



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Date: July 6, 2021

From: Todd Gross
Director, Park Services

File: 10-6125-30-001/Vol 01

Peter Russell
Director, Sustainability and District Energy

Re: Community Environmental Enhancement Grants Program

Staff Recommendation

That, as described in the report titled 'Community Environmental Enhancement Grants Program' dated July 6, 2021 from the Director, Park Services and Director, Sustainability & District Energy:

- a) The purpose, scope and process of Option 1 to support ongoing environmental initiatives be endorsed; and
- b) Council approve the proposed amendments to City Grant Policy 3712.

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Todd Gross
Director, Park Services
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Att. 2

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Community Social Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Recreation and Sport Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Arts, Culture and Heritage Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

This report is in response to the following committee referral endorsed at the February 1, 2021 General Purposes Committee:

That staff review the possibility of a new grant category which is related to the environment and provide options, and report back

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #2 A Sustainable and Environmentally Conscious City:

Environmentally conscious decision-making that demonstrates leadership in implementing innovative, sustainable practices and supports the City's unique biodiversity and island ecology.

2.4 Increase opportunities that encourage daily access to nature and open spaces and that allow the community to make more sustainable choices.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #8 An Engaged and Informed Community:

Ensure that the citizenry of Richmond is well-informed and engaged about City business and decision-making.

8.1 Increased opportunities for public engagement.

Analysis

Current Programs

The City of Richmond established its annual City Grant Program to support the work of community service organizations in Arts and Culture, Child Care, Health, Social and Safety, and Parks, Recreation and Community Events. The Neighbourhood Celebration Grants program supports community organizations or groups of neighbours to plan events that connect residents with local parks, open spaces and streets as well as with each other. While each grant is unique, the goals of the City's Grant Program are to:

- Improve the quality of life of Richmond residents through a wide range of beneficial community programs;
- Assist primarily Richmond-based community groups to provide programs for residents;
- Build community and organizational capacity to deliver programs; and
- Promote partnerships and financial cost sharing among the City, other funders and organizations.

Access to nature and healthy, local ecosystems can improve the quality of life for residents. Emerging ideas, including those from the United Nations, reflect the common understanding that

a healthy environment is integral to individual wellbeing, including physiological and mental health benefits. Although many of the City's existing grants can incorporate environmental initiatives indirectly, residents must rely on alternative City-led initiatives such as the Partners for Beautification Program to seek support and resources for environmental-related activities such as shoreline cleanups, trail maintenance, (minor) invasive species management and boulevard enhancements. The development of a new grant that focuses specifically on environmental initiatives can promote environmental stewardship in Richmond and lead to the growth of community groups supporting the City's environmental objectives. A strong network of environmental organizations can catalyze more local environmental stewardship, a key goal in the Ecological Network Management Strategy.

The City currently offers a broad range of programs, services and funding to support environmental awareness, resident activation and ecological enhancement not included in the City Grant Program. Many of these initiatives, including the Partners for Beautification Program, are typically funded through operational budgets, sponsorship opportunities and staff support (see Attachment 1 for more information). Staff estimate that the level of support within the current operating budget to support these initiatives is approximately \$100,000 annually. In addition to these City-led and coordinated initiatives, staff note that further community support for community-led initiatives would be well-received in Richmond. Staff receive a variety of requests each year from community members that cannot fully be supported due to funding limitations that could be accommodated with additional financial support from the City.

Proposed Community Environmental Enhancement Grants Program

A grant for environmental initiatives that utilizes non-tax revenue funding for proposed environmental initiatives provides an opportunity to complement the City's existing plans and strategies such as the Ecological Network Management Strategy and promote community stewardship. Three potential options for the newly proposed environmental grant are outlined below.

Option 1 (Recommended): Establish an Environmental Grant that complements existing City-led initiatives

A new grant for environmental initiatives led by registered non-profit organizations can complement the City's ongoing environmental initiatives and promote community stewardship. Local, for-profit business are typically not eligible for community grants, but they may assist eligible applicants in organizing events. If endorsed, a new grant would provide targeted funding towards materials needed to enhance Richmond's natural environment. Amongst the many programs listed in Attachment 1, staff note that a common critical need, reflected mainly in requests from the community, relates to a need for funding or access to materials such as soil, trees, plants and small hand equipment. The sole purpose of the proposed Environmental Grant Program would be to support material needs and associated costs for applicants. The funding would not support administration activities of the applicants but would, for instance, support costs for gaining access to materials such as a truck rental to deliver materials. Under this option, a staff team would undertake review of applications and prepare a list of recommended recipients for Council's consideration in a consistent manner as the City Grants Program.

Staff also considered other methods in which staff could address the Council referral, listed as 'Not Recommended' options below.

Option 2 (Not Recommended): Incorporate environmental criteria into the City's existing Grant Program with no additional funding

This option would be supported through the City Grant Program and would add environmental criteria that applicants must meet to successfully receive funding. The City's existing grant program currently supports the work of community service organizations in four areas: Arts and Culture, Child Care, Health, Social and Safety, and Parks, Recreation and Community Events. No additional funding would be offered in this option. Applicants would utilize the existing funding pools and allocate (directly or indirectly) a portion of the approved funding to benefit aspects of the environment, which would need to be developed to support the current application process. This Option is not recommended. Additional criteria or requirements to support environmental initiatives may place a strain on funding needed to support other important social and cultural programs. Similarly, this option may not offer enough funding or resources to complete environmental initiatives, which can discourage meaningful results in both areas. Staff also note that criteria suitable for each area in the City Grant Program will be challenging to tailor for each area and monitor after implementation.

Option 3 (Not Recommended): No action, maintain current operation and funding through the City Grants Program

The City's well-established City Grant Program provides support to community service organizations that may indirectly support environmental initiatives through annual funding. In addition, the City offers a variety of City-led programs and initiatives that promote community education, awareness and activation each year (Attachment 1). This option is not recommended. Staff note that the City receives a significant amount of community requests each year for environmental initiatives such as watercourse clean-ups that cannot be supported due to resource and funding limitations. Further, specific funding for environmental initiatives may lead to the establishment of more citizen-led organizations in Richmond, currently lacking in the City. These organizations have been successful in neighboring municipalities at coordinating activities that complement existing City-led initiatives and building awareness related to environmental stewardship.

Implementation

Staff intend to administer the proposed grant through the City's existing 'Partners for Beautification Program' which provides opportunities for Richmond residents of all ages, community groups, and service clubs to get involved in environmental stewardship. Furthermore, staff are in the process of reviewing and updating the program to more strongly reflect sustainability and environmentalism, better supporting the City's environmental objectives. Further information will be provided in a report to Council later this year.

Staff are proposing to amend the City's *Grant Policy 3712* to add the Community Environmental Enhancement Grants Program as a separate grant category (Attachment 2). Applications will follow the defined criteria in the City's *Grant Policy 3712*. Under these guidelines, a maximum

\$2,500 annually will be available to applicants for select projects on City property such as boulevards, channelized watercourses, joint City school properties, parks and open spaces. Applications would first be assessed by a staff team for evidence of financial need and fiscal responsibility; community benefit and inclusiveness; and an evaluation plan to measure project effectiveness.

If endorsed, staff will refine the future evaluation criteria consistent with the City Grant Program and establish an appropriate staff team to evaluate submissions that may be related to environmental enhancement, restoration and/or conservation. Successful projects will be monitored and future results will be communicated to Council at the same time as the launch of the 2022 City Grant Program.

Financial Impact

It is estimated that the additional costs for this program will not exceed \$35,000, which may be funded from gaming revenue or other non-tax revenue sources and will be included in the 2022 grants process for Council consideration.

Conclusion

Richmond relies upon a healthy and diverse landscape to maintain quality of life, biological diversity, and a resilient natural environment. Richmond residents play a key role in shaping the initiatives that contribute to healthy, diverse and functioning ecosystems. Limitations of the City's existing grant program impede environmental initiatives from being highlighted or identified as the primary focus. Utilizing non-tax revenue funding for ongoing environmental initiatives that are already supported by the City presents the best opportunity to support and improve community-led environmental enhancement projects. Staff recommend that the Community Environmental Enhancement Grants Program be endorsed.



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- Att. 1: Current Environmental Initiatives Involving Residents
- Att. 2: City Grant Policy 3712 Amendments

Current Environmental Initiatives Involving Residents

Programs	Description	Funding
Bat Friendly Program	Stewardship and educational program to support bat awareness.	\$2,000 annually, support and educational materials.
BC Sustainable Energy Association	Cool it! Climate Change Education for Grade 6 & 7 students.	Approximately \$10,000.
Butterfly Way Rangers (David Suzuki Foundation)	A volunteer-led movement that is growing habitat for bees and pollinator species in neighbourhoods across Canada.	Support from staff and financial support through the Partners for Beautification Program for projects on City owned land.
City Nature Challenge	Free program to encourage environmental education and stewardship.	Support from staff for facilities.
Community Workshops	Free community workshops in various topics; tied to the City's Enhanced Pesticide Management Program.	Approximately \$20,000 annually and staff time to organize.
Green Ambassadors Program	High school students that support event recycling and environmental efforts and projects in their schools or within the City of Richmond.	Approximately \$15,000, support for facilities and City staff mentors.
HUB	Generally supporting cycling education courses and Bike to Work Week Stations.	\$6,000 - \$8,000 annually.
Nectar Trail	Free program to encourage private properties to plant a pollinator friendly garden.	\$2,000 support from staff for facilities.
Partners for Beautification Program	A unique opportunity for Richmond residents of all ages, community groups, service clubs and businesses to get involved with one or more of the adoption programs to help make a difference in the parks, streetscapes and dyke legacy.	\$10,000 - \$30,000 annually, offset with grants, dedicated staff support provided. \$5,000 - \$10,000 for removal of invasive plants funding for Invasive Pulls.
Project Wet	Youth engaged in water conservation initiatives.	Support for facilities and City staff, combined with annual Public Works Open house.

REVA	Youth (via GA program) in Richmond that help promote the adoption and education of electric vehicles.	Support for facilities and City staff.
Richmond Earth Day Summit (REaDY Summit)	A youth-led conference whereby high school students fully organize a half day conference for 300-400 grade school students.	Approximately \$3,000 per year, plus support from staff for facilities (e.g. for meetings) and City staff who mentor students.
Tree Canada Tree Plants	Corporate tree plants coordinated through Tree Canada with operational support from the City.	Native plant costs are covered by the Tree Canada, but the City covers the cost of tools, mulch and staff time.

* Funding for these environmental-related initiatives is facilitated through the City's annual Operating Budget, Capital Budget or through external grant funding sources as determined through Council endorsement.



Page 1 of 1	City Grant Program	Policy 3712
Adopted by Council: July 25, 2011 Amended by Council: July 9, 2012		

POLICY 3712:

Please note that there is a separate Sport Hosting Incentive Grant Policy (3710) and Child Care Development Policy, including Child Care Grants (4017).

It is Council Policy that:

1. The following City Grant Programs be established, to be designed, administered and reported by the respective departments:
 - Health, Social and Safety (Community Social Services)
 - Arts and Culture (Arts, Culture and Heritage)
 - Parks, Recreation and Community Events (Parks and Recreation)
 - **Community Environmental Enhancement Grants Program (Parks and Recreation).**
2. Casino funding ~~will~~ **may** be used to create ~~three~~ **four** separate line items for these City Grant Programs in the annual City operating budget.
3. Each of the ~~three~~ **four** City Grant Programs ~~will~~ **may** receive an annual Cost of Living increase.
4. A City Grant Steering Committee consisting of a representative of Community Social Services, Arts and Culture, ~~and~~ Parks and Recreation, ~~and~~ **Environment** will meet at key points in the grant cycle to ensure a City-wide perspective.
5. Applications will be assessed based on program-specific criteria that reflect the City's Corporate Vision, Council Term Goals and adopted Strategies. Information regarding assessment criteria and the review process will be provided in Program Guidelines.
6. City Grant Programs will consist of two streams of grant requests, (1) \$5,000 or less and (2) over \$5,000, whereby application requirements may be streamlined for requests of \$5,000 or less.
7. Only registered non-profit societies governed by a volunteer Board of Directors requesting funding to serve primarily Richmond residents, are eligible.
8. Applicants may receive only one grant per year.
9. Applicants receiving City Grants for a minimum of the five most recent consecutive years will have the option of applying for a maximum three-year funding cycle.
10. Community Partner documents submitted to fulfill annual funding agreements with the City will be considered as part of grant application requirements.
11. Due to the high number of applications for limited funding, and as applicants may apply the following year, no late applications are accepted and there is no appeal process to Council's decision.