



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the Meeting of January 7, 2016

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** November 26, 2015

From: Katie Hamilton, Director of Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
Susanne Thompson, Director of Finance

Subject: Summary of Feedback on Proposed Changes to the Strategic Plan Grant Policy

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council direct staff to:

1. Make the following amendments to the Strategic Plan Grant Policy:
 - a. Implement a maximum grant amount of \$25,000
 - b. Allow only one strategic plan grant application per organization
2. Develop a communications strategy for all the City's grant programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 17, 2015, Council made the following changes to the Strategic Plan Grant Policy:

- Applicants are required to demonstrate which strategic outcome their project will achieve
- All festival applications will be redirected to the Festival Investment funding stream
- All projects that impact public space will be redirected to a new Neighbourhoods funding stream
- The application form will request the applicant to provide the following additional information:
 - Outline which strategic outcome (not just which strategic objective) the project would achieve
 - Outline who and how many would benefit from the project
 - Outline how much of the project cost is being requested
 - Identify and provide proof whether other funding sources have been confirmed or are pending
- Staff will provide options for Council to fit the grant requests within the available funding

City Council considered changes to the Strategic Plan Grant Policy by adding a number of limits as follows:

- Fund only one-time project grants; no operating funding
- Fund only projects that primarily benefit City of Victoria residents, not Greater Victoria
- Reduce the cap for project grants from 75% to 50% of total project cost
- Implement a maximum grant amount of \$25,000
- Allow only one strategic plan grant application per organization
- For arts applications, reduce the eligibility to only those organizations that are not eligible for a CRD arts grant

Prior to considering the proposed limits, outlined above, Council directed staff to seek feedback from previous grant applicants and recipients. As a result, outreach was done to all applicants and grant recipients between October 19 and November 16, 2015, and as a result, 27 written submissions were received. Each submission is attached.

Themes of the feedback include:

- Appreciation for grant funding and expressed need for continuing grant programs
- Several responding organizations expressed the need for maintaining or increasing grants for operating funds
- Organizations have also expressed the need for certainty of process and ample notification for grant opportunities
- Several organizations weren't certain how to interpret the City's language around one-time funding and in some cases, weren't certain which category best fit their program – both in terms of definition and how the changes might benefit/impact them
- The need for improved grant information and definitions, and clarity of process and increased notification is desired, regardless of changes
- Mixed feedback about the grant maximum of \$25,000. Some thought this was a positive way of maximizing the volume of grant requests as long as it did not mean that the overall funding was reduced, but organizations that have received annual grants over \$25,000 expressed strong concern.
- Mixed feedback about reducing project grants from 75% to 50% of total project costs
- Multiple organizations acknowledged the focus on Victoria residents, but felt their programs benefited others in Region, and while primary focus could be on Victoria, the result may be too restrictive
- Demonstrated high familiarity with the City's strategic plan
- Appreciation for the opportunity to provide input on the proposed changes

Staff recognize that the language used to describe “one-time” funding must be improved to reflect the intention. The intention is to state that funding is considered annually, and one grant per organization will be considered. It does not preclude organizations from applying for a grant for the same program, and receiving the same grant every year. The intention of the proposed change is to denote that the funding should not be relied on for funding annual operating expenses.

A new fund was proposed to Governance and Priorities Committee on December 3 that increases funding for neighbourhood public space projects, which may also create more capacity within the Strategic Plan Grant budget for organizations not proposing public space projects.

Staff consulted the Capital Regional District (CRD) Arts office on the impacts of limiting eligibility for arts and culture applications to only those not eligible for CRD arts grants. Upon researching and consulting CRD further, it appears this could have a significant impact to those groups, as the CRD program offers broad eligibility capturing virtually all arts and cultural groups. The changes, as proposed, would eliminate all Victoria arts organizations from City of Victoria grants. Adding the distinction and definition of “amateur” arts organizations may accomplish Council's direction to support grassroots arts organizations.

In 2015, Council approved strategic plan grants totalling \$249,298 including \$22,710 for grants impacting public space. This allocation included \$25,000 in unspent funding from 2014 as well as an additional allocation of \$36,000 from the Strategic Objectives Account.

The 2016 draft budget includes \$639,612 for strategic plan grants, including \$458,070 of funding that was previously allocated for fee-for-service grants. In addition, the recently approved \$120,000 "My Great Neighbourhood" fund will provide funding for public space projects,

COMPARISON OF 2015 AND 2016 GRANT PROGRAMS

	2015 Paid	Draft 2016
Strategic Plan Grants	\$249,298	\$639,612
Fee-for-service Grants	\$458,070	\$ 0
My Great Neighbourhood Fund	\$ 0	\$120,000
Total	\$707,368	\$759,612

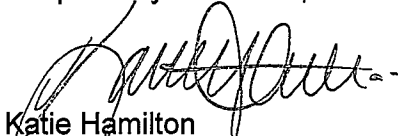
Based on the feedback received, staff recommend that the Strategic Plan Grant Policy continues to provide grants for operating funding, continues to fund projects that benefit residents of Greater Victoria, continues to fund up to 75% of project funding, and continues to fund arts applications even if they are eligible under the CRD's arts grants. It is also recommended that only one strategic plan grant application be allowed per organization and that a maximum grant of \$25,000 be implemented to ensure that limited funding is distributed among the many organizations that apply for City grants. To support all of the changes that have been implemented over the past year, it is recommended that a communication strategy be developed and implemented.

Next Steps

Upon approval of further changes (if any) to the policy, a communications plan will be developed and implemented to provide clear information to grant applicants. The Strategic Plan grant intake period would open February 1, 2016 and applications would be accepted for a two-month period to allow organizations sufficient time, followed by a report to Council in April, 2016 to seek direction and approval of the 2016 Strategic Plan grants.

The intake for Micro-grants and Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grants will open immediately with a closing date of January 31, 2016 to allow for Council approval in February and payment of the grants in early March as outlined in the approved policy.

Respectfully submitted,



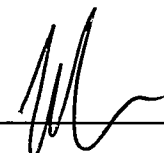
Katie Hamilton
Director, Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning



Susanne Thompson
Director, Finance

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


December 27, 2015

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Letter to grant applicants and recipients

Appendix B: Feedback from 27 organizations

Appendix C: Governance and Priorities Committee report of Dec 3, 2015 – Proposed Participatory Budgeting and “My Great Neighbourhood Fund”

Appendix D: Governance and Priorities Committee report of September 17, 2015 –Lessons Learned from Implementing the City’s New Grant Process and Direction Regarding Potential Changes in the Policy