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**Subject: Evaluation of 2018 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Projects**

**Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee**

**Report date: Tuesday, March 9, 2021**

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**Recommendations**

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

**Key Facts**

- Since 2008, Regional Council has supported local poverty reduction efforts through its annual investment in the Niagara Prosperity Initiative program.
- This report provides information on the evaluation of Niagara Property Initiative projects funded in 2018.
- Projects funded through the Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) can be for one or two years. All 2018 projects were completed by April 2020.
- Priorities for 2021 have been informed by impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and as such funding will be targeted to needs in the areas of housing, health and domestic violence.

**Financial Considerations**

The investment of NPI funding is reviewed annually by Council as part of Community Services' operating budget. Since 2008, Regional Council has invested \$1.5 million annually toward increasing prosperity for Niagara residents living in poverty. In 2020 and 2021, the investment was reduced to \$1.25 million to address other budget pressures in those years. Funds invested as per this report were approved as part of the 2018 operating budget.

**Analysis**

NPI is an annual funding program with the purpose of supporting poverty reduction, alleviation and prevention activities. NPI focuses on neighbourhood-based interventions aimed to increase prosperity for Niagara residents living in poverty. NPI does this through the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to the community.

In preparation for the 2018 NPI RFP, eight information sessions were held with community agencies and attended by over 240 people living in poverty, and identified four priority areas of need:

1. **Housing** (outreach, promotion of self-reliance and improved stability and homelessness prevention).
2. **Health** (mental health, dental needs for adults and sustainable access to healthy food).
3. **Employment** (opportunities for social enterprises).
4. **Neighbourhood investment in community hubs.**

In 2018, there were 23 projects funded through the NPI. Total funds contracted for 2018 was \$1,502,604 and total funds spent by agencies was \$1,434,128. The difference of \$68,476 was reinvested for future NPI grants. Nineteen projects served more people than expected and seven projects came in under budget. Individual project details are provided in Appendix A.

The 2018 project types are outlined in the following table.

<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Contracted</b>	<b>Funds Spent</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Housing – Outreach	\$71,101	\$71,101	\$0
Housing – Self-Reliance and Improved Stability	\$297,873	\$256,686	-\$41,186
Housing – Prevention	\$158,748	\$158,748	\$0
Health – Mental Health	\$54,033	\$54,034	\$0
Health – Dental	\$231,303	\$231,303	\$0
Health – Sustainable Access to Healthy Food	\$45,016	\$45,016	\$0
Employment – Social Enterprises	\$268,080	\$243,318	-\$24,762
Neighbourhood – Community Hubs	\$376,450	\$373,922	-\$2,528
	<b>\$1,502,604</b>	<b>\$1,434,128</b>	<b>-\$68,476</b>

NPI projects are required to submit quarterly and final reports that include:

- Number of children, youth, adults and/or seniors served.
- Outcomes achieved and measured.
- Lessons learned and recommendations for future initiatives.
- Specific examples of impact to neighbourhood/community.

- Testimonials from project participants.

The NPI secretariat (United Way Niagara) and/or the convener (Niagara Community Foundation) complete site visits/program reviews throughout the funding period to ensure contractual obligations are being met.

An analysis was completed to measure project impacts on individuals and communities and is outlined in the following table.

<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>	<b># of People Served</b>	<b># of People who found Employment</b>	<b>Revenue Generated</b>
Housing – Outreach	1	135	0	\$0
Housing – Self-Reliance and Improved Stability	5	3,967	49	\$0
Housing – Prevention	2	1,044	0	\$0
Health – Mental Health	1	757	0	\$2,250
Health – Dental	2	292	0	\$0
Health – Sustainable Access to Health Food	1	705	0	\$0
Employment – Social Enterprises	5	1,369	98	\$112,179
Neighbourhood – Community Hubs	6	5,305	20	\$17,863
	<b>23</b>	<b>13,574</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>\$132,292</b>

The following are examples of testimonials from individuals served through the 2018 projects. More examples are available in Appendix A.

#### Housing

- *“I was having a hard time paying rent and eventually got an eviction notice. I was given help with an apartment search as well as getting help with filling out paperwork for housing and my bills. I was able to get a more affordable place for me and my son.”*

#### Health

- *“I was able to get my teeth and confidence back and I got back to work. I needed to work again to feel like myself. I feel more confident.”*

## Employment

- *“This project help me to be busy and I am doing something that I like. I live alone and I like that I can share, talk and learn from other people. Since I started I made \$238 selling my bags.”*

## Neighbourhood Development

- *“I have made friends and established a connection to the community. This program has made me feel included in the community and has allowed me to express myself through my art.”*

All 2018 funded projects stayed within their approved budgets, provided reports and passed their site visits/program reviews.

## 2021 NPI Request for Proposals (RFP)

The 2021 RFP was issued by United Way Niagara on March 1<sup>st</sup> and will close on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. NPI projects will be funded for a maximum of 14 months (June 2021 to August 2022).

NPI is committed to providing supports to help the community rebuild and recover from the devastating impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has exacerbated and amplified many of the issues caused by poverty. To address this, the 2021 NPI RFP will target needs in the areas of **housing**, **health** and **domestic violence**.

Consistent with past practice, an independent review committee has been formed to review proposals, and decisions on funding for 2021 will be announced in May.

## Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

## Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Investing funding and collaborative action in neighbourhoods in need supports Council's strategic priority of Fostering an Environment for Economic Prosperity. Outcomes are realized by helping residents thrive through greater opportunities and relate to employment and improved community symptoms.

## Other Pertinent Reports

CWCD 263-2015 Memo - Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2015 Project Update  
COM 12-2016 Evaluation of 2013 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Projects  
COM 21-2016 2016 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Update  
COM 28-2016 Evaluation of 2014 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Projects  
COM 18-2017 Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2017 Update  
COM C 6-2017 Local Poverty Reduction Fund Application  
COM 13-2018 Niagara Prosperity Initiative 2018 Update

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*This report was prepared in consultation with Marc Todd, Manager Community Services.*

## Appendices

Appendix A            2018 Individual NPI Project Evaluations