



Council Member Motion
Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 13, 2020

Date: February 7th, 2020

From: Councillor Potts and Councillor Alto

Subject: Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction's Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC)
Community Action Initiative Community Wellness and Harm Reduction Grant

Background

Cities across North America are on the forefront of the overdose epidemic. Our province has been in a state of public health emergency since April of 2016 and our community has lost too many lives. The already devastating effects are made much worse by the concurrent global housing and affordability crisis. The city of Victoria has been deeply impacted by these overlapping realities. These challenges are often further compounded by stigmatization, marginalization, insufficient or misdirected resources.

A Peer-Informed Mental Health and Addictions Task Force culminating in a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy was brought forward for consideration in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strike a peer informed task force to identify priority actions to inform a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy actionable at the municipal level i.e. prevention, advocacy, integration of services, and education.

Six related actions, identified through the strategic planning session, were to be incorporated into this work and are as follows:

1. *Mental Health and Addictions Advocacy*
 - a. *Advocate for better prevention and more support for those aging out of foster care – there were 156 unhoused youth in the 2018 Point in Time Count*
 - b. *Advocate for more funds for mental health and more publicly funded recovery options and destigmatization of mental health and addictions*
 - c. *Advocate for and facilitate planning and delivery of additional harm reduction services in the city and region, including a safe inhalation site*
 - d. *Advocate for the BC government to provide currently illicit drugs /safer substances to reduce harm from addictions*
 - e. *Advocate for / work with agencies and other governments and professional bodies to facilitate increased harm reduction training (more clarity, training for who?)*
 - f. *Advocate to the Province and/or the CRD and Capital Regional Hospital District to measure homelessness, acute addiction, mental health and to identify service gaps and better coordinate between existing service providers and create better funding opportunities*

These actions were ranked as some of the highest priorities by participants of the Strategic Plan Engagement Summit. To facilitate this task force, Council appointed Councillors Potts, Alto, and Loveday and the work of developing recommendations via the Peer-Informed Task Force is currently underway.

Provincial Funding Opportunity

Beginning in July 2018, in partnership with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction's Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC), the Community Action Initiative is supporting communities to develop and implement action-oriented strategies that will help to address the overdose crisis on a local level.

Community Wellness and Harm Reduction Grants were open for applications from municipalities proposing project and initiatives that address substance use-related harms and improve wellness.

The evidence shows that harm reduction promotes health, improves social outcomes, and has other benefits for people with lived and living experience, their families and our broader communities. Municipalities are uniquely placed to listen and learn from people in their community and find bold and innovative ways to address challenges.

Community Wellness and Harm Reduction Grants are intended to support community partnerships providing focused, action-oriented harm reduction projects or initiatives, tailored to local needs. In particular, funding is available for municipalities who propose collaborative harm reduction projects or initiatives designed to enhance the knowledge, skills and resources for individuals, families and communities to be safer, healthier and more inclusive.

These grants are available through the Community Action Initiative (CAI), in partnership with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA) and Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC). Projects/initiatives must align with the OERC's Comprehensive Package of Interventions, must include a Regional Health Authority partner. Collaboration with local community-based organizations and local First Nations communities and Indigenous service providers is encouraged.

Funding ranges from \$15,000 to \$50,000 per community as determined by identified need and size of municipality.

The Project

Since 2011, the City of Victoria has facilitated discussions among service providers, people with lived experience, and government agencies regarding the need to re-organize and ease access to life saving harm reduction services. In recent years, discussion has focused on the need to enhance service delivery in Victoria and how service providers can collectively participate in a delivery model unlike what currently exists in the CRD. One path proposes a place that combines the very best of what Victoria front-line agencies have to offer, in one location, providing a more comprehensive, wrap around service designed to meet the complex and shifting needs of those at the centre of this public health emergency.

The grant offered by the Community Action Initiative will further enable a process to plan such a service. This process would bring together front-line service delivery experts, researchers, organizations that represent people with lived experience, and the public health department of Island Health.

Project partners for this work are subject matter experts AVI and SOLID. This project requires the support of Island Health, which it has secured. The City has a unique role to play as a facilitator and convenor – skills it has already undertaken and in which it has proven effective – given different organizations have different mandates and capacities. Accessing the grant provides another opportunity to bring people together, and convene an open table for diverse, respectful dialogue and visioning.

This project would not require any direct funding from the city. The city has embarked on similar projects with Provincial funding with minimal impact to staff resources. Similar to the Childcare Strategy, City Hall will be used as a venue for the dialogue, and the Head of Strategic Operations would provide overall grant management including reporting requirements and administration. After an initial meeting with Project

Partners (AVI and SOLID) to discuss defining elements of the Project Manager contract the city would put out RFP for Project Manager. The City and Project Partners will jointly approve a candidate for Project Manager. Following this Project Partner AVI would assume the role of liaising with the Project Manager.

The quick timeline between initial awareness of the grant and the grant deadline means that the application has been submitted and council is being asked to support this project should we be approved. Final announcements of successful applicants will be made in March 2020.

A contribution agreement for this project is attached.

Recommendation

1. That, based on council's commitments within the current Strategic Plan related to community health and harm reduction, Council endorse this project application to take advantage of this Provincial funding opportunity to bring stakeholders together to envision a multi-partner, effective, comprehensive, wrap around harm reduction service for Victoria.
2. That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the contribution agreement should the application be successful.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sarah Potts



Marianne Alto