

Canadian Medical Association Foundation – COVID 19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations

ISSUE

On June 1, 2020, the City of Saskatoon (City) was notified by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) that Saskatoon was selected as one of the recipient communities for the COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations (Community Response Fund), generously supported by Canadian Medical Association Foundation (CMAF). The City will receive \$117,000 to provide COVID-19 related support to vulnerable populations. There is a need to determine how to allocate these funds to best meet the needs of the vulnerable populations within Saskatoon.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the grant from Canadian Medical Association Foundation be directed to the Inter-Agency Response Group for use in their efforts to support the vulnerable populations in Saskatoon, and used in a manner consistent with the terms and conditions outlined in Appendix 1;
2. That the Office of the City Solicitor receive and review the appropriate Federation of Canadian Municipalities funding agreement and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreement on behalf of the City of Saskatoon; and
3. That the Inter-Agency Response Group, be required to provide a summary report on the use of the funding, in due course.

BACKGROUND

The FCM recently welcomed an unprecedented philanthropic contribution of \$10 million from CMAF to directly support vulnerable populations struggling with the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Community Response Fund will empower municipalities across Canada to better reach, protect and assist the most vulnerable among us, including those experiencing homelessness or grappling with mental health and substance use challenges.

The FCM is supporting the CMAF with the delivery of this funding initiative, providing expertise on community needs and engaging recipients on behalf of CMAF. This joint effort by two of Canada's largest membership organizations will save lives and help keep those needing medical assistance out of emergency rooms and community health centres. FCM has the infrastructure and expertise to support the flow of funding to communities and municipalities know how to effectively direct these funds to get tangible results.

Eligible cities and communities will receive funding to identify and target urgent local responses to COVID-19 that will improve the health and well-being of vulnerable populations. This will complement funding provided through federal homelessness programs, and will allow municipalities to target additional needs and improve the resiliency of efforts to support vulnerable populations throughout the pandemic.

These funds could be used to help:

- 1) secure or repurpose facilities for overnight shelter or daytime use that allow for physical distancing or isolation;
- 2) provide associated supports and services;
- 3) supply personal protective equipment and supplies and create or expand community hygiene facilities; and
- 4) provide emergency food access or emergency mental health services.

A complete list of the eligible activities and eligible expenses are outlined in Appendix 1.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

On June 1, 2020, the City was officially informed about being notified that we had been selected as one of the recipient communities for the Community Response Fund and would receive \$117,000, to provide COVID-19 related support to vulnerable populations. The City is now in a position to determine the most appropriate approach to allocate these funds.

Inter-Agency Response Strategy

The Saskatoon Inter-Agency Response to COVID-19 (Inter-Agency Response) is a newly formed group of over 50 organizations, including community-based organizations (CBOs), which are providing front-line services, as well as representatives of the City and other government agencies. See Appendix 2 for a full background overview on the Inter-Agency Response Strategy.

The Inter-Agency Response grew out of initial sector conversations hosted at the onset of the pandemic by the coordinators of the Safe Community Action Alliance. It was clear the Coronavirus Pandemic would present unique challenges for agencies serving vulnerable residents and that collaboration would be required to safely navigate this unprecedented crisis. As the response to the pandemic became formalized locally through public health orders, the community's coordination responded in kind. Incident Command Structure, an emergency response structure, was adopted with support from the City's Emergency Management Organization. Over time, this structure was populated primarily by reallocating staff from frontline community and government agencies, and from City staff, resulting in a 35-person Inter-Agency Response command and general staff. These individuals, reallocated fully or in part to this work, operationalized the core components of the response, thereby supporting agencies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic safely.

The Inter-Agency Response prioritized the support of agencies working to assist residents experiencing deep food and housing insecurity. A COVID-19 Vulnerable Sector strategy was developed, charting a path of key supports on priority areas of vulnerability. Core work has consisted of maintaining situational awareness, responding to critical incidents, gathering safety information and considerations, sharing information, liaising with external partners, advocating for sector support, and providing logistical support through procurement and financial assistance. Financial capacity was generated through reallocations of existing donor or grant funds managed by partner agencies, as well as direct fundraising into a fund created by key partners such as Saskatoon Community Foundation and the United Way of Saskatoon and Area and administered by the Inter-Agency finance section.

As the response to the pandemic continues, and with anticipation of a second wave, there remain ongoing concerns, policy gaps and resource challenges faced by the individual CBOs and the Inter-Agency Response to COVID-19 that require attention. One of the most pressing is that funding for the Inter-Agency response has not been consistent and support for critical supplies continues to be required by many CBOs. See Appendix 3 for a Midterm Report from the Inter-Agency group related to activities undertaken since the onset of COVID-19.

Recommended Allocation of Funding

Given the high level of organization and community collaboration underway with this Inter-Agency Response and the significant numbers of community based groups they are currently working with to assist the vulnerable residents of Saskatoon, Administration is recommending the \$117,000 in funding from the CMAF be directed to the Inter-Agency Response group (Group). As the Group has no corporate status, it cannot sign a funding agreement, but it does remain the best suited to administer the distribution of these funds.

Administration recommends that:

- 1) the funding be allocated to the Group who will identify, in advance of receiving any funds, their recommended distribution and confirm the use matches the eligible activities and eligible expenses;
- 2) the City Manager or his delegate be permitted to authorize the release or partial release once this condition has been met;
- 3) release will be contingent on the Group providing the City with supporting documentation to confirm the actual distribution matches the requested distribution; and
- 4) the Group would also be required to provide a final report to the City on the overall distribution and how the funds were used, which could then be received by City Council if that is the wish.

These recommendations address the City's commitment to social inclusion by providing vulnerable residents with equitable access to quality of life, as stated in the Official Community Plan.

OPTION

The other potential option for consideration would be to direct the funding to the Social Services Subcommittee to adjudicate grant proposals and allocate funding. This Subcommittee is appointed by City Council and currently has a role in allocating the annual grant funding provided through the Social Services Assistance to Community Groups Grant. The Subcommittee has recently concluded its work in allocating this year's Social Services grants. Choosing this option would mean the City would lead the administration of funding through the Social Services Subcommittee and would require Community Development and Finance staff to divert time and resources away from other work currently underway.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to the City resulting from the recommendations of this report. An indirect resource implication is that the \$117,000 will require staff time to process the payments through the City's accounting system to the Inter-Agency Response.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval by Committee and City Council, Administration would then follow up to ensure the appropriate allocation of the grant funding from FCM/CMAF.

APPENDICES

1. Schedule A – Eligible Activities and Eligible Expenses
2. Saskatoon Interagency Response to COVID-19 Vulnerable Sector Strategy
3. Saskatoon Interagency Response to COVID-19 Midterm Report – June 2020

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager Community Services Department
Reviewed by: Mike Jordan, Chief Public Policy and Government Relations Officer
Approved by: Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager

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