

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: May 27, 2022

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Chris Bone, Sr. Manager of Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships

SUBJECT: Evaluating Interventions to Improve Cleanliness, Safety & Inclusion

ATTACHMENT(S): Event Journal for Workshops 1 & 2
Event Journal for Workshops 3 & 4
PowerPoint Presentation

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated May 27, 2022, from the Sr. Manager of Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships titled “Evaluating Interventions to Improve Cleanliness, Safety & Inclusion”.

PURPOSE:

In late August of 2021, the City was advised that its application for Strengthening Communities’ Services grant funding was successful. The \$1.9 million grant has enabled implementation of a number of initiatives to improve the health and safety of unsheltered homeless people, and to address community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where homeless populations are seeking temporary shelter.

In addition, the grant has enabled the contracting of a consultant to help the City work with community leaders across sectors to co-design an evaluation framework that can be utilized to measure the outcome and impact of the City’s efforts to enhance safety, cleanliness, and social inclusion. This initiative has been unfolding since January of 2022, and has focused on a facilitated process to achieve multi-interest alignment in relation to key issues, required changes, and the path forward.

This report provides Council with a snapshot of progress to date, and an overview of next steps.

BACKGROUND:

To address complex social issues the City funds a broad range of services designed to supplement cleanliness, and social inclusion, particularly in the downtown. External funding has enabled additional services including the development and operation of the Community Safety Hub. The City has continually adapted its service responses to address changing circumstances driven in large part, by concurrent health emergencies. Efforts to mitigate health and safety impacts for the unsheltered homeless as well as local businesses and residential property owners has been challenging. While some quantitative data like the number of calls for service is collected and monitored, the City has not completed a comprehensive evaluation of its efforts.

This can be attributed to a number of factors. Most significant is the lack of a formal system to measure outcomes and impact. It is not clear what should be measured, or what could constitute success. It is also difficult to evaluate progress and/or change in complex situations involving multiple jurisdictions, mandates, and players. A further complicating factor is that progress in complex environments is usually not linear, predictable or controllable.

For this reason the City, with external funding from the Province of BC, contracted Coeuraj. Coeuraj, a “transformation change practice” and leaders in co-design processes, has been helping the community design a framework that can be used to evaluate services in a way that reports three broad types of results, outlined below.

- **Strategic Learning:** The extent to which efforts uncover insights, which would be key to future progress (and that could be shared with other local governments).
- **Systems Change:** The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.
- **Desired Outcomes:** The extent to which the City’s efforts contribute to the agreed set of desired outcomes in relation to safety, cleanliness, and inclusion.

To align with expectations, Coeuraj first convened a core design team consisting of the City’s Manager of Bylaw Services, BC Housing’s Coordinated Access and Assessment Manager, the City’s Economic Development Office, Downtown Prince George, Northern Health and the RCMP. Coeuraj staff participated in the core design team and helped to guide the process. The City’s Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships Division participates in and supports the co-design team.

Together, the team met over eight meetings to co-design an approach that is specific to Prince George including purpose and objectives, participants, content, process, and community context. Based on this design, five main phases of work were developed. Phases 1 – 3 have been completed.

1. **A project kick-off to onboard and mobilize stakeholders**, including the formation of the design team.
2. **An initial data study with focused secondary and primary research**, which included 1:1 interviews with 15 members of the community to learn more about what safety, cleanliness, and inclusion meant to them and to hear their perspectives on the impact of existing interventions. Based on this research, workshop sessions were designed with a focus on five key issues influencing safety, cleanliness and inclusion. Those were:
 - housing crisis and unsheltered peoples;
 - opioids and mental health;
 - graffiti, garbage, needles, and biohazards;
 - downtown lacks vibrancy and;
 - perception of safety.
3. **A series of in-person and online co-design sessions** to collaborate on a theory of change and evaluation framework. Over 50 diverse participants from municipal and provincial government agencies, policing, the Lheidli T’enneh First Nation and urban Indigenous organizations, business, and non-profits convened along with the City’s peer advisors as well as others with lived experience. They were engaged in a number of activities to define the issues, ideate long-term change, and then link this to evaluation by identifying the targets that would enable this change. In the final workshop, participants also identified data that

was currently available, as well as community evaluation expertise and capacity that would assist during phase four.

4. **A series of three ‘evaluation sprints’** that work with community stakeholders to test and refine the evaluation framework.
5. **A final phase of reporting**, to document findings, lessons, and recommended next steps.

DISCUSSION:

The approach outlined above enabled a shared definition of the key issues in downtown, their prevalence, and how they are changing over time. Convening diverse perspectives, including those with lived experiences of homelessness and problematic substance use, government, NGO, and business owners, provided an opportunity to look at issues holistically. It also cultivated and strengthened relationships across the system, creating shared ownership of the outputs (i.e. evaluation framework).

We now have a community-led “North Star” (see below) of the long-term change the community wants to see in Prince George that has been articulated and validated by stakeholders within the system. Under this North Star sits four over-arching change targets. Specific indicators will nest under each target that will be used to determine if the City’s interventions are contributing to the “right” change, as defined by the community. Specific indicators will be confirmed before phase four, involving a series of three evaluation sprints, is launched in late June.

North Star (Guiding Vision –Long Term Change)

Everyone is seen as a member of the community, deserving of social connection and support, where everyone feels safety, purpose, and a sense of belonging. We envision a community where everyone can say, “I am a proud member of Prince George and am responsible for its future.”

The four over-arching change targets identified during the co-design process include:

1. Improved efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness of services,
2. Increased quality, access, and appropriateness of service programs,
3. Increased social connection and inclusion of diverse groups, and
4. Strengthened collaboration across sectors and service providers.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The 2022-2024 Strategic Plan identifies the following goal applicable to the issues contained in this report:

Social Health and Well-Being Goals

2. Provide a Community Where People Feel Safe and Included
 - Work with stakeholders to continue the implementation and promotion of initiatives that enhance community safety and perception of community safety
 - Advocate for housing and health services to serve the diversity of need amongst residents

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The evaluation initiative is fully funded by the Strengthening Communities’ Services Program grant. In addition to the evaluation framework, the consultant will provide an Evaluation Framework Guidebook and an Evaluation Protocol User Manual. This will ensure the evaluation framework is utilized on an ongoing basis for a range of initiatives.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

With funding from the Strengthening Communities' Services Program, the City has contracted Coeuraj to work with community leaders across sectors to co-design an evaluation framework that can be utilized to measure the outcome and impact of the City's efforts to enhance safety, cleanliness, and social inclusion. This initiative has been unfolding since January of 2022, and has focused on a facilitated process to achieve multi-interest alignment in relation to key issues, required changes, and the path forward.

Three phases of work have been completed. Phase four, consisting of "evaluation sprints" to test and refine the evaluation framework, will be underway in late June. The project has engaged diverse participants from across sectors who have worked collaboratively to define a shared long-term vision (the North Star) and over-arching change targets. The co-design process has enabled the building of relationships, alignment of diverse perspectives, and the development of an evaluation framework that will guide the ongoing and comprehensive review of initiatives to enhance safety, cleanliness and inclusion.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Chris Bone, Sr. Mgr. of Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2022/06/13