

SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT STAFF REPORT

TO: Finance Committee (Round 1 Budget) – November 25 and 26, 2024

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SUBJECT: **GROWING COMMUNITIES FUNDS UPDATE**

RECOMMENDATION(S)

THAT the report titled Growing Communities Funds Update be received for information.

BACKGROUND

The [Growing Communities Fund \(GCF\)](#) provided a one-time total of \$1 billion in grants distributed among all of B.C.'s local governments in the spring of 2023. The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) received \$2.3 million from the GCF, the District of Sechelt received \$3.75 million and Town of Gibsons received \$2.8 million. The purpose of the grant is to support the delivery of infrastructure projects necessary to enable community growth. Grant funding is incremental to currently planned infrastructure and amenity projects and may include related project costs such as early-stage development work.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of the GCF as well as provide options for use of these funds during 2025 Budget deliberations.

DISCUSSION

Allocation

All Regional Districts received GCF based on a formula inclusive of \$500,000 in flat funding and a combination of the Regional District's overall population, rural population and rural population growth from 2016-2021. The funding allocation from the Province for the Regional District was as follows:

Regional Districts	2021 Total Pop	2021 Rural Pop	Flat Amount	Per Capita (Based on Total Pop)	Per Capita (Based on Rural Pop)	Foundational Funding	2016 Rural Pop	Rural Pop Growth Between 2016-2021	Growth Based Funding	TOTAL FUNDING
Sunshine Coast	32,307	15,659	500,000	549,219	469,770	1,519,000	14,957	702	702,000	2,221,000

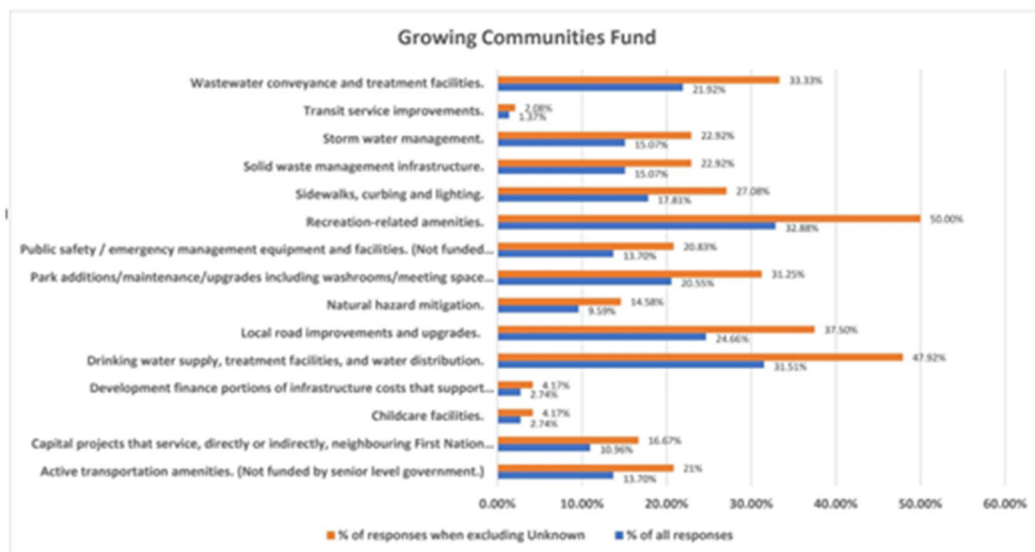
The GCF was not designed to be allocated to electoral areas like that of the Community Works Funds. This is because the funding calculation took into account member municipality populations. The funds are intended to address regional priorities. The province has left the responsibility of identifying and prioritizing regional priorities up to the board’s discretion.

Based on a survey conducted by Civic Info in the fall of 2023, local governments in BC, the majority of funding was being allocated to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, and recreation amenities. See excerpt of survey below.

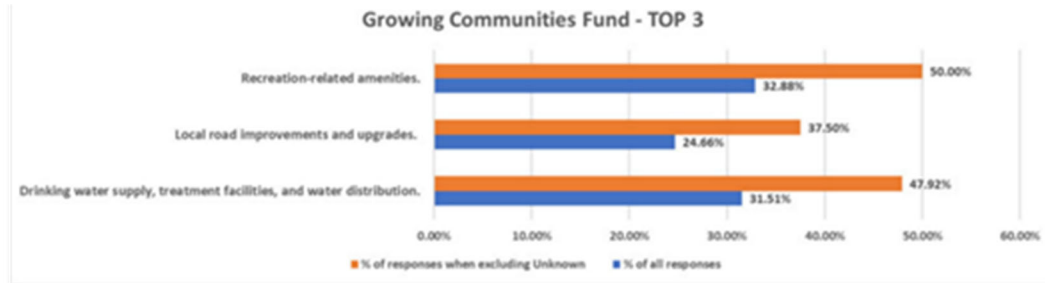


GROWING COMMUNITIES FUND

EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE PROVINCE ALLOCATED \$1 BILLION IN GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THROUGH THE GROWING COMMUNITIES FUND. IN THIS QUARTERLY QUESTION, WE SURVEYED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ABOUT THEIR PLANS FOR ALLOCATING THE GROWING COMMUNITIES FUND GRANT. A TOTAL OF SEVENTY-THREE (73) LOCAL GOVERNMENTS RESPONDED, INCLUDING EIGHT REGIONAL DISTRICTS.



At the time of the survey, several local governments were still in the process of deciding how to allocate the grant funds. Among the respondents, 34 per cent mentioned that they had not yet received council approval for any of the grant funds. Additionally, 13 per cent stated that they had council approval for only a portion of the grant spending.



TOP 3 CATEGORIES

According to the survey results, recreation-related amenities emerged as the most common area for allocation. Excluding “Unknown” responses, it was observed that 50 per cent of local governments had allocated a portion of the grant to recreation projects.

These projects encompassed trail expansions, community clubhouse facilities, arena upgrades, and theatre enhancements. This is followed by drinking water supply, treatment facilities and water distribution, and then local road improvements and upgrades as the most common areas allocations have been made.



LEAST POPULAR CATEGORIES

The survey revealed that the least favored options outlined by the Province of British Columbia for utilizing this funding included childcare facilities, the development finance aspects of infrastructure costs that facilitate affordable/attainable housing, and enhancements to transit services.

FULL RESULTS

A graph showing the full results of the survey can be found here (link to graph).

Detailed results for this survey can be obtained by emailing surveys@civicinfo.bc.ca



Please use this link to be a contributor.

This short survey should only take 3-5 minutes to complete.

If you would like to contribute topics for upcoming questions, please contact office@gfoabc.ca or call (250) 382-6871.

Use of Funds

Based on the GCF permitted use and associated eligibility of already established SCRD services, the following categories of projects could be considered:

- Public drinking water supply/treatment/distribution
- Wastewater conveyance and treatment
- Solid waste infrastructure
- Public safety/emergency management equipment and facilities

- Active transportation amenities
- Transit improvement infrastructure
- Natural hazard mitigation
- Park additions and upgrades
- Recreation related amenities

Funds are also permitted to fund feasibility studies and other early-stage development work including design, tender and acquiring land. GCF must be spent within five years of receipt of the funds. This would require the SCRD to have spent the funds by March 23, 2028.

Included below is a list of projects that have been funded from GCF as well as proposed 2025 Budget items that align with the Boards Strategic plan areas:

GCF Available	2,312,951
Estimated 2024 Interest Earned	121,400
Total Available Funds	2,434,351
2024 Projects	
Vertical Expansion Sechelt Landfill	65,000
Sechelt Landfill Contact Water Pond Relocation	520,000
SCA Water Well Investigation	62,957
Available for 2025 Projects	1,786,394
Proposed 2025 Projects	
PRV for Advanced Optimization Use- Church Road	315,000
Gray Creek Intake & Treatment Design Engineering	864,550
Langdale Wellfield	606,844
Ending Estimated Uncommitted	-

Other projects that could be funded through the GCF include:

Non-Mandatory Board Directive or Business Continuity	
Project	Amount
Transit Expansion Priorities 2025+	TBD
Cliff Gilker Bridges & Trail Remediation	\$1,670,000
911 Radio Upgrades	\$750,000
Chapman 911 Tower Project Budget Increase	\$125,000
Egmont Park Repairs	\$184,000
Chaster Park Temp Access and Parking Enhancement	\$143,000

Financial Implications

The funding for the PRV for Advanced Optimization Use- Church Road, Gray Creek Intake and Treatment Design Engineering, and Langdale Wellfield Budget proposals have been amended to use GCF. If approved, these would commit all of the uncommitted GCF. Alternatively, the Board may elect to use GCF for portions of the Non-Mandatory Board Directives or Business Continuity projects listed above. Approximately \$1,786,394 is available to allocate to 2025 or 2026 projects.

Should the Board elect to not fund these projects from GCF, Regional Water Service (RWS) [370] Capital Reserves will be presented as an alternative funding option. The use of GCF for these projects will further strengthen the RWS Capital Reserves which are currently insufficient to fund required future infrastructure replacement.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND RELATED POLICIES

The proposed projects align with the Board's Strategic Focus Areas and as well as the Board's Asset Management and Financial Sustainability Policies.

CONCLUSION

This report is an update on the status of the GCF including funding commitments and recommended 2025 projects that are eligible for use of GCF. There is currently \$1,786,394 available to be allocated in 2025. These funds must be expended by March 23, 2028.

Reviewed by:			
Manager		Finance	
GM		Legislative	
CAO		Other	