



City of
Courtenay

Together Responding to Homelessness in the Comox Valley

Impact of the
Strengthening Communities' Services Grant



Better
together

Presented by:
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November 13, 2024, City Council Meeting

Organizing For Action

Strengthening Communities' Services Program

- In 2021, homelessness had reached unprecedented levels in the valley.

According to the Comox Valley 2023 Homelessness Count, homelessness had more than doubled in the region since 2020, rising from 132 to 272 individuals.

- The federal and provincial response to this urgent nation-wide phenomenon was the creation of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program – an opportunity to apply for a one-year, one time grant **with a specific aim:**

To support unsheltered homelessness populations and help address community impacts in the wake of COVID 19.

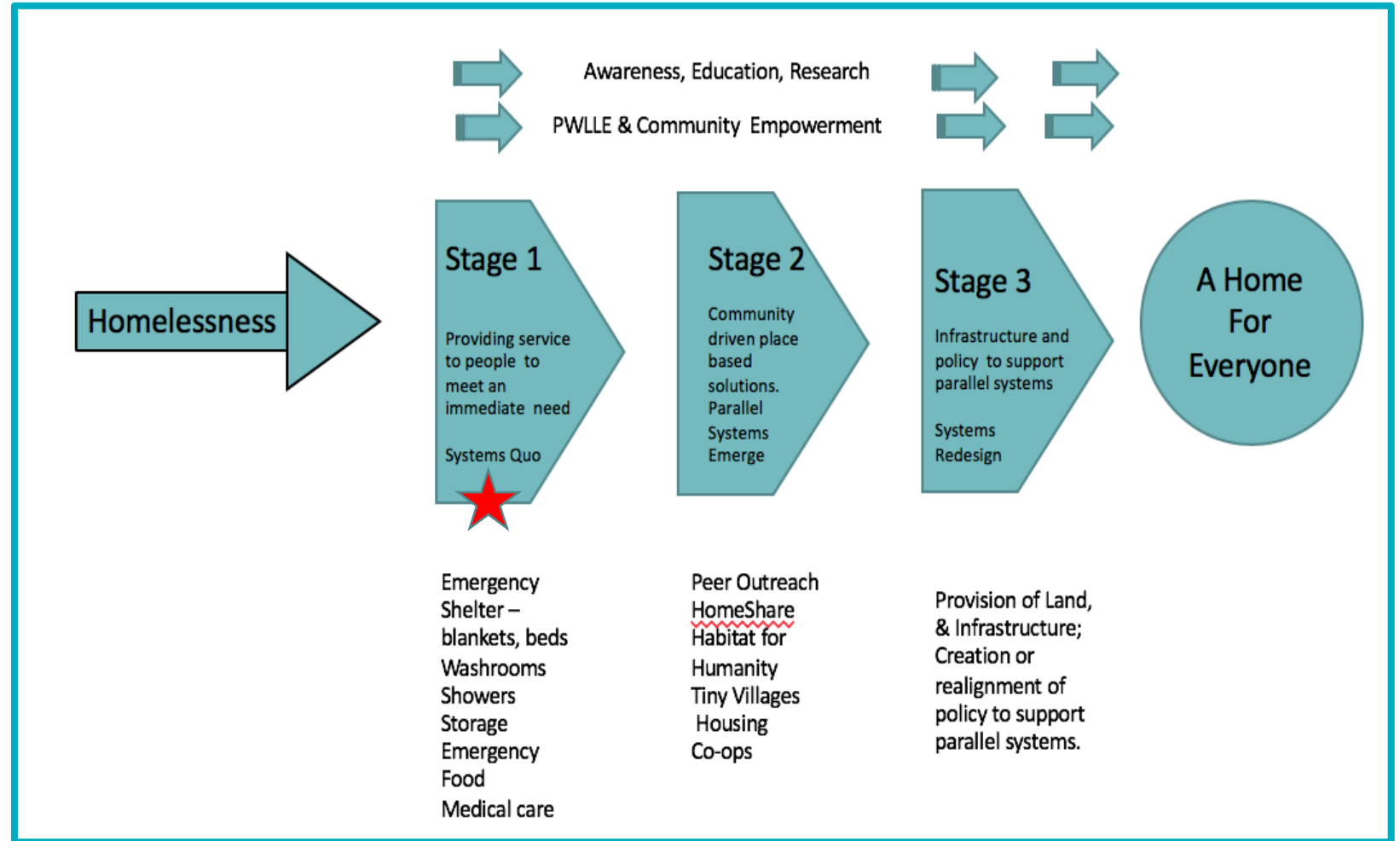
Strengthening Communities' Services Grant

Specific Outcome Expectations set by the Funder:

- *Improved health and safety of unsheltered homeless people living in public or private spaces.*
- *Reduced community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where unsheltered homeless populations seek temporary shelter and services.*
- *Increased capacity of applicants to work with homeless persons and Indigenous organizations towards culturally safe and trauma-informed responses.*

Strengthening Action on Homelessness

A multisectoral collaborative group met to develop a proposal designed to meet and support community service organizations where they were at while laying the foundation to sustain efforts beyond the term of the grant.



Strengthening Communities' Services Grant

In 2021, the group successfully secured \$1.09 M for their project, initially administered by the CVRD. Funded activities included:

- A temporary emergency warming centre.
- A temporary emergency-based overnight shelter.
- A daytime community access hub.
- Rural outreach on Denman and Hornby Islands.
- Peer led outreach and clean-up services.
- Community engagement and anti-stigma outreach activities.
- Training and capacity building activities across municipalities and the community.

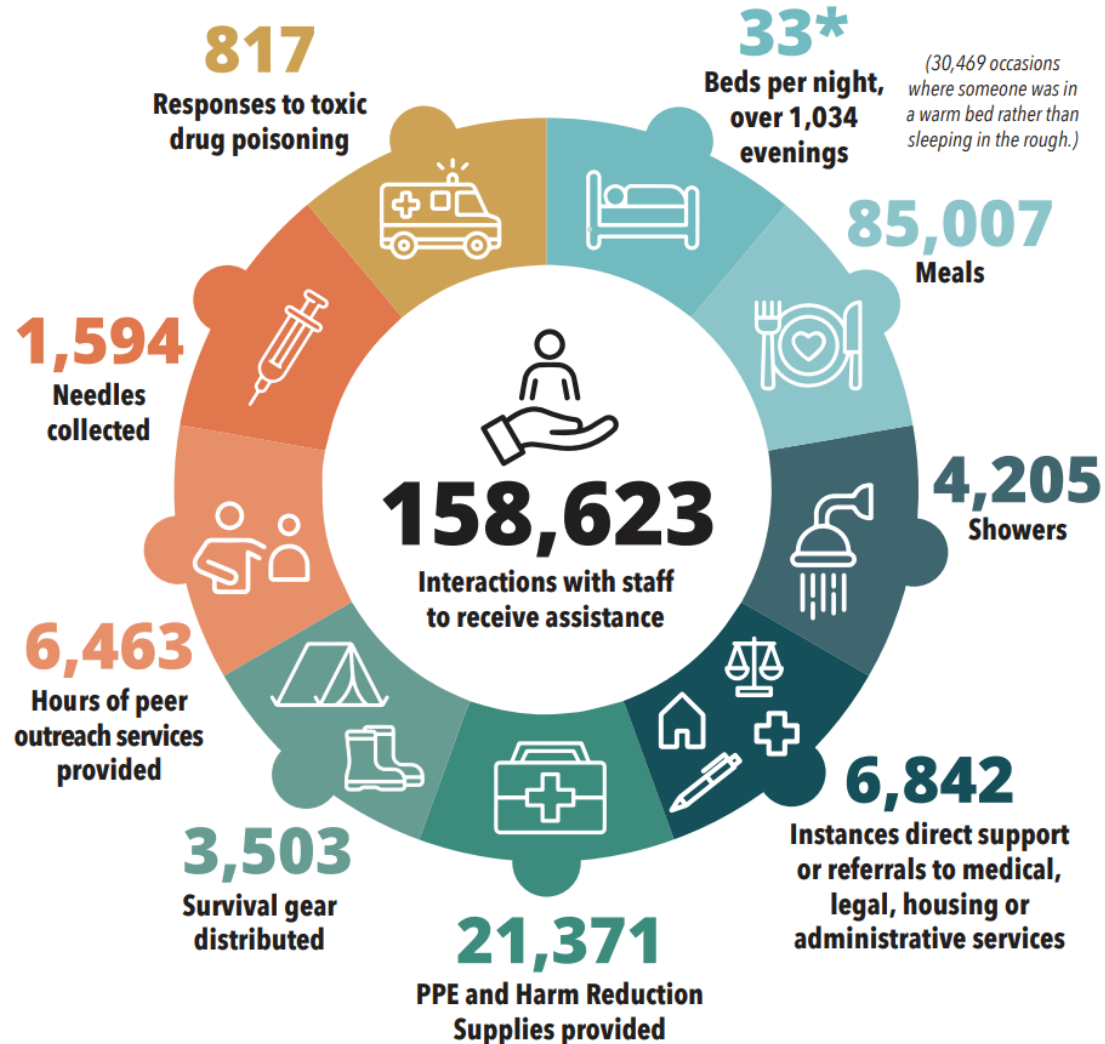
In 2022, the City of Courtenay began administering the project on behalf of the CVRD until it's completion in 2024. (As the project unfolded, the time-line was extended , and additional funding was received bringing the total to \$1.96 M.)

Outcomes & Impacts

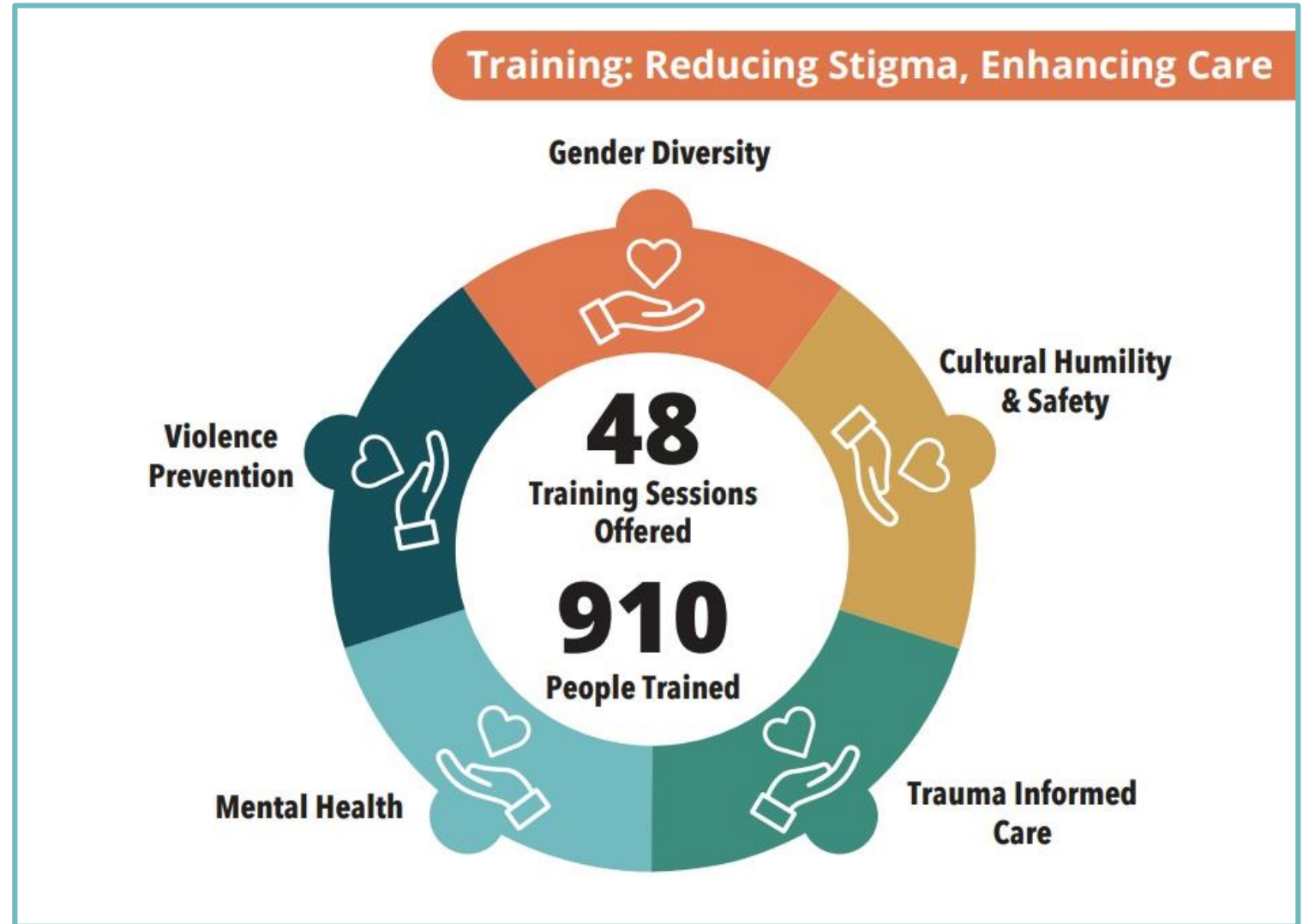
Improved Health and Safety of Unsheltered Homeless People

272 people were identified as experiencing homelessness in the Comox Valley, per the 2023 Homelessness Count

Up to 150 people per day received assistance through one or more key venues/activities



Increased Capacity to Work With Homeless People and Indigenous Organizations



Reduced Community Concerns About Public Health & Safety

The immediate support provided through the SCG focused on relationship-building, reducing stigma around homelessness, and engaging those with lived experiences, helped to mitigate concerns.

- **Weekly Community Meal Expansion:**

Neighbours from all walks of life gathered for warm, nutritious meals prepared at Sunday Station, along with clothing and grocery coupons, fostering a sense of belonging.

- **Peer-Led Outreach Crews:**

Teams conducted up to three daily walks to clean the streets and engage residents. They built relationships sharing their stories and expertise, and connecting people to services. They collected 611 needles and responded to 43 toxic drug poisonings.

Lasting Legacy

Saving Lives

“Without this program I wouldn’t eat”

-Participant, Sunday Station

“I believe CONNECT is an essential part of this community, and were it not for the tireless efforts of our team I have no doubt at all that many, many, people would have died from overdoses and/or the adverse effects resulting from homelessness. Though options for people to exit homelessness into affordable housing are very limited, we do the best we can to support the people who depend on CONNECT.”

-Connect Staff

“Our Support Worker attended The Kitchen (a community meal program) regularly establishing a supportive relationship with a client there that carried on outside of their time at the Kitchen. She worked with the client in an effort to access in-patient substance use detox and treatment however the client remained on a waiting list. Later this client had a mental health emergency and police were called. Our Support Worker was able to connect with the client, family, and police and provide support to the client and family, helping them with next steps and accessing off-island services and treatment following the crisis”

-HDCHCS Staff

Empowering Lives

"The increasing awareness around having PWLLE as experts in this field is undeniable. Awareness of CVSO, their work, and the positive impact they have in the community is increasing, and with their work they are helping to destigmatize PWLLE of substance use and addiction and offer their voice and expertise in community matters that impact them."

-CVSO Staff

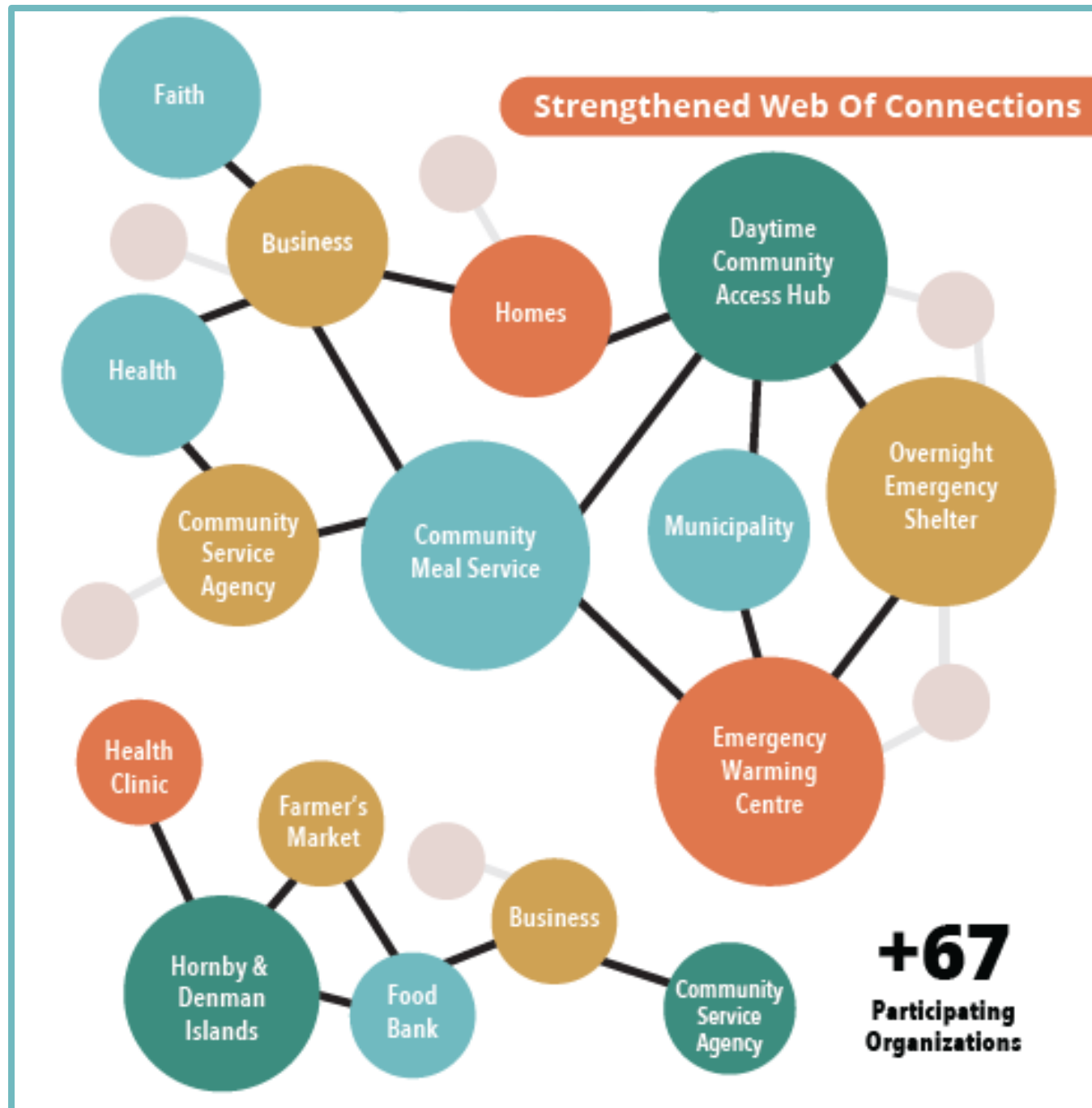
"Outreach work has opened doors for me — building connections and inspiring me to make a difference."

-Peer Outreach Worker

"With the support of Connect she transitioned into supportive housing. Since that transition she has been sober for over a year, attended college to become a community support worker and has just yesterday graduated her program with top marks."

-Connect Staff

Strengthened Web of Connections



Thank You

