

Valley First Community Endowment

2025 Grants



\$197,305,000 in 17 grants distributed through Impact, Capacity and SOAR grant streams

- \$269,305 in impact grants awarded to 13 charities
- \$24,000 in capacity grants awarded to three charities
- \$15,000 SOAR grant awarded to one charity

Multi-year commitments:

The following organizations are multi-year commitments, entered in 2023 and 2024; all will conclude in 2025.

Kelowna Community Resources (KCR) Kelowna, \$15,000



The Family Hub is a safe welcoming space for vulnerable families that offers a holistic approach to strengthening those at risk. This program fosters independence and pride, teaching basic skills to children aged 7 -12. At same time, parents and/or caregivers can participate in a self-care program. In 2024, 4,935 adults and 6,464 children accessed services at the KCR Family Hub.

Take a Hike Foundation Valley First Region, \$10,000



Empowering vulnerable youth to believe in their potential and achieve success, Take a Hike supports youth with full-time mental health clinical counselling and well-being programs integrated into their school curriculum. Also included are outdoor wilderness trips and community engagement activities. Following completion of high school, an impressive 97% of youth plan to attend post-secondary education and 76% reported improved mental health and overall life satisfaction. In Vernon, 100% of grade 12 students graduated, with one student returning to 'mainstream' classrooms for their grade 12 year.

Mothers Against Drunk Drivers Valley First Region, \$5,000



Youth are disproportionately affected by impaired driving—in 2021, young drivers aged 16-24 accounted for 23% of all impaired driving incidents in Canada. The School Assembly Program keeps kids safe, empowering youth in grades 7-12 with a presentation that vividly illustrates the consequences of impaired driving. In 2024, MADD presented School Assembly Presentation's to five schools in the Valley First region.

Impact Grant Recipients:

Impact Grants are unrestricted grants, investing in an organization's operations, programs, projects, or services. Eligibility criteria for Impact Grants include alignment to one of First West Foundation's six identified Sustainable Development Goals.

Dress for Success, Kelowna \$15,000



The grant will help sustain and expand core programming at Dress for Success ensuring women in Kelowna and surrounding areas receive the support, confidence, and tools needed to secure fulfilling, stable careers and contribute to a stronger, more vibrant community. Dress for Success Kelowna assists 300 women per year with a primary focus in 2025 to increase client participation in its professional development, leadership, and mentorship programs. This access will lead to better employment and financial outcomes for the women served while also increasing the impact of Dress for Success in the community.

Launch Financial Education Society Kelowna, \$15,000

The Matched Savings program is a year-long project which combines monthly financial education classes with financial savings. The goal of the program is to help people improve their financial security and financial resilience. The matched savings component provides graduates with a 3:1 return (based on their savings) for a grant up to \$1,800. Graduates use these funds to invest in transformative goals, such as starting a small business, pursuing education, purchasing tools for work, or contributing to RESP or RDSP accounts. In 2024, Launch served 900 people, a 23% increase over 2023.

**Okanagan Fruit Tree Project Society (OFTP) Kelowna, \$15,000**

The grant will help OFTP support its core programming and operational costs. Through its education programs and harvesting/gleaning programs, more than 475,000 pounds of produce has been collected since 2012. Approximately 5,000 residents are positively impacted by OFTP programs each year, and over 100 social service agencies and schools in Central and South Okanagan benefit from harvested produce. OFTP continues to “cultivate community through local food” and carry out their mandate to run food-based programming through the lenses of equity and inclusion, reconciliation and sustainability.

Canadian Mental Health Association Vernon & District Vernon, \$15,000

CMHA Vernon’s newly launched food security program will focus on building sustainable practices for participants, including a monthly class exploring strategies to improve healthy eating habits on a limited budget. Activities will range from meal planning, budgeting, creation of shopping lists, canning, and cooking. Having basic needs met, such as sufficient access to healthy food, is a major contributing factor for an individual's overall mental wellness. Included in the program is food safe certification for staff, program participants, youth at the Youth Integrated Services Hub and volunteers at their wellness housing sites.

**Centre for Epilepsy and Seizure Education in BC Central Okanagan, \$13,305**

In 2024, the Centre ran a pilot program with a grant from the Valley First Community Endowment. Included in the pilot was staff training, establishing an Advisory Committee, creation of an operations manual for regional hubs, and training modules for peer moderators; the Interior Hub launched October 2024. This grant will build on the success of the pilot program, provide ongoing training for peer moderators, reduce barriers for people affected by epilepsy and grow the resiliency of the community. An in-depth evaluation will be conducted in early 2026. In 2024, approximately 1,800 persons in BC accessed programming, with website resources attracting almost 10,000 visits monthly.

Haugen Community Healthcare Society Armstrong, \$5,000

Operating in Armstrong since 2009, the Society works in collaboration with community to increase access and to retain physicians and integrated health services for residents. Over 6,400 patients and 80 senior residents at Pleasant Valley Manor receive care from five physicians and a nurse practitioner. This grant will help support the rental costs for one year (60% of total cost required has been secured); doctors pay all other associated costs of the practice including operating expenses, supplies, staffing and insurance. “There are currently 700,000 patients in British Columbia who don't have a family doctor,” said Dr. Charlene Lui, a family physician in Burnaby and president of Doctors of BC.¹

North Okanagan Hospice Society Vernon, \$10,000

North Okanagan Hospice’s Navigator program (provided by their social workers, clinical counsellors and registered nurses) help people access the local services, information and support they need so they can oversee their journey. This grant will enable NOHS to expand community outreach and enhance services thereby strengthening their impact and addressing unmet needs within the community. Through group counselling, grief and bereavement counseling, NOHS provides care to over 170 residents per year.

¹ Jan 30, 2025, Vancouver [CityNews](#)

Third Space Charity Kelowna, \$15,000

The Pay-What-You-Can Counselling for Youth program provides accessible barrier free mental health services to youth 18-29 in the Central Okanagan region. The program is projected to serve over 400 young adults with more than 2,600 sessions this year. An additional component to the program is Third Space Charity's practicum program which supports graduate-level counselling interns who deliver the services under best-practice clinical supervision. The intern program will see an increase of 17% in student counselling services.

**Project Literacy Central Okanagan Society Kelowna, \$10,000**

The Adult Tutoring Program helps adult immigrants, refugees, and new Canadians improve their literacy skills with the support of a volunteer tutor. The One-to-One Children's reading program supports children in grades 1-4 who are struggling to read at their grade level; this program has a 96% success rate in improving a child's reading level. The grant will help support the cost of both programs. PLCOS serves approximately 300 adult learners and 80 students in grades 1-4 each year.

YMCA of Southern Interior BC Kelowna, \$15,000

The YMCA Alternative Suspension program is a unique out-of-school intervention program delivered in Kelowna, West Kelowna, and Penticton for students ages 12-17 who are suspended from middle and high school. Rather than send a youth home for the duration of their suspension, students are referred to the program. This ensures youth remain safe and off the streets, reduces engagement in risk-taking behaviours such as drug use and vandalism, and allows them the opportunity to transform their time away from school into a positive experience that fosters personal development and autonomy. The model of change empowers children, youth, and families by building skills and confidence, enabling them to better advocate for themselves, graduate from high school on time with their peers, and pursue higher educational and work opportunities. In 2025, up to 280 at-risk, vulnerable youth are expected to participate in the program this school year.

Capacity Grant Recipients:

Capacity grants provide organizations with financial resources to pursue education, professional development, training, and infrastructure enhancements. Capacity grants are released as restricted funds. Grantees are not required to align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Elizabeth Fry Society Kamloops, \$5,000

Elizabeth Fry Society provides education, advocacy, capacity building and safe, secure affordable housing within an environment of respect for each person's right to self-determination and freedom. Serving over 200 women, children and youth each year, the grant will support a fund development strategy to broaden communications and increase accessibility to programs and online resources.

Oasis United Church Penticton, \$9,000

Addressing food insecurity in Penticton, Naramata, and across the South Okanagan, a consultant will be hired to help Oasis develop a strategic plan to assist them in creating a more sustainable and effective approach to their service delivery. Approximately 80% of clients are housed and cannot find a way to afford food beyond their set costs. In 2021, the total number of people served was 1,830. In 2024, the total number of people served was 6,158 – an increase of 237%. Oasis is an Affirming congregation, which means they take a public stance to welcome and support all gender identities. This has meant there are clients who do not feel safe going to other organizations addressing food insecurity.

Vernon Upper Room Mission Society Vernon, \$10,000

The Upper Room Mission Shelter provides a welcoming, safe and supportive environment to the unsheltered, marginalized and vulnerable housed in Vernon, most of whom experience complex intersectionality. The grant will be used to strengthen board governance, through board training and

development, strategic recruitment and active engagement and accountability. The investment in leadership development enables Upper Room Mission to build a high-performing board that not only governs but actively drives impact, ensuring long-term sustainability and transformational change for those they serve. More than 70-110 guests access the drop-in services daily, including meals, access to washrooms, showers, laundry, clothing, and connections to community resources.

SOAR Grant Recipient

SOAR launched in 2023 to support and partner with those committed to equity deserving organizations, and racialized groups, including and not limited to people who identify as Black, Brown, Indigenous and/or as a person of colour in communities served by First West Credit Union.

Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre Society Kamloops, \$15,000

Indirectly and subsequently, this grant will help KSACC achieve its goal of increasing access to inclusive care in the direct aftermath of an assault. KSACC is relocating its services to a self-purchased building. As such, renovations are required to provide an accessible and trauma-informed clinic, police reporting, waiting and office spaces. Offering these services in a co-located, community-based setting has significantly improved survivors' healing and justice journeys in the short and long term. In the 2023/2024 fiscal year, KSACC served 264 folks in its counselling programs, 150 in its community-based victim service program, and 162 in its crisis response program.



First West Credit Union Leaders Fund

The Leaders Fund provides grants to advance an organizations' capacity building and development opportunities.

Discovery House, Penticton, \$10,000

Discovery House provides a safe, supportive, structured and peer-based environment for men seeking recovery from addiction. Residents are empowered to overcome substance use, develop essential life skills, and reintegrate into their families and communities as healthy, self-sufficient members of society. Serving 160 individuals each year, the grant will focus on strengthening several areas of governance: strategic and organizational planning, staff training and leadership development, and the expansion of recovery support services. With over 300 men served since 2007 and a 79% treatment completion rate, Discovery House has a proven track record of helping individuals achieve long-term sobriety, employment, and family reunification.

Keeping a Good Thing Growing

Keeping a Good Thing Growing is an endowed fund focusing on support for initiatives that enhance an organization's ability to grow its capacity, programs, or services.

Interior Community Services Kamloops, \$25,000

The future home of Foundry Kamloops, this investment will support the capital requirements to open the Centre. Foundry is recognized as one of the leading youth-centric program delivery models that is transforming access to services for young people ages 12-24 across British Columbia.

Foundry's integrated approach focuses on five core services in one convenient location: mental health care, substance use services, physical and sexual health care, youth and family peer support, and social services. Foundry Kamloops will offer five counselling/talking rooms, three primary care exam rooms, an additional breakout space, self-care spaces, a large group activity area, and a large demonstration kitchen.

First West Foundation has made investments in Foundry locations in Abbotsford and Penticton; First West Credit Union has invested in Foundry Kelowna, Surrey, and Victoria.