

Regional District of Central Okanagan
North Westside Governance & Services Study
January, 2022

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) is undertaking a North Westside Governance and Services Study in Central Okanagan West Electoral Area. The purpose of the Study is threefold:

- to document and assess the current state of governance and service delivery in the North Westside communities of Central Okanagan West
- to understand the interests and concerns of North Westside residents with respect to local governance and service delivery
- to identify governance and service delivery options, within the regional district framework, for addressing the most pressing interests and concerns expressed

The options identified in the Study will take into consideration the different restructure and governance approaches available under the *Local Government Act*. Initiatives that may be taken within current service delivery and governance models will also be considered.

To oversee and guide the Study, the RDCO Board of Directors will appoint a North Westside Governance and Services Study Committee comprised of up to twelve Central Okanagan West residents. Taken together, the Committee members will constitute a cross-section of the Electoral Area, and will represent a wide range of groups and organizations active in the Area. The Electoral Area Director for Electoral Area West will be a non-voting member of the Committee, on which he will serve in an *ex officio* capacity.

The RDCO wishes to retain a team of consultants to assist the Committee in conducting the Study. The consultants must have considerable experience in and knowledge of British Columbia's unique system of local government, including the regional district model, and the provision of local governance and services to unincorporated communities in the province. The consultants must have specific expertise in governance, local service provision, local government finance, community development and public engagement.

Neilson Strategies Inc. (NSI) has assembled a team of consultants with the required experience and expertise to assist the Governance Study Committee in its work. The team is headed by Allan Neilson, a Local Government Consultant with over 25 years' of experience working with regional districts and municipalities, primarily as a consultant, but also as a senior local government manager in the municipal and regional district contexts. Joining Allan is Sherry Hurst (Leftside Partners Inc.), a professional Planner with expertise in local government finance, service provision and governance. Allan and Sherry will be supported at all stages of the Study by Brianna Wells, Project Advisor.

This proposal presents the consultants' understanding of the *Governance and Services Study*, sets out a suggested work program for completing the initiative, provides a time line for the work, and outlines a budget within the Ministry of Municipal Affairs' grant limit of \$60,000.00, plus GST.

NORTH WESTSIDE GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE STUDY

The Study Area

The unincorporated communities located within the North Westside Fire Services Area in RDCO's Central Okanagan West Electoral Area are the focus of the *Governance and Services Study*.

The Study

In simple terms, the *Governance and Services Study* is being undertaken to help residents, the Central Okanagan West Director, the RDCO Board of Directors and the Minister of Municipal Affairs assess the need for changes to the current structure of local governance and service delivery in the North Westside. The full purpose of the Study, as noted earlier, is threefold:

- to document and assess the current state of governance and service delivery in North Westside communities
- to understand the interests and concerns of North Westside residents with respect to local governance and service delivery
- to identify governance and service delivery options, within the regional district framework, for addressing the most pressing interests and concerns expressed

Each of these purposes is explained in this section of the proposal.

➤ Current State

The Study is being undertaken, in part, to help residents understand the local governance and service delivery system in place in the North Westside today. To achieve this purpose the consultants, under the guidance of the Governance and Services Study Committee, will need to:

- explain the system of local government in BC, the regional district model and the provision of local governance and services to unincorporated communities
- explain the differences between electoral areas and municipalities in terms of local governance, local service provision and local government taxation and finance
- document and map-out the range of local government services provided to the North Westside and its individual communities, including services provided by the RDCO as well as those provided by other service agencies (e.g., Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure)
- describe how decisions are made, and by whom, for each of the local services provided
- outline the level of formal cooperation among service providers
- document and describe the costs associated with each local service, as well as the methods of cost allocation (i.e., who pays) and cost recovery (i.e., how costs are paid)

All information on the current state of governance and service provision is to be outlined for the Governance and Services Study Committee, residents and stakeholders in an *Interim Governance*

and Services Study Report. The *Interim Report* is to include, as well, a demographic and socio-economic profile of the North Westside and each of its communities.

➤ **Concerns and Interests**

The Study seeks to understand the concerns and interests of residents with respect to the current system of local governance and service provision. To achieve this purpose, the Governance and Services Study Committee needs to engage the public on a number of questions, such as:

- Do residents feel well-served today by the current system?
- What are the key governance and service concerns in each community?
- Are decision-making structures appropriate for the communities given their sizes, growth pressures and service needs?
- Does the range of services provided in each community make sense?
- Are needs being left unaddressed?
- Can the current system of governance and service provision accommodate the anticipated future needs and expectations in the communities?

A robust community engagement process is needed to communicate the findings of the *Interim Governance and Services Study Report*, and to explore the set of key questions.

➤ **Options to Consider**

The Governance and Services Study Committee, with the help of the consultants, needs to assess the public input received to clearly understand the concerns and issues of the local residents and stakeholders. Based on this understanding, the Committee must then consider the need and desire for change to the existing system of governance and service provision. In the event that change is warranted, the Committee is to identify options for further consideration. Options will take into consideration the different restructure and governance approaches available under the *Local Government Act*. Initiatives that could be taken within current service delivery and governance models will also be considered.

It should be emphasized that the Governance and Services Study is not an incorporation Study, and will not provide detailed technical or financial information on the impacts of incorporation.

Deliverables

There are three key deliverables from the Study: an *Interim Governance and Services Study Report*, a *Draft Governance and Services Study Report*, and a *Final Governance and Services Study Report*. The *Interim Report* will set out the full description and explanation of the current system of local governance and service provision in the North Westside and its communities. The information in the *Interim Report* will be shared with residents and stakeholders through the public engagement process, and will form the basis of the engagement. The *Draft Report* will be an expanded version of

the *Interim Report*, and will present the concerns and interests identified through the engagement process. The *Draft Report* will also identify options for change.¹

The *Draft Report* will be reviewed by the Committee, as well as by staff at the RDCO and Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Feedback provided to the consultants will be assessed and, where possible, incorporated into the *Final Report* which will be presented by the Governance and Service Study Committee to the RDCO Board of Directors.

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAM

To undertake the Governance and Services Study, and to achieve the Study's threefold purpose, the consultants have designed a suggested work program that features seven separate stages.

➤ Stage 1

First Committee Meeting

The Study would begin with a meeting of the consultants and the Study Committee to review the suggested work program, including the community engagement process and the Study time line (see later). Roles and responsibilities for the consultants, the Committee and individual members of the Committee would be reviewed. Roles and responsibilities for the Electoral Area Director, the RDCO and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs would also be outlined.

It would be important at the outset of the Study to ensure that all Committee members had a common base of knowledge on the subject matter. To this end, a portion of the first meeting would be set aside for a presentation and discussion on BC's local government system. The key differences between unincorporated areas and municipalities in terms of governance, service delivery and finance would be explored. Preliminary information on the range of local government services provided in the North Westside would also be reviewed with the Committee, as would information on the decision-making systems in place.

➤ Stage 2

Research, Interim Report and Engagement Materials

Research on BC's local government system would be undertaken prior to, and in preparation for, the first Committee meeting in Stage 1. Some research into the current local governance and service systems in place in the North Westside would also be undertaken in Stage 1. The bulk of data collection and research on the North Westside, however, would occur during the weeks leading up to Stage 2. The consultants would meet with staff from the RDCO and from all other local service agencies involved in Electoral Area West to obtain information on services provided, decision-making processes, service costs and cost-recovery mechanisms in place. The consultants would also review all census, economic, financial, development and other data to build profiles of the North Westside communities.

All research findings would be used to produce a draft of the *Interim Governance and Services Study Report*. The information would also be used to produce draft community engagement

¹ The detailed outline of the *Draft Report* is provided in the *Terms of Reference*.

materials, including (but not limited to):

- a *North Westside Governance & Services Overview* booklet
- a set of open house poster boards
- various website postings

The draft *Interim Report* would be sent to staff at the RDCO and Ministry of Municipal Affairs for comment.

➤ **Stage 3**

Second Committee Meeting

The draft *Interim Report* and the draft community engagement materials would be presented to and reviewed with the Committee at the second meeting of the group. Feedback from the Committee on the draft report would be incorporated along with that of RDCO staff and Ministry staff to create the complete *Interim Governance and Services Study Report*. Feedback from the Committee on the public engagement materials would be used to create final versions of the materials for the engagement process.

➤ **Stage 4**

Community Engagement

A core purpose of the *Governance and Services Study* is to understand the community's interests and concerns related to the system of local governance and servicing in the North Westside. Direct engagement is the means by which this purpose would be achieved. The Committee, with the participation of the consultants, would engage the community using the following methods:

– **Open Houses**

Three public open houses would be held over a five-week period in different parts of the North Westside. All events would feature both in-person and live-streamed options in order to accommodate as many community members as possible.² Each open house would feature a set of information poster boards and handouts that attendees could review at their own pace. The consultants and members of the Committee would be present to interact one-on-one with residents, to receive input and to answer questions. Each open house would also feature a presentation, introduced by the Committee Chair and made by the consultants. A Q&A period, facilitated by a member of the Committee, would follow the presentation. All attendees would be encouraged to complete a brief written questionnaire, copies of which would be made available throughout the event. The open houses would be advertised in print, online, by email and through social media.

At some point in the proceedings at each open house, the Electoral Area West Director would introduce the Governance Study Committee and its members, and would provide general comments on the purpose and process of the Study.

² In-person attendance would be dependent on public health orders in place at the time.

– **Overview Booklet**

A *North Westside Governance & Services Overview* booklet would be produced to provide full information on the current local governance and service provision system in place in the North Westside communities. Questions for residents to consider would be presented in the booklet; a link to a Study website (see later) to provide input on the questions would also be provided. Copies of the booklet would be available at the open houses and on the Study website. If possible, PDF copies of the publication would be distributed to residents and businesses using RDCO (Electoral Area West) email lists as well as those made available to the consultants by community stakeholder groups. Hard copies would be included in any RDCO mail-outs that coincided with the engagement process.

– **Study Website**

The Governance and Services Study would be profiled on a special section of the RDCO website. The site would provide community profiles, information on the local governance and servicing systems in place in the North Westside communities, and opportunities to provide feedback on specific questions. Online copies of the *Interim Report*, Overview booklet and information poster boards would also be posted.

The site would be developed and promoted as the sole official, definitive online information resource on the Study. All content would be provided by the consultants.

– **Stakeholder Group Meetings**

The consultants, supported by members of the Committee, would make themselves available to present information to, and receive feedback from, interested community stakeholder groups. A list of groups to approach would be determined in consultation with the Committee.

The full community engagement process would occur over a period of approximately two months. Web-based materials and the website itself would remain online following the formal consultation period.

It is useful to remember that the Governance and Services Study Committee is intended to be representative of a broad range of community interests and stakeholder groups. The Committee itself, therefore, would be an important source of community feedback on the existing system of governance and service provision in the North Westside communities. Committee members themselves would be well-positioned to provide views on the Study themes, and to connect with and relay the perspectives of key constituencies. The Study Committee, in short, would constitute an important element of the community engagement effort.

➤ **Stage 5**

Third Committee Meeting

The outcomes of the community engagement process would be reviewed at the third meeting of the Governance and Services Study Committee. Based on this review, and with the help of the

consultants, the Committee would determine whether to recommend further consideration of governance and servicing options, and if so, which options specifically.

➤ **Stage 6**

Draft Report (Fourth Committee Meeting)

Following the third meeting, the consultants would expand the *Interim Governance and Services Study Report* to include a summary of the engagement process and its findings, as well as any recommendations to be put forward by the Committee. The expanded product would constitute the *Draft Governance and Services Study Report*, which would be structured as prescribed in the *Terms of Reference*. The *Draft Report* would be distributed to Committee members following the Committee meeting, and to staff at the RDCO and the Ministry for comment. Where possible, feedback would be incorporated into the *Final Report*.

➤ **Stage 7**

RDCO Board

The Committee Chair and the lead consultant would present the *Final Governance and Services Study Report*, complete with recommendations, to the Electoral Area West Director and RDCO Board of Directors.

STUDY TIME LINE

Figure 1 presents a suggested time line that takes into account key deadlines identified in the *Terms of Reference*, and the seven stages of the suggested work program.

Figure 1
Study Time Line

Work Program Stage	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
1. First Committee Meeting							
2. Research, Interim Report							
3. Second Committee Meeting							
4. Community Engagement							
5. Third Committee Meeting							
6. Draft Report (Fourth Meeting)							
7. RDCO Board							

STUDY BUDGET

The RDCO has set a budget of \$60,000.00, plus GST, for the Governance and Services Study. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the consultants' budget for the Study within this limit.

Figure 2
Study Budget

Work Program Stage	Consultant Fees	Disbursements	Total
1. First Committee Meeting	5,000	1,000	6,000
2. Research, Interim Report	19,500	500	20,000
3. Second Committee Meeting	2,000	1,000	3,000
4. Community Engagement	16,000	2,500	18,500
5. Third Committee Meeting	4,000	1,000	5,000
6. Draft Report (Fourth Meeting)	7,000	-	7,000
7. RDCO Board	500	-	500
Total	\$ 54,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 60,000

The consultants' budget includes all professional fees and all disbursements incurred directly by the consulting team (e.g., travel, cost of producing poster boards). Not included in the budget are the following costs:

- goods and services tax (GST)
- costs incurred to rent space for Committee and public meetings
- costs incurred to print and distribute hard copies of the Overview booklet
- the cost of any RDCO staff time involved in the Study, including the cost of staff administer the website, assist with social media postings, respond to the consultants' information requests and invoices, take minutes at Committee meetings, and attend to other miscellaneous tasks