



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of July 9, 2020

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 30, 2020
From: Kerri Moore, Head of Business and Community Relations
Subject: Festival Investment Grant 2019 Allocations

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the Festival Investment Grant allocations as recommended in Appendix 1 for total cash grants of \$283,749 and in-kind City services grants of up to \$159,450.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Festivals and celebrations add to Victoria's vitality, vibrancy and diversity. The City's annual grant and in-kind support nurtures the development of high-quality accessible events and creates significant economic activity in the city. City support for festival applicants during this unprecedented time is intended to increase recipients' capacity to pay artists, innovate in order to connect audiences to scarcely available cultural content, and to simply 'keep the lights on' until they can once again present to live audiences.

The Festival Investment Program (FIG) was established in 1999. Over the 21-year history of the program the City has allocated \$3,161,157 in cash and \$2,115,271 in in-kind City services to FIG recipients.

There were 43 applications received prior to the FIG submission deadline with a total request for funding of \$494,043. City funding budgeted for this grant program is \$283,749. A record number (41) of the applicants met the criteria and are recommended for approval. Half of the recommended festivals have applied for federal funding.

All applications are reviewed based on the approved FIG policy, which includes:

- Program criteria, including a free component
- Artistic and cultural merit of the event
- Economic impact
- Community support
- Organizational effectiveness

A comprehensive list of requests and recommendations is detailed in Appendix I.

Traditionally, the economic impact of these events can be measured by spending activity generated by festival goers in local restaurants and businesses, overnight stays in hotels by both visitors and

performers, festival employment, production spending and increased tourism. As many of the 2020 events and festivals pivot to online platforms, much of the economic impact of those live events will be lost.

Although many of the festivals will not be able to present their programs as anticipated, it is worth highlighting the potential for positive future economic impact if they can maintain capacity to present in future. The five largest events were originally estimated to generate a total economic impact of over \$7 million with attendance for all recommended events estimated to exceed 600,000.

The total operating budgets of the recommended events is projected to be over \$5 million in direct cash spending. This reflects potential future impact through employment (273 full and part-time positions), event production sales and rentals, and the purchase of goods and services. Corporate investment by local, regional and national corporations were anticipated to exceed \$2.5 million. The recommended cash grant reflects less than 3.7% of the festival's combined \$7.6 million in proposed operating budgets.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval of the Festival Investment Grants recommendations for 2020.

BACKGROUND

By March of 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. Council reprioritized aspects of the 2020 Financial Plan in order to proactively respond to anticipated community need in the face of economic and social hardship. The previously approved \$25,000 increase to the 2020 FIG program was redeployed to support residents, local business and the not-for-profit sectors facing hardship as a result of COVID-19 impacts. Core funding to the FIG program has been maintained in the updated financial plan.

Arts and culture organizations have been in crisis since the declaration of global pandemic. Venues have been closed, artist contracts cancelled, and festival staff have been let go.

On May 21st Council directed staff to report back with FIG recommendations based on applicants' programming intentions outlined in their grant applications.

City support for festival applicants during this unprecedented time is intended to increase recipients' capacity to pay artists, innovate in order to connect audiences to scarcely available cultural content, and to address operational needs not already covered by other grant programs in order to simply 'keep the lights on' until they can once again present to live audiences.

The Festival Investment Grant program was established to create and sustain a healthy community, vibrant downtown core and enhance economic development. Over the past twenty-one years, the City has allocated festivals with cash and in-kind support through the Festival Investment Grant Program. City in-kind support is provided based on anticipated need and the availability of departmental resources.

In-kind support can include City services such as policing, traffic control equipment, festival equipment labour, venue fees waived, displaced parking revenue, sound operator and security in Centennial Square. See Appendix 1 for a detailed breakdown of recommended in-kind grants.

The Festival Investment Grant program was created to meet the following objectives:

- Increase the quality of life for our citizens
- Enable a vibrant downtown core
- Support economic development
- Offer exposure to new art forms

To qualify for funding, festivals and celebrations must meet the criteria outlined in the Council approved Festival Investment Grant Policy and Guidelines. See Appendix 2 attached.

The federal “Building Communities through Arts and Heritage” (BCAH) grant program has expanded to include three separate intake periods. The department of Heritage no longer requires municipalities to confirm municipal support by year end. Council is now able to consider requests within the context of the budget process and review allocations following budget approval. Event organizers leverage their municipal support through provincial and federal funding bodies and secure credibility with corporate and community sponsors.

Grant applications, policy, guidelines and reporting documentation can be found on the City website. The grant program is showcased online as well as through the City Vibe web application and print versions made available throughout the year. Moving forward, the City will continue to enhance content available on the City website and through City social media. Three to four weeks prior to the Festival Investment Grant deadline reminders are sent to previous recipients outlining the timeline for reporting. Additionally, staff conducted a festival grant workshop in September 2019 showcasing more than a dozen grant programs from local and senior government granting agencies. The event was hosted at City Hall and was attended by more than 75 local event and festival organizers. Final reporting must be received before the annual application deadline in order to be considered.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Recipients will be provided with the necessary latitude to adapt and employ creative approaches in order to maintain connection with their respective audiences, pay artists and meet ongoing operational demands not supported through senior government grant programs. Recipients will be required to observe mandated health orders, and report back on how funds were invested in 2020. Recipients will be required to prioritize City funding to:

1. pay artists
2. promote & deliver free content, and
3. meet ongoing essential operational demands

Any FIG funding not used for these purposes by year end would be returned to the City or carried over and applied to 2021 allocations. Staff will review final reporting and financials then determine if the grants were utilized as intended. Any unused funding will be applied to applicant’s 2021 grant allocation or will be returned to the City should the organization fold or cancel prior to the 2021 intake.

In 2019, the City of Victoria awarded \$276,828 in grants and \$128,700 in in-kind support to 37 festivals and celebrations (up from 32 in 2018). This year there were 43 cash grant requests seeking a combined \$494,043 in FIG funding. Of these, four are new applicants indicating both growth and vibrancy in the festival scene. Two applications did not meet program criteria and are deemed ineligible, resulting in recommendations to fund 41 festivals and celebrations for a total of \$283,479 cash and up to \$159,450 in in-kind support. The 41 recommended Festivals and celebrations include:

Seed Festival Grants - new festivals in first five years of operation (13)

- World Accordion and Tango Festival
- Victoria Festival of Authors
- Folktoria
- Burn in the City (formerly IMBY)
- Caravan
- Issamba
- Kizomba Festival
- Lights of Wonder
- Mabuhay! Celebrating Philippine Culture
- Metal Festival
- Peek Fest
- Samhain Season of Remembrance
- Small Press Fest

Established Festival Grants (24)

- Blues Bash
- Dragon Boat Festival
- FernFest
- Film Festival
- Flamenco Festival
- Free B Festival
- Fringe Fest
- Garden City Grooves
- 157th Victoria Highland Games and Celtic Festival/Tartan Parade
- India Mela
- Indigenous Cultural Festival
- JazzFest
- Festival Mexicano
- Nowruz
- One Wave Festival
- Out Stages
- Pacific Baroque Festival
- Pride Week
- Rendez-Vouz Victoria (French Fest)
- Selkirk Waterfront Festival
- Ska & ReggaeFest
- SKAMpede
- Uno Fest
- Wonderment

Signature Festival Grants (4)

- Art Gallery Paint-In
- Car Free Day YYJ
- Victoria Day Parade/Island Farms Santa Parade
- Victoria Symphony in the Summer (Splash)

Two applicants did not meet the FIG criteria and are not eligible to be recommended for funding. Both will be redirected to other City funding programs for this season:

- Oaklands Sunset Market – fails to meet the definition of “festival”: a series or theme related events, predominantly arts and culture in nature. This is first and foremost a market. The focus is vending. The Everyday Creativity grant program would be a better fit. Staff will follow up with the applicant.
- Pumpkin Parade – application incomplete. Staff will redirect to an appropriate program.

Staff utilize evaluation criteria and recommend support for as many eligible events as possible.

Four first time applicants are recommended for support including:

- Issamba – African Arts
- Lights of Wonder – DVBA
- Samhain Season of Remembrance – Rainbow Health Collective
- Small Press Fest – Open Space

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 (Recommended)

That Council approve the Festival Investment Grant allocations as recommended in Appendix I for total cash grants of \$283,749 and in-kind grants of up to \$159,450.

Option 2

Council directs staff to revise the recommendations in Appendix 1 and bring back new recommendations for Council's consideration at a later date.

Accessibility Impact Statement

There are no accessibility concerns related to the proposed recommendations in this report.

2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan

Nurturing and supporting arts, culture and creativity has been identified by Council as an operational priority. The Festival Investment Grant Program is consistent with achieving the outcomes for the following objectives in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Objective #5: Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City of Victoria
- Strategic Objective #8: Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods

Impacts to Financial Plan

The current budget is \$283,749 and will be increased by inflation annually as directed by Council.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The recommendation aligns with the following objectives in the Official Community Plan:

Section 14: Economy

14 (f) That the function of the Urban Core as the primary regional centre of employment, learning, arts, culture, entertainment, recreation and specialty retail is maintained and enhanced with high quality facilities, services and events

Section 16: Arts and Culture

16.6 Encourage broad access to arts and culture facilities, events and activities for people of all ages, incomes, backgrounds and lifestyles.

16.7 Encourage education, training and informal learning opportunities in the arts, design and culture.

16.19 Establish and maintain partnerships with professional artists and arts and cultural organizations to program the use of public space.

16.20 Continue to permit festivals, celebrations and special events in public spaces, such as streets, parking lots, plazas, civic squares and other open space.

16.21 Increase the use of parks for festivals, celebrations and special events

16.22 Continue to support and enable local, non-profit groups to host festivals, celebrations and special events through services, incentives and regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Festival Investment Grant Program assists the creation of a more vibrant downtown through the traditional festival season, enhancing tourism, local business success and the local economy. The program also broadens the festival season to the shoulder months to attract residents and visitors to the downtown year-round thereby supporting economic development in traditionally slower economic activity periods.

Even with the support of this program during this unprecedented time, some festival societies will struggle to survive. Arts, Culture and Events staff have already witnessed presenting organizations' creative nimble efforts to reconnect with audiences. Staff will continue to provide the necessary latitude and support required in order to ensure as many festivals as possible maintain capacity to present in the future.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Day
Senior Cultural Planner



Kerri Moore
Head of Business and Community Relations

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date: 2020-07-03

List of Attachments

Appendix 1 – Detailed list of FIG allocations

Appendix 2 – Festival Investment Grant policy and guidelines