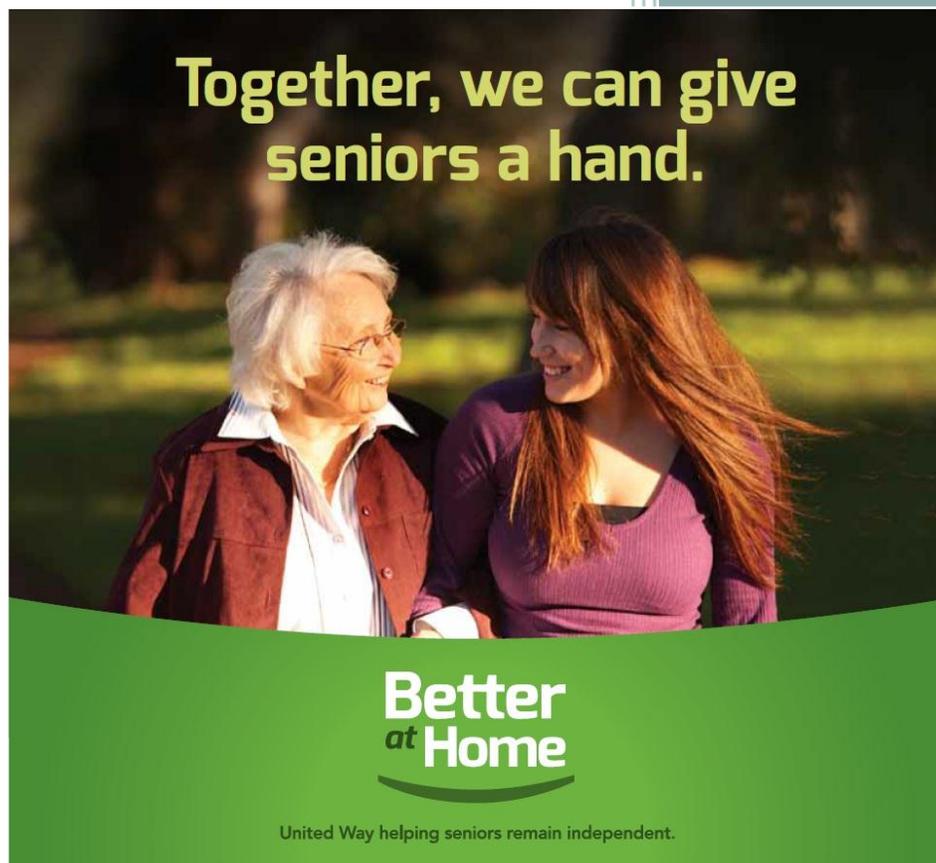


2012

Penticton Better at Home Community Development



Myrna Tischer
Final Report
12/10/2012

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Introduction

Better at Home is a program that helps seniors with simple day-to-day tasks so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. The program is funded by the Government of British Columbia and managed by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, with services delivered by a local non-profit organization. The Better at Home program is designed to address the specific needs of local seniors, allowing communities to choose from the following basket of services:



Penticton has been identified as a potential Better at Home site. Myrna Tischer was contracted as community developer to assess community readiness, identify seniors' assets, needs and priorities in regards to the basket of services, and help identify a potential lead organization best suited in the community to deliver the Better at Home program.

This report reflects the findings of the community developer and will be used by the lead organization to design an appropriate local Better at Home program that meets community needs.

1. Description of the local community development approach

The Community Developer took a number of different approaches to reach the target audience and optimize exposure to obtain meaningful input from the seniors' community in the time frame provided. The approach included activities with the intent to raise awareness of the issue of isolation and vulnerability in the senior population.

1.1 Activities

Organized and facilitated two public showings of the documentary film "The Remaining Light" produced by Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives which illustrates the decline in access to home and community care for seniors in BC. The first showing was an evening in the local college lecture theatre with an audience of 12 people. The second, afternoon showing at the public library had a much better turnout with 48 people in attendance. Discussion followed the film.

Developed and distributed a questionnaire to gauge public feedback on the local need for the Better at Home basket of services. Surveyed seniors at 2 flu clinics and Seniors' Day at Shoppers Drug Mart. Questionnaires were distributed to HandyDART riders, residents of Kiwanis housing and various agencies providing services to seniors as well as the film showings. In total, 277 questionnaires were completed.

To gather pertinent data, the questionnaire was modified after the first 90 to include two additional questions: "are you over 65?" and "are you interested in volunteering". Of the remaining 187 completed questionnaires 69% identified themselves as seniors, 25% non-seniors with the remaining not providing an answer to the question. 21% stated an interest in volunteering.

Met with 18 participants of the Adult Day program to speak casually about their experiences and need for support. In discussion with the coordinator, the decision was made not to ask these individuals to complete the questionnaires to avoid confusion regarding the current availability of services. These individuals confirmed their desire to remain in their own homes, shared the challenges of coping with loneliness and the benefits of socialization by attending the day program.

Met or consulted with representatives of local non-profit agencies, support services and businesses to understand more about local services for seniors, details of eligibility and access, opinions regarding challenges for local seniors and interest in the Better at Home program. Attended community meetings with various social service groups to introduce the program and encourage discussion of seniors' needs.

Made a presentation introducing the Better at Home program to City Council and invited representation at the Community meeting. As City Council was involved in budget deliberations, no representative was available to participate in the meeting.

Organized and co-facilitated the community and stakeholders meeting for final input into community development process which was very well attended by a total of 101 individuals including seniors and members of various community organizations.

1.2 Marketing / Advertising

Since traditional advertising is often costly, more innovative methods were explored to augment the outreach activities. Some were more successful than others but ironically, due to the number of registrations, some advertising had to be cancelled close to the date of the public meeting in order to manage the format of the meeting and allow participants their input within the time frame. One newspaper ad was cancelled and the offer of a radio interview was turned down.

Social media - Facebook page was created as a marketing tool, specifically to reach the 45 to 65 population concerned with the well-being of aging parents. However, due to limited Facebook skills and difficulty uploading photos and posters, energy was redirected.

Newspaper – Press release resulted in newspaper article “Program hits home with seniors” but missed opportunity for feature article due to short notice and scheduling conflict. Designed a newspaper advertisement to encourage seniors to attend the community meeting and speak out for what they need. This advertisement ran twice in the local community newspaper. The third posting scheduled to run in the other local newspaper was cancelled due to the growing number of registrations for the community meeting. Submitted a letter to the editor of the two local newspapers identifying general concerns about the issues for seniors who wish to maintain their independence; as well as information about the Better at Home program. This resulted in many direct phone calls from seniors wishing to share their stories and register for the meeting.

Created tent cards in same design as newspaper advertisements and ¼ page notes with info about community meeting and contact numbers. These small notes were placed in mini baskets with the tent cards, on dining tables at Seniors’ Drop in Centre during the monthly dinner in November as well as the weekly hot lunch. This was a successful and inexpensive marketing technique to encourage discussion about challenges of living independently.

Designed and distributed posters to market the film showings and community meeting, sent emails to contacts, posted on Facebook, utilized the free advertising through community coming events in newspaper, local radio and television. Notice was posted in Penticton Indian Band newsletter regarding the community meeting which resulted in two calls and one participant.

2. Community Profile

Penticton is a community within the Okanagan Similkameen District making up approximately 41% of the overall district population.

The city of Penticton has a population of 36,902 with a median age of 50.3 yrs. The census agglomeration of Penticton (including West Bench, Naramata, Kaleden, and Penticton Indian Reserve) has a population of 42,361 with a median age of 50.1 years; a marked increase from the median age of 47.9 in 2006 and much higher than the provincial median age of 41.9 yrs.

2.1 Description of the local seniors' population

BC Stats 2011 indicates 27% of the total population (city) or 25.8% (census agglomeration) is over 65 years, compared to the average in Canada (14.8%) and BC (15.7%). The senior population of the city of Penticton has increased only slightly (6.5%) from the last census (2006). However, in the last 10 years the number of residents over the age of 90 has increased by 147% (2001 – 2011) to 688 residents in the 90+ age range.

According to the 2011 census, the Aboriginal population on the Penticton Indian Reserve was 1667 (13.4% increase from 2006). The median age is noted as 55.9 yrs. However, the accuracy of the Census data regarding the Penticton Indian Band is curious as 2006 census showed 10 people over the age of 65 and a median age of 25.5 yrs.

11% of the population in Penticton has a first language other than English or French with German (2.7%) being the highest representation followed by Punjabi (2%). Of the two official languages, 87% of the population cites English as their first language and 1.8% French first language. 93% of the population indicates knowledge in English only as an official language, 6% had knowledge of English and French, .03 have knowledge of French only and 0.6% did not have knowledge of English or French.

Factors of vulnerability

Living Alone

The 2011 census indicates 9220 (92%) of people aged 65 and older living in private households in the city of Penticton. Of these, 2,960 (32%) are living alone (835 men & 2120 women); 210 are living with relatives (50 men & 160 women) and 235 are living with non-relatives (130 men & 100 women). 5815 people over 65 are counted as part of a census family (i.e.: part of a couple).

Within the census agglomeration of Penticton 10,170 (93%) of people aged 65 and older were living in private households. Of these, 3100 (30%) are living alone (895 men & 2210 women); 250 are living with relatives (60 men & 190 women) and 245 are living with non-relatives (140 men & 100 women). 6580 people are counted as part of a census family (i.e.: part of a couple).

Within the Penticton Indian Band, 640 people (38%) were aged 65 and older and all were living in private households. 135 (21%) were living alone (45 men & 85 women), 10 were living with relatives (5 men & 5 women) and 15 were living with non-relatives (5 men & 10 women) 485 were counted as part of a census family (i.e.: part of a couple)

In the past two years, seniors have been the fastest growing group of individuals in Penticton who find it necessary to access the food bank on a regular basis”.

Salvation Army

Poverty: Low Income Cut Off for one person in a community the size of Penticton is \$16,124.00 (after tax income). The prevalence of low income seniors in 2006 was 31.6% (26.4% men and 34% women). Poverty issues were mentioned as a growing problem by ten local service agencies. The growing gap between the rich and the poor, the rising cost of food and basic necessities on a fixed income is resulting in some difficult choices for seniors. The local Men’s shelter has seen an increase in homeless seniors in the community.

Mental Health: Mental health issues (depression, anxiety, and dementia) continue to be the largest diagnosed chronic health issue in BC. (British Columbia Medical Association) 32.8% of Penticton residents report suffering depression or anxiety on a chronic basis vs. 22.6% for all of BC (Vital Signs report 2011)

A meeting with the senior’s mental health team from Interior Health indicated a high incidence of mental health concerns among seniors with new referrals coming in every week. Common issues were a lack of transportation, isolation and hoarding tendencies. A meeting with the Mental Health Coalition reported an increase in the complexity of issues within seniors’ independent living situations. Requests for one-to-one supports such as transportation, housekeeping and visiting are increasing.

Housing: Low income housing options for seniors through BC Housing include 115 Bachelor suites, 84 one bedroom suites and 11 two bedroom suites. These units are accessible to both eligible seniors and adults with disabilities. Due to the wide range of what is considered a disability, some concerns from residents and others were noted about the safety of vulnerable, elderly residents in this type of housing mix.

A Canada Mortgage and Housing Report estimates the South Okanagan region has a population of 11,296 over the age of 75. This report cites 2105 units in the South Okanagan including various levels of care in what this report refers to independent living, assisted living and heavy care. This indicates only 18% of the population over 75 has access to this type of housing. The private senior residences are sometimes referred to as “supportive housing” or “independent living” and include a meal or two per day and access to recreation and socialization. CMHC cites the rental cost in the South Okanagan ranges from \$1695 to \$2815 per month averaging \$2038 per month, lower than the provincial average of \$2672 but still above the financial ability of many local seniors.

According to the Interior Health Authority website, there are 142 Assisted Living Units and 487 Residential Care beds in Penticton. An expansion at Haven Hill is near completion and will add an additional 66 residential care beds. With the growing elderly population it is clear that supports to allow people to safely remain in their own homes is practical and cost effective.

Isolation: The Okanagan Valley attracts many seniors as a retirement destination but the economic stability does not produce the employment opportunities needed to support a younger population. Therefore, many seniors do not have family living nearby and can quickly find themselves isolated as they age. The lack of diversity in the Penticton population can also result in greater isolation or vulnerability for those whose identities, cultures or histories exclude them from meaningful community participation.

The Coordinator for Adult Day Care program stated it is not unusual for participants in the program to have no support. Most seniors would prefer to live in their own homes but concerns were also noted that some individuals are reluctant to consider residential care and wait too long to be assessed creating a situation where decisions are made in a crisis situation. As some facilities have long wait lists in terms of preference and there are limited beds, transition is often very stressful.

Access to information: Penticton has various community services available for seniors but most services are for the general public, with seniors being a segment of the client group. A common concern heard from seniors was the inability to get the information needed, knowing who to call or frustration of getting lost in the navigation process of teleprompts or options of online access to information with expectations of technological skills. Even with good computer skills, finding local resources for seniors is challenging. At a meeting with the Interagency Community Services group, it was stated that seniors are the #1 group with misinformation, resulting in fear, isolation, and lack of knowledge regarding options. This concern was reinforced at the public input meeting with a strong message that easy access to information was of utmost importance.

2.2 Summary of community assets

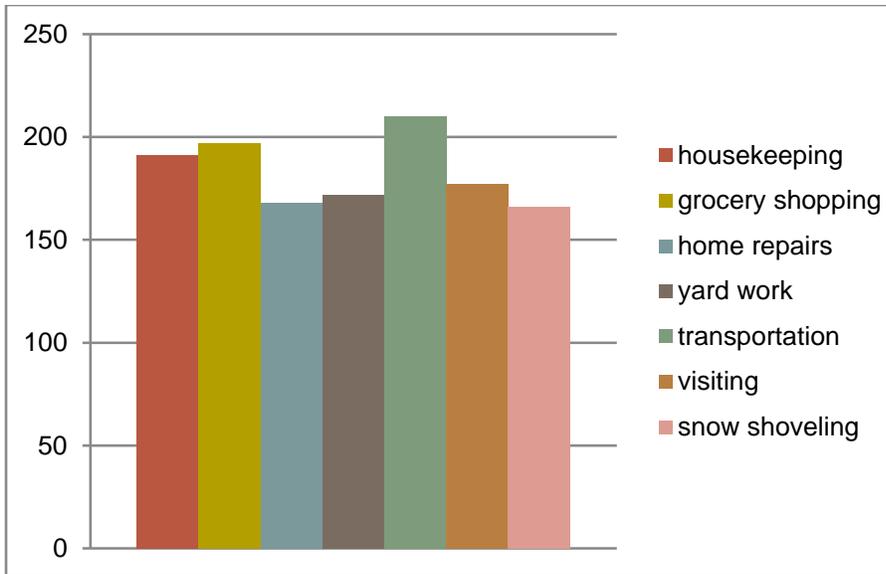
Organizations providing services exclusively targeted to the seniors' population include South Okanagan Seniors' Wellness Society, South Main Seniors Drop in Centre and the Adult Day program at Village by the Station. Many health related services have a majority of senior clients but considering the proportion of the senior population in Penticton, a central seniors' hub would be well utilized.

Specifics regarding community assets for seniors are listed at the end of this report, including services for information and resources, non-medical supports, recreation and socialization, housing, low income or poverty issues, health related services and more.

2.3 Seniors needs related to the non-medical home support services

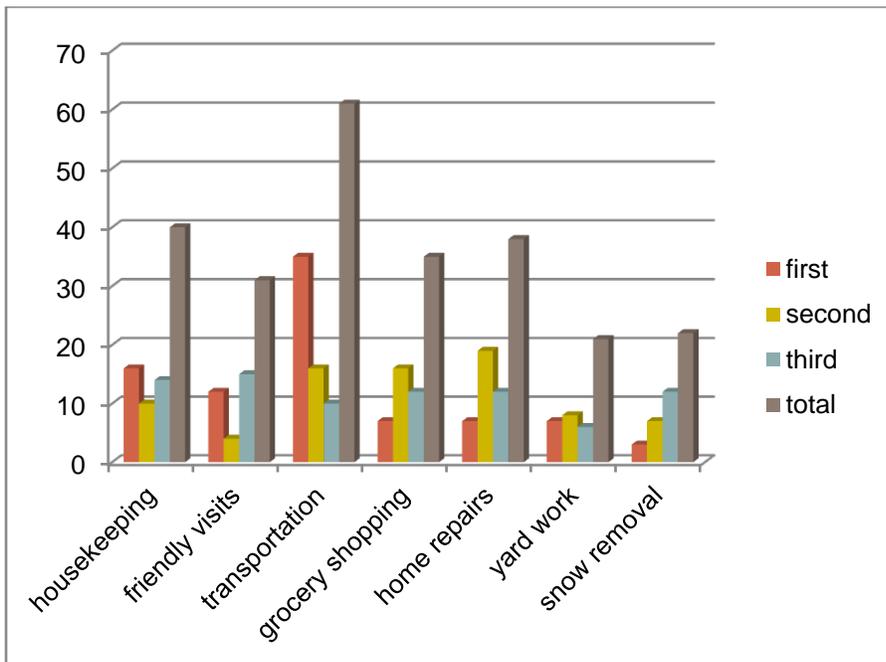
Seniors and other community members were surveyed regarding the needs in Penticton for non-medical support services. Results are based on 277 completed questionnaires, selection of priorities as identified at the community meeting by over 90 participants and 42 evaluations. Support was given to all non-medical services as identified in the Better at Home basket of services with some obvious indication of priorities.

With one HandyDART bus in Penticton and approximately 500 registered riders it is easy to see why the demand is greater than the service can deliver and transportation was considered top priority. Another significant aspect of the lack of transportation that was identified at the community meeting was the availability of options outside of city limits. Redwing, an adult gated community adjacent to Penticton, has 450 homes with an aging population and no bus service; as is the situation for the Penticton Indian Reserve, West Bench, and Kaleden. A recent BC Transit Service Review (Sept 2012) recommended an additional HandyDART bus as first priority and was included in all three options of transit service improvement for Penticton.



Questionnaire Results: percentage of 277 respondents

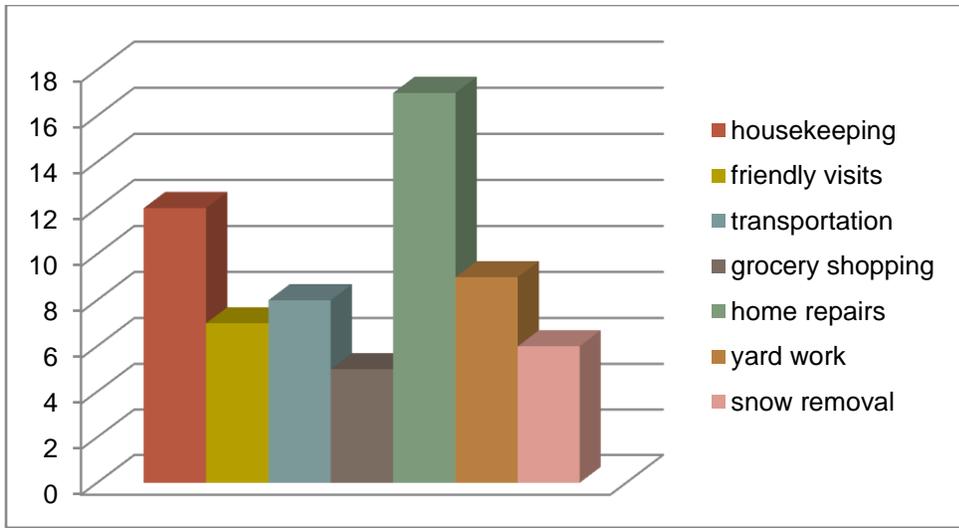
76% Transportation
 71% Grocery shopping
 69% Housekeeping
 64% Visiting
 62% Yard work
 61% Home repair
 60% Snow shoveling



Results from the Community Meeting

Top three choices identified,
 #1 transportation
 #2 housekeeping
 #3 friendly visits;
 however, when considering all top three choices combined, the top three were transportation, housekeeping and home repairs.

Of all the input collection data, the only one that deviated from the common responses were the 42 evaluation forms completed at the community meeting, the services selected from the “basket of services” are shown here. Of these 42 responses to the question “If you are a senior and interested in accessing Better at Home services, which services would you be interested in?”, transportation did not make the top three responses. Home repairs were of far greater importance together with housekeeping and yard work as top three. It should be noted that the majority of people who attended this community meeting had their own transportation.



2.4 Suggested opportunities for service integration / coordination

Penticton and District Community Resources Society and South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society are two agencies with deep roots in the community. When considering the eligibility criteria, suitability and sustainability of the services, these two organizations, as partners, are a good choice to initiate the Better at Home program for Penticton. Each brings expertise and strengths to form a partnership that can be responsive to the needs of seniors.

Other suggested community partners include Home and Community Care services with the Interior Health Authority as the main referral source. Other service integration and coordination could be explored with South Main Seniors Drop in Centre, South Okanagan Volunteer Centre, local colleges and high schools for possible student volunteers as well as other non-profit agencies interested in working on solutions for seniors’ issues. Community collaboration will be a crucial component to success.

3. Community Readiness

3.1 Explanation of community readiness

As reflected in the strong community response, Penticton demonstrates both a readiness in terms of the need for services and an interest in involvement by way of volunteering.

Although concerns were heard about the ability to attract the volunteers needed to make this program successful, it should be noted that Penticton has a reputation as a community with substantial volunteer capacity and commitment. Also of significance is the response received from the question of interest in volunteering on both the questionnaires and the community meeting. 41 respondents (22%) of those who completed the questionnaire with

the question regarding interest in volunteering answered “yes”. An additional 18 individuals (18%) at the community meeting completed forms providing their names and contact information to be passed on to the lead agency indicating their interest in volunteer opportunities.

Penticton and District Community Resources has the infrastructure to act as a strong lead agency with financial stability, accreditation and desire to provide services to the growing senior population. Due to the strong family component of the organization, opportunities for intergenerational programming are a possibility. Partnership with the South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society will ensure a seamless transition with their service mandate to expand the non-medical support services already offered in the community. Both organizations have the potential for a regional growth capacity.

3.2 Potential risks going forward

Access to information regarding services for seniors was a common concern heard throughout the community development process and seems to be a major barrier for addressing the needs of this population. The services in Penticton for seniors seem to be fragmented throughout the community. This sentiment was reinforced at the community meeting and suggestions were strong for a central, accessible location or seniors HUB.

Exacerbating this confusion is the similar names of agencies delivering services. For example, the South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society has changed both its’ location and mandate over the last few years. There continues to be confusion and reference to Seniors Recreation and Wellness Centre in a former location now operated by Penticton and District Society for Community Living and sometimes known as the Winnipeg St Leisure Centre. The relatively new location of the South Okanagan Seniors’ Wellness Society office is not well known and there is no sign on the outside of the building which indicates its’ presence. Moving forward, a partnership with Penticton and District Community Resources Society (a name very similar to Penticton and District Society for Community Living) will need to address the potential challenge of further confusion with two points of entry for the Better at Home program.

Due to the outpouring of response from all involved parties, it is reasonable to expect that there will be a higher need for services than the ability to respond when relying on volunteers for service delivery. Some of the services may be more problematic than others to deliver and the expectation of reasonable parameters will need to be considered and addressed with those receiving services as well as care taken to support volunteers to maintain reasonable expectations.

Another consideration will be to ensure the administrative costs of delivering the Better at Home services in a partnership model are no greater than a service delivery model using one agency.

4. Local Better at Home Program details

Building upon the current services offered in the community with relation to the Better at Home program, the agencies selected will create a service delivery model based on the information obtained through the community development process.

4.1 List of preferred services from the Better at Home basket of services

Transportation

Almost every facet of the community development process identified transportation as the top priority.

Housekeeping

Although not as obvious as transportation, the second most identified service was housekeeping. It is not clear if the response was based on the need for these services or a desire, but as this service was once a part of the home support program and is still offered in 9 Canadian provinces to assist seniors to remain in their own homes, it is clear that help with housekeeping is an important aspect of remaining in the home.

Grocery Shopping

Third choice was grocery shopping but the need for grocery shopping was greater for those living in the downtown core as grocery stores are located at the other end of town. This fact may have affected the outcome of this service being identified as a priority. It should also be noted that if transportation was more available, individuals may have the ability to get to the grocery stores to do their own shopping.

Home Repairs

Input from the community meeting identified assistance with home repairs to be of importance. This service was considered the most important for the 42 individuals who completed the evaluation forms.

Visiting

Of the 277 questionnaires completed, visiting was identified in the top four services. However, when results from the community meeting were added, visiting became less important. It is possible that the attendance at the meeting was not representative of seniors who are alone and isolated.

Yard Work and Snow Removal

Consideration should be given to the variables of living circumstances of the respondents. For example, apartment dwellers are not usually in need of yard work or snow shoveling and both of those services are seasonal so the importance of these services would be different if they were combined. Additional comments provided on the questionnaires mentioned these services more often than other issues and several people were quite concerned about fines for not clearing sidewalk of snow. Every winter there are injuries related to seniors attempting to clear snow. The volunteer snow angel program with the city has not been funded for this winter.

Other

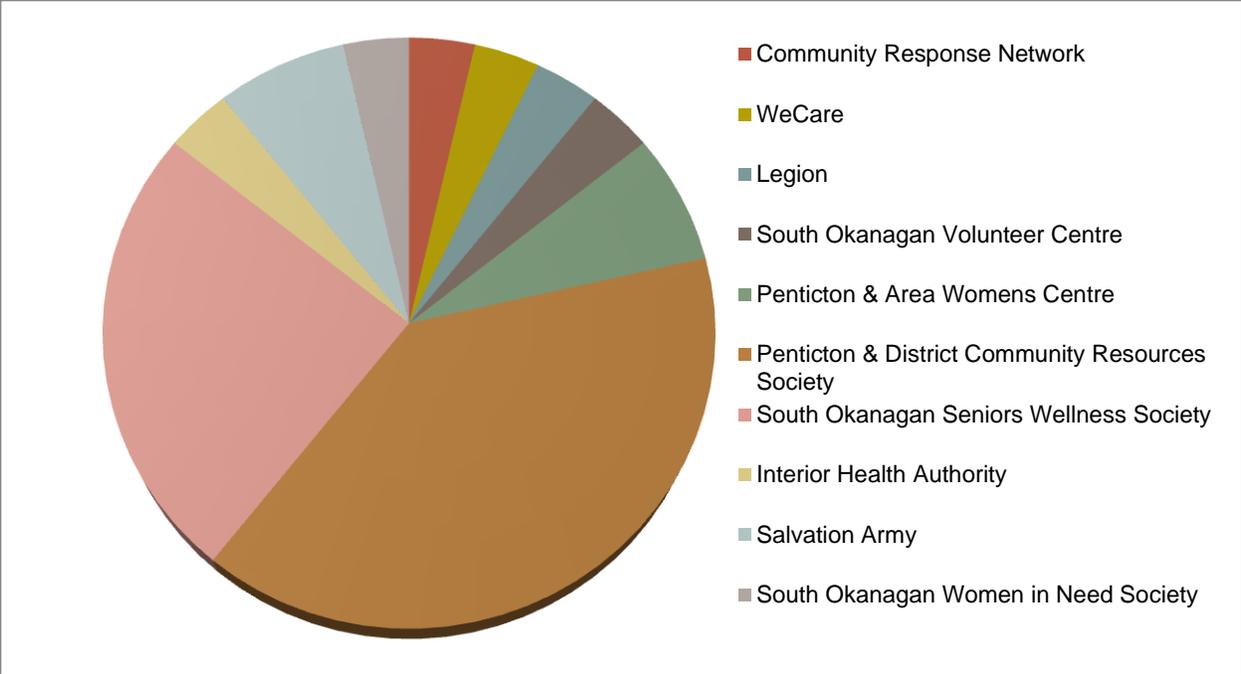
Additional common patterns of concern were help with meal preparation and pet care. Although pet care is not part of the Better at Home services, consultation with the SPCA may provide opportunities for referral for suitable volunteers willing to help.

4.2 Proposed lead agency

South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society has a mandate to provide non-medical home supports with an outreach model. They have been operating a volunteer friendly visitor program since 2006 and provide monthly interest sessions and elder abuse prevention workshops. Their database offers access to information, resources and referrals specifically for seniors. This is a small organization with limited capacity.

Penticton and District Community Resources Society is a large, well established, accredited agency providing various community services and programs for children, families and people with disabilities. They operate the HandyDART bus and have the infrastructure and capacity to manage the Better at Home program.

These two agencies both indicated an interest to be lead agency. Community response when asked for suggestions for lead agency showed strong support as shown on chart below and together are the best choice to meet all of the criteria for eligibility, suitability and ability to sustain the program.



5. Recommendations and next steps

Ensure the services address the 5 A's - Accessible, Affordable, Acceptable, Available, Adaptable

It is the suggestion of the Community Developer to engage the South Main Seniors Drop in Centre in a discussion about the possibility of collaboration or usage of space. This location is well known as a place for seniors and is easily accessible with lots of parking and a bus stop in front. Although this organization did not show interest in leading the project, a possible service delivery model with a minimum representation once a week would not require any permanent office space. The location would be an effective focal point to hold regular volunteer recruitment, orientation and training sessions. Another possibility would be a designated day at the Penticton Community Centre.

It is the position of the Community Developer to take advantage of the work done as a pre-marketing phase to promote this program. The interest in Better at Home program generated in the community can provide leverage to recruit volunteers and market the services to seniors. The community developer created an email address and obtained a second phone line for the contract period and this could be transferred to remain as the contact point. Better at Home brochures that were circulated in the community include this phone and email contact.

Focusing on a quality volunteer program with clear policy, orientation, training and ongoing support without making it an onerous process will take both effort and finesse. The need for criminal record checks, references, drivers' abstract etc., for the recruitment of volunteers

may detract from the follow through of some potential volunteers, but due diligence to protect the well-being of the vulnerable population served, is of utmost importance. Creating a supportive, respectful and inviting culture within the volunteer base is more likely to result in a program that grows through internal marketing. Volunteers with good experiences recruit their friends.

Another possibility is to include an opportunity for local businesses to become “endorsed” for a corporate fee or donation. Selected employees could undergo the same screening as volunteers, be given identification and hence become approved for referral purposes. This would be an opportunity for local businesses to support the program and give the senior clients a greater assurance of trust. Including this type of component has potential to support sustainability and make the screening process a desirable asset instead of a deterrent for volunteers - somewhat like the Better Business Bureau – an endorsement of “Better at Home approved”

When possible, if client is not referred by Interior Health, outreach services for intake including home interviews with clients who are isolated should be considered to ensure the safety and suitability of both the senior client and volunteers with a clear understanding of the client need in order to respond appropriately.

Develop a service delivery model for transportation consulting with other successful volunteer driver programs in the region and the province. For instance, Neighbourlink in Summerland and Lower Similkameen Community Services Society in Keremeos both have active volunteer driver programs in the region. Langley Senior Resources Society is another model to consider. In comparing these models, a centralized system of payment for gas compensation is suggested to avoid direct payment to volunteer drivers. Since the need for transportation is so well recognized in the community, donations from service clubs or other fundraising initiatives could be a popular way to provide subsidies for this service.

Due to the interest in volunteering that has been generated by the community development process it would be recommended to begin volunteer recruitment as soon as possible. Since all services are important to the people who need them and community participation is such a crucial component of this program, it is recommended to focus on skills, interests and abilities of potential volunteers to match services requested rather than attempting to develop programs for each service.

It will be important to build good community relationships with other service providers and businesses to ensure a community approach to address the needs of seniors. Better at Home should not be seen as competition and it would be beneficial to continue to make efforts to collaborate in order to support the senior population as a community. For example, enlisting assistance from other organizations for expertise in issues related to aging such as understanding dementia and falls prevention for volunteer training.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Summary Notes from Consultations

Excerpts from comments made by community stakeholders regarding challenges of local seniors

- Loneliness is very prevalent
- Transportation, where to get help with glasses and teeth etc. Lots of lonely people out there
- Transportation, widening gap between the rich and poor - more people “at risk” than the community is aware. Child care programs seeing more seniors caring for or having custody of grandchildren
- Loneliness / social isolation, unaware of resources available to them, help needed for proper nutrition & housekeeping
- Transportation, mental health, isolation, finances, health
- Isolation, no family nearby, concern about losing driver’s license, loneliness, confusion in navigating the system, transportation always an issue, medical support – advocacy
- Poverty, need for mediations, bankruptcy issues, isolation, mental health, navigating the system
- Poverty, isolation, transportation, need for one stop shop for information
- Access to services and support, affordability. In home services such as hairdressing & foot care; Caregiver burnout - stress is poison
- Lack of transportation, access to nutritious food, poverty. Isolation, affordable housing
- Increased mental health issues, hoarding/safety, elder abuse. Assessment through IHA is a long process
- Challenges for organizations serving seniors – managing the expectations. Coordinators are crucial to manage successful volunteer groups.
- Wait list too long for long term care and/or assessment, often discharged from hospital with no care in place
- Loneliness, safety
- Transportation a huge issue. HandyDART is frustrating. Some residents don’t make the effort to socialize
- Dementia and early onset Alzheimers
- Transportation – taxi savers good but no bus service on reserve
- Access to information and financial issues
- Hoarding, transportation, isolation
- Caregiver burnout. Reluctance to residential care. Not unusual to have no support

- Need is greater & greater and the money is not going as far
- More complex issues within seniors' independent living. More requests for one-on-one supports (transportation, housekeeping, visiting)
- Transportation, isolation, housekeeping. More calls for non-medical transportation

Comments from community members who completed questionnaires

- We would appreciate snow ploughing and of course would pay.
- Very good idea. Needed in Penticton.
- Assistance with preparing meals.
- Meals-on-Wheels.
- I know of many seniors in our community who really are in need of these services.
- Transportation is vital as most seniors are using assistive walking devices and are not that stable. Having someone trained in escorting seniors is important.
- Visits from a physical trainer who could help with exercises and movement.
- Snow shoveling is a vital service as, in many areas; people are fined if their sidewalk has not been cleared of snow.
- Paying for services is very expensive.
- This is a very good idea.
- All of the suggested services are very important.
- Visiting seniors who have no family is important.
- Assistance with meal preparation.
- Thank you to the Senior Wellness Centre for the support they offer.
- I feel this is a very important component to assist aging with dignity in one's own home. Non-medical assistance should be an available option for all elderly staying in their own homes.
- I think this would be very helpful to the many seniors that we have here in Penticton.
- Subsidized services, e.g. housekeeping. Also, taxi vouchers as they can be so expensive.
- Pet therapy visits.
- A "buddy system" – a network for checking that seniors living alone are OK.
- Assistance with meal preparation.
- Visits from a chiropodist.
- Handidart program is great.
- It is good to know that this is being raised as an issue.
- Good luck in getting volunteers!
- It is difficult to assess the needs of others when one does not yet need these services oneself. Also, some seniors are eligible for support (paid for by veteran affairs, provincial support services, private coverage etc.). Also, are the services being paid for under this program by individuals or by the province of BC?
- Great ideas!

- All non-medical support services are needed for those seniors who have no family or friends to contact. A support group should be formed and made available for seniors who have no other contacts. A “buddy” system would be good to make Good Morning calls for “shut-ins” who find it hard to reach out to people.
- Keep up the good work!
- Please can we have more *affordable* housing and in-home medical care in Penticton?
- I am not ready for home support services as I handle all the cooking and shopping. I am healthy and able to look after myself. Thank you for trying to help me out. Perhaps later when I get older.
- Be generous and help. We won't be here forever.
- At this time, too many older people are looking after older people. THIS IS EXHAUSTING. It's time for 45-60 year-olds to be doing some caring.
- Stop treating seniors as society's rejects that no longer contribute.
- There should be a card or something for people in apartments to hang on the outside of their door. Someone could check this every morning, mark the date on it and then put it back under the door ready for the next day. A note could be put on the door card if help is needed, with appropriate phone numbers of family members, doctors etc., if required. Also, there could be a list given to every tenant that contains names of people who can be called any time, day or night, for information. There could be personal information on this list for every tenant too, containing where they keep their meds, who should call for an ambulance if required, who would pay etc. There should be noted on the list who could be called if someone was unsure of physical symptoms they were experiencing because, as everyone knows, a stitch in time saves nine.
- There needs to be a grocery store downtown as there are many seniors in this area who are in need of this service.
- Thank you United Way. As our numbers grow, it is a *must* that we are able, with help, to remain living independently in our homes. The savings for BC and all provinces will surely add up, along with riches of self-preservation and spirit.
- At one time, Penticton Home Support did all of these services. Whatever happened to the casino and lottery monies that were supposed to go to health services? Dollars to doughnuts into retired politicians' pockets....
- A good grocery store in the north part of the city, where seniors could walk to would be good and give an opportunity for exercise too.
- Great service! So needed. You guys ROCK!
- There are many disabled, me being one, who certainly could use some of these services.
- Very good start!

- I think it's always better for a person to stay in their own home as long as possible. I understand that economically it is less costly to provide services to help make this possible than it is to have people living in a care facility.
- This is a great idea. Also, it would be good to have transportation to events, e.g. curling club, pub, teas, lunches etc.
- A major change is needed to attract more volunteers.
- The wheel has turned and now we find it cheaper to keep people in their own homes. When I first arrived in Penticton, a program similar to this was in place. If it works well, it is a blessing for those who need these services. An interesting meeting – especially with the young lady and her energy!
- Down the road I will need help with yard work, home repairs and who knows what else. I will be able to pay for services, but it is often difficult to find someone capable and/or available to do small jobs. *I do not want to live in a condo or apartment.* I plan to stay in my house as long as possible.
- I am 75 years old and have no family here in Penticton and need help with things (even to change a light bulb). I want to stay in my home. Please help
- In one form or another, most seniors will need these services. Some will be able to pay for them, others won't. I am not sure volunteers can/will do many of these – liability/screening issues would be a concern. There needs to be a lead agency which is creditable/trustworthy with a focus on *all* seniors. There is no such agency that currently exists.
- This subject is very broad and this survey doesn't specify enough to be helpful for me to give information. There is no doubt in my mind that there is great need for all of these services, especially for the 80+ group.
- Transportation is especially important for seniors who live *off* the bus route or who have mobility or cognitive challenges that make understanding the bus schedule or getting to the shops on time difficult.
- Respite for caregivers is also needed.
- A downtown senior centre would be useful. Let's use the Community Centre more. Are you considering End of Life care?
- This is a small part of all services important to elder care and caregiver care.
- Very good.
- Establish a possible volunteer (community help) support program where high school students could participate. Great community interaction between seniors and students etc. Create some kind of incentive for student participation? Unfortunately society's greatest volunteer population are ageing themselves. Encourage independence – home support is essential and acknowledging personal caregivers.
- Working in Home Support, I recognize that many of these activities are not being done by individuals. Many people do not have family support to assist them, so these services would be very welcome. Great idea!

- The seniors I know would find all the above services helpful. Many women live alone on low incomes and it is difficult for them to get the assistance they need at a price they can afford.
- Visits for interaction and for bringing health information would be useful.
- No, I did not approve.
- There are many people that have no help. If my family moves, I would need extra help.
- Any help to keep people in their homes and happy is great.
- Different people have different needs. All the suggested services could be implemented.
- I think it is very important that people stay in their homes – for health and financial reasons. Also, if people cannot qualify for their driver’s license, they are in even greater need of assistance.
- Bathing, cooking and feeding services would be useful.
- Good idea!
- I wish to remain in my own home, but due to illness and disabilities, have difficulty with some yard work and home maintenance. I have no family living close by to help me with the above things and would greatly appreciate help with them!
- So very happy that this discussion is taking place and am personally aware of the deep void in home support – even for hospital-discharged patients. My husband and I fully support and verify the great need for this support system, especially for low income seniors etc. Truly hope this small miracle can happen through United Way which we support.
- I am grateful to see that there is a program such as this. It is very much needed. Looking back in time, I was very active in doing many of these services (on a voluntary basis), when I was still able-bodied.
- Stressful areas are bill-paying and interpreting doctors’ analyses. These areas need help too.
- Having struggled with health issues over the last two years, these practical supports would have resulted in faster recovery time by me not having to worry about how to manage.
- With seniors living longer and in increased numbers, non-medical support will be needed more than ever. This support provides quality of life and helps ensure seniors’ safety.
- Sunday transportation for church visits would be good.
- Sunday transportation to and from church was what I needed as that was where my friends gathered.
- All these suggested services would be helpful. Visiting would be especially good where a senior has no family in town.

Comments from evaluations by community meeting participants

- I would like to see this program to be sustainable and to assist other vulnerable or needy community members rather than operating in a silo
- I would like to see the edge of the term “senior” softened so that the isolation key age demographic is listened to through the program, not emphasized. Building in knowledge and wisdom sharing empowers people to transition through changes. Our culture does not provide enough time or space for this.
- My organization, Peachland Wellness Center, already provides some of the same services as Better at Home, but we still need improved and increased resources – services for isolated seniors
- I would encourage inclusion of regional district lands (Redwing, West Bench and Indian Reserve) as they are not always covered by Penticton services. Also Summerland, Naramata, Kaleden and OK Falls if possible
- I would like to see an organization with a strong ability for r..in, strong organization ethics and handle volunteers
- People being isolated in case of problems
- Provide some sort of database of services
- Location of organization should be easily accessible and senior friendly with definite hours on a bus route
- Great to have a gathering place to share and obtain what is available
- Sorry, I couldn't understand speak as I am very deaf and hearing aids don't help I just get ... of speech

Met or consulted with representatives from the following agencies, organizations and businesses:

- Penticton and District Community Resources Society
- South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society
- Penticton Bereavement Resource Centre
- Lifeline program
- South Okanagan Victim Assistance Society
- South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services
- Penticton and Area Women's Centre
- South Okanagan Senior's Wellness Society
- Alzheimer Society of BC
- South Okanagan Women in Need Society
- RCMP Victim Services
- South Okanagan Volunteer Centre
- South Main Seniors Drop In Centre
- Canadian Cancer Society

- Penticton and District Community Living Society
- Kiwanis Housing
- Charles Manor
- Footprints Centre
- City of Penticton Yards – Snow Angel program
- Freemasons volunteer driver program
- Veteran Affairs Canada
- Interior Health Authority – Seniors Mental Health
- Interior Health Authority – Community and Home Care
- Nurse Next Door
- We Care
- Village by the Station
- Meals on Wheels

Meetings attended

- Mental Health Coalition
- Integrated Community Services
- Community Response Network
- Penticton Regional Hospital Volunteer information session
- Volunteer workshop
- Advance Care planning workshop
- Kiwanis Club meeting - presentation
- City Council meeting - presentation
- Meeting with BC Minister for State of Seniors, Ralph Sultan; MLA, Bill Barisoff; Mayor, Dan Ashton and various regional seniors' service providers

Contacts attempted, invitations extended to community meeting

- South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family practice
- BC Government and Services Employees Union (local 807)
- Home & Community Care, Penticton Indian Band
- Media contacts

Email received from Patient Voices Network after the community meeting extending an interest in being involved - possible representation for advisory committee.

Appendix B - List of Community Assets

Information & Resources

South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society provides information and resources for a wide range of topics related to seniors' interests from their database of local community resources and services.

Penticton and District Community Resources Society has a Community Services Directory on their website providing information regarding various local services, groups and organizations.

Interior Health Home and Community Care Services has a list of community services and resources which include many of the options for non-medical home support services in a user pay system. This list is for information only and is not a recommendation or endorsement of the Interior Health Authority in any way. The existence of this list does not seem to be well known.

Experience 50+ Living is a community guide produced annually covering the Central and South Okanagan with information on housing, health, professional services, leisure and travel, resources and Government services related to older adults. Many of the services are located in Kelowna.

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services is a non-profit organization providing services for immigrants and building community through promoting multicultural respect. Services for seniors include information and resources, settlement services, ESL classes, computer classes and assistance with understanding government regulations and forms.

Non-medical Supports

Penticton and District Community Resources Society operates the BC Transit HandyDART bus service and taxi saver coupons for eligible, registered users to provide transport service for people with disabilities who are unable to use conventional transit service without assistance.

South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society offers the Friendly Visitor program matching volunteers to seniors to relieve loneliness, isolation and vulnerability and support healthy independence.

Veterans Affairs Canada administers the Veterans Independence Program which provides financial assistance for services such as grounds maintenance and housekeeping for eligible individuals or widows. A new model is being introduced that will require veterans to manage their own arrangements through a granting model.

Nurse Next Door, We Care and various private, fee for service small businesses offer personalized services including companionship, transportation, light housekeeping and meal preparation as well as additional medical supports for seniors living in their own homes.

Snow Angels: City of Penticton was offering a volunteer snow removal program but it has not been supported in this year's budget.

Several local Grocery stores offer delivery services and sometimes shopping for various fees. Many local pharmacies also offer free delivery for prescriptions.

Recreation and Socialization

The South Main Seniors Drop-in Centre Society is a non-profit organization operating with volunteers and one part-time, paid manager. This is a very active group with a large facility including a commercial kitchen, great hall, games rooms, meeting rooms and craft room. A monthly calendar offers many recreational and social options for members. Annual membership is \$20. There is also a large community bulletin board where advertisements for services are posted.

The Winnipeg Street Leisure Centre offers a variety of scheduled games and social activities. Penticton Computer Club meets regularly in this location. There is no recreation coordinator on site, but space is rented out for the activities and is advertised on a monthly calendar of events.

Village by the Station Adult Day Program operates 6 days a week with up to 18 participants a day. Transportation, lunch, snacks and entertainment provide an opportunity for socialization for seniors living in their own homes as well as a break for caregivers. Participants are referred by Interior Health with cost based on income and a wait list is ongoing.

Penticton Community Centre has recreational facilities including a pool, whirlpool, sauna, steam room, fitness room and programs. The L.I.F.E. program offers free and low cost recreation opportunities for those on a limited income. Penticton Steps Out is a program to encourage walking for fitness with access to an indoor walking track at the South Okanagan Events Centre open Monday – Friday (excluding event days) for days not suitable or enjoyable for walking.

Canadian Mental Health Association of South Okanagan Similkameen promotes mental health and supports people experiencing mental illness. Services include advocacy, education, improved mental health through socialization and meals at Unity House Clubhouse.

South Okanagan Gay and Lesbian Association is non-profit organization based in Penticton that offer many GLBT related activities in the South Okanagan. Activities includes:

Dances, Potlucks, Movie Nights, Lake Cruises, Fund Raisers Garage Sales and a Men's Book club.

South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society is a non-profit organization providing education and support for individuals with acquired brain injuries (including stroke). Services include case management, one-to-one and group supports, education, recreation and employment programs. A housing program also assists client in finding affordable housing.

Churches and Service Clubs: 26 churches and religious organizations and 36 service clubs and lodges in Penticton.

Housing

BC Housing administers the SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters) program, providing rent subsidies for low income seniors, Home Adaptations for Independence for home modifications, access to Seniors Supportive Housing, Seniors Rental and Subsidized Housing for low income persons over 55.

Low Income or Poverty Issues

South Okanagan Women in Need Society offers services for abused women and their children. They also provide an outreach support program specifically for mature women (aged 50+) who have experienced abuse. Programs such as Wisdom and Energy linking older women with younger women to offer learning opportunities are examples of innovative intergenerational programs.

Penticton and Area Women's Center is a non-profit organization providing services to both women and men. The center is a comprehensive source for information, resources and advocacy for legal and poverty issues. Outreach services and assistance with forms including a volunteer income tax completion service. A directory for free and low cost goods services and advocacy is available on their website.

Salvation Army operates a local Food Bank, Thrift Store, Men's Emergency Shelter as well as a Community Kitchen. Services to seniors have increased and some of those who used to give now need help.

Services for Health Related Issues

Various support services and group programs focused on specific health concerns are offered through Interior Health Authority, South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society, Alzheimer Society of BC, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Mental Health Association for South Okanagan Similkameen, Penticton and Area Cooperative Enterprises, Arthritis Society, Better Breathers Club, BC Schizophrenia Society, Canadian Diabetes Association, , South Okanagan and Similkameen Chapter of MS Society of Canada,

Other Community Assets:

Community Response Network is a local community group representing various agencies for a coordinated community response to adult abuse, neglect and self-neglect.

Bereavement Resource Centre not-for-profit, non-denominational service that connects people to grief support services through resources, referrals and group programs.

Lifeline is a medical alert system to help ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals by providing the ability to call for help when they are not able to reach a phone. Service is administered through Interior Health Authority and volunteers. Subsidies are available for those who cannot afford monthly fee.

Red Cross Health Equipment Loan Program provides short term loan of health equipment to assist with mobility and increase independence.

South Okanagan Similkameen Volunteer Centre operates regionally to promote volunteerism and provide training and support to organizations utilizing volunteers. The Centre produces a directory and maintains a website showcasing registered member organizations.

Footprints Centre, Penticton Indian Band offers computer training and a Community Navigator program for peer support and leadership for Elders and Elders in training.

Ooknakane Friendship Centre is an aboriginal not-for-profit society that provides holistic, culturally-driven programs and services designed to support, educate and strengthen people of all nations.

South Okanagan Victim Assistance Society provides counselling, court support and information to men, women and children who have experienced abuse

RCMP Victim Services provides support to those affected by crime and other traumatic events.

Appendix C - Proposed Advisory Committee members

Stakeholders were informed that the lead agency will be forming an advisory committee. Potential committee members could include representation from City Council, Patient Voices Network, Community Response Network, Interior Health Authority, representation from interested community service providers, community members who participated in public input meeting to ensure sufficient representation of seniors.

Appendix D - Documentation of media coverage

“Program hits home with seniors”

By: Steve Kidd, Penticton Western

Published: **October 30, 2012 3:00 PM**

Updated: **November 02, 2012 11:39 AM**

After a successful pilot project in Osoyoos and five other communities, Penticton has been chosen to be one of the first 18 participants in the Better at Home program.

Better At Home is a new program through United Way with the goal of allowing seniors to live longer in their own homes surrounded by friends, family and neighbours. The program, said United Way director Riley Gettens, was developed in collaboration with the B.C. Ministry of Health, which has allocated \$15 million to it over the next three years.

“All of our United ways are working together to bring this to individual communities where the need is the greatest,” said Gettens. Better at Home is expected to be spread to 60 communities across the province.

Working with local non-profit agencies, the program provides seniors with services such as housekeeping, grocery shopping, friendly visits, yard work, home repair, snow removal and transportation to appointments.

“What we have done is taken some of that funding and hired a community developer, that’s Myrna Tischer,” said Gettens. “She is going to be doing some research in Penticton to find local non-profit agency to deliver the Better At Home services.”

In Osoyoos, one of the findings of the pilot project findings was that seniors there needed access to transportation, since the community has very limited public transportation. So a van was purchased to help alleviate the problem. But Gettens expects that Tischer will discover different needs for Penticton.

“It’s definitely a Penticton focus; that is the point of the program being rolled out into different communities,” said Gettens. “The solutions they might find here in Penticton may not work in a different community. A different community might have a different need.”

Tischer will be gathering information and seeking input over the next few weeks about how Better At Home can benefit Penticton seniors. To help generate that dialogue, there will be two showings of *The Remaining Light*, a documentary about how society cares for seniors, followed by a discussion about the local issues facing older adults trying to continue living independently. The first showing takes place at 7 p.m. on Nov. 1 in the Okanagan College lecture theatre, then repeats on Nov. 14 in the auditorium at the Penticton Library/Museum complex.

“It’s a really grass roots initiative to help out people living in our communities and that is always the biggest benefit,” said Gettens. “Rather than being told from the top down what we need, it is kind of nice to have some opportunity to give input.”

At the end of November, a community and key stakeholders meeting will be held to present the project findings, solicit additional input and help determine Penticton's readiness to implement the Better at Home program and support the selection of a lead agency. Implementation of the program is expected to begin in April 2013.

For more information about the program www.betterathome.ca. Anyone wishing to provide input is invited to contact Myrna Tischer at betterathomepenticton@gmail.com or 250-492-0065 to leave a message

Seniors face challenges daily

Penticton Herald
Tue Nov 6 2012
Page: A7
Section: Opinion
Byline: Myrna Tischer
Source: Penticton Herald

As community developer for the United Way's "**Better at Home**" program, I have the task of estimating how many Penticton seniors are isolated and or vulnerable.

The majority of older adults wish to live independently as long as possible but as the risk of physical and cognitive decline increases with age, the risk of vulnerability also increases.

According to B.C. Stats, "For the first time, since reporting began, persons 65 years of age and older outnumbered 0 - 14 year olds in B.C.."

Penticton's senior population is much higher than the provincial average. We are living longer and the number of residents over the age of 90 has more than doubled in the last 10 years.

As we age, other risk factors increase such as social isolation as we lose our friends and loved ones. Access to suitable transportation is vital to participate in community and being connected to community decreases the likelihood of elder abuse, neglect or self-neglect. The vast majority of our seniors are socially active, healthy and capable but we also have others who struggle with day to day tasks that the agile take for granted.

Furthermore, life circumstances can very quickly change the picture for any individual and can lead to a significant loss in quality of life. How many seniors do we have in this community who could successfully maintain their independence with a little bit of practical support?

Penticton has an opportunity to launch the new **Better at Home** program with the help of the United Way to provide non-medical home support services such as light housekeeping, grocery shopping, transportation to appointments, simple home repairs, friendly visiting, light yard work, snow shoveling. In order for this to happen, we need the support and the will of the community to identify priorities and make this program a reality for Penticton.

If you, or someone you know needs this kind of support, please add your voice. I encourage all seniors and stakeholders to attend the community meeting on Nov. 30 from 9:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. at the South Main Drop-in Centre where the findings of this project will be presented along with a final chance to provide input.

Lunch will be provided and transportation can be arranged with advance notice.

To register for the **Better at Home** Community Meeting or provide input to this project, please call Myrna Tischer 250-492-0065 or email betterathomepenticton@gmail.com.

Myrna Tischer

Penticton

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Edition: Final
Story Type: Letter
Length: 400 words
Idnumber: 201211060028

Help for seniors who want to stay home

Penticton Herald
Wed Nov 14 2012
Page: A3
Section: News
Column: City in Brief
Source: Penticton Herald

Penticton has been selected as a potential community for an initiative called **Better At Home**.

The project brings together the United Way and the B.C. Ministry of Health to help support seniors who wish to live longer in their homes.

A meeting is scheduled for today from 1:30 to 3 p.m. at Penticton Library Auditorium, and input is being sought from seniors, family members and community agencies on how the city can best support seniors who face challenges coping with chores, getting to appointments or who would benefit from a friendly visit.

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Edition: Final
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Tone: Neutral
Ad Value: \$90 Circulation: 6,960

Support offered to seniors

Published: **November 14, 2012 1:00 PM**

Updated: **November 14, 2012 2:05 PM**

As community developer for the United Way, Better at Home program, I have the task of estimating how many Penticton seniors are isolated and or vulnerable. The majority of older adults wish to live independently as long as possible but as the risk of physical and cognitive decline increases with age, the risk of vulnerability also increases.

According to B.C. Stats, “For the first time, since reporting began, persons 65 years of age and older outnumbered 0-14 year olds in B.C.” Penticton’s senior population is much higher than the provincial average. We are living longer and the number of residents over the age of 90 has more than doubled in the last 10 years. As we age, other risk factors increase such as social isolation as we lose our friends and loved ones. Access to suitable transportation is vital to participate in the

community and being connected to community decreases the likelihood of elder abuse, neglect or self-neglect.

The vast majority of our seniors are socially active, healthy and capable but we also have others who struggle with day to day tasks that the agile take for granted. Furthermore, life circumstances can very quickly change the picture for any individual and can lead to a significant loss in quality of life. How many seniors do we have in this community who could successfully maintain their independence with a little bit of practical support? Penticton has an opportunity to launch the new Better at Home program with the help of the United Way to provide non-medical home support services such as light housekeeping, grocery shopping, transportation to appointments, simple home repairs, friendly visiting, light yard work and snow shoveling. In order for this to happen, we need the support and the will of the community to identify priorities and make this program a reality for Penticton. If you, or someone you know, need this kind of support, please add your voice.

I encourage all seniors and stakeholders to attend the community meeting on Nov. 30 from 9:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the Penticton Seniors Drop-in Centre where the findings of this project will be presented along with a final chance to provide input. Lunch will be provided and transportation can be arranged with advance notice. To register for the Better at Home community meeting or provide input to this project, please call Myrna Tischer at 250-492-0065 or email betterathomepenticton@gmail.com.

Myrna Tischer

<http://www.bclocalnews.com/opinion/letters/179368821.html>

PENTICTON  HERALD

Sr. population rises annually

Penticton Herald
Tue Dec 4 2012
Page: A7
Section: Opinion
Byline: Myrna Tischer
Source: Penticton Herald

Dear Editor:

I would like to send out a big thank you to all the seniors and other interested parties who came out on Friday, Nov. 30 to the community meeting at the South Main Seniors Drop-in Centre for the United Way's **Better at Home** project.

A total of 101 people (more than 80 per cent seniors) participated; shared their personal

experiences and provided input and creative ideas to find solutions for a number of challenges.

Better at Home is a program that helps seniors with simple day-to-day tasks so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities.

It is not yet operating in Penticton but my job, as community developer, is to determine, with community input, which of the services (light housekeeping, grocery shopping, transportation, light yard work, friendly visiting, simple home repairs, snow shoveling) are needed in this community, what the priorities are; which non-profit agency is best suited to deliver this program and demonstrate community readiness.

Although all services are needed and welcomed what we heard, loud and clear is that transportation is top priority in this community.

For those of us who can jump in our cars and get where we need to go in a matter of minutes, we don't always think about how much our independence is connected to our ability to drive.

It concerns me when an elderly woman tells me that she is avoiding seeing her doctor because of the difficulty of access to transportation. Although Handy-Dart provides a crucial service to many, it does not have the capacity to meet the growing needs of this population. Our total senior population has risen by 6.5 per cent in the last 10 years. However, the number of residents over the age of 90 has increased by 147 per cent.

I am encouraged by the community support including the interest of potential volunteers when this program is up and running. As I come to the end of this contract and write my final report, I am proud to be a part of the community of Penticton and look forward to the implementation of **Better at Home** services in the new year.

Also, kudos to Carol and her team in the kitchen who worked all morning to prepare a home style lunch, from scratch. Your teamwork and dedication is much appreciated.

Myrna Tischer

Community Developer

United Way

Better at Home Program

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