

External Grant Review Committee Report

External Grant Review Committee
Report to Council
June 10, 2021

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The EGRC members acknowledge the privilege to work, live and play on the unceded and unsurrendered lands of the Lekwungen and *WSÁNEĆ* peoples. As uninvited guests in these territories, we recognize our collective and individual responsibility to decolonize ourselves, our work and our practices, to honour the laws that have governed these lands since time immemorial, and to support the hereditary stewards' right to self-determination

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. This Committee has provided recommendations on the Strategic Plan Grants since 2017. All members of the original pilot committee have completed their terms or resigned due to other commitments. Council appointed new members to the Committee at the beginning of the 2021. Members of the Committee include:

- Chris Tilden (Chair), returning Committee member (he/him)
- Meribeth Burton (she/her)
- Lauren Petersen (she/her/they)
- Luca Piscetta (they/them)
- Carolyne Stayton (she/her)

Since October 2017, Council has 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 2021 review process, and are outlined in the section called "Suggestions for 2022", 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 support preparing material and providing the committee with background information essential to a full assessment of the applications. Grant Diamond, Committee Secretary, Christine Havelka, Deputy City Clerk, and Jennifer Lockhart, Manager, Revenue, provided invaluable input and assistance through the 2021 deliberations as the committee needed to adapt to an online meeting process.

This is the second year that Strategic Plan Grants were submitted under the 2019-2022 Strategic Objectives. A total of \$472,615 is available for the grant program in 2021. Sixty-seven eligible applications totaling \$1,323,857 were received.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The Committee met five times. These meetings, per COVID-19 protocols, were conducted virtually as they were in 2020.

March 10, 2021:

- New members were introduced.
- Review of Terms of Reference and selection of Committee Chair
- Staff reviewed with the committee the grant process and how the applications were reviewed by the previous committee.

April 16, 2021:

- Set up a process for determining the allocation of the grants.
- Setting discussion guidelines for the duration of 2021 External Grant Review Committee (EGRC)

May 7, 2021 and May 14, 2021:

- Two half-day sessions were conducted online to review and discuss committee members' results to make the final determination for grant allocations.
- Reviewed opportunities for improvements to applications and the review process.

May 21, 2021:

- Finalization of External Grant Review Committee Report

The Committee's timeline was designed to meet deadlines for Council's meeting on June 10, 2021

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The elements of the evaluation framework adopted by the Committee are the same as those used in 2020 and included the updated Weighted Strategic Plan Objectives that Council adjusted:

1. Council Weighted Strategic Plan Objectives:

OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL RANKING
Affordable Housing	5.88
Prosperity and Economic Inclusion	5.88
Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship	5.38
Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations	5.38
Strong, Livable Neighborhoods	5.25
Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City	5.00
Sustainable Transportation	4.75

In 2018, grant applications were instructed to select the one objective that was most applicable. This process was continued for 2021. Applicants could select multiple objectives but were only weighted on the primary objective as identified by the applicant.

Of the applications submitted, 62.7% of applications selected Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City as the most applicable objective, with the remaining applications split between the remaining six objectives. In 2020, 61.5% of applications selected Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City as the most applicable objective. This year, no applications were received for Sustainable Transportation.

OBJECTIVE	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED
Affordable Housing	5
Prosperity and Economic Inclusion	6
Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship	3
Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations	2
Strong, Livable Neighborhoods	9
Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City	42
Sustainable Transportation	0

2. Criteria used for analysis grant applications.

Capacity of Organizations to Deliver the Project (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 City Strategic Plan Objective.

Project Builds Community Resilience (30%): Project increases community resiliency to withstand significant community changes; 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 5 in each category and scores were weighted according to the percentages above.

3. Approach used by EGRC for determining Merit Score.

The four criteria established by Council were each given a score between 1 and 5. An application could earn a maximum non-weighted score of 5.

The non-weighted score is then multiplied by the Strategic Plan weighting to get a final weighted score.

Example:

Capacity of an organization to deliver the project (20%) - Rating of 5 – Score of 1

Evidence of Need (20%) – Rating of 3 – Score of .60

Project Builds Community Resiliency (30%) - Rating of 4 – Score of 1.2

Project Feasibility (30%) - Rating of 4 - Score of 1.2

Total Non-Weighted Score – 4 (1 + .60 + 1.20 + 1.20)

Strategic Plan Objective - Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City

Strategic Plan Weighting – 5.00

Final Weighted Score – 20.00

4. 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 as outlined in 3. Scores ranged from a high of 26.34 to a low of 11.45. The average was 20.57 and the median was 20.70. Thirty-five applications scored at and above the mean while thirty-two fell below.

In assessing the final recommended awards for 2021, the committee applied a process so that the higher the final weighted merit score would result in a greater percentage of the eligible amount requested being received. With the overall breadth and quality to the applications presented, the committee wanted to provide funding to as many applications that were forwarded to the EGRC. The committee established a framework that applications scoring at or above a final weighted score of 18.00 would receive some level of funding, with only fourteen of the sixty-seven eligible applications not receiving funding. The committee elected to set a minimum grant of \$2,500 that five applications were recommended for that level of funding.

Given demand relative to funds available, no applications received full funding. No notional maximum was set, but awards of \$30,000 (or 6.3% of total funds available to be awarded) for a single grant were considered at or near maximum.

For most of the high merit scoring applications, most grants amounted to between 60-80% of the amount requested. The average being 35.60%, the median 35.00%.

The largest grant amount recommended is \$27,920 (Victoria Women's Transition House Society); the smallest \$2,500 (The Diverters Foundation; Bike Victoria Society; Victoria Literacy Connection; Pandora Arts Collective Society; Peninsula Streams Society) average \$7,054; median \$5,000.

One application, from North Park Neighbourhood Association required special consideration to the approach described above. With an eligible amount requested of 95,200 (20.14% of the total budget to award for 2021), the EGRC felt a funding amount closer to the average amount awarded of \$7,054 was more prudent to ensure more applications could receive partial funding.

RESULTS

Each Committee member completed the agreed upon template and the results were consolidated. The Committee met on May 7, 2021 and May 14, 2021 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

ORGANIZATION NAME	REQUESTED	ELIGIBLE	MERIT	SUGGESTED AWARD
Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria	30,000	30,000	26.34	24,000
Bridges for Women Society	30,000	30,000	25.87	24,000
Together Against Poverty Society	25,642	25,642	25.17	19,232
Pacifica Housing Advisory Association	24,700	24,700	24.70	18,525
The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society (YES)	13,000	13,000	24.68	9,750
Circles for Reconciliation Inc.	10,000	10,000	24.43	7,100
Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH)	40,000	40,000	24.23	27,920
YYJ Prosperity Association - South Island Prosperity Partnership	15,000	15,000	24.23	9,180
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society	25,000	25,000	23.76	14,000
Crisis Intervention & Public Information Society of Greater Victoria dba NEED2 Suicide Prevention Education & Support	20,000	20,000	23.40	11,200
Peers Victoria Resource Society	15,000	15,000	23.30	8,670
Victoria Native Friendship Centre	20,000	20,000	23.24	11,600
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre	40,000	40,000	23.00	22,400

LifeCycles Project Society	20,000	20,000	23.00	11,000
The Mustard Seed Street Church	20,000	20,000	22.80	10,200
Living Edge Community	15,000	15,000	22.80	7,650
Oaklands Community Association	35,795	35,795	22.38	16,108
The Proulx Global Education and Community Foundation	26,740	26,740	22.16	12,300
Worker Solidarity Network	25,000	25,000	22.11	11,250
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Victoria and Area	10,000	10,000	22.10	4,500
Burnside Gorge Community Association	25,000	25,000	22.00	11,250
Synergy Sustainability Institute	9,500	9,500	21.99	3,800
Theatre SKAM Association	24,000	24,000	21.84	9,600
Victoria Community Micro Lending Society	10,000	10,000	21.61	4,000
Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees (VICCIR)	40,000	40,000	21.60	16,000
Victoria Compost and Conservation Education Society (Compost Education Centre)	11,000	11,000	21.52	4,400
Fairfield Gonzales Community Association	20,000	20,000	21.50	8,000
Greater Victoria Cross Guards Association	61,400	61,400	21.42	21,490
Victoria Rainbow Kitchen Society	15,000	15,000	21.40	5,400
South Island Centre for Counselling and Training	20,000	20,000	21.40	7,000
The Diverters Foundation	3,350	2,513	21.00	2,500
Silver Threads Service	5,000	5,000	21.00	3,130

Coastal Research Education and Advocacy Network	39,220	31,290	21.00	9,387
Stigma-Free Society (Formerly Bipolar Disorder Society of BC)	9,000	9,000	20.70	2,700
Friends of Learning and Living Through Loss	9,440	9,440	20.60	2,832
Victoria Brain Injury Society	10,792	10,792	20.40	3,238
Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative Roundtable Society	18,000	18,000	20.30	5,580
KidSport Greater Victoria	10,000	10,000	20.30	3,000
Canadian Paraplegic Association (BC), Operating as Spinal Cord Injury BC	8,500	8,500	20.20	2,635
Victoria Conservatory of Music	9,500	9,500	20.10	2,850
Victoria Literacy Connection	7,000	7,000	20.00	2,500
Soap for Hope Canada Society (Formerly Disaster Aid Canada)	20,000	20,000	20.00	6,000
African Art & Cultural Community Contributor CCC	50,000	50,000	19.90	14,500
Quadra Village Community Centre (/Downtown Blanshard Advisory)	20,500	20,500	19.70	5,125
MakeWay Charitable Society (Formerly Tides Canada Initiatives Society)	15,000	15,000	19.70	3,750
Bike Victoria Society (Formerly Greater Victoria Bike to Work Society)	4,500	3,375	19.32	2,500
Chinese Community Services Center of Victoria	14,200	10,650	19.20	2,663
MOVE Adapted Fitness & Rehabilitation Society of BC	20,000	20,000	19.10	5,000
Peninsula Streams Society	10,000	10,000	19.05	2,500
North Park Neighbourhood Association	95,200	95,200	19.01	7,500
Power to Be Adventure Society	10,000	10,000	18.80	2,700

Vancouver Island Human Rights Coalition	32,000	24,000	18.70	6,000
Pandora Arts Collective Society (PACS)	10,000	9,000	18.27	2,500
Maritime Museum of British Columbia Society	20,000	20,000	17.90	-
Human-Nature Counselling Society	10,500	10,500	17.90	-
Victoria Supply Creative Reuse Society	28,163	28,163	17.57	-
Refugee Sponsorship Program of the Anglican Diocese of BC	50,000	50,000	17.50	-
Agrarians Foundation 'dba' Young Agrarians	12,000	12,000	17.50	-
Society for Kids at Tennis (KATS)	10,000	10,000	17.30	-
Victoria Downtown Residents Association	27,050	22,088	17.22	-
FED Urban Agriculture Society	7,500	7,500	17.20	-
Ballet Victoria Society	6,500	6,500	16.90	-
Story Studio Writing Society (Story Studio)	2,800	2,800	16.60	-
The Nature of Us Project	21,381	18,020	16.10	-
Leadership Victoria Society	15,750	15,750	16.00	-
Victoria Women Support Association	7,600	4,500	14.70	-
My Living City	10,500	10,500	11.45	-
TOTAL	1,357,723	1,323,857		472,615

**Table 2. Victoria Strategic Plan Grants: Application Comments
(Sorted by Merit Score Ranking)**

ORGANIZATION NAME	COMMENTS
Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria	The committee felt strongly the applicant had a solid, results-based plan to support people who need housing.
Bridges for Women Society	The committee felt the organization, with a well-established and respected service delivery model, would deliver on its objective with recommended level of City of Victoria funding.
Together Against Poverty Society	The application supports City Council’s established objectives and will help meet some of the needs of residents – needs that have been negatively amplified as a result of the pandemic.
Pacifica Housing Advisory Association	Housing supports is a City Council priority and this grant application, while aimed at a relatively small number of people, will bring substantial and significant relief.
The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society (YES)	The committee felt there was a high need for this program to support youth.
Circles for Reconciliation Inc.	Reconciliation is a City Council priority. This application was strongly supported by the committee and its mentor-based program was viewed as valuable approach.
Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH)	The service provider is delivering vital programs and its services will needed more than ever as an increase in domestic violence is linked to the pandemic.
YYJ Prosperity Association - South Island Prosperity Partnership	The committee determined the project was innovative and well-positioned to deliver stated objectives.
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society	The Community Association is well-established and is poised to make a positive impact on housing and housing security with its proposal.
Crisis Intervention & Public Information Society of Greater Victoria dba NEED2 Suicide Prevention Education & Support	The committee felt the project proposal was sound and achievable with clear objectives to support people who are living with mental illness including suicidal thoughts, anxiety and depression.
Peers Victoria Resource Society	The organization has strong community reputation, the project had solid objectives and success metrics.

Victoria Native Friendship Centre	The application, with a focus on reconciliation and Indigenous relations, will help reunite community members after the long, pandemic period of isolation. Feasting plays an important role in connecting people and supporting community wellness.
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre	The committee felt the organization was providing vital services. The program had clear objectives. And given the longstanding community contributions, this was a priority project.
LifeCycles Project Society	The committee, recognizing food security was a high community need, and this application, with its plan to serve up to 5,000 people, was considered excellent value for the city's investment.
The Mustard Seed Street Church	The applicant is well-known and respected organization – their grant proposal included well-defined objectives and their efforts would support vulnerable populations.
Living Edge Community	The committee considered this proposal – with a modest monetary request – delivered very good community value at providing food security.
Oaklands Community Association	The proposal had diversified funding partners, a sound plan, a history of delivering quality services and the program addresses food security needs by offering food/ snacks to support young students and their learning.
The Proulx Global Education and Community Foundation	The proposal fulfilled a number of the City of Victoria's strategic priorities, including Health, Well-Being and Welcoming City and Reconciliation and the committee appreciated the partnership model outlined in the proposal. The committee suggests the funding be used to support the direct service delivery component of the program and not the proposed film.
Worker Solidarity Network	The committee felt the proposal had potential to offer important legal services to otherwise marginalized workers and as an intersectional support for pandemic recovery.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Victoria and Area	The committee recognized this organization, with a proven service delivery track record, was providing much needed supports to vulnerable youth.
Burnside Gorge Community Association	The proposal comes from a well-established agency and the plan supports vulnerable youth at a critical point in their lives.
Synergy Sustainability Institute	The committee saw the value in creative opportunities provide by this level of funding – the investment will go toward art supplies and workshops – led by volunteers.

Theatre SKAM Association	Arts group have been particularly hard hit by the impact of the pandemic, and the committee felt this pilot program proposal was a good investment in livable neighbourhoods.
Victoria Community Micro Lending Society	The committee acknowledged the established organization and the reach of the program – up to 200 people – as a solid investment in entrepreneurial ship and prosperity.
Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees (VICCIR)	The committee felt the community benefit of immigrants and refugees covered far more than the Health, Wellbeing and a Welcoming City priority.
Victoria Compost and Conservation Education Society (Compost Education Centre)	The participant numbers projected in the program were high and the household scraps diversion had numerous community benefits.
Fairfield Gonzales Community Association	This is a project that has been offered before and the leadership at the association knows how to deliver it well. Food security challenges will be addressed through this program, including food for vulnerable seniors.
Greater Victoria Cross Guards Association	This was a very difficult and divisive topic for the committee. As this program as been funded before through this committee, the majority of us voted to fund this – this year. But the entire committee has agreed this very important safety request, should not be decided by this volunteer board in future years.
Victoria Rainbow Kitchen Society	The committee felt this society provides essential services to the community and felt the City should support their efforts to feed residents in need.
South Island Centre for Counselling and Training	The committee felt this was an innovative program that could be a positive economic driver for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the region.
The Diverters Foundation	The grant ask for the program was relatively small and the committee recommended this program be partially funded to support community-building efforts around sustainability in the time of pandemic.
Silver Threads Service	The pandemic has taken a unique and challenging toll on seniors and the committee felt this very well-respected organization would use grant monies to effectively support their membership.

Coastal Research Education and Advocacy Network	The committee felt the reasonably small organization and mostly volunteer driven had a feasible plan for their grant request with ripple effects for years to come.
Stigma-Free Society (Formerly Bipolar Disorder Society of BC)	While the program directly serves 45 people – the proposed service is invaluable for clients where possible positive outcomes could have lifelong benefits for individuals and their extended family and community.
Friends of Learning and Living Through Loss	The proposal includes workshops and gatherings to support youth suffering loss. The committee felt the City could fund at least one of those proposed events.
Victoria Brain Injury Society	The committee felt the proposal, from a well-known organization would be able to meet its objectives in supporting 80 clients.
Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative Roundtable Society	The committee found the proposal from the umbrella organization clearly laid out its aims, objectives and success measurements.
KidSport Greater Victoria	The proposal outlined its plan serve 32 children directly and up to 600+ indirectly through awards, exposure, family connections. The promotion of an active lifestyle for a child has countless benefits for communities as well.
Canadian Paraplegic Association (BC), Operating as Spinal Cord Injury BC	The committee felt the proposal for grants to provide peer counselling was a valuable project for the injured, and those who support them.
Victoria Conservatory of Music	The committee determined the organization had diversified funders, their success measures were reasonable and with 150 children benefiting it was a good value for grants.
Victoria Literacy Connection	The proposal serves 180 individuals and offers both traditional and computer literacy supports.
Soap for Hope Canada Society (Formerly Disaster Aid Canada)	The committee values the work that this organization is doing. This proposal has a variety of funding sources, including in-kind donations from organizations, and will be able to successfully operate with a reduced allocation.
African Art & Cultural Community Contributor CCC	The committee felt while the grant application was not as thorough as some, more certainly needs to be done to support Black communities in Victoria. The grant would not only help creates a job for one person but more significantly opens doors for many other people through engagement at a community level.

Quadra Village Community Centre (/Downtown Blanshard Advisory)	The committee determined while success measurements could have been more defined, the organization had the size and history to use the city grant wisely.
MakeWay Charitable Society (Formerly Tides Canada Initiatives Society)	Although it was not clear to the committee how 450 people are going to be served as outlined in the application, nevertheless, we felt the program seems very valuable and could have real impacts on peoples' lives.
Bike Victoria Society (Formerly Greater Victoria Bike to Work Society)	The committee supported the proposal, the funding request was relatively small, and the project objectives seems both reasonable and of benefit to the greater community.
Chinese Community Services Center of Victoria	The committee saw this volunteer-focused project as culturally important. And felt the percentage of funding recommended would help establish the project and lead to growth of the project and greater funding amounts for future years.
MOVE Adapted Fitness & Rehabilitation Society of BC	The applicant provided solid evidence that there is a high percentage - 21% - living with mobility challenges and other disabilities in Victoria and that online classes and coaching will work well for their clients.
Peninsula Streams Society	The committee felt the application was aligned with the City's Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship objectives and would be able to use recommended grant monies to support project deliverables.
North Park Neighbourhood Association	The funding ask was significantly higher than other neighbourhood associations. The committee recommended funding inline with similar groups and suggests the association look to refine future applications with an understanding this committee typically awards grants of \$10,000 or less.
Power to Be Adventure Society	With 37 full time staff and a \$3.875M budget, the committee felt the society had strong financial backing and solid reputation and would be able to direct City of Victoria recommended funding levels appropriately to serve its clients.
Vancouver Island Human Rights Coalition	While the proposed research to support equitable outcomes for vulnerable populations is valued, the committee felt that the research question was too broad and the tangible way in which it would be presented to inform policy development was unclear. The allocation presented will allow the organization to clarify its research objective as the first phase of a greater research project.
Pandora Arts Collective Society (PACS)	The committee felt while the society was not entirely clear in its objectives, they would make good use of the partial funding level recommended.

Maritime Museum of British Columbia Society	This committee did not recommend a grant for this project because details on the scope of the work were not well defined and the committee believed to properly and effectively address colonial harms - far more resources would be required. Suggest the society look for more funding partners, subject matter experts and reapply in subsequent years.
Human-Nature Counselling Society	The required amount for the proposal to properly deliver the proposed initiative did not meet the scoring from the committee. Given the amount of participants directly impacted, the committee decided to prioritize applications which have a greater impact for dollar ratio.
Victoria Supply Creative Reuse Society	This committee did not recommend funding for this proposal primarily because the number students impacted by the project and the materials provided to teachers seemed low.
Refugee Sponsorship Program of the Anglican Diocese of BC	The applicant has a long and successful history with projects but given the limitations related to the pandemic, the demand may not be as high as stated in the applicant and at the same time, the minimum financial ask was beyond what the committee could prioritize at this time.
Agrarians Foundation 'dba' Young Agrarians	The committee felt this was an innovative proposal, but suggest the applicants look to other CRD communities where ARL or farming land is more abundant.
Society for Kids at Tennis (KATS)	The society is well-established and has a benefactor who can support the project - financially. Given the high demands for grants and the needs within the community, this was not identified as a priority in this extraordinarily difficult funding year.
Victoria Downtown Residents Association	The committee felt there were other, existing engagement avenues for residents and business owners already in place and this was not a priority at this time.
FED Urban Agriculture Society	The committee felt there are other community partners providing food security services, and this proposal has less reliable co funders, putting the overall project at risk.
Ballet Victoria Society	This organization has strong funding sources and the committee felt, given its overall budget, this was not a priority in this funding cycle.
Story Studio Writing Society (Story Studio)	The committee did not recommend funding this society in this granting year. The applicant is encouraged to more clearly define its objectives and success measures in subsequent applications.

The Nature of Us Project	The applicant is a new organization and the committee felt the proposal focused mainly on salaries could not be funded substantially enough to meet the project’s minimum financial requirements. Would suggest the project look for other funding partners before reapplying for future grants.
Leadership Victoria Society	The committee felt the society and its members had other, existing revenue sources and given the demands related to the pandemic – housing, food and mental health – this was not a priority at this time.
Victoria Women Support Association	The scope of the project, 15 people was very limited, and details in the application did not give the committee the confidence that the proposal was viable at this time.
My Living City	The committee determined there are already participatory budgeting opportunities for people to engage in - and in comparison with other applicants – did not demonstrate a need for this service.

SUGGESTIONS FOR 2022

The committee (EGRC) has some recommendations for improving the Application Form and the Application Process, as outlined below.

1. Application Form

Revise Strategic Plan Grant Application Form to ensure consistency of responses and improve oversight of grant applications submitted:

In Section Six:

- a. *Suggestion:* Change the following questions from "How does the program advance Council's stated values on equity?" and "How does this program build community capacity and empower communities most impacted by inequities?" to "Which of the Council's stated values on equity have been centered in the development of the program, and how has your organization done that?" and "Please identify which underserved populations are directly impacted by this proposed program, and how this program builds capacity within those identified communities?"

Rationale: The EGRC appreciates the opportunity for applicants to identify ways in which their proposed initiatives support underserved communities and align with the equity goals and metrics outlined by the City of Victoria.

The EGRC notes; however, that many applicants provided overlapping or redundant information to these questions, and by adjusting to them to the proposed questions will allow for greater understanding and consistency and improve the redundancy to both current questions.

2. Strategic Plan Objectives

- b. *Suggestion:* Narrow or define the scope or focus of the Strategic Plan Objective "Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City"

Rationale: 42 of the 67 proposals (62.6%) indicated that their program would support this strategic objective; yet due to the variety of programs, it was challenging for the EGRC to rank alignment of proposed programs to the direct strategic goals. The EGRC recommends creating subcategories (or prioritize which areas are deserving greater emphasis) within this broad strategic goal to better determine where the needs of the CRD lie and how Council can support an intentional model of grant allocations to strategically impact the trajectories of City of Victoria citizens in a positive and meaningful way.

This is of particular importance given the significant increase in funding requests in 2021 and expected future higher demand.

3. The Assessment Criteria

- a. *Suggestion:* To consider the addition of two additional assessment criteria above the four included today. One to assess the impact of the application on underserved communities, and one for the alignment of the application to the priority Strategic Plan Objectives.

Rationale: The evaluation framework presented to the EGRC to evaluate the applications does not have tangible opportunities to assess the potential impact of proposed programs on equity-deserving communities. The EGRC recommends including a metric to assess the impact of the application on underserved populations in the overall scoring process.

The EGRC notes that the onus placed on organizations to self-select into one of the strategic goals doesn't allow for the EGRC to appropriately assess the alignment of the proposal to the indicated strategic goal. The EGRC recommends including a metric to quantify to what extent the application meets the stated strategic goals identified by Council and to include that metric in the overall scoring process.

4. Budget for Strategic Plan Grants

- a. *Suggestion:* Increase the funding allocation for the Strategic Plan Granting Program to respond to the increased demand for services during this time of multiple pandemics (colonization, system racism and oppression, COVID-19)

Rationale: The EGRC notes that over the past 5 years, proposals have increased from community organizations while the allotted amount for grants has decreased. This cycle, a record 1.37 M in asks was received by the EGRC with an allotment of 444K (32.4%). In comparison, in its inaugural year, Council received 865K in requests and allocated 604K in funding (69.5%).

The reduction of allocated funding coupled with the increase in demand for services has meant that for this funding cycle, important projects remain underfunded. It is important to note that some major funding organizations which support community services that directly impact the CRD's most vulnerable have either ceased funding or have been decreased their allocations. This has resulted in community-based organizations who have the best understanding of how to positively impact the trajectory of marginalized and underserved communities in the CRD are unable to provide the level of services in the same way with the same impact and positive outcomes.

These organizations are imperative to supporting the economic, social and cultural revitalization of a post-COVID-19 city. This cycle, the EGRC made very challenging choices which prioritized essential services such as food, mental health and social connection programs for equity-deserving groups over other community-building programs due to the restrictions in funding from Council.

In this era of pandemic, investing in community-based organizations is a strategic and timely opportunity to leverage community organizations to support economic and social revitalization. The EGRC recommends increasing the allotment for 2022 and beyond.

5. Grant Application Funding Requests

- b. *Suggestion:* Establish a maximum grant request that an organization can apply for.

Rationale: An organization can apply for any amount of funding which may significantly exceed the average grant amount awarded in past granting cycles. The opportunity for organizations to apply for any level of funding makes it challenging for the EGRC to balance allocating funding to larger, more-established organizations and smaller community groups.

Establishing a ceiling for applications allows for expectation to align more closely with result, giving organizations a better sense of what allocated funding may look like, and opportunities to diversify their funding asks. The committee recommends providing a maximum request amount between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

6. Applications for Review by EGRC

- a. *Suggestion:* Provide an alternative evaluation and funding mechanism for “Greater Victoria Cross Guards Association (GVCGA)”

Rationale: A significant amount of time was dedicated to reviewing this application, and reflecting on the potential implications of not funding the initiative. After hours of discussion, the EGRC has determined that this grant application does not fit the objective, rationale and purpose of the Strategic Grant Funding Process.

This proposal has significant safety implications, which deserve to be evaluated by unionized employees of the City of Victoria, or Elected Council members. All of the committee members felt uncomfortable evaluating this proposal (with two abstaining) as they did not feel that they had the necessary background and understanding of risk analysis to evaluate a proposal that has real-life implications on the safety of children who live in Victoria, nor the protection from a unionized body to mitigate potential individual or collective accountability and blowback.

The EGRC recommends that Council either directly fund this initiative or provide an alternative review and analysis process led by unionized City of Victoria employees. In future, returning members of the EGRC will abstain from evaluating a proposal by this group or others like it.

7. EGRC Composition

- a. *Suggestion:* Embed Equity and Diversity Considerations into the application and appointment of EGRC committee members.

Rationale: To support full inclusion and participation by all CRD citizens, notably underserved and marginalized populations, the appointment of EGRC members should reflect the stated Equity Goals and Reconciliation efforts established by the Council. The combination of professional and lived experience, through a diverse set of appointees, allows the EGRC to provide a more robust and holistic view of applications. With Council's continued work on Reconciliation, it is recommended that one seat on the EGRC be reserved for an Indigenous person.

All ERGC members should be familiar with the Equity Considerations and these be woven in the decision-making framework. The EGRC recommends Council to embed more intentional equity considerations into the Terms of Reference outlining the makeup of the EGRC, which would ensure that the EGRC remains a diverse body of viewpoints, lived experiences and identities.

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 2022, as proposed in "Suggestions for 2022", above.