Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – March 16, 2022

REPORTS

Item No. 2 24/7 Safe Space Grant Program: Year Two Update

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service:

1. That $62,500 be referred to the 2024 - 2027 Budget process to provide Ka Ni Kanichihk ($37,500) and Spence Neighbourhood Association / WE 24 ($25,000), with funds to operate existing safe spaces from January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024.

2. That a new four-year 24/7 Safe Space Grant totaling $937,500 be referred to the 2024 - 2027 Budget process for the period April 1, 2024, through December 31, 2027.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Rollins,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in.

Yea:	Bowman, Allard, Browaty, Gillingham, Gilroy, Mayes, Rollins	7
Nay:		0

Carried

COUNCIL DECISION:

On September 30, 2020, Council concurred in the September 21, 2020, recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee, which included the following recommendation:

3. That within 90 days following the end of year 2 (2021) and year 4 (2023) the Community Services Department report back to Executive Policy Committee with an update on program outcomes provided by successful grant recipients.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: 24/7 Safe Space Grant Program: Year Two Update

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
C. Brens	C. Fernandes	C. Kloepfer	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its September 2020 meeting, Council awarded the 24/7 Safe Space Grant Program to Ka Ni Kanichihk and West End 24/7 (WE24), operated by the Spence Neighbourhood Centre (SNA). Totalling $1,000,000 over four years, Ka Ni Kanichihk was awarded $150,000 annually between 2020-2023, while SNA was awarded $100,000 annually, for the same time period.

This report provides an update on the program outcomes from the first two years of the granting program in 2020 and 2021, and outlines recommendations on next steps moving forward. The first section of this report provides an overview and history of the granting program, and outlines potential options following the end of the 24/7 Safe Space Grant Program in 2023. The second section highlights the outcomes and challenges identified by each agency in their reporting submitted to the City, and the third section concludes the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That $62,500 be referred to the 2024 - 2027 Budget process to provide Ka Ni Kanichihk ($37,500) and Spence Neighbourhood Association / WE 24 ($25,000), with funds to operate existing safe spaces from January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024.

2. That a new four-year 24/7 Safe Space Grant totaling $937,500 be referred to the 2024 - 2027 Budget process for the period April 1, 2024, through December 31, 2027.

3. That the proper officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On September 30, 2020, Council directed the Public Service to award the 24/7 Safe Space Grant Program to Ka Ni Kanichihk and the Spence Neighborhood Association. Council further directed the Public Service to report back to the Executive Policy Committee within 90 days following the end of year 2 (2021) and year 4 (2023) with an update on program outcomes provided by the successful grant recipients.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The 24/7 Safe Space Grant Program will end on December 31, 2023. While City funding was committed until the end of 2023, no additional funds have been approved for future years. Without dedicated funding, it will not be possible for either Ka Ni Kanichihk or SNA to continue to offer the services outlined in this report. As noted in Recommendation 1, the amount of $62,500 would allow for both agencies to continue to operate from January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024. As outlined in Recommendation 2, and if approved, a new granting program will allow for the continuation of the 24/7 Safe Space Grant into the next four-year budget period. These recommendations require additional mill rate support of $250,000 in each year 2024 to 2027.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Overview

In 2019, the Illicit Drug Task Force published its report, titled “Recommendations to Reduce the Use and Effects of Illicit Drugs within Manitoba’s Communities.” This report identified eleven recommendations. Of these, the third recommendation called for the improved management of mental health and addictions through 24/7 Safe Spaces. 24/7 Safe Spaces are welcoming places, free of bias or conflict, that are open 24 hours a day, to address immediate needs for shelter, food, community, and cultural supports, while also offering referrals to health, housing, income assistance and crisis counseling services.

In March 2020, City Council adopted the 2020-2023 multi-year operating budget which included a grant program to support the delivery of $1,000,000 in new funding over 4 years to provide 24/7 safe space supports and services in Winnipeg. Through this Program, up to $250,000 in funding would be available each year for 4 years, beginning in 2020 and ending in 2023.

At its September 30, 2020 meeting, Council awarded the 24/7 Safe Space Grant to Ka Ni Kanichihk and West End 24/7 (WE24), which is operated by the Spence Neighbourhood Centre (SNA). Ka Ni Kanichihk was awarded $150,000 annually for 4 years, while SNA was awarded $100,000 annually for the same period.

Ka Ni Kanichihk was awarded this grant funding based on its application which included the opening and administration of Velma’s House; a low-barrier safe space for women exiting sexual exploitation, fleeing intimate partner violence or experiencing unsheltered homelessness. SNA was awarded this grant based on its application to enhance the hours of operation for the WE24 program; an overnight safe space for vulnerable and unsheltered youth ages 13-26.

It is important to note that municipal funding for both of these initiatives will end as of December 31, 2023, with the conclusion of the current four-year budget cycle. While City funding was committed for the period from 2020 to the end of 2023, no additional funds have been approved for future years. Without dedicated funding, it will not be possible for either Ka Ni Kanichihk or SNA to continue to operate going forward. The Public Service is recommending that this granting program be referred to the 2024-2027 budget review processes. As noted in Recommendation 1, and if approved, the amount of $62,500 would allow for both agencies to continue to operate from January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024. As outlined in Recommendation

2, and if approved, a new granting program will allow for the continuation of the 24/7 Safe Space Grant throughout the next four-year budget period.

As part of its September 2020 disposition, Council directed the Public Service to report back to EPC within 90 days following the end of year 2 (2021), and year 4 (2023), with an update on program outcomes provided by the successful grant recipients. This report provides the first of two updates to EPC.

Before reviewing the reporting of each agency, it is important to highlight the context within which each agency submitted their reporting to the City. As part of the grant agreements signed between each agency and the City, the Public Service requested that each agency submit to the City a report at the end of 2021 outlining the outcomes and challenges of the first two years of the granting program. However, the timing in which the reports were due overlapped with the onset of the Omicron variant of the COVID19 Pandemic. This context is important as each agency was simultaneously managing staffing shortages, increased service pressures, and decreased capacity, while working to compile and submit their reporting.

Ka Ni Kanichihk: Velma's House

Ka Ni Kanichihk is an Indigenous-led organization whose mandate is to provide culturally-safe programs and services focused on the wholeness and wellness of the individuals they serve, while building on the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples. Ka Ni Kanichihk works in collaboration with a diverse program advisory committee and community partners to build Indigenous inclusion through education, skills development and economic advancement while supporting reconciliation and ensuring Indigenous opportunities exist in a variety of sectors. Key partners in this work include representatives from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Manitoba Coalition, Lived Experience Advisory Committee of Survivors, the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, End Homelessness Winnipeg, and the West Central Women's Resource Centre.

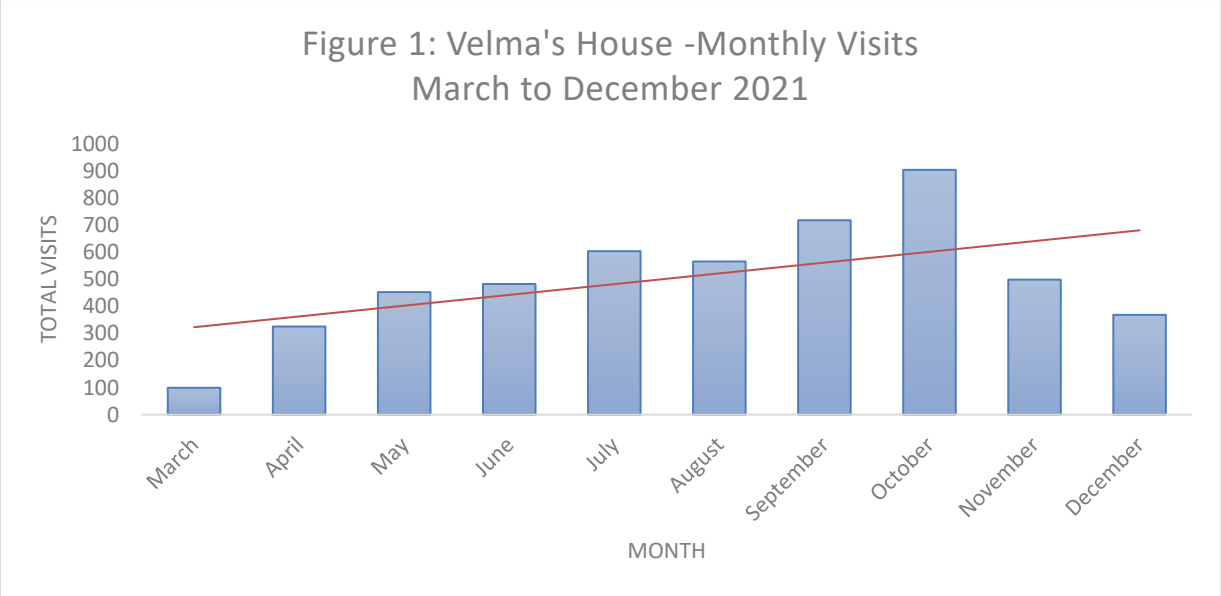
Recognizing a gap in specialized and culturally-safe spaces and supports for Indigenous women and girls, Ka Ni Kanichihk with other Indigenous service providers, leveraged the 24/7 Safe Space Granting Program to implement Velma's House. Velma's House is a low barrier, safe space for women who are sexually exploited, experiencing violence (street or domestic) or are unsheltered. All women are welcome at Velma's House which includes trans women, 2 spirit and all who identify as female. Staffing at Velma's House is led by Indigenous women and survivors, and supported by a Lived Experience Advisory Committee. Velma's House programming, services and guiding principles are based on cultural safety, trauma-informed care, harm reduction and anti-oppressive practices. Participants do not need to be sober to access services and are not required to book an appointment.

As the funding for this program was provided to agencies late in 2020, following the September 30 meeting of Council, Ka Ni Kanichihk focused its initial efforts on developing and operationalizing this new service. Officially opening in March 2021, the space was named in honour of Velma Orvis, who worked closely with Indigenous women until her passing in 2020. Velma envisioned a welcoming place of safety, offering comfort and cultural connection to women experiencing homelessness, violence or exploitation. At Velma's House, women have access to healthy meals, emergency clothing, a safe place to rest, hygiene supplies, laundry, and shower facilities, as well as other supports such as employment counselling, housing support, and assistance navigating the health care system. In addition to the above services,

there is an Elder on site, along with access to traditional medicines, ceremony, and cultural ways of healing.

Velma's House has become a vital space in the community, with hundreds of women walking through the doors since opening. Although Velma's House is currently open Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 24:00 and on weekends from 11:00 to 21:00, Ka Ni Kanichihk and its partners are working to further scale up operations for 2022-2023 to respond to community need, and grant funding requirements.

In terms of access, Velma's House operates on a drop-in basis, and there are no requirements for individuals to register or enroll. This means the number of participants varies from day to day. As noted above, grant funding was received late in 2020, and this program did not formally open until 2021. For this reason, reporting information is not available for 2020. However, Ka Ni Kanichihk was able to provide reporting data for the period of March to December 2021. During this period, Velma's house supported over 5,000 visits, and on average supported over 500 visits per month. Figure 1, below, outlines the total visits by month as provided by the agency in its reporting submitted to the City. It is important to note an increasing trend in access over the reporting period, with only a few hundred visits per month early in the year, to nearly a thousand by the fall of 2021. Although visit rates decreased late in 2021, it is expected that an upward trend will continue as Velma's House further scales up its operations and as the most recent wave of the COVID19 pandemic subsides.



Throughout the course of the first two years of implementation, Ka Ni Kanichihk identified a number of key successes and outcomes. First, that the access created by Velma's House has directly supported hundreds of women by offering a place where they can go to escape dangerous circumstances and reduce the risk of physical violence and exploitation. Second, Velma's House is the first space of its kind in the City that provides access to trauma-informed and culturally relevant supports for women, empowering participants through a sense of hope provided by the staff and women who lead the programs and services. Third, Velma's House has enabled increased communication and coordination among organizations serving the same population, reducing the gap in services available to sexually exploited adult women and those who identify as women from the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Finally, this service has significantly

reduced the isolation and stress brought on by the pandemic by remaining open when many other public and private spaces were closed in response to Provincial Public Health Orders.

Throughout the reporting period, Ka Ni Kanichihk identified several operating challenges. However, the core issue was the difficulty of initiating a new 24/7 service given available resources. Although the Safe Space is intended to be operational 24/7, initial funding was not sufficient to immediately ensure a full 24/7 staff team. As such, hours of operation have been adjusted to provide services when needed most. In their report, Ka Ni Kanichihk identified that 24/7 service would require additional staffing, and that additional long-term funding is needed to make the Safe Space fully operational at a 24/7 capacity. Moving into the next 2 years of implementation, Ka Ni Kanichihk and its partnering agencies are working to implement additional capacity and are exploring new granting opportunities to continue to scale up this critical service.

Spence Neighbourhood Association: West End 24 (WE24)

WE24 is a 24/7 service operated by SNA, aimed at supporting youth between the ages of 13 and 26 who may be experiencing homelessness, and who may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Based out of the City-owned and operated Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre (MERC), this service supports individuals living in the downtown area with a focus on the West End and Spence neighbourhoods. WE24 provides accommodations overnight from 23:00 to 07:00, with access to additional services and programs throughout the day provided through SNA. WE24 is the only overnight shelter in the area that supports youth, providing an alternative for those who may not feel safe attending adult shelters. In addition to overnight accommodations, WE24 provides meals, warm clothing, hygiene kits, transportation support, and referrals to other supports and services including housing, mental health, education, and other health services. Similar to Ka Ni Kanichihk, this service is provided in partnership with other organizations and stakeholders including, but not limited to, the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, West Central Women's Resource Centre, Ma Mamawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc., Ndinawe, Resource Assistance for Youth, Boys & Girls Clubs of Winnipeg, the Downtown Community Safety Partnership, Nine Circles Community Health Centre, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Leftovers Rescue Food.

In terms of access and supports, in 2020 WE24 supported over 11,000 visits, distributed over 11,370 meals and supported 42 individuals in accessing housing. Access to services increased in 2021 with WE24 supporting over 23,600 visits, distributing over 25,500 meals and helping 48 individuals access housing.

Throughout the reporting period, WE24 identified a number of key successes. During the pandemic, this included working closely with other community organizations to develop innovative ways to support youth. For example, from December 2020 to March 2021, WE24 partnered with the West Central Women's Resource Centre to open a daytime warming space at the MERC. The warming space provided community connection, hygiene products, warm meals, access to washrooms and a place for people to escape the cold and warmup. In addition to the above, and in collaboration with End Homelessness Winnipeg, Resource Assistance for Youth, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, and the West Central Women's Resource Centre, WE24 supported a collaborative effort to provide emergency housing for individuals experiencing homelessness who needed to isolate due to the pandemic. This initiative identified hotel space in downtown Winnipeg and offered safe accommodations for youth and women to isolate in private rooms while supported with meal delivery, internet access, on-call outreach, and on-site security. Through this initiative, the housing services staff at SNA and partnering agencies were

able to transition many individuals from the hotel to permanent housing. In total, 173 people received temporary emergency hotel stays, and of these, 67 were permanently housed. Lastly, and throughout the previous winters, the WE24 outreach team conducted enhanced outreach patrols during the evenings. The patrols visited high traffic areas to meet with youth, provide immediate support, and offer transportation back to the 24/7 Safe Space. Building off of this work, WE24 is hoping to add a system navigation team and daytime outreach workers to their staff compliment in 2022.

Throughout the reporting period, WE24 identified several challenges connected with their services. This included an increase in the number of individuals using bus shelters as primary spaces for living, as well as a significant increase in encampments in the Spence neighbourhood. In their reporting, WE24 also identified the connection between youth accessing their services, and those involved in care, with almost all youth citing the trauma caused by the Child Welfare System as a core reason for their path to requiring emergency shelter.

In addition to the above, WE24 highlighted key impacts caused by the pandemic. For example, this included a decrease in the number of safe rides offered in 2021 due to the need to reduce the number of people who could ride at the same time in the same vehicle. In addition, the pandemic also necessitated the reduction of volunteers and, as a result, there have been no active volunteers in the WE24 Safe Space since March 2020. However, it is important to note that WE24 still offers offsite volunteer initiatives, including a community meal program in partnership with Trans Canada Brewers Direct. Moving forward into the final two years of the granting program, WE24 is working to enhance and grow its services where possible and continue to provide critical supports to youth in the Downtown and Spence neighbourhoods.

Conclusion

In review of the reporting from both agencies, it is clear that there is an ongoing need for 24/7 Safe Spaces in Winnipeg. This is particularly true when reviewing the significant challenges related to poverty and homelessness in the City. Data collected from the 2016 Federal Census, show that 1 in 4 Indigenous (28%) and Newcomer (27%) residents experience poverty, and that Winnipeg has double the national average of child poverty, with poverty affecting over 1/3 of all Indigenous and Newcomer children. The 2021 Winnipeg Interim Street Census reached 1,127 individuals experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg, and of these individuals 27.5% identified as female, 22% were unaccompanied youth under the age of 24, and 66% identified as Indigenous. This data, combined with the recommendations of the 2019 Illicit Drug Task Force, the 2020 Kíkininaw Óma Strategy to Support Unsheltered Winnipeggers, and the City's 10-Year Poverty Reduction Strategy reaffirm the continued need for the critical and often life-saving services provided by Ka Ni Kanichihk and SNA, as outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: March 3, 2022

Project Name:

24/7 Safe Space Grant Program: Year Two Update

First Year of Program **2024**

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Capital					
Capital Expenditures Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budgeted Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Funding Sources:					
Debt - External	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Cash to Capital	-	-	-	-	-
Canada Community Building Fund	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -				
Total Additional Debt Required	$ -				
Current Expenditures/Revenues					
Direct Costs	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ -
Less: Incremental Revenue/Recovery	-	-	-	-	-
Net Cost/(Benefit)	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ -
Less: Existing Budget Amounts	-	-	-	-	-
Net Budget Adjustment Required	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ 250,000	$ -

Additional Comments:

Direct costs represent the grants to be referred to the 2024-2027 budget processes including Recommendation 1; $62,500 to provide Ka Ni Kanichihk ($37,500) and Spence Neighbourhood Association / WE 24 ($25,000), with funds to operate existing safe spaces from January 1, 2024 to March 31, 2024, and Recommendation 2; $937,500 for a new four-year 24/7 Safe Space Grant for the period April 1, 2024 through December 31, 2027. Additional mill rate support of $250,000 in each year 2024-2027 is required to support these recommendations.

Original signed by K. Lemoine

Kelly Lemoine, CPA, CA
Manager, Finance and Administrative Services
Community Services Division

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.
- Spence Neighbourhood Association

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

03 QUALITY OF LIFE

- Theme 03-1-Opportunity
- Direction 4: Work with municipal service areas as a collaborator on poverty reduction.
- Theme 01-2a-Collaborate to Make Safe Communities
  Direction 6: Take a broad-scaled, complete and collaborative approach to crime prevention.
- Theme1-4- Housing
- Direction 3 Establish partnerships with the private, not for profit and government sectors to provide affordable housing throughout the city

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

N/A

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

The information and recommendations presented in this report align with and advance the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Strategy (2021–2031) as follows:

They embody the following Guiding Principles:

- We will Uphold Human Rights
- We will Honour Relationships and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
- We will Address Systemic Oppression, Trauma and Social Inequity
- We will Promote and Maintain the Welfare of All Residents
- We will Develop Trust and Meaningful Partnerships to find solutions and drive change.

They aligned with the Life Pole of Affordable Housing and they support the following Goals and Objectives:

- Goal 4 - ‘Community Well-Being Supports for those in Greatest Need are Increased’. More specifically, Objective A: ‘The immediate needs of residents experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are met through collaboration with community partners and other levels of government.’

- Goal 8: ‘Equity in Community Safety is Increased Through Collaboration’. More specifically, Objective B: There is increased safety and security of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and youth, as the City pursues partnerships and joint initiatives, and prioritizes safety in its decision making.

This report is also aligned to the following action of the poverty reduction strategy:

- Action 8.3: 24/7 safe spaces - Provide long-term, sustainable funding to Indigenous-led, low barrier, culturally appropriate 24/7 safe spaces and services for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, transitioning out of the child welfare system, dealing with chronic poverty, fleeing domestic violence or who are victims of sexualized violence and exploitation. (CMS)

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Community Services
Division: Community Development
Prepared by: Noelle DePape, and Karen Glugosh
Date: March 3, 2022