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Information Item No. 2
Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee
September 14, 2023

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development
Standing Committee

-Original Signed-

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 3, 2023

SUBJECT: Engage Nova Scotia Partnership and Grant

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

2022-06-30 Community Planning and Economic Development

THAT Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare a staff report which will: 1. Identify potential funding sources to possibly grant \$40,000 to support the work of Engage Nova Scotia; and 2. Make recommendations on formalizing the relationship between Halifax Regional Municipality and Engage Nova Scotia with the intent to provide the municipality with information to better understand the needs and wellbeing of citizens of HRM.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; ...

79A(1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality; ...

BACKGROUND

Engage Nova Scotia (EngageNS) is a non-profit organization based in Nova Scotia. It is established in 2012 and funded by the government of Nova Scotia. EngageNS is dedicated to promoting collaboration and innovation to address complex issues facing the province.

EngageNS plays a crucial role in promoting engagement and collaboration among communities, government, and other organizations. The organization provides a platform for stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, sectors, and perspectives to work together to create positive change in Nova Scotia. EngageNS operates on the principle that effective engagement and collaboration between various stakeholders can lead to better outcomes for individuals and communities.

To achieve its mission, EngageNS provides resources and support for engagement activities such as facilitating discussions and connections between organizations and individuals. The organization has several key initiatives, including the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey, which measures the well-being of Nova Scotians, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project, which drives opportunities for collaboration on action for sustainable, equitable, and inclusive futures.

DISCUSSION

Staff have been asked to prepare a staff report that will:

- 1) Identify potential funding sources to possibly grant \$40,000 to support the work of Engage Nova Scotia; and
- 2) Make recommendations on formalizing the relationship between Halifax Regional Municipality and Engage Nova Scotia with the intent to provide the municipality with information to better understand the needs and wellbeing of citizens of HRM.

These two components represent the initial steps in an ongoing effort to strengthen collaboration and achieve shared goals with EngageNS. Item 1 was funded from the 2022/23 Government Relations and External Affairs budget.

EngageNS is currently seeking funding to support Nova Scotia's Quality of Life Initiative (QOLI), as well as the costs and value of undertaking a wellbeing census of Nova Scotians in 2024. This work will:

- provide all levels of government; leaders across social, economic, and environmental sectors; as well as researchers with ground-breaking nimbly available, hyper-local, and intersectional information about the perceptions, behaviours, and experiences of residents in our communities.
- Set the stage for more efficient use of taxpayer dollars, deeper evidence-based decision making and a more reliable focus on what will give residents of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to fully participate - and thrive - in Nova Scotia society.
- Set a standard by which other provinces, particularly in Atlantic Canada, can consider and model in their approaches to responding to increasingly complex and intersecting social, economic, and environmental challenges.

In a recent meeting, staff identified the potential to use the EngageNS platform to inform strategic and business planning and budgeting decisions, in terms of analysing the potential well-being requirements for and impact of capital project and program investments, possibly using this information to frame any subsequent budget asks. The platform is well-positioned to be able to tie HRM initiatives to areas of current need (with 2019 data) as well as measuring their impact post-factum (with 2024 data). Other potential deliverables could include a staff symposium as well as ongoing workshops with HRM Business Units and key staff.

In keeping with this direction, Staff are:

- Assessing the potential use of the EngageNS platform to support planning and budgeting decisions in alignment with municipal planning processes, as well as examining potential funding options for the 2024 QOL survey, and exploring the potential of engaging the Halifax Partnership in further developing this work.
- Finding an opportunity to allow EngageNS be invited to present the platform and its potential uses HRM's Executive Leadership Team.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report. The \$40,000 was disbursed in 2022/23.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

None required.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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