

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT NO. SI - 2023 - 0017

**FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
COUNCIL**

November 22, 2023

SUBJECT: Update – Economic Development and Tourism Grant Programs and the Approval Process

1. RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Council receive Report SI-2023-0017 prepared by the Economic Development and Tourism Division, Strategic Initiatives Department respecting updates on the Economic Development and Tourism Grant Programs and the approval process.
2. That Council direct the Internal Review Team to undertake the evaluation and approval of all Grant Programs administered through the Economic Development and Tourism Division and direct the Clerks Division to update the Terms of Reference for the Economic Development Committee accordingly.

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the various grant programs (ie. Community Improvement Plan Grant, Economic, Culture and Community Betterment Grant, Development Application Rebate) administered by the Economic Development and Tourism Division and efforts undertaken to ensure that all these grants and information are accessible to the public in the same location on the website and in a consistent format. The report also requests that Council direct the Internal Review Team recently appointed to oversee the new grant application program for non-profits, to also provide for the evaluation and approval of these grants. And further, that the Clerks Division be directed to amend the Terms of Reference for the Economic Development Committee to delete the reference to overseeing the evaluation and approval of grant applications.

3. BACKGROUND:

On August 2, 2023, Council approved the following Resolution respecting the review and implementation of a formalized application process to be used by non-profits who wish to request funding to support their programs.

RESOLUTION NO. C-2023-0281

1. That Council receive Report SI-2023-0014 prepared by the Strategic Initiatives Department, Economic Development and Tourism Division respecting the review of the process of providing annual funding to community organizations and not-for-profits.
2. That Council direct staff to develop guidelines and a standardized application form for use by community organizations and not-for-profits that incorporate the recommendations as outlined on Page 9 of the Consultant's Report provided as Attachment 1 to Report SI-2023-0014.
3. That Council approve a budget of \$350,000 for a 1-year period to support project-based funding requests received from community organizations and not-for-profits, in advance of the 2024 budget deliberations.
4. That Council direct the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer / Treasurer to establish an internal review team to receive and review all future funding applications for requests less than \$10,000, to a maximum disbursement of \$50,000.
5. That Council authorize the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer / Treasurer and the internal review team to review and evaluate all applications for funding requests of \$10,000 or more and provide a report to Council for final consideration.
6. That Council request staff return with a report in advance of the 2025 budget discussing the full suite of grants currently available through the Town of Georgina departments with an eye to streamlining the application process in a similar manner as this review.

As a result of questions from Council with respect to the various grant applications available, Recommendation #6 above requested an update from Staff on the various grants available to the public, and steps taken to streamline the application process. In order to improve the application process for 2024, staff have undertaken immediate steps to streamline the application process and have expedited this report back to Council.

4. **ANALYSIS:**

In response to Council's request, the Economic Development and Tourism Division has created a new link to the Town's webpage www.georgina.ca/grants that contains a list of all the grants currently available to non-profits, community organizations and businesses/individuals. This webpage indicated below provides the title of each grant available, a brief description of the grant, a drop-down menu to guidelines and a link to the online grant application. Staff note that all grant applications are now available on the same online application platform.



This new webpage provides a one stop shop approach on the Town's website and ensuring that all Town grants utilize the same online application platform. Staff note that although the webpage includes the Community Initiative Fund and a new online application form is now available, this is a separate grant administered by the Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council and is not part of this report discussion.

Staff note that historically all Economic Development and Tourism related grants were evaluated and reviewed by the Economic Development Committee (EDC). However, during the Pandemic and in the absence of EDC meetings, an Internal Review Team was established to evaluate and approve these grant applications. Any grant approvals were provided in a briefing note and placed on the next available Council meeting to ensure that Council and the public were notified of the grant disbursements.

Given the success of this Internal Review Team during the Pandemic in providing for the timely evaluation and approval of funds and that this team will be overseeing the evaluation of the grants available to non-profits as outlined in Resolution C-2023-0281, staff are recommending that these grants continue to be processed by the Internal Review Team. Review and approval by this Internal Review Team not only helps to streamline the approval process but also helps to ensure that questions and concerns with implementation are addressed early in the process of preparing for events/programs.

In discussions with the Town's Deputy CAO and Treasurer, the Internal Review Team will consist of the following staff/divisions:

- Financial Strategy and Planning Division
- Grant Specialist
- Taxation Division
- By-law Enforcement Division
- Building Division
- Clerks Division
- Economic Development and Tourism Division
- Community Services Department

In order to formalize the evaluation and approval process for all Town grants, staff recommend that Council approve the Internal Review Team as the evaluator and approval authority for all grants and rebates historically processed by the Economic Development Committee.

Staff note that the grants offered through the Community Improvement Plan Grant Program and Economic, Culture and Community Betterment Grant Program have a maximum grant of \$5,000. The Development Application Rebate provides rebates of 50% to a maximum of \$15,000 for a single development application and 75% up to a maximum of \$50,000 for multiple applications on the same property. This rebate is provided upon confirmation that the final occupancy for the building has been issued by the Town's Building Division. The Development Application Rebate is targeted to industrial/commercial/institutional developments that create full time employment and increase the non-residential tax base.

5. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Delivering service excellence

Diversifying our local economy

Creating a vibrant, healthy, and safe community for all

Advancing environmental stability

6. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:

A total of \$40,000 has been allocated in the 2024 draft budget for the administration of the Community Improvement Program grants available to business within the Business Improvement Areas.

A total of \$45,000 has been allocated in the 2024 draft budget for the administration of the Economic, Cultural and Community Betterment Grant Program.

A total of \$100,000 has been allocated in the 2024 draft budget to the Development Application Rebate Program.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

There is no requirement to notify the public prior to consideration of this report. However, all grants administered by the Economic Development and Tourism Division are advertised on a regular basis through the Division's social media channels and e-newsletters. Two application intakes are held for the Economic, Culture and Community Betterment Grants and applications for the Community Improvement Plan Grant Program and Development Application Rebate Program are accepted throughout the year.

8. CONCLUSION:

In order to ensure a streamlined process for Town grants and that applications are evaluated and approved in a similar and timely manner, staff are recommending that the Internal Review Team evaluate and process all grants historically evaluated and approved by the Economic Development Committee.

APPROVALS

Prepared By: Karyn Stone
Manager, Economic Development and Tourism

Reviewed By: Rob Wheeler
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Treasurer

Recommended By: Shawn Nastke
Director, Strategic Initiatives

Approved By: Ryan Cronsberry
Chief Administrative Officer