Wellness requires socially, environmentally, culturally, and economically thriving communities. Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) Community Investments – a division of VCH’s Regional Population Health team – supports community organizations in their efforts to empower communities to thrive. This is health promotion.¹

VCH SMART Grants fund long-term health promotion programs that promote greater equity in wellness by building on a community’s social, environmental, cultural and economic foundations to reduce the impact of systemic factors that create conditions of vulnerability. The primary focus is to support community driven programs accessible to residents who are experiencing barriers to wellness due to ability, age, citizenship status, colonization, ethno-cultural or religious background, gender, health, language, place of residence, sexuality and/or socioeconomic circumstances.

SMART Grants are for a one, two or three year term with the possibility of renewal based on program performance and on continued alignment/compliance with SMART guidelines and priorities.

The grants are named in honour of the late Sharon Martin, the founding Director of Community and Public Involvement for the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, one of the predecessors of Vancouver Coastal Health. Sharon believed that communities understand their local issues and have the ability to create collective solutions. SMART Grants are a tangible reflection of Sharon’s vision of nurturing healthy communities through community development and public involvement.

Current funding priorities for VCH Population Health Community Investments include:
- Prevention or management of chronic physical or mental health conditions.
- Early childhood development or enhancing resiliency of at-risk children and youth.
- Community capacity building in support of people experiencing, or at-risk of, homelessness or poverty.
- Social connectedness and reducing social isolation.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Only a very limited number of SMART Grants become available on an occasional basis. These are targeted according to VCH Population Health Community Investment priorities at the time. Organizations serving the particular priority population and/or addressing the particular priority issue are then invited to submit a brief letter of interest detailing program ideas. Upon review, applicant(s) may then be invited to submit a full application for consideration to receive a SMART Multi-Year Health Promotion Grant.

¹ “Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behaviour towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions.” – World Health Organization.
BASIC PROGRAM FUNDING CRITERIA

1) Programs must consist of activities that promote greater equity in wellness by building on a community’s social, environmental, cultural and economic foundations to reduce the impact of systemic factors that create conditions of vulnerability.

Programs that consist of, provide, or support provision of direct services are not eligible. Examples include, but are not limited to:
- Direct health care services, including health intervention, medical treatment, rehabilitation services, one-on-one counselling, or other personal health services.
- Other services, including housing, food distribution, meal programs where the primary purpose is the provision of food, etc.

2) Programs must consist of activities that build collective capacity of peer groups and/or communities (not solely that of individuals).²

3) Programs must respond to dynamic community needs and be driven and developed collaboratively with program participants and community members, with an ongoing mechanism for engagement and feedback (e.g., an active program advisory).

4) Programs must build on promising practices in health promotion. Informed innovation where evidence-based practice is underdeveloped is encouraged, with an appreciation that this requires support for research; planning and development; experimentation; and evaluation.

5) Programs must demonstrate strategic, active partnerships, or willingness to develop these, with other programs, community groups, and/or non-profit organizations.

6) Health promotion requires a whole-community approach. Recognizing the contributions of community organizations to population health; priority consideration will be given to organizations outside the health care sector. Health centres and other organizations delivering health care are encouraged to partner with, and support, community organizations eligible for funding.

7) Programs must be based within and primarily serve residents of the VCH region (Vancouver, Richmond, North Shore, Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Sea-to-Sky, Bella Coola Valley and/or Central Coast).

8) Applicant organizations must be a registered non-profit society, school board, or local, regional or First Nations government in British Columbia in good fiscal, operational and managerial standing and with an independent, active governing body (e.g., Board of Directors).

9) Program expenses must be reasonable in relation to proposed activities, and estimates must be well supported.

² Collective capacities are the skills, knowledge, and other group assets to promote health and/or prevent illness within or across groups or communities. This also includes working with population groups to address systemic barriers (e.g., employment barriers) such that groups or communities are better able to increase control over, and improve their health.
FUNDABLE/NON-FUNDABLE EXPENSES

SMART Grants CAN be used for the following expenses:

Labour:
• Staff wages and benefits – for staff time spent directly on developing/planning, delivering, coordinating and evaluating/refining the funded health promotion program.
• Contracted services – people hired on a contractual basis to provide services for the delivery of the funded health promotion program (e.g., temporary/seasonal help, contracted translators and special workshop facilitator, etc.).
• Volunteer honoraria/stipends – money or gifts recognizing the contributions made by volunteers to the funded health promotion program/project.

Program Non-labour:
• Space and utilities for the delivery of the funded health promotion program.
• Program supplies and services – supplies and services directly required for the delivery of the funded health promotion program.
• Program travel – travel costs directly related to delivery of the funded health promotion program (e.g., driving participants to a community centre).
• Communications – communications directly related to the delivery of the funded health promotion program. (e.g., newsletter, posters).
• Costs associated with the organizing and hosting events, conferences, and meetings directly related to the funded health promotion program.
• Volunteer and/or Peer Leader recruitment and training.

Program Administration:
• Program administration – Administrative, managerial and other operational costs incurred, albeit not necessarily solely, in order to deliver the funded health promotion project/program. Administrative costs cannot exceed 10% of the total value of the SMART Grant.

IF a SMART program has been approved for developmental phase, funds may also be used for:

• Research directly related to assessing community health promotion needs and/or interest (e.g. community needs assessment).
• Small capital expenditures necessary for program implementation. Requests for capital expenditure expenses must include a strong rationale for the need and amount.
• Organizational capacity development and professional development.

SMART Grants CANNOT be used for the following expenses:

• Programs and activities that consist of, provide, or support provision of direct services are not eligible. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Direct health care services, including health intervention, medical treatment, rehabilitation services, one-on-one counselling, or other personal health services.
  - Other services, including housing, food distribution, meal programs where the primary purpose is the provision of food, food coupons, low-cost food markets, etc.
• Services which fall wholly or primarily within the mandate of other government agencies.
• Financial remuneration or other direct financial supports for program participants (e.g., payments, honoraria to participate, housing subsidies, etc.)³.
• Research projects not directly related to understanding and planning to address community health promotion needs or where strong research already exists.
• Administrative costs exceeding 10% of the total value of the awarded SMART Grant.

³ Except in the case of low-barrier employment programs.