

IDEAS FOR ACTION

QUALITY JOBS 
AND LIVABLE INCOMES

HOMELESSNESS
AND HOUSING 

TRANSPORTATION 

HEALTH 
AND WELL-BEING

FOOD SECURITY 

EDUCATION AND
LEARNING 

SYSTEMIC CHANGE 

INTRODUCTION

We've identified ideas for action that impact people who are living in poverty now, address root causes, and generate long term solutions that will end poverty.

Each theme includes recommendations and ideas for action that are organized by three objectives:

- Address Immediate Needs
- Pathways to Prosperity
- Systemic Change



ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Growing numbers of HRM residents are living in poverty. The current social support system does not address many of their basic needs for housing, food, childcare, healthcare, and transportation. Actions that address immediate needs focus on ensuring that essential services are well funded, coordinated, and meet the immediate needs of those living in poverty.



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

The increasingly high cost of living in the HRM, coupled with the scarcity of quality jobs (and high cost of living), means that many people are persistently marginalized, with limited prospects of achieving a more stable life. Actions that create pathways to prosperity focus on improving the quality of income supports, education, jobs, and social development. They also support investments to low-income areas, and ensure programs and services are integrated, client-centered, and focused on early intervention.



SYSTEMIC CHANGE

People do not choose to be poor: social, economic, and financial policies have led to the racialization, feminization, and geographic concentration of poverty. People with disabilities, African Nova Scotians, Indigenous people, and newcomers are also overrepresented among the municipality's marginalized. Actions that drive systemic change focus on creating an accountable and participatory social support system, wherein eliminating poverty and inequality is an integral part of day-to-day business.



ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

1. Improve the quality of and access to income supports.

- 1.1 Advocate and work with the provincial and federal governments to raise social assistance rates and other income supports and benefits (e.g., tax credits).
- 1.2 Advocate and work with the provincial government to ensure income supports and services meet residents' needs by reducing barriers and increasing supports (e.g., allowing individuals to retain greater earned income, while maintaining eligibility; reviewing the special needs list to reflect actual cost and needs).
- 1.3 Better assist low-income and marginalized residents to access childcare spaces and fee subsidies.
- 1.4 Improve access to health benefits, including dental, pharma, and vision care, for those transitioning to employment from Employment Services and Income Assistance (ESIA) and Nova Scotia Disability Support Program.



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

2. Create more employment opportunities for low-income and marginalized populations with high unemployment rates and barriers to employment.

- 2.1 Increase access to skill development programs to expand opportunities for marginalized populations.
- 2.2 Develop and provide flexible childcare models that align with the current labour market realities and enable greater participation in the workforce among low-income and marginalized families.
- 2.3 Collaborate with business and community partners to better understand workforce gaps and opportunities for employment.
- 2.4 Provide opportunities for ongoing training for employers around inclusion and cultural competency to influence more inclusive recruitment and hiring practices.
- 2.5 Support low-income and marginalized youth to access volunteer and job opportunities.
- 2.6 Advocate with the provincial government to support participation in the workforce by maintaining open income assistance files, to allow individuals to cycle in and out of the workforce as their situation changes.

3. Raise incomes of marginalized populations.

- 3.1 Work with public and private employers to implement a living wage (e.g., develop a Living Wage Network).
- 3.2 Advocate and work with the federal and provincial governments to increase minimum wage and improve labour standards.
- 3.3 Support pension savings (e.g., Registered Disability Savings Plan: RDSP) for people with disabilities, and their families and caregivers.
- 3.4 Advocate for a basic income as a means for eliminating poverty. Work with HRM and other levels of government to complete a feasibility study to detail how a basic income could best be implemented, including a local pilot study to further assess implementation.
- 3.5 Explore and consider the benefits of restructuring the tax system (e.g., modify tax policy to create a new tax bracket so that individuals living on low-income do not pay provincial income tax; convert existing non-refundable tax credits to refundable credits).
- 3.6 Explore opportunities to increase access to business loans, credit, and other support for marginalized populations.



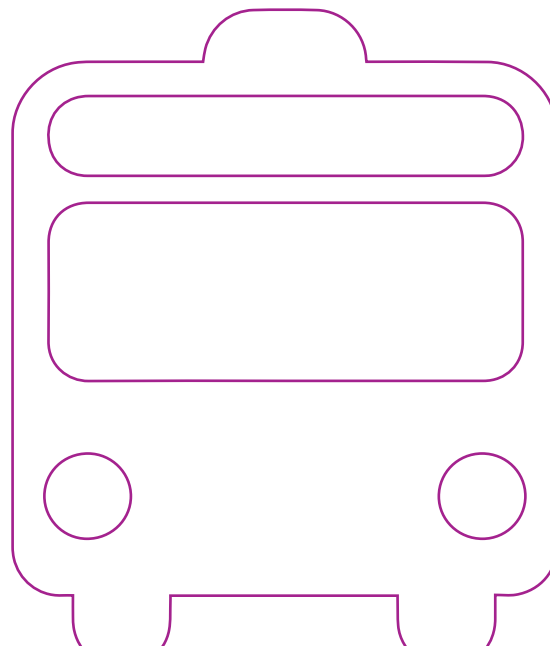


ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

4. Make transportation more affordable and accessible for low-income residents and marginalized populations.

- 4.1 Seniors and youth 18 and under ride public transit free.
- 4.2 Provide low-income transit passes.
- 4.3 Comply with the Accessibility Act and ensure that the public transportation system is fully accessible and available when people need it (e.g., improve the reliability, flexibility, and accessibility of the Access-a-Bus system).
- 4.4 Ensure access to an adequate transportation allowance for ESIA recipients in rural areas who have limited public transit access.

- 4.5 Support partnerships that increase access to affordable and accessible transportation through the establishment and expansion of community transportation (e.g., community vans, vehicle share options, accessible van share options).
- 4.6 Increase the number of accessible taxis.
- 4.7 Support community transportation options for moving (e.g., community moving van or truck).
- 4.7 Support and advocate for the development of active transportation infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.).



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

5. Improve transportation services in urban and rural HRM.

- 5.1 Work with governments to implement the Sustainable Transportation Strategy and Integrated Mobility Plan.
- 5.2 Increase reliability, availability, and access across the Halifax Transit system, linking people with community, employment, and services.
- 5.3 Ensure equitable access to public transportation across the HRM.



ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

6. Eliminate hunger by increasing access to and availability of affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food in neighbourhoods and communities.

- 6.1 Increase the dignity of accessing food banks (e.g., expand food bank times to the weekend and allow access more than once a month; improve the quality of food; volunteer training).
- 6.2 Expand nutrition programs for children and youth in collaboration with the Department of Health and Wellness, Nourish Nova Scotia, school boards, community-based organizations, and other levels of government (e.g., school breakfast, snack, and lunch programs; edible school gardens).
- 6.3 Reduce food waste (e.g., selling ugly fruit and vegetables at a reduced price).

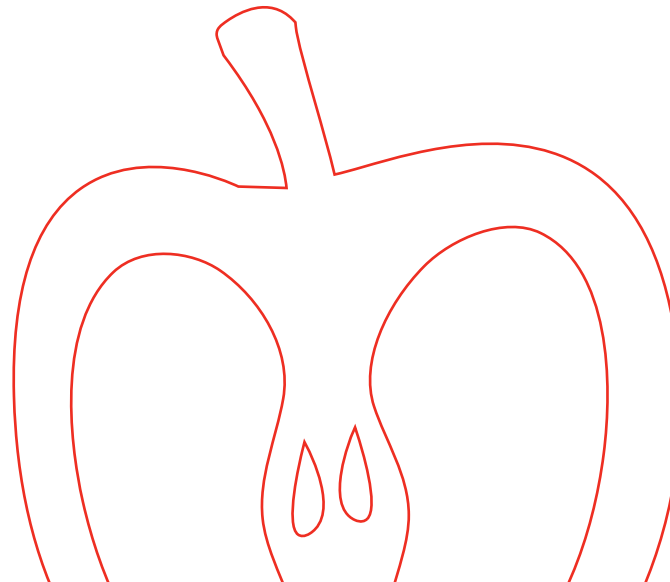
- 6.4 Provide healthy food and beverage options within municipally-owned and operated facilities and programs.
- 6.5 Increase funding and empower communities to do more community food programming, like community gardens.
- 6.6 Establish enabling policies and processes to facilitate food initiatives on municipal land and facilities.
- 6.7 Empower residents through place-based agencies with food skills, information, and access to equipment and tools.



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

7. Support the development of a Food Charter and Food Strategy for HRM.

- 7.1 Identify and eliminate food deserts by developing public private partnerships to create service models which address food security and access needs in neighbourhoods.
- 7.2 Remove barriers to expand urban agriculture on government lands.
- 7.3 Invest in community-based food centres that increase access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food, and help navigate access to services.
- 7.4 Advocate and support the development of a National Food Policy.
- 7.5 Support the development of procurement mechanisms to create efficient, cost effective, healthy, and local food access across sectors (e.g., schools; regulated childcare centres; and recreation and sport settings).





ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

8. Minimize new intakes and returns to shelters.

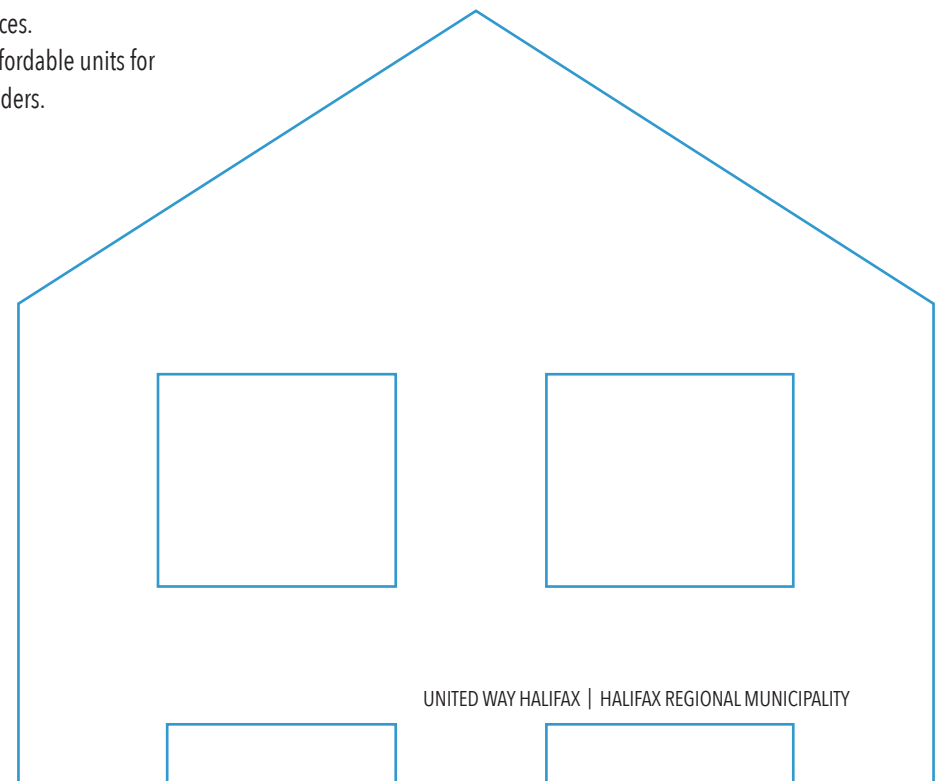
- 8.1 Coordinate intakes and referrals to shelters for the homeless.
- 8.2 Create and maintain emergency housing for marginalized populations who do not fit the traditional shelter model (e.g., family housing; people with disability; LGBTQ2SIA+; youth).
- 8.3 Expand and coordinate Housing First.
- 8.4 Increase the number of housing support workers and related resources to manage lower acuity shelter users.
- 8.5 Develop a core competencies training model for service providers.
- 8.6 Create an emergency fund to assist people in securing and maintaining housing.
- 8.7 Implement and expand wrap around supports embedded in the delivery of housing programs for marginalized populations.

9. In collaboration with the Indigenous community, respond to the Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Community Action Plan.

- 9.1 Develop hostel accommodation.
- 9.2 Expand addictions and mental health supports.
- 9.3 Implement a case management model linked to other community-based organizations.
- 9.4 Expand family housing linked to Mi'kmaw Children and Family Services.
- 9.5 Increase the number of affordable units for Indigenous housing providers.

10. Sustain community assets in shelters, transitional, and permanent supportive housing.

- 10.1 Increase investments and supports to ensure the quality and sustainability of shelters, and non-market housing.





ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

11. Improve the quality of all affordable housing.

Calls to action to preserve or upgrade 2000 existing affordable housing units:

- 11.1 Identify the capital needs of non-market and private units in need of repair, and allocate required resources.
- 11.2 Increase the number of licensed single room occupancy (SRO) units by developing a pilot project based on best practices.
- 11.3 Advocate and work with HRM to strengthen the enforcement of minimum housing standards (M-200).
- 11.4 Develop a public database of by-law infractions.
- 11.5 Develop and implement a municipal bed bug strategy.
- 11.6 Expand incentive programs for private landlords and low-income homeowners to improve the quality and energy efficiency of dedicated, long-term affordable housing.

12. Reduce the number of HRM residents living in core housing need.

Calls to action to create 250 rental supplements:

- 12.1 Advocate and work with the provincial and federal governments for long-term commitment to continuing existing rental supplements.
- 12.2 Work with governments, private landlords, and non-profits to phase in additional rent supplements for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- 12.3 Increase the flexibility of the rent supplement program by introducing a portable housing benefit.
- 12.4 Advocate and work with governments to develop rent supplements, and to develop rent geared to income approaches.



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

13. Increase the supply of affordable housing options that meet the needs of marginalized populations and communities.

- 13.1 Prioritize community-based affordable housing options for people with disability, seniors, and people with mental health conditions (e.g., home sharing options between seniors and youth).
- 13.2 Identify opportunities to create accessible units through universal design.



The Housing and Homelessness Partnership set five-year affordable housing targets which helped inform the ideas for action –

- Preserve or upgrade 2,000 existing affordable housing units.
- Create 250 rental supplements.
- Create 1,000 new social housing units.
- Create 1,000 new affordable private rental units, and 500 new secondary suites,

These housing targets were approved in principle by HRM Regional Council in 2016 and a framework for implementation is under development.



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Calls to action to create 1000 new social housing units:

- 13.3 Work with community-based and other partners to enable non-profit housing providers to coordinate efforts and pool resources to build affordable housing.
- 13.4 Provide surplus government and community group land for new affordable housing developments, or dedicate a percentage of net proceeds from land sales to affordable housing.
- 13.5 Assist non-market housing organizations to leverage capital to create new affordable housing units by working with community partners such as government, private capital, social enterprise etc.

Calls to action to create 1000 new affordable private rental units, and 500 new secondary suites:

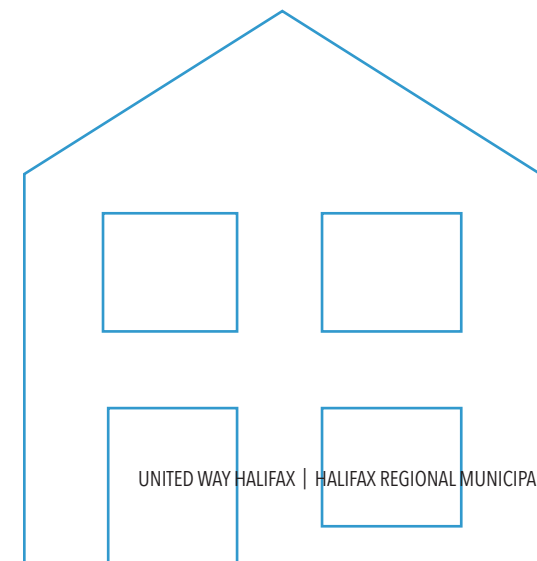
- 13.6 Continue to pursue and advocate for a review of land use planning policies and bylaws to increase affordable housing options (e.g., tiny homes, rooming houses, secondary suites etc.).
- 13.7 Expand density bonusing and inclusionary zoning throughout the HRM.
- 13.8 Advocate for the provincial government to incorporate inclusionary zoning and rental preservation in the HRM Charter.
- 13.9 Develop a proposal for the administration of affordable housing units resulting from density bonusing and inclusionary zoning.

Calls to action to create 250 affordable ownership units:

- 13.10 Work with government and community partners to develop a new home ownership program for low to middle income individuals and families.

14. Foster a strong housing sector by strengthening and building capacity for increased effectiveness.

- 14.1 Create a central online registry of community-based non-profit housing organizations and available units.
- 14.2 Host an annual symposium and other programming to build the capacity of the non-profit sector.
- 14.3 Support the creation of community land trusts, and non-profit development resource and management groups.
- 14.4 Enable professional management of housing stock through access to financial and capital planning software.





ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

15. Increase coordination, awareness, and capacity of service providers and programs to increase access, availability, and equity for everyone.

- 15.1 Establish a Fair Entry program for municipal programs, with a focus on increasing access for marginalized people to recreation and other services that could be subsidized or free.
- 15.2 Collaborate with Service Nova Scotia and other partners to increase timely access and reduce the cost of obtaining identification documentation.
- 15.3 Protect and increase provision of effective services and infrastructure for marginalized populations.

16. Advocate for mental health and addiction supports.

- 16.1 Advocate for the provincial mental health and addictions strategy to be implemented.
- 16.2 Increase capacity and funding for community-based mental health services that focus on prevention, as well as treatment, for marginalized populations.



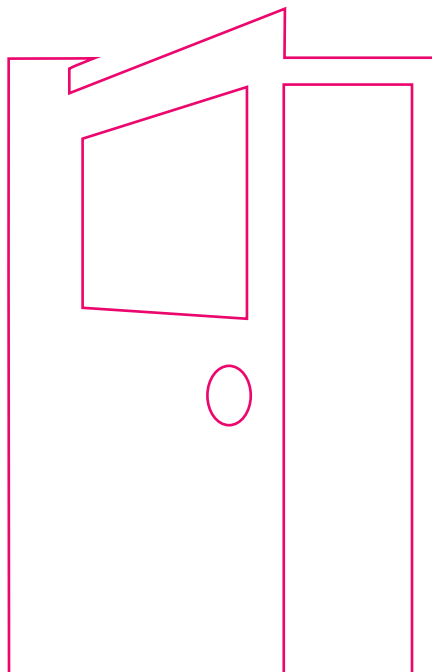
PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

17. Ensure healthcare and pharmacare are accessible, inclusive, responsive and appropriate.

- 17.1 Ensure that pharmacare is equitable (e.g., affordable, acceptable, and available).
- 17.2 Train health care providers to diagnose poverty using a health equity lens, and to coordinate with community hubs to support navigation and better access to services.

18. Reduce social isolation of marginalized populations.

- 18.1 Reduce social isolation by providing more affordable and accessible culture and recreation opportunities.
- 18.2 Create recreation equity through more inclusion supports for recreation so children, youth, and adults with special needs can have better access.
- 18.3 Provide children and youth with universal cultural and recreation passports (e.g., Discovery Centre, museums, art galleries etc.).
- 18.4 Increase funding for support services that provide respite and support independence in the community for children, youth, and adults with disability.
- 18.5 Provide funding and support for assistive devices and technology, including access to interpreters and translators.
- 18.6 Create affordable adult day programming for people with disabilities and seniors.
- 18.7 Invest in more services and supports for newcomers (e.g., language classes).





ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS

19. Increase accessibility of education.

- 19.1 Expand Schools Plus efforts by working with community-based organizations to provide a holistic approach to education.
- 19.2 Provide more supports for students with a disability in postsecondary and vocational education (e.g., funding for support workers).
- 19.3 Increase the amount of supplementary funding to ensure equitable access to extra academic activities (e.g., social, cultural, and philanthropic opportunities – field trips, music and art classes, and other school activities).
- 19.4 Develop better options for youth with disabilities to transition from school into meaningful work and learning opportunities.
- 19.5 Explore sliding scales for tuition, and student loan forgiveness.

20. Improve access to affordable, quality childcare and after school programming.

- 20.1 Provide accessible and affordable transportation for after school care and the new pre-primary program.
- 20.2 Create a childcare strategy, including increasing subsidized day care spots, portable childcare subsidies, and a waitlist strategy.
- 20.3 Provide free after school programs and tutoring.
- 20.4 Provide universal childcare and more early education and intervention programs, including more spots for infants under 18 months.
- 20.5 Provide subsidies and other supports to make day cares accessible for children with disabilities.



PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

21. Lifelong quality learning.

- 21.1 Governments, community-based organizations, businesses, and other partners work collaboratively to improve opportunities for good quality education and apprenticeship opportunities.
- 21.2 Ensure equitable access to literacy, adult education, and training for all HRM residents.
- 21.3 Provide opportunities for seniors to volunteer as readers and literacy coaches.
- 21.4 Increase access to the Options and Opportunities programming for youth.
- 21.5 Work with community partners and businesses to support mentorship programs for youth and marginalized people.
- 21.6 Support parents with opportunities to upgrade education and provide homework support to their children.

22. Empower the non-profit sector to grow their capacity to eliminate poverty.

- 22.1 Stabilize core funding for community-based organizations.
- 22.2 Advocate for the federal government to allow charities to devote more than 10% of their total resources to advocacy.
- 22.3 Support capacity building for the non-profit sector (e.g., online knowledge base on best practices; workshops, etc.).

23. Leverage the economic power of HRM to stimulate job growth, support local businesses, and drive inclusive economic growth.

- 23.1 Design and implement a community benefits program for HRM purchasing and capital investments.
- 23.2 Design and implement a municipal social procurement policy.
- 23.3 Work with HRM to implement a living wage ordinance for all municipal staff and third party contractors.
- 23.4 Working with local institutions, connect job seekers,

start-up businesses, social enterprises, and worker-owned co-operatives to create more economic opportunities.

- 23.5 Develop models to enhance economic development in low-income communities.

24. Create a seamless social support system.

- 24.1 Increase the level of community navigation, outreach, and capacity by developing a Neighbourhood Strategy featuring place-based responses to support individuals experiencing poverty.
- 24.2 Develop a Community Hubs Plan with HRM and other levels of government to support poverty elimination efforts in neighbourhoods and communities.
- 24.3 Coordinate seamless care and support among hospitals, the child welfare system, Employment Support and Income Assistance, correction and mental health facilities, and HRM services (e.g., develop common discharge protocols).

- 24.4 Work with governments to remove legislative and financial barriers to the creation of one stop community access sites for key health, education, and social services that also serve as focal points for community building.

25. Experts by Experiences (lived experience) are included in decision making processes.

- 25.1 Develop, resource, and use effective models to meaningfully engage people with lived experience in the decision-making of community-based organizations and governments. Provide a living wage, childcare, transportation, food, and other supports needed including ASL interpreters and language translators.



26. Recognize and reconcile the impact of colonialism and systemic racism on the African Nova Scotian and Indigenous people.

- 26.1 Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- 26.2 Guided by their respective communities, work in collaboration to reconcile the impact of racism and colonialism on the African Nova Scotian and Indigenous people (e.g., structural, institutional, interpersonal, internalized) and the resulting inequitable outcomes.
- 26.3 Expand cultural competency and trauma-informed training for community-based organizations, governments, businesses, and communities.

27. Coordinate and evaluate the implementation of the Poverty Solutions Strategy.

- 27.1 Using an Equity and Collective Impact approach, create a cross-sectoral leadership and staff team (governments, community-based organizations, residents and experts by experience, labour, private sector, faith communities, academia, funders, and others) to support activities related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of poverty-elimination actions.
- 27.2 In collaboration with governments, community-based organizations, experts by experience and other partners, develop monitoring and measuring processes and tools to inform the implementation and evaluation of this Strategy.

28. Engage HRM residents to learn and act to eliminate poverty, racism and stigma.

- 28.1 Develop change management and staff training tools using gender, rural, racial, and health equity lenses in order to promote a poverty sensitive culture.
- 28.2 Champion poverty elimination as a priority to HRM residents, businesses, and all levels of government.

29. Dedicate funding to poverty elimination actions.

- 29.1 Embed mechanisms that assess the impact of budget choices on poverty elimination in business units' and Halifax Regional Council's decision-making processes.
- 29.2 Find new ways to invest in eliminating poverty by exploring sustainable funding options and new revenue tools (e.g., dedicating an amount of property tax to a Poverty Elimination Fund).
- 29.3 Prioritize accessibility for marginalized people and communities when designing programs and services.

