

Case Study:

The City of Edmonton creates community access points to FE support for low-income residents

Background:

The City of Edmonton's Community Wellness team has been providing financial empowerment (FE) supports to Edmontonians for a number of years but noticed an opportunity to target these services further to people living on low and modest incomes. The Community Wellness team worked with Prosper Canada to integrate FE practices in other city services with the intention of reaching people who would benefit from FE support early. The Community Wellness team identified two programs that already increase financial accessibility in the city: the Ride Transit and Leisure Access Pass programs.

Vision:

Residents living on low income are seamlessly connected to financial empowerment supports through existing city programs, and can achieve financial well-being through this support.

Approach:

The Community Wellness team has embedded FE social workers at locations where residents apply for the Ride Transit and Leisure Access Pass programs, such as the Edmonton Service Centre, recreation centres, and other City facilities. Co-locating social workers in these spaces allows the team to reach more residents living on low income and help them with:

- Navigating financial challenges through 1:1 support
- Tax filing
- Applying for government benefits
- Accessing other community programs

They have also worked to strengthen relationships with community organizations who provide other necessary support services and build partnerships on a strategic level.

Impact:

Through the pandemic, the FE social workers have been providing remote support to Ride Transit and Leisure Access Pass applicants, along with other community members in need of financial empowerment support. The program has been helpful for people with varying levels of knowledge and confidence in their finances. Since January 2021, the FE social workers have supported 183 people for a variety of reasons including accessing financial support programs, navigating income taxes, and managing their Ride Transit or Leisure Access Pass applications.

What can we learn from this?

- A team that has high FE delivery capacity can scale their services by creating access points in other programs
 - Co-location can be a valuable approach to embedding FE because it allows for stronger partnerships, more seamless referrals, and more opportunities for collaboration
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