





Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Grants Sub-Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 14, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Annual Update, City Enrichment Fund - Digital Pilot Program (CM22015(a)/GRA22003(a)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Kelly Austen (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2733 Andrea Carvalho (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1947
SUBMITTED BY: SIGNATURE:	Morgan Stahl Director, Government Relations & Community Engagement City Manager's Office 
SUBMITTED BY: SIGNATURE:	Cyrus Tehrani Chief Digital Officer & Director of Innovation City Manager's Office 

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On August 11, 2022, Council amended report CM22015/GRA22003, to include “that staff be directed to report back to the Grants Sub-Committee annually respecting the City Enrichment Fund - Digital Pilot Program.”

INFORMATION

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

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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 systemic discrimination and the disadvantages for equity-deserving and rural communities across the City.

On August 11, 2022 Council approved a new two-year pilot, Digital Pilot Program, for inclusion in the City Enrichment Fund (CEF) 2023 through recommendation report CM22015/GRA22003. A \$150,000 one-time commitment from the CEF reserve was approved for the two year-pilot for year 2023 and 2024. The objective of the Digital Pilot Program is to make funding available to organizations, events, and activities that support efforts to achieve digital equity, promote digital inclusion and literacy, and support digital infrastructure. Each year, \$75,000 is earmarked to be approved for disbursement to successful applicants that meet the Digital Pilot Program and City Enrichment Fund criteria.

As part of that work, a mutually beneficial partnership was also formed between the R.R. McCann Family Foundation (the “Foundation”) and the CEF Digital Pilot Program, on behalf of the City of Hamilton. The Foundation has a keen interest in funding digital equity-related initiatives in our community. The City has entered a partnership Memorandum of Understanding, that will see successful, Digital Program grantees receive additional funding from the Foundation to support their programs and complement their 2023 City Enrichment Fund grant.

A total of \$100,000 will be disbursed to Digital Program grantees at the discretion of the Foundation over the two-year pilot. Any funding from the Foundation to CEF Digital Program grantees is in addition to the 2023 CEF funding recommendations. This partnership is meant to complement the 2023-2024 funding recommendations and does not impact grantee’s future eligibility within CEF.

The partnership between the City and the R.R. McCann Family Foundation represents a model for future strategic investments. Through partnerships with other local funders and foundations, the City Enrichment Fund has the potential to make greater funding impacts through the programs and services delivered by CEF applicants.

2023 Digital Pilot Program

The Digital Program offers funding through one stream, the *Digital Equity Initiatives Stream* with the objective “to support organizations, events and activities that support efforts to achieve digital equity, promote digital inclusion, increase digital literacy within the community.”

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CEF staff hosted two virtual information sessions meeting with 10 potential applicants during the intake period. Many other community organizations expressed interest in applying for the pilot program but did not feel they could meet the November 2022 application deadline. It is anticipated that the 2024 intake cycle will result in more applications based on community feedback and increased efforts by staff to reach potential applicants across the city's not-for-profit sectors.

The Digital Pilot Program received five applications, four of the five were successful with a total of \$50,078 in requests. One application was withdrawn by the applicant, because the organization could not complete the application in time to meet the CEF deadline, but they do intend to apply for 2024 cycle. All eligible applications received "A" ratings and were recommended for funding at 75% of their request.

In the first year of the CEF Digital Pilot Program, Council approved \$33,809 in funding.

The following chart is a summary of the applications supported through the pilot program:

Organization and Program Name:	Program Description and Target Audience:	CEF 2023 Grant	Foundation Funding
Mathstronauts STEAM Engine Program	Mathstronauts delivers high quality inclusive, STEM programs to students in grades 4 to 12 in underrepresented communities in Hamilton. Target: Grades 4-12, free to participate.	\$ 11,250	\$ 11,500
Glanbrook Community Services Digital Program	To provide training, assisted and supportive internet connectivity for home bound or isolated seniors and other marginalized individuals. Target: Seniors, free to participate.	\$ 4,725	Declined to participate
Theatre Aquarius Digital Workshops	Theatre Aquarius will run two 5-day Virtual Reality Storytelling workshops in spring and fall 2023 for Hamilton-based artists who want to learn new digital skills in this artistic medium. This workshop will be offered free to those participating.	\$ 11,250	\$ 11,250

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	Target: Creative Industry, free to participate.		
Dundas Valley School of Art (DVSA) Digital Content Production for Charities and Not-for-Profits	DVSA's Digital Art Studio will provide quality instruction on content development and production for local charities and not-for-profits especially those who work closely with marginalized communities. Target: Not-For-Profit Community, free to participate.	\$ 6584	n/a

The Digital Program anticipates more applications in year two. All CEF Program Managers will be encouraged to share information on the Digital Program within their respective areas in addition to continued marketing and communication efforts to increase access to the program overall. Lessons learned from year one of the pilot will be applied to program guidelines, workshops, and scoring for continuous improvement.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

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