

**REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 04, 2020**

SUBJECT Reaching Home Additional COVID Funding

ISSUE SUMMARY

An information report is being provided to update the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board on the allocations of the \$1,918,197 in additional COVID-19 emergency response funding from Reaching Home – Canada's Homelessness Strategy, to support the region's COVID-19 response capacity for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

BACKGROUND

The CRD is designated by the Government of Canada as the Community Entity to administer this funding, and provides financial contributions through sub-project agreements to non-profit organizations based on a Community Plan, which is approved by a Community Advisory Board (CAB). Through an Agreement with the Government of Canada, the CRD is currently administering \$870,753 in the Designated Communities funding stream and \$337,256 in the Indigenous Homelessness funding stream in 2020-2021.

On March 18, 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Government of Canada would be providing Reaching Home with an additional \$157.5 million (M) under Canada's Economic Response Plan to Support People Experiencing and at Risk of Homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. The initial 2020-2021 incremental COVID-19 funding allocation in the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area was \$1,312,852 (\$917,880 Designated Communities and \$394,972 Indigenous Homelessness funding). Approximately 98% of this funding has been allocated to projects providing urgent services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

On October 10, 2020, the CRD was notified that the Government of Canada had allocated an additional \$236.7M of COVID-19 emergency response funding and that the CRD would be receiving an additional \$1,918,197 to support efforts to respond to the pandemic's impact on vulnerable populations in the region. The breakdown of funding is as follows:

- \$1,341,107 allocated under the Reaching Home Designated Communities funding stream.
- \$577,090 allocated under the Reaching Home Indigenous Homelessness funding stream.

This funding will be added to the statutory agreement that the CRD already has with the Government of Canada. The funding can be used for a range of needs such as purchasing beds and physical barriers for social distancing, providing services to people forced to shelter outdoors and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters. Communities have flexibility to use the new funding to meet local needs and priorities. This funding is focused on three priorities:

1. Extend COVID-19 measures for those experiencing homelessness;
2. Find permanent housing for those temporarily housed; and
3. Help communities to reduce the inflow into homelessness, including homelessness prevention and shelter diversion activities.

On April 28, 2020, the CAB approved the Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Funding Strategy (Appendix A) which addressed three key priority areas for action.

1. Short-term sheltering and support programs for people currently without shelter and at risk of infection from the COVID-19 virus;
2. Keeping individuals stably housed and/or sheltered during the emergency response period; and
3. Ensuring individuals and households in Reaching Home Program funded programs have short-term access to goods and/or services to meet basic needs to which access may have been disrupted due to the emergency response to protect against COVID-19 contagion.

In order to allocate the funding in a timely manner, the Strategy supports a contracting approach to distributing the funding and CRD staff have been working with local coordinating bodies to identify programs and or projects requiring funding to address these priorities. The CRD has recommended to the CAB that this approach be sustained to support use of the new funding.

CRD staff have been engaged with Reaching Home funded programs as well as organizations and groups in four geographic areas (Victoria, Sooke, Sidney and Salt Spring Island) and local First Nations to identify needs and has subsequently received and has allocated funding to a number of community based initiatives (see Appendix B).

CRD Regional Housing, through the CRD's Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), is facilitating a Regional EOC Vulnerable Populations Working Group to support a coordinated response with local government, other levels of government and community agencies.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding report be received for information.

Alternative 2

That the COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding report be referred back to staff for further information based on Hospitals and Housing Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

Provincial Government

Staff is working closely with BC Housing, Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR), and Island Health to coordinate the use of the Reaching Home COVID-19 funds in accordance with the *COVID-19: Joint Provincial Program Framework for Emergency Response Centres*.¹

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-joint-povincial-program-framework-for-ercs.pdf>

First Nations

The CRD has reached out to the nine First Nations within the CRD boundaries and CRD staff are working with a number of these communities to look at possibilities for supporting initiatives that are not covered by other Government of Canada funding available to First Nations during the emergency.

Social Implications

Engagement within various coordinating bodies has helped identify opportunities to address the social needs of people in four key areas within the region.

Financial Implications

The CRD, in its role as Community Entity for the Reaching Home Program, has the capacity to effectively manage these funds.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

This work aligns with Board priorities related to community wellbeing and corporate priorities related to housing and homelessness.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

This work aligns with the goals and objectives of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The CRD is receiving \$1,918,197 in additional funding from Reaching Home – the Government of Canada's Homelessness Strategy, to support the region's COVID-19 response capacity for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. CRD staff have worked effectively with the CRD EOC, CAB and community and government partners to implement a Strategy for equitable distribution of this funding where people have been identified as experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This funding will help extend these efforts into next year and will facilitate the funding of new responses needed as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding report be received for information.

Submitted by:	John Reilly, MSW, RSW, Manager, Housing Initiatives and Programs
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Funding Strategy
Appendix B: 2020-21 Reaching Home Covid-19 Contracts