



NEWS RELEASE

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B.C.'s COVID-19 economic response: community grant delivery met most expectations

VICTORIA – Emergency grants designed to help B.C. communities deal with the economic impact of COVID-19 were delivered in line with most government policies and guidelines, according to an audit by the Office of the Auditor General.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs provided \$30 million in grants to 63 small-scale infrastructure projects – such as new bike paths, public building upgrades, and park improvements – in amounts between \$29,000 and \$1 million, under the Community Economic Resilience grant stream.

The recipients included 32 local governments, 25 not-for-profit groups, and six Indigenous governments or organizations.

“The ministry provided urgent funding to communities and organizations during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and they did it within tight timelines,” Auditor General Michael Pickup said. “Valuable lessons from this program can be applied when future emergencies require grant programs to be developed and delivered quickly.”

The ministry established the grant stream in September 2020, applied a consistent evaluation process for grant applications, and monitored recipients to ensure they met funding requirements.

However, the ministry did not provide clearly documented guidance for scoring technical assessments and assessing project risks. It also relied heavily on unverified information from applicants when assessing whether they could carry out the work on time and budget.

“It took just seven months from the initial program development to the grants being issued,” Pickup said. “The ministry’s experience with assessing applications shows some of the challenges when a program is rolled out under extreme time pressures.”

All 63 projects must be completed by March 2023. As of March 2022, eight were completed. The rest of the projects were in progress, though several experienced delays due to wildfires, floods, supply chain and technical issues.

The audit report – [B.C.'s COVID-19 Response: Community Economic Resilience Grants](#) – makes one recommendation to develop guidance for emergency grant programs based on the lessons learned from this experience. The ministry has accepted the recommendation.

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