

Cariboo Chilcotin Regional Hospital District (CCRHD)

Foundation Partnership Grant Application

Improving access to healthcare through telehealth

Introduction

Northern Health is working to expand the reach of primary care services through clinical videoconferencing, by building partnerships with communities in the North. The District of Wells has monthly visits from a Quesnel-based Nurse Practitioner, and this project will increase access for Wells' community members without reducing in-person visits.

The District of Wells and Northern Health Authority wish to provide more and timely access to health care for community members, by using technology that allows patients and health care providers to meet virtually. This proposal describes the benefits, activities and funding required to implement this project.

The partners are requesting support in the form of a Cariboo Chilcotin Regional Hospital District (CCRHD) Foundation Partnership Grants. By funding this project, the CCRHD would be purchasing devices that will enable patients to have more timely access to health care services.

Details

The District of Wells is partnering with Northern Health Authority to improve access to health care services – both from primary care providers and specialists. The project will use device-based videoconferencing initially between the Nurse Practitioner in Quesnel and patients using a tablet connected to the internet from the Community Hall in Wells. The project will also set the foundation for more access to services as cell phone coverage increases in the area, in the next few years.

Currently, a Nurse Practitioner (NP) provides a range of health care services in Wells similar to a family physician. She sees patients in person in Wells one day per month, in the Wells Community Hall, and is interested in supplementing these visits by providing telehealth visits when she is not in the community, and reaching specialists located elsewhere in the province when providing care in the community.

Several iterations of a plan have been developed and in October, Northern Health met with representatives of the Wells District to develop a plan and identify the challenges that need to be overcome. The plan is attached to this application.

With the contribution of the Foundation Partnership Grant, patients and their Nurse Practitioner will be able to include a specialist in their visit who can participate via videoconference. Patients will also be able to have a visit with their NP when they are not in Wells, using a secure and reliable tool that is easy to use.

In addition, the project will enable expansion to include the Community Paramedic who can assist patients when doing home visits, and family doctors in Quesnel who are able to see patients remotely, using the telehealth system being set up in Wells. Patients will be able to get more timely access to care, to supplement the current schedule of in-person visits from the NP.

The platform to be used is called PEXIP and it enables connection with any clinical endpoint in BC, include specialist care delivered from Vancouver. Northern Health is planning to expand use of the platform to multiple communities across the North, and Wells will be the first community to benefit from the program.

Some patients who are not comfortable with the use of clinical videoconferencing will need assistance, and Wells District staff can assist patients to set up their virtual encounter, by providing help to local patients. Northern Health technical staff will provide training and technical support in a variety of ways, including:

- Optimizing the connection that is currently available;
- Supporting stronger and more stable internet connections, including WiFi;
- Providing robust infrastructure that enables seamless connections;
- Providing training and technical assistance to providers, patients and district staff.

Benefits

The goal of the Wells Telehealth Project is to increase access to healthcare services for people in Wells.

In addition to ongoing visits from the Nurse Practitioner, the project will:

1. Make it possible for patients to get a visit with their NP when the NP is in Quesnel and a patient has a health care issue that requires timely contact with the NP;
2. Enable patients and the NP to involve specialists in clinical encounters when the care is delivered in Wells;
3. Enable patients to access other health care services, such as patient education or specialist visits, without travelling outside the community;
4. Potentially enable patients to have virtual visits with physicians in Quesnel, if the physician is participating in virtual care;
5. Potentially enable the Community Paramedic to access physician care (including specialist care) when visiting patients as part of her home care role.

Budget and Request

The District of Wells requests \$3241 from the CCRHD through its Foundation Partnership Grants. The Wells Telehealth Project will also be funded from several sources:

- Northern Health has acquired funds from a provincial collaborative committee (the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues or JSC) to build the technological capacity and annual license costs for communities interested in partnering;
- The District of Wells is considering costs to upgrade the connection in the space where telehealth visits will happen;
- The current request of the CCRHD would be used to address capital costs that are limited to 40% of the overall project budget

Wells Telehealth Project	Contribution	Total
Budget		
Technical advice and project management	\$ 2,500.00	
Improvements to connectivity in Community Hall - service	\$ 1,000.00	
Wired and wireless modems in Community Hall, materials for improvements	\$ 1,000.00	
Device for telehealth visits	\$ 1,902.88	
Cart / holder for device	\$ 150.00	
License for telehealth platform	\$ 1,000.00	
Meeting supplies, food	\$ 350.00	
Communication	\$ 200.00	
Total Expenditure	\$ 8,102.88	\$ 8,102.88
	40% of project total	\$ 3,241.15
	Request from the CCRHD	\$ 3,241.15

Implementation plan and timeframe

October - November 2018

- Meeting between Wells District, Northern Health, community members
- Development of estimates for equipment and improvements

December 2018

- Develop scheduling approach
- Test technology between Quesnel and Wells
- Develop budget and funding proposal

January 2019

- Approval of proposal by Wells Council
- Presentation to the CCRHD

February 2019

- Implement improvements and install equipment and platform
- Test connection, pilot virtual visits between patients and NP
- Engage physicians in Quesnel to test

March 2019

- Patients can start booking appointments through the Quesnel Primary Care Clinic

Sustainability

Northern health is committed to maintaining the licenses and system capacity to enable the continuation of virtual care indefinitely, as part of its plan to expand access to primary care for people living in rural and isolated communities.

The District of Wells and Northern Health will develop a plan to update equipment and can add devices to enable more opportunities for connection. As devices are added based on a shared expansion plan, Northern Health will support the license and capacity for virtual visits.