



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of March 18, 2021**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 26, 2021  
**From:** Kerri Moore, Head of Business and Community Relations  
**Subject:** Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Approve the new Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program and accompanying guidelines;
2. Approve reallocation of \$25,000 from previously approved funding for Create Victoria - Cultural Spaces Roadmap to the Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program for 2021;
3. Authorize the City Manager to approve the grants following the staff review process;
4. Direct staff to report back in T3 2021 on grant allocations and evaluation of the grant program.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Through many discussions with local arts and culture organizations, City staff are aware of the significant demand for infrastructure funding for projects of various scope and complexities including (re)development, renovations, capacity building and emergency upgrades. During Create Victoria engagement, affordable and accessible space was the number one issue facing the arts and culture sector. The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program and staff person dedicated to cultural spaces is a big step towards meeting our target of more space for creative purpose.

The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program guidelines presents key details of the program including objectives, eligibility criteria, funding limits, application deadline and other details that will inform the program administration including application review and adjudication. The program guidelines have been drafted based on best practices and insights from other municipalities across Canada that offer cultural infrastructure grants. In addition, staff reviewed provincial and federal government programs to ensure alignment to increase opportunities for applicants to secure additional funding from senior levels of government. Staff hosted two virtual roundtable discussions in mid-February to consult with community members to gain feedback on the guidelines and overall program objectives.

Over the past year, several studies, surveys and reports focussed on the state of the arts and culture infrastructure have been published. Due to relevant, applicable data available on the issue under examination, and expertise of in-house staff on research projects, staff recommend taking on the Cultural Space Road Map within staff operational plans and reallocating \$25,000 to the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program. Given rising construction and development related costs,

staff have examined strategies to increase support for cultural organizations without impacting the overall City budget. By reallocating funding from the Cultural Space Road Map that would have funded a consultant, more funding can be provided to the community through the new grant program.

## **PURPOSE**

To seek Council's approval on the new Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program guidelines and to increase the funding envelope for the Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program through a budget reallocation.

## **BACKGROUND**

At the January 18, 2021 Special Committee of the Whole meeting, Council approved \$100,000 in one-time funding for the Create Victoria - Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program in 2021 to support arts and culture organizations in the community. Funding for cultural infrastructure is one of the priority actions identified in the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan, informed by community consultation and stakeholder engagement.

While there are federal and provincial government grant programs for cultural infrastructure funding, some of these programs require matching funding from private or public sources as well as indication of local support. Providing municipal funding for cultural infrastructure projects will increase opportunities for local arts and culture organizations to secure additional funding from alternative sources.

The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program will seek to fulfil the following objectives:

- To build organizational capacity and support arts and culture organizations that own or manage shared production, exhibition and work space;
- To increase the supply of cultural spaces owned and/or operated by not-for-profit organizations with an arts and culture mandate;
- To improve and upgrade existing cultural facilities, providing safe and accessible spaces for individuals and groups with diverse needs.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

Affordable and accessible spaces are foundational elements of a thriving creative ecosystem in any urban context. Rising real-estate values and redevelopment pressure over the past several years in Victoria has led to an increase in rental rates which severely affects non-profit arts and culture organizations with limited financial means. In addition, redevelopment and rezoning of older commercial properties and industrial lands are reducing the supply of larger and more affordable spaces for arts and culture organizations.

Staff hosted two virtual roundtable discussions with arts and culture organizations to review program guidelines, seek feedback and answer questions. During these sessions, the overall response from participants was positive and enthusiastic about municipal funding for cultural infrastructure projects. Staff heard from participants about potential concerns to complete projects within 2021. Given ongoing COVID-19 related challenges staff will work with applicants that might need additional time to complete projects.

Another concern that emerged in one of the discussions was the need to secure separate or

dedicated funding streams for smaller or emerging organizations who have fewer resources and capacity compared to more established organizations. Concerns regarding equitable disbursement of funds beyond the professional larger organizations was noted by staff and included for consideration within the criteria for assessment to ensure staff address each project's feasibility as well as scope, variety of disciplines supported and overall community impact of the project and who the project will serve using an equity lens.

For this first year, staff do not recommend creating multiple application streams within the grant program and rather recommend an assessment after the initial intake on potential changes to the program guidelines.

There are very few arts and culture organizations that own their own space, with most relying on rental tenure for space. While the guidelines require a minimum of 18 months lease which would support more sustainable and longer-term spaces, staff recognize this could be a potential barrier for groups that rely on shorter-term rentals or are nearing the end of their lease agreements and therefore have allowed for exceptions to be made on a case-by-case basis to reduce barriers for applicants that require critical assistance. The program also encourages collaboration and partnerships between multiple organizations that are interested in sharing facilities and capacity.

The maximum grant amount per applicant is \$25,000 or 50% of project costs, whichever is lower. The aim is to support as many groups as possible, however, staff recognize that infrastructure projects can be expensive and therefore recommend providing funding amounts that will lead to completed projects and ensure successful outcomes.

This program will also provide support for 'soft infrastructure' projects such as planning or feasibility studies that would help organizations hire or engage consultants and subject area experts in business development, real-estate, planning, architecture and construction amongst others. These projects would enable groups to develop expertise and develop feasible plans. The maximum grant amount for 'soft infrastructure' projects is \$10,000, in order to prioritize 'shovel ready' projects.

To be efficient with limited time within 2021 to provide funding by the end of this fiscal year, staff recommend the City Manager approve grants based on a staff analysis using the grant criteria provided in the grant guidelines (Appendix A). A final staff report to Council on grant allocations and evaluation of the program will be provided in T3 2021.

## **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

### **Option 1 (*Recommended*):**

1. Approve the new Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program and accompanying guidelines;
2. Approve reallocation of \$25,000 from previously approved funding for Create Victoria - Cultural Spaces Roadmap to the Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program for 2021;
3. Authorize the City Manager to approve the grants following the staff review process;
4. Direct staff to report back in T3 2021 on grant allocations and evaluation of the grant program.

### **Option 2:**

Council to provide alternative direction to staff.

## **IMPACT:**

The following Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan action items would be implemented by moving forward with this program:

- Create a Cultural Infrastructure Fund for both existing and new spaces beginning with a \$100,000 investment by the City to leverage and attract private and public donations, with an emphasis on legacy giving, to encourage cultural leadership and philanthropy;
- Support cultural venues in seeking funding from partners and other levels of government;
- Continue to engage with the creative and cultural community in ongoing dialogue and participation in space needs.

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program will provide funding for non-profits to upgrade, renovate and improve accessibility standards to cultural venues.

### *2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan*

Implementation of the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program will help the City achieve the following strategic objectives:

- #4 Prosperity and Economic Inclusion
- #5 Health, Well-being and a Welcoming City

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

There are no impacts to the 2021 Financial Plan.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

16.9 Provide direction for cultural planning through the development and regular update of a Cultural Plan, that:

- 16.9.2 Seeks opportunities for partnership with the public, private and non-profit sectors;
- 16.9.3 Maintains, develops and enhances the delivery of City arts and culture programs;
- 16.9.4 Enhances support to local, non-profit groups engaged in arts or culture programs.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Affordable and accessible cultural spaces are an essential part of the community. They provide spaces to work, practice, host activities and engage communities. The arts and culture industries play a larger role in society providing quality-of-life benefits, generating economic development opportunities for local businesses and support tourism. The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program is one step forward in realizing the City's vision outlined in Create Victoria. Staff are also working on other projects including vacant properties, arts hub and partnerships between public-private groups that are being developed to create additional or new space for arts and culture organizations.

Respectfully submitted,

Ammar Mahimwalla  
Arts, Culture and Events Liaison

Kerri Moore  
Head of Business and Community Relations

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager**

**List of Attachments**

Appendix A: Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program Guidelines