



## STAFF REPORT

**Title:** Stepping Stones - Small Community Opportunity Program

**Meeting Date:** March 11, 2025

---

### **Executive Summary:**

The Stepping Stones Crisis Society has applied for a Small Opportunity Program Grant to help fund a Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program. The program is intended to address food security and workforce development by offering culinary training, meal preparation services, and classes on nutrition and budgeting.

To facilitate the proposed program, the society has requested \$88,850 through the grant process. The society has also learned that it is ineligible for the grant due to its status as a not-for-profit association with an economic mandate. In speaking with the grant authority, the society has learned that in order to receive the grant, it would need to partner with an eligible partner, an option of which could be a municipality.

Stepping Stones Crisis Society has requested that the City of Cold Lake consider taking over the grant application and enter into a partnership to flow the grant funding through to the society and coordinate the necessary reporting requirements. Administration, including leadership at Cold Lake and District FCSS, has met with the society to discuss the possibility of the partnership and is supportive of the proposal.

By taking over the grant application, the City of Cold Lake would ultimately be responsible for ensuring that the grant's guidelines are followed and that the reporting requirements are met. The City would enter into an agreement with the province to flow the funding through to the organization while keeping a portion of the requested administrative grant funds to compensate for staff time in administering the grant (A total of \$10,350 of the requested grant is intended to recoup administrative costs associated with the grant and the program). Depending on the agreement the City receives from the province, and MOU may be required to complete the needed transaction with the Stepping Stones Crisis Society.

### **Background:**

Stepping Stones Crisis Society supports women and children facing domestic violence and family crises. We provide emergency shelter, long-term housing, and compassionate care to help rebuild lives and offer hope.

Stepping Stones is a non-profit organization encompassing Joie's Phoenix House and the Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Centre. The society offers:



- A 27-bed emergency shelter dedicated to assisting women and their children in need of short-term emergency accommodations.
- Joie's Phoenix House, a Second Stage Women's Shelter Program, offering safe, affordable housing and programming to families choosing to leave an abusive relationship.
- A community support program that offers 1:1 supports to all women who are struggling with an unhealthy or abusive relationship or have left one.
- Public Education, bringing community awareness and education about Family Violence to the Lakeland area.
- A 24-hour helpline offering confidential support, information, and referrals to anyone who calls.

According to the Government of Alberta's website, the Small Community Opportunity Program provides grants to solve challenges and find opportunities in rural areas. Indigenous and small communities, as well as non-profit groups they work with, may receive between \$20,000 and \$100,000 for local projects.

The deadline for submissions was in December of 2024. The Stepping Stones Crisis Society submitted its application prior to the deadline and heard about the complications due to its registered status when the government was verifying the applications it had received.

Not-for-profits are able to receive funding through the program, but must work with a municipality, Metis Settlement or First Nation to do so.

The City's only risk is in the context of compliance with the grant agreement, as the agreement will be with the municipality, it will be responsible for the funding in the unlikely event of compliance issues.

**Alternatives:**

- Council may pass or defeat a motion to apply for the Small Opportunity Program Grant in partnership with the Stepping Stones Crisis Society for a Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program and enter into an agreement with the society to govern the administration of the grant and the associated funds.
- Council may respectfully decline to apply for the Small Opportunity Program Grant in partnership with the Stepping Stones Crisis Society at this time.
- Council may accept this report as information.



**Recommended Action:**

Administration recommends that Council pass a motion to apply for the Small Opportunity Program Grant in partnership with the Stepping Stones Crisis Society for a Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program and enter into an agreement with the society to govern the administration of the grant and the associated funds.

**Budget Implications (Yes or No):**

Yes

**Submitted by:**

Kevin Nagoya, Chief Administrative Officer