




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Grants Sub-Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 12, 2024
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	City Enrichment Fund Community Consultation Update (GRA23003(c)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Andrea Carvalho (905) 546-2424 Ext. 6797
SUBMITTED BY:	Morgan Stahl Director, Government Relations and Community Engagement City Manager's Office
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

At its June 13, 2023 meeting the Grants Sub-Committee approved City Enrichment Fund – Appeal Process Update (GRA23003(a)) (City Wide) (Item 9.1), which included the motion:

- (a) That staff be directed to consult with community organizations in order to develop a further equitable City Enrichment Fund process and report back to the Grants Sub-Committee.

INFORMATION

Since 2015, the City Enrichment Fund (CEF) has annually invested in local charities, non-profit, and grassroots organizations across seven sector areas in the city, Agriculture, Arts, Communities, Culture and Heritage, Community Services, Environment, and Sports and Active Lifestyles. At the September 14, 2023, Grants Sub-Committee meeting, staff presented a twelve-month engagement plan that included preliminary steps to consult community partners and applicants with a focus on best

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practices, funding rationale recommendations, evaluation, and efficiencies to the overall program delivery.

As the needs of the Hamilton community continue to grow and evolve, community

feedback provided through Council delegations, surveys, focus groups, workshops and applicant feedback has informed enhancements to CEF. The CEF program evolution has been driven with the applicant experience and community benefit at the forefront of decision making. Staff have recommended incremental changes to the fund through Grants Sub-Committee to ensure the program is meeting the current needs of the community and the continuously evolving local landscape.

This report provides Grants Sub-Committee with a detailed update on Phase I of the CEF Update and Community Engagement Plan, including recently implemented changes, planned Phase II activities, and an update on the 2024 CEF intake period, which received a 28% application increase or 430 applications across the program in 2023 ahead of the 2024 distribution of funds.

Community Engagement – Phase I

From September 20, 2023, to October 11, 2023, the general public, community partners, and previous CEF applicants were invited to provide feedback on the development of a set of funding principles through an online survey. This was promoted through direct communication with past applicants via e-mail, on the City of Hamilton website, through social media and the Engage Hamilton promotional tool. 126 respondents participated through the Engage Hamilton platform and answered five questions relating to funding allocations, priorities, and overall expectations of the City Enrichment Fund. Responses and comments to these questions set the foundation and informed discussion at the in-person and virtual consultation(s).

Following the survey, approximately 100 community partners attended in-person and virtual sessions on October 23, 2023, to further prioritize and shape the survey results. Government Relations and Community Engagement, Tourism and Culture, and Healthy and Safe Communities staff worked with external community member, Kojo Dampety of 2941 Consulting, to provide arms-length facilitation and a report summarizing attendee feedback with recommendations to inform future direction of the CEF program. This report, and the report key messages, are published on Engage Hamilton and the CEF webpage.

The City Enrichment Fund is guided by the following set of funding principles informed through the Phase I community engagement.

CEF Funding Principles:

Allocate available funding amongst not-for profit organizations, registered charities,

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grassroots organizations, and professional artist projects.
 Allocate some level of funding to all passing applicants.
 Provide funding to programs/projects that present diverse revenue sources and a feasible budget.
 Support the programming and service delivery for both returning and new organizations and programs.

Beginning with the 2024 cycle, CEF staff have implemented the following updates in an effort to deliver an equitable, transparent, and streamlined program.

Update	Impact/Benefit
<p><u>Funding Principles</u> Support funding to all passing applicants, recognizing returning organizations, and providing access to new applicants and programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and informed by community. • Provides funding to more applicants. • Greater overall impact to smaller, new, community organizations and equity serving groups. • Recognizes both returning and new applicants.
<p><u>30% Funding Policy</u> Updated to only apply to requests above \$15,000. (this does not apply to operating streams).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater capacity for applicant to deliver programs. • Greater support to applicants that do not have access to other funding sources. • Greater support for equity-deserving organizations. • Improved support to one-time projects and new initiatives. • In 2024, 243 applicants, or 57%, submitted requests less than \$15,000. Their total requests represent 34% of the overall 2024 requests.
<p><u>Financial Review</u> Updated the internal financial review process to apply to applications with requests of \$30,000 or greater only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced staff time to process the reviews by 73%. • Improved support to one-time projects and new initiatives.
<p><u>Online Grant Portal</u> Piloting separate grant portal program tiles for Agriculture, Digital, Sports and Active Lifestyles areas, with the intent of providing an easier and more simple process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for a more simplified application process. • Allows for the application language to be more direct and relevant to each program area. • Improved user experience for adjudicators

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Update	Impact/Benefit
for applicants and efficiencies for staff.	and staff.
<u>Translation Services</u> Written translation available for all program material, applications, handbooks, guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants requiring language support services can request the translation of CEF material into 74 different languages.
<u>Applicant Support</u> In addition to public information sessions, CEF Program Managers offered drop-in sessions, providing applicants with one-on-one staff support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEF staff are accessible to the public, providing direct applicant support. Applicants can bring their specific questions and challenges to staff to increase their grant writing capacity and build success.

Community Engagement – Phase II

Staff have begun working on Phase II of the 2024 CEF Update and Community Engagement Plan, as presented to the Grants Sub-Committee on September 14, 2023, report (GRA23003(b)). Phase II includes a review of past consultation documents, an internal review with staff, and community engagement to solicit feedback on CEF overall, experiences as an applicant, adjudicator, and current barriers in accessing the program.

Phase II community engagement will begin online through the Engage Hamilton page and move to in-person sessions divided by CEF Program Areas and occurring in City-Wide throughout the city. Phase II will gather overall feedback and then apply a collaborative approach with focus groups addressing issues that are most prevalent to applicants and their needs.

Through a relational listening and sharing approach, Phase II community engagement is intended to inform staff with specific areas for enhancements. Applying a continuous improvement method allows staff to identify long-term goals and make meaningful, gradual improvements to several CEF program stages.

The Community Engagement Plan, objectives include:

- Developing a funding framework
- Updated public documents
- Updates to the online grant portal to ensure a more user-friendly experience for applicants
- Recommendations for 2025 CEF program enhancements
- Updates to the Funding Agreement/DocuSign process
- Creating program stretch goals

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Enhancements to the application process – reducing barriers to access
Document Plan – a user-friendly public facing CEF Funding Report

2024 City Enrichment Fund Intake

In response to Council direction to consult with community groups in the development of an equitable funding model, the 2024 CEF intake was shifted to facilitate a November 1 — December 15, 2023, deadline. To accommodate the Phase I engagement, past applicants were communicated with directly and notified of date changes and continued to be in frequent communication with staff.

The 2024 CEF intake period was shared with the public through the City’s webpage, social media channels, print and online ads, and marketing through the City’s recreation centers and city-wide library branches. To support applicants during the intake period, CEF Program Managers hosted 11 virtual information sessions that saw 89 total attendees. The information sessions provide potential applicants with general CEF information and specific program area details. The sessions were recorded and were publicly accessible through the CEF webpage. Closer to the December 15 deadline, Program Managers also hosted 8 drop-in sessions, with a total of 35 attendees. Drop-in sessions provide applicants with one-on-one staff support where organizations are invited to bring their specific application or budget questions and challenges.

For the second year, applicants were offered translation services of the CEF applications, handbooks, and guidelines. Additional support was provided to applicants unable to access the online portal by converting specific applications into fillable pdf forms that were then attached to their online accounts through one-on-one online support.

This year, the CEF program saw a considerable increase to the number of applications and overall funding request with the highest totals for the program to date. Compared to the 2023 funding year, the program received a 28% increase in applications and a 47% increase in funding requested, 430 and \$13,537,403 respectively.

City Enrichment Fund Intake Totals 2023-2024 Application Totals

Area	2024	2023	% Increase
Total Applications	430	337	28%
Total Grant Requests	\$13,537,403	\$9,190,107	47%

The total number of applications and funding requests by program area is detailed in Appendix “A” to Report GRA23003(c).

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

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Appendix "A" to Report GRA23003(c): 2024 City Enrichment Fund Intake Data

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