



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Steve Palmer, Director, Recreation and Culture

Date: April 15, 2024

Report No: COMS-002-24

Subject: Milton Small Grant Program - Pilot Program Update

Recommendation: THAT the Milton Small Grant Program be approved for annual continuance;

AND THAT the annual allotment from the Milton Community Fund be maintained at \$75,000;

AND THAT the Director, Recreation and Culture be authorized to make minor amendments to the Milton Small Grant Program guidelines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Milton Small Grant Program (MSGP) was introduced in Spring 2022 as a two (2) year pilot to encourage and enhance support for small scale citizen-led activities.
- MSGP encourages events and activities that support relationship building among community members and provide opportunities for connection, knowledge sharing, cultural exchange and community-building.
- The program is currently funded annually through an allocation of up to \$75,000 from the Milton Community Fund (MCF).
- The maximum annual grant is \$2,500 per applicant.
- To date, 42 Milton recipients (residents and organizations) have been supported.



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Background

In response to our growing and increasingly diverse community, staff recommended the introduction of a funding stream to encourage and enhance support for small scale citizen-led activities.

The Milton Small Grant Program (MSGP) was introduced in Spring 2022 as a two (2) year pilot program for Milton residents and not-for-profit organizations planning small scale, citizen-led activities/events that enhance the well-being of Milton residents.

To date, there has been 42 recipients and \$56,118 allocated to support local events and activities (Schedule A). The balance of available funding is returned each year to the MCF and re-distributed through the annual allocation process.

The MSGP offers a flexible option for residents / organizations to consider relative to their objectives, with a less demanding application and shorter processing time completed within the same calendar year as compared to the MCF.

Discussion

The MSGP is intended to support not-for-profit organizations, individuals and groups whose events and activities are aligned with the goals of the Town of Milton's strategic action plan and supports relationship building among community members; providing opportunities for connection, knowledge sharing, cultural exchange and community-building.

Program Continuance

In response to an increase in applications submitted each year and availability of funds, staff recommend continuance of the MSGP with a funding upset limit of \$75,000. Proposed changes to the MSGP annual budget would come to Council for approval and annual unspent funds will be returned to the MCF for reallocation. Staff will continue to provide an annual allocation summary for Council's awareness.

MSGP Renaming

While the increase in submitted applications for 2023 suggests growing local awareness of the MSGP, a significant number (47) were declined compared to 2022 (8). Most were related to for-profit/business activities or social service activities, potentially indicating a lack of

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clarity regarding the purpose of the MSGP. To assist with this, the program has been renamed the 'Milton Community Connections Grant' and further education will be provided to ensure the fund's purpose is clearly stated to prevent the submission of unnecessary applications, and unnecessary administration time.

Program Guidelines

Based on learnings during the pilot phase, minor updates have been made to the funding guidelines (Schedule B) to mimic the Milton Community Fund guidelines (COMS-008-15). Staff propose that they only come to Council for approval if substantive changes are being recommended. This would be based on the following criteria:

- Change to the eligibility for application;
- New category of funding; or
- Focus on the guidelines to support a new strategic program objective.

It is recommended that any other minor adjustments be made through the authority of staff who will review the program annually to ensure it meets the needs of applicants the program is intended to support.

Financial Impact

When the MSGP was introduced (COMS-011-21), it was determined that funding would be provided from within the approved budget for the MCF, with any unused portion being redirected back to the broader MCF each November.

The 2024 budget provides \$500,000 for the MCF, with funding from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Association revenue that the Town receives each year. Should the MSGP be approved to continue, the upset limit (currently set at \$75,000) will continue to be funded entirely from the approved budget for the MCF. As a result, there will be no impact to the Town's reserve balances or operating budget.

With a per application limit of \$2,500, it is estimated that MSGP can support up to 30 events and activities per year, noting that the number could potentially increase as not all applications will require or be approved for the full \$2,500 limit.

