



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: September 26, 2024
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Meeting Date: October 23, 2024
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TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities
FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture & Community Services
SUBJECT: Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Program – 2024 Update

Recommendation

THAT Council receive the Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Program – 2024 Update report for information.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report responds to Council's motion, approved November 22, 2022, directing City staff to allocate \$8 million per year to enable the requisition and hiring of mental health nurses. In response to this motion, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) created an *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Program* ("the program") to implement the City's investment in mental health service enhancements. This report provides an update on progress made by VCH in implementing the program to date. Information contained in this report is accurate to August 15, 2024.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- [2024-02-06](#): Council approved a grant to VCH in an amount up to \$4,670,000 (RTS 16098).
- [2023-02-14](#): Council approved VCH's *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Framework* and a grant to VCH in an amount up to \$2,800,000 (RTS 15510).
- [2022-11-22](#): Council passed a Motion entitled *Enabling the Requisitioning and Hiring of 100 New Police Officers and 100 Mental Health Nurses*.
- Vancouver Charter Section 206(1)(a) enables Council to, by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of all its members, provide for the making of money grants to a charitable institution.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendation.

Context and Background

On [November 22, 2022](#), Council approved the motion 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 the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to hire 100 new police officers and for 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.

VCH 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 programs, 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.

Discussion

With Council's approval of funding for this project in February 2023, VCH has made significant strides in adding new resources and implementing the program. Noting the challenges with hiring capacity and labour market availability and the effort to initiate and expand programs, VCH continues to phase in these enhanced services over multiple years. As of August 15, 2024, VCH has implemented the following:

- 14 full-time equivalents (FTE) have been hired for the Mobile Crisis De-escalation Service; 18 FTE positions are still to be filled.
- 10 FTE positions have been hired for the Car 87/88 program; all positions are filled.
- 2 FTE positions have been hired for the Operations Centre Liaison Nurse (OCCLN) project; 2 FTE positions are still to be filled.
- 9 FTE positions have been hired for the Indigenous Crisis Response Team (ICRT); all positions are filled. The initial target of 12 FTE was revised to 9 FTE to provide more appropriately specialized services based on program modelling and assessed need.

- In summary, 35 out of 55 FTE (64%) of positions funded through the City of Vancouver grant have been hired. The revised total of 55 FTE rather than 58 FTE reflects the revision to the staffing model for the Indigenous Crisis Response Team.

Over the past year, City staff have been assisting with implementation, participating in the oversight committee and evaluation committee, and engaging in regular monthly updates. A presentation by VCH to Council on the current program and the plans for 2025 accompanies this report.

Financial Implications

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. On [Feb 6, 2024](#), VCH provided updated hiring projections and Council approved a grant of \$4.67M for 2024, in addition to the 2023 carry forward. This provided \$6.85M available funding for 2024.

Current year expenditures reported from VCH are summarized in the table below, for the period of January 4, 2024 - September 15, 2024:

Expenditure Category:	2024 Budget:	Year to Date Expense (by program):			Total Year to Date Expense:	Remaining 2024 Budget:
		Mobile De-escalation (MoDe)	Expanding Police Partnership (Car 87/88 & OCCLN)	Strengthening Indigenous Approaches (ICRT)		
Staffing Salaries & Benefits	\$ 6,185,000	\$ 825,080	\$ 930,520	\$ 230,466	\$ 1,986,066	\$ 4,198,934
Performance Measurement / Evaluation	\$ 100,000	\$ 49,560	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 49,560	\$ 50,440
Community Engagement	\$ 200,000	\$ 20,716	\$ -	\$ 1,074	\$ 21,790	\$ 178,210
Other Expenses	\$ 365,000	\$ 40,565	\$ 60,019	\$ 11,455	\$ 112,039	\$ 252,961
Total:	\$ 6,850,000	\$ 935,921	\$ 990,539	\$ 242,995	\$ 2,169,455	\$ 4,680,545

Expenditures for the remaining 3.5 months of the year are expected to be higher due to the increased staffing over recent months. For example, the Indigenous Crisis Response Team is now fully staffed. However, it is anticipated that not all of the approved grant will be spent in 2024 because expenditures earlier in the year were lower due to unfilled positions. The remaining approved grant will be used in 2025 with any additional 2025 estimated cost to be considered as part of the 2025 grant request. The request will come forward in the November 2024 Social Policy Grant Report.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendation.

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