

Vibrant Communities and Economies: What Does the Nonprofit Sector Have To Do With It?

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Saskatoon Poverty
Reduction Partnership

The **Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP)** is a collaborative, intersectoral and multijurisdictional group of agencies and people who are committed to the elimination of poverty. Understanding that poverty is a complex social and economic issue, the SPRP has identified 12 Bold Ideas that, when woven together and addressed as a collective, could create the foundation to eliminate poverty. Part of the SPRP commitment is redirecting the narrative to identify root causes, conceptualizing the idea of choice and highlighting the ineffective public policies that dominate the public conversations about poverty. Building a vibrant, poverty free Saskatoon requires the collective determination to address the policies and practices across these 12 Ideas, and requires a fundamental shift in thinking about the components of neighbourhoods, urban planning, employment impacts and the social economy.

Introduction

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody” (Jacobs, 2011, p. 238)

Since 1994 Saskatchewan has had steady economic growth, with our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growing by 44% (Smale, 2019). Similarly, Saskatchewan has welcomed progress towards greater wellbeing within our communities, marked by the increased availability of childcare spaces, higher graduation rates, lower unemployment rates, higher levels of democratic engagement, and more people reporting that they feel a sense of belonging to the community they live in (Smale, 2019).

As Saskatchewan’s largest city, with a population of over 300,000 people and counting, Saskatoon plays a large role in progressing towards a more vibrant economy (City of Saskatoon, 2020).

But what is a vibrant economy? Who does it include, and what role do they play?

Vibrant economies address and contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of people and communities by expanding access to opportunities. In turn, those opportunities translate into wellbeing outcomes for all, especially for those who reside in communities that have been historically excluded from the equitable distribution of resources, services and opportunities (Guirra, 2019).

Many people, organizations and sectors contribute to a vibrant economy – one of which is the nonprofit sector. The nonprofit sector is a critical contributor to vibrant economies. In Saskatchewan, the sector produces 8% of the province's annual GDP and plays a critical role in ensuring all communities have access to opportunities that drive the economic strength and stability in our province and city. The work of the nonprofit sector is shaped and influenced by several factors, including community needs, availability of resources, and policy, all of which influence the equitable distribution of goods and services provided throughout the community.

But the nonprofit sector isn’t always perceived to be an essential player in building vibrant economies.

This report aims to dispel this notion and explore ways in which the nonprofit sector contributes to building inclusive, healthy and vibrant economies. Additionally, this report seeks to provide context around how nonprofits respond to community needs and how the nonprofits, businesses and governments can work together to make more informed policy decisions to ensure all members of our communities have access to greater social and economic wellbeing.

The Nonprofit Sector: Driving Vibrant Communities & Economies

The nonprofit sector is comprised of many nonprofit organizations representing a diverse range of activities, audiences, sizes, scope and geography (Saskatchewan Nonprofit Partnership, 2018). Nonprofits can be incorporated at a provincial or federal level, both of which are governed by separate legislation (i.e., Acts) specific to nonprofits. Nonprofits can also register as a charitable organization under the federal Income Tax Act, which allows nonprofits to issue charitable receipts to qualified donors (Canada Revenue Agency, 2009).

While there are many layers and types of nonprofits, the following definitions help simplify the variations that exist within the nonprofit sector for the purpose of this Report.



(Imagine Canada, 2019, "Terminology" section.)

The nonprofit sector is a mission-driven, social-purpose oriented entity that provides many services for free or at costs well below market prices, it is a central part of Canada's evolving economy (Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2017). Regardless of what kind of nonprofit an organization may identify as, all nonprofits are mission-driven entities that operate to provide public benefit. Collectively, nonprofits provide services and goods like social housing, sport and recreation opportunities, legal services, food programming, education, arts programming, social services, and many more. Nonprofits invest and spend funds, not by paying or distributing profits to individuals, but by (re)investing profits into programs and services they provide and the communities they serve (Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2017).



The Nonprofit Sector: Driving Vibrant Communities & Economies

The nonprofit sector is the third largest sector in Canada.

The nonprofit sector is the third largest sector in Canada, providing services essential for improving social and economic wellbeing, many of which address community needs that go unmet by the for-profit sector (as it may well not serve a set of clients it finds unprofitable). Additionally, the nonprofit sector generates significant benefits to the economy in terms of creating jobs and economic growth (Imagine Canada, n.d.).

One in every ten Canadian workers, roughly 2.4 million people, are employed by the nonprofit sector, which is more than the mining, oil and gas, or agriculture sectors, respectively (Imagine Canada, n.d.).

The term “nonprofit” is often a misnomer, implying that nonprofits don’t earn income or participate in revenue generating activities that fuel our larger economy. The nonprofit sector contributes an estimated \$192 billion (8.3%) to Canada’s annual GDP (Imagine Canada, n.d.). Additionally, a 2013 study conducted by Imagine Canada found that earned income-generating activities are a widespread practice among nonprofits, with three in five (60%) income-generating nonprofit organizations reporting that these activities account for roughly 30% of the organization's total revenues (Lasby, 2013).



The nonprofit sector
contributes an estimated
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Saskatchewan's Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofits in Saskatchewan

It is estimated that there are as many as **8,000 provincially registered nonprofit organizations in Saskatchewan that employ as many as 94,000 people**. Community nonprofits, as opposed to business and government nonprofits, employ roughly 20,000 people in local communities across the province (Imagine Canada & Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2021).

Overall, the nonprofit sector contributes roughly \$6.3 billion (8%) to Saskatchewan's GDP annually, with community nonprofits contributing \$811 million (Imagine Canada & Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2021).



Community Investments

In 2021, the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre's Community Volunteer Income Tax Clinic helped over 2058 residents across Saskatoon file their income – injecting \$9,263,360 back into Saskatoon's local economy through tax refunds, GST Credits, and Canada Child Benefit payments.

Saskatoon Nonprofit Employer Profiles:

SASKATOON FOOD BANK & LEARNING CENTRE

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday
8:00 am - 4:30 pm



Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre employs **50 full-time staff**.

Total Operating Budget:

Revenue for 2022-23 projected to be \$3.25M.

Average Employee Earnings:

On average, Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre (SFBLC) employees make \$40,736 annually (plus benefits). SFBLC is also a living wage employer and pays employees over \$16.36 after three months.

Employee Benefits

- **Benefits:** SFBLC offers a co-pay benefit program for all staff that includes health, dental, and short and long-term disability benefits. Additionally, SFBLC offers an employee assistance program that can be accessed through two different providers. Employees can choose the provider they are most comfortable working with.
- **RRSP Contributions:** SFBLC contributes approximately \$50 per pay period to employees RRSPs.
- **Progressive Employment Policies:** SFBLC offers staff vacation leave, 12 paid sick days, and 2 paid cultural days (June 21 and September 30) annually.

Saskatchewan's Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofits in Saskatoon

Saskatoon is home to **740 federally registered nonprofits** and likely many more registered at a provincial level. A review of 2021 registered charity information return data on 15 federally registered nonprofits operating in the Pleasant Hill and Riversdale neighbourhoods found that:

- These nonprofits employed 201 full-time staff and 510 part-time staff totalling \$18,943,669 in employment expenditures; and
- Attracted \$16.4 million in federal, provincial, and municipal government funding,

fuelling social and economic activities in the neighbourhoods of Pleasant Hill and Riversdale (Government of Canada, n.d.).



Community Investments

Quint has invested more than \$40 million in construction and renovation projects in Saskatoon's Core Neighbourhoods since 1995.

Saskatoon Nonprofit Employer Profiles

QUINT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday
8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Housing services operate
24-7



Staff

Quint employs **59 staff**, with the majority of them being full-time.

Total Operating Budget:

Revenue for 2022-23 projected to be \$3.4M.

Average Employee Earnings:

On average, Quint employees make \$46,000 annually (plus benefits). Quint strives to ensure all staff are at or above living wages. Entry level positions start at \$16.89/hr.

Employee Benefits

- **Benefits:** Quint offers employees competitive benefits including extended health, dental and long-term disability benefits.
- **RRSP Matching:** Quint matches employees' contributions of up to 5% of their salary to a group RRSP.
- **Progressive Employment Policies:** Quint offers employees generous vacation schedules, one earned day off (EDO) per month and 12 health and wellness paid days per year.

Saskatchewan's Nonprofit Sector

Bridging Value: Nonprofits and Businesses

Co-existing in several markets across Canada and Saskatchewan, private sector businesses and nonprofits each contribute to vibrant economies as employers, service and good providers, community builders and innovators.

Despite having different working models, nonprofits and businesses often find ways to work together – and when they do – they both benefit (Emmet, 2019). Nonprofits and businesses in the Riversdale community have found opportunities to work collaboratively and drive meaningful social and economic impact, furthering a vibrant economy in the community. For example, Crocus Co-operative and 9 Mile Brewing Company have forged a commercial partnership where clients of Crocus Co-operative's transitional employment program provide a range of labour services (e.g., fabricating sales tags, supporting demolition and removal activities, etc.) to support 9 Mile Brewing Company's business needs (Crocus Co-operative, n.d.).

\$48,790

is the average salary of a Saskatchewan-based nonprofit sector employee. Community nonprofit employees earning \$33,697 annually (Imagine Canada & Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2021).

While nonprofits and private sector businesses may specialize in different areas of the economy, both businesses and nonprofits receive and benefit from government support (Emmet, 2019).

Nonprofits

In 2014, the federal government provided the nonprofit sector with about \$2.3 billion in tax subsidies (e.g., charitable receipts, tax exemptions). In turn, the sector generates social benefits that outweigh the cost of the tax subsidies provided and produces roughly 8.1% of Canada's GDP (Emmet, 2019).

Businesses

In 2014, the federal government provided roughly \$11 billion in funding to the small business sector. In turn, the sector employs more than eight million people and produces roughly 30% of Canada's GDP (Emmet, 2019).

Vibrant Economies & Equity

While our economy, locally, provincially, and nationally, is flourishing in many respects, the inequitable distribution and access to resources, goods, and opportunities continues to hold communities back from achieving more vibrant economies. As reported by the Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing, Saskatchewan's gains in GDP (44.1%) have far outpaced gains in wellbeing (13.2%) (Smale, 2019). Consequently, our communities, and therefore economy, is not achieving its full potential. Central to this story is inequity.

Inequity, although commonly associated with the measure of income, is much more complex (The Conference Board of Canada, n.d.). Inequity is driven by both social and economic factors, and includes if, how, when and who in our communities can access health services, participate in the labour market equitably, access community resources to meet their emerging needs, engage with the democratic institutions to inform decisions being made in their community, participate in leisure and culture opportunities, and education (Smale, 2019).

In Saskatchewan, inequity has disproportionately impacted specific members of our communities, including Indigenous peoples on and off reserve, people living in more rural settings, and new Canadians (Smale, 2019). As a result, these groups often have higher rates of poverty, lack access to good education and good housing, and face increased mental health challenges that perpetuate exclusion and inequity (Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, 2019). Often, the inequitable distribution of resources, services and opportunities and the exclusion of specific people and identities from economic prosperity can be situated geographically in local neighbourhoods, cities, or regions, which, in part, have been driven by inequitable land use planning policies and practices.

Another factor contributing to inequity is the limited agency that communities hold in policy and decision-making, especially among those experiencing higher concentrations of social and economic disparities. In the exclusion of diverse community voices and engagement, these spaces can propel vested interests and mandates of public and private elites that perpetuate inequitable frameworks and narratives that guide the

What is equity?

Equity refers to the fair distribution of opportunities and resources to meet the needs of all people, regardless of their gender identity, age, immigration status, ethnicity, ability, income, education, or culture.

Equity-based approaches to social change hold that we must actively seek to identify populations most affected by social, economic, and political discrimination and provide them with a higher level of support to ensure that they can participate in their community (BC Healthy Communities Society, 2020).

Vibrant Economies & Equity

distribution of goods, services and policies critical for ensuring vibrant economies and communities (Vey & Love, 2019).

In short, inequity has harmful consequences for individual and community wellbeing by constricting:

- Individuals' and communities' access to resources and constraining upward social and economic mobility;
- Community trust and cohesion;
- The agency and voices of those facing barriers to engage and contribute to decision-making and policy making processes that shape their connection to their communities (Toolis, 2021).

In order to achieve more sustainable, vibrant communities and economies, policymakers, public, private and nonprofit sectors, must put equity at the centre of their work.



Poverty, Colonialism and Reconciliation



One of 12 Bold Ideas to eliminate poverty outlined by the Saskatoon's Poverty Reduction Partnerships (SPRP) is the need for us to have an understanding of the concepts that are referred to in **Call to Action #47 and the call to reform public and social policy built upon such concepts**. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action #47 reads:

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.

To fulfill the commitments to Reconciliation in Canada, **we must address racism in all of its forms**. This means looking beyond racism as the simple act of harbouring hatred towards a person of different skin colour and seeing the interlocking and deeply complex systems of oppression based on race. Building vibrant neighbourhoods representing the diversity of needs, support services, agencies, and for-profit businesses as a collective is critical to achieving this commitment. Vibrant spaces are built with inclusive policies, not divisive ideologies that place value on some people and not others.

Equity & Nonprofits

Are Nonprofits Equitably Distributed in Saskatoon?

In the post-COVID economy, we continue to see increasing living costs driven by slowing economic growth, wage stagnation, and rising inflation. As the cost-of-living increases, low-income households struggle to make ends meet, in turn compounding pressure on Canada's nonprofit sector (Silver, 2009). Despite increasing needs, resources available to fund services within the nonprofit sector are limited. A 2020 survey conducted by the Saskatchewan Nonprofit Network found that 69% of nonprofits had experienced a loss of revenue from the cancellation of fundraising events, self-generated revenues (e.g., sales of goods and services), and closures of social enterprises since the onset of COVID (Saskatchewan Nonprofit Partnership, 2020).

In the face of increasing demand for the nonprofit sector and the decreasing availability of resources to meet those demands, ensuring that limited resources are equitably distributed in a way that optimizes social and economic vibrancy is critical. Despite the need for equitable resource distribution, a 2016 report commissioned by the Riversdale Business Improvement District (RBID) noted that nonprofits, particularly community nonprofits focusing on social services, were not equitably distributed throughout Saskatoon based on community need (Ramage, 2016).

The RBID report indicated an over-concentration of community nonprofits exists in Riversdale, despite other neighbourhoods within the city (e.g., Sutherland, Nutana, Lakeview) having larger segments of individuals living below the Low-Income Cut Off (LICO) threshold relative to the city-wide instances (as opposed to neighbourhood level concentrations). The report perceived the concentration of community nonprofits in the Riversdale neighbourhoods, in part, was being driven by social policy (i.e., provincial housing supplements) and that an over-concentration of any services, particularly nonprofits, “diminishe[s] the strength of any neighbourhood” (Ramage, 2016, p. 1).

These findings starkly contrast with research on the geographic distribution of community needs in Saskatoon. Studies and community practitioners have found the rates of poor socioeconomic conditions of several core neighbourhoods situated in Saskatoon – most notably, Riversdale and Pleasant Hill – to be significantly higher than other neighbourhoods (Cushon et al., 2013; Wilkie & Berdahl, 2017). These conditions and the spatial concentration of poverty in core neighbourhoods have been shaped over decades by a range of social, economic and political factors such as zoning and land planning policies (e.g., suburbanization), globalization, colonization and racism (Diamantopoulos & Findlay, 2008; Silver, 2009).

Equity & Nonprofits

In response to these needs, the nonprofit sector has mobilized over the years to address needs within these communities, with many of the first community nonprofits taking root in the Riversdale community as early as 1967. Some of the first community nonprofits focused on relieving poverty in the Riversdale area included:

- The Salvation Army Saskatoon Community Services (1967)
- Saskatoon Friendship Inn (1969)
- Crocus Co-operative (1983)
- Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre (1984)
- CHEP Good Food Inc. (1989)

Over the years, many community nonprofits with different focuses have emerged within the Riversdale area to address community needs while contributing to a more vibrant community and economy within the core neighbourhoods. Community nonprofits occupying these spaces have long focused on building up the strengths and assets of the core communities through place-based, community-driven approaches.

Station 20 West

In 2012, Station 20 West (S20W) opened its doors with the purpose of acting as an “engine of urban renewal” in Saskatoon’s core neighbourhood (Findlay et al., 2017, p. 8). The impetus behind S20W stemmed from the continued absence of private sector business and government support by those finding it difficult to make ends meet, which left the community without a grocery store for over a decade. S20W has become a site for place-making and asset-based community development that has brought together youth, seniors, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, immigrant groups, foundations, faith and business communities, nonprofits and government to support a healthier, more inclusive and vibrant core neighbourhood (Findlay et al., 2017). Today, S20W is a community enterprise centre that is home to co-locators such as: Quint Development Corporation, CHEP Good Food Inc., Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan, Our Neighbourhood Health Centre, KidsFirst, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, Boxcar Café, and the University of Saskatchewan’s International Indigenous Health Research and Training Network.

Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre Inc.

Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre (GTNT) was established in 2004 and led by a community of Indigenous peoples who aimed to bring vibrancy to the core neighbourhood through the arts (Silver, 2009). Today, GTNT provides theatre programming that engages Indigenous youth, Indigenous artists and other community members in cultural theatre experiences (Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre, n.d.).

Equity & Nonprofits

Given such a contrast in findings, and the urgent need to build more equitable, vibrant economies, the Riversdale BID report draws our attention to three other lines of inquiry we aim to explore in the work that follows:

- What factors influence where nonprofits are situated and why?
- What shapes our understanding of community needs?
- What is needed to inform more equitable distributions of services?

These questions are critical to determining if and how to interpret community needs and the potential spatial mismatch within Saskatoon, as well as to inform viable solutions to address the equitable distribution of goods and services the nonprofit sector provides to further contribute to a vibrant economy.

What Influences Nonprofit Location?

The distribution of nonprofits and the spatial distribution of their services relative to community need has been a long-standing policy issue (McDonnell et al., 2020). To date, the majority of studies conducted on this topic have found that, despite popular beliefs, nonprofit location and density factors are often not predicted by the demand side of community needs (Allard, 2004; Bielefeld & Murdoch, 2004; Carroll et al., n.d.; Katz, 2014; Marchesini da Costa, 2016; Sevak & Baker, 2022). In exploring the relationship between nonprofit location density and community, McDonnell et al. (2020) found evidence to support that while nonprofit density does respond to changing levels of community need occurring within local communities, over time that nonprofit location density is less likely to be predicted by community need alone, and many other factors have significant influence on how nonprofits may choose to locate their services within the communities, cities, regions they serve (McDonnell et al., 2020).

Conflicting Social, Political, or Economic Interests & Mandates

At times, nonprofit location decisions are influenced or controlled by competing social, economic, or political interests and mandates occupying decision-making spaces where various stakeholders aim to achieve policy and planning decisions aligned with their interests (Fan, 2012). The interests of some groups may negatively impact the ability of the nonprofit sector to provide services and goods in areas where a community needs and the potential solution is seen as “undesirable”. For example, public health objectives aimed at ensuring individuals with substance use disorders have equitable access to healthcare services (e.g., harm reduction initiatives) are often at odds with some residents, business associations, and other interest groups occupying the same communities. Conflicting interests in these spaces often constrict equitable service provision options (e.g., locating services in communities with greater need) (Bernstein & Bennett, 2013).

Equity & Nonprofits

While studies focused on community need, many mapped ways in which nonprofit density/location outcomes were influenced by other intersecting variables, some of which included:

- Current and historical zoning bylaws and land use policies
- Social, political or economic interests or mandates
- Availability of resources needed to operationalize services (e.g., financial, volunteers, collaborative partners)
- Type and nature of nonprofit services being provided
- Central locations that allow for a broader catchment area of service provision for high needs communities
- Affordability or adequacy of commercial spaces required to provide services
- Market characteristics (Allard, 2004; Bielefeld & Murdoch, 2004; Carroll et al., n.d.; Katz, 2014; Marchesini da Costa, 2016; Sevak & Baker, 2022)

Current and Historical Zoning Bylaws and Land Use Policies

Regulatory tools like zoning bylaws have a legacy of promoting the public good – and exclusion. Colonization and the legacy of segregation enabled through historical land use policies and regulatory tools have profoundly impacted the people and communities, particularly racialized minorities and Indigenous peoples (Blanc et al., 2021; Silver, 2009). Zoning bylaws can often be influenced by interest groups pursuing agendas that marginalize equity-deserving groups in the community. Research has found that Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) while aiming to serve the interests of their stakeholder groups (e.g., business, property owners, real-estate developers), can often exclude community members who are making ends meet on low wages and incomes from decision-making processes and support policy positions that negatively impact them, such as limiting the further development of affordable housing or limit the participation of nonprofit supports (e.g., shelters) (Lippert, 2012; Valli & Hammami, 2021). Urban planning policymakers and decision makers must ensure that policy decisions are rooted in the best interest of communities to overcome social and economic inequalities experienced by particular communities who face multiple barriers to equal opportunity. As such, equity is an essential consideration in urban planning.

Equity & Nonprofits

What Shapes Our Understanding of Community Need?

Given that the RBID report findings varied significantly from other research regarding community needs in core neighbourhoods such as Riversdale, we must further understand how community need can be shaped and framed through data, and ways this can shape very different policy solutions. While many research studies explored the relationship between community needs and nonprofit density/location, most studies used different measures to assess need (e.g., unemployment rates, crime rates, inequality, material deprivation, racial diversity, etc.) (Katz, 2014; Marchesini da Costa, 2016; Sevak & Baker, 2022). Consequently, there was a mixture of findings regarding if and how community needs shape or influence nonprofit location and density outcomes.

Measuring Community Need

The RBID report utilizes the Low-Income Cut-off (LICO), a common poverty measurement used in Canada, to frame community need. Using this measure, as well as looking at the concentration of social services per square hectare of land, the RBID report suggested that there is a significant spatial mismatch in regards to the number of nonprofit concentrated in communities with lower need communities, resulting in an equitable distribution of nonprofit services (Ramage, 2016). Despite the importance of income measures such as LICO, mapping community need is complex and often difficult if not impossible to measure and understand with a single measure. It is important that we carefully consider what measures are most useful in assessing poverty and community need.

Poverty measures, such as LICO, while useful, paint a limited picture of community need and poverty. For example, LICO focuses on the amount families spend on necessities such as housing, food, and clothing. If a family spends a higher percentage of their income on these necessities than the average family, then the family falls below the LICO. While LICO was initially meant to be recalculated on a yearly basis, it hasn't been since 1992 (other than for inflation). Consequently, it doesn't do a good job of calculating the cost of things today (e.g., it doesn't account for the cost of the internet). Additionally, LICO doesn't do a good job of accounting for differences in the cost of living between geographic areas. Given this, LICO isn't a poverty measure that is commonly used to measure poverty or community need today (Falvo, 2019).

Other poverty measures that are more commonly used in Canada include the Low-Income Measure After-Tax (LIM-AT) and Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM has recently been adopted as Canada's official poverty line.

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LIM-AT

How is it calculated?

Thresholds determined at 50% of the national median income. Household sizes scaled with LIM scale.

What type of measure is it?

A relative measure of low income.

Strengths

Covers 95% of the Canadian population and has the largest number of sociodemographic indicators.

MBM

How is it calculated?

Thresholds based on the cost of a basket of essential goods based in 2018.

What type of measure is it?

An absolute measure of low income.

Strengths

Accounts for variation in costs of living between geographic areas.

Note: Adapted from Ngo, S., & Kolkman, J. (2017).

The Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing speaks to the complexity of measuring wellbeing, which has led them to adopt a framework that utilizes 8 domains (e.g., community vitality) and 64 indicators/measures (e.g., crime severity index) to better understand the nature of wellbeing. Each domain has a total of eight measures that contextualize wellbeing and help policymakers understand if and how we might need to shift our practices or focus to address community needs (Smale, 2019).

Community Needs Through an Equity Lens

Incorporating multiple measures to frame our understanding of community needs also helps to apply an equity-based lens to addressing community needs, which is a critical component to building equitable, inclusive, and vibrant communities. As referenced earlier, an equity focused approach to the distribution of services, goods, and opportunities inherent to vibrant communities suggests that **it's important to identify populations most affected by social, economic, and political discrimination and provide them with a higher level of support** so that they can participate in the same social and economic opportunities that other communities enjoy (Toolis, 2021).

While unique measures like LICO may indicate what community needs may look like, these measures are often limited by their ability to inform the dynamic issues related to community needs on their own. When

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we explore local community data available to us more closely, we can better understand how needs can be informed through community-specific data. The table below depicts 2021 City of Saskatoon Neighbourhood Profile data for Pleasant Hill and Sutherland, as the two communities depicted to have the highest level of community needs based on the RBID report, and Riversdale.

Measures	Riversdale	Pleasant Hill	Sutherland
MBM Threshold for Saskatoon (2020)	\$47,025	\$47,025	\$47,025
Median Household Income	\$25,920	\$21,590	\$33,290
Percentage of households with incomes below \$34,999	62.2%	73.2%	51.9%
Percentage neighbourhood households that are reported as lone parent households	24%	24%	12%
Labour force participation rates	56.1%	43%	69.3%
Economic Dependency Ratio	36%	80.5%	22.6%
Percentage of neighbourhood residents whose occupation is in the Sale and Service Industry	12%	12%	5%

Note: Adapted from City of Saskatoon. (2021).

Despite Pleasant Hill and Sutherland being found to have the greatest community need in the RBID report, the other measures provided demonstrate that Pleasant Hill and Sutherland have very different neighbourhood profiles, which may require very different policy solutions to address each neighbourhood's unique needs.

As depicted above, it is estimated that 24% of the total households within Pleasant Hill are reported to be lone-parent households, double the percentage of lone-parent households in Sutherland. Lone-parent households face unique barriers that may differ from other types of households. For example, lone-parent

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households are less likely to be employed than a two-parent household. Additionally, females leading lone parent households were more likely to work in sales and service occupations than females in two-parent households (Government of Canada, 2015). Those working in sales and service occupations within Saskatchewan are some of the lowest-paid employees in the labour market, often earning minimum wage (i.e., \$13.00). Additionally, Pleasant Hill sees significantly less participation in the labour market compared to Sutherland, with a significantly higher economic dependency ratio (an indicator used to measure the neighbourhood's reliance on government transfers).

Given these differences, it might be reasonable to assume that despite both neighbourhoods having a high number of individuals living below the LICO threshold, the policy and service solutions required to address their unique neighbourhood needs and achieve desired outcomes may look considerably different. While high-level income measures like LICO will help us understand the overall situation of low income in neighbourhoods, the level of measurement is typically too broad to inform unique policy solutions. Applying additional measures to contextualize neighbourhood needs (e.g., lone-parent households) will help policymakers and community practitioners narrow in on more equitable solutions to neighbourhood needs.

Disaggregated Data

Missing from the previously referenced data table, which is not available from City of Saskatoon Neighbourhood Profiles, are disaggregated demographic data on equity deserving groups such as Indigenous peoples, racialized minorities, people with disabilities, women and 2SLGBTQ+ community members. Disaggregated data can help to reveal differences between groups within wider populations, particularly equity deserving groups whose experiences and needs often vary greatly from others. While the absence of these data is problematic, the issue itself is not uncommon. Many surveys and larger data collection points fail to capture and record disaggregated demographic data on equity-seeking groups, but research has found that the inclusion of disaggregated data can “allow for more effective anti-poverty and inclusion policies” (Avendano et al., 2018, p. 42).

Given this, many organizations and institutions, governments in particular, are making efforts to recognize and fill the gaps in disaggregated data. Other municipal governments, such as Toronto, have begun to map disaggregated demographic data, even making it available to the public, to better understand and take into consideration how community needs, opportunities and outcomes are distributed and vary across the city. As such, there is a lack of available disaggregated data to help us contextualize the unique experiences and need of equity deserving groups within our communities, and how governments, and the nonprofit sector might better distribute finite resources to address community needs.

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Ensuring progress in how we measure and understand community needs will require us to pursue more sophisticated data collection strategies that capture unique demographic data on equity deserving groups in order to fully understand community needs and address disparities existing in our communities, challenge systemic inequalities that reduce the vibrancy of future, and build equity into the foundations of our policy responses.

Additionally, policymakers must ensure that they put forward the importance of including these data in analyses to decision makers. Decision makers may not always ask or understand the importance or influence disaggregated data can have at a policy design level, including things like nonprofit service provision and zoning bylaws (Avendano et al., 2018).

MOVING FORWARD

Vibrant economies are important. For Canadian cities like Saskatoon to continue to develop more vibrant economies they must look at expanding access to opportunities that translate into wellbeing outcomes for all, especially those who occupy communities that have been historically excluded from the equitable distribution of resources, services, and opportunities (Avendano et al., 2018).

Through this work, we have shared ways in which the nonprofit sector contributes to vibrant economies, while exploring intersecting factors that shape the way nonprofits respond to community needs. Given the wide range of factors that contribute to how community need can be framed, measured, and interpreted to inform policy and service provision solutions, it is imperative that the communities work together to find opportunities to map community needs and develop a common framework to inform equity-focused policy decisions. In doing this, we must ensure that place-based knowledge of local community needs, values, and goals is honoured and provided space to inform decision-making and policy development processes.

A more vibrant economy requires the collective work of many people, organizations, and sectors. Nonprofits, businesses, and governments all play a role in helping communities realize more vibrant economies. Knowing this, this report would like to draw attention to strategic policy actions to spur Saskatoon's collective progress toward a more vibrant economy.

Strategic Policy Actions

Action 1: Spending with Purpose

We recommend that nonprofits, businesses, and all levels of government consider implementing social procurement policies that help to build a more inclusive and vibrant economy.

Each and every dollar we spend can help to make social, economic, cultural, and environmental change for good. So how do we spend with purpose? Social Procurement, or social benefit procurement, is about organizations leveraging and aligning their existing buying power to generate social value and benefits beyond the value of goods and services being procured (Victoria State Government, 2021).

Social procurement policies and frameworks can help organizations achieve their intended purchasing objective while also achieving the following:

- Creating employment opportunities for people facing barriers to employment

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- Supporting diverse owned businesses (e.g., Indigenous, Black, or women-owned businesses) that contributes to the local economy
- Redirecting purchasing to nonprofit-led social enterprises that are centred in local community economic development work (EndPovertyEdmonton, n.d.)

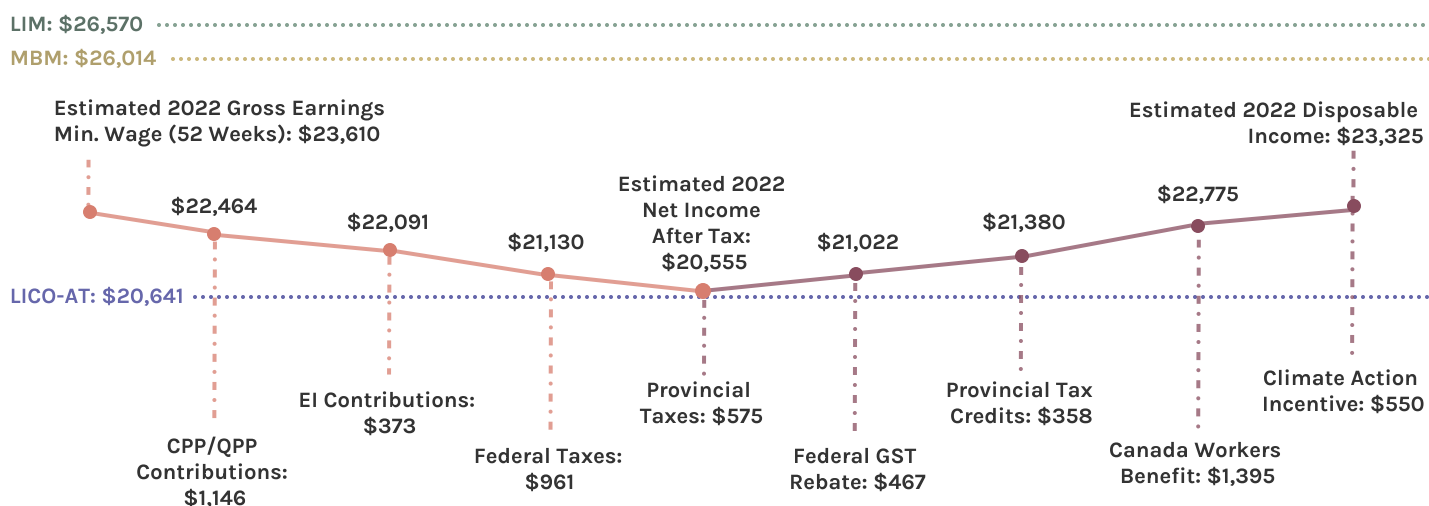
Who's Doing it?

In May 2016, the City of Toronto adopted a Social Procurement Program in an effort to address recommendations made in the [Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy](#). The purpose of the Social Procurement program is “to embed supply chain diversity and workforce development initiatives within the City’s Procurement Processes to drive inclusive economic growth” (City of Toronto, 2017).

Action 2: Adopting a Living Wage

We recommend that nonprofits, businesses, and all levels of government become living wage employers.

Currently, Saskatchewan’s minimum wage is \$13.00 per hour. Employment at the current minimum wage level creates and perpetuates cycles of poverty in Saskatoon. Employees who work full-time at minimum wage live below the LICO, LIM, and MBM (depicted below). Important pieces to note in this graph are the benefits provided in green are individuals file their taxes. Even after filing personal taxes and receiving provincial and federal benefits, minimum wage workers still live below Canada's poverty line.



Note: Adapted from the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership. (2022)..

MOVING FORWARD

By paying a living wage, employers can ensure their employees are able to be healthy and productive in both the workplace and in the community. A living wage is reflective of what people need to access a good quality of life that supports themselves and their families given the actual costs of living within their respective community. As of May 2022, the living wage (for a family of four) in Saskatoon is \$16.89 per hour (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2022).

Action 3: Reflecting the Role of Nonprofits in Building Inclusive and Vibrant Communities

We recommend that the City of Saskatoon update the Official Community Plan to reflect the role the nonprofits play in supporting and enhancing Saskatoon's local economy.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) references the nonprofit sector once throughout the entirety of the document, while keywords linked to 'business' and the 'private sector' are referenced over 100 times (City of Saskatoon, 2020). Many of the strategic goals, especially those aligned with the City's strategic vision for economic diversity and prosperity, do not reference the inclusion of nonprofit or public benefit type organizations.

One example is the OCP's goal around the economy and "Collaboration and Partnerships". This goal recognizes that creating an economically vibrant city requires "cooperation, collaboration and partnerships, its municipal and provincial partners, and other authorities" (City of Saskatoon, 2020, p. 108). Below is an example of language surrounding how this goal could be realized in its original form, as well as how it could be improved to reflect the role nonprofit and public benefit organizations play in realizing this goal.

Before

3.1 Foster Relationships with Existing Partners

Strong relationships with local businesses and business groups helps focus support for Saskatoon's economy.

(1) Objective

(a) Foster existing partnerships to encourage strong relationships with organizations that are important in maintaining a strong economy.

(2) Policy

(a) Partner with local business groups to encourage a coordinated, consistent approach to attracting business to Saskatoon.

After

3.1 Foster Relationships with Existing Partners

Strong relationships with local businesses, business groups **and public benefit organizations (e.g., social enterprises, nonprofits, etc.)** helps focus support for Saskatoon's economy.

(1) Objective

(a) Foster existing partnerships to encourage strong relationships with organizations that are important in maintaining a strong economy.

(2) Policy

(a) Partner with local business groups and **public benefit organizations** to encourage a coordinated, consistent approach to attracting business and social enterprise development to Saskatoon.

MOVING FORWARD

It is important that public facing documents that guide the collective vision for a healthy, vibrant and prosperous Saskatoon are inclusive of major economic partners, such as the nonprofit sector, that represent the diverse interest and voices of many of those who call Saskatoon home. Recognizing these voices and giving them space to shape Saskatoon's forward direction will ensure a more vibrant and equitable future for all.

Action 4: Recognizing Nonprofits as Neighbourhood Employers and Part of a Business Improvement District (BID)

We recommend that the Business Improvement District Bylaw, 2022 be amended to include the appointment of nonprofit employer representation and “at large” members that reflect the diversity of the neighbourhoods they represent.

It is important to ensure that governance structures embrace democratic values that promote participation, accountability, transparency, and inclusion of diverse representation of the communities they serve. Additionally, research on board governance has found that diversity positively affects board performance (Boesso et al., 2014; Buse et al., 2016).

Ensuring that Saskatoon's BID governance boards include representation of community members beyond the business community increases accountability and supports continuity in directives to ensure BIDs are focused on creating vibrant communities through inclusive social and economic policies and activities. As such, we call for the recently approved Business Improvement District Bylaw, 2022 to be amended to ensure ensure the inclusion of nonprofit employers and at large members, as originally intended.

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