



POVERTY TO POSSIBILITY

Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty – Terms of Reference – January 2025

1.0 Background

The **Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty** formed as a result of conversations within Bridges out of Poverty St. Thomas Elgin. Bridges Out of Poverty St. Thomas Elgin is a group of committed community leaders and volunteers whose mission is to eliminate poverty by uniting the strengths and passions of those living in St. Thomas & Elgin County. Since 2010, this group had been passionate about reducing poverty in St. Thomas & Elgin County through the tools set out in Bridges Out of Poverty. In 2015, Bridges out of Poverty St. Thomas Elgin appointed a small working group to further investigate interest in a comprehensive poverty coalition to tackle the root causes of poverty and commit towards eliminating poverty entirely.

In October 2016, planning tables of community leaders across St. Thomas Elgin were invited to come together to talk further about what could be done. Subsequently, a group of about 25 agencies and community citizens met two additional times, December 2016 and January 2017 to establish and inform a Steering Committee. The local YWCA and Southwestern Public Health agreed to provide backbone services, and the Coordinating Committee met for the first time officially on February 15th, 2017.

Currently, the coalition remains a collaborative group of organizations, decision makers and individuals dedicated to working together on the vision "no one in Elgin St. Thomas lives in poverty".

2.0 Purpose of the coalition:

The overall purpose of the coalition is to address the root causes of poverty in Elgin St. Thomas and find solutions for long term sustainable change to achieve our vision. This means we:

- Identify and plan for opportunities to address system transformation by advocating for needed change at all three levels of government
- Work collaboratively with community partners to eliminate poverty
- Provide opportunity for coordination across community tables working on poverty reduction initiatives i.e. food security, housing, economic security, transportation, etc.

3.0 Membership of the coalition:

The coalition will be made up of community members and partners with a diverse mix of leadership including those with lived and living expertise, members of the business community, elected officials, social services, and community volunteers.

All members will have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the root causes of poverty, and its effects on people and our community.

Members are encouraged to commit to ongoing continuous learning through opportunities such as Re-think Poverty Training, Tamarack Ending Poverty Pathways or other similar training to foster an understanding of the social determinants of health.

Ideally, local chairs of committees or groups encompassed under the coalition pillars are invited and attend and share updates from their area of work.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of General Members of the Coalition

- Attend meetings as scheduled
- Bring back information to their organization or community group to support awareness and communication across sectors
- Bring expertise and knowledge in one or more key areas of interest for the coalition
- Share information relevant to the work of the coalition at meetings
- Where possible, coalition members will also be members of a pillar committee
- Actively support the work of the coalition in the community. Attend coalition events
- Support coalition efforts over social media
- Participate in training or educational opportunities

4.0 Purpose of the Coordinating Committee (CC)

1. Establish and monitor the effectiveness of Coalition governance structure and procedures.
2. Annually review the strategic direction of coalition and associated communication materials.
3. Maintain fiscal responsibility with regular financial reports and approval processes.
4. Anticipate opportunities and challenges, with a specific emphasis on securing resources to address Coalition sustainability.
5. Encouraging and fostering community collaboration
6. Provide leadership to the Coalition meetings by developing the Agenda and Chairing the meetings.
7. Regularly review the proceedings of the Coalition in order to support its coordination and to monitor progress towards work plan goals and objectives.
8. Regularly identify and plan for opportunities to address system transformation by advocating for needed change at all three levels of government.
9. Produce and circulate documents on an as-needed basis to support the work of the Coalition.
10. Be the official voice of the Coalition, in conjunction with other Coalition members, as needed.

4.1 Individual Roles & Responsibilities of the Coordinating Committee Members

- CC members will be liaisons to the Coalition sub-groups/pillars.
- Prepare for and attend Coordinating Committee meetings and provide advance notice to a Co-Chair if unable to attend
- Identify, recruit, appoint, select, and elect sub-group representatives as necessary
- Lead or support the process to secure Coalition funds (e.g., grant writing, "Making the Case" to potential sponsors)
- Participate in the development and implementation of an accountability framework for the Coalition's strategic plan
- Actively support the work of the Coalition in the community
- Identify and support the training and development needs for the group.

4.2 Membership of the Coordinating Committee

Ideally, the Coordinating Committee will consist of multi-sector representation reflective of the community at large including people with lived and living expertise, members of the business community, social services, and community volunteers.

4.2.1 Coordinating Committee Roles Include: (8-10 members maximum)

Persons with Lived/Living Experience (1-2)	Someone who currently or has ever identified as living in poverty. Financial poverty is not the only form of poverty. People are able to self-identify as they are comfortable. • Recommended to be a member of the wider coalition for a minimum of one year. • Honorariums will be provided as funds allow (examples may include transportation, childcare and time).
Co-Chairs (2)	The co-chairs will hold shared responsibility and determine individual tasks. Roles and responsibilities include: • Provide Backbone support for the Coordinating Committee and coalition • Chair coalition and Coordinating Committee meetings. • Point of contact for the coalition and Coordinating Committee for public and media inquiries. • Manage coalition correspondence • Develop Coordinating Committee and coalition agendas and distribute one week in advance of meetings along with the previous meeting's minutes for review. • Liaise with coalition working groups • Lead on the connection to the relevant research and work of other communities through participation on Tamarack's Communities Ending Poverty Community of Practice, or identify a coalition representative • Liaison for System Transformation lens to all Coalition work • Liaise with community agencies to obtain and review data as requested. • Recommended to be a member of the wider coalition for a minimum of one year.
Treasurer (1)	• The treasurer will provide financial management and reporting. They will track membership fees and expenses. They will provide annual invoices to coalition members. • Recommended to be a member of the wider coalition for a minimum of one year.
Communications Officer (1)	The communications officer will manage social media accounts and website for the Coordinating Committee and coalition and liaise with professionals to support this work. They will: • Recommended to be a member of the wider coalition for a minimum of one year. • Update the Timeline of Success annually • Maintain Coalition Facebook page and edit as required, post coalition content as directed, share content as appropriate. • Website updates coordinated through third party website support.
Representatives at Large (3-4)	• Representatives at large including representation from social services, housing, health sector, family and children's services, food security, education, business sector or municipal leadership. • Provide input and perspectives from their area of expertise. • Participate in activities of the committee and associated working groups as able.
Notetaker	Nonvoting member, not counted in CC total membership • Takes minutes at all coordinating committee and full coalition meetings • Provides minutes to co-chair for review and distribution

4.3 Terms of Office

- Coalition Co-Chairs will serve a three-year term that can be renewed. Ideally, terms of co-chairs will be staggered or overlap to ensure continuity and mentorship.
- All other CC members will serve two-year terms that can be renewed.
- Within 6 months of the anticipated end of a member's term, the member will be consulted to determine if they wish to remain in their role.
- General coalition members are welcome for indefinite years of service

4.3.1 Expression of Interest to join the CC will be acted upon using the following criteria:

1. Interested member has ideally been part of the wider coalition for at minimum 1 year
2. An open position is available or coming available in the next 6 months
3. The person represents a sector not currently involved in the CC. This will allow for balanced decision making so one sector is not over-represented
4. The member can commit to attending CC meetings, being an active participant, and taking on action items where appropriate.
5. If more than one member is expressing interest in a single position, existing CC members will review applications and determine the next steps through consensus decision making

4.4 Accountability

The Coordinating Committee is accountable to the Coalition and will bring forward recommendations and opportunities to the full coalition. The coordinating committee will communicate yearly with full coalition and community regarding successes, next steps, and evaluation of actions taken.

5.0 Membership Fees:

- Each involved organization or individual member is requested to pay an annual membership fee in accordance with the approved fee sliding scale. Members with lived/living experiences of poverty are not required to pay a membership fee.
- Membership fees will be set annually

6.0 Financial

- The financial year for the Coalition will run from January 1 through December 31.
- As outlined in the purpose statements in Section 4.0, the CC will anticipate opportunities and challenges, with a specific emphasis on securing resources to address Coalition sustainability.

6.1 Financial Decision Making Matrix

Expense	Examples	Decision Process
Renewal of Existing Memberships or vendor contracts	Website hosting, Tamarack membership	Reviewed and decided on by Coordinating Committee
\$1 - \$ 500 – One Time Expenses	Catering for coalition events, printing, meeting expenses,	Reviewed and decided on by Coordinating Committee

\$501-\$1000 – One Time Expenses	educational opportunities, working group expenses	Reviewed and decided on by Coordinating Committee, Full coalition informed of decision at next meeting
\$1001 +	Larger expenses of coalition or working groups i.e. consultation support	-Options and quotes sought by coordinating committee. -Coordinating committee reviews quotes and options and determines recommendation -Recommendation is brought to full coalition at the next meeting or electronically for overall discussion and consensus decision making.

7.0 Meetings

7.1 - Coordinating Committee

The CC will meet every other month or on the call of one of the Co-Chairs as needed. Members may virtually or in person.

The CC members will also attend the full Coalition meetings, which are five times per year. The location of CC meetings will be based on available and accessible spaces.

7.2 Full Coalition

The full coalition meets 5 times per year as scheduled. All members are invited and encouraged to attend either in person or virtually.

7.3 Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes inclusive of action items will be sent to members (Coordinating Committee and or regular coalition meetings) after initial draft approval by the co-chairs. This will be sent to the larger group via the co-chairs.

Meeting minutes will also be circulated along with the following meeting's agenda for review and approval at the next meeting. Once approved, meeting minutes are saved in the ESTCEP SharePoint Site.

8. Decision Making

The CC and the coalition will endeavor to have consensus through discussion in advance of decision making. The coalition will create opportunities for discussion and question/answers. When ample opportunity has been provided for discussion and members feel their questions or concerns have been adequately addressed, a vote will be called with the members in attendance based on the consensus scale. Members can decide to hold a vote at the next meeting if there is low attendance.

Quorum for decision making at the coordinating committee is a minimum of 50% + 1 members present

If a time-sensitive decision is required in between CC meetings, input will be solicited by electronic, or telephone means within a specified time frame.

11.0 Conflict of Interest Guidelines

Coalition members have a duty to declare being in conflict between the committee and/or coalition's interests and their agencies or personal interests. Whenever a coalition member has a personal or pecuniary interest in the same subject matter of the coalition, a conflict of interest arises. Conflict of Interest must be disclosed to the coalition co-chairs in advance or as soon after it first becomes known. Co-Chairs will discuss conflict of interest and determine next steps. This may result in the members refraining from participating or voting on related items.

12.0 Confidentiality

Due to the nature of coalition meetings, information of a personal or private nature may be disclosed by participants. It is understood that personal disclosures are to remain confidential. Members who are bound by reporting requirements (I.e., teachers, health care workers) will comply with their legal duty to report requirements as directed by their profession and the law.

13.0 Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually in the fall of each year.

Updated: February 2025