



## Saskatoon Interagency Response to COVID19 Vulnerable Sector Strategy

### **Background:**

The Saskatoon Inter-agency Response is a group of 50+ organizations including non-profit organizations providing front-line services and representatives of government agencies. We are deeply appreciative of the City of Saskatoon and Council's support over the past eight weeks as we do everything in our power to flatten the curve in Saskatoon by helping the most vulnerable people in our community to stay safe, reducing transmission of the virus and decreasing the burden and risk experienced by all frontline workers. Thanks in no small part to support from the Saskatoon EOC, City of Saskatoon reallocated staff, and the City's adoption of this work as priority in the local COVID-19 response, we have been able to do our work in a coordinated, safe and effective manner. Additional information can be found at the Interagency website <https://saskatooninteragencyresponse.ca>

### **Adoption of an Incident Command Structure: (see May 28 draft attached PDF)**

As the process evolved and community was tasked with creating a mechanism to build order in the chaos associated with responding to unprecedented urgency of a pandemic. The team was connected to the Saskatoon EOC planning team to learn about how the incident command structure could be used.

Over the course of the last 9 weeks, the Saskatoon Interagency response was created and now has more than 35 command and general staff working to operationalize the core components of the incident command structure.

The job descriptions and responsibilities for each of the command and general staff roles can be found online on the internal agency website (PW comresphub)

In the coming weeks, the command team will create a structure that can be demobilized and remobilized depending on levels of threats within states of emergency, including ensuring that this response could be operationalized in other potential emergencies in Saskatoon, such as tornadoes, fire, train derailments, etc.

### **Outputs and Outcomes – brief overview:**

Using the process outlined in the ICS the Interagency response was able to focus on 2 core areas of vulnerability in Saskatoon: Housing and homelessness and food insecurity.

To address these big issues, the interagency response worked to operationalize collaborative response to create a community HUB, a testing and isolation process, temporary shelter and supporting in hotels, a long term supported housing model, harm reduction procedures and policies and a mechanism to support access to healthy food (both hampers and meals) along with demographic specific responses for youth, vulnerable old people and mothers and their children.

From early on, it became evident that a logistics support system was required, so the interagency response created a system to research, identify, procure, fund and distribute essential materials (PPE, water, food containers and cleaning supplies) to the partners working within the network. This procurement and distribution process must continue for the duration of the COVID response. Over the course of the 9 weeks, the interagency has supported 30+ organizations with PPE and other essential resources to keep clients and staff safe.

**Some general quick win outputs/outcomes include:**

- More than 80 people were tested and isolated in hotels
- 10 of the hotel clients were securely housed in SK Housing Authority Units
- COVID19 was kept out of the sheltering system
- Managed Alcohol Programs (MAP) were initiated in new locations (including the SHA implementing a MAP program in the north)
- Reaching Home federal funding for housing/homelessness was allocated to COVID response programs/services using the 401 data as a tool to inform investment
- 1000s of meals were delivered to community residents (>600/day for 2 months)
- 1000s of grocery hampers were delivered to community residents
- Youth (and families) received over 300 kits to support learning and encourage social distancing
- 20 vulnerable Elders were provided technology to connect and provide cultural supports to many in need
- \$25K a month in PPE supports were provided to community agencies in need

**Funding and Allocations of resources:**

As part of the preliminary conversations the interagency recognized the need to have support for core community funders and welcomed collaboration with the Saskatoon Community Foundation and Saskatoon United Way that created an online portal to receive community donations that would be allocated to the interagency network. The team worked diligently to create a mechanism that was nimble, yet accountable and equitable that moved funds quickly from the portal to agencies in order to ensure essential items were provided in a timely fashion.

Part of the ICS framework is the Finance and Admin team – led by the Saskatoon Community Foundation. This general staff role also oversees an independent accounting team that ensures accountabilities and responsibilities of the interagency to the funders. Regular reporting regarding expenses, allocation requests, payees and resources are provided by the logistics and planning teams to the finance and admin team.

Working with the planning team, particularly the evaluation and research team, there is a situational awareness tool (called a 401) that is used to identify needs, gaps and to address requests for resources based on the changing landscape of the COVID response. The data team works to identify emerging issues and ensure that core priorities are provided to the logistics and finance teams. Once priorities are set to have a finance allocation, all funding decisions are approved by incident command, who is responsible for keeping the full ICS system situational awareness. Once allocations are approved, money is EFT to specific qualified donees who have reporting arrangements with the funder.

This process is summarized in the model here:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aF\\_aRHQASGGnZVWmFZh6GQ7K5MGpmtB3OqS0Hb1LVs/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aF_aRHQASGGnZVWmFZh6GQ7K5MGpmtB3OqS0Hb1LVs/edit?usp=sharing)

**Next Steps:**

As with every agency and team responding to COVID we are uncertain what the future holds. We are creating a plan that can respond to identified triggers in the vulnerable community and that is aligned with the Saskatchewan re-open plan. This plan includes building on the collaborative practices that emerged in the ICS work, returning to pre-COVID collaborative teams and looking for ways to sustain key COVID responses until they are no longer needed.

The Interagency response has seen tremendous collaborative response and has created strong partnerships to provide this continued response moving forward. In conversation with leaders from across the sector, there is unanimous agreement that the Interagency Response should remain in some capacity, offering the planning, logistics, funding and safety supports as the community collectively re-opens and adjusts to a new COVID reality.

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