



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: January 15, 2024
Contact: Margaret Wittgens
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: February 6, 2024
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture & Community Services
SUBJECT: Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Grant

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve a grant of up to \$4,670,000 from the 2024 Operating Grants budget to Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH), a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency to continue implementation of Phase One of VCH's *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Program*.
- B. THAT Council delegate its authority to execute grant agreements that include terms and conditions that are consistent with this report, that satisfy the City's Director of Legal Services, and that disburse the grant described in this report to the City's General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (or their designate).
- C. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of these Recommendations unless and until the respective parties execute and deliver all legal documentation.

Recommendation A requires at least 2/3 affirmative votes of all Council members under section 206(1)(a) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

Purpose and Executive Summary

On November 22, 2022, Council approved a motion directing City staff to allocate \$8 million per year to enable the requisition and hiring of 100 mental health nurses. In response to this motion, VCH created an *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Program* to implement the City's investment in mental health services enhancements. This report recommends a 2024 grant of up to \$4,670,000 to continue to implement Phase One of VCH's *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Program*.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- [2022-11-22](#): Council passed a resolution entitled, *Enabling the Requisitioning and Hiring of 100 New Police Officers and 100 Mental Health Nurses*.
- [2023-02-14](#): Council approved a grant to VCH in an amount up to \$2,800,000 (RTS 15510).

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

On November 22, 2022, City Council passed a resolution entitled [Enabling the Requisitioning and Hiring of 100 New Police Officers and 100 Mental Health Nurses](#) (Member's Motion B.5). This motion directed staff to allocate funding in the 2023 Operating Budget for Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to hire 100 new police officers and for Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) to fund 100 new nurses. The motion specifically referenced the following VPD and/or VCH mental health response partnerships or teams: (1) Car 87/88 – Mental Health Cars, (2) Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams, (3) Assertive Outreach Team (AOT), and (4) VPD Mental Health Unit.

With the opportunity presented by the Council resolution, VCH identified the need to prioritize specific services for people with more severe mental health issues, some of whom also use substances and are frequently unhoused or living in shelters, single room occupancy hotels (SROs) or supported housing. Further, given the demonstrated effectiveness of interdisciplinary teams in crisis response programs, VCH proposed that funding be directed to support a range of different types of mental health workers, including nurses, social workers, peers and others – rather than be solely directed to mental health nurses. They presented a proposed approach to allocating the City's funding in their proposed *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Framework*, which recommended the \$8M be allocated to expand existing and initiate new programs through the hiring of 58 FTE. Council approved this program unanimously and approved a 2023 grant of up to \$2.8M to initiate implementation of the approved program. Importantly, the partial allocation of the \$8M was recommended noting it would take time for VCH to work with VPD to expand the existing partnership programs and to develop and initiate the new programs outlined in the framework. Please see February 2023 report *Grant to VCH for Expanded Mental Health Response* ([RTS 15510](#)) for the Framework.

Discussion

With Council's approval of funding for this project in February 2023, VCH has made significant strides in adding new resources. Noting the challenges with both hiring capacity and labour market availability and significant effort to expand and initiate programs, VCH is working to phase in these enhanced services over multiple years. As part of their implementation planning, VCH also updated their anticipated FTE complement to:

- 32 full-time equivalents (FTE) for the Moderate Crisis De-escalation Service;
- 14 FTE will be allocated towards Expanding Police Partnership Programs;

- 6 FTE will be allocated towards other health services including assertive community treatment and other service enhancements; and
- 6 FTE towards Strengthening Indigenous Approaches.

Given the significant effort in recruitment and labour market pressures, VCH's actual expenditure for 2023 was \$617,836, leaving \$2.18M to be carried forward into 2024.

Over the past year, City staff have been assisting with implementation, participating in the oversight committee and evaluation committee, and providing regular monthly updates. VCH will deliver a presentation to update Council on the current program and the plans for 2024 as a companion to this report.

Financial Implications

Funding for the proposed grant is included in the 2024 Operating Grants budget. The table below includes VCH's estimated 2024 expenditures. Their projections are based on their ability to hire the needed staffing, ready space for team, and the readiness for other partners to participate as anticipated. Staff will report to Council prior to the end of 2024 on progress, outcomes, and achievements for 2024.

The recommended 2024 grant amount of \$4.67M plus the \$2.18M remaining from the 2023 approved grant will provide VCH with the funding requested for 2024 as summarized in the table below.

2024 Budget Forecast	
Category	Total
Staffing Salaries & Benefits:	
Car 87/88	2,520,000
Moderate De-Escalation Crisis Response	3,265,000
Strengthening Indigenous Approaches	400,000
Total Salaries& Benefits	6,185,000
Non-Labour Expenses:	
Performance Measurement/Evaluation	100,000
Community Engagement	200,000
Other Non-Labour Expenses	365,000
Total	6,850,000
Funding	
2023 Grant Funding Remaining	2,180,000
2024 Grant Recommendation	4,670,000
Total Funding	6,850,000
Numbers in the table have been rounded to reflect their estimated nature	

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

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