

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: December 5, 2023
FROM: Protective Services
SUBJECT: 2024-25 UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MUNICIPALITIES (UBCM) COMMUNITY RESILIENCY INVESTMENT (CRI) FIRESMART COMMUNITY FUNDING STREAM GRANT ALLOCATION

REPORT: 23-120
FILE: 1855-20

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Corporate Services and Public Safety be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the 2024 Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program grant allocation application attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report No. 23-120 and, if successful, direct staff to provide overall grant management as per UBCM's grant requirements, and;

That Council endorse staff to apply for the 2025 UBCM CRI Program grant allocation when intake becomes available, and if successful, direct staff to provide overall grant management as per UBCM's grant requirements.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to obtain Council's endorsement for this grant allocation. For the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to be eligible for Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) grant funding, a Council resolution indicating support for the grant allocation and direction to provide overall grant management is required to be submitted.

☐ Information Report ☒ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

The Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program is a provincial program intended to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire to communities in BC through community funding, support and priority fuel

management activities. Whistler is classified as 'Wildfire Risk Class Two' with approximately \$25 billion in assets located within two kilometres of identified wildfire risks. Additionally, with over three million visitors annually, the community is exposed to greater likelihood of human caused ignitions.

The RMOW's wildfire program consists of three main activity areas including:

1. The Whistler FireSmart Program (WFP) which educates, guides and supports private property owners' wildfire hazard mitigation efforts on their land and treats by hand identified priority municipal forest;
2. Contracted mechanical fuel thinning work in Whistler's Wildlife Urban Interface (WUI) which aims to reduce the ability of a fire to spread directly through connected forest fuels; and
3. Broad fire safety public education which aims to inform Whistler residents and guests about fire safety and emergency preparedness.

On April 5, 2022, Council adopted the [Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan](#) (CWRP) ([Administrative Report No. 22-052](#)), which is the latest iteration of a master wildfire-planning document to guide all activities in the above three wildfire related areas over the next five plus years. Recommendation number six of the CWRP is to "Stay up to date with local, provincial and federal funding sources that support wildfire risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and disaster mitigation work". This aligns with the core principles of the WFP.

New in 2024 - Base funding is scaled to offer eligible applicants with lower risk of wildfire, generally demonstrated by WUI Risk Class Four and Five, to apply for up to \$100,000 per year (for up to two years), and applicants with a higher risk of wildfire, generally demonstrated by WUI Risk Class One to Three, to apply for up to \$200,000 per year (for up to two years). If a community with higher risk class applies for funding for two years of eligible activities, they are eligible to apply for up to \$400,000 (i.e., \$200,000 per year).

The 2024-25 UBCM CRI Program grant allocation will cover deliverables for the WFP. As part of the 2024-25 intake, First Nations and local governments are now eligible to receive FireSmart Community Funding and Supports funding for FireSmart activities through an allocation-based program if they meet the following requirements:

- a higher risk of wildfire, generally demonstrated by WUI Risk Class One to Three (the RMOW is Risk Class Two);
- have a FireSmart position;
- participate in a Community FireSmart and Resiliency Committee; and
- have an acceptable CWRP or Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

The RMOW WFP meets the above requirements and thereby qualifies to apply for this more simplified allocation approach for grant funding. The advantage of the allocation-based approach is more simplified application and final reporting process over the next two years.

Analysis

WFP Funding:

The WFP engages the community to educate, motivate, guide and support activities intended to reduce the potential impact of wildfire within the municipality. Building a strong understanding and appreciation of local wildfire threat and advocating FireSmart solutions are cornerstone to these efforts. Program activities include FireSmart outreach and presentations, conducting FireSmart assessments, organizing and leading FireSmart Work Days (FSWD) with groups of homeowners, organizing and leading volunteer groups in the Adopt-a-trail campaign (treating forest around the valley trail system), deploying the FireSmart crew to deliver the FireSmart Community Chipper Service as well as reducing fuel load in dense juvenile municipal forest. Collectively, these activities are the key components designed to progressively move the community toward greater wildfire resilience.

Program administration includes strategic planning, procuring funding, participating in Community FireSmart Resiliency Committees, conducting assessments at the neighbourhood level (FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition Program), at individual home level (Home Partners Program), and at identified critical infrastructure locations. Further, it delivers public education (market booths, workshops for stakeholders, speaking at Stata Annual General Meetings, onsite during FSWDs), presentations to municipal Council, digitizing work into the municipal Geographic Information Systems, and internal permit application reviews.

The RMOW has received similar CRI grant funding for the last six years. The total annual budget for WFP is approx. \$530,000. If successful, the UBCM CRI funding will cover \$200,000 per year for the next two years of the cost of this program which includes funding for staff and other resources to support administration and operations.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

[Administrative Report No. 22-052 – Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan](#)
[Appendix A to Administrative Report No. 22-052 – Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan](#)

The 2022 and 2023 FireSmart Grant Administrative Reports [No. 21-125](#) and [No. 23-013](#) were presented and approved on November 2, 2021, and January 24, 2023, respectively.

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities

☐ Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing

☒ Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

☐ Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

☐ Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

☐ Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

Municipal initiatives designed to increase wildfire protection and resiliency for the community are well aligned with many of the strategic objectives of the OCP including in particular:

4.1. Goal Land use and development are effectively managed to maintain Whistler's unique sense of place, protect Whistler's natural environment, provide a high quality of life for residents and provide exceptional experiences for our visitors.

7.2. Goal Natural areas are proactively managed for and resilient to climate change.

8.7. Goal Ensure Whistler is a safe and secure resort community.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The total annual 2024 budget for WFP is \$530,000. If successful, the UBCM CRI funding will cover \$200,000 of associated program costs each year for the next two years.

LIL'WAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lil'wat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy. This section identifies areas where RMOW activities intersect with these relationships.

There are no specific considerations to include in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☒ Inform ☐ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

Ongoing community engagement is led by the FireSmart Supervisor. The WFP will continue to work closely with homeowners through program delivery and will provide information to Whistler residents on how to FireSmart their property, assist them with understanding options, prioritizing work, fuel removal, engaging arborists and connecting with Parks and other land managers, as needed.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – 2024 CRI Program Grant Application
Appendix B – 2024 CRI Program Grant Guide and Allocation

SUMMARY

The RMOW has been actively working to reduce the risk of wildfire in the community for over 15 years. The municipal wildfire protection program provides significant FireSmart and ongoing fuel thinning investments as key components of a wildfire loss reduction strategy for the community. Securing outside funding for these programs is crucial in realizing wildfire risk reduction priorities as per 2022 CWRP while reducing municipal budget impacts. As such, the purpose of this report is to obtain Council's endorsement for the 2024-25 UBCM CRI Program grant allocation application(s).

SIGN-OFFS

Written by:

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Reviewed by:

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