



**Neighbourhood
Small Grants**

vancouver
foundation



Image 1. The Waterways Lane Mural project in Metro Vancouver

Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants

2020 Program Evaluation

Prepared by Zoe Howell and Courtney Stover

Acknowledgements

Vancouver Foundation is located on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), Səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) peoples who have cared for and protected the land upon which we build community since time immemorial. Further, this report acknowledges that the Neighbourhood Small Grants program operates on Indigenous land throughout the province colonially known as British Columbia. In order to properly recognize these Indigenous lands, this report makes specific acknowledgements to lands across British Columbia through the use of Indigenous place names where possible (College of New Caledonia, n.d.).

We would like to thank Meseret Taye, Vincent Tom, and the rest of the Neighbourhood Small Grants team for their guidance, support, and knowledge-sharing throughout the evaluation process. Moreover, we would like to thank the Project Leaders across British Columbia who took the time to share their experiences with the Neighbourhood Small Grants program. Each of you have made indispensable contributions to this report.

Executive Summary

Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) is a grassroots grantmaking program that provides grants between \$50 and \$500 to community members across British Columbia. NSG was founded in Vancouver in 1999, specifically in the communities of Cedar Cottage, Kiwassa, and Frog Hollow Neighbourhood Houses. The NSG program expanded significantly in the past decade, increasing its reach to communities across the province by more than three times. As of 2020, the NSG program operates province-wide which allows community members across the province to apply for grants and carry out projects.

Each year, Vancouver Foundation conducts an evaluation of the NSG program to summarize the projects, outline and address challenges, and provide recommendations to improve the program and evaluation in the future. In contrast to previous NSG evaluations, the 2020 evaluation was conducted against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had extensive political, economic, and social impacts in British Columbia and beyond. The pandemic led to Vancouver Foundation pivoting its approach to granting, thereby establishing Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (R-NSG), a new granting stream intended to respond to the unique impacts of the pandemic. In particular, R-NSG projects looked to build community strength and resilience, foster community creativity and wellbeing, and tackle and address social isolation. As the first year of the R-NSG program, this evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program?
- What challenges were faced in carrying out the R-NSG program, and how can those challenges be addressed?

Using a mixed methods research approach, this evaluation conducted a demographic analysis of Project Leaders and Grant Committee Members, an analysis of all approved R-NSG projects, an analysis of survey data from Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members, and Program Coordinators, and finally, interviews were conducted with 10 Project Leaders to create project stories that are featured throughout the evaluation. Furthermore, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to centre and bolster these analyses.

Executive Summary

This evaluation found that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many alterations to the NSG program and served as the impetus for the R-NSG granting stream. These changes were mainly applied to the eligibility of certain projects and how the granting process was executed on behalf of Program Coordinators and Grant Committee Members. Some of these changes were well-received and should continue into future granting cycles, such as allowing higher honorariums, which allowed Project Leaders to host more capacity building projects. Other changes, such as switching to digital platforms, increased the efficiency of application assessment and the delivery of projects, but some noted that it limited the accessibility of projects for those that lacked either the technology or digital literacy required.

Using these analyses, a province-wide overview, specific regional breakdowns, and targeted recommendations were created to not only summarize the evaluation results, but to provide Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members, Program Coordinators, and Vancouver Foundation staff with a tool to make future granting years inclusive, diverse, and successful in creative and unique ways.

Small grants.
Beautiful ideas.

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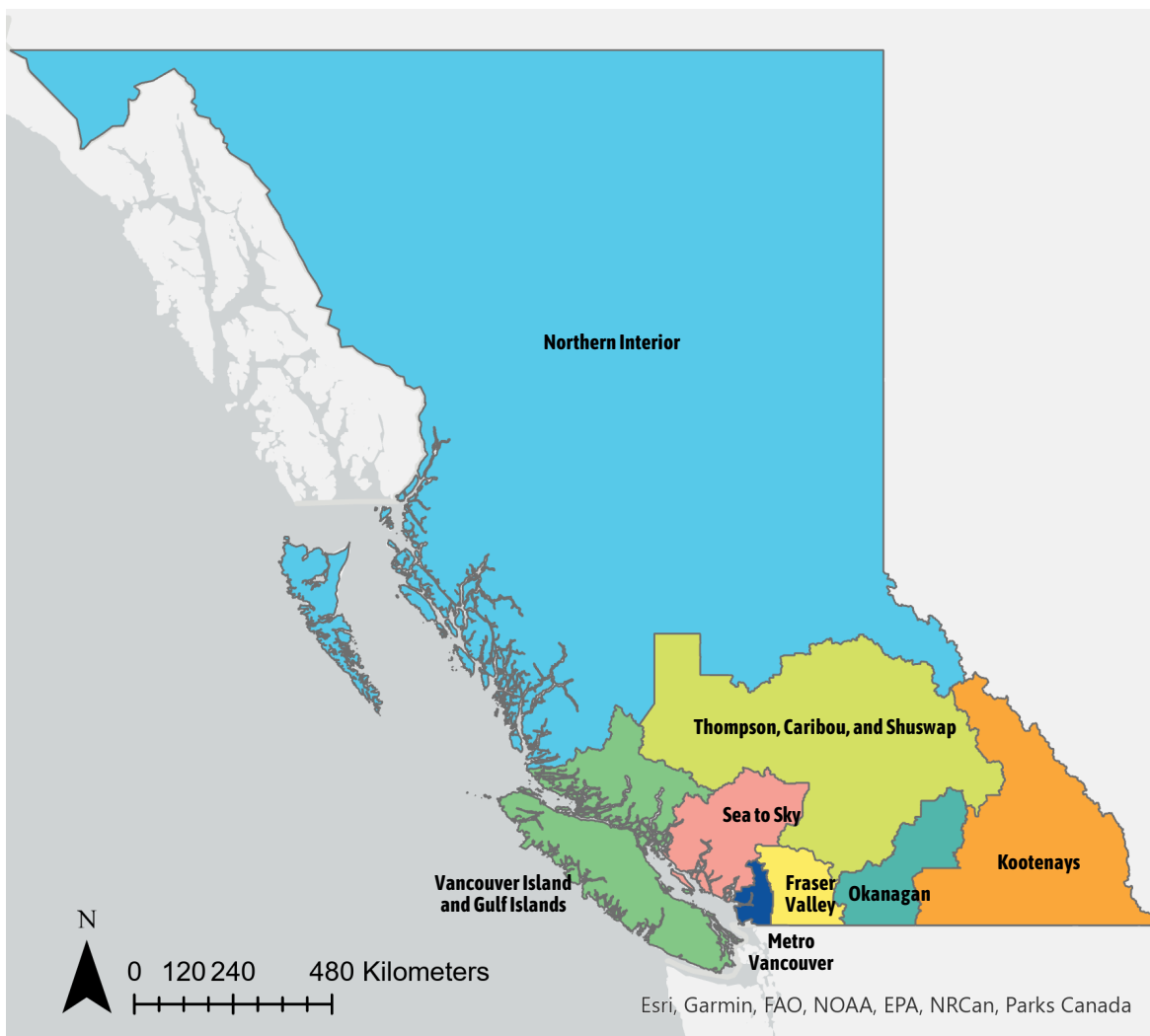
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1 Program Overview

Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) is a grassroots granting program developed in Vancouver in 1999 and funded by many place-based organizations including community foundations across the province that provide grants between \$50 and \$500 to community members looking to improve their neighbourhoods. The NSG program expanded most significantly in the past decade, increasing its reach by more than three times. As of 2020, the NSG program operates province-wide. To do so, NSG partners with community organizations and foundations across British Columbia through eight regions:



NSG Regions

Fraser Valley	Northern Interior	Thompson, Caribou & Shuswap
Kootenays	Okanagan	Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands
Metro Vancouver	Sea to Sky	

Figure 1. A map of the Neighbourhood Small Grants regions across British Columbia

1 Program Overview

1.1 ROLE BREAKDOWN

The Vancouver Foundation works with community partner organizations to establish regional networks across the province, one or more of which takes a leading role. The leads are responsible for overseeing the distribution of funds to the community partners in the region, providing program coordination and technical support, connecting community partners, and facilitating capacity building and regional collaboration. The primary roles within the Neighbourhood Small Grants program are described in more detail below.

Community Partner Organizations

Community Partner Organizations and Foundations are responsible for overseeing the program coordination in their community. Examples of these organizations include community service organizations, community foundations, municipalities, and universities. Each partner organization is responsible for hiring a **Program Coordinator** who oversees the program, recruits Neighbourhood Grants Committee members, and supports applicants. Partnering with communities helps to foster local leadership and self-direction.

The Neighbourhood Grants Committee

Members of the Neighbourhood Grants Committee (NGC) are community members recruited as local, well-connected experts. Alongside the **Program Coordinator**, the Committee reviews applications for coherence with NSG principles and local goals, interests, and priorities. This process ensures that projects are community-driven and provide local solutions. Committee Members are also responsible for promoting the program in their community, mentoring Project Leaders, and providing feedback on NSG to the Program Coordinator, Community Partner Organizations and the Vancouver Foundation.

Project Leaders

Members of each community apply online to NSG for grants to carry out a community project of their choosing. With support from the Program Coordinator and the NGC, they are responsible for imagining, organizing, and budgeting for the project. After the project is complete, Project Leaders are provided with opportunities to share-back their projects' successes and challenges.

The Vancouver Foundation

1 Program Overview

1.1 ROLE BREAKDOWN

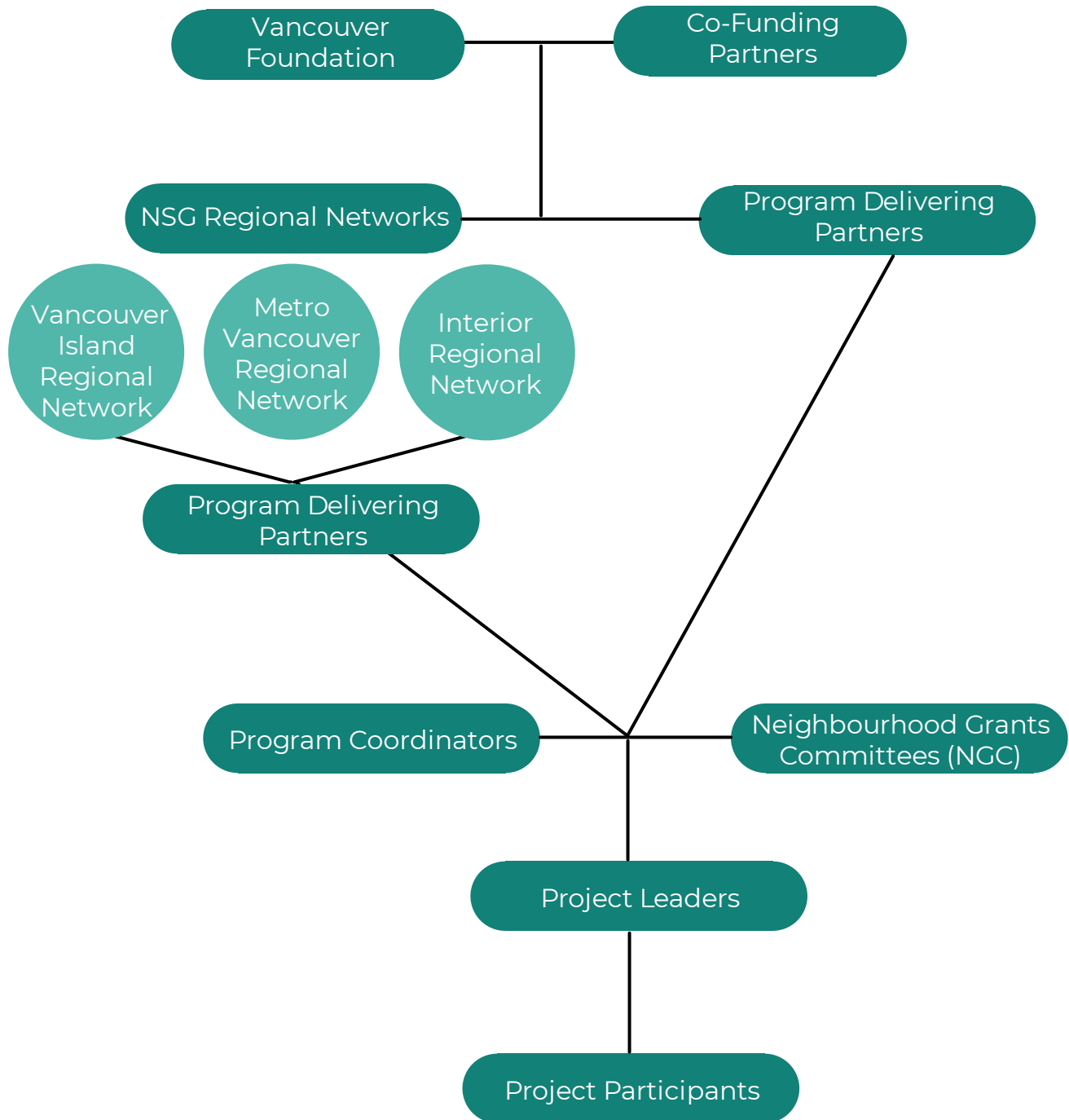


Figure 2. A breakdown of the roles within NSG

1 Program Overview

1.2 GRASSROOTS GRANTMAKING

NSG operates according to grassroots grantmaking, a place-based funding model that supports community development through community-led change. NSG operates according to six principles:

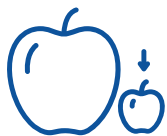


Everyone has gifts

Asset-based Community Development

NSG uses an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. This approach stems from the belief that everyone possesses capacities and abilities that they can contribute to their community, and that each skill and knowledge-set is critical to community development. In this model, those involved with NSG are “community connectors”, meaning that they believe in the strength of their communities and strive to connect people with each other and resources. The core steps of asset-based community development are:

- Mapping existing strengths and assets,
- Defining local values and priorities, and
- Organizing local assets and resources toward a common goal



Small is beautiful

The power of small scale initiatives

NSG believes that small projects have the potential and capacity to have expansive and lasting impacts on one's community. Small projects can also inspire more initiatives and act as pilot projects that can be scaled up.



Local decisions are best

Supporting local leadership

NSG values are about strengthening local leadership by giving residents the opportunity for local-decision making. This includes connecting them with resources, facilitating mentorship, and incorporating feedback.

The Vancouver Foundation

1 Program Overview

1.2 GRASSROOTS GRANTMAKING



Where we live matters

Maintaining a local, place-based approach

NSG projects are rooted in the communities that they serve. This means that the projects are imagined and realized by local community members who use their networks and resources to implement change that is impactful given a community's unique needs and desires.



We learn together

Foster skill-building and knowledge exchange

Those involved with NSG are provided with opportunities to learn from each other and share their own knowledge and skills



Everyone is invited

Create accessibility and inclusion

NSG is accessible and inclusive to anyone in British Columbia regardless of age, ethnicity, income, cultural background, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability.

In order to activate these principles, NSG encourages Grant Committee Members and Project Leaders to leverage community strengths to increase their impact. Project Leaders leverage community strengths by using or enhancing existing community resources and assets, collaborating with community members during the project process, or forming an ongoing activity or tradition within the community, among other things. Grant Committee Members are encouraged to approve projects that meet these expectations. Further, NSG prioritizes projects that seek to create a sense of belonging and social responsibility to one's community. In order for this to occur, it is critical that projects are low-barrier and inclusive. With the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic to British Columbia, NSG's approach to granting was modified to abide by the ever-changing public health restrictions and meet community needs.

1 Program Overview

1.3 RESPONSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL GRANTS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSG program pivoted its approach, creating the Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (R-NSG) program. This new grant stream was created to support small-scale community projects that comply with social and physical distancing guidelines set by federal, provincial, and local governments. The purpose of R-NSG is to support and approve projects that:

- Build community strength and resilience,
- Foster community creativity and wellbeing, and
- Tackle and address social isolation.

While community members are still eligible to apply for up to \$500 in grants, the R-NSG grant stream included a series of modifications to the application, the permissible uses of grant funds, the grant cycles, and the project requirements in order to best accommodate projects that complied with both the most recent social and physical distancing regulations and best served unique community needs.

Applications

- Applicants could either apply for a project on their own or with people in their household. When the restrictions were loosened in the summer of 2020, applicants were permitted to apply with a co-applicant from their community, as had been done prior to the pandemic.

Grants

- Prior to the pandemic, honorariums were capped at \$100 for anyone hosting a skill-sharing project, yet these were raised to \$350 under R-NSG to support those that may have been negatively impacted by the pandemic.
- Prior to the pandemic, applicants were not permitted to include certain tools in their application budget, such as computers or tablets. Given the reliance on technology during the pandemic, applicants were permitted to use up to \$350 of their project budget for purchasing a computer or tablet to aid them in carrying out their virtual projects.

1 Program Overview

1.3 RESPONSIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL GRANTS

Grant Cycle

- NSG held fixed spring and fall grant deadline dates for receiving and processing applications. Instead, R-NSG often had their applications open year-round or until they ran out of funds. To do so, they received and processed applications within a shorter timeline of between two and three weeks, as opposed to the six to eight week time period under NSG.
- Under NSG, applicants were only permitted to apply for one grant per year, but under R-NSG they are allowed to apply for a grant once they have completed their previous project and submitted a short story of the project, and finally so long as the application is open for their community.

Projects

- In line with the most recent social distancing restrictions, indoor projects were not permitted in both the spring and fall of 2020. Over the summer, communities in the Interior and the North were permitted to hold indoor projects with six people or less. Prior to the pandemic, there were no restrictions on indoor projects.
- Prior to the pandemic there was no size limit for outdoor projects, yet R-NSG requires six people or less for face-to-face interactions so long as they adhere to local public health orders, such as social distancing, providing face masks and sanitizers, and keeping contact tracing forms for 6 to 8 weeks following the project.
- One prominent modification is the encouragement and approval of projects held solely or partially online using video conferencing platforms, such as on Zoom, FaceTime, and Skype, and social media platforms, such as Facebook. Prior to the pandemic, virtual projects would have been declined as the intent of the program was to bring people together for face-to-face projects. This meant that grants could now be used to cover the cost of digital platform subscriptions.

2 Methodology

2.1 INTENTION

This report is an analysis of the Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (R-NSG) program in 2020. Using a mixed methods research approach, this evaluation explores key program characteristics and the experiences of Program Coordinators, Grant Committee Members, and Project Leaders.

As 2020 was the first year of the Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (R-NSG) program and the first year operating under a pandemic, this evaluation focused on the following questions:

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program?
- What challenges were faced in carrying out the R-NSG program, and how can those challenges be addressed?

While these questions guided the design of the evaluation tools, the evaluators adapted the tools and approach based on findings obtained throughout the data analysis process. Further, it is intended by the evaluators that the findings of this evaluation are useful to key stakeholders including future Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members, Program Coordinators, regional partners and Vancouver Foundation staff. To this effect, recommendations to refine program delivery are provided at the end of this report. Additionally, supplementary materials including a StoryMap and infographics were developed in response to the findings and recommendations.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to starting the evaluation, the evaluators grounded their work by conducting a literature review. Topics were selected based on an understanding of the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the purpose of the R-NSG program. Topics reviewed include social isolation and loneliness, community resilience, mutual aid, and disaster planning. In response to the contemporary and ongoing effects of the pandemic, and to encompass more diverse perspectives, sources for the literature review were not limited to academic journal articles and included news articles, blog posts, and podcasts, among other sources. This review helped to inform the evaluation approach and final recommendations.

2 Methodology

2.3 EVALUATION TOOLS AND DATA SOURCES

Grants Management System

The Vancouver Foundation maintains an online grants management system where prospective Project Leaders submit applications and Grant Committee Members and Program Coordinators review grant applications, and Vancouver Foundation staff can evaluate various aspects of program delivery. Project applications can be filtered to show projects by grant cycle, region and community, and a projects' approval status. Information from this system was used to conduct the following analyses.

Applicant and Project Leader Demographic Analysis

When applying, applicants are given the option to provide demographic information for the purposes of analysis. Approximately 80 percent of applicants provide their demographic information. While this is a relatively high response rate, it is important to note that it may not be entirely representative of all applicants. A demographic analysis was conducted on all applicants to examine key characteristics about who applies for grants. An additional demographic analysis was conducted on applicants whose projects were awarded, referred to in this report as Project Leaders. The two demographic analyses were compared to determine if the Project Leaders were representative of all applicants.

The communities of UBC and South Okanagan do not use the grants management system for managing project applications so applicants and Project Leaders from these communities are not represented in the demographic analysis.

Project Coding

A list of all approved 2020 R-NSG projects and their descriptions was obtained from the grants management system. The evaluators used this list of projects to conduct a thematic analysis of the types of projects implemented and the intended population that the project would serve. A thematic analysis, along with most qualitative research, is a subjective process. It is dependent upon the evaluator's own interpretations and understandings of the data. To mitigate preconceived notions about the projects, the evaluators used an open coding process, meaning there were no pre-set codes, and the codes were developed and modified as the coding process was conducted. Each project was assigned

2 Methodology

2.3 EVALUATION TOOLS AND DATA SOURCES

up to two codes for project theme and up to four codes for the population served. Once each project received a code for its theme, the evaluators repeated the open coding process to identify sub-themes. Projects from UBC and South Okanagan are included in this analysis as the Program Coordinators for these communities provided the evaluators with a list of projects and project descriptions to analyze. Even with an open coding process, it may be possible that the intended or actual outcome of the project may differ from the evaluator's interpretation.

Surveys

At the conclusion of the 2020 granting cycles, Vancouver Foundation sent out surveys to the following groups: Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members, and Program Coordinators. Surveys contained between thirteen and nineteen questions that differed based on the targeted group. While Vancouver Foundation sends out these surveys every year, the survey questions for 2020 were updated to include questions about COVID-19, specifically if there were challenges related to COVID-19 or how COVID-19 impacted operations. There were a total of 575 responses from Project Leaders, 126 Grant Committee Member responses and 32 Program Coordinator responses.

The surveys featured both quantitative, or close-ended, and qualitative, or open-ended, questions. The evaluators conducted a frequency analysis for all close-ended questions and a thematic analysis for the open-ended questions using a similar open coding process as described above.

The survey for Grant Committee Members included demographic questions, which were analyzed and are presented in Section 3.2 Province-Wide Demographics (p. 21).

Interviews

The evaluators selected one Project Leader from each of the eight regions to interview. The projects were chosen to represent a cross-section of project themes. Given that one of the themes, Supply Handout/Delivery, was a new type of project that was permitted due to COVID-19, Vancouver Foundation staff recommended two additional projects that aligned with this theme. These Project Leaders were also interviewed, for a total of 10 interviews.

2 Methodology

2.3 EVALUATION TOOLS AND DATA SOURCES

The interviews were conducted over Zoom or telephone and recorded with the participants' consent using an online software. A transcript of the interview was created and disseminated to Project Leaders for their approval. Using this information, a project story was created and sent to Project Leaders for their review. Project Leaders were active participants in this process through consistent consultation on all materials. The interviews and project story highlights are used in this report to contextualize and humanize the data.



Image 2. Some of the performers and attendants at the Kimberley Back Porch Concert project

3 Provincial Overview

3.1 THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread to Canada in early 2020, has had a number of direct and indirect impacts on the lives of all Canadians. This evaluation centres itself within the pandemic in order to better understand and represent the data. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in British Columbia are broadly described below along with a timeline of events. Please note that this summary is not exhaustive of all the important dates and impacts.

Economic Impacts

In total, 39,100 jobs were lost in British Columbia from December 2019 to December 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, there was a dramatic decrease in jobs between February and May 2020, which can be directly linked to the restriction measures taken by the provincial government. Furthermore, the unemployment rate grew the most in Canada in British Columbia, going from 4.9% to 10% in less than a year (HelloSafe, 2020).

Social Impacts

The sweeping measures taken to slow transmission and preserve hospital resources, such as closing nonessential services, have had the unfortunate consequences of limiting social interactions. In particular, COVID-19 response measures are likely to disproportionately impact those with fewer resources, poorer health, and those already experiencing discrimination and marginalization. These individuals tend to be racialized, lower-income, and/or of varying abilities. For example, those already struggling with unemployment or food insecurity are more likely to have suffered during the pandemic (Wong et al., 2021).



Figure 3. COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in British Columbia in 2020
BC Centre for Disease Control, 2021

3 Provincial Overview

3.1 THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Health Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic is occurring against a backdrop of inequalities in the social determinants of health. This means that disadvantaged groups generally have higher rates of almost all of the known underlying clinical risk factors that increase the severity and mortality of COVID-19, including diabetes and heart disease. These chronic conditions arise as a result of inequalities in exposure to the social determinants of health, such as working conditions, unemployment, access to essential goods and services, housing, and access to healthcare (Bambra et al., 2020).

Mental health is also an important health consideration amidst the pandemic. It is known that those with an established mental illness are at a greater risk of COVID-19 infection. Further, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in anxiety and depression among those who have not previously been diagnosed resulting from the isolation and anxiety caused by the pandemic (Cullen, Gulati,& Kelly, 2020). Social isolation, in particular, is both a risk factor for mental illness and a higher severity and mortality of COVID-19 (Hwang et al., 2020).



Image 3. Project participants attending an online tai chi class

COVID-19 Timeline



Figure 4. Timeline of Major COVID-19 events in British Columbia in 2020

3 Provincial Overview

3.2 PROVINCE-WIDE DEMOGRAPHICS

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

62%

Between
25 and 54

79%

Female
Identified

5%

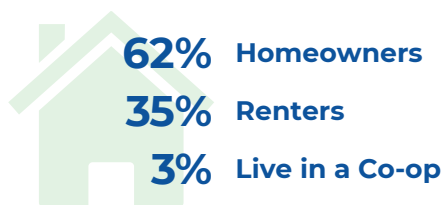
Indigenous
Identified

66%

Canadian
Born

Demographic information for both applicants and Project Leaders was individually and comparatively analyzed in order to identify similarities and discrepancies. This analysis demonstrates that the demographic breakdown of R-NSG applicants and approved R-NSG applicants across British Columbia was nearly identical, with variations of less than one percent on all measures.

This means that there is very little demographic discrepancy between individuals that apply for grants and those that were approved across the province. As a result, only the demographic data for Project Leaders is provided throughout this evaluation. Any notable dissimilarities between the datasets that occurred at the region-level are discussed in Section 4 Regional Highlights (pp. 48-63).



Language Most Comfortable Using

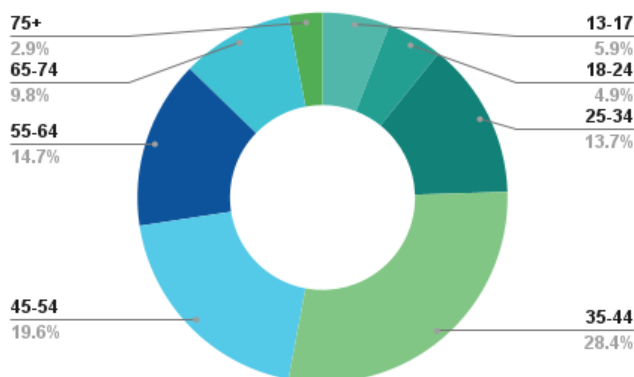
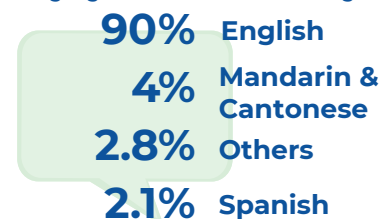


Figure 5. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, British Columbia

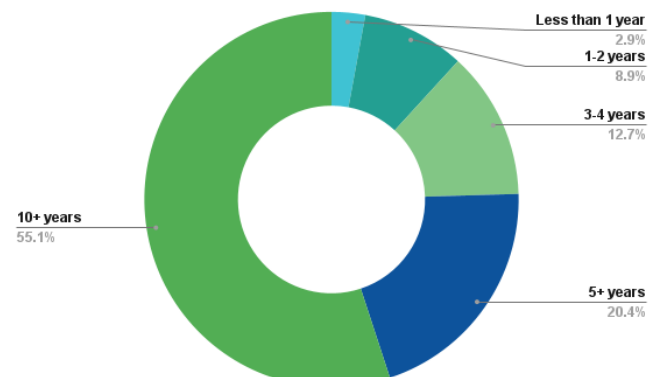


Figure 6. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, British Columbia

3 Provincial Overview

3.2 PROVINCE-WIDE DEMOGRAPHICS

GRANT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

54%

Between
25 and 54

72%

Female
Identified

71%

Canadian
Born

According to Program Coordinators, the province had 548 total Grant Committee Members in 2020, 82 of which were new members. Additionally, demographic information for the Grant Committee Members was analyzed to demonstrate the diversity of the members. In total, the survey collected data from 126 respondents.

Given that Grant Committee Members are responsible for reviewing projects and providing guidance, this data can be utilized to identify potential gaps in representativeness and allow the Program Coordinators to continue recruiting new Grant Committee Members in an informed and thoughtful manner. Unlike the Project Leader demographic data, this data does include the UBC and South Okanagan communities as it is derived from the survey data. Further, the survey did not ask Grant Committee Members whether or not they identified as Indigenous, hence why it is not included in this evaluation.

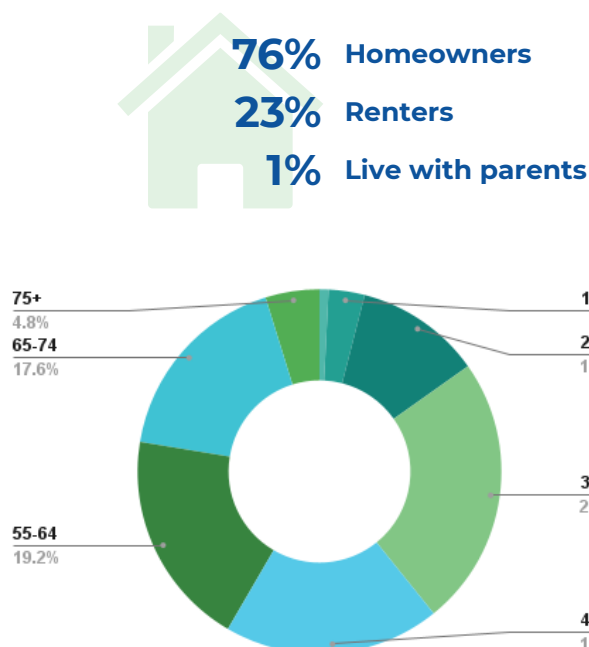


Figure 7. Grant Committee Member age ranges by frequency, British Columbia

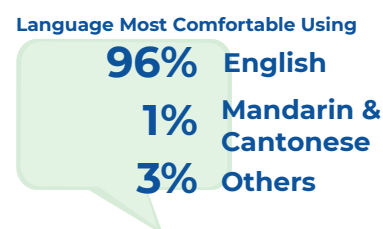


Figure 8. Grant Committee Member years living in current community by frequency, British Columbia

3 Provincial Overview

3.3 PROJECTS

In 2020, 1,408 projects were approved through the R-NSG program with a total of \$633,054.22 allocated, resulting in an average of \$450 per project. This amount does not include the cost for administering the program such as staffing and other operational costs. The map and table below shows the number of projects and funding allocated by region.

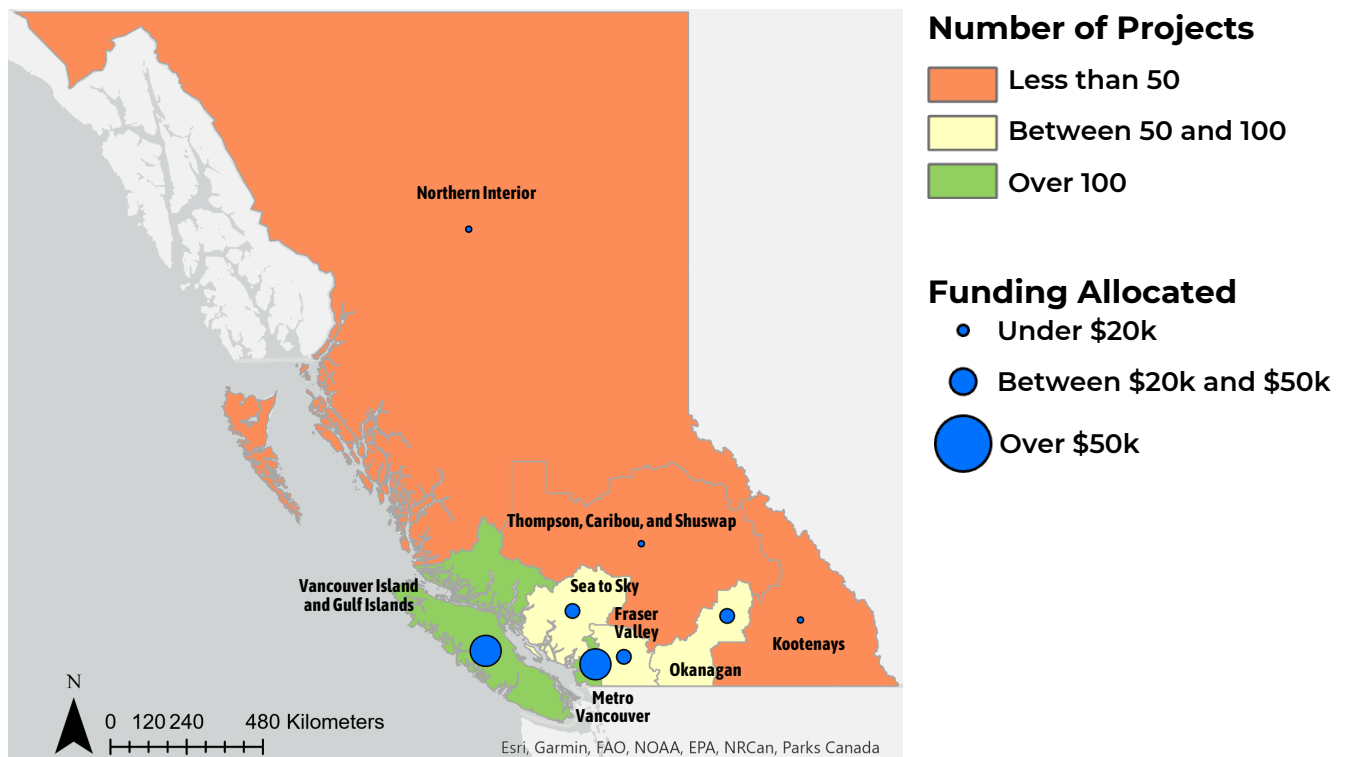


Figure 9. Map of the distribution of projects and funding allocated by region

Region	Number of Projects	Funding Allocated	Percent of Total Projects
Metro Vancouver	936	\$416,573.71	66.48%
Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands	213	\$98,822.56	15.13%
Fraser Valley	54	\$26,966.25	3.84%
The Okanagan	54	\$23,875.00	3.84%
Sea to Sky	52	\$24,237.00	3.69%
Thompson, Caribou & Shuswap	45	\$16,404.00	3.20%
The Kootenays	34	\$16,456.00	2.41%
Northern Interior	20	\$9,720.00	1.42%

Figure 10. Number of projects and funding allocated by region

NSG Program Evaluation 3 Provincial Overview

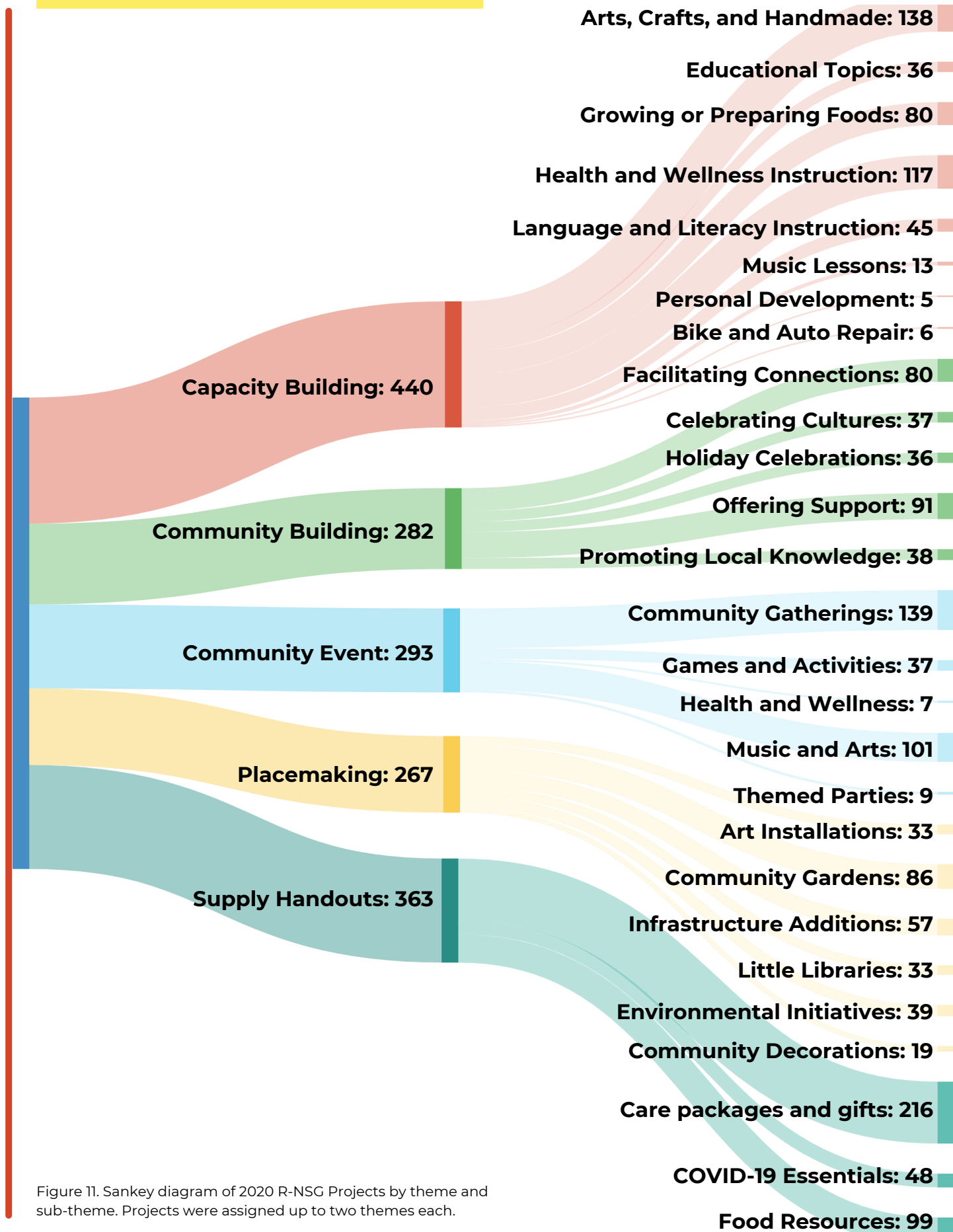


Figure 11. Sankey diagram of 2020 R-NSG Projects by theme and sub-theme. Projects were assigned up to two themes each.

3 Provincial Overview

3.3 PROJECTS

Project Themes

Based on the project description provided in the Project Leader's application, each project was assigned up to two themes and sub-themes. While most projects only had one primary theme, 237 projects had two primary themes. The Sankey diagram shows the flow of 1,645 project themes into corresponding sub-themes.



Capacity Building

Projects that involve individuals teaching a new skill or sharing knowledge with participants

SUBTHEMES

- Assisting participants in the creation of arts, crafts, and handmade goods
- Presenting on an educational topic
- Sharing of knowledge and skills for growing or preparing foods
- Leading a group through a health and wellness activity
- Providing instruction in languages or literacy, including digital literacy
- Offering music lessons
- Facilitating a group on a topic of personal development
- Teaching technical skills on bike and auto repair



Community Building

Projects that seek to provide support and connection among residents, relate and celebrate with one another, or learn about the diversity of cultures, histories, and resources within their community.

SUBTHEMES

- Facilitating connections among community members
- Celebrating cultures through events or sharing of knowledge or skills
- Promoting local knowledge through creating and sharing resources using websites, videos, or notice boards
- Finding creative ways to safely hold holiday celebrations
- Connecting residents and offering support intended for specific population groups like newcomers, youth, parents, seniors, or the LGBTQ2S+ community

3 Provincial Overview

3.3 PROJECTS



Community Events

Projects that have a primary purpose of bringing people together, whether it is online, in-person with COVID-19 precautions in place, or a hybrid of the two options.

SUBTHEMES

- Community gatherings
- Games and activities
- Health and wellness activities
- Music and art performances
- Themed parties



Placemaking

Projects that add to the physical fabric of the community, often giving life and purpose to previously underutilized public spaces.

SUBTHEMES

- Art Installations that are done on a large or small-scale and can be done by a professional artist or through involvement of the community
- Community Decorations that are installed for a holiday or other community celebration
- Community Gardens, specifically for starting, upgrading or maintaining them
- Environmental initiatives, which includes restoration efforts, initiatives that promote pollinators, or beautification projects
- Infrastructure additions that are made to a community space
- Little Libraries, which are primarily used for community members to take and drop off books, but some also offer seeds for planting or food items



Supply Handouts

Projects that purchase, assemble, and deliver item(s) to a specific group of people or community members.

SUBTHEMES

- Care packages and gifts that are curated based on an individual's specific needs or to show appreciation
- COVID-19 essentials like face masks and hand sanitizer
- Food resources including cooked meals or the provision of produce or grocery items

3 Provincial Overview

3.3 PROJECTS



Capacity Building

Capacity building projects were the most prominent project type in 2020, representing over 30 percent of all projects. The prevalence of this project theme is a deviation from years past, most notably in 2019 when block parties made up 29 percent of all projects. With the restrictions for in-person gathering sizes in place, traditional block parties were not possible. Additionally, because of workplace, school, and facility closures, some residents may have been looking for alternatives to their normal activities. Project Leaders were able to fill this need using their own gifts, offering instruction in fitness activities, language and literacy classes, and other educational programming. Further, 28 percent of capacity building projects were designed for a particular population indicating a focus on connecting and sharing skills with groups most affected by closures. For example, in responding to school closures, some Project Leaders facilitated activities that helped youth remain connected with their friends, provided them with tutoring or additional school support, or led them in an art project.



Supply Handouts

One project type that emerged was supply handouts, such as care packages and food supplies. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, projects of this sort were not common and often not approved as the intent of NSG was to bring community members together for face-to-face interaction. In light of the pandemic, community members felt the need to aid their communities in ways they had not in the past. Further, these projects eased feelings of social isolation



Image 4. 100 comfort kits delivered to neighbours

that many vulnerable groups were experiencing. NSG proposed that dry goods, healthy snacks, toiletries, and grocery cards could be included in packages. These projects were the second most common type of project implemented in 2020.

Cheryl Anne Park COVID



Shishalh Traditional Territory | Roberts Creek



Supply Handouts | Sea to Sky

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Karen was motivated to do something nice for those in her community. She knew that people were feeling detached from each other and their community and many of them were also suffering the financial consequences of the pandemic. To help people in a time of need, Karen organized a nomination system whereby community members nominated each other to receive gifts and funds in order to keep the project low-barrier. Every community member that was nominated received something.

Karen believes that the project encouraged people to think about who lives in their community, especially those that may need help. For Karen this project demonstrated the deep and caring connection community members have with each other. Further, she believes that this project helped to reduce the feelings of social isolation that were caused or aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic by collapsing the social barriers that separate people. Karen plans to apply for grants in the future to continue building connections in her rural community.



Image 5. A person holding gift bags
Source: Karolina Grabowska, Pexels

We thought that we could help some of the people who are losing their income and that we could provide them with a little bit of joy in this time of great darkness.



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Community Events

While community events were not as common in 2020, they were still a component in one-fifth of all projects. Over one-third of community events featured music or arts. These projects offered participants the opportunity to experience music or a performance, either performed outdoors with COVID-19 safety measures in place or recorded and shared digitally. The increased amount of funding that could be used as an honorarium for the performers made these events possible. Unlike previous years, however, the nature of community events hosted by Project Leaders in 2020 were more flexible. Community events were not limited to one-time events, and many occurred over multiple sessions. Project leaders also offered events that occurred asynchronously, meaning individuals or households could participate on their own time. One such project is a scavenger hunt on Bowen Island. The Project Leader maintains a website where participants can find their first clue that leads them to various parts of Bowen Island in search of the next clue.



Community Building

Still, many community events offered opportunities for residents to connect. In reviewing the 237 projects that were assigned two project themes, the most



common pairing, appearing across 23 percent of these projects, were community events and community building. These two project themes complement one another as they have a similar goal of facilitating community connection. Community building projects, however, were not limited to community events. These projects sought ways to celebrate the diversity of community members and facilitate intercultural and intergenerational connections between residents.

Image 6. A garden volunteer helps to get Mary Anne Cooper's community garden in Port Moody ready for harvest

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Placemaking

The least common type of project identified were placemaking projects. These types of projects tend to be technical in nature. Projects that add or make improvements to infrastructure like installing signage, making repairs, painting murals, or building little libraries each require a certain set of skills. Projects that focus on environmental restoration efforts or community garden sites require Project Leaders to rely on specific knowledge sets. Through some of these projects, Project Leaders attempted to use the projects as an opportunity to share their knowledge with the community, like adding signage that highlights the importance of pollinators, or have community members learn a skill while participating in the placemaking project, like teaching participants how to build bat boxes.

Project Challenges

Project Leaders were asked if they faced any challenges in planning or implementing their projects, of which two-thirds indicated they did face challenges. Project Leaders were also asked to note if they faced challenges specific to COVID-19 or challenges in making their projects inclusive or accessible. The majority (56%) of Project Leaders dealt with challenges related to COVID-19 while just over one-third indicated challenges in making their projects inclusive or accessible.

COVID-19 Related Challenges

- **Ensuring Safety**

To ensure the safety of participants, Project Leaders often had to take additional measures including proper sanitation of supplies and, with events that involved interaction, that physical distancing was maintained.

Additionally, Project Leaders had to ensure their event complied with both the R-NSG program guidelines as well as any provincial health guidelines. These guidelines posed challenges for Project Leaders, particularly when the guidelines changed in between the time the Project Leader submitted the application and was awarded the funding. Half of all challenges faced by Project Leaders were due to ensuring participant safety.

Unveiling Event for the Sign of the Squamish Name of Bowen Island



Squamish Nation | Bowen Island



Placemaking | Community Event | Sea to Sky

Several years ago, after reading the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, long-time Nex̱w̱lélex̱wm (the island colonially named Bowen Island) resident, full-time artist and community activist Pauline was committed to finding ways to “making reconciliation a reality, and more than just a lot of nice words.” With the support of the Bowen Island Arts Council and Bowen Island Library, Pauline began a reconciliation initiative called Knowing Our Place. Knowing Our Place is a series of events, workshops, and a bookclub designed to support learning about the Indigenous Peoples and deepen relationships with the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), whose unceded and traditional territory includes Nex̱w̱lélex̱wm. An important gesture of reconciliation was to have a sign with the original Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Sníchim (Squamish language) name for the island — Nex̱w̱lélex̱wm — to be placed above the “Bowen Island Welcomes You” sign greeting passengers as they disembark from the ferry. After receiving permission and blessing from the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw, the sign was carved and an unveiling ceremony planned for June 21, 2020, National Indigenous Peoples Day. While only a limited number of people could attend the ceremony in-person due to COVID-19, many more were reached through a live stream and a video produced commemorating the event. In the weeks following the ceremony, Pauline recalls community members approaching her to tell her they’ve been practicing the pronunciation of “Nex̱w̱lélex̱wm” and more and more Pauline has seen organizations and community groups referencing Nex̱w̱lélex̱wm in their materials. Though these

acts are small, they represent movement in the ongoing process of reconciliation. As Dennis Joseph, a Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw Elder and Witness to the ceremony concluded about the sign, “A mighty bridge is being built and we have a foundation to work from.”



Image 7. Tina Nielsen and Marysia McGilvray unveil the Nex̱w̱lélex̱wm sign at the blessing ceremony last Sunday. Coral Louie, who made the sign watches from the right while Alroy “Bucky” Baker K’etximtn, speaker for the Squamish Nation, is on the left. / Len Gilday

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- **Limited Interactions**

Interactions between Project Leaders and participants were often limited. Project Leaders indicated that these limitations, including only being able to meet virtually or not being able to connect directly with participants, hindered the overall impact of their project.

- **Limited Participation**

To comply with limits on gathering sizes, the number of community members that could participate in the project had to be limited. Project Leaders felt their project could have been enhanced if more people could have participated.

- **Securing Supplies**

Due to global supply chain shortages and at times, restrictions on the quantity of items that one could purchase, some Project Leaders faced challenges in securing the supplies necessary to carry out their project.

23 percent of Project Leaders who faced challenges in making their projects inclusive and accessible stated that COVID-19 regulations were the primary cause, largely noting the limitations on the number of community members that could participate. Looking forward, if COVID-19 restrictions are still in place, Project Leaders asked for guidance, resources, and innovative ideas for holding projects that comply with the recommended health guidelines.

Other Challenges

Other commonly cited challenges included technological issues, marketing or promoting the project, finding participants, or issues with the logistics of carrying out the project.

15 percent of all project challenges were related to issues with technology. These challenges included being able to access it, particularly if the project took place in a rural community, or the Project Leaders or participants being unfamiliar with new digital platforms. While the technology challenges did not arise as a direct result of COVID-19, the high prevalence of projects that relied on the use of technology or online platforms was due to the pandemic. Further, when Project Leaders were asked what challenges they faced in making the project accessible

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or inclusive, the most cited answer (31%) related to ensuring participants could access and use technology.

Nine percent of responses were related to challenges of marketing or promoting the projects. Previously, Project Leaders were able to spread the word about their projects via word of mouth at in-person events or gatherings. Due to COVID-19, Project Leaders had to find new ways to promote their projects. While some relied on social media, other Project Leaders noted that not all individuals use social media and it was challenging to reach out beyond their social circles. As a result, Project Leaders requested additional promotional and outreach support from the NSG program. As one Project Leader said in an interview:

“Any partnerships that the Vancouver Foundation can do with the regional foundations, or regional districts...to be able to help bolster the recruitment...like on the Neighbourhood Small Grants site, if there's a list of all the things that people can sign up for.

Logistically, Project Leaders faced barriers in communicating and coordinating with participants or venues. In some instances, projects may require approvals, such as those taking place in public spaces or organizational spaces. Securing these approvals were identified as a challenge by Project Leaders.

To a lesser extent, Project Leaders indicated challenges with having enough time or funding to carry out the projects, ensuring the project met community needs, or issues posed by bad weather.

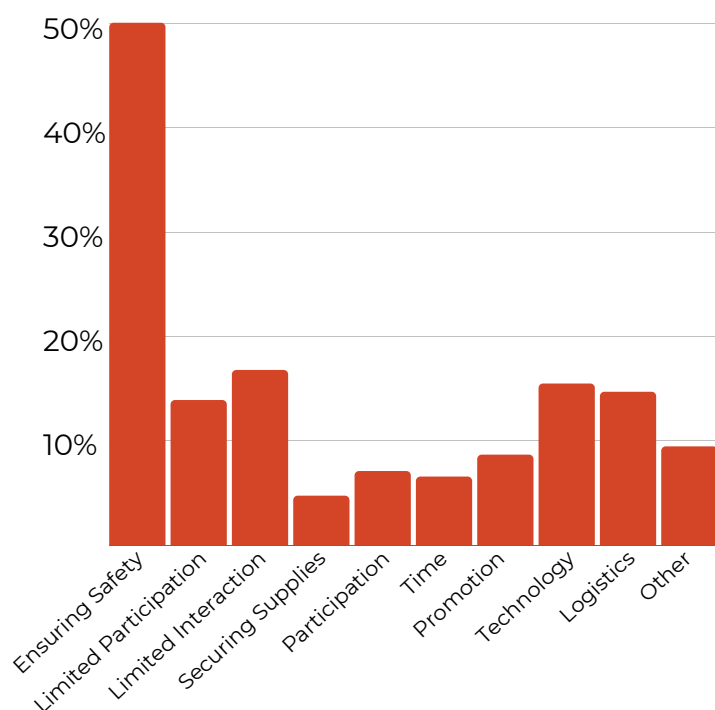


Figure 12. Challenges reported by Project Leaders

Phone Photography and Social Media Online Class



Okanagan Traditional Territory | Oyama



Capacity Building | The Okanagan

After seeing the Neighbourhood Small Grants program advertised, Alison wondered what she could do to connect with her community and share a skill. Alison teaches photography at a local college, yet was unable to continue doing so in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alison saw photography as a way to relax and connect with one's surroundings, and therefore decided to apply for a grant to teach photography to fellow community members. Like many other Project Leaders, Alison found it difficult to recruit participants and ensure that participants possessed the digital literacy required to engage with this project, despite having welcomed anyone in her community to participate.

Alison successfully recruited 9 participants from her community. Due to the pandemic, Alison held the photography sessions online and also created a Facebook group for participants to share back their photos. This worked well given the circumstances, but Alison felt as though participants were not as invested. Overall, Alison feels that the project created a social connection between participants. In the future, Alison hopes a hybrid approach will garner more participants and a deeper investment in the work. In particular, she hopes to host a photography walking group.



Image 8. A graphic Alison created for her class

I think especially in rural communities, which Oyama definitely is, I think it can be harder and harder to connect with people, especially as lots of us are working at home and it would be really great to have more opportunities to do that.

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3.3 PROJECTS

Project Impacts

Creative Ways to Connect

Project Leaders had creative ideas for bringing their community together even with the COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings in place. The many ways in which Project Leaders found ways to connect can be seen in the wide variety of places where projects took place. As shown in Figure 12, over two-fifths of projects (42%) made use of an online platform. Using online platforms, Project Leaders could teach a skill, bring community members together, or lead an activity. The prevalent use of online platforms is both an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the altered guidelines of the R-NSG program that permitted virtual gatherings and the use of funds for online platform subscriptions. As previously discussed, residents in some areas face challenges in accessing or using online platforms. Three Project Leaders abated this barrier by connecting with participants from afar by broadcasting on the radio.

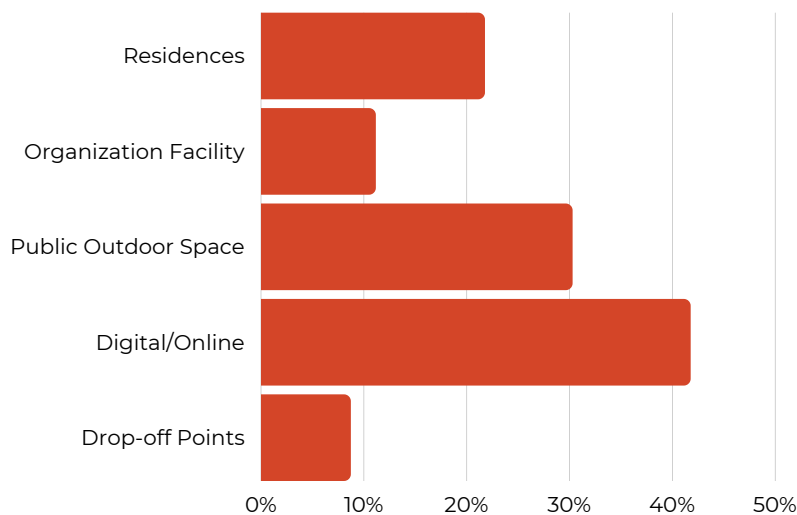


Figure 13. Project locations reported by Project Leaders
Note: As some projects took part in multiple phases, up to two locations were coded for each response

The next most prominent place to hold a project was at a public outdoor space, such as on the street, at a public park, or at another green space. Project Leaders made use of these large public spaces to facilitate small groups of people to meet while maintaining their physical distance. Just over one-fifth of projects (21%) in part took place at a private residence. This included at an individual's home, in a private yard, or in the driveway.

One Project Leader hosted a driveway dinner party where neighbours sat at the end of their respective driveways, ate dinner, and socialized with one another. Organization facilities, including retirement facilities, healthcare facilities, schools, nonprofit organizations, community centres, or studio spaces, were used in 11 percent of projects, typically as a place where supply handouts occurred.

Kimberley Back Porch Music Series



Ktunaxa Traditional Territory | Kimberley



Community Event | The Okanagan

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Andra felt a deep sense of loss with the cancellation of live music events in her community. Given her extensive experience in producing live performances, Andra wanted to produce a musical event of her own.

With the help of other community members, Andra successfully hosted three concerts featuring local musicians throughout the summer on a back porch. While there were some technical difficulties to resolve, such as how to livestream the event, the concerts were a success. Friends and families of the musicians were able to attend in person while between 25 and 73 community members tuned in to the Facebook livestream.

While anyone was welcome to tune in, Andra felt that those vulnerable to COVID-19, such as seniors, would benefit most from the project. From feedback she received, Andra felt as though the project created and strengthened a sense of community.



Image 9. Some of the performers at one of the summer concerts

I thought about the people at home, I thought about the people who were vulnerable to and susceptible to COVID and trying to give them some delight.



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Project Leaders would assemble care packages, gifts, or other items and deliver to these organizations. Organization facilities were also used for community events, such as an outdoor musical performance at a retirement facility. Drop-off points were used for 9 percent of all projects. Drop-off points were exclusively for supply handout projects, as they indicate that the Project Leader visited various places throughout the community to deliver items.

Overall, Project Leaders took great care and showed considerable ingenuity in ensuring their projects offered safe ways for community members to connect. When asked about their most memorable moment from leading the project, a quarter of Project Leaders indicated it was the social connection that the project helped facilitate.

Meeting Community Needs

While only four percent of Project Leaders faced challenges with financing their projects, 32 percent stated they could be better supported with additional funding. These additional funds, Project Leaders stated, could increase the reach and impact of their projects. Additional funding could also be used to better meet the needs of the community, which was believed to be, in part, exacerbated by COVID-19. As one Project Leader said, “the amount of families needing help this year was more than likely due to COVID.” Nearly 30 percent of Project Leaders indicated that they relied on loans or donations from the community outside of NSG to help carry out their project. Even with additional supports, several Project Leaders noted the need in the community outpaced the amount of funding available. One Project Leader, who used the grant funding to provide meals to students at school, said the following:

“There has been a greater need for food for our students. We have definitely seen the impact that COVID-19 has had on many of our students and families and community. We are always seeking ways to try and fund our program as we have depleted our funding so quickly and the need for breakfast and lunch for our students has been greater than the funding we receive and advocate for.”

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This challenge is indicative of a larger societal issue: when community needs exceed the capacity of traditional charity models (Whitfield et al., 2020). One solution that has gained recognition because of the COVID-19 pandemic is mutual aid.



Image 10. Food Share Stand added by community garden to share excess harvest

Mutual aid, akin to the “caremongering” that has been popularized in Canada, is a grassroots, bottom-up approach to meeting people’s survival needs through the building of community networks of support (Su, 2020; Van Ness, 2021). Despite its recent popularity, mutual aid is not a new practice. Marginalized communities have long been relying on mutual aid. Mutual aid practices have been documented in Black communities as far back as the 1800s (Mochama, 2020). Unlike with charity where the nature of the relationship between the donor and recipient are transactional, mutual aid thrives on a symbolic give and take; you can ask for and take the support you need, but you also have support to give, whether now or farther down the line.

In R-NSG projects, threads of mutual aid appear in projects that offer supply handouts or opportunities for community support, particularly for vulnerable communities. The following project highlight from Fernie exemplifies a story of mutual aid. Beyond providing direct assistance to individuals in meeting their daily needs, the project is building new social relations and through the continued advocacy, programming, and outreach of the Fernie Pride Society, finding ways to sustain those social networks.

LGBTQ2+ Community Support

 Ktunaxa Traditional Territory | Fernie

  Supply Handouts | Community Building | Kootenays

In addition to the health impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in lasting social and economic implications. When the pandemic began, Courtney noticed these impacts being felt more acutely by the LGBTQ2+ community in and around Fernie. To provide support for LGBTQ2+ community members who lost their jobs, experienced a loss of wages, or otherwise needed additional support, Courtney collaborated with the Fernie Pride Society to create a COVID-19 LGBTQ2+ Assistance Fund. With funding from the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, the fund was able to provide 16 individuals with grocery cards and prescription assistance. Working with local producers and growers, 25 food boxes were also distributed.

To facilitate ongoing social support and connection at a time when COVID-19 restrictions made it challenging, the funding also supported a virtual music night, a virtual youth night, and a socially-distanced, outdoor picnic. Both the assistance fund and community events have strengthened community connections and formed strong networks of support.

FERNIE PRIDE COVID-19 COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Are you a resident of the Elk Valley, LGBTQ2+, and find yourself in need of financial assistance? We have a limited amount of funding available for food, medical and prescription expenses. Email info@fernierpride.ca to find out more.



This project was made possible with support from the

vancouver
foundation

My only piece of advice...submit the application because there's very few restrictions, if any, on what the project can be...It's just really great that you're allowed to dream a bit bigger and not be confined with a lot of rules and restrictions.



Image 11. Advertisement created for the COVID-19 Community Assistance Fund

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In addition to sustaining social networks, an embedded component of mutual aid is its links to larger systemic change. Although the role of R-NSG projects in leading to systemic change is difficult to measure, Project Leaders are asked about the project's impact in creating a new community resource. A community resource could include a garden, bench, book exchange box, or relationship with other community members. Over half (54%) of Project Leaders said that a new community resource was created. Further, 46 percent of Project Leaders indicated that the resource was being maintained.

Aside from the creation of new relationships, the creation of new community resources would primarily be a placemaking project, those projects that change the physical fabric of the community in some way. One example of such projects are little libraries. While these outdoor boxes typically hold books for community members to take, Project Leaders also indicated using them to offer other items including non-perishable foods, personal hygiene items, first aid supplies, seeds, and other resources. Like with a little library book box, other community members can contribute items of their own to keep the box full. In this way, a grant from R-NSG can act as a “starter grant” that funds a project that can be sustained without additional funding.



Image 12. Volunteers unloading and sorting a grocery delivery, This order weighed in at 900 pounds.

The grant helped us reach the critical number of participants we required to make the program affordable, so today it is sustainable and very popular.

- Judith, Project Leader
(story highlight on following page)



Surge Narrows Grocery Delivery Program



We Wai Kai Nation | Surge Narrows



Supply Handouts | Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands

Getting supplies to the rural island communities of the Discovery Islands has never been a simple task. As North Rendezvous Island resident Judith explains, it is always a day-long affair that includes travel by private boat, car and ferry. On top of several hours travel time, there are also safety concerns including storms that result in rough waters and downed trees, and injury from the physical labour required to haul heavy loads from road to boat over rough terrain. COVID-19 brought a new layer of concern to town trips, particularly for the Islands' older residents. In an attempt to address these concerns, Judith organized a weekly grocery delivery service.

At the beginning, each household would submit their separate grocery list and it would be combined into one bulk order. When the grocery boat arrived, all the boxes would be emptied out onto long tables and each customer's order would be 'shopped' again by volunteers and shares of the grocery bill and shipping costs calculated. The tasks involved were very time-consuming and would likely have caused volunteer burnout and been unsustainable. When the grocery stores made online orders easier, each household began submitting and paying for their orders directly, so now the orders arrive pre-sorted. A cab company moves all orders in one load to the water taxi which carries it to the public dock at Surge Narrows on Read Island. There, residents collect their orders. At first, some residents were hesitant about changing their shopping routines and spending extra money on shipping costs. Funding from the Neighbourhood Small Grants program covered these costs for several months, which allowed residents to experience the overall value of the service and to appreciate fewer trips to town.

Even though funding from the grant ended, the grocery delivery program continues to operate on a weekly or biweekly basis, depending on the season and demand. Twelve households rely on the delivery service regularly, six households use the service occasionally and more customers are trying it out as word spreads. Beyond keeping residents safe, the service also lowers carbon emissions by decreasing the number of trips to town; increases access to fresh food; helps older residents to continue aging in place; and provides outdoor socialising on grocery day for isolated homesteaders.

Growing Together Garden Project

 Coast Salish Territory | Port Moody

  **Placemaking | Community Building | Fraser Valley**

Since moving to Port Moody over 30 years ago, Mary Anne Cooper has made quite the impact. Mary Anne served on the Port Moody Heritage Commission for seven years and was instrumental in securing heritage designation for the IOCO Townsite. Her advocacy work has made her the recipient of several awards including the BC Community Achievement Award and the Freedom of the City Award, Port Moody's highest honour. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the 105-year-old wanted to continue to give back. Mary Anne shared her vision of creating a community garden on her own property where the fresh produce could be distributed to neighbours and anyone in need with her friends Tracy, Ruth and Jeff who had been helping to maintain Mary Anne's yard.

Throughout the growing season, the garden team worked bit by bit to make Mary Anne's vision come to life. They learned and made improvements as they went, like how to water more efficiently or what to do about the white moths eating all the cabbage. As the garden bloomed and word began to spread, other community members began pitching in with their own areas of expertise. From neighbours sharing their experiences growing certain produce to an artist painting rain barrels, Mary Anne's garden soon became a community project. In the end, the garden team grew over 480 different types of plants and distributed the produce to neighbours and the larger community. A year later, thanks to ongoing community support, Mary Anne's garden is still flourishing.



Image 13. Mary Anne Cooper's community garden

The community aspect was really important, and growing food was as important.



3 Provincial Overview

3.4 PROGRAM OPERATIONS

In addition to redefining the eligibility of projects and permissible funding, COVID-19 also impacted the operations of the R-NSG program. Affecting Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members, and Program Coordinators, the grant intake and review processes changed in the following ways:

- Grants were awarded on an ongoing basis, with applications being processed weekly or monthly
- Neighbourhood Grants Committees began meeting virtually and reviewed grants online
- Grant payments became available via an electronic transfer payment option

Surveys for each of the Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members, and Program Coordinators requested the respondent rank the usefulness of a series of various changes or other program supports provided. Based on participants who did use or participate in the support offered, the percentage of respondents who identified the support as “useful” is represented in the tables for each of the following three sections.

Project Leaders

Support	Usefulness
Electronic transfer of funds	92%
Online grant application form	90%
Support and mentorship from NGC members	85%
Grant writing support	84%
Wrap up celebration event	77%
NSG Website	73%
Virtual Learning Day organized by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses	70%
Ability to post events and project stories on NSG website	65%
Multi-lingual grant application forms	50%
Paper-based grant application form	45%

Project Leaders found the electronic transfer of funds and the online grant application to be the most useful. Each of these options also had a high utility rate among Project Leaders with 89 percent using the online grant application system and 60 percent utilizing EFT for their grant payment. These offerings help to make the granting process simple and easy, as some of the Project Leaders in the interviews described.

Figure 14. Project locations reported by Project Leaders

Amblewood Heights: Beautification of Community Complex



Secwépemc Traditional Territory | William's Lake



Placemaking | Northern Interior

Beverly and Sherry are residents of a small 11-unit community for those aged 40 and older in William's Lake. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, residents that had spent time abroad returned home and the community went into isolation. As time passed, many members of the community expressed an interest in spending time together in a safe environment.

Beverly and Sherry proposed to their fellow strata members that they redevelop a garden in Sherry's backyard with the help of an R-NSG grant. Not only would the grant help to offset their limited budget, but it would also bring the community together.

Residents were involved in maintaining the garden in various ways, whether that meant hands-on gardening or providing input during strata meetings. Although the project was only intended for the residents, they received positive comments from others in their neighbourhood. The project was so successful that they applied again in 2021 to continue maintaining the garden.



Image 14. Residents working on the garden together

It's amazing what a little bit of funding does to energize a group



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3.4 PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Despite rating the support and mentorship received from Grant Committee Members and Program Coordinators highly, Project Leaders indicated the need for additional support in this area. Over half (52%) of the ideas from Project Leaders on additional supports needed were around improving Project Leader support. Specifically, Project Leaders were looking for support in promoting their projects, check-ins or increased communications from the Program Coordinator, and training or other skill-building opportunities to become more effective Project Leaders.

40 percent of Project Leaders received grant writing support, 84 percent of which found it useful. Additional supports Project Leaders identified for the application process were assistance with designing their projects, making the grant application more accessible, and ensuring electronic fund transfers were available in every community. Although the majority of Project Leaders did not use paper-based applications or multilingual applications (79%), those that did ranked these resources poorly in terms of usefulness. Paper-based applications specifically received the highest number of 'not useful' ratings from Project Leaders. While having these options for different forms can increase accessibility, Project Leaders found the paper-based forms difficult to access.

Grant Committee Members

Support	Usefulness
Support/Mentorship from Program Coordinator	89%
Access to grant applications online	88%
Ability to make comments and ask questions about applications online	86%
NGC orientation	86%
Access to the NGC orientation manual	83%
NSG Website	70%
Virtual Learning Day organized by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses	69%
NSG promotional materials	65%
NSG e-newsletter	63%

Grant Committee Members most appreciated the support and mentorship they received from the Program Coordinator. When asked what went well in their committee, a quarter of Grant Committee Members highlighted the leadership for keeping the committee informed on any changes in processes, being supportive, and remaining organized.

Figure 15. Project locations reported by Project Leaders

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3.4 PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Similar to Project Leaders, Grant Committee Members enjoyed being able to access grant applications online, including the ability to make comments or add questions to the grant application. Committee Members liked this process as it allowed them to read through grant applications ahead of time and be prepared to discuss.

While reviewing the grants online was well-supported, virtual meetings raised mixed feelings for the Committee Members. 16 percent of Committee Members noted meeting virtually as something that worked well for their committee. Some members noted that their committee adapted easily to being online and it brought with it many benefits, namely the flexibility around meeting dates and times. Still, some Grant Committee Members preferred in-person meetings as 15 percent indicated online engagement as a challenge.

While the NGC Orientation and having access to the orientation manual were helpful, Grant Committee Members still faced challenges in understanding and applying the grant criteria. Most of the challenges that came up in committees were discrepancies between Committee Members on which projects met the criteria. Grant Committee Members requested clearer guidelines on the grant eligibility requirements be available to both Committee Members and project applicants.

Program Coordinators

Program Coordinators, like Project Leaders, also found the online grant application system useful in simplifying the granting process. Grant Committee Members could review and comment on applications within the system. If there were straightforward applications that all members agreed on, these could be processed more quickly. One-third of Program Coordinators indicated they will continue to rely on the online system moving forward.

Overall, only two-fifths of Program Coordinators used e-transfers to process grant payments. Of those who use e-transfers, 87 percent found it useful. Some Project Leaders noted that it took some time and effort to connect with the Project Leader to secure their appropriate information needed for direct deposit.

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3.4 PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Support	Usefulness
Grant application system	94%
Grant payment through electronic fund transfer	87%
Orientation and support to new coordinators	71%
NSG Website	69%
Updated R-NSG promotional resources	69%
Provincial partner consultations on how to pivot the program for COVID-19 and follow up check in and best practice sharing meetings	68%
Basecamp	62%
Program evaluation report	57%
Virtual Learning Day organized by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses	55%
Project leaders' ability to post events and project stories on NSG website	42%
Youth outreach workshop	28%
Vancouver Coastal Health Q&A session	13%

Another Project Leader was concerned e-transfers would not be accessible to those who do not use online banking, but most Program Coordinators that offered e-transfers still issued paper cheques. Program Coordinators that used cheques faced some challenges as well. The Coordinator had to decide on how the cheques would be distributed, either by the Project Leader picking up the cheque or mailing it. Most opted to mail the cheques, but those that required the cheques to be picked up had to coordinate schedules with the Project Leader. Additionally, processing and delivering cheques sometimes took a long time, delaying the start of projects.

Figure 16. Project locations reported by Project Leaders

Waterways Lane Mural

📍 Skwxwú7mesh, Səlílwəta?, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm Traditional Territories | Vancouver

☀️ Placemaking | Metro Vancouver

If you go down a laneway in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, you may come across a colourful mural. Cynthia has been working on this mural for a couple of years with her neighbours, and in May of 2020 she received funding to continue adding to it. Cynthia was driven by a desire to organize a project that would serve as a hub for her community that reflected the history of the neighbourhood. Given the neighbourhood's proximity to Brewery Creek, they brought in a Chinese Canadian artist to paint the waterways and other flora and fauna in order to represent the environmental history of the area.

In the second year, they brought an Indigenous artist in to represent the Indigenous history of the area. Cynthia had all members of her neighbourhood in mind in this project, and found that people wanted to participate as they are interested in being a part of their neighbourhood. Cynthia had troubles with community outreach in the first year, especially with community members she did not know. Once connections had been made, Cynthia found it easier in the second year to get the word out. The addition of the mural to the laneway has transformed it into a welcoming space for children to play and neighbours to connect.



Image 15. Neighbours working on painting the mural together

Think about some ideas about the demographic of our neighbourhood, who are the most vulnerable in our neighbourhood, and what are some of the key issues that they want to move forward in terms of social inclusion or diversity



Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver is the oldest region in the NSG program having been conceived in 1999 in the communities of Cedar Cottage, Kiwassa, and Frog Hollow Neighbourhood Houses.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

61%
Between
25 and 54

The demographics of all applicants and Project Leaders in the Metro Vancouver Region were analyzed individually and comparatively to identify similarities and differences.

78%
Female
Identified

Unlike other regions in the province, it was found that there were no significant differences between those that applied for R-NSG grants and those that were approved.

3%
Indigenous
Identified

This finding indicates that the demographic information for Project Leaders was representative of all those who applied for R-NSG grants in the Metro Vancouver region.

57%
Canadian
Born

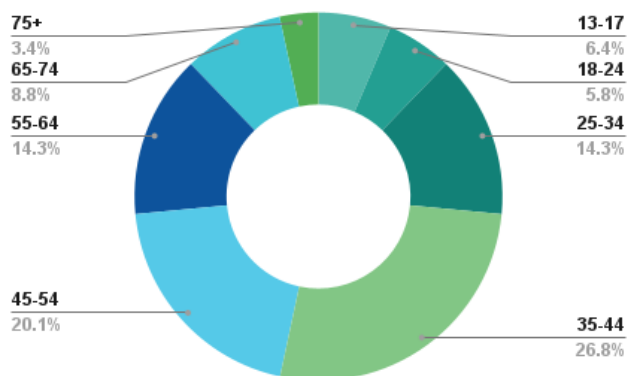


Figure 17. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, Metro Vancouver

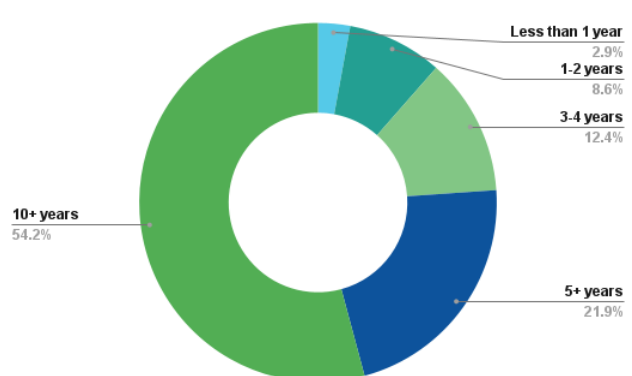


Figure 18. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, Metro Vancouver

Stó:lō peoples, Coast Salish peoples

1053

Applications
Submitted

936

Projects
Funded

\$ 471,912.23

Funding
Requested

\$ 416,573.71

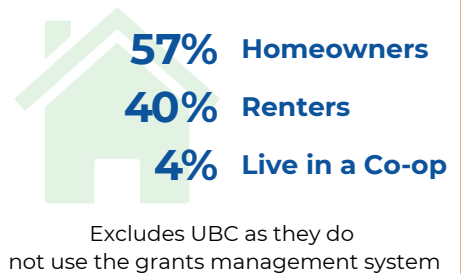
Funding
Awarded

\$ 445.06

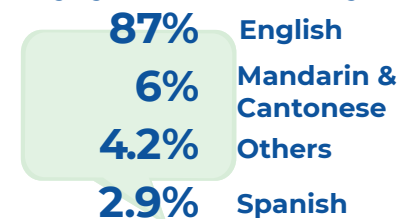
Average
Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

The Metro Vancouver region had several notable demographic outliers that differentiated it from other regions in the province. Firstly, Metro Vancouver had the lowest proportion of Indigenous-identifying Project Leaders of all regions. Further, the region had the highest proportion of Project Leaders that were most comfortable speaking Mandarin and Cantonese, Spanish, Punjabi, and Tagalog. This diversity in preferred language in Metro Vancouver is what constituted the majority of language diversity in the province. Thirdly, Metro Vancouver had the highest proportion of Project Leaders that were renters and living in a co-op in British Columbia. Lastly, the region had the highest proportion of Project Leaders that were not born in Canada. These outliers indicate that Metro Vancouver had a more diverse group of Project Leaders on certain demographic characteristics, but it may want to improve its Indigenous representation.



Language Most Comfortable Using



PROJECT THEMES



Metro Vancouver's approved R-NSG projects comprised 66.48 percent of the total approved R-NSG projects in British Columbia, the largest share of all regions. Of the 934 approved R-NSG projects in Metro Vancouver, the most prominent project theme that was coded is Capacity Building at 28 percent. The second most prominent is Supply Handouts at 20 percent. This is followed by Community Building and Community Event at 19 percent respectively, and lastly by Placemaking at 14 percent. Of all the regions, Metro Vancouver had the highest proportion of Community Building projects.

Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands

Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands is the Neighbourhood Small Grants program's most established region outside of Metro Vancouver. The region joined NSG in 2015 through partnerships with Community Partner Organizations Clayoquot Sound and Victoria Foundation.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

65%

**Between
25 and 54**

89%

**Female
Identified**

10%

**Indigenous
Identified**

83%

**Canadian
Born**

The demographics of Project Leaders shown here were compared to the demographics of all applicants in the Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands region. There was a difference of no more than two percentage points for all demographic indicators. This analysis showed that there were no significant differences between these two groups.

Compared to applicants, Project Leaders were more likely to be between 25 and 54 years of age, 65 percent compared to 63 percent, and female-identifying, 89 percent compared to 87 percent. A greater percentage of applicants, however, identified as indigenous, 12 percent of applicants compared to 10 percent of Project Leaders. Lastly, Project Leaders represented a higher percentage of homeowners at 71 percent compared to just 69 percent of applicants. Despite these slight differences, Project Leaders were representative of all those who applied.

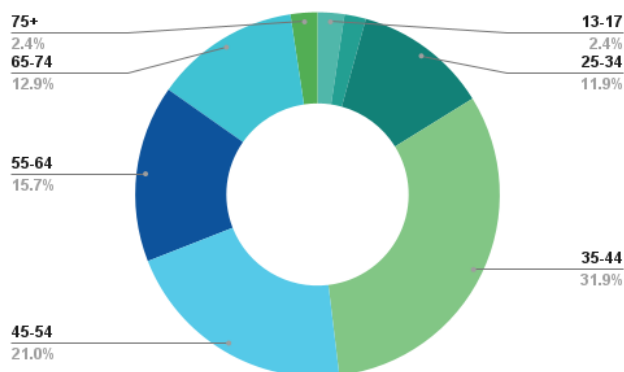


Figure 19. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands

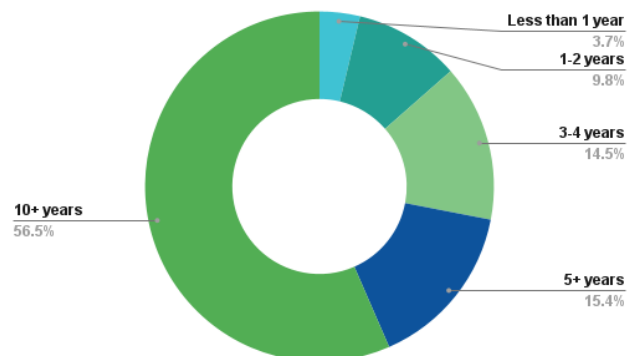


Figure 20. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands

Laich-kwil-tach peoples, Coast Salish peoples

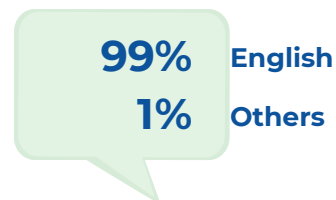
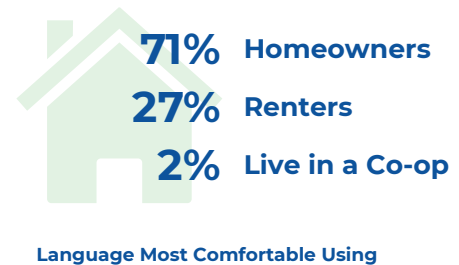
262	213	\$ 99,583.96	\$ 98,822.56	\$ 463.96
Applications Submitted	Projects Funded	Funding Requested	Funding Awarded	Average Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

The Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands region did not have any demographic outliers that differentiated it from other regions in the province.



Image 16. Photograph from smartphone photography for seniors class in Nanaimo



PROJECT THEMES

29%	15%	13%	21%	22%
Capacity Building	Community Building	Community Event	Placemaking	Supply Handouts

The Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands region funded 213 projects in 2020, representing the second highest percentage of projects in the province at 15.13 percent. The most prevalent project theme was Capacity Building at 29 percent. This was the second highest proportion of capacity building projects of all regions. Over one-third of these projects focused on instructing others in creating arts, crafts, or other handmade goods. Supply Handouts and Placemaking projects were the next highest, at 22 and 21 percent, respectively. Next, 15 percent of projects incorporated Community Building. Lastly, 13 percent of projects were community events, the second to lowest percentage of community events across all regions.

The Okanagan

A partnership with the Okanagan region began in 2015 with the South Okanagan as its first community. In 2020, the Central and North Okanagan communities joined which allowed community members across the Okanagan region to apply for grants.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

61%
Between
25 and 54

94%
Female
Identified

6%
Indigenous
Identified

78%
Canadian
Born

The demographic analysis conducted for the Okanagan region for applicants and Project Leaders demonstrated that there were overall no significant differences in demographics, besides a couple variances. While 61 percent of Project Leaders were between the ages of 25 and 54, 50 percent of all applicants indicated the same. This can be accounted for by a higher rate of those aged 65 to 74 in the applicant pool, at 27 percent, versus 17 percent of Project Leaders. If the number of applicants aged 65 to 74 was consistent for Project Leaders, the region would have had the highest proportion of senior-aged Project Leaders in the province. Furthermore, 22 percent of Project Leaders indicated that they were not born in Canada compared to 14 percent of applicants that indicated the same. While these discrepancies do not indicate that there was a bias toward approving projects that were led by younger and non-Canadian born Project Leaders, they do indicate certain demographic aspects were not representative of all applicants.

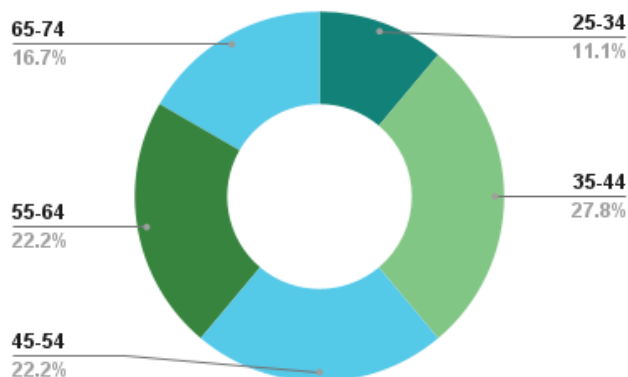


Figure 21. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, The Okanagan

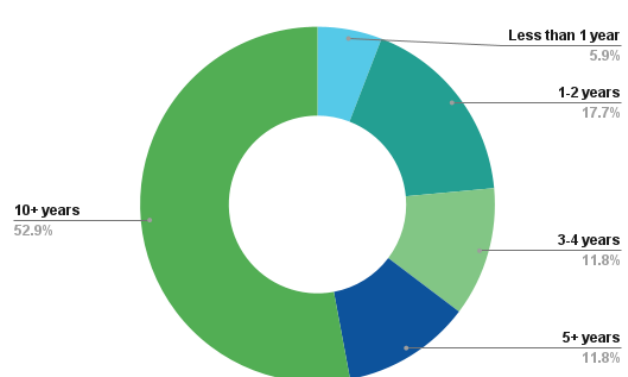


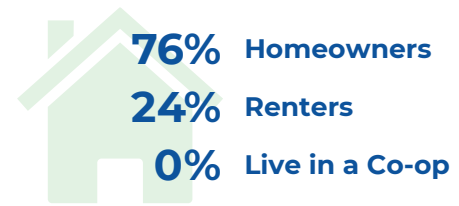
Figure 22. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, The Okanagan

Syilx Nation, Secwépemc Nation

71	54	\$ 26,075.00	\$ 23,875.00	\$ 442.13
Applications Submitted	Projects Funded	Funding Requested	Funding Awarded	Average Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

The Okanagan region had a couple demographic outliers that differentiated it from other regions in the province. Along with the Northern Interior, the Okanagan region had the lowest proportion of Project Leaders aged 13 to 17, at zero percent. This result is not surprising given that only one Project Leader between these ages was recorded in the applicant demographic data. The lack of youth representation in both the applicants and the Project Leaders may indicate that outreach and promotion of the R-NSG program is lacking for youth. Secondly, the region had the highest proportion of Project Leaders that identified as female at 94 percent.



Language Most Comfortable Using



PROJECT THEMES



The Okanagan region had 54 approved R-NSG projects in 2020, making up 3.84 percent of the total approved R-NSG projects in the province. The two most prominent themes were Community Event and Supply Handouts at 24 percent respectively. These were followed closely by Placemaking at 22 percent. Lastly, Community Building made up 16 percent of the projects and Capacity Building at 14 percent. The Okanagan had the lowest proportion of Capacity Building projects in the province. Despite this low percentage, the evaluators highlighted a Capacity Building project in the Central Okanagan community, which can be viewed on page 33.

Sea to Sky

The Sea to Sky region began in 2016 with an initial partnership with the Squamish Community Foundation in 2016. In 2017, Whistler and Bowen Island joined, and finally in 2020 Lillooet, the Sunshine Coast, and Powell River joined.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

64%

Between
25 and 54

While the demographic data for both applicants and Project Leaders was analyzed and compared, it was found that there were no significant differences in demographics between those that applied for R-NSG grants and those that were approved.

72%

Female
Identified

The only notable difference was in the age range: the Project Leaders had 64 percent, as opposed to 68 percent, of individuals between the ages of 25 and 54. This was due to there being two percent more Project Leaders between the ages of 55 and 64 compared to all applicants.

7%

Indigenous
Identified

84%

Canadian
Born

Overall, this indicates that the demographics of Project Leaders were representative of all those who applied for R-NSG grants in the Sea to Sky region.

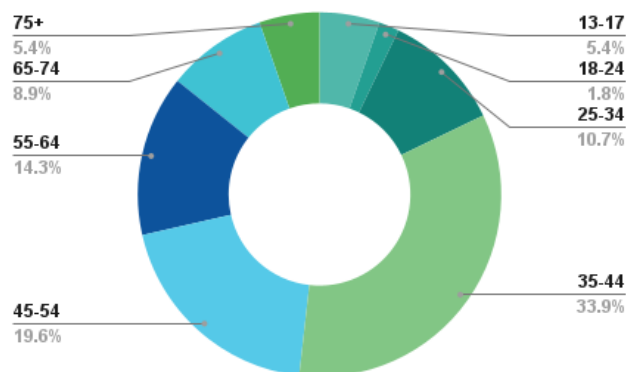


Figure 23. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, Sea to Sky

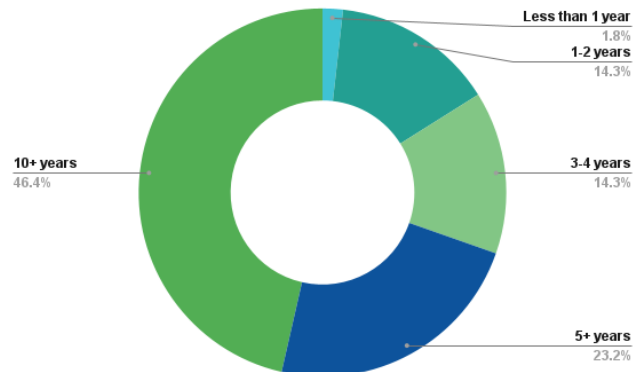


Figure 24. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, Sea to Sky

Coast Salish peoples, St'at'imc Nation

66	52	\$ 24,134.00	\$ 24,237.00	\$ 466.10
Applications Submitted	Projects Funded	Funding Requested	Funding Awarded	Average Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

The Sea to Sky region did not have any demographic outliers, and was fairly consistent with the provincial data for Project Leaders.



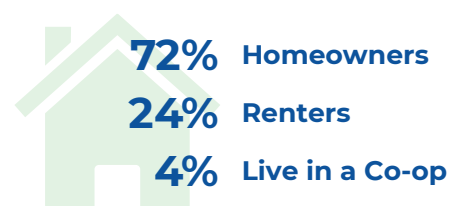
Throwing a Character Curveball: Writing Workshop with author Rebecca Wood Barrett

Image 17. Virtual writing workshop in Whistler

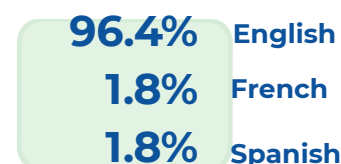
PROJECT THEMES

30% Capacity Building	14% Community Building	17% Community Event	25% Placemaking	14% Supply Handouts
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The Sea to Sky Region had 52 approved R-NSG projects in 2020, which accounted for 3.69 percent of the total approved R-NSG projects in British Columbia. The most prominent project theme that was coded in the region is Capacity Building at 30 percent. This is followed by Placemaking at 25 percent, Community Event at 17 percent, and Community Building and Supply Handouts at 14 percent respectively. The Sea to Sky region had the lowest proportion of Supply Handouts projects of all regions. Along with the Kootenays region, the Sea to Sky Region had the highest proportion of Capacity Building projects in the province.



Language Most Comfortable Using



Fraser Valley

The Fraser Valley region is one of four regions that joined the Neighbourhood Small Grants program in 2020.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

63%

**Between
25 and 54**

69%

**Female
Identified**

6%

**Indigenous
Identified**

71%

**Canadian
Born**

The demographics of all applicants in the Fraser Valley were compared to the demographics of Project Leaders provided here. On a whole, the two analyses were consistent with one another, with only a few notable differences. Comparing these two datasets showed that a lower percentage of Project Leaders were between the ages of 25 and 54 than applicants, 63 percent compared to 72 percent, respectively. In place of these middle-aged applicants, Project Leaders overrepresented youth and young adult applicants. Only 12 percent of applicants were age 13 to 17, but 15 percent of Project Leaders belonged to this age group. Similarly, just 6 percent of applicants were between the ages of 18 and 24 compared to 10 percent of Project Leaders. Fraser Valley was the region with the highest proportion of both youth applicants and Project Leaders. Inversely, only 12 percent of Project Leaders were 55 and older, the lowest representation of older adults across all regions.

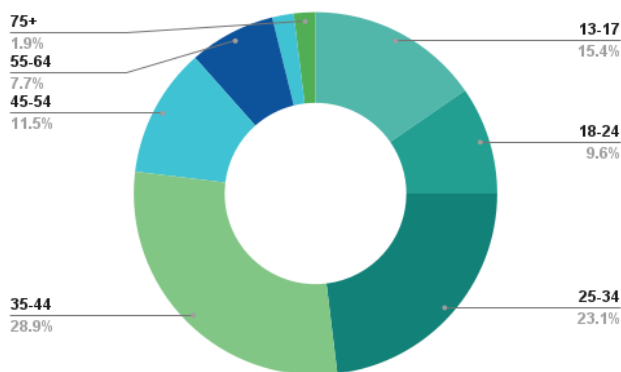


Figure 25. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, Fraser Valley

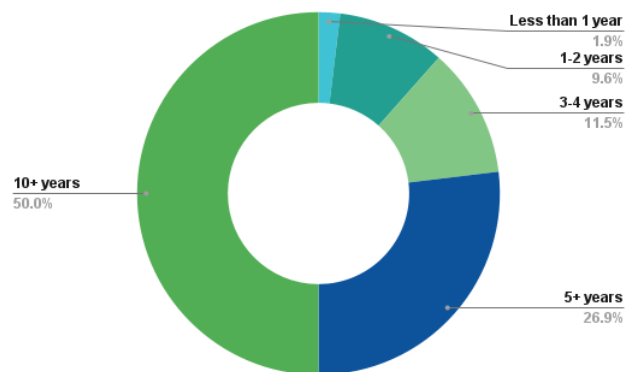


Figure 26. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, Fraser Valley

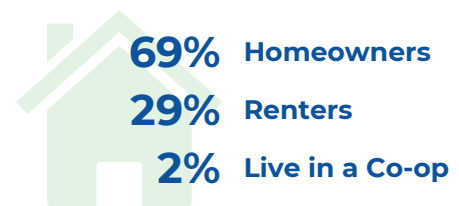
Stó:lō peoples, Coast Salish peoples

94	54	\$ 29,701.25	\$ 26,966.25	\$ 499.38
Applications Submitted	Projects Funded	Funding Requested	Funding Awarded	Average Award

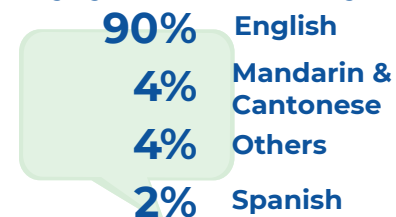
*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

The demographics of Project Leaders in the Fraser Valley differed from other regions when it came to age. The Fraser Valley was the region with the highest proportion of both youth applicants and Project Leaders. Inversely, only 12 percent of Project Leaders were 55 and older, the lowest representation of older adults across all regions.

At 69 percent, the Fraser Valley also had the second lowest proportion of female-identifying Project Leaders, only ahead of the Northern Interior where 68 percent of Project Leaders were female-identifying.



Language Most Comfortable Using



PROJECT THEMES



Fraser Valley's 54 projects represented 3.84 percent of all R-NSG projects across the province in 2020. At 47 percent, Fraser Valley offered the largest proportion of projects that were coded as Supply Handouts out of all regions. The majority of these projects were care packages or gifts. More than half of these projects were intended for a certain population group including seniors, unhoused populations, first responders, at-risk youth, and newcomers. The next most common project was Capacity Building at 18 percent. Community Events followed at 14 percent. The remaining two project types, Community Building and Placemaking made up 11 and 10 percent of projects, respectively.

The Kootenays

The Kootenays region joined the Neighbourhood Small Grants program in 2020, making it one of the newest regions to join Neighbourhood Small Grants.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

74%

**Between
25 and 54**

74%

**Female
Identified**

6%

**Indigenous
Identified**

88%

**Canadian
Born**

The Kootenays region demographic data for applicants and Project Leaders was analyzed and compared to identify similarities and differences. It was found that the demographic data was generally consistent besides a few differences. Firstly, while six percent of Project Leaders identified as Indigenous, 12 percent of all applicants said the same. Had this 12 percent of Indigenous-identifying applicants been approved, the Kootenays would have had the second largest proportion of Indigenous-identifying Project Leaders in the province. Further, while 27 percent of applicants identified as renters, 21 percent of Project Leaders indicated the same. Finally, while 19 percent of applicants stated that they were not born in Canada, only 12 percent of Project Leaders indicated the same. While these discrepancies do not indicate that there was a bias toward approving projects led by those that were not Indigenous, or were homeowners, or were born in Canada, it does demonstrate that the Project Leaders were not entirely representative of all applicants.

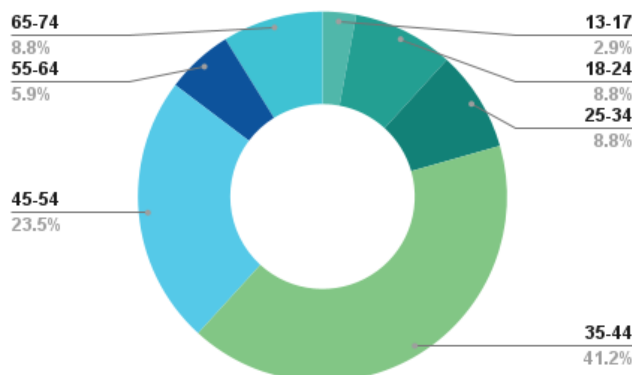


Figure 27. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, The Kootenays

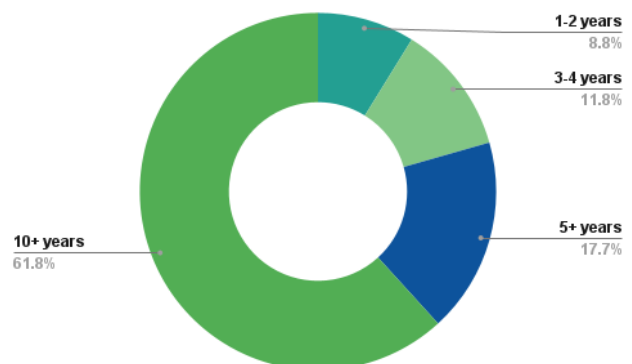


Figure 28. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, The Kootenays

Syilx Nation, Ktunaxa Nation, Secwépemc Nation, Dene Tha' Nation

43

Applications
Submitted

34

Projects
Funded

\$ 16,256.00

Funding
Requested

\$ 16,456.00

Funding
Awarded

\$ 484.00

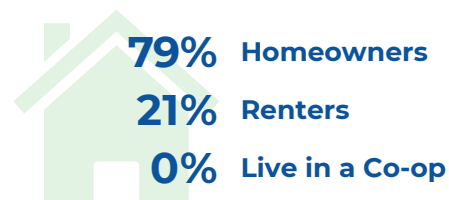
Average
Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

The Kootenays region did not have any demographic outliers for Project Leaders that differentiated it from other regions in the province.



Image 18. Creations from a woodworking crafts class for youth in Rossland



Language Most Comfortable Using



PROJECT THEMES



The Kootenays had 34 approved R-NSG projects in 2020, which comprised 2.41 percent of all approved R-NSG projects in the province. The most prominent theme is Capacity Building at 30 percent, followed by Placemaking at 23 percent, and Community Event and Supply Handouts at 17 percent respectively. The least common project was Community Building at 13 percent. Along with the Sea to Sky Region, the Kootenays had the highest proportion of Capacity Building projects in the province.

Northern Interior

The Northern Interior region joined the Neighbourhood Small Grants program in 2020.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

53%

Between
25 and 54

The Northern Interior region is unique to that of the other regions because all applicants were successful in obtaining funding to implement their projects. As such, the applicant demographic indicators match the Project Leader demographics.

68%

Female
Identified

One demographic area where the Northern Interior differs from other regions is in the age of Project Leaders. There were no youth, ages 13 to 17, who submitted a grant application. Only one other region, the Okanagan, had no youth participate as a Project Leader. Conversely, at 47 percent, the Northern Interior had the highest representation of Project Leaders who were aged 55 and above. Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap had the next highest proportion of Project Leaders of 55 and above at 39 percent. As the NSG program continues to develop in the Northern Interior, the region should consider targeting its outreach to youth specifically.

37%

Indigenous
Identified

84%

Canadian
Born

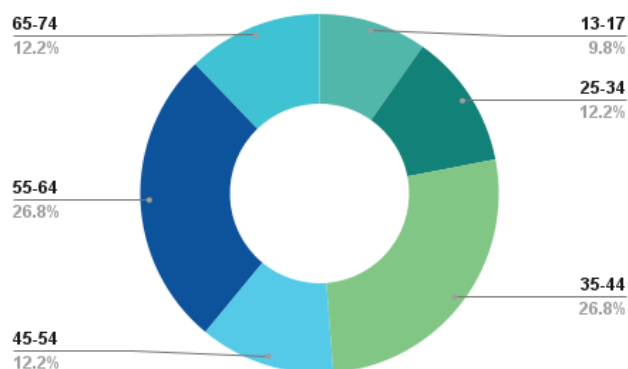


Figure 29. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, Northern Interior

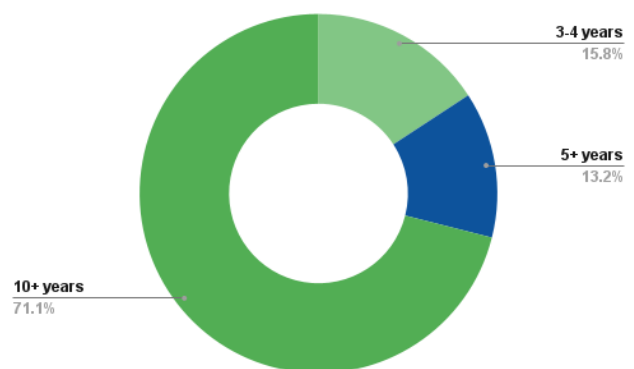


Figure 30. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, Northern Interior

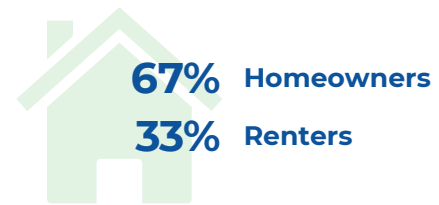
Lhatko Dene Nation, Southern Dakhelh Nations, Lheidli T'enneh

20	20	\$ 9,720	\$ 9,720	\$ 486
Applications Submitted	Projects Funded	Funding Requested	Funding Awarded	Average Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

Another differing feature is that Project Leaders in the Northern Interior had the lowest proportion of Project Leaders who identified as female. Although the lowest compared to the other regions, this percentage is closer to being representative of the entire region.

Lastly, the Northern Interior had the highest percentage of Project Leaders who identified as Indigenous, 37 percent. This is significantly higher than the other regions. The next highest proportion of Indigenous-identifying Project Leaders is in Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap with 11 percent.



Language Most Comfortable Using



PROJECT THEMES



The Northern Interior had the lowest number of R-NSG projects compared with the other 7 regions. The 20 projects represented 1.42 percent of the 1,408 projects held across the province. Both Supply Handouts and Placemaking projects represented 29 percent of all projects. Placemaking projects largely focused on community gardens or adding infrastructure. A story highlight on a Placemaking project in William's Lake is featured on page 43. Following these two project types are Capacity Building projects at 25 percent and Community Events at 17 percent. The Northern Interior is the only region where a project theme, in this case Community Building, is not represented.

Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap

The Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap region is new to the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, joining in 2020.

PROJECT LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS

51%

**Between
25 and 54**

81%

**Female
Identified**

11%

**Indigenous
Identified**

97%

**Canadian
Born**

In comparing demographic indicators for applicants to Project Leaders, several differences were noted. The percentage of Project Leaders aged between 25 and 54 was significantly lower than applicants, 51 percent compared to 64 percent. Indigenous-identifying Project Leaders were underrepresented with 15 percent as applicants and 11 percent as Project Leaders. For female-identifying Project Leaders, the percentage increased to 81 percent from 77 percent of applicants. Long-term residents, those living in the community for 10 or more years, were overrepresented at 71 percent of Project Leaders, as opposed to 65 percent of applicants. Lastly, 7 percent of applicants indicated they were not born in Canada, but only 3 percent of Project Leaders did. While these variances do not indicate a bias toward approving applicants who are older, non-Indigenous, female-identifying, long-term residents or Canadian born, they do indicate these certain demographic indicators were not representative of all applicants.

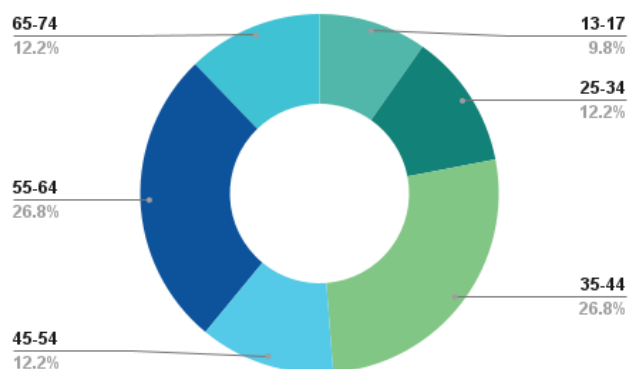


Figure 31. Project Leader age ranges by frequency, Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap

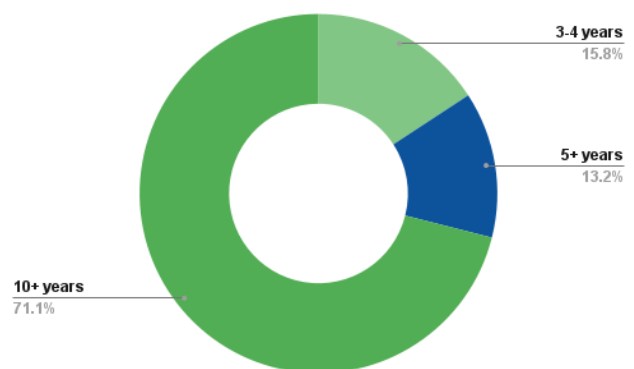


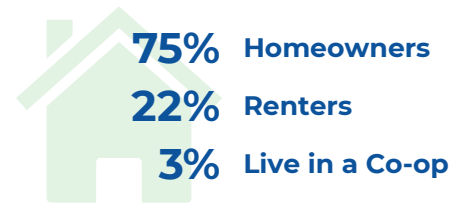
Figure 32. Project Leader years living in current community by frequency, Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap

Secwépemc peoples

84	45	\$ 17,505.20	\$ 16,404	\$ 364.53
Applications Submitted	Projects Funded	Funding Requested	Funding Awarded	Average Award

*Indicates funding allocated toward grants only; does not include program operational costs

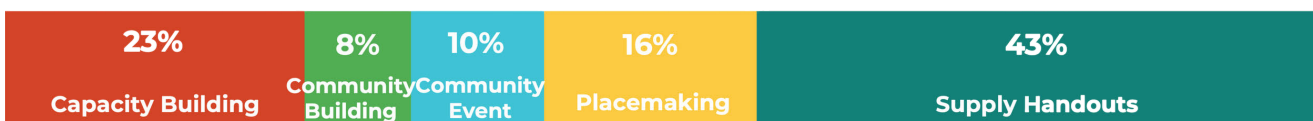
As older R-NSG program applicants of Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap saw a greater percent of their projects be approved compared to middle-aged applicants, the region had the second highest proportion of Project Leaders who were over the age of 55. Further, both applicants and Project Leaders had the highest percentage of Canadian born residents at 93 and 97 percent, respectively.



Language Most Comfortable Using



PROJECT THEMES



The 45 projects that were funded in the Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap region represented 3.20 percent of all 2020 R-NSG projects in the province. The most common project type in the region were Supply Handouts. At 43 percent, Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap had the second highest proportion of Supply Handouts compared to all regions. Supply Handouts in the regions were evenly split across the three sub-themes of Care Packages, Food Resources and COVID-19 Essentials. A Supply Handout project that took place in Salmon Arm is highlighted on page 64.

Following Supply Handouts are Capacity Building projects at 23 percent. Then, Placemaking projects at 16 percent. Of all regions, Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap had the lowest proportion of Community Events at just 10 percent of projects. Lastly, 8 percent of projects were coded as Community Building.

Appreciation Packages for Essential Service Workers



Secwepemc Traditional Territory | Salmon Arm



Supply Handouts | Thompson, Caribou, & Shuswap

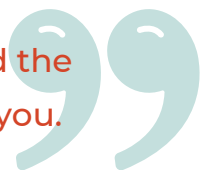
As a member of the Youth Philanthropy Advisory Committee (YPAC) of the Shuswap Community Foundation, Kate is no stranger to community service. Committee members serve in an advisory role to the Shuswap Community Foundation on projects for youth, provide grant funding for youth-centered projects and volunteer at community events. When the Committee missed one of their grant cycles last year due to COVID-19, they were looking for other ways to give back. A Board member of the Shuswap Community Foundation mentioned grant funding was available through the Neighbourhood Small Grants Program and Kate took the lead on applying for the funding.

Working together, Kate and other YPAC members created appreciation packages for essential service workers in Salmon Arm. Using products from local businesses including florists and bakeries, the bags were filled and hand-delivered to the fire department, police station, ambulance services building, post office, hospital and doctor's offices. While only some youth were able to connect personally with the service workers due to COVID-19 restrictions, all places received handmade cards thanking them for their continued service throughout the pandemic.



Image 19. Kate and other YPAC members ready to deliver gift bags

With figuring out an idea for the project, just kind of looking at your community, looking at who's doing the most work, looking at how it needs to be supported...really just observing the community and the people around you.



5 Findings and Recommendations

Based on the analyses, there are three key findings. An overview of each finding is provided below, followed by a set of recommendations for various stakeholders of the NSG program.

DETERMINE NEW PRACTICES TO ADOPT

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about many changes to the operations of the NGCs. NGCs began meeting virtually and made use of online tools to review grants and communicate with one another. 16 percent of Grant Committee Members identified meeting virtually as a key benefit, stating it allowed for more flexibility of scheduling meetings. Further, over 50 percent said the committee communicated and collaborated well. This indicates that while some Grant Committee Members would have preferred to meet in person, the online environment did not greatly affect the committee's ability to work together.

The main challenge noted by Grant Committee Members was managing disagreement about which projects to approve and differing interpretations of the grant requirements. Conflict can be difficult to manage in any circumstance, but having it in a virtual setting where individuals cannot rely on body language or other nonverbal communication can make it particularly challenging to manage. To support NGCs as they work through these challenges, the evaluators have created a tool that provides strategies and recommendations for managing and settling disagreements, specifically in a virtual setting, in a respectful and compassionate manner.

It is further recommended that...

Neighbourhood Grants Committees evaluate their operating procedures moving forward. The use of virtual meetings and other online tools were praised by some Grant Committee Members for increasing the efficiency of application evaluation and other processes. The increased flexibility, such as meeting from your own home or reviewing grants on your own time, could also increase inclusivity and allow for more residents to volunteer. On the contrary, requiring stable internet service and digital literacy to participate can also cause a barrier for some, particularly for residents who live in remote areas. Each NGC should evaluate these matters along with their own operating conditions and the experiences of Grant Committee Members to determine the way forward.

5 Findings and Recommendations

Vancouver Foundation evaluates their practices for obtaining and analyzing demographic data. Currently, the grants management system (GMS) generates a demographic summary which can be filtered by grant type, granting year, and grant status, which differentiates submitted applications and approved applications. To glean insights from this data, one must export it and conduct analyses. Therefore, increasing the functionality and utility of this tool would allow future evaluators, Program Coordinators, and Grant Committee Members to manipulate the data for their unique purposes. The ability to compare data between granting cycles or between submitted and approved applicants would generate more valuable information. For example, it would illuminate whether or not there are demographic discrepancies between individuals that apply for grants and individuals that are approved. Further, it is recommended that demographic information for Grant Committee Members be added to the GMS to further increase its utility.

SUPPORT PROJECT LEADERS IN DESIGNING IMPACTFUL PROJECTS

While Project Leaders were successful in designing and implementing their projects, seven percent indicated they could use additional support at the application stage in identifying a project. Project Leaders noted they were interested in hearing from other applicants about ways they pivoted their projects to comply with COVID-19 restrictions or how they made their projects inclusive. Generally, Project Leaders indicated they liked hearing about other projects to get ideas, gain insights, or find new ways to increase the impact of their own projects. This idea was reiterated in the interviews conducted with Project Leaders. One project type that was encouraged during COVID-19 was the delivery or handout of supplies and gifts, particularly to those most vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic. This type of project was the second most common project in 2020 across the province and the impacts were spoken of highly by the Project Leaders that were interviewed.

 *It's inspiring what people come up with.*

5 Findings and Recommendations

In response to this finding, the evaluators have taken several steps to share project stories with prospective Project Leaders and provide an example of ways that stories can be presented. Section 3.3 Projects (pp. 22-42) provides a broad overview of the types of projects that could be offered and makes several references to projects within the text. Additionally, ten project highlights based on interviews with Project Leaders are included throughout this report. As Project Leaders were curious about hearing ways to engage participants during the pandemic, the evaluators have also created a resource for effective online engagement. Further, the evaluators created a StoryMap supplementary to this report that provides an overview of the R-NSG program and highlights various projects in an alternatively accessible format.

It is further recommended that...

Vancouver Foundation updates the template used by Project Leaders to submit stories to be featured on the NSG website to include a place to describe the project type, topic area, and population intended to be served through the project. Further, these descriptors should be added as an additional filter option on the NSG website. Doing so would allow prospective and existing Project Leaders to easily search for and find inspiration from projects that may be of interest to them.

Vancouver Foundation continues to allow Project Leaders to apply for more than one grant per year. Prior to the implementation of the Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants grant stream, applicants were only permitted to apply for one grant per year. Under R-NSG, applicants could apply for another grant once they have completed their previous project and so long as the application was still open for their community. Extending this requirement would allow Project Leaders to extend the length of projects that have had a measurable impact on their community, especially as some Project Leaders indicated that they would have appreciated more time to carry out their projects.

5 Findings and Recommendations

“I know that the Neighborhood Small Grants are kind of meant to be for a short period of time. It might be nice if you get a strong idea and you get a strong connection...if you were able to do [your project] and then be like...“this is a good fit, can we continue this on?” I think that would be a really neat thing to be able to continue something on maybe over a longer period of time.”

Neighbourhood Grants Committees encourage applications that address a community need. To support Project Leaders in identifying location-specific needs, provide resources on demographics, community strengths and assets, vulnerable individuals who may be lacking adequate assistance, and how to design projects that are inclusive of all community members.

In an interview, one Project Leader stated that she believed NSG could be a strong agent of change if Project Leaders were provided with, “ideas about the demographic of our neighborhood, who are the most vulnerable in our neighborhood, and what are some of the key issues [to move forward] in terms of social inclusion or diversity”.

GROW REGIONS SUSTAINABLY

2020 was the first year that the Vancouver Foundation offered the NSG program province-wide. The NSG program has been expanding since it first began in 1999. First, to the rest of Metro Vancouver, then to communities just outside of Metro Vancouver and since 2015, to other regions of B.C. In 2020, four of the eight total regions were new. Newer regions tended to have lower numbers of applications and projects overall.

Three of the four regions that joined the NSG program in 2020, Northern Interior, The Kootenays, and Thompson, Caribou, and Shuswap had the least number of projects at 20, 34, and 45, respectively. More established regions, like Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island, saw the largest number of projects.

5 Findings and Recommendations

Using the Okanagan region as a case study, the evaluators found a difference in the rate of projects by population. The community of South Okanagan-Similkameen, which has been operating the NSG program since 2015, had a rate of 43 projects per 100,000 persons. The communities of North Okanagan and South Okanagan, both new to the NSG program last year, had rates of 10 and 5 projects per 100,000 persons, respectively. These differences show that despite population differences, more established regions have a greater number of NSG projects. In addition to longevity, more established regions also benefit from the leading role that Community Partners play in the implementation of the NSG program.

With that being said, it is recommended that...

Vancouver Foundation commits to growing the NSG programs in a way that is inclusive and accessible. For newer regions, this means forming partnerships with local organizations and residents to increase community control and input over the program. For smaller and rural communities, this means increasing marketing and promotional materials to advertise NSG. For all communities outside of Vancouver, this means, to some extent, disconnecting the name “Vancouver Foundation” from the NSG program.

“I know it's the Vancouver Foundation who does it, but ensuring that the program gets out to some of the smaller communities because sometimes we kind of get left out of these things. I think a lot of this stuff seems to be very Vancouver-centric and if you don't happen to hear about it, you know, it just doesn't happen in the wider B.C. area.”

“What I'm finding where I live...the Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grants is not known whatsoever. So, it would be really nice to find additional ways to get the word out that there's this opportunity...And being called the Vancouver Foundation, also, is like, “oh this is only meant for people in Metro Vancouver”?”

6 Conclusion

The year 2020 was unique for the Neighbourhood Small Grants program in a number of ways. The first is that NSG pivoted its approach in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to create a new granting stream, Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (R-NSG). R-NSG brought with it a shift in operations in order to keep Program Coordinators, Grant Committee Members, and Project Leaders safe. Program Coordinators and Grant Committee Members displayed great flexibility in this transition as they moved to a virtual meeting format, utilized new online tools and platforms, kept up with ever-changing restrictions, and provided ongoing support to Project Leaders who were encountering novel challenges of their own, such as recruiting participants and handling technological and ensuring participant safety.

Secondly, R-NSG had different project eligibility requirements, which encouraged and approved projects that served community members in new and innovative ways. The change in requirements, alongside the social and economic inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, led Project Leaders to consider the vulnerable populations in their communities and the impact their project could have. An entirely new type of project, where Project Leaders assembled or made items like facemasks, groceries, or care packages, emerged. These items were often directed toward a certain population group. In some instances, Project Leaders connected with organizations like retirement facilities, hospitals, or nonprofit organizations to learn more about the needs of these populations. In this way, these new projects not only strengthened relationships with community members, but strengthened the Project Leader's connection to the social infrastructure of their community.

Lastly, 2020 was the first year that NSG was offered province-wide, adding four new regions to its total. In particular, this expansion allowed the program to reach many rural communities in the Northern Interior, Thompson, Caribou, and Shushwap, The Kootenays, and Fraser Valley. Despite this, newer regions tended to have less applications and projects. This demonstrates that regions benefit from longevity and the participation of Community Partners within the region.

The 2020 R-NSG program offers insights and lessons learned for refining the program's delivery in the future. Even as the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, the R-NSG program has highlighted the important role that the NSG program fills. Lessons learned from the past year offer valuable opportunities for improving NSG as it moves from a responsive state to a proactive one.

Reflections

This year's evaluation differed considerably from NSG program evaluations conducted in previous years. Most prominently, the COVID-19 pandemic affected both the evaluation process and the content being evaluated.

For the process, all of our work was conducted online. We made use of online programs and tools that allowed us to work collaboratively on most tasks, such as coding and data analysis. This ensured that neither of us were constrained to tasks or knowledge sets we were already familiar with, and therefore allowed us to learn from each other. On other tasks, we split the work evenly and communicated whenever we faced challenges or had questions. Crucial to ensuring our work was collaborative was creating a shared Google Drive that held all of our files.

We did not face many challenges, but when we did they were primarily technical in nature. Most prominently, we struggled with the collaboration functions on many softwares. For example, we hoped to use a qualitative coding software to code the survey responses. When the software did not permit us to collaborate, we found an alternative method that would allow us to code at the same time.

We used video conferencing software to stay connected with one another and our supervisors at the Vancouver Foundation, Meseret and Vincent. Meseret and Vincent supported us greatly in our learning throughout the process. Meseret provided us with insight into the NSG program, its history, and how the evaluation could support the program moving forward. Vincent introduced us to various evaluation frameworks, including Developmental Evaluation and Utilization-Focused Evaluation. While our approach did not directly follow these techniques, we took inspiration from them.

For example, we were able to connect with Meseret, Vincent, Lidia, and Andrew of the Partnerships team at the Vancouver Foundation and with the NSG regional network leads of Metro Vancouver, Vancouver Island, and Central and North Okanagan to get feedback on our work plan and ideas for our final products. Their advice and feedback helped to ensure that our findings and outputs from the evaluation would be useful. We also ensured our work plan was reflexive, meaning that we adjusted it along the way to follow what we were finding and to meet changing deadlines.

Reflections

Conducting our work online also meant we were able to hear directly from Project Leaders across the province. We were given the opportunity to attend the Neighbourhood Small Grants Island Network Spring Summit in May, and the Neighbourhood Small Grants Summit in June. These summits highlighted the stories and experiences of various Project Leaders and displayed innovative ways to build community and learn together, virtually.

While our evaluation process was different compared to previous years, our learnings from NSG program participants at various levels inspired us to be innovative in our approach. The evaluation centred on the Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants (R-NSG), a granting stream that was introduced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 greatly impacted both the type and format of projects. We honed in on these differences by coding each project for what it hoped to achieve or offer the community.

One crucial aspect of our evaluation was fostering relationships with Project Leaders and learning more about the projects themselves. After spending many hours coding the projects for themes, we felt the need to humanize the data. We ended up speaking with 11 Project Leaders from across the province and learned not only about their projects, but also the impact it had on their community. Further, they were able to provide us with invaluable advice and feedback to bolster our findings and recommendations.

While the health, social, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been widely documented, the stories and information contained within this report highlight the community response to the pandemic. We were thankful for the opportunity to learn and document these stories.

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