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REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 07, 2024

SUBJECT Reaching Home Program Agreement

ISSUE SUMMARY

The Capital Regional District (CRD) and the Government of Canada need to negotiate and execute an amending agreement to allow the CRD to continue to act as Community Entity (CE), responsible for administering the Reaching Home Program (RHP): Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

BACKGROUND

The CRD is administering \$11.6 million (M) in Designated Communities funding between 2019 and 2024 on behalf of the Government of Canada through the Reaching Home Program (RHP).

The RHP is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. This program provides funding to urban, Indigenous, rural, and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs. The RHP aligns with the goals of the National Housing Strategy (NHS) to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable, and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2028.

Local priorities are set out in the 'Community Plan to End Homelessness', which is approved by a Community Advisory Board (CAB). Appendix A, attached, contains a summary overview of the range of sub-projects currently supported through the RHP. The CAB supports the CRD, as CE, in implementing the RHP by undertaking a range of activities in critical community-based program delivery. Appendix B, attached, is the CAB Terms of Reference.

On November 28, 2023, the Government of Canada notified the CRD of its intention to extend the RHP Contribution Agreement (which was to end on March 31, 2024) for a further two years for an additional amount of \$6.1M. Following consultation with the CAB, the CRD has launched a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to identify projects for funding starting April 1, 2024. The draft agreement amendment is attached as Appendix C.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That Capital Regional District staff be authorized to negotiate, execute agreements with the Government of Canada and receive funds through the Reaching Home Program and do all things incidental to finalize such agreements and deliver the program.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred to staff for additional information based on Hospital and Housing Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

The Reaching Home Program directly supports vulnerable Canadians and will directly contribute towards advancing this priority through the work of sub-projects in community. Though the CRD as CE, does not directly provide social and/or clinical services in support of vulnerable populations, the funding is allocated to several community projects that do. Projects are identified through RFPs with priorities guided by the ‘Community Plan to End Homelessness’ and specific recommendations from the CAB. Upon receipt of applications for funding, CE staff screen applications for eligibility and then distribute to CAB members for evaluation and scoring which results in a list of project recommendations. This process is to help ensure alignment between the needs of individuals experiencing or are at imminent risk of homelessness as outlined in the Community Plan to End Homelessness and the requirements of the RHP.

Legal Implications

In additional to the general terms of the RHP Contribution Agreement related to administrative and program delivery obligations, there are three distinct projects that are also requirements of the agreement amendment:

Coordinated Access and Assessment (CAA)

Section 8.1 of Appendix C outlines, that in partnership with the Indigenous Homelessness Community Entity, the CRD will be required to have a Coordinated Access system in place by March 31, 2026. The minimum requirements, as prescribed by Canada, include expectations related to governance, access points, triage, vacancy matching and referrals.

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

To support the successful implementation of CAA, Section 8.2 of Appendix C stipulates that communities must implement HIFIS to achieve the minimum requirements for Coordinated Access.

Point-in-Time Count and Enumeration

To further data collection activities, Canada is requiring a Point-in-Time Count be completed every three years, starting in the fall of 2024. This activity will include both an enumeration and survey of people experiencing homelessness in the community to standards set out by Canada. Additionally, future enumerations shall be conducted annually, in a similar time period beginning in 2025 as outlined in Section 8.5 Appendix C.

Financial Implications

Consistent with projections in the 2024-2028 CRD Provisional Financial Plan, Table 1 shows the total RHP funds expected from the Government of Canada for the next two years. Note that the Government of Canada’s fiscal year cycle is April 1 – March 31.

Table 1: Designated Communities (DC) Funding by Year

Designated Communities	2024-2025	2025-2026	Total
Funding for Initiatives	\$2,594,879	\$2,594,879	\$5,189,758
Administration	\$ 457,919	\$ 457,919	\$ 915,838
Sub-Total	\$3,052,798	\$3,052,798	\$6,105,596

The RHP responsibility over program oversight includes financial administration, reporting and record keeping as well as oversight of eligible expenditures. Quarterly, the CE submits claims to the Government of Canada based on actuals spent and annual is subject to financial review conducted by the Government of Canada and is subject to an annual audit of the program's activities conducted by a third party. These conditions remain unchanged in the amending agreement.

Service Delivery Implications

All costs associated with the delivery of the RHP are recovered through the administrative allocation as permitted by the program. Therefore, there is no additional cost associated with program delivery.

Intergovernmental Implications

Entering into these agreements will sustain a partnership that has proven effective in addressing the Government of Canada and CRD's mutual interests in working to better address the challenge of homelessness in Canada. The delivery of the program through a community-based approach also positions the CRD in an influential role in working with the provincial government and its agencies to address homelessness.

CONCLUSION

The CRD can sustain its partnership with the Government of Canada to address issues related to homelessness by continuing to act as the CE for the RHP. To better position itself to execute the agreements in a short time frame, staff recommend the CRD Board delegate the finalization and execution of the agreements to CRD staff. In total, this will represent an additional \$6.1M for RHP funds into the community with all costs for delivering these funds to eligible community-based projects being covered through the administrative allocation as permitted by the program.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That Capital Regional District staff be authorized to negotiate, execute agreements with the Government of Canada and receive funds through the Reaching Home Program and do all things incidental to finalize such agreements and deliver the program.

Submitted by:	Don Elliott, MUP, Senior Manager, Regional Housing
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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Reaching Home Program Sub-Projects 2023-24
- Appendix B: Reaching Home Program Community Advisory Board Terms of Reference
- Appendix C: Draft Reaching Home Program Amendment Agreement 2024-2026