



City of Hamilton Report for Consideration

To: Members Grant Sub-Committee
Date: May 14, 2025
Report No: **GRA25003**
Subject/Title: 2025 City Enrichment Fund Recommendations
REVISED
Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Discussion of Confidential Appendix “B” to Report GRA25003 is subject to the following requirement(s) of the City of Hamilton’s Procedural By-law and the *Ontario Municipal Act, 2001*:

(b) personal matters about an identifiable individual, including City or local board employees.

Rationale For Confidentiality

Appendix “B” to Report GRA25003 is being considered in Closed Session as it contains legal payee information provided to the City of Hamilton (City) in confidence. All applicants recommended for funding recommendations are included in Appendix “A” to Report GRA25003 using the applicants’ common name.

Rationale For Maintaining Confidentiality

Appendix “B” to Report GRA25003 is to remain confidential as it was provided to the City in confidence.

Recommendations (Closed Session)

None

Recommendations

- 1) That, the 2025 City Enrichment Fund recommended funding allocation, in the amount of \$7,970,711 (as outlined in the attached REVISED Appendix “A” to Report GRA25003), **BE APPROVED**; including a one-time use of \$175,000 from the City of Hamilton’s Municipal Accommodation Tax Reserve 108072 to support City Enrichment Fund Arts Program Area, Arts Festivals and Arts Capacity Building streams; and including a one-time use of \$26,251 from the City Enrichment Fund Reserve #112230 for the returning program MYF-CS-D7 Wesley Youth Housing;
- 2) That, staff **BE DIRECTED** to assign payments to the applicants’ legal names, as listed in Confidential Appendix “B” to Report GRA25003, Legal Names of Individuals and Applicants;
- 3) That, the following grants **BE APPROVED**, and funding be withheld, pending the submission of additional information, by July 20, 2025:

i.	AGR - A5	Stoney Creek BIA
ii.	AGR - A15	Wentworth District Women's Institute
iii.	AGR - A11	Westdale Village BIA
iv.	MYF - ART - A6	Grit Lit
v.	ART - A26	Red Beti Theatre
vi.	MYF- ART - B1	Centre Francais
vii.	ART - B2	Festival of Friends
viii.	ART - B3	Greater Hamilton Arts and Events
ix.	CCH - A17	Canpak Association of Hamilton
x.	CCH - A55	Winona Peach Festival
xi.	CCH - A57	Stoney Creek BIA
xii.	CCH - A60	Locke Street BIA
xiii.	CCH - A65	Westdale Village BIA
xiv.	CCH - B3	Stoney Creek BIA
xv.	CCH - B9	Ottawa Street BIA
xvi.	CS - H6	Abrar Mental Health
xvii.	CCH - A14	Binbrook Minor Baseball Association
xviii.	SAL - D12	Ottawa Street BIA
xix.	MYF - ENV - A1	Hamilton Harbour Restoration
xx.	CS	All Community Service (CS) recommendations pending the successful submission of 2024 Final Reports. The CS deadline is April 30 th annually and follows the submission of this report.

- 4) That, Appendix “D” to GRA25003, Payment Plan **BE APPROVED**, and;
- 5) That Confidential Appendix “B” to Report GRA25003, Legal Names of Individuals and Applicants **Be RECEIVED** and remain confidential.

Key Facts

- Report GRA25003 provides Council with the 2025 City Enrichment Fund (CEF) intake results and funding recommendations totalling \$7,970,771.
- To support adequate funding levels within the Arts program area, a one-time allocation of \$175,000 from the Municipal Accommodation Tax reserve is recommended as it supports the shared goals of Tourism and Culture's Tourism Strategy and the CEF Arts Festivals and Capacity streams.
- To remain consistent and to address a technical miscalculation of prior year funding within the Community Services program area for MYF-CS-D7 Wesley Youth Housing, a one-time allocation of \$26,251 from the CEF reserve is recommended.
- The 2025 CEF recommendations support a wide variety of programs and services that are an investment in the lives of citizens that advance the City's strategic plan, and council priorities.
- 435 of 463 applications have received a passing rating and are recommended for funding. The total funding recommended represents 62% of the total \$12,825,251 submitted requests.
- Following two years of CEF program transitions, the 2025 recommendations continue to provide access to municipal support for new applicants. The 2025 recommendations include, when possible, matched one-time 2024 bridge funding, that supported grantees during the CEF program changes from the previous year.

Financial Considerations

The total \$7,970,771 in 2025 CEF recommendations are comprised of the 2025 approved City Enrichment Fund Budget of \$7,769,520, a one-time recommendation to approve \$175,000 from the City of Hamilton's Municipal Accommodation Tax Reserve #108072, and a one-time recommendation to approve \$26,251 in funding from the City Enrichment Fund Reserve #112230. Sufficient funds are available in the current budgets identified to support the recommendations.

Background

Since 2015, the CEF program has enhanced Hamilton communities through annual investments in local charities, not-for-profit and grassroots organizations that deliver a wide range of programs and services to citizens across the city. The 2025 CEF intake received 463 applications on November 15, 2024, across the 7 CEF program areas available:

- Agriculture (AGR)
- Arts
- Communities, Culture & Heritage (CCH)
- Community Services (CS)

- Digital (DIG)
- Environment (ENV)
- Sport & Active Lifestyles (SAL)

The public was informed of the CEF funding intake through email, print and online marketing. The public was invited to meet with members of the CEF corporate-wide team through 12 information sessions and 312 one-to-one support meetings. To increase access and transparency, applications, program area handbooks, support videos, and translation services were available online and by request.

Eligible applications were reviewed by 28 adjudication teams comprising 34 external community reviewers and 48 City staff subject matter experts. Adjudication teams provided constructive application feedback and determined a final score and corresponding rating.

On December 11, 2024, Council approved the 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy (report PED24046(b)) that details the vision and strategic priorities for Hamilton's tourism industry and the actions to achieve this vision. Action #30 recommends using a portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) to support cultural development. In collaboration with the Tourism and Culture Division, a one-time reallocation of \$175,000 is recommended in response to increasing demand within the Arts area. This investment supports the shared goals of the CEF Arts program and Tourism and Culture's mandate. These funds will help to strengthen Hamilton's arts sector in delivering high-impact programming recognized at regional, provincial, and national levels.

Staff are committed to continuous program improvements to embed equitable funding practices and evolve to meet the changing needs of the community.

Analysis

The 2025 CEF funding cycle launched on October 1, 2024, with the 6-week intake period closing on November 15, 2024. CEF is promoted broadly across the city with applicant support provided by the corporate wide CEF team. 463 applications were received with a total request of \$12,825,251. The Communities, Culture & Heritage, Sport & Active Lifestyles, and Community Services program areas received the greatest increase in applications and requests compared to 2024.

Applications are assessed by staff for completeness followed by financial reviews to ensure fiscal health and oversight (247 completed in 2025), and a final assessment by adjudication teams that evaluate applications based on the published criteria. In total, 435 applications received a passing rating and are recommended for \$7,920,771 in funding. Using a sector-based funding approach that maximizes the available CEF program area budgets, the 2025 funding recommendations reflect the application rating and unique challenges in each CEF program area.

Ratings and Recommendations

To qualify for funding, applications must receive a passing score between 60-100. Scores are categorized into a rating scale as follows:

Rating Scale	Scoring Range	2025 Applications by Rating
Rating A	80 – 100	259
Rating B	79 – 70	125
Rating C	69 – 60	51
Rating D	59 – 0	22
Rating DNQ	Does Not Qualify	6

The 2025 recommendations address fluctuations in funding levels observed in previous years and aim to strike a balanced approach between supporting new and returning applicants. The sector-based recommendations for 2025 provide stable funding for returning organizations while creating opportunities for new applicants. Although minor differences exist between program areas, the recommendations have been developed using consistent criteria across the CEF program. Key funding criteria applied across the 2025 recommendations:

Recommendation	Impact	Program Area
Consistent Across CEF Program Areas		All Program Areas
All passing applicants funded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets CEF funding principles and increases access to municipal support. 	
Sector-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizes the program area budget allocations. Similar formula applied across CEF, with minor variations to equitably address significant program area growth, stability, and increase in dollar requests. 	
Returning “C” applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No increase, matching 2024 levels. No reductions have been recommended. Fewest applications in total 51 passing C’s. 	
Funding prioritized for “A” and “B” applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insured higher rated applicants received funding level relative to scores. Increases recommended where possible. 	
New vs Returning applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 292 Returning Applications, and 171 new applications. Where funding allowed, recommendations matched the prior year funding for returning applicants or same percentage as new applicants. This ensured consistency for both returning and new. 	

Recommendation	Impact	Program Area
	<i>CEF supports the programming and service delivery for both returning and new organizations.</i>	
Multi-Year Funding - MYF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency, trust based funding, stabilize funding levels. • Meets community engagement recommendations. 	
Program Areas Distinctions		
Returning Applicants: Matching 2024 CEF and 2024 Bridge Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide consistent and predictable funding levels for “A” rated applicants. • When budget allowed, “B” rated applicants received bridge matching funds 	ALL program areas with the exception of CCH
Returning “A” and “B” applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where funding allowed, increases provided to returning A and B • 21 applications received an increase 	AGR, ART, DIG, ENV
Funding Formulas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas with more available budget received a single formula irrespective of new or returning status. • Areas with constraint budgets due to increase in applications and/or request levels received separate formulas for new and returning. • Varying % of request funded based on the available program area budget and passing applications. 	Single formula: AGR, DIG, ENV, SAL. Two formulas- one each for and returning: ART, CCH, CS

Sector-based funding responds equitably to the uniqueness of each program area, maximizing budgets and allowing the City to make impactful investments. Prior consistent funding models (using one formula across CEF) often resulted in significant under and over funding allocations. The 2025 Budget enhancements supported the permanent launch of the Digital area and were applied to the Community Services and Sport & Active Lifestyles areas as these programs required strategic investment to meet prior year fluctuations and increased community requests. Remaining program area budgets were reallocated to the Community Services area, one-time, to meet the increased need in community.

To address past inequities in program area investments, a one-time Arts budget investment through MAT is recommended. It supports the shared goals of Tourism and Culture’s Tourism Strategy and the CEF Arts Festivals and Capacity streams. This will

ensure that new applicants receive adequate support while maintaining 2024 CEF and Bridge funding levels, avoiding reductions for returning applicants. In 2024, Arts bridge funding accounted for nearly half of all bridge funding, totalling \$190,669. Due to a high number of 2025 new applicants and requests in the Arts, combined with existing bridge funding commitments, the current Arts program area budget cannot adequately fund all 2025 passing applicants. An alternative Arts program allocation, without the MAT support, is provided on page 8.

Multi-Year Funding (MYF) Pilot

MYF represents a strategic advancement in our commitment to equitable funding practices. Following valuable engagement and consultation with community partners, Council approved MYF which reflects a shared vision for sustainable support, long-term impact and greater transparency. MYF provides qualifying applicants with a three-year funding agreement. Implementation of the MYF program aligns with staff’s broader commitment to the continuous improvement of CEF. It marks a deliberate evolution in our approach that better supports community resilience and outcomes.

MYF was open to 236 of 292 returning applicant programs within 15 of the 27 available granting streams. Interested applicants submitted a brief three-year outline describing program outcomes and objectives; Arts Operating applicants submitted a three-year operating plan that detailed planned activities, partnerships and programming timelines. To qualify, applicants required an A rating and a positive financial review outcome.

The community responded strongly with 186 of the total 236 eligible applicants (79%) submitting to the MYF pilot. Of those, 103 applications (55%) have qualified and are recommended for the pilot program. The breakdown of MYF applications by program area is as follows:

CEF Program Area	Approved MYF Applications	Total MYF Submitted Applications
Agriculture	3	10
Arts	21	33
Communities, Culture & Heritage	10	26
Community Services	60	105
Digital	4	6
Environment	4	5
Sport & Active Lifestyles	1	1
Totals	103	186

In years 2 and 3, MYF grantees are required to submit interim reports in lieu of annual applications. Staff will evaluate reports for outcome objectives, financial risk and a continuation of excellent program and service delivery. MYF provides a reciprocal benefit by streamlining the funding process for staff and the public while providing

predictable, stable funding.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA)

Applicants provided IDEA information relative to organizational leadership and target groups served. The collected data provides staff with a greater understanding of the applicant's program impact and board of director's representation. Key data received in 2025:

- 96% of all CEF applicants have representation from equity designated groups within their organization's governance structure, with 99% for returning applicants.
 - 88% report representation of women
 - 65% report representation of racialized peoples and communities
 - 20% report representation of Indigenous people
 - 41% report representation of persons with disabilities
 - 21% report representation of "Other" equity deserving groups
- 69% of CEF applicants have representation from 2 or more equity designated groups within their governance structure, up from 62% in 2024. This number rose to 77% for returning applicants only, indicating that returning applicants had been working to diversify leadership at their governance tables.
- 40% of applicants report universal access, or no target for the applicant programs, down from 51% in 2024. CEF applicants have increased the intentional outreach to target populations for their programs: 48% for new applicants and 36% for returning applicants.

Collected IDEA data will continue to help inform future CEF updates, communication strategies and community capacity initiatives. The IDEA data questions are not scored as part of the overall adjudication assessment.

Alternatives

Alternatively, Council may decide to not recommend the one-time \$175,000 allocation of MAT reserve and instead fund passing Arts applicants from within the \$7,769,520 CEF budget only.

Pros: This ensures funding allocations are drawn from the existing CEF budget.

Cons: This option negatively impacts the Arts and Community Services areas, which will result in an average decrease in funding by 20% and 6% respectively for each new applicant. Programs may not be viable due to low funding levels.

Additionally, this alternative does not advance action #30 of the Tourism and Culture Division's Tourism Strategy by mutually supporting cultural development opportunities with the Arts Festival and Capacity Building grantee programs.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Report GRA25003 aligns with all three of City Council's strategic Priorities, supports the City's 25-year strategic plan, and several departmental strategic plans.

Priority 1: Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development

2. Facilitate the growth of key sectors

Investments made through CEF support the growth and success of Hamilton's non-profit organizations and the Digital sector. CEF funding enhances the City's reputation as a hub for culture, sport, and tourism by directly supporting organizations and initiatives that showcase the vibrancy and diversity found throughout the city.

3. Accelerate our response to climate change

Applicants within the Environment program area have identified alignment with the Community Energy & Emissions Plan, and Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy: Climate Mitigation or Climate Adaption Plans. Grantee outcomes are tracked, and data gathered through the final reporting process.

4. Protect green space and waterways

Hamilton's Urban Forest Strategy is identified among Environment applicant programs. Grantees track the number of trees planted by volunteers, along with additional information including water redirected, impermeable surfaces removed and native species planted.

Priority 2: Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods

3. Provide vibrant parks, recreation, and public space.

CEF 2025 recommendations invest directly in senior focused active living programs and culturally relevant programming in public spaces and facilities. More broadly, many funded programs also serve Hamilton's aging populations.

Priority 3: Responsiveness & Transparency

1. Prioritize customer service and proactive communication

CEF staff are committed to providing excellent customer service to all potential and existing applicants and partners. Access to information is provided through updated online information, translation of all CEF documents and group and one-to-one staff meetings. Following the recommendation phase, applicants are invited to meet with Program Managers to review adjudicator comments and receive application feedback in an effort to build grant writing skills within Hamilton's non-profit sector.

2. Get more people involved in decision-making and problem-solving

CEF recommendations are determined through a collaborative assessment and decision-making process. 28 adjudication teams made up of cross-departmental staff, and external arms-length adjudicators and community reviewers are invited to contribute to the process. Each year, staff request feedback from the adjudication teams which influence CEF program enhancements.

3. Modernize City systems

Public access to CEF program tools is offered through the City's web and the grant and application portal. Efforts are made to ensure a consistent digital user experience with improved visibility. To provide enhanced public City services, the Special Events Advisory team (SEAT) and the Better Homes Hamilton (BHH) programs are also hosted with the CEF portal to provide the public a central application software system.

Previous Reports Submitted

2025 City Enrichment Fund Intake Update (GRA25002) (City Wide) <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=e85133e5-ad9d-4020-8b40-f3d93d9597e3&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=17&Tab=attachments>

2024-2028 Tourism Strategy (PED24046(b)) <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=3ad3efa3-de41-4d62-bb0b-79c5de899bdf&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=30&Tab=attachments>

Consultation

Several divisions across the corporation play a key role in shaping and executing the direction of CEF. Program Area details are summarized in Appendix "F" to report GRA24003. The following divisions have provided feedback including but not limited to the following:

- Lisa Abbott, Director - Tourism and Culture, Planning and Economic Development
- Monique Garwood, Business Administrator, Corporate Services Department

CEF Program Managers

- AGRICULTURE: Tyson McMann, Business Development Consultant, Planning and Economic Development Department.
- ARTS AND COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & HERITAGE: Kristina Durka, Cultural Projects Specialist, Planning and Economic Development Department
- COMMUNITY SERVICES: Carmen Bian, Senior Policy Analyst Policy & Programs, Healthy and Safe Communities Department
- DIGITAL: Fernando Duque de Estrada, Senior Project Manager Digital Innovation, City Manager's Office
- ENVIRONMENT: Morgan Evans, Clean and Green Coordinator, Public Works Department
- SPORT & ACTIVE LIFESTYLES: Mike Savoy, Sports Specialist, Healthy and Safe Communities

28 adjudication teams made up of a combined 82 City staff, external subject matter experts and community reviewers, assessed applications to determine final rating results. [2025 CEF Adjudication – City of Hamilton Staff and Community Reviewers](#)

Appendices and Schedules Attached

REVISED Appendix A to Report GRA25003: 2025 City Enrichment Fund Recommendations

Confidential Appendix B to Report GRA25003: Legal Names of Creation and Presentation Applicants

REVISED Appendix C to Report GRA25003: Application Summaries

Appendix D to Report GRA25003: City Enrichment Payment Plan

REVISED Appendix E to Report GRA25003: 2025 City Enrichment Fund Presentation

REVISED Appendix F to Report GRA25003: 2025 City Enrichment Fund Program Area Details

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