



REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: September 18, 2023

FROM: Recreation and Culture

DATE: September 5, 2023

SUBJECT: **Community Activation Grant**

LOCATION:

WARD: Town-wide

Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information contained in the staff report dated September 5, 2023, entitled Community Activation Grant from the Recreation and Culture department, be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Community Activation Grant program is intended to support small, community lead initiatives for informal groups.
- Council funded \$35,000 annually for this program as part of the 2023 budget.
- The initial launch of the program will have continuous intake of applications.
- Initiatives will be evaluated and funded based on alignment with the program mandate and organizers eligibility.
- Approved applications may be funded up to a maximum of \$2,000.
- Successful initiatives will require applicants to enter into an agreement and submit a final report.
- Staff will report back to Council after one year of operation.

BACKGROUND:

In February 2023, Council approved the 2023 Operating Budget that included funding \$35,000 to develop and implement a Community Activation Grant program. The program is intended to distribute small value, or micro grants, to community-

based organizations, residents and informal groups, to lead and organize initiatives focused on enhancing the sense of belonging for residents.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

One of this Council's strategic priorities is Community Belonging: *Enhancing community belonging to ensure residents are invited to engage in a fulfilling community life that is built to support wellbeing.* This new Community Activation Grant program will enable residents to come together to lead and implement initiatives that they want to see, in their local neighbourhood or community. The program will provide financial support and staff guidance to make these small-scale but impactful ideas come to life. By building capacity in the community, to bring people together around a common interest, bring awareness and/or enhance spaces, a small investment can go a long way to enhance the vibrancy and livability of Oakville for all.

Leveraging best practices from similar programs offered by the City of Burlington, City of Mississauga, and City of Kitchener, this program is designed to be accessible, flexible, and responsive to enable residents to make things happen.

The objectives of the Community Activation Grant program are to.

- Focus on small scale community events, activities, and programs, to enhance community capacity and increase access,
- Support residents, ad-hoc groups, and not-for-profit organizations to enhance the community wellbeing for all Oakville residents by building capacity through engaging activations and project,
- Provide a user-friendly collaborative application and administration process to reduce barriers and provide opportunities,
- Prioritize new activations and projects that are not eligible for other direct or indirect town funding streams such as the Cultural Grant or Special Event Fee Assistance programs.

In general, applications receiving funding will demonstrate how the new initiative will enhance the target audience's sense of community belonging. Eligible applicants include ad-hoc, informal groups, individual residents and community based not-for-profit organizations. Most expenses related to the specific initiative delivery will be eligible including permit fees and insurance, food, equipment rentals, supplies, advertising, and entertainment. Staff salaries, organizational costs, alcohol, equipment purchases are not eligible expenses.

The detailed program framework, examples and eligibility criteria is outlined in Appendix A.

The program framework will help guide the applicants through a user-friendly online application, an evaluation framework and simple templates to assist with planning the project. Applications should be submitted a minimum of two months in advance of the activity.

Submissions will be evaluated by Recreation and Culture using evaluation criteria included in the framework. Approved applications may be funded between \$500 and a maximum of \$2,000.

For the initial launch of the program there will be an ongoing continuous intake. Applications may be submitted at any time and funded based on the program framework and available funds.

Successful submissions will require applicants to enter into an agreement. All funds must be spent as documented in the submission. Applicants will agree to complete a template report after the project, including a summary of expenses. Receipts are not required to be submitted, but the applicant must keep all receipts/proof of purchases for a period of 12 months.

Staff will finalize the on-line application, promotional campaign and associated forms with a targeted program launch of November 1, 2023.

Staff will report back on the success of the program and any recommended changes after one year in operation.

Conclusion

This exciting new initiative fills a need within the community to enable residents to initiate and implement small-scale activations they want to see in their neighbourhood.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

This report provides information to the public regarding the town's upcoming Community Activation Grant process. The program launch will be broadly shared through town social media and relevant customer distribution groups as well as through various community partners.

(B) FINANCIAL

Council approved the annual operating budget for this program in 2023.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Finance, Parks and Open Space, and Roads and Works, have been involved in the development of the Community Activation Grant process. Corporate Communications will support the implementation and communication phases.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:

- Promote Livability to further Oakville's goal of being the most livable town in Canada.
- Promote an Engaged Community.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Community Activation Grant: Program Framework

Prepared by:

Chris Clapham, Community Development Specialist

Recommended by:

Colleen Bell, Commissioner – Community Services

Submitted by:

Julie Mitchell, Director - Recreation and Culture