

2021-4 Transforming the Building Sustainable Communities Program to support targeted community-led development

Mover: North End Community Renewal Corporation

Whereas: Community development funding for community-based organizations (CBOs) is housed in the Department of Municipal Relations, generally targeted at different regional, geographic, or population groups. However, many community-based organizations working toward poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and community renewal do not have access to multi-year funding that they require to take innovative, long-term, strategic, and comprehensive action.

Whereas: On April 4, 2019, the Province announced significant changes to community-led development funding, combining seven funding streams into the Building Sustainable Communities Program (BSC).

Whereas: BSC will not fund projects beyond two years. It will not fund salaries or other employment costs, which are required to run key community development programming. Funding is available up to \$75,000, and proponents must demonstrate 50 per cent of project costs funded from other sources, with a minimum of 10 percent from non-governmental sources. It does not fund administrative costs beyond 2.5%, when the charitable sector standard for administration costs is 10-20%. The evaluation or measurement of qualification remains very broad.

Whereas: Requiring multiple funding sources with minimal support for the administrative and human resources needed to accomplish this creates administrative and accessibility barriers. Stable, long-term community development requires stable, predictable, and reliable funding of proven programs following an agreed upon payment schedule. Only allowing new projects over predictable, long-term funding will only continue to stress and stretch the non-profit and charitable sector. Evaluations have demonstrated that multi-year funding has helped community-based organizations to be more efficient and effective, helping leverage additional resources from non-government sources or different levels of government. Additionally, many CBOs are not able to maintain enough savings or retained earnings to adequately manage during a delay in funds flowing, thus highlighting the importance of adhering to an agreed upon payment schedule.

Whereas: While BSC streamlines funding applications into a one window application process, it now is open to any non-profit, charity, or municipality competing for dollars to meet the very general criteria of helping "to build thriving, sustainable communities." While previous funding programs previously targeted low-income communities, now CBOs in low-income areas must compete for general dollars available to municipalities, charities, and other non-profits across the province, leaving them in jeopardy of receiving less targeted support.

Whereas: The changes in funding criteria as well as a less targeted program purpose, compared against the previous NA! criteria, means that more affluent communities will have an edge over poor communities with less capacity and access to volunteer and financial resources.

Whereas: Manitoba's CBOs and nonprofits are providing essential services to help communities address the impacts of COVID-19, while continuing to play a crucial role in supporting communities and individuals through already existing socio-economic needs.

Whereas: Significant changes are needed if the Building Sustainable Communities (BSC) Program is to properly support the sector.

Whereas: Supporting Community-Led Development is a key theme area of the CCEDNet Manitoba Public Policy Road Map. Building Sustainable Communities is a key funding program of the Province of Manitoba to support this kind of work. Transforming the program to support targeted, effective community development and CED work is needed for capturing the value of the sector.

Be It Resolved That:

The Province of Manitoba, through Department of Municipal Relations should renew and restructure the Building Sustainable Communities program for community-led development with multi-year, streamlined funding, with the following characteristics:

- A. An evidence-based, targeted approach with a clear mandate and outcomes for community development across Manitoba, including a focus that identifies and invests in key neighbourhoods and communities in the greatest need of physical, social and economic revitalization as defined in the Neighbourhood Renewal Act.
- B. Fund multi-year agreements to a maximum of five years for eligible CBOs, including core funding commitments to NRCs. Funding should include administrative, program, and project costs, including funding for program salaries, evaluation and outcome reporting, and cost of living increases. Long-term, effective NRC projects (previously funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund) should be brought into core funding agreements.
- C. Effective communication channels between the Province of Manitoba and CBOs by reducing red tape and the administrative burden for application, renewal, and reporting, and renewing reporting and outcome measuring mechanisms in collaboration with CBOs.
- D. Predictability of provincial funding including an agreed-upon and adhered to payment schedule, helping CBOs leverage funding from other non-government sources and enabling more organizational stability and sustainability.
- E. Support for CBO capacity building services to promote effectiveness, professional development, sustainability within the sector, and an 'ecosystem' approach to the community development network in Manitoba.

Be it Further Resolved That: The Province of Manitoba, through Department of Municipal Relations, should support the financial needs of CBOs through the COVID-19 pandemic through:

- A. Providing and clearly communicating flexibility measures to assist nonprofits that receive funding directly from the Government as they manage their agreements with the Province through the COVID-19 pandemic. This could potentially include allowing funds to be moved between budget categories, extending funding agreements concluding in 2019/20 through the 2020/21 fiscal year, postponement of implementation of administrative guidelines, and recognition that program outcomes may shift.

How the Resolution will be Advanced: CCEDNet Manitoba, as well as a number of other network groups, including the Coalition of Manitoba Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations and other individual CBOs, will continue to lead direct advocacy and lobbying to the Department of Municipal Relations to see BSC changed to reflect these recommendations. A forthcoming research report through the Manitoba Research Alliance, CCPA-Manitoba, and CCEDNet Manitoba will further detail proposed changes to the program.