

## Executive Summary

Inn from the Cold offers emergency shelter and supportive housing to assist Calgary’s homeless children and their families achieve independence. Inn from the Cold supports the creation of numerous positive social outcomes for families, including increased safety, wellbeing and hope. While anecdotal evidence and basic assessment of program efficiency suggests that Inn from the Cold is creating significant value for families and communities, in 2018 Social Return on Investment (SROI) practitioners at Constellation Consulting Group were hired to conduct a full SROI assessment of Inn from the Cold’s shelter and housing programming.

SROI helps organizations articulate the financial value of social outcomes created through key investments, revealing how much value is created for every dollar invested. The end result of an SROI analysis is an SROI ratio that compares investment to the financial value of social outcomes that are achieved, showing - in monetary terms - the financial benefit of social investments. While SROI enables analysis of the value of social outcomes using the *language* of financial returns, the social and economic value return calculated through an SROI analysis is not *equivalent* to a financial return in spendable dollars. It is better understood as an approach to valuing social outcomes through financial measures other than standard economic indicators, such as GDP. The SROI analysis of Inn from the Cold leverages existing research on family homelessness and has used the internationally standardized SROI methodology outlined in *A Guide to Social Return on Investment*, the acknowledged international SROI methodology guidance document of The Social Value Network International.

The SROI analysis of Inn from the Cold’s shelter and housing services revealed an SROI ratio of 1 : 4.63 meaning that:

For every dollar invested in the operation of Inn from the Cold’s shelter and housing programming, **nearly five dollars** in social and economic value is created.



This ratio suggests that significant social and economic value is created by providing shelter and housing for families in need. This value is experienced by multiple stakeholders, including adult clients, children of adult clients, various levels of government, landlords, and communities. The result demonstrates that investment in the wellbeing of homeless families generates important social value for our community and its citizens.

---

While the SROI ratio suggests that significant social and economic value is created by Inn from the Cold's work with homeless families, the SROI analysis represents a conservative estimate of the total value created as it was not possible to measure and capture the financial value of all potential outcomes for all potential stakeholders. Further, where estimations were made within the analysis, conservative estimations were taken to ensure the analysis is not at risk of over-claiming.

As governments seek more cost efficient ways to support citizens and communities in thriving, the current study suggests that investment in the wellbeing of homeless families generates important cost savings and value to multiple stakeholders. Ongoing investment in this type of programming is likely to advance the achievement of positive outcomes and further generate value in our community. Based on the findings from the current study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Invest in shelter services for homeless families and find ways to connect these services to ongoing supportive housing options. Based on the findings from the current study, it is clear that investing in shelter and housing services for homeless families is a value-generating investment. Building on the value created in shelters, there is an opportunity to advance value creation by offering supportive housing options for families who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing homelessness. The current study indicates that by doing so, investors not only address a core need of citizens in our community, but they also create significant economic and social value for individuals, families, communities, and various levels of government.
2. Continue to evolve outcomes measurement systems at Inn from the Cold and track the Social Return on Investment (SROI) over time. As outcomes measurement at Inn from the Cold becomes more robust, the SROI model can be updated to provide a definitive evaluative statement of value that can be used and updated to track value creation over time.
3. Seek opportunities to advance knowledge about the impacts of programming to support homeless families. While the current study begins to shed light on the value of supports for homeless families, more rigorous research on the impacts of programs for homeless families is needed to help develop deeper and more robust understanding of impact, particularly long-term impact. It is recommended that opportunities for future research on the subject are pursued in order to advance the knowledge and information we have about interventions addressing family homelessness.