

REPORT

Office of the Mayor

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

Date: August 25, 2025

From: Denise A Tambellini, Manager,
Intergovernmental Relations

File:

Item #: 2025-242

Subject: **Building Safer Communities Fund Program - At-Risk Youth Update August 2025**

RECOMMENDATION

1. *THAT the report titled "Building Safer Communities Fund Program - At-Risk Youth Update August 2025" from the Manager, Intergovernmental Relations, dated August 25, 2025, be received for information; and*
2. *THAT the New Westminster At-Risk Youth Situation Table be approved to continue beyond the March 31, 2026 funding deadline for the Building Safer Communities Fund Program.*

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the Building Safer Communities Fund Program (BSCF) and secure feedback on the New Westminster Youth Resiliency Strategy. The BSCF was established to serve youth (defined as ages 12 – 25 years) at high risk of involvement in gangs and using guns in violent crime. Staff have utilized funding from the Federal Government and, with the oversight of the BSCF Working Group, created new initiatives. This report presents an update of the initiative to date and the draft New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy for feedback.

SUMMARY

The BSCF Program has made significant strides in its mission over the past few years, achieving notable milestones and fostering valuable community engagement. The Program facilitated the New Westminster Youth Hub, Dan's Diner, the New Westminster Situation Table and preventative programming for middle schools across the City. This

report introduces the New Westminster Youth Resiliency Strategy for feedback from Council. 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 has formed the basis for this community program. It will indeed be crucial in maintaining momentum and addressing the ongoing vulnerability of young people. Securing continued support from both 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 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.

Staff are requesting approval for the New Westminster At-Risk Youth Situation Table beyond the March 31, 2026, funding deadline and are requesting feedback on the New Westminster Resiliency Strategy 2024/2025.

BACKGROUND

Public Safety Canada identified New Westminster youth (defined as ages 12 – 25 years) as being at high risk of involvement in gangs and using guns in violent crime. They offered approximately \$1.8 million to the city to develop strategic programs to meet the needs of high-risk youth. 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 decreasing youth violence and addressing gun and gang prevalence. The program provides funding to develop new community-led projects to meet the needs of at-risk youth and address knowledge gaps concerning the impacts of interventions in gun and gang violence.

Objectives:

- Develop a strategy to decrease gun and gang violence among at-risk youth;

- 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 data systems to support data gathering/reporting on gun and gang crime or 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;
- Develop outreach and establish preventative initiatives or interventions for 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.

As the BSCF is a targeted, evidence-based approach, no formal call for proposals was made. 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.

Staff discussed program ideas, collaborated with local non-profits currently serving vulnerable youth and worked through the submission plan with a Federal Program Advisor. The BSCF Program only funded new programs for at-risk youth; therefore, staff worked with stakeholders with subject matter expertise to develop new programs.

A four-year proposal was developed for new initiatives that met the established objectives.

Program Timeline

In May 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 up to \$1,736,800 over four years. In June 2022, Council approved the draft four year implementation plan with Public Safety Canada, for the BSCF Program.

In February 2023 Council approved the following in a Regular Council meeting:

- 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 terms of reference for the working group.

The BSCF At-Risk Working Group was established to provide oversight and direction to the BSCF program. The Program Manager was hired in June 2023, and the program is now in the fourth and final year. A year three update was provided to Council in 2024.

Funding through the BSCF Program will be completed on March 31, 2026.

Program Implementation

Since this was a new program area for the city, partnerships with numerous community organizations were developed to ensure the program would be 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 initial implementation plan included the following components, all of which have since been completed or are ongoing as planned:

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 a 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.

ANALYSIS

The BSCF Program is in the fourth and final year of operation. The program has successfully implemented program components to support the needs of vulnerable youth in New Westminster. As all the programs were new, the city continues to learn and adapt. Several key initiatives have been established:

A. Develop 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:

- Participated in the BSCF Regional Leads consultation table to connect with other program managers in surrounding communities for networking, support and collaboration.
- Joined the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities (formerly Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention).
- Created the New Westminster Situation Table to increase community collaboration and partnerships between the City and local youth-serving agencies to ensure the needs of high-risk youth are met.
- Created 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.
- Participated regularly in the Burnaby /New Westminster Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At Risk Youth, which meets quarterly.

B. Create the New Westminster Situation Table for At-Risk Youth (NWST)

The New Westminster Situation Table (NWST) is a tool for service providers serving youth to advance community safety and well-being. This unique table takes a collaborative approach to complex social challenges, bringing together front-line workers from public safety, health and social services sectors to identify high-risk youth and young adults and rapidly connect them to the services and supports they need, before they experience adverse 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. This is a structured approach for assessing and managing risk, particularly in the context of information sharing and multi-agency collaboration. It involves a series of screening steps to determine if a situation warrants intervention and whether information can be disclosed appropriately. 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 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 support of a one-time \$50,000 grant from the BC Provincial Government. The Province supported high-level training for Table participants and community champion leaders to establish the Table.

British Columbia currently has 34 active situation tables across the province. Ongoing enrollment and recommendations for new table participants continue to be sent to the Chair/ BSCF Program Manager. 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;
- Canadian Mental Health Association;
- Cameray Child and Family Services;
- Child and Youth Mental Health – Province of B.C.
- City of New Westminster;
- Dan's Legacy;
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Family Smart;

- First Nations Health Authority
- Fraser Health;
- Fraserside Community Resources;
- ISS of BC
- Last Door Recovery 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;
- Spirit of the Children Society;
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society;
- Westminster House Society

Situation Tables across British Columbia continue to demonstrate strong outcomes in supporting individuals and families facing acutely elevated risk (AER) through coordinated, multi-agency interventions.

In 2024, there were 1,009 discussions held across 34 'active' Situation Tables province-wide. Of these discussions:

- 67.9% resulted in a measurable reduction of overall risk for the individuals or families involved.
- 91% of referrals originating from police were successfully redirected to more appropriate social or health service agencies, allowing police resources to be concentrated on core public safety responsibilities.

The most common risk factors identified were as follows:

1. Lack of appropriate housing (65.1%)
2. Drug abuse/misuse (46.8%)
3. Inability to meet basic needs (44.4%)
4. Financial hardship (42%)
5. Suspected mental health concerns (32.4%)

On average, each discussion involved 5.3 participating agencies and addressed 8.2 risk factors per case, underscoring both the complexity of the situations presented and the high degree of inter-agency collaboration.

New Westminster Situation Table

The New Westminster Situation Table continues to be successful in working with community agencies and focusing on high-risk youth. It has achieved outcomes that are equal to or stronger than provincial benchmarks, while also demonstrating a unique and effective focus on youth-related risk reduction.

Chart 1: Key Metrics – New Westminster (2024/ 2025):

Area	New Westminster	Province	Notes
Discussions Held at tables	67	1009	
Youth Risk lowered in cases	68.8%	67.9%	Slightly exceeded the Provincial average.
Average Agencies involved per Case	5.2	5.3	Indicating robust multi-agency collaboration consistent with provincial standards
Average Risk Factors per Case	7.8	8.2	Reflecting effective management of complex, multi-factor situations
Police Referrals Transferred to Services	0	21%	Individuals at risk are being efficiently connected to services earlier in the process, minimizing reliance on police-initiated cases, – school staff majority of referrals.

Prominent Risk Factors in New Westminster:

- Negative Peers – Person associating with negative peers: 35 cases (52.2%)
- Missing School – Truancy: 20 cases (29.9%)
- Missing School – Chronic absenteeism: 17 cases (25.4%)
- Drugs – Drug abuse by person: 17 cases (25.4%)
- Mental Health – Suspected mental health problem: 16 cases (23.9%)
- Alcohol – Alcohol abuse by person: 15 cases (22.4%)
- Mental Health – Mental health problems in the home: 14 cases (20.9%)
- Mental Health – Diagnosed mental health problem: 14 cases (20.9%)
- Antisocial/Negative Behaviour – Person exhibiting antisocial/negative behaviour: 13 cases (19.4%)
- Physical Violence – Person perpetrator of physical violence: 12 cases (17.9%)

Key Highlights

- Above-Average Risk Reduction: New Westminster exceeded the provincial average in lowering risk, showing the success of its coordinated, community-based approach.
- Leading in Youth-Focused Interventions: Youth-specific risk factors like truancy and negative peer association highlight strengths in early intervention and youth resiliency.
- Prioritize Alcohol Misuse Interventions: Address high rates of alcohol-related risks with focused prevention and treatment efforts.
- Strengthen Basic Needs Support: Enhance housing, food security, and related supports to address root causes.

- Prevent Antisocial Behaviour: Expand early interventions to reduce antisocial patterns.
- Monitor Low-Frequency Risks: Continue tracking cognitive impairment and crime victimization for timely responses.

BSCF-Funded Youth Outreach Worker to support the Situation Table

A dedicated Youth Outreach Worker, funded through BSCF, has significantly strengthened New Westminster's capacity to intervene early with high-risk youth identified at the New Westminster Situation Table. The Youth Outreach worker conducts the following work:

- Connecting Youth to services
- Crisis intervention: Successfully de-escalated incidents, including preventing school suspension for a high-risk youth.
- Education advocacy: Supported youth facing chronic absenteeism, improving school engagement—a proven protective factor.
- Gang prevention: Provided targeted consultations and referrals for gang-exiting pathways

Between October 2024 and February 2025, the Outreach Worker engaged eight high-risk youth, providing multiple episodes of support and sustained, relationship-based engagement. The worker participated in 14 Filter Four discussions, ensuring timely and coordinated responses for youth facing acutely elevated risk. 87.5% of youth engaged remain connected to the Outreach Worker or ongoing services—demonstrating a high retention rate and effectiveness in transitioning youth to long-term supports.

Youth connected through this program were referred to vital services, including:

- MCFD supports and child welfare
- Gang exiting programs and consultations
- Youth shelter placements
- Mental health counselling (Dan's Legacy)
- Lower Mainland Purpose Society youth programming and ongoing support
- Digital inclusion and material aid initiatives

Overall, New Westminster's Situation Table has shown exceptional performance, excelling in areas critical to local needs, particularly in youth-focused prevention and proactive service coordination. The Situation Table model has proven highly successful in reducing harm, strengthening service coordination, and fostering proactive, collaborative responses to community safety and well-being challenges. These outcomes highlight the value of an evidence-based approach to addressing risk in a timely and coordinated manner.

Staff are requesting the New Westminster At-Risk Youth Situation Table be approved to continue beyond the BSCF funding deadline of March 31, 2026.

C. Establish the New Westminster Youth Hub: A Proven Model for Youth Success

The New West Youth Hub opened its doors on May 19, 2023. It is operated by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society. Considerations for wraparound supports and services have included age, sex, gender, culture, religion, ethnicity, and 2SLGBTQIA+ supports. The Hub's approach is one of inclusivity, ensuring that youth of all backgrounds, social locations, and 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.

Through the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF), the City of New Westminster has supported the Lower Mainland Purpose Society in delivering impactful, evidence-based programming to the community's most vulnerable youth. Over the past fiscal year, approximately 200 unique youth accessed supports through BSCF-funded initiatives, including the New Westminster Youth Hub and targeted outreach work. Collectively, these youth presented with at least one risk factor identified in the Situation Table framework—such as housing instability, mental health challenges, substance use, school disengagement, or exposure to gang activity.

The Youth Hub model, grounded in a low-barrier, relationship-based approach, has proven particularly effective. The Hub recorded 2,693 youth visits between October 2024 and March 2025, with 90% of participants attending at least weekly—a powerful indicator of engagement and trust. This high frequency of visits reflects its dual role as both a safe space for daily needs (meals, hygiene supplies, clothing) and a gateway to critical services such as housing referrals, mental health counselling, substance use support, life skills programming, and employment readiness training.

New Westminster Youth Hub Attendance: October 2024 – March 2025

Attendance trends reflected seasonal variations, with fewer youth attending during winter and spring break (December 2024 and March 2025). Despite these natural fluctuations, overall engagement remained high, underscoring the Hub's role as a trusted, consistent resource for youth throughout the school year.

Chart 2: Attendance Overview (Oct 2024 – Mar 2025):

Month	Total Visits	Operational Days	Average Daily Visits
October	559	21	27
November	494	20	25
December	398	17	23
January	508	22	23
February	413	19	22
March	321	19	17
Average (Oct–Mar)	449	20	23
Total (Oct–Mar)	2,693	118	—

Why the Youth Hub Model Works

The Youth Hub reflects best practices seen in successful models like BC's Foundry Centres, integrating prevention, intervention, and social development under one trusted roof. Research confirms that relationship-driven, early intervention models reduce long-term harm and costs by diverting youth from justice involvement, street entrenchment, and chronic homelessness.

By combining the drop-in hub model with Situation Table-driven outreach, Purpose Society delivers:

- Immediate access to supports, reducing service gaps and delays.
- Strong trust-based relationships, identified by youth as the most impactful factor in their lives.
- Coordinated, multi-agency responses, ensuring no youth falls through the cracks.
- Culturally inclusive, trauma-informed care, tailored to New Westminster's diverse youth population.

"We are not only responding to crises—we are creating hope. Every connection made, every conflict de-escalated, every young person who walks through our doors instead of heading down a path of violence is a testament to what community-based, trauma-informed care can do."

Lower Mainland Purpose Society

D. Establish Dan's Diner – Social Enterprise Café (Dan's Legacy)

Dan's Diner officially opened its doors on November 15, 2023. Since its opening, Dan's Diner has grown into a cornerstone initiative of the Building Safer Communities Program, providing youth with essential job training, mental health supports, and pathways to independence while reducing risk factors associated with gang involvement, addiction, and social disconnection.

Dan's Diner continues to be a significant success across the city. Initially supported by the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) and delivered by Dan's Legacy, it aims to address the needs of at-risk youth in New Westminster. Through its trauma-informed, wraparound approach, Dan's Diner integrates job skills training, mental health supports, and community connection to reduce risk factors such as gang recruitment, addiction, and social isolation. By addressing root causes such as trauma, poverty, and disconnection, Dan's Diner provides youth with tools to build resiliency and exit cycles of risk.

Program Overview

Dan's Diner is designed to provide at-risk youth (particularly those aging out of foster care) with culinary life skills training alongside counselling, outreach, and essential supports. The initiative combines practical employment skills with mental health counselling, food security (daily meals and grocery hampers), transit support, and fitness programming. The program also incorporates culturally responsive elements,

such as Indigenous-led cooking workshops and gender-diverse instructors, to ensure inclusivity and relevance.

The success of Dan's Legacy Programs continues to provide support for youth at risk. They achieve mental health improvements that align with or exceed provincial benchmarks. Early intervention and mentorship address risk factors, such as negative peer influence and school disengagement. Youth access supports before requiring police or crisis intervention, aligning with harm prevention goals.

Significant growth in Dan's Diner sales and catering services, alongside new contracts and donor support, positions the program toward long-term viability.

Program Success and Measurable Impact: Evidence-Based Approach

Dan's Legacy has worked with researchers at the University of British Columbia (UBC) to validate Dan's Diner's integrated approach. Independent evaluation by UBC's Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC) confirms that Dan's Diner and Dan's Legacy's programs deliver statistically significant results for at-risk youth.

Results include:

- 51.6% improved coping skills.
- 34.1% reduced mental health symptoms.
- 20% reported higher self-esteem.
- 37% accessed wraparound supports, including therapy, food programs, and outreach.
- 80% retention rate - Youth demonstrated strong program retention, with 80% attending consistently.
- Gender-diverse youth achieved the highest counselling completion rates.

Client testimonials highlight transformative outcomes, including regained passion for education and employment, improved mental health, and increased independence.

UBC's SARAVYC study (2023–2025) demonstrated:

- The effectiveness of the 16-session counselling model in addressing trauma.
- The importance of wraparound supports in tackling housing instability (69% of clients) and food insecurity (50%).
- The impact of early intervention in preventing gang recruitment, which research shows begins as early as elementary school.

Alignment with the Building Safer Communities Program

Dan's Diner directly supports the goals of the BSCF by:

- Reducing risk factors associated with gang involvement through early, proactive intervention.
- Providing low-barrier access to trauma-informed therapy and essential supports.
- Building employable skills and connecting youth to economic opportunities in the culinary sector.

- Promoting inclusion for Indigenous, immigrant, and gender-diverse youth disproportionately represented among at-risk populations.

Dan's Diner demonstrates the effectiveness of BSCF-funded initiatives in addressing the complex needs of at-risk youth. By combining mental health counselling, wraparound supports, and job skills training, it has successfully diverted youth from high-risk pathways and equipped them with the tools to achieve stability and independence. Its continued success provides a model for evidence-based, community-driven programming that reduces harm and strengthens social cohesion.

E. Increase Prevention Programs

Middle School Programs

Collaboration between the New Westminster School District and the BSCF Program continues to grow. The 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, connections were made with the School District's Wellness Team to confirm educational prevention workshops for all three New Westminster Middle Schools, grades 9 and 10 at the high school, as well as parent workshops in partnership with Safer Schools Together (SST)

At the end of March 2024, the City expanded its partnership with the Washington Kids Foundation to launch a new collaboration with the *Her Time* program—a female-identifying engagement program for vulnerable youth. Her Time takes a strengths-based approach to empower young women to stay safe and healthy while striving toward positive life goals. The program's "playbook" is built around five foundational pillars: positive relationships, healthy living, financial independence, goal setting, and personal safety. Between 2024 and 2025, 18 sessions were delivered.

Notable other partnerships for Middle School prevention and awareness include:

- The City hosted a total of eight GRIP (Gang & Gun Violence Prevention) workshops in collaboration with Safer Schools Together (SST). The sessions were aimed at strengthening community capacity in identifying, preventing, and responding to gang involvement and gun violence risk factors among youth.
- As part of the City's increased working partnership with SST, a complementary workshop was offered to community service providers to help identify early risk factors and provide support to youth. Building on these sessions, SST, BSCF, and the New Westminster School District will deliver additional school-based workshops for all three middle schools, grades 8 and 9 in the high school, as well as two parent workshops.

Feedback suggests that the training was effective in enhancing knowledge and confidence among participants. It also highlighted opportunities for the City and partners to continue building multi-agency collaboration, increase public education, and address root causes such as housing and poverty in future programming.

Black History Month Programming

The City of New Westminster, in partnership with the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, hosted two “Barbers and Braids” style events at the New Westminster Youth Hub. The first was held in 2024 and the second on February 24, 2025. It was rebranded as the “Pop-Up Barbershop.” Both events celebrated Black History Month, showcased local Black-owned businesses, and created an inclusive space for youth to connect while receiving free, culturally relevant haircuts and styles.

Both events strengthened connections between youth, local businesses, and the community and reinforced the value of hosting culturally significant programming at the Hub. Moving forward, staff will explore new partnerships with local salons to ensure the continued growth and success of this popular and meaningful initiative.

General Programming

Networking and program development continue to be a key priority. Ongoing working relationships with the New Westminster Police Department (NYPD) Gang Suppression Unit have continued since June 2023. A NYPD Sergeant has been newly introduced to the unit, 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 təməsewtxw Aquatic and Community Centre. BSCF provides 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 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 in the community.

F. Build Youth Resiliency – Develop the New Westminster Youth Resiliency Strategy for High Risk Youth

In January 2024, bassa Social Innovations Inc. began work on the City-wide Youth Resilience Strategy. This initiative focused on understanding youth resiliency through extensive consultations with youth, community leaders, cultural groups, service agencies, and city staff to create a culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and actionable plan.

Engagement highlights included:

- Four community-led virtual focus groups (February 2024) with approximately 30 community partners;
- In-person engagement sessions with youth and service providers (April–June 2024);
- Personalized outreach to Indigenous Nations and collaboration with the Spirit of the Children Society; and

- Engagement with over 400 participants through surveys, workshops, and youth-led sessions throughout 2024.

Four Strategic Pillars: New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy

In December 2024, the City finalized the New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy. The Strategy, included for information (attachment 1), is structured around four pillars developed from youth, community, and stakeholder input.

The pillars are:

1. Empower Youth Leadership

Recommendation: Transform the role of youth in New Westminster by supporting their power to shape, influence, and thrive in their communities.

Strategy:

- ❖ Seek Innovative and Informal Ways to Increase Youth Voice and Engagement Across Municipal Projects
- ❖ Explore Long-Term Opportunities to Formalize Civic Leadership Opportunities for Youth

Tactics:

- Ensure all municipal plans include specific youth engagement strategies:
 - Lower participation barriers (e.g., language interpretation, plain language).
 - Meet youth where they are (schools, youth centres, recreation facilities).
- Explore long-term civic leadership roles for youth:
 - Engage an internal City working group to identify immediate, medium, and long-term opportunities (e.g., committees, youth councils).

2. Develop Trusted Adults and Positive Relationships

Recommendation: Ensure youth have ongoing access to safe, trusted adults in both formal and informal settings.

Strategy:

- ❖ Build Community Capacity Through Targeted Investment and Action
- ❖ Invest in Training for Trusted Adults
- ❖ Expand Access to and Use of Restorative Justice Practices

Tactics:

- Provide training in trauma-informed care, non-violent intervention, and culturally relevant mentoring.
- Expand partnerships between schools, community organizations, and service providers for coordinated support networks.
- Train adults in non-violent intervention and bystander strategies.
- Offer ongoing professional development for adults working with youth.

- Create mentorship opportunities between adults and youth in school and community settings.
- Develop and expand restorative justice programs for youth offenders.
- Use community development models (e.g., Good Lives Model) for culturally informed restorative interventions.
- Offer restorative justice training for youth workers, educators, and community leaders.

3. Grant Youth Access to Programs, Supports, and Services

Recommendation: Foster protective factors through accessible, meaningful programs and services that build resilience.

Strategy:

- Identify Barriers and Gaps Experienced by New Westminster Youth
- Reduce or Eliminate Barriers to Youth Access
- Invest in Social and Recreation Prescription for Youth
- Build Capacity for Program and Policy Design

Tactics:

- Engage youth/families to identify barriers; analyze trends for underserved groups
- Ensure year-round access for all age groups
- Expand fee assistance (free access, tiered pay, recreation credits)
- Provide transportation assistance (passes, shuttles, ride-shares)
- Improve marketing & visibility; co-design outreach with youth
- Pilot recreation prescriptions; partner with schools & healthcare
- Deliver GBA+ & IBPA training for staff
- Integrate equity assessments in program design & funding
- Create cross-sector communities of practice

4. Coordinate a Systems for Safety and Intervention

Recommendation: Build a responsive, integrated system that enhances youth safety through cross-sectoral collaboration.

Strategy:

- ❖ Explore and Position the Municipality to Lead and Convene Systems-Level Coordination for the Youth Resilience Strategy
- ❖ Explore the Formation of a Short-Term Action Committee to Improve Non-Policing Intervention Systems for Youth
- ❖ Consider the Establishment of a Youth Social Development Position at the City of New Westminster

Tactics:

- Form Youth Systems Leadership Team (City, SD40, NWPD, service providers)

- Develop data/resource sharing protocols
- Create a centralized communication protocol for strategy
- Establish a short-term multi-stakeholder action committee for non-policing interventions
- Ensure youth & service providers are part of the design process
- Consider a dedicated Youth Social Development position (lead, coordinate, facilitate, share best practices)

The New Westminster Youth Resiliency Strategy is included for information. Staff are requesting feedback on the recommendations in the strategy.

G. Building a Program Sustainability Plan

Grant funding provided by the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) will be completed on March 31, 2026. Staff have identified needs, opportunities, and partnership strategies to sustain critical services beyond the grant period. Both the Situation Table and the other BSCF-supported initiatives continue to explore diverse funding avenues, leverage partnerships, and align with the City's Youth Resilience Framework to improve safety, quality of life, and long-term supports for at-risk youth.

The Youth HUB

The Lower Mainland Purpose Society's sustainability plan for the New Westminster Youth Hub emphasizes trusted relationships, coordinated cross-sector partnerships, and youth-driven programming to maintain the Hub as a safe, non-judgmental space for early intervention, prevention, and social development. Operations will be adjusted to match available resources, while staff pursue new funding from government, foundations, and private donors to preserve the Hub's role in the city's youth-serving ecosystem.

Dan's Diner (Dan's Legacy)

Dan's Diner social enterprise continues to exceed expectations in terms of revenue generation and skill development for youth. The program demonstrates a strong built-in sustainability model, with sales nearly doubling since opening. Through recovered food use, the program has reduced CO₂ emissions by 833,000 kg in 2024, with 450,000 meals provided to the community. In addition to operating a growing cook training program and social enterprise, Dan's Legacy donates to eight other food banks and runs a weekly Grocery Hamper program.

The BSCF program manager has shared several grant funding opportunities with both Dan's Legacy and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, including the B.C. Capital Project Grant, the Vancouver Foundation Transforming Systems Grant, the B.C. Civil Forfeitures Grant, and Vancouver Foundation Participatory Action Grant, among others. Both Dan's Legacy and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society have applied to the

Federal National Crime Prevention Strategy Grant, with the City issuing letters of support for their applications.

The New Westminster At-Risk Youth Situation Table

The BSCF funds the New Westminster Situation Table. A small grant was received through the Collaborative Public Safety Programs, which will allow its operations to continue into Q4 of 2026. The City is exploring partnerships to continue funding the dedicated youth outreach worker who supports at-risk youth identified at the Situation Table. Staff are seeking approval to continue the Table beyond the BSCF funding completion on March 31, 2026.

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) was 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 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 2024/2025 funding was allocated entirely to New Westminster youth programs.

With the end of this grant, funding for the Youth Hub and Dan's Diner will stop. The New Westminster At-Risk Youth Situation Table costs approximately \$40,000 per year. There is \$16,000 remaining from a Provincial Public Safety grant to allow the Table to continue until Q4. The Youth Outreach Worker position is funded until August 2026. The value of the outreach worker position is \$65,000 per year. Staff are seeking external funding to continue the Situation Table and the Youth Outreach Worker.

If external funding is not secured, it is recommended that staff submit a funding request to Council for the 2027 Budget process. It is recommended that this request potentially

be integrated into the Social Planning Section or a similar type of at-risk youth-focused department to maximize support and integration from the organization.

OPTIONS

1. THAT the report titled “Building Safer Communities Fund Program - At-Risk Youth Update August 2025” from the Manager, Intergovernmental Relations, dated August 25, 2025, be received for information; and
2. THAT the New Westminister At-Risk Youth Situation Table be approved to continue beyond the March 31, 2026 funding deadline for the Building Safer Communities Fund Program.
3. Council provide other direction.

Staff support options 1 and 2.

Conclusion

The BSCF Program has made significant strides in its mission over the past few years, achieving notable milestones and fostering valuable community engagement. The Program facilitated the establishment of the New Westminister Youth Hub, Dan’s Diner, the New Westminister Situation Table for at-risk youth and preventative programming for middle schools across the City. This report introduces the New Westminister Youth Resiliency Strategy and requests feedback on the recommendations from Council. Moving forward, the focus is on program sustainability to ensure the ongoing success and impact of the initiatives.

Collaboration with social service agencies, stakeholders, and frontline programming has formed the basis for this community program. It will indeed be crucial in maintaining momentum and addressing the ongoing vulnerability of young people. Securing continued support from both 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 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.

Staff are requesting approval to continue the New Westminster Situation Table beyond March 31, 2026 and are requesting feedback on the New Westminster Resiliency Strategy.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Aditi Rudra, Program Manager, Building Safer Communities Fund Program

This report was reviewed by:

Annie Sudeyko, Social Planning and Homelessness Prevention Supervisor

Silisha Ali, Recreation Supervisor – Youth & Seniors

This report was approved by:

Denise Tambellini, Manager, Intergovernmental Relations

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer