

COVID-19 Restart Funding for Local Governments Strengthening Communities' Services 2021 Program & Application Guide

1. Introduction

The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia are providing \$540 million in shared funding to local governments under the Safe Restart Agreement to manage the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. These investments will help to protect public health and safety, prepare for potential future waves of the virus, and further support the safe reopening of economies.

Strengthening Communities' Services Program

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in the visibility of unsheltered homelessness in many communities, and related community health and safety challenges.¹ Many local governments and Treaty First Nations, despite already experiencing pressures on revenues and staff capacity, have responded to these challenges with a variety of services, infrastructure, and coordination with health authorities and social sector service providers.

Some of society's most vulnerable members face challenges that have worsened in the context of COVID-19. This includes groups that are more likely to experience homelessness and are more vulnerable to the health and safety risks associated with living unsheltered, such as Indigenous people, women, and gender diverse people. People who lack adequate housing are more likely to suffer from a range of health challenges, including mental health and substance abuse issues, and are highly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Within the Safe Restart funding, \$100 million is being delivered through the Strengthening Communities' Services Program, which aims to support unsheltered homeless populations and address related community impacts through an application-based program. The goal of this program is to support local governments and Treaty First Nations that wish to take action, understanding that this will complement parallel provincial efforts. This program is meant to bridge the period between the COVID-19 outbreak and the post-COVID recovery period. The funding is being administered by UBCM on behalf of the Province and the Government of Canada.

Intended Outcomes

The intent of the Strengthening Communities' Services program is to assist local governments and Treaty First Nations with:

- Improved health and safety of unsheltered homeless people living in public or private spaces, including reduced risk of COVID-19 or other disease transmission;
- Reduced community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where unsheltered homeless populations are seeking temporary shelter and services;

¹ [Homeless Hub's definition of homelessness](#) describes a range of physical living situations. Unsheltered homelessness refers to "people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions." This includes people living in public or private spaces without consent (parks, sidewalks, squares, vacant buildings, lots, etc.) and people living in places not intended for permanent human habitation (vehicles; garages, attics or buildings not designed for habitation; makeshift shelters, shacks or tents).

- Improved coordination among eligible applicants and health/social service providers, Indigenous organizations and others working on housing, homelessness and service provision; and;
- Increased capacity of eligible applicants to work with homeless persons and Indigenous organizations towards culturally safe and trauma-informed responses.

2. Eligible Applicants

All local governments (municipalities, regional districts, and the Islands Trust) and Treaty First Nations (as defined by the *Interpretation Act*) in BC are eligible to apply.

Eligible applicants can submit one application per intake, including regional applications or participation as a partnering applicant in a regional application.

3. Funding Guidelines

The Strengthening Communities' Services Program can contribute up to 100% of the cost of eligible activities.

It is recommended that eligible applicants follow the Funding Guidelines below. Funding permitting, applications for projects that exceed the Funding Guidelines may be considered for funding provided that applicants are able to demonstrate evidence of need in the community and provide a rationale for the request. If the total funding request exceeds the available funding, applicants that have requested additional funds may be asked to reduce their funding request.

Table 1: Funding Guidelines

Population (based on 2019 BC Stats Population Estimates)	Funding Guideline
Under 5,000	\$200,000
5,000-40,000	\$450,000
40,000-75,000	\$1,250,000
75,000-200,000	\$2,500,000
200,000-500,000	\$3,500,000
500,000 or greater	\$10,000,000

In order to ensure transparency and accountability in the expenditure of public funds, all other financial contributions for eligible portions of the project must be declared and, depending on the total value, may decrease the value of the grant. This includes any other grant funding and any revenue that is generated from activities that are funded by the Strengthening Communities' Services Program.

4. Eligible Projects

To be eligible for funding, applications must demonstrate that proposed activities meet one or more of the intended outcomes of the program (see Section 1), and all of the following:

- Demonstrate evidence of need in the community (e.g. unsheltered homeless population estimates, housing needs report, community concerns about public health and safety) and provide a rationale for how these issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19;
- Provide temporary solutions that address increased urgent and immediate needs related to unsheltered homelessness and do not create ongoing long-term financial obligations that will not be supported by the applicant;

- Include new activities or expansion of existing activities with costs incurred after September 17, 2020;
- Be capable of completion by the applicant within one year of the date of grant approval.

Applicants must choose to apply as a single applicant (i.e. an individual local government as identified in Section 2) or as part of a regional project.

Regional Projects

Funding requests from two or more eligible applicants for regional projects may be submitted as a single application for eligible collaborative projects. In this case, the maximum funding available would be based on the combined funding guidelines of each of the eligible applicants included in the application. It is expected that regional projects will demonstrate cost-efficiencies in the total grant request.

The primary applicant submitting the application for a regional project is required to submit a resolution as outlined in Section 7 of this guide. Each partnering applicant is required to submit a resolution that clearly states their approval for the primary applicant to apply for, receive, and manage the grant funding on their behalf.

5. Requirements for Funding

As part of the approval agreement, approved projects must meet the following requirements for funding:

- Any in-person activities, meetings, or events meet physical distancing and other public health guidance in relation to COVID-19.
- Activities must comply with all applicable privacy legislation under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* in relation to the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information while conducting funded activities. Personal information is any recorded information about an identifiable individual other than their business contact information. This includes information that can be used to identify an individual through association or inference.

In addition, as part of both the development of the application package and the delivery of the approved project, local governments are encouraged to engage with local First Nations and Indigenous organizations. Engagement by local governments both locally and regionally can help build relationships with First Nations, benefit both communities and enhance reconciliation. More information on engagement best practices is available [here](#).

6. Eligible & Ineligible Costs & Activities

Eligible costs are direct costs that are approved for funding, properly and reasonably incurred, and paid by the applicant to carry out eligible activities. Eligible costs can be incurred after September 17, 2020 to the date of submission of the final report.

Table 2 identifies examples of activities that are eligible for funding. Other activities that support the intent of the program may be considered for funding. Eligible activities must be cost-effective.

Table 2: Activities Eligible for Funding (including but not limited to)

1. Improved health and safety of unsheltered homeless people living in public or private spaces, including reduced risk of COVID-19 or other disease transmission

- Temporarily increasing emergency shelter capacity, availability, and services, including:
 - Expansion of existing shelters (e.g. more beds, staff, hours, and shelter-based services);
 - Creation of new temporary shelter spaces within existing buildings or land (e.g. in a civic centre or church, motel rooms), including minor renovations or minor improvements; and
 - Adherence to COVID-19 public health regulations (e.g. shelter capacity reductions, extra cleaning staff, physical distancing, rental of motel rooms to allow infected individuals to safely isolate).
- Providing other temporary options or enhancements for unsheltered homeless populations (e.g. temporary structures such as shipping containers; tents; platforms; fire retardant tarps; warming tents).
- Providing temporary, incremental services (including basic supplies) that are specifically related to supporting unsheltered homeless populations such as:
 - Food and water;
 - Bathroom facilities, showers, laundry;
 - Cleaning and waste management;
 - Harm reduction;
 - Security;
 - First aid;
 - Fire safety; and
 - Outreach teams to connect people to resources and support programs.

2. Reduced community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where unsheltered homeless populations are seeking temporary shelter

- Fostering positive dialogue between unsheltered homeless people, bylaw and protective services, and neighbourhoods or community members (e.g. liaison program with bylaw enforcement).
- Promoting understanding and cooperation through peer-based and/or neighbourhood participatory activities for site cleaning, security, communications etc.
- Providing programs or services that offer storage or security for belongings of unsheltered homeless populations.
- Funding incremental expenditures relating to protective services and bylaw enforcement.
- Participating in, supporting or coordinating community engagement strategies (e.g. neighbourhood outreach, public education materials, participatory dialogues).

3. Improved coordination among eligible applicants and health/social service providers, Indigenous organizations and others working on housing, homelessness and service provision

- Partnering with Indigenous leadership, communities and organizations.
- Participating in, supporting or coordinating cross-jurisdictional working groups and service teams related to housing, homelessness, and service provision.

- Participating in, supporting or coordinating joint communications programs with health authorities.
- Collaborating with health authorities and non-profit service providers on supporting harm reduction services and initiatives to connect people to health services.
- Liaising with public health officials on environmental safety, infection prevention and control and overdose prevention focusing on unsheltered homeless populations.
- Collaborating with local fire commissioners to increase fire safety.
- Participating in, supporting or coordinating peer-based support services including development of peer teams.

4. Increased capacity of eligible applicants to work with homeless persons and Indigenous organizations towards culturally safe and trauma-informed responses

- Training for elected officials, program administration and front-line staff, bylaw and protective services staff, and peers supporting unsheltered homeless populations, addressing topics such as:
 - Trauma: causes, effects, and trauma-informed approaches;
 - Crisis de-escalation;
 - Awareness of Housing First and harm reduction principles;
 - The distinct needs and barriers of Indigenous peoples at risk of homelessness, as well as Indigenous cultural safety and cultural humility training; and
 - The distinct needs and barriers of groups at higher risk of homelessness, including youth, women at risk of violence, LGBTQ2S, people with disabilities (including mental illness, brain injury and cognitive impairments).

Additional Eligible Costs & Activities

In addition to the activities identified in Table 2, the following expenditures are also eligible provided they relate directly to eligible activities:

- Honoraria for community members with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness that are participants in funded activities
- Incremental applicant staff and administration costs (i.e. creating a new position or adding new responsibilities to an existing position)
- Consultant or other contract costs relating to service provision
- Public information and engagement costs
- Temporary lease/rental costs related to the delivery of eligible activities
- Minor renovations related to the delivery of eligible activities

Ineligible Costs & Activities

Any activity that is not outlined in Table 2 or the 'Additional Eligible Costs & Activities' section is not eligible for grant funding. This includes:

- Development of funding application package
- Development of architectural, engineering, or other design drawings for the construction or renovation of facilities
- Routine or ongoing operating and/or planning costs or activities that are not incremental to the project

- Purchase of software, software licences, service subscriptions, or membership fees
- Legal, audit, or interest fees or fees to incorporate a society
- Fundraising, lobbying, or sponsorship campaigns
- Project-related fees payable to the eligible applicant(s) (e.g. permit fees, DCCs, etc.)
- Purchase of promotional items, door/raffle prizes, give-away items, and/or gifts for community members
- Major capital improvements to existing facilities and/or construction of new, permanent facilities
- Long-term, permanent capital investments including the purchase of land and/or buildings

7. Application Requirements & Process

Application Deadline

The application deadline is April 16, 2021. Applicants will be advised of the status of their applications within 90 days of the application deadline.

Required Application Contents

All applicants are required to submit an electronic copy of the complete application, including:

- Completed Application Form with all required attachments.
- Detailed budget that indicates the proposed expenditures from Strengthening Communities' Services program funding and other sources (if applicable) and that aligns with the proposed activities outlined in the application form. Although additional funding or support is not required, any other grant funding or in-kind contributions must be identified.
- Council, Board, Local Trust Committee or Treaty First Nation resolution, indicating support for the current proposed activities and willingness to provide overall grant management.
- For regional projects: Council, Board, Local Trust Committee, Treaty First Nation resolution from each partnering applicant that clearly states approval for the primary applicant to apply for, receive, and manage the grant funding on their behalf.
- Optional: Up to three letters of support as evidence of partnership or collaboration with partners such as community-based organizations, non-profit service providers, health authorities and public health units, local First Nations and/or Indigenous organizations.

Submission of Applications

Applications should be submitted as Word, Excel or PDF files. Total file size for email attachments cannot exceed 20 MB.

All applications should be submitted to:

Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: lgps@ubcm.ca

Review of Applications

UBCM will perform a preliminary review of all applications to ensure the required application contents have been submitted and to ensure that eligibility criteria have been met.

Following this, an Evaluation Committee will assess and score all eligible applications. Higher scores will be given to applications that:

- Demonstrate greater alignment with the intent of the Strengthening Communities' Services program (i.e. address multiple program outcomes).

- Provide evidence of need in the community (e.g. existing homelessness plans, strategies or initiatives; unsheltered homeless population estimates; community concerns about safety) and provide a rationale for how these issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Demonstrate partnership and engagement with Indigenous leadership, organizations, and communities.
- Demonstrate a plan for communicating and engaging with unsheltered homeless populations to include perspectives of people with lived experience.
- Apply an anti-stigma lens and increase public awareness and understanding of causes and responses to homelessness.
- Include proposed activities and costs that are part of comprehensive, multi-faceted, approach to addressing unsheltered homelessness.
- Include collaboration with distinct needs-serving organizations, public health, health authorities, non-profit organizations, other local governments, police, bylaw enforcement, etc.
- Demonstrate cost-effectiveness.
- Demonstrate a plan for winding up and concluding the funded activities (or continuing with alternative sources of funding).

Point values and weighting will be established within each of these scoring criteria. Only those applications that meet a minimum threshold point value will be considered for funding.

The Evaluation Committee will consider the population and provincial, regional, and urban/rural distribution of proposed projects. Recommendations will be made on a provincial priority basis. All funding decisions will be made by UBCM.

All application materials will be shared with the Province of BC.

8. Grant Management & Applicant Responsibilities

Grants are awarded to eligible applicants only and, as such, the applicant is responsible for completion of the project as approved and for meeting reporting requirements.

Applicants are also responsible for proper fiscal management, including maintaining acceptable accounting records for the project. UBCM reserves the right to audit these records.

Notice of Funding Decision & Payments

All applicants will receive written notice of funding decisions. Approved applicants will receive an Approval Agreement, which will include the terms and conditions of any grant that is awarded, and that is required to be signed and returned to UBCM.

Grants are awarded in two payments: 50% at the approval of the project and when the signed Approval Agreement has been returned to UBCM and 50% when the project is complete and UBCM has received and approved the required final report and a financial summary.

Please note that in cases where revisions are required to an application, or an application has been approved in principle only, the applicant has 30 days from the date of the written notice of the status of the application to complete the application requirements. Applications that are not completed within 30 days may be closed.

Progress Payments

To request a progress payment, approved applicants are required to submit:

- Description of activities completed to date;
- Description of funds expended to date; and

- Written rationale for receiving a progress payment.

Changes to Approved Projects

Approved grants are specific to the project as identified in the application, and grant funds are not transferable to other projects. Approval from UBCM will be required for any significant variation from the approved project.

To propose changes to an approved project, applicants are required to submit:

- Amended application package, including updated, signed application form, updated budget, and an updated Council, Board, Treaty First Nation or Local Trust Committee resolution.
- Written rationale for proposed changes to activities and/or expenditures.

Applicants are responsible for any costs above the approved grant unless a revised application is submitted and approved prior to work being undertaken.

Extensions to Project End Date

All approved activities are required to be completed within the time frame identified in the approval agreement and all extensions beyond this date must be requested in writing and be approved by UBCM. Extensions will not exceed one year.

9. Final Report Requirements & Process

Final reports are required to be submitted within 30 days of completion of the project. Applicants are required to submit an electronic copy of the complete final report, including the following:

- Completed Final Report Form with all required attachments (see Appendix 1).
- Detailed financial summary that indicates the actual expenditures from the Strengthening Communities' Services program funding and other sources (if applicable) and that aligns with the actual activities outlined in the final report form.
- Copies of any materials that were produced with grant funding.
- Optional: any photos or media related to the funded project.

Please note, as a requirement of funding, the program and approved projects may be subject to a compliance audit.

Submission of Final Reports

Final reports should be submitted as Word, Excel or PDF files. Total file size for email attachments cannot exceed 20 MB.

All interim and final reports should be submitted to:

Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: lgps@ubcm.ca

Review of Final Reports

UBCM will perform a preliminary review of all final reports to ensure the required report elements have been submitted.

All final report materials will be shared with the Province of BC.

10. Additional Information

For enquiries about the application process or general questions regarding the Strengthening Communities' Services program, please contact UBCM at lgps@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-0930.