



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the meeting of June 4, 2015

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** May 26, 2015
Susanne Thompson, Director, Finance
From: Katie Hamilton, Director, Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
Julie MacDougall, Assistant Director of Parks
Subject: Summary of Public Input on the Proposed Grant Process and Approval of Fee-for-Service Grants

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize the public input regarding the proposed changes to the City's grant program and recommend changes based on the feedback. This report also seeks approval of the 2015 fee-for-service grants.

At the April 23, 2015 Governance and Priorities Committee, staff outlined the proposed new process for the grant program aligned with the Strategic Plan. Subject to feedback from stakeholders, Council approved a phased approach that maintains the current process for the fee-for-service grants in 2015, and in 2016 replaces it with the grant program aligned with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

Over 200 groups were invited to participate in a public information session that was held on May 12, 2015. The session included a presentation of the proposed grant process, hand-outs outlining the draft policy and previous grants paid, and a question period. Fifty people attended this session, which involved two-way conversations with questions, answers and comments; all attendees were further encouraged to submit their comments in writing. Based on early feedback received, the opportunity to submit written comments was extended to May 26 for a total of two weeks; seven written submissions were received (Appendix A).

Comments provided at the meeting included:

- Support for the proposed changes
- Desire for simple application and reporting forms
- Concern regarding reporting timeline (September is a busy time and projects may not be completed yet)
- Concern regarding the resource impact for organizations to present to Council.

The written comments favoured the implementation of the new process and also identified concerns for the City to consider when finalizing the grant process. Some organizations provided feedback that they were still not clear on exactly what was being proposed, so staff followed up with them individually to clarify. The written feedback included:

- Support for a streamlined and consistent approach and improved information about the grant program
- Support alignment to the Strategic Plan
- "Informative information session"; "questions answered fully and handouts were useful"
- Early grant cycle and award is better for organizations to budget

- One year funding commitment can be challenging
- Concern about timing of the reporting requirements since program or project might not be complete
- Support for simplified applications and reporting
- Concern that presenting to Council is time consuming and will be challenging for smaller organizations
- Concern around the timing of payment for community garden grants

Based on the feedback, there are a number of suggestions for Council's consideration:

- A simple application form with a shorter version for the micro-grants since the maximum dollar amount is small
- A streamlined reporting format
- An interim report requirement for the 2016 intake due to changing to an earlier application intake timeline
- Align the payment of the community garden volunteer coordination grants and micro grants with the growing season (March)
- Presentations to Council - possibly only requiring presentations from organizations requesting a grant above a certain amount

A terms of reference for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant has also been developed as per Council direction (Appendix C).

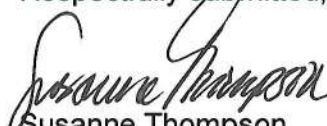
Council has yet to approve the individual grants in the fee-for-service category. The total 2015 fee-for-service grant request is \$503,070, which is the same amount granted in 2014.

Recommendations

That Council:

1. Approve the Grant Policy, including amendments as a result of the feedback:
 - a. A simple application form with a shorter version for the micro-grants
 - b. A streamlined reporting form
 - c. An interim report requirement for the 2016 intake
 - d. Pay community garden volunteer coordination grants and micro-grants in March
 - e. Require presentations to Council only for grant requests over an amount determined by Council
2. Direct staff to accept applications for the 2015 Strategic Plan grants until June 26, 2015
3. Direct staff to report on eligible applications at the July 9, 2015 Council meetings (decisions on awards to be made on July 23 after presentations)
4. Direct staff to schedule two Town Hall meetings for presentations by eligible applicants the week of July 13, 2015
5. Approve the 2015 Fee-For-Service Grants as outlined in Appendix B
6. Approve the terms of reference for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant as outlined in Appendix C

Respectfully submitted,

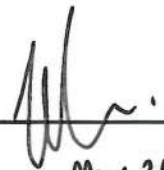

 Susanne Thompson
 Director, Finance


 Katie Hamilton
 Director, Citizen Engagement
 and Strategic Planning


 Julie MacDougall
 Assistant Director,
 Parks

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager: _____

Date: _____


May 28, 2015

Attachments:

Appendix A – Written Feedback on the New Grant Process

Appendix B – 2015 Fee-for-Service Grant Applicants

Appendix C – Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Terms of Reference

Appendix D – April 23, 2015 Governance and Priorities Committee Report

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to summarize the public input regarding the proposed changes to the City's grant program and to seek approval of the 2015 fee-for-service grants.

Background

On December 18, 2014, Council approved a streamlined grant process that consisted of separating grants into two categories: direct award grants and program grants aligned with the Strategic Plan. At that meeting, Council also approved the 2015 festival investment grants to enable those grant recipients to apply for Federal grant funding that had a December 31 deadline. Council approved the 2015 direct award grants on February 26, 2015.

As part of the strategic planning process, Council approved a volunteer coordinator grant of \$6,000 for each of the six neighbourhoods that have community gardens focussing on food production as well as a micro-grant for commons and community gardens.

At the April 23, 2015 Governance and Priorities Committee, staff outlined the proposed grant process for the grants to be aligned with the Strategic Plan (report attached as Appendix D) and Council approved the following motion:

"That Council:

1. Approve the proposed grant program and process incorporated into the Grant Policy as outlined in Appendix A attached to the report dated April 13, 2015.
2. Implement a phased-in approach as outlined in this report:
 - a. In 2015, fee-for service grant process will remain unchanged and neighbourhood enhancement, greenways, community arts and sustainability programs will be replaced with the new grant program aligned with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.
 - b. In 2016, fee-for service grant process will be replaced with the grant program aligned with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.
3. Direct staff to launch the intake for 2016 grants in September 2015 for approval by Council in November 2015 in alignment with the 2016 financial planning process.
4. Direct staff to explore, as part of developing options for participatory budgeting, participatory budget opportunities for a portion of the strategic grant budget, prior to the 2016 grant process.
5. Direct staff to:
 - a. Engage the public, including stakeholders, to gather their input on this proposal.
 - b. Amend the dates following the receipt of stakeholder input.
 - c. Report back to Council within four to six weeks."

The goal of the proposed grant program is to implement best practices and create a consistent and streamlined process where applicants outline how their project or program supports the achievement of the outcomes identified in the Strategic Plan. The objectives of the proposed program are:

1. Flexibility
 - a. A grant program that is broader in scope with one funding envelope to provide Council with greater ability to fund applications that meet strategic objectives the best
 - b. Avoids the historical experience of having some grant programs undersubscribed
2. Consistency and opportunity
 - a. The same application and evaluation process for all strategic plan grants, including the timing of applications and awards
 - b. Opportunity for new applicants to apply and be assessed using common eligibility criteria

- c. Timing of grant awards earlier (in the fall of the previous year) to allow Council to consider grant applications before the budget is set
- 3. Involvement and oversight
 - a. Council will determine the merit of each application; staff will determine eligibility
 - b. Applicants will present their requests to Council
 - c. Formal reporting back before the following year's grant awards

Subject to feedback from stakeholders, Council approved a two phased approach that consisted of maintaining the current process for the 2015 fee-for-service grants and in 2016 replacing it with the grant program aligned with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. The intake period for 2016 is to be launched in September 2015 for approval by Council in November 2015, in alignment with the 2016 financial planning process. The Festival Investment Grant Policy is to remain unchanged.

A public information session that included a presentation outlining the proposed changes and a question period was held on Tuesday, May 12 at City Hall, which 50 people attended. This session was open to anyone interested in the City's grant process and over 200 invitations were sent out to past applicants, both those who have received grants and those who were unsuccessful in past intakes.

Issues & Analysis

Public Input

The in person forum held at City Hall attracted 50 participants. Staff engaged in two-way conversations explaining the new grant process and answering questions from the participants.

Written feedback was encouraged over a two-week period. The City received seven submissions commenting on the new process. Some responses included questions and staff have contacted the organizations directly to provide clarity. Overall, the comments included support for various aspects of the proposed program and also outlined some concerns to consider when finalizing the process.

The feedback is summarized as follows:

- Support for a streamlined and consistent approach and improved information about the grant program
- Support alignment to the Strategic Plan
- Informative information session; questions answered fully and handouts were useful
- Early grant cycle and award is better for organizations to budget
- One year funding commitment can be challenging
- Concern about timing of the reporting requirements since program or project might not be complete
- Support for simplified applications and reporting
- Concern that presenting to Council is time consuming and will be challenging for smaller organizations
- Concern around the timing of payment for community garden grants

All written responses received are attached in Appendix A.

Based on the feedback, there are a number of suggestions for Council's consideration:

- A simple application form with a shorter version for the micro-grants since the maximum dollar amount is small
- A streamlined reporting format
- An interim report requirement for the 2016 intake due to changing to an earlier application intake timeline
- Align the payment of the community garden volunteer coordination grants and micro grants with the growing season (March)

- Presentations to Council - possibly only requiring presentations from organizations requesting a grant above a certain amount

2015 Fee-for Service Grants

In April 2015, Council approved a two phased approach that maintains the current process for the 2015 fee-for-service grants and in 2016 implements the new grant program aligned with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

The organizations requesting fee-for-service grants in 2015 are the same as in prior years. The grant requests range from \$2,000 to \$100,000 totalling \$503,070 which is equal to the grant amount approved in the prior year. The requests have been summarized by organization in Appendix B.

Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Terms of Reference

As part of the strategic planning process, Council approved a volunteer coordinator grant of \$6,000 for each of the six neighbourhoods that have community gardens focussing on food production. As per Council's direction, the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Terms of Reference is attached in Appendix C.

Timeline

The proposed timeline is as follows:

Proposed Date	Description of Activity
June 26, 2015	Application Deadline
July 9, 2015 - Council	Report to Council of Eligible Applicants
Week of July 13, 2015 - Town Halls	Eligible Applicants Present to Council
July 23, 2015 - Council	Decision on Grant Award
September 30, 2015	2016 Grant Application Deadline
November 2015	Council Approval of 2016 Grants

Recommendations

That Council:

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 - b. A streamlined reporting form
 - c. An interim report requirement for the 2016 intake
 - d. Pay community garden volunteer coordination grants and micro-grants in March
 - e. Require presentations to Council only for grant requests over an amount determined by Council
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5. Approve the 2015 Fee-For-Service Grants as outlined in Appendix B
6. Approve the terms of reference for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant as outlined in Appendix C