

To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 4/29/2025

Subject: 2025 Community Grants Program

Submitted By: Lesley Head, Director of Recreation & Culture

Prepared By: Lesley Head, Director of Recreation & Culture

Report No.: 25-044-CD

File No.: C11

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 24-044-CD 2025 Community Grants Program be received;

AND THAT Council approve applications for less than \$25,000 for 2025, as recommended by the Community Grants Review Committee and outlined in Appendix A, which meet the Program Guidelines outlined in A09 FIN 004 Community Grants Program Policy;

AND THAT Council approve applications received for requests greater than \$25,000 for 2025, as recommended by the Community Grants Review Committee and outlined in Appendix B, that meet the Program Guidelines in A09 FIN 004 Community Grants Program Policy;

AND THAT applications that did not meet the Program Guidelines are considered ineligible as per A09 FIN 004 Community Grants Policy;

AND THAT Council approves a one-year pilot program to retain a part-time Volunteer Coordinator position funded by the Community Grants Program at a total cost of \$29,700;

AND FURTHER THAT a detailed review of the policy and recommendations be brought forward prior to the 2026 program release.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Grant Program is to provide funding opportunities to community organizations that offer programs and services that improve the health,

lifestyle and community wellbeing of residents that align with the City's strategic direction. This report is seeking Council approval of the recommended successful applicants of this City program.

Key Findings

- Grant applications for \$25,000 or less are assessed by the Community Grants Review Committee ("Committee") in accordance with the program guidelines.
- Grant applications for \$25,000 or greater are assessed by Council in accordance with the program guidelines.
- The Community Grants Program received a total of 63 applications totaling \$1,144,615
- The Committee reviewed a total of 49 applications for \$25,000 or less, requesting a total of \$635,016, and are recommending allocations to 32 groups totaling \$214,600.
- The Committee reviewed a total of 14 applications of \$25,000 or greater, requesting a total of \$509,599, and are recommending allocations to 7 groups totaling \$145,500.
- Some organizations are seeking support both financially and in-kind from the City to support efforts with Volunteer coordination. Staff currently do not have the capacity to provide this in-kind support. A one-year pilot program to support a part-time Volunteer Coordinator position is proposed at a total cost of \$29,700 funded by the Community Grants Program.
- A total of 10 applications were not recommended for funding.
- A total of 15 applications were considered ineligible for funding.

Financial Implications

The approved 2025 Budget provides up to \$389,800 in available funding towards the City's Community Grants Program. This is reflective of a \$25,000 reallocation to support the now City led Canada Day and Santa Clause Parade events. The Community Grants Review Committee has recommended allocation 100% of the funding.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

☐ Strategic Action

Objective(s): Not Applicable

Strategic Action: Not Applicable

OR

☒ Core Service

Program: Grants

Core Service: Grants Provided

The Community Grants Program helps support strategic objectives by providing financial resources to initiatives that align with the City's vision and goals. Organizations seeking funding can apply in the following categories: Social Services, Recreation & Sport, Arts/Culture & Events, Civic & Leisure Interests and Not-for-Profit Organizations that further the interests and prosperity of the City of Cambridge. Community Grants play a pivotal role in supporting the strategic plan by providing funds to address specifically all local needs and priorities.

By aligning grant funding with strategic initiatives, municipalities can leverage community driven initiatives to achieve broader policy objectives efficiently.

BACKGROUND:

The Community Grant Program was implemented to provide support to not-for-profit organizations to deliver programs and services that benefit the quality of life for Cambridge residents. The Community Grants Review Committee (the Committee) is comprised of Mayor Jan Liggett, Councillor Nicholas Ermeta and Councillor Mike Devine.

The program continues to utilize an online application system where applicants are required to submit. Applications are first reviewed and evaluated by an internal team comprised of staff from both Financial Services and Recreation & Culture. These results are then presented to the Committee. Each application is assessed based on compliance with the Council approved Community Grants Policy.

The 2025 Community Grants Program application process opened on September 30, 2024, and all applications were due on November 30, 2024.

ANALYSIS:

The internal staff review team met on several occasions to review and analyze the grant applications and make recommendations to the Committee.

A total of 63 applications were received which represents a 11% increase from 2024. These applications were comprised of 49 applications for less than \$25,000 and 14 applications of \$25,000 or greater.

Based on the scoring matrix, some applicants are being recommended for partial funding or project specific funding.

Some examples of projects funded include:

- Purchase and distribution of free bike helmets to children and youth
- Art installation in public spaces
- Expansion of community events
- Operating costs to support non-profit organizations
- Ensuring access to low cost recreational and sport opportunities for newcomers in our community
- Supporting those impacted by critical illness
- Supporting initiatives to enhance and educate on cultural diversity and inclusion
- Education and awareness on environmental issues
- Increasing efforts to end trafficking and exploitation of young women and supporting families facing abusive situations
- Increasing access to suicide prevention and supports
- Education resources to support safe communities
- Programs to support transgender girls, gender diverse and two spirit youth
- Ensuring students have universal access to food while at school

Some organizations are seeking both financial and in-kind support to fund volunteer coordination efforts. This is requiring resources from City staff that do not have capacity. To better support our community in a more cohesive and coordinated approach, the Committee is recommending a pilot project by funding a part-time Volunteer Coordinator position. A dedicated resource can recruit, train and retain volunteers effectively. Maximizing volunteers' efforts can reduce reliance on paid staff to support community initiatives and support the groups the City is funding in a more coordinated effort. This pilot will be reviewed in advance of the 2027 budget and a formalized business case will be presented if the need continues to be identified.

The Committee also identified the need to have Doctors 4 Cambridge provide a bi-annual update to Council on how the grant allotment is being utilized to support their organization's efforts in the community.

Through a comprehensive review of all the applications, the Committee was able to meet the objective of the Community Grants Policy within the funding allocated in the 2025 budget.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

Policy #A09 FIN 004- Community Grants Program

The purpose under the Community Grants Program Policy includes:

- To improve the wellbeing of Cambridge residents through the direction of City grant funding to eligible organizations that can demonstrate their positive contribution to the achievement of the community wellbeing goals;
- To provide municipal funds or other forms of financial assistance, in limited amounts, to community groups and/or organizations that align with the City's strategic direction;
- To consider each grant on its own merit and to deal with it in a transparent, equitable and objective manner; and
- To ensure that a proper system of accountability is developed and maintained by the community groups and/or organizations receiving funding from the City.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

As part of the 2025 budget, a total of \$389,800 was allocated to the Community Grants Program. The Community Grants Program received a total of 63 applications totaling \$1,144,615. The Committee reviewed a total of 49 applications for less than \$25,000, requesting a total of \$635,016, and are recommending allocations to 32 groups totaling \$214,600. The Committee reviewed a total of 14 applications of \$25,000 or greater, requesting a total of \$509,599, and are recommending allocations to 7 groups totaling \$145,500. The Committee is recommending \$29,700 be allocated to support a pilot program for a part time Volunteer Coordinator to support community initiatives.

The above recommendations allocate the total amount of \$389,800 from the approved External Funding allocation for the Community Grants Program.

PUBLIC VALUE:

By performing an in-depth review of applications to ensure their compliance with our policy as well as auditing reports on how funding was spent in previous years, the City is supporting sustainability through the responsible management of financial resources, ensuring transparency for the public and accountability to program applicants.

By providing both financial support and a pilot project for a part time staff resource, we help support valuable programs and services that are not offered by City staff to our community.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Not applicable.

PUBLIC INPUT:

The 2025 Community Grants Program application process opened on September 30, 2024, and all applications were due on November 30, 2024. Applications were accepted through the City's online portal. When necessary hard copies were accepted. This process provides greater transparency on funding provided by the City to community organizations. The program is advertised through various media channels including the City's website.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

An internal review team consisting of five internal staff from Financial Services and Recreation & Culture completed a comprehensive review of each application. Consultation with Business Units including Reality, Facilities and Operations also took place as needed. The Internal Review Team completed a Community Grants Application Evaluation Scoring Matrix for each eligible application.

The Evaluation Scoring Matrix is intended to be used as an objective tool to assess each grant application against the criteria outlined in the Community Grants Policy. The scores are not considered the sole determining factor regarding how grant funding is allocated but are intended to be used as a tool to help further inform the Community Grants Review Committee during deliberations.

The Evaluation Scoring Matrix ensured the application met the eligibility criteria set out in the Community Grants Policy and encompassed several evaluation criteria including:

- Alignment with the City of Cambridge Strategic Plan and Public Value Statement
- Community Impact
- Merits of Funding Request
- Organizational Profile
- Organizations Finances
- Benefit to the Community

CONCLUSION:

Through a comprehensive review of the applications, the Committee was able to meet the objective of the Community Grants Program Policy with the funding allocation included in the 2025 operating Budget.

A summary of the recommendations for the 2025 applications for both under and over \$25,000 is attached to this report in Appendix A & B.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **Yes**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

Deputy City Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

When naming attachments please use the following format:

1. 25-044-CD Appendix A – Applications \$25,000 or less
2. 24-044-CD Appendix B – Applications \$25,000 or greater
3. 25-044-CD Appendix C- A09 FIN 004 Community Grants Program Policy