

External Grant Review Committee Report

External Grant Review Committee
Report to Council
May 10, 2018

INTRODUCTION

In October 2017, Council received a report on the pilot project initiated in 2017 to use an external grant review committee to assist it in its annual deliberations on Strategic Plan Grants. The mandate of the pilot “Strategic Plan Grant Review Committee” according to its Terms of Reference was to

“... review all applications received by the City under the Strategic Plan Grants program and to make recommendations to City Council on the annual Strategic Plan Grants to be funded by the City.

The Committee’s recommendations will be guided by the City’s Strategic Plan and in particular the evaluation matrix specifically established for Strategic Plan Grants.”

Council decided to formalize this approach and created the External Grant Review Committee. Members of the pilot committee agreed to reappointment during a transitional period. Public members of the Committee include:

- Margaret Eckenfelder (Chair), retired public servant
- Louise MacDonald, Victoria Foundation
- Danella Parks, United Way Greater Victoria
- Melissa Avdeeff, University of Victoria
- Shannon Alderdice, Senior Implementation Consultant

Council also agreed to a number of recommendations to update the application process itself. The changes were greatly appreciated by the Committee and facilitated review of the project applications. A few more suggestions for improvement have been made to staff as a result of the 2018 review process, and are outlined in the section called “Suggestions for 2019”, below.

The committee received support from the City Clerk’s office and Finance Department. The committee would like to take this opportunity to thank staff for their excellent support preparing material and providing the committee with background information essential to a full assessment of the applications. Christine Havelka, Deputy City Clerk, kept the committee on track and organized. Jo-Ann O’Connor, Manager, Financial Planning, provided invaluable input during the April 23 deliberations, with quick answers to members’ questions.

A total of \$506,500 is available for the grant program in 2018. Fifty-five eligible applications totaling \$1,060,681 were received.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The Committee met two times:

March 13, 2018:

- reviewed Council direction regarding the 2018 grant process;
- agreed on process and schedule for preparing recommendations on 2018 grant applications; and,
- decided that each member would review all of the grants and complete an evaluation template based on the one developed for 2017.

April 23, 2018:

- reviewed consolidated results for each grant application; and,
- developed final recommendations included in this report.

The Committee's timeline was designed to meet deadlines for Council's meeting on May 10, 2018.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The elements of the evaluation framework adopted by the Committee are the same as those used in 2017 and include:

1. Council Weighted Strategic Plan Objectives:

OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL RANKING
Facilitate Social Inclusion and Community Wellness	3.67
Engage and Empower the Community	3.22
Enhance and Steward Public Spaces, Green Spaces and Food Systems	3.11
Create Prosperity Through Economic Development	3.00
Nurture our Arts, Culture and Learning Capital	2.56

In 2017, grant applications could show how they met more than one strategic plan objective. To apply Council's weighting, Committee members had to select a single strategic objective that best reflected the application. For 2018 applicants were instructed to select the one that was most applicable. This simplified the review process.

2. Criteria used by the Victoria Foundation to evaluate its grant applications.

Criteria and sample assessment tools for each criterion include:

Strength of Organization (20%): project aligns and advances organization mission and mandate; organization has experience and capacity to undertake project successfully; the people who will lead and implement the project have relevant experience; and strong leadership is evident.

Evidence of Need (20%): Demonstrated strong evidence of need for the project, project addresses a Vital Signs indicator or priority issue (in this case, City's strategic priorities).

Community Impact (30%): Project benefits a priority target population (or environmental area); expected results are well-considered and will have significant impact; applicant identifies appropriate methods for evaluating project results; project will involve appropriate partners/amplify impact through collaboration; community impacts are reasonable, well-considered and are applicable to the project.

Project Feasibility (30%): Work plan is detailed and feasible with stated timelines; budget expenses are appropriate and well considered amounts are identified for proposed activities; budget revenues include adequate funding sources to meet project expenses; other sources of funding are identified as potential or confirmed, including in-kind sources.

Each application was given a score between 1 and 6 in each category and scores were weighted according to the percentages above.

3. Overall Evaluation Taking Multiple Factors into Consideration

The combination of scores from 1 and 2 above resulted in a total "Merit Score" for each grant application. Scores ranged from a high of 21.36 to a low of 6.48. The average was 16.22 and the median was 17.25. Thirty applications scored above the median while twenty-five fell below.

Specific details of each application were also taken into account to determine recommended grant amounts. This resulted in some cases where applications with relatively low merit scores received funding and a number of high scoring applications received less funding than would be expected given their score. The Committee's rationale for specific funding decisions is contained in Table 2, below.

Given demand relative to available funds very few applications received full funding, despite their merit. Committee members set a notional maximum of \$40,000 for a single grant. For most of the high merit scoring applications, grants amounted to about 60-80% of the amount requested. The largest grant amount recommended is \$40,000; the smallest \$1000; average \$9251; median \$7000.

RESULTS

Each Committee member completed the agreed upon template and the results were consolidated. The Committee met on April 23, 2018 to review and make final decisions and recommendations to Council regarding the allocation of grant funds. The results, including recommended grants and comments on each application, are summarized in the tables below. Table 1 shows applications sorted by merit scores; Table 2 shows comments for each application.

Table 1. Victoria Strategic Plan Grants: Total Merit Scores and Suggested Awards

ORGANISATION NAME	REQUESTED	ELIGIBLE	MERIT	SUGGESTED AWARD
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre	70,000	70,000	21.36	40,000
Pacifica Housing	25,000	25,000	21.10	20,000
The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society (YES)	13,000	13,000	20.99	11,000
Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH)	50,000	50,000	20.92	40,000
Crisis Intervention & Public Information Society of Greater Victoria dba NEED2 Suicide Prevention Education & Support	21,800	21,800	20.70	18,000
Threshold Housing Society	34,422	34,422	20.55	25,000
Peers Victoria Resource Society	15,000	15,000	20.48	13,000
Pacific Training Centre for the Blind Society (PTCB)	15,000	15,000	20.41	13,000
Bridges for Women Society	25,000	25,000	20.26	20,000
Society for Kids at Tennis (KATS)	10,000	10,000	19.96	8,000
Victoria Brain Injury Society	12,000	12,000	19.89	8,500
Victoria Conservatory of Music	9,500	9,500	19.88	6,000
Burnside Gorge Community Association	25,000	25,000	19.67	20,000
Fairfield Community Association of Victoria DBA Fairfield Gonzales Community Association	13,228	13,228	19.45	6,500
Our Place Society	25,000	25,000	19.38	20,000

The Mustard Seed Street Church	10,000	7,500	18.86	5,000
KidSport Greater Victoria	25,000	25,000	18.86	18,000
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society	9,500	9,500	18.42	7,000
Cerebral Palsy Association of British Columbia	5,000	5,000	18.42	2,500
Together Against Poverty Society	12,000	12,000	18.10	0
Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society	15,875	15,875	18.08	12,000
Greater Victoria Volunteer Society dba Volunteer Victoria	4,000	4,000	18.01	3,000
MOVE Adapted Fitness & Rehabilitation Society of BC	9,000	9,000	17.98	6,000
HeadWay - Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre	13,950	13,950	17.98	3,000
Ballet Victoria Society	10,000	10,000	17.76	7,000
Disaster Aid Canada	30,000	30,000	17.40	7,500
Victoria Compost and Conservation Education Society (Compost Education Centre)	8,250	8,250	17.29	6,000
Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee	10,000	10,000	16.62	8,000
Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees	49,720	49,720	16.52	10,000
LifeCycles Project Society	10,000	10,000	16.48	8,000
Greater Victoria Visitors & Convention Bureau	24,000	24,000	16.14	10,000
Vancouver Island South Film & Media Commission	60,000	60,000	16.08	20,000
Greater Victoria Bike to Work Society	7,500	7,500	16.00	5,000
Rainbow Health Co-operative	8,061	8,061	16.00	4,000
Stigma-Free Society	9,500	9,500	15.85	0
SHIFT Collaborative Society	22,570	22,570	15.84	5,000

Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology and Entrepreneurship Council (VIATEC)	50,000	50,000	15.84	15,000
Living Edge Community	30,000	30,000	15.49	10,000
1Up Victoria Single Parent Resource Centre Society	15,540	15,540	15.06	5,000
Synergy Sustainability Institute	10,000	10,000	14.52	7,000
ArtsReach Society	1,000	1,000	13.52	1,000
Victoria Community Micro Lending Society	13,730	13,730	13.44	5,000
Tides Canada Initiatives Society - The Existence Project	35,000	35,000	13.36	4,000
James Bay New Horizons	24,750	24,750	12.70	0
Greater Victoria SportHost Association	10,000	10,000	12.64	0
Story Studio Writing Society (Story Studio)	7,500	7,500	12.08	4,000
Theatre SKAM Association	23,000	23,000	11.47	10,000
Maritime Museum of BC	30,000	30,000	10.96	20,000
Cine-Vic Society of Independent Filmmakers	10,000	9,715	10.14	2,500
Downtown Victoria Business Association	25,000	25,000	9.78	7,000
Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria	16,520	16,520	9.62	0
Anastasia Brain Injury Society	3,500	2,625	9.25	0
Greater Victoria Placemaking Network Society	30,000	24,450	9.21	0
Ministry of Casual Living	4,000	3,975	8.60	0
BC Black History Awareness Society (BCBHAS)	12,500	12,500	6.48	0
TOTAL	\$ 1,069,916	1,060,681	16.22	506,500

Table 2. Victoria Strategic Plan Grants: Application Comments

ORGANISATION NAME	COMMENTS
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre	Innovative program that is showing results. For the region, but hosted in Victoria. Strong demonstrated need.
Pacifica Housing	Supports programming throughout island - funds should be supplemented accordingly. Funds awarded for Victoria programming. Preventative measures vs eviction: important and needed program.
The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society (YES)	Strong established program. Scalable. Encourage organization to seek accreditation.
Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH)	Important regional role; encourage organization to seek funding sources in other municipalities.
Crisis Intervention & Public Information Society of Greater Victoria dba NEED2 Suicide Prevention Education & Support	Strong program with regional reach. Encourage organization to seek funding sources in other municipalities.
Threshold Housing Society	Regional scope. Encourage organization to seek funding sources in other municipalities.
Peers Victoria Resource Society	Innovative, unique program. Expanding need within transgender community that is being supported by this group.
Pacific Training Centre for the Blind Society (PTCB)	Strong program with a unique approach and focus.
Bridges for Women Society	Delivering consistent results. Valuable service.
Society for Kids at Tennis (KATS)	Simple but effective program. Encourage organization to seek funds in other municipalities.
Victoria Brain Injury Society	Encourage organization to seek funds in other municipalities.
Victoria Conservatory of Music	Capacity building project. Considering the focus on schools outside Victoria, encourage organization to seek funds in other municipalities.
Burnside Gorge Community Association	Established program. Demonstrated results, with new focus on families.
Fairfield Community Association of Victoria DBA Fairfield Gonzales Community Association	Could charge small admission fee, sliding scale, or donation, to recoup food costs.
Our Place Society	New program; encourage other funding sources given scope.
The Mustard Seed Street Church	Suggest Victoria grant funds go towards Cafe Shack.
KidSport Greater Victoria	Good program with regional reach; encourage organization to seek funds from other municipalities.
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society	Consider for operational community centre funding next year.
Cerebral Palsy Association of British Columbia	Could charge a small fee for sessions.
Together Against Poverty Society	Peer support is important. Concerns regarding advocacy

	intentions.
Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society	Good program - aligned with organisation's mission. Created opportunities for newcomers.
Greater Victoria Volunteer Society dba Volunteer Victoria	Scalable program. Pro-rated for Victoria.
MOVE Adapted Fitness & Rehabilitation Society of BC	New request for a program with established results.
HeadWay - Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre	Recommend Victoria grant be used to support peer training.
Ballet Victoria Society	Good program; scalable.
Disaster Aid Canada	Not clear how much funding is directed to Victoria needs; seek clarification regarding local vs. transnational aid.
Victoria Compost and Conservation Education Society (Compost Education Centre)	Great program with demonstrated results and broad reach.
Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee	Impact of program beyond direct participants should be clearly articulated .
Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees	Located in Saanich without funding from municipalities outside Victoria. Suggest partial funding for one admin/office manager position.
LifeCycles Project Society	Great project. Positive long-term implications.
Greater Victoria Visitors & Convention Bureau	Poor budget completion. Suggest that other sources of funding would be more appropriate long term.
Vancouver Island South Film & Media Commission	Final report incomplete. Scope extends beyond Victoria; should consider broader regional funding support.
Greater Victoria Bike to Work Society	Dates in application unclear: 2017/18 report did not address results of training program.
Rainbow Health Co-operative	Potential for revenue sources. Suggest grant funding for training purposes only.
Stigma-Free Society	Concerns about: vulnerability of youth and mental illness; appropriateness of this approach; and qualifications of speakers. Inadequate information concerning established connections to schools.
SHIFT Collaborative Society	More clarity required on neighbourhood expansion intentions.
Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology and Entrepreneurship Council (VIATEC)	Strong organization. Final report incomplete. City of Victoria benefits economically from Tectoria.
Living Edge Community	Expansion markets not located in Victoria; suggest organization seek funding from other municipalities.
1Up Victoria Single Parent Resource Centre Society	Victoria grant to be used for workshops only.
Synergy Sustainability Institute	Good program. Encourage organization to examine the WestShore model.
ArtsReach Society	Solid program with broad reach.

Victoria Community Micro Lending Society	Victoria grant to be used for workshops only.
Tides Canada Initiatives Society - The Existence Project	Should seek more outside funding; Victoria grant to be used for honoraria and volunteer appreciation funds.
James Bay New Horizons	Outside the scope of the organization and could duplicate work elsewhere. Application indicates the program could not proceed without full funding.
Greater Victoria SportHost Association	Incomplete application; no concrete plans for funds; no timeline or milestones indicated.
Story Studio Writing Society (Story Studio)	Project is scalable; no clearly demonstrated need or established relationships.
Theatre SKAM Association	Project is scalable. Victoria grant to be used for artists' fees.
Maritime Museum of BC	Interesting variety in programming: schools, seniors, youth. Could ask other municipalities for funding.
Cine-Vic Society of Independent Filmmakers	Could increase registration fees for revenue. Could charge entrance fees for attendance in order to recoup costs.
Downtown Victoria Business Association	New initiative with potential benefits for Victoria. Not clear how funds would be used. Partial funding to show Victoria's support for this initiative.
Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria	The City of Victoria is not working with this group on this project. Question viability without such agreement in place.
Anastasia Brain Injury Society	Financial stability and feasibility concerns. The organization could team with the Brain Society organization. Programming less defined than other projects.
Greater Victoria Placemaking Network Society	Incomplete application. No sense of impact; shows surplus revenue; planning unclear. There is no established connection with the City of Victoria.
Ministry of Casual Living	Representation of finances unclear; project mechanics (e.g. selection process; partners) not well defined; narrow impact (10-20 students).
BC Black History Awareness Society (BCBHAS)	Concerns about financial stability and whether a conference should be funded through the strategic grant program; suggest organization seek sponsors.

SUGGESTIONS FOR 2019

The committee has a number of recommendations for improving the Application and Reporting forms, and a general suggestion for helping to assess organizational sustainability.

1. Application Form

Sections 5 and 6 (page 2):

- Reverse sections 5 and 6. Section 6, Project or Program Information, would become Section 5. Section 5 would become Section 6 and should be separated into 2 parts: Weighted Strategic Plan Objective; and Project or Program Key Objectives.
- In new Section 5, clarify the questions regarding how many people will benefit from the project. The focus should be on Victoria.
- Add the word “Victoria” to the first question. It would read, “How many Victoria residents will benefit from the project or program?”
- Amend the question regarding the percentage of “Greater Victoria” residents who will benefit to say: “How many Greater Victoria residents benefit from this project or program?” The current language is ambiguous and open to very broad interpretation.

Section 7, Project or Program Budget (pages 3 and 4):

- Require the organization to: list all funding sources by name; match project or program costs with revenues, as applicable; and, show matching funds exist where matching is a criteria.

Section 8, Project or Program Timeline (page 4):

- On page 5, amend the heading to read: “Project or program timeline and outcomes”.

2. Final Report

Section 5, page 2:

- A number of applicants who received grants in 2017 did not show any funding from Victoria in their 2017 reports. Clarify this section to ensure applicants show any grant received from Victoria.

3. General

Attachments:

- In 2018, instructions to applicants made it clear that material included in attachments would not be considered. In a number of cases, key elements were included in attachments.

The committee recommends that the ban on attachments be clearly reiterated and emphasized for 2019 in both the Application and Report Forms and instructions for completion.

Organizational Sustainability:

- The second part of the evaluation framework used by the committee adopts criteria used by the Victoria Foundation to evaluate its grant applications. The first criteria, “Strength of the Organization” is intended to help assess the viability and sustainability of the applicant. During the 2018 review, staff and committee members familiar with the organizations were able to help with this assessment. In the future, background information and track records of those who will be managing the program or project would be helpful. Management often will determine the success or failure of a project.

The committee recommends that staff explore ways of obtaining management information and track records through the Application Form.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

The External Grant Review Committee makes the following recommendations to Council:

1. Approve the Grants and amounts proposed in Table 1, above.
2. Approve recommendations to improve the process for 2019, as proposed in “Suggestions for 2019”, above.