

Subject: Reaching Home - Second COVID-19 Funding 2020-2021**APPROVALS:****Jamie Doyle**_____
Director_____
Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

THAT \$1,135,067.00 from the 2020-2021 Community Plan on Homelessness Program be allocated to Wood Buffalo Wellness Society for the Tawâw Project, a partnership with Wood Buffalo Housing, McMurray Métis and the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society.

Summary:

On April 6, 2020 Council approved \$744,997 to be allocated for the first round of COVID-19 funding from the Federal *Reaching Home* initiative for the 2020-2021 year.

Due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal government announced a second round of COVID-19 funding for the *Reaching Home* initiative in the amount of \$1,135,067. This new funding must be allocated in the 2020-2021 funding cycle.

Reaching Home is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness. It provides direct funding to communities across Canada to support their efforts in developing local solutions to homelessness.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is the region's Community Entity (CE). The Municipality is responsible for contracting service providers through the Community Investment Program, monitoring service delivery and costs, and reporting to the Federal Government about the outputs and outcomes of the Community Plan on Homelessness (CPH) projects.

Background:

In November of 2020 the Federal Government provided a second COVID-19 grant through the *Reaching Home* grant stream. These funds are restricted to programs that address the COVID-19 pandemic for individuals experiencing homelessness. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued on November 16, 2020 and closed on December 7, 2020. Due to the time restrictions on the grant funding and the extensive reporting, data management, and common assessment tools required by the Federal Government, the RFP was restricted to six regional agencies; four under the homeless

serving sector currently funded through the CPH program and two Indigenous organizations.

One submission was received and reviewed by Administration and then presented to the Homelessness Initiatives Strategic Committee (HISC) on December 14, 2020. The HISC Committee includes representatives from the United Way, Industry, Rural Community, Indigenous Community, Landlords and Alberta Health Services and non-voting members from the Federal and Provincial Governments. The mandate of this Committee is to act as a steward of the Community Plan on Homelessness, and to provide CPH funding recommendations to Council. It is a Federal funding requirement to have a committee such as HISC in place. Overarching priorities are determined by the Community Plan on Homelessness, and HISC ranked the priorities to align with their assessment of utilizing the funds by designating the dollars toward a capital investment project.

Current CPH agencies expressed the need for more supportive housing solutions, and the proposed project will address this need.

RMWB and CPH funded agencies continue to provide support to CPH programs including Housing First, Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Outreach, and Eviction Prevention. During the pandemic, these organizations have housed a total of 85 individuals this is an increase of 56% from the last fiscal year. Since May 2020, the programs have provided a 10% reduction in chronic homelessness and continue to make reductions.

As of December 10, 2020, there are 51 individuals on the By Name List (which is a list of individuals awaiting placement in a CPH housing program, 32 of those individuals identify as being Indigenous).

According to Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH), there were 135 households (298 people) on a waitlist as of 2018-year end (update based on information given for the affordable housing panel). Approximately 29% of Housing First and Rapid Re-housing participants are housed in WBH units while 71% are housed with other landlords.

Rationale for Recommendation:

This funding recommendation is being allocated to non-profit organizations that are partnering and collaborating to provide housing and programs to support individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals experiencing homelessness are at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to decreased ability to self-isolate and limited access to appropriate washroom facilities which would allow individuals to adhere to health authority directions for frequent hand washing. Further, this pandemic has decreased CPH funded agencies' capacity to provide intensive case management and regular in-person support.

The recommendation for allocation of the Reaching Home grant is to fund the Tawâw project, which will provide housing for 22 Indigenous individuals and families who are

experiencing homelessness and are impacted by COVID-19. This project will create a collaborative environment as the support staff will be on-site and will respond to client needs and intervene with potential issues that could impede the clients progress in maintaining long term housing stability. RMWB Community and Protective Services continues to work collaboratively with the Regional Emergency Command Centre, Alberta Health Services, community homeless serving agencies and CPH funded agencies to support individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategic Priorities:

Responsible Government
Rural and Indigenous Communities and Partnerships

Attachments:

- 1. Tawâw Project Proposal**
- 2. Tawâw Project Budget**
- 3. McMurray Métis Letter of Intent**
- 4. Wood Buffalo Housing Letter of Intent**