



Making Zero Count

User-Centred Design
& Strengthening Buy-in for
Greater Coordination Handbook

Acknowledgements



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Foreword:

Public systems have to work together in order to end homelessness. Too often services are designed without the service user in mind. It is important that we engage with those with lived experience so that efforts to end homelessness can be as tailored and impactful as possible.



Through the use of stories and role-play, participants will gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist in their community. Those results can be used to strengthen and streamline service coordination and move toward the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

Overview:

Purpose:

To support change management for systems planning

To raise awareness and build public will for ending homelessness

Target Audiences:

Homelessness System
Service Providers & **Public System** Service Providers

General Public

We have developed this toolkit to engage communities in an experiential way and to help communities understand the challenges and opportunities for ending homelessness through greater service coordination. We utilized user-centred design in order to support communities with strengthening systems integration and coordination.

User-centred design can be defined as the process of creating products that provide meaningful and relevant experiences to users¹. This involves the design of the entire process of acquiring and integrating the product, including aspects of branding, design, usability, and function.

This handbook outlines 10 steps to designing a user-centred, large-scale experiential exercise. User-centred design is about understanding the user experience at every interaction a user may have with a product. In this case, the “product” is service provision and/or resources within the homeless-serving sector. We further evolved the process by building the user-centred design experience into a large-scale experiential exercise for service providers to role-play a person experiencing homelessness who needs to access resources and services.

This role-play experience is intended to be tailored to your local community context, including the provincial and municipal policies specific to your community. We have found that the value of this process is in the way it shows, not tells, the inconsistencies of the series of services that people experiencing homelessness must navigate.

1. Interaction Design Foundation. (n.d.) What is User Experience (UX) Design? Retrieved on March 22, 2019 from <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/ux-design>

Resource 1

Step 1 – Preparing the Interview Guide

People with lived experience are the experts in this exercise. Their understanding of the system is what the role-play process attempts to capture. In order to learn more about their perspectives of navigating the system, we developed an interview guide to use in a consultation (see *Attachment 1.0 – Interview Guide*).



[Homeless-Serving System](#)

[Public Systems](#)

[Lived Experience](#)

Fig. A Lived Experience Leadership & Feedback

The questions in this guide initially focused on the working definition's indicators, and we have since updated these to align with the newly refined framework for an end to homelessness, developed through the Making Zero Count project. The questions cover the three critical dimensions of ending homelessness: Homeless-Serving System, Public Systems, and Lived Experience, as well as key demographic features.

It is important to note that the questions are written in third person narrative, and not intended to put a person on the spot with their personal experience. Rather, it is assumed that anyone who has navigated the homeless-serving system and related public systems is an expert in how that system works and speaks with credibility. Personal history is not required to provide that perspective. Some participants will absolutely want to share personal experiences, but it is important to set up the consultation in a way that this is not expected.

The consultation sessions can occur in a focus group setting or one-on-one. We suggest recording these conversations, as you will be referring to them for the development of the script. It is important to provide a clear overview of the role-playing project and how the information gathered in the focus-group consultation will be used. See *Attachment 2.0* for an Informed Consent template.



Tips:

- ▷ **Ensure that each person participating has informed consent.**
See *Attachment 2.0* for a consent form template outlining the purpose of the consultation.
- ▷ **Ensure that people are financially compensated for their time.**
We recommend \$20/hour on average.
- ▷ **Make sure that there is a counselor or worker available** during the consultation in case a participant wants further support.

Template 1.0

Focus Group Questions – General Background Information



Age

- ▷ Can you share your age when you first experienced homelessness?

Income Source

- ▷ When people are experiencing homelessness, what forms of income are available (e.g. Social Assistance, disability support, Employment Insurance, money from family, etc.)?
- ▷ How much per month does this amount to?

ID

- ▷ What forms of ID did you have when you were homeless?
- ▷ Was not having an ID ever a barrier?
 - ▶ If so, how?
 - Did it prevent access to a resource?
 - Which one?

Shelter Situation

- ▷ When people experience homelessness, where do they go?
 - ▶ A shelter?
 - ▶ Shared accommodation?
 - ▶ An unsafe situation for housing?
 - ▶ Couch Surfing?
 - ▶ Sleeping outside?

- ▷ What other services do people access when they experience homelessness?

- ▷ What are some of the barriers to accessing these services when people experience homelessness?

Dimension 1.0 – Lived Experience (1/2)

Focus Group Questions: Key Questions for those with Lived Experience

- ▷ **How do people access the system/get the services they need?**
 - ▶ What works well?
 - ▶ What are some of the barriers that prevent them from getting services?

- ▷ **How could workers/service providers further improve how they deliver services to support people?**

Functional Zero Indicator	Questions
1.1 Program and housing participants served by a homelessness-prevention system (including shelter, transitional housing, and Housing First programs, etc.) increasingly report being moderately or highly satisfied, at rates nearing 100 percent with:	
a) Shelter quality & safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ What does good quality homeless shelter look like?▷ How can safety be ensured at a shelter?▷ What are barriers to safety and quality at a shelter?
b) Housing security of tenure, affordability and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ How much money for housing would you consider affordable?▷ What does secure housing look like for you? (How long would that last?)
c) Case Management services received	<p>** May need to clarify what case managers do/ language may be different, perhaps just workers or outreach workers is more familiar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ What does a supportive relationship with a case manager look like?▷ When case management does not go well, what are the barriers to success?
d) Being treated with dignity, respect, and having self-determination/choice in housing and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ How can service providers promote choice and dignity in housing and supports?

Functional Zero Indicator

Questions

e) Access to appropriate supports to address diverse needs within homeless system & mainstream public systems (addiction, trauma, mental health issues, employment, education)

What kinds of services are needed for better support for people experiencing homelessness? (Could include a need for more of a particular kind of support, as well as perhaps supports that don't exist).

f) Process of referral and intake into programs, shelters, and housing

- ▷ When a person first becomes homeless and needs services, how do they currently access help?
- ▷ What are some of the barriers people experience to getting the right services?
- ▷ How would you improve this process?

g) Housing secured, stabilization and aftercare supports

- ▷ What do people need to stay in housing?
- ▷ What leads to a successful housing situation for someone who has exited homelessness?

h) Perception of quality of life, including sense of belonging, participation in community activities, and connection with friends and family

- ▷ How can a person who has exited homelessness develop a stronger sense of belonging?
- ▷ What can service providers do to support this?

1.2 Emerging and increasing evidence of systematic and effective inclusion of those with lived experience in community coordination efforts and decision-making to develop and deliver services in the homelessness-prevention system.

- ▷ How do you want to see people with lived experience included in ending homelessness and developing solutions?
- ▷ What support/resources would you need to be able to have a leadership and participation role in your community's planning work to end homelessness?



Dimension 2.0 – Homeless-Serving System

Focus Group Questions: Key Questions for those in the Homeless-Serving System

- ▷ What does safe and affordable housing mean to you?
- ▷ What do people need to maintain their housing?
- ▷ How can the homeless-serving system keep track of people effectively?
 - ▶ What are the best ways to follow up with people and check in if they are in need of supports?

Functional Zero Indicator

Questions

2.1 Total number of unsheltered persons and emergency-sheltered persons is consistently decreasing year over year towards zero; the community has reduced its initial baseline total unsheltered and emergency-sheltered count by 90 per cent. This performance is improved/maintained year over year.

2.2 Length of stay in emergency shelter and length of being unsheltered is consistently decreasing year over year towards zero. The community has reduced the initial baseline length of stay in system has a steady or decreasing rate. This performance is improved/maintained year over year.

2.3 The number entering versus exiting the homelessness-prevention system has a steady or decreasing rate. This performance is improved/maintained year over year.

2.4 There is a high percentage of positive homelessness-prevention system exits (above 90 per cent), including successful and stable natural-supports placements.

2.5 All unsheltered persons in a community are engaged with services and have been offered low-barrier shelter and housing at least every two weeks. Community has capacity to provide universal access to low-barrier shelter. This performance is improved/maintained year over year.

- ▷ What leads to increased lengths of stay in shelter for people?
- ▷ What could help people to exit the shelter system faster?
- ▷ What does affordable housing mean to you?
 - ▶ How much of your income would that cost?
- ▷ What does secure housing mean to you? (Location, permanence, safety, etc.)

- ▷ How can service providers better understand/measure when someone leaving the shelter system is positive?

- ▷ How would you want to see support services regularly check in with people? (Especially when people are hard to find?)
- ▷ What other ways can service providers connect with people experiencing homelessness?

Functional Zero Indicator

Questions

2.6 No more than 10 per cent of those who exit homelessness return within 12 months. This performance is improved/maintained year over year.

- ▷ What leads to people returning to shelter?
- ▷ What would prevent this from happening?

2.7 People are diverted/prevented from experiencing homelessness (unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provincially accommodated) wherever possible.

As a result, there is a consistent reduction year over year in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in emergency shelter and transitional housing/outreach with no previous homelessness experience.

This performance is improved/maintained year over year.



Dimension 3.0 - Public Systems

Focus Group Questions: Key Questions for those in Public Systems

- ▷ **What does the ideal transition from another system look like?**
 - ▶ child welfare, corrections, healthcare?
- ▷ **What gets in the way of supporting people once they exit one of those systems?**
- ▷ **What do people need after they leave that system to be supported and maintain housing?**

Functional Zero Indicator	Questions
<p>3.1 Percentage of those entering the homelessness-prevention system from other public systems is consistently decreasing (e.g., child protection, corrections, social housing, health, addiction treatment, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ Looking at the systems below, what could the staff in those systems do to stop someone from experiencing homelessness when they leave their care?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Child Welfare?▶ Corrections or jail?▶ Hospital?▶ Addictions treatment?
<p>3.2 All levels of government commit that no one should be forced to live on streets and provide sufficient resources to meet emergency-shelter demand, at a minimum.</p>	
<p>3.3 Coordination efforts are emerging between homeless-serving and public systems to ensure appropriate referrals and timely access to services/supports to prevent and end homelessness. This includes public systems conducting standardized screening for housing status assistance and having in place, standardized protocols for addressing people's needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ What happens when someone without housing leaves one of the following systems?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Healthcare (hospital, etc.)?▶ Child Welfare?▶ Corrections system?▶ Addictions treatment?
<p>3.4 Funding is increasingly coordinated and aligned with community needs to ensure service delivery levels sustain a high functioning system.</p>	
<p>3.5 There is increasing evidence of funding and policy coordination across government to ensure ending-homelessness objectives are supported.</p> <p>This includes removal of laws that criminalize homelessness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▷ Do you know of cases where people are caught between two or more systems related to homelessness that contradict each other?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Specifically, where this may result in not being able to access service or their shelter is threatened?<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Ex: a person with children afraid to access a shelter or other service provider out of concern that child welfare may be called?▷ Or are there examples of people being ticketed or penalized for things related to experiencing homelessness?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Panhandling, loitering in public spaces, barred from areas where service is provided, etc.?▷ What changes would you want to see in these situations?

Template 2.0 (1/2)

Journey Mapping Project Information & Informed Consent Form

1. Project Information

Date: _____ Project Title: _____

Project Staff: _____

Funding Sponsor (if applicable): _____

Participant's Name: _____

City/Town of Residence: _____

2.1 Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this consultation process is to **develop a stronger understanding of the lived experience of the homeless-serving system and related systems**. This information will be used to develop an interactive role-play for community members, where participating community members will be assigned a fictional profile based on multiple true experiences, in which they will be asked to complete a series of tasks in navigating the homeless-serving system.

2.2 What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research

You will be asked to **participate in a consultation session on how the homeless-serving system works as people navigate access to resources and services**. You will be asked questions related to your expertise and understanding as a person who has had to navigate this system. The consultation session will last between 1-2 hours and an honourarium is provided.

2.3 Potential Risks

While the questions are intended to initiate a general conversation about the homeless-serving system's strengths and weaknesses, **some of the questions may bring up personal history that causes discomfort**. If you experience discomfort at any time while participating in the consultation session, you may withdraw without any negative consequences.

2.4 Potential Benefits

Participants will help to **develop an impactful learning opportunity for community members to deepen their understanding** of the complexities of the homeless-serving system **from the perspective of people with lived experiences of homelessness**.

Template 2.0 (2/2)

Journey Mapping Project Information & Informed Consent Form

2.5 Voluntary Participation

Participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw for a portion or the entirety of the consultation session. In the event you withdraw from the project, you will be asked if you would like all associated comments collected to be immediately destroyed wherever possible or if the data can be retained.

2.6 Compensation

Those with lived experience of homelessness will receive \$____/hour for their participation in this study. The compensation will be provided upfront and is not affected if you withdraw from the consultation at any point.

2.7 Confidentiality

Your name will not appear in any report or written work related to this project. Your information will be anonymized, with identifiers such as your name and affiliation only being accessible to the project team. However, as a focus group participant, other focus group members will be aware of statements you make during the focus group and confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed.

Information will be collected through electronic recording and/or note taking by a member of the project team. Your information will be kept in a locked, secure location.

3. Consent Form

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this project. Agreeing to participate in this project does not waive any of your legal rights or release the project team from responsibilities. Your signature below indicates your consent.

I, (Please print first and last names) _____

_____ hereby consent to participate.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

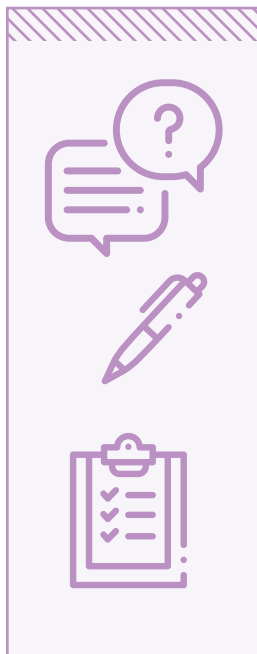
Resource 2.0

Step 2 – Building User Profiles

The results of the journey mapping focus group consultations will form the basis of the profiles and scripts used in the role-play activity (see *Attachment 3.0*). After finishing the consultations, begin by going back over the notes and recordings and look for common themes - particularly related to barriers in accessing services or obtaining housing. It is important to note that the profiles are not intended to be any one person's story, but a combination of stories that reflect common experiences heard throughout the consultations.

After having carried out this process in four different communities across the country, it is striking how the particular policies and regulations that become obstacles for people experiencing homelessness are extremely similar, with slight regional variations. There is value, however, in having a “home-grown” process for this, that will be familiar to community members participating in the eventual role-play.

Below we have included a Sample Profile (see *Attachment 4.0*) and Profile Template (see *Attachment 5.0*). In addition to filling out the general demographic information, develop an outline for the story. The demographic information will shape this outline. The outline serves as the overall story arc and identifies what the overall journey is for the profile. The story can end positively or negatively, and there may be no clear “ending” at all. It is best to stay true to the consultation stories. We have included a Sample Story Outline (see *Attachment 6.0*) and Story Outline Template (see *Attachment 7.0*) as well.



Tip 1: Try to feature a demographically diverse set of stories.

For example, we generally tried to feature a young person or middle-aged person navigating multiple systems (jail, hospital, shelter). We also looked at the regional trends for racial representation in homelessness. In some communities, this meant that we highlighted the stories of refugees, in others, it meant we highlighted Indigenous Peoples' experiences.

Tip 2: Generally, we did not go into great detail on a person's history of trauma.

However, **we consistently heard from people** in our consultations **that it was critical to name the presence of trauma** in the profiles.

Template 3.0

Questions to Identify Common Themes for Profiles

Homeless-Serving System

- ▷ **What worked well about the homeless-serving system to support people effectively?**
- ▷ **What kinds of barriers existed to finding housing?**
 - ▶ Transportation Delays?
 - Needing to travel to most places?
 - ▶ Administrative/Bureaucratic?
 - E.g., Lack of ID, lack of paperwork, etc.
 - ▶ Personnel?
 - Were people spoken to in a way that was punitive or shaming?
 - ▶ Lack of communication or inconsistent communication between services?
 - ▶ “Pre-requisites” that are not feasible?
 - Is the person required to do a series of tasks to move forward to the next task that will take a significant period of time or may be difficult to achieve?
 - **E.g.**, A person cannot apply for Social Assistance without ID. Applying for ID requires a set of several other additional steps, generally a fee, and a length of time that means an individual may be without any money coming in for a long period of time.
- ▷ **How are people experiencing homelessness involved in leadership within the homelessness system?**
- ▷ **Were there/are there opportunities for feedback from people accessing the system to improve services?**

Public Systems

- ▷ **Identify the gaps in the various public systems - where did people fall through?**
- ▷ **How did people fall through?**
 - ▶ Hospitals
 - ▶ Jails or the Corrections system
 - ▶ Child Welfare
 - ▶ Schools
- ▷ **Are there examples of other public systems penalizing homelessness?**
- ▷ **Were there examples of a barrier in a public system leading to a series of worsening events for a person experiencing homelessness?**
 - ▶ Look for how problems compound, because one piece of the puzzle is not resolved early on. This often lays the foundation for the narrative.
 - **E.g.**, Once ticketed or red-zoned, a person may not be able to go back to the shelter, this leads to increasing risk and isolation as a person is unable to access necessary services.

Lived Experience

- ▷ **How did service providers support the development of integration with community?**
- ▷ **What helped people to maintain their housing?**
- ▷ **What contributed to a sense of belonging for people?**

Template 4.0

Sample Profile – Sarah

Name: Sarah

Gender: F

Age: 18

Education: Currently in High School

Work History: None

Income: No independent income, money goes to foster parents for Sarah's living costs

Family Status: Single

Living Situation: Foster Care

Sarah's Story: You have been in foster care since you were 11 years old, with a number of different homes, and with intermittent contact with your family. Your adolescence has been filled with instability, as you have had a number of different foster homes and never really settled down in one. Your on-again, off-again contact with your family destabilizes you every time, but they are your family, and you don't want to cut off contact with them.

You are about to age out of the child and youth system and have applied to college. In the Journey Mapping process, you must navigate the transition from living in foster care to finding an apartment of your own and applying for school. Your relationship with your current foster home is tense and your foster parents offer you little to no support. You are pretty much on your own.

You Know:

- ▷ You are about to transition out of Ministry of Child & Family Development (MCFD) care to independent living.
- ▷ You need money to live and pay for college tuition.

You Must:

- ▷ Go to MCFD to discuss the transition with your worker.
- ▷ Find an apartment to move to in time for your 19th birthday.

Template 5.0

Profile Template

Name: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Education: _____

Work History: _____

Income: _____

Family Status: _____

Living Situation: _____

Your Story:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

You Know:

▷ _____

▷ _____

You Must:

▷ _____

▷ _____

Resource 3.0

Step 3 – Drafting the Story Outline

Once you have built the profiles, you have a better sense of what the story outline will be as well. It may be helpful to draft a broad outline of the progression that a person walks through in the story as a starting point.

The key is to identify:

- ▷ The **“tasks”** a person needs to achieve in order to move forward (housing, find a job, get mental health support, etc.)
- ▷ The **places** a person would need to go in order to achieve these tasks.
- ▷ The **order** that these would occur in.

Below is a sample story outline. Note that we chose to use generic names for service providers such as Emergency Shelter or Warming Room. In a smaller community anonymity is less feasible and we did not want to single out any one organization by name.

Template 6.0

Sample – Story Outline

MCFD

▷ Sarah goes to MCFD for financial support as she transitions out of foster care a few months before her 19th birthday.



Emergency Shelter - Round 1

▷ She ends up not finding housing in time for her 19th birthday and has to go to the Emergency Shelter. Her ID is stolen while there.

▶ At the Emergency Shelter, she asks about financial assistance and is told that she needs to go to Social Assistance (or Welfare).



Social Assistance

▷ Sarah goes to Social Assistance and explains her situation. She is told that she is eligible for the basic needs allowance for Social Assistance, but not the shelter allowance - because she is currently staying in the shelter.

▶ However, she requires ID to make a formal application for Social Assistance.



ID Office - Round 1

▷ Sarah goes to the ID Office to apply for a new ID, so that she can get Social Assistance. She is told to go back to the Emergency Shelter for confirmation of her identity by Shelter staff.



Emergency Shelter - Round 2

▷ Sarah gets a paper confirming her identity from Emergency Shelter staff.



ID Office - Round 2

▷ Sarah hands in her confirmation of identification form to the ID Office. She is told it will take 4-6 weeks to process.

Final Outcome

▷ When ID comes in, so much time has passed that despite having what she needs to pursue income (and further housing options), Sarah has stopped looking for housing.

▷ She becomes increasingly discouraged and anxious about what's happening to her and begins to use substances to numb her anxiety.

Template 7.0

Sample Story – Outline Questions

Below is a series of questions to prompt the development of the outlines. Working through these questions will paint a clearer picture of the profile journey.

Choose a Starting Location

- ▷ **Based on the demographic characteristics**, is this person already in shelter, or about to become homeless?
- ▷ **What resources** do they need to access based on the profile write-up?
- ▷ **Generally, these profiles tend to map a trajectory of becoming homeless**, or if one is starting out homeless, encountering multiple barriers to getting housing.

Prompting Questions

- ▷ **How is this person slowed down/blocked in their journey to access resources?**
- ▷ **What kinds of barriers get in the way of moving forward with their goals?**
 - ▶ Lack of paperwork/administrative barriers?
 - ▶ Lack of transportation?
 - ▶ Lack of prioritization in the system?
 - ▶ Lack of communication between agencies?
 - ▶ Lack of empathy from worker?
 - ▶ Overly complex rules and regulations?
 - ▶ ***Lack of resources is almost always true**
 - try to focus on the system-specific challenges, which are obviously occurring within the context of underfunding.
- ▷ **It is useful to show how much of current services are focused on risk escalating before people are able to access supports.**
 - ▶ **E.g.**, A person needs to experience suicidal ideation before being admitted to the hospital mental in-patient unit, even if they had previously sought mental health care.

Common Examples of System Barriers for Role-Play

- ▷ **Discharge into homelessness from hospital** - no housing available
- ▷ **History in the justice system** - discharged from jail to shelter
- ▷ **Getting ticketed for panhandling**
- ▷ **Getting “red-zoned” by by-law or police** - i.e., not being allowed in the area where most services are because of panhandling or some other violation
- ▷ **Turning 19 and having no transitional supports from Child Welfare**
- ▷ **Needing bus fare** to go back and forth to get paperwork for ID, Social Assistance, etc.
- ▷ **Being turned away from the Emergency Room** if you have a substance use issue
- ▷ **Being turned away from the Emergency Room** if you have a diagnosis or symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
- ▷ **Person experiences judgement** from a worker, for not having gotten a job
- ▷ **Becoming entrenched in street life**, as the pace of moving forward is slowed due to bureaucratic and/or communication between service provider challenges

Resource 4.0

Step 4 – Writing the Scripts

The final step after having crafted the profile is to write the scripts themselves. We have included a sample series of scripts and a script template for this process as well. Sometimes, in the organizing of the stories, the flow of the story cannot easily be captured in a script. In order to compensate for this, we created follow-up sheets in the example below. These follow-up scripts bridge the storyline between agencies. These are then handed out to participants as they go through the role-play.

Template 8.0 (1/10)

Sample Scripts – MCFD Sarah

Sarah has been living in foster care. She will soon be 19 and will have to move out. She has come to see you to discuss this transition. She has also applied for post-secondary education and wants to know more about possible financial support.

MCFD Worker

Sarah

Hello Sarah, I am your case worker. What can I do for you today?

Sarah explains that she knows she has to move out of the foster care as soon since she turns 19.

I am glad you came in to see me Sarah. I know you want to get the process started now so you can ease the transition into school.

Sarah shares that she is nervous about turning 19 and having to find her own place.

Now in terms of post-secondary school, because you have a file with us, there is some support available to you.

If you are in school and between the age of 18- to 26-years old, you can receive financial support through us, as opposed to through other government sources. You are eligible to receive up to \$1,150 per month to go towards your education and housing. In order to apply for this, you must understand that you have to be in school full time.

Yes!

If you go down to part-time or leave school, your funding will be cut off. You will be required to check-in with a MCFD worker regularly to provide updates about your school program and any employment you are pursuing.

Is this a program you are interest in applying for?

That's great. I will start processing your file.

***** Share** the following script line only with some people. The key is to demonstrate inconsistency of information.

Finally, I recommend you consider taking all of the community life skills classes as that will further help prepare you for the transition from your foster home into independent living.

Bye.

I will see you soon, Sarah.

***** Give Sarah the piece of paper titled:**
Follow-Up to MCFD Meeting: Sarah

Template 8.0 (2/10)

Sample Scripts – Follow-Up to MCFD Meeting

MCFD Worker should give this sheet to Sarah. Since your meeting with MCFD, you have not had any support in finding housing. Never having lived on your own before, you didn't really know where to start. The few places you called about, you were rejected when the landlord heard that you were a student. MCFD supported you in finding a place that had cheaper rent, but it was not in a safe neighbourhood, and you did not feel comfortable with the place. After finding this one place, MCFD said that you couldn't afford to be choosy, and said it was up to you to find a place.

You continue to look but are unable to find a safe place for a rental amount that you can afford. As a result, your 19th birthday comes, and you find that you have no place to go. You couch surf at a friend's place for a few weeks, but then are told that you need to leave. You become homeless. You also know that accessing income from MCFD means that you must be in school-full time. Given the stress and chaos of the past few months, attending school is the last thing on your mind.

You go to the shelter. After staying there for a few nights, your ID is stolen.

You Know:

- ▷ You need an income.
- ▷ You have lost all forms of your ID, including your birth certificate, BC Services Card, etc.

You Must:

- ▷ Complete these tasks in order.
 - ▶ 1) Go to emergency shelter
 - ▶ 2) Go to income assistance
 - ▶ 3) Go to ID office

Template 8.0 (3/10)

Sample Scripts – Emergency Shelter (Sarah - Round 1.1)

Sarah has been in foster care for most of her adolescence. She has recently turned 19 years of age and was not able to find a new apartment in time for her birthday, at which point she was no longer able to access foster care. She applied and was accepted for post-secondary school, but with the stress of not finding an affordable apartment in time, she has already missed out on attending school. After couch-surfing for a few weeks, she is now accessing the emergency shelter.

Shelter Employee (Round 1)

Sarah

Hi, how can I help you?

Sarah explains her situation.

Wow – I'm sorry to hear that. You're in luck, we have space available. But we have some rules that must be followed:

Emergency shelter rules

- ▷ **Be respectful;** no racist, sexist or homophobic language.
- ▷ **Hours**
 - ▶ You must be up at 8 a.m., and out from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
 - ▶ From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. you must be downstairs, not in your room.
 - ▶ Curfew is midnight and quiet time is from midnight until 7 a.m.
- ▷ No possession of drugs or alcohol.
- ▷ Shirts, pants and shoes or socks must be worn at all times.
- ▷ Sharp objects and ALL medication must be locked up in the staff office. You may keep epi-pens, inhalers and birth control with you.
- ▷ Never share a bed or go into a room that you are not assigned to.
- ▷ Food only in the dining room.
- ▷ You must do one chore each evening.
- ▷ **If you choose to break a rule,** you will be asked to leave for 30 days and then make an appointment for a re-entry meeting.

Template 8.0 (4/10)

Sample Scripts – Emergency Shelter (Sarah - Round 1.2)

Shelter Employee (Round 1)

Sarah

Hi, how can I help you?

Sarah explains her situation.

*****Only provide the following information to some participants, not all, so as to demonstrate the inconsistency of it.**

We also provide some other services. We can help you find more permanent housing; we can provide vouchers for clothing at a second hand store; we can provide bus tickets on a request basis; we can help you get medical care; and we can help you get assigned to a case worker if you don't have one already.

After you get settled, you can tell me if any of these services interest you. Do you have any questions?

Sarah enquires about financial assistance.

Ok. You will need to apply for social assistance.
Here is the address for the Social Assistance Office.

Ok. I have booked you a bed for tonight, but tomorrow you will have to come back to see me to keep your spot.

Ok.

Template 8.0 (5/10)

Sample Scripts – Income Assistance (Sarah - Round 1.1)

Sarah is recently homeless, after having turned 19 and stopped receiving financial support from the MCFD. She has been told to come and apply for financial assistance from a shelter worker.

Income Assistance Worker (Round 1)

Sarah

I am a Case Manager. How can I help you?

Sarah explains her situation.

I understand that you are applying for assistance from Income Assistance.

Yes.

Do you have any other income?

No.

Do you have a family to support?

No.

It is likely that you will be successful in obtaining Income Assistance support.

You will be eligible to receive \$335 a month.

Normally, if you are renting, you would also receive a shelter allowance of \$375. But since you don't pay rent you don't qualify. I know this isn't much.

Once you find a place to stay, you will also receive a shelter allowance of \$375/month. However, I need a signed form from a landlord confirming that you have found a place.

Furthermore, once you start receiving Income Assistance, you are expected to look for work. If you get a job, you must claim any earnings and those earnings will be deducted from your Income Assistance cheques. If you do not look for work, or do not claim any amount made, you will lose Income Assistance support.

Sarah may receive \$335 a month – that's \$11 a day! For food, clothing, toiletries, transportation...

Template 8.0 (6/10)

Sample Scripts – Income Assistance (Sarah - Round 1.2)

Income Assistance Worker (Round 1)

Sarah

Sarah, you will need to make another appointment and bring with you the following documents: Social Insurance Number, BC Services card, Birth Certificate, recent bank statements, proof of address.

I don't have any ID - it was stolen at the shelter. I also don't have an address - I'm homeless.

You can use the shelter as your address. Come back once you've gotten your ID. You need to go to BCID for that

Sarah may indicate that she doesn't have bus tickets, or money for transportation. (You cannot help her with this.)

See you soon when you come back with all of your paperwork.

Template 8.0 (7/10)

Sample Scripts – BCID (Sarah - Round 1)

Sarah has just come from the welfare office and is here to get a new ID, because hers has been stolen.

ID Office Employee	Sarah
How can I help you?	Needs a new BC Services Card.
OK, we can arrange for a new BC Services card for you. You will need to provide us with three different types of identification.	
1. Proof of your citizenship. Do you have a birth certificate?	No.
2. Proof of residency. Do you have a pay stub, or tax assessment, or bank account statements, a rental agreement, a school transcript, a driver's license? 3. A document that proves your identity, such as a credit card, passport, student ID card...	No, Sarah has no forms of ID at all - everything was stolen. She may explain that she is staying at the shelter and has no address.
Ok. If you have no address, you will have to go back to the shelter and get a signed form that proves your identity.	Sarah may express frustration and try to see if you can do this faster.
I cannot help you further, until we have that information. We'll process your information when we see you next time.	Bye.

Template 8.0 (8/10)

Sample Scripts – Emergency Shelter (Sarah - Round 2)

Sarah has been to Social Assistance/Income Assistance and the BCID office and has gotten nowhere so far. She requires ID to apply for Income Assistance and needs a written confirmation from you indicating that she is who she is.

Shelter Employee (Different person - Round 2)	Sarah
Hi again, Sarah.	Sarah explains what has happened and that she needs you to provide written confirmation clarifying who she is.
Sarah, I'm sorry that's happened. We can take care of that for you. <i>(Fills out form on computer, prints it out, and signs.)</i>	Ok.
See you later.	Bye.

Template 8.0 (9/10)

Sample Scripts – BCID (Sarah - Round 2)

Sarah has a signed sheet from the emergency shelter she is staying at, indicating she is who she says she is.

ID Office Employee	Sarah
Hi again Sarah.	Sarah presents her paperwork.
Okay, we'll process this, and your ID card should be mailed to you at the Shelter directly. It will take between 4-6 weeks.	Sarah may push back, asking if it can go faster.
I'm sorry, but that's the length of time it takes.	Sarah is resigned. She may talk about not being able to get an income until this is done.
That's unfortunate, but this is the process we have to follow. Hope that you have a good day. Bye. ***Be sure to pass on following page titled: BCID Office - Follow-Up - Sarah	Ok, bye.

Template 8.0 (10/10)

Sample Scripts – BCID Follow Up (Sarah)

After 2 more weeks in the shelter, while waiting on your ID and social assistance to kick in, you fall into an increasing state of despair. You become increasingly depressed and begin to have suicidal thoughts. Not knowing where to turn, you go to the emergency room to try and get mental health support. However, after waiting for 7 hours to be seen by a psychiatrist, you are told that you no longer pose a risk to yourself or others and you're released back to the shelter.

Your feelings of depression do not go away and trying to move forward becomes increasingly difficult. Once your ID comes in, you have stopped looking for housing options because it's just too difficult without transit money, and landlords have been rejecting you once you showed up to the place anyway, due to your age. At the end of the Mapping Session, you are still homeless and have now begun to use substances to manage your growing anxiety.

Resource 5.0 (1/2)

Step 5 – Vetting the Stories

Once the profiles have been developed from the interviews, there are **two key phases to validating the scripts**:

- 1) Service provider staff should review the stories for factual accuracy first.
- 2) Review the scripts with the individuals who were interviewed in the first place as the final review.

Service Provider Review

This is a complex process as sometimes what actually happened is not the intended policy. However, most service providers recognize this tension and know anecdotally that people's experience accessing resources is often not a straight line. If there is a conflict between what a person says they experienced and the policy, we generally defaulted to the knowledge of the person with lived experience. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight how the system does not operate the way that we'd anticipate and hope it to.

As well, the power dynamic of this process cannot be ignored. People with lived experience are willing to share their knowledge of how the system works.

This can be very hard to hear for service providers. It is easy to assert authority in these conversations and deny that the system worked poorly for a person. This actually creates further distance between people with lived experience expertise and people working in the system. If approached with an attitude of humility and understanding, this part of the process can be very validating for service users. If approached with a sense that people are "exaggerating" or that the individual must have been "non-compliant" or a "difficult" person to serve, we are quite possibly invalidating what the data shows us to be true. Further, the system is meant to support "difficult" people. If it is not working as intended, then we need to re-examine the system.

Another challenge that may come up is where the stories that arise reflect older policies that have been changed. Again, we generally defaulted to people's lived expertise and added this as a disclaimer when explaining the role-play to people.

The reason for this is two-fold:

- ▷ **It is true, but out of date.**
- ▷ **It shows that systems and organizations can change when we realize that something is not working.**

This is an important message to integrate throughout the process: **changing our system is possible.**

Resource 5.0 (2/2)

Step 5 – Vetting the Stories


Lived Experience Expert Review

We set this process up so that we had a half a day to review the scripts in a group setting with people the day before the full-community role-play process. Food was provided, and the day was an opportunity to both review the scripts for accuracy and also prepare people to be co-facilitators the following day.

Again, we intentionally developed scripts that combined a variety of stories. No one person's story was perfectly reflected, **but the similarities across many people's experiences was evident.**

- ▶ Read through the full scripts with the group slowly.
- ▶ Make sure that everyone has paper copies so that they can absorb it.
- ▶ Invite ongoing feedback as you read through these.
- ▶ Have a computer with you and ensure that you are making any necessary changes as you go through.

This process is both a science and an art. Whoever is leading the conversation should be deeply knowledgeable about how homelessness systems and policies operate on the ground. As well, there may be moments of needing to focus the conversation back on the system. It can be easy to become absorbed in one person's trauma. Part of this process is creating an opportunity to show how there are structural reasons leading to homelessness. It is not the fault of the person.



We heard again and again some variation of “Thank you for sharing our stories.”

We found that in each community we carried out this process in, people came away with a sense of feeling validated and affirmed in the challenges they experienced in the system.

The other part of this process is walking through the agenda for the following day and asking the group to become co-facilitators for each group during the debrief. The lead facilitator will guide the group through the questions. In each smaller group, the person with lived experience engages the group in the questions provided. By clarifying this leadership position, both in the preparation session and the following day, it creates further space for people's voices to be the center of this process. It was also important to provide an opportunity for the Lived Experience experts to ask any questions and clarify the process for the following day.

People only co-facilitated if they wanted to. There was no pressure if an individual was not interested. However, in our experience, each person who participated in the pre-session wanted to co-facilitate the following day.

Resource 6.0

Step 6 – Setting Up the Space

After the scripts are reviewed and finalized, there is a lot of set-up for the actual day. It's best to arrive an hour earlier to make sure everything is in order. The best set up tends to be a large building with a lot of rooms, generally classroom sized, such as a school or community centre. Each individual room is intended to be a separate agency. We have also carried this out in a large gymnasium with only a few other rooms as agencies. The set-up is intended to mimic an agency setting as much as possible with chairs set up in rows in front of the main "desk"/table, as in a waiting room at an office.

We have added a template for organizing the agencies and rooms below, as well the number of "staff" likely needed for each agency. Given the higher rates of shelter interaction in most stories, it is best to have more than one volunteer working at the emergency shelter. However, this will depend on the scripts developed in your community. There may be other agencies than the ones listed in the scripts that your community can develop; however, those listed on the template are the most common. After the rooms are set up with the tables and chairs, each room needs clear signs indicating the name of the agency. We have also included all of the basic agency signs in this package in *Template 11.0 - Signs*.

Template 9.0

Sample – Setting up the Space

Agency & Room Number Organization Chart

Agency Name	Room Number	Staff Number
Emergency Shelter		2-3
Child Welfare		1
ID Office		1
Income Assistance		1-2
Hospital		1
Probation		1
Community Centre		1

Template 9.0

Setting up the Space

Agency & Room Number Organization Chart

Agency Name	Room Number	Staff Number

Template 11.0 (1/5)

Signs

Tip: Each of these labels can be turned into a sign to indicate what each room is. This is helpful for your role-playing exercise.



Emergency Shelter



Child Welfare



ID Office



Income Assistance



Hospital



Probation



Community Health Centre

Rooms Set-Up Checklist: All agencies have:

- A table
- Chair for "staff"
- Chair for "client"
- 1-2 rows of extra chairs to simulate waiting room
- Sign with agency name clearly visible

Template 11.0 (2/5)

Sign Directions: Cut Fold.....



Emergency Shelter



Child Welfare

Template 11.0 (3/5)

Sign Directions: Cut Fold.....



ID Office



Income Assistance

Template 11.0 (4/5)

Sign Directions: Cut Fold.....



Hospital



Probation

Template 11.0 (5/5)

Sign Directions: Cut Fold.....



Resource 7.0

Step 7 – Recruiting Volunteers

A key component of this exercise is having volunteers serve as “staff” for the various agencies that are set up. These volunteers need to be recruited in advance and briefed about a half hour before start time on the morning of the role-play. It is important that volunteers have a level of authority to be believable. For this reason, while often a great group to recruit from, we have tended not to ask students, simply due to their age. Each person will require the script for their particular agency for each profile. If there are follow-up sheets that will be handed out to the participants, these volunteers need enough copies for the number of people/profiles.

Finally, depending on the number of participants and the frequency that the storylines go to particular services, consider adding more than one volunteer person to certain agencies for the role-play. Generally, if there aren't multiple volunteers for the shelter, the role-play can get backed up in moving people through the experience. So, we often had 2-3 people role-play emergency shelter staff. Income Assistance is another agency that often has more visits from more people, requiring additional volunteers. Determine what makes sense in your community.

In preparing the volunteers prior to the exercise, we indicate that even if they are workers from agencies and have additional information, the important piece is to stay true to the way the role-play is written, as these are based on real accounts. This may mean that rules are not followed or implemented properly, and volunteers who are workers often want to correct this. However, part of the complexity of the exercise is in demonstrating that the way that the rules are written is not always how operational policies and rules play out for people needing services in the homelessness system.

The volunteers will have written out scripts for the exercise, with a clear outline of what they should be saying. The participants role-playing the profile stories will not have a script, but will have an overview of their profile, with a series of tasks. As a result, they may try to improvise and push for things that are not in the script. Coach the volunteers to respond in a bureaucratic way, generally not giving more than is allowed by the rules, and to remain fairly neutral. As well, we asked volunteers to change their tone and approach between participants. For some, volunteers are deeply empathetic, and for others, they are much more focused on following the rules.

Resource 8.0 (1/2)

Step 8 – Outlining the Structure of the Role-Play

Agenda – Role-play & User-Centred Design

8:30 - 9:00 am	Coffee & Mingling
9:00 - 9:30 am	Welcome & Introductions
9:30 - 9:45 am	Why User-Centred Design?
9:45 - 10:00 am	Why Experiential Learning & Role-play?
10:00 - 10:15 am	Developing Today's Exercise
10:15 - 10:30 am	Explaining Role-play Exercise
10:30 - 10:45 am	Coffee Break
10:45 - 11:45 am	Role-play Exercise
11:45 - 12:15 pm	Small Group Debrief
12:15 - 12:30 pm	Large Group Takeaway
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 - 2:00 pm	Explanation of Afternoon Problem Solving
2:00 - 3:00 pm	Small Group Problem Solving
3:00 - 3:30 pm	Report Back to Group
3:30 pm	Thank you & Closing

Once the participants have arrived and there has been an opportunity for welcome and introductions, the first part of the morning will be spent explaining the purpose of the experiential role-play. Left is a rough agenda for how the day generally progresses.

This exercise works well when there are between 12 - 20 people/profile group. Most of the time, we developed 3 separate stories or profiles to role-play. Generally, there have been between 5 - 8 different agencies involved in these profiles. The profile group stays together for the explanation and debrief portion of the day. However, each participant role-plays the profile story by themselves. Encourage people not to stick together with their group.

Numbers Checklist:

3 profile stories

3 groups, 1 group per profile/roleplay story

12 - 20 people per profile group

5 - 8 agencies (typically)

6 - 9 volunteers for agencies

Total Participants = 60 people

3 groups of 20 people

1 group is exploring one profile or roleplay

Resource 8.0 (2/2)

Step 8 – Outlining the Structure of the Role-Play

This exercise requires a fair amount of printing, simply due to the sheer number of people often participating. Each volunteer requires their portion of the script, which will be titled with the name of their agency at the top of the page. Volunteers at one agency will likely see more than one profile/storyline. As well, they will see all of the participants from one storyline. For example, if there are 20 “Sarah’s” participating, and Sarah’s story takes her to Child Welfare, the Child Welfare volunteer will see 20 different Sarah’s. However, the storyline will be the same with all of those Sarah’s. Participants require a copy of their profile overview at the beginning of the exercise. See below for printing instructions.

After explaining the value of user-centred design exercises and role-play, explain that participants will be taking on the role of a person as they navigate various social services to get needed resources. They will be in a group of 12 - 20 people who will also be walking through the same process, but it is important to do this exercise on one’s own. As well, there are several other storylines occurring simultaneously. The morning will start by gathering in groups with others sharing the same profile storyline, to read through the profile, and make sure that the next steps are clear. While it is tempting to improvise, we ask participants to stay true to the exercise as much as possible, and not try to cut the lines, or find additional resources by using their phone or any other short cut.

Each group will have a facilitator to hand out the profile sheet overviews and answer any questions participants may have. Once everyone is clear on the next task they must complete, begin the exercise.

Printing Checklist:

Volunteers

- Agency-specific sections of the script - **1 copy**
 - E.g., Emergency Shelter volunteer requires all scripts involving the shelter, including if multiple profiles or storylines attend the shelter
- Follow-Up Sheets (if applicable) - **Enough copies for the number of participants acting out that profile**
 - E.g. If there are 20 Sarah’s and that storyline has a “Follow-Up” sheet, 20 copies are required

Participants

- Profile Overview - **1 copy for each participant for their profile**
 - E.g., If there are 20 Sarah’s, and 18 Tom’s, 20 Sarah sheets are required, and 18 Tom’s are required

Resource 9.0

Step 9 – Debriefing the Role-play

The actual length of the process is usually around 1 hour for both large and small groups. Some will finish sooner. As people start to finish up, we asked them to take a break until everyone was finished. Once the exercise was complete, everyone goes back to their profile group and the facilitator posed a few key questions for participants to discuss in their smaller groups.

This is also the part of the process, as people with lived experience are co-facilitating the discussions in the smaller groups. Generally, it is best to have this discussion for about 30 - 45 minutes. People want to debrief their experience and the job of the facilitator is to keep bringing back the experience to the system-level challenges that occurred throughout the exercise. The main facilitator brings everyone back to the larger group discussion and asks each group to share the top three things that struck them during the process.

After wrapping this component up, ensure that the group knows the afternoon is an opportunity to discuss how solutions can be found to some of the challenges identified through the exercise.

Break for lunch.

Resource 10.0 (1/2)

Step 10 – Facilitating the Follow-Up Discussion

After lunch, the main facilitator will bring the large group back together and shift the discussion to problem solving. At this point, it is best if participants remain in their small groups attached to the profile storyline, so that there is consistency in the conversation. However, the facilitator will be speaking to the large group, and participants will be sitting with their smaller groups. The facilitator asks the group to write down three major systems barriers that participants came across in the process of the role-play.

Once this is captured, the facilitator guides the groups through categorizing what kind of systems challenge these are.

The major categories include:

- ▷ **Lack of Consistent Communication?**
 - ▶ Within organizations?
 - ▶ Between several organizations?
 - ▶ Between different systems?
 - E.g., hospital & shelter?
- ▷ **Legal/Legislated Policy Barriers?**
 - ▶ Criminalization of homelessness
 - E.g., no-go zones, etc.
- ▷ **Personal Approach?**
 - ▶ Punitive, shaming or harmful interaction?
- ▷ **Bureaucracy or Lack of Flexibility?**
 - ▶ Administrative slow-down?
- ▷ **Other?**

The purpose of the day is to focus on challenges that members of the group can have an influence on.



Generally, this is related to coordination and communication between agencies and systems. Some groups may tackle the bigger picture pieces such as legislation or political will, which is fine. However, the goal of the day is to leave with a tangible action that participants can address within their context or organization in some way.

After participants have categorized the barriers into these major areas, usually 2-3 major issues rise to the top. Most of the time, the discussions will center around various forms of systems integration and communication. We then ask participants within their profile groups to break into even smaller groups to each tackle an action plan for the barrier they have identified. Once the barrier is identified, we ask groups to problem solve. What are the strategies or ways that this challenge could be addressed?

Resource 10.0 (2/2)

Step 10 – Facilitating the Follow-Up Discussion

The main facilitator walks the participants through the following questions to be answered as the groups develop solutions to the challenges:

- ▷ **What are the challenges and goals?**
 - ▶ Provide a brief description
- ▷ **Who needs to be involved to achieve this goal?**
 - ▶ Define each stakeholder's role in the process.
- ▷ **What content/product needs to be developed?**
 - ▶ E.g., Framework, communications materials, new organizational policy, etc.
- ▷ **How will you measure success?**

We usually leave about 30-45 minutes to work through these questions, and then wrap up the exercise with the final following piece:

Outline the steps needed to be taken to get these solutions off the ground.

- ▷ **Immediately (0-6 months?)**
- ▷ **Short Term (within the next two years?)**

In addition to the steps needed to be taken, a key part of this discussion is what can the participants in the room take part in? How can these participants take a step in the direction of moving this issue forward? Ask people to commit to one piece of this process. That may be bringing the issue to a manager or someone in their agency with the ability to make a change to an operational policy or enhance strategies for communication with other agencies. It is valuable for people to have a clear, concrete task that they can take with them leaving the exercise. This should be bite-sized and do-able for that individual in their particular position.

Conclusion:

This role-play process is intended to support the hard work of shifting attitudes and beliefs which so often drive this work but are rarely addressed. Through running this process in a number of communities across the country, we have witnessed how experiential learning is a valuable tool. It can prompt important discussions about how we can all contribute to improving the experience of accessing supports for people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness and build the buy-in to take further steps in that direction.