



City of Hamilton Report for Consideration

To: Chair and Members
Grants Sub-Committee

Date: September 3, 2025

Report No: **GRA25004**

Subject/Title:

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Recommendations

- 1) That staff **BE DIRECTED** to adjust the application deadline for the Agriculture program area from November 15 to December 5 annually.
- 2) That staff **BE DIRECTED** to pilot an 18-month project timeline in the Arts program area Creation & Presentation Stream for two grant cycles (2026 and 2027), and to report back on the outcomes of this pilot prior to the 2028 CEF cycle (Q4 2027 launch) as outlined in Appendix "A" to Report GRA25004.
- 3) That staff **BE DIRECTED** to create a new "Organizational Capacity Building" stream within the Community Services program area as outlined in Appendix "B" to Report GRA25004.
- 4) That Appendix "C" to Report GRA25004, respecting other changes to the City Enrichment Fund guidelines **BE RECEIVED**.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide the Grants Sub-Committee with program enhancement opportunities ahead of the 2026 CEF cycle.
- In response to community feedback, this report recommends a new deadline for the Agriculture program area to accommodate harvesting season.
- In response to community feedback and in keeping with other municipal practices, an 18-month project timeline pilot for the Arts Creation & Presentation stream, is recommended.

- This report recommends the creation of a new Community Services funding stream to support organizational development and capacity building in the human services sector.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial impacts in this report.

Background

On May 27, 2016, the Director of the Government Relations and Community Engagement was delegated the authority to amend all City Enrichment Fund forms, guidelines and program areas as needed, reporting any and all changes annually to the Grants Sub-Committee. This delegated authority was further updated and confirmed at Grants Sub-Committee on July 3, 2025.

At the August 11, 2022, Audit Finance & Administration meeting, staff were directed to review the fund's current overall funding guidelines, program handbooks, related funding caps and report back to the Grants Sub-Committee with recommendations to ensure the fund is evolving with the needs of community. Over the 2023 CEF cycle, staff began offering translation services, introduced the use of DocuSign and created opportunities for new applicants with a revised funding approach.

In advance of the 2024 CEF cycle, staff consulted with community partners and the public at large to further develop recommendations for the program. Through this work a set of funding principles and short and long-term goals were developed that influence the ongoing evolution of the CEF program.

At the September 14, 2023, Grants Sub-Committee meeting, staff continued to update the program and received Council approval to streamline the financial review process and amend the 30% funding policy. At this same meeting, staff were directed to review CEF's overall funding and program area guidelines and report back to the Grants Sub-Committee with recommendations to ensure the fund is evolving with the needs of community in advance of the 2025 intake (Report GRA23004).

The CEF program is committed to evolving, adapting to best practices, and meeting the changing and growing needs of the city. This report reflects a commitment to continuous improvement, client support, and transparency.

Analysis

CEF staff are committed to transitioning the program through meaningful incremental changes. A combination of internal assessment and external feedback from the community have informed the recommendations and information within this report.

Application Deadline - Agriculture

Since 2024, the annual CEF intake period has shifted twice, first to accommodate consultation, and second to establish a new permanent intake period based on

feedback from community. As a result of specific feedback from the rural community, this report recommends permanently moving the Agriculture program area intake deadline to December 5.

The current November 15 deadline coincides with the final stages of the harvest season in Hamilton. This significantly impacts the availability of the volunteers from the not-for-profit agricultural organizations to prepare and submit their CEF applications. The proposed December 5 deadline responds directly to community feedback and better reflects the realities of Hamilton's rural and agricultural communities.

Staff have determined that the administrative implications of a later intake for the Agriculture program area can be effectively managed as this is one of the smaller CEF program areas.

18 - Month Project Timeline Pilot

This report recommends the development of a two-year pilot testing 18-month project timelines for grantees awarded CEF Arts, Creation & Presentation (C&P) grants. The recipients of these grants are professional artists or artist collectives.

C&P grantees have consistently provided feedback requesting a longer project timeline to adequately complete and present their projects. Currently, grantees are notified of funding results in May and are required to complete their project by December.

While the current grant timeline (January to December) allows projects to begin prior to receiving the grant funding, the applicant assumes the risk of beginning the project without confirmed grant support. Staff have observed that many grantees do not begin their projects until CEF results are known as CEF funding is essential to the success and scale of each project.

Modifying the timeline to allow 18-months for project completion will better allow projects to be implemented post grant notification. Comparable municipalities utilize a similar timeline based on the receipt of funds or Council ratification, whereas CEF is based on the calendar year. To ensure a consistent administrative schedule, one final report deadline will be recommended for all C&P projects. This will streamline the process and allow staff to receive all grantee final reports prior to the next eligible intake year.

The timeline to complete C&P projects is the only proposed change for this stream. The 18-month project timeline framework and municipal best practices scan are detailed in Appendix "A" to Report GRA25004.

New Community Services Organizational Capacity Building Stream

In consultation with applicants to the Community Services (CS) program area, staff have identified the need for an additional stream to increase the effectiveness and resiliency of the human services sector at the organizational level. Organizations may submit funding requests in support of internal facing one-time projects that grow and strengthen operations, such as the development of strategies and plans, financial records, governance documents, policy improvements, and advancing inclusion,

diversity, equity, and accessibility programs. The proposed Organizational Capacity Building stream will provide equitable access to organizational capacity funding for both returning and new applicants.

This stream will ensure more equitable access to funding for applicants from the human service sector in Hamilton, as organizational capacity building streams already exist in four of the seven CEF program areas. Funding to support this stream will be awarded from the existing CEF budget.

The CS Organizational Capacity Building stream will allow human service organizations to prioritize existing budgets on the increasing demand for program delivery, while building administrative resiliency and capacity. The stream is modelled after other CEF Capacity Building streams. Full eligibility and application assessment criteria is detailed in Appendix “B” to Report GRA25004.

Administrative Updates

CEF is managed with a continuous improvement lens to provide an applicant-centered funding program. Throughout the funding cycle, staff assess each stage and develop immediate and long-term improvements within the CEF workplan. The following administrative program updates are being implemented to streamline the grant portal process, reflect corporate standards and practices, and support program sustainability:

- Application intake date clarity: October 1 to November 15 (or next business day)
 - Providing clarity on application due dates when dates fall on weekends on a go forward basis.
 - In 2025, the deadline for CEF applications to the 2026 cycle will be November 17, at 4 pm.
- Program Area Updates: CCH, CS, and SAL
 - Minor updates to the CCH, and SAL streams related to number of applications that can be submitted per stream or program area.
 - Changes to the evaluation percentages of the CS, Emerging Needs and Program Innovation Stream.
- Appeals Guidelines Updates
 - Clarifying rules for the Appeals process to allow procedural error to be addressed through appeals, in addition to extenuating circumstances.
 - Clarifying frequency of eligibility of C&P applicants to appeal.
- Applications and Budget Form and improvements for administrative efficiencies and to enhance user experience.
- General Guidelines and Program Handbook Updates
 - Improved clarity of definitions for consistency and updating handbooks to reflect all changes within this report.
- R.R. McCann Family Foundation update
 - Confirming the 3-year matching commitment from the R. R. McCann Family Foundation in support of the Digital program area.

With an approximate 500+ CEF users annually, ranging from applicants, adjudicators, and staff, enhancing the administrative performance of CEF is a priority to ensure a

user friendly and accessible program. Detailed descriptions, rationale, and status of each improvement is provided in the attached Appendix “C” to Report GRA25004.

Alternatives

Alternative to Recommendation 1) the proposed Agriculture application deadline of December 5 could be recommended as a pilot, with staff evaluating the efficacy of the new deadline ahead of the 2027 application intake. Given several changes to application deadlines over the past three grant cycles, making this change permanent would help provide greater stability and consistency for applicants, and reduce unpredictability in future years.

Alternative to Recommendation 2) the C&P pilot could instead offer grant recipients twelve months from grant notification to complete the project. This aligns with other municipalities practices. However, this would create administrative challenges as the grantees would have differing final report deadlines and depart from using a consistent CEF program approach to final report deadlines.

Alternative to Recommendation 3) the new Organizational Capacity Building stream could alternatively be offered as a 2-year pilot, with staff reporting back on the efficacy of the stream and recommending whether or not it should be made permanent before the 2028 application intake (Q4 2027). This alternative would require additional staff reporting, maintain discrepancies between Program Area offerings, and introduce unpredictability in future years. Establishing this stream as a permanent offering from the outset would instead help build applicant awareness in a gradual and sustainable manner, preventing a surge of applications in years one and two, and allowing organizations to apply when the stream best aligns with their work.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Report GRA25004 aligns with Priority 3 of City Council's strategic priorities.

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. Staff are proactively working to continuously improve the City Enrichment Fund to more responsively, meet the needs of community. These changes are being proposed in an incremental fashion to ensure transparency and excellence in customer service.

Previous Reports Submitted

2025 City Enrichment Fund Recommendations REVISED (GRA25003) (City Wide)

<https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=50112e19-d05d-438f-8a8e-f220c7cc19f5&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=18&Tab=attachments>

City Enrichment Fund 2025 Program Updates and Improvements (GRA24004) (City Wide)

<https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Meeting?Id=6c03a36e-968a-4aa5-9e75-c5a01c8e4a52&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=14&Tab=attachments>

Consultation

Several divisions across the corporation play a key role in shaping and executing the direction of CEF.

- 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, Policy Analyst - Grants, 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

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: City Enrichment Fund – Arts Program Area – Creation & Presentation Stream Updates Framework

Appendix B: City Enrichment Fund – Community Service Program Area – Organizational Capacity Building Stream Framework

Appendix C: 2026 City Enrichment Fund Administrative Updates

Prepared by: Andrea Carvalho, Advisor, City Enrichment Fund
City Manager's Office, Communications and Engagement
Rebecca Frerotte, Grants Coordinator, City Manager's Office,
Communications and Engagement

Submitted and recommended by: Heather Anderson, Director, Communications and Engagement
City Manager's Office