

Staff Memorandum



To: Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council

Subject and Ward(s): 2025 Arts and Culture Investment Program Results and 2024 Program Impacts

Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Department Head Approval: S. Schlichter, Director, Economic and Creative Development

Executive Management Approval: B. Araniyasundaran, P. Eng, PMP, General Manager, Infrastructure and Growth Management

CAO Approval: M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with an update concerning the City of Barrie's Arts and Culture Investment Program, including funding allocations for the 2025 intake period. The memorandum also includes impacts of the 2024 Arts and Culture Investment funding on the cultural sector and economy.

Background

The Arts and Culture Investment Program, formerly known as the Cultural Grants Program, has been in operation since 2005 and delivered under the program guidelines which were updated and approved by Council in 2021.

The Application and Decision-Making Process

The program guidelines and application forms were made available online for all interested applicants to review and applications were submitted online via APLI. Coinciding with the program launch, two information sessions were offered where staff talked through the program guidelines and application best practices. The Cultural Development Officer shared eligibility and evaluation criteria with participants, explained the application process and addressed any program changes. The December 2024 and January 2025 information sessions were held at the Sandbox Centre and had a combined seven organizations in attendance. Staff also took individual questions and met with organizations to discuss their applications when requested, with several applicants calling, emailing or scheduling one-on-one meetings with staff to discuss their applications.

The deadline for applications was Monday, February 3rd. Applications were then reviewed for completeness and eligibility by staff and sent to the five-member adjudication panel. The panel is selected through a process that includes a call for adjudicators distributed through Work in Culture and the Culture Pop newsletter and selection is based on their arts expertise, career history, and adjudication experience. Please see Appendix A for the 2025

adjudicators' biographies. Efforts are made to ensure diversity with regards to arts disciplines and backgrounds of the adjudicators, with all but one of the adjudicators being located outside of Barrie and immediate surrounding area to ensure impartiality.

Following a several week review of all applications, the adjudication panel was convened to discuss the applications and score each based on the applicant's sustainability, artistic merit, community impact and audience development efforts. Adjudicators came to a consensus score and determined the level of funding investment, should an applicant be successful. The role of the Cultural Development Officer is to provide administrative support and document the feedback to be given to each applicant. Staff are restricted from participating in the decision-making process.

Successful recipients must agree and accept the City's conditions for funding that include commitments to spend the funding for the purposes for which it was awarded, standards for acknowledging the City as a funder, and restrictions on the kinds of expenditures the funding is to be utilized for. All applicants are provided with constructive feedback from the adjudication panel to improve future applications.

City Investment and Recipients

For 2025, the approved Arts and Culture Investment Program budget was \$232,500, and 22 applications were received, requesting \$381,448 in funding. Of those applications, 16 were successful in receiving funding.

The adjudication panel were impressed with the applications and how they demonstrated Barrie's vibrant arts and cultural community. They noted the amount of work being done across many genres and demographics in the community and the large audience engagement numbers demonstrated across applications. The panel was exceptionally moved by the number and diversity of this year's project applications and felt strongly that pilot programs and new initiatives should be supported through this fund. They noted it was a challenge to allocate the pool of funding in a manner that balances the continued support of longstanding organizations with championing development, innovation, and diversity in the sector.

2025 Operating Funding Recipients

Organization	Amount
Barrie Concert Band	\$3,948
Barrie Film Festival	\$49,000
Bravado! Show Choir	\$16,000
Ontario Musicians Cooperative, Inc.	\$15,000
Huronina Symphony Orchestra	\$17,052
Kempfenfelt Community Players	\$15,000
Simcoe Contemporary Dancers	\$20,000
Talk Is Free Theatre	\$60,000

Total	\$196,000
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2025 Project Funding Recipients

Organization	Amount
Barrie Art Club	\$2,500
Barrie Film Festival	\$5,000
Barrie Persian Association	\$5,000
Barrie Pride	\$5,000
La Cle d'la Baie	\$5,000
Lyrice Choir	\$4,000
South Asian Association of Simcoe County	\$5,000
Spare Room	\$5,000
Total	\$36,500

Return on Investment for 2024 Arts and Culture Investment Funding

In 2024, the City of Barrie invested \$230,418 in the Arts and Culture Investment Program. Several organizations saw 2024 as an opportunity to apply for project funding to bring new initiatives to fruition. Projects that were rewarded for their innovative and creative ideas focused on the development of a free, collaborative community dance event, providing podcast training for Métis youth, presenting Francophone arts performances, and supported the leveling up of professionals in the visual arts in Barrie.

After experiencing an increase in other public sector funding from 2020 to 2022 to support recovery of the arts sector during the pandemic, that revenue stream has seen a decline. Since 2020, sponsorship revenues have been lower than in pre-pandemic years, and feedback from the sector suggests that full pre-pandemic recovery is still ongoing. The following outcomes were realized from the funding that was dispersed via the 2024 Arts and Culture Investment Program:

2024 City of Barrie Investment	\$230,418
Other Public Sector Funding in 2024	\$2,760,563
Earned Revenue in 2024	\$707,546
Sponsorship Revenue in 2024	\$112,153
Total Revenue in 2024	\$4,081,364

The Arts and Culture Investment funding recipients have been able to leverage City of Barrie grant monies to access other levels of government funding, earn ticket sales and other revenue and attract sponsorship dollars allowing for continued, successful operations.

Applicants to the Arts and Culture Investment Program complete statistical forms to provide valuable data about the sector, including audience numbers and participants in professional development or educational programming. Reports from 2024 indicate that almost 60,000 people were engaged in local programs and events supported by Arts and Culture Investment funding.

Next Steps

As part of the City of Barrie Culture Plan Update being presented in 2025, consultants engaged through Agence MASSIVart are creating a 10-year vision of arts and culture development in the City and may provide recommendations for updates to policies, program elements, funding models, and priorities of the Arts and Culture Investment Program, expanding upon the work completed in 2021. Further, the update to the plan is expected to provide additional measurement tools to assess the impact of the sector on the economy.

Appendix:

Appendix A – 2025 Arts and Culture Investment Program adjudicators' biographies

Memo Author:

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Appendix A

2025 Arts and Culture Investment Program Adjudicators' Biographies

Lori DeGraw

Lori DeGraw ICD.D (she/her/elle) is an experienced Executive and Board Director dedicated to supporting Canadian success stories. She has served on several non-profit Boards of Directors and worked for over 20 years as part of executive management teams responsible for business growth, technology innovation, and government relations. Lori has enjoyed cultivating strategic partnerships with innovation incubators, accelerators, major funders, media, all levels of government, and organizations such as The Walrus Foundation, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, IKEA, The Stratford Festival, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and TED Talks. She currently serves on the Boards of the Canadian Olympic Committee, TO Live and previously on the Board of the Canada Media Fund and ex-officio on Destination Stratford. She has a BA in Political Science from Western University and completed an Equity and Inclusion Education Series on Anti-Racism, Intersectionality, Building Workplace D & I, Best Practices, Inclusive Leadership, led by Professor Tina Dacian, Chair of Strategy and Organizational Behaviour at the Smith School of Business at Queens University. She lives in Barrie and has plenty of personal passions including sports, music, arts, and supporting community and economic development.

Sarah Jane Flynn

Sarah Jane is a leading media executive with two decades of experience in developing, producing and programming hit content for television and digital platforms. Sarah Jane has held senior roles in large production companies and at Canada's leading broadcasting entities. She has overseen award-winning original content for brands like Global, History and National Geographic among many others. Sarah Jane holds a joint MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and the Schulich School of Business at York University. Also, she is a sessional Lecturer at the University of Toronto and has sat on the Board of Directors of Scarborough Music Theatre.

Elsa Gebremichael

Elsa Gebremichael is a Toronto-based artist, musician, and arts advocate with a commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion in the arts. She has significant experience both writing grants and serving on adjudication panels for organizations such as the Saskatchewan Arts Board, FACTOR, and the Sask Music Awards. Elsa's background as a musician, grant writer, and mentor, particularly through her work with Girls Rock Camp and the Saskatoon Open Door Society, allows her to bring a unique perspective to arts funding decisions. She is passionate about creating opportunities for BIPOC youth and underrepresented communities, ensuring that all voices have a platform in the arts.

Nevine Sedki

Nevine Sedki is a seasoned Resource Mobilizer and Nonprofit Director with over 25 years of experience in philanthropy, equity, and community engagement within the arts and social impact sectors. Her work focuses on leveraging resources to create long-lasting, community-led change driven by and for equity-deserving communities and artists. Nevine is committed to using the arts as a powerful tool for systemic social change and mobilizing community-centric support for arts and social justice initiatives, fostering transformative change through the intersection of creativity, advocacy and activism. Outside of her professional work, Nevine spends her time engaging with the community through grassroots radical initiatives and connecting with nature. A music enthusiast, she also channels her passion as a DJ and radio host with over two decades of experience, sharing her love for diverse sounds and musical storytelling with listeners.

Jaash Singh

Jaash Singh is a multi-award-winning percussionist, specializing in folk music and dance accompaniment. He is featured on many notable recordings, has done over a thousand live performances, and has experience in film, theatre, and as an educator. Jaash has been involved in eastern European, middle eastern, and mediterranean music and culture for 15 years, and has worked extensively with many community organizations who focus on making cultural experiences accessible to a wider audience. He is known for his work with such artists as Lemon Bucket Orkestra, Ventanas and Measha Bruegggosman. He is known for his exciting rhythmic grooves and his magnetic audience engagement.