

City of Mississauga

Corporate Report



Date: January 14, 2025	Originator's files:
To: Chair and Members of General Committee - Corporate Grants	
From: Jodi Robillos, Commissioner of Community Services	Meeting date: February 5, 2025

Subject

2025 Culture and Community Grant Programs

Recommendation

1. That the Corporate Report entitled "2025 Culture and Community Grant Programs" dated January 14, 2025, from the Commissioner of Community Services be approved.
2. That amendments to the current 2024-2026 multi-year agreements of the Art Gallery of Mississauga, Heritage Mississauga, Orchestras Mississauga, Mississauga Arts Council, and Visual Arts Mississauga be approved.
3. That Council delegates authority to Director of Recreation & Culture to approve a spring intake of the Live Music Grants Pilot Program.
4. That all necessary By-laws be enacted.

Executive Summary

- The 2025 Culture Grant Programs include three streams of funding with a total budget of \$5,155,500, cost centre 28533.
- The 2025 Community Grant Programs includes two streams of funding with a total budget of \$1,300,000, cost centre 28530.
- Per *Subcommittee of Council- Arts and Culture Festival Groups Report 4-2024*, the following changes were made to the 2025 grant streams.
 - An additional \$1.5 million dollars allocated from the city portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax each year to help support the cost of the new and increased Culture Grant funding.
 - Arts and Culture groups are now eligible for grants of up to 65% of their annual budgets, up to a maximum of \$200,000.
 - Festivals are now eligible for grants of up to 65% of their eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$200,000.

- A total of 94 applications were received.
- The Peer Assessment Committees recommend that 77 applications be approved for funding which includes:
 - 55 applications in the Culture Grants Program including four new multi-year grants and nine Culture Project Grants.
 - 21 applications in the Community Grants Program.
- In addition to the new grant recommendations for 2025, five organizations in the Arts and Culture Grant Program and six organizations in the Community Grant Program will be entering the next year of their previously approved multi-year grants.

Background

As outlined in the City's Community Grant Administration Policy (08-01-03) funding is provided through various granting programs to assist emerging and established community-based groups and organizations to support their operations, deliver programs or services, or complete special projects that address needs in the community and contribute to advancing the City's strategic priorities.

This report outlines 2025 funding recommendations for the following four grant streams:

1. Arts & Culture
2. Cultural Festivals & Celebrations
3. Culture Projects
4. Community Grants

Arts & Culture

The Arts & Culture grant program supports emerging and established not-for-profit professional and community-based arts, culture, and heritage organizations in Mississauga through annual and multi-year (3-year) grants. The goals of the grant program are to help eligible organizations develop exemplary programs and services for art, culture and heritage; and to advance knowledge, understanding and appreciation of arts, culture, and heritage for the citizens of Mississauga.

Cultural Festivals & Celebrations

The Cultural Festivals and Celebrations (CFC) grant program provides annual and multi-year (3-year) funding up to \$200,000 to offset expenses associated with providing a clean and safe venue for the presentation of arts, heritage and cultural festivals and celebrations to residents and visitors. CFC supports a range of events that reflect the City's many cultural traditions.

Culture Projects

Each year, the Culture Projects Grant program has a theme. The 2025 Culture Projects Grant, themed “Animating Urban Spaces”, aims to support organizations, collectives, and BIAs to create temporary, site-specific arts and culture projects that reimagine and activate urban spaces throughout the City of Mississauga. The theme is designed to:

- Support the presentation of art outside of traditional galleries, venues, and presentation spaces.
- Encourage artists to explore and integrate art into urban surroundings in creative ways.
- Activate private, non-residential spaces that otherwise do not host artistic activities, including outdoor spaces and repurposing buildings/indoor spaces.
- Support work in many artistic mediums including theatre, dance, music, visual arts, digital arts, Indigenous arts, and more.

Community Grants

The Community Grant Program provides annual grants up to \$10,000 and multi-year grants to Mississauga-based, not-for-profit community groups in good standing with the City of Mississauga’s Community Group Registry Program (Policy 08-01-01). These groups deliver programs and services that keep Mississauga residents active, healthy and engaged in their communities and align with the strategic priorities of the Recreation & Culture Division and Parks, Forestry and Environment Division.

The Small Projects Matching Grant (SPMG) is another funding opportunity for community groups seeking small grants of \$500 to \$2,500 to support projects that strengthen neighbourhoods, increase resident engagement, and enhance opportunities for Mississauga residents to participate in events and activities. The SPMG is funded through the Community Grants budget with Director approval.

Live Music Grant Program

The Live Music Grant Pilot Program, which for the previous two years held intakes in the fall and the spring, did not have a fall intake for 2025 and will only feature a spring intake for 2025 set to launch in February 2025. The rationale is to ensure the maximum amount of grant funds are available in alignment with the music sector's planning cycle for the spring/summer of 2025, as this appears to be when music presenters need it most. Because the grants are of low value (up to \$2500), staff seeks delegated authority to the Director of Recreation & Culture to approve the Live Music Grant recommendations, ensuring an efficient review and distribution of grants. This aligns with the process of the previous two spring intakes of the Live Music Grant for which Council delegated authority for Director approval.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Survey

New for 2025 is a volunteer equity, diversity and inclusion survey that was included in the grant application form. The survey is a part of the City’s larger commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in its Culture and Community Grants program, and is utilized to better understand the organizations applying for grants and the communities they serve. The survey was confidential,

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voluntary and did not impact the evaluation of the grant application. The results provide helpful context on the groups applying for City grants, what demographics of residents they are serving, where in Mississauga are their programs and services are held, and the demographics of their leadership teams. In total, 89 of 94 applicants completed the survey, for a response rate of 95%. Some initial findings from the survey include the following:

- The three most common demographics that grant applicants serve are Racialized Communities, Youth, and Older Adults.
- 84% of comments indicate a group’s leadership predominately consists of equity-seeking individuals (i.e. predominately women, predominantly members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities, predominantly racialized individuals, predominantly persons with disabilities, primarily members of Indigenous communities.)
- 1/3 of survey responses indicate that programming and services are being delivered city-wide, rather than in one specific ward in Mississauga.

Staff will continue to review the results of the survey to determine how this information can help to strengthen the grant programs. This will help staff ensure that the grants process is equitable and reflects the broad spectrum of Mississauga’s community's need.

Grant Administration Process

The City’s grant process is guided by the Community Grant Administration Policy (08-01-03) and is consistent with other municipalities and granting bodies throughout North America, including the provincial and federal governments. The process can be broken down into three steps:

1. Application Intake

The 2025 application period opened on August 26, 2024, and closed on October 11, 2024. As in previous years, information about the grant program was distributed through the City’s promotional channels to ensure broad community awareness including the City's website, emails, e-newsletters, news releases and social media channels. The Community Development team and other City staff perform significant community outreach and leverage their professional networks across the city to attract potential applicants and reach underserved populations. Per the direction received from Council in the 2024 report, the Community Development team also hosted the Verge learning series throughout 2024. This series of workshops supported groups in strengthening organizational capacity, including diversifying revenue and sponsorship.

Six grant information sessions were held virtually from September 11, 2024, to September 26, 2024, with a total of 81 participants attending. This is an 108% growth in attendees over the previous year (39 participants), reflecting the increasing interest in the grant programs and the effectiveness of City staff’s outreach to new community groups. The sessions provide an opportunity for staff to share the application process and answer questions about the grant program. Sessions are open to the public and all first-time applicants are required to attend one

of the information sessions to be eligible for funding. Staff are also available to provide grant applicants with a one-on-one pre-application consultation which is strongly encouraged.

2. Staff Review

This step verifies that applications are complete, meet eligibility criteria and include sufficient information to be assessed. The Eligibility Criteria is included in Appendix 1.

Grant requests over \$5,000 also undergo a financial risk assessment by the City's Finance Division. Each application is categorized as either a high, medium or low risk based on the following:

- Does the organization have adequate financial liquidity?
- Is the organization carrying a sufficient surplus?
- Is the organization carrying an unacceptable deficit?
- Are the organization's finances consistent year over year?
- Does the organization have a sustainable funding base (including funding from multiple sources)?
- Are there significant variances between the organization's budgeted finances and actuals?

3. Peer Assessment Committee Recommendations

Peer Assessment Committees were approved by Council on February 15, 2023, for a four-year term (Appendix 2). The volunteer peer assessors review the grant applications independently and then participate in a series of group meetings to review the applications and recommend grant allocations.

The Peer Assessment Committees review and score each eligible application against the published criteria for the grant programs (included in Appendix 1). Each organization is assigned a grade from 1-5 based on the numerical score. Recommendations are based on the merit of the applications with detailed criteria for how funding is to be allocated. Applications require a minimum threshold score above 2 to be considered for funding.

Comments

A total of 94 grant applications were received by the October 11, 2024, deadline. This includes 71 applicants in Culture Grant streams and 23 applicants in the Community Grant. There was a total of 18 new applicants across all streams. Please note this does not include applications for the Small Projects Matching Grant, which are approved at the Director level and discussed later in the report. In total:

- 77 applications are recommended for funding
- 13 applications are not recommended for funding
- 5 applications did not meet eligibility criteria

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A detailed breakdown of the funding recommendation is provided in Appendix 3. In addition, evaluation summaries for each application are included in Appendix 5.

Recommendations from the *Subcommittee of Council- Arts and Culture Festival Groups Report 4-2024*

The 2025 Culture Grant programs are the first to integrate recommendations from the *Subcommittee of Council- Arts and Culture Festival Groups Report 4-2024* (and its corresponding Resolution 0194-2024) that was adopted at Council on September 25, 2024. Over the course of the summer and fall of 2024, City staff, community groups, and City Council members collaborated to determine revisions to the Culture Grants process and budget to better support community groups.

Some immediate revisions for the 2025 grant intake process include the following specific recommendations made by Council through the subcommittee:

- An additional \$1.5 million dollars allocated from the city portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax each year to help support the cost of the new and increased Culture Grant funding.
- Arts and Culture groups are now eligible for grants of up to 65% of their annual budgets, up to a maximum of \$200,000.
- Festivals are now eligible for grants of up to 65% of their eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$200,000.

In a presentation to the subcommittee in September 2024, staff committed to the following action items for 2025:

- Improved application form with clearer and more concise questions and formatting.
- Reduced financial reporting table in application
- Increased opportunities for groups to includes notes to support their statistics.
- Increased communication opportunities with City staff for support throughout the year.

Staff addressed each of these commitments throughout the grant application process, with special attention being paid to the grant application form. Substantial changes to the application form were made to ensure the process was less labour intensive for applicants and peer reviewers. This includes a refined financial reporting section with fewer categories, improvements on the quality and clarity of questions, as well as reducing the size of application sections for the applicant to complete. Early feedback from groups has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly regarding the refined financial reporting table. Staff will continue to make improvements to the application form to ensure continuous improvement of the application process.

Additional improvements for subsequent cycles of the grant program include further outreach to community groups to gain feedback on current and future process improvements and creating

an action plan to implement process improvements and address logistical supports requested by applicants. Staff will report back to Council on proposed changes in advance of the 2026 grant application process.

Outcomes of Integrating Subcommittee Recommendations

The subcommittee's recommendations were made midway through the grant intake process, so staff and peer assessors quickly integrated recommendations made in the subcommittee report to ensure groups received the benefits of the subcommittee in 2025.

As a result of the recommendations made by Council and the adjustments to the grant process made by staff, several impactful outcomes emerged for 2025. This includes:

- An 81% success rate for applicants across all streams.
- 15 applicants receiving grants for the first time in their respective grant programs.
- A 31% increase in funding for the Cultural Festivals and Celebrations Grant stream.
- A 28% increase in funding for the Arts & Culture Grant stream.
- 68% of applicants received their full eligible funding request.

The high success rate of 81% is particularly important, as it shows the accessibility of the City's grant programs and the continued commitment to fund a wide breadth of Culture groups at various stages of their growth.

Although staff were able to move quickly to implement changes, many community groups did not have the capacity to change their annual budgets, strategic plans, or other action items once the grants budget increase occurred midway through the intake period. Thus, several groups did not ask for funding increases in 2025, and many of the highest scoring groups did not ask for substantial increases. For instance, 4 of the top 5 scoring CFC groups asked for a combined increase under \$100,000. In instances where groups did ask for substantial increases, their budgets were not always in line with the request. This was especially the case with CFC groups whose request did not match the growth of their annual eligible expenses or included ineligible expenses. Staff anticipate a larger demand for grants and more concise budgets in 2026 when groups can properly plan and budget around the new parameters set by the subcommittee of Council.

2025 Culture Grants Recommended Funding

71 applications were submitted to the Culture Grants Programs in 2025. 56 applications are recommended for a total funding of \$2,630,275, including four groups recommended for multi-year grants: three in the Cultural Festivals and Celebrations Stream and one in the Arts & Culture stream. This excludes previously approved multi-year funding. The Peer Assessors focused their analysis on the evaluation criteria for each stream and considered increases in funding based on the quality of the application and the business case made by the applicant for an increase in funding. A groups' core operating expenses and each stream's eligible expenses were carefully considered to ensure the funding provided assists a group's operations and

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allows the group to pursue additional funding sources from other funders. Funded groups will offer programming and services in theatre, dance, visual arts, among other artistic disciplines. These programs and services will occur throughout the city and help to advance the City’s Cultural Districts by providing residents the opportunity for social gathering and community building through the arts. For details on funding for each group and total funding amounts for each stream please see Appendix 3.

Arts & Culture Grant

The annual Arts & Culture Grant stream recommends \$1,258,781 in funding to 25 groups, which represents an increase of \$274,259 (or 28%) from 2024. The increase in funding ensures that established groups have additional funds for important stages of their growth, while new applicants have access to funding to offset core operating costs and leverage their grant for additional funding. 4% of funded group have now met or exceeded the previous 2024 funding limit of \$120,000, 59% of groups received funding increases, and 45% of groups received the total eligible grant they requested. 10% of Arts & Culture Grant recipients are new groups receiving operating funding from the City of Mississauga for the first time, which shows a commitment to onboarding new groups to the grant programs to help support their operations.

Cultural Festivals and Celebrations Grant (CFC)

The annual CFC Grant stream recommends \$710,794 in funding to 18 groups, an increase of \$167,546 (or 31%) from 2024. Much like the Arts & Culture stream, funding was prioritized for both established and emerging applicants. 66% of established groups applying over the \$20,000 threshold received increases. The CFC stream also saw a substantial growth in new applicant receiving grants in 2025, as six groups who did not receiving funding in 2024 are now receiving funding in 2025. New groups represent 33% of total CFC grants in 2025, providing more groups the opportunity to offset their event expenses while providing more opportunities for Mississauga residents to engage in events and festivals across the city. 44% of groups from all applicant categories received the total eligible grant they requested.

Culture Projects

Nine Culture Projects initiatives, outlined in Appendix 4, will activate spaces in Mississauga that typically do not feature art. This includes four projects that will activate City parks, with City staff eager to collaborate with the groups to ensure a safe and efficient process. The Culture Project Grant’s theme helps to advance the objectives of the 2024 Culture Future Directions Master Plan, including Recommendation 16, which aims to promote and expand availability of spaces for artists to exhibit and present their work in City-owned parks and open spaces. The program had a 90% success rate for applicants in 2025.

2024-2026 Multi-Year Grant Revisions

As a result of the budget increase for the 2025 Culture Grants as directed by the subcommittee of Council, the five groups with existing multi-year funding for 2024-2027 will receive an increase in funding from their previously approved funding agreements. The groups include:

- Art Gallery of Mississauga
- Heritage Mississauga
- Orchestras Mississauga
- Mississauga Arts Council
- Visual Arts Mississauga

The groups' applications for their 2024-2026 agreements were previously evaluated by the peer assessment committee in 2023, and scores and funding were awarded based on the quality of their applications. The peer assessment committee's detailed process and evaluation followed established procedures following the criteria in the 2024 Arts & Culture Grant Guidelines to ensure impartial and informed funding recommendations.

While it is important to recognize the previous process, it is equally important to ensure these integral groups to our arts and culture fabric also receive the benefit of the additional funding available for this budget cycle from the recent subcommittee recommendations. To increase funding in a way consistent with the peer assessor's original assessment, staff recommend a 31% increase to each group's funding previously approved by Council in 2024. A 31% increase is consistent with the overall increase to the 2025 Culture Grants budget and ensures our multi-year funding applicants receive the same average increase as the budget received.

To validate the percentage increase, staff reviewed each group's 2024 mid-term financial report and final report, which articulates their proposed 2025 service delivery and 2024 outcomes. The conditions of the grants will remain the same as their current agreements, with amendments made to the value and duration of the grant.

As recommended in the *Subcommittee of Council-Arts and Culture Festival Groups Report 4-2024*, upon the conclusion of the 2025 grant year, the current agreements will terminate, and each of the five groups will receive a new service level agreement for 2026. City staff will negotiate the agreements with the groups and bring the recommendations forward to Council with the 2026 grant recommendations.

2025 Community Grants Recommended Funding

A total of \$1,196,777 has been recommended to 21 applicants by the Peer Assessment Committee for 2025's annual community grants. Seven existing multi-year grants enter their next year of funding (Appendix 3). It is recommended that any surplus in the community grants budget be allocated to a Small Project Matching Grant Program (SPMG) in 2025.

Seven groups will be entering the next year of their Community Grant 3-year agreements, with a total of \$1,004,349. This includes:

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- Mississauga Sports Council (Year 2 of 3)
- Ecosource (Year 3 of 3)
- Erin Mills Youth Centre (Year 3 of 3)
- Safe City Mississauga (Year 3 of 3)
- The Dam (Year 3 of 3)
- The Riverwood Conservancy (Year 3 of 3)
- Volunteer MBC (Year 3 of 3)

With six Community Grant multi-year grants ending in 2025, updated guidelines will be launched for 2026 when the groups are eligible for their next multi-year grant.

Seventeen applications were submitted to the first intake of the 2025 Small Project Matching Grant Program by the October 11, 2024, deadline to be considered for approval by the Director of Recreation & Culture. Seven groups received Director approval for a total of \$17,500 in funding, which was allocated from the 2024 Community Grant budget. A recommended second intake of the SPMG would open in the spring of 2025 to support implementation of additional community initiatives. Residents will benefit from additional programming and services in sports, active transportation, horticulture, youth and older adult initiatives, and other community services because of this funding recommendation.

Support with Conditions Status

As outlined in the Grants Policy, it may be recommended for a group to receive “Support with Conditions” in cases where there are concerns about a group's financial or organizational sustainability. Group may also have conditions attached to their Culture Projects Grant, should the project require specific permissions from the City. Groups on “Support with Conditions” receive coaching and guidance from staff and may be asked to provide interim information during the grant period or have stipulations attached to the release of grant funds. Several successes emerged from the 2024 Support with Conditions process, as groups collaborated with staff to review strategic plans, refine their mandates, develop new by-laws documents, and discuss revenue generation.

For 2025, the assessment committees recommend five organizations be placed on “Support with Conditions” as detailed in the evaluation summaries in Appendix 5:

Culture Grants

- Ensemble for French

Community Grants

- Port Credit Lawn Bowling Club
- Breakfast with Santa Foundation
- Tong Le Senior Association
- Music for Every Child

Additional Support for Community Groups

Staff provides all eligible applicants with detailed feedback in the evaluation summary of their application (Appendix 5). The feedback aims to assist the applicants in crafting strong grant applications for future funding opportunities, and all applicants are encouraged to reapply to the grant programs in future years. Groups can also connect with City staff to arrange an individualized session to review their grant application and/or evaluation summary. When appropriate, staff refers groups to other sources of funding that best align with the initiatives proposed in their application.

The grant programs are now closed for 2025, and no new applications or requests for funding will be accepted until the 2026 grant programs open in August of 2025. Groups who did not apply or were not awarded funding can still apply for the Community Group Registry Program (CGRP), which provides benefits such as discounted rentals at City facilities and access to general liability insurance through the City's affiliate insurance program. Groups can apply for the CGRP year-round, as there is no fixed deadline. The City also collaborates with Volunteer MBC on the Verge Learning Series. These capacity-building events aim to empower nonprofits and community groups through interactive sessions, group activities, and networking opportunities. The City's events team, Sauga Celebrates supports groups looking to host an event on City property.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from the Recommendations in this report, The 2025 Grants budget were submitted and approved as part of the 2025 Business planning process to included:

- \$5,155,500, in cost centre 28533 for the 2025 Culture Grant Programs; and
- \$1,300,000 in cost centre 28530 for the 2025 Community Grant Programs

Conclusion

In 2025, 88 organizations are recommended to receive funding: 77 groups are recommended for 2025 grant funding, six organizations were approved in previous years for multi-year funding, and five previously approved multi-year recipients have amendments to their current agreements. According to the members of both Peer Assessment Committees, these groups effectively demonstrated their community impact, and their programs and services align with the City's priorities. The result of the funding will be more stable community groups that increase access to programs and services for Mississauga residents.

Attachments

Appendix 1: 2025 Grant Eligibility Criteria

Appendix 2: 2025 Peer Assessment Committees

Appendix 3: 2025 Culture and Community Grants Recommendation Summary

Appendix 4: 2025 Culture Projects Grant Allocations

Appendix 5: 2025 Grant Evaluation Summary Sheets

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jodi Robillos", is written over a horizontal line.

Jodi Robillos, Commissioner of Community Services

Prepared by: Sean Robertson-Palmer, Community Development Coordinator