



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

BRIEFING NOTE

To: Council

File No.: 1845-20-SCS

From: Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Date: May 31, 2023

Subject: Strengthening Communities' Grant Update

PURPOSE: To update Council and local partner governments on the progress made and key outcomes resulting from the Strengthening Communities' Grant. This report covers the period from January to March 2023.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021 the CVRD was awarded a regional grant of \$1.093 Million through the Strengthening Communities' Services program to better support people experiencing homelessness in the Comox Valley. The City of Courtenay is administering the grant funds on the region's behalf. To effectively administer the grant the City works with an advisory committee consisting of representatives from the following organizations: Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness, Wachiay Friendship Centre and Comox Valley Transition Society. City of Courtenay grant administration is inclusive of the following work streams:

- Program Management: execution and renewals of service provider's agreements, program oversight including payment to service providers, monthly collection of metrics, communications and training and development,
- Stakeholder Management: host advisory committee meetings and act as primary liaison with UBCM, and;
- Reporting: provision of quarterly briefing notes to City Council and Municipal partners and preparation and submission of a final report to UBCM.

The first quarterly report was provided to Council and local government partners on December 12, 2022.

DISCUSSION:

The Strengthening Communities' Grant supports:

- **A Daytime Community Access Hub** that operates six days a week providing services focused on health, hygiene, personal safety, and administrative support to those in need. Funding supports security services and the creation/facilitation of a Community Advisory Committee.
- **Rural outreach on Denman and Hornby Islands** to facilitate connections to housing and support services.
- **A peer-based outreach team** to provide outreach and conduct cleaning and remediation activities around locations where support services are provided.

- **Community engagement and anti-stigma outreach activities**, including expanded community meal events hosted at Sunday Service for residents, local businesses and people experiencing homelessness.
- **Training and capacity building activities across municipalities** for local government and First Nation employees, politicians, outreach workers and volunteers focusing on trauma-informed

Updates since last report

Comox Valley Transition Society (CVTS), the operator of the Daytime Community Access Hub located at Connect, is in the process of launching its Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Based on leading practice, the purpose of this committee is to bring together a broadly representative group who will:

- Build and maintain positive and trusting relationships amongst the downtown neighbourhood, facility operators, program partners, business owners and residential homeowners;
- Facilitate information sharing and dialogue with the broader community;
- Collaboratively develop solutions to address or resolve any challenges or issues that may arise;
- Support the success of the warming centre by addressing any concerns related to the operation of the warming centre; and
- identifying and promoting community-building activities and events.

The CAC will be comprised of approximately 8-12 individuals who will represent local business owners, social services, the RCMP, VIHA, BC Housing, and community members. Recreation, Culture, and Community Services will provide a City staff liaison to the CAC. It is expected that the CAC will hold its first meeting shortly and will then meet quarterly. CVTS will lead the development and implementation of the CAC.

Comox Valley Street Outreach has shared with staff that their ability to provide peers for the Downtown clean up crew has been substantially impacted by the toxic drug supply, and earlier in the year also by adverse weather. While they were able to complete 14 hours of work by seven individual peer workers in March, they were unable to fill any shifts in April. However they are hopeful that they will be able to fill shifts in May and staff are working with the Coalition and AVI Health and Community Services to support this critical work.

With the SCG funding expected to end June 30, 2023, staff have submitted a request to UBCM for additional funding to support a one year extension. The funding request is for those activities previously approved under the SCG but without another source of identified funding. This includes staff and security at Connect for daytime services, peer outreach, community engagement, training, and rural outreach. Staff will report back to Council and local government partners should approval be granted by UBCM.

METRICS

Qualitative Feedback

Comox Valley Community members have submitted the following impact statements through the local service groups:

Thank you for providing the shower service. It is so important to maintain good hygiene and have a sense on normalcy. All these little things give hope. – VIHA worker

I don't know where I would go if this program wasn't here. No one wants to let us inside. – Connect Client

"Great Work Sunday Station. Keep making a difference and always know we are huge supporters of you all."

"I am new to my position and to working in the Comox Valley - and so seeing both this (Naloxone training) and the information on the Village come through your office/department is like a WOW to me. So just wanted to express appreciation."

"We look forward to your program every Sunday and really rely on this food to get us throughout the week"

"It gives me a sense of accomplishment and self-pride. I find myself lost on the days it's not open."

"Connect is so important to us. I can always go there and get help. Without it I would never get to eat."

"Having a weekly, consistent presence at these spaces has created a friendly, familiar, approachable face for our service in the community. Our Outreach Worker reports that after she leaves these spaces she is approached at other locations in the community for more in-depth and private supportive conversations about mental health and substance use." – Hornby & Denman Community Health Care Society

"It makes me feel proud to represent the street outreach team. When we do our clean ups it also gives us the chance to make sure peers are ok, and we can provide them with clean gear. Its really hard in this weather for people to get around because they are so cold, so I know what we are doing is helping." – Peer outreach worker with CVSO

Metrics January to March 2023

The graphic below shows a high-level overview of outcomes achieved in partnership with local service providers.

High Level Overview



Current Projects Update

PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	METRICS (JAN-MAR)	\$ DISTRIBUTED (TOTAL)
Comox Valley Transition Society Community Access Hub		▶ Provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shower program; • Washrooms; • PPE and harm reduction; • Overdose response; • Access to primary health care and addiction medicine; • Connection to ACT and Integrated Case Management; • Social connection; • Access to phone/internet services; • Survival gear distribution; • Storage of personal belongings; and • Housing applications and other administration support 	▶ # of meals provided: 5,652 ▶ # of showers provided: 501 ▶ # of service interactions: 10,206 ▶ # of hours of service provided: 1,800 ▶ # of PPE & harm reduction supplies distributed: 1925	\$550,000
Sunday Station Meals		▶ Supports an expanded and adjusted Sunday Service community meal event(s) that invite residents and business to share a meal and hear from the members in their community that are experiencing homelessness, and enhanced access to program information and grant activities online.	▶ # of meals provided to the community: 1000	\$12,623
Comox Valley Street Outreach Clean-Up Crew		▶ AVI peer-based outreach and remediation activities. The Comox Valley Street Outreach Clean-Up Crew provides 12 hours per week of cleaning services around locations where support services are being provided (e.g. sharps sweeps, local outreach, etc.)	▶ # of hours of service provided: 32 ▶ # of sharps collected: 95	\$15,008
Hornby & Denman Community Health Society Rural Outreach		▶ Current agreement supports a part-time outreach worker that will attend existing/established support program events to meet with clients to facilitate connections to a variety of support and housing services	▶ # of referrals to health services: 11 ▶ # of service interactions: 31 ▶ # of hours of service provided: 59 ▶ # of engagement events attended: 36	\$14,927
City of Courtenay Training		▶ To meet the goal: increased capacity of eligible applicants to work with homeless persons and indigenous organizations towards culturally safe and trauma-informed responses, the City of Courtenay is currently coordinating training opportunities.	▶ # of people trained: 271 ▶ # of HSABC memberships provided for organizations: 4	\$32,608

Past Projects

PROJECT	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	METRICS (JAN & FEB)	\$ DISTRIBUTED (TOTAL)
Community Cares Peer Outreach		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Community Cares Warming Centre, at 1580 Fitzgerald Ave (Salvation Army basement) January – March 2022 ▶ Provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals and snacks; • Washroom access; • Survival gear distribution; • Medical service outreach; • PPE and harm reduction supplies; • Housing referrals; and • Social connection 	▶ # of hours of service provided: 840	\$105,000

NEXT STEPS:

The next Strengthening Communities' Grant Service Update will be provided in Summer 2023. The current funding ends June 30, 2023 and a final report is due to UBCM July 31, 2023 after which an update to Council and local government partners will be shared. For monthly progress updates, information on our social service partners, contact information and the SCG training and development opportunities currently being provided, please visit our website at www.courtenay.ca/scgrant.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT Council receive the Strengthening Communities' Grant Update briefing note.

Prepared by:



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Concurrence:

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