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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. CMS23-013

Subject: Community Partnership Grant Program - Policy Approval

Prepared by: Lisa Warth, Manager of Recreation Services and Phil Rose, Manager of Cultural Services

Department: Community Services

Date: April 18, 2023

Recommendations

1. That Report No. CMS23-013 be received; and
2. That the Community Partnership Grant Policy (attachment 1) be approved; and
3. That the Town's existing Corporate Sponsorship Policy be repealed.

Executive Summary

This report provides a status update on the merger of the Recreation and Culture Grant and the Sponsorship of Community Events and Programs into a single grant program and seeks Council approval on the policy required to launch the new grant program.

- Staff have developed the Community Grant Partnership Policy and corresponding documents based on feedback received by Council, experience with previous Town grant programs, and best practice.
- The policy and supporting documents provide transparency and structure for the impactful use of the funds.
- The policy and supporting documents strive to provide a fair and flexible procedure for organizations and individuals to apply for and access the funds with the goal of assisting them in becoming stronger community partners and bettering the Aurora community as a whole.

Background

On January 17, 2023, Council approved the merger of the Recreation and Culture Grant and the Sponsorship of Community Events and Programs into a single grant program. Council also directed staff to finalize all documents necessary to launch the refreshed grant program, to be called the Community Partnership Grant, including an administrative policy and procedures, evaluation rubric, application form, and final report form.

Analysis

Staff have developed the Community Grant Partnership Policy based on feedback received by Council, experience with previous Town grant programs, and best practice.

Key Elements of the grant program include:

- Staff recommend having four deadlines as detailed in the January 17 report (January, March, June and September). To ensure the community is aware of the grant program, staff will proactively promote the four deadlines. Grant applications requesting less than \$500 will be accepted on a continuous basis with no specific deadlines.
- Eligible grant recipients should be Aurora based community groups, and not-for-profit and charitable community groups or individuals who serve the Aurora community primarily.
- Eligible expenses to be funded include program or event supplies, rental of items or facilities related to the project being applied for, catering or food for events, and entertainment for the project being applied for
- Ineligible expenses to be funded include staff wages, salaries or benefits, ongoing operating costs of the applicant such as office rent, utilities, office supplies, travel costs, donations and consultative services.
- Staff recommend the maximum grant amount to be set at \$10,000. The rubric will assist the Grant Review Committee in ensuring that funding higher amounts up to \$10,000 will be impactful and reasonable based on the project the applicant is proposing. The Grant Review Committee will have the discretion to fund applications in an amount that is less than what is asked for on the application based on how the project scores on the rubric
- Grant applications will be evaluated using a rubric that will measure several criteria including scale, inclusivity, direct and indirect benefits, the importance of the Town's contribution, how the project will support the Town's vision and strategic plan, and how the success of the project will be determined.

- Organizations can apply more than once per year, but the overall funding that any one organization can receive in a calendar year is not to exceed \$10,000.
- The policy proposes that staff will prepare a semi-annual report to Council identifying who was funded (and not funded), use of funds, the amount of funding and any suggestions for changes to the policy.
- The John West Memorial grant will continue to be administered under the umbrella of this new grant program and the process for that specific grant will not change. Funds have been allocated within the Community Partnership grant for the John West Memorial grant.

The policy and supporting documents provide transparency and structure for the impactful use of the funds.

The application form and rubric will ensure that a potential applicant is capable of undertaking the proposed project, has experience and/or has other partners to help execute the project. They will be expected to have a full understanding of what is required to execute the project (including funding) and should show alignment or support of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

The policy and supporting documents strive to ensure a fair and flexible procedure for organizations and individuals to apply for and access the funds with the goal of assisting them in becoming stronger community partners and bettering the Aurora community as whole.

This new grant program would enhance the Town's ability to invest in the important work of various community groups, individuals and other organizations and partner with them to achieve and work towards some of the goals in the Town's strategic plan.

A new web page will be created to include all the information an applicant would need to know when applying for this grant.

The page would include:

- Application form – This would include 2 versions, one for applications for grants \$500 and under and one for applications over \$500.
- Documents and information required as part of the application.
- Intake deadlines and when applicants can expect to hear a decision on the application (approved or not approved)
- Link to Corporate strategic plan

Staff will also host information sessions to assist applicants in preparing their project and request for funding.

A widespread promotional plan will also be launched to ensure community awareness of the new program.

Advisory Committee Review

In the interest of time sensitivity, staff are recommending this new grant program be launched as soon as possible, as potential applicants are inquiring about the policy and procedure to apply for grants for upcoming projects. Given that advisory committees and meeting schedules have just been created, presenting this policy to the Parks and Recreation Advisory committee would delay launching the program.

Legal Considerations

Organizations or individuals that receive a grant from the Town will be required to enter into an agreement with the Town that outlines various provisions, including outlining the intended purpose for the use of the Grant, reporting requirements, and usage of the Town's name and logos.

Financial Implications

The approved 2023 operating budget includes \$30,000 in support of the existing Culture and Recreation grant program. A further \$2,000 was approved in support of the John West Memorial Scholarship program, funded from the John West Memorial Scholarship Award reserve.

Upon Council approval of the proposed policy, \$57,500 in Corporate Sponsorship of Community Programs and Events funding currently located under Corporate Communications will be consolidated with the above noted existing funding under Community Services to form a single budget totalling \$89,600 to be governed by this policy (the Community Partnership Grant).

Communications Considerations

Communications will work with Community Services to inform community groups, organizations and residents about the Community Partnership Grant Program through the Town's regular communications channels.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Community Partnership Grant supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure
- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Encourage an active and healthy lifestyle
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

This report provides a summary of the new Community Partnership Grant Policy required to launch the grant program. Staff believe the new grant program can have considerable community impact and enable community organizations to build capacity, thus strengthening the community as a whole.

Attachments

Community Partnership Grant Policy

Previous Reports

PR11-021, Community and Cultural Grant, May 31, 2011

CAO19-001, Requests for Sponsorship Policy, January 22, 2019

CMS23-001, Recreation and Culture Grant and Sponsorship of Community Events and Programs Policy Refresh, January 17, 2023

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on March 30, 2023

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services Department

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer