

Amendment to Council Policy C03-018 – Assistance to Community Groups, Environment Category

ISSUE

In 2001, Saskatoon City Council approved a policy that provides financial assistance to community groups undertaking activities that serve to enhance the quality of life for Saskatoon residents. The policy contains an “Environment Category” that lists an amount that is lower than the amount subsequently approved by City Council in recent years. As such, this report seeks City Council’s approval to amend section 3.3(b) of Council Policy C03-018 – Assistance to Community Groups.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council that section 3.3(b) of Council Policy C03-018, Assistance to Community Groups, be amended to reflect the current amount allocated to the Environment Category.

BACKGROUND

The Assistance to Community Groups – Cash Grant – Environmental Component (Environmental Grant) adheres to City of Saskatoon (City) Council Policy C03-018. When it was originally conceived, the grant was allocated \$5,000 to provide assistance to community groups in the area of “environment”. The policy still lists the \$5,000 amount despite several increases to it over the years, as explained below.

City Council at its Special Meeting of December 17, 2013 resolved:

“That the funding allocation to the Assistance to Community Groups – Cash Grant – Environmental Component be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually, beginning in 2014.”

At its April 24, 2017 meeting City Council approved Capital Project No.2197 – Water Conservation Initiative. This approval, among other things, allocated an additional \$10,000 to the Environmental Grant to support initiatives that increase awareness and protection of the City’s water resources. As a result, the amount allocated to the Environmental Grant totalled \$20,000.

At its November 28, 2018 Business Plan and Budget Meeting, City Council approved Capital Project No. 2184 – Waste Characterization. The approval of this project resulted in a one-time allocation of \$10,000 to the Environmental Grant to support waste diversion initiatives in 2019. In other words, the \$10,000 was one-time funding that was to be substantially spent in the 2019 fiscal year. This amount has been allocated and spent by successful applicants.

In 2019, a total of \$30,000 was awarded through the Environmental Grant as follows:

- \$10,000 for Environmental Leadership (General);
- \$10,000 for Water Conservation; and
- \$10,000 for Waste Reduction and Diversion.

The allocations for Environmental Leadership (General) and Water Conservation are available annually. As noted, \$10,000 for the Waste Reduction and Diversion component was intended to be a one-time funding allocation for 2019.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Council Policy C03-018 provides conditional cash grants to eligible community organizations in the areas of social services and the environment. The policy was last amended in 2001. Appendix 1 – Council Policy C03-018 provides a copy of the current policy.

Section 3.3 of the policy stipulates that the maximum amount of funding that is available in each year shall be \$2.00 per capita. However, section 3.3(b) of the policy states: “The Environment Category will have \$5,000 in funding”. This means that the remaining funding is allocated to social services category and a “contingency”. As explained in the background section of this report, recent Council decisions have resulted in increases to the base amount for the Environment Category to \$20,000. Thus, section 3.3(b) of the policy no longer reflects the amount of funding allocated to the Environment Category, and is in need of amendment.

Moreover, the Administration has identified opportunities for additional funds from various programs. These opportunities are as follows:

- \$10,000 to support community initiatives that reduce the amount of waste going to landfills, available from Capital Project No. 2184 – Waste Characterization;
- \$10,000 to support community initiatives that encourage active transportation, available from Capital Project No. 2468 – Active Transportation Plan Implementation; and
- \$4,000 to support events (conferences, workshops, etc.) that provide learning opportunities on initiatives that support the City’s environmental goals, available from Environmental Awareness Operating Budget.

The total amount available through the Environmental Grant in 2020 and 2021 is \$44,000 per year. The reallocation of these existing funds to the Environmental Grant will eliminate the need to administer those funds through separate allocation mechanisms, while ensuring funds are allocated to support specific environmental outcomes. This approach aims to provide a formalized and consistent approach to adjudicating applications for this funding support.

As a result, the Administration is recommending that section 3.3(b) of the policy be amended to reflect that up to \$44,000 be available for the Environment Category. Similarly, the Administration is also requesting that a new clause be added to the policy that indicates any increases to the Environment Category shall be approved by City

Council during the business plan and budget process. Also, as budgets are tied to Capital Projects, amounts allocated each year to the Environmental Grant will be determined by the available budget.

In accordance with existing policy, grants for the Environment Category are open to local non-profit organizations. Eligible recipients are those who propose to undertake environmental initiatives that meet a demonstrated community need and are supported by one or more of the following categories:

- protection of the environment;
- conservation of natural resources; and
- environmental communications, research and education.

Applications for the Environmental Grant are typically accepted between early December of the current year and February 15th of the following year, aligning with the application deadline of the Social Component of the Assistance to Community Groups – Cash Grant program. Applications that meet the eligibility requirements are adjudicated and ranked using consistent criteria, with funding recommendations presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services in early spring.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Environmental Grant program is currently administered by an Environmental Coordinator within the Sustainability Division. There is existing capacity within this position to administer the expanded program. The expanded program will require a minimal increase in the adjudication committee's time to review the anticipated increase in applications, but the overall time required to review is expected to decrease as a result of the streamlined process of administering multiple sources of funding through a single intake and award process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The Environmental Grant supports environmental initiatives that serve to enhance the quality of life for Saskatoon residents. In 2019, the projects funded addressed aspects of renewable energy, environmental stewardship, waste diversion, water quality, wildlife rehabilitation, and food security. Funding allocated through the 2019 Environmental Grant leveraged projects valued at approximately \$195,000.

NEXT STEPS

If the amendment is approved by City Council, the policy will be updated to reflect the appropriate amounts in the Environment Category. Updates to the policy will be incorporated in the guidance material prepared for the 2020 Environmental Grant, as well as communicated through the City's website and social media channels. A comprehensive review of the policy is also currently being undertaken by the Leadership Team Governance Subcommittee, and further policy amendments may be required.

APPENDIX

1. Appendix 1 - Council Policy C03-018 - Assistance to Community Groups

REPORT APPROVAL

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