



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council

File No.: 1660-20 Fire

From: Fire Chief

Date: December 11 2024

Subject: Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding: 2023 Update and 2025 Application

PURPOSE:

To provide an update to the 2023 Community Resiliency Investment Grant Program – FireSmart Community Funding and Supports and request approval to submit a new 2025 Grant application.

BACKGROUND:

The goal of the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) grant funding program is to fund activities that reduce the risk of wildfire, improve a community's resiliency to the effects of wildfire, and empower communities to participate in wildfire risk reduction and resiliency. This report seeks authorization to submit a joint CRI grant funding application for 2025, with the Comox Valley Regional District, Village of Cumberland, and K'omox First Nation as a partner. The 2025 application will include:

- Supporting the newly drafted regional Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP) recommendations, highlighting possible fuel management and FireSmart mitigated demonstration site projects.
- Continued work to integrate the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act lens further into local FireSmart education and training activities.
- Implementing the FireSmart BC Plant Program.
- Offering specialized training for local FireSmart representatives and Comox Valley volunteer firefighters.
- Continuing the successful regional curb-side wood debris removal (Chipping Program) for the Comox Valley.

Appendix A provides a summary of completed initiatives from the 2023 Community Resiliency Investment Grant program – FireSmart Community Funding and Supports.

DISCUSSION:

The CRI Grant program is intended to reduce the risk of wildfires and mitigate their impacts on BC communities. To achieve this goal, the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports stream was created to provide support to local governments and First Nations in BC. The aim is to increase community resiliency by undertaking community-based FireSmart public education, planning, and activities that reduce the community's risk from wildfire and increase Comox Valley residents' and local governments' readiness for the ever-increasing wildfire threat. The 2025 application in partnership with the previously mentioned communities could result in up to \$2,000,000 in grant funding over two years. The application guidelines allow each community to access funds up to a maximum of \$200,000

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The grant funding request will be \$200,000 per applicant (up to \$2,000,000 combined for the region)

Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding: 2023 Update and 2025 Application**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

None

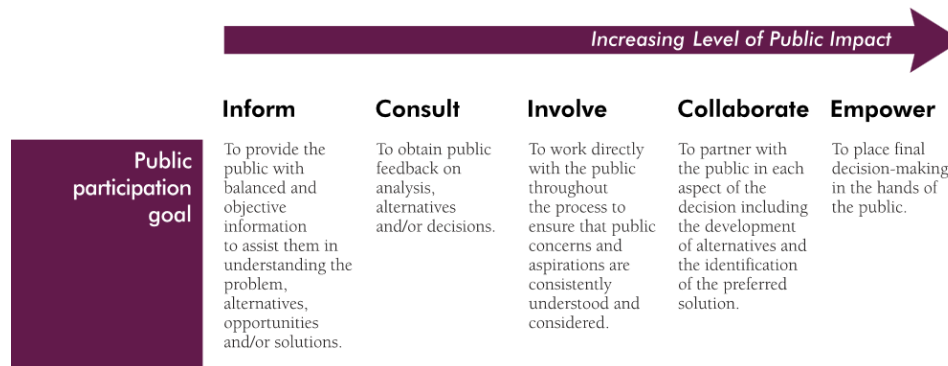
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Public Safety - Build capacity for emergency planning and local response

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

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



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT based on the December 11 2024 staff report "Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding: 2023 Update and 2025 Application", Council approves OPTION 1 and authorize an application made to the Union of BC Municipalities Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding – FireSmart Community Funding and Supports for up to \$2,000,000 to be used in 2025-2026 to support the regional application by the Comox Valley Regional District (primary applicant); AND FURTHER, THAT as a joint applicant, Council agrees that the primary applicant will apply for, receive, and manage the grant funding on their behalf, if successful in grant funding.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

Prepared by: Kurt MacDonald, ECFO, Fire Chief

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

Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding: 2023 Update and 2025 Application**Appendix A - Community Resiliency Investment Grant- FireSmart 2023 Summary of Completed Projects and Initiatives****Purpose:**

Summary of the 2023 Community Resiliency Investment Grant FireSmart application activities/initiatives undertaken in partnership with the City of Courtenay, Comox Valley Regional District, Village of Cumberland, Town of Comox, and K'ómoks First Nation to enhance FireSmart education and training within the Comox Valley.

During this, what was to be one-year grant, Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) offered an unsolicited extension end date of October 31, 2025 from Oct 31, 2024. This was done as many grant approvals were being greatly delayed in being awarded and communities trying to meet new required grant structures. e.g. FireSmart Resiliency committees.

Highlights of Accomplishments:

- CV Regional FireSmart Resiliency committee members planned, directed and implemented all FireSmart initiatives/projects/events as well as managed contractor positions support the coordinating or delivery of these.
- 170 Wildfire Home Ignition Zone Assessments (HIZ) Assessments that support education and Implementing FireSmart principles on private and community land areas.
- Chipping program - Another successful initiative that removed approximately 85 tons of debris from the Comox Valley.
- FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition Program renewed two neighborhoods for their commitment to reduce their vulnerability to wildland fire.
- Region wide FireSmart education campaign that included: Newspaper ads, Radio advertising, a dedicated FireSmart webpage, social media posts/replies with support from CV local governments Communications staff.
- Cross- Jurisdictional and regional collaboration meetings along with Tabletop and/or Functional exercises were created and delivered such as the multi-agency wildfire exercise that engaged CVRD fire services, Courtenay, Comox and BC Wildfire.
- Initiated the development of the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan for the Comox Valley (to be completed February 2025).

Budget:

The grant approved budget was \$454,112. The actual funding spent so far at the time of this report has been \$375,112 with \$79,000 approved by UBCM to carry forward into 2025 to continue supporting the FireSmart delivery as a new 2025 grant application is being submitted. The following are a few initiatives this carry forward funding will support:

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- Chipping Program (off site debris removal) – which has increase in demand
- Administration position to assist the CV FireSmart Resiliency Committee with administration, tracking 2025 grant application, coordinating events and information session with Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP)/FireSmart and records management.
- Local FireSmart Representatives (that could be representatives from CV local fire services) to continue Home Ignition Zone Assessments and/or attending events.
- FireSmart Plant and Landscape Specialist with strong Horticulture knowledge and experts with CV native plants and landscapes

At this time, 2023 grant funds are looking to be fully utilized.