



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of July 21, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 27, 2022
From: Kerri Moore, Head of Business and Community Relations
Subject: Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program 2022 Report

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. Approve staff recommendations for the 2022 Cultural Infrastructure Grant funding allocations as outlined in Appendix A.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval on staff's recommendations for the 2022 Cultural Infrastructure Grant (CIG) program. Last year was the inaugural intake for the program. The CIG program supports local not-for-profit organizations to purchase specialized equipment, fund accessibility and facility upgrades, feasibility, and planning studies as well as expansion and acquisition of new cultural spaces.

Council approved \$250,000 for ongoing funding to the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program and a one-time \$150,000 Accessibility stream. The program received 20 applications with total funding request of \$585,479.

Projects include several elevator projects to improve physical accessibility, specialized equipment such as LED lighting systems, sound equipment and planning and feasibility studies for longer term projects. Successful applicants represent a variety of artistic disciplines and spaces serving diverse communities.

Victoria has some of the highest rental rates for artists and cultural groups in B.C. and many groups are working in older building stock that require accessibility upgrades (SPRE 2021). The consequences of high market rates on not-for-profit organizations are displacement of artists from the community and groups operating in unregulated and unsafe spaces while struggling to find adequate and accessible cultural facilities. Faced with increasing rents and aging infrastructure and facilities, arts and culture organizations have deferred infrastructure upgrades without sufficient funding sources.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the 2022 Cultural Infrastructure Grant program funding allocations.

BACKGROUND

At the October 7, 2021, Committee of the Whole Meeting Council approved an ongoing \$250,000 Cultural Infrastructure Grant fund and an additional \$150,000 one-time Accessibility fund to support accessibility upgrades to arts and cultural facilities.

Realization of the CIG program is a direct-action item in Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan. Accessible and affordable venues is a major goal of Create Victoria, and the CIG program provides resources to non-profit organizations to improve both the quality of space, access to better equipment and improve access to facilities for both presenters and audience goers.

Staff hosted a virtual information session on April 5, 2022, with 45 registered and 17 people attending. The information session was recorded, and a link was posted on the City's webpage as a resource for those who could not attend. At the info session staff shared program eligibility criteria, funding limits, application and evaluation process and answered questions from potential applicants.

The program guidelines and information session were widely publicized through the City's website, and social media and shared by emails and e-newsletters with assistance from a range of community-based organizations and networks. A total of 20 applications were received for a total funding ask of \$585,479.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

As per the Council workshop on April 21, 2022, the major issues facing cultural facilities is affordability, accessibility, adequacy, and availability of spaces.

Many spaces occupied by arts and culture groups are in older or heritage buildings that do not meet the necessary infrastructure to be considered accessible, especially by people facing mobility barriers. 51% of venues that require a lift or elevator are lacking this infrastructure limiting artists or audiences from accessing these facilities.

Purpose built cultural spaces are in short supply in Victoria, with very few examples of new facilities built over the past 20 years. Victoria cultural spaces also lack 'quality' of space, for example, many require upgrades to equipment or extensive retrofitting and renovations. Most often groups are making do with inadequate staging and exhibition space, aging specialized equipment, and unsafe production facilities in aging buildings.

30% of organizations based in Victoria and the Capital Regional District either urgently or very urgently need serious repairs, renovations or upgrades to their building (SPRE, 2021). Organizations that own, have shared ownership, or long-term leases, show that 55% of organizations believe that a renovation would increase their ability to deliver services more effectively.

For the 2022 CIG intake period, staff received a total of 20 applications. Staff and one community member assessed and scored the applications based on the stated criteria and discussed each application. 17 applications are recommended for funding and are detailed in Appendix A. 3 applications will fund new elevators to improve accessibility, 1 application to improve inclusive accessible washrooms, 10 applications will upgrade to new equipment including LED lighting

systems, upgrade sound, media, staging equipment and exhibition infrastructure, 2 feasibility and planning studies and 1 application to improve sound proofing.

3 applications did not fulfil the application requirements and/or did not fit the stated criteria for funding:

- African Caribbean Cultural Society: Support to purchase musical instruments is not considered under this grant program and programming funding is available through other public funding programs.
- Khalsa Diwan Society: Lack of evidence of 50% greater arts and cultural activity.
- Victoria Event Centre: Previously funded the same project last year (installation of elevator).

Staff will reach out to the unsuccessful applicants to provide feedback and guide the applicants to other sources of funding to align with their project goals.

The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program (CIG) is a step forward to address the issue of suitability of space, by providing not-for-profit organizations with access to grant funding to improve conditions at existing spaces. Continued investment in this program, which can be leveraged for additional funding from higher levels of government and private donations, will expand the impact of the program towards upgrading existing facilities.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1: Approve staff recommendations for the 2022 CIG Grant allocations. (Recommended)

Option 2: Provide alternative direction to staff.

Accessibility Impact Statement

This report aligns with the City's Accessibility Framework (2020) focus areas including Built Environment, Governance and Services and Capacity and Collaboration. The grant program aligns with the short-term action plan items #7 and #22. The Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program will provide funding to support not-for-profit arts and culture organizations to renovate and improve accessibility standards at cultural venues. Along with physical upgrades, this grant will enable organizations to increase the amount of available space for programming, creating additional opportunities for people to access and participate in activities.

The grant program evaluation process includes representation and participation from marginalized and underrepresented groups valuing lived experiences of individuals facing barriers to help inform funding decisions.

The grant program evaluation matrix includes scoring criteria for accessibility, equity, diversity, and reconciliation to support funding decisions based on an equity lens.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

Strategic Objective: Prosperity and Economic Inclusion

Strategic Objective: Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods

Impacts to Financial Plan

No impacts to the 2022 Financial Plan.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

This program is consistent with and supports the following Official Community Plan directions:

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.

Creative City Objectives

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

Cultural Planning Objectives

- 16.10.6 Identifies tools to secure new cultural spaces, including senior government funding; land donations; developer contributions, private donations; and changes to regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2022 Cultural Infrastructure Grant program is a much-needed step forward to implementing action items within Create Victoria and fulfill the City's vision outlined in Create Victoria. The grant program successfully leveraged financial contributions from other levels of government and private contributions to support upgrades, new equipment and feasibility studies for arts and cultural facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Nichola Reddington
Senior Cultural Planner

Kerri Moore
Head of Business and Community Relations

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Summary Report and Grant Recommendations