

Strategic Plan Grant Review Committee

Report to Council

June 22, 2017

Introduction

This is a pilot project using an external grant review committee to assist Council in its annual deliberations on Strategic Plan Grants. The mandate of the Strategic Plan Grant Review Committee according to its Terms of Reference is 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.”

A total of \$537,500 is available for the grant program in 2017. Fifty-seven eligible applications totaling \$987,108 were received.

Public members of the Committee include:

Margaret Eckenfelder (Chair) – retired public servant
Louise MacDonald, Victoria Foundation
Danella Parks, United Way Greater Victoria
Melissa Avdeeff, University of Victoria
Shannon Alderice, Senior Implementation Consultant

The committee received support from the City Clerk’s office and Finance Department. City staff provided background and advice on process.

Summary of Activities

The Committee met three times:

May 2, 2017 – agreed on process to use to review grants.

May 8, 2017 – agreed on evaluation matrix and criteria.

June 13, 2017 – agreed on recommendations and contents of report to Council.

The Committee’s timeline was compressed to meet deadlines for Council’s meeting on June 22.

At the May 2 meeting the Committee decided that each member would review all of the grants and complete an agreed upon evaluation template. The template was developed at the May 8 meeting.

Key elements of the evaluation adopted by the Committee include:

1. Council Weighted Strategic Plan Objectives:

Objective	Council Ranking
<i>Facilitate Social Inclusion and Community Wellness</i>	3.67
<i>Engage and Empower the Community</i>	3.22
<i>Enhance and Steward Public Spaces, Green Spaces and Food Systems</i>	3.11
<i>Create Prosperity Through Economic Development</i>	3.00
<i>Nurture our Arts, Culture and Learning Capital</i>	2.56

In many cases, grant applications showed how they met more than one strategic plan objective. To apply Council's weighting, Committee members selected a single strategic objective that best reflected the application.

2. Criteria used by the Victoria Foundation to evaluate its grant applications.

Criteria and sample assessment tools for each criterion include:

Strength of Organization (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 Vital Signs indicator or priority issue (in this case, City's strategic priorities).

Community Impact (30%): 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 6 in each category and scores were weighted according to the percentages above.

3. 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. Scores ranged from a high of 20.625 to a low of 9.931. The average was 15.953 and the median was 16.440. Twenty-eight applications scored above the median while twenty-nine fell below.

Given demand relative to available funds very few applications received full funding, despite their merit. Specific details of each application were also taken into account to determine recommended grant amounts. This resulted in some cases where applications with relatively low merit scores received funding and a number of high scoring applications received less funding than would be expected given their score. The Committee’s rationale for specific funding decisions is contained in the attached tables. The tables organize applications alphabetically and by merit score.

Each Committee member completed the agreed upon template and the results were consolidated. The Committee met on June 13, 2017 to review and make final decisions and recommendations to Council regarding the allocation of grant funds.

Recommendations to Council

The Strategic Plan Grant Review Committee makes the following recommendations to Council:

1. Approve the Grants and amounts proposed in the attached table.
2. Direct key staff to meet with Committee members to review questions and suggestions with respect to both policy and process as part of Council’s evaluation of the pilot project after the 2017 Strategic Plan Grants have been awarded and prior to the intake of grants in 2018.