



Community-Based Poverty Reduction

Tamarack's goal with these guides is to find and highlight examples of community engagement. In this guide, we explore how Poverty Reduction can be made more effective by using community engagement principles. Those principles include: grassroots citizen action; collaboration between actors; clear visions and goals; and public decision-making.

Our original intent with this research was to educate ourselves about how others were putting these principles to work in the real world, but the examples we found were too good to keep to ourselves. By sharing these resources, how-to guides, and inspiring stories, we hope to encourage others to put these principles to work in their own communities.

Not all the resources we've included discuss "community engagement" explicitly, but we feel these are interesting and useful examples. If you know of a helpful resource or a great story we should include, please let us know so we can add it soon—we're always looking to revise and improve this guide. We hope this guide is a helpful start for anyone interested in engaging their communities around Poverty Reduction.

Is this your first time using one of our Tamarack Guides? Turn to Page 2 to see *How to Use This Guide*

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Definitions that might be useful:

Community Engagement: involving citizens in inspired action and learning as they work together on behalf of their communities to create and realize bold visions for the future.

Poverty: From the Canadian International Development Agency: "...the lack of human, physical, and financial capital needed to sustain livelihoods, and inequities in access to, and control of, and benefits from political, social, or economic resources."

Poverty Reduction: The process of not only relieving, but actually reducing, the depth of people's poverty by ensuring access to political, social or economic resources by building and engaging community. Poverty Reduction attacks the root causes of poverty, not just the symptoms.

Signature Documents: Two Resources We Couldn't Do Without

Opportunities 2000: A Project Summary

<http://www.op2000.org/op2000.htm>



This community-based project aimed to take 2000 families out of poverty by the year 2000 in Waterloo Region. This [project summary](#) describes the goals, methods and values of OP2000's second phase, and briefly outlines its strategic initiatives, aimed at youth, seniors, and the working poor. Paul, Louise, and Mark all worked at OP2000, and the [award-winning](#) project is a great example of a collaborative effort by nonprofits, government, business, and people living in poverty to build community and reduce poverty.

Poverty USA

<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/index.htm>

Maintained by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, [Poverty USA](#) features a whole lot of interesting resources. [Press releases](#), an [education centre](#), and a neat [animated tour](#) make this a really good starting place for basic information on poverty. You can even take a [quiz](#) to test your knowledge about poverty.



How to Use This Guide

We've divided the guide into 6 sections:

- Great Stories
- Resources
- Effectiveness
- Innovative Ideas
- Different Perspectives
- Connections

We divided the guide into these categories in order to help people like you who want to make positive changes in your community—Stories to inspire, Resources, Effectiveness, and Innovative Ideas to help you get started, and Connections, so there's always more information to find if you need it, and people to call on if you need help.

As you read through the guide, you'll see text that's been highlighted blue. If you're reading this on your computer, (and we'd encourage you to do so) simply click on the link to be taken to the document you've just been reading about. That way, if something catches your eye, or you'd like something clarified, the information is available right away.

You'll also notice some "Must-See" boxes in the margin that point you towards related information. Just click on those links to find even more.

It's that simple. And remember, if you know of something that should be included in here, please send us an email at

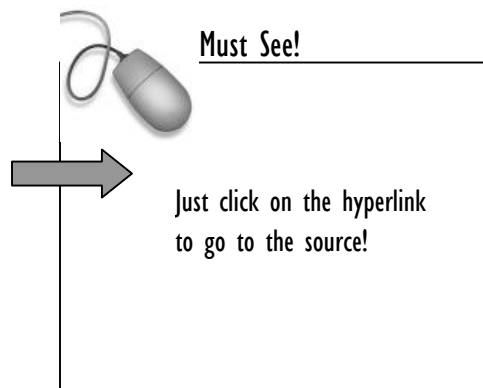
louise@tamarackcommunity.ca

and we can be sure to include it soon. There's new information all the time, and we'd love to have it. So if you hear about a resource or a website, just write us. It'll only take a minute, we promise.

To access many of these online resources, you'll need the Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. The software is free and available at www.adobe.com

We hope you find this guide informative and easy to use. Happy clicking!

Tamarack



Great Stories In Poverty Reduction

We think the best way to learn is by example. The resources in this section tell great stories about Community-based Poverty Reduction to inspire you to make positive changes in your own community. Just click to read about them!



Women in Transition Out of Poverty (Canada)

http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT01/wit_eng.pdf

This [report](#) from the [Canadian Women's Foundation](#) describes how community engagement principles were used to reduce poverty rates among women. It is also a helpful resource, but its focus on case studies makes it a great story, too. From Victoria, British Columbia to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, this initiative shows that community engagement is a powerful weapon against poverty, especially among women.



Catholic Campaign for Human Development: Poverty USA—Success Stories (USA)

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/cchd/povertyusa/about.htm>

Poverty USA's [success stories](#) are communities that have really reduced poverty for the people who live there, often with a little help from outside. The Poverty USA website is a great introduction to Poverty Reduction concepts, featuring a [multimedia tour](#), [statistics](#) and fact sheets, and most of all, [syllabi](#) for teaching students and adults about poverty, and how they can help to reduce it.

Opportunities 2000: OP2000 Series—Opportunity Development Accounts (Waterloo, Canada)

<http://www.op2000.org/PDF/894598563.pdf>

Opportunities 2000 and Lutherwood CODA ran a pilot project using Opportunity Development Accounts to reduce poverty. This [profile](#) describes how the project worked, the results it got, and the lessons learned by the organizers. This is a great story of one method of reducing poverty in Canada. The OP2000 Series of publications profile several other great stories, like the [Quint Development Corporation](#) and the [Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank](#).

Resources for Poverty Reduction

We think these resources will be helpful tools for Community-based Poverty Reduction projects. They lay out the whole process for you, step-by-step. But don't feel trapped by them! They make suggestions and point the way, but please, adapt them to the needs of *your* community.

Catholic Campaign for Human Development: Poverty USA—Education Centre (USA)

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/cchd/povertyusa/edcenter/index.htm>

This [education centre](#) provides suggestions and activities to teach elementary students, high school students, and adults about poverty and how they can reduce it. [Poverty USA](#) is a powerful website, compiling poverty [facts](#), [success stories](#), and the voices of [real people](#) living in poverty.



Centre for Community Enterprise: Tools and Techniques for Community Recovery & Renewal

<http://www.cedworks.com/pdf/books/P201.pdf>

This [guide](#) describes, with the help of real-life examples, how communities can reverse and repair damage done by poverty by using Community Economic Development, a comprehensive, long-term process of development which uses many community engagement principles. It covers planning, research, and implementation, plus special sections on particularly important sectors like health and culture. The Centre for Community Enterprise has many other helpful resources, from [planning guides](#) to [benchmarks](#) and indicators for evaluation. Their [online bookstore](#) is a great place to look.

UNDP: Review of Poverty Concepts and Indicators (International)

http://www.undp.org/poverty/publications/pov_red/Review_of_Poverty_Concepts.pdf

Before poverty can be reduced, it has to be identified. This [review](#) explains how poverty can be defined: is it relative or absolute? This paper will help communities decide how to define poverty for their particular circumstances so the right solutions can be found.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: How-To Guides (USA)

http://www.mdrc.org/publications_inpractice.html

MDRC researches and evaluates poverty reduction schemes all over America (see what they've done in our "Effectiveness" section). They've put all their [how-to guides](#) here in one place. Most are guidelines for helping people in poverty find jobs, but some also use community building.

The Mott Foundation: Pathways out of Poverty (USA)

<http://www.mott.org/publications/pdf/P32001pov.pdf>

The Mott Foundation's [Pathways out of Poverty](#) program is one of our favourite examples of a community-based poverty reduction program. Mott concentrates on four goals: Improve Community Education; Expand Economic Opportunity; Build Organized Communities; and Other Special Projects. They focus on long-term, sustainable development, education, community empowerment, and collaborative solutions. This Snapshot of the program describes their grant-making process and how they decide which initiatives to support.



Effectiveness in Poverty Reduction

How successful have other people's Community-based Poverty Reduction projects been? How did they measure their success? These resources explain how other people have evaluated themselves, and how you can use these tools yourself. Just click to read!

Opportunities 2000: Multisectoral Collaboration for Poverty Reduction - Final Evaluation (Waterloo, Canada)

http://www.op2000.org/Final_evaluation_28-09-01_Eric.pdf



This detailed [evaluation report](#) on OP2000's first phase from 1996-2000 covers everything from how the project began, to key ingredients for success, outcomes and lessons learned. The report focuses on OP2000's distinctive elements - its focus on poverty reduction and its emphasis on multisectoral collaboration.

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation: The Self-Sufficiency Project (Canada)

<http://www.srdc.org/english/projects/SSP.htm>



SRDC is funded by [Human Resources and Development Canada](#), and they've done a huge study of how they believe welfare recipients can be brought out of poverty. Here they describe what the [Self Sufficiency Project](#) is, and how it works. Their strength is studying outcomes—their "[publications](#)" section contains many of their evaluation studies.

The Aspen Institute: Jobs and the Urban Poor—Privately Initiated Sectoral Strategies

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/bookdetails.asp?i=66&d=103>



The Aspen Institute is without question one of the best organizations in North America for trying to understand effective strategies to reduce poverty. In this [study](#), by examining a range of poverty reduction schemes across the USA, Aspen concluded that "sector strategies"—poverty reduction schemes working within a defined industry—were quite effective.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: Neighbourhood Jobs Initiative Final Report (USA)

http://www.mdrc.org/Reports2003/nji_final_report/nji_overview.htm



MDRC researches and evaluates poverty reduction schemes all over America. The [Neighbourhood Jobs Initiative](#) was designed to increase employment in inner-city neighbourhoods by building community with the help of local community organizations. This report is the final evaluation of this project.

The Aspen Institute Closing the Gap—How Sectoral Workforce Development Programs Benefit the Working Poor

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/aspeninstitute/files/Img/pdf/ClosingtheGap.pdf>

This [report](#), also from the Aspen Institute, examines the employment, income and training impacts on working poor residents that have participated in six sectoral job-training programs in the United States. They found that Sectoral Strategies, which target individual industries, improved job prospects for unemployed or underemployed people.

Innovative Ideas in Poverty Reduction

The materials in this section are ones that we thought took a fresh approach to Community-based Poverty Reduction. They don't all approach "community" the same way, but their solutions are original and inspiring.

The Learn Save Project – Building Assets for Low Income Families

http://www.sedi.org/html/prog/save/fs3_prog_save_learn.html

The [Learn Save program](#) helps low-income Canadians build their savings by matching every dollar they save on their own, effectively doubling their nest egg. Funded by [Human Resources Development Canada](#) and working in ten Canadian communities, this is the largest project of its kind in the world.

Youth Build USA

<http://www.youthbuild.org/YBmain.html>

This [project](#) links youth who are unemployed with training and employment in the construction skills while building affordable housing for other low-income families. It is a small idea that has gone big in the U.S.A and is now being replicated in other communities in Canada.

The Cooperative-Auto Network

<http://www.cooperativeauto.net>

Sometimes reducing someone's poverty simply means making it easier for him or her to do day-to-day things with out a great deal of expense. [The Cooperative-Auto Network](#) in Vancouver provides people with affordable access to a car when they need it and a share and piece of ownership of the co-op. There are 600 members and 35 cars in the Vancouver co-op – and a number of these innovative co-ops across Canada.

Different Perspectives In Poverty Reduction

The things that appear in this section are meant to challenge our conventional thinking about Community-based Poverty Reduction. That means it could offer a different solution to environmental problems, or it could say the conventional thinking is flat-out wrong. We just want to know about all the thinking in this field, not just from people who agree with our view.

Defining and Re-defining Poverty: A Canadian Council on Social Development Perspective

<http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2001/povertypp.htm>

The [CCSD](#) is Canada's most prolific research group on poverty issues. This [document](#) provides a very good overview of the different perspectives of poverty and the history of the 'poverty definition' debate.



The Fraser Institute: Measuring Poverty in Canada

http://oldfraser.lexi.net/publications/critical_issues/2001/poverty/index.html

[The Fraser Institute](#) critiques the standard measurement of poverty in this [report](#). Most agencies use an informal measure called the "Low-Income Cut-Off" to determine the poverty line, but The Fraser Institute says this method exaggerates the number of people living in poverty. If the poverty line were lowered, they say, fewer people would be poor. It's not a position we agree with, but The Fraser Institute has a lot of influence in Canada.

Can Communities Reduce Poverty?

<http://www.op2000.org/Series2.htm>

Yes they can, according to Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. This [framework](#) describes the various areas or issues a community can focus on to ensure residents are not living in poverty. This paper was prepared for the [Opportunities 2000](#) project in Waterloo Region to help guide that multisectoral initiative's efforts to reduce poverty to the lowest level in Canada.

Women and Economic Development Consortium: Women in Transition out of Poverty (Canada)

http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT01/wit_eng.pdf

This [report](#) from the WEDC suggests how women can escape poverty by building a set of "assets," which include financial security, emotional and spiritual support, and employability. An important resource, designed and tailored for women's experience with poverty. It is revolutionary in the sense that it focuses on building a person's various assets for a sustainable livelihood rather than simply just trying to improve their income. This is a must read.

Connections for Poverty Reduction

If you're still looking for information, and we hope you are, these resources will tell you where to find it, or who you can talk to. The things we've tried to draw your attention to are a start—these resources will help you along the way.

Campaign 2000 (Canada)

<http://www.campaign2000.ca/res/links.html>

Campaign 2000's [links](#) page can direct you to almost all of the major policy organizations in Canada.



United Nations Development Program (International)

<http://www.undp.org/dpa/publications/poverty.html>

This directory of UNDP publications on poverty groups its documents by theme and type. Scroll down for Conference Reports, working papers, technical documents, and more.

The Mott Foundation (USA)

<http://www.mott.org/publications/pubs-view.asp>

Just click on the topic you're interested in—the Mott Foundation has most of its publications since the late 1990's available online. Education and Poverty are their specialties. Publications that aren't online can be ordered.

Poverty USA Education Centre

<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/edcenter/index.htm>

Poverty USA contains many useful resources, but their Education Centre has lesson plans, bibliographies, and activity suggestions. Click on "Press Room" to see press releases and articles.



SRDC Publications List (Canada)

<http://www.srdc.org/english/publications/publications.htm>

Here are all of the SRDC's reports in one place. You can download their research documents, newsletters, and working papers by picking and choosing from the boxes.

MDRC Publications Directory (USA)

<http://www.mdrc.org/publications.html>

MDRC's research can all be accessed from this section of their website. Browse by topic, or search by keywords.