

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 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 the Canadian Medical Association Foundation. The City received \$117,000 to provide COVID-19 related support to vulnerable populations and with approval from City Council, Administration worked with the Saskatoon Community Foundation to provide funds to the Saskatoon Inter-Agency Response to COVID-19. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on how these funds were utilized.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) welcomed an unprecedented philanthropic contribution of \$10 million from Canadian Medical Association Foundation to directly support vulnerable populations struggling with the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Community Response Fund was created to 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.

During the same time, the Saskatoon Inter-Agency Response to COVID-19 (Inter-Agency Response), a newly formed group of over 50 organizations including community-based organizations providing front-line services, representatives of the City and other government agencies, was established.

To address challenges faced by agencies serving vulnerable residents in safely navigating this unprecedented crisis, an Inter-Agency Response was developed, by the coordinators of the Safe Community Action Alliance, from initial sector conversations hosted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic became formalized locally through public health orders, the community's coordination responded in kind; an Incident Command Structure and an emergency response structure was adopted with support from the City's Emergency Management Organization.

CURRENT STATUS

Once City Council approval was received on the plan to direct the funding from the Community Response Fund, City Administration worked with the Saskatoon Community Foundation on an agreement to distribute the money to the Inter-Agency Response. Over the course of the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Response worked to respond to the constantly changing pressures associated with Phase 1 surge, maintenance mode and re-open planning and worked to establish a Phase 2 surge and community outbreak preparedness/response.

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The Inter-Agency Response built an external membership of over 200 community partners and a more internal membership, connected to the work and service delivery model partnership, of over 65 community partners. Through this reporting period, the Inter-Agency Response became the source to which other organizations looked to for advice on accurate information, supports for outbreaks, personal protective equipment (PPE)/critical supplies, operational supports and funding. These funds were used to support organizations who were critical in the effort to support vulnerable populations including:

- The Friendship Inn;
- The Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre; and
- The Lighthouse Supported Living Inc.

This meant Saskatoon's largest shelter, Saskatoon's safe sanctuary for meals and Saskatoon's Food Bank, were able to stay open and provide critical services to Saskatoon's most vulnerable during a global pandemic.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Using the Community Response funding provided, the Inter-Agency Response focused on the following groupings of activities:

1. Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment & Personal Hygiene Products
There was a focused, concerted effort to socially procure and distribute PPE, hygiene products, cleaning supplies etc. to approximately 30 organizations within the city who would otherwise struggle with procurement, access and delivery of these items.
2. Coordination of Activities
Facilitating meetings, coordinating available secondment positions, and providing leadership for next steps, the team was able to create an Incident Command Structure which was necessary with the amount of organizations attempting to serve the most vulnerable.
3. Connecting Agencies and Logistics Support
The logistics team ensured PPE standards were up to date; they also kept up to date with the safety protocols put forward by the Saskatchewan Health Authority and found ways to leverage supports.
4. Communication Activities
Providing critical information in a time sensitive and consistent matter was key to ensuring community partners were able to make informed decisions on service delivery. A website was created along with emails regarding new information and was sent to community partners on a weekly basis.

Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive summary and overview of how the Community Response Funds were utilized and includes testimonials from partner organizations receiving the supports.

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A breakdown of how the Canadian Medical Association Foundation funds were used by the Inter-Agency Response to COVID 19 is provided below:

| Budget Item | Budget | Comment |
|---|-------------------|--|
| Distribution of PPE & Personal Hygiene Products | \$78,500 | Used for routine PPE, outbreak PPE, masks for clients, cleaning & sanitizing supplies, food containers and water |
| Coordination of Activities | \$30,000 | Creating incident command, facilitating meetings, etc. |
| Connecting Agencies and Logistics Support | \$ 3,500 | Gathering accurate up to date information, creating delivery routes and storage for PPE |
| Communication Activities | \$ 5,000 | Creating e-blasts, a website and social media posts to ensure both vulnerable populations and service providers had information. |
| Total | \$117, 000 | |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to the City resulting from this report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

There are no next steps required.

APPENDICES

1. FCM Final Report

REPORT APPROVAL

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