



# **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES (FCSS)**

**Advocacy Toolkit**

**Dear FCSS Program Representative,**

Attached is the updated FCSS Advocacy Toolkit. This toolkit is based on the work done by the Inter-City Forum on Social Policy from 2019. This kit will assist FCSS-funded organizations, including staff, board members, and volunteers, to increase the profile of FCSS across the province.

In order to have the greatest impact possible, we are committed to the idea of a one-voice strategy, working to coordinate our key messages from FCSS-funded programs across Alberta.

A number of documents are attached to make it as easy as possible for you to engage with your elected officials:

1. FCSS Alberta Fact Sheet
2. FCSS Local Fact Sheet (Template for local statistics and stories)
3. Letter to MLAs template
4. Common questions from elected officials
5. FCSS key messages

Included in the Fact Sheets are common social media logos into which you can embed hyperlinks to any active social media accounts you have. Links to FCSSAA accounts have already been included in the Alberta Fact Sheet. We encourage you to post in your accounts, using the hashtag #FCSSworkshere. You can also tag @FCSSAA in your posts. We encourage you to share this information with board members, employees, partners, family, friends and volunteers and ask them to help promote the critical need for sustainable funding for preventive social services.

# FCSS Alberta Fact Sheet

## Background

For over 50 years, the Government of Alberta, together with participating municipalities and Métis Settlements, have jointly funded preventive social services for Albertans through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. The Province contributes 80 per cent of the cost of operating a local program and the participating municipality or Métis Settlement contributes a minimum of 20 per cent. This unique provincial partnership program leverages municipal funds to greatly magnify their impact. Designed to allow communities to create customized programs that meet the specific needs of the local community, FCSS's preventive programs and services promote well-being, resilience, and active participation in the community for people of all ages.

- 313 municipalities and Métis Settlements participate in FCSS, organized into 205 local programs, under the FCSS Act and Regulation.
- FCSS programs support the delivery of comprehensive community-based preventive social programs. Almost all 4.33 million Albertans can access an FCSS program; less than one percent of the population lives in communities without an FCSS program.
- FCSS funding allocation in 2019 was less than 1% of the total provincial budget.
- FCSSAA brings together FCSS programs from across the province to promote collaboration and learning. FCSSAA supports and strengthens FCSS programs through evidence-based research, common evaluation, professional development, current tools and resources, and communication and coordination.
- FCSS programs are vigilantly striving to respond to community needs. During the Covid-19 pandemic FCSS quickly responded to support Albertans. FCSS programs were able to promptly mobilize to assist in meeting the needs of their community, especially vulnerable populations.
- FCSS supported the process to distribute the emergency funds from Community and Social Services to support vulnerable Albertans through Covid-19.

- Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that for every \$1 invested in preventive services, \$7 - \$12 dollars in future spending is saved. Long-term spending is reduced for justice, health care, and addiction treatment.
- Preventive social programs have demonstrated across sectors and countries a positive impact on health and well-being through reducing depression and isolation, improving community cohesion and participation.
- FCSS builds community; promoting volunteerism as a method for citizens to contribute directly to their community. Across Alberta, FCSS programs report over 75,742 volunteers contributing 2,473,288 volunteer hours annually, equivalent to \$37,099,320 at minimum wage.
- FCSS Programs contribute to Albertans' economic prosperity. For instance, many communities provide a free income tax filing service through FCSS. Of the 24 programs that were surveyed in 2018, there were 5,954 tax returns filed, impacting 259 children, 266 seniors, and 2,426 low income individuals. A total of \$26,999,593 from just these 24 programs was brought back into Alberta communities.

***Follow us:***



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<sup>1</sup> Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2), 114–128.

## FCSS Local Fact Sheet

The **Central Peace FCSS** runs **14** programs, which supports approximately **2564** community members every year.

- The three municipalities of: Town of Spirit River, Village of Rycroft and Municipal District of Spirit River, currently contribute 20 percent (\$18,138) towards the overall FCSS of Central Peace budget of \$90,688.
- In 2019, approximately 700 people benefitted from participating in one of the 14 programs funded by FCSS of Central Peace.
- In 2019, 315 volunteers contributed 1166 volunteer hours, valued at \$17,490
- FCSS creates meaningful jobs for skilled professionals. In the Central Peace , approximately 8 jobs are supported in part or in full by FCSS funding.
- The FCSS program in the Central Peace works with **8** partners, including **local Early Childhood Coalition, Health & Wellness Coalition, municipal libraries, halls, Peace Adult Learning Society, Birch Hills County, and Saddle Hills County.**
- Through a comprehensive evaluation system, FCSS **of Central Peace** has been able to determine its positive impact in the community in a number of areas. For example, of seniors participating in senior support programs, **90%** percent more of them said they felt like they were less lonely as a result of the FCSS program, increasing their ability to stay in their own homes.

### What is the impact?

Every FCSS program conducts evaluation, submitted annually to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Through these evaluations, we learn about what works, what can be improved, and gather the stories of participants who have benefited from FCSS programs and services.

Here is one of those stories:

Every year Central Peace FCSS coordinates the collaborative community effort to provide Christmas Hampers and other Christmas programs to help support those who are less fortunate, or need some community care shown their way. This is a large undertaking, at the program takes on advertising for the programs, getting client applications processed, seeking and collecting donations, coordinating 43 volunteers' 70 hours of efforts to put together 45-85 hampers a week before Christmas. Plus the many other tasks of running Santas for Seniors, Secret Santa for Children, and coordinating the volunteer efforts for 4 days to make Christmas Meals.

In 2020, this undertaking supported 202 individuals receiving food for Christmas, 55 children received Christmas presents by donation, 100 seniors received a box of meals made by Community Kitchen volunteers to support them over the holidays, and 101 seniors in our community also received Christmas presents donated by our community. For a community of our size, this was a huge support, and a great success.

Follow us at Central Peace FCSS: [\(20+\) Central Peace FCSS | Facebook](#)



and our website: [www.centralpeacefcss.ca](http://www.centralpeacefcss.ca)

## Letter to MLAs Template

Dear (MLA Name):

On behalf of (Organization Name), we are writing to request an opportunity to speak with you about the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Program. FCSS is an innovative, made in Alberta approach to delivering preventive social programs. Although it has been around for more than 50 years, you may not have heard much about FCSS. We often don't hear about preventing drug and alcohol abuse, preventing crime, preventing isolation, because when prevention works - and in Alberta it works like nowhere else - it's not widely broadcast. Avoiding a crisis isn't news.

The FCSS program is a vital resource in the social and economic health and wellbeing of the province which supports the Alberta Government's vision of making life better for all Albertans. FCSS (community name) supports (X) unique individuals through \$X million in funding for preventive social services. These programs help isolated seniors access supports to keep them safely in their homes for longer; they help women and newcomers build the skills they need to participate more fully in the workforce; they help keep children and youth engaged in positive programs during crucial after school hours; and they help young families connect to resources and supports in their local community.

Participants in FCSS programs have felt the pinch in Alberta's economy. Although the FCSS program has not received an increase in funding for four years, FCSS programs have sought creative ways to meet increasing demands. FCSS programs consistently seek out innovative opportunities for collaboration in order to leverage existing funds for greater impact. Ensuring that future policies prioritize prevention as a best practice allows us to address social issues before they arise, reducing long-term costs in other areas such as the justice system, health care and addiction treatment.

As the (position name), I would like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss how we can best advance our shared vision of healthy Albertans supported by a province that encourages all to succeed, and is the very best place to work, start a business, and raise a family.

We look forward to your response. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,  
(Your Name)  
(Contact information)

## Common Questions from MLAs

### **Question: Why are there so many organizations? Isn't it true that there is a lot of duplication?**

**Answer:** While many organizations have similar mandates, they have different service philosophy and approaches to address the varying needs of the people served. Sometimes similar programs will be offered by different organizations, in different parts of a city, to ensure equitable access to services. There are many examples of organizations sharing resources such as space, information, services and administrative supports.

### **Question: Couldn't we consolidate some organizations to save money? Can't services offered by smaller organizations be delivered as well, or better, by larger organizations or government directly?**

**Answer:** Not necessarily. FCSS-funded organizations are constantly evolving into collaborations and new partnerships. However, bigger does not necessarily ensure better outcomes. The complexity of preventive service delivery, and the need for more accessible, community-based programs demand services that are closer to where people live, delivered in a culturally-appropriate manner. The notion that size automatically ensures best practices and outcomes is not defensible.

### **Question: How do you know you are making a difference?**

**Answer:** All FCSS programs report back based on the FCSS Outcomes Model, meaning that we have an understanding of the impact of the program across the province using the same outcomes. At a high level the outcomes of FCSS are to improve the social well-being of individuals, families and communities. Improved social well-being is measured through indicators of success such as: personal well-being, connectedness with others, children & youth developing positively, healthy family functioning, connectedness to resources and supports, and community issues being addressed. In addition, many of the programs across the province collect or collaborate for local data strategies and evaluation above and beyond their reporting requirement. This additional work supports measurement and communication of additional impacts in the community, how the program is leveraging partnerships, and opportunities for continuous improvement.

### **Question: A priority for the Alberta Government is building civil society. How does FCSS contribute to building civil society?**



**Answer:** The requirement for volunteer involvement in FCSS programs has created an opportunity for tens of thousands of Albertans to get involved in every aspect of civil society, from governance to service delivery. Further, in many communities, civil society organizations (not-for-profit organizations) work with FCSS to provide programs and services. Many times these organizations embark upon partnerships and collaborations within the not-for-profit sector as a result of their relationship with FCSS, enhancing the communication and coordination of social services beyond those provided by FCSS. FCSS is a strong, and cost-effective vehicle to build and strengthen Alberta's civil society.

**Question: How does FCSS respond to emerging social issues?**

**Answer:** The principle of local autonomy allows FCSS programs to respond to the unique needs in the community. Through local needs assessments and local priority setting processes, FCSS responds to the unique needs of each community. A current example is how FCSS offices are supporting their communities through Covid-19.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF STABLE

# FCSS FUNDING

Why is Secure & Stable Funding for  
**Family & Community Support Services**  
Critical to Albertans?



## Together, Making Life Better For Albertans

- **FCSS** responds to social issues by helping individuals and families before they reach a crisis point.
- Albertans feel a sense of belonging, meaning, security and control over their lives through **FCSS** programs and services.
- With overall support for those struggling with addictions, homelessness, social isolation, poverty and violence, **FCSS** can show measurable results for short term and long term goals.



## Social Well-Being Creates Economic Prosperity

- Strong, stable and supported employees allow our business communities to thrive. **FCSS** programs support the health and wellbeing of individuals to give them the confidence and ability to get back to work.
- Businesses are more likely to locate in a community with a strong, healthy work force and positive social conditions. **FCSS** is creating healthy communities that attract new and diverse businesses.
- **FCSS** strategically invests in programming that helps to reduce crime, reduce health care dependency, reduce employment barriers for vulnerable Albertans and enhance our economy.



## Communities Know What is Best for Themselves

- **FCSS** leverages local knowledge and relationships, to ensure that investments are directed to the programs that will make the greatest impact for all Albertans.
- By using a coordinated approach, **FCSS** connects non-profit groups and the volunteer sector, with public and private sectors, to meet the unique needs of each community.
- **FCSS** programs create local accountability to tax payers. Direct contact with the organizations means increased accountability for producing measurable outcomes, to better the communities.

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