



United Way British Columbia's Healthy Aging Program

Community Consultation & Stakeholder Meeting
Elk Valley – Elkford, Fernie and Sparwood

October 28th, 2021 at 10:00 AM Mountain Time Via Zoom

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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 British Columbia (UWBC), with services delivered by a local non-profit organization. UWBC is collaboratively working with communities in BC’s Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Interior Vancouver Island.”

The **Elk Valley** region has been identified as potential **Better at Home** site. Elk Valley includes the communities of Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford. The United Way British Columbia 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 28th at 10:00 AM MTN (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. This report focuses on the **October 28th** meeting where participants shared their interest in hosting Better at Home in their community. Further conversations were held early November to assist in the selection process of the recommendations submitted for approval and the conversations continued until early February.

The meeting attendees included members of the public and representatives from key stakeholders from the entire region. It was attended by 25 individuals including 3 representatives from the United Way British Columbia (UWBC) and two BH Program Coordinators from the interior. Invitations were sent to stakeholders including the local First Nations Bands 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 Elk Valley and surrounding region and included key stakeholders, the health authority and local government.

United Way British Columbia would like 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:

Jessica Kleissen, Regional Community Developer (RCD), Interior British Columbia, United Way British Columbia

Cathy Holmes, Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home, United Way British Columbia

Jessica Kleissen acknowledged territorial lands of the First Nations Communities and our use of their land for this meeting. After a bit of housekeeping, we welcomed participants.

Introduction to United Way British Columbia's Healthy Aging program

To better support older adults to be socially connected, live healthy lifestyles, and maintain independence, United Way British Columbia's (UWBC) Healthy Aging program's 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. UWBC's Healthy Aging program 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, Men Shed's, 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 program's Strategic goals is to increase physicality to help older adults remain socially connected and active as they age.

Reduce social isolation: The UWBC's 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 UWBC's 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.

Healthy Aging Core Canada was launched in the Spring of 2021 and Programs and Initiatives profiled on *Healthy Aging CORE* provide examples of the important work being done by local, provincial, and national organizations and the value of these programs and initiatives in promoting health and well-being and fostering resilience for seniors.

The knowledge hub was created for **Community Based Seniors' Services** (CBSS) 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.

For more information visit and/or join Healthy Aging Core at www.healthagingCORE.ca

Community-Based Seniors Services sector (CBSS)

The key stakeholders of the province's broad and diverse CBSS sector, including seniors themselves, form an extensive network that is connected through Healthy Aging CORE (Collaborative Online Resources and Education). Besides this provincial knowledge hub, the sector shares information, knowledge, expertise, and experience through learning events, Provincial Working Groups, Regional and Provincial Consultations, Communities of Practice, and the Biannual Provincial Summit on Aging. Between September 2020 and May 2021, eight virtual Regional Consultations and one Provincial Consultation were held.

These community engagement mechanisms are guided by the CBSS Leadership Council, and play an important role in informing their work, as well as keeping the CBSS sector informed about new resources, programs, and research relevant to the sector.

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.

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 2021, BH will expand to serve up to six (6) new program sites in British Columbia. **Elk Valley** was identified as a potential **Better at Home** site. Elk Valley is of significant geographical region and includes the communities of **Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford**.

The meeting on **October 28th, 2021** could not have happened without the dedication behind the scenes of the following people from:

Elk Valley Community included participants from Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie.

Elkford Mayor Dean McKerracher
Lois Halco – BC CRN

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

Elk Valley Community Consultation Attendees:

Elkford Mayor Dean McKerracher
Katie Taylor – Fernie Housing Society/Elk Valley Family Society
Lois Helko – BC CRN
Doug Newberry – BC CRN
Erin Leahy – Interior Health
Sharon Strom – Tech Corporation
Linda Hunter – Participant
Lauren Fox – Fernie Women’s Centre /Columbia Basin Resources Society
Courtney Baker – Fernie Seniors Centre
MaryAnne – Elk Valley Care Giver
Judi Loewen – Sparwood Old Age Pensioners (SOAP)
Debbie Attmour – Sparwood Senior Society
Tami Chechotko – Sparwood Food Bank
Michelle Milan – Elk Valley Seniors Housing Society
Karen Baily Romenko – CARP
Donna Fields – UWBC
Norma – Anglican Diocese of Kootenay
Neha Johal – UWBC
Sharon Quail – Interior Health
Elin Holuck – Senior Volunteer Food Security
Lisa Kennedy – Community Connections Cranbrook
Laurie Harris - Participant
Micheala Matters – East Kootenay’s Senior Care Provider

The intent of the community meeting on October 28th at 10:00 AM was:

- Support isolated areas as soon as possible in order to help support seniors in Elk Valley;
- That all seniors who need supports have access to bc211 and COVID-19 emergency supports as well as **Better at Home** supports to community;
- Recommendation for **Better at Home** services in 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 Elk Valley

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 (*This is not an exhaustive list*):

- Districts of Elk Valley (Sparwood, Fernie and Elkford)
- Local Municipal Governments
- Elk Valley Family Services
- Columbia Basin Services Society
- Sparwood Food Bank
- Elk Valley Women's Center
- Fernie Chamber of Commerce
- Elk Valley Housing Society
- Fernie Health Center
- Veteran's Affairs
- Elk Valley Seniors Centres
- Elk Valley Legion
- Elk Valley Hospice
- Home and Community Care
- Division of Family Practice
- BC CRN
- Community Paramedics
- RCMP / Community Policing
- BC Emergency Services
- Chamber of Commerce

* *This is not an exhaustive list*

First Nations Communities including: The Elk Valley is part of the **Ktunaxa First Nations** Traditional Territory. For more than 10,000 years, the Ktunaxa people, also known as the Kootenai or Kootenay, have occupied a traditional territory that spans what is now known as southeastern British Columbia, Southwestern Alberta, and parts of Washington, Idaho and Western Montana.

Note: These communities are not included in the below population demographics as they were not available in the most recent census (2016)

Community Demographics Elk Valley

- According to the 2016 Census, the population of the three communities of Elk Valley is **11,532**
- **2275** persons are 65 years and older
- **300** over the age of 85
- In 2016, **920** seniors over the age of 65
- **7.98%** lived independently in their own homes
- **38.3%** lived below the poverty line in the region

The average rent in Elk Valley for a one-bedroom apartment in the city centre was approximately **\$1,187** per month, and utilities cost around \$135.57 per month. Other costs are inline with the national average; however, transportation is limited in this region.

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 10th 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

Elk Valley has a tightly knit group of community advocates who look after each other, but particularly during COVID. In their desire to stay engaged in their community they work together in partnership with various agencies to ensure that the seniors who live in their region are a priority. They have various programs for seniors currently in place, including a Seniors Center, an active BC CRN, a Women's Shelter, Elk Valley Hospice, Division of Family Practice, and options for Seniors Housing including the Elk Valley Housing Society.

Feedback & Questions from Meeting Participants

After a bit of housekeeping, the meeting began with an overview of Better at Home and the United Way British Columbia's Healthy Aging program's contributions to the Interior.

Community Conversations:

Elin Holuck – Senior Volunteer Food Security started off the conversation stating there was a huge concern regarding food security in the Elk Valley. She suggested that a *food train* be created as a way to assist seniors access food while still in the pandemic. She expressed that in her experience many older adults can't cook or don't cook for themselves anymore and a food train may offer some choices to seniors. The hosts of the meeting spoke to supporting food delivery and/or delivering prepared meals is currently

offered through our Safe Seniors, Strong Communities initiative. There was also discussion of a local church preparing meals and delivering them to local seniors in Elk Valley.

Jessica Kleissen transitioned the attention of participants to Better at Home programs that are currently operating nearest to Elk Valley and in particular introduced both the Cranbrook and the Columbia Valley Programs. She described some of the highlights that these programs have created while working through the pandemic over the past couple of years. She discussed the importance of our programs pivoting to meet the needs of seniors throughout the province and emphasised that each community, while similar, have different needs.

Jessica introduced the Family Dynamix Better at Home program located in the Columbia Valley. She noted their geographical area has similar elements to the Elk Valley and she spoke of the initial stages of the pilot program from BH rural and remote perspectives. She spoke of the initial research done as one of the first rural and remote programs, and she discussed some of the services offered in the area. Unfortunately, invited guests from Family Dynamix were unavailable to attend this meeting however they expressed their support of having a Better at Home program develop in Elk Valley.

Nancy Reid and Lisa Kennedy were invited to share their perspective on behalf of their Better at Home program hosted at Community Connections. Lisa Kennedy, Program Coordinator of the Better at Home program expressed how her community appreciated the services provided. Since the pandemic, the key focus has been on streamlining services and she explained how important it was for new programs to start slowly and offer a few supports from the basket of services that could be provided exceptionally well. She recommended that new programs introduce more services as their expertise grew. She explained that in Cranbrook, Laurie Harris, currently is on leave, built an exceptional program. Lisa has experienced quite a few calls coming from the Elk Valley. The appetite for services in the three communities of Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford is evident.

Lisa mentioned that there were not many services available in the area and that it was a considerable "haul" to get to Fernie from Cranbrook. She discussed the challenges of operating during a pandemic and stated that at one time, the Cranbrook program offered all of the services in the basket, but due to Covid, the services were paired back. She explained that when new program coordinators start there is quite a bit of work to keep housekeepers, shopping, while navigating all of the services and she found that she was spread very thin. She said that any new program coordinator should have a solid understanding of their community and be able to help navigate resources. Lisa emphasised that it is really important because, *"a lot of seniors that do call, or are family members who do not live in the area, don't understand where to find the resources and they often rely on Better at Home Coordinators to help them navigate where services for their parents can be acquired. While this isn't in the job description as such, it is one of the most important elements to the work."*

Lisa encouraged new programs to set really strong boundaries regarding the services they are providing, and that having things in writing could really help ensure that program services are clear, both in what they offer, and in what they do not offer as part of the basket of services. She noted that it is tricky to change services once people have grown attached to the services they have received. She identified that it is important to make sure that the supports remain consistent for all of the services provided.

Further, a discussion ensued about how important it is to connect with other programs, to share documents and participants shared that it was very clear that new programs do not have to “reinvent the wheel” and that there are a number of supports and people at the Community of Practice (COP’s) for coordinators to share resources.

Nancy Reid, Executive Director of Community Connections in Cranbrook noted that there was great interest in having a Better at Home program in the region. She expressed that the momentum is very good and, in her opinion, the “food train” was a great idea and she talked about how many restaurants during Covid stepped up to help older adults get the food during the pandemic. In her discussion, she expressed gratitude to local restaurants in the interior. She said, the restaurants were giving great prices on the meals, and volunteers were able to get a lot of frozen meals and made social connections with while delivering to seniors in the area. She remarked that every little bit matters. She advised not to *“spread yourself to thin as you do get known as the senior’s specialist. You will be asked to sit on any committee serving seniors.”* She noted that her daughter was moving to Elk Valley and that it was wonderful to see so many people in the area offering services, even though her daughter would not be utilizing them.

Mary Ann spoke about being an Elk Valley Care Facilitator and she compared Better at Home sharing that the program looks to be somewhat of a senior’s concierge. She talked about Mountainside Church who mobilized during the pandemic to get services to seniors, such as meal delivery and groceries. She said the biggest issue in the area is that no one knows who to call and she emphasised the need for solid communication. She shared that she is well connected in community and was surprised to hear that a meeting regarding Better at Home was being held. She explained that family and friends are relied on heavily for supports but they are very stretched. The communication factor is very poor and so there is a disconnect. *“We need the concierge kind of person who know who is on the ground. There is hardly anyone that is willing to help with meals and even though people are willing to come in the territory is huge and it isn’t easy in the winter. We have a few places in Sparwood and Fernie but not as much in Elkford.”* She said that people are in such need and they are afraid to ask, and when they ask, there isn’t a clear person to call and sometimes, as a result, it is too late. Seniors are often left in isolation and they don’t reach out for help despite their need for services.

An acknowledgement of gratitude to Lois Helko from BC CRN for being the community navigator in the Elk Valley region was made and that it was Lois who shared information regarding the community meeting to many local stakeholders in attendance of the consultation.

Katie Taylor, Elk Valley Family Society had questions regarding some of the services in the basket and wondered what hours are required from a coordinator. She specifically asked Nancy and Lisa which services from the basket were most requested in their community and if the Cranbrook area looked after the South Country area. In response, Lisa offered that by and large the most requests are for housekeeping. She discussed they their community hires as staff housekeepers. She also said that she sees many more requests for transportation than ever before as transportation in the region is limited. She also said that grocery delivery is becoming more frequently requested. Snow shovelling and lawn care is less of a service for them because of insurance concerns. In order to accommodate, Lisa said that she now refers that service to local companies who offer lower costs to seniors. She said that laundry is becoming a popular request.

A discussion ensued regarding the costs of Better at Home to seniors. The hosts described the sliding scale and the ability to work with seniors who are financially challenged in order to help seniors age in place. Agencies receive a sliding scale update annually but during the 2022 fiscal there would be no changes to the annual scale due to the pandemic.

It was important that the UWBC team highlight that Better at Home is a community program and even though the program sits with a particular agency, the expectation is that the organization works with the community to create a program that is steered by the needs of seniors in the region. A conversation regarding the Advisory/ Steering Committee ensued and references were made that members of the community meeting may be candidates to sit on this steering committee. The conversation highlighted that it would be most advantageous if someone from each community were members as well. As a matter of protocol, all new Better at Home programs, for the first two years, must have an advisory committee. A discussion regarding who could sit on these councils was answered with the recommendation that members included could include people from the health authority, local agencies and stakeholders, divisions of family practice, local seniors and other senior serving people who are willing to help support programming in community. It is important that representation from Sparwood, Fernie and Elford are present to help drive the program to support individual community needs. Upon this description, the meeting returned to participant questions.

Katie Taylor commented that what she noticed as immediate needs included housekeeping, friendly visits and help with the loneliness factor, picking up of groceries, and prescriptions as priorities.

Lauren Fox, Fernie Women's Center and Columbia Basin Resource Society suggested that another priority is transportation, especially to medical appointments. She was curious how far are people able to go for medical appointments and said that many people need to go to Cranbrook and Calgary for medical services and there are currently very few options for these people. She also said that snow shovelling was a problem, particularly in Fernie and in the South Country. She said that many people appear to be the lowest of priority in these communities and that many are even more isolated when they can't get out of their homes due to a lack of snow clearing in their area. Lauren also said that Sparwood and Elford have not bad snow removal and infrastructure in the area and so it is a bit less of a concern. She said that they don't have a lot of contractors as it is to be able to support snow shovelling let alone some of the other services in these remote areas.

Michela Matters said she is a caregiver for her blind grandmother, and she feels the transportation piece is really key. She said that she and her mother do most of the driving and she said that it puts pressure on them. She said she doesn't mind, but it is difficult to get support in community and especially during the pandemic.

Elford Mayor Dean McKerracher was delighted to hear that Better at Home was interested in providing services in Elk Valley. He suggested that a list of the participants on the call be compiled and that his office would post the contacts on their communities' website and share the information with their 50 plus club. He said he was willing to help coordinate a package that can be shared in the club, and maybe they could coordinate with the library. He talked about their 50 plus club sharing that it has been running for many years, and that there was a group trying to put together a *senior's helping senior's* club that tried to do a service program for older adults, but it didn't work out. He said that the library is offering some services

to seniors. He then shared the partnership they have with Interior Health, Transit, and the District of Elkford, Sparwood & Fernie. He told us that they share a bus that runs between the communities and back and forth to Cranbrook for medical appointments. He explained that they have a second bus that runs from Elkford to Fernie and South Country a few times a day, and a little more often into Sparwood because it is closer. They charge \$2.50 per trip. He said that with this service there is an opportunity for older adults to shop out of town if they want to, as this bus runs fairly frequently. He would like to see a list of coordinators that are providing services and have a coordinated effort, mentioning that one of his former counsel members may be interested in the Better at Home Program Coordinator position. He reminded the group, *"it sounds like Better at Home is a good program."*

Karen who works with CARP Kootenay Chapter, and has worked volunteering for BH for many years. She expressed the importance of working together, getting all the groups sharing resources rather than being territorial in order to best share information. She emphasised: *"Be sure everyone comes to work together"*. The reminded participants that the region is huge but great groups can work together. When putting CARP together, she said she had several meetings to bring people together and as a result they created *SIP – Seniors in Partnership* to be the point of contact for referrals. People need to be able to access information and stakeholders to get information to seniors. One volunteer came forward during this process and she said volunteering was an issue. She said they mobilized and together started *Neighbours Helping Neighbours* to promote volunteering to share information and soon businesses got involved and began helping as well.

The hosts spoke about some Better at Home programs that share resources including intergenerational partnerships such as helping high school seniors work with older adults in the spring with yard work. Hosts stressed that this is when an advisory group can really help a program. Coordinators can help facilitate these conversations and develop solutions to local obstacles through collaboration and curiosity.

Lois Halco from BCCRN noted that she was very excited to hear the that there was a proposal to encourage a Better at Home program in Elk Valley. She said that Sparwood is the middle community situated between Elkford and Fernie. There are 3700 people in Sparwood and there are no facilities for seniors with higher needs in Sparwood and all seniors are living independently as there is no complex care or assisted living facilities in the community. She said that Katie Taylor has been instrumental in getting housing for seniors and she explained that a new complex is coming to the area. She shared information about the three independent living facilities services in the community stating that services there are very limited. She mentioned that one of the facilities offers dinner only. To help advocate for seniors in the region, there is a seniors agency called SOAPS – Sparwood Old Age Pensioners Society who had a membership of 140 seniors. This membership has dropped significantly due to COVID as their membership is now about 70 people, but there is bigger capacity when the pandemic is finished.

At the end of this part of the conversation, Jessica and I reminded the participants that the purpose of the meeting was to help find the appropriate agency. We discussed next steps, processes and potential timelines for the implementation of the Better at Home program. At the end of this part of the meeting, many of the participants left the zoom call; however, Jessica and Cathy remained on the line and spoke with Elkford Mayor Dean McKerracher about the three communities.

A conversation with Jessica Kleissen, Cathy Holmes and Mayor Dean McKerracher ensued and we candidly spoke of agencies that potentially could host the program.

Mayor McKerracher explained that there were very few agencies in the area that could support the host role. He shared his insight regarding the transportation pieces. Jessica asked if he had any insight to whom he might recommend to move placement forward and he suggested the Lion's Club as a starting point. We spoke of his daughter Kim Bauer who is very active with seniors in community. (*Note: Kim Bauer is the Executive Director of Elford Women's Task Force and Kim also assists with the Affordable Housing Society*) Mayor McKerracher said the community is working on their new housing complex, but are still fund raising in order to support a new building.

Mayor McKeeracher noted that the three communities work together but are independent. Interior Health works very closely with their team to ensure older adults are scheduled for medical appointments around the bus to make it easier for seniors. He suggested the 50 plus club may be interested in participating. He said he will do what he can to support the Better at Home program. At the recommendation, Jessica highlighted that UWBC has criteria and she outlined some of the important points. We discussed the challenges of finding a society and that many in the area are more sports related than social service driven. Mayor McKeeracher said that the housing society would need a manager for the new building, and quite possibly the Program Coordinator role could be shared with the building manager once the facility was built. He also explained that two of his counsellors work on the housing project and perhaps there may be something they can work out in the future. He does not know if either of the two councillors will be running in the next election again. He shared that he has been Mayor for 16 years and that he planned to retire next election saying he had a year left of leadership. We left the conversation with full support in moving forward with bringing Better at Home to the community.

The meeting adjourned 11:36 Mountain Time.

After the meeting Jessica Kleissen and Cathy Holmes debriefed and mutually decided to extend an invitation to Katie Taylor, Kim Bauer, Tami Chechotko and Lauren Fox to see if there is any potential future for Better at Home within these agencies.

Cathy Holmes contacted Kim Bauer – Executive Director of Elford Women's Task Force Society, who kindly expressed that her agency was at capacity and would not be considering this potential contract. In support of the program, Kim forwarded our initial invitation to some of her colleagues including the Fernie Housing Society, Elk Valley Family Society, Elk Valley Women's Society and the Columbia Basin Resource Society. Tami Chechotko from Sparwood Food Bank was also invited to the conversation. Tami attended the presentation on Oct 28th, but sent her regrets to attending on November 4th 2021.

November 4th 2021, 11:30 Mountain Time - Zoom Meeting

Attendance:

Lauren Fox, Executive Director, Fernie Women's Centre and Columbia Basin Family Resource Society.

Katie Taylor - Katie Taylor – Fernie Housing Society/Elk Valley Family Society

Jessica Kleissen, Regional Community Developer (RCD) UWBC,

Cathy Holmes, Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home Expansion UWBC

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the potential hosting of Better at Home by Fernie Women's Centre/ Columbia Basin Family Resource Society /Fernie Housing Society and/or Elk Valley Family Society. Katie and Lauren represent all four community agencies in Elk Valley.

Jessica and Cathy reviewed with Katie and Lauren the organizational structure of Better at Home and discussed some of the details regarding operating a program. We opened the floor for conversations with each of their agencies and discussed their concerns. The conversation regarding expectations, deliverables, funding, and operations was the focus of the dialogue.

During the discussion, Jessica and Cathy requested that if either party was interested in hosting the program we would pursue further talks at a later time, once they had a chance to review their current capacity, implications for bringing on a new program under the current restraints of the pandemic and other variables. At the meeting, Katie Taylor expressed her reservations about hosting a program sharing that it was difficult to find people. She explained that her organization was stretched, but that she would consider the options and get back to us.

Lauren Fox expressed significant interest in hosting the program and appreciated the value of Better at Home in the Elk Valley. She explained that she needed to review their current programming and would get back to us.

Cathy Holmes asked each of the participants to reach out if they had further questions and the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 Mountain Time

Follow up telephone calls were made to both Katie Taylor and Lauren Fox. They both, after careful consideration, decided that they were at capacity but welcomed Better at Home in their community should a suitable host be found.

Discussions continued from December to February with the team from UWBC. A conversation with local representatives from the interior from the United Way offered suggestions, including attaching the Elk Valley Better at Home to an existing program and thereby sharing administration and coordination options. In reviewing current Better at Home programs, members of the UWBC team recommended Pat Cope, Family Dynamix as a potential host of the program and supported the idea of a regional model.

A meeting was set up on **February 10th at 11:00 AM** Mountain Time to discuss the particulars of hosting the Better at Home program in the Elk Valley with Executive Director, Pat Cope from Family Dynamix. Camille J Hannah, Provincial Coordinator, Healthy Aging, Population Health and Cathy Holmes, Provincial Coordinator, Better at Home Expansion facilitated the conversation.

After a bit of housekeeping, the conversation began with reviewing the Better at Home expansions that had been completed in the interior since 2020. Cathy led the discussion surrounding the gaps in service in the Elk Valley Region. Pat explained that Family Dynamix had been awarded a grant from the Ministry

of Health to work with Mental Health supports in the region, and there was some crossover in the Elk Valley communities. As the conversation unfolded, we asked if she had any agency contacts in the area that potentially could host the program in the Elk Valley.

It became clear during the conversation, that there were no agencies in the Elk Valley region who could host the program and so we began discussions around a regional model with Family Dynamix as the host of Better at Home.

The concern for Pat Cope was first and foremost the community. Her conversation led to questions about the region, the Community Consultation, and the importance of Family Dynamix should they take the project on, collaboration with community resources was essential to ensure that all three communities of Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford's seniors' population could be served with the support of the Elk Valley Community as a whole. She requested information about the scope and current resources in community and expressed interested in hosting the program if queries were met.

In an email sent in early February, Cathy Holmes shared the participant list which included the agencies that attended the Community Consultation on October 28th 2021. (As listed above) Cathy further expressed that the final decisions for any community expansion are based upon the needs of the community and the final approval of *Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director, Govt. Relations & Prog., Population Health.*

Resolve: Upon receipt of the information and a review of the current community assets, Family Dynamix agreed that they were in a position to host the Better at Home expansion in Elk Valley.

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

- Connection to service groups throughout communities in the Elk Valley
- 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 UWBC 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 British Columbia 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.

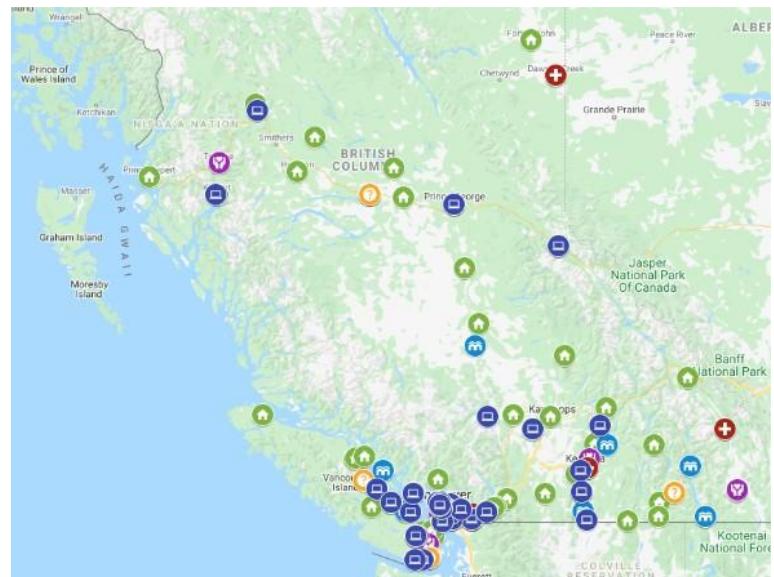
Although each program is unique and serves based on the community, there are also commonalities among 85 **Better at Home** programs:

- 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.

Healthy Aging's province-wide network:

Currently **127** community agencies are providing **195** programs in BC

-  Better at Home
-  Family & Friend Caregivers Support Programs
-  TAPS (Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors)
-  Social Prescribing Program
-  Navigation and Peer Support
-  Digital Learning Pilot Project:
 - Active Aging Plus Program
 - iTech Packages



Working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland, Central & Northern Vancouver Island.

Better at Home Programs in Interior BC

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

Currently, **Better at Home** can be found throughout the province; however, the following programs became HUB Agencies. They supported the efforts of Safe Seniors Strong Communities using a Hub and Spoke model to ensure that most communities in the Interior would be served during the pandemic.

South Okanagan Similkameen – OneSky Community Resources Society – Penticton

Okanagan & Shuswap – Seniors Outreach Services Society – Kelowna

Thomson Nicola Cariboo – Interior Community Services – Kamloops

West Kootenays & Boundary – Valley Community Services – Creston

East Kootenays & Columbia Valley – Family Dynamix – Invermere

Better at Home in the Interior can be found in:

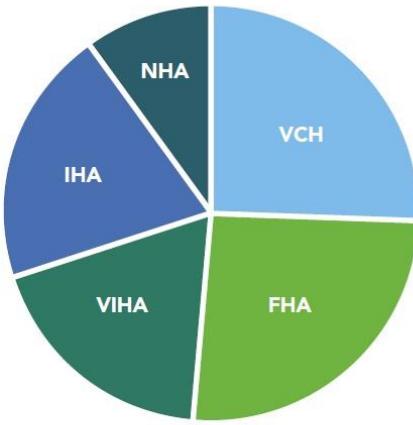
Arrow Lakes, Ashcroft/Cache Creek, Boundary, Castlegar, Central Okanagan, Columbia Valley, Cranbrook, Creston Valley, Kamloops, Logan Lake, Lower Columbia, Thompson, Peachland, Penticton, Shuswap, Southern Okanagan, and Williams Lake and Golden.

2020-21 Highlights

Total Community Programming by Region

■	Vancouver Coastal Health.....	\$3,923,610
■	Fraser Health Authority	\$3,937,270
■	Vancouver Island Health Authority...	\$2,853,533
■	Interior Health Authority	\$3,089,279
■	Northern Health Authority	\$1,487,282

TOTAL - \$15,290,974



Total includes the following streams: Better at Home, Social Prescribing, Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors (TAPS), Family & Friend Caregiver Supports and Safe Seniors, Strong Communities programs.

Interior British Columbia Elk Valley Better at Home Region



In 2020-2021 – Investments / Interior of BC

- \$3,422,629 dollars invested
- 22 BH programs
- 11 HA programs
- 7955 seniors receiving at least one service
- 1777 volunteers provided services

While there are 22 formal programs in the region, there are several smaller communities served in the Interior. Some follow a regional model and cover more than one community with communications and supports which work together to support seniors who may reside in remote areas that have few services. Throughout the Interior, 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 who formally meet two to three times per year serving all Interior Programs in British Columbia; however, with COVID-19 they met more regularly as the needs of community changed and evolved. Host organizations also connect via the **Better at Home Working Group** (found on Healthy Aging 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.

Regional models defined include:

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.

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.

Local Better at Home agencies can be of great value to new programs. It is encouraged to new programs reach out to the local representation and Regional Community Developer for guidance.

The Regional Community Developer (RCD) in the Interior is Jessica Kleissen jessicak@uwbc.ca

Emergency Response

Safe Seniors Strong Communities (SSSC) COVID-19 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 the time of writing, over a million services were delivered - SSSC services have been provided to seniors in British Columbia which may have included one or more of the following:

- Seniors (65+) No cost for Service Delivery
- Urgent non-medical needs resulting from COVID-19
- Living independently in community 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

Better at Home - 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;
 - UWBC Program Funds budget,
 - and a Total Program Funds budget.
5. Provide any other documentation considered key by the community or by UWBC 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 for Elk Valley

An ideal timeline was suggested for the **Elk Valley BH** program be:

- July 2021– February 2022– Work with the community to identify a *Lead Organization* for Elk Valley
- Mid February 2022 the Lead Organizations to fulfill and meet all application and grant criteria
- A signed Letter of Agreement for dispersal of funds be for March 2022
- A Program Coordinator be employed in time to participate in the Provincial Better at Home Communities online COPs by March 2022
- At least one BH service be delivered to seniors no later June 2022

The UWBC Healthy Aging program team shared their experiences with the presenters and tried to affirm concerns by sharing the current dynamics of the program throughout the province reflecting the needs of community, particularly during COVID-19 and the current landscape of successful BH Programs.

Recommendations from Regional Community Developer & Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home

It became very clear that the members of the Elk Valley community, Jessica Kleissen, Regional Community Developer (RCD), key stakeholders, and seniors have felt the challenges of Covid 19 in their communities.

Through many conversations, creative solutions to bring Better at Home to fruition in the Elk Valley regions would become necessary. After considering all options, it was determined that there were existing programs in the province that showed potential to be modelled in other areas of the province and that this model could work well in the Elk Valley region.

Over several meetings, conversations regarding the administrative, management, collaborations of the agency with community, and discussions with local experts and participants of the October 28, 2021 meeting, it was determined that the best agency to host this program in Elk Valley was to expand the territory of Family Dynamix, located Invermere. Not only does the agency have capacity in all levels, it also has relationships with the UWBC as the Hub agency for Safe Seniors, Strong Communities services. Family Dynamix has a proven track record of building solid relationships with existing programs and working in collaboration with community.

It is the recommendation of the Regional Community Developer and the Provincial Community Planner that the best fit for Better at Home in Elk Valley is **Family Dynamix** noting that relationships with agencies in Elk Valley and other stakeholders may form lasting partnerships as the program develops.

Why Family Dynamix?

- Solid non-profit with strong ties to the community
- History of community engagement and consultation
- 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 including First Nations Health Authority
- Committed to sustainable and secure operating policies
- History of accountability in reporting to funders
- Accomplished fundraisers and program developers
- 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

Next Steps

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 to support the application process.

Once the LOA has been approved and is in place our team will work with the agency to train, support and facilitate a successful launch of the **Better at Home** program in the community.

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 dialogue was created by the community of **Elk Valley** and we are grateful for the opportunity to bring the **Better at Home Program** in your region.

Thank you **Kahir Lalji**, Provincial Director, Government Relations & Programs for your vision and encouragement to expand **Better at Home** to more communities in the Province of BC through meaningful initiatives for older adults in our communities.

Many thanks to **Jessica Kleissen**, RCD Interior BC, United Way British Columbia for her co-facilitation and insight into the region. Special thanks to the team of **UWBC's** Healthy Aging Program, including **Bobbi Symes**, Assistant Director, Population Health, **Jessamine Liu**, Administrative Assistant, Population Health, **Camille J Hannah**, Provincial Coordinator, Population Health, **Jean Rikhof**, Provincial Coordinator, Grants & Data, and everyone on the Healthy Aging team who assists in the facilitation of new programs in the Province of British Columbia.

Finally, thanks to each of you for participating during the entire community engagement process and particularly on October 28, 2021 with the desire to co-create a shared future that invests in 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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