



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 7, 2018
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Meeting Date: September 18, 2018

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager, Arts, Culture, and Community Services
SUBJECT: City Support for Healthy School Meal Programs

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve a grant of up to \$128,000 to the Vancouver School Board (VSB) for their school food programs from September to December 2018. Source of funding is the 2018 Social Policy Operating Budget.
- B. THAT Council approve a grant of \$59,000 to Fresh Roots Urban Farm for their pilot project: Youth Serving Youth: A Universal Meal Program, on approval of the final proposal. Source of funding is the 2018 Social Policy Grants Operating Budget.
- C. THAT Council approve a grant of \$32,000 to the Strathcona Community Centre Association for the Strathcona Breakfast Program from September to December 2018. Source of funding is the 2018 Social Policy Grants Operating Budget.
- D. THAT Council deem the VSB to be an organization contributing to the welfare of the City under Section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter* in respect of the VSB's school food program referenced in Recommendation A, above.
- E. THAT Council authorize the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services to negotiate and execute agreements to disperse the grants described in Recommendations A, B, and C above on the terms and conditions set out herein or such other terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services and Director of Legal Services.
- F. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of Recommendations A through C above unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Recommendations A to C require 2/3 affirmative votes of all Council members per Vancouver Charter S. 206(1).

REPORT SUMMARY

This report recommends renewal of funding to two student meal program operators that have been funded since 2015, as well as one new grant to pilot a universal school meal program. These grant recommendations are for up to \$219,000 from the Social Policy Grants and Operating budgets.

In December 2014, Council designated \$400,000 to enhance student access to healthy food. Since December 2015, \$320,000 per year has been provided from ACCS Operating funds for the VSB's delivered lunch program and \$80,000 per year from ACCS Grant funds to Strathcona Community Centre Association's Breakfast Program. This funding augments \$1.4M in provincial funding provided to VSB's elementary school meal programs, as well as charitable contributions and donations.

Staff recommend continuing funding to VSB's delivered lunch program as well as the Strathcona Community Centre Association Breakfast Program from September to December 2018. Funding for 2019 will be considered as part of the 2019 operating budget process.

Lastly, staff recommend a grant of \$59,000 to Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society to pilot a universal meal program for the entire school population for a minimum of three days per week split between two schools that includes food skill education, food growing and environmental stewardship. The findings could inform alternate food provision models.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Vancouver Food Strategy – In January 2013, Council adopted the Vancouver Food Strategy. In 2017, Council endorsed a Food Strategy action plan for 2017-20 with three new priority areas: diversity of voices and inclusion; food access; and resilience.

Healthy City Strategy – In October 2014, Council adopted the Healthy City Strategy with goals of ensuring that Vancouver's children and youth, up to age 24, have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood; that Vancouver has a healthy, just, and sustainable food system; and that Vancouverites feel safe and are connected. In July 2015, Council approved the first four year action plan for the Healthy City Strategy. It included an action to determine how the City can reduce poverty levels, and an action to facilitate 1300 school breakfasts and food literacy development.

Expanding access to healthy foods for school-aged children – In December 2014, City Council unanimously adopted a motion asking City staff to identify \$400,000 in the operating budget to expand access to healthy foods for school-aged children. These funds enabled meal programs through Vancouver School Board and through Strathcona Community Centre Association between 2015 and 2018.

City of Reconciliation - Vancouver City Council passed a motion to reaffirm its commitment to designate Vancouver as a City of Reconciliation in 2014 following its *Year of Reconciliation* and in 2015, acknowledged Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings and identified 27 actions to redress the legacy of residential schools and commitments to reconciliation .

Universal Healthy School Food Program – In June 2017, Council unanimously adopted a motion for submission to the Union of BC Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian

Municipalities that they advocate for a Universal Healthy School Food Program to provincial and federal governments.

Poverty Reduction - In June 2017, Council passed a motion directing staff to report back on the progress of a poverty reduction plan for Vancouver; Council also approved the creation of a poverty reduction plan as part of the Healthy City Action Plan in 2015.

Grants for innovative school food organizations and projects – In 2017 Council approved grants to the Provincial Health Association of BC's Farm to School Vancouver and the UBC Centre for Sustainable Food Systems' Think&EatGreen@School. In 2018, Council approved grants to Growing Chefs Society and Fresh Roots Urban Farm.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing. The City's financial support for healthy school food programs enables more low income students to receive the school day nourishment that they need in order to learn. The City, along with others like the City of Toronto, UBCM and FCM support a national universal school meal program to ensure every student can benefit from meal program participation.

The City looks forward to furthering efforts towards healthy meals and food-based education for all students, along with the Vancouver School Board, Strathcona Community Centre Association, Fresh Roots, and other partners.

REPORT

Background/Context

Access to healthy food for children has a direct relationship to healthy child development and poverty reduction. Canada is one of the only industrialized countries without a national school meal program, and it ranks 37th out of 41 industrialized countries in ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition for children and youth, just behind the USA (UNICEF Report Card, 2017). Research shows that every student would benefit from access to a meal program, as these programs show positive benefits not only on reducing school day hunger, but on improving academic achievement, physical and mental well-being, and fruit and vegetable consumption (Coalition for Healthy School Food, 2016). School meal programs are also well placed to model systemic changes on environmental sustainability and local agriculture through procurement practices.

Income security is a key determinant of both food security and health. Twenty one percent of children in Vancouver aged 6-17 are part of families with incomes below the low income measure (Statistics Canada, 2016). This figure increases to 51% in the Strathcona neighbourhood. While meal programs cannot address the root causes of food insecurity, they provide one stable meal on school days to support student learning.

During the City's 2018 consultations to inform a poverty reduction strategy, Vancouverites raised the challenges in accessing healthy, culturally appropriate, and affordable food, particularly in light of escalating food, housing, childcare, and other living costs. The cost of eating has increased 33% from 2007 to 2017 (data provided by BC Centre for Disease Control, Population and Public Health). Given the work of three levels of government to develop and implement poverty reduction strategies, it's

important for the City to continue to raise the issue of income security as a key determinant of food security in their work with the provincial and federal governments.

City contribution to school food programs

In December 2014, Council designated \$400,000 to enhance student access to healthy food. City funding augments the Province's \$1.4 million CommunityLINK funding that VSB allocates annually to elementary school food programs.

Since 2015, \$320,000 per year has been allocated to the Vancouver School Board's delivered lunch program from the ACCS operating budget and \$80,000 per year to the Strathcona Community Centre Association (CCA)'s breakfast program from the ACCS grants budget.

Vancouver School Board Delivered Lunch Program is one of several programs that targets meals to low income families and children in care.

VSB provides food for students through multiple food service models in elementary, secondary, and alternate schools in addition to the lunches delivered to 200 students with City funding. Student needs vary greatly across the district and within individual schools, and kitchens or food equipment infrastructure, space, or labour availability don't necessarily align. These constraints present challenges to providing food for students; however, VSB works to serve all children in the District as identified on the Social Services Index (SSI). The SSI refers to children in care or whose families are on income assistance.

Strathcona Community Centre Breakfast Program provides more than a meal.

The Strathcona CCA community breakfast program is open to all students and their families at no cost, and models healthy eating and sustainable practices. It provides the opportunity for neighbours to gather, builds social connections including across generations, and provides older students with volunteer opportunities that include serving and assisting with food preparation. The breakfast program benefits from almost 1000 adult and student volunteer hours annually, including contributions from grade 6 and 7 students. These students develop life-long skills through preparing and serving food, and through team planning to increase peer interest in the breakfast program.

Total cost per meal is \$3.54 which includes food, labour, equipment, and the costs of student leader field trips and activities. The program complements an on-site lunch program provided by VSB.

Access to healthy food is critical for many participants, in particular urban Indigenous families. The census tracts surrounding Strathcona school show that 23% of children aged 0-14 are Indigenous, compared to 3% city-wide (Statistics Canada, 2016). A June 2017 Canadian Medical Association Journal article notes that chronic diseases stemming from malnutrition in residential schools has had impacts on successive generations, and it recommends that Indigenous children are assured access to plentiful, healthy, seasonal and traditional foods (Mosby, 2017).

Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society Pilot of a Universal Meal Program will test the potential of a universal school food program

In response to a 2018 call for proposals, Fresh Roots proposed a school food project: Youth Serving Youth: A Universal Meal Program. Fresh Roots' pilot project would make a healthy, universal meal program available for the entire school population for a minimum of three days per weeks, split between two schools. Fresh Roots proposes to test the feasibility and explore scalability of a model that integrates meal provision with food literacy, connects students and community, creates leadership opportunities, and

partners school infrastructure with non-profit organizations. The pilot would launch in Spring 2019 and would run through the 2019-20 school year.

Strategic Analysis

Vancouver School Board Lunch Program

The cost of the City-funded portion of the VSB meal program (\$8.72/meal) limits the number of students who are able to benefit. In 2017, VSB commissioned a food services review. The recommendations are intended to increase the number of children who benefit from their programs. This includes the approximately 250-275 identified on the Social Services Index who are not currently benefiting from a formalized meal program. VSB staff will have a three year food services plan ready to begin implementation in April 2019.

City staff are concerned by the meal program costs and limited reach, however recommend continuing funding for 2018. Funding is crucial for meal program access for 200 students whose families experience financial hardship. Funding for VSB's meal programs for 2019 will be considered as part of the 2019 operating budget process.

See Appendix A for information about the use of the City funds in the context of other formal and informal meal supports at VSB elementary schools.

Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society Pilot Project

There is a significant gap in the availability of universal food programs in the province and other parts of Canada. The Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) is a member of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, a group of nearly 40 organizations from across Canada advocating for a national universal school food program.

In Spring 2018, City staff issued a call for proposals for socially innovative approaches to address social issues. In response, Fresh Roots proposed a pilot project which aims to address several systemic food systems issues including lack of universal access to meals at schools, cultural disconnection to food and land, limited student agency in the food system, poor eating habits, and a disconnection between food-based education and meal time.

VSB and City staff jointly reviewed and approved the pilot program letter of interest. Their project has been, and will continue to be developed and implemented in consultation with VSB staff, community members and students. The learnings will provide ideas for the City and VSB to consider for the use of City funds moving forward.

Strathcona Community Centre Association (CCA) Breakfast Program

The Strathcona neighbourhood continues to have the highest childhood poverty rates in the city, and the CCA breakfast program provides an important complement to the VSB's lunchtime program. The Strathcona CCA food security programs are strongly rooted in strengthening community leadership from across their community. The breakfast program demonstrates strong alignment with the Food Strategy, Greenest City Action Plan, and Healthy City Strategy, and will continue to be implemented with input from VSB staff, community members, and students. Staff recommend continuing funding for 2018. Funding in 2019 will be considered as part of the 2019 operating budget process.

Table 1 Summary of recommendations

Agency	Recommendation	Program Name	Description	Conditions
Vancouver School board (Rec A)	2018: \$128,000	Food4 Schools	Delivered lunch on school days for 200 elementary students across ~17 VSB schools from Sept - Dec. 2018	
Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society (Rec B)	\$59,000 to be spent within 2 years	Youth Serving Youth: A Universal Meal Program	Universal lunch at for up to 3 days/week, split between 2 schools; including food skill development; Pilot to launch Spring 2019	Two year funding will be released following receipt of a final project plan to the satisfaction of the Managing Director, Social Policy and Projects
Strathcona CCA (Rec C)	2018: \$32,000	Strathcona Breakfast Program, including Breakfast Buddies Chat and Chew program	Universally available breakfast program serving approximately 120 elementary students and their family members, and leadership development Sept. - Dec. 2018	

Public/Civic Agency Input (if applicable)

The report recommendations align with the efforts of the Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC). In June 2017, the VFPC passed a motion recommending that

- the City of Vancouver advocate to the provincial and federal governments regarding investment in a cost-shared universal healthy school food program that would enable all students to have access to healthy meals at school every day, as advocated by the Coalition for Health School Food; and
- the Vancouver Food Policy council recommends that the City of Vancouver advocate to other municipalities through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to adopt this motion and advocate to provincial and federal governments.

In January 2017, the VFPC passed a motion recognizing and affirming the connection between food security and income security and called upon the City of Vancouver:

- To act in its own capacity to address the link between income and food security in their poverty reduction initiatives and food policies;

- To advocate that the Federal and Provincial governments address the link between income and food security in their poverty reduction initiatives and food policies;
- To introduce motions at the Union of BC Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities which call upon member municipalities to address the link between income and food security in their poverty reduction initiatives and food policies.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)

Financial

Funding recommendations and budget balances are summarized in Table 2 below. Staff will return to Council with recommendations for the remaining grant balances later in 2018.

Table 2: Financial Overview of 2018 Operating and Grant Budget Implications

Rec	Grant Stream	Source of funding	2018 Budget	Previously Approved	Recommended in this report	Balance
A	VSB School Food Program	Social Policy Operating Budget	320,000	192,000	128,000	-
B	School Food	Social Policy Operating Grant	6,716,026	6,210,874	59,000	414,152
C					32,000	
TOTAL			7,036,026	6,402,874	219,000	414,152

Human Resources/Labour Relations

None

Environmental

Meal programs provide opportunity to prioritize purchases from local and sustainable food producers, and to minimize food and food packaging waste.

The VSB adopted their sustainability plan in 2018. The plan's actions are structured within five theme areas: sustainability in education, green spaces, resource conservation and climate change, sustainable transportation, and leadership in sustainability. VSB Food Services has been working on a pilot project on a custom compostable container that should be implemented fall 2018. At that point, the program will be 100% compostable/recyclable. In 2015, when last assessed, 38% percent of the delivered lunch program ingredients were locally grown or produced.

Strathcona CCA uses reusable dishware for their program and only a limited amount of coffee cups (~50/week) or napkins to take food or drink away.

Fresh Roots Urban Farm's project will use reusable dishware and places a high priority on using foods grown on-site.

All three organizations practice 100% waste separation at all sites.

Legal

In order to receive the grant referenced in Recommendation A, above, Council must deem the Vancouver School Board as an organization that, in respect of its meal programs, contributes to the welfare of the City.

Other

None

CONCLUSION

This report recommends three grants for up to \$219,000 from the Social Policy Grants and Operating budgets in order to meet the school day food needs of students attending VSB schools until the end of 2018. These grants will continue support to two existing meal models and will support planning and testing of a pilot meal model.

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Table 3 Formal and informal meal supports for Fall 2018

Funding source	Number of students and schools	Total funding	Costs per meal
City of Vancouver funding proposed in this report	1. <i>Through VSB – rec A</i> 200 elementary students in ~17 VSB schools will receive daily lunch from Sept-Dec.	\$128,000	\$8.72/meal
	2. <i>Through Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society – rec B</i> To be determined – The pilot will enable a meal program open to all students in 2 schools (1 elementary; 1 alternate) for 1-2 days/ week each. Pilot to Launch Spring 2019	\$59,000	TBD through the pilot
	3. <i>Through Strathcona CC– rec C</i> Approximately 120 elementary students and family members in the Strathcona neighbourhood participate in breakfast	\$32,000	\$3.54/ breakfast
CommunityLINK (BC) funded school meals	Approximately 1300 elementary students receive meal supports (lunch +/- breakfast)	\$1.4 million	VSB unable to provide 2018 costs at this time. In 2015, \$7.08/ delivered lunch \$4.75 / onsite lunch \$4.54 / delivered breakfast \$1.80 / onsite breakfast
Informal or non-VSB managed supports (e.g. Firefighters charity, Breakfast Clubs of Canada, student-, staff-, or parent-led)	These supports help meet the needs of the 250-275 elementary students who are not part of a formal meal program, and/or provide food to other students before, during, or after school and during school breaks, complementing existing formal food supports. In some schools, parents can pay to participate in meals.	N/A	N/A