



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council

File No.: 1850-01

From: Director of Finance

Date: May 22, 2024

Subject: Regional Social Development Grant Service Feedback

PURPOSE:

To seek Council direction on a Regional Social Development Grant Service (RSDGS).

BACKGROUND:

The City received a letter from the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) seeking feedback regarding the potential establishment of a new Regional Social Development Grant Service.

DISCUSSION:

The CVRD, as per the letter dated February 8, 2023 (Attachment 1), is requesting feedback from the City of Courtenay on the potential establishment of a new regional service that would provide financial support to non-profit community-based organizations that are working to address social issues in the Comox Valley. This service is described as a potential regional approach to help strengthen the Comox Valley's social well-being and resiliency through the provision of grants to support community social development priorities.

While the letter outlines that a regional approach to social grant funding could support "jurisdictional equity in funding" through establishing a regional approach, staff note that without a fulsome review of all grant functions in the Comox Valley, at both local and regional government levels, there remains an absence of structure to ensure this funding equity occurs in practice.

The City and the CVRD currently have numerous grant and grant-like programs that support both City serving and regional serving organizations.

- The City has its own grant-in aid program, with a total annual budget of \$50,000, administered through the Comox Valley Community Foundation
- The City provides Permissive Tax Exemptions
- The City also provides grants through other means, such as Management/Service agreements and direct requests to Council.
- The City is a participant in the regional recreation grant function
- The CVRD also has other grant functions funded through Electoral Areas

It is noted that a regionalized grant service could be a potential solution to the cross jurisdictional services and benefits provided of many of the region's not-for-profits for the City's residents and regional population. However, the development of an additional grant service must take into consideration the already existing grant functions in both local and regional governments to determine eligibility criteria, potential overlap, and adjudication processes to ensure the most effective and equitable distribution of funds by local governments and amongst the various granting programs and processes.

By creating a single source of regionalized funding, it could provide each local government efficiencies as well as improve cohesion for organizations seeking funding, however it could also lead to a reduction in

control and oversight of funds being granted. There will always be instances where an organization will try focus their request to a single local government and or where a local government has an interest in funding a particular organization or purpose.

To ensure maximum equity among municipalities and organizations supported by the local municipalities, work must be done to examine and give recommendations regarding regional and municipal grants to ensure that all organizations receive fair opportunity to seek grants and that all municipalities appropriately contribute to these grants. This work would best be completed regionally in order to bring the fulsome picture together to enhance understanding of the local government funding opportunities, duplications, and limitations in the Comox Valley.

Staff recommend the City inform the CVRD that it is not supportive of participating in the RSDGS at this time and that the City request the CVRD to coordinate a fulsome review of all grant and grant like programs of all municipalities and the CVRD to ensure equity among contributors to the grant service. Following such a review the City could then indicate its interest in participating in a regional social development grant function pending the review of further information such as grant purpose, eligibility, adjudication methodology and reporting.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

Permissive Property Tax Exemption Policy 1960.00.01
Comox Valley Community Foundation – City Grant in-aid Memorandum of Agreement

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial implications are not known as Council and CVRD board direction would dictate the impact. If the City takes part in the RSDGS it is recommended that the City look critically at reducing all current grant and grant like contributions to ensure the City is not financially supporting organizations through multiple channels.

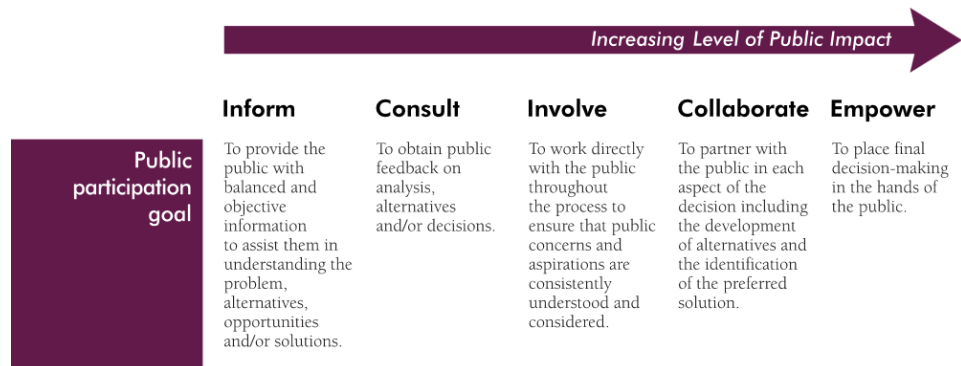
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Financial Sustainability - Ensure capacity to accommodate big change

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

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



OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council direct staff to inform the CVRD that it does not support participating in the proposed Regional Social Development Grant Service at this time; and THAT the City request the CVRD to coordinate a fulsome review of all grant and grant like programs of Courtenay, Comox, Cumberland, and the CVRD to inform future grant service development.
2. THAT Council direct staff to inform the CVRD that it would support participation in the proposed Regional Social Development Grant Service.
3. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter from Chair Ketler to City of Courtenay RE: Social Development Grant Service

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