

In February 2024 during the 2024 budget discussions, Council directed staff to create the Major Community Initiatives and Events Grant (MCIEG) program. The intent of the program is to support major events such as the recent Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada that are one-time, unique regional attractions and major initiatives that significantly advance community and civic goals outlined in Councils' 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Staff reviewed grant programs from across Canada including Surrey, Halifax, and Edmonton, to review existing programs for Major Events and Community Initiatives. Based on this analysis staff created guidelines and criteria for the Major Event category, which draws on similar grant programs designed to support cultural and economic development through major event attractions.

The MCIEG is intended to be used for events and/or initiatives that are not eligible for other City funding including the City's Festival Investment Grant Program, Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program or the Victoria Music Strategy Grant Program. The MCIEG program will make funding support available for one-time, new, and unique major community celebrations, major destination event hosting, event sponsorships and community initiatives.

Major Event Criteria

Based on other similar grant programs researched across Canada, staff recommend the following criteria to be eligible for funding:

- be a one time, new, and unique initiative or event,
- must have broad appeal and be a benefit to the community,
- attracts people to Victoria from outside the region,
- prioritize events that occur in the shoulder season,
- have an estimated economic impact greater than \$1,000,000,
- direct cash expenditures greater than \$500,000 with diverse revenue streams,
- led by entities with a proven track record of delivering large scale projects, and
- gated and ticketed events can be considered eligible provided a significant public free component is included.

The City will fund up to 50% of the total project expenses up to a maximum of \$250,000 per request in combined value of City services and grant funding. The program will operate on a first come, first served rolling intake until all available MCIEG support and funding is exhausted.

Applications will be reviewed by staff and forwarded to the City Manager with draft recommendations. The City Manager will forward the report to Council with recommendations for Council decision.

Further criteria are outlined in the attached MCIEG Guidelines (Appendix A).

Community Initiatives Criteria

The community initiatives component has been more challenging to define within the scope of this grant program. Staff propose three options for Council consideration provided in more detail in the

options and analysis section of this report. The first recommended option already incorporated into the attached grant guidelines is to provide broad parameters to allow flexibility for Council to consider requests, such as capital infrastructure and unique, one-off proposals that result in economic, community vitality, or community well-being benefits.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1 (Recommended)

1. Approve the new Major Community Initiatives and Events Grant Program Guidelines as outlined in Appendix A.

This option provides Council with maximum flexibility to allocate funds at their discretion for community requests. Staff would receive the submissions, provide a brief analysis to ensure they are viable projects that will have a significant impact and benefit to residents and businesses. This would provide more discretion for Council to make these requests with minimal staff input on decisions.

This would expediate requests as it would be a lighter touch by staff on the review process, providing Council with the discretion to make funding decisions for major projects. With a one-year pilot, Council could review this process in one year's time and either continue or adjust the program.

Community members may find it difficult to assess what are viable projects and what is funded under this program, causing confusion for community, staff, and Council. The attached guidelines do provide some parameters for funding to support Council in assessing applications. Based on Council direction for major initiatives and events, staff do not anticipate many applications that would meet the threshold for major projects with budgets that exceed \$500,000.

Option 2: Direct staff to allocate \$250,000 into the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program and create a new stream for Major Events under the Festival Investment Grant program, with the remaining funds.

The second option would be to move \$250,000 into the Cultural Infrastructure Grant program to support major capital infrastructure including acquisitions, major equipment purchases and renovation projects. A new community initiatives stream could be created for projects that fall under recreation, sport and community serving space projects. The CIG program has established criteria and rigorous reporting requirements to ensure viable projects with measurable outcomes are funded to ensure these projects meet the intended impact in the community. Due to cost escalation for capital projects, increasing the funding envelope above the current \$100,000 threshold would enable larger cultural and community capital projects to be completed.

This option allows for enhanced staff oversight in administering capital requests that necessitate rigorous review and technical analysis due to their extended timelines, magnitude of costs, and the organizational capacity required to assess and administer more complex capital projects effectively.

The Major Event stream would also be administered by staff, using a similar model as above with a new stream under the Festival Investment Grant for major new one-time events with budgets that exceed \$500,000.

This option requires more staff time, longer approval times and less oversight by Council on community requests.

Option 3: Remove Community Initiatives and rename the grant Major Event fund.

The third option is to remove the Community Initiatives component out of the new grant program and dedicate funding to new Major Events.

Festival Investment Grants, the Victoria Music Strategy Grants and Cultural Infrastructure Grants fund many of the community initiative requests received by Council. Dedicating a specific fund for Major Events provides clarity to staff and Council on the use of funds for events that bring a major event and draw to Victoria including national and international events. Grants could be administered by staff with staff recommendations for Council consideration. New major events such as the Winter Arts Festival, Canada Day and Hockey Day in Canada, require significant support with operational budgets exceeding \$500,000 including requests for City support for policing, cleaning, road closures and equipment. Typically, Council can receive 2-3 requests per year from community groups, non-profits, and tourism agencies to provide local government funding to leverage other levels of government and tourism support.

Option 4: Council to provide alternative direction to staff.

Accessibility Impact Statement

Funding will provide necessary support to increase opportunities for people with disabilities participate in City supported special events and initiatives (Accessibility Framework) and may reduce financial barriers to non-profit organizers.

2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Arts, Culture, Music, Sport, and Entertainment:

- Support arts programming, including public programming, live music, and public art.
- Support and simplify processes for creating murals, events, festivals, and experiential activities.
- Enhance supports and amenities for recreational, youth and professional sports in the city

Impacts to Financial Plan

There are no impacts to the 2024 Financial Plan

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.

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

Major community initiatives and events add community vibrancy and economic vitality. The Major Community Initiatives and Events Grant Program will provide the process and discretionary funding for Council to allocate support for one-time, new, and unique major community celebrations, major destination event hosting, event sponsorships and community initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Day
Senior Cultural Planner

Kerri Moore
Director, Business and Community Relations

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Major Community Initiatives & Events Grant Program Guidelines