

**COUNCIL MEETING**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**REPORT CS-2024-30**  
**November 26, 2024**

**SUBJECT: Community Grants Program Funding Update**

**AUTHOR: Amanda Degazio – Manager of Business and  
Community Services**

**APPROVING: Jessica Ruddell – Director of Community Services**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND receives for information Report CS-2024-30 Community Grants Program Funding Update.

**RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This recommendation is aligned to Council's strategic priority of ensuring "Liveability" by creating a sense of belonging while enhancing mobility by improving access to recreation and community events, ensuring adequate housing options, encouraging job growth, and improving ways to efficiently move people throughout the city.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the City of Welland's Community Grants Program. Launched in August 2024, this program strives to develop mutually beneficial relationships that support community involvement, activation, and support by groups and individuals who provide services to keep Welland residents active and healthy and strengthen engagement in our community.

The program supports local initiatives in arts and culture, events, and social services, and is designed to provide funding through a structured, transparent process for projects that align with the City's community goals.

Now that grant applications have been received and evaluated, the next step is for Council to approve the funding envelope. For 2025, \$369,200 has been requested to support the Community Grant program. This is the same funding envelope approved by Council in 2024 and results in a 0.75% impact to the tax base. Following approval of the 2025 budget, program applicants will be notified by December 13, 2024, and will receive detailed information regarding the next steps including funding disbursement.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Welland has a long-standing tradition of supporting the community through taxpayer-funded grants for events, programs, and other local needs. These community grant programs are highly valued by both residents and local organizations. On August 13, 2024, City Council approved a revised Community Grant Policy which introduced best practices for governance, established clear processes, and defined roles and responsibilities. The updated policy creates three distinct funding streams: Arts and Culture, Events, and Social Services, to better address the diverse needs of the community.

As part of the policy, Council is responsible for approving the annual funding envelope for the Community Grant Program through the budget process. Once the funding envelope is approved, staff will manage the program and allocate grant funding in accordance with the policy's guidelines.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Once the new Community Grants Program was approved by Council, staff undertook a number of actions to introduce the new program to the community. This included:

- Sharing the new policy and application process with past grant recipients.
- Hosting an information session in September 2024 (37 participants) which was recorded and made available through Engage Welland.
- Posting resources for the new program including timelines and requirements on the Engage Welland platform.
- Broadly communicating the new program through a media release, social media platforms and the What's Up Welland podcast.
- Accepting applications from September 13 to October 15, 2024.

These efforts resulted in 44 applications. Once reviewed for eligibility, 35 applications were evaluated as per the criteria and terms outlined in the Community Grants Policy. The total sum for all eligible applications was \$602,942.55. Evaluation scores ranged from 87% to 52% underscoring the breadth of ideas and approaches submitted.

Attendees expressed their gratitude for the new program and the clarity provided during the session. City staff were also available throughout the application period to assist applicants with any questions or guidance they needed, ensuring a smooth intake process.

The chart below highlights the number of qualified applications, the number of applications that will receive funding, and the evaluation cutoff point. It provides a clear breakdown of how many groups meet the qualification criteria, how many will be funded based on evaluations, and the specific score threshold for funding consideration.

<b>Evaluation Ranking</b>	
# of qualified applicants	35
# of groups partially funded	23
# qualified, not funded	12
Evaluation Cutoff	68%
% of qualified applicants receiving funding	66%

**FINANCIAL:**

The financial component of the community grants program is effectively managed within the current funding envelope of \$369,200.00, with \$368,013.50 allocated to community grants and a small surplus of \$1,186.50 remaining. This surplus will be made available in a second round along with any funds that can not be distributed for any reason. This funding is distributed across three streams: \$212,450.00 for social services, \$100,646.00 for events, and \$54,917.50 for arts and culture.

Given the successful evaluation of applications based on established criteria and the current allocation, we recommend maintaining the existing funding envelope. This approach allows us to continue supporting a diverse range of impactful projects while staying within the policy guidelines and budget constraints.

<b><u>Funding Breakdown</u></b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Funding Envelope</b>	<b>\$369,200.00</b>	<b>100%</b>
Community Grants Allocation	\$368,013.50	99.68%
Surplus	\$1,186.50	0.32%

<b><u>Funding Breakdown by Stream</u></b>			
	Requested Amount	Community Grants Allocation	% of total funding envelope
Social Services	\$348,570.80	\$212,450.00	57.73%
Events	\$155,346.75	\$100,646.00	27.35%
Arts & Culture	\$99,025.00	\$54,917.50	14.92%
Total:	\$602,942.55	\$368,013.50	100%

Note: The % of total funding allocated by stream was designed to be flexible to be responsive to community need.

In accordance with the community grants policy, Council can adjust the funding envelope only through the budget amendment process. Any proposed

amendments will require a formal notice of amendment submitted by 3:00 p.m. on November 28. These amendments will be reviewed and discussed at the Council meeting scheduled for December 4.

**CONCLUSION:**

THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND receives for information Report CS-2024-30 Community Grants Program Funding Update.

**ATTACHMENT:**

N/A