

Report

Date March 4, 2026
Subject Foundry for Youth in the Cowichan Region

File:

PURPOSE

To provide information on the Foundry Integrated Youth Services model and identify potential locations or existing sites that could host a Foundry.

BACKGROUND

At the regular Council meeting of September 3, 2025, the following motion was passed:

THAT Council direct staff to prepare a brief staff report that provides background information on the Foundry concept of integrated youth services and outlines the role that a municipality can play in supporting the establishment of a Foundry Centre in the community, including the identification of suitable land or an existing building, as time permits, as staff advance through other key priorities.

DISCUSSION

The Foundry offers free and confidential mental health and wellness services for youth ages 12-24 in British Columbia and their families. The Foundry model brings together health and social services for youth into a one-stop shop, typically at a physical location, and takes an integrated youth services approach. Each Foundry centre is hosted by a lead agency, but there may be multiple service agencies within a Foundry location.

The goal of the Foundry model is to provide a space that is welcoming and accessible to youth and their families, and a service landscape that is easier to navigate.

Foundry's are supported by a provincially funded Foundry Central Office, which provides capacity building support, training, and knowledge exchange between practitioners. The Foundry Central Office issues Calls for Proposals for communities that want a Foundry and provides capital funding to successful applicants. Currently, there is no open call, and as such, no mechanism to apply for Foundry funding.

There are five service streams at a typical Foundry:

- Mental health
- Substance use health
- Physical & sexual health
- Peer support
- Work, education and community services

There are 19 Foundry centres in operation in communities throughout the province: Vancouver-Granville, North Shore (North Vancouver), Campbell River, Abbotsford, Ridge Meadows, Kelowna, Prince George, Victoria, Penticton, Terrace, Burns Lake, Comox Valley, Langley, Richmond, Cariboo-Chilcotin (Williams Lake), Sea to Sky (Squamish), Port Hardy, Surrey Central, and East Kootenay (Cranbrook).

Sixteen more Foundry centres are in development in Burnaby, Chilliwack, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, Powell River (Qathet), Quesnel, Sooke-Westshore, Sunshine Coast, South Surrey-White Rock, Tri-Cities, Vancouver, Vanderhoof, Vernon, and West Kootenay.

Two communities that applied for Foundry funding were not successful (Langley and Mission) and moved forward with a "Youth Hub," a scaled-down version of a Foundry. The intent is to be ready for the next call for funding.

Foundry's are often purpose-built and come in a range of sizes. Surrey opened a new Foundry centre on November 12, 2025.



2 / 6 Jen Temple, left, and Jacquie Robertson inside the new Foundry Surrey facility for youth health and wellness programs, at 10280 City Parkway in Surrey, on Sept. 26, 2025. | Photo: Tom Zillich

This is the largest Foundry site in the province, covering 18,000 square feet across all three floors of the building, with the lower floor for medical offices, the main floor for social services, and the top floor for substance-use services, which also includes some Indigenous spaces. The project's capital budget is \$9.3 million, and an additional \$1.3 million is needed. The province is providing \$2.3 million to establish Foundry Surrey Central, as well as annual funding for operations and service delivery. Health Canada provided additional funding for the project through the Youth Mental Health Fund, Fraser Health, and several other donors and supporters.

The Foundry Central Office provides a [Guide and Specification for Foundry Centre Facilities Development](#) to Foundry proponents that outlines the physical space requirements for a Foundry, typically comprised of seven zones:

- Greeting Zone,
- Group Zone,
- Talking Zone,

- Clinic Zone,
- Staff Work Area,
- Staff Amenity Zone, and,
- Miscellaneous Services Zone.

The table below from that guide outlines the spatial requirements for small, regular, or full-size Foundry programs. Note that measurements are in square feet.

Sample Space Programs For Foundry Centres		SMALL SIZE PROGRAM (theoretical only)		REGULAR SIZE PROGRAM		FULL SIZE PROGRAM	
Space type	Net Sqft	QTY	SQFT	QTY	SQFT	QTY	SQFT
GREETING/ENTRY ZONE (REQUIRED)							
Greeting/Reception Desk	208	1	132	1	208	1	208
Waiting Area	20 - 30/person	1	154	Seating for 14	320	Seating for 22 (2 wheelchairs)	425
Washroom - Accessible	50			1	50	1	50
Peer Support	100-120	1	80	1	100	1	120
Refreshment Station	25			1	25	1	25
GREETING/ENTRY ZONE (OPTIONAL - As needed based on your Functional Program)							
Client belonging storage area (Bikes, pets, etc.)	40			0	0	0	0
CLINIC ZONE (REQUIRED)							
Exam Room - Standard	120	2	200	1	120	2	240
Exam Room – Large	140	1	140	1	140	1	140
Clean Utility / Supply Room	100	1	100	1	100	1	100
Soiled Utility / Waste Holding	60			1	60	1	60

Locker area within staff amenity zone	1.5/purse locker 4.5/half locker			11	49.5	16	72
Staff Washroom - Accessible	50	1	50	1	50	2	100
STAFF AMENITY ZONE (OPTIONAL - As needed based on your Functional Program)							
Staff shower	75			0	0	0	0
SERVICE ZONE (REQUIRED)							
Housekeeping / Janitorial Closet or Room	60			1	60	1	60
Voice and Data Server Room (Comm closet)	80	1	80	1	80	1	80
General Storage	15	1	80	11	165	16	240
OTHER SPACES (OPTIONAL - As needed based on your Functional Program)							
Laundry	50			0	0	0	0
Waste Holding / Garbage Room	60			0	0	0	0
Mechanical / Electrical Room	50			0	0	0	0
Meditation Room	180			0	0	0	0
Sweat Lodge	224-320			0	0	0	0
Sweet Grass Room	150			0	0	0	0
Net square Footage			3226		4562.5		5950
Component Gross Square Footage (CGSF)	1.35		4355.1		6775.313		8032.5

Other communities on Vancouver Island have Foundry's currently operating, including the Comox Valley and Campbell River. In speaking with those operators, they indicated that not all Foundry's follow the above recommendations for size, but that all the Foundry's in B.C. have a similar look and feel, which is an essential part of creating the Foundry experience for service users. Some Foundry's are operated from leased premises.

The Comox Valley Foundry (Courtenay) is in a building purchased by the John Howard Society (the lead agency), approximately 10,000 square feet and the capital improvements to the building were close to a \$1,000,000. No local government funds were provided. The annual operating costs for the Foundry in Courtenay are approximately \$900,000, mostly comprised of existing health services funded by the provincial government. Administrative overhead costs for this Foundry are approximately \$50,000 per year.

Each Foundry is expected to fundraise every year to contribute to operating costs, and there is a strong emphasis on the whole community supporting the area's youth through the Foundry model. In both the Comox Valley and Campbell River, the local governments did not contribute financially to the establishment of the Foundry.

There is an existing collaborative network of service providers in the Cowichan Valley who meet regularly to build local capacity for a Foundry in the Cowichan Valley. One key challenge is the Cowichan Valley's extensive geography, which means any centralized location will pose access challenges for youth from outlying areas like Shawnigan Lake or Crofton. One model being considered is the idea of a "one door" access point so youth and their families can navigate the service landscape more easily.

In discussion with local service providers there is no specific site that has been identified for a Foundry and there is a sense that it may be some time before another call for proposals is issued by the Province. In terms of North Cowichan's municipal holdings there is not an appropriate building that we own that could be converted, and as far as bare land options the high cost of a new build would potentially be prohibitive; Foundry Central has recognised the high cost of new construction and is exploring alternatives to that approach. For further analysis on the options for providing a municipal site staff would refer Council to the forthcoming real estate disposition report.

There may be commercial properties that come onto the market suitable for a Foundry, but none of the local agencies could likely afford an outright purchase. One option is to identify donors who may be interested in supporting an acquisition, and North Cowichan staff could assist with this if so directed.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council directs staff to continue engaging with Foundry proponents in the Cowichan Valley in support of a potential application and assist them with the search for a location when appropriate.
 - By staying connected with community partners, staff can identify when a new call for funding for a Foundry is issued and provide updates on any potential roles for local government.
2. That Council provide the following direction: [insert alternate direction].
 - All of the services that would comprise a Foundry are currently in place and serving youth in our community.

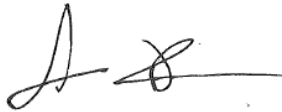
IMPLICATIONS

The Province of British Columbia provides capital funding for a Foundry centre, and our community will have to wait until a new call is issued to move forward. But in the meantime, the youth serving agencies are collaborating closely to ensure seamless service delivery and ease of access for youth and their families.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council directs staff to continue engaging with Foundry proponents in the Cowichan Valley in support of a potential application and assist them with the search for a location when appropriate.

Report prepared by:



John Horn
Director, Social Planning and Protective Services

Report reviewed by:



Bill Corsan
General Manager, Corporate Services and
Community Relations

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer