



## COUNCIL REPORT

To: Paul Gipps, CAO

Date: May 11, 2021

From: Jen Kanters, Community Support Specialist

File No: P 21-12

Subject: **Strengthening Communities' Services Application for Funding**

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### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** Council support the UBCM Application for Strengthening Communities' Services Grant.

### STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

**Foster Safety and Well-being** - We will pursue through direct action, advocacy, and partnerships with Westbank First Nation, with government and local service providers to further advance the health of our community. We will continue to advocate for investments in community health, needs-based housing, emergency preparedness, increased police services, and other community services that foster safety and well-being in West Kelowna.

**Strengthen Our Community** - We will provide opportunities for the residents of West Kelowna to build connections and strengthen the collaboration with our diverse neighbourhood associations. Together with our community we will celebrate successes and embrace our culture, such as promoting and supporting our strengths and diversity, addressing our shared needs and shaping our community's future.

### BACKGROUND

The City of West Kelowna requests Strengthening Communities' Services funding of \$157,193.50 to help increase the impact that our community's peer network can have in building relationships, guidance and support between those who are street entrenched and outreach workers, bylaw and protective services, and neighbourhood, business and community members around our shelter sites. The goal is to fund "Peer Ambassadors" under the existing program operated by Partners in Resource (PIERS) and an assigned City Bylaw Officer for specialized populations to join local efforts, seek those who are at risk and bridge positive dialogue, ensure appropriate resource allocation and create a safe environment for all in our community. This proposal will not only offer training

opportunities to these new positions, but also address ongoing safety concerns in our community. This proposed program would run from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

## **DISCUSSION**

With pandemic assistance dollars coming into our community, added shelter spaces at the BC Housing funded emergency shelter program at the Super 8 Motel have created more areas of congregation, which create greater risk for COVID-19 transmission and perceptions of reduced public safety. Despite these welcome new beds, we know that some people may not access shelter, and choose to remain outside. The City is in a time of flux; we await confirmation as to which programs (both motel and shelter) will be available in the next year, and any that will cease. If the motel and shelter close, even temporarily, this could create a scenario whereby more than 50 people would potentially need to shelter outside. As the third wave of the pandemic progresses, the City seeks essential funding support to ensure vulnerable individuals can access basic needs supports and harm reduction supplies and are prioritized for housing and screened for COVID-19 vulnerabilities. Should the entire funding ask not be given, the Bylaw Officer may be reduced to part time accordingly.

### **Community Safety and COVID-19 Response**

Community public health and safety concerns have arisen from neighbouring businesses and residences close to the shelters. Specifically, citizens have reported an increase of biohazardous waste and materials, individuals who are under the influence of substances and experiencing mental health crisis, as well as vandalism and litter. Security has been hired by site operators to help with perimeter checks, however are not contracted to do community clean up, harm reduction, referrals to services or mediation and neighbourhood relations. Fire safety is also a concern attached to those individuals who are sleeping unsheltered and camping in non-permitted spaces.

Funding support will help reduce community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where we see congregation of people who are experiencing homelessness, in addition to curbing the spread of COVID-19 among a vulnerable population. This City and its partner organizations will achieve this by the following:

- Pairing up trained Peer Ambassadors and the assigned Bylaw Officer with outreach workers and hired security to ensure that positive and intentional work occurs to resolve conflict, unsafe activity, vandalism and bio hazardous waste around perimeters of shelter sites.
- Assessing of needs for individuals, including those vulnerable to COVID-19 with Early Detection and Screening methods.
- Being proactive in supporting community safety in a multifaceted approach.
- Assuring that encampments have access to extra survival and hygiene supplies and place increased attention on the importance of hand cleanliness
- Adding a Bylaw Compliance Officer position to relieve pressure from the existing Bylaw team, allowing for a more timely response to concerns that are raised.

- Providing positive visibility of the City's efforts to address issues in the areas of congregation of the vulnerable community.
- Ensuring Fire Safety Compliance for those who are sheltering outside.

### Services, Partnerships and Engagement

This proposal builds on our existing community resources of social support services, Bylaw Compliance and established peer programs. It compliments and enhances work that is already being done in our community to address the needs of those experiencing homelessness. Teams will support community clean up, warm referrals to support services and daily PiT counts to help better understand the needs of our community. With these positions, the City of West Kelowna will have the ability to support:

- A specialized Bylaw Officer to spend more time building relationships with both our local service providers, and those who are most vulnerable
- Identification and engagement of those that are sheltering outside and unable/unwilling to access other mainstream services, including shelter
- Population of a map, in order to identify where people experiencing homelessness are positioned within the community, in order to track where they are, movements and changes/trends
- Targeted outreach to ensure appropriate housing applications have been submitted/locate individuals outside to make connection to housing opportunities
- Support of transition back into community when the motel funding concludes
- Team work that will create better connections with those most vulnerable to transmission and increase capacity of work experience and skills training to people of lived experience, which improves the community's access to education and awareness around the experience of homelessness.

### Training and Education

Staff will receive training in areas of COVID-19 vulnerability screening, Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility, peer support, harm reduction, first aid, conflict resolution, bylaw orientation, fire safety and mental health first aid. This training is funded by this grant application, and will be delivered by our community partners at PIERS and KANDU (Kelowna Area Network of Drug Users), in consultation with Westbank First Nation.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are making progress in finding solutions aimed at helping those experiencing homelessness. Strengthening Communities' Services funding is essential for the City to continue to connect people with the services they need, bridge service gaps and provide a timely response to issues that are raised in our community. This funding will also provide an opportunity to demonstrate the City of West Kelowna's commitment to ensuring a safe community for every citizen.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Strengthening Communities' Services grant would cover the costs associated with the additional Bylaw officer, including wages, administration costs and benefits, uniform, armour and IS supplies (see attachment 2). The City of West Kelowna can contribute in-kind for vehicle and office space. All training opportunities will be funded through this grant.

### **Alternate Motion:**

THAT Council not support the funding application of the UBCM grant for Strengthening Communities' Services.

## **REVIEWED BY**

Brent Magnan, Planning Manager

Mark Koch, Director of Development Services

Shelley Schnitzler, Legislative Services Manager/Corporate Officer

## **APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY**

Paul Gipps, CAO

Powerpoint: Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Attachments:**

1. SCS 2021 CWK Final (Application)
2. SCS-West\_Kelowna-Budget-2021