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REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 04, 2023

SUBJECT **Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness - Funding Extension**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To detail implications of the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness' (ACEH) request for annual funding from the CRD of \$150,000, with an annual cost of living indexation, for five years.

BACKGROUND

Formed in 2016, the ACEH Society is an Indigenous-led non-profit organization, registered charity, and housing provider operating on Lək̓wəŋən territory with a Vancouver Island-wide mandate to provide culturally supportive, affordable housing and services that work to address the disproportionate number of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness.

As the only Indigenous-led organization on Vancouver Island solely focused on ending Indigenous homelessness, the ACEH's approach is unique and plays a vital role in developing, prototyping, and implementing targeted interventions in serving the housing, health, and cultural needs of a chronically underserved and overrepresented population of Indigenous Peoples. Specific to the Capital Regional District (CRD), the ACEH receives funding support through two distinct streams. Operational funding provided through CRD Service 1.224 Community Health and project funding through the Reaching Home Program (RHP). These are distinct processes with the operational funding being at the discretion of the Board and the project funding subject to the terms and conditions of the RHP.

The ACEH was provided three years of seed funding (\$150,000/year) from 2020 – 2022. The ACEH indicated that it would be self-sufficient following the initial three-year investment. However, at the request of the ACEH the CRD Board provided an additional year of funding at \$150,000 in 2023. With the conclusion of four years of funding from the CRD, the ACEH sent a letter to the CRD Board on August 15, 2023, requesting an extension to annual funding for five years (see Appendix A). Also attached to this report is the ACEH's 2022/23 Service Agreement Report (Appendix B), their presentation to the September Hospitals and Housing Committee meeting (Appendix C), and their 2023 Audited Financial Statements (see Appendix D).

At the September 13, 2023, CRD Board meeting, the Board directed staff to return to the October Hospitals and Housing Committee with a staff report detailing implications associated with the ACEH's request for five years of funding (2024 – 2028).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the Capital Regional District commits to three years of annual funding to support the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness starting at \$155,250 (2024) and increased annually based on the consumer price index for Victoria; and
2. That staff be directed to amend the Financial Plan to reflect the extended Service Agreement funding commencing in 2024.

Alternative 2

That the Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Capital Regional District not continue providing operational funding to the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness as the commitment to provide seed funding has concluded.

Alternative 3

That the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness - Funding Extension report be referred back to staff for additional information based on the Hospitals and Housing Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Since 2019, the ACEH has received a total of \$1,295,859 through Service Agreements (\$600,000) and the RHP (\$695,859). The Service Agreements are negotiated annually and the RHP funds are through an open call, which are reviewed by the RHP Community Advisory Board and/or the RHP Indigenous Community Advisory Board, which is supported by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre as the Indigenous Community Entity (Indigenous CE).

Alternative 1

Proposes funding for the ACEH that would start at \$155,250 in 2024, which is an increase of 3.5% from 2023. If approved, the funding would increase annually in alignment with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Victoria as reported through BC Stats. Any commitment of funds starting in 2027 would then be at the discretion of the incoming CRD Board and would be considered alongside other initiatives identified as CRD Board/Corporate priorities. This alternative looks to limit the commitment of funds and the requisition implications beyond 2026 and provides flexibility to the incoming CRD Board to balance the resourcing of activities with potential requisition impacts starting in 2027.

Alternative 2

As the initial funding commitment was approved for a total of three years including 2020, 2021, and 2022, an extension was provided as a CRD Board-directed initiative for 2023. This alternative provides the CRD Board with the opportunity to consider its commitment to provide the ACEH with start-up support concluded now that the ACEH has grown significantly and now operates with \$5.5 million (M) per year in annual revenue and expenses.

First Nations Reconciliation

The CRD's Statement of Reconciliation acknowledges that for the CRD to have a positive relationship with First Nations it needs to acknowledge, respect, and complement their Indigenous laws, customs, and systems of governance. The ACEH advances this statement through:

- Directly engaging First Nation governments within the capital region and across Vancouver Island and works to collaborate with and report out to First Nations on intervention and initiative design, delivery, program implementation and outcomes.
- Directly engaging Indigenous Peoples in the design and development of a range of system transformation undertakings while also investing in a society that provides direct intervention of a homelessness episode through a culturally appropriate dual model of care.

Service Delivery Implications

The CRD Board has, through the 2022-2026 Corporate Plan, directed staff to "support a coordinated, regional, and collaborative response to homelessness." The ACEH remains the only Indigenous-led non-profit society on Vancouver Island that is specifically focused on addressing the needs of Indigenous Peoples experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

The ACEH is positioned to advance the following related to a five-year housing strategy:

- Culturally Supportive Housing for Youth
- Perinatal Transition Home for Intergenerational Healing
- Wellness House (Including pre and post treatment transitions)
- Island-Wide Expansion¹

Appendix E contains a more detailed breakdown of these various initiatives.

The requested funding would support enhanced leadership and operational effectiveness in advancing the ACEH's strategic directions. Specifically, and if approved, the funds will be used to support the ACEH's governance, leadership and operations related to delivering on their Strategic Plan, three-year Operations Plan, and five-year Housing Strategy.

If the CRD Board approves an extension of funding to support ACEH operations, staff will review the ACEH's year-end report which is expected in Q1/Q2 2024 to ensure the existing Service Agreement terms have been met. Provided that all the obligations have been met, CRD staff will then begin negotiating a renewed Service Agreement that will provide funds to the ACEH in line with their April 1 – March 31 fiscal year.

If no extension of funds is approved by the CRD Board, staff will continue to work with the ACEH to consider opportunities to support their activities through the RHP, which is expected to be renewed April 1, 2024. It is also important to note that the ACEH is eligible to receive RHP funds through both the Designated Funding Stream, administered by the CRD and the Indigenous Funding Stream, Administered by the Victoria Native Friendship Center.

Alignment with CRD Plans and Strategies

The identified ACEH priorities support the following CRD Plans and Strategies:

- CRD Board Priority 2a and CRD 2023 – 2026 Corporate Plan 5a-1: Increase supply of affordable, inclusive, adequate housing in the region.
- CRD 2023 – 2026 Corporate Plan 5c-1: Support a coordinated, regional, and collaborative response to homelessness.
- Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (2018) 4.2: Reduce Pathways into homelessness.
- Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (2018) 4.3: Reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness.
- Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (2018) 4.4: Reduce the proportion of Indigenous Peoples Experiencing homelessness.

CONCLUSION

The ACEH plays an important role in supporting the needs of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness that includes running a range of support service and housing programs as well as work associated with system transformation and collaboration. The work of the ACEH is supported through both the CRD's Community Health service and the RHP.

The CRD has provided the ACEH with \$150,000 per year as core funding, starting in 2020. The ACEH has received a total of \$1,295,859 through Service Agreements (\$600,000) and the RHP (\$695,859). Also, since that time, the ACEH has grown as an organization into an organization providing a range of services and reporting a total annual budget of \$5.5M in revenue and expenses.

¹ It is important to note that CRD funds can only be used for those activities taking place within the capital region.

The staff recommendation proposes to provide the ACEH with a three-year funding extension 2024 – 2026 to support the continued efforts to address the disproportionate number of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness. Any further extension of funding starting in 2027 would be at the discretion of the incoming CRD Board and could be considered alongside other priorities identified through corporate planning.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the Capital Regional District commits to three years of annual funding to support the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness starting at \$155,250 (2024) and increased annually based on the consumer price index for Victoria; and
2. That staff be directed to amend the Financial Plan to reflect the extended Service Agreement funding commencing in 2024.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: ACEH Funding Request Letter, Submitted August 15, 2023
- Appendix B: ACEH Funding Request Presentation – September 6, 2023
- Appendix C: ACEH 2022-23 Service Agreement – Annual Report
- Appendix D: ACEH 2023 Audited Financial Statement
- Appendix E: ACEH Five-Year Housing Strategy Identified Priorities