households in the Town of Blackfalds. Through consultation with the Town of Blackfalds FCSS, the questionnaire was finalized and programmed into an online platform. While the primary means of fielding was online, a hardcopy version was also developed.

To promote the survey, one thousand postcards were produced and distributed to residents within Blackfalds during various project engagement activities (e.g., interviews, working groups). Further, the survey was promoted heavily through the Town's website and social media accounts. Agencies throughout Blackfalds also supported survey promotion by directing clients and other key stakeholders to the survey online.

In total 285 full and partial responses were gathering during the fielding window of June 15, 2022 and October 1, 2022. The findings are presented below in the order they were asked in the survey. The percentages shown are based upon the number of respondents who provided an answer.

FINDINGS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents who completed the resident survey are presented in the charts below.

37% of respondents were between 45 and 64 years of age. A fifth (20%) of respondents were between 25 and 34 years of age. 10% of respondents were greater than 65 years of age.

RESPONDENTS' AGES

8%
65-75

1%
76+

2%
18-24

5%
55-64

20%
25 - 34

37%
45-54

27%
35-44
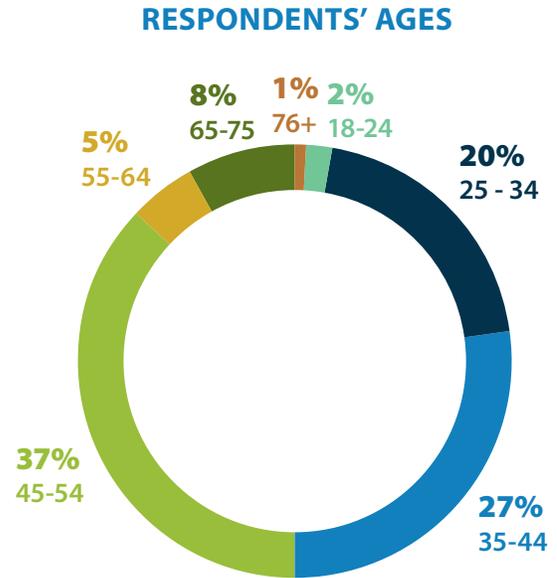
Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents were female. The remaining respondents (36%) were male.

RESPONDENTS' GENDER

36%
Male

64%
Female

RESIDENT SURVEY
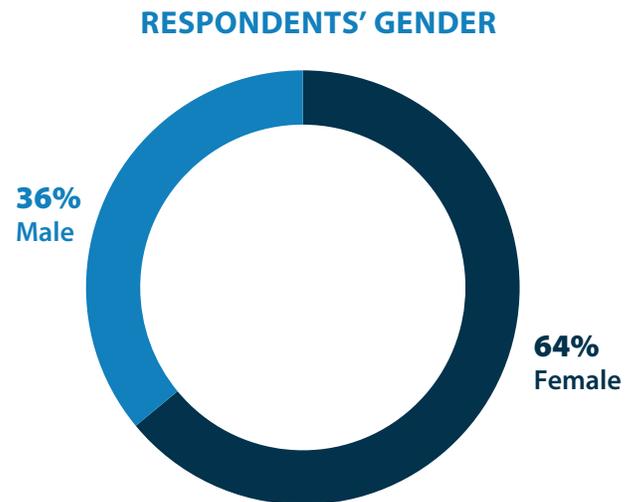
Almost a third (32%) of respondents have lived in Blackfalds for more than 10 years. 28% of respondents preferred not to answer this question. One fifth (20%) of respondents have lived in Blackfalds for 5 to 10 years.

HOW LONG RESPONDENTS HAVE LIVED IN BLACKFALDS

- ■ Less than 1 year
- ■ 1 to 2 years
- ■ 2 to 5 years
- ■ 5 to 10 years
- ■ More than 10 years
- ■ No response
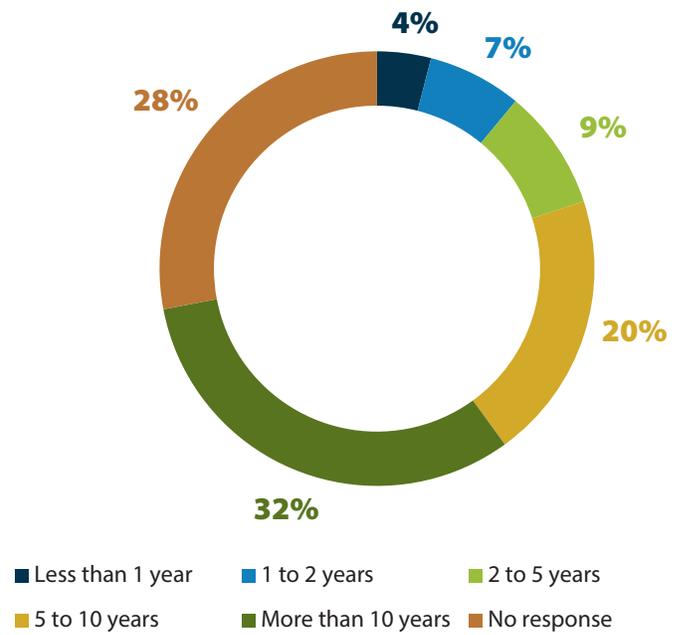
LIVING IN BLACKFALDS

To begin, respondents were asked to identify the strengths of living in Blackfalds. As illustrated in the accompanying graph, 70% of respondents said that living close to a large city (i.e., Red Deer) is a strength of life in Blackfalds. The small-town atmosphere (69%), greenspaces and walkability (66%), and the variety of recreational and social opportunities (48%) were the next most frequently identified strengths.

STRENGTHS OF LIVING IN BLACKFALDS

Good access to social supports and services
16%

Close to a large city
70%

Diversity and inclusion in the community
11%

Welcoming community / good neighbours
47%

Town spirit and pride
27%

Economic stability
9%

Small town atmosphere
69%

Accessible businesses and services
19%

Good access to healthcare
9%

Green spaces / walkability
66%

Variety of recreational and social opportunities
48%

Affordability
22%

Safe Community
47%

In total, 90% of residents indicated that kindness and mutual support are areas of high importance to them when considering social needs in Blackfalds.

Being able to access needed social programs and services (84%), and acceptance of cultures, disabilities, and individuals (81%) were also identified as social areas of high importance to respondents.

The importance and priority of each identified social area to residents is determined by combining the percentage numbers stated as very important and important. The somewhat important number (%) is used to differentiate when two social areas score the same.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL AREAS TO BLACKFALD RESIDENTS

■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not at All Important ■ Unsure

A sense of belonging to the community

| 29% | 45% | 20% |

Opportunities to know your neighbours

| 24% | 44% | 20% |

Opportunities to provide input into civic matters

| 28% | 48% | 16% |

Opportunities to volunteer

| 15% | 36% | 37% |

Opportunities to participate in community activities

| 29% | 49% | 15% |

Connections to others from other cultures or generations

| 20% | 42% | 25% |

Input into the social programs and services you need

| 31% | 48% | 15% |

Access to the social programs and services you need

| 43% | 41% | 9% |

Acceptance of cultures, disabilities and individual difference

| 43% | 38% | 9% |

Kindness and mutual support

| 56% | 30% | 7% |

Top six areas of importance as reported by residents:
- Kindness and mutual support.
- Access to needed social programs.
- Acceptance of cultures, disabilities, and individual differences.
- Input into social programs and services needed by residents.
- Opportunities to participate in community activities.
- A sense of belonging in the community.

The vast majority (87%) of respondents indicated that they are happy living in Blackfalds. Only 2% of respondents indicated that they are unhappy living in Blackfalds.

BLACKFALDS RESIDENTS' HAPPINESS

11%
Neutral

2%
Unhappy

29%
Very Happy

58%
Happy
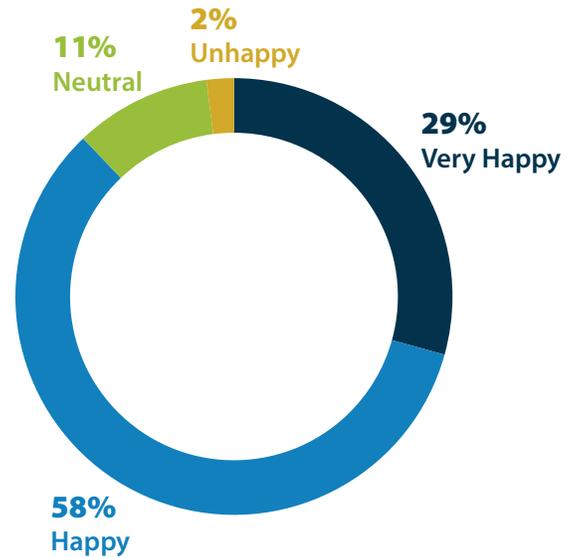
SOCIAL ISSUES IN BLACKFALDS

Respondents were asked to express their views on how important it is to have different social issues addressed in Blackfalds.

Three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that having issues related to personal safety in Blackfalds addressed is of high importance. Mental health (74%), affordable housing (72%), and substance use / addiction (70%) were also identified as issues of high importance to address in the Town.

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING SOCIAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Unsure

Lack of before and after school care
| 30% | 30% | 17% | 22% |

Lack of supports for special needs children
| 40% | 25% | 14% | 21% |

Lack of supports for special needs adults
| 38% | 25% | 16% | 21% |

Availability of childcare
| 35% | 29% | 13% | 23% |

Unsupervised children / youth
| 37% | 25% | 17% | 20% |

Parenting / child rearing problems
| 30% | 35% | 15% | 21% |

Lack of employment supports (e.g. job search, resume writing)
| 29% | 29% | 15% | 21% |

Violence and bullying (not your family)
| 48% | 21% | 10% | 20% |

Family and domestic violence / family conflict
| 45% | 26% | 8% | 21% |

Lack of employment
| 33% | 31% | 16% | 21% |

Lack of age-appropriate proramming
| 31% | 34% | 15% | 20% |

Lack of in-home supports
| 33% | 29% | 17% | 21% |

Lack of community connectedness
| 24% | 33% | 21% | 21% |

Positive relationships / relationship breakdown
| 26% | 32% | 21% | 21% |

Local programs and services are too expensive
| 35% | 27% | 17% | 21% |

Basic needs not being met (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)
| 53% | 22% | 6% | 19% |

Personal safety
| 50% | 24% | 8% | 19% |

Homelessness
| 38% | 28% | 14% | 20% |

Suicide
| 50% | 23% | 7% | 20% |

Substance use / addiction
| 38% | 32% | 10% | 19% |

Affordable housing
| 48% | 24% | 9% | 19% |

Mental health
| 58% | 16% | 7% | 19% |

Basic needs not being met (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)
| 30% | 36% | 15% | 20% |

The top 10 social issues Blackfalds residents would like to see addressed:

- Basic needs not being met.
- Issues involving mental health.
- Personal safety.
- Suicide.
- Affordable housing.
- Family and domestic violence / family conflict.
- Issues related to substance use and addiction.
- Violence and bullying (not your family).
- Homelessness.
- Lack of age-appropriate programming.
- Parenting / child rearing

Respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness of the social issues that children and youth, adults and families, and seniors face in Blackfalds.

Children and Youth

1. Mental health.
2. Violence and bullying, not in the child or youth's family.
3. Unsupervised children and youth.
4. Substance use and addiction.
5. Isolation and loneliness.

Adults and Families

1. Mental health.
2. Affordable housing.
3. Substance use and addiction.
4. Isolation and loneliness.
5. Basic needs not being met.

Seniors

1. Isolation and loneliness.
2. Mental health.
3. Affordable housing.
4. Basic needs not being met.
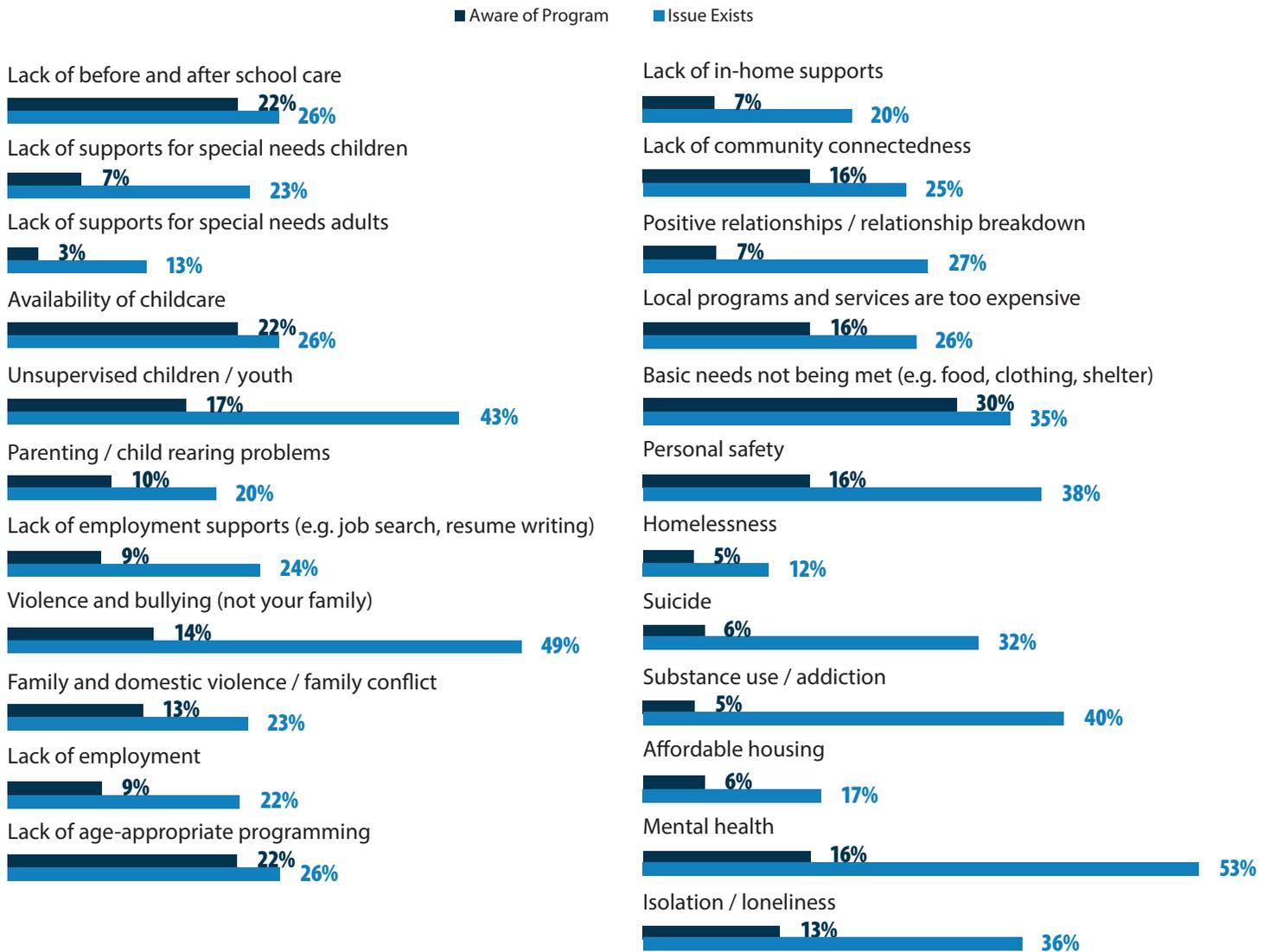5. Lack of in-home supports.

Respondents were provided with a list of social issues and asked if the issues exist within Blackfalds. Specifically, they were asked if the issue exists within the children and youth, adults and families, and seniors of Blackfalds. Secondly respondents were asked if they are aware of local programs and services to address the issues for each population group.

RESIDENT SURVEY

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

As illustrated in the graph below more than half (53%) of respondents said that the mental health issues are experienced by children and youth in Blackfalds. A similar amount of respondents said that children and youth experience violence and bullying outside of their families (49%), and that the number of children and youth without appropriate supervision is an issue (43%). However, only a small minority of respondents indicated that they are aware of programs that exist to address these issues.

Note: Priorities are determined from the following charts by taking the number (%) of responses identifying that an issue exists and subtracting the number (%) of responses that indicate respondents are aware of a program that exists to support the issue. Therefore, the highest priorities are those issues that the most number of respondents identify as existing in the community and have the least level of awareness that programs exist to address the issue or need.

SOCIAL ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN BLACKFALDS AND RESIDENTS' AWARENESS OF PROGRAMS

■ Aware of Program   ■ Issue Exists

Lack of before and after school care
22% / 26%

Lack of supports for special needs children
7% / 23%

Lack of supports for special needs adults
3% / 13%

Availability of childcare
22% / 26%

Unsupervised children / youth
17% / 43%

Parenting / child rearing problems
10% / 20%

Lack of employment supports (e.g. job search, resume writing)
9% / 24%

Violence and bullying (not your family)
14% / 49%

Family and domestic violence / family conflict
13% / 23%

Lack of employment
9% / 22%

Lack of age-appropriate programming
22% / 26%

Lack of in-home supports
7% / 20%

Lack of community connectedness
16% / 25%

Positive relationships / relationship breakdown
7% / 27%

Local programs and services are too expensive
16% / 26%

Basic needs not being met (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)
30% / 35%

Personal safety
16% / 38%

Homelessness
5% / 12%

Suicide
6% / 32%

Substance use / addiction
5% / 40%

Affordable housing
6% / 17%

Mental health
16% / 53%

Isolation / loneliness
13% / 36%

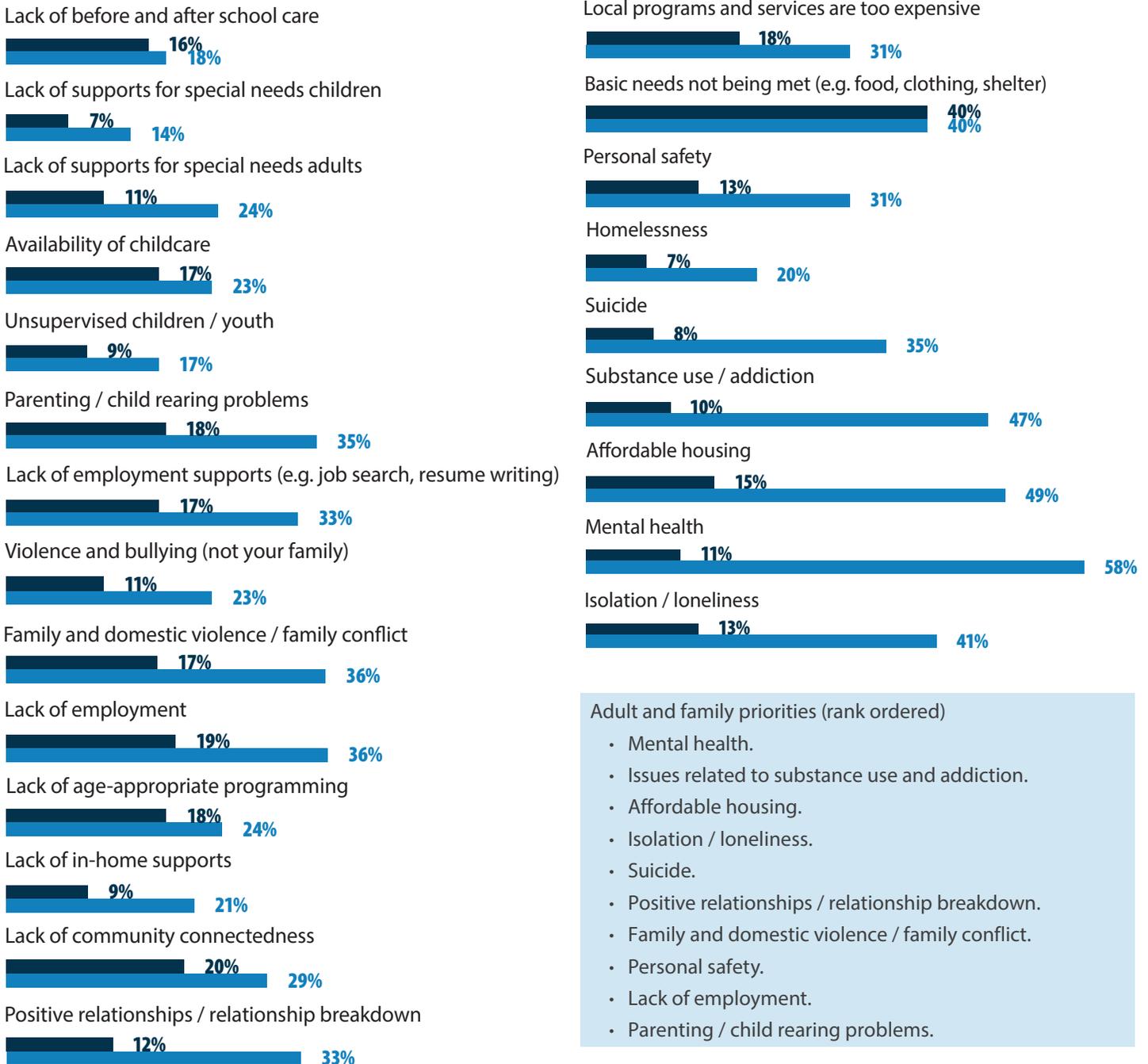Children and youth priorities (rank ordered)
- Mental health.
- Violence and bullying (not your family).
- Issues related to substance use and addiction.
- Unsupervised children and youth.
- Suicide.
- Isolation / loneliness.
- Positive relationships / relationship breakdown.
- Personal safety.
- Lack of supports for special needs children.
- Lack of employment supports.

ADULTS AND FAMILIES

As illustrated in the graph below more than half (58%) of respondents said that mental health issues are experienced by adults and families in Blackfalds. Nearly half of respondents said that the lack of affordable housing is an issue for adults and families (49%) and that substance use and addiction are an issue for adults and families (47%). However, only a small minority of respondents indicated that they are aware of programs that exist to address these issues.

SOCIAL ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY ADULTS AND FAMILIES IN BLACKFALDS AND RESIDENTS' AWARENESS OF PROGRAMS

■ Aware of Program   ■ Issue Exists

Lack of before and after school care
16%
18%

Lack of supports for special needs children
7%
14%

Lack of supports for special needs adults
11%
24%

Availability of childcare
17%
23%

Unsupervised children / youth
9%
17%

Parenting / child rearing problems
18%
35%

Lack of employment supports (e.g. job search, resume writing)
17%
33%

Violence and bullying (not your family)
11%
23%

Family and domestic violence / family conflict
17%
36%

Lack of employment
19%
36%

Lack of age-appropriate programming
18%
24%

Lack of in-home supports
9%
21%

Lack of community connectedness
20%
29%

Positive relationships / relationship breakdown
12%
33%

Local programs and services are too expensive
18%
31%

Basic needs not being met (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)
40%
40%

Personal safety
13%
31%

Homelessness
7%
20%

Suicide
8%
35%

Substance use / addiction
10%
47%

Affordable housing
15%
49%

Mental health
11%
58%

Isolation / loneliness
13%
41%

Adult and family priorities (rank ordered)
- Mental health.
- Issues related to substance use and addiction.
- Affordable housing.
- Isolation / loneliness.
- Suicide.
- Positive relationships / relationship breakdown.
- Family and domestic violence / family conflict.
- Personal safety.
- Lack of employment.
- Parenting / child rearing problems.

RESIDENT SURVEY

SENIORS

As illustrated in the graph almost half (48%) of respondents said that isolation and loneliness are issues experienced by seniors in Blackfalds. Nearly half also said that mental health issues are experienced by seniors (44%) and that securing affordable housing is an issue for seniors (42%). However, only a small minority of respondents indicated that they are aware of programs that exist to address these issues.

SOCIAL ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY SENIORS IN BLACKFALDS AND RESIDENTS' AWARENESS OF PROGRAMS

■ Aware of Program   ■ Issue Exists

Lack of before and after school care
- 5%
- 5%

Lack of supports for special needs children
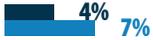- 4%
- 8%

Lack of supports for special needs adults
- 4%
- 16%

Availability of childcare
- 3%
- 6%

Unsupervised children / youth
- 3%
- 5%

Parenting / child rearing problems
- 4%
- 7%

Lack of employment supports (e.g. job search, resume writing)
- 8%
- 13%

Violence and bullying (not your family)
- 3%
- 15%

Family and domestic violence / family conflict
- 9%
- 18%

Lack of employment
- 7%
- 14%

Lack of age-appropriate programming
- 22%

Lack of in-home supports
- 13%
- 30%

Lack of community connectedness
- 17%
- 26%

Positive relationships / relationship breakdown
- 7%
- 21%

Local programs and services are too expensive
- 11%
- 21%

Basic needs not being met (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)
- 27%
- 36%

Personal safety
- 8%
- 26%

Homelessness
- 4%
- 12%

Suicide
- 5%
- 14%

Substance use / addiction
- 4%
- 16%

Affordable housing
- 9%
- 42%

Mental health
- 8%
- 44%

Isolation / loneliness
- 11%
- 48%

Senior's priorities (rank ordered)
- Isolation / loneliness.
- Mental health.
- Affordable housing.
- Personal safety.
- Lack of in-home supports.
- Positive relationships / relationship breakdown.
- Violence and bullying (not your family).
- Lack of supports for special needs adults.
- Issues related to substance use and addiction.
- Local programs and services are too expensive.

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of providing various social programs and services in Blackfalds.

The graph illustrates how respondents view the importance of all social programs and services.

The top ten social programs and services that respondents wish to see offered in Blackfalds are as follows:

1. Mental health services for children and youth, adults and families and seniors.
2. Programs and services for children and youth.
3. Support programs for family / domestic violence.
4. Daycare.
5. Programs and services for seniors.
6. Out of School care.
7. Programs for pre-school children.
8. Programs and services for persons with disabilities.
9. Family counselling and support.
10. Support programs for addiction.

IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING EACH PROGRAM AND SERVICE IN BLACKFALDS

Legend: ■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important ■ Unsure ■ Prefer Not to Answer

Support programs for family / domestic violence
44 | 19 | 8 | 29

Support programs for addiction
33 | 26 | 11 | 30

Support for newcomers and immigrants to the community
28 | 25 | 16 | 31

Programs and services for seniors
36 | 28 | 7 | 29

Programs and services for children and youth
43 | 22 | 6 | 29

Programs and services with persons with disabilities
38 | 23 | 9 | 30

Mental health services for seniors
47 | 19 | 5 | 29

Mental health services for adults and families
49 | 17 | 5 | 29

Mental health services for children and youth
50 | 16 | 5 | 29

Family counselling and support
45 | 14 | 11 | 30

Daycare
38 | 26 | 7 | 30

Out of school care
38 | 24 | 8 | 30

Programs for pre-school children
37 | 25 | 8 | 30

RESIDENT SURVEY

More than half (54%) of respondents indicated that they were able to access programs and services when they needed to in Blackfalds. Less than 10% of respondents indicated that they are unable to access programs and services when needed in Blackfalds. 27% preferred not to answer this question.

WHETHER RESIDENTS ARE ABLE TO ACCESS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN BLACKFALDS

22%

32%

8%

8%

3%

27%

- Yes, completely
- Yes, somewhat
- Unsure
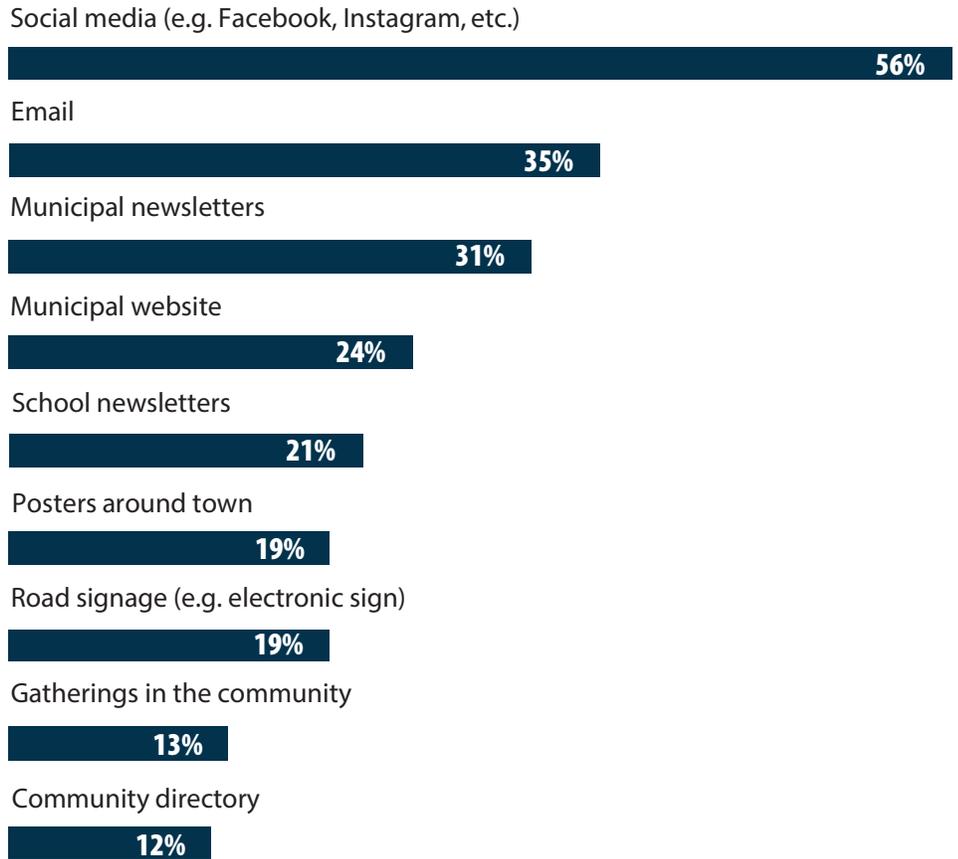- No
- Not Applicable
- Prefer not to answer
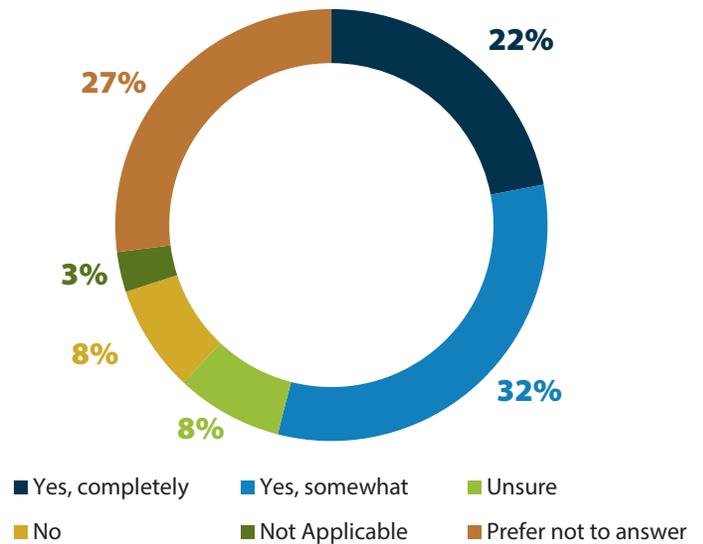
46% of respondents indicated that lack of awareness of programs and services available in Blackfalds was a factor in them not accessing programs and services when needed. 23% of respondents indicated that the lack of specialized services tailored to their individual needs was a barrier to access. Slightly more than a fifth of respondents (21%) indicated that high cost prevented them from accessing programs and services when needed.

FACTORS THAT PREVENT RESIDENTS FROM ACCESSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN BLACKFALDS
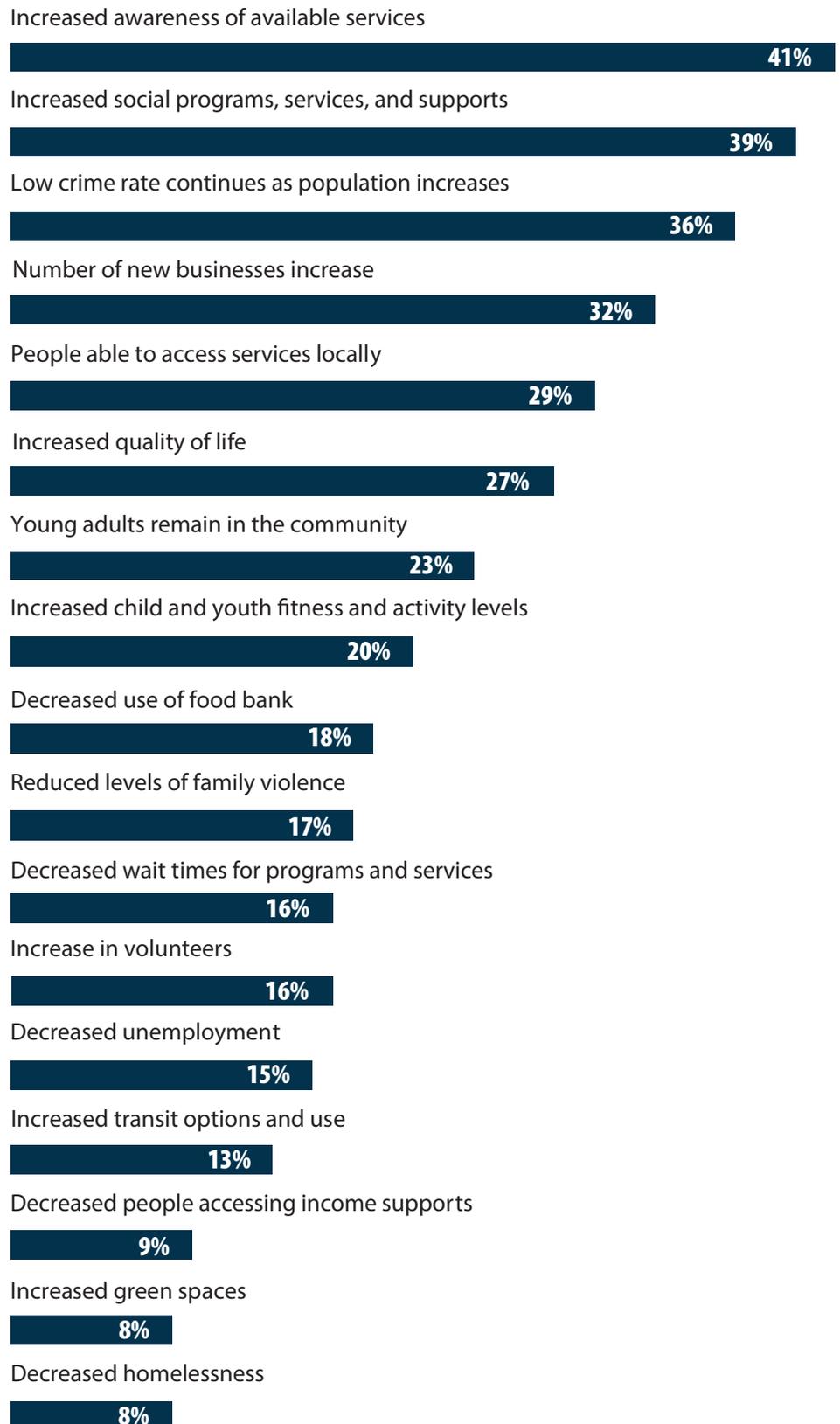
Not aware of the programs and services that are available

46%

Lack of specialized services

23%

Cost

21%

Transportation issues

7%

Questions about quality

7%

Privacy / pride

6%

Difficulty getting appointments

5%

More than half of respondents (56%) indicated that social media postings through media like Facebook and Instagram are their preferred methods to receive information about existing social programs and services in Blackfalds. For more than a third of respondents (35%) email would be an effective way to share information about programs and services. 31% of respondents indicated that municipal newsletters are also a preferred way to receive this information.

RESIDENTS PREFERRED METHODS TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
56%

Email
35%

Municipal newsletters
31%

Municipal website
24%

School newsletters
21%

Posters around town
19%

Road signage (e.g. electronic sign)
19%

Gatherings in the community
13%

Community directory
12%

RESIDENT SURVEY

Close to the conclusion of the resident survey, respondents were asked to identify what they believe would constitute success and progress in Blackfalds, post social needs assessment. Less than half of youth (41%) indicated that increased awareness of social programs and services amongst residents would demonstrate success. More than a third of respondents (39%) believed that an increase in the volume of social programs and services available to residents would be success and that residents being able to access to these programs and services locally would also be success.

WHAT RESPONDENTS BELIEVE WOULD BE INDICATORS OF IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN BLACKFALDS

Increased awareness of available services

41%

Increased social programs, services, and supports

39%

Low crime rate continues as population increases

36%

Number of new businesses increase

32%

People able to access services locally

29%

Increased quality of life

27%

Young adults remain in the community

23%

Increased child and youth fitness and activity levels

20%

Decreased use of food bank

18%

Reduced levels of family violence

17%

Decreased wait times for programs and services

16%

Increase in volunteers

16%

Decreased unemployment

15%

Increased transit options and use

13%

Decreased people accessing income supports

9%

Increased green spaces

8%

Decreased homelessness

8%

Youth Survey

DESCRIPTION

To gain insight into the social needs of youth in the Town of Blackfalds, an online survey was fielded directly with youth. The questionnaire was programmed and provided online; youth in the Town were invited to participate through youth serving agencies, local schools, and engagement at other community venues (e.g., the Info Expo, the local skateboarding park). In total 168 responses were gathered between June 15, 2022 and October 1, 2022. A synopsis of the survey findings is presented below.

FINDINGS

LIVING IN THE TOWN OF BLACKFALDS

Youth were asked to identify what the best things about living in Blackfalds are. The following themes emerged from responses.
- The recreational facilities (i.e., Abbey Centre, skateboard park, hockey rink, parks).
- The people and close relationships with friends and neighbours.
- The fact that everything in town is just a short walk or bike ride away.
- The variety of restaurants and places to eat.

The majority of youth (68%) indicated that they are happy living in Blackfalds. Only a small proportion of youth (3%) indicated that they were not happy living in Blackfalds.

Youth were asked to identify what could be done to improve their quality of life. A wide variety of responses were provided. However, the following themes consistently emerged.
- More amenities and services on the west side of town.
- Outdoor basketball courts.
- An indoor swimming pool.
- A climbing wall.
- More science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities.
- Sun covering for the skateboard park.
- A mall and movie theatre.
- More places for youth to hangout and socialize.
- Better streetlights.
- Supports for people who are being bullied or abused.

BLACKFALDS YOUTH HAPPINESS

2% Unhappy
1% Very Unhappy
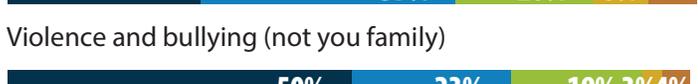19% Very Happy
29% Neutral
49% Happy
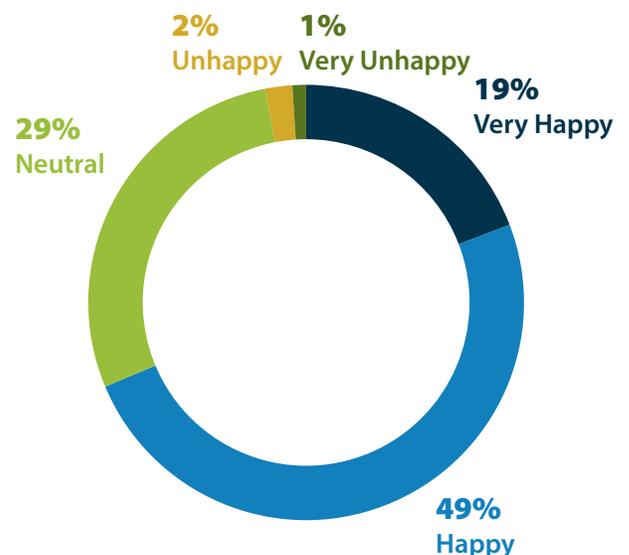
SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE TOWN OF BLACKFALDS

Youth were asked to express their views on how important it is to have different social issues addressed in Blackfalds.

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING SOCIAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important
■ Not Important ■ No Answer

Lack of before and after school care

| 15% | 35% | 30% | 11% | 9% |

Lack of supports for special needs children

| 34% | 32% | 18% | 6% | 10% |

Lack of supports for special needs adults

| 29% | 35% | 24% | 3% | 9% |

Availability of childcare

| 30% | 31% | 22% | 8% | 9% |

Unsupervised children / youth

| 40% | 28% | 21% | 6% | 5% |

Parenting / child rearing problems

| 26% | 31% | 24% | 8% | 10% |

Lack of employment supports (e.g. job search, resume writing)

| 28% | 37% | 20% | 8% | 7% |

Violence and bullying (not you family)

| 50% | 23% | 19% | 3% | 4% |

Family and domestic violence / family conflict

| 40% | 23% | 17% | 9% | 11% |

Lack of employment

| 34% | 25% | 26% | 5% | 10% |

Lack of age-appropriate programming

| 18% | 32% | 26% | 11% | 12% |

Lack of in-home supports

| 12% | 30% | 30% | 12% | 17% |

Lack of community connectedness

| 14% | 24% | 31% | 16% | 15% |

Positive relationships / relationship breakdown

| 11% | 26% | 33% | 14% | 16% |

Local programs and services are too expensive

| 17% | 28% | 33% | 11% | 10% |

Basics needs not being met (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)

| 38% | 32% | 14% | 8% | 9% |

Personal safety

| 45% | 33% | 15% | 2% | 4% |

Homelessness

| 34% | 31% | 21% | 8% | 6% |

Suicide

| 56% | 21% | 9% | 7% | 6% |

Substance use / addiction

| 57% | 24% | 10% | 5% | 5% |

Affordable housing

| 40% | 31% | 18% | 4% | 6% |

Mental health

| 49% | 38% | 8% | 1% | 4% |

Isolation / loneliness

Importance of addressing social issues – youth (in rank order)

- Mental health.
- Substance use / addiction.
- Personal safety.
- Suicide.
- Affordable housing.
- Basics not being met.
- Unsupervised children / youth.
- Lack of supports for special needs children.
- Lack of employment supports.
- Lack of supports for special needs adults.

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN BLACKFALDS

Importance of access to programs and services – youth (in rank order)

- Mental health services for children and youth.
- Programs and services for persons with disabilities.
- Support programs for addiction.
- Mental health services for seniors.
- Mental health services for adults and families.
- Support programs for family / domestic violence.
- Programs and services for seniors.
- Programs and services for children and youth.
- Family counselling and support.
- Support for newcomers and immigrants to the community.

■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important ■ No Answer

Support programs for family / domestic violence

| 61% | 22% | 11% |

Support programs for addiction

| 62% | 24% | 9% |

Support for newcomers and immigrants to the community

| 31% | 43% | 16% |

Programs and services for seniors

| 44% | 37% | 14% |

Programs and services for children and youth

| 40% | 40% | 15% |

Programs and services for persons with disabilities

| 53% | 34% | 9% |

Mental health services for seniors

| 58% | 27% | 11% |

Mental health services for adults and families

| 56% | 29% | 11% |

Mental health services for children and youth

| 59% | 28% | 9% |

Family counselling and support

| 37% | 39% | 16% |

Daycare

| 22% | 52% | 18% |

Out of school care

| 18% | 45% | 29% |

Programs for pre-school children

| 23% | 40% | 29% |

YOUTH SURVEY

Youth were also asked to identify programs and services that they believe are important to have access to in Blackfalds. Programs and services that support people of all ages with mental health issues and addiction were of the greatest importance to youth. Youth also believe that programs and services that support seniors are important.

More than half of youth (54%) indicated that lack of awareness of programs and services available in Blackfalds was a factor in them not accessing programs and services when needed. Under half (49%) indicated that cost was a factor that prevented them from accessing programs and services when needed. 31% indicated that having to leave the community to access programs and services was a barrier to access. An associated barrier for youth was the lack of transportation to attend programs and services.

FACTORS THAT PREVENT YOUTH FROM ACCESSING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN BLACKFALDS

Not aware of the programs and services that are available

54%

Cost

49%

Transportation issues

31%

Lack of specialized services

20%

Privacy / pride

17%

Questions about quality

14%

Difficulty getting appointments

13%

YOUTH PREFERRED METHODS TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

73% of responding youth indicated that social media postings through media like Facebook and Instagram are their preferred methods to receive information about existing social programs and services in Blackfalds. More than half of youth (52%) indicated that email and posters around town are also a preferred way to receive this information. 46% of youth indicated that their school newsletters would be an effective way to share information about programs and services.

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

73%

Email

52%

Posters around town

21%

School newsletters

46%

Municipal website

28%

Road signage (e.g. electronic sign)

27%

Municipal newsletters

18%

Gatherings in the community

14%

Community directory

12%

Vision, Values and Principles

The vision, value and principle statements in this section are summarized from information collected during the engagement interviews, surveys and from the document and resource reviews.

VISION OF SOCIAL WELLNESS FOR THE TOWN OF BLACKFALDS

Vision statements describe the Town of Blackfalds as it will be when the work of the SNA is completed. A vision statement is a powerful tool to help align goals and strategies and ensure that they work together to achieve the intended outcomes and results identified in the Plan. The vision "elements" have been summarized as:

- The Town achieves inter-dependent social, economic, and environmental wellness.
- Residents have access to education and employment opportunities, housing, transportation, and have barrier free access to programs and services designed to address key social needs.

COMMUNITY VALUES THAT SUPPORT SOCIAL WELLNESS

The following statements were gathered throughout the various engagement activities and reflect the participant's sense of the values needed to support social wellness for individuals, communities, and the Town.

- The Town values citizen engagement, community building, collaborative and collective action, health and well-being of community residents, advocacy, and alignment between social, economic, and environmental development factors.
- Diversity is recognized, acknowledged, and capitalized on.
- All individuals deserve to be treated fairly and equally and be provided with the opportunities to utilize their unique strengths and abilities.

PRINCIPLES THAT WORK TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL WELLNESS

Principles help to describe the ways of working that support, and are consistent with, the vision and values reflected in the SNA. The principles listed below were identified by participants as needing to be in place and practice to support the implementation of the SNA and to help guide policy, practice, and operational decisions.

- Strength comes from true collaboration and shared accountability within the community and Town (i.e., stronger together).
- Communication is the bedrock for meaningful resident engagement.
- Volunteers play a crucial role in addressing social needs.
- All parties advocate for a safe, healthy, and sustainable community.
- Agency leadership must work to interact, collaborate, and jointly address existing social needs.
- No resident should confront barriers to programs and services due to financial deficits.
- All residents who can work should have access to employment opportunities that provide a fair, living wage.

Needs and Gaps Analysis and Social Priorities

The needs and gaps identified during the SNA were identified by reviewing all data sources. A summary table containing the results of this identification process can be found in Appendix 4.

SOCIAL PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants in the various engagement activities (i.e., interviews, working sessions, surveys) responded to all or part of a common set of questions. The data resulting from these engagement activities has been systematically analyzed to identify key social priorities within the Town of Blackfalds.

The social priorities identified in this section are not intended to represent all the issues that require attention in the Town of Blackfalds. Rather, these priorities represent the things that have most often been identified by residents and youth during the engagement process that if addressed, lead to the greatest positive social impact, and change in the community.

Ten social priorities were identified. These ten priorities are as follows. Priorities are ordered by relative importance.

1. Mental Health
2. Bullying and Abuse
3. Isolation and Loneliness
4. Substance Use and Addiction
5. Basic Needs
6. Support for Seniors
7. Affordable Housing
8. Connections and Collaborations Amongst Local Agencies
9. Communications
10. Support for Parents and Families

Each of these priorities are described in more detail in the following sections, along with broad recommended strategies for consideration and further development.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #1: MENTAL HEALTH

Description:

Needs for mental health services were identified across all forms of engagement for the needs assessment. People indicated that while there is a reasonable level of services available for the size of the community, there still are several significant gaps in mental health supports. Long wait times and uncertainty about access to the availability of qualified mental health providers were noted as significant concerns. Many respondents also noted that other social needs such as housing, education, parenting, and the development positive interpersonal relationships requires that the mental health issues be resolved first before success in the other areas can be achieved. It was further noted by many respondents that mental health needs (e.g., anxiety, depression, difficulties with social situations) for individuals of all ages have soared due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making this a key priority area to address going forward.

Recommended Strategies:

- Collaborate with mental health providers and organizations in the community to seek additional funding for mental health program and services. Any additional funds secured should be used to create low-cost mental health services for all age groups. Building mental health services that are accessible in the evenings and on weekends would be of great benefit to the community.

- Encourage organizations that offer mental health programs and services to review and adjust the eligibility criteria for their programs and services. The goal of this review and these adjustments should be to eliminate restrictions and barriers to programs and services, increasing the likelihood that those in need of mental health supports will obtain access to these supports.

- Facilitate the development of a community-based helpline to enable easier navigation of existing mental health programs and services. By providing people with an initial contact point, they will be better positioned to self-refer or support others when mental health issues arise, and programs and services are needed.

- Develop and implement a communications campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues within the community. This campaign should focus on normalizing the occurrence of mental health issues. This campaign should stress that anyone, regardless of their social or financial circumstances can be confronted by mental health issues at some point in their lifetime. It would be crucial for this campaign to promote relevant mental health programs, services, and resources available in the Town or other nearby geographic areas.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #2: BULLYING AND ABUSE

Description:

Violence and bullying are most often discussed in relation to children and youth. However, the information generated through the needs assessment process includes all ages of people from children through to seniors. The types of violence and bullying cited in the response include physical, emotional, financial, and gender based. During discussions of bullying and abuse, family and domestic violence concerns were also raised. Further, significant concerns were raised about parents modeling bullying behaviour or condoning their children when they bully others. Many individuals who participated in the engagement process believe that a negative intergenerational cycle that reinforces and encourages bullying and abuse has taken hold within the Town. Strategies to address this collective set of issues should be multifaceted and responsive to all forms of abuse.

Recommended Strategies:

- Facilitate community conversations about the harm that bullying and abuse cause within the Town. Invite adults of all ages as well as children and youth to participate. Emphasis should be placed on helping adults understand how their behaviour has the capacity to positively or negatively impact the children and youth that they interact with daily.

- Develop community-based value statements and messaging on violence and bullying and include information on accessing a community-based help line. Linking these values statements to existing statements on family and domestic violence is also advised.

- Continue to support the existing work in the community, schools, workplaces, clubs, and organizations on informing people what violence and bullying is and what possible actions and support resources may be helpful and available.

- Support educators and those who interact with children, youth, and families so they are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to quickly identify incidents of bullying and other forms of abuse. Help these professionals build their expertise so they can aid those in need.

- Source and promote provincial bullying prevention resources and training while also promoting the provincial bullying helpline.

- Establish linkages with existing bullying, abuse, and family and domestic violence collaboratives within the province to obtain and promote resources.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #3: ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Description:

Issues related to isolation and loneliness were identified as a significant concern to adults, seniors, children, youth, and families by almost half of the individuals involved in the engagement process. Many of these individuals indicated that this has always been an issue in the community due to its more rural location. However, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically exacerbated and complicated the issue for many people. As people start to emerge from the pandemic, attention must be paid to this issue. Re-building social ties and the fabric of the community depends on a strong and consistent effort to bring all members of the community together. Through these efforts new ways of living and socializing will emerge and people can start to heal and mend relationships with their friends, family, and neighbours after such a lengthy time apart.

Recommended Strategies:

- Make a concerted effort to create inclusive social events that provide all members of the community with opportunities to mix, mingle, socialize, and build relationships. Acknowledgement that people's level of comfort with in-person social events may vary post-pandemic is crucial to ensure strong, positive uptake and participation.
- Consider local events including opportunities for arts and cultural expression and activities, information on programs, services and businesses that are open to all residents and include support systems such as transportation, childcare, etc.

- Support agencies and organizations as they work to socialize the programs and services that they offer and invite people to participate in new activities.
- Consider ways to ensure welcoming and engaging practices that consider language, culture, and other real or perceived barriers to people who would want to get involved.
- Explore the possibility of conducting an annual community engagement survey or study to assess people's level of interaction and to determine what types of events they wish to see planned and offered to residents. Delving deep into the specific needs of all age groups will be important to ensure that adults, seniors, children, and youth are all provided with meaningful opportunities to connect with each other.
- Consider undertaking a process to develop a diversity and inclusion plan.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #4: SUBSTANCE USE AND ADDICTION

Description:

Substance use and addiction are a concern within the Town. However, there is limited knowledge in the community as to the degree of the issue because the issue is seldom discussed openly and there is a prevailing belief that people with substance use issues should take care of themselves without intervention or support. As a result, a limited number of resources are invested on programs and services to support persons struggling with substance use, which prevents the community from effectively addressing the issue.

Recommended Strategies:

- Develop resources that shed light on the negative impacts of substance use. These resources should also incorporate information that dispels the notion that substance use is an individual issue that should be managed discreetly without support.
- Collaborate with social agencies and health organizations in the community to seek opportunities to secure resources that would allow substance use and addiction programs and services to be offered in the Town.
- Identify and distribute information that will help all members of the community prevent the onset of substance use and addiction issues.
- Stimulate the development of follow-up services and supports for those who are post substance use treatment to ensure that people can safely reintegrate into community life, without stigma or judgment.

NEEDS AND GAPS ANALYSIS
AND SOCIAL PRIORITIES

SOCIAL PRIORITY #5: BASIC NEEDS

Description:

This priority refers to the ways and means that residents in the Town can access items that support their basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health care, and education. These basic needs are building blocks upon which all strong, healthy, and vibrant communities are built and can grow. Respondents indicated that there are large number of individuals and families in the community that struggle to have their basic needs met. This is even the case for individuals and families with financial resources. Breaking the myths that only those who are economically disadvantaged have basic needs issues is a crucial priority for the Town to address.

Recommended Strategies:

- Educate members of the community about what basic needs are and make it the norm that anyone who is struggling can reach out to agencies that provide basic needs support for help.
- Encourage agencies that provide basic needs supports to operate using non-traditional hours, increasing accessibility for persons needing the services and supports on evenings and weekends in the process.
- Campaign for community members to consider basic need donations (e.g., food, clothing, etc.) outside of peak donation times (e.g., traditional holiday times).
- Continue to build food security in the Town including incorporating community gardens, fruit bearing trees, and shrubs into neighbourhood and community design. Educate community members about how to use things like community gardens responsibly (e.g., only taking what is needed, cleaning up after use, etc.).
- Encourage the distribution of excess food from restaurants, food stores, school lunch programs.
- Facilitate the development cooking and nutrition programs for community members that include social opportunities (e.g., community kitchens - one meal for many families) and other life skills information and resources.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #6: SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Description

Individuals who participated in the engagement process and completed surveys expressed concerns about seniors and their capacity to safely live as comfortably and independently as long as possible in the community. While there are programs and services for seniors in the Town a large proportion of these programs and services are aimed at low-income seniors and seniors who are isolated or have difficulties leaving their homes. Programs and services need to be tailored to meet the unique needs of all seniors, not just those with complex, high-need circumstances.

Recommended Strategies:

- Support agencies that offer programs and services for seniors with varying levels of need. Advocating for seniors so they can access services that suit their needs is essential to safe, comfortable, independent living.

- Actively engage seniors in community social life. Find ways to bring seniors together with different generations, including children and youth, to support intergenerational connections and diminish feelings of social isolation.

- Monitor the volume of seniors in the community and actively engage these seniors in discussions about their needs and what housing options should be built to meet their needs. Providing seniors with opportunities to share their input and perspectives in settings that they find comfortable is a key consideration.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #7: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Description:

A significant number of interview participants and survey respondents indicated that housing and homelessness are important issues facing residents of all ages. Young people and newcomers to the community were two groups identified to have some of the most significant challenges in this area. Additionally, some respondents noted that seniors looking to relocate from their homes to a supported living environment also face challenges. For all ages, finding suitable housing that is both affordable and sustainable in the Town is difficult. For those facing this reality, the risk of moving away to where suitable and affordable housing exists is a common outcome.

Recommended Strategies:

- Support the evaluation of current housing levels in the Town and assist in determining what proportion of existing housing is affordable for those who meet or are below a living wage.
- Conduct periodic, systematic homelessness counts to help understand the degree to which homelessness continues to be an issue and the specific needs that people who are homeless are facing in the Town.
- Consider a housing planning group that would further define the needs of persons and families experiencing difficulties finding affordable housing or are facing homelessness and look for short and longer-term options.
- Consider options for emergency and/or transitional housing including emergency housing for residents and youth in the community. Special attention should also be paid to seniors' housing needs.
- Encourage the development of housing options that are accompanied by programs and services that foster the development of basic life skills and financial management.
- Investigate the suitability of a housing support program for the Town that adopts a "Housing First" model or approach.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #8: CONNECTIONS AND COLLABORATIONS AMONGST AGENCIES

Description:

The data collected throughout the needs assessment process indicates that agencies and organizations in the Town are committed to interacting and collaborating with each other. This has been noted as a strength of both organizations and the individuals involved. The value and principles of working collaboratively are well supported by the municipality and FCSS.

Recommended Strategies:

- Continue the facilitation of an interagency table that provides organizations with an opportunity to engage in regular discussions about their successes and challenges. Through active, open, and consistent dialogue at the table shared services and joint problem-solving could occur, facilitating opportunities to collectively address social needs.
- Facilitate movement to a case-based interagency service model for individuals and families who require programs, services, and supports from multiple agencies.
- Create semi-annual or annual opportunities for joint action planning in relation to the priorities in the SNA and any other emerging issues in the community.
- Stimulate the development of a process for those who access social programs and services to be part of the ongoing joint action planning processes.
- Actively enlist current and future community leaders to champion social development in the Town.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #9: COMMUNICATION

Description:

A significant number of individuals who participated in the engagement process believed that there is room to improve both the quantity and quality of the communication about program services. At present the mechanisms in place for agencies to share information about what programs and services they offer are limited. Technological deficits and the lack of a coordinated social media strategies were noted as being problematic. Further, the limited number of opportunities for agencies to connect with each other and discuss how they are working to address identified social needs was identified as a significant issue to overcome.

Recommended Strategies:

- Facilitate the development of a "multipronged" approach to communication. This approach should consist of opportunities for agencies to meet and discuss their programs and services as well as distribution of information using both traditional print methods as well as social media.
- Foster a culture of continuous open communication. Without this type of communication social needs are overlooked and people in the community lose sight of those who are impacted by social issues. Bringing attention to social issues and the programs and services that are in place to address these issues will have a positive impact on multiple levels. Further, it will reduce the burden on the individuals in the social sector who have assumed responsibility for communications and create a more sustainable approach to move forward.

SOCIAL PRIORITY #10: SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Description:

A need for parenting supports and resources and support for families, especially those with young children, was identified across all of the engagement activities. The needs included such things as empowering parents with information and resources, support to single parent families and families where one parent works away for long periods of time and support to deal with situations of family dysfunction. The participant comments supported the work of the Lacombe based Family Resource Network, however, indicated that a gap in parenting support programs still exists in Blackfalds, particularly for working parents and those with toddlers. Parents, schools and agencies expressed the need for support with issues including managing social media, bullying, teaching basic values, resolving conflicts, and children and youth challenging authority. The youth who engaged in the SNA process also identified bullying and social media conflicts as issues, as well as the need to develop positive relationships and access to family counselling.

Recommended Strategies:

- Support parents in recognizing and acknowledging parenting issues and the need for support.
- Provide a place for regularly scheduled parenting support, information and sessions. Include Blackfalds schools in developing parenting strategies.
- Provide information and support on basic family values.
- Work to remove barriers to participating in parenting programs and services.
- Develop parenting coaching supports which could operate through a parenting "hub" in Blackfalds.
- Work with single parents to identify programs and supports that would be helpful and effective.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Implementation Plan

A fundamental premise of the SNA is that social wellness and improved quality of life result from meaningful and effective collaboration involving the municipalities, agencies and organizations, community, and other stakeholders. The responsibility for implementation requires the collaboration of a wide range of partners working effectively together on common priorities to achieve shared goals. It is critical to the successful implementation of the plan that all stakeholders and interested parties be engaged from the beginning in contributing to the actions, results, and successful outcomes.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The social priorities identified during the SNA are complex and will require dedicated attention across the entire community to work to resolve in the months and years ahead. As an established, trusted, and well-respected entity in the Town, Blackfalds FCSS is well positioned to continue to stimulate and initiate efforts to address these social priorities. In some circumstances Blackfalds FCSS may also be able to facilitate the development of services and resources that work to address the social priority areas.

To effectively support implementation of the SNA the following functions may need to be emphasized through reallocating resources, staff training and development or identification of new sources of funding:

- Facilitating community engagement.
- Program and service development based on SNA priorities.
- Project leadership and management.
- Provision of outreach supports.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The strategies, potential actions and outcomes identified in the plan will be achieved through working with agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders collectively to achieve common goals. Roles and responsibilities will vary depending on the positioning, current priorities, capacities, and available resources of each potential partner.

Community-based planning, development and delivery assumes the following primary roles:

Initiator role—responsible for convening those who have an interest and capacity to undertake the work involved.

Primary role—responsibility for development and implementation is undertaken by one party who is uniquely positioned to design and deliver the initiative.

Shared role—participates as one of a number of stakeholders.

Supporting role—other stakeholders hold most of the responsibility for the development and delivery of the initiative. Supporting participants have no formal mandate, however, they have some capacity to contribute to the work and to the results

Resource role—primary contribution to the initiative is as a source of funding, human resources, or other forms of resource support.

Stakeholders in the SNA play a variety of roles and take on differing responsibilities based on the implementation needs of each priority, potential action, and outcome area.

Participants in the engagement activities were asked to identify possible actions that could help to address the priority challenges and opportunities that had been raised to ensure successful outcomes.

Near term strategies and actions have the following characteristics:

- Actions that can be done immediately.
- Actions where all the required information and best solutions are known.
- Partners and their respective roles are clear.
- Actions that may require collaboration but that do not require policy or budget processes and approvals to be implemented.

Longer term strategies and actions require:

- Additional information and development of best solutions.
- Proposal development for policy and/or budget application or approval.
- A process to clarify the challenge at hand and the agencies and organizations required as partners.
- Other strategies or actions need to occur first before they can be implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

A summary of the recommended elements of the SNA implementation include:

1. Hosting of a launch information and implementation planning session for all SNA stakeholders in the Town to increase awareness and knowledge of the SNA results and to develop collaborative immediate and long-term strategies and actions and build engagement in the SNA implementation.
2. Formation of an SNA implementation committee that will have responsibility for supporting the implementation of the plan over time. The committee will act to ensure that evaluation of results and potential changes and updates to the plan occur as required. For Blackfalds, this implementation committee role may fall to the FCSS Board.
3. Encourage all social profit organizations, funders, and other stakeholders to incorporate the SNA priorities into their strategic and annual operational plans as well as identify key indicators from their organizations' perspective to measure progress toward achieving the priority outcomes.
4. Create an annual review process that engages all non-profit agencies, organizations, funders, the Town and other municipalities, and other stakeholders in reviewing the progress made on the priorities and collectively plan for the upcoming year, based on the results achieved.
5. Provide an annual progress report to the FCSS Board and Town Council as well as to all agencies and organization so that they can update their respective boards and committees about the status of the plan and their respective current anticipated contributions.
6. Develop additional, ongoing methods of engaging residents in providing information about portions of the plan and/or specific strategy areas under consideration and development, including an ongoing SNA page on the Town's website.
7. Plan and budget for a three and five-year review of the plan and process to update the document based on current changes in the social, economic, and program and service environment in the Town.
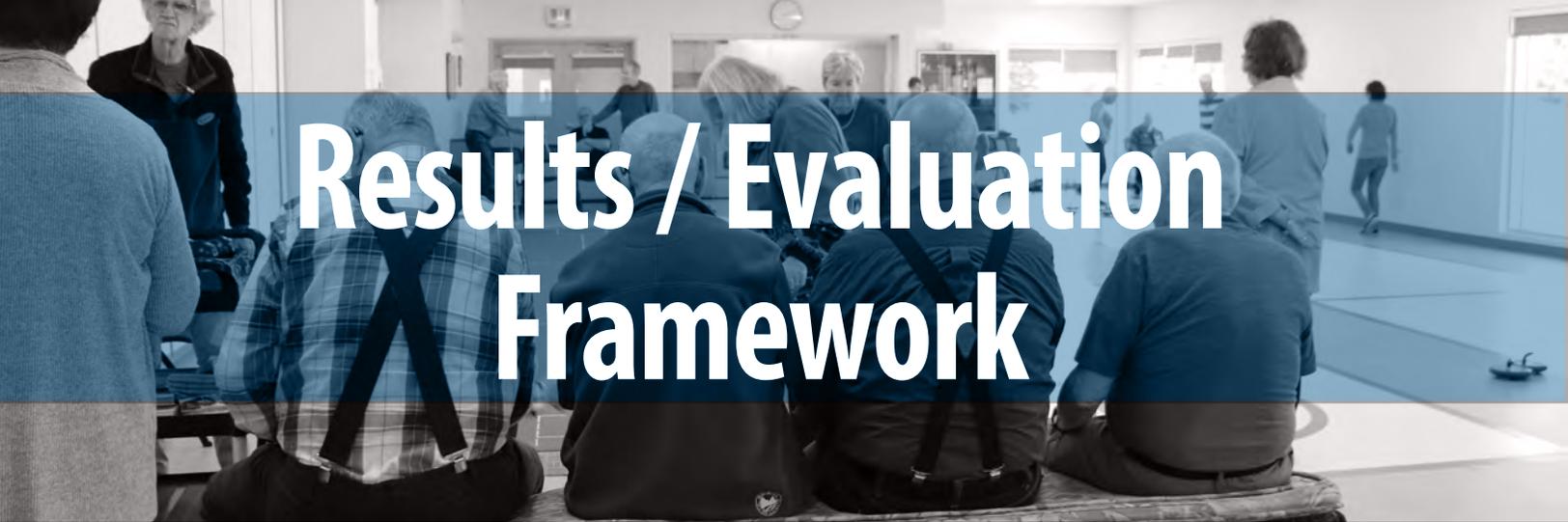
Results / Evaluation Framework

A parallel process of evaluation and specifically outcome-based evaluation of the SNA priorities, strategies and actions is essential to creating social change and quality of life improvements.

Evaluation often takes the form of taking a snapshot of outcomes at the end of a program to prove to decision makers and funders that the program worked. However, evaluation can, and should, be used as an ongoing strategic and learning tool that improves the ability of a program or service to meet the intended change identified at the beginning of the planning process. This is particularly important when working in collaborative, multi-partner environments. Evaluation enables demonstration of a program or service's success or progress.

Outcome evaluations assess the effectiveness of a program or service in producing individual and community change. Outcome evaluations focus on difficult questions that ask what happened to program participants and how much of a difference the program or service made for them and for the community in which they reside.

Outcome evaluation is effective in showcasing the effectiveness of a program to potential collaborative partners, to the community and funders, and in building ongoing trust with clients, partners, and community members.

Outcome based evaluation increases a program's ability to conduct a critical self-assessment and plan for the future by assessing "what works" and "what does not work." Building the capacity for self-assessment early in the plan implementation allows for ongoing reflection and creates an evaluation and planning cycle that helps create a continuous learning environment which is essential to sustainability.

Top ten result and success indicators suggested by SNA engagement participants:
- Increased awareness of available social programs and services.
- Increased social programs, services and supports.
- Low crime rate continues as the population increases.
- The number of new businesses increases.
- Residents can access services locally.
- Increased quality of life.
- Young adults remain in the community.
- Increased child and youth fitness and activity levels.
- Decreased use of the food bank.
- Reduced levels of family violence.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - DOCUMENT AND RESOURCE REVIEW

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT AND RESOURCE REVIEW

SOURCE	KEY POINTS	LEARNINGS FOR 2022 SOCIAL PLAN

Town of Blackfalds Social Needs Assessment Master Plan - 2016	87% were happy with their quality of life in Blackfalds
	
	Top 5 issues impacting youth are:
	• Bullying
	• Substance use / addiction
	• Alcohol abuse
	• Violence in the community
	• Mental health
	
	Approximately two-thirds of students identified substance use / addiction (66%) and bullying (62%) as priority areas to address.
	
	Top 5 issues impacting adults / families are:
	
	• Alcohol abuse
	• Substance use / addiction
	• Affordable housing
	• Violence in the community
	• Relationship breakdown and mental health
	
	Top 5 issues impacting seniors are:
	• Mental health
	• Poverty
	• Affordable housing
	• Lack of housing
	• Isolation/loneliness
	
	Of residents responding:
	• 76% were unaware of programs and services available in Blackfalds
	• 73% have heard of FCSS
	• 28% of households had volunteered in Blackfalds in the past year Youth Survey
		In 2016 the top 5 issues identified to address were identified as:
		• Substance use / addiction
		• Unsafe neighbourhoods and streets
		• Unsupervised children/youth
		• Bullying
		• Violence in the community
		
		16 Recommendations were identified including:
		1. Redevelop FCSS as Blackfalds FCSS and Community Social Development (or similar)
		2. Develop and implement a performance measurement system
		3. Tie FCSS annual plans into the Town's strategic plans
		4. Develop programs to address the following priority areas:
		  » Bullying / conflict resolution
		  » Child and youth safety
		  » Mental health supports
		  » Parenting
		  » Relationship support
		  » Family and domestic violence support
		  » Substance use
		  » Intergenerational programming
		5. Develop and/or support a feasibility study on community space
		6. Provide additional staff resources focused on community events and community capacity building
		7. Develop a low-income subsidy policy and program for residents of Blackfalds
		8. Establish a program of short term supports
		9. Develop a program of employment supports
		10. Support the launch of the Parent Link Centre in Blackfalds and continue to provide support to parents who face barriers to participation/integration
		11. Provide funding to assist community agencies and organizations to locate in Blackfalds
		12. Facilitate discussions/meetings to develop a plan to increase childcare options and capacities
		13. Facilitate discussions regarding the type and quality of affordable housing needed
		14. Facilitate discussions to Identify potential transportation supports for people wanting to attend social programs and services
		15. Enhance promotion and communication of social wellness supports.

Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan -2020	Critical Steps Include related to the Social Needs Assessment findings include: • Develop a plan to bring health services and health professionals to Blackfalds • Develop an Arts & Cultural Strategic Assessment • Develop an Affordable Housing Plan • Pursue strategies to increase seniors housing • Maintain an effective and efficient on-demand transit service for Blackfalds • Develop a Community Engagement Action Strategy • Develop a resident feedback survey	Social Needs Assessment alignment with respect to: • Local access to mental health services • Programming options for children and youth • Affordable housing • Transportation to social programs and services • Ongoing community engagement • Ongoing resident feedback
Town of Blackfalds Report to the Community 2019-2020	Information on social needs and results in Blackfalds includes: • Subsidized programming • Lunchbox program • Volunteerism	Investigate the opportunity to support the Social Needs Assessment by including: • Brief information on FCSS • Highlight one or two achievements from the plan • Include statistics from the SNA engagement • Highlight resident feedback on social strengths in Blackfalds
Town of Blackfalds Economic Development and Tourism Strategy - 2021	Information on social needs and results in Blackfalds includes: • Subsidized programming • Lunchbox program • Volunteerism Town of Blackfalds Vision: Blackfalds is an active family community full of pride, commitment and opportunities reflecting an economically sustainable, self sufficient, and safe living environment, with a balanced range of municipal services provided through innovation and proactive community partnerships. Assets to the Town of Blackfalds: • A strong sense of community • Small-town feel • A great place to live & raise a family • Diverse and unique • A rural setting not affected by urban sprawl • Friendly, generous, and helpful people • A healthy mix of long-time residents and newcomers • An enthusiastic community spirit Strengths include safety in the community and a superior quality of life Weaknesses include a lack of health practitioners and facilities and limited diversity and multiculturalism Threats identified include loss of the older population due to lack of housing and provincial supports and local transit system does not offer regional services Goals relevant to the SNA Attract: • Health services and wellness facilities • Childcare providers • Affordable housing • Aging in place accommodation Build community capacity to attract, welcome, integrate and retain newcomer residents Support expansion of the BOLT regional public transportation system	Alignments: • Vision especially with respect to community pride, families, safety, and community partnerships • Residents' perceptions of community assets • Quality of life findings from SNA survey and engagement • Need for increased health services, increased affordable housing and seniors housing, expanded transportation support, increased childcare providers and options • Need to engage and support newcomer residents

APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW COMMENT SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF SOCIAL STRENGTHS AND ISSUE / OPPORTUNITY PRIORITY THEMES

STRENGTHS	
• The spirit of connectivity in the community • FCSS does great work and has a great reputation	• Actively connecting people in the community • Events held in the Town bring people together

PROGRAM AND SERVICE PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Mental Health Supports for Children, Youth, Seniors, and Families:
- Social/emotional gap for children and youth because of the pandemic has emerged more quickly than most expected. With increasing population simply more capacity is needed.
- Mental health is huge; currently very few services available in the region and none they are truly local in Blackfalds.
- Mental health supports across all ages.
- Local mental health supports including strategies and support to deal with mental health stigma.
- Connect agencies and AHS to create awareness and easier access.
- Issues related to social isolation.
- Strong advocacy for prioritizing mental health, particularly youth mental health, as the most critical concern; noting a worsening mental health situation in Blackfalds, with a significant youth population affected.
- Emphasis on addressing the most significant need in Blackfalds, which is youth mental health despite recent but insufficient support efforts.
- Recognition of the need for adult mental health support, considering its impact on the well-being of the youth.
- Recognized the scarcity of mental health resources in Blackfalds, noting tech-savvy limitations that hinder engagement in virtual care.
- Highlighted the ongoing distress experienced by individuals with mental health issues, emphasizing that temporary supports are insufficient to stabilize their situations.

Parenting Supports:
- Need parenting / coaching supports – hub for families. Need a Family Resource centre in Blackfalds. Empowering parents and families.
- Support to single parent families.
- Support to families to prevent and deal with family dysfunction.
- Identified a gap in parenting support programs, particularly for working parents and those with toddlers, despite efforts from the Family Resource Network.

Youth and Families with Special Needs:
- Specialized support programs for learning disabilities are needed, alongside a focus on mental health resources for youth.

Program Spaces:
- Lack of spaces and affordability of spaces for social programs and services.
- Additional community center that provides increased program space (10-year plan).
- Expressing disappointment in not obtaining Civic Centre space for service providers; vision for positive outcomes by bringing in external service providers, covering areas like addictions, bullying, Indigenous programs, and sexual assault.

Food Insecurity and Other Basic Needs:
- Ensuring a supply of good quality food is available and affordable.
- Nothing else really matters if you are worried and stressed about feeding yourself / your family adequately.
- Recognition of many high-risk families in need in the community.
- Highlight the challenges of insufficient funding and reluctance to address deep-rooted social issues.

More Services for Youth and Parents with Young Children:
- Families will likely be identified as having high needs. The influx of young families will shape social needs in future years.

Increased Opportunities for Youth Including:
- Summer green shack program.
- Youth engagement.
- Readiness for new high school. Developing youth social and interpersonal skills.
- Educational support, including literacy programs and tutoring, are crucial for those behind due to the pandemic.
- Programs addressing socialization, emotional regulation, and communication skills for youth under 25 are essential.

Information and Awareness:
- Creating awareness information on what the social issues are in Blackfalds and what is available to help.
- Increase knowledge of resources in the community and how to access them.
- Advocacy against creating another hotline, urging the use of existing resources like 211 for up-to-date local program information.

Connectivity and Collaborative Planning:
- Collaboration between all youth workers, teachers and other school youth resources (school social workers).
- Action focussed collaboration.
- No one, including the municipality can address these issues alone nor should they.
- Action focus on identified priority areas will encourage attendance. Also networking that results in connection and collaboration.
- Recognition of discussions on collaboration but a lack of authentic efforts; noting a significant disconnect among agencies, operating in silos with poor program utilization and evaluation.
- Concerns raised about a lack of community support for the proposed ideas, citing an example of insufficient backing for a girls' self-defence class.
- Described collaboration as almost non-existent, with agencies operating independently and resistant to change or new approaches.

Substance Use:
- Drug and alcohol use information, awareness and support.
- Acknowledgment of the secondary priority on youth addiction, with challenges due to jurisdictional limitations.
- Addressed the pressing needs of young people facing complex mental health and addiction issues, often exacerbated by unsupportive family situations
- Emphasized the need for more addiction support, focusing on the prevalent issues of alcohol and marijuana use in Blackfalds.
- Expressed worries about the increasing rates of marijuana use among youth, particularly with the influence of vaping; redirected attention from opioids, emphasizing the critical focus on addressing excessive alcohol consumption and marijuana use as primary concerns in tackling addiction.

Housing:
- There have been plans but nothing has been built.
- Accessible and affordable.
- Only four units of senior housing in Blackfalds.
- Low-income housing especially for seniors.
- Intent is to not have seniors need to leave the community to get the housing support they need.

Transportation:
- Not necessarily a transportation system but ways to help people get to appointments, shopping, etc. Seniors need to get out as much as possible and not be isolated.
- Residents face challenges with limited local resources and transportation issues, particularly impacting those with significant needs.

Volunteers:
- Need to have a systemic process to build the Blackfalds volunteer base.

Welcoming Community and Community Building:
- Proactive strategies to avoid culture based disconnects and barriers.
- Welcoming, supporting and engaging newcomers into the community.
- Developing pride in Blackfalds and what a great place to live it is.
- Building community pride, collaboration with schools, and creating non-judgmental environments are priorities.
- Initiatives are needed to bridge divides among adults, combat misinformation, and foster community conversations.
- With population growth, a consistent welcome wagon initiative is needed to provide information about Blackfalds.
- Identified a lack of roots and social safety nets for individuals moving to Blackfalds for affordability, leading to isolation without support.

Community Safety:
- Continued focus on crime reduction.
- Adolescent vandalism and rising petty crime require interventions.
- Disruptions and violence at community centres signal a need for increased safety measures.
- Highlighting concerns beyond mental health, such as youth involvement in gangs and carrying weapons, emphasizing the need for preventive services.

APPENDIX 3 – WORKING SESSION PARTICIPANT COMMENTS AND SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF SOCIAL STRENGTHS AND ISSUE / OPPORTUNITY THEMES

STRENGTHS	
• In-home supports • Rural outreach • Working relationships with schools • Businesses support to events	• Events that provide opportunities for families • Recreation facilities including Abbey Centre, parks, and community spaces • Town administration and Council open to listening and to ideas

PROGRAM AND SERVICE PRIORITIES

Mental Health Support
- Need for increased capacity.
- Improve access including hours, transportation, face to face rather than telephone or video (video fatigue).
- We now have a private psychologist if benefits will cover. Having to pay up front and then submit for benefits can be a barrier.
- Mental health support for adults is not easy to access. Also need to deal with issues concerning stigma. Low resources in Town.
- Not really within the FCSS mandate. FCSS Program and Board will need to look at what part of this might be able to be addressed through FCSS (i.e. spaces, advocacy, collaborations, etc).
- Lack of role models of proper use of social media.
- Collect dissent expressed through social media.
- Deep neglect (of mental health issues and concerns) that has not kept pace with growth.
- Social anxiety and depression intensified by COVID.
- Need to address and support family mental health and home dynamics.
- Parents can tend to be fierce advocates which has positive and negative aspects.
- Collective dysregulation exists and needs organized support.

Childcare
- After school care.
- For PD days.
- Affordable.

Social Media
- Schools encounter parent created Facebook pages which tend to be very negative and divisive. Face-to-face conversation would be preferable.
- Confusion as to what is appropriate and not to post / read on social media.
- It has become very easy to create an online presence (FB) and there is very little accountability for the truth.
- The resource officer is providing support to families that have been bullied.
- Kids need positive role models (media stars, community, and political leaders) who show the proper use of social media.

Parenting Support

- Blackfalds has increased situations where one parent is working "away" for long periods and the remaining parent is essentially a single parent. Need support with parenting in this situation where one parent regularly leaves and then re-enters the family. Sudden and substantial role changes when one parent is away or not.
- Hard to support parents in recognizing and acknowledging parenting deficiencies. Parents are not always seeing or acknowledging the poor behaviour by their children.
- The prevailing dynamic of a sense of entitlement has created a norm of challenging authority by both children and parents.
- Youth have a society driven confusion of the difference between right and wrong.
- Need for a "place" and regularly scheduled parenting support information and sessions.
- Information and support for basic family values. Need to re-establish trust relationships rather than quick judgement without all of the facts.
- School counsellor case loads are made up 90% by single moms who are lonely, isolated, have a sense of failing and not wanting to be judged.
- "Parents to the rescue" can be positive or not. Often may be misdirected and does not model accountability for children.
- "Single" parents (including when one parent works away).
- Social media and bullying.
- Removing barriers to use of social programs and services.

Financial Literacy and Affordability

- Blackfalds has resource industry driven financial highs and lows. Youth, parents and families need help in financial management and planning for a boom / bust economy.
- Transportation to any programs and services can be a barrier to participation.
- This can be a tricky curriculum area as it is not only for low-income people. It needs to be leveled and focused for all people who are struggling with finances.
- How to connect youth with a bank and banking in a positive way and develop financial life skills.
- Costs are increasing so the level of affordability to attend social programs and services is decreasing.
- People have less money available to take care of social concerns. Decisions are becoming between "heating and eating" for many people.

Food Insecurity for Youth, Seniors, and Families

- People who used to volunteer are now using the Beyond Food Community Hub.
- Poor knowledge of good food choices and how to prepare nutritional food.
- Need to consider accessibility to good food vs. canned or prepared foods, fast foods, etc.

Transportation:

- Is a priority in terms of helping residents get to programs and services they need.
- Able to access Golden Circle for some needs.
- Reduction in BOLT service has made the transportation issue worse.

Affordable Housing for Singles, Families, and Seniors:

- Need for good quality and lower cost rental accommodation.
- Need rental housing where rent is geared to income.
- Town has allocated land for housing development.
- This is a priority with Council now.
- Consider appropriateness of housing, affordability, and availability.

Information and Awareness

- Increasing the information and awareness of programs and services that already exist. Maximize existing before building new. Do this from a community "umbrella" perspective rather than each agency and organization doing their own.
- Increasing information and awareness of the programs, services and events that are available.

Connecting and Collaborating

- Focus on connecting and collaborating to maximize resources and reduces any duplication or overlap that may exist.

APPENDIX 4 – NEEDS AND GAPS ANALYSIS

THE TABLE BELOW CONTAINS A BREAKDOWN OF THE NEEDS AND GAPS, BY THEME .ANY DATA SOURCE WHERE THE NEED OR GAP WAS IDENTIFIED WAS FLAGGED WITH AN "X" .

NEEDS AND GAPS	INTERCEPT SURVEYS	INTERVIEWS	SURVEY DATA	DOCUMENT REVIEW	WORKING SESSIONS
CHILDREN AND YOUTH					
Bullying and inappropriate behaviour at school, at the skatepark on social media	X		X		X
Feeling safe in the community					X
Substance use and addiction issues in schools	X		X		
Support for children and youth with disabilities	X		X		
Unsupervised children and youth			X		
Transportation challenges	X			X	
MENTAL HEALTH					
Supports for youth experiencing anxiety and depression and those considering suicide		X	X		X
Positive family dynamics and relationships		X	X		
Reducing depression, anxiety and stress from food insecurity, relationships, and financial challenges				X	
Programs and services dealing with substance use and addiction			X	X	
Local psychologists and counsellors		X		X	X
PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES					
Some programs and services cost prohibitive			X	X	
Potential regional collaborations		X			

NEEDS AND GAPS	INTERCEPT SURVEYS	INTERVIEWS	SURVEY DATA	DOCUMENT REVIEW	WORKING SESSIONS
SUPPORT TO FAMILIES					
Affordable childcare options including for children and youth with disabilities	X	X		X	
Parenting programs and supports including early childhood	X	X			X
Affordable housing options			X	X	X
Relationship support		X	X		X
Parenting support while one parent is away for extended periods of time					X
Transportation to programs, services, appointments, etc.			X	X	
SUPPORT TO SENIORS					
Affordable and supportive housing			X	X	X
Community support so older residents can remain in the community – in home support	X	X	X	X	
Local mental health services		X			X
BASIC NEEDS AND FOOD SECURITY					
Need to expand the Food Hub operation - basic needs	X		X		
Accommodate changing family and individual circumstances		X			
Continue lunch box program				X	
INCREASE COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES					
Maximize participation in existing programs and services	X		X		X
Increase visibility of FCSS		X	X		X
Options to social media	X				
FCSS communications resource					X

NEEDS AND GAPS	INTERCEPT SURVEYS	INTERVIEWS	SURVEY DATA	DOCUMENT REVIEW	WORKING SESSIONS
ENGAGING AND CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY					
Engage and support newer residents	X			X	X
Acknowledge and celebrate what cultural differences bring to the community			X	X	
Support for persons with disabilities including access and specific programs and services	X		X		
Community events and activities bring people together	X			X	
Dealing with isolation and loneliness			X		
Build and support community identity					X
ISSUES RELATED TO LOCAL MINOR CRIME					
Personal and property crime	X				X
Respect for persons and property	X				
VOLUNTEERS					
Need to broaden and diversify the pool of volunteers				X	X
Design volunteer opportunities to build community engagement					X
COMMUNITY USE SPACES					
Spaces for programs and services and childcare		X			
Iron Ridge Secondary Campus		X			

APPENDIX 5 – INTERVIEW AND WORKING SESSION PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

PARTICIPANTS	INTERVIEWS	WORKING SESSIONS
Schools	5	4
Agencies	9	1 (Childcare)
RCMP	1	
Library	1	
Enforcement	1	
Council	1	3
CEO	1	1
Administration	1	5
AHS – Mental Health	2	
FCSS Board		5
		7 (Spring working session)
Totals	**22**	**26**