

REPORT

Office of the Mayor

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council,
Regular Council Meeting

Date: June 10, 2024

From: Denise A Tambellini Intergovernmental
and Community Relations Manager

File:

Item #: 2024-353

Subject: **Building Safer Communities Fund Program Update February 2023 to March 2024**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT staff be directed to provide regular updates to Council on the progress of the Building Safer Communities Fund Program.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the Building Safer Communities Fund Program (BSCF) established to serve youth (defined as ages 12 – 25 years) at high risk of involvement in gangs and using guns in violent crime, the BSCF Working Group's initiatives and progress to date.

SUMMARY

The BSCF Program has made significant strides in its mission over the past few years, achieving notable milestones and fostering valuable community engagement. Moving forward, focusing on program sustainability is a next step to ensure the ongoing success and impact of the initiatives.

Collaboration with social service agencies, stakeholders, and frontline programming will indeed be crucial in maintaining momentum and addressing the needs of vulnerable youth. Securing continued support from both the Council and the broader community will be essential for sustaining the positive impact of the program and expanding its reach to those who need it most.

Prioritizing preventative measures and providing positive opportunities for at-risk youth is not only commendable but also critical in addressing issues like gang and gun violence. By investing in such initiatives, the program can contribute significantly to creating safer and more supportive environments for young people to thrive.

As the program enters this pivotal phase of sustainability, it's essential to continue monitoring progress, adapting strategies as needed, and staying responsive to the evolving needs of the community. With dedication and ongoing collaboration, the BSCF Program has the potential to make a lasting difference in the lives of youth and the broader community.

BACKGROUND

Public Safety Canada identified New Westminster youth (defined as ages 12 – 25 years) as being high risk of involvement in gangs and using guns in violent crime. The Building Safer Communities Fund Program provided 21 British Columbia cities with program funding for four years (2023 to 2026).

BSCF Program Objectives

The objective of the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) Program is to support Municipalities and Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit or Metis) governments in their efforts to address gun and gang prevalence. The program provides funding for community led projects to combat gun and gang violence and address knowledge gaps concerning the impacts of interventions in gun and gang violence.

BSCF specific objectives include:

- Develop of a strategy on gun and gang violence
- Develop and deliver prevention intervention initiatives to address risk factors associated with gun and gang violence, including but not limited to mentoring, counselling, skills development and recreational opportunities;
- Develop or enhance of data systems to support data gathering/reporting on gun and gang crime or on results achieved;
- Develop knowledge to fill gaps at the community/recipient level, including research, and sharing of information and/or best practices related to gun and gang violence;
- Outreach and recruit preventative initiatives or intervention of participants;
- Create increased public awareness and education;

- Collaborate and integrate horizontal initiatives related to gun and gang violence;
- Develop a plan to sustain successful preventative initiatives or intervention activities beyond the end of the contribution agreement; and
- Integrate prevention and intervention initiatives as developed in consultation with the program authority.

Public Safety Canada identified program staff to work with the City to develop a four year proposal and secure a commitment from the City. Public Safety Canada would only fund new initiatives that met the established objectives.

As the BSCF is a targeted, evidenced-based approach, there was not a formal call for proposals. Communities identified through the funding methodology were contacted directly by Public Safety Canada Program Advisors to begin discussions and develop best practice based programs. Public Safety Canada signed contribution agreements with recipients with an implementation plan approved by city council and the federal government. Plans were developed based on desired outcomes for the community and best practices identified by Public Safety Canada.

As this was not a competitive process, staff discussed program ideas, collaborated with local non-profits currently serving vulnerable youth and worked through the submission plan with a Federal Program Advisor. As the BSCF Program only funded new programs for at-risk youth, this meant staff had to work with stakeholders with expertise to develop new programs.

Program Timeline

On May 9, 2022 Council approved the start of negotiations with Public Safety Canada, including the intention to enter into a funding agreement with the Federal ministry for the BSCF Program. The value of the contract was for up to \$1,736,800 over four years.

On June 27th, 2022 Council approved the draft four year implementation plan for with Public Safety Canada, for the BSCF Program in Closed Council. The program details were then released to the public once the negotiations with the Government of Canada were complete.

On February 13, 2023 Council approved the following in Open Council:

- Adopt the four-year implementation plan for the Building Safer Communities Fund Program for At-Risk Youth valued at \$1,736,800.23 and funded by Public Safety Canada;

- Amend the 2023 budget and 2023-2027 Five Year Financial Plan to include the additional funding from Public Safety Canada for the Building Safer Communities Fund Program; and
- Establish a working group similar to the Peer Assisted Crisis Team (PACT) (Working Group) for the project to ensure project oversight and success and to report back with a terms of reference for the working group.

The BSCF At-Risk Working Group was established to provide oversight and direction to the BSCF program. It was proposed the membership of this group was to include a representative of Council, the Manager of Intergovernmental Relations, the BSCF Program Manager, a consulting team contracted for the at-risk anti-gang Youth Resiliency Strategy and other stakeholders, as required.

A Program Manager was hired in June 2023 and the program is now in the third year of funding.

On Oct. 30, 2023, Council moved a motion to appoint Councilor Henderson as the representative for the BSCF At-Risk Working Group.

Program Implementation

As this is a new area for the city, partnerships with numerous community organizations were developed to ensure the program was embraced by vulnerable youth and organizations serving youth. Alliances include the New Westminster Police Department (NWPD), the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, Dan's Legacy, the School District and others.

The plan currently being implemented is as follows:

1. Develop a City Wide strategy focused on Building Youth Resiliency in response to addressing the needs of vulnerable youth at-risk of gang recruitment, or gang entrenched; or involved in gun violence.
2. Create an at-risk Youth Collaboration/ Situation Table.
3. Develop the Youth Outreach Program with a base at the New Westminster Youth HUB (502 Columbia Street).
4. Develop Dan's Diner, a Social Enterprise Café Storefront for At-Risk Youth (131 11th Street).
5. Ensure mental health support for youth.
6. Increase preventative programs at local middle schools – Game Ready Fitness, HER TIME, and End Gang Life Programs

A city procurement process was conducted to award the following contracts to implement the components of the project:

- Program Manager
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society
- Dan's Legacy
- bassa Social Innovations Inc.

Oversight and the BSCF At-Risk Youth Working Group

Oversight is provided by the BSCF At-Risk Working Group, which includes a representative of Council, the Manager Intergovernmental Relations, the BSCF Program Manager, a consulting team building the at-risk youth anti-gang strategy and other stakeholders as required.

ANALYSIS

The BSCF Program is in the third year of operation and successfully implementing the following program components to meet the needs of vulnerable youth in New Westminster. As all the programs are new, the city continues to learn and adapt. Several key initiatives have been established to fulfill the set outcomes:

A. Developing Regional and Local Collaboration and Learning Opportunities

Staff are committed to building strong networks to support youth in the community. Learning events and initiatives include:

- Participation in the BSCF Regional Leads consultation table helps staff connect with other program managers in surrounding communities for networking, support and collaboration.
- The City of New Westminster is now a member of The Canadian Centre for Safer Communities (formerly Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention). The BSCF Program Manager attended their 2023 Conference - Community Safety.
- The Together, Igniting Change Convention held on October 23 -25, 2023 in Regina, Saskatchewan, helped staff gain a further understanding of trends and best practices. New connections were made with local BC BSCF members, as well as leaders across Canada working in the community safety and wellbeing space.
- Additional local learning and networking events attended by the BSCF Program Manager have included the 16th Annual Gangs and Guns Symposium hosted Safer Schools Together (SST), and the Gang and Gun Violence in Burnaby 2024 Symposium, hosted by the City of Burnaby and Simon Fraser University. Current gang and gun landscape, trends and research were shared.

- The New Westminster Situation Table was created as a positive response to increasing community collaboration and partnerships between the City and local youth serving agencies to ensure the needs of high risk youth are met.

B. Building Youth Resiliency – Anti-Gang and Gun City-Wide Strategy Engagement

The development of a city-wide strategy is currently underway. Through a competitive process, *bassa* Social Innovations Inc. was awarded the contract to deliver this initiative.

In January 2024, *bassa* began work focused on building youth resiliency and addressing gun and gang violence with vulnerable youth and young adults (ages 12-25). The anticipated work plan is for 12 months, with an expected completion date of December 2024. Timelines were established to ensure effective consultations directly with youth, local community leaders, members, cultural groups, partners and agencies, as well as city staff to inform the strategy in a meaningful, culturally appropriate, holistic, trauma informed, sustainable and actionable report.

bassa Social Innovations Inc., are engaged with the BSCF At-Risk Youth Working Group for guidance and leadership and have conducted an initial assets mapping. Support from the City’s Planning and Development Department and the New Westminster Police Department (NWPD) have been central to research evaluation and data collection.

In February 2024, *bassa* held four community-led virtual focus groups. Close to 30 community members, partners and agencies participated. Sessions focused on eliciting feedback from individuals working in front line spaces to help the City establish key outcomes and actionable solutions; ultimately working to address issues facing vulnerable youth today. Discussions emphasized creating an understanding and defining youth safety, an upstream violence prevention analysis, and building resiliency.

Additional in-person engagement sessions with local service providers and youth took place in April 2024, and follow up sessions are scheduled for early June. Many were invited to participate in the engagement process, including service providers, school district, local agencies, caregivers and families, and most importantly, youth. A summary of what we are hearing in consultation is included for information (Attachment 1).

As part of the City of New Westminster’s ongoing commitment to reconciliation and fostering meaningful collaboration, personalized letters have been sent to all the First Nations with an interest in New Westminster, outlining the intentions of the City to work collaboratively to create a Citywide Strategy for Building Youth Resiliency.

The following groups were contacted for consultation:

- a. Musqueam First Nation
- b. Kwikwetlem First Nation
- c. Qayqayt First Nation
- d. Squamish Nation
- e. Tsleil-Waututh Nation
- f. Kwantlen First Nation

The BSCF Program Manager is actively working to engage and collaborate with The Spirit of the Children Society and a personalized letter was sent as a request to participate.

The City acknowledges Indigenous youth disproportionately experience violence in our communities. The opportunities for collaboration to understand the specific and unique challenges and recommendations for change will help amplify and center the voices of racialized, Indigenous, and vulnerable members of our community who have been living at the intersection of historical and systemic marginalization. Consultations with Indigenous youth and groups in New Westminster will ensure any recommendations we make are culturally relevant, appropriate, and impactful.

C. Creating the New Westminster Situation Table for At-Risk Youth (NWST)

The New Westminster Situation Table (NWST) is a new tool for service providers serving youth to advance community safety and wellbeing. This unique table takes a collaborative approach to complex social challenges, bringing together front-line workers from the public safety, health and social services sectors to identify high-risk youth and young adults and rapidly connect them to services and supports they need, before they experience negative or traumatic events.

The Table is a risk-based, rapid triage model that is informal and conversational by design. The NWST targets young people aged 11 – 25 years (middle school age to young adulthood) who are facing situations of acutely elevated risk (AER); as recognized across multiple human service lenses, while carefully protecting personal information and privacy. Outcomes are achieved through a structured process, designed in cooperation with privacy officials in multiple jurisdictions. The Table uses the Four Filter Model. Subject to consensus, the Table mobilizes immediate and multiagency supports, leading to connections to all essential services required to mitigate the evident AER factors, and to ensure improved pathways to care and support.

The NWST team is committed to working together, sharing resources and expertise and ensuring there is a coordinated effort to support youth across the Lower Mainland and in New Westminster in order to provide positive alternatives to gang life and gun violence.

In consultation with Public Safety Canada, the NWST is funded by the BSCF Program, with additional supports of a one-time \$50,000 grant from the BC Provincial

Government for strategic development to provide high-level training for participants and community champion leaders to get the table established.

Identified activities undertaken to promote the project are summarized below:

1. Establish the System Leaders Group (SLG)

From September 2023 to October 2023 – Identified 8 individual’s participation in the Situation Table Governance (STG). The System Leader’s Group (SLG) to meet quarterly for oversight of the NWST and ensure successful operations and intended outcomes are met.

2. Community Mobilization

A virtual information event inviting System and Community Leaders was held in October 2023 as a means to learn more about the BSCF program, the Situation Table model, and how leaders can support the staffing, eventual training, launch and sustainability of the Situation Table in New Westminster. 30 Community Partners attended the online event from various community and social sectors.

3. Community Mentor Training

Five Community partners and the BSCF Program Manager were confirmed as Community Mentors for the Table. The role was to provide direct leadership to colleagues across multiple disciplines as they set out to learn and operationalize a properly functioning Situation Table, and to ensure close adherence to the practices and protections afforded by the model.

From November 2023 – January 2024, Community Mentor Training partners included:

- Youth and Seniors Parks and Recreation – City of New Westminster;
- New Westminster Youth Hub – The Lower Mainland Purpose Society;
- Outreach Supervisor – Dan’s Legacy;
- District Vice-Principal of Safe and Caring Schools, New Westminster School District; and
- Community Engagement Unit – New Westminster Police Department

4. Community Engagement Continuation

In February 2024, over 100 individuals from various community agencies who had expressed interest in the table to raise awareness of the table’s creation and the BSCF overall project initiatives were engaged.

5. Mock Situation Table

An in-person mock table was held February 29, 2024 at City Hall, to confirm table participants’ comprehension of the NWST after completing online training.

- 87 users were provided access to the site based on interest and feedback.
- 25 community partners were in attendance for the mock table event and received their training certificates.

6. The New Westminster Situation Table (NWST) Activated

The City of New Westminster hosted the first official NWST meeting on March 5, 2024 and real-life situations were brought forward. Table was joined by 15 in-person and 5 online community partners. Active Table Participants were encouraged to communicate the benefits of the situation table to additional community groups and agencies not currently at the table and to share new contacts to the Chair.

British Columbia currently has 36 tables in total, with New Westminster being the 35th table created. Ongoing enrollment and recommendations for new table participants continues to be sent to the Chair. The Situation Table meets weekly at New Westminster City Hall.

The list of community partners, as well as active table participants includes:

- Aunt Leah's Place;
- BC Housing;
- Boys and Girls Club - Odyssey I Program;
- Canadian Mental Health Association;
- Cameray Child and Family Services;
- City of New Westminster;
- Dan's Legacy;
- Family Smart;
- Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks;
- Fraser Heath;
- Fraserside Community Resources;
- Last Door Recovery Society;
- Massey Theatre Society;
- Ministry of Children and Family Development;
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General;
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction;
- MOSAIC - SWIS Program;
- New Westminster Police Department;
- New Westminster School District;
- OCABC – CFSEU End Gang Life;
- Pacific Community Resources Society – IRAYL Program;
- Red Fox Healthy Living Society;
- Spirit of the Children Society;
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society;
- Transit Police;
- Washington Kids Foundation.

The table has been highly successful since its launch, with ongoing positive feedback from Situation Table members and community groups.

To showcase this unique Community Safe Situation Table, a targeted media event led by the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Mike Farnworth, and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Jennifer Whiteside, with support from Mayor Johnstone and Councilor Henderson; as well as the BSCF Program Manager/Table Chair and 8 core members of the Situation Table was held on Thursday April 18, 2024 at the Anvil Centre. A roundtable discussion provided opportunities to share benefits of the table and how the community and City are working to take action for youth in New Westminster who are at risk of harm or victimization and provide them with faster access to support and services.

As part of the sustainability plan post-BSCF Funding, the At-Risk Working Group is looking to develop a systems plan to ensure longevity of the table. The intention is to create an ongoing sustainable funding source and allocation of resources to accommodate the operation of the table and connect additional youth outreach workers.

D. Opening the New Westminster Youth Hub

The New West Youth Hub opened its doors May 19, 2023, operated by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society. Considerations for wraparound supports and services have included age, sex, gender, culture, religion and ethnicity as well as 2SLGBTQIA+ supports. The Hub's approach is one of inclusivity, ensuring that youth of all backgrounds, social locations, sexual identities, feel welcomed and supported in their unique identities. The Hub offers low-barrier access to resources and supports for at-risk youth, as well as measures to address gun and gang prevalence.

In order to ensure the program reaches the target youth population, the BSCF Program Manager continues to work with Purpose Society's staff to ensure the focus of the Hub is on vulnerable young people at risk of or engaged in criminal and gang activity. Ongoing discussions to develop a youth outreach component to the Hub program, later evening and weekend hours to meet the needs of vulnerable young people during peak times continue.

In identifying different activities and initiatives, the voices of young people served were central to the process at the New Westminster Youth Hub. The Hub prioritizes age appropriate programming, tailoring activities to align with developmental stages and interests of the youth attending. The Hub is working to "strengthen services for younger participants (ages 12-14) through middle school connections".

Community Engagement:

Hub staff report establishing meaningful partnerships with The Spirit of the Children Society, facilitating monthly sessions centered on Indigenous-focused activities. Additional partnerships with MOSAIC has brought newcomer and immigrant youth to the Hub, creating community for youth to come together in a diverse and collective space.

The Hub’s engagement efforts have seen a turnout of 25-30 youth daily on average. Participating in school events and workshops has been instrumental in reaching out to youth, with plans to increase new initiatives like ‘DJ for a Day’, and employment workshops. Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies have aided in supporting staff and building positive connections with program participants with vulnerable youth. These interventions are collectively contributing to holistic youth development, addressing crucial aspects of the lives of youth and empowering them to seek support and build on strengths.

Centering Youth Voices:

The Hub reports actively seeking input from youth participants and are exploring the development of a youth advisory committee at the New Westminster Youth Hub. This committee would provide certain participants with the opportunity to act as leaders for the space, allowing them to contribute their insights and ideas on a regular basis. Members of the advisory committee would have the chance to provide feedback on current programs and initiatives, suggest new ideas for future activities, and collaborate with staff to address issues and concerns within the youth community.

E. Opening Dan’s Diner – Social Enterprise Café (Dan’s Legacy)

Dan’s Diner officially opened its doors on November 15, 2023. Initial opening dates were set for early August, however due to ongoing delays from Fraser Health for permitting issues, project timelines took longer than expected. The Grand Opening event was advertised to community partners, local media and newspapers, shared on social media and official invitations were sent to senior leaders. The event was extremely well received and was celebrated with Mayor and Councilors; the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Jennifer Whiteside; Member of Parliament, Peter Julian; Dan’s Legacy former and current youth participants, Dan’s Legacy Executive Director, staff teams and their Board of Directors; Aunt Leah’s Foundation as well as various Media outlets, community members, partners and Public Safety Canada Program Advisors.

The Dan’s Diner program, funded by the BSCF Program, has the following phases for intake for youth entering the program.

- 1) Phase I**
 - a. Dan’s completes an intake of up to four (4) youth participants who receive three months of basic cook training with their professional chef instructor in the Union Gospel Mission (UGM) kitchen. Funding for this is covered by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.
- 2) Phase II**
 - a. After successfully completing 240 hours of training, youth are eligible to apply for a paid work experience opportunity in our Dan’s Diner social enterprise. They are also offering paid work experience in Dan’s Diner to alumni graduates of their earlier Intro to Cook training program. These

paid work experience positions last for three (3) months, but can be extended on a case by case basis. Three to five (3-5) youth are expected to be working at Dan's Diner at any given time.

Since mid-November 2023, Dan's Diner has seen increasing success with each month of operation. Seven youth have graduated from the training program and received certification. Five youth have transitioned from the cook training program to the Dan's paid program. Staff estimate 400-500 customers per month are attending the diner and have doubled sales since their first month of operation.

Dan's Diner continues to grow the catering side of their business, giving participants valuable work experience and training. They have provided catering to over 16 community groups, including support to other BSCF initiatives, such as food for the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the Youth Hub, as well as the Situation Table. Dan's Diner has also increased its reach through social media, with Instagram and Facebook accounts, extending their "real-time communication with 'fans', by asking Q&A's, reaching out directly to individuals for food preferences and options".

Dan's Legacy and Diner program is focused on ensuring the participants, "concrete needs are met by the outreach and social workers, psychological needs are met through trauma-informed therapy, and training needs are met through Dan's Diner".

Dan's Diner trained staff work to address and support participant's deficits and focus holistically on the strengths of youth. If they cannot meet all of the needs, partnerships with other community organizations are secured to provide wrap around programming to close the gaps.

F. Ensuring Mental Health Supports for Youth

Mental health support for vulnerable youth is embedded within the BSCF program initiatives. Dan's Legacy and New West Youth Hub staff teams offer supports as part of their programming.

Initial BSCF concepts included an expansion of the Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT) Pilot project focused on youth, however youth in general are already included in the PACT Program which is delivered by The Lower Mainland Purpose Society in partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). PACT offers a professional alternative to police response to residents experiencing mental health crisis across New Westminster.

BSCF Program Manager attends quarterly PACT Dialogue meetings between, The City, Canadian Mental Health Association, and the PACT program team to provide a youth lens to these discussions; ensuring a commitment to care model is in place and representative of all community members, including vulnerable young people.

In addition to the PACT meetings, the BSCF Program Manager, City staff from Parks & Recreation and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society collaborated with The Crisis Centre and TRRUST Collective Impact to offer a, “Real Talks Youth Program”, which was held at the NW Youth Hub. The program was offered over November 2023 as a no-cost, low barrier support to learn about mental health resources for youth as part of the BSCF program.

- The Real Talks Youth Program includes 4 peer-led interactive talks about mental health to learn practical skills to support self and others. All Real Talks Program for Youth sessions are co-led by a Crisis Centre Youth Educator and a Peer Leader (a young adult with lived experience).
- Real Talks consists of four interactive sessions, inviting participants to learn about mental health and ways to support it.
 - **Session 1 - Self-Care for Mental Health**
 - **Session 2 - Brain Science Tools for Everyday Living**
 - **Session 3 - Don't believe everything you think!**
 - **Session 4 - It's Okay to NOT be OK**
- Each talk introduces ideas and encourages participants to connect through various activities and group discussions, self-reflect, and learn from each other to be better prepared for real life challenges.

Real Talks program staff identified the New Westminster workshop sessions as the strongest program turnout to date with the highest graduation rate, with 10 certificates of completion for youth. Over 15 youth attended one or more of the sessions weekly.

As a result of this successful initiative, the Hub staff implemented new programming called, “Let’s Talk”, a weekly mental health group. These mental health workshops have provided valuable resources and support, promoting emotional well-being and resilience. Additional connections occurred with the Boys and Girls Club to deliver the Odyssey program to provide substance-related support, provided harm reduction education and substance support education for youth to ensure safer use. These initiatives underscore Lower Mainland Purpose Society’s commitment to preparing youth with essential life skills and knowledge to navigate challenges of safety and wellbeing.

G. Increase Prevention Programs at Middle Schools

Collaboration with the New Westminster School District and the BSCF Program continues to grow. BSCF Program Manager has made strong connections with the Vice Principal of Safe and Caring Schools and the District School counsellor. Through work with the Situation Table, BSCF Program Manager connected with the School District’s Wellness Team to confirm educational prevention workshops for all

three New Westminster Middle Schools; grade 9's and 10's at the high school; as well as parent workshops in partnership with Safer Schools Together (SST) occurring in early June 2024.

At the end of March 2024, the City expanded their working relationship with the Washington Kids Foundation, and began a new collaboration with the Her Time Program; a female identifying engagement program for vulnerable youth. The Her Time girls program takes a strengths-based approach to empower young females to stay safe and healthy while achieving remarkable things in their lives. The foundational pillars of the Her Time program are organized into a playbook that focus on positive relationships, healthy living, financial independence, goal setting and personal safety.

Notable other partnerships for Middle School prevention and awareness include:

- New connections and ongoing support with Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (CFSEU) – End Gang Life staff, who attend weekly Situation Table meetings and provide the BSCF Manager with promotional information to share with community partners, schools and parents.
- Increased working partnerships with Safer Schools Together (SST) to deliver a workshop for Community Service Providers. On April 9, the City hosted a complimentary Gangs and Gun Prevention Training for service providers, to help with early identifiers to support youth. SST, BSCF NW School District will deliver additional school-based workshops for all three middle schools, grades 8 and 9 in the high school and two parent workshops.
- On January 26, 2024, BSCF Program Manager attended an open-house Community Meet & Greet at Spirit of the Children Society (SOTCS), to learn more about their programming to support Indigenous Youth and how BSCF can work collaboratively with their ongoing programming.
- The City has made new connections with local Black business owner, Danny Ampong, who owns Anim Hair and Barbershop. They provided the talent of his staff team of stylists for our Barbers and Braids Pop-Up Barbershop in celebration of Black History Month.
- BSCF Program Manager is a member of the Burnaby /New Westminster Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At Risk Youth, which meets quarterly.
- BSCF Program Manager continues ongoing working relationships with the NWPD Gang Suppression Unit since connecting in June 2023. NWPD Sergeant, Kari Turpin, has been newly introduced and discussions for youth

engagement opportunities between the BSCF programming and Gang Suppression Unit have commenced. New initiatives include Friday night basketball sessions with youth and officers at the tēmәsewtx^w Aquatic and Community Centre. BSCF will be providing food and other incentives to youth to participate as a means to encourage pro- social activities for vulnerable youth during high risk times in the community.

The Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the Youth Hub continue to expand their community networks and collaboration work to promote their resource and raise awareness about gangs and guns. The Hub partnered with New West Police Department (NWPD) – Gang Suppression Unit, and CFSEU (Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit) with their End Gang Life team to offer a workshop on October 11, 2023. This event featured presentations addressing gun and gang-related topics, providing a platform for educating and engaging both youth and parents. The aim was to ensure consistent support and resources for this serious issue.

Lower Mainland Purpose Society Staff attended a Wellness Fair at the New Westminster High School in October and have also been meeting with middle and high school staff and resources to raise awareness about the Hub and services provided. Additionally, collaboration work with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to provide support for Persons with Disabilities. The Hub continues to explore a partnership with Game Ready Fitness and has purchased gym and work out equipment to expand fitness programming on site. This will be an ongoing initiative.

The NW Youth Hub reports that although a significant presence of individuals under the age of 14 attend programming, active engagement with local middle schools and alternative schools in New Westminster is underway. Through visits and presentations, as well as close collaboration with the school district, the aim is to raise awareness about opportunities available at the NW Youth Hub. As a result of these efforts, an increase in participation from younger participants, specifically youth ages 12-13, has been observed.

The Hub has a strong working relationship with the City's Parks and Recreation Youth Centre and staff teams work together to share resources, support young people and encourage participation in events, programming and attendance to the Youth Hub. The Barbers and Braids event was an example of a successful joint collaborative initiative to engage middle school youth in services and connect them to positive pro social supports.

On February 12, 2024 - The New West Youth Hub, in collaboration with the City of New Westminster and Anim Hair & Beauty Studio and Barbershop hosted a free event for youth ages 13-18 years old in celebration of Black History Month.

- The event included free haircuts and simple braids by stylists from Anim Beauty and Barbershop. Ongoing activities during the event included a Photo booth, Music Trivia, Bingo, Art project –“ we love black history month”, a spotlight on Black owned businesses, highlights of Black influential people and YouTube Videos on how to braid/how to maintain/history of hair culture. This event was offered as a no-cost, low barrier support to learn about and celebrate culture, for youth to feel good about their physical appearance and wellness as part of our public outreach activity initiatives for the City of New Westminster’s Building Safer Communities Program. This event brought new youth to the Hub and created awareness about positive resources and support for young people.

Close to 60 youth attended. 6 Stylists in total attended for 3.5 hours due to heavy demand for cuts and braids. It was a very successful event, with a new partnership solidified with Anim Hair. A grander event is scheduled for next February.

The BSCF program remains proactive and committed to providing preventative measures and positive opportunities for at-risk youth. With continued funding from Public Safety Canada until March 31, 2026, the program can further solidify its efforts and make a lasting impact on the community.

Having the financial support to sustain the program's initiatives is crucial for ensuring stability and continuity in its efforts to address issues related to gang involvement and violent crime. Over the coming years, the program can build upon its successes, expand its reach, and further refine its strategies to effectively support and empower youth.

With the ongoing dedication of the program's staff, partners, and supporters, it's likely that the BSCF program will continue to make significant strides in creating safer and more resilient communities for young people. By staying proactive and responsive to the needs of the youth it serves, the program can maximize its impact and contribute to positive long-term outcomes.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Grant funding under the BSCF will terminate March 31, 2026. Essential BSCF personnel and the At-Risk Youth Working Group members have begun identifying needs and opportunities with the support of *bassa* Social Innovations’ citywide strategy framework and asset mapping. Fostering partnerships and leveraging community resources may help ensure continued support for initiatives beyond the grant period.

Strong relationships will continue to be developed and formalized where possible. This project will work toward improving the overall safety, or sense of safety, and quality of life for all youth and young adults. The intention is to make the best use of limited

resources across all levels of government. Staff continue to make use of limited resources and explore new funding avenues and foster partnerships.

It will be important to continue developing an effective strategy to ensure the sustainability of this program. By proactively planning for the longevity of the program, the city can mitigate the potential disruption and maintain momentum in delivering services for at-risk youth to ensure all our youth can thrive.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Federal funding will continue to offset up to 100% of eligible costs up to \$1,736,800 over four years after the spending has occurred. The grant funding allocated from Public Safety Canada is as follows:

*FY 22/23 (April 1 2022 to March 31 2023)	\$173,680.02
FY 23/24 (April 1 2023 to March 31 2024)	\$607,880.08
FY 24/25 (April 1 2024 to March 31 2025)	\$607,880.08
FY 25/26 (April 1 2025 to March 31 2026)	\$347,360.05
Total	\$1,736,800.23

*2023 - \$173,680.02 as the funding was intended for an eight month duration. Due to the delayed approval by Public Safety Canada, the full amount could not be expended over 2 months and therefore \$70,000 was left unspent.

The Contribution Agreement with Public Safety Canada (PSC), approved on January 13, 2023 and does not include a carry forward between fiscal years. Funding that is unspent at the end of a fiscal year will not be carried forward into the next fiscal year and will therefore will be lost. The city has sent a letter requesting the remaining \$70,000 to be added to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025/2026. The city has not received notice about the funding.

The 2023/2024 funding was completely allocated to New Westminster youth-centered programs.

There are no additional financial implications from this report.

OPTIONS

1. Staff be directed to provide regular updates to Council on the progress of the Building Safer Communities Fund Program; or
2. Council provide other direction.

Staff recommend option 1.

CONCLUSION

The BSCF Program has made significant strides in its mission over the past few years, achieving notable milestones and fostering valuable community engagement. Moving forward, focusing on program sustainability is a logical next step to ensure the ongoing success and impact of the initiatives.

Collaboration with social service agencies, stakeholders, and frontline programming will indeed be crucial in maintaining momentum and addressing the needs of vulnerable youth. Securing continued support from both the Council and the broader community will be essential for sustaining the positive impact of the program and expanding its reach to those who need it most.

Prioritizing preventative measures and providing positive opportunities for at-risk youth is not only commendable but also critical in addressing issues like gang and gun violence. By investing in such initiatives, the program can contribute significantly to creating safer and more supportive environments for young people to thrive.

As the program enters this pivotal phase of sustainability, it's essential to continue monitoring progress, adapting strategies as needed, and staying responsive to the evolving needs of the community. With dedication and ongoing collaboration, the BSCF Program has the potential to make a lasting difference in the lives of youth and the broader community.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Summary of What We Have Heard to Date through Engagement

APPROVALS

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