

CITY OF EDMONTON ONE-TIME MICRO-GRANTS - UPDATE (E. RUTHERFORD)

RECOMMENDATION

That the August 10, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01241, be received for information.

Requested Council Action	Information Only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work as we work to achieve our strategic goals.	Regional Prosperity		
City Plan Values	THRIVE		
City Plan Big City Move	Catalyze and Converge	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Economic Growth
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-racism Advisory Committee • Capital City Clean Up • Community-Based Budgeting • Community Investment Program • Corner Store Program • Edmonton Economic Recovery Program • Emerging Immigrant and Refugee Communities Grant Program • Neighbourhood(s) Micro-grant • Storefront Refresh Program 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UFCSD00060 - Update on the Edmonton Economic Recovery Grant • UFCSD00243 - Edmonton Economic Recovery Grant Phase 2 (Edmonton Economic Action Plan Grant) • UPE00945 - Support for Small Businesses Outside of Business Improvement Areas • OCM00991 - Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy 		

CITY OF EDMONTON ONE-TIME MICRO-GRANTS - UPDATE (E. RUTHERFORD)

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 13, 2022, Executive Committee meeting, Councillor E. Rutherford made the following inquiry:

Can Administration provide a report outlining any one-time micro-grants or spark grants the City of Edmonton funds in the amount below \$2,000 to support areas of business and economic growth as well as individual and/or community-led initiatives.

Executive Summary

- The City typically uses micro-grants to respond to emergent needs or opportunities, stay nimble and minimize application and reporting requirements.
- There are 12 City-funded micro-grants under \$2,000 that are currently available to support small businesses, individuals or community-led initiatives.

REPORT

The City employs micro-grants to respond to emergent needs or opportunities (e.g. pandemic support), to spread the impact of the grant across a large number of applicants or where a nimble approach is required. Micro-grants are typically employed in situations where the window of opportunity is small or where a longer administrative process may delay the delivery of services or programs for Edmontonians. These grants often are one-time sources of funding and often have fewer application or reporting requirements, compared to grants with larger award values.

Micro-grants are only one example of the extensive variety of supports that the City provides to businesses, community organizations and Edmontonians. Examples include personalized explanations of regulatory requirements for businesses, coordination of education and outreach with community leagues and support for event planners and businesses with large-scale or community-focused events.

Micro-Grants Under \$2,000

The City offers a number of micro-grant programs directly to businesses, individuals or community initiatives. The full list of City-funded micro-grants with descriptions can be found in Attachment 1. The micro-grants are organized into the following categories:

- Business Support and Development Micro-Grants
 - Two general business support micro-grants that cover exterior improvements and building capacity and competitiveness for Edmonton businesses.
- Community-Building Micro-Grants
 - Six micro-grants support community building and cleaning initiatives.
 - Two micro-grants support inclusive communities.

CITY OF EDMONTON ONE-TIME MICRO-GRANTS - UPDATE (E. RUTHERFORD)

- Micro-Grants delivered by partner organizations, who are funded by the City
 - Three micro-grants that support local screen industry companies.
 - One micro-grant that supports equity and access in the arts community.

There are also a number of City-funded organizations that offer micro-grants:

- The Edmonton Arts Council manages the City of Edmonton's Community Investment Program, which provides funding to artists and arts and festival organizations in Edmonton. The Edmonton Arts Council also administers grants from other sources, such as the Edmonton Community Foundation.
- Edmonton Screen Industries Office (ESIO) offers a number of grant programs aimed at the development, growth and sustainability of Edmonton's screen industries.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration has received feedback on previous grant programs from its economic development partners who support entrepreneurs. This information informed the GBA+ analysis.

Additionally, through operating the now-closed Edmonton Economic Recovery Grant - City Stream, which offered matching micro-grants of \$1,000, Administration learned that micro-grants can be useful at a point in time to address an immediate need, but they do not support growth over time. The size of micro-grants typically prevents recipients from leveraging them to secure other funding or financing, such as a commercial loan.

GBA+

Administration reviewed the list of City-funded micro-grants to understand which groups are supported and what demographic information is collected. Administration also considered feedback its economic development partners provided for previous grant programs to inform the GBA+ analysis. Findings include:

- Most of the micro-grants within the City are focused on supporting business owners, entrepreneurs, property owners, non-profit organizations and business improvement areas.
- Many grant programs do not collect demographic data from applicants. This leads to gaps in disaggregated data on applicants and grant awards.
- Barriers to grant programs may include:
 - The value of grants when an applicant is required to match the funding provided. The barrier to access increases as the grant amount increases.
 - Reimbursable grants, while they ensure projects get completed before funding is provided, can hinder applicants who may need the funding up front.
 - The intensity of application and reporting requirements. This is especially relevant to people who speak English as a second language or are newcomers.

CITY OF EDMONTON ONE-TIME MICRO-GRANTS - UPDATE (E. RUTHERFORD)

- Awareness of a grant program.

To address these findings, Administration could:

- Prioritize the collection of demographic data in grant applications to ensure equitable access to City-funded and administered grants. Collection of this information could be voluntary to ensure additional reporting burdens are not created.
- Effectively communicate why demographic data is collected in grant applications to increase the amount of demographic data collected.
- Conduct a GBA+ analysis when developing new grants, or administering existing grants to ensure unintended barriers are not being created.

ATTACHMENT

1. City-Funded Micro-Grants Under \$2,000