

Office of the Chair

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File: 5080-02

February 8, 2023

Sent via email only: aproton@courtenay.ca

Mayor and Council
City of Courtenay
830 Cliffe Avenue
Courtenay, BC V9N 2J7

Dear Mayor and Council:

Re: Regional Social Development Grant Service Feedback

I am writing to you to request feedback from the City of Courtenay regarding the potential establishment of a new regional service to provide financial support to non-profit community-based organizations that are working to address social issues in the Comox Valley.

As leaders we are all working to strengthen our communities and improve the well-being and quality of life of our citizens. Our region's social health and wellness is driven by our built, social, environmental and economic environments. These local conditions and settings are supported by a broad spectrum of community groups, organizations, agencies and institutions that collectively strive to provide access to services and resources that help to ensure all residents, regardless of their circumstances or background, have their basic needs met and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

While health and social programs have long been under the jurisdiction of Provincial and Federal governments, significant gaps in funding and programming have emerged over the last few decades. This, together with other societal changes, has led to a weakening of our social fabric and the safety net that exists for individuals and families who fall on hard times. The underlying social issues impacting our communities right now are urgent, complex and interconnected. They include food insecurity, homelessness, social isolation, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, violence, accessibility, mental health and addictions and others.

In light of these community vulnerabilities and the inter-jurisdictional nature of social development, the CVRD Board has been considering regional approaches to help strengthen our social well-being and resiliency. In 2022 a scoping study entitled [Social Development Activities in Local Government](#) was completed that outlined potential activities that could be undertaken. Of the four areas of potential action, resource provision and specifically the development of a regional social grant program was noted as a 'big leap' that could support community social development priorities.

As our social vulnerabilities know no boundaries and services are often delivered to residents from across the Comox Valley, the proposal under consideration is to establish a new regional grant service. A valley-wide service could help build and strengthen important social services while enabling jurisdictional equity in funding such work and eliminating the piecemeal, consuming work local organizations often undertake to secure support for beneficial services and programs. In this regard, the service could function in a similar fashion to the CVRD's existing Recreation Grant Service which provides financial contributions to recreation programs and facilities that benefit and serve residents from across the Comox Valley.

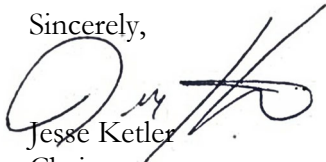
The Comox Valley Regional District respectfully acknowledges the land on which it operates is on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

As the Board is considering its strategic priorities for the term we wish to engage our municipal and electoral area partners on this potential initiative of a regional social development grant service. At this early stage a formal service establishment bylaw has not been drafted but we have provided some potential service concepts and configurations for your consideration in the enclosed table. These considerations are provided as possible options which could be advanced individually or together but do not reflect the full extent of service arrangements that could be developed. Your feedback on these specific options or alternatives is requested. The earliest such a service could be established is for the 2024 budget year, but this requires that we agree on a bylaw adopted no later than October 2023.

I know each of our local governments are challenged with maintaining our existing services and assets with limited revenue sources. Further, part of these existing services includes social programs (e.g. parks, recreation, arts and culture, planning, grants-in-aid) so in this regard I encourage your candid feedback about your needs and capacity, your level of support for this concept and whether a regional granting service of this nature can support your community's ambitions.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this and I look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,



Jesse Ketler
Chair

Attachment: Regional Social Development Grant Service Concepts

cc: Geoff Garbutt, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Courtenay

REGIONAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT SERVICE CONCEPTS

	Service Concept 1 “Operational Grants”	Service Concept 2 “Special Projects Grants”
Service Definition	To provide funding to assist established non-profit groups, and non-profit organizations, with expenditures incurred in the operation and the delivery of their existing social development programs.	To assist non-profit groups and non-profit organizations to deliver special events or to operate short-term projects or initiatives.
Service Scope	Funding would be considered for core operation and core program funding including administrative costs, program delivery, facility costs, and technical/material assistance. Grants could be unrestricted or set to a maximum award amount and/or number of consecutive years (e.g. 3-5 years) recipients could receive funding. Eligible organizations would be Comox Valley-based, established, non-profit social service organizations which have a mission to generate, promote or accelerate socially beneficial services or programs at a region-wide scale.	Projects must be clearly time-framed (e.g. less than 12 months in duration), not require permanent staff, and be projects which would not normally have been undertaken without this additional resource. Grants could be unrestricted or set to a maximum award amount.
Service Area	All jurisdictions in the region including City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and Electoral Areas A, B and C.	
Service Cost	<p>Given the nature of the benefits derived from this service it is proposed that service costs would be recovered through property value taxes applied to both land and improvements within each of the participating jurisdictions.</p> <p>A total annual budget available for grant awards could be set at whatever level deemed appropriate (e.g \$25,000 - \$200,000). For illustrative purposes an \$80,000 tax requisition across all CVRD member municipalities and electoral areas would equate to a tax impact of approximately \$2.25 for a property valued at \$800,000.</p>	
Service Cost Containment	In alignment with the desired total budget, a maximum annual amount that may be requisitioned through taxation for the service could be set in the service establishment bylaw. This would effectively provide an ongoing cap of the amount of money that could be raised through taxation.	

	Service Concept 1 “Operational Grants”	Service Concept 2 “Special Projects Grants”
Service Delivery	An operational grant service would allow the Board to provide funding to non-profit organizations that play a unique, strategic and essential role in the community. Administration of the service (grant awards) could be done internally by the CVRD or externally through a third-party.	A special projects grants service would allow the Board to provide funding to non-profit organizations to undertake new and innovative projects to serve the community. Administration of the service (grant awards) could be done internally by the CVRD or externally through a third-party.
	Option A – External Service Delivery A special projects grants service could be administered by a local community foundation or another chosen external body. This could enable further leveraging of funding and enable grant adjudication by individuals with knowledge and expertise specific to the social development sector.	Option A – External Service Delivery A special projects grants service could be administered by a local community foundation or another chosen external body. This would present strong opportunities for further leveraging of funding and enable grant adjudication by individuals with knowledge and expertise specific to the social development sector.
	Option B – Internal Service Delivery The service could be delivered by the CVRD with grant funding decisions being recommended by staff based on the applicant’s relevance and response to established regional plans, policies, priorities.	Option B – Internal Service Delivery The service could be delivered by the CVRD with grant funding decisions being recommended by staff based on the project’s relevance and response to established regional plans, policies, priorities.
Service Control	The CVRD Board or a standing committee could serve as the governing body of the service. Voting could follow the default weighted voting provisions provided in the Local Government Act or a custom arrangement could be structured to provide partial equality linked to population (similar to the newly established Regional Parks and Trails Committee).	