



# WHISTLER

## REPORT | ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL

**PRESENTED:** April 20, 2021  
**FROM:** Corporate and Community Services  
**SUBJECT:** UBCM STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES' SERVICES GRANT  
**REPORT:** 21-046  
**FILE:** 854

### COMMENT/RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**That** the recommendation of the General Manager of Corporate and Community Services be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION

**That** Council endorse the grant application to the Union of B.C Municipalities', for the Community and Indigenous Outreach, and Temporary Housing Initiative under the Strengthening Communities' Services funding stream to a maximum of \$450,000;

**That** Council support the proposed activities in this grant application;

**That** Council support the Resort Municipality of Whistler Emergency Program providing overall grant management for the project, if funding is successful; and further

**That** Council support the addition of a new project to the Five Year Financial Plan to track and accommodate the spending, and direct staff to bring forward a future amendment to the Five Year Financial Plan for Council consideration.

### REFERENCES

Appendix A - Strengthening Communities' Services Program and Application Guide

Appendix B - COVID-19 and Gender Based Violence in Canada

Appendix C - Howe Sound Women's Centre Purpose Letter

Appendix D - Howe Sound Women's Centre Letter of Support

Appendix E - RCMP Letter of Support

Appendix F - Whistler Public Library Letter of Support

Appendix G - Whistler Community Services Society Letter of Support

Appendix H - Squamish Lil'Wat Cultural Centre Letter of Support

Appendix I - Sea to Sky Communities Centre Letter of Support

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Report is to obtain Council's endorsement of the proposed grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities' Services grant, which aims to support unsheltered homeless populations and address related community impacts of COVID-

19. For the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to be eligible for UBCM grant funding, a Council Resolution indicating support for the grant applications and direction to provide overall grant management must be submitted with the applications.

## **DISCUSSION**

UBCM is currently accepting grant applications to the Strengthening Communities' Services funding stream. The grant program and application guide can be found in Appendix A of this report. Through the grant program, the RMOW seeks to fund the Community and Indigenous Outreach, and Temporary Housing Initiative.

### **Background**

Some of society's most vulnerable members face challenges that have worsened in the context of COVID-19. This includes groups that are more likely to experience homelessness and are more vulnerable to the health and safety risks associated with living unsheltered, such as Indigenous people, women, and gender diverse people. People who lack adequate housing are more likely to suffer from a range of health challenges, including mental health and substance abuse issues, and are highly vulnerable to COVID-19. As shown in Appendix B, crises such as COVID-19 can be a catalyst for gender based violence.

The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia are providing shared funding to local governments under the Safe Restart Agreement to help manage the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. These investments are intended to protect public health and safety, prepare for potential future waves of the virus, and further support the safe reopening of economies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in unsheltered homelessness in many communities, and related community health and safety challenges. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' definition describes 'unsheltered homelessness' as, "people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions." This definition includes people living in public or private spaces without consent (parks, sidewalks, squares, vacant buildings, lots, etc.) and people living in places not intended for permanent human habitation (vehicles; garages, attics or buildings not designed for habitation; makeshift shelters, shacks or tents).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMOW has worked with Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS) and several local non-profits to provide support for the demand for increased services from the community. This includes increasing the capacity of the local Food Bank as well as assisting in the facilitation of safe COVID isolation sites for those in high density housing. The isolation site project was identified as a potential temporary solution to address some of the issues of homelessness or those at risk of homelessness by expanding the current program to include individuals beyond those in self isolation or quarantine. This program in collaboration with WCSS and BC Housing has successfully provided safe isolation for 30 individuals since late January 2021.

Prior to COVID-19, the Whistler Public Library (the "WPL") provided space for outreach and coordinated space for drop in social services for community members. Due to the restrictions put in place by provincial health orders, these outreach programs were temporarily suspended. These services included WCSS Outreach, Work BC Employment Advisor, Whistler Welcome Centre Settlement Worker and Sea to Sky Community Services Poverty Law Advocate. These services were provided on a drop in basis one day a week.

### Grant Proposal Purpose, Deliverables and Approach

The focus of the proposed grant activities will be based primarily on outreach, peer support and providing temporary emergency shelter. This project would commence upon grant funding approval, (approximately 90 days from the deadline submission of April 16, 2021), and continue for the duration of one year from the approval date.

As COVID-19 has exasperated the issues of many community members living in vulnerable situations, the RMOW is proposing a project in partnership with several local non-profits including Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS), Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (SLCC), Howe Sound Women's Centre (HSWC) and Sea to Sky Community Services Society (SSCS) to provide increased access for the local population to services and support. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional & mental health support, access to healthy food, referral, transportation, clothing and peer support as well as temporary emergency shelter. The RMOW Emergency Program will provide oversight for the administration and disbursement of grant funding while the non-profits will provide the outreach workers and referrals to support services including referrals for potential emergency shelter.

All proposed activities will be reimbursed upon the submission of a final report no later than 30 days from project completion. Staff are applying for the maximum amount of \$450,000, but only the actual funds spent will be reimbursed based on the community's needs.

The proposed access sites for this outreach will be at the WPL and the SLCC, both of which are central, established community hubs, with easy access for members of the community. The proposed program will fund:

1. Outreach objectives by providing:

- Outreach services at the Whistler Public Library seven days a week totaling 60 hours
- Outreach workers from WCSS, SCSS and HSWC with full access to services and programs located at the Whistler Public Library.
- Indigenous Ambassador Program at the SLCC providing outreach services on a part time basis at 20 hours per week. This program is proposed to include a peer support model incorporating Indigenous teachings and cultural practices including indigenous elders from the Lil'wat and Squamish Nations.
- A total of \$166,000 in total program expenditures.

2. Temporary Shelter objectives by providing:

- Temporary housing for those unsheltered and under-housed, who are fleeing domestic violence or other unsafe living situations made worse through the COVID pandemic. Outreach support will also be provided to allow them to work towards a stable and safe living situation for themselves and/or their family. The proposed location of this housing is utilizing existing vacation rental units and hotel rooms through an expansion of the COVID self-isolation program currently being provided through BC Housing.
- Temporary shelter being provided in nightly rentals, hotel rooms or a combination thereof for a maximum 30 day period per stay.
- Referrals for emergency shelter will be provided for each individual or family through WCSS, SSCS, SLCC or HSWC.
- RMOW staff support for any after hour requests for referrals from RCMP through the Emergency Support Services Program which currently provides lodging, food, and clothing to evacuees in a disaster for a period of 72 hours. This program is currently

- administered through the Emergency Social Services Coordinator, the Emergency Program Coordinator and a team of Canadian Red Cross ERT (Emergency Response Team) and PDAT (Personal Disaster Assistance Team) volunteers.
- A total of \$284,000 in program expenditures which includes \$144,000 for the accommodation based on market rental rates. The remainder of the funds will be for additional outreach support.

### Relevant Rationale and Letters of Support

The letters of support provided in Appendices C through I, indicate a high level of need in our community to address several challenges – each currently worsened by the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic

As shown in Appendix C and D, the Howe Sound Women's Centre (the "HSWC") has reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought attention to the increasing rates of domestic violence happening in communities across the country. This is apparent in the Sea to Sky region as HSWC are now seeing even higher number of gender based violence as well as increased rates of high conflict divorce and separation. In some cases in Whistler, this has been amplified by the risks associated with high-density communal living situations.

As supported in Appendix E, the RCMP have reported an increase in calls related to domestic violence in the sea to sky corridor due to COVID-19. This fact, combined with increased social isolation and decreased access to in person support has created the need to have increased safe housing supports in place. The closest transition house to Whistler is approximately 45 kilometers away in Squamish which can create a barrier especially for women with children in school who are fleeing an unsafe living situation.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### Official Community Plan

This grant application align with the following goals, objectives and policies of Whistler's OCP:

#### ***8. Health Safety and Well Being***

**8.2. Goal:** Promote efforts to enhance the quality of life for all residents and employees.

**8.2.1. Objective:** Strive to increase affordability for residents.

**8.2.1.1. Policy:** Create strategies and mechanisms to ensure basic needs, including housing, food, transportation, childcare, recreation and health care, are affordable for all who live and work in Whistler.

**8.6. Goal:** Create and embed effective governance mechanisms and partnerships to create trust, responsibility and accountability.

**8.6.2. Objective:** Work with partners to achieve mutual benefits.

**8.6.2.1. Policy:** Collaborate with community and regional partners wherever possible and practical.

**8.11. Goal:** Strive to ensure community health and social services and facilities meet the physical, mental, spiritual and social needs of residents and visitors.

**8.11.1. Objective:** Engage with service providers and the community to maintain and coordinate high quality services with a particular focus on the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

**8.11.1.9. Policy:** Engage with social service providers to ensure an adequate level of services is maintained.

## **BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

If the grant application is successful, the project described above will be 100% grant funded. Staff time to administer the projects will be funded through existing 2021 RMOW operating budgets.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

The RMOW Emergency Program collaborated with community stakeholders to provide input as subject matter experts in their fields. This included WCSS, HSWC, RCMP, SLCC, and SSSC.

## **SUMMARY**

Staff asks Council to endorse the grant application for the Union of B.C Municipalities' Strengthening Communities' Services Grant, which will enhance the capacity of the community recovery effort from the effects of COVID-19. A Council resolution indicating support for the grant application, and direction to provide overall grant management must be submitted with the application.

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Donohue  
EMERGENCY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

for

Ted Battiston  
GENERAL MANAGER OF CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES