

Healthy
Aging
by United Way



Better
at Home

United Way helping seniors
remain independent.

Community Consultation & Stakeholder Meeting
Smithers, Telkwa, and Houston BC
October 14th, 2020, Via Zoom
1:00-4:00 PM

Overview:

“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 **Smithers, Telkwa and Houston** region have been identified as potential **Better at Home** sites. The United Way of Lower Mainland assessed community readiness, identified seniors’ assets, needs and priorities in regard to the potential delivery of the **Better at Home** program.

This report reflects the Community Input and Stakeholder Meeting held on October 14, 2020 at 1:00 PM (via Zoom) and will be shared with invited guests and used by the lead organization to design an appropriate local **Better at Home** program that meets community needs.

The meeting attendees included members of the public and representatives from key stakeholders from the entire region. It was attended by approximately 15 individuals including 3 representatives from the United Way. Thirty eight invitations were sent to stakeholders and key members of each location in preparation for the community meeting. Attendees were community members and representatives from various local organizations and businesses from the Smithers, Telkwa and Houston region and included one **Better at Home Program** from Northern Health.

The United Way Lower Mainland would like to acknowledge the traditional territories of the Carrier Sekani and Wet-suwet'en peoples. We humbly acknowledge that we live, work and play as a guest on the beautiful, traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Indigenous Peoples of this place we now call British Columbia. We honour the Elders for their stewardship of this place and peoples of these nations.

Facilitators:

Sarrah Storey, Regional Community Developer (RCD), Northern British Columbia, United Way Lower Mainland,
Cathy Holmes, Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home, United Way Lower Mainland

Support Facilitators:

Tracey Davidson - Volunteer Terrace – **Better at Home** HUB Agency

After a bit of housekeeping and a formal welcome from the facilitators, Sarrah Storey welcomed and acknowledged the First Nations Communities and our use of their land for this meeting. Sarrah also introduced her role as the Regional Community Developer for Northern BC.

A short video highlighting the Better at Home Program was presented to the callers.

Introduction to Healthy Aging by United Way

To better support older adults to be socially connected, live healthy lifestyles, and maintain independence, United Way’s Healthy Aging strategy aims to help British Columbia’s seniors stay at home and in their communities longer. Working towards a vision of a healthy, caring, inclusive community for all members. Healthy Aging by United Way embraces a holistic setting where older adults have unrestricted access to

community programs and services so that they can age in place. Together with community agencies, local, provincial, and federal governments, and a diverse set of vested partners and donors, the Healthy Aging Team delivers programs including **Better at Home**, *Active Aging*, *Social Prescribing*, *Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors*, *Family Friends and Caregivers Support*, *Safe Seniors*, *Strong Communities* and Community and Sector Development initiatives, such as Healthy Aging CORE and Project Impact.

This work is based on three **Healthy Aging Pillars** – priorities that were identified through extensive research, community consultations and recommendations, and learnings uncovered through 12 Better at Home Communities of Practice (COPs) facilitated across the province:

Increase physical activity: Physical immobility and lack of leisure activity are related to social isolation and loneliness. One of the Healthy Aging Strategy goals is to increase physicality to help older adults remain socially connected and active as they age.

Reduce social isolation: The Healthy Aging Strategy aims to keep seniors mentally engaged in their communities, therefore reducing feelings of social isolation and social frailty.

Maintain and enhance independence: Through provincial investments that maintain and enhance seniors' independence, the Healthy Aging Strategy strengthens United Way's commitment to providing home and community services that encourage self-determination.

Raising the Profile Project (RPP)

The RPP was launched in 2016, and was created to increase support and recognition of the role of community-based seniors' services in promoting health and fostering resilience in seniors in BC.

A significant component of the RPP was the development of a provincial network, the goal of which is to understand and build on the capacity of community-based seniors' services to meet the growing needs of an aging population. The network consists of executive directors and managers from municipal and non-profit organizations around BC, seniors who are volunteer leaders in the community-based senior services sector, as well as provincial organizations and others that support the work of the sector.

While **Better at Home** was not created from the RPP project the overall needs of individuals staying in their homes for longer periods of time revealed that complex needs arise as older adults age in place. In noting these changes, **Better at Home** has been able to support, educate and even influence many strategies in the sector.

Healthy Aging CORE

Healthy Aging Collaborative On-line Resources and Education is a platform to connect community-based senior services organizations and allied agencies and individuals in British Columbia. CORE is designed to provide up-to-date information, resources, and training opportunities and to make it easier to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate in order to help build capacity, strengthen the network, and develop a collective and cohesive voice among volunteers, staff, and others who support healthy aging initiatives.

The knowledge hub was created for Community Based Seniors' Services organizations and allied agencies and individuals in British Columbia. This portal features training, resources such as tool kits, guides, highlighted community programs, and CBSS Leadership Council's Provincial Working Groups discussion groups. **Better at Home** continues to be an integral part of the steering of the sector.

Community-Based Seniors Services sector (CBSS)

The CBSS sector is broad and diverse bringing together key stakeholders, including seniors themselves from across the province in a central forum; Between April 2019 and July 2019, 12 regional consultations showcased Healthy Aging CORE, recommendations from the Provincial Summit on Aging, and guidance from the CBSS Leadership Council.

Community based organizations provide seniors with access to a range of low-barrier programs in seven core areas: 1) nutritional supports, 2) health and wellness programs, 3) physical activity, 4) education, recreation, and creative arts, 5) information, referral, and personal advocacy, 6) transportation, 7) affordable housing.

These programs and services are offered through a range of municipal and non-profit agencies including: senior centres; community centres; neighbourhood houses; community coalitions; ethnocultural organizations; and multi-service non-profit societies.

Better at Home Expansion Sites

Over the past few years, there has been considerable interest in expanding the **Better at Home (BH)** program to more communities in BC. Based on a reviews of community population, data and needs assessments of prospective communities, in 2020, BH will expand to serve up to six (6) new program sites in British Columbia.

Smithers, Telkwa and Houston were identified as a potential **Better at Home** sites.

The meeting on October 14, 2020, could not have happened without the dedication behind the scenes of the following people from:

Smithers Community Services Association

Catheryn Olmstead Executive Director

Houston Links to Learning

Marian Ells - Executive Director

A conversation with Mayor Elect, *Gladys Atrill* from Smithers, and Mayor of Houston, *Shane Brienen* to discuss logistics and potential host agencies in each of the regions was held in early October. Neither were available for the community consultation but sent their support for the program coming to the region. Brad Layton, Mayor of Telkwa was also aware and invited to both the community consultation and the telephone briefing.

All participants were thanked for their participation and support throughout the meeting.

Attendees:

Veronica Groot – Home and Community Care Smithers

Cathryn Olmstead – Smithers Community Services Association

Jane McCord – Senior in Community, Smithers

Tracey Davidson – Volunteer Terrace

Debbie Joujan – City of Telkwa

Arnold Amodson – Senior – Senior Citizens Care Van

Joanne Woodbeck – Houston Legion

H. Shannon – Seniors Organization (unknown)

Helena Grubb – Smithers Home and Community Care

Jill Barrowman – Smithers Chamber of Commerce

Marian Ells – Houston Links to Learning

Maureen Czirfusz – Houston & District Chamber of Commerce

Jessica Kleisssen – United Way Lower Mainland

The intent of the community meeting on October 14, 2020 was:

- Support isolated areas as soon as possible in order to help support seniors in Smithers, Telkwa, and Houston;
- That all seniors who need supports have access to bc211 and COVID19 emergency supports as well as **Better at Home** supports to community;
- Recommendation for **Better at Home** services in these three identified communities;
- Readiness in each community to pursue expansion in the region and determine community need and appetite which was confirmed by those in attendance.

The agenda for the meeting via Zoom was to come together as a community, through structured conversations, to identify senior's needs and priorities with regards to **Better at Home** services, as well as help identify a potential lead organization in the community best suited to deliver the Better at Home program.

Community Assets Smithers

A community asset is something that has value that is part of a community. Includes skills, networks, current initiatives, programs, policies, structures, or other resources that can be leveraged to improve the community's sustainability:

- Smithers Fire Department

- Smithers Community Policing Office
- Smithers Chamber of Commerce
- Smithers Community Services Association
- Royal Canadian Legion – Smithers Branch 63
- Elder College – Coast Mountain College
- Smithers Home and Community Care
- Smithers Housing Projects
- Smithers Senior Citizens Association, Branch 21
- Bulkley Valley Pool/Recreation Center
- Alzheimer's Society
- The Health Information Hub
- Bulkley Valley Community Foundation
- Broadway Place Emergency Shelter
- Dze L K'ant Friendship Center /Witset First Nations



The population of Smithers in 2016 was 5401. In addition, 5256 people live in the Regional District.

855 persons are 65 years and older or 15.8%

285 are over the age of 85

15.4% are Low Income Seniors

In 2016, 565 seniors over the age of 65 (10.46%) lived independently in their own homes.

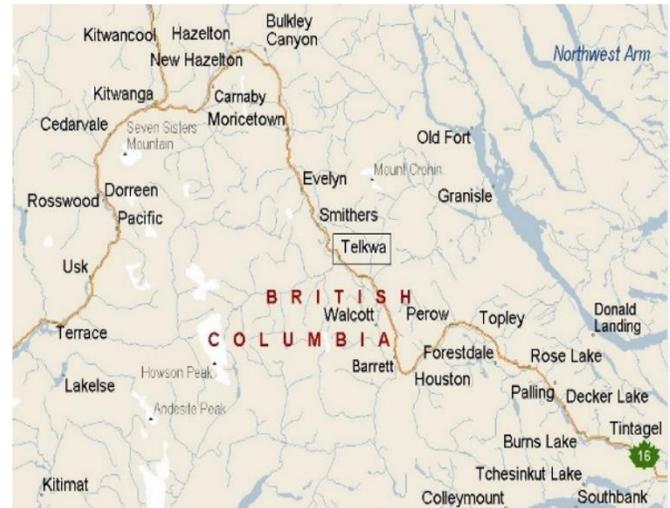
Average cost of a home in Smithers BC is between \$ 325-350,000

Smithers is located on the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en, a First Nation belonging to the Carrier Sekan people with 435 people identifying as First Nations in the community

Community Assets Telkwa, BC

- Telkwa Community Initiatives Society
- Telkwa Seniors Association
- Telkwa Seniors Center

- Telkwa Community Hall
- Age Friendly Telkwa
- Telkwa Seniors Housing Society – Telkwa House
- Village of Telkwa
- Telkwa Museam
- Telkwa Reading Centre
- St. Stephen's Heritage Church
- Bulkley Valley Kinsmen
- United Way Northern BC



The population of Telkwa in 2016 was 1327

(No additional population figures were available regarding the Regional District of Telkwa)

135 persons are 65 years and older or 10.20%

25 are over the age of 85

11.10% are Low Income

Seniors over the age of 65 (10.46%) lived independently in their own homes.

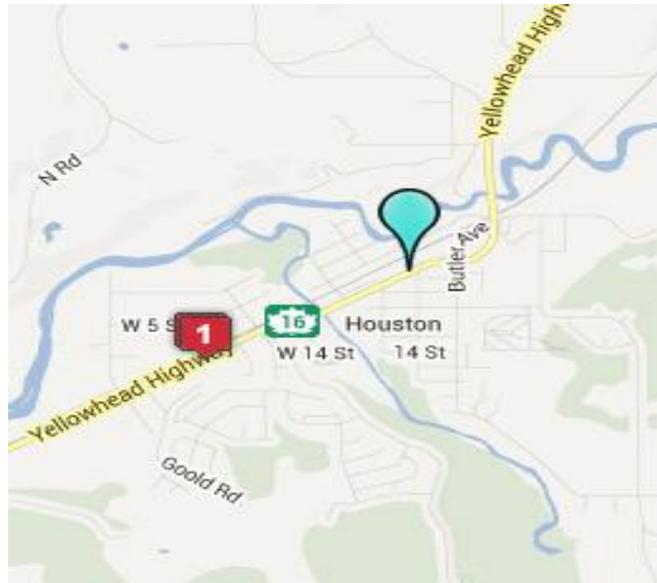
Average cost of a home in Telkwa BC is just under \$ 400,000

55 people identify as First Nations

Community Assets Houston, BC

A community asset, or community resource, is anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life. Includes networks, people, current initiatives, programs, services, policies, structures, or other resources that can be leveraged to improve the community's sustainability.

- Houston Friendship Program Office
- Houston Community Services Association
- Houston Link to Learning
- Houston Senior Citizen Association
- Houston Legion # 249
- Houston Health Center
- Houston Chamber of Commerce
- United Way of Northern BC



- **The population of Houston in 2016 was 2993** – Recent numbers indicate the population is closer to 3200 and 903 people live in the Regional District of Houston.
- **420 persons are 65 years and older**
- **55 are over the age of 85 which equates to 14.4%**
- **16.90% are Low Income**
- **The land area of Houston is 72.94 km²**
- **In 2016, 220 seniors over the age of 65 (7.35%) lived independently in their own homes**
- **Average cost of a home in Houston BC is approximately \$250,000**
- **120 people identify as First Nations and the local agency is Wilp Si'Satxw Community Healing Centre**

Regional Considerations

According to the 2016 Census, the population Smithers, Telkwa and Houston combined was **9721**

Note: *These figures do not illustrate the Regional District population of all three communities. It is estimated that there is an additional 5256 people who live in the Smithers Regional District. In Houston, an additional 903 people live in the Regional District. At the time of writing, there are no additional statistics available for the Regional District of Telkwa.*

Total population in the area **16,110**

In 2016, 1440 persons are 65 years and older and 365 are over the age of 85

The geographical area of Smithers is 15.27 km, and Telkwa is 7.04 km. Smithers and Telkwa are located 15 km from each other but are very separate communities who often share resources. Houston is 72.94 km and is 64 km from Smithers or about a 45 min drive.

In 2016, 875 seniors over the age of 65 (9%) lived independently in their own homes

14.46% lived below the poverty line in the region

Those attending the meeting clearly acknowledged differences amongst the three communities citing services for seniors outside of Smithers as limited.

There was considerable discussion around the hosting of the program as separate entities through the regional model as many seniors in Houston or Telkwa may not be inclined to allow supports from outside agencies.

Volunteers in Houston are very active in the community and had raised considerable funds to ensure the building of a high level 18-unit seniors low income housing complex. Prior to COVID 19, seniors' luncheons, daily exercise programs and various social activities were common place in Houston.

Volunteers in Smithers and Telkwa are active in their communities. Food security, low income and seniors housing are constant concerns for the region.

As transportation is an issue for many seniors in the region, one of the community members recommended the use of a senior's van that the community owns but have found too expensive to operate. With potential funding from Better at Home, options open for this vehicle to be used for various senior's transportation needs.

A significant number of isolated seniors including First Nations persons live off reserve in the Houston and Topley area. One of the participants reminded the attendees of the importance of remaining mindful to these people and that their needs must be considered when planning a **Better at Home** program in the region. Smithers and Telkwa likewise have a large population of non reserve residents.

What does Better at Home do?

The Better at Home program helps seniors live in their own homes by providing nonmedical support services delivered by local lead organizations, which may be a non-profit organization; using a mix of paid workers, private contractors and volunteers. Better at Home programs are guided by local Advisory Committees and each program will have a paid Program Coordinator. In our 7th year of service delivery, we are thrilled to continue supporting existing programs, and welcome new ones, as they ensure that seniors live well, remain independent, and are active contributors to their communities.

The Better at Home program is designed to address the specific needs of local regions, allowing communities to choose from the following basket of services:

- friendly visiting

- transportation to appointments
- snow shoveling
- light yard work
- simple home repairs
- grocery shopping
- light housekeeping

Presentation and Reflections - *What are the needs of Seniors in the Smithers, Telkwa and Houston Region?*

Smithers Community Services Association

Smithers Community Services Association prepared a presentation outlining the many supports that their agency provides to the three communities. The presentation was facilitated by **Executive Director, Cathryn Olmstead**.

Highlights:

Smithers Community Services Association is non profit agency that is 40 years old and their office is located across from the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway known built 100 years ago.

Smithers Community Services Association provides four main service streams to Smithers, Telkwa and Houston including:

1. Housing
2. Family Support Services
3. Community Learning
4. Other services including English Language Training

Their *Helping Hands* program was (prior to COVID 19) similar to the **Better at Home** program; however, it's focus was outdoor supports and the lion-share of services were performed by volunteers.

The agency works to "*partner to help people during their live journey.*" The agency provides Farmers Market coupons and they assist seniors to navigate the bus system.

The agency operates a bus system and among other activities, during the holidays, transport people to the Christmas Light festivities.

The agency partners with local community organizations including the *Northern Society for Domestic Peace* to help participants access the *Community Hall*, and events hosted by other agencies including the *Women's Institute*.

Smithers Community Services Association is actively involved in housing initiatives, not only for seniors, but for families offering supportive, assisted and independent living options to community.

As a community organization **Smithers Community Services Association** is dedicated to providing flexible, responsive, and adapting to the needs of their participants. They are cognisant of the ebb and flow of a person's life course and they work to address the landscape and find solutions that empower participants.

Smithers Community Services Association are guided by the following principals:

- To help each other live with confidence and courage
- Believe in the power of belonging
- Act with integrity
- Grow through creativity and flexibility
- Celebrate the strength of diversity

Smithers Community Services Association cultivates contribution and partnership and believe that these values align with the **Better at Home** Program.

Their agency manages an operating budget of approximately \$3 million and have 55 staff on site. They host an Annual General Meeting and every year their books are audited.

Many of the attendees on the call supported the **Smithers Community Services Association** as an excellent organization and supported them as a potential Host agency for Better at Home.

“What the agency sees seniors wanting / needing are services such as shopping, medication pickups, transportation to appointments, home and yard clean up, as well as just general socialization and check ins. Plus, many of the older folks in these areas live rurally and want to stay in their homes but are unable to continue to manage the complexities of a rural property without assistance.” Cathryn Olmstead

Houston Link to Learning

Houston Link to Learning prepared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the many supports that their agency provides to the three communities. The presentation was facilitated by **Executive Director, Marian Ells**.

Marion began by describing their location at *Northwest Community College Campus* noting that they had moved into a smaller building on campus. At this location, a new community kitchen was built and their team was very happy to have this important addition to the community. Their location during COVID 19 has allowed the community to be supported with take out food options for families and seniors. They have a couple of rooms that are conducive to social distancing and various locations within the community where they can utilize space to offer programs to older adults as they develop. It was noted that with the onset of COVID 19, like in many communities, there have been significant changes in service provisions. While many of the services are literacy based, **Houston Link to Learning** are dedicated to providing and supporting seniors programming in Houston and the surrounding area.

Highlights:

Vision Statement

We work with people and community to improve and promote literacy skills to enhance quality of life.

Mission Statement

Houston Link to Learning will be a center of excellence, providing leadership and advocacy for a literate community.

Goals of Houston Link to Learning

- We put people first.
- We take a leadership role to develop and maintain partnerships with individuals, families, and community organizations.
- We encourage and facilitate learner involvement in all aspects of society.
- We support the professional development of our staff, board, and volunteers.
- We promote and use plain language.
- We work as a team both internally and externally.
- We continually evaluate ourselves and our organization to improve the delivery of services.
- We strive to enjoy our work and create a stimulating work environment.
- We celebrate our successes.

Current Programs:

Adult Literacy Programming: This includes our Adult Literacy Drop in program and many services that we can offer in a group setting or individual including: resume writing, computer literacy, form filling, help with on-line processes, income taxes, job skills, practice interview skills and at the drop in we offer crafts, coffee, food and networking.

New Start Program: An instructor led, self paced program for adults which includes: learning new skills to help enter or re-enter the workforce, increase life skills and explore education opportunities. This program also offers adults an opportunity to complete their Grade 12 through a partnership with SD54.

Food Skills for Families: This program is a partnership with Diabetes Canada who supply the materials and recipes. It is a six-week program that focuses on learning to cook nutritious meals on a budget.

Family Literacy Programming: The Family Literacy Drop in can help parents with the day to day challenges of having young children. This program also runs multiple events (although not at the moment!) including Family Literacy Brunch, Community Christmas Dinner, Teddy Bear Picnic, Stories with Santa and many more.

Houston Community Garden: We have 42 raised beds available for individuals to grow their own produce in for their own use. Produce from our community section of the garden goes to the Market to be sold and also to families in need.

Houston Farmers Market: HLL offers the Farmers Market for the community and we also run the Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program which focuses on families and seniors.

Family Resource Centre

The Family Resource Centre is a place for families with children 0 to 6 years. The Family Drop in is a playgroup for parents to meet other parents and caregivers and a place for the children to play. Our facilitator provides a safe and nurturing environment with access to resources and referrals..

The Toy lending Library is part of the Centre and provides toys and equipment for use free of charge.

Other programs and services include:

Fostering Literacy
Jumpstart pre-Kindergarten program
Public use computer lab
Silverthorne Summer Program
One to one tutoring
Exam Invigilation and much more.....

Most of these programs are running in some form or other since COVID 19 hit. Some are on hold and other are running with limited numbers and safety protocols

During lockdown we did notice that our usual clients were struggling and we pursued some funding and programming to provides some relief.

Programs we have added since COVID 19 - March 2020:

HLL shut down in mid-March and one of the first things we noticed was that every other place where community members could access food (except for the Food Bank) also shut down.

Food security in Houston is a huge issue so with some leftover literacy funding we came up with our

Recipe Bag Program

This program operates bi-weekly and provides people with a 'recipe bag' that has a recipe and all the ingredients to make the recipe. We also added relevant resources and information to the bags. Our Family Literacy and Family Resource programs also developed activity bags for families that had children.

This was a huge hit but our literacy funding was running short so we applied to Emergency Community Support Fund and received a grant to continue until March 2021. We hand out and deliver 35 bags bi-weekly, an average of 10 bags go to seniors.

Food Kitchen

Part of the same ECSF grant was to provide a 'Food Kitchen' weekly where cooked food was provided take out style. This has been a huge hit with many seniors benefitting from this. This program gets busier each week and we average around 50 meals a week with an average of 15 going to Seniors. Many more seniors could benefit from this program.

Safe Seniors Strong Communities

This is a COVID 19 program that engages volunteers to provide Seniors in the community with services to help them while they are isolating e.g. Friendly chat, grocery shopping, collecting prescriptions and delivering some food from the food kitchen program.

Food for thought - Houston Link to Learning

This program was developed with the Harm Reduction Committee and will add a second food kitchen at HLL with harm reductions services available if someone should need them. The concept is to provide much needed food in a safe location for anyone. Harm reduction services will be available in a very informal way. The hope is that services can engage informally with people who are not yet seeking out assistance.

Why should Houston Link to Learning apply to Host the Better at Home program?

We can see that there is a huge need in the community for the services that this program offers.

Through our Food programming we are starting to make connections with Seniors in need and we know we have only begun to scratch the surface.

We are an established agency in the community with strong partnerships and connections.

HLL has a proven financial record and system and a Board of Directors who support this project.

HLL has long term senior staff who are committed to seeing this program in the community.

We have already done some research by meeting with program staff from Granisle, who have been running this for a few years now.

HLL has been operating Safe Seniors Strong Communities for a few months now and established connections with vulnerable seniors, staff at the Health Centre and the Community Paramedic.

HLL has space in our building for this program and staff experienced in human resources, reporting, proposal writing and much more.

As staff we are not afraid to ask for help and support where we need it.

Our community needs this program.

Feedback from Meeting Participants:

- There is a high density of isolated seniors in the surrounding districts of all three communities.
- The city of Houston recently built an 18-unit low income seniors housing complex (utilizing only volunteers).
- Smithers Community Services Association manages both an assisted living and independent living facility in Houston and in Smithers. They also manage supportive family housing in Smithers.

- There are a number of low-income seniors that are not accounted for under Stats Canada's 2016 report and many seniors are unable to find appropriate services outside of Smithers.
- During Covid19 there is a concern regarding providing traditional Better at Home services.
- Seniors remain very engaged to community due to the programming that currently exists at both agencies particularly as it relates to food security either through meal supports or through local farmers markets.
- All three communities have very engaged support teams through their community seniors' programs and initiatives. Both organizations have access to volunteers that could support elements of the **Better at Home** Program.
- Telkwa has a much smaller population density but no less a need and the requirements of the region are different than those in Houston or Smithers. There are several organizations in Telkwa who could contribute to the facilitation of this program in their community. One of the participants noted that there are a number of suitable partners in Telkwa that could facilitate **Better at Home** services in the area.
- In each of these communities, foundational funding would help support existing programming for seniors and would allow expansion serving seniors not currently connected to medical supports.
- While Smithers may have services in community that the two other communities do not, services to support seniors to age in place are limited.
- Houston seniors have the potential use of a local van to assist with transportation should the program come to the area.
- ***Houston and Smithers repeatedly spoke of their need to host independent programs even if attached to a regional model.***
- As there are many isolated seniors in the region, it was noted that seniors who did not fall into the Smithers catchment areas are less open to welcome services outside of their community therefore rooting a program in Houston would assist in supporting this gap.
- Further questions regarding programming including sliding scale, criminal records check, annual reporting, geographical implications and gaps in the communities ensued and programmatic deliverables ensued.

Better at Home would be a welcome addition to current community supports for all three communities and there are two agencies that could work well together with the regional model as potentially a single host agency with MOU's between the two other communities.

Both agencies acknowledged the expertise of their colleagues and their community knowledge regarding each of their regions and support the collaborative opportunity ahead.

What are some important criteria for a lead organization in community?

- Connection to service groups in all communities in the Smithers, Telkwa and Houston Region
- Track Record for managing Grants and sourcing alternative funding to support programs
- The ability to distribute resources
- Able to manage the demands and expectations of the clients
- Ability to gather In Kind supports
- Have people "on the ground" in the region
- Possess long term sustainability

- Have the capacity and foresight for growth
- Promote Success
- Long standing in the community
- Cooperative and Collaborative
- Evolve and fluid

Prevention oriented: Better at Home programs are built on the primary assumption that preservation of independence, dignity and health, and the delay of functional decline are worthwhile investments.

Seniors planning for and with seniors. Seniors are engaged in the planning and governance of the local programs.

Senior centered. The local programs are designed to respond to the needs, priorities and changing circumstances of seniors.

Community driven: Within the Better at Home framework, local programs are built by the community for the community and will involve coordination of services from various organizations and partners.

Evidence informed: Local programs are built on the learning and evidence developed through the CASI evaluation, through ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning, and on the desire to seek continuous improvements through additional learning and research.

Independence focused: Better at Home fosters self-sufficiency and independence by: offering services that assist clients to live independently; helping to promote health literacy and support self-care; promoting social inclusion, and; enabling community connectedness.

Simple and understandable: Services incorporate clear and accessible information, ease of access, and the least amount of official procedure needed to maintain standards of safety, privacy and quality.

Based on need: Local programs respond to seniors' needs for service and ability to contribute to the cost of providing those services.

Integrated: Local programs are developed in partnership with seniors and other key stakeholders and will be integrated where feasible and, by design, complementary to other services and supports.

A non-governmental program: Better at Home is managed by UWLM and identified as a non-profit sector program funded by government, which does not replace existing governmental programs or services.

Better at Home Program Highlights:

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 Government of British Columbia funds the program, United Way of the Lower Mainland manages it, and local non-profit organizations provide the services.

Its unique 'seniors planning for seniors' approach means older adults contribute to the design, operation and evaluation of their local program.

Older adults who receive Better at Home services may pay a fee based on their income. Some services may be free. These fees-for-service are fed back into the local program in order to serve more seniors.

Although each program is unique and serves based on the community, there are also commonalities among 75 Better at Home programs:

- Service fees are established on an income-based sliding scale which ensures that services are free for low income seniors, and market rate for seniors with an income above the BC average.
- All volunteers providing services directly to seniors must have a criminal record check.
- Programs submit regular reports to the provincial office to monitor performance and progress.

- Program Coordinators engage in a Community of Practice which includes sharing, learning activities, discussing best practices on an online portal, and meet annually for training opportunities and participation in collective dialogue. These activities help develop the capacity of each local program to best serve and support the older adults in BC. Better at Home Across the Province.

*69 out of 70 programs reporting

From April 2019 – March 2020
Service Distribution

 **13 %**
Transportation

 **47 %**
Light Housekeeping

 **16 %**
Friendly
Visiting

 **2 %**
Snow
Shoveling

 **4 %**
Light Yard
Work

 **6 %**
Grocery
Shopping

 **12 %**
Other
Services

 **0 %**
Minor Home
Repairs

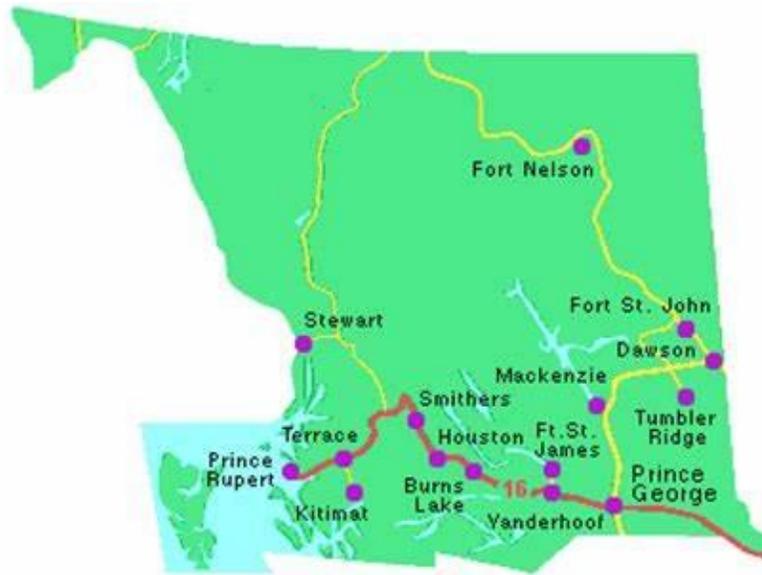
From April 2019 – March 2020

11,935 Active Participants

3,832 New Program Participants

38% of all services were delivered by Volunteers

Better at Home Northern British Columbia



- **\$1,041,795** invested
- **11** programs
- **1386** seniors received at least one service
- **315** new seniors enrolled
- **869** are female
- **839** live alone
- **307** are 85+
- **495** volunteers provided services

**Data provided is based on BH programs 2018-2019 reporting.*

Better at Home Northern BC

Better at Home programs have been established in Northern BC since 2012 initially under the CASI project.

Currently **Better at Home** in the North can be found in: *Terrace, Prince Rupert, Robson Valley including Valemont, Fort St. James and Fraser Lake, Kitimat, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Quesnel, Gitxsan, Granisle, and Fort St. John* and are programs serving several communities.

While there are 11 programs, there are several smaller communities served in the region. *Vanderhoof, Fort St. James and Fraser Lake* follow a regional model. *McBride and Valemont* also follow a regional model and in both regions communications and supports work together to support seniors who may reside in remote areas that have few services. Throughout the North, several First Nations communities both on and off reserve receive services. Close relationships with First Nations Health Authorities have proven invaluable. The **Better at Home** programs listed will be of tremendous support moving forward and can provide advice on program development.

Learning, reflective practice, and knowledge-sharing are central to **Better at Home**, particularly to support program development and quality improvement. Together these programs participate in on two Community of Practice (COP) sessions formally meet two to three times per year serving all Northern Regions British Columbia; however, with COVID 19 meet more regularly as the needs of community change and evolve. Host organizations also connect via the Better at Home HUB (found on CORE). Several times per year agencies come together for learning opportunities and to support each other's program growth or to consult on best practices as program challenges occasionally arise. **Better at Home** Programs are constantly evolving and pivoting to meet the needs of the community.

Because the program is established using a *community development approach* each program is unique to the communities it serves. **Each program must meet the basic grant criteria** and beyond that can offer some or all of the services from the basket using a mix of paid staff, contractors, and volunteers.

To get a feel for the scope of the work **Better at Home** Program Coordinators are invited to present a brief synopsis of how the program operates in their unique community and to highlight some of the wisdom learned through delivering services in their area.

Our Guest **Better at Home** speaker offered the following insight:

Tracey Davidson – Volunteer Terrace – HUB Agency SSSC

- Noted that each region is different and it is important to figure out that what may work in a larger region, may not work the same way in a smaller region
- Recommended that potential sites consider contacting existing Better at Home sites to find out about how their experiences have impacted both their community and to get first hand how administering the program works from a practical perspective
- Explained how her experiences in assisting originally with the COVID19 as a HUB Agency and shared the challenges of delivering services during a pandemic
- Reminded the group that Better at Home has been a great addition to the services available for older adults in the Province overall

Safe Seniors Strong Communities (SSSC) Covid19 Response:

**Emergency COVID-19 Response Plan in partnership with United Way and bc211
Funded by the Ministry of Health**

- Easy access to services through bc211, now province-wide
- Seniors connected to local community volunteers, friends, neighbors
- Added supports and expanded services specific to COVID-19 needs
- Expansion of United Way's Better at Home Services
- Funding of community agencies and programs through United Way

□ As of October 20th, 2020 over 370,139 - SSSC services have been provided to Seniors in British Columbia

- Seniors (65+) **No cost for Service Delivery**
- Living in community
- Urgent non-medical needs resulting from COVID-19
- Living independently without publicly funded services and/or have no other way to get support services
- Wellness checks /Virtual Friendly Visits
- Grocery shopping/delivery
- Meal prep (pre-made drop-offs and support in home)
- Prescription pick-up/drop-off

Identifying a Lead Organization

We have designed a different approach to the selection of the Lead Organization for delivering the **Better at Home** program. Instead of a competitive process where the funder selects which agency will receive the grant, each community will go through a community engagement process. In this process, stakeholders – seniors in particular – have a chance to shape the program according to local needs and help select the Lead Organization that is the best fit with the program they envision.

This approach encourages partnerships and collaboration, results in better service delivery for the seniors, and empowers communities to make their own decisions.

In order to qualify to hold the **Better at Home** program, the lead organization must:

1. Be a non-profit, charitable organization,
2. Employ a program coordinator,
3. Complete a BH application form, including the following:
 - a. Governance structures, financial statements
 - b. A description of geographical boundaries for service delivery
 - c. A list of Better at Home services that your program will offer
4. Provide two (2) completed budgets;
 - ✦ UWLM Program Funds budget,
 - ✦ and a Total Program Funds budget.
5. Provide any other documentation considered key by the community or by UWLM to support approval of the implementation plan and application.

BH Program Must Meet the Following Grant Criteria:

- Participants should be older residents, sometimes defined as 60 or 65 years of age or over
- Participants served must be residents of the identified service area

- A paid program coordinator
- The organization that receives and is accountable for the funds must be a non-profit and charitable organization.
- Provide in-kind support and seek additional funding as needed e.g., donated office space, equipment)
- The program must comply with evaluation requirements (data collection, reporting, participation in Community of Practice).
- That a *Better at Home Advisory Committee* be established to support, guide, and to help the integration of the program into community and be responsive to seniors for the first two years.
- Establish strategies to maximize reach / impact of the program, volunteers, and in-kind support.
- Undertake outreach, marketing and public awareness to reach older adults.
- Provide Volunteer training and support.

Better at Home Implementation Process



Suggested Timeline for Implementation of Proposed Smithers, Telkwa, and Houston

An ideal timeline was suggested for the Smithers, Telkwa and Houston BH program be:

- Mid- late October a Lead organization be identified for Smithers, Telkwa, and Houston
- Early November, 2020 the Lead organizations to fulfill and meet all application and grant criteria
- A signed Letter of Agreement for dispersal of funds be for Early November 2020
- A Program Coordinator be employed in time to participate in the Provincial Better at Home Communities online COP's by December 2020
- At least one BH service be delivered to seniors no later than February 1, 2021.

Two potential lead organizations stepped forward and presented to the communities.

Both presenters from Smithers (including Telkwa) and Houston shared their concerns for local representation in their region. They noted that the differences in needs and current supports in each

community is markedly different and felt it was important that program coordinators in each location would better serve their communities under a regional model. Both organizations seemed open and willing to work with each other in partnership to create a program that delivered services that are relevant and necessary in each community.

The UWLM team shared their experiences with the presenters and tried to affirm their concerns by sharing the current dynamics of the program throughout the Province reflecting the needs of community, particularly during Covid19 and the current landscape of successful regional programs.

Recommendations from Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home

After careful deliberation and conversations with the community, colleagues from the United Way of Lower Mainland, the Regional Community Developer Northern BC and the data available, the recommendation is to proceed with the application processes for **Houston Link to Learning** under a regional model employing one LOA and establishing an MOU to **Smithers Community Services Association**. **Telkwa** representation will fall under, due to geography, the Smithers catchment area; however, once the program is in place the host agency may consider an additional MOU with a local community partner to provide services. Below are Regional Model options that could be employed in the facilitation of **Better at Home** in this region.

Both agencies are well equipped, ready to support the initiative and are able to carry out the deliverables for the **Better at Home** program goals.

Regional Models defined:

Type 1:

- 1 Host Umbrella + formal agreements with 2 or more Community Based Senior Services (CBSS) agencies in different communities served.
- This may be determined by population size and distance factors, differences in services from basket desired by differing communities

Type 2:

- 1 Host, employs several coordinators in different communities.

Type 3:

- 1 Host Agency, 1 Coordinator responsible for a large geographic region with distinct communities with different local governments - We currently have many BH Programs of this type.

Why Houston Link to Learning:

- Regional resources available through websites and online presence show considerable gaps in the Houston region with larger availability of services in Smithers
- Solid non-profit with strong ties to the community
- History of community engagement and consultation
- Documented quality needs assessments

- Committed Board Members with a wide range of relevant experience
- Membership reflects the region's communities
- Extensive community engagement in defining regional requirements and solutions
- Providing significant input to evolving needs of seniors and close relationships with health authorities
- Committed to sustainable and secure operating policies
- History of accountability in reporting to funders
- Accomplished fundraisers and program developers
- Experienced with SSSC initiative during COVID 19
- Independent Board that represents the community
- Support from all corners of the region
- Strong and growing network of contacts locally and beyond
- Significant track record of service to the community
- Willingness and ability to take advantage of **Better at Home** for our residents across the region and support all 3 communities with leadership, sensitivity to community needs and collaboration with Smithers Community Services Association and the Telkwa Communities.

Next Steps

No final decision was made at the Community Input and Stakeholder Meeting on October 14th, 2020 but considerable support for **Houston Link to Learning** as the lead host agency was supported by participants in attendance. Support for a community partnership with Smithers and Telkwa was clearly identified noting that the expertise of Houston was not the expertise of Smithers or Telkwa. This regional partnership including local stakeholders, many from the community consultation as an advisory counsel will serve each of these communities well.

The community clearly expressed the need for independent programs even if the community was to share funding from the **Better at Home** program.

All members of the call were *"looking forward to the implementation of the program in the area because the services are desperately needed."* The population of Houston is large and spread out with a number of isolated seniors who will not accept services from organizations rooted in Smithers.

Findings of this report will be reviewed and discussed and an application will be sent to the successful host agency candidate.

The Provincial Community Planner and the Regional Community Developer will work with the perspective agency(s) to support the application process. Once the LOA has been approved and is in place our team will work with the agency(s) to train, support and facilitate a successful launch of the **Better at Home** program in each of the communities.

Thank you!

The day would not have been possible without the support of everyone who assisted in putting the meeting together. From the zoom meeting itself to the information gathering, this meeting was created by the community of Smithers, Telkwa and Houston and we are most grateful for the opportunity to discuss the **Better at Home Program** in your region.

Thank you **Kahir Lalji**, Provincial Director Population Health for your vision and encouragement to bring **Better at Home** to more communities in the Province of BC through meaningful initiatives for older adults in our communities.

Many thanks to **Sarrah Storey**, RCD Northern BC, United Way Lower Mainland for her cofacilitation and insight into the region. Special thanks to the team of **Healthy Aging by United Way, Population Health UWLM** including, **Bobbi Symes**, Assistant Director, Population Health, **Jean Rikhof**, Administrative Assistant, Population Health, **Camille J Hannah**, Provincial Coordinator, Population Health **Isaac Shr**, Provincial Coordinator, Grants & Data, and everyone on the team who assists in the facilitation of new programs in the Province of British Columbia.

Finally, thanks to each of you for attending the day with the desire to co-create a shared future that invests in our older adults to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. Thanks also for demonstrating humility, courage, grace and leadership to explore differences and uncover what could be the greatest asset and outcome of the session; in particular trusting the facilitation process and being supportive of working with complex challenges presented in our communities.

We look forward to the next steps.

Further feedback, comments or questions can be directed to:

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