

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

Cheyenne Ratnam, A Way Home Toronto  
CAEH, November 2018, Ottawa

Funded in part by the  
Government of Canada:

**Canada** 

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**VERS UN CHEZ-SOI**  
TORONTO



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



# A Way Home Toronto

## Vision

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

## Mission

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

## Goal

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

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

*~focus group participant*

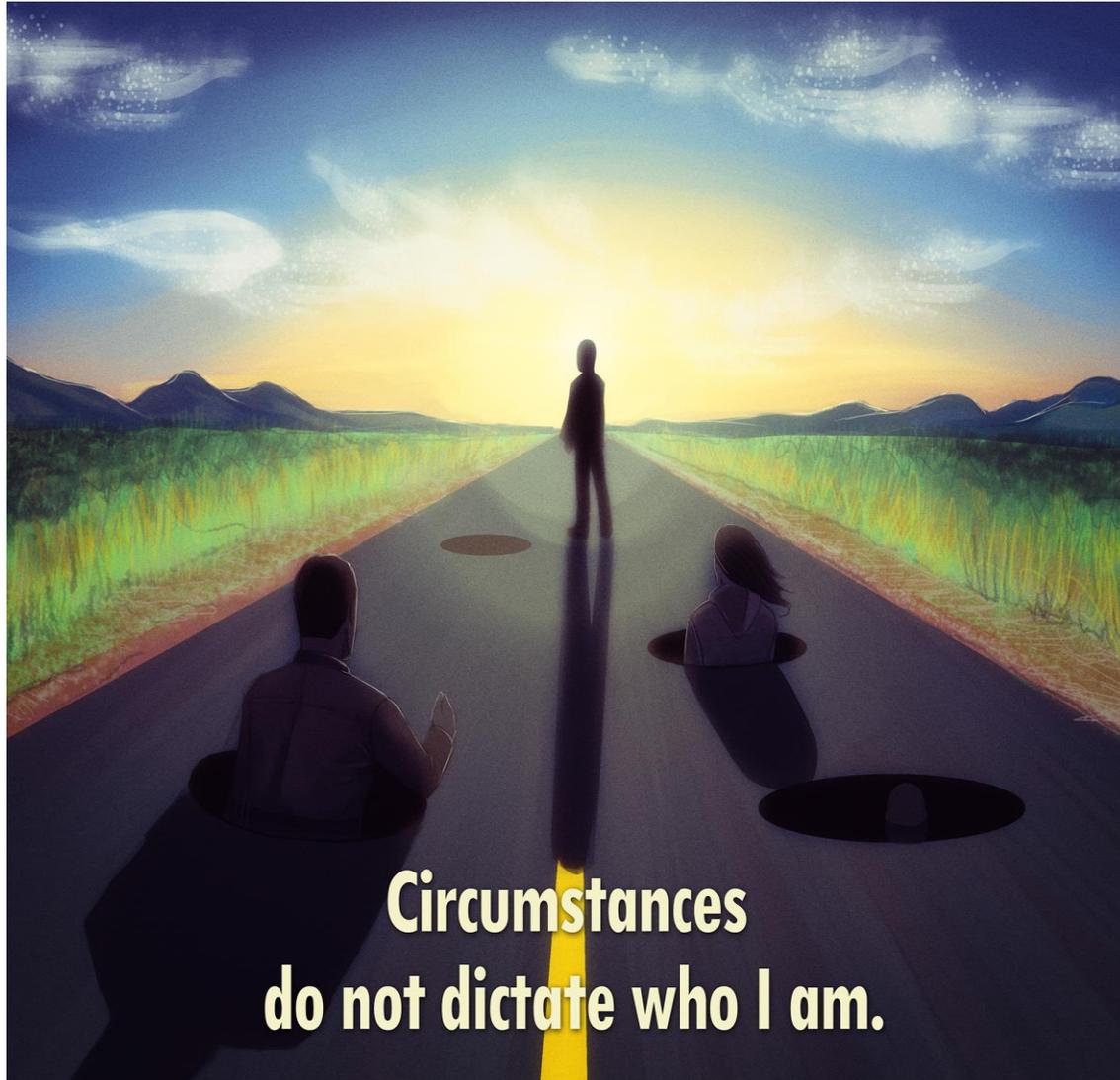
# A Way Home Toronto Phase 1 Working Group



- ❖ City of Toronto – SSHA
- ❖ Covenant House
- ❖ Eva's Initiatives
- ❖ Horizons for Youth
- ❖ Central Toronto Community Health Centre
- ❖ Kennedy House
- ❖ Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- ❖ Sherbourne Community Health Centre
- ❖ SKETCH Working Arts
- ❖ Toronto Council Fire
- ❖ Turning Point Youth Services
- ❖ What's the Map?!: Newcomer Youth Leading the Call to Action
- ❖ YMCA GTA
- ❖ The Yonge Street Mission
- ❖ Youth Without Shelter

# Why a youth homelessness strategy?

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**Circumstances  
do not dictate who I am.**

Because youth homelessness is

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

Art by Yael De Gale (@degaledesign)

# A “fusion policy issue”: Context & alignment

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



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

Phase 1:  
Framework



Phase 3:  
Implement



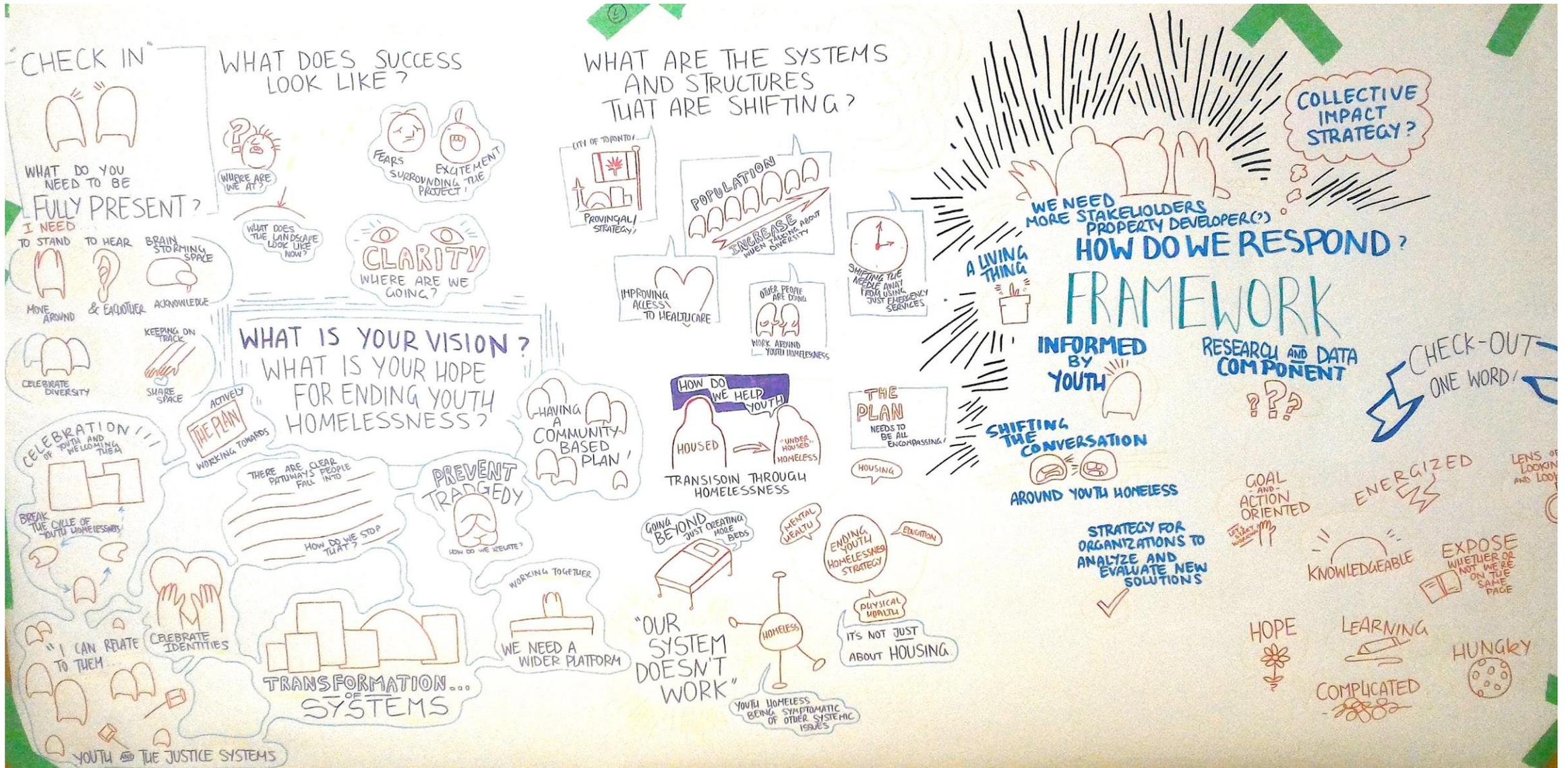
Phase 2:  
Strategy

Listening, Learning, Unlearning, Improving

Engaging, Collaborating, Coordinating



# Phase 1: Listening, Learning, Connecting



# Framework for a Youth Homelessness Strategy for Toronto

A Way Home Toronto



Vision

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

Principles

Young people as key partners

Human Rights

Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism, & Intersectionality

Inclusive Collaboration

Approach

**Youth-Centred Collective Impact**

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

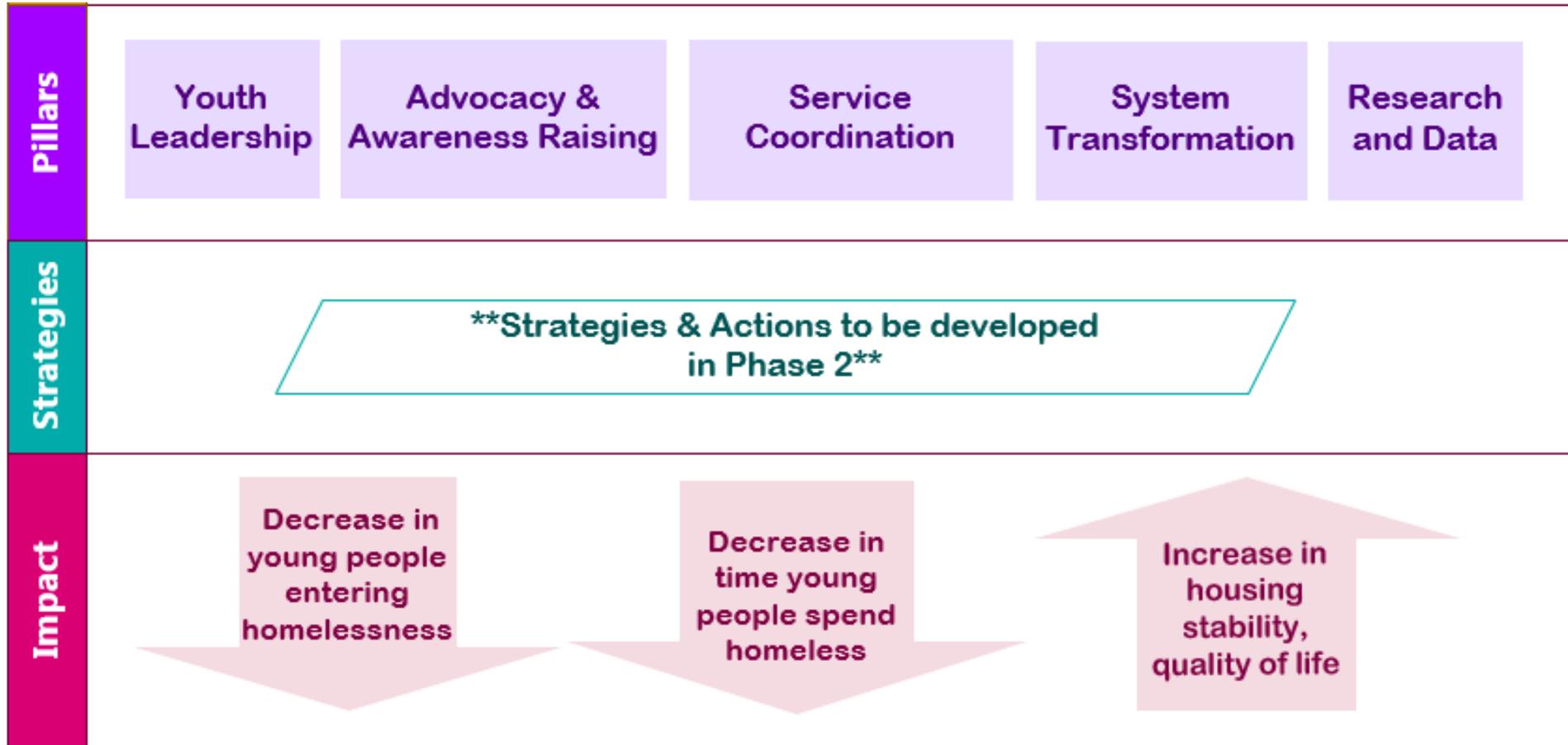
Goals

**PREVENT**  
entry/return to homelessness

**REDUCE**  
duration and impact of homelessness

**END**  
homelessness through housing & support

# Framework continued



Art by Yael De Gale (@degaledesign)

**It's not the voices on the outside  
that shape us  
but the voices on the inside  
that make us.**

# Transitioning to Phase 2

- Federal funding for 1 year
- Goal: build on framework to create a strategy & action plan
- New governance structure

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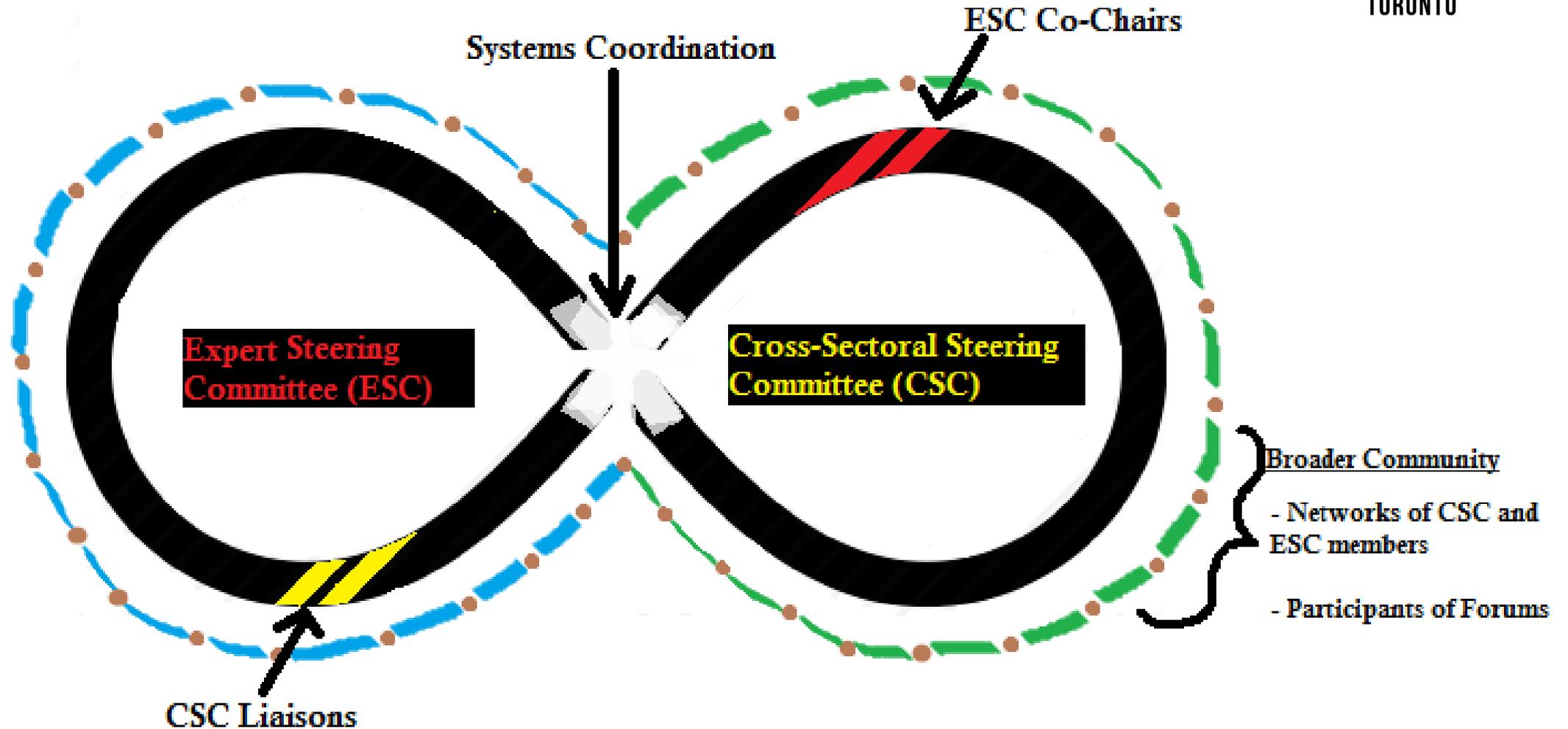
# A Way Home Toronto (AWHT)

- Governance Structure



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# Cross-Sectoral Steering Committee



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- ❖ City of Toronto – Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration
- ❖ Covenant House Toronto
- ❖ Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- ❖ 2 Expert Steering Committee Co-Chair's
- ❖ Sherbourne Community Health Centre
- ❖ Justice for Children and Youth
- ❖ SKETCH Working Arts
- ❖ Toronto District School Board
- ❖ Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- ❖ East Metro Youth Services
- ❖ Planned Parenthood Toronto – LGBTQ Initiatives
- ❖ The Yonge Street Mission – Evergreen
- ❖ FCJ Refugee Centre

# Expert Steering Committee

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- ❖ 8 member steering committee
- ❖ 2 co-chairs
- ❖ Diverse Lived Expertise re: Homelessness
- ❖ Diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds
- ❖ Diverse capacities
- ❖ Various statuses in Toronto (newcomer to Canadian citizens)
- ❖ Pay according to work, not age or 'youth silo'
- ❖ Expert driven work

# The Journey:

- Canadian Observatory on Homelessness – Developmental Evaluation
- A Way Home Canada Partnership Solidification via MOU
- Solutions Generation Forum and Knowledge Exchange Circles (100-110 experts)
- 2 Cross-Sectoral Community Forums (100 participants)
- Developing Strategy to develop strategy, and strategy development
- Home Depot Canada Foundation
  - Orange Door Award
  - \$25,000.00



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

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



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# Three Key Outcomes

- Strategy to End Youth Homelessness in Toronto
- Developmental Evaluation and Report by Canadian Observatory on Homelessness
- Governance Structure and Engagement Model

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

We need to be taken seriously.

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

# Developmental Process Evaluation



- The COH collaborated with AWHT to conduct a developmental process evaluation of the strategy to prevent, reduce, and end youth homelessness in Toronto
- The work was guided by three main questions:
  - How can AWHT facilitate effective collaboration across sectors to address the drivers, experiences, and consequences of youth homelessness?
  - How can community coalitions work with young people with lived experience as key partners, experts, and leaders to address the social policy issues affecting their lives?
  - How can evaluation be integrated into emerging, multi stakeholder initiatives in ways that support continued innovation, evolution, and improvement?

# What did the evaluation find?

- Through interviews, meeting attendance, and engagement in community events, the evaluation's key findings were:
  - Expert engagement is vital!
  - Empowerment leads to engagement
  - Working collaboratively is key
  - Collaborative work takes time and money
  - Language is important

# Contact info

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