

Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING June 10, 2020

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**SUBJECT CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION COVID-19
COMMUNITY RESPONSE FUND FOR VULNERABLE
POPULATIONS**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Health and Housing Task Force with information regarding a \$45,000 grant being offered from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation's COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations to the City of Nanaimo, with the recommendation that the United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island administer this funding in their capacity as the Community Entity for the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition. |

Recommendation

That the Health and Housing Task Force recommend that Council:

- a. direct Staff to receive a \$45,000 grant offered from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation's COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations; and,
- b. transfer the funds to the United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island to be administered along with COVID-19 emergency funding received through the Federal Government's 'Reaching Home' program in its capacity as the Community Entity for the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations (the "Fund") directly funds cities and communities to support vulnerable populations struggling with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding come from a \$10 million donation from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation (CMAF). The mandate of the Fund is to empower municipalities across Canada to better reach, protect and assist vulnerable populations, including those experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges and/or substance use disorders.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is supporting the CMAF by assisting with the administration of this fund. The FCM is allocating funding to communities based on the Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness Streams of the federal Reaching Home program for homelessness interventions. As Nanaimo is a Designated Community, the City received notification on 01-JUN-2020 that a grant of \$45,000 is available upon application. The application requires that the municipality describe, in general terms, how the municipality will spend the grant funding.

Potential uses of the funding include but are not limited to the following:

- Helping communities secure or repurpose facilities for overnight shelter or daytime use that allow for physical distancing or isolation, along with associated supports and services;
- Creating or expanding community hygiene facilities; and,
- Providing emergency food access or emergency mental health services.

The full list of eligible and ineligible expenses for the grant are included as Attachment A.

DISCUSSION

Organizations in Nanaimo have received multiple grants from the Canadian government to assist agencies that serve vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the CMAF grant is the first to assign the municipal government as the fund recipient. Previous federal funds have flowed through agencies such as the Nanaimo Foundation or the United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island (UWCNVI), to be administered locally. For a list of federal funding provided to date, see Attachment B.

The primary program through which Nanaimo is receiving additional financial support for vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic is the Federal Government's 'Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy'. This program helps service agencies that work with populations experiencing homelessness. Funding comes to the community through the UWCNVI as the 'Community Entity' for the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition.

On 2020-MAR-18, as part of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, the Federal Government announced an additional \$157.7 million for the Reaching Home designated communities to support local agencies for a range of needs. These needs included purchasing beds and physical barriers for social distancing and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters during COVID-19. In total, Nanaimo received an additional \$400,000 in Reaching Home funding (\$200,000 in Indigenous funding and \$200,000 in general funding).

On 2020-MAY-19, the UWCNVI issued a call for proposals for this fund under two categories: a COVID-19 Economic Response Fund and a COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund. The Economic Response funding is for larger grants to support organizations who directly support the needs of those experiencing or are at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emergency Response funding is for smaller grants (up to \$2,000) for organizations who are providing emergency basic needs services to those experiencing or are at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. See the following Table A: Reaching Home COVID-19 Funding in Nanaimo for details on how the funding is being allocated.

Table A: Reaching Home COVID-19 Funding in Nanaimo

	Nanaimo Designated Community	Nanaimo Indigenous Homelessness
COVID-19 Economic Response Fund Grant Amount	\$150,000	\$150,000
COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund Grant Amount	\$20,000	\$20,000
C. E. Administrative Cost (15%)	\$30,000	\$30,000
Total	\$200,000	\$200,000

The current round of grant applications for the Reaching Home COVID-19 funding is open until 2020-JUN-15. The UWCNVI aims to distribute the grants by early July 2020.

In discussion with UWCNVI staff, they anticipate that the applications for the Economic Response stream of the funding will be in high demand because of the ability to fund larger projects. Staff recommend that the Health and Housing Task Force pass a motion for City Council to transfer the CMAF grant of \$45,000 to the UWCNVI for administration along with the rest of the Reaching Home funding in order to supplement the category of grant with the greatest demonstrated needs.

As the infrastructure for the grant administration is already in place for the Reaching Home funding, the UWCNVI could administer the CMAF grant for minimal additional overhead (5%). This would likely be less than the staff time that it would take to administer a separate granting process.

Alternatively, the Health and Housing Task Force may wish to recommend that Council retain control over this funding in order to provide funding for other COVID-19 responses that assist vulnerable populations (i.e., additional hygiene support such as toilets and hand-washing stations, which have high maintenance costs without an identified budget.) The CMAF grant is relatively flexible within the parameters provided in Attachment A, and Council may find it is helpful to have additional funding for additional costs related to supporting vulnerable populations through the pandemic.

OPTIONS

1. That the Health and Housing Task Force recommend that Council:
 - a. direct Staff to receive a \$45,000 grant offered from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation's COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations; and,
 - b. transfer the funds to the United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island to be administered along with COVID-19 emergency funding received through the Federal Government's 'Reaching Home' program in its capacity as the Community Entity for the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition.

- The advantages of this option: The intention of the grant would be met with minimal additional administrative costs to the City. No budget amendment would be required.
 - The disadvantages of this option: It would not provide Council with any decision-making ability over how the CMAF grant is allocated.
 - Financial Implications: The City of Nanaimo would transfer the \$45,000 CMAF grant funding received to the United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island.
2. That the Health and Housing Task Force recommend that Council:
- a. direct Staff to receive a \$45,000 grant offered from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation's COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations; and,
 - b. keep the grant funding within the City's budget to retain control over the disbursement of funds for COVID-19 responses that assist vulnerable populations.
- The advantages of this option: Council would retain control over how financial resources received are dispersed in support of requests to assist vulnerable populations during COVID-19.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Staff time and resources would be required to administer the grant funds (i.e., Council reports, criteria for evaluation) and existing efforts in the community may be duplicated. May result in delays to money being applied for COVID-19 response.
 - Financial Implications: The 2020-2021 budget would need to be amended to reflect the additional funding.
3. That the Health and Housing Task Force provide alternative direction.]

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City of Nanaimo is eligible for a \$45,000 grant from the COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation.
- The funding is intended to support municipalities in better assisting vulnerable populations, including those experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges and/or substance use disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island could be appointed by the City to administer the \$45,000 grant along with other Reaching Home COVID-19 funding in its capacity as the Community Entity for the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Schedule A - Eligible Activities and Eligible Expenses
ATTACHMENT B: Federal Funding for COVID-19/Vulnerable Populations Grants]

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