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Presented by: Anna Royer, Senior Advisor, Grants & Partnerships, Recreation & Parks

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Policy C-CS-22 Outside Agency Grant Program Review Update

Presented by: Anna Royer, Senior Advisor, Grants & Partnerships, Recreation & Parks

RECOMMENDED MOTION

That the Outside Agency Grant Program base funding be increased to \$10.20 per capita effective 2021.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

At the April 6, 2020 Council meeting Council received a general review of the Outside Agency Grant Program, with a recommendation from the Community Living Standing Committee (CLSC) to increase the per capita allowance in the policy from \$9.00 to \$10.20. At the time of the meeting, Council requested that Administration bring the report back for debate in September 2020. This report meets the request of Council providing opportunity for further dialogue on the topic of the base budget for the Outside Agency Grant Program.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL’S STRATEGIC PLAN

N/A

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Management of Community Granting:

Provision of funding to eligible St. Albert Not-for-profit organizations and residents in the areas of special events, sport and culture development, operational funding and capital renovations and development. Applications are accepted on an annual basis with submissions reviewed by the

Community Services Advisory Committee in the fall of each year with recommendations forwarded to Council for final funding approval. Total budget for this grant program is based on a funding formula of \$9 per capita.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

On April 6, 2020 Council passed the following motion:

(CB-20-015)

That the matter be directed back to Administration for further review taking into consideration the dialogue and feedback generated by the Committee and present a revision back to the Committee or Council before September 21, 2020.

On February 10, 2020 the Community Living Standing Committee passed the following motion:

(AR-19-496)

That in 2021 the Outside Agency Grant Program base funding be increased to \$10.20 per capita and include the related background information to Council in March 2020.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

St. Albert was in the early stages of understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the future challenges that would be faced by both the City and local community organizations when this agenda item was initially discussed April 6. Council postponed the decision surrounding the recommendation of CLSC to increase the Outside Agency funding formula from \$9 to \$10.20 per capita until more information regarding financial impacts and strategies for managing the anticipated financial pressures on the overall city budget due to COVID-19 was available.

COVID-19 has proven to be an unparalleled experience for both the City and community organizations. This pandemic has created many challenges for community organizations but has also created many innovations and the exploration of alternate methods of program delivery. Administration has consulted with local community organizations to further understand their current state during the pandemic and challenging economic climate.

All 2020 Outside Agency Grant recipients were invited to provide feedback related to their experiences during COVID-19 to provide Council an understanding of the impacts of the pandemic. The feedback was requested on four categories, including; financial impacts to each organization; impact on utilization of services by clients; additional support or funding received through alternate sources; and anticipated Outside Agency grant requests for 2021. The summary of the feedback received is outlined below.

Financial Impacts

Negative financial impacts were identified by local organizations due to COVID-19, including the following:

- Reduction of revenue resulting from the inability to operate in-person programs.
- Inability to host or run fundraising events to support operations.
- Lack of revenue resulting from rapidly aligning programs to an online format.
- Additional costs incurred relating to upgraded computer equipment and software to serve to

keep clientele and membership engaged, informed and connected.

Impact of Modified Operations on Community Organization Clients

Most outside agencies identified that COVID-19 had impacted their operations, requiring program modifications, including:

- Engaging with clients and minimizing the effects of isolation from COVID-19.
- Offering programs and updates on-line/social media was met with some success, but organizations have found that many clients still require one-on-one contact through phone or one-on-one video counselling, both requiring time and staffing resources.
- Some organizations have seen an increase (as much as double in some cases) in their service demand during the pandemic.

Alternative Funding

Grant and funding options in support to not-for-profit organizations have been developed both provincially and federally since COVID-19. Through this consultation, it was noted that there were varying degrees to which local organizations applied for and have been successful in receiving funding. Funding received assisted in mitigating the financial impact of COVID-19 and was used primarily for staffing, supplies, training, and on-line specialty programming.

2021 Outside Agency Funding Request

All organizations expressed intent to apply for funding through the Outside Agency Program for 2021. Most organizations indicated they anticipate requesting a similar or slightly increased amount of funding to that which they received in 2020.

Local community organizations are continuing to understand and plan for their future operation in alignment with the unknowns of the current pandemic. 2020 is a year of constant change and uncertainty and may not be the right time to make changes to existing grant programs to meet future needs of organizations that have yet to be understood.

Regular updates provided over the past five months by the Director of Finance have highlighted the mitigation strategies put in place by Administration to respond to the magnitude of the financial impacts to the City. Capital projects, events, initiatives, and programs have been postponed or cancelled; staff have been laid off or redeployed, and vacant staff positions have been left unfilled; all with the intent of minimizing the current financial impact. Decisions have been balanced and well thought out with consideration to the potential of a second wave, which would once again require the corporation to be nimble and respond quickly.

It is important to consider the current economic climate and the financial challenges faced by the City during this pandemic in making this decision to increase the budget for the Outside Agency Grant Program at this time. COVID-19 has had profound impacts on the City of St. Albert, our residents, businesses, and community organizations. We are living in uncertain times with a strong possibility of lingering effects well into 2021 and beyond. Administration has worked diligently to minimize the current financial impacts and may be required to continue to be flexible as adjustments to programming, projects, staffing, and service delivery may be required through 2021. There is a strong potential that a second wave of the pandemic will occur resulting in further impacts.

Therefore, Administration is recommending an alternative for Council's consideration, that the funding formula of \$9.00 per capita as currently documented in Policy C-CS-22 Outside Agency Grant Program remain in place.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

Included within the body of the report.

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

Increasing the per capita funding of the programs from \$9.00 to \$10.20 would result in a budget increase of \$79,298 to a total funding envelope of \$674,036 from a current budget of \$594,738.

Legal / Risk:

None at this time.

Program or Service:

Increased funding may help to support local not for profit during this challenging health crisis, but may also become a reliance of those organizations, at a time that Administration is being pro active to look for solutions to existing funding challenges.

Organizational:

None at this time.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

If Council does not wish to pass the recommended motion set out at the beginning of this report, the following alternatives could be considered:

1. That the funding formula of \$9.00 per capita as currently provided for in Policy C-CS-22 Outside Agency Grant Program remain in place.
2. That the 2021 Outside Agency Grant Program base be increased to \$10.20 per capita for one year only and then returned to the \$9.00 per capita base for 2022 and onward.
3. That Administration proceed based on specific direction from Council.

Report Date: September 8, 2020

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Chief Administrative Officer: Kevin Scoble