

The 2023 CIG program received 10 applications with a total funding request for \$279,248. Staff have evaluated the applications based on the eligibility and scoring criteria outlined in the Council approved program guidelines. Staff recommend funding seven applicants for a total of \$216,292. Recommended applications include specialized audio-visual and lighting equipment to improve artistic production capabilities and audience experiences at venues, physical upgrades to provide new space for music and performing arts, and one application to support the acquisition of a new cultural space in the downtown core.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to award funding for the 2023 Cultural Infrastructure Grant program, and to seek Council approval to amend the Delegation Bylaw to authorize the Director of Business & Community Relations to approve grant funding allocations for the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program up to the maximum annual program funding in the Financial Plan.

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.

The CIG program is a direct-action item in the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan. Accessible and affordable venues is a major goal of Create Victoria, and the CIG program provides funding resources to not-for-profit organizations to improve the quality of space, upgrade technical equipment, and improve access to facilities for both presenters and audiences. The City's funding supports not-for-profit organizations to access additional grants from Provincial and Federal government arts and culture infrastructure grant programs.

The 2023 program was launched on March 1, 2023, and applications were accepted until April 24, 2023. The 2023 program launch was widely publicized through the City's website and social media, and shared by staff through emails, and e-newsletters with assistance from a range of community-based organizations and networks.

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. For example, 51% of venues require a lift or elevator. The one-time \$150,000 in CIG funding in 2022 for accessibility upgrades is supporting elevator or physical accessibility improvements in five cultural venues. These larger projects are currently being implemented in 2023.

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.

Based on the Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE) report completed in 2021 (Appendix B), 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. 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 2023 CIG program staff received 10 applications with a total funding request of \$279,248. Details of all 10 applications along with funding recommendations is included in Appendix A. Three applicants are new and have not previously applied for funding through the CIG program.

The total number of applications and funding requests this year is lower compared to the previous two years (2021 – 25 applications and 2022 – 20 applications). Staff have heard from several applicants who are in the process of completing large-scale accessibility or facility upgrades funded in 2022 that require more time to complete and therefore did not apply this year. Staff anticipate a higher volume of applications in 2024, once many organizations complete previously funded projects.

Staff assessed and scored the applications based on the eligibility and evaluation criteria. Seven out of 10 applications are recommended for funding totalling \$216,292. Included below is a summary of the seven project types recommended for funding:

- Three applications for specialized equipment (audio-visual and lighting) to support increased visual and auditory experiences for visitors and enhanced capabilities for artistic production.
- Two applications for physical upgrades to increase the amount of usable space available for music and performing arts events.
- One planning and feasibility study to explore (re)development opportunities to expand an existing cultural facility.
- One application to support the acquisition of a 9,400 sq. ft. building to create a new arts facility for the performing arts in the downtown core.

Three applications are not recommended for funding because they did not fulfil the application requirements and/or do not demonstrate sufficient benefit to the arts and culture sector:

- African Art & Cultural Society: The applicant did not provide proof of tenure status (lease agreement) or quotes for project expenses. The project budget included several ineligible expenses including rent, utilities and staff fees for ongoing operations. Funding for these expenses is available through operating grant programs.
- Victoria Film and Video Festival: The applicant did not provide proof of tenure status (lease agreement) and the budget sheet submission did not specify funding sources for project expenses.
- Christ Church Cathedral: The project does not demonstrate benefits to the arts and culture community. Funding is requested for early design work for future seismic upgrades to a heritage registered building. Funding for these activities is available through municipal, provincial and federal heritage funding programs.

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 issues of suitability, accessibility and availability 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 and adding new or expanded facilities to our cultural space inventory.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1: Approve staff recommendations to award funding through the 2023 CIG program as outlined in Appendix A, and instruct the City Solicitor to prepare necessary amendments to the Delegation Bylaw to enable the Director of Business & Community Relations to approve annual grant funding allocations for the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program, as per the Council approved program guidelines, up to the maximum annual program funding in the Financial Plan. (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.

2023 - 2026 Strategic Plan

Arts, Culture, Music, Sport and Entertainment: Invest in artistic, theatrical and music spaces, and/or use City-owned property to support the goals of the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan and the Victoria Music Strategy.

Impacts to Financial Plan

No impacts to the 2023 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 2023 Cultural Infrastructure Grant program is a much-needed step forward to implementing action items and fulfilling 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,

Ammar Mahimwalla
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Director of Business and Community Relations

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

Appendix A: 2023 CIG program applications and grant recommendations summary
Appendix B: Space for Community: Understanding the Real Estate Challenges Affecting the Social Purpose Sector in BC. Social Purpose Real Estate Collaborative, 2021