



MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE

REPORT NO. CS-002-24

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Director of Community Services and Facilities
MEETING DATE: March 11, 2024
SUBJECT: Community Grants Program

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CS-002-24 be **RECEIVED** for information;

AND THAT Council **APPROVE** an annual Community Grants Program, starting in Q2 2024 and within the approved budget allocations.

PURPOSE:

For Council to consider a process to formalize a Thames Centre Community Grant Program.

BACKGROUND:

At the December 11, 2023 Special Council Meeting, the following Resolution (398-2023) was carried:

THAT Council establish a Community Grants program for 2024 with the London Children's Museum request to be referred to that process, once initiated;

AND THAT staff bring back a report to outline the community grants process, and with respect to ongoing requests pertaining to the West Nissouri Non-Profit Seniors' Complex and the Thorndale Medical Centre.

In addition, at this same meeting, a request for financial support from St. Mary's and Area Mobility Services was received for information (Resolution 393-2023). Staff can also refer this group to the Community Grant Program, once initiated.

During Council's Special Meetings focused on the 2024 budget, \$40,000.00 was budgeted for this new program. At this point, \$5,000.00 of this budget line has been allocated to the Lord Dorchester H.S. Robotics Program, with no other commitments finalized at this time.

Upon receiving Council direction, staff has been able to determine that a similar grant program was administered by the Municipality in the years preceding 2016 and can provide the following relevant context as additional background information:

At the April 27, 2016 meeting of Council, the following resolution was carried:

“RESOLVED THAT the Community Partnership Fund (CPF) Program of the Municipality of Thames Centre be discontinued...and further, that the Director of Financial Services/Treasurer be requested to forward a letter to those organizations that have participated in the CPF Program to advise them that the program will no longer be available.”

At its regular meeting held on July 11, 2016, Council requested Staff to investigate whether a fund exists for requests for financial assistance and the amount of financial support that has been approved by Council so far in 2016.

At the August 8, 2016 regular meeting, Staff reported back that a fund still exists for requests for financial assistance and it was found that there is still a minimal “Community Partnership Fund” account in place in the 2016 Budget. The Community Partnership Fund account used to start with approximately \$65,000 each year. In 2016, the account started with \$6,200. At this meeting the following recommendations were carried:

- 1. Report No. C-014-16 of the Clerk/Cemetery Manager, dated August 8, 2016, concerning the Community Partnership Fund, be received for information;*
- 2. The Community Partnership Fund account be renamed “Financial Assistance Fund”;*
- 3. That \$5,000.00 be allocated in the 2017 Budget under the “Financial Assistance Fund” for this purpose;*
- 4. That the following accounts be created:*
 - a. Contribution – Non-Municipal Cemeteries (\$2,500), noting that these funds have been distributed for 2016;*
 - b. Contribution – Educational Awards (\$300.00), noting that the funds have not been distributed for 2016.”*

At the October 26, 2020 meeting of Council, the following recommendations were carried, regarding the “LDSS Co-op Award” which can be seen on the attached spreadsheet:

- 1. THAT Report A-012-20 be received for information;*
- 2. AND THAT Council approve the assumption of the former Thames Centre Business Association award on an annual basis;*
- 3. AND THAT Council approve the \$300.00 funding for the award from the Community Partnerships and Grants Fund.*

Please refer to attached spreadsheet for historical details on grants payments made by the Municipality from 2016 to 2023, falling under the general ledger accounts of “Community Partnership Grant” and “Economic Development.”

COMMENTS:

It is recommended that community groups which received funds previously from the Municipality via the “Community Partnerships Grants” budget line or the “Economic Development” budget line, as summarized in the attached spreadsheet, will now be considered via this new Community Grants Program process.

An exception will be the five abandoned cemeteries that have each been receiving \$1,000 per year for the past five years.

Since this is a new approach for how the Municipality will provide funds/grants, as of 2024, staff recommends that for this transition year each group that received funds in 2022 and 2023 receive the same amount in 2024 (totaling \$21,600 as per attached spreadsheet). In addition, each of these groups (excluding the 5 cemeteries) will be advised by staff that moving forward they will be required to follow the new Community Grant Program application guidelines each year, in order to be considered for funds in 2025 and beyond.

Any parties who have requested consideration for funding in 2024 that do not fall into the above group (those that received funds in 2022 and 2023) will be contacted by staff with how to apply for consideration this year. This includes the London Children’s Museum request.

For the remaining funds available for 2024, and for disbursement of this budget amount for future years, staff recommends the following process:

- 1 – grant applications are solicited (newspaper advertisement, website, social media)
- 2 – select staff review all applications after the submission deadline and bring a report to Council with any recommendations
- 3 – Council reviews all submissions to finalize decision(s)
- 4 – staff updates all applicants
- 5 – a second round of applications may be considered in any year where Council determines there are sufficient funds remaining to do so, otherwise, any remaining/unused funds could also be reserved for the following year.
- 6 – all parties that are awarded any funds from this grant will be required to submit a progress report by the end of the year. This will help to ensure funds are used as expected and will influence consideration for future grant requests.

The second attachment is a draft of the proposed grant application. The final version will be enhanced and made into a fillable PDF that will be available on the Municipal website. Staff recommends that the maximum amount any applicant can receive in one calendar year is \$10,000.



The schedule for the inaugural year of the Community Grants Program will be delayed, pending approval of this report. The proposed schedule is as follows:

	2024	Future Years
Finalize Program Budget	December 2023	December (previous year)
Promote Application Period	March	January
Application Deadline	May	February
Staff Review/Council Decision	May	March
Announcement of Grants	June	March
Progress Reports from Grantees	October	October

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The approved 2024 Budget included \$40,000 for the new Community Grants Program and it is recommended to be allocated as follows;

2024 Budget	\$40,000
Recommended Allocation to 2022 and 2023 recipient Community Groups - Inclusive of \$7000 for the Thorndale Medical Centre	(21,600)
Remaining Amount to Be Allocated in 2024	\$18,400

Council may further consider allocating a portion of the proposed remaining funds in its response to the Letter of Request dated February 26, 2024 from West Nissouri Non-Profit Senior's Complex Board of Directors, as attached.

Future funding levels for the Community Grants Program would be approved through the annual budget process.

STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Pillar: *Community Communications & Engagement*

Goal: 3E *The Municipality could provide funding for community groups and local arts and culture initiatives.*

CONSULTATION:

Jana Nethercott, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk
 Sara Henshaw, Deputy Clerk/Lottery Licensing Officer
 Diane Gallinger, Deputy Treasurer/Tax Collector
 Nicole Bowery, Financial Analyst/Purchasing Officer

REFERENCES:

Previous Council Minutes

ATTACHMENTS:

Historical Info – Grant Payments (2016 to 2023)

Draft Version of Proposed Community Grants Application Form

Letter of Request dated February 26, 2024 from West Nissouri Non-Profit Senior's Complex Board of Directors

Prepared by: S. MacDonald, Director of Community Services & Facilities

Reviewed by: D. Barrick, Chief Administrative Officer