

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Keith Hearst Grant and Policy Writer Legislative Services khearst@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	September 26, 2022		
Report No.:	Legislative Services-066-22		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: Town of Cobourg 2022 Grant Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive the Staff Report for information purposes

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

Coordinate funding opportunities to optimize community development capital and special project funding opportunities.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding grant applications and grant funding received to date in 2022. This report will also provide Council with an update on the internal process for identifying and applying for grant funding opportunities.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

The pursuit of grant revenue is a key planning and financial tool to help the Town of Cobourg to offset operating and capital expenses and to advance projects that might otherwise not be possible. Grant funding also provides financial relief for the

Town, allowing the redirection of limited property tax revenue required to pay for crucial municipal services and infrastructure.

In 2021, the Council approved the hiring of a Grant and Policy Writer to work across the Corporation and with community partners to identify projects suitable for grant eligibility. The Grant and Policy Writer started with the Town of Cobourg on May 2, 2022. This position assists in moving strategic priorities and projects forward through maximizing funding opportunities.

The 2021 KPMG Organization Review commented that prior to the hiring of the Grant and Policy Writer, the responsibility for grant writing rested with the individual functional departments, who are required to identify and respond to grants in addition to their other duties. As such, capacity for the investigation and pursuit of new revenues is limited by other demands on Town staff, potentially resulting in instances of missed revenues. The addition of a Grant and Policy Writer is intended to enhance the Town's ability to secure funding for specific initiatives (both operating and capital), while also allowing for dedicated appropriate resources for policy development and updating.

5. BACKGROUND

The Town of Cobourg hired a Grant and Policy Writer to start in May 2022. One of the main purposes of the role was to centralize the grant application and tracking process within the municipality. Prior to the hiring of the Grant and Policy Writer, each Division in the Town applied for grants and tracked the progress of their grants independently. Centralizing the grants applications and tracking promotes greater knowledge sharing between Divisions to identify and target grant application that have a high probability of success.

Once an application has been approved for funding, grantors require the signing of a transfer payment agreement (TPA) that outlines the requirements for the funding and any regular reporting on grant progress to ensure that the funding they are providing is being used for its intended purpose. These progress reports keep the grantor appraised on the progression of the grant project and whether there have been any changes over the course of the implementation of a project that may affect the scope or timelines of the project. Progress reports also provide the Town with an opportunity to submit invoices and claims for reimbursement to receive the funding awarded by a granting agency. Tracking grant progress is essential in ensuring that all the dates and deadlines over the lifetime of a grant are met and to ensure that the Town maximizes the amount of funding received after a grant has been awarded.

6. ANALYSIS

This analysis will discuss multiple aspects of the grant process that have been worked on since the start of the Grant and Policy Writer role in May of 2022. It will also highlight the grants that have been awarded, which grants staff are currently

in the application stage for, and grants that have been highlighted for staff for possible submission.

Grant Application Process

The first step in the grant application process is identifying grants that the Town may apply for. The Grant and Policy Writer sends out a bi-weekly email to Division Directors and Managers with a list of open grant opportunities. The purpose of the email is to provide an overview to staff on all the grants that are available for municipal governments. If a Director or Manager see a grant from the list that would match a project that they are working on, the Grant and Policy Writer will work with them to determine project eligibility and the application process for the funding opportunity by reviewing the grant's application guide. Individual staff may also bring specific grant opportunities to the Grant and Policy Writer for further examination on eligibility requirements and application details.

Once a specific opportunity has been identified and matches a project being undertaken by the Town, the Grant and Policy Writer starts a new application for the project and requests any necessary background details and financial information for the project to develop a first draft of the application. After developing the first draft of the application the Grant and Policy Writer provides the Division Director(s) overseeing the project and any other appropriate staff to make review the draft and add any additional details. Upon receipt of the revisions to the draft, the Grant and Policy Writer finalizes and submits the grant application along with any necessary supporting information.

Grant applications are tracked throughout the application process and once a grant has been awarded to ensure that TPAs are signed and sent back on time and that all reporting deadlines for each grant are met. Data tracked in grant monitoring includes:

- Grant title
- Project description
- Amount requested (or amount awarded if the application is approved)
- Date of application submission
- Final decision on approval
- Division implementing the project
- Lead staff member on the project
- Number of Payments
- Date of Payments
- Reporting Deadlines
- Additional Notes

Tracking these data points ensures that all documentation and reporting for each grant is completed on-time which will eliminate any slowdowns in receiving funding that the Town has been approved for.

The Grant Application Tracking Sheet is attached to this report as Appendix “A” and shows a list containing both grants still active in 2022 that were submitted in previous years and grant applications submitted 2022. The tracker also shows funding opportunities that staff are currently applying for. This data has been collected through communication between the Grant and Policy Writer and separate departments. So far in 2022, the Town has been successful in receiving approval for eight (8) grants and is awaiting approval for three (3). The Town is currently working on three (3) grant applications and identified three (3) funds to apply to.

Current Applications in Progress

The Town is currently completing three (3) submissions for the Natural Infrastructure Fund (NIF). This fund promotes the use of natural and hybrid infrastructure to enhance traditional grey infrastructure outcomes and to deliver valuable co-benefits to the communities. The NIF targets five community services which include: climate change resilience, increased access to nature, improved environmental quality, enhanced biodiversity and habitat, and climate change mitigation. The NIF provides funding for up to 80% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$1 million per approved project. All eligible costs must be incurred between May 1, 2021, and December 31, 2024, to be eligible to reimbursement. The NIF can also be stacked with other grants. The three (3) projects that the Town is applying to fund through this project are the restoration of the Monk’s Cove seawall, the restoration of the east breakwater, and the planting of street trees throughout the Town. The application deadline for this fund is September 27, 2022.

The Disaster Adaptation and Mitigation Fund (DMAF) is another fund that the Town is seeking to apply for. This fund is for infrastructure projects that prevent, mitigate, or protect against the impacts of climate change, disasters triggered by natural hazards, and extreme weather. The DMAF has both a small-scale stream for projects between \$1 million and \$20 million, and a large-scale stream for projects over \$20 million. This is another fund that the Town has matched for the both the restoration of the Monk’s Cove seawall, and the restoration Cobourg Harbour. This fund would cover up to 40% of eligible expenses and grant can be stacked with others to cover a great portion the cost of a project. The second intake window of this fund has currently been postponed.

The 2022 Enabling Accessibility Fund – Small Projects Component provides funding for projects that make communities and workplaces more accessible for persons with disabilities. This fund targets the creation of more opportunities for persons with disability to take part in community activities and programs, and to access employment. The fund provides up to \$100,000 for eligible and approved accessibility projects. The application deadline is November 1, 2022.

Community Collaboration

To foster stronger connections between the Town and different community organizations, municipal staff are creating a community list to contact to distribute

funding opportunities that the Town is aware of. Opening this communication will help to strengthen communication between community organizations and the municipality and can highlight opportunities for collaboration between the Town and other organizations to maximize funding for community projects. In addition to this, the plan moving forward is to offer quarterly sessions where the Grant and Policy Writer can work with organizations to help with any grant requests or applications that they are working on.

Town of Cobourg Grant Strategy Moving Forward:

Municipal staff recognize the importance of continuing to apply and to receive ongoing grants, primarily to advance capital projects and Council priorities while reducing the reliance on property taxes. In the next several months and into 2023 Budget process, staff will review the current grant process and where required will implement a consistent corporate grant strategy that will support maximizing access to grant funding in **a timely manner and proactively** understand the grants available while moving into and during each budget year.

The goals of the strategy are to create flexibility and agility in the grant process, to be responsive to opportunities, to empower staff with the resources to confidently pursue grants and strengthen advocacy by emphasizing relationship building with external funding entities and political leaders.

The proactive identification of grant funding will involve two (2) main components:

1. Identifying grant opportunities through ongoing surveillance of the grant landscape (federal and provincial level, corporations, foundations)
2. Developing oversight and an inventory of all potential corporate and community projects / initiatives that can benefit from external funding support. Potential sources of project identification include:
 - Strategic priorities; capital and operating workplans;
 - Ongoing engagement with all Town departments and community partners;
 - Localization of a project (that has been successful elsewhere);

A proactive grant process positions the Town to strategically align corporate and /or community initiatives with the best grant opportunities. During this matching process, alignment with the Municipal Council strategic priorities is critical.

Pursuit of Grants

Grant support and advocacy are critical elements to the effective pursuit of grant opportunities. Grant support is achieved by establishing a central community resource for grant application coordination and empowering internal Municipal departments and community organizations with the expertise and tailored support required to steer a grant application to successful submission. With the support of

the Grant and Policy Writer position, this active approach to grant funding will support the pursuit of more grant funding opportunities for the Town.

Advocacy is a two-pronged approach involving intentional engagement with both political leaders and government organizations (i.e., administrators of grant funding programs) to build awareness of projects/innovation percolating in the community. This can be accomplished by the Town actively engaging provincial and federal government and ministries for support and funding that benefits not only the Town of Cobourg, but also all County, Provincial and Federal Government residents. An example of this would be the Cobourg Waterfront and Harbour which hosts the Canadian Coast Guard and is a previous federal asset. This project should be a good match to advocate support for funding in our community.

Stages of advocacy that require focus:

- Pre-advocacy: Seek face-to-face opportunities to aggressively pitch / showcase key areas for further investment and alignment with government priorities (i.e. leverage Ministerial visits – carve out dedicated time for this purpose)
- Targeted advocacy (in advance of and post-submission of specific grant applications)

The Grant process, depending on which project will implement these strategies when necessary to support the Towns success in achieving funding.

Opportunities in the Grant Strategy:

Similar to the grant monitoring steps as outline above, when grant funding is received, below are the eight (8) steps to be taken when delivering the Town of Cobourg Grant Strategy:

- 1) Identification
- 2) Matching
- 3) Assessment
- 4) Application Development
- 5) Submission**
- 6) Receipt**
- 7) Recognition**
- 8) Reporting

An opportunity that was recommended through the 2021 Town of Cobourg Organizational Review was the concept of Delegation of Authority by Council on some decisions of Council that may make staff more efficient and assist with achieving greater grant funding.

KPMG noted that the Town currently does not have a delegated of authority By-law and several similar sized municipalities have adopted Delegation of Authority

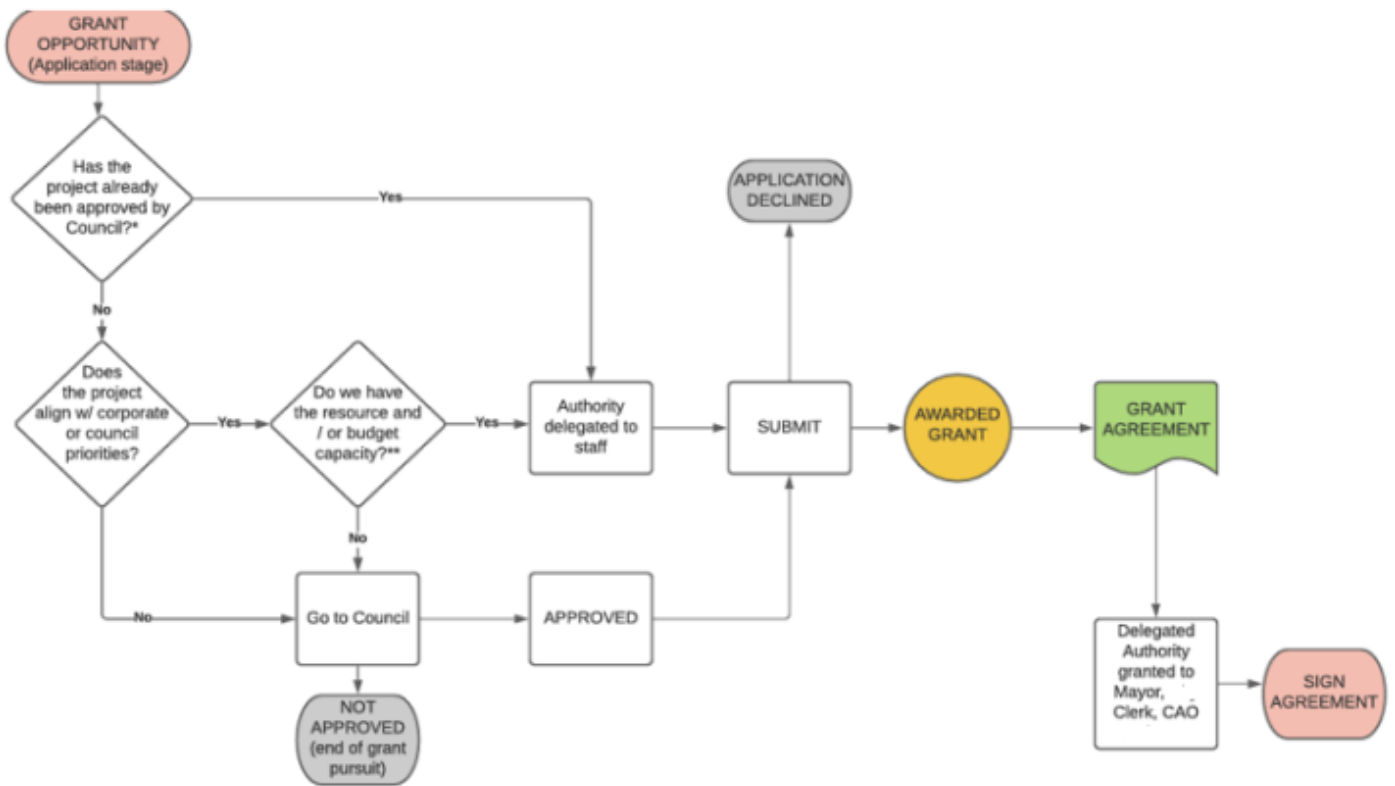
Bylaws pursuant to Section 270(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, which allows council to delegate decision-making authority for routine or lower risk decisions. KPMG recommended that the Town consider the adoption of a delegation of authority bylaw, which will provide authority to staff for routine and low-risk decisions, reducing the time and level of work required by staff and Council.

In identifying grant opportunities, the priority of the Town's going forward Grant Strategy will be in alignment with Council strategic priorities. At times, a grant opportunity is a collaborative process involving multiple stakeholders in the application development. In other circumstances, grant applications are time sensitive either because the timeline for submission is short or because the Town was made aware of opportunities late in the process. It is critical for the Town to be nimble and flexible to submit applications and maximize its revenue opportunities. There have also been situations where the Town needs to be able to sign agreements within short periods of time to access funding. The time frames can be challenging when reports to Council may be required.

Municipal Staff have recognized throughout the process that there may be an opportunity for delegated authority be provided under the submission, receipt and recognition steps of the strategy when grant funding aligns with Council strategic priorities, approved capital and operating projects and initiatives as standalone grant requests or in partnership with other community organizations, and there is approved budget allocation for any municipal share of the funding.

Any grant applications that are outside of Council's priorities or capital and operating plans, or where there is no approved budget allocation for a municipal share of funding, would continue to be submitted to Council for approval.

Below illustrates a delegated authority process that would allow for staff to submit grant applications and to enter into grant agreements where the following criteria are met; there is alignment with Council priorities, there is resource and/or budget capacity both internally as well as with external partners where required, and there are approved envelopes of funding where a municipal allocation share is required.



7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

There is no immediate operating or capital budget impact because of this report. Future successful grant applications for funding capital projects planned for the remainder of the year and beyond will provide relief to capital budget requests and reduce operating budget impacts where eligible. Staff may also need to re-prioritize or defer scheduled projects to capitalize on available grant funding opportunities and funding awarded.

8. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to present a summary to Council on the Grant funding process and the current opportunities that have been received and funded and also those in the application and development stage. Municipal staff are proposing to report back to Council on an annual basis with information on grant applications and funding received. In addition, Staff has laid out a general Grant Strategy and opportunity to improve the process to allow Staff to be more proactive and efficient in eth application processes.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2022 Grant Update - Legislative Services-066-22.docx
Attachments:	- Grant Application Tracking 2022.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 16, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk / Director of Legislative Services - Sep 16, 2022 - 12:58 PM

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Sep 16, 2022 - 1:46 PM