



Council Member Motion
For the Meeting of May 14, 2020

To: May 14, 2020 Committee of the Whole Date: May 8, 2020
From: Councillors Alto & Thornton-Joe
Subject: COVID-19 Community Recovery Grants Program

Background

Every year, cities invest in community with diverse grant programs. For example, the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Park Board award over \$11 million just to non-profit arts, cultural organizations and artists through a variety of grants.

The City of Victoria has grant programs that support different aspects of community: Strategic Plan grants, Micro grants, Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grants, Festival Investment grants, and Direct Award grants.

Strategic Plan Grants are awarded annually by Council through a competitive process and are for eligible organizations working on a project or program that supports the actions and outcomes of the City of Victoria's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan Objectives.

Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grants are available to any neighbourhoods that manage and maintain community gardens as defined in the City's Community Garden Policy.

My Great Neighbourhood Grants support citizen-initiated projects and activities that animate community spaces and create gathering spots to bring people together.

Festival Investment Grants are guided by the Festival Investment Grant Policy and are awarded by Council through a competitive process annually.

Direct-Award Grants are paid to organizations that deliver a service on behalf of the City on an ongoing basis, including organizations that operate a City-owned facility.

Grants for these programs provide financial support to community organizations to advance important programs and services to and for residents.

There can be no greater, more important, more urgent need now than for programs, projects, services, actions, ideas that will lift Victoria, its residents and businesses from the doldrums imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As our city emerges from an unprecedented social and commercial slowdown/shutdown, community organizations, businesses and residents are key to our recovery. Their essential, real-world experience and dedication to their city will enervate collective and individual ideas for community capacity building, opportunity creation, and innovation. The City could support and

challenge its residents with a time-limited grant program specifically designed to ignite and nurture community-based recovery work.

Not intended to replace existing grant programs, intended to act as new catalyst for community-based recovery action to kickstart our city's resurgence, the COVID-19 Community Recovery Grants Program could complement, or be an expansion of, the city's Strategic Plan Grants. In this way new ideas, focused specifically on actions to foster recovery from COVID-19, could be considered in the context of the city's 2019-2022 strategic plan, but with a generous examination of ideas that may push the boundaries of our strategic plan while remaining municipally relevant.

The new program, or Strategic Plan Grant sub-program, and each awarded action, would identify and realize a tangible, measurable remedy to a business¹, organization, neighbourhood, or other entity directly affected by COVID-19.

City staff, experienced in designing, establishing, administering and managing grants, would be asked to create a temporary or complementary policy and program, with an application document including evaluation parameters, deadlines, reporting requirements, and a series of questions to be used in determining successful applications.

Some of the questions asked of applicants might include:

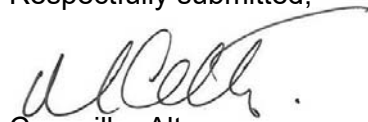
- How will your action protect people and ensure that our city can come back from COVID-19 stronger than before?
- How does your action revive a business, organization, service, or other local program, based in the city, that was affected by COVID-19?
- How was the business, organization, service, or other local program for which you are creating a remedy affected by COVID-19?
- How will your action complement, on a local level, the COVID-19 recovery priorities set out by the provincial government?
- What specific benefits to community accrue from your action?

The budget proposed for this one time only program could be up to \$700,000 – equivalent to one half of one per cent (0.5%) of projected 2020 property tax revenue, and could be sourced from a combination of 2020 contingency, a reduction in the 2020 allocation to reserves, new assessed revenues and/or other options as per our Financial Sustainability Policy (when considering new programs).

Recommendation

That Council direct staff to, on an urgent basis, design and report back with options for an innovative, one time, time limited grant program that would complement, or be an expansion of, the city's Strategic Plan Grants to allocate funds to organizations and/or individuals to support specific, measurable, actions to remedy a city-based business, organization, neighbourhood, or other entity directly affected by COVID-19, and in that report identify options for funding such a program.

Respectfully submitted,


Councillor Alto


Councillor Thornton-Joe

¹ Accounting for existing regulations and/or prohibitions on the city providing direct benefits to businesses.