



TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: RECREATION AND SPORT COMMUNITY GRANT ADJUDICATION PROCESS

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: C. GILLARD, MANAGER OF RECREATION AND CULTURE BUSINESS SERVICES

SUBMITTED BY: D. BELL, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND CULTURE SERVICES

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: D. MCALPINE, GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That the composition of the adjudication panel for the Recreation and Sport Community Grant be amended to replace the current adjudication panel composition with the five members (including ex-officio members) of the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee.
2. That the ex-officio members be authorized to appoint an alternate representative to serve in their stead and that this alternate representative be limited to any other member of City Council.
3. That this change in composition take effect upon approval of this motion such that the new adjudication panel is available to adjudicate the applications received for the Spring 2024 Recreation and Sport Community Grant intake process.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Purpose

4. The purpose of this report is to adjust the composition of the adjudication panel for the Recreation and Sport Community Grant to replace staff involvement in the decision-making process for distribution of grant funds to organizations and/or individuals who apply for funding. This will allow elected officials to determine the allocation of taxpayer funds directly.
5. The amended composition to members of the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee highlights the importance of Council members' knowledge of the needs and wants of residents within the City of Barrie and matching those indicators with the intended outcomes contained with applicants' funding requests.

Background

6. On February 14, 2022, City Council adopted motion 22-G-022 as follows:

"22-G-022 RECREATION AND SPORT COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM – GUIDELINES APPROVAL

 1. That the Recreation and Sport Community Grant Program be limited to \$300,000 annually to be funded from the Reinvestment Reserve.

2. That the guidelines for managing the Recreation and Sport Community Grant as outlined in Appendix "A" to Staff Report REC002-22 for the 2022 fiscal year be approved.
7. Intake for grant funding applications has occurred three times (once in 2022 and twice in 2023) with a total of 34 applicants receiving funding in the aggregate amount of \$540,000.
8. During each intake, applications are reviewed by an adjudication panel of five (5) members comprised of the following individuals:
 - The General Manager, Community & Corporate Services
 - The Director, Recreation & Culture Services
 - A representative from the Finance Department
 - A representative from Economic and Creative Development
 - A representative from Tourism Barrie
9. The role of the adjudicators is to read all applications and to make notes about each application and grade them accordingly prior to the assessment meeting. At the assessment meeting, in a group decision-making environment, the adjudication panel reviews the submitted documents and discusses the applications. Using their knowledge and expertise, the adjudicators identify funding priorities and determine the allocation of the funds.
10. Adjudicators are required to keep the contents of all applications and discussions during the assessment meeting confidential.
11. All adjudicators are asked to sign forms to identify any conflicts of interest as a further means of documenting the integrity of the process. Their role is to remain objective and facilitate decisions with impartiality.

ANALYSIS

12. The purpose of the Recreation and Sport Community Grant is to provide funding support for programming, events, workshops, activities, and facilities which focus on building participation and engagement in recreation and sport to enhance the broader health and well-being of the community.
13. The guiding principles used by the adjudication panel in determining successful applicants are:
 - **Health and Well-Being of Residents** as measured by the application's positive impact on the social determinants of health established by Public Health Canada.
 - **Inclusiveness and Diversity** through the reduction or elimination of barriers to participation for under-served and marginalized populations.
 - **Innovative and Collaborative Thinking** evaluated as innovative methodologies for developing and delivering recreational and sport opportunities.
 - **Operating at Arm's Length** from all levels of government to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability.
14. Prior to each intake period, staff conduct an information session which is promoted to local organizations through the City's social media channels, the City's website, signage within recreation and community centres, and direct email notifications using a comprehensive list of over 200 local organizations.

15. The grant guidelines document outlines specific information to assist applicants in completing an application including:
 - The types of funding categories (Programming & Events and Capital Improvements)
 - Eligibility criteria for organizations
 - Expenses that are eligible for funding and those costs which are ineligible.
16. Grant applications received are checked for completeness by the grant administrator, currently the Manager of Business Services within Recreation and Culture Services. Applicants are advised prior to the closing date for applications of any missing information or documents and provided an opportunity to respond within five business days.
17. The grant administrator compiles an electronic file of all application documents received and verifies the eligibility of all requests. Only eligible applications are forwarded on to the adjudication panel for review. The adjudication panel members are given an opportunity to review and score applications independently which generally takes up to two weeks.
18. The adjudication panel members then gather together to review a summary of scoring for all applications. Applications are ranked from highest score to lowest score based on an equal weighting of all adjudicators' scores. Adjudicators are given an opportunity to share their score and rationale behind it for each application. Based on this discussion, the relative scoring for each application may be adjusted. As a group, funds are allocated beginning with the highest-ranked application and proceeding down the list until the budgeted funding is fully distributed. The results can range from full funding approval to partial funding to no funding allocated.
19. Organizations that are not successful in their application are provided the agreed upon rationale from the adjudication panel. This information is shared by the grant administrator. Unsuccessful organizations have, at times, questioned the rationale for a non-award of funds.
20. Some unsuccessful organizations who are not satisfied with the decision-making process have used this as a discussion point in future meetings with staff, thereby, creating an environment whereby staff feel there is a level of distrust with the organization or even favouritism towards the successful applicants.
21. At times, organizations may or have brought the decision of a lack of funding to the attention of one or more Councillors. This places both the Councillor(s) and the Staff member in the challenging position to ensure that they are not infringing on the guiding principle of Operating at Arms' Length.
22. Anonymity is a key component of ensuring as fully an objective process as possible. While adjudicators complete their individual scoring sheets and notes, the adjudication meeting is run in a fashion where only aggregated data is shared openly. This is specifically intended to allow for the knowledge and expertise of the entire group to be shared and utilized to inform the final decision-making. This is similar to the process used for evaluating procurement proposals.
23. The requests for Recreation and Sport Grant funding far exceeds the annual allocation of \$300,000. The current adjudication panel has experience related to the delivery of recreation, tourism and culture as well as financial expertise. However, the political representatives through their direct interaction with the community have a more fulsome understanding of the diverse needs in the community and the impact on the community of allocation of the limited grant funding. The allocation of these taxpayer funds is intended to address the needs identified by community groups balanced with the broader benefit to the community. Council as the representatives elected by the taxpayers have a greater sense of the appropriate balance.

24. As a result of these concerns, staff are suggesting the composition of the adjudication panel be changed such that staff's focus can remain on the execution of the process while an independent panel of adjudicators makes decisions on who are successful grant applicants and how much funding they receive.
25. As a committee of Council and the proposed format with more than 50% of the members of the adjudication panel being Members of Council, the review of applications and awarding of funding would require a meeting that is open to the public.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS

26. There are no environmental or climate change matters directly related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

27. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1 General Committee could choose to maintain the current composition of adjudicators.

This alternative is available.

Alternative #2 General Committee could propose an alternative composition for the adjudication panel to include both staff and Council members.

This alternative is also available. A composition that includes members of Council as more than 50% of the panel would be require the adjudication of applications in an open public meeting. Additionally, some staff may feel the need to defer to Council member(s) recommendations despite having a different view about the application.

Alternative #3 General Committee could choose to propose an alternative composition for the adjudication panel consisting of members of the community and/or recreational industry without any representation from Council or staff.

This alternative is not recommended as it introduces potential conflicts of interest within the local recreational community given the diverse needs for funding with the City of Barrie. There may also be a need to financially compensate adjudicators which adds cost to the process.

FINANCIAL

28. There are no financial considerations of the proposed motion.

LINKAGE TO 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

27. The recommendations included in this Staff Report are related to the following goals contained in 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.
 - ✓ Thriving Community
 - ✓ Responsible Governance