

City of Saskatoon/University of Saskatchewan – Memorandum of Understanding – Research Connections Update

ISSUE

This report provides an update on the work of the Research Connections task team which has been established under the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Saskatoon (City) and University of Saskatchewan (USask).

BACKGROUND

On February 27, 2018, the City and USask executed a formal Memorandum of Understanding which purpose was to better define each party's current areas of engagement, and areas of current or future collaboration, including a process through which each party may identify and commit to work collaboratively on current or future engagements.

A working group consisting of senior leaders from the City and USask was initially established in 2017, and meets quarterly to discuss areas of strategic engagement and collaboration. Task teams have been established to provide oversight and coordination of activities within various areas of focus, including: Reconciliation Initiatives, Infrastructure & Land Development, Research Connections, Student Engagement, Student Life, and Climate Change.

The purpose of the Research Connections task team is to foster collaborations between the City and USask through an increase in the number, breadth and impact of research-focused partnerships to address community needs in Saskatoon.

In its 2019 Business Plan and Budget, City Council approved Project 2625 for \$50,000 to provide resources towards a pilot program to achieve success in research collaboration.

CURRENT STATUS

The Research Connections task team developed the Research Junction development grant program to create opportunities for collaboration through a development grant competition, data sharing, partnership development and support for research opportunities.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Research Junction program launched on September 11, 2019. The program will involve research teams including at least one USask researcher and one City staff member working together to address community needs around issues that include urban planning, reconciliation, transit, environmental sustainability, and youth issues.

The 2019 development grant funding consists of \$50,000 from the City and \$50,000 from USask, and is intended to be allocated through a grant competition. The grant application deadline was November 1, 2019. Up to six grants of \$10,000 to \$30,000 each are planned to be awarded to projects that support the City's Strategic Goals and contribute to making Saskatoon a great place to live, work, learn and play. Projects must be completed within 18 months.

In December, the grant award committee will be assembled to review the applications and make their award selections. The committee will include a City and USask representatives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the pilot program is already in place. For future years, annual funding of \$50,000 from the reserve for capital expenditures (RCE) is included in the 2020 and 2021 proposed Business Plan and Budget package for a total of \$100,000 over the next two years. USask will consider their contribution during their budget process, and it is generally understood that if either partner chooses not to fund their portion of the program, this specific program would not continue. Similarly, even if funding is put in place in 2020 and 2021 by both parties yet the pilot is not deemed a success, the funds would be returned to their respective agencies. No additional permanent full-time employee equivalents are associated with this capital funding option.

IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal, social, or environmental implications directly associated with this report. Implications associated with research projects approved under the development grant program would be detailed in subsequent update reports.

NEXT STEPS

The next step in this initiative is for the funding request to continue the development grant program over the next two year to be considered during the 2020/21 Capital Budget deliberations.

Report Approval

Written by: Dan Willems, Interim Chief Strategy & Transformation Officer
Reviewed &
Approved by: Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager