

Community Excellence Awards 2024 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form by May 17, 2024.

All questions must be answered by typing directly in this form. **As all questions are reviewed and scored as part of the adjudication process, please do not leave any questions blank.**

If you have any questions, contact awards@ubcm.ca.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information	_____ (for administrative use only)
Local Government or First Nation Applicant: City of White Rock	Date of Application: May 16, 2024
Primary Contact Person*: Anne Berry Phone: 604-541-2293	Position: Director, Planning & Development Services E-mail: aberry@whiterockcity.ca
Secondary Contact Person*: Guillermo Ferrero Phone: 604-541-2133	Position: Chief Administrative Officer E-mail: gferrero@whiterockcity.ca

* Contact persons must be authorized representatives of the applicant (i.e. staff member or elected official).

<p>SECTION 2: Category. Please select only one:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Governance. <i>Governance processes or policies that are outcomes-based and consensus oriented; support and encourage citizen participation in civic decision-making; are efficient, equitable and inclusive, open and transparent; and exemplify best practices in accountability, effectiveness, and long-term thinking.</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Service Delivery. <i>Projects/programs that provide effective services in a proactive manner and demonstrate benefit to the community.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Asset Management. <i>Projects/programs that demonstrate a comprehensive system of asset management policies and practices, meeting and/or exceeding accepted best practices.</i></p>



**Municipal Finance
Authority of BC**



Excellence in Sustainability. *Projects/programs that incorporate a long-term sustainability lens by considering cultural, social, economic and environmental issues in planning, policy and practice.*

SECTION 3: Project/Program Details

1. Name of the Project/Program:
Third Party Contracted Services for Building Permit Application Review

2. Project/Program Summary. Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.
In January 2023, Council directed staff to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for temporary contracted building permit application review services. This initiative aimed to reduce the volume of applications awaiting review and permit issuance. Over the previous 18 months, the city experienced a high volume of building permit applications combined with vacancies in the Building Division, which were challenging to fill. This situation resulted in unsatisfactory permit review wait times, necessitating increased resources in the Division. Consequently, Council authorized hiring additional staff for the Planning and Development Services department. Following Council's direction, staff posted an RFP for consultant services to address the backlog. In March 2023, Council awarded the contract to Pontem Consulting Group Ltd. on a time-limited basis, with a budget of \$150,000 for these services. This resulted in a significant reduction in building permit review wait times within the first six months.

3. Project/Program timeline. Please indicate when the project/program was initiated and if it is now substantially complete.
The program was implemented in March 2023. The initial trial was determined successful by October 2023, and ongoing funding for 2024 was included in the 2024 budget discussions.

4. Demonstrating Excellence. Please describe how your project/program demonstrates excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC and provides promising practices for others to follow.
The City's experience with an increase in application volume following the pandemic, along with challenges in staff recruitment and retention, is not unique to White Rock. However, it became significant for a small organization with limited staff. The City recognizes that applicants face financial burdens, difficulties booking construction trades, and supply chain challenges. They rely on swift application processing to plan their construction schedules. By considering and applying an alternative mechanism to expedite the permit review process, the City is demonstrating a commitment to service excellence for the community. Furthermore, by recognizing the need to implement additional supports during a challenging recruitment period, the City has shown that it values its employees by considering their workload and capacity.

5. Category Criteria.

A. Please describe how your project/program meets the objectives of the category you have applied under. Refer to Section 3 of the Program and Application Guide.

When Council developed its strategic priorities for the 2022-2026 term, improving permit review times for the community was a top priority. By directing the use of contracted services, the City was able to expedite permit delivery, reducing the burden on applicants and staff while supporting economic growth. The program's flexibility allows it to be utilized on an as-needed basis. As staff are recruited and the application backlog is reduced, the need for the consultant diminishes. This approach demonstrates prudent financial planning and resource management.

B. In many cases projects may meet the criteria of more than one category. If applicable, please describe how your project meets the criteria of one or more other categories.

SECTION 4: Program Criteria

6. Leadership. Describe the extent to which your local government acted as a local or regional leader in the development or implementation of the project/program.

While the use of consultants is common in local governments, this program is unique for the City. Staff ensured that the consultants were qualified to meet Provincial requirements for certifications and qualifications. They supported the consultants as needed, which allowed staff to focus on less complex applications, inspections, and other related building services. Council demonstrated leadership by addressing a challenging situation through unconventional means. With many requests to prioritize one application over another, this approach exemplifies the implementation of best practices for fairness to all applicants.

7. Financial management and planning. Describe the degree to which the project and/or organization has implemented financial best practices that support long-term financial planning, value for money, financial sustainability and/or economic development.

The consultant's services are provided only on an as-needed basis, reflecting a prudent approach to managing the City's finances. Many timing concerns originated from the business community, particularly with tenant improvement applications. This program enabled faster building permit issuance for businesses needing permits for new or renovated spaces, including retail, offices, and medical services. By improving the timing of these permits, the local economy could grow and provide needed services for the greater community, helping White Rock flourish as a complete community.

8. Partnerships and collaboration. Describe the breadth and depth of community and/or regional partnerships that supported the project/program and the extent to which internal (e.g. inter-departmental and/or staff and elected officials) and/or external collaboration was evident.

Faced with staffing retention and recruitment challenges within the Building Division, as well as high levels of frustration among developers and business owners, Council sought a solution that would address the needs of both staff and the community. They listened to both groups and collaborated with staff to develop a program that could be implemented

with minimal disruption to staff workflows. This program allowed numerous waiting projects to be reviewed simultaneously, creating a more efficient process to alleviate the backlog. The approach was compassionate to the needs of both groups, recognizing internal morale challenges and the external burdens applicants were carrying.

9. Innovation and promising practices. Describe the degree to which the project/program demonstrated creativity and innovation, and contributed to increased efficiency or effectiveness.

The program had not been utilized in the City previously, so staff ensured that the City remained in compliance with Provincial requirements for the qualifications of application reviewers. It was innovative in its efficient implementation and rapid results. This approach allowed staff to focus on less complex, less time-consuming applications, enabling more files to be processed concurrently. Reducing the permit backlog also alleviated anxiety for both staff and applicants, resulting in more effective working relationships, faster reviews and approvals, and reduced wait times.

10. Engagement and communications. Describe the extent to which internal and/or external engagement was foundational to the success of the project/program, including the use of communication tools such as social media.

With the exception of an in-person kick-off meeting, the consultant team and the City team met electronically to discuss the files and review process updates. These electronic meetings helped build trust between staff and the consultants, given that external reviews of building permit applications had never been undertaken previously. One staff member was assigned as the primary contact for the process, establishing a reliable source of information for the consultants and fostering a good rapport between the City and the consulting team.

11. Transferability. Describe the degree to which the process or outcomes of the project, or other learnings, could be conveyed to other UBCM members.

This program is fully transferable to other communities experiencing similar recruitment and application volume challenges. The program setup, including bi-weekly meetings, information summary templates, RFP templates, and referral types, could be easily adopted by other organizations. The City of White Rock staff would be pleased to share their experiences with the program to help refine the process for other interested communities.

12. Performance measurement: Describe the extent to which the project has identified and/or utilized performance measures, benchmarks and/or standards to demonstrate benefit to the community.

The program utilized basic benchmarks to track the number and types of applications awaiting review. Data was collected when the RFP was issued, mid-way through the program in July 2023, and again in September 2023. This information was reported publicly to Council in a summary report, which is available to the public. As a result of the program, Council can now inform the public that wait times are considered reasonable. Additionally, if application volumes exceed staff capacity in the future, the City can re-engage the consultant to help manage the workload.

SECTION 5: Additional Information

13. Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

Prior to engaging consultants for the building permit review process, staff morale was low, and retaining employees was challenging due to stressful conditions. The development community was vocal in their dissatisfaction with the level of service, despite the hard work of staff. Once the consultant was retained and the volume of applications waiting to be reviewed was reduced, staff were pleased to meet community expectations and could work to rebuild good relationships with applicants. Council successfully implemented a commitment made based on community feedback heard during their election campaign, helping to build greater community trust.

SECTION 6: Required Attachments

- Council, Board or Band Council resolution indicating support for the project to be considered for a 2024 Community Excellence Award. Note: UBCM will accept applications without a resolution, providing they are received by August 16, 2024. Please contact UBCM if the resolution cannot be submitted by the application deadline.
- Five representative photos of the project. Photos should be submitted as JPEG files at a resolution suitable for display.
- Links to any publicly available videos related to the project.

Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files. Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities.

E-mail: awards@ubcm.ca

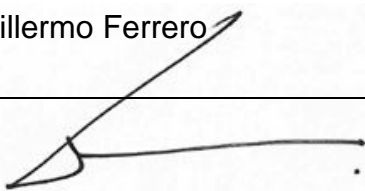
SECTION 7: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Name: Guillermo Ferrero

Title: Chief Administrative Officer

Signature:



Date: May 16, 2024