



The Village Initiative

Helping children, youth and families thrive

March 17, 2026

TO: West Shore & Sooke Mayors and Councils

RE: Supporting the health and wellbeing of children and youth across West Shore-Sooke

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to present our [business case](#) for the establishment of a Regional Coordinator role to better support the health and wellbeing of children and youth across the West Shore-Sooke region.

The wellbeing of children and youth is a shared and urgent priority. [Local data](#) shows that children and youth are struggling across key indicators, including mental health, social connection, and hopefulness about the future. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated and collaborative approach. By working together, we can ensure that children, youth, and families throughout the West Shore–Sooke region have access to the foundational supports needed to strengthen well-being and foster positive outcomes.

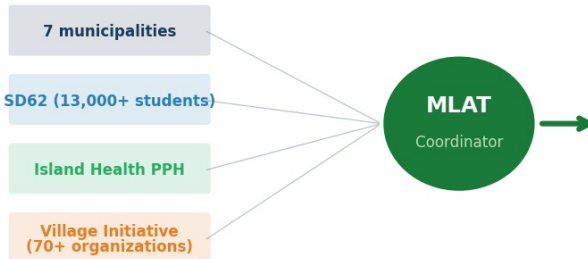
We appreciate and agree with the perspective that municipalities play a key role in fostering healthy communities through investment in parks, recreation, and access to nature. However, for many young people, particularly those facing complex challenges such as substance use, trauma, abuse, and housing or food security, these supports alone are not sufficient. [Basic needs](#), including stable housing, access to food, education, transportation and counselling, must be in place before youth can fully benefit from initiatives such as green space and outdoor programming.

[The BC Healthy Communities Child and Youth Mental Well-Being Resources Guide](#) reinforces this, highlighting that supports such as youth programs and spaces, accessible transportation, employment and volunteering opportunities, access to health services, and safe neighbourhoods are critical for children and youth to thrive. Moreover, many of these supports have been [directly identified](#) as priorities by West Shore-Sooke youth.

Effective delivery of these supports requires partnerships that span municipalities, school district, health authorities, and community organizations. That coordination infrastructure does not currently exist in this region. Without coordination, systems can evolve in parallel, resulting in duplicated efforts and missed opportunities to address needs that cross municipal boundaries.

How regional coordination delivers what youth are asking for

Who's at the table



What youth get



~\$1/resident/year | SD62 committed \$15K/yr [bus. case] | Island Health contributing ~\$10K/yr in-kind [bus. case] | Hosted at CSPC (neutral, 90+ yrs)

The intent of the proposed Regional Coordinator is to strengthen and uplift existing initiatives rather than replace them. By improving coordination across municipalities, this role will help maximize the effectiveness, impact, accessibility, and equity of current investments. It will also reduce administrative burden on individual municipalities by providing shared capacity to advance regional priorities and align efforts across the region. It will also support the implementation of clear metrics to measure impact over time and ensure accountability for results. It will embed youth voices in a meaningful way, ensuring that strategies and investments are effective for those most affected.

The Municipal Leaders Advisory Team (MLAT) brings together seven municipalities, the Sooke School District, Island Health and the 70+ community organizations which comprise The Village Initiative. This is a powerful first step to improving children and youth well-being in the region. What is currently missing is a dedicated person to sustain and advance this work, ensuring continuity, coordination, and measurable progress. That's what the proposed Regional Coordinator position is designed to do – for roughly \$1 per resident/per year.

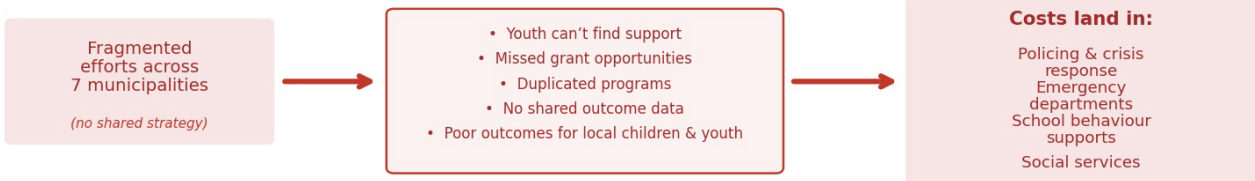
As you continue your budget deliberations, we urge you to consider the proposed role and how it will help this growing region move from the spirit of collaboration to coordinated action that turns shared priorities into measurable positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Where costs show up when youth well-being isn't addressed upstream

WITH coordination



WITHOUT coordination



The region is already paying for the consequences of uncoordinated youth support.
The question is whether to invest \$1/resident/year upstream — or continue absorbing growing costs across policing, emergency, and social services.

ROI evidence: Reynolds et al. (2011) Chicago Child-Parent Centers, 8.54–13.58/dollar (PMC3817956); Heckman et al. (2010) Perry Preschool, 7–12/dollar; Maag et al., Urban Institute (2023); MHCC (2013)

Investing in young people not only improves their quality of life — it also [saves taxpayer dollars](#). So, local governments can either invest proactively now or pay the price of inaction later.

Sincerely,

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