



DECISION ITEM: September 27, 2023
BOARD/COMMITTEE: BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING DATE: September 27, 2023
AGENDA ITEM: Reserve for Unfunded Emergency Payments

RECOMMENDATION:

RODS' Board of Directors should establish a reserve for unfunded emergency payments. The recommendation would appropriate \$50,000 from RODS' \$2,700,000 contingency reserve to authorize support to newcomers of an emergent nature that is not within the parameters of existing funding agreements.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES:

- RODS has a longstanding informal practice of making small value payments to newcomers (clients and non-clients) for compassionate reasons, even where such amounts may not be recoverable from funders.
- Such payments are consistent with RODS' mission, vision and values, however they are unbudgeted and have never been explicitly authorized by the Board. Given that such payments can represent a drawdown of accumulated reserves, Board engagement is warranted. Establishing a formal reserve for these payments would facilitate a framework for Board oversight.
- Using a reserve to segregate RODS' discretionary activities from government funded operations may incentivize potential donors by providing assurance that they are supporting newcomers' needs that would otherwise "fall through the cracks". This would likely be attractive to individuals and entities who may be interested in supporting refugees, but lack the funding and/or energy to go the sponsorship route.

BACKGROUND:

Saskatchewan receives few asylum seekers because it is a landlocked province that does not receive regular international flights. Nevertheless, 50-100 such individuals arrive in the Regina area in a typical year, usually from another province. These people can be eligible for a hodgepodge of services however there are systemic deficiencies in how such newcomers are treated. In Canada's major cities, some of these people have ended up homeless because of the worsening shortage of housing. Even in Regina, temporary housing problems can arise during major events such as Agribition.

RODS' reputation in Regina means that when problems arise, newcomers are sometimes referred to RODS for assistance such as finding a hotel room for the night.

These costs can sometimes be recovered from the IRCC, however there is no guarantee that this will occur.

Emergency situations can also occur for RODS' clients, and these are sometimes addressed by providing resources above and beyond what would ordinarily be available through established programs.

Emergency situations are a risk for RODS, because by their nature, they are irregular circumstances. For example, staff need to know that they should not help a newcomer to obtain medication, as the staff member is not qualified to assess the individual's medical circumstances.

The Board and the Organization can expect to benefit from instilling greater structure in the process for making these payments. A segregation of these payments, where significant, can provide useful information to the Board concerning their magnitude, and potentially form the basis for future funding requests and donations.

ADVANCED CONSULTATION:

N/A

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

N/A – none at this time, however the new reserve would be discussed with donors on a case by case basis,

REQUIRED APPROVALS

Board of Directors

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

C3: enhance meaningful community connections and integration
S1: strengthen donor management experience and retention.

TIMEFRAME/CONSEQUENCES OF DEFERRING DECISION:

There is no specific deadline for a decision, however there is no reason to delay one.