



Grants Ad Hoc Committee Report

To: To the Chair and Members of the Grants Ad Hoc Committee
From: Heather Boyd, General Manager of Corporate Services
Date: November 21, 2024
Report #: RPT-0527-24
Subject: 2025 Community Grants Program
Purpose: For Information

Recommendation

That Staff Report RPT-0527-24 “2025 Community Grants Program” be received as information;

That \$385,000 be included in the draft 2025 Budget for the 2025 Community Grants Program, subject to budget deliberations;

And that staff be directed to deliver the 2025 Community Grants program in cooperation with the Brant Community Foundation under the same criteria and format as 2024.

Strategic Plan Priority

Strategic Priority 5 - Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens

Impacts and Mitigation

Social Impacts

The County of Brant Community Grants Program is an important funding tool to assist various non-profit and charitable organizations in the County deliver vital services and amenities to the community. It draws on and promotes a partnership between the municipality and volunteer groups.

Environmental Impacts

No environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this recommendation.

Economic Impacts

Following Council’s previous direction, the 2025 Community Grants Program would cost the County of Brant a total of \$385,000, delivering approximately \$346,500 in grants to non-profit community organizations that have a direct benefit to County of Brant residents.

Report

Background

In 2023, County of Brant Council approved entering into a partnership with the Brant Community Foundation (BCF) for the delivery of the Community Grants Program, starting in 2024. Grants were allocated under the categories of operational grants, event grants and capital project grants. A total of 107 grant applications were received in 2024, totaling \$558,342 in funding requests. The BCF undertook the application intake, review, evaluation, adjudication and award processes, awarding a total of \$300,000, matching the County's allocation.

Analysis

2025 Community Grants Allocation

At its meeting on December 19, 2023, County of Brant Council approved the following resolution:

“That 0.5% of the County of Brant’s overall Operating Budget be allocated to the Community Grants Program, including ongoing, pre-approved grants, annual grant awards and the overhead costs of the Brant Community Foundation”.

For the 2024 Community Grants Program, this was calculated based on 0.5% of the County's 2023 Operating Budget. In a similar manner, rounding off to an even number, the total funds to be allocated for the 2025 Community Grants program will be \$385,000.

Brant Community Foundation Overhead Cost

As per the agreement entered into in 2023, the Brant Community Foundation (BCF)'s overhead costs are calculated as 10% of the annual budget allocation to the program. Based on a proposed budget allocation of \$385,000 as outlined above, the cost to have BCF administer the 2025 Community Grants program will be \$38,500.

Timing of Grants Window

Because 2024 was a transition year, the Community Grants Program window did not open until March, 2024 with awards being made in late May / early June. Staff are meeting with representatives from BCF after this report is being published and will have a verbal update on the timing for the 2025 program at the meeting. With budget approval proposed for February, it is expected that the application window would open thereafter.

On-line Application Intake

Staff continue to pursue an online portal option for the grant application intake. The BCF currently uses an online portal for other grant programs and has found that it has advantages for both the administrators and the applicants over the e-mail application system currently used for County applications. Discussions are ongoing with both the City of Brantford and the County of Brant about transitioning their programs to this format and further information will be forthcoming.

Grant Application Criteria

For the 2024 Community Grant process, Council approved the following Eligibility Criteria, which, if not met and demonstrated, would result in an application not being passed forward for consideration by the adjudication team:

1. To be eligible for grant funding, an organization **MUST**:
 - Complete all relevant sections of the Community Grant Application Form and submit all documents listed under “Documents to be Included in Grant Application Package”.
 - Be either a registered charity or a not-for-profit organization, as defined in this document.
 - Have a location and/or presence in the County of Brant.
2. To be eligible for grant funding, an organization **MUST NOT**:
 - Be in arrears with or involved in any litigation against the municipality.
 - Have a primary purpose to provide funds to another or an ineligible organization.
3. With respect to any facility, program or event that receives grant funding:
 - Any facility, program or event must be inclusively open to residents of the County of Brant.
 - County of Brant funds are not to be used for any activity or purpose that engages in political activity, support of political parties or candidates or lobbying for law / government policy change.

Further, the following documentation is required to be considered eligible for grant funding:

- Financial Statements for the Previous Year
- Annual Organization Operating Budget for Current Year
- Event or Capital Project Budget (for event or capital grant requests – not necessary for operational grants)
- Board of Directors or Executive Committee information (names and contact info)
- Registered Charity / Incorporation / Not-for-Profit No. and/or explanation how organization meets criteria as a not-for-profit organization.

Eligibility criteria options that were put forward for consideration for the 2024 program but not adopted include:

- Any Event or Program proceeds must not be re-distributed for the benefit of other organizations and/or individuals.
- Organizations which are religious entities or faith-based groups may only apply for funding for programs and services to the community at large which are not religious in nature and do not require declarations of faith.
- No funding will be provided to organizations that have a primary healthcare mandate.
- No funding will be provided to universities, colleges, schools and their associated / auxiliary groups or agencies.
- No organization may apply to finance a deficit or debt repayment.
- Organizations must carry valid General Liability Coverage in the amount of \$2 million with the County named as an additional insured.

- Organizations must be in compliance with all applicable legislation, regulations and by-laws for the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the County of Brant.
- The municipality must not be the sole source of funding for any specific program, event or project.

From a cursory review of the list of approved 2024 grants, staff believe that the following may not have been eligible if the above list of optional criteria had been in place:

- Capital request for improvements at church facilities (3)
- Capital School Council requests for playground equipment (2)

This list does not include any applications that may have been ineligible because they re-distributed funds, may have been financing a deficit, couldn't meet liability coverage requirements or had the municipality as the sole source of funding.

As a minimum, staff recommend that eligibility criteria be included to require that any funding for faith-based or religious groups be for services and programs that are available to the community at large, are not religious in nature and do not require a declaration of faith, that require demonstration of liability insurance (wording to be finalized with our insurance team) and that organizations must be in compliance with all applicable legislation, regulations and laws. The other criteria are suggestions at Council's discretion.

"Ongoing" Grants to Organizations

In 2023, Council passed a resolution *"That the County of Brant continue with its commitments to the ongoing, pre-approved grants as previously approved, to be reviewed beginning in 2024, as amended"*.

Staff have reviewed the ongoing grants referred to as outlined below:

- Mount Pleasant Optimist Club - \$6,000
- Scotland Optimist Club - \$19,000
- St. George Lions Club - \$10,000
- Paris Agricultural Society - \$5,000
- Burford Agricultural Society - \$5,000

Mount Pleasant Optimist Club

In 2007, the County of Brant (Lessor) entered into a lease agreement with the Mount Pleasant Optimist Club (Lessee) for the Mount Pleasant Nature / Fish Park at 755 Mount Pleasant Road. The purpose of this agreement was to lease the lands to the Club, who in turn would maintain, manage and operate the park for conservation, land management and recreational purposes. Part of this agreement outlined a reporting mechanism for financial assistance. The County is also responsible for all taxes and/or rates applicable to the property and an exemption from tipping fees. The automatic renewal of this agreement will end on April 30, 2026.

The County currently meets the above obligations through a grant to the Mount Pleasant Optimist Club in the amount of \$6,000 per year. Staff recommends that this funding arrangement continue until the end of the lease, at which time consideration should be given to the most effective management model for this park.

In 2007, the County also entered into a lease agreement for the Mount Pleasant Community Centre at 711 Mount Pleasant Road, however this lease specifically outlines that the landlord (County) is not required to make any payments in respect of the premises, except major repairs / alterations needed. The initial term of this lease has expired and the agreement states that the tenancy will continue on a monthly basis until notice of termination is given by either party. As this property has a revenue source, it is staff's understanding that the grant amount issued is wholly related to the Nature Park, not for the Community Centre.

Scotland Optimist Club

In 1996, the Township of Burford entered into an agreement with the Scotland Optimist Club with respect to the conveyance of the Scotland Optimist Park, to be maintained by the Club as a public park. The Township (and now the County) retains first right of refusal over the property if the Club were to sell the lands or remove the lands from public use. The Club is solely responsible for the administration, supervision and maintenance of the park. At the time of writing this report, the author has not been able to find documentation regarding arrangements made with the Club for annual, ongoing payments towards the care and maintenance of this park. As this agreement has been referenced at several Council meetings, staff will continue to investigate, but recommends that no action be taken to discontinue the funding until every effort to determine when and how these arrangements came to be has been made. A more fulsome review of former Committee business and possibly Township of Burford and/or Optimist Club records will need to be conducted.

The County currently provides a grant to the Scotland Optimist Club in the amount of \$19,000 per year, which is a reduction from previous years' amounts nearing \$23,000. Staff recommends that this funding arrangement continue until further clarification of the terms and conditions has been determined.

St. George Lions Club

In 2002, the County of Brant (Lessee) entered into a lease agreement with the St. George Lions Club (Lessor) for 210 County Highway 5, Elliot Field, for use as a soccer field. The lease was for a term of five (5) years, with an option to renew every five years. As such, the next scheduled renewal would be in 2027, unless either party chooses to terminate earlier. As part of the agreement, the County agrees to pay the Lions Club an annual rental fee equivalent to the taxes payable on the property, to maintain the lands and to provide washroom facilities.

The County currently meets the above obligations through a grant to the St. George Lions Club in the amount of \$10,000 per year. Staff recommends that this funding arrangement continue until the end of the current renewal term, at which time consideration should be given to the most effective management model for this park, noting that this property is owned by the Lions Club, not the County.

Paris Agricultural Society / Burford Agricultural Society

In 2022, Council approved a resolution that the Agricultural Societies be treated at parity in their operating grant applications and be forwarded as an ongoing grant for future years. The intent of this was to ensure that both societies received equitable treatment, but recognized that either may have specific capital or event needs in a given year. For 2024, the ongoing grant was approved at \$5,000 per organization. In practicality, the Paris Agricultural Society received a total of \$16,834 in 2024 (ongoing operating grant, capital grant, one-time utilities / maintenance grant and an event grant) and the Burford Agricultural Society received a total of \$9,000 in 2024 (ongoing operational grant plus one-time insurance / maintenance grant).

The ongoing grant has not had its intended effect of providing parity between the organizations.

Recognizing that both groups are well aware of the grant application process, Council could direct staff to give notice to the groups, directing their 2025 and beyond funding requests to the Community Grants process with minimal impact, however this would be a departure from Council's previous direction. Alternatively, Council could provide direction that these groups be ineligible for some or all grant categories (i.e. operational grants) in lieu of the ongoing grant.

Summary and Recommendations

In summary, staff are very satisfied with the professional and compassionate manner in which the 2024 Community Grants Program was administered by the Brant Community Foundation and are pleased to continue working with this organization for future grant programs.

Staff are recommending that the 2025 Community Grants Program be administered on the same basis and under the direction established in 2024, that ongoing grants continue to be monitored and assessed as lease terms near their expiration and that further research be done to clarify arrangements with the Scotland Optimist Club. Once all ongoing grant agreements have been fully researched and/or come to the end of their terms, there may be options to formalize and adjust any remaining funding commitments so that they are not considered part of the grants program, but general operating expenses.

If Council would like any specific changes made to the 2025 Community Grants Program, an amendment to the staff recommendation should be considered accordingly.

Attachments

None

Reviewed By

1. Heather Mifflin, Director of Finance, Treasurer
2. Vanessa Graves, Senior Accountant and Supervisor of Accounts Payable

Copied To

1. Alison Newton, CAO
2. Anne Marie Peirce, Executive Director, Brant Community Foundation

By-law and/or Agreement

By-law Required	No
Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk	No