



# Anchor YorkU

An Anchor Institution & Community Benefits  
Framework

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## An Anchor Institution & Community Benefits Framework

### Preface

Created by the Human Rights and Social Justice Working Group under the President’s Sustainability Council, this framework defines York University as an “Anchor Institution” and establishes four target areas for current and future development opportunities – employment, engagement, infrastructure, and social procurement – specifically within the Black Creek/Jane Finch communities.

This framework was submitted as part of the President’s Sustainability Council’s Annual Report 2015-16, with the recommendation that York University review and consider the “Framework for York as an Anchor Institution” and direct the creation of an implementation plan by the end of 2016-17.

The goal of this framework is to spark a discourse around the development of mutually favourable community benefits and help propel York to the forefront of progressive and innovative sustainability approaches among universities worldwide.

The PSC Report and its recommendations were accepted by York University President Mamdouh Shoukri as of November, 2016.

The full PSC report can be found at

<http://sustainability.info.yorku.ca/files/2016/11/PSC-Report-2015-2016-FINAL-Nov2016.pdf>.

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## Introduction

York University is a comprehensive, diverse university—a leading organization and key driver of social and economic development within the three geographical communities its campuses are located within and shares relationships with. As the plans are underway to build and open a new campus in Markham, and the Keele and Glendon campuses continue to grow, York University is committed to recognizing and respecting the mutual support and reciprocity that exists between the university and the community. We see ourselves as contributing to the surrounding neighbourhoods with the goal of promoting and advancing local sustainability in its broadest sense. Recognizing York in an anchor role requires an institutional outlook that extends beyond solely serving ourselves, but one that requires the institution to also hold the interests of the surrounding communities as our own.

This document was created to acknowledge and outline York’s significant role within the broader communities of which we are a part, through the adoption of an anchor institution framework. Created by the Human Rights and Social Justice Working Group, under the President’s Sustainability Council, this framework will define “anchor institution”, as well as establish four target areas as the foundation of the framework at York University. These target areas are: Employment, Engagement, Infrastructure and Social Procurement, and will be discussed in the context of current and future initiatives, and the potential beneficiaries of these targets will be established. This document concludes with suggested next steps in order to implement specific objectives to realize this framework.

Universities are complex organizations. We acknowledge that when thinking of sustainability and the realities of financial and resource management, the struggle to maximize development opportunities along with respecting broader community interests will create tension. It is the goal of this framework to spark a dynamic discourse around the growing development of mutually favourable community benefits. This approach will help propel York to the forefront of progressive and innovative approaches to sustainability among universities worldwide and enhance York’s reputation as a sustainability leader.

## Defining Anchor Institutions

Canada is increasingly becoming defined by rising levels of income inequality and decreased access to wealth. In 2013, 4.65 million Canadians were living on incomes that were, on average, one third below the poverty line—a poverty gap that Statistics Canada estimates at a value of 16.9 billion dollars<sup>1</sup>. Within Toronto specifically, income inequality is particularly prevalent, as the city has the second largest income inequality gap in the country. Without action, an estimated 60 percent of Toronto neighbourhoods will be classified as low and very low income communities by 2025<sup>2</sup>. An “anchor institution” approach is an encouraging, proactive response to counter growing inequality through building community capacity, community wealth and localized economic opportunity<sup>3</sup>.

Anchor institutions are defined as “entities such as colleges and universities, hospitals, military bases and local business that are deeply embedded in a community and could not easily move elsewhere (Holden, 2013 p. 2). Such institutions share an “interdependent relationship with their communities, and are important players in community development and revitalization efforts” (Holden, 2013 p. 2). A report completed by the Mowat Centre states that anchor institutions employ a “deliberate and strategic use of resources to benefit communities, especially low-and-moderate income neighbourhoods or historically disadvantaged groups” (Dragicevic, 2015 p. 5)

According to a collaborative report published by the University of Maryland and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, anchor institutions are increasingly being viewed as partners in social and economic development, as they hold significant economic, social and intellectual power to “leverage their resources for the long term benefit of their communities” (Serang, Thompson & Howard, 2010 p.5). Within Ontario, universities and hospitals alone annually spend 9.9 billion on acquisition of goods and services. Channeling just a small percentage of that capital into the community could have a transformative impact on employment generation, community development and local economic growth<sup>4</sup>. As drivers of social and economic development, anchor institutions play a critical role in wealth building and positive community transformations.

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, S. & Yalnizyan, A. (2016). Better is always possible: A federal plan to tackle poverty and inequality. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved from [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2016/02/Better\\_is\\_Always\\_Possible.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2016/02/Better_is_Always_Possible.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The Toronto Foundation. 2015. Toronto Vital Signs Report. Retrieved from <https://torontofoundation.ca/sites/default/files/OP-TVS%202015-Full-Report-PRINTING.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Dragicevic, N. (2015). Anchor Institutions. The Mowat Centre. Retrieved from [https://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/109\\_Anchor\\_Institutions.pdf](https://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/109_Anchor_Institutions.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Toronto Star. (2015). “Anchor strategy is a smart way to fight poverty”.

Outlined in the following section is a framework that defines York University's role as an anchor institution based on four target community benefit areas.

## Defining Sustainability

Core principles of the York approach to sustainability include: a long-term perspective; a holistic outlook; acceptance of limits; a focus on place; and an active involvement in problem-solving<sup>5</sup>. Each of these core principles relates directly to this anchor institution framework.

As spaces that facilitate the pursuit of innovation, critical thinking and knowledge, as well as their expertise within the realms of the natural, human and social sciences, universities have the resources, moral responsibility and proficiency to take on a leadership role in the promotion of sustainability—a role that York University has adopted within the City of Toronto. York University and the President's Sustainability Council have taken the initiative to move beyond an exclusive focus on environmental measures by incorporating a more comprehensive perspective of sustainability that include factors of social equity, as demonstrated through the establishment of the Social Justice and Human Rights Sub-Committee and its role in initiating and developing this document.

Issues of social justice and human rights are essential components of sustainability due to the interdependency between social, human and natural capital, and their collaborative contribution in the development and growth of sustainability within institutions and communities. The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainability as meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>6</sup>-- needs that include the advancement of social equity, increased access to human rights and building community capacity through measures that promote social justice<sup>7</sup>.

To be effective, organizations promoting sustainability must recognize the relationship between equality and environmental justice and understand that existing social injustice and violations to human rights lead to unsustainability and environmentally damaging practices<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, countries with greater civil liberties and political rights, higher literacy and education levels, more equal income distribution and a

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<sup>5</sup> President's Sustainability Council (2009). Annual Report. York University

<sup>6</sup> Brundtland, Gro, Mansour Khalid, Susanna Agnelli, Sali Al-Athel, Bernard Chidzero, Lamina Fadika, Volker Hauff et al. "Our Common Future ('Brundtland report')." (1987).

<sup>7</sup> Wright, T. S. (2002). Definitions and frameworks for environmental sustainability in higher education. *International Journal of Sustainability in higher education*, 3(3), 203-220.

<sup>8</sup> Roseland, M. (2000). Sustainable community development: integrating environmental, economic, and social objectives. *Progress in planning*, 54(2), 73-132.

greater overall focus on social justice have found to have significantly higher ratings of environmental quality (as measured by concentrations of air and water pollutants and access to clean water and sanitation) than those with fewer rights, civil liberties, lower income distribution and literacy levels<sup>9</sup>. Also significant, greater inequalities in the distribution of privilege and power in society were found to be associated with not only less stringent environmental policies and greater levels of environmental stress, but higher rates of infant mortality and premature deaths<sup>10</sup>.

The development and pursuit of this framework under the Social Justice and Human Rights Sub-Committee, the President's Sustainability Council at York University has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability within both the university and the surrounding community.

## York University's Role as an Anchor Institution: 4 Target Areas

As an Anchor Institution, York will focus on addressing economic disadvantage, discrimination, and/or barriers to equal opportunity experienced by people across the GTA, but with initial and ongoing focus to the neighbouring communities of the Keele campus. This includes those distant or isolated from the labour market (such as youth experiencing vulnerabilities) and those from equity-seeking communities and neighbourhoods (i.e. Jane Finch) who have historically faced discrimination that prevents equitable access to economic opportunities. These groups include, but are not limited to:

- Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Metis)
- Racialized groups/visible minorities
- Persons with disabilities
- Newcomers/new immigrants
- Women
- LGBTQ+ people
- Youth

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<sup>9</sup> Agyeman, J. (2005). Alternatives for community and environment: where justice and sustainability meet. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 47(6), 10-23.

<sup>10</sup> Agyeman, J. (2005). Alternatives for community and environment: where justice and sustainability meet. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 47(6), 10-23.

We have identified four target areas which we believe can have the most impact over the next 10 years:

1. Employment
2. Engagement
3. Neighbourhood building through infrastructure
4. Social Procurement

## 1. Employment

York University is a driver of community social economic development and local capital growth, as it is one of the largest employers in the Black Creek area and neighbouring York region, employing over 14,000 staff in full and part-time, unionized and non-unionized environments.<sup>11</sup>

In 2010 the President's Sustainability Council identified the opportunity to "explore a program for workplace training opportunities...in collaboration with local partners and community initiatives". York has developed some innovative practices that could be expanded to build employment skills and exposure through the implementation of a variety of programs and procedures aimed at building economic capacity of the community and its residents. One initiative is the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program with Campus Services and Business Operations at York. The program takes a number of students from high schools, and introduces them to different trades and apprenticeships involved in Trade Maintenance.

Another program is the Advanced Credit Experience, or

### *Employment Opportunities*



Explore a program for workplace training opportunities, for example, through internships, skilled trade apprenticeships and other employment training in collaboration with local partners, educational partners and community initiatives, including systems and support for faculty and staff to participate in supervision.

Work with education partners (e.g. school board, Seneca College) and community partners to develop training programs or opportunities to build skills needed for target groups to access employment opportunities at York.

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<sup>11</sup> York University (2016). *About York University*. Retrieved from <http://about.yorku.ca/>

ACE program, within the Faculty of Education. ACE is an initiative to increase access to post-secondary education for local high school students. They enroll in an introductory university course and earn a co-op credit for their Ontario secondary school diploma by working in various work settings on campus. They receive credit towards an undergraduate degree—while simultaneously fostering the academic skills necessary for success within post-secondary education.

Expanding local employment opportunities to qualified local residents is another pathway towards the target of employment. Institutionally, the Human Resources department employs a Diversity and Inclusion Consultant to monitor and attract a diversified talent pool. This important role and work continues to evolve. Due to the size of the York University workforce, opportunities exist to integrate a community hiring strategy within its human resource requirements. Targeted hiring, with a benchmark set of eligible employees from surrounding postal codes, would contribute jobs that could have a significant impact at the community level.

It could also be considered that emerging enterprises could be supported to develop locally to meet the demand of institutional need. For example, cooperatives emerged in a Cleveland community near a hospital, providing needed services such as laundry, while creating jobs for local workers with a reliable market<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. Engagement

York University and its surrounding communities share an intrinsic, reciprocal relationship. While the focus is often on what the university has to offer the community, there must also be an acknowledgement of the many resources that York gains from the community which strengthen and benefit the existing learning environment provided by York (i.e. experiential education opportunities and field based practicums for students, research opportunities for students/faculty). The future of the university and communities are intertwined, emphasizing the importance of engagement within this anchor institution and community benefits framework.

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<sup>12</sup> Serang, F., Thompson, J. P., & Howard, T. (2013). The anchor mission: Leveraging the power of anchor institutions to build community wealth. College Park, MD: Democracy Collaborative. Retrieved from <http://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/UH-composite-online.pdf>



One of the opportunities for civic engagement included within this framework is increasing access to community use of university space, a need that has been frequently voiced by the community. There have been a number of recommendations from the President's Sustainability Council that merit being integrated into this target of the framework. For example, recommendation 17 aims to “Improve access to York facilities such as the library system, buildings, sports complexes and laboratories. In particular, a number of days each year should be designated as ‘community use days’.” At present, community members are able to access the library system on a day-use basis and purchase community memberships for athletic/fitness facilities. Nevertheless, progress to increase community use of university space (particularly among smaller external community groups) has been slow and sometimes impeded by negative perceptions permeated within the relationship, concerns regarding security, cost considerations and internal complexities of how to manage. However, there are still opportunities for realizing the spirit of these recommendations.

At York University, the message must be one of openness and a willingness to welcome and engage with the community. Recommendations for engagement include using existing infrastructure to draw in residents of surrounding neighbourhoods, including extending the use of the Keele campus baseball diamond to residents, connecting neighbourhood schools with university faculties and departments for educational opportunities, opening theatres for cultural events, and promoting the walkability of the campus through signed walking paths. Furthermore, York Lanes on the Keele campus houses a diverse set of services relevant to community members, including medical and dental services that are limited in the neighbourhood outside campus. Advocating for increased accessibility of York Lanes and transforming the space into a “service centre” for both student and neighbourhood residents could be a mutually

### *Engagement Opportunities*



- Establish transparent and accessible process for community groups to request and access space.
- Explore the possibility of developing a grant stream for community members to offset the costs of the space.
- Encourage visitors to the campus and support the development of a ‘welcoming campus’ environment through development of walking paths, community open house days, public events, etc.
- Promote York’s community engagement opportunities and resources through the York University website in a manner that provides community members with easy to access information about the University (e.g. general information, examples, key contacts, resources, and upcoming public events).

beneficial avenue to increased engagement for businesses within York Lanes and the community. The new subway is anticipated to increase opportunities for community engagement.

Engagement opens opportunities to strengthen both the university and the resident communities. The York-TD Community Engagement Centre remains a key initiative of York towards supporting engagement with the local community

### 3. Neighbourhood Building: Developing physical, social and environmental infrastructure.

York has recognized the importance of infrastructure in the past. The 2008-2009 President's Sustainability Council annual report outlined York's role to maintain, promote and develop social, physical and environmental infrastructure. The role would also require a commitment to protect local ecosystems within the communities York inhabits, as well as building social connections, community collaborations and social supports to alleviate the inequities and injustice as they currently exist within the surrounding Black Creek/Jane Finch Community, thereby contributing to thriving, sustainable neighbourhoods<sup>13</sup>.

Opportunities are emerging with the increase of rapid transit in the neighbourhood. Support of community efforts in securing community benefits agreements with Metrolinx through the construction of the Finch LRT, including the building of its maintenance facility at Finch and Yorkgate Blvd should be an immediate consideration. The City of Toronto is poised to develop

#### *Infrastructure Opportunities*



Support and implement the policies of the updated York University Secondary Plan, specifically as they relate to housing, community services and facilities.

Monitor, and where possible, strengthen the social justice and human rights considerations in the implementation of the York University Secondary Plan.

Create a collaborative plan that includes community input and resources to co-support university and community needs.

Participate in current neighbourhood planning initiatives related to community benefits of infrastructure development.

<sup>13</sup> President's Sustainability Council (2009). *Annual Report*. York University

the Keele Finch neighbourhood with community consultation processes underway. The university will be central to this planning, and should be mindful of resident concerns regarding gentrification and environmental impacts.

Buildings and land development that is inclusive of community needs has been a standing recommendation from the PSC (#22, 2009; #9, 2012; #4, 2013). Creating a collaborative plan that includes community input and resources to co-support university and community needs will be an opportunity in the next 10 years. This will be relevant both at the Keele campus and in the new emerging Markham campus.

## 4. Social Procurement

The City of Toronto defines social procurement as “the achievement of strategic social, economic and workforce development goals using an organization’s process of purchasing goods and services.” In May of 2016, Toronto City Council passed the Social Procurement Program and encourages large institutions such as York to follow suit.<sup>14</sup>

York has been an active member of AnchorTO, a broad initiative of 18 anchor institutions, including 3 provincial Ministries, Metrolinx, colleges and universities, and City agencies and corporations who will develop further implementation plans around social procurement in the next year.

Furthermore, York has aimed to engage with local small businesses and promote fair labour practices through the Procurement Code of Ethics and Fair Wage Policy. The procedure specifically outlines that the university will “grant all competing suppliers/vendors equal consideration”<sup>15</sup> with respect to contracts—allowing smaller, local businesses to compete for large university contracts. Furthermore, the code of

### *Social Procurement Opportunities*



Increase the number of employment, apprenticeship and training opportunities leveraged for people from the Black Creek neighbourhoods and other equity-seeking communities.

Increase the diversity of York’s supply chain by providing diverse suppliers with equitable access to competitive procurement processes.

<sup>14</sup> City of Toronto (April 4, 2016). Social Procurement Program. (Staff Report)

<sup>15</sup> York University, (2009). Procurement Code of Ethics. Procurement Services

ethics states that York will “encourage suppliers to consider sustainability and social responsibility in their product or service offerings”<sup>16</sup>, including “ensuring all procurement activities are conducted according to University policies, provincial and federal laws, and respect the principles of ethical business practices”<sup>17</sup>. Through adoption of this code of ethics, York has shown dedication to developing the local economy and promoting sustainable, equitable businesses practices.

However, anchor institutions like York have considerable leveraging economic power that can be used to generate sustainable, local jobs within its host communities<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, the introduction of a place based purchasing policy could result in more equitable access for local vendors to foods and service, thereby building both the human and economic capital of the surrounding community.<sup>19</sup> For example, an opportunity includes favouring local postal codes when posting supplier/vendor contracts. Implementing this recommendation could encourage further participation from local businesses and facilitate economic capacity building for residents within the three distinct communities. It might also see York become proactive in seeking out partners for building a local procurement stream for the University.

## New and Emerging Communities: Potential Beneficiaries and Community Benefits

York University is a large institution, with three distinctive campuses - the Keele Campus, Glendon Campus and upcoming Markham campus – each rooted in three diverse community contexts. It is necessary to acknowledge and embrace the diversity of these distinct communities, as well as appreciate the impact York as an anchor institution has on the more expansive surrounding region. The existing partnerships and developing relationships with the Glendon and Markham communities are within the context of this framework, for they are fundamental members of the growing contemporary community within York University. In the case of Markham, York University should make every effort to honour the municipality’s *Greenprint Sustainability Plan*, particularly in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Dubb, S., & Howard, T. (2012). Leveraging anchor institutions for local job creation and wealth building. Big Ideas for Job Creation, at [http://community-wealth.org/\\_pdfs/news/recent-articles/04-12/paper-dubb-howard.pdf](http://community-wealth.org/_pdfs/news/recent-articles/04-12/paper-dubb-howard.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

terms of the well-articulated priorities identified in the plan relating to social equity, as well as education and skills.

However, the primary focus of this framework, and the resulting impact, is envisioned to be primarily with the Black Creek/ Jane Finch community—the community surrounding the York University Keele Campus where York University was first established almost 60 years ago. Jane-Finch is a community with substantial human assets and strong aspirations for positive change, but the existing shortage of resources has continually acted as a barrier to facilitate this change<sup>20</sup>. Social injustices and inequity are particularly prominent within this neighbourhood, as economic opportunities have been unable to keep pace with the needs of the community, resulting in higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of income experienced by community members, compared to that of other neighbourhoods in the Greater Toronto Area.<sup>21</sup> The residents of the Black Creek/Jane Finch community are disproportionately racialized and stigmatized and experience significantly high concentrations of discrimination on the basis of socioeconomic status and ethnicity when compared to residents in other Toronto neighbourhoods. York University and the Black Creek/Jane Finch community share a long standing, reciprocal relationship, and the university has an ethical imperative to respond to the detrimental social conditions that currently exist within its surrounding communities. An anchor institution and community benefits framework has the potential to create considerable positive change within the Jane Finch community, making it a pertinent and relevant focus for this framework.

### **Intersecting Interests (unions, social investment, procurement, employment, policy, government)**

It will be critical to consider that there are many intersecting interests and potential partners as we implement this framework. This includes unions, social investment policies, government and sector specific policy. A broad education and engagement strategy, both with internal and external communities, will need to be undertaken to ensure that we are working across the board as collaborators for the benefit of the communities in which we serve.

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<sup>20</sup> The Jane-Finch Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy Task Force (2015). *Community response to the Toronto strong neighbourhoods strategy 2020: What neighbourhood improvement looks like from the perspective of residents in Jane-Finch*. Retrieved from <http://cec.info.yorku.ca/files/2014/03/TSNS-Research-Report-August-12-2015.pdf>

## Recommendations

As per the President's Sustainability Council 2015-2016 report, we recommend:

1. That York University review and endorse this Framework for York as an Anchor Institution developed by the sub-group on Community Benefits, and direct the creation of an implementation plan by end of 2016-2017;
2. That representatives of the broader community (external to York) who are working in the areas of community benefit, economic development, and planning initiatives, be included in the working group that moves this framework forward;
3. That a communication strategy accompanies the acceptance of the Framework as well as its implementation; and
4. That this framework be integral to a Sustainability Plan for York University as proposed by the Presidents Sustainability Council in their 2015-16 Report.

## **Background: The President's Sustainability Council's Mandate.**

The President's Sustainability Council is an advisory body with the responsibility to provide recommendations and guidance on the advancement of York University's sustainability initiatives. The council facilitates integration of knowledge about sustainability into research, education and application through overseeing approved recommendations and providing opportunities and support for York students, faculty and staff to meaningfully participate in the planning and implementation of various York University sustainability policies, projects and practices.

The specific objectives of the council include:

- Develop a framework for understanding the different dimensions of sustainability as relevant to the university's campuses;
- Conduct assessments of sustainability to establish common understandings and benchmarks in the context of the 2001 Report of the President's Task Force on Sustainability;
- Provide a forum in which members may discuss sustainability challenges and opportunities to foster pan-university approaches to sustainability initiatives;
- Identify and review current university sustainability practices and initiatives, and ascertain opportunities for synergies and engagement;
- Through a planning/prioritization process, identify and examine specific high priority issues and develop recommendations for the President to consider implementing;
- Develop communication tools that promote and enhance awareness of sustainability activities and initiatives, including the work of the Council, throughout the entire York community; and
- Produce an annual report on sustainability at York relative to the Councils' Activities.

## **Social Justice and Human Rights Working Group**

The SJHR Working Group serves to further the understanding and action related to sustainability and human rights and social justice, which are integrally intertwined. The working group meets regularly to review past PSC recommendations for progress and updating and to advise on the development of future recommendations for the PSC's Annual Report.

In responding to a 2014-15 recommendation of the PSC Report, a sub-group was formed to "develop an action plan to advance a proposal for how community benefit agreements could be used by York University as it moves forward on the development of Lands for Learning under the Secondary Plan as

well as for major upgrades and updates to existing buildings and infrastructures taking into account the needs of neighbouring communities as well as existing contractual agreements and development plans” (#1, 2015). After lengthy discussion, it was agreed that a Framework on York as an Anchor Institution, including community benefits, be created to begin to move this from discussion to action.

The Social Justice and Human Rights working group would like to thank the following for their construction of this document through thoughtful discussion, forward looking ideas and careful reflection. They are: Martin Bunch, Robert Castle, Natalie Coulter, Jennifer Foster, Richard Francki, Marian MacGregor, Yvette Munro, Andrew Plunkett, Darryl Reed, Lorna Schwartzentruber, and Christopher Wong. Special thanks to Angelina Vaccaro for conducting the research for this framework and articulating our ideas to paper.



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