



**TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: BRIGHT FUTURES BARRIE GRANT ADJUDICATION PROCESS**

**PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: D. BELL, DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND CULTURE 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 Bright Futures Barrie Grant be amended to include the five members (including ex-officio members) of the Community Safety Committee.
2. That the ex-officio members may appoint an alternate representative to serve in their stead and that this alternate representative must 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 2025/2026 Bright Futures Barrie Grant intake process in Fall 2024.

**PURPOSE & BACKGROUND**

Purpose

4. The purpose of this report is to adjust the composition of the adjudication panel for the Bright Futures Barrie 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 remove any potential situations of perceived bias or favouritism which may be directed at staff.
5. The amended composition to include members of the Community Safety Committee highlights the importance of Council members' knowledge of the needs and wants of residents within the City of Barrie, alignment with the City's Community Safety Plan objectives, and matching those indicators with the intended outcomes contained with applicants' funding requests.

Background

6. On February 22, 2023, the City of Barrie entered into an agreement with the federal Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for funding under the Building Safer Communities Fund.
7. The fund's purpose, administered through Public Safety Canada, is "to support Municipalities and Indigenous communities in their efforts to address gun and gang prevalence by providing a determined funding allocation to put in place community led projects to combat gun and gang violence and address knowledge gaps concerning the impacts of interventions in gun and gang violence." ([Building Safer Communities Fund](#))

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8. The total amount of funding received over the entire life of the agreement is \$1,866,398 allocated as follows by federal fiscal year (April 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>):
    - 2022/23 \$ 66,014
    - 2023/24: \$700,149
    - 2024/25: \$700,149
    - 2025/26: \$400,086
  9. Recreation and Culture Services seconded staff in early 2023 to administer grant funds, develop a sustainable long-term strategy, and build an evaluation framework to support key measurements reflecting the impact of spending initiatives.
  10. As there was no official funding announcement made by the federal Minister until January 2024, the City could not reference the grant by its official designation as the Building Safer Communities Fund. Staff created the Bright Futures Barrie name for the project as it would reflect a more local focus and higher recognition level amongst organizations and residents.
  11. In consultation with Public Safety Canada, eligible uses of grant funding were identified to support initiatives aimed at reducing youth participation in guns and gang violence through preventive and interventive programs and allocated as follows:
    - Flowthrough funding to eligible community-based organizations.
    - Funding to support City-led initiatives.
    - Funding to support staff administering the grant process.
  12. Intake for grant funding applications has occurred twice, once in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024, with a total of 14 applicants receiving funding in the aggregate amount of \$715,861. The remaining portion of each year's allocation to date has been utilized for City-led initiatives such as the after-school programming in schools that was directed by Council, train the trainer programs to develop employment skills, increases to RecAccess funding available for eligible Barrie youth, and workshops/forums to educate teachers and members of the community related to guns and gangs, as well as to recover the costs of staff time to administer the grant. The grant program has extensive reporting requirements associated with it which require significant staff time.
  13. 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
    - Recreation Program Supervisor with Youth Programming in their portfolio
    - Recreation Programmer for Youth, Volunteer and Special Projects
    - A representative from Barrie Police Services
  14. 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

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discusses the applications. Using their knowledge and expertise, the adjudicators identify funding priorities and determine the allocation of the funds.

15. Adjudicators are required to keep the contents of all applications and discussions during the assessment meeting confidential.
16. 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**

17. The purpose of the Bright Futures Barrie Grant is to provide organizations funding support for programming, speakers, events, workshops, activities, counselling, and more, which focus on prevention and intervention addressing the root causes which encourage violence involving weapons and or gang affiliation for children, young adults, and youth at risk between the ages of 6-26 years of age.
18. The guiding principles used by the adjudication panel in determining successful applicants are:
  - **Strengthen Community Bonds** through improved access to goods and services that keep individuals safe.
  - **Targeted Audience** which identifies, in line with the Building Safer Communities Fund framework, children, youth and young adults at risk between the ages of 6-26.
  - **Pro-Social Activities** that engage the target audience in positive activities that support skill building to improve opportunities for gainful employment.
  - **Sustainability** that identifies outcomes and KPI's that support initiatives beyond the timeline of grant funding.
19. 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, and direct email notifications using a comprehensive list of local community-based organizations.
20. The grant guidelines document outlines specific information to assist applicants in completing an application including:
  - A focus on new or innovative community-based initiatives.
  - Eligibility criteria for organizations
  - Expenses that are eligible for funding and those costs which are ineligible as per the federal funding parameters.
21. Grant applications received are checked for completeness by the grant administrator, currently a member of the grant administration team. 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.
22. 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.

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23. The adjudication panel members then gather together to review a summary of scoring for all applications. Applicants 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. 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.
  24. 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.
  25. 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.
  26. 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 a challenging position.
  27. 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.
  28. The requests for Bright Futures Barrie Grant funding far exceeds the annual allocation as per the funding agreement with Public Safety Canada. The current adjudication panel has experience related to the delivery of youth programming, working relationships with many community-based organizations 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 grant 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.
  29. 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.
  30. As a committee of Council, 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**

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

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

32. 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 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 non-profit youth-based service 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**

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

**LINKAGE TO 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN**

34. The recommendations included in this Staff Report are related to the following goals contained in 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

- ✓ Community Safety
- ✓ Thriving Community
- ✓ Responsible Governance