

Edmonton Arts Council

2021 Activate Grant Recommendations (June Deadline)

Recommendation

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That the grant recommendations, as outlined in Attachment 2 of the August 25, 2021, Edmonton Arts Council report EXT00742, be approved.

Executive Summary

The Edmonton Arts Council (EAC) has been working towards the implementation of ***Connections & Exchanges: A 10-Year Plan to Transform Arts and Heritage In Edmonton*** as adopted by City Council in late 2018. This includes the development of new investment models and processes, guided by the Ambition in Book 4 of ***Connections & Exchanges: A Thriving and Well-Funded Arts and Heritage Ecosystem***.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the public health restrictions have had major impacts on the arts and festival communities. In late 2020 the EAC's Board of Directors through its Grants Review and Transitions (GRT) Committee, developed an investment framework for 2021 to balance stability and flexibility in support of arts and festival organizations. These processes and approaches were designed to integrate and transition to the future implementation of funding structures as directed by ***Connections & Exchanges***.

This report summarizes the third of those processes for 2021, the second deadline of the "Activate" program, and recommends investments of **\$532,950** in **37** organizations. City Policy 211H, requires City Council approval when a grant to any one recipient is over \$30,000. Four (4) of the attached grant recommendations are equal to or greater than that threshold.

These recommendations are made in accordance with Policy C211H and are within the Edmonton Arts Council's 2021 Budget as previously approved by City Council.

Report

Background

- For more than 20 years the EAC has managed various grant programs that support the Arts and Festival communities on behalf of the City of Edmonton.
- As part of the implementation of the *Connections & Exchanges* plan (see CR_6355 from October 2018) new and revised structures are replacing those historical programs.
- Adjustments to that implementation work were needed to respond to the impacts of COVID-19, while continuing the transition towards the future granting structures outlined in Book 4 of *Connections & Exchanges*.
- The EAC Board and its Grants Review and Transition Committee developed a framework to support Arts and Festival organizations for 2021. The framework was built with the future in mind, based on balancing stability and flexibility in the short-term to enable the sector to manage through the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- This report summarizes the second round of the Activate pillar of that framework, which responds to organizations that are working to their mandates in 2021.
- Activate was built specifically to provide an investment structure that could respond to organizations that are active and resilient through the COVID-19 restrictions.
- This is the second of two deadlines for Activate. The first was reported to City Council in April of 2021 (see report EXT00550).
- The Sustain Pillar was reported to City Council in March of 2021 (see report EXT00257)
- The third Invent and Adapt pillar also provides opportunities for the EAC to support organizations in 2021, as they seek to maintain and create new capacities, innovate, and build resilience.

Activate Investment Process

- Forty (40) eligible applications were received at the June 15, 2021 deadline.
- Applicants were asked to summarize their mandates and goals, and describe their plans for pursuing those goals in 2021. This included specific questions about planning and consideration of COVID-19, and the impact of health restrictions on the work of the applicant.
- Six peer assessors were recruited to review the applications.
- After reading the applications, assessors met over the course of several virtual meetings to discuss and refine their responses. That process concluded in mid-July.
- Broad categories and themes emerged from the assessment that were used by the EAC staff to draft granting recommendations, also considering the applicant's granting history with the EAC. See Attachment 1 for more details and discussion.
- The EAC's Grants Review and Transitions Committee reviewed and recommended the outcomes to the EAC Board.
- The Edmonton Arts Council Board reviewed and accepted those recommendations via a virtual process in the first week of August, 2021.
- Applicants were notified of the recommendations.

- Thirty-seven (37) organizations are recommended for a total of up to **\$532,950**, listed in Attachment 2.
- Two (2) of the recommended grants are to new applicants that have not been supported by the EAC previously.
- The Edmonton Arts Council will continue to offer specific capacity, and change-capital support in accordance with Actions outlined in Book 4 of Connections & Exchanges, particularly to those that are not recommended for this specific support.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

These recommendations are specifically relevant to the Connections & Exchanges plan:

- Aim: New and existing arts and heritage organizational capacity enables innovation and builds resilience in the sector.
- Action: Build funding mechanisms for arts and festival organizations with an emphasis on: (...) Annual programming grants.

These recommendations are specifically relevant to the City Plan:

- 6.0: Edmonton is where creative spaces emerge and arts, design and culture flourish.
 - 6.2.1.1: Provide and enable a variety of arts programming and spaces city wide.

Corporate Outcome(s):			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Connections & Exchanges Ambition Book 4: A Thriving and Well Funded Arts and Heritage Ecosystem	Number of Organizations is one of the measures in the framework	This report recommends support to 37 Organizations. The overall number of organizations the EAC supports in 2021 will be lower than previous years due to the pandemic.	Not applicable
Connect Edmonton: Healthy City / Personal Wellness / Arts and Culture	Percentage of Edmontonians who indicate they attended arts or cultural activities	90% City of Edmonton Community Perception Survey (2019) A 2015/16 Economic Impact Study estimated 3.9 million attendees at arts events in Edmonton annually. The pandemic restrictions have drastically reduced opportunities to attend these activities.	Not applicable

Attachments

1. 2021 EAC Investments in Organizations – Overview and Analysis
2. 2021 Activate Grant Recommendations