



# Winter Emergency Response Final Report 2015-2016

Prepared for the Planning & Research Department at  
Homeward Trust Edmonton

by  
Rumbi Zimyemba and Robin Way

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## 1.1 HIGHLIGHTS

- Total funding allocated for the Winter Emergency Response (WER) Program 2014-15 amounted to \$1,750,000 for four drop-in locations and a winter warming outreach bus service. These projects were funded from November 1, 2015 to April 30, 2016. An additional \$250,000 was originally allocated for WER Contingency Funding to supplement capacity of emergency shelters and other emergent situations on an as needed basis. However as only one downtown Drop-In participated, more funding was directed to shelter overflow and overnight respite space.
- Resources for WER were provided by Homeward Trust through the resources of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Government of Alberta's Outreach Support Services Initiative to implement *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in Ten Years*, and the City of Edmonton's annual donation to Homeward Trust.
- The five main projects that were funded included:
  - Boyle Street Community Services: Drop-In
  - Boyle Street Community Services: Winter Warming Bus
  - Jasper Place Wellness Centre Drop-In
  - Mosaic Centre Drop-In
  - The Neighbour Centre Drop-In
- A total of 88,614 visits were recorded by WER agencies over the 2015-16 season, which is a slight decrease of 4.22% from the previous 2014-15 WER season. However, given that there were fewer WER agencies participating in this season, the visits per agency are significantly higher compared to 2014-15 for most agencies that participated in both seasons.
- 72% of total season visits indicated gender. 75% of these visits were by men, 25% by women, and less than 1% were by transgender individuals. These proportions are consistent with those observed in previous WER seasons.
- Individuals of Aboriginal descent accounted for 58% of all visits for which ethnicity was recorded, whereas 34% of these visits were by Caucasian individuals. Individuals recorded as "other" ethnicities accounted for 8% of visits. This is similar to the 2014-2015 season where individuals of Aboriginal descent accounted for 55% of visits.
- 51% of all visits reported accommodation the previous night at emergency shelter or domestic violence shelter, while 14% reported sleeping rough. "Other" was reported at 35%. Four out of the five agencies reported a combined 29% that indicated staying in "own home", and 16% that were at "someone else's place" or a hotel the previous night.

**Collaborating with Edmonton service providers to prevent harm and address the unique challenges of homelessness during Edmonton’s winter months.**

## **2.1 ABOUT HOMEWARD TRUST**

Homeward Trust is a community-based, comprehensive coordinating organization that provides leadership and resources towards ending homelessness in Edmonton. We lead initiatives and programs, engage community and government, conduct research and share knowledge, create awareness, and fund housing and support projects. The core of our work is helping people secure housing and supporting them to keep it. We fund, coordinate and deliver a range of housing and support programs that achieve this.

Homeward Trust manages implementation of the 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness. Since 2009, Homeward Trust and our funded agencies have housed over 5000 homeless adults and children through the Housing First program.

## **2.2 WINTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Homeward Trust has implemented the Winter Emergency Response (WER) Program since 2008 in order to address the added challenges and safety issues inherent to homeless individuals due to Edmonton’s harsh winter weather. As the eighth WER season, the 2015-2016 WER Program mobilized community partners to help alleviate these challenges and to prevent harm from coming to Edmonton’s homeless population during the cold winter months from November 2015 to April 2016.

Key components of the WER program include the provision of additional funding to several of the city’s drop-in centres, thereby allowing them to extend their hours of service to bridge periods of the day when emergency shelters are closed. Additionally, transportation is provided via the Winter Warming Bus to assist homeless people “sleeping rough” to access drop-in centres or shelters and to have their basic needs met. The WER program acts as an access point for people at risk of harm due to the harsh winter weather and facilitates linkages to housing and support services.

Homeward Trust provides funding for the WER program through the resources of the Government of Canada’s Homeless Partnering Strategy, the Government of Alberta’s Outreach Support Services Initiative to implement A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in Ten Years, and the City of Edmonton’s annual donation to Homeward Trust. The 2015-2016 WER program received a total budget of \$1,750,000 in funding, including \$1,049,000 for the following four drop-in programs: Boyle Street Community Services, Jasper Place Wellness Centre, Mosaic Centre, and The Neighbour Centre. Additionally, funding was also provided for the Boyle Street Community Services Winter Warming Bus.

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

In addition to the four WER drop-in projects and the Winter Warming Bus, Contingency Funding was allocated in order to be prepared to provide supplemental shelter overflow on nights of extreme cold or when emergency shelters were operating at or near capacity. As a result of high shelter usage, Hope Mission collaborated to provide additional Shelter Overflow space out of the former Remand Centre building, and on an as needed basis the Women’s Emergency Accommodation Centre and the George Spady Shelter added additional cots/mats. A total of \$580,250 in WER Contingency Funding was made available.

Finally, for the 2015-2016 WER Program, Homeward Trust allocated a small amount (\$70,000) within the WER Transportation and Mobile Outreach funding basket to enable an exploration of additional transportation options. In collaboration with the Edmonton Transit System (ETS), key stakeholders and service providers, the WER-ETS Bus Pilot made a trial run on the evening of Saturday, January 16, 2016. Lessons drawn from this pilot will inform the 2016-17 WER season, with the aim of providing regularly scheduled season-long WER bus routes to assist in transportation between drop-in centre providers and emergency shelters.

Homeward Trust assumed responsibility for coordinating data collection, analysis, and reporting of the WER program, as well as organizing meetings of the WER Committee.

## 2.3 FUNDED PROJECTS: 2015-2016

<b>Drop-In Centres</b>	<b>Location</b>
Boyle Street Community Services	Inner City
Jasper Place Wellness Centre	West Central
Mosaic Centre	North East
The Neighbour Centre	South Central
<b>Shelter Overflow</b>	<b>Location</b>
George Spady Shelter Overflow	Inner City
Hope Mission Shelter Overflow	Inner City
WEAC Gibson Block (E4C)	Inner City
<b>Mobile Outreach/Transportation</b>	<b>Location</b>
Winter Warming Bus	City-wide
WER-ETS Bus Pilot	City-wide

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## **Drop-In Centres**

The WER Program enables community agencies operating drop-in centres to extend their hours of service in order to provide Edmonton's homeless community a safe, warm place to stay during the critical hours when emergency shelters and other agencies in the city are not open. The 2015-2016 WER Program administered \$520,000 funding to one drop-in centre in the inner city, Boyle Street Community Services (BSCS). BSCS reported an average daily total of 316 visits, which represents an 86% increase from its 2014-15 daily average of 170 visits.

In addition to the inner-city drop-in, Homeward Trust also provided funding to drop-in programs located throughout the city, including Jasper Place Wellness Centre, Mosaic Centre, and The Neighbour Centre. A total of \$300,000 was provided for the operation of these three drop-in centres.

## **Shelter Overflow**

Leading up to the 2015-2016 season, Homeward Trust recognized the need to be prepared for additional emergency shelter space when needed, in order to mitigate the risk of having to turn away people from shelters on the coldest nights. As such, contingency funding was allocated for the addition of emergency Shelter Overflow space for vulnerable individuals, particularly those who have active bans or bars from inner city agencies or those who may be intoxicated.

Through coordination with emergency shelters, WER contingency funding enabled shelters to operate additional Shelter Overflow space when they were operating at or near capacity or on nights where the temperature dropped to -20 degrees Celsius.

Homeward Trust allocated a total of \$580,250 for the respite and overflow shelter spaces in the 2015-2016 WER season.

## **Mobile Outreach and Transportation Services**

### **Winter Warming Bus**

The Winter Warming Bus fills a unique role in ensuring the safety of homeless individuals in Edmonton. At its core, the main function of the Winter Warming Bus is to ensure the safety of homeless individuals, particularly those who "sleep rough" in the city's river valley and parkland areas, and to provide them with transportation to drop-in centres, shelters and other service providers. The Bus is a strategic service that provides information and referrals to resources, in addition to providing basic needs items such as food, clothing, blankets, winter gear, first aid, and hygiene items.

The Winter Warming Bus circulated on a regular route of stops; however, it maintained flexibility in its schedule to respond to calls from individuals not along the route who required the Bus's

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

services. Homeward Trust provided \$220,000 in funding for operation of the Winter Warming Bus by Boyle Street Community Services.

## WER-ETS Bus Pilot

This season Homeward Trust provided \$70,000 for an extreme weather transportation contingency fund. Although still in its pilot phase, the main function of the WER-ETS Bus will be to provide much needed evening transportation between drop-ins and shelters during the WER season. Planning for the 2016-17 WER-ETS Bus routes and regular scheduling is already underway with key stakeholders such as service providers, ETS and the City of Edmonton.

## 2.4 Financial Summary 2015-16

Program	Budget Amount	Claimed Amount
Boyle Street Community Services Drop-in	\$520,000 <sup>1</sup>	\$519,000
Jasper Place Wellness Centre Drop-in	\$83,000	\$83,000
Mosaic Centre Drop-in	\$103,000	\$100,054
The Neighbour Centre Drop-in	\$113,000	\$113,155
<b>Contingency Funding</b>		
George Spady Community Centre	\$57,089	\$27,595
E4C WEAC	\$61,408	\$32,553
Hope Mission	\$406,429	\$331,935
<b>Transportation</b>		
Winter Warming Bus	\$220,000	\$217,656
WER-ETS	\$70,000	\$434
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,633,926</b>	<b>\$1,425,382</b>

<sup>1</sup> Additional funding for Boyle Street Community Services was proposed due to high demand for January – April, including additional staff and extra administration/maintenance (\$60,750)



# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## 3.1 DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS PROCESS

The provincial 10-year Plan to End Homelessness identifies the need for obtaining better information as a priority area in efforts to end homelessness. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is an electronic, community-wide system used for the collection of client-level information on individuals and families experiencing homelessness. It collects data on what services and housing have been accessed by individuals who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness. Homeward Trust uses the Efforts to Outcomes™ (ETO) case management software for the Housing First teams, and as the platform for Edmonton's HMIS. The collection of information on how and where an individual enters the homeless system, and the services and agencies accessed by that individual, is an essential element to effective case management.

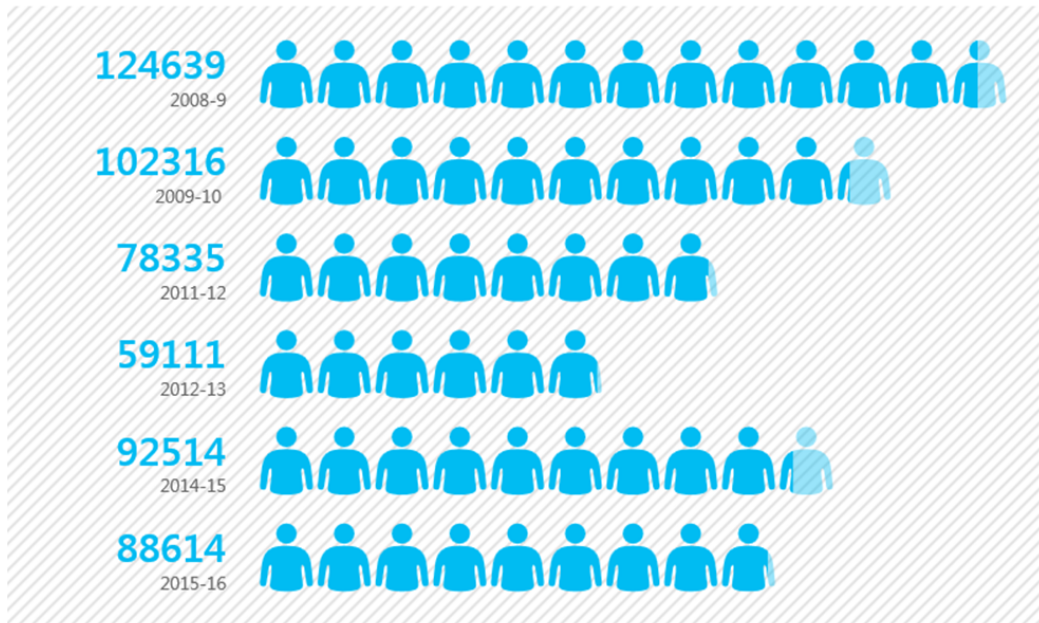
During the 2015-2016 WER season, all drop-in centres and the Winter Warming Bus were able to collect WER program data in ETO. Use of ETO to capture WER program data enabled the drop-in centres and the Winter Warming Bus to provide data on winter warming visits, demographics, and emergency needs provision for individuals accessing services, as well as a tally of total daily visits. This information will provide critical insight into the design, implementation, and coordination of rehousing and prevention interventions.

Despite the benefits of ETO and the strides made to ensure accurate and consistent information collection, there are real challenges to completing comprehensive data collection during the WER season. The busy downtown drop-in centres noted that program participants were sometimes reluctant to provide personal information each time they entered the building, especially when they entered more than once per day. Additionally, the manual entry of data can pose an additional challenge to agency staff members already balancing a full workload, particularly in the Downtown Core drop-ins that serve a high volume of clients each day.

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## 3.2 TOTAL VISITS

### Total WER Visits 2011-2016



The total number of recorded visits during the 2015-16 season across all the WER agencies was 88,614, with a total daily average of 486 visits. This represented a 4.22% decrease from the 2014-15 season where 92,514 WER visits were recorded. This number sits very close to the yearly average of 89,707 WER visits for the 7 years of recorded data. It however remains below the 2008-2009 baseline by 29%. The table below presents the change in the total recorded WER visits by season.

SEASON	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2014-15	2015-16
<b>Total WER Visits by Season</b>	124,639	102,316	81,421	79,335	59,111	92,514	88,614
<b>Number of funded WER projects</b>	7	5	5	5	6	7	5
<b>% Change from previous season</b>	N/A	-18%	-20%	-3%	-25%	+57%	-4.22%
<b>% change from 2008-09 baseline</b>	N/A	-18%	-35%	-36%	-53%	-26%	-29%
<b>Yearly Average:</b> 89,707 (data is missing for 2013-14 season)							

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

There were fewer agencies participating in the 2015-16 WER season as compared to the 2014-2015 season, with only one downtown and three satellite drop-ins as well as the Winter Warming Bus. This decrease in capacity may account for the decrease in across-agency total visits from last season. However, when looking at within-agency numbers as shown in the following section, the data shows increases in number of visits by most agencies that operated in both 2014-15 and 2015-16 WER seasons.

### 3.3 VISITS BY AGENCY

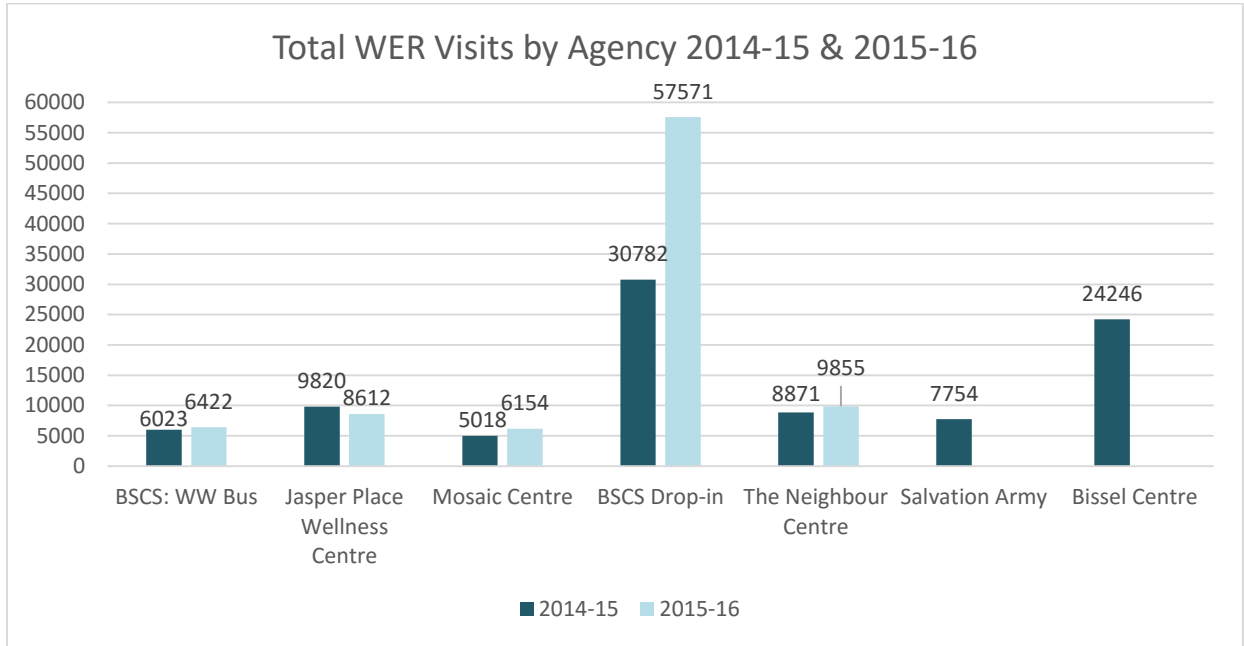
In comparison to the 2014-15 season, the 2015-16 season recorded increases in visits in each agency save Jasper Place Wellness Centre Drop-in, which experienced an overall decrease of approximately 12.3%. All agencies that participated this season also participated in the previous season, and together they had a combined 28,100 increase in total visits this season which represents a 46% increase from their combined total in 2014-15.

Agency	2014-15 Season Total WER visits	2015-16 Season Total WER Visits	% Change from 2014-15 to 2015-16 Season
BSCS WW BUS	6,023	6,422	6.63% increase
Jasper Place Wellness Centre	9,820	8,612	12.3% decrease
Mosaic Centre	5,018	6,154	22.64% increase
BSCS Drop-In	30,782	57,571	87.03% increase
The Neighbour Centre	8,871	9,855	11.09% increase
Salvation Army	7,754	not participating 2015-16	not participating 2015-16
Bissel Centre	24,246	not participating 2015-16	not participating 2015-16
<b>Total Number of WER visits</b>	<b>92,514</b>	<b>88,614</b>	<b>Overall 4.22% decrease</b>

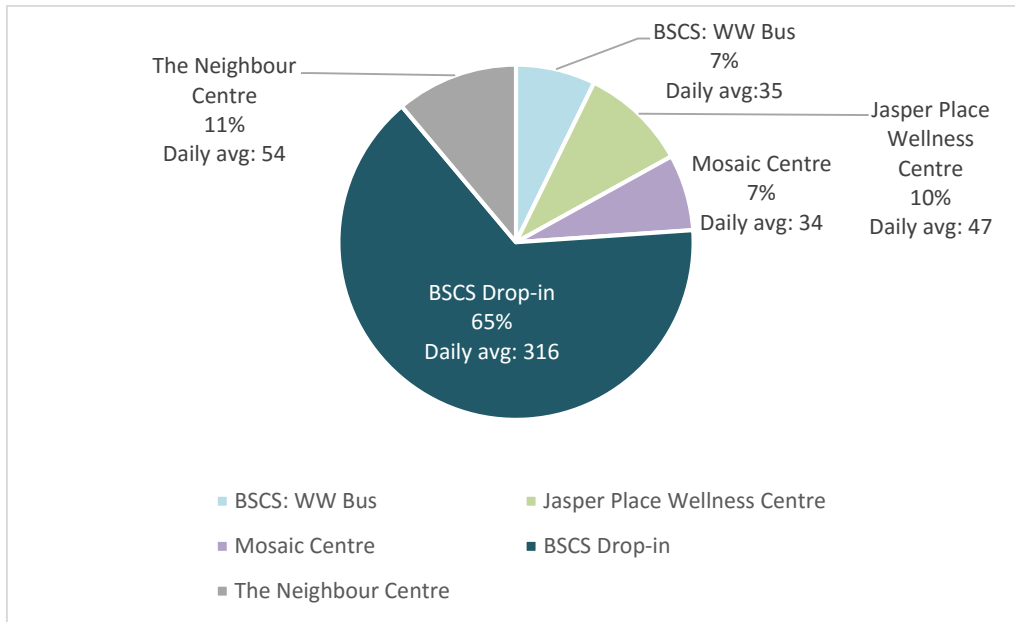
65% of all recorded visits were to the BSCS Drop-in, which reported an average of 316 visits per day. That BSCS received the highest proportion of visits is not surprising, given that there were no other downtown drop in locations participating this season. As such in 2015-16, BSCS WER visits increased by 87% from the 2014-15 season when a second downtown drop in, the Bissel Centre, also participated. Looking at it by location, there was, in fact, a 4% increase in total number of downtown WER visits in 2015-16 compared to 2014-5.

The Neighbour Centre received 11% of total WER visits, Jasper Place Wellness Centre recorded 10% and both the Mosaic Centre and the Winter Warming Bus received 7% of all WER visits. The Mosaic Centre recorded the lowest daily average of visits at 34 a day.

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA



### Proportion of Total Visits by Agency



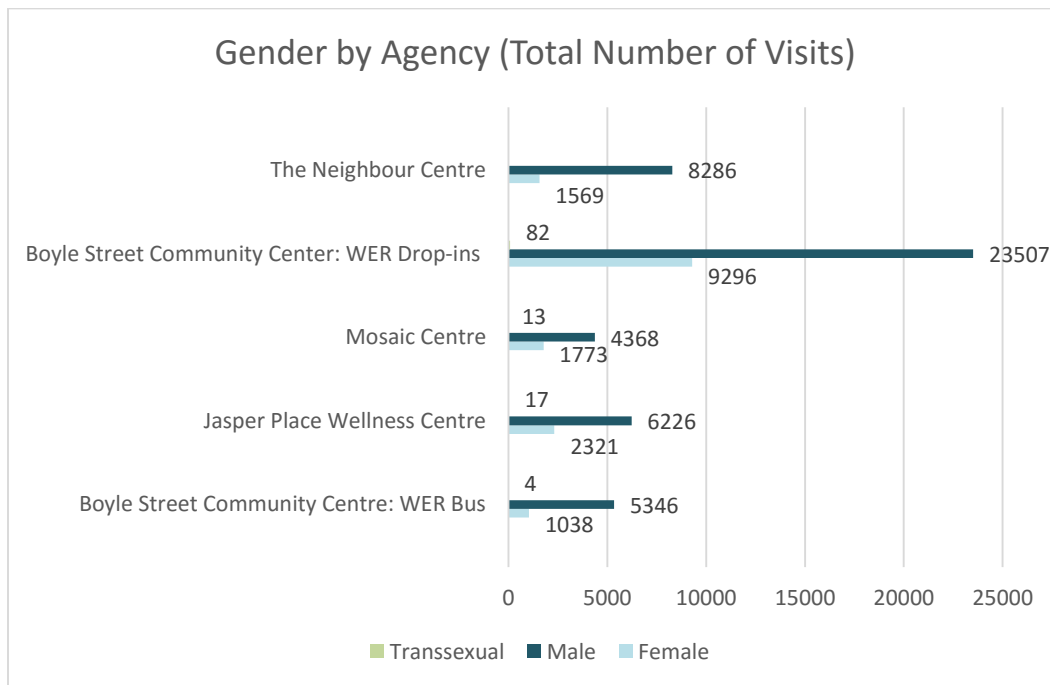
# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## 3.4 DEMOGRAPHICS OF VISITORS

The WER projects served some of the most vulnerable populations within Edmonton during the harsh winter months. This included not just individuals currently experiencing homelessness, but also those who are at risk of, or have previously experienced, homelessness.

### 3.4.1 Gender

Of the 72% of visits for which gender was recorded, 75% were made by males and 25% were made by females. 116 visits were made by individuals who identified as transgender, accounting for less than 1% of all visits. The Mosaic Centre and Jasper Place Wellness Centre experienced the highest proportions of visits by women at 29% and 27% respectively. The Neighbour Centre, and Winter Warming Bus each recorded approximately 16% visits by women. BSCS Drop-in had gender data for only 57% of its visits, and of these 28% were visits from women.



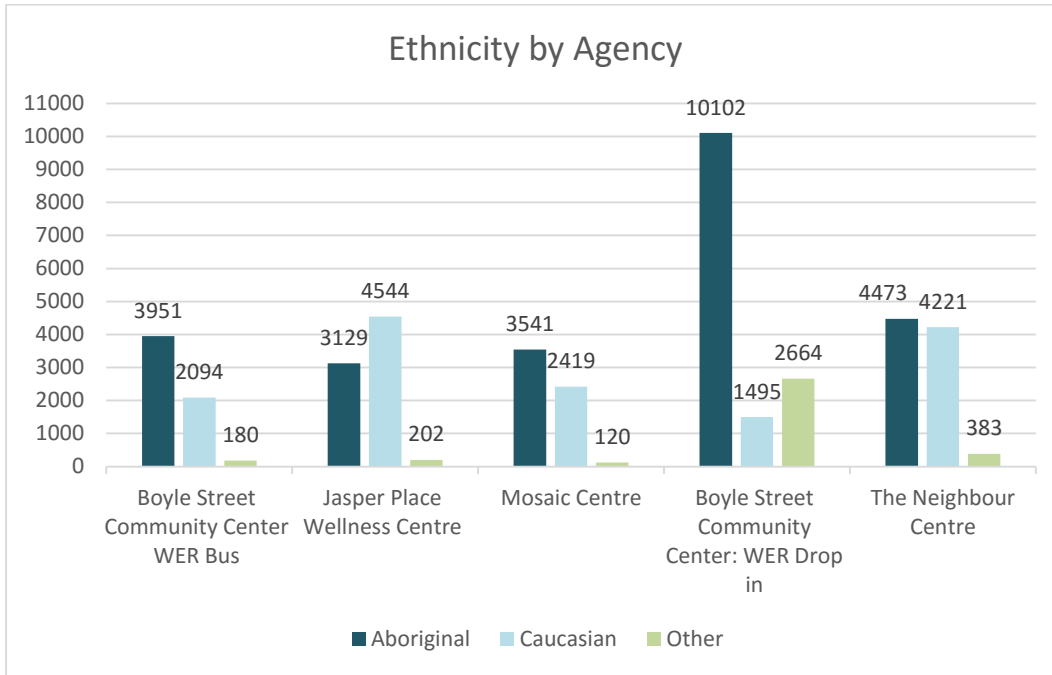
### 3.4.2 Ethnicity

For the 2015-16 season, 51% of all visits had no data reported for ethnicity, and almost all of these, 96%, were from Boyle Street Community Drop-in.

Of the reported 43,518 visits with ethnicity data, 58% of visits were from people of Aboriginal

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

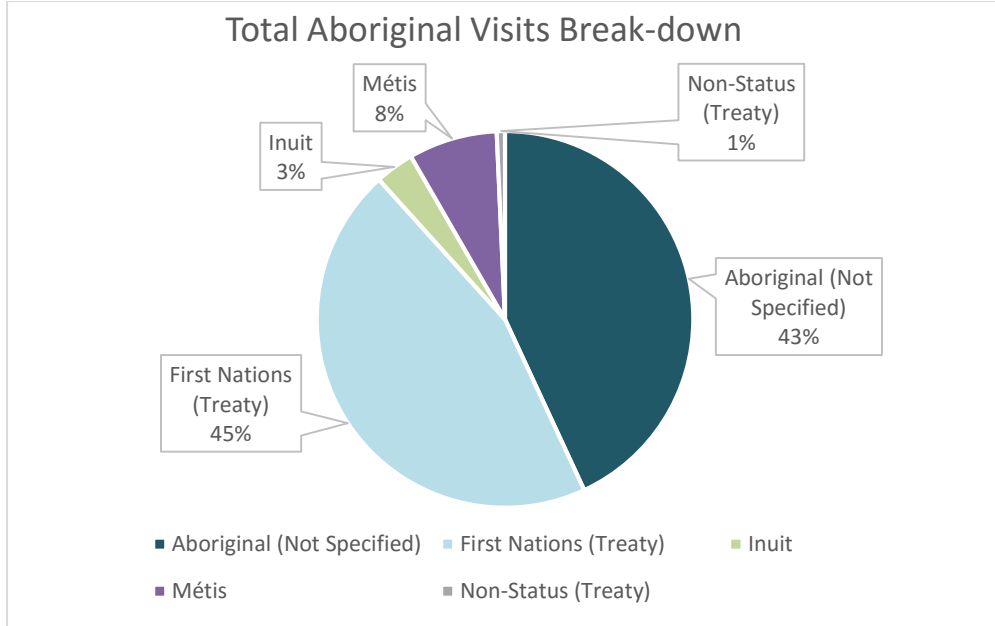
descent, 34% were of Caucasian descent, and 8% of visits recorded 'other' which included African, Caribbean, Chinese, East Indian, European and Filipino categories.



An overall total of 25,196 visits out of the 43,518 for which ethnicity information was recorded were of Aboriginal descent. Evidently, Aboriginal individuals were using WER services more frequently than people of other ethnicities, with the exception of Jasper Place Wellness Centre where people of Caucasian descent accounted for 58% of recorded visits and people of Aboriginal descent accounted for 40%.

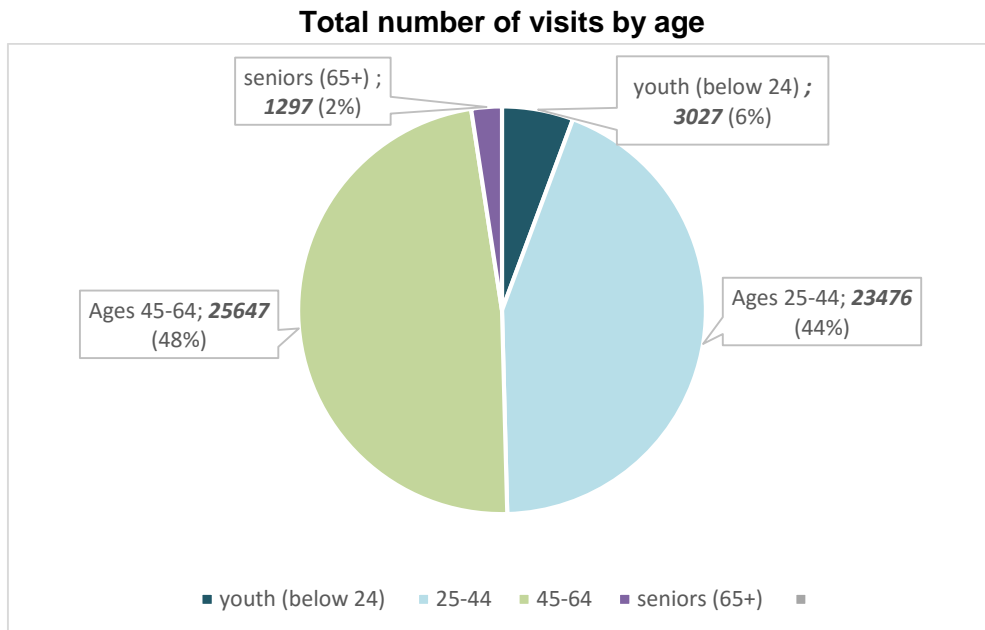
To gain better understanding of who is most frequently accessing WER services, all the agencies further broke down Aboriginal ethnicity data into visits by individuals who identified as Metis, Inuit, First Nations and "other Aboriginal". The following chart illustrates this. 45% percent of reported Aboriginal visits were by people who identified as First Nations (Treaty), and 8% of visitors identified as Metis.

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA



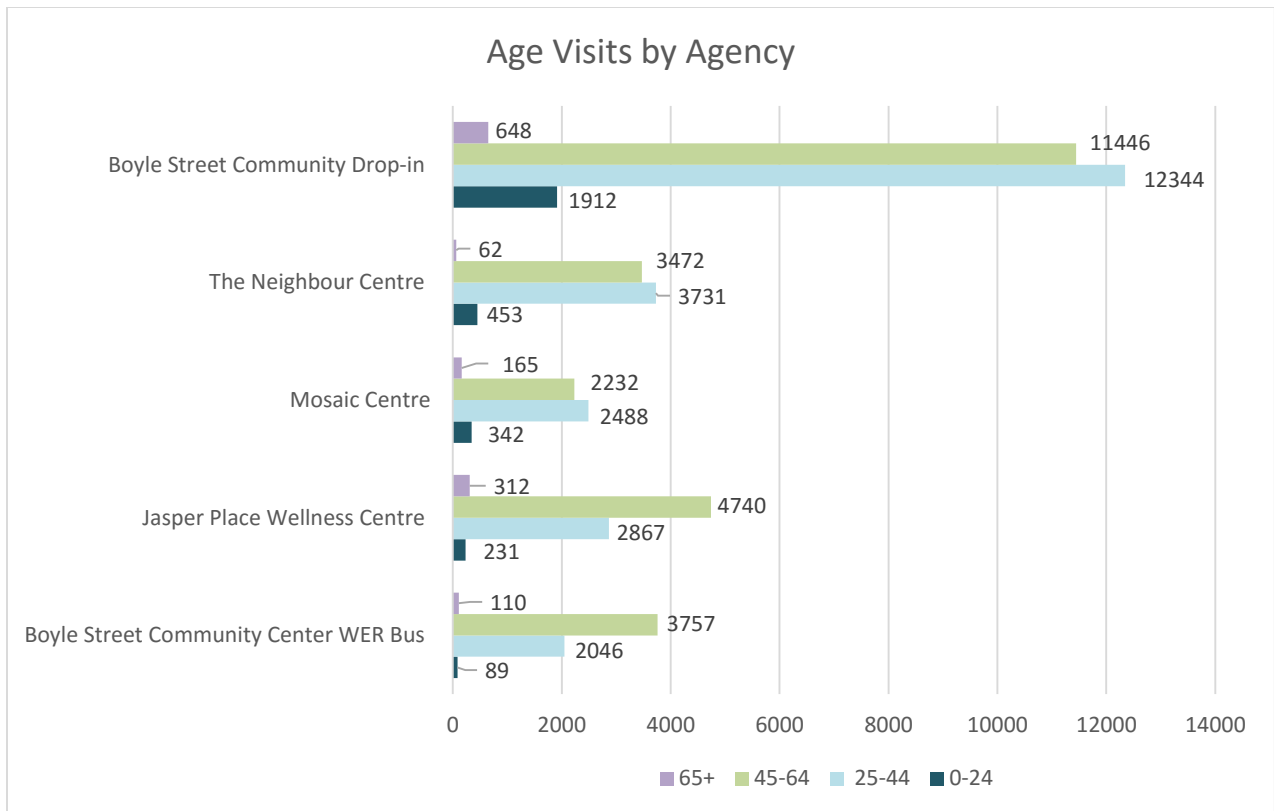
### 3.4.3 Age

Of the 60% visits that reported age, the majority were “middle aged”, between 45 and 64 years old. A total of 1297 reported visits this season were from seniors over 65, accounting for 2% of total reported WER visits. Youth under 24 accounted for 6% of reported WER visits, with a total of 3027 visits to all agencies.



# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

Overall, the Boyle Street Community Drop-In recorded the largest proportion of youth under 24 visits in the season at 7%, and 63% of all reported youth visits were at BSCS Drop-in. Jasper Place Wellness Centre recorded the largest proportion of seniors at 3.8%.



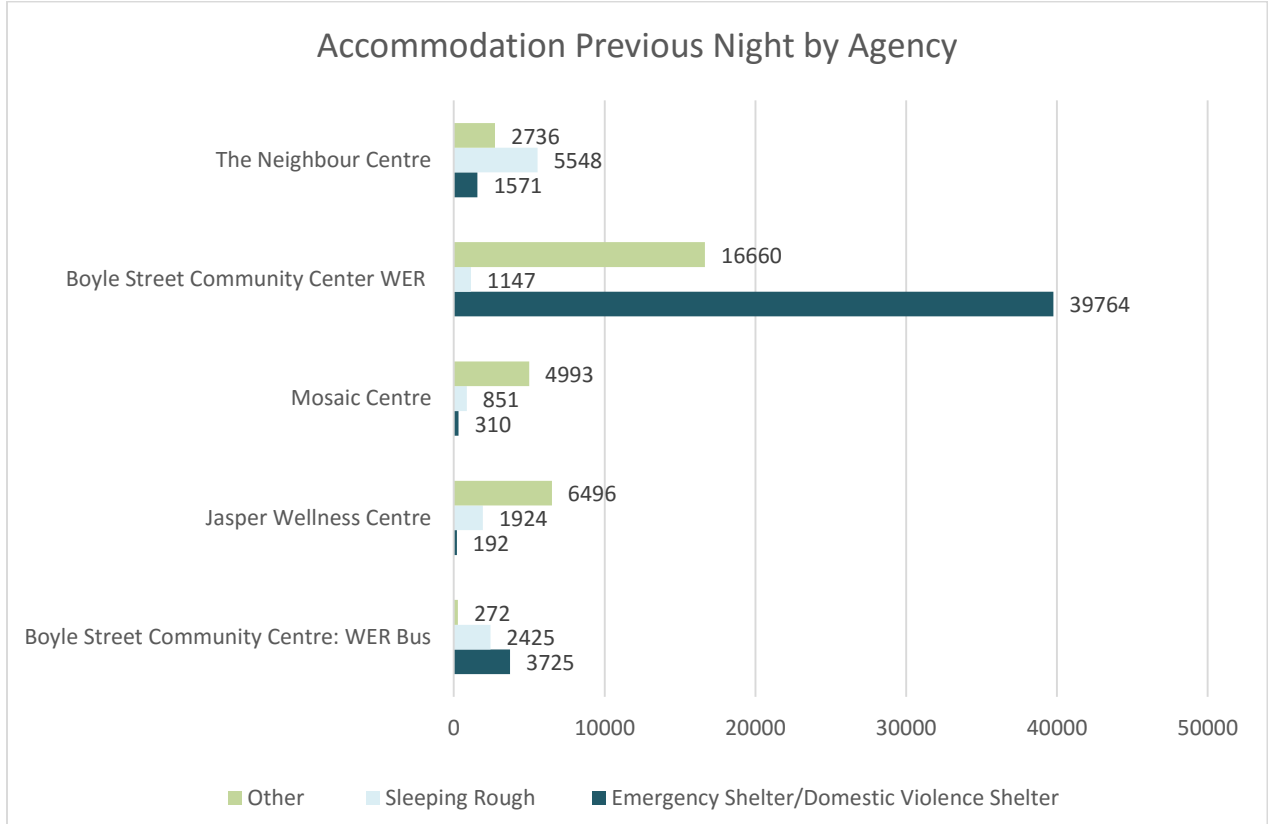
### 3.4.4 Accommodation the Previous Night

For the 2015-16 season, 51% of total visits reported spending the previous night at an emergency or domestic violence shelter and 13% reported “sleeping rough” the night before.

Across agencies, the pattern of accommodation the previous night is variable, highlighting the differences in the populations served. Boyle Street Community Services Drop-in and the Winter Warming Bus reported the highest percentage of accommodation the previous night at “emergency shelters,” at 69% and 58% respectively. Conversely, The Neighbour Centre reported the highest percentage of individuals “sleeping rough” at 56%. Jasper Place Wellness Centre reported 22% “sleeping rough”, and the Mosaic Centre reported 13% rough sleepers. .



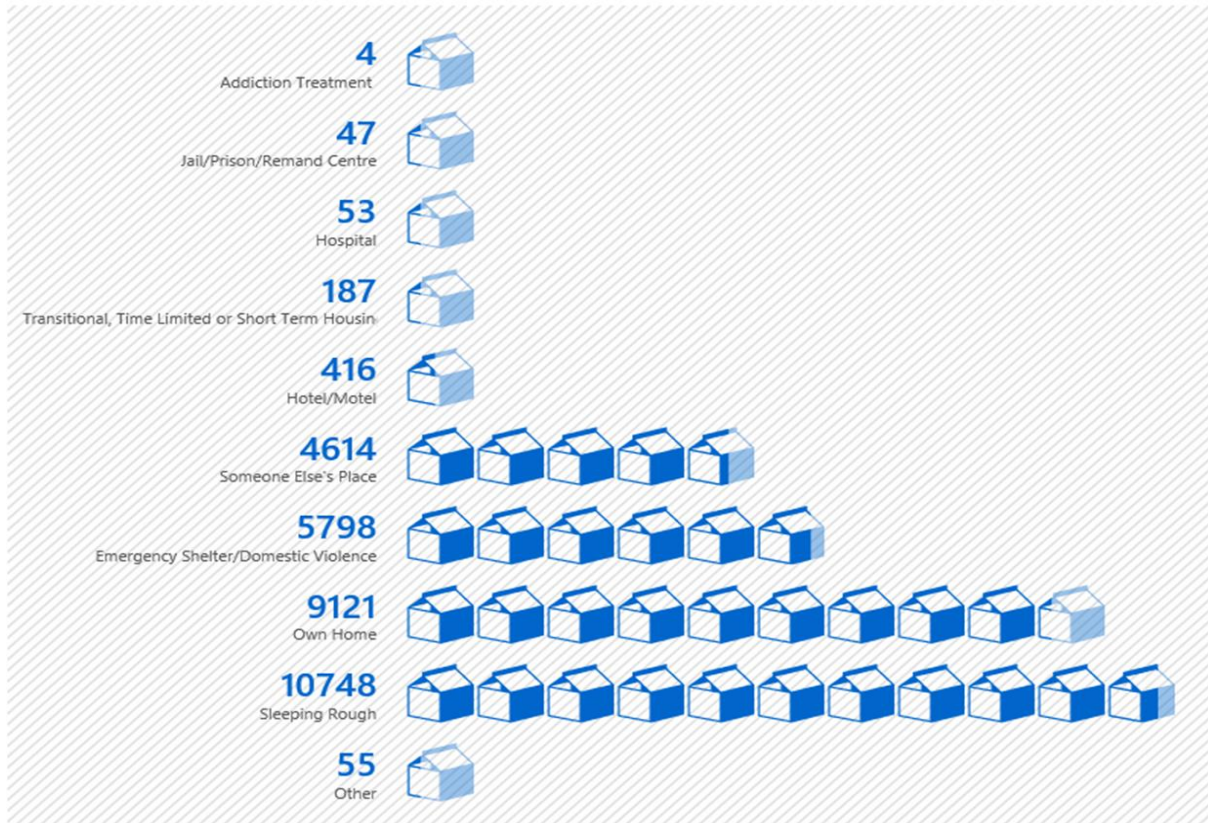
# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA



Due to the high volume of visitors at the BSCS drop in, only three options for accommodation the previous night were recorded: emergency shelter/domestic violence shelter, sleeping rough, and other. Jasper Place Wellness Centre, Mosaic Centre, The Neighbour Centre, and the Winter Warming Bus were able to collect a wider variety of responses further broken down into Emergency/ Domestic Violence Shelter, Own Home, Someone Else’s Place, Jail, Sleeping Rough and Other, allowing for a closer look at where visitors to drop-ins are coming from. Below are the totals (BSCS data not included).

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## Accommodation Previous Night Totals



### 3.5 WER CONTINGENCY FUNDING USAGE

#### 3.5.1 Shelter Overflow: Total Number of Unique Clients

In all, a total of 136 additional mat spaces were provided by WER contingency funding. The three agencies that utilized them, George Spady Society, Hope Mission and E4C Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC), together reported a season total of 9,666 unique visitors who used the additional mat space.

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## SHELTER OVERFLOW: BED MAT USAGE

1,525 

*George Spady Shelter Overflow (Additional 10 Mat capacity Nov-April)*

7,752 

*Hope Mission Overflow (Additional 120 mat capacity Nov to April)*

389 

*WEAC Gibson Block (additional 6 mat capacity Jan-March)*

### 3.5.2 Shelter Overflow: Usage by Agency

#### George Spady Shelter Overflow:

Thanks to WER Contingency Funding, 10 additional mat spaces were available at George Spady for shelter overflow. From November to April a total of 1,525 used the additional space. December was by far the busiest month, with an average of 20 visitors using the additional space each day.

#### E4C: Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC):

E4C strategized a three tier plan for the 2015-16 season. This included space for additional cots at the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre, the potential for additional cot space at Elizabeth House if needed, and further possible shelter space in the gymnasium at Alex Taylor School. In the end, only the WEAC building was necessary, and an additional 6 cot spaces were available from January to March. A daily average of 5 unique visitors used the additional 6 mat capacity for the short time that additional space was available at WEAC.

#### Hope Mission:

The former Remand Centre building was used for shelter overflow for the 2015-16 season with Infrastructure Alberta taking on the facility operating costs and HTE Contingency Funds covering staffing, client and security costs. 120 additional mat spaces were available from November to April, and a total of 7,752 unique visitors utilized the space.

# WER PROGRAM USAGE AND DATA

## 3.6 SHELTER USAGE DURING WER SEASON

The following was taken from Alberta Adult Shelters Occupancy Reports Nov 2015- April 2016. The tables reflect average monthly shelter capacity and usage and then percentage difference between average capacity and average usage.

### 2015/16

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
Average Shelter Capacity	716.00	716.00	716.00	716.00	716.00	716.00
Average Usage	605.63	538.26	566.48	548.59	514.87	495.17
Average Difference	110.4	177.7	149.5	167.4	201.1	220.8
Percentage Difference	15.41	24.82	20.88	23.38	28.09	30.84

### 2014/15

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
Average Shelter Capacity	722.67	716.00	716.00	729.50	716.00	718.20
Average Usage	663.60	619.84	639.06	608.07	592.42	571.83
Difference	59.1	96.2	76.9	121.4	123.6	146.4
Percentage Difference	8.17	13.4	10.75	16.65	17.26	20.38

# SERVICE DELIVERY & AGENCY REPORTS

## 4.1 OVERVIEW

This section provides summaries of the Winter Emergency Response program reports provided by the participating agencies to Homeward Trust, including the agencies that received contingency funding and the mobile outreach.

Program	Drop-in Capacity	WER-Funded Hours of Operation	Total Recorded Visits
Boyle Street Community Services Drop-in	200	Monday-Friday 6:00-9:00am, and 5:30pm-9:00pm. Weekends and statutory holidays 6:00am-9:00pm; total of 62.5 hours per week	57,571
Jasper Place Wellness Centre Drop-in	120	7:00-10:00pm Monday-Friday and 5:00-10:00pm weekends and holidays; total of 25 hours per week	8,612
Mosaic Centre Drop-in	55	Monday-Friday 5:00-9:00pm; and 4:00-9:00pm on weekends and holidays; total of 30 hours per week	6,154
The Neighbour Centre Drop-in	60	Monday 2:00pm-8:00pm; Tuesday and Thursday 2:00pm-5:00pm; Wednesday and Friday 5:00pm-8:00pm; 5:00pm-8:00pm Sunday; total of 21 hours per week	9,855
<b>Total</b>	<b>435</b>		<b>82,192</b>

## 4.2 DOWNTOWN CORE DROP-INS

### 4.2.1 Boyle Street Community Services

The Boyle Street Community Services (BSCS) WER drop-in program aims to help people to use personal and community resources to meet their daily needs, to promote opportunities for individuals to realize their potential, to strive for policies and programs that support dignity and well-being, and to foster the development of healthy inner city communities. Using a health promotion and harm reduction framework, the BSCS WER program provided a lifeline for people living on the streets. Regularly scheduled BSCS programming and activities were offered throughout the day and evenings, including assistance with basic needs through the provision of basic survival items, first aid supplies, personal hygiene items, light meals, and winter gear, as well as referrals to other BSCS services and external support services.

# SERVICE DELIVERY & AGENCY REPORTS

## Successes:

The BSCS drop-in ensured the provision of basic needs, as BSCS staff regularly referred clients to other Boyle Street Community Services programs, as well as to external support services, such as George Spady and other detox services, Hope Mission's intoxic services, mental health supports and housing

The WER drop-in program serves people living on the streets who face physical limitations, legal constraints, addictions and mental health challenges that may prevent them from accessing services at other social services agencies. The extended winter hours from 6am to 9pm were beneficial as shelters were not accessible to community members after 6am and before 8pm. WER extended hours provided better opportunities to connect with community members, maintain relationships and check in on them during the harsh winter months.

## Challenges

BSCS gave important insight into some challenges associated with hiring staff for the WER season. Hiring often takes place mid-season which means there is not enough time to do full orientation and training. Secondly, over the years BSCS has developed a client base that is seemingly the same but the staff change every WER season. This means that relationships and rapport have to be re-established each season with community members that are often distrustful of seasonal new staff.

## Partnerships:

Partner	Partner Contribution
George Luck School	Backpacks of Luck
Donated by White ridge clothing	30 boxes of Winter coats
Thrive church	Thanksgiving dinner/ basic needs donation
St. Ambrose	Meal prep/donates 4-5 times per year
IFSSA	Roast Beef Dinner (every two months)

## 4.3 CITY-WIDE DROP-INS

### 4.3.1 Jasper Place Health & Wellness Centre

From November through April the JPWC extended the drop-in centre hours to include evenings and weekends. The scope of services included shelter, nutrition, personal care, social interaction

# SERVICE DELIVERY & AGENCY REPORTS

and transportation to overnight shelter via the BSCS Winter Warming Bus. In addition to providing the services noted above, the primary goals of the Jasper Place Health & Wellness Centre’s WER program are: to engage clients on the west end of the city through relationship building, to provide a safe place for those in the community to come in out of the cold, to provide information on housing options and the housing first program, and to provide information and referrals to other sources of assistance.

### Successes:

The WER program provides necessary funding for the JPWC to extend our hours of operation to assist those in need and address the increased need for support during the winter months when the community is most vulnerable. Many participants were “rough sleepers” who were sleeping in public spaces or parks in the cold. In addition, this year several of the staff were able to participate in the 20,000 Homes Campaign, completing interviews with visitors who were in need of housing support.

### Challenges:

Occasionally staff experienced some challenging clients and were able to successfully handle situations thanks to collaboration with EPS and EMS.

### Partnerships:

The JPWC has a variety of successful collaborations and partnerships used to achieve program goals, including several neighbourhood churches and schools who collected donations on an ongoing basis. Other partnerships included:

Partner	Partner Contribution
United Way Coats for Kids & Families	Ongoing donations of winter gear including coats, hat and gloves
Bubble up Marketing	Organization of Christmas “Bag of Hope” backpack distribution and holiday meal
4 Churches Group (Trinity United, Spirit West United, Hosanna Lutheran & Good Shepherd Churches)	Provided weekly Saturday night meal and volunteers to serve
Groups from various neighborhood churches (West Meadows, West Edmonton Christian Assembly, Beulah Alliance)	Provided occasional meals, activities, donations and volunteers
University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing and Grant MacEwan Social Work program	Practicum students volunteered

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## 4.3.2 Mosaic Centre

Mosaic Centre opens doors to the most vulnerable people in northeast Edmonton who are challenged by poverty, hunger, and homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Healthy activities, aimed at building strong, cohesive community relations were offered to adult men and women, youth, children, and seniors clients, including those who are homeless, couch surfing and those at risk of losing their housing. Many of those served suffer from mental illness, physical disabilities and addictions. Staff intentionally engaged clients in conversations centered on individual housing status, needs and desires, and offered supports and referrals towards positive change. Clients were also often provided with physical assistance such as clothing, blankets, personal care items, food or transportation.

### Successes:

During the WER season, the Mosaic Centre was able to open 7 nights a week providing a safe, warm community for people to come in from the street and access basic needs. Staff offered; cup a soup or food prepared by a group, a hot coffee/tea, change of clothing, a place to do laundry, foot care, access to telephones and computers, people to talk with and think about moving forward into housing and their healthy goals. The Centre was a refuge from the cold, physically and emotionally, connecting visitors to daytime services and access to a healthy community.

### Challenges:

Mosaic Centre staff noticed some duplication of services with other service providers, and suggest that it would be beneficial if WER sites could have access to each other's information so as to avoid this.

### Partnerships:

Partner	Partner Contribution
Mustard Seed	Personal Assistance Centre - clothing
Edmonton City Police	Assisting in community relations
EMS	Response to emergent needs
Starbucks/Cobbs/Salvation Army	Food supplies for community members

## 4.3.3 The Neighbour Centre

The Neighbour Centre exists to respond to the increasing needs of homeless and marginalized people in south Edmonton. The Centre offers showers, laundry, snacks, coffee, clothing, computers, phones, washrooms, foot care, first aid, and social support with everyday issues; such as help regaining ID, connecting with housing workers or support workers, faxing resume's and more.



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## Successes:

Thanks to WER support, the agency was able to extend hours and resources to better serve the south side homeless community this winter. Through the WER program, the Neighbour Centre provided drop-in services 7-nights a week over the winter months, which enabled staff to build better relationships with the clients and provide services to meet the various needs of each individual in a positive environment.

## Challenges:

Staff at The Neighbour Centre experienced some challenges linked to being located outside the downtown area. This means that they experience difficulties accessing services downtown and services such as the 24/7 crisis team which is often busy working in the downtown core.

## Partnerships:

Partner	Partner Contribution
Edmonton Food Bank	Food
Bissell Centre	Housing worker 1 day/week, Mental health worker 1 day/week Conflict to calm training for all staff
Boyle Street	1 ID worker 2 days/week 1 MOAT team member 1 day/month
Salvation Army	Food and donations 1 day/week

## 4.4 CONTNGENCY FUND OVERVIEW

Project	Additional Capacity	Total Unique Clients Recorded
George Spady Society	10 mats	1,525
E4C WEAC	Up to 6 cots	389
Hope Mission	120 mats	7,752
<b>Total</b>		<b>9,666</b>

In order to be prepared for emergency situations and to ensure flexible and quick responses to meet emergency needs, Homeward Trust engaged in early Contingency Fund planning to locate

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additional shelter overflow space for the 2015-16 season. In the previous two WER seasons, contingency funding had been used to ensure additional overflow shelter space was made available when nighttime temperatures dropped below -20 degrees Celsius (including windchill), or when shelters were operating at or near capacity. WER Contingency Funding allows HTE administration to act quickly when shelters, WER providers, or other stakeholders require new or additional funding to address high demand or exceptional circumstances.

This season, \$250,000 was approved by the Board for Contingency Funding. However, as there was no second Downtown Drop-in this winter, there was an additional \$380,000 approved for WER but which was not attached to a specific project. The committee agreement was that if additional Contingency Funding was needed, there was the option to include an upward amendment to roll the \$380,000 into the Contingency Fund.

## **4.4.1 Shelter Overflow Space: Agency Insights**

Funding for shelter overflow went to George Spady, WEAC and Hope Mission. Staff at all three agencies had positive feedback about the added capacity provided for by WER Contingency funding.

George Spady reported that it was a relief to have the capacity to take in clients they would have previously had to turn away at the door. There the staff successfully experimented with opening the shelter during the day from April 2015 to March 2016, and found that the numbers they were able to accommodate during the day rose exponentially when the WER additional mats were funded.

WEAC staff started the overflow program in January and found the additional space useful for the busy days. They thought the winter warming overflow program could have assisted more women were it not for their late start in the season.

Staff at Hope Mission reported that the first two months were slow, but after people seemed to have heard of the winter warming service, usage rocketed to a daily average of 62 unique visitors from January to April.

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## 4.5 TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILE OUTREACH

Program	Budget Amount	Claimed Amount	Total Visits Recorded
Winter Warming Bus	\$220,000	\$217,656	6,422
WER-ETS	\$70,000	\$434	21 (1 pilot run)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$290,000</b>	<b>\$218,090</b>	<b>6,443</b>

### 4.5.1 Winter Warming Bus

Operated by the Boyle Street Community Services outreach team, the Winter Warming Bus acts as a critical access point for people outside of the inner city who may not be comfortable coming downtown for shelter or support services. It provided basic needs items, such as warm food, beverages, clothing, blankets, socks, winter gear, first aid, and hygiene items. Additionally, the Bus provided information and referrals to individuals on the outskirts of the city who do not come downtown for services. Importantly, the Warming Bus staff provided a constant, friendly face and connection for people who may otherwise feel disconnected.

The Winter Warming Bus follows a regular route, but allows enough flexibility in the schedule to respond to calls from individuals not along the route who require the Bus's services. With only a few small changes to the route from the previous winter, the Bus operated on the following schedule:

- Centennial Bottle Depot 2:00pm – 3:00pm
- McDonald's at 34 Ave & 99 St 3:00pm – 4:00pm
- Old Strathcona Bottle Depot 4:00pm – 5:30pm
- McDonald's at 112 Ave & 82 St 5:30pm – 6:00pm
- Borden Park 6:00pm – 6:30pm
- Mosaic Centre 6:30pm – 7:00pm
- The Neighbour Centre 7:00pm – 7:30pm
- 7-11 at 102 Ave & 109 St 7:30pm – 8:00pm
- McDonald's at Oliver Square 8:00pm – 8:30pm
- Jasper Place Wellness Centre 8:30pm – 9:15pm
- Hope Mission 9:15pm – 9:30pm

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## Successes and Partnerships:












Many of the individuals served identified as “rough sleepers”, meaning they were sleeping outside in parkland areas. Winter Warming Bus staff provided these individuals with information about resources available through the various other service providers. Sometimes individuals are unaware of service providers but know the bus and its regular schedule, meaning that the bus is an important tool for increasing WER program visibility and a means of communication between homeless individuals and the BSCS Winter Warming Bus staff.

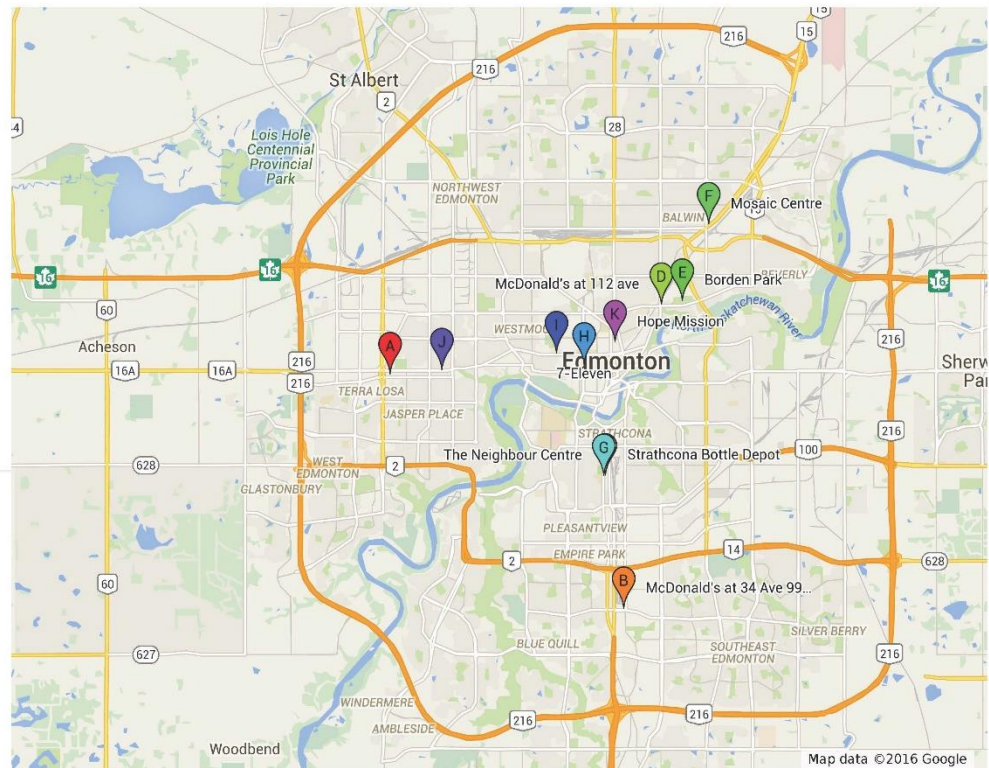
## Challenges:

The BSCS WER bus is tasked with covering as much of Edmonton as possible and has a set schedule and route to do so. However, with such a large area to cover over an eight-hour period the window for people to connect with the bus can be quite short considering individuals may not make it to the bus stop locations within the window the bus is there due to multiple barriers.

## BSCS Winter Warming Bus Schedule

### Scheduled Stops

-  Centennial Bottle Depot
-  McDonald's at 34 Ave 99 St
-  Strathcona Bottle Depot
-  McDonald's at 112 ave
-  Borden Park
-  Mosaic Centre
-  The Neighbour Centre
-  7-Eleven
-  McDonald's Oliver Square
-  Jasper Place Wellness Centre
-  Hope Mission



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## 4.5.2 WER – ETS Bus

For the 2015-2016 WER Program, Homeward Trust allocated a small amount (\$70,000) within the WER Transportation and Mobile Outreach funding basket to enable an exploration of additional transportation options.

### Background:

Every year, transportation between drop-ins and shelters in the evening is identified as a high priority by service providers and stakeholders. In preparation for this winter's WER season, Homeward Trust reached out to the Edmonton Transit System to discuss opportunities to augment transportation service during the winter. At a meeting in October 2015, HTE and ETS discussed the idea of developing dedicated bus routes between WER drop-in centres, particularly those outside the downtown core, and emergency shelters in the evenings. Given the length of time it takes to develop bus routes, confirm stops and times, staffing considerations, etc., it was proposed to start the process this winter with a pilot using chartered buses during periods of extreme weather.

### WER- ETS Bus Pilot:

From October to December, ongoing conversations and discussions were held with both ETS and the WER drop-in centres, as well as emergency shelters to determine details of this pilot. The original plan included chartering three buses on nights when temperatures drop to -20 degrees Celsius or colder, using the 7-day weather forecast to determine when the buses would operate. Each bus would run a route to transport individuals from one of three drop-in centres, the Mosaic Centre (northeast), Jasper Place Wellness Centre (west), and the Neighbour Centre (south), to the Hope Mission and George Spady shelters downtown. The buses would operate for 2-3 hours between 7pm and 9:30pm, allowing for the buses to make two loops between the drop-ins and the shelters.

In discussions with ETS to plan out the routes and stops of each bus, ETS requested having qualified drop-in or shelter staff and/or volunteers on the buses to accompany individuals to the shelters, and agencies agreed this would help ensure the pilot ran smoothly. Two agencies, Boyle Street Community Services and George Spady Society, agreed to provide staffing for the pilot; however, because the original plan called for up to 6 staff per night, this proved to be more difficult to organize and much more costly. As such, the plan was modified to involve only one chartered bus that would make one trip to all of the drop-in centres and shelters, thereby requiring only two staff.

On Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the WER-ETS Bus Pilot made its first trial run. The route and schedule were as follows:

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## Schedule:

- Pick up BSCS staff (101 Street and 105 Ave) 7:00pm
- The Neighbour Centre (7221 104 Street) 7:15 – 7:25pm
- Mosaic Centre (12758 Fort Rd.) 7:50 – 8:00pm
- Drop off downtown @ Hope & Spady Shelters 8:15pm
- Jasper Place Wellness Centre (15201 Stony Plain Rd.) 8:40 – 8:50pm
- Boyle Street Drop-in (EPCOR Tower 101St & 105Ave) 9:00pm
- Drop off downtown @ Hope & Spady Shelters 9:10pm

## Successes and Challenges:

Two staff from BSCS and a HTE staff were present for this run. The BSCS staff had scarves, socks and other warm weather gear on hand to give out to individuals. The bus was able to remain on schedule for most of the run, with only a slight delay at the end of the evening when dropping off a few intoxicated individuals at the shelter. A total of 21 people were picked up at the drop-ins over the course of the evening.

HTE continued to work closely with ETS and the WER providers to refine the routes and stops of the bus; however, due to unusually warm weather for the remainder of the WER season, there was not another opportunity to try a second run.

The first trial run went relatively smoothly, however, it also raised some important considerations for moving forward with this pilot. Some of these considerations include continued staffing of the bus, developing guidelines in accordance with ETS policies around security of all passengers, emergency situations and the appropriate transportation options for highly intoxicated individuals.





## 5.1 OVERVIEW

Strategic planning around the Winter Emergency Response program to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of Edmonton's homeless population and integrated into existing community supports is a challenging endeavour. The harsh winter months create additional challenges that are encountered, both when coordinating the efforts of the various agencies directly implementing the WER program, and also when connecting clients accessing WER services to other programs and supports outside its scope of service.

The last three years have witnessed major WER stakeholders, including implementing agencies, community members, government, and support services, make a concerted effort to ensure that the program is operating strategically according to its purpose and scope, and in a coordinated and integrated manner. Ensuring that WER program services are operating within a comprehensive homeless-service system is essential for its success and long-term sustainability. As such, ongoing consultations with WER program stakeholders have resulted in the identification and implementation of several actions needed to facilitate a more comprehensive Winter Emergency Response program that is more fully integrated into existing community services.

## 5.2 WER STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

On-going and open communication and collaboration is essential to ensuring the safety of our city's homeless population during the cold winter months. This is true not only between the agencies implementing the WER program, but also among the wider homeless-serving sector, including community agencies, emergency shelters, outreach service providers, hospitals, police, libraries, and many other community and system services. This season, the WER Strategic Planning Committee met three times to assess and discuss progress and strategy around WER: once in October 2016 prior to the start of WER, once during the WER season in January 2016, and once in June 2016 following the completion of the program.

The committee was created to act as a means of communication and coordination between WER-funded service providers and other community agencies and systems providers. The role of the Committee was established to assist in identifying and assessing needs and gaps around homelessness and housing challenges during the harsh winter temperatures, helping to coordinate the WER contingency funding, and discussing and strategizing around emerging issues, such as transportation options for individuals between drop in centres and shelters.

Open and clear communication with Alberta Human Services Homeless Supports Division was also essential for successful implementation of the WER programs. Homeward Trust worked in collaboration to receive daily updates on emergency shelter overnight occupancy levels. Daily reporting on shelter numbers assisted in planning for overflow and respite space. Cooperation



among Human Services, shelters, agencies and service providers on the collection and sharing of relevant data helped to ensure the success of the Winter Emergency Response program.

Moving forward, the committee has expressed the need to identify what the best use of the limited funding that exists for Winter Emergency, keeping in mind the larger context of Homeward Trust's mandate. This will include thinking of the most efficient use of WER funding, and how to introduce flexibility into the program model and funding allocation for warmer winters such as this past season where there was only one night where temperatures fell below -20 degrees C with windchill.

### 5.3 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation services to ensure a homeless individual can travel from one drop-in site or shelter to another is vitally important, especially during periods of heavy usage and extreme winter weather when shelters may reach their capacity and have to redirect clients to other shelters or agencies. Challenges further increase when individuals needing transportation have physical disabilities or mobility impairments. Therefore, having an integrated, comprehensive transportation strategy, utilizing existing and new community services, is a main focus area for future WER strategic planning.

The ETS-WER bus pilot was a step towards finding solutions to these transportation challenges, and the lessons learned from it will provide useful insights for strategic planning for the 2016-17 season. Considerations that will need to be addressed moving forward with this pilot include: expectations for the staff in terms of guidelines around management en route, working with the ETS bus driver, emergency situations and escorting individuals into shelters amongst others. Additionally, guidelines will need to be determined in accordance with ETS policies around security of all passengers, emergency situations and the appropriate transportation options for highly intoxicated individuals.

After testing the service and discussing outcomes and process among all stakeholders, including ETS Security, Operations, drivers, community agencies, and City of Edmonton, ETS will be in a better position to pursue regular, season-long WER routes for 2016-17, which would be scheduled in advance and have a much lower operating cost.

Additionally, the 24/7 Edmonton Crisis Diversion Team, which is a partnership with Hope Mission, Boyle Street Community Services and 211, was an essential component for crisis diversion and an important transportation option this season. They serve people experiencing non-emergency/non-violent crisis in Edmonton, responding to calls from EMS and EPS dispatch, and through 211 to provide crisis intervention services. Agencies were able to call 211 and communicate crises or emergency situations when someone was experiencing a medical or

mental health (non-emergency) crisis, there was a potential safety concern for the individual involved, or if an individual was intoxicated, or otherwise impaired.

Transportation services for homeless individuals during the winter months is an on-going issue in need of coordination and collaboration among WER program stakeholders and community members, especially in order to reduce non-critical reliance on emergency services. Significant progress was made this season towards finding solutions to this issue. The WER – ETS bus pilot laid a positive foundation for future on-going collaboration with ETS, and the 24/7 Crisis Diversion team provides an alternative to non-emergency use of emergency services.