

2016 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS APPLICATION PARTNERSHIPS

Filled Thursday, June 16, 2016

Name of Local Government

City of Surrey

Project/Program Manager Name

Len Garis

Title

Fire Chief

Phone

604-543-6701

Email

lwgaris@surrey.ca

Administrative Contact Name

Natalie Jones

Title

Administrative Coordinator

Phone

604-591-4192

Email

NatalieJones@surrey.ca

The Mayor/Chair is aware that I am submitting this application on behalf of my local government.

Yes

Project/Program Title:

BC Working Smoke Alarm Campaign

Project Summary Paragraph

Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

The BC Working Smoke Alarm Campaign has distributed 41,000 smoke alarms across the province and significantly reduced residential fire deaths since its launch in March 2012 by the City of Surrey in partnership with the Fire Chiefs' Association of British Columbia. The basis of the campaign was a study of almost 50,000 fires in BC, Alberta and Ontario that showed: two-thirds of houses that catch fire do not have working smoke alarms; fire damage is reduced by 19% when a working smoke alarm is present; the death rate per 1,000 fires is 74% greater when a working smoke alarm is not present; smoke alarm function declines over time; and vulnerable populations such as children, seniors and First Nations are more likely to die in fires. From that data grew the concept of a sustainable, multi-faceted campaign built on diverse partnerships.

Project Analysis

1. OBJECTIVE

Please explain the decision-making and thought process behind your decision to take on this initiative.

The fire industry has promoted the use of smoke alarms for many years, based on evidence that smoke alarms save lives and reduce fire losses. However, research by Surrey staff in conjunction with the University of the Fraser Valley brought to light new data that made a strong case for a more comprehensive, consistent and continuing effort (as noted in the research paper Smoke Alarms Work, but Not Forever, January 2012, UFV).

The study of almost 50,000 fires in Alberta, BC and Ontario from 2006 to 2011 revealed that almost 70% of the smoke alarms in homes that caught fire were not

working, and that alarm function deteriorates over time when left unchecked. It also showed the death rate per 1,000 fires was 74% greater when a working smoke alarm was not present, that vulnerable populations such as young children, the elderly, people with disabilities and First Nations are more likely to die in a fire, and that fire damage was reduced by 19% when a working smoke alarm was present.

The wide-reaching implications of this new data were clear to the City. The FCABC was immediately brought on board, both because Surrey's Fire Chief was its president at the time, and because reducing fires and fire losses across BC is the underlying purpose of its work. It was decided the FCABC would become the face of the campaign due to its widespread reach and influence, while Surrey would drive the campaign behind the scenes.

2. CHALLENGES

Please provide examples of challenges you faced in taking on this program/project and how you overcame them.

REFRESHING THE MESSAGE

The promotion of smoke alarms is not new, and this has challenged the campaign to work harder to convince stakeholders there is a new story to be told. By generating and sharing new and relevant research – e.g., about the declining function of alarms, the percentage of malfunctioning smoke alarms found in fires, and the vulnerable populations – the campaign succeeded in generating widespread engagement.

SUPPORT AND FUNDING

The campaign model relied heavily on engaging and activating a wide variety of stakeholders and partners. The FCABC was secured as an early partner. Others have included: BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General (which co-launched the campaign), BC Professional Fire Fighters' Association, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, RCMP, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, Office of the Fire Commissioner, Fire Prevention Officers of BC, Volunteer Fire Fighters' Association of BC, BC Ambulance Service, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND), Kidde Canada, BC Hydro, the Red Cross, Food Banks BC., Super Save Group, Shaw Cable, Black Press, BC Real Estate Association, Insurance Brokers of BC, Insurance Bureau of Canada and United Way. More than 60 fire departments also signed on through their involvement with FCABC.

The partners provided varying types of support, from distributing smoke alarm information, to lending their name to the campaign, to distributing alarms to

vulnerable populations, to financial support (including more than \$500,000 in cash and in-kind donations in the first year).

3. BENEFITS

Please provide examples of how this program/project benefited the community.

Through the campaign, 41,000 smoke alarms have been distributed and installed across BC, with a focus on vulnerable populations such as seniors, First Nations and people with low incomes. A media campaign, website (www.workingsmokealarms.ca) and brochures were developed. Provincial Smoke Alarm Awareness Day was announced October 12, 2012. Fire departments across BC have integrated working smoke alarm messages into their public education.

Fire data from BC's Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) shows the campaign has both reduced deaths by fire and increased the presence of working smoke alarms. The research paper *Smoke Alarms Work, But Not Forever: Revisited* (published in September 2015 by Len Garis, Joseph Clare and Sarah Hughan through the University of the Fraser Valley), compared the period 2007-2011 (pre-campaign) with the period 2012-2014 (post-campaign), and found: deaths per 100,000 citizens declined by 65%; deaths per 1,000 fires declined by 37%, the presence of working smoke alarms per 1,000 fires increased by 26%, and fires without any smoke alarms decreased by 17%.

When the 2015 figures are considered, the results are even more dramatic (although it is important to note that a handful of small departments had not reported when the data was extracted March 22, 2016). Between 2014 and 2015, there was an additional 35% decline in total deaths in residential fires, and a further 9% increase in the number of residential fires at which a working smoke alarm was present.

4. INNOVATION

Tell us why you consider this project/program to be an innovative and/or creative initiative.

Typically, smoke alarm programs are not sustained or consistent, and lack ongoing funding support. This campaign is built on collaboration, bringing together a wide range of partners from both the public and private sector that each offer different opportunities and approaches. The campaign succeeded in securing financial support from both business and government and social service agencies, with the

result that more than 41,000 smoke alarms have been distributed and installed across the province.

Also unique is the focus on new data to refresh the smoke alarm “story”. The promotion of smoke alarms is not new, and this has challenged the campaign to work harder to convince stakeholders that there is a new story to be told. By generating and sharing new and relevant research – e.g., about the declining function of alarms, the percentage of malfunctioning smoke alarms found in fires, and the most vulnerable populations – the campaign succeeded in generating widespread engagement in a new smoke alarm dialogue.

The unique qualities and success of this innovative project recently earned the City of Surrey and Fire Chiefs’ Association of BC an Award for Collaborative Excellence from the Canadian Collaborative Centres for Injury Prevention.

5. GOALS

What did you set out to accomplish with the program/project? How effectively did you meet your goals?

REDUCE FIRE-RELATED DEATHS, INJURIES AND LOSSES

The campaign’s desired outcome was reduced injury and death caused by residential fires in BC. A study of provincial fire statistics comparing 2007-2011 (pre-campaign) and 2012-2014 (post-campaign) data found that deaths per 100,000 citizens declined by 65%, while deaths per 1,000 fires declined by 37%. Further, there was an additional 35% decline in total deaths in residential fires between 2014 and 2015. This trend is expected to continue, following the campaign’s distribution and installation of 41,000 smoke alarms across BC, with a focus on vulnerable populations.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

Developing partnerships was an early mandate, given the recognition that a multi-faceted, sustainable approach was required. The campaign has successfully met this goal by engaging dozens of partners, including all levels of government, fire service organizations, business, emergency responders, health/medical organizations, a public utility, the real estate and insurance industries, community service organizations, and others.

RAISE AWARENESS

Educating the public, decision-makers and potential partners about the importance of working smoke alarms is an ongoing goal. The involvement of a number of government agencies, ministries and partners is an indication of the success in this

area. Further, public awareness has been raised through print and TV advertising, a website (www.workingsmokealarms.ca), media coverage, and campaign partners. For example, more than 55 FCABC members distributed free smoke alarms in their communities, the provincial government declared Provincial Smoke Alarm Awareness Day, and the Red Cross and several food banks began providing smoke alarm education to clients.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

What measures have you put in place to ensure the continued operation of this initiative?(e.g. staff time, resources, financial)

A Smoke Alarm Working Group has been struck that brings together various partners with the goal of continuing to seek new opportunities. The group includes representatives from the City of Surrey, FCABC, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Office of the Fire Commissioner, Fire Prevention Officers of BC, BC Real Estate Association, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Insurance Brokers of BC, Insurance Bureau of Canada, Kidde Canada, Black Press, the RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, BC Hydro and a number of BC municipal fire services.

At the City of Surrey, the campaign has been assigned to the Assistant Fire Chief with the fire prevention portfolio to ensure a continuing effort. The City, with its connections to the University of the Fraser Valley, has also helped monitor the campaign's success by reviewing and reporting on provincial fire statistics. The participation of Surrey staff in national injury prevention initiatives has also spread awareness of the project outside the province.

At the FCABC, the chair of the Fire & Life Safety Education Committee is also actively working on the project, and the entire committee continues to move the issue forward through its membership.

7. TRANSFERABILITY

How is this program/project transferable to other local governments?

The success of the BC Working Smoke Alarm Campaign has attracted attention from jurisdictions across North America and internationally, leading to a number of requests for information and speaking engagements. Other jurisdictions interested in achieving a similar goal could easily replicate the campaign's model, which relied on a foundation of data as well as diverse partnerships.

The project is an excellent example to other communities about the benefits of collaborating with a wide range of partners to improve service to residents.

In their day-to-day work, many communities address problems shared by other communities but often don't look beyond the city limits for a solution. Conducted within one community alone, this campaign would likely follow the same trend as other fire prevention campaigns – eventually dying out due to lack of ongoing funding and support.

By bringing in a variety of partners with like interests but different resources, the City of Surrey ensured that the campaign would not only have the capacity to continue to grow and evolve, but would be able to approach the problem from many different angles.

8. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

What helpful advice would you share with other communities looking to embark on a similar project?

Key activities should include the following:

1. Target resources: When approaching a problem, start by collecting data, initiating research, and looking for best practices locally and internationally. This process will not only hone in on the real issues but also pinpoint the problem, areas or individuals where you should best deploy your efforts and resources.
2. Seek partners – Bring others into the solution. Look to other cities, other levels of government, businesses and other organizations that might have something to gain by being involved. The more varied the partnership, the more creative and sustainable the approach will be, and the more effective the solution will be.
3. Determine longevity – Some problems require ongoing management while others require a one-time solution. Identify the type of problem you have and plan accordingly. Partnerships are essential to ensuring sustainability of resources and interest for problems that require a long-term approach.

Additionally, when choosing a primary partner(s), a jurisdiction should seek an organization that has similar goals and capacity, yet can bring value to the proposition. For example, in Surrey's case, the FCABC was a natural fit given the shared interest in reducing fire death and injury, the existing collaboration between the two entities, and the association's widespread reach and recognition in the province.

9. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may support your submission.

The roots of the BC Working Smoke Alarm Campaign are the City of Surrey's HomeSafe program, which received a 2013 Community Health and Safety Program Excellence Award from the International Association of City/County Managers. HomeSafe is a cost-effective smoke alarm giveaway program that involves home visits by firefighters and targets the populations and neighbourhoods most likely to be involved in fires. It has significantly reduced fires and fire losses in Surrey since its launch in 2008.

The data on which HomeSafe was based prompted Surrey's Fire Chief Len Garis to conduct further research on smoke alarm trends. A study of almost 50,000 fires in Alberta, B.C. and Ontario from 2006 to 2011 uncovered new information about working smoke alarms and ultimately led to the creation of the BC Working Smoke Alarm Campaign. The results of this research are reported in the research paper Smoke Alarms Work, but Not Forever (January 2012), available on the University of the Fraser Valley website (<http://cjr.ufv.ca> > Reports and Publications).

The initiative has earned the City of Surrey and Fire Chiefs' Association of BC a 2016 Award for Collaborative Excellence from the Canadian Collaborative Centres for Injury Prevention.

10. PARTNERS

a) Please list all the partners involved in this initiative. (no word limit)

Primary partner: Fire Chiefs' Association of BC

Provincial government (the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General co-launched the campaign in March 2012)

BC Professional Fire Fighters' Association

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

RCMP

Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs

Office of the Fire Commissioner

Fire Prevention Officers of BC

Volunteer Fire Fighters' Association of BC

BC Ambulance Service

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND)

Kidde Canada

BC Hydro,

Red Cross

Food Banks BC.

Super Save Group

Shaw Cable

Black Press

BC Real Estate Association

Insurance Brokers of BC

Insurance Bureau of Canada

United Way

b) Why did you choose to work with this/these particular partner(s)?

From the start, the campaign model relied heavily on engaging and activating a wide variety of stakeholders and partners.

Although the fire industry has promoted the use of smoke alarms for many years, smoke alarm programs are typically not sustained, targeted or supported with long-term funding, with the result being that any initial gains tend to drop off over time. The 2011 research by Surrey's Fire Chief and Strategic Planning Analyst published in *Smoke Alarms Work, but Not Forever* (University of the Fraser Valley, January 2012) made a strong case for a more comprehensive, consistent and continuing effort.

Surrey and the FCABC knew they would need to mobilize an army of diverse partners in order for the campaign to gain traction and to create a deeply ingrained understanding about the importance of working smoke alarms among BC communities, decision-makers and individuals.

To this end, they sought partners that would provide a variety of types of support, from pushing out smoke alarm information to the public or clients, to lending their name to add legitimacy to the campaign, to distributing smoke alarms to vulnerable populations, to providing financial support (including more than \$500,000 in cash and in-kind donations in the first year). These partnerships are critical in ensuring that the campaign can create long-term change.

