



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner, Community Services

Meeting Date: August 5, 2025

Report: 2026 Community Wellbeing Fund, Report CSD25-007

Subject

A Report to approve a new framework that transitions the Community Project Grants, Community Investment Grants and Arts Investment Fund programs into a Community Wellbeing Fund.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CSD25-003, dated August 5, 2025, of the Commissioner of Community Services as follows:

- a) That the framework for a Community Wellbeing Fund be established for 2026 as described in this report;
- b) That Schedule A-4 of By-law 22-088 be amended to reflect:
 - i. The Community Investment Grant Advisory Committee be renamed the Community Development Grant Advisory Committee;
 - ii. The staff liaison for this committee be changed from the Art, Culture and Heritage Director to the Community Development Program Manager; and
- c) That the Policy for Community Wellbeing Fund attached as Appendix B be approved.

Executive Summary

- Broad changes to the Community Grants Program were initiated and approved through Report CSAC23-008 in October 2023.
- This report provides details on changes to the Community Grants Program as it relates to Project Grants, Investment Grants, and the Arts Fund as they transition to be within a Community Wellbeing Fund.
- The Community Service Agreements (previously known as Community Service Grants) were detailed in Report CSD24-003 and approved by Council on June 24, 2024. These agreements are in place with all 16 local organizations for 2025 to 2027.
- The new Professional Arts Organization Grant is recommended to be postponed until 2027 to align with a new Municipal Cultural Plan, and will incorporate changes in Cultural Services, Tourism, and Economic Development.
- At the direction of Council, the Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee (ACAC) was formally consulted twice with an additional informal meeting with staff to discuss this Report. ACAC does not support the minor changes being made.

Background

[Report CSAC23-008 Community Grant History and Future Direction](#) was approved by Council on October 30, 2023, to provide a history and future direction for the Community Grants Program. The report outlined changes for all three streams of funding, including Community Project Grants, Community Investment Grants, and Community Service Grants, along with a realignment of funding related to the arts sector. The report also supported the creation of a Professional Arts Organization Grant.

The recommendations in Report CSAC23-008 that made changes to Community Grants Program are summarized as follows:

- a) That an Arts Investment Fund be established in 2025 separate from the Community Investment Grant and that all City funding for the Arts be aligned within this funding stream to include the following programs:
 - Individual Artists Grants
 - Professional Arts Organization Grant (new)
 - Artsweek Funding
 - Poet Laureate Program
- b) That a two-year pilot of the Professional Arts Organization Grant be introduced for the 2025 budget, within the Art Investment Fund umbrella to be administered and led by the staff from the Art Gallery of Peterborough in collaboration with

Electric City Culture Council (EC3), who will be included in each jury process with a non-voting seat;

- c) Funding guidelines, application process, evaluation rubric review process, reports, and acknowledgement as well as the selection and role of the jury are to be established for the Professional Arts Organization Grant based on best practices utilized by other municipalities and supporting Council's strategic priorities; and
- d) That \$60,000 be transferred from the Community Grant Program to the Professional Arts Organization Grant with the fund to be administered through the Arts and Culture Division's operating budget.

[Report CSD24-003 2025 Community Service Agreements](#) was approved on June 24, 2024, to address changes to the Community Service Grant program. This report created a three-year agreement cycle and enhanced reporting requirements for organizations receiving funds.

This report, CSD25-003, makes further adjustments to this program and provides a new framework for all remaining aspects of the Community Grants Program.

Update and Adjustments to Arts Funding

EC3 Funding was approved in the 2025 Budget process for a 1-year Community Service Agreement which included:

- \$100,000 for operating costs
- \$25,000 for Arts Week
- \$25,000 for Individual Artists Grants

This agreement was signed on April 16, 2025. The funding agreement with EC3 will be reviewed later in 2025 in preparation for funding recommendations as part of the 2026 budget.

The Professional Art Organization Grant, originally projected to start in 2025, is now recommended to be postponed to 2027. On March 27, 2024, a consultation session was held with approximately 60 participants connected to the arts community to receive input into this new grant. Staff from the Art Gallery of Peterborough and EC3 worked on developing the granting guidelines, however, it was not possible to have the program ready for the 2025 granting process.

The \$60,000 proposed for this grant remained in the funds available for Community Investment Grants approved in Report CSD25-002 Community Project and Investment Grants. The delay to 2027 is to allow for:

- The update to the Municipal Cultural Plan.

- Recent hiring of a Manager of Cultural Services.
- Alignment with new tourism and economic development mandates.
- Pending contract discussions with EC3 for 2026.

New Community Wellbeing Fund

After further research and evaluation of the various funding streams, it is being recommended that City grants be consolidated in a Community Wellbeing Fund (CWF). The CWF would include: Community Project Grants; Community Development Grants (previously Community Investment Grants); and Arts Investment Grants. The goal of consolidating the grants is to improve transparency, streamline budgeting, and facilitate better reporting on grant funds being provided to various sectors and organizations in the community. The Community Grants Program is being organized as shown in Chart 1 below.

The purpose of the CWF remains unchanged. It provides financial assistance to non-for-profit, community-based organizations and charities that provide direct programs, services, or activities that enhance the quality of life for Peterborough residents. This financial assistance builds capacity and resiliency across a variety of sectors including: social services and health, arts, culture, heritage, recreation, and the environment. Appendix A contains a description of these sectors and City’s historic investments by sector over the past three years.

Chart 1: Community Grants Program Structure

	Grant Range	2025 Budget	2026 Budget (Projected)
Community Wellbeing Fund			
• Community Project Grants	\$250-\$1,000	\$20,965	\$20,965
• Community Development Grants	\$1,000-\$15,000	\$204,070	\$204,070
• Arts Investment Grants			
▪ Individual Artists*	\$1,500-\$3,500	\$25,000	\$25,000
▪ Prof. Arts Organizations		\$0	\$0
Community Service Agreements	n/a	\$1,068,303	\$1,168,303
• EC3		\$100,000	
Total		\$1,418,338	\$1,418,338

* Individual Artists Grants are administered through EC3 and funds are drawn from the Public Art Maintenance Reserve.

The Projected 2026 Budget in **Chart 1** reflects a 0% increase in funding for the Community Grants budget and is for discussion purposes only and not being recommended for approval at this time. The Community Grants budget will be part of

2026 budget process. Funding for EC3 has been incorporated into the 2026 budget for Community Service Agreements.

The Arts Investment Grants are an exception to this broad scope. This grant bolsters financial support only to the arts sector, while the Community Project Grants and Community Development Grants are open to organizations in any local sector.

Community Project Grants

The guidelines for Community Project Grants remain largely unchanged from their historical framework. The grants are intended to be used for seed money, small projects, or special events.

A. Grant amounts for Community Project Grants

- Grants are between \$250 - \$1000.
- All funds must be used during the current fiscal period of the grant recipient.
- Can cover up to 50% of project costs.

B. Eligibility criteria for Community Project Grants

- Be new or existing, incorporated or unincorporated not-for-profit organizations (NFPs), charities, or neighbourhood associations, and
- Be located and conduct the majority of activities within the geographic boundaries of the City of Peterborough.
- Discrete projects will be prioritized over operational support.

C. Ineligibility factors for Community Project Grants

- Organizations receiving a Community Development Grant, Arts Investment Grant, or have a Community Service Agreement
- Individuals
- For-profit businesses
- Organizations demonstrating any political affiliations within the previous 5 years
- Organizations serving as funding sources for others, e.g. Service Clubs
- Faith organizations where funding is directly supporting services/activities that include the promotion and/or required adherence to a faith
- Hospitals, clinic-based services or medical treatment programs
- Fund-raising events
- School boards, primary and secondary schools, post-secondary institutions

- Programs within legislated mandates of other government or city departments
- Provincial/national organizations, unless a local chapter exists to service the residents of Peterborough
- Organizations receiving 80% or more of funding from senior levels of government
- Organizations that conduct the majority of their activities outside of the City
- Expenses incurred prior to funding being granted
- Cost-of-living increases.
- Costs for major capital equipment/renovations and minor renovations; and financing of deficits
- Organizations that already receive over \$100,000 in funding or revenue from the City.
- Organizations with overall revenue of over \$500,000.

D. Assessment Process

The assessment process has not changed. Applications would be reviewed in detail and recommended by Senior City staff committee for Council approval. Members of this committee are asked for a 3-year commitment to provide continuity but also bring new perspectives. Requests for financial support often exceed the funds available. Applying to Community Project Grants is a competitive process and funding is not guaranteed.

The changes to Project Grants include:

- removing the requirement for first-time applicants to apply for this grant before being eligible for other grants
- adding ineligibility criteria that excludes organizations already receiving over \$100,000 in revenue from the City and those with over \$500,000 in overall revenue.

Community Development Grants

Community Investment Grants are proposed to be renamed Community Development Grants. These grants are intended to be a way for the City to support larger projects, special events, enhance expanding programs, build capacity, or start new initiatives. They are not intended to be core funding; however, it is recognized that they may have been used this way in the past. [Report CSAC23-008 Community Grant History and Future Direction](#) identified new initiatives as a funding priority to reduce the reliance of Community Grants as long-term core funding. This factor will be incorporated into the evaluation process by providing scoring weight to new projects and initiatives.

A. Grant amounts for Community Development Grants

- Grants are between \$1000 - \$15,000.
- All funds must be used during the current fiscal period of the grant recipient.
- Generally, up to 33% of project cost or total operating budget of the organization.

B. Eligibility criteria for Community Development Grants

- Incorporated not-for-profit organization or charity with a local Board of Directors.
- Organization located, and conduct the majority of activities, within the geographic boundaries of the City of Peterborough.
- Sustained a history of activity for a minimum of the past 2 years,
- Demonstrated sound financial management and good standing with the City, and must submit one of the following documents: Audited Financial Statement, a Notice to Reader; or a profit and loss statement.
- Able to demonstrate that organization provides services and programs in an effective, accessible, open, and inclusive manner.
- Be in good standing financially and through day-to-day interaction with the City.
- Not receiving more than two additional sources of City funding/support.

C. Ineligibility factors for Community Development Grants

- Organizations receiving an Arts Investment Grant or have a Community Service Agreement.
- Individuals
- For-profit businesses
- Organizations demonstrating any political affiliations within the previous 5 years
- Organizations serving as funding sources for others, e.g. Service Clubs
- Faith organizations where funding is directly supporting services/activities that include the promotion and/or required adherence to a faith
- Hospitals, clinic-based services or medical treatment programs
- Fund-raising events
- School boards, primary and secondary schools, post secondary institutions
- Programs within legislated mandates of other government or city departments
- Provincial/national organizations, unless a local chapter exists to service the residents of Peterborough

- Organizations receiving 80% or more of funding from senior levels of government
- Organizations that conduct the majority of their activities outside of the City
- Expenses incurred prior to funding being granted
- Cost-of-living increases.
- Costs for major capital equipment/renovations and minor renovations; and financing of deficits
- New unincorporated not-for-profit organizations or organizations receiving a Community Project Grant, Arts Investment Grant, or having a Community Service Agreement.
- Organizations acting as a sponsor to fund another organization.
- Applications deemed an employment program.

D. Assessment Process

Applications will be reviewed in detail and adjudicated by the Community Grant Advisory Committee. New initiatives are eligible for additional scoring. City staff will prepare the final recommendations of the Community Grants Advisory Committee in a report for Council consideration. The requests for financial support each year exceed the funds available. Community Development Grants are not intended to be a source of core funding to an organization as there is no guarantee funding will be granted. All grant applications are evaluated as part of a highly competitive process.

The changes to Community Development Grants are as follows:

- New name replaces Community Investment Grant.
- The requirement to have two successful Community Project Grants before being eligible for this grant has been removed. The Assessment Process gauges the merit of all applications, including those from established organizations that may be applying for the first time. Eligible proposals will not need to wait two years before applying to this grant.
- Additional credit will be available to strong applications that are new projects or programs. This assessment criteria will be added to encourage new and innovative proposals. Supporting the core funding of an organization has occurred in the past but is not a goal of the Community Development Grants. Strong applications will continue to be scored highly during the evaluation regardless of their funding history; however, new and innovative proposals that may be successful by obtaining additional credit and potentially diversify the sectors supported.

Arts Investment Grants

Arts Investment Grants are currently under review and development. The Professional Arts Organization Grants are recommended to be deferred to 2027, the Poet Laureate Grant has ended, and Arts Week will be reviewed as part of a future agreement with EC3. The Individual Artist Grants remain in this funding stream and is administered by EC3.

Funding Options

The City is committed to supporting organizations that improve the quality of life of local residents. The City provides this support through many channels, including community grants, property tax rebates to registered charities, property tax exemptions, Municipal Capital Facilities, support for parades and processions, capital projects, special events, provincially legislated support, in-kind support, interest-free loans, and direct project-specific appeals. Local organizations can access any three of these funding opportunities.

Sports Tourism Considerations

With the transition of tourism service into the City, the Sport Tourism Program supports local expenses related to activities to attract and host major tourism events and continue to raise the community profile of Peterborough as a sport tourism destination. Some applicants to the Community Grants Program may qualify for funding through this program. If the purpose of a future Community Grant application aligns with the objectives of the Sports Tourism Program, they may be declined and referred to the Recreation and Park Services Division for funding consideration.

The Sport Tourism Program has an annual budget and can be applied at any time of the year, making it more convenient and accessible to sport organizations..

Declined or Reduced Grant Applications

There is no appeal process for any grants in the Community Wellbeing Fund. City staff evaluating the Project Grants and the Community Grants Advisory Committee evaluating the Community Development Grants are empowered to make the best funding recommendations possible. Creating a mechanism to overturn a rigorous and impartial evaluation has the potential of undermining the integrity of the granting process.

The final approval for grants is made by Council, other than those administered by EC3. Organizations that believe an error has been made in the granting process are encouraged to approach City staff to provide feedback on grant decisions. Organizations are also free to voice their concerns when Council is considering the report to approve grant funding.

Funding Recipient Expectations

As noted earlier in this report, the City has a granting program for the purpose of providing financial assistance to non-for-profit, community-based organizations and charities that provide direct programs, services, or activities that enhance the quality of life for Peterborough residents. When funding is provided, the City considers this a partnership with an organization as a supporter of their activities. All grant recipients are expected to give appropriate recognitions to the City as a funder.

Organizations that receive funding are expected to remain in good standing with the City both financially (E.g no debts with the City, outstanding payments, funding used as proposed, etc.) and through day-to-day interactions (E.g. work collaboratively, open communication, pursue mutual goals, etc.).

Most organizations funded by the City have a relatively narrow focus on a particular sector, population, event, or activity (see Appendix A) in comparison to the much broader responsibilities of the City. It can be expected that some City policies or programs may not fully align with the mandate of an organization that receives City funding. In the spirit of partnership and collaboration, organizations funded by the City that have concerns with City actions are encouraged to reach out to the appropriate staff so that a clear understanding of a disputed situation can be established with the potential for next steps being recommended.

Advisory Committee

As a matter of housekeeping resulting from recommendations in this report, Schedule A-4 of By-law 22-088, which defines the mandate and procedures of committees, it is being recommended the Community Investment Grant Advisory Committee be renamed the Community Development Grant Advisory Committee to reflect the new name of these grants.

It is also being recommended the staff liaison for this committee be moved from the Arts, Culture and Heritage Director to the Community Development Program Manager.

General Adjustments to Community Grants Program and Evaluation Process

The Community Grants Advisory Committee and the Staff Committee that evaluate grant applications complete a thorough the thoughtful process to determine the outcome of the granting program. Both committees believe the process is successful but could be improved with an update scoring matrix, additional evaluation criteria, and updated eligibility criteria. A number of these issues have been resolved through updated criteria included earlier in this Report.

Further improvements will be made to the scoring matrix through updates by staff to clarify factors including:

- The financial need of the applicant along with their financial stability and capacity to cover grant costs.

- How the applicant is reaching target populations and themes important to the City, such as: accessibility, DEI, Indigenous relations, active transportation, local economy and age-friendly.
- Recurring Project Grant applications for operating funding.
- Large community impact versus targeted benefits on a smaller scale.

Next Steps

The next steps involved in updating the Community Grants Program in preparation for 2026 applications are as follows:

- Update granting guidelines.
- Update scoring matrices.
- Update Community Grant website with new information.
- Host public information session(s).

Strategic Plan

Strategic Pillar: Community & Well-being

Strategic Priority: Foster community resiliency, neighbourhood identity, civic pride, sense of belonging, and intercultural harmony. Enhance and protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of all in our city. Provide robust, affordable, and accessible sport, recreation, wellness, the arts, and social programs for people of all ages and abilities.

Engagement and Consultation

[Report CSAC23-008 Community Grant History and Future Direction](#) documented a Community Grant Survey that took place in the summer of 2023 along with research into the granting practices of several other municipalities. The results of this engagement and consultation informed this report.

On March 27, 2024, a consultation session was held to receive public input regarding the development of a Professional Arts Organizations Grant. The session was facilitated by the consulting firm Arising Collective and was attended by approximately 60 people connected to the arts community.

ACAC was consulted twice regarding this Report on May 27, 2025 and June 17, 2025. An informal meeting between staff, the Chair and one member of ACAC on June 5, 2025 was also held to provide further clarification. Twomemos from ACAC, attached as Appendix C and Appendix D, provide the committee's concerns and objections to this Report.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no budget or financial implications resulting from the approval of the recommendations of Report CSD25-003. The budget for the Community Grants Program will be considered as part of the 2026 Budget.

Conclusion

Broad changes to the Community Grants Program were approved by Council in October 2023 through Report CSAC23-008. Report CSD24-003 was approved by Council in June 2024 which adjusted the new Community Service Agreement program.

The repositioning of City grants in a new Community Wellbeing Fund clarifies the various funding opportunities of local organizations. The Professional Arts Organization Grant program has been postponed until 2027.

The revised structure and updated guidelines should facilitate an improved granting process for applicants, volunteers, and staff contributing to the Community Grants Program.

Attachments

Appendix A: Summary of Community Grants
Appendix B: Community Wellbeing Fund Policy
Appendix C: Memo from the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee
Appendix D: Memo from the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee (July)

Submitted by,

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