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Community Grants Program

Review and Proposal

2022-10-17

Purpose of the Review

The review project informed the development of an Administrative Order for the Community Grants Program and represents an opportunity to align the program with Council's priorities. Some elements have been simplified or clarified to enhance understanding of the program.

Although consolidation is recommended for some elements (heritage property, housing, EMO, transit), this needs to be phased. The aim of this consolidation will be to help prospective applicants identify the appropriate program and realize efficiencies for both HRM and applicants. The issue of navigation is not unique to one program and will require inter-departmental coordination.

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Methodology

- Profile of Nova Scotia's nonprofit and charitable sector.

- Internal scan of municipal grant program Administrative Orders.

- Interviews with staff who administer other municipal grant programs.

- Jurisdictional scan of comparable grant programs.

- Analysis of Community Grants Program applicants between 2018 - 2021.

- Program participant/public survey.

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Summary of Review

- Ensuring proven success that this program is accessible to small, volunteer-driven, and rural groups.

- Clarifying the intention of the Diversity & Inclusion category.

- Understanding why applications are ineligible.

- Finding ways to streamline the application process.

Program Reach

Changes have been made to the Community Grants Program over the past 25 years, but the program is not intended as universal. Consequently, not all nonprofit programs and services can be included.

Data suggests that there are 1,674 non-profits and 856 charities located in HRM.

A 2022 survey conducted by Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia suggests most survey respondents had budgets below $50,000.

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Communications Plan

- Community newspapers
- Social media
- Website navigation – existing frontpage "Doing Business in Halifax" does not help groups find these resources.
- Website highlight – Callout box when program is accepting applications.
- Investigate community radio.
- Survey findings indicated many groups obtained information from council sources (e.g., newsletters).

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Program Focus

As proposed, the program's focus supports volunteer organizations that are largely self-funded and/or those with limited access to government funding. Diversity and inclusion has been integrated into the simplified scoring matrix.

Evaluation Matrix		
Category Priority	Does the project directly address a funding priority for the category?	5
Financial Need	Demonstrated inability to self-fund. Limited access to government or other funding sources.	5
Public Benefit	Accessible, affordable, inclusive.	5
Volunteer Support	Supports volunteers in the development and/or delivery of a program or service serving residents.	5
	Total	20

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Main Program Revisions

Simplification	Clarification	Navigation
✓ Guidebook, application, and reporting form.	✓ Priority outcomes for each category.	✓ New web address (halifax.ca/grants).
✓ Funding category descriptions.	✓ Eligibility of unregistered groups as co-applicants.	✓ Continue digital meetings.
✓ Flexibility of application deadlines (i.e., weekend, holidays, global pandemic).	✓ Amended eligibility of leasehold improvements to public property (provincial, federal) conditional upon cost-share – excludes municipal property.	✓ Reinstating in-person meetings.
✓ Return of unspent funds. (>$50)		✓ Communications plan.
✓ Reduced reporting default penalty (up to 3 years).	✓ Registration "default" explained (revoked or suspended).	

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Next Steps

- ❏ Publish guidebook and form.
- ❏ Schedule and purchase media.
- ❏ Investigate cost and reach of adding community radio for future budget consideration.
- ❏ Develop "key performance indicators" for the program.
- ❏ Investigate feasibility of purchasing a customized profile of nonprofit and charities in HRM at intervals (for example, every 5 years).

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Possible Consolidation

The following are not intended for implementation in 2023 and require consultation and coordination with department staff.

- ❑ Include nonprofit and charities in the Heritage Incentives Grants Program.
- ❑ Capital grants for housing projects under the Affordable Housing Grants Program.
- ❑ Capital grants for rural transit under the Rural Transit Grants Program.
- ❑ Funding to emergency service providers under the Ground Search & Rescue/EMO Organizations Grants Program.

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