
MEETING TYPE: Regular Council Meeting
MEETING DATE: October 3rd, 2023
AUTHOR: [Sponsor]
DEPARTMENT: Protective Services
ITEM TITLE: Attachment A-Additional UBCM CRI-FCFS Grant Funding for 2024.docx
DESCRIPTION: [Document Description]

QUESTION

Does Council wish to direct staff to make application to the combined 2024 and 2025 intake for the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund; to secure up to \$200,000 in 2024 and an additional \$200,000 in 2025 to fund a suite of FireSmart BC related services and projects. This application will include provisions to fund the development of a FireSmart BC Bylaw for the District of Lake Country and a supporting provision to assess complementary Bylaws to ensure they are aligned to support the development of a fire adapted community.

OPTIONS

- A. THAT the staff be directed to make application to the combined 2024 and 2025 intake for the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund to secure up to \$200,000 in 2024 and \$200,000 in 2025.
AND THAT the District of Lake Country provide overall grant management.
AND FURTHER THAT, if successful a portion of the grant funds be allocated towards the development of FireSmart tools for the District of Lake Country that support the development of creating a fire adapted community
- B. THAT staff be directed to report back to Council with additional details on the works and projects 100% funded by the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Fund grant prior to amending the 2024 Financial Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Lake Country (District) and the Lake Country Fire Department (LCFD) have experienced several Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) emergencies over the past several years. The 'Nighthawk Fire' was widely regarded as the WUI incident of note for the District until the McDougal Creek Wildfire burned approximately 330 hectares and threatened approximately 2,354 properties within the community.

Over the past two decades, Staff and LCFD Firefighters have also been called to assist our neighbors directly in their communities and in the Emergency Operations Centre. The frequency, complexity, and severity of WUI emergencies across British Columbia is trending upward. The WUI issue in the interior of British Columbia is a complicated problem with numerous casual factors that include but are not limited to:

- 80+ years of successful modern wildfire suppression,
- Evolving forest health issues,
- Evolving impacts of climate change, and
- Expanding development in the WUI.

To support Local Governments and First Nations throughout British Columbia, the Provincial Government created the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Fund in 2018. The CRI and its three separate funding streams are intended

to reduce the risk of wildfires and mitigate impacts on communities. The Fund was expanded for the 2023 intake, and now includes a wide range of eligible costs related to locally directed FireSmart BC programs and associated mitigation, emergency preparedness and emergency response. Previous to the 2023 wildfire season the Province was attempting to streamline the application process by combining the 2024 and 2025 intakes into a single application. In wake of the 2023 wildfire season the Province is attempting to simplify the application and reporting process by shifting to an allocation-based funding model.

[FireSmart shifting to allocation-based funding for higher risk areas in 2024 | Union of BC Municipalities \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

The District has accessed funding through the CRI. In 2023 the LCFD used funding from this grant to start a formal Fire Smart BC program and continue several Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) projects. The planning for these current WRR projects have been funded through the CRI for a number of years. WRR projects fall under Stream-2 of the CRI. Stream-2 is managed by the Ministry of Forests and is intended to be used for WRR on Crown Lands only. This funding stream is not to be used for mitigation efforts on private property.

In 2022 Staff investigated the eligible costs under Stream-1 of the CRI. In September of 2022, staff sought Councils approval to make an application to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for a FireSmart Coordinator and associated costs.

The FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program provides funding to local governments and First Nations in BC to increase community resiliency by undertaking community-based FireSmart planning and activities that reduce the community's risk from wildfire.

[FireSmart Community Funding & Supports | Union of BC Municipalities \(ubcm.ca\)](#)

The timing of the initial Request for a Council Decision was based upon the 2023 intake for the FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program that opened October 1st, 2022. UBCM Staff indicated that applications would take approximately 90 days to process. District staff worked to ensure that the District's application was at the front of the queue when the UBCM began processing the 2023 applications in the fall of 2022. Unfortunately, resourcing issues and other administrative challenges delayed the approval process. During the delay, staff gathered considerable information as to what is working well in other communities. While this information will help inform the development of Districts Fire Smart program, staff were unable to fully utilize grant funding in the 2023 budget process.

KEY INFORMATION

The history of FireSmart Canada goes back to 1990 when a multi-agency committee was established to address common concerns about wildfire in the wildland urban interface, where natural wildland environments and human development come together. FireSmart has evolved over the past 33-years and today it helps protect residents, their homes, neighbourhoods, critical infrastructure, and vital natural resources from wildfire. FireSmart advocates a shared responsibility involving all levels of government with participation from the private sector and neighbourhood leaders. FireSmart programs utilize seven disciplines to help neighbourhoods address the threat of wildfire. These are as follows:

- Education,
- Emergency Planning,
- Vegetation Management,
- Legislation,
- Development,
- Interagency Cooperation, and
- Cross Training.

[About FireSmart | FireSmart Canada](#)

Through the LCFD's 2022 annual training plan, several key staff members and paid-on-call firefighters completed the 32-hour FireSmart BC Home Partners Program – Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course. This training helped fire personnel gain expertise in the seven disciplines with a specific focus on working with and from the community out into the natural wildland environment. The Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Course has allowed staff to network and gain insight into what programs and initiatives are making a positive impact regionally and provincially.

[FireSmart Home Partners Program | FireSmart Canada](#)

As was mentioned above, staff investigated the eligible costs under Stream-1 of the CRI and are sought Councils approval and make application to the UBCM FireSmart Community Funding & Supports program for an initial ask of \$200,000 to secure funding for various mitigation and FireSmart program costs. In May of 2023 staff finally received notification from UBCM staff and BCWS staff that the District of Lake Country Application had been approved to a maximum allowable value of \$200,000. It is important to note that the combined intake for 2024 and 2025 will permit a single application for a maximum of \$400,000 that will support programs and staffing over two years.

DESIRED BENEFIT

FireSmart BC programs are making significant improvements in their community's resiliency to wildfire within two or three years however no single staffing model has emerged as the most impactful. The one common trait among the successful FireSmart BC programs focusing on building relationships in their respective communities through considerable investments in their local schools, service clubs, and community associations.

The general allocation of funding in the previously approved in the 2023 application was:

- \$20,000 for fuel management prescriptions
- \$45,000 for structural protection unit (year 1 of 4)
- \$ 135,000 for operational expenses and staff time

Unfortunately, the CRI was very prescriptive and the LCFD struggled to find the right fit for staffing. With the shift to an allocation-based funding model, staff are cautiously optimistic that the funding may now be a better fit for the LCFD and support the additional FTE's in the 2024 financial plan. If the combined 2024 and 2025 application is successful, staff will be able to fully inform Council during the development of the 2024 District of Lake Country financial plan.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Securing funding for and creating an effective FireSmart BC program for the District of lake Country was aligned with all five of Councils 2022 Strategic Priorities.

- Infrastructure - Fire Smart can help improve protection specific critical infrastructure such as wastewater treatment facilities, drinking water treatment facilities and other assets by creating defensible space in and around these facilities.
- Economy - Fire Smart can support the local economy by making homes and businesses and more resilient by to the impacts of wildfire
- Governance – FireSmart will create opportunities to work with regional partners, provincial partners and First Nations.
- Environment – FireSmart can help public and private properties to live with current and future wildfire potentials.
- Social – FireSmart will allow the District to connect with individuals, groups and associations within the community.

FireSmart BC funding rules allow staff and consultants to amend policy and plans as they relate to mitigating the impacts of wildfire. The intent is to help local governments become more resilient to the threat of wildfire by mitigating current conditions while building the future mindful of the potential impacts of wildfire.

REQUISITES

All First Nations and Local Governments in British Columbia are eligible to apply UBCM CRI. Eligible applicants are allowed to submit one application per intake, including regional applications or participation as a partnering applicant in a regional application. Eligible applicants with a higher risk of wildfire, such as WUI Risk Class 1, 2 and 3, could apply for 100% of the cost of eligible activities to a maximum of \$200,000 per application. Staff have assessed the Districts WUI Risk Class using the available provincial mapping referenced in the application package. The full amount of \$200,000 was awarded to the District of Lake Country in the 2023 intake.

[WUI_RiskClass_36x48L_82L_SW.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

Staff originally planned on the LCFD being able to add seasonal or full FTE personnel for FireSmart BC programs. 2023 was an educational year and, staff are learning that many local FireSmart programs are evolving away from specialized personnel and making the shift to FireSmart as a portfolio or task within existing job descriptions. Staff believe that the LCFD can develop a FireSmart program that will fit the needs of the community and mitigate the unintended outcomes experienced by other local governments. With the shift to an allocation-based funding model, staff are cautiously optimistic that the CRI will be a better fit and support the addition of complimentary FTE's in the 2024 financial plan.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

If Council supports Option-A, staff will be able to utilize the \$200,000 in CRI grant funding in 2024 and utilize an additional \$200,000 in CRI grant funding in 2025 to supplement the respective budgets. Other than the significant investment of staff time there is no financial risk to the District.

IMPACT ON STAFF CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In terms of the impact on staff capacity, securing funding for 2024 and 2025 will allow the LCFD to designate a manager to the 'FireSmart Coordinator' portfolio to provide management, leadership, planning, and coordination of the suite of programs and services supported by the CRI funding. This will also allow the LCFD to designate staff members to the 'FireSmart Specialists' portfolio. FireSmart specialist work under the direction of FireSmart coordinators and deliver frontline service to the community. This model has allowed other communities to allocate sufficient staff time and resources towards ensuring that their programs are impactful. It is unknown if the LCFD would require additional 'Fire Smart' support in form of FTE's but staff will assess needs throughout 2024.

The commitment to meet the communities demand for FireSmart related services and supports will require at least one additional FTE in 2024. This will ensure that other critical internal functions are addressed such as administration, human resources, payroll, technology, and statutory compliance.

Other external pressures related to the new BC Fire Safety Act, new BC Emergency Program Act, new BC Firefighter Minimum Training Standard, updated EMA First Responder Licensing and evolving RDCO Regional Programs are forcing change upon the LCFD and demanding additional staff time.

While the FireSmart BC suite of programs and services can help reduce the risks associated with wildfire, it is essential for Council to understand that LCFD is dealing with considerable pressure on the paid-on-call firefighter program and fire maintenance operator program. These areas need to be supported to maintain levels of service to the community. These programs need to be expanded to keep pace with the growing population, growing building stock, growing infrastructure, and the associated demands for service from the community. A separate financial analysis surrounding future staffing will be provided with the 2024 financial plan.

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Option A provides the District the best opportunity to utilize as much of the \$200,000 awarded for 2024 and the \$200,000 awarded for 2025 as possible. The harmonized 2024 and 2025 CRI application will open October 1st, 2023. This initial round of funding will be a benefit to the District and allow staff to grow the program as required.

In closing, staff would like to thank Council for their thoughtful consideration of this proposal.

Respectfully Submitted,
[Sponsor]

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	20254 and 2025 UBCM CRI FireSmart BC Grant Application.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	

This report and all its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2024 and 2025 UBCM CRI Fire Smart BC Grant Application.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Sep 25, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Trevor James, CFO, Director of Finance & Administration - Sep 25, 2023 - 2:26 PM

Reyna Seabrook, Director of Corporate Services - Sep 25, 2023 - 2:34 PM

No Signature found

Matt Vader, Director Parks, Recreation and Culture - Sep 25, 2023 - 3:42 PM