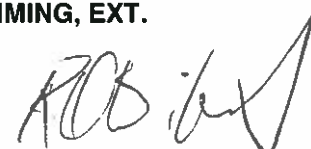



TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: CITY OF BARRIE CULTURAL GRANTS PROGRAM

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: O. GROVES, BA, MAIS, CULTURE OFFICER PROGRAMMING, EXT. 4794

SUBMITTED BY: R.Q. WILLIAMS, MBA, BFA, DIRECTOR OF CULTURE 

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: R. W. MCARTHUR, P. Eng., GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE, DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE 

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: CARLA LADD, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER 

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That staff implement the following recommendations regarding the City of Barrie Cultural Grants Program.
 - I. That city staff no longer be required to meet with applicants in person, to relay jury feedback and disseminate funds. Information and cheques can be mailed and person to person meetings scheduled upon request from applicants.
 - II. That full time and part time City employees and individuals or companies that have contracted their non-artistic services to the City of Barrie, be ineligible for the Cultural Grants Program in the year of their employment or contract and that this concept be formalized in the application guidelines.
 - III. That the City of Barrie Cultural Grants Program accept applications from "Barrie artists" who may reside outside the City limits but contribute significantly to the Barrie culture sector and that these artists' applications clearly indicate for the benefit of the jury that they are non-residents.
 - IV. That the jury panel adjudicating the City of Barrie Cultural Grants Program be comprised of four external expert jurors and one juror chosen from the arts experts residing in Barrie who is not an applicant in the same year.
 - V. That the Cultural Grants Program be reviewed again by staff no later than September 2016 and that any recommended changes to the Program be submitted to Council.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Report Review

2. This report is a summary of a review of the City of Barrie's granting program. The program exists for artists who contribute significantly to the quality of life and vibrancy of Barrie. This report will present some of the successes of the program and some of its challenges as well as recommended changes for continued success.

Background

3. The City of Barrie's Plan for Culture, Building a Creative Future, articulated as a significant strategy the support of excellence in Barrie's Culture Sector. In order to implement this strategy a cultural

grants program was designed to create fair and equitable opportunity for all arts organizations serving the City of Barrie, so they could access the public funds that were designated as part of the City's investment in the local culture sector.

4. The grants program was seen as a viable and more equitable way to serve the arts community than the existing practice of approaching Council directly and asking for financial support. The former method of acquiring funding was often based on familiarity, social networks and informal peer review assessments.
5. The current program allows for organizations to apply for ongoing operational support for various amounts depending on their jury assessed application. Organizations may also apply for project grants for up to \$5,000. Individual artists are only eligible for project grant support for up to a maximum of \$5,000.
6. Once the Department of Culture was officially formed in 2008 the Cultural Grants Program was reviewed with the assistance of local arts professionals. Over the next few years modifications were made to the Program driven by artists' and arts community's feedback. Amongst other changes, specific outcomes aligned with Council's strategy and the Plan for Culture were identified, the online form was simplified, a component to fund individual artists for project grants up to \$5,000 was added in 2009, measurement and analysis was introduced as part of the ongoing deliverables.
7. Some specific Culture Sector gaps have been identified as a result of the Grants Program application process and remedies were implemented by staff through the Department of Culture. Perhaps the best example of this is the annual grant writing workshops held prior to the annual application deadline. There are also informal peer mentoring opportunities created by placing organizations challenged by grant writing and strategic planning with more experienced organizations for a learning experience.
8. Outcomes for the Grants Program are:
 - To encourage creation and displays of arts and cultural expressions to enhance the quality of life for Barrie and area residents and tourists.
 - Increase the opportunity for funding to City of Barrie arts organizations and artists from other (non municipal sources) such as corporate sponsorships and federal and provincial government.
 - Increasing arts organizations and individual artists' awareness of the need for strategic planning, business planning, sustainability planning, sector analysis, understanding competition etc.
 - Encourage product development and marketing strategy.
 - Identification and support of sector champions.
 - Maximize the City of Barrie's return on investment in the Culture sector.
9. As with all programs of this type, the Cultural Grants program is guided by several underlying principles:
 - Progression of Council's strategic goals
 - Excellence

- Professionalism
- Objectivity
- Transparency
- Leadership
- Partnership
- Contribution to Barrie's Economic Development
- Strengthening of Barrie's brand

The Grants Process

10. The Guidelines and Application Form are available online and in hardcopy for all interested applicants to review. Applicants may download the grants application forms from the City of Barrie's website or pick up a copy from the Department of Culture office. Applications are received in the strictest confidence and reviewed by Culture staff to ensure all documents listed are included. Staff is available to answer all questions regarding the application and the process of applying.
11. In order to apply to the Grants Program, organizations and artists must have submitted all outstanding reports on previously funded work. Individual artists must submit a project report at 6 months and another at year's end.
12. Five jury members are selected based on their arts expertise, education and experience in the arts. Efforts are made to ensure diversity with regards to arts disciplines and residential geography of the jurors.
13. Once the deadline arrives, a full set of applications, with supporting materials are couriered to each member of the jury. Jury members are given at least one full month to do an independent review and evaluation in order to prepare for discussion on the merits of each application when they come to Barrie.
14. On the dates designated for final review and recommendations, jury members are sequestered in Barrie for two days to discuss the applications and to give specific commentary on each applicant's sustainability, business strategies, artistic merit, community impact, audience development efforts etc. and to make recommendations on the investment that should be made to each successful applicant.
15. The Culture Officer for Development and the Administrative Assistant attend the sessions in order to provide administrative support and document the feedback to be given to each applicant. Staff is restricted from participation in the decision making process.
16. All allocations are recommended subject to the City of Barrie Budget. When the budget is finalized meetings are scheduled by the Culture Officer for Development with each and every applicant to give the recorded jury panel feedback on various aspects of their arts business, to answer questions and disseminate the financial allocations recommended by the jury.
17. In this meeting staff also has the opportunity to have questions answered regarding the previous year's report.

Program Results

18. Since the inception of the program there have been many successes experienced by the arts organizations and individuals funded by the City of Barrie. Organizations have experienced a significant increase in all levels of funding, including other levels of government, private and corporate sponsorships and revenues generated from ticket sales. In the recent precarious climate driven by a world financial crisis many Barrie arts organizations were able to avoid the threat of financial collapse.
19. For the years 2006 through to 2010 the City of Barrie's Cultural Grants Program allocated an average of just under \$300,000 annually to successful arts organizations and individual artists. These organizations and artists, many operating with scant resources, generated:
 - an average of (more than 10 times the investment) \$3,200,000 in revenue annually;
 - economic benefits experienced by other businesses;
 - contributions to Council's goals, including downtown revitalization;
 - contributions to the enhanced quality of life experienced by residents; and,
 - a strengthening of Barrie's brand as a vibrant, dynamic and attractive community.
20. In 2007 the cultural grants program received a total of 16 applications from not-for-profit arts organizations. Out of the 16, 13 of them were funded for a total of \$207,125.00. Since 2007 the program has grown to include project grants.
21. Project grants offer funding to arts organizations in three categories;
 1. Special projects that are outside of their regular programming, such as celebrating an anniversary
 2. New program ideas – which gives organizations the opportunity to try innovative ideas
 3. Operating funds for small arts organizations that are applying for lesser amounts of money
22. Individual artists can also apply for project funding. These funds can be used to develop a special or innovative project. Individual artists can also apply for operational funds that will assist them in continuing their arts practice. For example, a visual artist may want to use the funds to create more paintings and build their collection for a unique exhibit.
23. In 2012, 12 not-for-profit arts organizations applied for and received operational funding. Out of 44 project grant applications submitted, 13 were from not-for-profit arts organizations and the remaining 31 were from individual artists. In the project category 11 of the organizations and 16 of the individual artists were funded. The total amount given in arts grants in 2012 was \$325,000.00.
24. The increase in project grants applications from individual artists confirmed staff's analysis in 2008 regarding the gap in supporting individual artists in order to meet Council's objectives. This was further strengthened by the Hill Strategies Research that revealed Barrie as having the greatest per capita resident-artists increase in Canada in the last decade.
25. The combination of limited dollars and increased demand has resulted in some pressures on the program. In any given year, applicants whose applications are assessed to be weak by the jury could experience drastic reductions in their allocations and funds given instead to those deemed to be a better investment. In the current financial climate and for artists already resource starved, any

reduction in revenue can be cause for great stress and alarm. This is exacerbated by many organizations having their fiscal year end in sync with Provincial Government practice.

26. In the current process within which the Culture Officer for Development is responsible for meeting with each applicant to relay the jury's feedback, there have been some difficult discussions and in one extreme case staff reported being threatened.

Program Eligibility

27. The eligibility requirements of the program were evolved to meet the Granting Program's outcomes and are reviewed periodically.
28. Operating Grants are specifically for funding operating expenses of not for profit arts organizations that meet the criteria for support. Operating funds can include whatever expenses are incurred in operating their organizations with the following exclusions: equipment, renovations, paying off deficits, fundraising activities and purchasing new buildings.
29. The project grants for arts organizations has been fully explained in #21, however the lists below detail the criteria.

The criteria for arts organizations include:

Operating Grants

- be not-for-profit
- be Barrie based
- have been in operation for two years
- have a demonstrated record of regular ongoing performances
- have proof of sound financial management
- must be governed by a Board of Directors

Project Grants

- be not-for-profit
- be Barrie based
- have been in operation for one year
- have a demonstrated record of regular ongoing performances
- have proof of sound financial management
- not mandatory to have a governance structure

For individuals the criteria include:

- Must be engaged in arts activities in the City of Barrie
- Recognized as professionals practicing in their fields
- Have completed some training in their field, formal or informal
- Not presently enrolled in school
- Must have submitted all outstanding reports on funded activity

30. At present the eligibility requirements do not include residency within the City of Barrie's geographical boundaries. The test for artists and arts organizations is contribution to Barrie's Cultural Sector, artistic merit and community impact. Of 31 project grant applications received in 2012 from individual artists, only one provided a home address outside of the city limits. A few Barrie arts organizations have some members who reside outside of the City limits.
31. It is also acknowledged that the nature of artists' work may require travel away from their local residence. This has not been assessed as a change in address. The jury will assess whether in their opinion the demands of the travel away will jeopardize the quality or completion of the work for which the funds are to be granted.

The Jury

32. In an effort to reduce nepotism and due to the feedback from local artists and arts experts, it was determined in the 2008 review that the jury members should reside in other municipalities. Although arts expertise is available in the City of Barrie there is also greater risk of nepotism due to our tightly knit community. Qualified local residents with expertise to participate in the jury are also frequently grant applicants so many are not eligible to act as jury members. Even for those not applying, it was expressed that the challenges of objectivity or lack of it could threaten the program.
33. The benefits of exposing Barrie artists to experts external to the community were also expressed as were concerns regarding external experts' sensitivity to nuances of the local arts community.
34. The jury is generally comprised of experts from a mixture of disciplines and genders with equal representation from performing arts, visual arts, music, dance and literature. In order to achieve a wide and diverse jury pool, panel members have travelled from Windsor, Ottawa, Lindsay, London, Peterborough, Guelph and Toronto to name just a few of their cities of origin. Some jurors are used in consecutive years to achieve continuity.
35. Five professionals are selected annually for their proven expertise. This is usually a combination of academic qualifications, work experience and knowledge of local arts practice. We are fortunate to have attracted quality jurors. Their biographies including qualifications are presented to Council annually in Memos dated May 8, 2008, May 4, 2009, May 1, 2010, May 16, 2011 and April 30, 2012.
36. Many of our jurors have been employed by the leading arts organizations provincially and nationally such as the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario to name but a few. Many are long serving experts in their fields who through the jury process are able to give valuable advice that can make an enormous difference to the careers of affected artists and organizations.

ANALYSIS

37. The City of Barrie's Cultural Grants Program has been deemed a great success by many members of the Barrie culture sector due to its role in helping them to build capacity in the arts. Some artists or organizations are dissatisfied with the results of the Program, especially when the funding component does not meet their expectations. The revenues generated by participating arts organizations are evidence of its success.
38. Examples of growth in Barrie's culture sector supported by the Grants Program and the Arts and Culture workshops abound. A recent example was demonstrated in the fact that Barrie ranked 10th in Canada for the number of arts activities in a community participating in the national Culture Days in 2011. Art ce Soir, a significant component of the Culture Days activities is funded by the City of Barrie as are other participating organizations like the Barrie Folk Society and Theatre by the Bay.
39. Many individual artists have noted that the funding has allowed them to take their arts practice to the next level, "having the opportunity to develop my collection and enhance my arts practice" (Kyle Thornley). Organizations note that City's funding has given them "credibility for acquiring other funding" (Barrie Spring Art Tour) and allowed them to "remain committed to providing unique experiences to the community and fostering local talent by stimulating the imaginations of young people" (The MacLaren Art Centre).
40. The profile of artists who are born and raised in Barrie, participate in the Barrie cultural sector, later move to a neighbouring community for greater access to space while all the time continuing their participation in the Barrie culture sector, is a frequently occurring one.

41. Arts organizations funded by the City of Barrie are all based in Barrie and some have individuals that reside just outside the City's boundaries. For example the Huronia Symphony that boasts Barrie as its home is comprised of members from all across Simcoe County. The Barrie Concert Band is Barrie's oldest arts organization with over a century of service to the community and it has some members who reside outside Barrie boundaries. It is clear that restricting the group's access to City support based on the residency of some of their members would be contrary to the Grants Program's intentions and guidelines.
42. Because of the weight given to contribution to the Barrie Culture sector as criteria in funding, only a small percentage of successful applicants reside outside of Barrie's boundaries. These artists have greatly contributed to the Barrie arts scene but have had to live in surrounding townships in order to conduct their art work without having a negative impact on their neighbours. There are three examples of artists that have been funded since 2007 that work with metals and require studios that are significant distances away from neighbours as their craft deals with extremely high temperatures and/or loud resounding noises.
43. It is important to note that when these artists are being recognized on a national or international level they will not likely be proclaimed as an Oro or Innisfil artist, but rather as Barrie artists.
44. In preparing this report, staff gained arts sector input via responses to questions disseminated through the culture sector networks. Questions asked were formulated to gain the benefit of the thinking and feedback of Barrie culture sector participants.
45. In two surveys conducted in 2012 stakeholders were asked:
 1. Is there value in the exercise of the Culture Officer for Development meeting with all the applicants to relay the jury feedback? Can we consider an alternative method of disseminating the jury's comments and funding?
 2. Should the applications continue to be juried by non-resident jurors or should staff consider a jury of local arts experts?
 3. Should the Grants Program be restricted to artists that live in the City of Barrie proper, or should we allow applications from individuals that live outside the geographical boundaries but whose art practice is based in Barrie and contribute significantly to Barrie's culture sector?
46. The responses received were considered in the formulation of the staff recommendations proposed in this report. Responses to questions 2 & 3 are provided in the Councillors lounge for Council's review.
47. Staff concurs that after considering the feedback from the community that the jury panel should remain external to the City of Barrie in order to keep the process fair and equitable. There is however an opportunity to include a local expert to address the concerns expressed by some respondents regarding additional sensitivity to the local Barrie arts scene and its nuances.
48. There are some City of Barrie employees who participate in arts organizations that are applicants to the Program.
49. While no artists expressed concern regarding City contractors participating in the Grants Program there has been at least one very vocal complaint from a resident in this regard.
50. Many artists are, out of necessity, engaged in other forms of employment. The City of Barrie is one of the region's largest employers and as such it may be inevitable that artists involved in the Grants Program will be considering opportunities as contractors or temporary and part time employees at the City of Barrie. No City of Barrie employees or contractors are able to influence the jury process which

operates at arms length from staff, however concerns have been raised regarding the perception of fairness when contractors apply and are successful Grants Program recipients.

ALTERNATIVES

51. There are many alternatives available for consideration by General Committee. They could be viewed as a menu of possible selections.

Alternative #1

General Committee could decide to leave the granting process as is.

This is not recommended by staff as there is an opportunity to improve the program that should be taken. An improved program will better meet the needs of the culture sector, especially as demand grows.

Alternative #2

General Committee could request that staff continue the practice of meeting with all applicants to relay the jury feedback and to disseminate funds.

This is not recommended by staff as it seems to set up a confrontational relationship with clients, at a time when we want to be able to work closely with them. The jury feedback could also be given by email and cheques mailed. Staff is operating in an environment of human resources shortage and could use the time more productively.

Alternative #3

General Committee could grant individuals or companies that have contracted their non-artistic services to the City of Barrie eligibility to apply to the Grants Program.

This is not recommended due to the need to achieve a perception of fairness that is unquestionable. No contractor is able to influence the jury process because of being a contractor with the City of Barrie; however there is good reason to operate with rules that protect the integrity of the Program.

Alternative #4

General Committee could determine that all applicants must reside within the City's limits without exception.

This is not recommended as it would reduce Barrie's ability to act as a regional cultural leader. Many Barrie artists who have brought value to the community because of their excellence on the national and international stage would be denied support from the very community to which they have made significant contribution. This would be a major blow to the goodwill built up by Barrie towards its arts community. The gains from this action are diminutive in comparison to the value gained from providing support to artists that are already identified positively with Barrie.

Alternative #5

General Committee could determine that the jury should be all external.

This is not recommended as it would leave unaddressed the concern that some artists have regarding the jury's sensitivity to Barrie's culture sector.

Alternative #6

General Committee could determine that the jury should be all local Barrie experts.

This is not recommended due to the small size of the Barrie arts community and the difficulty in finding experts without significant conflicts of interest. The need for protecting the integrity of the program is great and a local jury leaves the Program open to accusations. An external jury is also a way of promoting the work of Barrie artists and organizations to a provincially and nationally connected group of experts who can provide increased exposure for Barrie artists and organizations.

Alternative #7

General Committee could determine that there is no need to review the Program in 2016.

This is not recommended as a Program of this type that is serving a fast growing community in a quickly changing environment should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is meeting the needs of those that it is intended to serve.

FINANCIAL

52. Between 2006 and 2011 the City of Barrie has invested \$1.9M in its Cultural Grants Program. Recipient organizations and individual artists have used this support to generate \$17.4M in revenue.
53. In 2007 Barrie culture grants recipients received \$682K in funding from other government sources. By 2011 and despite a challenging financial climate this funding increased to \$881K.
54. Currently the City invests an annual sum of \$325K in its Cultural Grants Program. This is below both the median and the average recorded by our OMBI comparators.

LINKAGE TO 2010-2014 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

55. The recommendations included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2010-2014 City Council Strategic Plan:
 - Strengthen Barrie's Financial Condition
 - Create a Vibrant and Healthy City Centre
 - Improve and Expand Community Involvement and City Interactions
56. A supportive cultural grants program has the potential to increase the work of artists and arts organizations who endow the city with a vibrant and artistic texture making it more interesting and enjoyable to live in, work in and visit. By creating an attractive and exciting city new people will be encouraged to relocate to Barrie as they will see the municipality as one with meaningful offerings that is memorable. New residents will not only strengthen the city's financial position but will provide greatly needed services.
57. Cultural grants programs can contribute significantly to the development of cultural tourism.
58. Cultural grants programs provide life-long learning opportunities where the arts are a significant vehicle for developing learning opportunities outside of the formal education sector. These inclusive opportunities will request and encourage the participation of the community.