



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council

File No.: 1850-00

From: Director Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Date: March 11, 2026

Subject: Community Services – Annual Grant Impact Report for 2025

PURPOSE: To provide Council with a summary of the progress, impact and strategic alignment of five (5) grant agreements administered by Community Services between the period of January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

Community Services administers grant-funded and agreement-based initiatives that advance Council’s strategic priorities and the City’s OCP objectives in the areas of community and social development. In 2024 and 2025, Council approved funding and gave direction to enter into agreements related to five (5) initiatives that remained active in 2025. Each initiative addresses a distinct community need and is delivered in partnership with local non-profit organizations. This report highlights outcomes, qualitative impact, and the dedication of community partners, acknowledging the value of financial investment.

This report speaks only to grants administered by Community Services, typically through grant fee for service agreements, and financially supported through tax revenue, gaming funds and or external sources.

Project One: Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy

Purpose: To coordinate a collaborative, culturally informed, and evidence-based community response to substance use and overdose prevention.

Background: The City of Courtenay has a long history of supporting substance-use prevention and response initiatives, beginning with the creation of the Community Drug Strategy Committee in 2002. In 2019, the City asked the Comox Valley Community Health Network to expand this work into a regional substance-use strategy, providing \$30,000 for Phase One and an additional \$30,000 to support Phases Two and Three.

On September 11, 2024, Council renewed it’s support of the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy. The following motions were carried:

THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services to determine the service and reporting deliverables of a fee for service agreement between the City of Courtenay and Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society for a three- year term to support the implementation of the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy; and

THAT subject to execution of the agreement the City provide the Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society \$15,000 per year, for a total of \$45,000, funded from tax revenue; and

THAT the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services be authorized to execute the agreement on behalf of the City.

Table 1: Grant Fee For Service Agreement Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society

Organization	Term	Financial Support	In Kind Support	Deliverables	Total
Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society	Nov 15, 2024- Dec 31, 2027 (3 years)	\$15,000 2024 \$15,000 2025 \$12,000 2026 \$ 3,000 2027 Total \$45,000/ 3 years	~\$13,000/year Total \$39,000/ 3 years City staff - participation with tables and/or actions coming out of tables. Administering grant and reporting outcomes.	Seek additional alternate sources of funding to realize a stable coordination model Provide annual reports outlining progress with deliverables including: qualitative metrics and quantitative metrics Provide annual financial reports	
Total		\$45,000	\$39,000		\$84,000 (3 years)

Project 2: Share the Harvest Community Garden

Purpose: To provide a welcoming, safe space where people grow food, build skills, and connect across backgrounds—strengthening local food security, the sustainability of the local food system and serving as a model for community gardens in Courtenay.

Background: The City of Courtenay has provided support to operationalize this garden since its inception in 2012, primarily through a series of consecutive limited term License of Occupation and Management Agreements.

On April 24, 2024, Council renewed their support of Share the Harvest Community Garden. The following Motions were carried:

THAT Council authorize staff to execute the five-year "Licence of Occupation" extension between the City of Courtenay and Lush Valley Food Action Society for the continued use of the property located at 721 Grant Avenue, PID: 030-871-191, LOT 1, PLAN EPP84993, SECTION 61, COMOX LAND DISTRICT, subsequent to the publishing of notice; and

THAT Council authorize staff to execute the five-year "Community Garden Management and Operating Grant Fee For Service Agreement" between the City of Courtenay and Lush Valley Food Action Society for the management and operation of a community garden; and

THAT upon execution of the "Licence of Occupation" and the "Community Garden Management and Operating Grant Fee for Service Agreement" with Lush Valley Food Action Society, Council approve a

grant up to \$5,500 from Gaming funds, to cover infrastructure improvements to the community garden area, subject to grant submission requirements as determined by staff.

Table 2: License of Occupation and Community Garden Management and Operating Grant Fee for Service Agreement

Organization	Term	Financial Support	In-Kind Support	Deliverables	Total
LUSH Valley Food Action Society	May 1, 2024 – Dec 31, 2028 (5 years)	\$12,000 2024 \$12,000 2025 \$13,000 2026 \$13,000 2027 \$13,000 2028 \$5,500 One-time grant to be used in any year to repair infrastructure	\$1,000/year City staff – Water to site, garbage & recycling; and maintenance of perimeter fence \$5,000 / 5 years \$700/year City Staff - Administering grant and reporting outcomes \$3,500 / 5 years Lease Assistance \$4,605/year \$23,025 / 5 years Permissive Tax Exemption \$6,453 2024 \$6,937 2025 \$7,492 2026 \$8,091 2027 \$8,739 2028 \$37,712 / 5 years	Matched Funding Annual reports summarizing progress with goals and contract deliverables and including: qualitative metrics and quantitative metrics. Annual financial reports	
Total		\$68,500	\$69,237		\$137,737 (5 years)

Project 3: Vanier Nature Park Garry Oak Restoration Project

Purpose: To restore and steward Garry Oak ecosystems in Vanier Park through invasive species removal, risk abatement, and community engagement.

On Feb 14, 2024, the following motions were carried:

THAT Council authorize staff to negotiate and execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Comox Valley Nature as required to initiate the Garry Oaks Remediation and Stewardship Project; and,

THAT upon the execution of the Memorandum of Understanding, Council approve a grant up to \$5800 from gaming funds, to cover tree risk abatement activities; and

THAT upon third-party environmental assessment review of the Garry Oaks Remediation and Stewardship Project, Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services to negotiate and execute a five-year agreement with Comox Valley Nature to support the initiative and activities outlined within the Comox Valley Nature Garry Oaks Remediation and Stewardship Project; and,

THAT Council approve up to \$4000 from gaming funds for each year of the five-year agreement in matching funds to support the Garry Oaks Remediation and Stewardship Project.

Table 3: Grant Fee For Service Agreement Comox Valley Naturalists Society

Organization	Term	Financial Support	In-Kind Support	Deliverables	Total
Comox Valley Nature Society	Oct 1, 2024 – Dec 31, 2028 (5 years)	\$4,000 2024 \$4,000 2025 \$4,000 2026 \$4,000 2027 \$4,000 2028 \$5,800 One time grant to be used in 2024 for tree risk abatement	\$700/year City Staff - Administering grant and reporting outcomes \$3,500 / 5 years	Matched funding Annual work plans Annual reports outlining progress with deliverables and work plans including qualitative metrics and quantitative metrics Annual financial report	
Total		\$25,800	\$3,500		\$29,300

Project 4: Courtenay Winter Farmers Market Rental Support

Purpose: To support the CVFMA on an interim basis to continue to operate a winter farmers’ market at Native Sons Hall and in the designated area in the adjacent parking lot, to support food security, support access to healthy food options, educate the community on agricultural issues and support local economic development in alignment with the City’s OCP objectives and policies and CVFMA’s priorities while the association works towards finding a permanent location.

Background – the Courtenay winter farmers market has operated in the Native Sons Hall on Saturday mornings in fall and winter months since 2008 - acting as a hub for social connections, providing year-round local food access, increasing food security for vulnerable residents (through the nutrition coupon program), and strengthening the local economy.

On December 6, 2023, the Comox Farmers Market Association made a presentation to Council noting that the viability of continuation of a winter market at the site was not tenable given current costs and revenues and requesting a reduction in facility rental fees.

On June 12, 2024, Council supported the Comox Valley Farmers market Association for a request for rental support for the winter farmer’s market in Courtenay at the Native Sons Hall on an interim basis. The following motions were carried.

THAT Council approve Comox Valley Farmers’ Market Association be charged the Adult Not-For-Profit Rate at the Native Sons Hall Grand Hall as established by the Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 2988, 2024; and

THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services to determine the service and reporting deliverables and form and content of an agreement between the City of Courtenay and Comox Valley Farmers’ Market Association for a three year term with two options to renew for an additional one year term each; and,

THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services to execute any agreements related to the assistance both in-kind and financial provided to Comox Valley Farmers Market Association, subsequent to the publishing of notice.

Table 4: Partnering Agreement Comox Valley Farmer’s Market Association

Organization	Term	Financial Support	In-Kind Support	Deliverables	Total
Comox Valley Farmer’s Market Association	Oct 1, 2024 - Jun 30, 2027 3 years, with 2 one-year options to renew for a maximum of 5 years	\$11,835 in foregone rental revenue (3-year total)	\$700/year City Staff - Administering grant and reporting outcomes \$2,100/3 years	Explore alternate locations for a year-round Farmer’s Market. Actively seek and apply for third party grant funds to support infrastructure and amenities. Annual reports outlining progress with deliverables including: qualitative metrics and quantitative metrics.	
Total		\$11,835	\$2,100		\$13,935 (3 Years)

Project 5: Community Winter Response and Storage Solutions

Purpose: To address urgent winter survival needs for people experiencing homelessness while improving safety, dignity, and community conditions.

On March 12, 2025, Council received a briefing note regarding a \$28,050 grant from the Comox Valley Community Foundation. The grant, administered by Community Services and delivered through three community agencies, supported the provision of peer led services to aide in the operationalization of infrastructure (washroom facilities, a storage unit), plus distribution of winter clothing and emergency supplies.

Table 5: Administration of the Community Winter Response and Storage Solutions Grant Received from the Comox Valley Community Foundation

Organization	Term	Financial Summary	In-Kind Support	Deliverables	Total
Funder Comox Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) Administration: City of Courtenay (CoC) Grant Delivery Comox Transition Society (CVTS) Solid Outreach Society (SOS) Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society (IWSS)	Jan 2, 2025- Dec 31,2025 (1 year)	Revenue: CVCF \$28,050 Expenses: CoC Administration \$1050 CVTS: Peer Support Supplies (\$22,000) SOS: Supplies (\$2, 500) IWSS: Supplies (\$2,500)	\$3,850 Additional administrative support to develop and oversee grant agreements with community agencies, liaise with funder, prepare reports for funder and Council.	A final report Including: high-level impact summary; key outcomes; qualitative metrics; quantitative metrics; and a brief financial summary.	
Total		n/a	\$3,850		\$3,850

DISCUSSION

Summary of Project Outcomes and Impacts in 2025

In 2025, the City of Courtenay partnered with local organizations to deliver five (5) key initiatives supporting environmental stewardship, food security, public health, economic resilience, and winter response for vulnerable residents. Across these projects, volunteers contributed hundreds of hours, residents accessed new services and programs, and community organizations demonstrated leadership and impact aligned with the City’s Official Community Plan (OCP).

Each grant agreement requires community partners to submit annual reports detailing how they have met the objectives of the grant in that year and are requested to provide both qualitative and quantitative metrics. Table

6 provides a summary of the information contained in the annual reports provided by each partner and received and reviewed by staff.

Table 6: Project Implementation and Key Accomplishments, 2025

Project	Key Outcomes/ Quantitative Metrics	Qualitative Impact/ Community Voice	Status
<p>Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy</p>	<p>Peer and Elder advisory committee established.</p> <p>A collaborative table plus 3 action tables to address CVSUS recommendations, coordinated monthly.</p> <p>Safe Inhalation Overdose Prevention Site opened.</p> <p>CRCL “Circle Team” launched.</p> <p>Cultural humility and safety training modules developed and delivered.</p> <p>Indigenous-led case management expansion.</p>	<p><i>We have strengthened and culturally informed service delivery and structural coordination improvements despite funding constraints.</i></p> <p>-CVSUS Coordinator</p>	<p>On track.</p> <p>Community driven, City actively engaged/supporting</p> <p>Significant inroads with respect to Indigenous and peer led framing and approaches</p> <p>Actively fundraising</p> <p>Seeking sustainable coordination model</p> <p>May require additional support to complete some deliverables: to collect and report substance use data and, to advance key actions related to municipal responsibilities (i.e. City policies / bylaws).</p>
<p>Share the Harvest Community Garden</p>	<p>Strong volunteer engagement and community participation.</p> <p>Inclusive programming</p> <p>Significant production and distribution of food - contributing to community food security.</p>	<p><i>“It builds the feeling of being a part of the community.”</i></p> <p><i>“Lush has made participation possible in spite of my challenges.... I was offered an accommodation at the community garden for people with disabilities as well as a financial subsidy to participate.”</i></p>	<p>On track</p> <p>Meeting all Deliverables</p> <p>Grant funding matched</p> <p>Community driven</p>

	<p>Reported Metrics: 44 work parties; 396 participants; 645 volunteer hours; 8+ educational workshops</p>	<p><i>“(I gained) confidence with tools and materials, loved that it was led and for women”</i> <i>“I appreciate the opportunity to grow food for the community, learn more about gardening and enjoy conversation of staff and volunteers”</i> -Garden participants</p>	<p>requiring limited City support – primarily to repair infrastructure</p> <p>Seeking sustainable funding model</p>
<p>Vanier Nature Park Garry Oak Restoration Project</p>	<p>Significant volunteer hours contributed.</p> <p>Ongoing invasive removal and canopy restoration.</p> <p>Strengthened Community and Indigenous engagement.</p> <p>Reported Metrics: 44 volunteers 966 Volunteer hours 8 Community education and outreach events engaging KFN, students at Vanier School, families, etc.</p>	<p><i>“If the Garry oak trees in Vanier could speak, they would likely say ‘Ah, the sunlight is returning to our grove. Let’s grow!’”</i> – CVNS Staff</p>	<p>On track</p> <p>Meeting Deliverables</p> <p>Grant funding matched.</p> <p>2025 workplan including restoration, community outreach and engagement activities were delivered as planned.</p> <p>Community driven, requiring minimal City Support</p>
<p>Courtenay Winter Farmers Market Rental Support</p>	<p>Strengthened community connections and food access.</p> <p>Strong food security and economic impact.</p> <p>Reported Metrics: 23 market weeks October 2024 – April 2025; 19,311 market visitors; Avg. 39 vendors; 8076 Nutrition coupons redeemed (\$20,241 – value of food made available at no cost to low-income families); \$571,510 gross sales;</p>	<p><i>“Support of a space for fall and winter markets is important. These markets provide a source of local food in the colder months when fresh produce is harder to find and grow for market patrons. Fall and winter markets give farmers and food producers a way to continue to get their products to customers and bring in some income in the slower season. The winter market helps keep food security and local agriculture at the top of people’s minds.”</i> - ED CVFMA</p>	<p>On track</p> <p>Meeting deliverables</p> <p>Seeking alternate sites for a permanent year-round market (have approached the CVRD).</p> <p>Actively seeking additional funds to maintain viability of the market during fall and winter months.</p>

	Est. \$857,264 total economic impact.		
Community Winter Response & Storage Solutions	<p>Peer workers provided support to outdoor washrooms at Connect;</p> <p>Winter clothing – jackets, scarves, hats, gloves, socks, boots – delivered;</p> <p>Laundry tickets delivered;</p> <p>Emergency supplies – first aid, flashlights, blankets -delivered.</p> <p>Reported Metrics: 750 hours paid peer employment @ \$25.00/hr</p> <p>25 hours peer service per week over a 30-week period.</p> <p>Conservative estimate: 150-200 people without shelter provided winter gear or emergency supplies. Most received more than 1 item.</p>	<p><i>“Boredom is one of the worst things — everyone needs purpose to exist. Helping people who are in a vulnerable situation like I was once in gives me a reason to exist.”</i></p> <p>-Peer reflection</p>	<p>Complete – final report submitted to CVCF.</p> <p>Achieved intended outcomes.</p>

The above projects demonstrate the community, social, economic, and environmental impact of the City working closely with and or providing financial support to community partners who are contributing significantly towards the City’s goals, policies, and actions as outlined in the Official Community Plan. Conducting this holistic review of grant and management fee for service agreements in Community Services highlights the benefits of working in partnership with organizations through a community development lens whereby residents are actively engaged in and contributing to the leadership, development, and sustainability of community driven initiatives and projects.

The review has also highlighted areas of improvement in the way grants and agreements are managed and reported on. Staff have identified inconsistencies in reporting requirements that make cumulative tracking, evaluating, and reporting more difficult for both the City and partners. Ensuring consistency across agreements and funding arrangements would ensure that community impact and strategic alignment can be highlighted and shared broadly to demonstrate the community benefit.

Staff have also noted that the City's distribution of funds to external organizations, outside of the grant-in-aid program administered by the Comox Valley Community Foundation, lacks a structured and consistent framework to ensure fairness and equity for fund recipients both in terms of process for accessing funds and in terms of obligations and responsibilities related to the receipt of City financial contributions. For example, all of the above projects required the recipient organization to enter into formal agreements with the City that include obligations regarding both financial and outcome reporting. Partners worked with City staff to receive approval from Council through staff reports and presentations. Comparatively, other organizations have received funds from the City through delegations and with no associated agreements or reporting requirements.

As such, staff are recommending the development of a community grants policy that would clearly outline consistent approaches to distribution of City funds to external parties and would address items like process, agreement requirements, and reporting expectations. Staff are recommending that this work reflect on and review not just Community Service administered fee for service or management agreement grants, but also funds distributed to community agencies at Council's discretion and direction. A framework would identify clear financial contribution thresholds that trigger certain requirements, to ensure there is fairness and consistency in how the City administers these funds and that what it requires in terms of agreements and reporting are appropriately aligned to the financial value of the contribution. It would also consider simplifying and aligning reporting requirements to enable annual reporting to Council on the impacts of these financial contributions and the alignment with City strategic priorities.

Staff will continue to provide an annual grant impact report moving forward in order to highlight the meaningful work delivered through strong partnerships between the City and local organizations and the impacts of the City's financial contributions towards achieving and delivering on its priorities and goals related to environmental stewardship, food security, economic resilience, public health, and support for vulnerable residents.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

OCP, 2022

Natural Environment

- Objective 1: Remaining sensitive ecosystems are protected; lost or degraded sensitive ecosystems are restored
 - o NE 1: Preserve sensitive ecosystem areas and the connections between them in a natural condition to the maximum extent possible.
 - o NE 8: Work in partnership to minimize the further introduction and spread of invasive species, and to develop an invasive species management plan to prevent, eradicate, contain, and control the spread of invasive species within Courtenay and the wider region.
- Objective 6: Information and opportunities are in place for the wider community to play an active role in the protection, restoration, and stewardship of the natural environment.
 - o NE 38: Work in partnership on the development and delivery of robust public education campaigns to promote a local culture of nature and watershed conservation, restoration, and stewardship. Opportunities on private land should include, but not be limited to, invasive species management, tree planting and care, pesticides, native, bio-diverse, and watershed sensitive landscaping.

Social Infrastructure

- Objective 2: Coordinated, inclusionary, and systems-based responses are in place to address evolving complex social issues

- SI 6: Consider social determinants of health and adopt an evidence-based approach to policy formation, community education, advocacy, and decision making, including ensuring equity priority voices are included in the creation, delivery, and evaluation of services.
- SI 7: Identify an appropriate role for the City in the delivery of social infrastructure in relation to other organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions that provide services for equity-priority groups.
- SI 8: Continue to support regional partners on program administration and delivery for homelessness, poverty prevention, mental health, addiction, and overdose prevention programs.
- SI 12: Work regionally to further recommendations of the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy Phase 1 Report (2021) including identifying an appropriate role for the City.
- Objective 3: Neighbourhood and community development-based organizing are leveraged as a source of community capacity and resilience
 - SI 21: Support volunteers, organizations, and other social assets to continue undertaking their work within the community
 - SI 22: Explore opportunities for establishing volunteer programs that promote community-based stewardship and restoration of parks and natural areas
 - SI 24: Support and build neighbourhood capacity in strengthening social connections, climate action, and community resilience through neighbourhood-driven initiatives based on asset based community development approaches

Food Systems

- Objective 1: All residents have access to affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate, and local food outlets within walking distance, including food access services and programs when needed.
 - FS 1: Support establishment of small-scale healthy food retail options such as both year-round and seasonal farmers markets, small to mid-size grocery stores, mobile food vendors, bakeries and restaurants within or in proximity to the Town and Neighbourhood Centres and Corridors including the Downtown Town Centre.
 - FS 2: Work with the Comox Valley Farmers Market Association to secure a permanent site and facility for its year-round operation in a suitable and accessible location with necessary supportive amenities, preferably near the downtown.
 - FS 7: Work in partnership with food security organizations and regional jurisdictions to ensure food access services and programs are available when needed.
- Objective 2: All residents have access to food growing opportunities within walking distance.
 - FS 11: Refine municipal regulations and identify the City's role in encouraging and integrating opportunities for sustainable urban agriculture (including community gardens, small plot farming, edible landscaping, greenhouses, and gardening to support pollinators and foraging) on municipal lands, boulevards, park spaces and vacant lands, including temporary accessory retail sales.
 - FS 13: Support educational programming on urban agriculture, traditional Indigenous foods practices, environmental stewardship, and food security.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

The administration of grant fee for service and management agreements, as well as third party grant administration, for projects related to Community Services is a core part of the division's work plan. As outlined in this report, each project requires in-kind support of staff either through agreement administration or through the participation of staff in planning and action tables, resulting in a range of in-kind contributions. Projects may also require support from other departments, such as Parks Services (Garry Oak Restoration), Operations (LUSH Community Garden), and Development Services (Substance Use Strategy).

The development of a community grant policy would form part of Community Services workplan and would occur over 2026 and 2027. Subsequent changes to agreements would occur as they come due for renewal.

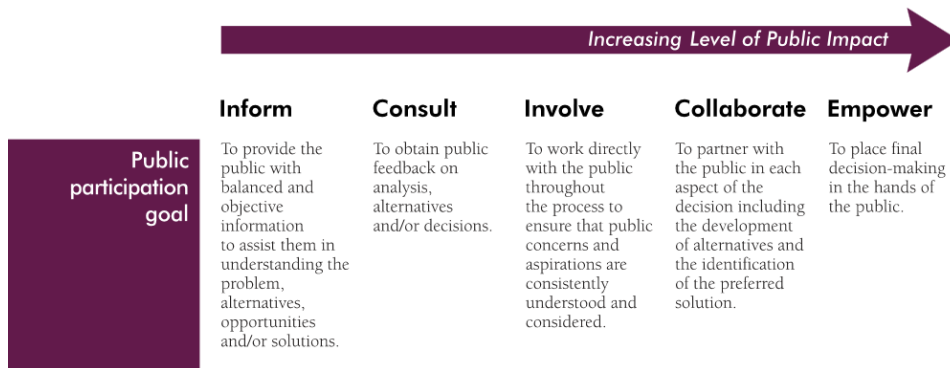
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Social Infrastructure - Identify roles for the City in the delivery of social infrastructure outlined in the OCP; Implementation plan for delivery of social infrastructure
- Food Systems - Develop a policy for community gardens and other small-scale food production spaces, identify community partners to support community garden projects

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council receive the “Community Services – Annual Grant Impact Report for 2025” staff report for information, and
2. THAT Council direct staff to review City funding contributions to community agencies, evaluate existing agreements, and research best practices to report back to Council with options regarding a community granting policy.
3. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

Prepared by: Joanne Bays, Community Development Coordinator, Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Reviewed by: Susie Saunders, Director Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)