

**Committee of the Whole Report Back – COVID-19 Recovery**  
**For the Meeting of June 4, 2020**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council:

- Direct staff to shift funding allocated for the Cultural Infrastructure and Cultural Space Roadmap towards a one-time only Everyday Creativity Grant program during COVID pandemic.
- Direct staff to report back on the Everyday Creativity Grant program criteria and process by end of June 2020.

**COUNCIL MOTION:**

1. That Council move forward at this time with the previously approved 2020 Create Victoria actions related to the creation of a Cultural Infrastructure Grant fund, Cultural Spaces Roadmap, and the new staff position for implementing *Create Victoria*
2. That Council direct staff to report back with options for a special round of grants to:
  - a. Encourage events with alternative formats that build community and social connection while allowing for physical distancing;
  - b. Once restrictions are lifted, events to bring people back downtown, support arts and culture, and inject economic vibrancy back into the core and village centres.

**ISSUES, ANALYSIS, OPTIONS**

COVID pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to step back and rethink priorities and how we might use this unforeseen crisis as an opportunity to embrace our *vision “Victoria radiates creativity and thrives as a home to creative people and everyday artistic encounters”* as outlined in the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan.

During the pandemic, we have already seen the many varied forms that people have embraced everyday creativity and a need for creative outlet from their homes. Arts and culture activity is also an important ingredient in supporting economic recovery efforts. Performances and public art can bring people back into the core and village centres through animation and beautification of public space to support small business re-opening plans.

Shifting priorities from capital infrastructure to programming support will provide benefits to both the arts organizations and citizens by providing much needed social and creative outlets. This shift aligns well to Create Victoria’s *vision to thrive as a place for everyday artistic encounters*.

Staff will continue work on cultural space development through mapping, research, and data collection to ensure we are evidence-based in our approach to cultural spaces. COVID pandemic will dramatically change priorities, needs and business models for the arts sector and more time and research is needed to understand these impacts before implementation of a capital grant program.

At the May 14, Committee of the Whole meeting, Council directed staff to encourage events with alternative formats that build community and social connection while allowing physical distancing,

and events that bring vibrancy back into the core and village centres once restrictions are lifted. Staff propose two directions to meet this objective.

### **Everyday Creativity Grant**

Everyday Creativity Grant aims to increase access for everyone to be creative through the arts to improve mental and physical health. A new grant program would enable all citizens to have the means to access the arts regardless of cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, disability, income, educational, occupation or location.

Grants ranging from \$500 to \$5000 would be encouraged to enable more creative programming for the community by many organizations. Emphasis on learning, creative expression and broad public participation of the program could be encouraged.

Staff will bring back a staff report on the grant criteria, goals and objectives by the end of June 2020 for Council approval before receiving submissions.

### **City-Wide Interventions**

What happens when you create a city-wide culture of everyday creativity?

Traditional programming in Centennial Square and Cameron Bandshell will be challenging to do safely this summer. Staff have been working on new and reimagined ways to provide everyday creativity to citizens to support health and wellbeing. While the grant program supports non-profit arts organizations, city-run programs can provide much needed support to individual artists and creators through our artist, musician and community programmer rosters. These pre-juried rosters allow staff to quickly deploy creativity into our public spaces.

Ideas currently under development include:

- Art on the Spot: pop up busker-style performances in public spaces downtown and in village centre shopping areas.
- Call to artist to submit work for display in vacant storefronts, bus shelters, alleyways, and walls
- Livestreaming concert series in partnership with CFUV campus radio station.
- Self guided public art walking tours.
- Creative Spotlight Instagram series: promoting local events, artists and makers.
- Continuation of ongoing programs including the Artist in Residence programs, Butler Book Prize and the Poet Laureate programs.

In partnership with arts and business community, staff will be rolling out opportunities year-round to increase access to everyday creativity for all to enjoy.

### **OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS, DEPENDENCIES AND RISKS**

A number of Create Victoria action items would be implemented by moving forward in this direction. This includes but is not limited to:

- Use parks, open spaces, community centres and schools, to act as creative nodes in neighbourhoods
- Identify opportunities for inclusive, collaborative community arts and creative placemaking participation activities facilitated by artists and creative practitioners.

- Use art as a tool for community wellness and opening up opportunities for marginalized communities through inclusivity initiatives with identified partners.
- Support cross-cultural interactions and more inclusive platforms and spaces for engagement with the community.
- Build relationships with community associations and organizations to expand the number and range of creative participation opportunities at the neighbourhood level.
- Animate public art collection and intangible cultural assets through tours, workshops, storytelling and other engagement activities
- Work with the technology community in identifying tech-based solutions to help increase access to the arts.
- Encourage and support buy local campaigns.

## **PUBLIC IMPACTS**

Participating in the arts has multiple benefits for health and wellbeing - reducing social isolation, building self-esteem and strengthening community connection. Creating an equitable solution where more people can experience more art, more often is essential.

Unfortunately, opportunities to participate in the arts are not evenly distributed with many people facing significant and complex barriers. These challenges are often cultural, physical, systematic, or a combination of these, and more.

Everyday Creativity approach via a new grant program and city-led programming would enable all citizens to have the means to access the arts regardless of cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, disability, income, educational, occupation or location.

## **IMPACTS TO FINANCIAL PLAN**

No impacts to the Financial Plan. Possible reduction in operational expenses for city-led programs due to lower technical expenses and in-kind service support to events and festivals in Centennial Square and Bandshell.

## **CONCLUSION**

These are extremely challenging times for the arts sector, but there are great opportunities too. If the City can centre creativity in people's homes, communities and workplaces, the long-term health, wellness and quality of life outcomes could be considerable.