



Governance & Services Committee

TO: Governance and Services Committee

FROM: Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

DATE: April 8, 2021

SUBJECT: Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy – Project Update

Purpose: To provide the Governance & Services Committee with an update on the development of a regional strategy to increase wellness and reduce poverty in the communities of the Central Okanagan.

Executive Summary:

In March 2019, the Province of British Columbia released their poverty reduction strategy called TogetherBC: British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy. Mandated through the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*, the strategy set targets to reduce the overall poverty rate in BC by at least 25%, and the child poverty rate by at least 50%, by 2024.

The Province made funding available through UBCM intended to support local governments in reducing poverty at the local level and to support the Poverty Reduction Strategy. In February 2020, the Regional Board approved a collaborative grant application to be submitted to UBCM for the development of a Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy (COPAWS) on behalf of the District of Lake Country, City of West Kelowna, District of Peachland, and the City of Kelowna. A \$149,000 grant was awarded to the RDCO to further the work that has been completed by regional community partners over the last several years and build on resources such as the Central Okanagan Community Wellness Analysis.

With the United Way Southern Interior BC as the program/delivery agent, the strategy is being developed with oversight from the COPAWS Leadership Committee which includes staff from each of the partnering communities. The Regional District is responsible for maintaining proper fiscal management and reporting requirements for the grant and Co-Chairs the Leadership Committee with the United Way.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Governance and Services Committee receive for information the Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy update report dated April 8, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted:



Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

Prepared by: Danika Dudzik, Senior Planner

Approved for Committee's Consideration



Marilyn Rilko, Deputy CAO

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan:	Receiving the update on the development of the Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy for information supports the Regional Board Strategic Priorities 2019-2022 with respect to "Sustainable Communities" to initiate and support efforts to create a healthy built environment in which all people throughout the region enjoy access to a diverse range of housing options, remain safe in the face of emergencies and experience a high quality of life.
Policy:	Receiving the update on the development of the Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy for information supports numerous policies contained within Our Health, Our Food, and Our Housing outlined in the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336.
Legal/Statutory Authority:	Mandated through the <i>Poverty Reduction Strategy Act</i> , the Province has created a poverty reduction strategy called TogetherBC: British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy." The intent of the Poverty Reduction Planning & Action program is to support local governments in reducing poverty at the local level and to support the Province's poverty reduction strategy.

Background:

Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program

In March 2019, the Province of BC released their poverty reduction strategy called TogetherBC: British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy. Mandated through the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*, the strategy set targets to reduce the overall poverty rate in British Columbia by at least 25%, and the child poverty rate by at least 50%, by 2024. *TogetherBC* is based on four principles: affordability, opportunity, reconciliation, and social inclusion. These principles guided the priority action areas that form the core of the strategy.

The intent of the Poverty Reduction Planning & Action program is to support local governments in reducing poverty at the local level and to support the Province's poverty reduction strategy. Funding is provided by the Province of BC and is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).

In February 2020, the Regional Board approved a collaborative grant application to be submitted to UBCM for the development of a Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy on behalf of the District of Lake Country, City of West Kelowna, District of Peachland, and the City of Kelowna. Each of the four member municipalities provided a resolution that acknowledged and supported the RDCO to apply for, receive, and manage any grant funds on their behalf. The grant was awarded to the Regional District for a total of \$149,000. Currently, all project activities are to be completed no later than November 14, 2021.

Project History

In 2017, the Central Okanagan Poverty Reduction Committee (COPRC) was established with the goal of developing a regional poverty reduction strategy with an upstream focus. Supported by funding from the Vancouver Foundation and the Central Okanagan Early Years Partnership, the committee set the stage for a community-driven, regional approach to addressing poverty. The COPRC determined that there were specific requirements needed to move ahead into strategy development including a poverty analysis, significant community engagement, further involvement of those with lived and living experience of poverty, and a governance structure and sufficient resources to plan and execute a strategy.

In 2019 the COPRC contracted Urban Matters to create a regional community poverty analysis informed by lived experience and key engagement from stakeholders. The analysis provides baseline data and insights into poverty at the community and regional level, and identified eight key priority areas to help determine and inform action areas through the next phase. Key stakeholders involved in the Central Okanagan Community Wellness Analysis identified the need to pursue the development of a strategy with a regional focus.

Alignment

A regional focus provides considerable benefits to Central Okanagan communities. A regional strategy provides for efficiencies in resources, engagement processes and advocacy. Through the City of Kelowna's Journey Home process, the community identified the need for a regional approach to complex social issues, as people move throughout the region for services, employment, childcare and housing. A regional strategy can create an action plan on policies and structures at the regional level, while building capacity within each community to address their unique needs and priorities.

The strategy aligns with the Regional Board priority of Community Sustainability to initiate and support efforts to create a healthy built environment in which all people throughout the region enjoy access to a diverse range of housing options, remain safe in the face of emergencies and experience a high quality of life.

Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy:

The development of the Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy (COPAWS) is aimed at creating a strategy to be implemented across the region to increase community wellness and decrease poverty in the communities of the Central Okanagan which:

- Recognizes, values and seeks to build on existing strengths, strategies and initiatives;
- Builds capacity for collaborative action through engagement, with a goal of community ownership and leadership;
- Prioritizes inclusion and the active involvement of priority populations; and
- Focuses on implementation and on-going evaluation beyond the strategy development project.

The strategy development process includes opportunities for various collaborators such as local governments, Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members, the local health authority, not-for-profit agencies serving people living in poverty, persons with lived or living experience, and the private sector.

Key Deliverables

1. Broad and inclusive community engagement program that develops ownership, collective impact and sustainability of the work ahead.
2. A “What We Heard” report from the community engagement process and events across the region.
3. A Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy which outlines how we will reduce poverty and increase wellness in each community within the Central Okanagan region.
4. An Implementation Plan and accompanying accountability framework for each community in the region, identifying how the strategy will be actioned, responsibilities of key community stakeholders, and resources required for implementation.
5. An Evaluation Framework which provides specific, measurable targets to evaluate progress on implementing the strategy.

The Strategy will:

- Align and integrate with Provincial and National Poverty Reduction Strategies, with related local systems change strategies, and current initiatives completed or underway in within the Region.
- Have an upstream, systems and policy change focus.
- Increase community awareness and will.
- Build capacity within and across the region for collaborative action (leverage resources).
- Create a roadmap that identifies ways for systems and policy to change and be equitable and diverse.
- Identify grass roots movements, organizations and systems that can support a regional goal of reducing poverty and build a strong collaborative and sustainable network with these groups.
- Focus on the unique needs of the individual communities across the region.

Through the development of the strategy, strengths of individual communities will be identified and used to create a community agenda and understanding to support the conditions for:

- Connecting, activating and mobilizing;
- Building a framework for sharing, gathering, and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to inform niche initiatives;
- Inspiring innovation and creativity in finding solutions;
- Developing programs, projects and services that have tangible benefits for individuals and families;
- Creating a shared measurement framework to ensure continual improvement; and
- Coordinating existing services and infrastructure to maximize impact.

Structure

The United Way Southern Interior BC is responsible for project management and development of the strategy with support and oversight from the COPAWS Leadership Committee and Community Action Teams (see attached Organizational Chart). A consultant will be part of the strategy development process through the development of an Indigenous engagement framework, preparation of an Implementation Framework and accompanying Accountability Framework for each community within the region, and preparation of an Evaluation Framework.

Summary of Key Milestones

#	Key Milestones	Timeline	Status
1	Support for the project from the RDCO & member municipalities	Early 2020	Complete
2	UBCM Grant	May 2020	Complete
3	Formation of the Leadership Committee	November 2020	Complete
4	Communications Plan	March 2021	Complete
5	Community Engagement Plan	March 2021	Complete
6	Community Engagement and Consultation	April – July 2021	
7	Indigenous Engagement	May – July 2021	
8	Community Engagement Analysis and 'What We Head' report	August 2021	
9	Draft Strategy, implementation and evaluation framework	September 2021	
10	Final Strategy, Implementation, and evaluation framework	November 2021	

Next Steps

1. Select Consultant

An RFP was issued in February 2021 for a consultant to develop an Indigenous engagement framework and an implementation and evaluation framework relating to the development of the strategy. Proposals are currently being reviewed by United Way staff. With oversight from the United Way SIBC Project Manager, the purpose of this call for proposal is to:

1. Provide a strategic framework for engaging Indigenous communities into this work through involvement and collaboration and implementation of this framework
2. Create an implementation and accountability framework for COPAWS
3. Develop an evaluation framework for COPAWS that measures the effects and changes of the Strategy on people and communities

2. Finalize Community Engagement Plan

Planning for community engagement has been ongoing and includes strengthening relationships with community service providers. The engagement plan was developed with input from the Community Action Teams and is to be reviewed and endorsed by the COPAWS Leadership Committee prior to undertaking any engagement.

3. Community Engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted those living in poverty, people who are precariously housed, facing food insecurity, with chronic health conditions or living with disabilities, marginalized and racialized groups and individuals, and families and seniors who were already facing structural and social inequities. In order to effectively create a community-based, actionable wellness and poverty strategy in our region, we need to adapt to ensure equitable, inclusive community engagement will still occur across the region despite the barriers that remain in place due to COVID-19. The project team is shifting in-person community engagement activities (forums, focus groups) to virtual methods, and will leverage existing social service programs, relationships and connections to scale up one-to-one and small group engagement focused on those with limited or no access to technology to engage virtually.

Additionally, the project team will continue the planned engagement with community-identified priority groups (youth, lived and living experience) and specific engagement activities focused on diverse and priority populations in all communities across the Central Okanagan region.

The community engagement approach includes:

- Asset Mapping – building a community roadmap of existing services and initiatives
- Community Action Teams – community led activation and guidance of approach
- Online Surveys (priority groups and general public)
- 1:1 interviews
- Focus groups with priority populations (disproportionately affected by poverty)
- Community consultation through service delivery partners in the community

Financial Considerations:

The District of Lake Country, City of West Kelowna, District of Peachland, and the City of Kelowna all provided Council resolutions that acknowledged and supported the RDCO to apply for, receive, and manage any grant funds on their behalf.

As the primary applicant, the Regional District of the Central Okanagan is responsible managing the grant funding on behalf of the regional partners. The RDCO is responsible for the completion of the project, reporting requirements and maintaining proper fiscal management.

Organizational Issues:

Along with the fiscal and reporting responsibilities, the Regional District is involved in the strategy development process through the review and input of components identified in the work plan, and a staff representative Co-Chairs the COPAWS Leadership Committee with the United Way. Staff from each of the partnering communities (Council liaisons) form part of the Leadership Committee and are accountable for guidance on community engagement and strategy implementation in each respective community.

Attachment:

- COPAWS Organizational Chart