CITY OF HAMILTON
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
Digital, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships
and
Government Relations and Community Relations

TO:	Chair and Members Grants Sub-Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	August 8, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	City Enrichment Fund – Digital Program (CM22015/GRA22003) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Cyrus Tehrani (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2261
SUBMITTED BY: **SIGNATURE:**	Cyrus Tehrani Chief Digital Office & Director of Innovation City Manager's Office
SUBMITTED BY: **SIGNATURE:**	Morgan Stahl Director Government Relations & Community Engagement, City Manager's Office

RECOMMENDATIONS

(a)   That a new Digital program area, which focuses on projects related to digital equity, be established within the City Enrichment Fund as a 2-year pilot, with the ability to evaluate the success of the program area thereafter.

(b)   That the City Enrichment Fund Reserve of $150,000 be effectively allocated to this new pilot program area of Digital, with the split of $75,000 allocated to Year 1 and $75,000 be allocated to Year 2 and be made available to local eligible entities as per existing CEF eligibility guidelines and newly drafted program area specific guidelines.

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(c)   That the Digital Handbook, containing objectives, funding categories, guidelines, application details and budget information, as outlined in the attached Appendix "A" to Report CM22015/GRA22003 be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Hamilton's City Enrichment Fund plays a significant role in enriching the community through targeted grant programs. The City Enrichment Fund was launched with an inaugural application intake in 2014 with four program areas: Arts; Community Culture and Heritage; Community Services; and Sport & Active Lifestyles.

The City Enrichment Fund was launched in 2015. Two new program areas, Agriculture and Environment, and refinements to existing funding streams were approved by City Council in July 2015 City Enrichment Fund-Implementation Phase 2 (FCS14024(c)).

As planned, each of the six program areas have phased in incrementally and funding streams enhanced or added as new funding is approved. During this extended period, especially during COVID-19 pandemic, the city has grown and evolved, and the population and needs within the community have changed. With minor exceptions, however, the grants programs have fundamentally remained the same.

Below is the summary of the changes recommended to be implemented for 2023 intake:
1. Establishing a new program area within the City Enrichment Fund integrated model for a new total of seven program areas:
    a. Arts
    b. Communities, Culture & Heritage
    c. Community Services
    d. Sport & Active Lifestyles
    e. Agriculture
    f. Environment
    g. Digital **(NEW)**
        ▪ It is proposed that the new Digital Equity program area be implemented as a 2-year pilot, with the ability to evaluate the success of the program area thereafter.

2. City Enrichment Fund Reserve of $150,000 be effectively allocated to the new pilot program area of Digital Equity, with the split of $75,000 allocated to Year 1 and $75,000 be allocated to Year 2 and be made available to local eligible entities as per existing City Enrichment Fund eligibility guidelines and newly drafted program specific guidelines.

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Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 5

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: It is recommended in this report that a total of $150,000 to be allocated to the new program pilot area – Digital; $75,000 allocated to Year 1 of the program (2023) and $75,000 allocated to Year 2 of the program area (2024).

Staffing: There is no additional implication to the City of Hamilton. The management of the newly created program area will be overlooked by the existing Sr. Project Manager, Digital & Innovation Office, who will act as the program manager for the Digital program area (Management of CEF Digital program will be added to the list of duties Sr. Project Manager is responsible for).

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The City of Hamilton recognizes that internet connectivity is essential for many residents, businesses, and institutions in our communities. Access to affordable, reliable High-Speed Internet Connectivity is critical to our community to access services and information, work remotely, access on-line learning or operate a business. High speed broadband availability across Hamilton is a key economic driver and is central to economic growth and job creation in our community. However, many residents still lack the skills, resources and connectivity required to participate in our increasingly digital society. When left unchecked, digital inequity can become a huge enabler of disadvantage and systemic discrimination for marginalized communities across the City.

According to a study conducted by Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA), the research showed that digital development in Canada is underfunded, piecemeal, ad hoc and unorganized despite stakeholders sharing many of the same goals – the connecting of Canadians to the internet in an affordable and reliable manner so that they can comfortably and knowledgeably participate in an increasingly digital economy and society.

These funding issues have been further exacerbated during COVID-19 pandemic as resources at various level of government have been stretched. With every facet of life being pushed online, the current funding organizations are finding themselves at unacceptable level of digital inequity among grant recipients and communities across the country, especially among those who have poor or no connectivity and have limited capacity and limited opportunity to get their voices heard on the larger issues. Organizations who were initially seeing requests related to hardware, software and

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digital services are now seeing requests in the context of larger issues related to digital equity, basic needs, and human rights.

There is an imminent need to step up and join other funding bodies to address the gap in grants available to community organizations who are leading initiatives advocating for digital equity and access to affordable, faster internet services and systems.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

- Government Relations and Community Engagement
- Digital and Innovation Office

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Internet users face real threats, and the City of Hamilton through Digital program area as a part of City Enrichment Fund can play an important role in community-led internet initiatives that focus on solving problems related to digital equity.

These projects would specifically address digital inequity issues in Hamilton. This program will support organization, events, and activities that support efforts to achieve digital equity, promote digital inclusion, and spur greater adoption of connectivity and digital skills development among underserved populations. It will support the planning, delivery, and administration of a variety of initiatives ensuring all City of Hamilton residents have access to the resources, opportunities and skills needed to thrive in our increasingly digital world. Through this Digital pilot program, the City Enrichment Fund program will look to invest in partners who will deliver impactful programs aimed at building community members' digital literacy skills as well as facilitating access to existing opportunities related to internet service, technological devices, and digital programming.

Some examples of initiative that will be supported through this program include:

Digital Literacy Programs:
- Increasing equity, skills development and empowerment of Indigenous people, youth, racialized Canadians, older adults, and low-income people.
- Developing and implementing training programs and digital inclusion activities for underserved populations that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills, or other workforce development programs.

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- Public education on privacy, digital policy, data governance and understanding algorithms regarding how they shape access to information, rights, and equality.
- Developing digital skills.
- Creating regional associations devoted to media and digital literacy.
- Facilitating the adoption of broadband by underserved populations in order to provide educational and employment opportunities to those populations.

Digital Infrastructure:
- Expanding free Wi-Fi access points across the City of Hamilton.
- Provide affordable internet access to underserved populations at low or no cost, including in urban areas.
- Provide low cost/free equipment/devices, networking capabilities, hardware and software for those in need.
- Construct, upgrade, expand, or operate new or existing public access computing centres for covered populations through community anchor institutions.
- Pilot programs to test proof of concepts, including mesh networks and other technology solutions.
- Research and pilot projects to help define infrastructure business models that are sustainable in low density and dispersed population areas.

Community Leadership
- Developing of a coalition or ecosystem of groups working on similar issues.
- Policy advocacy and development, including research and evidence to support it.
- Digital Ambassador Programs and/or lobbying for proactive legislative reforms.
- Taking existing research and packaging it in ways that are easily understood by decision makers.
- Countering concentration of power, monopoly issues and data trusts

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Increase initial 2-year pilot funding to $300,000 or other amount acceptable to Grants Subcommittee.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and Participation
Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community

Economic Prosperity and Growth
Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

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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.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to report CM22015/GRA22003 – Digital Handbook