

January 31, 2020

Attention: Alison Slater
Executive Director, SILGA
PO Box 27017, Kamloops BC V2E 0B2

via email: yoursilga@gmail.com

RE: SILGA Community Excellence Awards – Social Responsibility

Dear Alison,

It is with a great deal of pride that I submit this nomination on behalf of the City of Vernon for a SILGA Community Excellence Awards in Social Responsibility. Like most urban centres, the City of Vernon is faced with a broad range of challenges to support and assist diverse at need populations homelessness, accessible and affordable housing, addictions, community safety, health and well-being.

The City of Vernon has developed a unique model, providing modest funds supporting Partners in Action Committee through a contract with the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan. The community development model for this committee is incredibly successful and the City of Vernon has been very satisfied with the outcomes and return on investment.

The Partners in Action Committee is a solution-oriented, community driven committee that addresses social issues with a community development approach. The role of the coordinating committee is to identify problems and/or solutions and then create and oversee action teams. Members of the coordinating committee are recruited from the community based on the skills and knowledge they bring to the table, in addition to representation of an agency, support group or a municipal service including RCMP, Bylaw Compliance and Planning. Each member is responsible for linking the committee to their resources (other committees, organizations, skill set).

The key to this model is to break down larger social issues into manageable solutions. When a problem is identified or brought forward to the coordinating committee, an action team is created. The task of the action team is to problem solve. They are the “worker bees” of the model. Key players for the action team are recruited from the community based on the skills, knowledge and connections needed to reach a solution. Action teams can be created ad hoc or include already established committees in the community. Once a solution is reached, the action team disbands. Anyone in the community can put forward a request for an action team, but the coordinating committee makes the final decision based on the available resources and chances of success.

The model was launched in 2008, and since this time, approximately 150 action teams have been initiated with literally hundreds of people taking part in the different action teams. Over the last decade, representation on action teams has included: 45 non-profit organizations; five faith groups; 35 different levels of federal, provincial and municipal government; 27 businesses; nine other community committees; two colleges/universities; 95 private citizens; and three local funders. Some examples of action teams include:

- Development of Community Strategies, Protocols and Networks:
The Partners in Action Committee hosts the Homelessness Strategy, Harm Reduction Strategy and Immigration and Settlement Strategy. Protocols have been developed to improve communications between RCMP, Bylaw and Outreach Workers as well as with Vernon Jubilee Hospital in relation to people who are homeless. Ongoing networks have been established between faith groups and service providers for emergency food response as well as regular networking meetings between housing non-profits to maintain an updated housing inventory and shared wait lists.
- Development of New Services and Programs:
The Partners in Action Committee secured the partnerships and funding for the Gateway Shelter and a variety of outreach programs. In 2008, the community had a baseline inventory of 233 affordable units for adults and families. In 2019, the number had more than doubled to 541 units, with another 195 units to be built in the next couple of years.
- Adoption of Policies, Resources and Tools:
The Partners in Action Committee secured a 75% discount for Recreation Services for people on a limited income with approximately 1500 people taking part annually. A Children's Charter was established in 2012 and childcare is embedded in the City of Vernon's Official Community Plan. In addition, education and resource tools have been developed for a range of topics including disposal of sharps, supporting people with FASD, and promoting the benefits of Immigration.

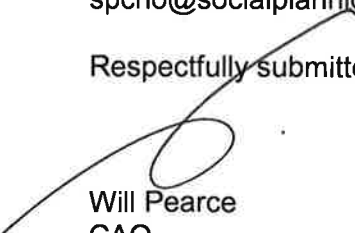
In addition to problem solving social issues, the action teams have also produced an economic spin off for the community. Since 2008, the action teams have secured: \$11,270,000 in capital funding: \$1,445,292 in project funding: \$1,175,000 for annual operational program funding: and created 15 full-time positions and 8 part time positions.

Most importantly, however, the Partners in Action model has produced an unprecedented level of trust and collaboration between stakeholders and service providers. Because the committee is results driven, people who take part feel that their time was valued and are more likely to take part again if requested. This has resulted in a model that is streamlined, flexible, and adaptable. The Partners in Action Committee has provided the City of Vernon with a successful mechanism for proactively dealing with social issues. The Social Planning Council has developed a resource that describes the model and provides an evaluation framework. This is available to other communities who are interested in learning more about the Partners in Action Committee.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PARTNERS IN ACTION:

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Respectfully submitted by:



Will Pearce
CAO