

For Information Only

Client Navigator Program Final Report

Presented To: Community Services Committee

Presented: Monday, Jan 16, 2017

Report Date: Wednesday, Dec 21, 2016

Type: Correspondence for Information Only

Resolution

For Information Only

Finance Implications

The City of Greater Sudbury received \$71,725 in Provincial grant funding through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund, as well contributed \$29,557 through in kind services, for a total project cost of \$101,282.

The project was carried out within this budget and therefore there were no additional financial implications to the City budget.

Health Impact Assessment

The Client Navigator Program resulted in a direct and positive impact on the health and well-being of participants by assisting homeless individuals to connect with health, social and housing supports.

Background

The Local Poverty Reduction Fund is a \$50 million, six-year initiative created by the Province of Ontario to support innovative, community-driven projects that measurably improve the lives of those most affected by poverty.

The Local Poverty Reduction Fund provides funding to community organizations and Municipalities to support and evaluate their poverty reduction initiatives, create partnerships, and build a body of evidence of programs that work for Ontarians living in poverty.

By supporting projects in Communities across the Province, this initiative aims to harness innovative ideas from local, community-based approaches and establish new ways of tackling poverty. Using the evidence

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Gail Spencer
Coordinator of Shelters and Homelessness
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 16

Health Impact Review

Gail Spencer
Coordinator of Shelters and Homelessness
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 16

Division Review

Luisa Valle
Director of Children and Citizen Services
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 16

Recommended by the Department

Catherine Matheson
General Manager of Community Development
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 16

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Ed Archer
Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Dec 21, 16

gathered from these projects, the government will work to apply best practices across the Province and focus on funding programs that are proven to work and that can expand over time.

A Call for Proposals was issued in June 2015. The Local Poverty Reduction Fund was available to a wide range of groups across Ontario, including not-for profit corporations, registered charities, broader public sector organizations such as school boards, Municipal Governments, District Social Service Administration Boards, Aboriginal Communities and organizations.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Office at the Treasury Board Secretariat is responsible for the overall program and assessment of the applications. The Local Poverty Reduction Fund office has partnered with the Ontario Trillium Foundation to administer the Fund.

Client Navigator Program

The Community Development Department, Social Services Division, was successful in its 2015 grant application to the Local Poverty Reduction Fund. The total project cost was \$101,282, of which the Local Poverty Reduction Fund provided a grant of \$71,725 and \$29,557 was offered in-kind by the Social Services Division of the City of Greater Sudbury.

The funding received was used to hire two “Client Navigators” (one Aboriginal, one bilingual) within the Social Services Division. The two staff were employed between January and June 2016 to assist individuals who were staying at the Out of the Cold Emergency Shelter Program to access the necessary supports and services to move from street to home. They worked a split shift, spending three and a half hours at the shelter in the evening connecting with clients and creating relationships, and then having day time hours to meet with clients in the Ontario Works office or out in the Community. They provided a one-on-one client centered response and assisted clients to access a variety of services such as applying for Ontario Works, registering with the Homelessness Network for housing case management support, completing the social housing application, accessing crisis, addiction or mental health services, as well as accessing Aboriginal or bilingual supports as required.

The goal of this unique program was to reach the most chronically homeless and difficult to serve citizens who are typically disconnected from homelessness services. As defined by the Government of Canada, chronically homeless refers to individuals, often with disabling conditions, (e.g. chronic physical or mental illness, substance abuse problems), who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e. have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation). Client Navigators reached this goal by establishing and maintaining relationships with shelter clients and focused on connecting participants to housing, health and social supports. Collaboration with Community Partners was essential to the success of the program.

The Client Navigator Program was evaluated by the Social Planning Council of Sudbury using information shared directly by clients and data entered into the Federal Government’s Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). Third-party evaluation was a mandatory requirement by the Treasury Board. A stakeholder survey was completed by the Social Services Division.

Program Evaluation Key Findings

- Introducing Client Navigators into an emergency shelter was successful in housing homeless men in Sudbury;
- The personal approach through direct client contact and follow-up was effective at housing homeless men in Sudbury;
- Client Navigators worked directly with 46 individuals accessing the Out of the Cold Emergency Shelter;

- 54% (25 people) were housed either in private market, subsidized housing or returned to a previous address;
- Of the 25 participants who were successfully housed, 52% (13 people) identified as Indigenous and 48% (12 people) as non-Indigenous;
- The most reported factor contributing to the client's need of Navigator Program services was alcohol abuse (33%), while a quarter of clients were reported as having experienced relationship breakdown (24%);
- 75% (15 respondents) of Community Partners agreed that the services provided by the Client Navigators were beneficial for individuals staying at the Out of the Cold Emergency Shelter; and
- 90% (19 respondents) of Community Partners agreed that the Out of the Cold Emergency Shelter was a good location to reach the chronically homeless.

According to the Final Evaluation Report submitted by the Social Planning Council, a key lesson learned is that there are many factors that can impact a homeless person's housing success. This evaluation found that attributes such as age, gender, immigration status, Indigenous identity, language of service, and income, can play a role in whether an individual is successfully housed. Contributing factors such as substance abuse, family/relationship breakdown, as well as a transient lifestyle and unemployment, can present additional challenges to an individual becoming housed.

In addition to the results reported in the program evaluation, it is of interest that approximately 22% (10 people) transitioned to programs or services as a forward step to securing permanent housing. For example, the Client Navigators assisted individuals with access to primary health care, mental health services, withdrawal management programs, and enhanced shelter options with additional supports. The personal approach practiced by the Client Navigators included helping individuals access social benefits, visiting landlords, shopping for apartment necessities, completing rental and rental subsidy applications and connecting patrons to community programs and supports. Housing success is an important indicator; however, each step towards housing stability was celebrated as individuals progressed from street to home.

A very special thanks is extended to the Treasury Board for this opportunity to be able to provide this program in the City of Greater Sudbury, and to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their administrative assistance.

Next Steps

As a result of the success of the Client Navigator Program, local homelessness providers have incorporated program elements into their shelter services with the understanding that building trust and connections with individuals experiencing homelessness can have positive results. The Client Navigator Program results will be used to inform provincial partners in this initiative and to improve services locally.