



CITY OF HAMILTON
CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Financial Planning, Administration and Policy Division

TO:	Chair and Members Audit, Finance and Administration Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 3, 2021
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Canada Healthy Communities Initiative Intake Two (FCS21020(a)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	John Savoia (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7298
SUBMITTED BY:	Brian McMullen Director, Financial Planning, Administration and Policy Corporate Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (a) That the Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project be approved as the City of Hamilton’s submission for consideration to the Community Foundations of Canada for the requested funding amount of \$250,000 in accordance with the terms and conditions associated with the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative;
- (b) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute all necessary documentation, including Funding Agreements to receive funding under the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative with content satisfactory to the General Manager, Finance and Corporate Services, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (c) That the City Solicitor be authorized and directed to prepare any necessary by-laws for Council approval, for the purpose of giving effect to the City’s acceptance of funding from the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative for The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project;
- (d) That, should this funding application be successful, the ongoing operating costs for connectivity estimated at \$30,000 be included in the 2022 Tax Operating Budget for consideration;
- (e) That copies of Report FCS21020(a) be forwarded to local Members of Parliament;

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- (f) That the matter respecting Canada Healthy Communities Initiative Intake Two, be identified as completed and removed from the Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 9, 2021, the Government of Canada, in conjunction with the Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) and the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI), announced the launch of the first application intake for projects under the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative (CHCI).

The CHCI supports communities as they create and adapt public spaces and programming and services for public spaces to respond to ongoing needs arising from COVID-19 over the next two years. This \$31 M investment from the Government of Canada will fund small-scale infrastructure projects to create safer, more vibrant and inclusive Communities.

The initiative is supporting projects under three main themes:

Creating safe and vibrant public spaces

- Projects that create or adapt existing public places such as parks, main streets and indoor spaces that encourage safe cultural or physical activities and local commerce.

Improving mobility options

- Projects that permit physical distancing through permanent or temporary changes that make it easier for people to get around in their communities, whether walking, biking, accessing public and private transit or other modes of transportation.

Digital solutions

- Innovative digital projects that address changing community needs through the use of data and connected technologies.

The Application Guide places a strong emphasis on community engagement and equity in considering the impact of proposed projects in public space.

Funding for the CHCI is being repurposed from existing funding for a second Smart Cities Challenge competition to support communities in dealing with the immediate and ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19.

CFC was selected by Infrastructure Canada to work directly with communities to identify and fund local projects and solutions to the challenges presented by COVID-19. As such, CFC accepted applications for project funding under the first intake which closed on March 9, 2021. For the first intake, the City submitted the Hamilton Street Art Festival 2021 Project seeking up to \$250 K in CHCI funding (refer to Report FCS21020 for details). However, the City has recently been advised that the application was unsuccessful.

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The second intake for applications opened on May 14, 2021 and will close June 25, 2021 at 5:00 pm (PST). Review committees will start meeting on June 26, 2021 and all applicants will receive results by August 13, 2021, at the latest.

Applicants can apply for funding ranging from \$5 K to \$250 K for eligible projects within an overall envelope of \$31 M in federal government funding. Local governments and a variety of community-led organizations are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants can submit one application per intake. Eligible expenses must be incurred between April 1, 2020 and June 30, 2022.

Projects funded by the CHCI must be in the local communities' public interest by operating in public space and for public benefit. Projects in public space take place in any space owned or operated by a municipality, the provincial or federal government (e.g. sidewalk, streets, park, recreation centre) or non-commercial organization (e.g. non-profit or educational institutions) or Indigenous communities. Projects for the public benefit include projects serving specific communities that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Four projects were identified and evaluated based upon staff's interpretation of the project approval assessment criteria, as specified within the application process and the CHCI Program Guidelines. These projects included Gage Park Children's Discovery Garden, Hamilton Collaborative Talent Zone, The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project and the Hamilton Street Art Festival 2021. Based on alignment with the assessment criteria, opportunities for city-wide impact and project timelines, Report FCS21020(a) seeks Council's endorsement of The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project, with a cost of up to \$250 K, to be submitted under the CHCI program first intake.

Refer to the Analysis and Rationale for Recommendation(s) section of Report FCS21020(a) for more details of the recommended project and how it aligns with the Program's assessment criteria.

Alternatives for Consideration – N/A

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project, with a cost of up to \$250 K, would be fully funded from the requested grant. Funds are available in the Smart City capital project for unexpected costs and / or expanded project scope. Should the City not receive CHCI funding, the project will not be implemented.

Ongoing connectivity costs for the new locations are estimated to be \$30 K per year and will be included in the 2022 Tax Supported Budget cycle if the project receives funding approval.

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Staffing: No impact as project administration to be managed within current staff complement.

Legal: It is anticipated that the City will be required to enter into a funding agreement to receive CHCI grants and may need to enter into other ancillary agreements or pass by-laws to receive funding.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Canada Healthy Communities Initiative (CHCI) supports communities as they create and adapt public spaces and programming and services for public spaces to respond to ongoing needs arising from COVID-19 over the next two years. This \$31 M investment from the Government of Canada will fund small-scale infrastructure projects to create safer, more vibrant and inclusive communities. Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) and its network are working alongside the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) and other partners to deliver the Healthy Communities Initiative locally.

The CHCI encourages community-level innovation and improvements in the quality of life for residents. As local communities continue to adapt to COVID-19, local governments and community partners across the country in urban, rural and remote communities are discovering new ways to keep residents safe and healthy, support economic recovery and rebuild communities to be pandemic-resilient.

The CHCI supports communities through small-scale local infrastructure projects as they create and adapt public spaces and programming and services for public spaces to respond to ongoing needs arising from COVID-19. The minimum funding amount for projects is \$5 K and the maximum funding amount is \$250 K for each project.

There are two rounds of funding applications for this program. The first intake for applications closed on March 9, 2021. Through Report FCS21020, approved by Council on February 24, 2021, the City submitted an application to fund the Hamilton Street Art Festival 2021. The City has recently been advised that the application submitted for the Hamilton Street Art Festival 2021 Project was unsuccessful. A second application round for the CHCI has opened as of May 14, 2021 and will close June 25, 2021 at 5:00 pm (PST).

Local governments and a variety of community-led organizations are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants can submit one application per intake. Eligible expenses must be incurred between April 1, 2020 and June 30, 2022.

Organizations that have applied are welcome to partner with multiple other organizations submitting independent applications. For example, a municipality can submit an application for a project and also partner with multiple grassroots organizations in their community who are submitting projects as long as the municipality is not the lead applicant on the other applications. Supporting other applications will not affect the partner's chances to receive funding on a project that they may choose to submit independently.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

The following departments provided project proposals for submission consideration under the CHCI Intake:

- Healthy and Safe Communities Department
- Planning and Economic Development Department
- Public Works Department
- City Manager's Office

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

To be eligible under CHCI, all applications must meet the basic eligibility criteria. Applications that meet the eligibility requirements will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria. These criteria include the project rationale, community engagement, outcomes and project implementation and readiness.

Projects must fulfill all the following criteria for consideration:

- Submitted by an eligible organization and provides documentation;
- Responds to needs arising from COVID-19;
- Creates or adapts public spaces or programming or services for public spaces in the public interest;
- Demonstrates consideration of and connections within the community;
- Serves the general public or a community disproportionately impacted by COVID-19;
- Falls within the Healthy Communities Initiative theme(s);
- Submitted with a complete budget;
- Is requesting between \$5 K and \$250 K; and
- Incurs expenses between April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022.

Projects that would be considered ineligible for funding include but are not be limited to:

- Partisan, political or election-related activities.

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- Research projects where findings are not, or are not intended to be, tangibly applied as an outcome of the project. For example, carrying out a feasibility study without intending to carry out the project.
- Publication of books or reports.
- Projects that solely sponsor other organizations' events or activities.
- Research and development for a for-profit endeavour.
- Projects that benefit only private interests or are implemented only on private property.
- Projects that promote a for-profit entity or its products and service.

Four identified projects were evaluated based upon staff's interpretation of the project approval assessment criteria, as specified within the application process and the CHCI Program Guidelines. As such, Report FCS21020(a) seeks Council's endorsement of the second project, The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project to be submitted under the CHCI program.

The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project, with a total project cost of up to \$250 K, would involve the installation of Wi-Fi in public spaces across the city. Potential locations include the City Hall Courtyard, Bus Terminals, as well as, City parks possibly with a focus on areas in Code Red Neighbourhoods and lower income Census tracts.

There is possibility of potential partnerships with the Hamilton Public Library (HPL) and the Boards of Education on this initiative as several schools have existing connectivity and, in many cases, are adjacent to parks. Complexity increases with additional partners. However, the likelihood of successful outcomes is enhanced.

It is estimated that the cost of a Wi-Fi connection per park would be approximately \$10 to \$15 K (excludes future operating costs). The scope of target parks and public spaces has not been completed. There may also be the opportunity to include smart benches that could be deployed in the City's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to improve connectivity. Smart benches are urban furniture that use solar energy to power environmental sensors and to provide free device charging for citizens. Project scope development contemplates assessing various factors to ensure the greatest benefit for the community is realized given the amount of the potential CHCI grant.

It should be noted that both the federal and provincial governments, as well as, the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery Report 2020 (MTFER) have identified affordable internet connectivity for all Canadians as a high priority. Additionally, this project represents a response to Council direction for staff to review options to help address the digital divide (the gap between those who have ready access to computers and the Internet and those who do not).

Staff carefully assessed projects for the best alignment with the CHCI Program's funding selection criteria. The following chart outlines how the The Public Space and Park Wi-Fi Connectivity Project meets the CHCI evaluation criteria so that it may receive strong consideration for funding approval from the Community Foundations of Canada.

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CHCI Evaluation Criteria	The Public Space and Public Wi-Fi Connectivity Project
Responds to needs arising from COVID-19	This project aligns with priority action items identified by the MTFER. Connectivity and addressing the digital divide have been highlighted as an essential item to recovery and building back better. Lack of connectivity for marginalized and economically challenged residents during the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide. The Internet has become an essential service for the well being of residents and a means to fully participate in society, including but not limited to, access to public health information, pandemic support services, emergency income supports, online education and connectivity to family and friends.
Creates or adapts public spaces or programming or services for public spaces in the public interest	This project will involve the installation of Wi-Fi in some existing parks and public spaces that are accessible to all residents. Although the project will provide universal benefits for residents of all ages, the greatest benefit will be for those who currently lack access data plans or internet connectivity. Bridging the digital divide improves the quality of life, economic opportunity and social interaction for those without digital access.
Demonstrates consideration of and connections within the community	Discussions with the local school boards, Mohawk College, McMaster University, as well as, Neighbourhood Associations reflect a shared view that public space accessibility to the Internet beyond the traditional access options has significant value. Organizations such as the United Nations, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (CRTC) and Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) have acknowledged Internet connectivity as an essential service.
Serves the general public or a community disproportionately impacted by COVID-19	Installation locations will be strategically chosen to target Code Red neighbourhoods that have been more heavily impacted by COVID (as supported by the COVID-19 Case incidence rate by Census Tract). Various socio-economic factors will be considered to ensure location selection to best target locations of greatest need. Increased connectivity in parks could also increase accessibility for the homeless who may utilize public spaces and could then also engage with increasing services that may have digital access pathways.
Falls within the Healthy Communities Initiative Themes	Digital Solutions Safe and vibrant public spaces

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Ongoing connectivity costs for the new locations estimated to be \$30 K per year and will be included in the 2022 Tax Supported Budget cycle if the project receives funding approval.

Some other recommendations relate to authorization to execute funding agreements, other ancillary agreements or pass by-laws to receive CHCI funding.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

N/A

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

Culture and Diversity

Hamilton is a thriving, vibrant place for arts, culture, and heritage where diversity and inclusivity are embraced and celebrated.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A

JS/dt