Corporate Policy and Procedure

Policy	Community Priorities Grant Policy
Category	Departmental
Authority	Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Services
Related Policies	None
Approved By	Jodie Sales, General Manager Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Services
Effective Date	Thursday, October-08-2026
Revision Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

Policy Statement

The City of Guelph believes that community benefit organizations play an essential role in improving the quality of life of Guelph residents. The City's role in supporting these organizations is guided by the Community Investment Strategy (CIS). The Community Priorities Grant Policy is part of this strategy and enables the City to proactively and directly invest through multi-year operational grants to organizations whose work contributes to achieving the CIS priorities. All funding under this policy, in every year, is subject to Council approving sufficient funds in the City's budget.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Improve the wellbeing of individuals, neighbourhoods and Guelph as a whole through directing City multi-year operational grant funding to eligible non-profit organizations that can demonstrate their positive contribution to the achievement of the CIS priorities.
- Provide a clear overview, including eligibility and terms and conditions, of the Community Priorities Grant.
- Ensure that the process to review and allocate grant funding is transparent, consistent, and achieves the maximum impact for the investment provided.
- Continue to address barriers for equity-deserving communities in accessing the Community Priorities Grant.

Community Investment Strategy Overview

Values and Guiding Principles

The Community Priorities Grant is guided by the CIS values and guiding principles:

- Accessible and Inclusive: Reduce barriers to access direct community investments for organizations, neighbourhoods, and individuals.
- Collaborative: Build connection and a culture of collaboration and partnership between organizations and the City. A system that leverages resources across the community and across sectors.
- Community-Driven: Invest in our shared Community and City goals through organizations and individuals. Ensure that community groups and residents have a voice in the implementation of the strategy.
- Holistic: A view that community, arts, services, recreation, and other sectors are all important to the quality of life for Guelph residents. Ensure that investments impact the community in measurable ways.
- Resilient: Build the capacity and resilience of Guelph's community benefit sector to be more financially sustainable and to continue producing results and achieving goals.
- Responsive: Adapt to changing circumstances and community needs. The City's investments are flexible and innovative to match the community.
- Transparent: A transparent, consistent, and defensible system that maintains responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Priorities Overview

The Community Investment Strategy Priorities were developed through consultation with City staff, Community Grant recipients, and past unsuccessful Community Grant applicants. The priorities are also aligned with three key City planning documents. Additional key City planning documents may be considered in specific grant programs as deemed appropriate:

- The Community Plan
- The Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- The Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan

The priorities were approved by Council, in conjunction with overall CIS updates in June 2026. The priorities ensure that Community Investment grant programs are responsive to community needs and aligned to the City's strategic direction. The priorities are viewed as intersectional. Community Investment Grant initiatives will integrate the priorities into their application, review criteria, evaluation, and report requirements. The priorities are:

- Equity, Anti-Racism and Reconciliation: Work that reduces systemic inequities, discrimination, and hate, and that advances Indigenous rights, reconciliation, and cultural safety, and initiatives led by equity-deserving communities.
- Connection, Expression, and Belonging: Focused on social connection, belonging, participation, creative expression through arts, sport, physical activity, neighbourhood activation that foster dialogue, and storytelling.

- Community Resilience: Initiatives that strengthen health, climate, safety, and access to basic needs including income, food, housing, supports and services, upstream and prevention, and collaborative initiatives.

Community Priorities Grant Program Overview

The Community Priorities Grant is the primary annual grant program administered by Community Investment. The program directs multi-year (up to three years) operational funding to initiatives advancing at least one CIS priority. Multi-year operational funding is only available through the Community Priorities Grant program to strengthen stability and long-term impact in the non-profit sector.

The program prioritizes applicants with under $1M in revenue and expenses for multi-year funding. Organizations and groups can request up to an increased funding cap of $20,000 per year, for up to three years. An award, including any multi-year award, is not a commitment by the City to provide funding in any year for which Council has not approved sufficient funds. Funding for the second and third years of a multi-year grant is also conditional on the Grantee continuing to meet the eligibility requirements and the Terms and Conditions of Award. The program aims to distribute resources awarded evenly across the three priorities where possible. Funding allocations will be tracked and monitored to better understand emerging and changing gaps in the community and will inform future updates to the CIS.

Community Priorities Grant applications are reviewed for eligibility by Community Investment Staff. Applications are then sent to the Community Priorities Grant Allocation Working Group (the "Working Group"). The Working Group is comprised of up to nine Guelph residents who meet to assess and recommend applications for funding. Before receiving any application, each Working Group member must sign a confidentiality undertaking and a conflict-of-interest declaration and must declare any conflict of interest and withdraw from the review of any application in which they have a conflict. The Working Group utilizes the application assessment criteria mentioned below as well as the Community Priorities Grant evaluation framework. The framework supports Community Investment and Community Priorities Grant applicants in understanding how the impact of the program is evaluated. Organizations in their applications must indicate how they would measure their contribution towards the priorities in alignment with the evaluation framework.

Eligibility Requirements

To apply, applicant organizations must meet ALL the following eligibility requirements at the time of application, and throughout the term of any grant award:

1. Both the organization and the funding must benefit Guelph residents.
2. The organization must be either:
    a. An incorporated not-for-profit organization
    b. A registered charity
    c. An incorporated not-for-profit or registered charity acting as a fiscal sponsor for a grassroots group.
3. The organization must have a volunteer board of directors.
4. The organization must have been in operation for at least one year.

5. The organization must have either a location in Guelph or at least 50% of its participants be from Guelph.
6. The organization must be in good standing with the City.
7. The organization adheres to the Ontario Human Rights Code (the "Code") in its employment practices and in the delivery of the programs, services and facilities funded by the Grant, and must not use the Grant to discriminate against any person on a ground protected by the Code.
8. The organization must disclose any finding made in the three years before the application by the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario or a court that the organization contravened the Code and describe the steps it has taken in response.
9. Funding requests cannot exceed the maximum set out in this policy.

Who The Community Priorities Grant Will Not Fund

Community Priorities Grant will not fund the following:

1. For-profit organizations and initiatives
2. Individuals
3. Organizations and initiatives that overlap or duplicate work under a current signed agreement with the City including Community Benefit Agreements
4. Government bodies including boards of those governments such as school boards and local boards of municipalities.
5. Political organizations, as defined in this policy.

What The Community Priorities Grant Will Not Fund

Community Priorities Grant will also not fund the following:

1. Programs that other levels of government have legislated responsibility to fund. This includes funds to 'top up' shortfalls for government mandated programs. Some examples include school board educational programs, public health programs, provincially mandated childcare/services or social assistance programs and health care services.
2. Health care services that involve performing a controlled act within the meaning of section 27(2) of the *Regulated Health Professional Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, c. 18.*
3. Advocacy, lobbying, advertising or public awareness campaigns whose primary purpose is to influence public opinion, legislation or government policy. An organization is not eligible for operating funding if such activities form a substantial part of its core activities. This exclusion does not apply to education or outreach that is part of delivering a program or service associated with the CIS priorities.
4. Debt retirement, deficit reduction, depreciation, or financing charges.
5. Retroactive payments: These are activities or costs incurred before grants are approved.
6. 100% of the budget of an activity.
7. Secondary allocation: 'Secondary Allocations' refers to the process where funds received through the grant program are allocated to another organization by the applicant or a third party via a funding allocation process such as a grant program. In addition, the grant program will not fund initiatives that have a primary purpose of raising funds for a secondary allocation process. This

includes fundraising activities carried out on the behalf of or in support of a provincial or national organization/campaign that will then reallocate the funds raised to others. This restriction does not apply to a Fiscal Sponsor providing Grant funds to the grassroots group on whose behalf it applied.

Community Priorities Grant Process and Procedure

1. The City will advertise a call for the Community Priorities Grant on the City website (guelph.ca) and other relevant media channels. The funding call will occur in the fall of each year preceding the grant cycle (i.e. the 2027 cycle funding call would launch fall 2026).
2. Organizations must download and review the Community Investment Policy in full and may use any additional resources (program guides, information sessions, 1:1 consultations, etc.).
3. Eligible applicants have the option to complete an oral or written application. All applications must be completed in full which means that each question must be answered and all the requested supporting documentation must be submitted. The application form is available online.
    a. If an organization selects completing an oral application, required documentation must be submitted at least one week in advance of the scheduled application interview. Oral applications will not proceed if documentation is not provided in advance.
4. Oral and written applications must be received by the City on or before 4:00pm on the advertised submission deadline. No late applications will be considered. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the City receives completed applications.
5. Eligible applicants can submit only one application per grant cycle.
    a. Exceptions are made for organizations that submit applications as a fiscal sponsor on behalf of a grassroots group. A Fiscal Sponsor may submit one application on its own behalf and one application for each grassroots Group it sponsors.
6. Applicants must disclose in their application any relationship between the applicant (including its directors, officers and senior staff) and a member of Council, a City employee involved in administering the program, or a Working Group member. The conflicted employee/member will not participate in the review or any decision relating to the application.
7. Personal information contained in applications and reports is collected under the authority of section 107 of the Municipal Act, 2001 and will be used to assess eligibility, evaluate applications, administer grants and report on the program. Application information will be shared with Working Group members for the purpose of evaluating applications. Questions about this collection may be directed to [title, business address and business telephone number of the responsible City employee].
8. All records submitted to the City are subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Applicants should identify, when they apply, any financial or other information they supply in confidence and consider to be commercially sensitive.
9. Applications will be screened for eligibility and completeness by staff and provided to the Community Priorities Grant Working Group for review.

a. The City reserves the right to contact any organization for information in their application which requires clarification.

10. Community Investment Staff will convene the Community Priorities Grant Working group for the required series of meetings to review each eligible application using the application assessment criteria outlined in this policy.
11. Following these meetings, the Working Group members will compile a list of recommended grant applications and their respective recommended funding allocations.
12. Final funding decisions for the Community Priorities Grant are made by the General Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Services, or their designate under the Delegation of Authority By-law, based on the information and recommendations provided by the Working Group. Funding decisions are final, and are subject to Council approving sufficient funds in the City's budget for each year of funding.
13. Additional feedback on applications can be provided by staff upon request.
14. The Community Priorities Grant does not have an appeals process for unsuccessful applications.
15. Following annual Council budget approval, the Finance Department will issue grant payments by cheques or electronic fund transfer to successful applicants.
16. All grant cheques must be cashed within six months of the date of issue. Cheques that are not cashed within six months of the date of issue will be cancelled, stopped, and not replaced. Failure to cash cheques may impact the review of an applicant's future grant applications.

Community Priorities Grant Terms and Conditions of Award

Successful grant recipients (each a "Grantee") will be subject to the following terms and conditions related to the Community Priorities Grant. Applicants are required to acknowledge their agreement to be bound by the following terms and conditions at the time of application. Applicants must provide a signed Grant Acknowledgment prior to the release of any funds.

Use of the Grant

1. The Grantee confirms that the information contained in the Grant Application and supporting documentation is true and correct in all material respects.
2. The Grantee shall use the Grant only for the activities set out in the Grant Application as approved by the City (the "Activities").
3. The Grantee shall immediately notify the City in writing if the funds cannot be used for the Activities, or if all or part of the Grant funds has not been spent after completion of the activities. The City may, at its sole discretion, permit the Grantee to use the remaining Grant funds for a different, related purpose, or may require their return within 30 days of the City's written request.
4. Payment of the Grant for each year, including the first year, is subject to Council approving sufficient funds in the City's budget for that year. The award of a Grant, including a multi-year Grant, is not a commitment by the City to pay any amount for a year in which Council has not approved sufficient funds. If Council does not approve sufficient funds for a year, the City may reduce or cancel the Grant for that year, and the City will have no liability to the Grantee for any costs the Grantee has incurred or commitments it has made in anticipation of the Grant. Payment for the second and third years of a multi-year

Grant is also conditional on the Grantee having submitted all reports then due, and continuing to meet the eligibility requirements of this policy and to comply with these terms and conditions.

5. The Grantee shall comply with all laws, regulations, by-laws and other governmental directives or orders, including the Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, in the course of carrying out the Activities and spending the Grant.

Relationship and Recognition

1. The Grantee and the City are independent parties. Nothing in these terms and conditions creates a partnership, agency, employer-employee or joint venture relationship between them. The Grantee has no authority to act as agent for the City, to enter into any contract or commitment in the name of or on behalf of the City, or to represent or bind the City in any manner.
2. The Grantee shall not state or imply that the City endorses the Grantee's views or activities beyond the City's funding of the Activities, and shall not use the City's name or logo except as required by clause 9 or with the City's prior written consent.
3. The City is not responsible for any costs of the Activities or of the Grantee's operations beyond the amount of the Grant.
4. The Grantee shall acknowledge the financial support of the City in all publicity material related to the Activities and the Grant, in accordance with any recognition guidelines provided by the City.

Records, Reporting and Information

1. The Grantee shall keep proper and accurate accounts and records of the Activities and the Grant for seven (7) years after the expiry or termination of the Grant, including accounting records that show the Grant separately from the Grantee's other sources of funding. On request, the Grantee shall make these accounts, records, receipts, vouchers and other documents available to the City to substantiate the use of the Grant and the progress of the Activities.
2. The Grantee must comply with all the reporting requirements as set out in this policy.
3. The Grantee shall immediately notify the City, in writing, if any of the information provided by the Grantee to the City is determined to be inaccurate in any material respect, or if there has been any material adverse change in any of the information provided.
4. The Grantee shall notify the City immediately, in writing, of its impending or actual bankruptcy, insolvency, appointment of a receiver, dissolution, cessation of carrying on business or bulk sale of assets.
5. The Grantee consents to the City publishing information regarding the details of the grant awarded, including the name of the Grantee, the amount of the Grant, the activities carried out and the community impact of the activities, in reports to Council and on the City's website and other relevant media. The Grantee acknowledges that information it submits to the City is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and that the City will protect personal information and information supplied in confidence in accordance with that Act.

Default and Repayment

1. Each of the following is an event of default:
    a. the Grantee has provided information to the City that is false or misleading in any material respect;
    b. the Grantee uses any part of the Grant for a purpose other than the Activities without the City's written approval;
    c. the Grantee fails to submit a complete report by the deadline and has not done so within 30 days after the City's written notice;
    d. the Grantee ceases to meet the eligibility requirements of this policy;
    e. any event described in clause 3 occurs, or the Grantee ceases to operate; or
    f. the Grantee breaches any other of these terms and conditions and does not remedy the breach within 30 days after the City's written notice.

2. If an event of default occurs, the City may, by written notice to the Grantee, do one or more of the following:
    a. suspend or withhold any further payment;
    b. reduce the Grant or terminate it;
    c. require the Grantee to repay all or part of the Grant, including amounts already spent where the default is described in clause 1(a), (b) or (c); and
    d. declare the Grantee ineligible for City grant funding until the default is remedied and any amount owing is repaid. Any amount the Grantee is required to repay is a debt due to the City, and the City may set it off against any amount the City owes to the Grantee.

3. If the Grantee fails to fully complete and submit the report to the City within the stated time and within 30 days after the City's written notice, the Grantee shall, on the City's written demand, repay the Grant received for the year covered by the report, and will not be eligible for future City grant funding until such time as the City is satisfied that the report has been submitted in full and any amount owing has been repaid.

4. On the expiry or termination of the Grant, the Grantee shall:
    a. within 30 days, return any unspent Grant funds unless the City agrees otherwise in writing;
    b. within 60 days, submit a final report covering the period up to expiry or termination, if not already submitted; and
    c. continue to keep records as required by clause 1.

5. Clauses 3, 1, 4, 1.f, 3, 1, 23, and 24 survive the expiry or termination of the Grant.

Risk Allocation

1. The Grantee shall indemnify and hold harmless the City, its elected officials, officers, employees and agents, from and against any claims, demands, actions, costs, causes of action, fines, or any other losses or other penalties arising from or relating to the Activities, the Grantee's use of the Grant, or any breach of these terms and conditions by the Grantee. This indemnity survives the expiry or termination of the Grant.

General

1. The Grantee shall not assign the Grant or these terms and conditions, or any benefit or obligation under them, without the City's prior written consent, which the City may withhold or condition in its sole discretion. If the City consents to an assignment, the Grantee remains liable for all of its obligations.
2. Where the Grantee is a Fiscal Sponsor, the Fiscal Sponsor is responsible to the City for the grassroots group's compliance with these terms and conditions and for repayment of any amount owing.
3. This policy as it reads on the date the Grant Acknowledgment is signed, the Grant Acknowledgement, and the Grant Application together form the entire agreement between the Grantee and the City regarding the Grant. If there is a conflict among them, the Grant Acknowledgment prevails, then this policy, then the Grant Application. These terms and conditions are governed by the laws of Ontario.
4. Organizations receiving a multi-year Community Priorities Grant cannot reapply in a year for which they have been approved for funding.
5. It is the sole responsibility of the organizations receiving a Community Priorities Grant to know when their multi-year funding expires, and when to reapply.

Community Priorities Grant Application Assessment Criteria

All eligible applications that are submitted to the Community Priorities Grant will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Community Impact and Community Investment Priorities Alignment: The applicant demonstrates a clear contribution to Community Investment priorities, and desired outcomes for Guelph residents.
2. Organizational Effectiveness and Capacity: The organization demonstrates the leadership, governance, staffing, volunteer capacity, and operational readiness required to successfully deliver the proposed work.
3. Community Support and Responsiveness: The organization demonstrates an understanding of community needs and engages residents, particularly those with relevant lived experience, in shaping its work. The organization can clearly demonstrate how its activities respond to community needs and add value within the community.
4. Equity, Anti-Racism, Reconciliation, Accessibility, and Inclusion: The organization demonstrates a commitment to reducing barriers and advancing equity, accessibility, inclusion, anti-racism, and reconciliation through its programs, practices, partnerships, and decision-making.
5. Collaboration and Partnerships: The organization can demonstrate that it works collaboratively with partners, networks, and community members to strengthen community capacity and maximize impact.
6. Financial Stewardship and Sustainability: The organization demonstrates responsible financial management, a need for the funding, an appropriate use of funds, and a reasonable approach to maintaining community benefit beyond the grant period where applicable.
7. Learning, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement: The organization demonstrates an ability to measure outcomes, learn from experience, and adapt programs and services based on evidence and community feedback.

Community Priorities Grant Reporting Requirements

Community Priorities Grant recipients are required to submit one report for each year of funding awarded**.** Reports must be submitted to the City by December 15th of the same year for which the grant is awarded. For example, if a grant is awarded in February 2026, the grant recipient must provide a completed report by December 15, 2026.

Report forms will be available at the Community Priorities Grant webpage. Alternate formats for reporting, including oral reporting, are available on request. Oral reports must be completed by December 15th.

The following is the foundational structure for Community Priorities Grant Reports:

- Overview of work completed
- Impact measurement
- Financial Summary showing how the Grant was spent against the approved budget.

The City may request additional information or supporting documents to verify a report.

Policy Review

The Community Priorities Grant Policy will be reviewed annually by Community Investment staff. Changes to any matter approved by Council as part of the Community Investment Strategy require Council approval.

Definitions

Activities

Specifically, what the applicant has requested grant funding for (e.g. programs and services of an organization), as approved by the City.

Benefit to Guelph Residents

Organization's service boundaries include Guelph or portion of Guelph, and at least one service, program, or activity location is in the City, or 50% or more of individuals served reside in the City. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they will positively impact Guelph residents.

Community Benefit Organization

Community Benefit Organizations possess five defining features; they are:

- Organized - they have some structure and regularity to their operations, as reflected in regular meetings, a membership, and procedures for making decisions that participants recognize as legitimate, whether they are formally constituted or legally registered or not. This includes informal groups as well as legally incorporated ones.
- Private - they are institutionally separate from government, even though they may receive financial support from government
- Not profit distributing - they do not distribute profits to individuals

- Self-governing - they have their own mechanisms for internal governance and can cease operations on their own authority
- Voluntary - membership or participation is not compulsory or coerced.

Community Benefit Agreement

A City-led, strategic partnership agreement where a community partner is better positioned than the City to achieve key departmental objectives or outcomes.

Community Investment Strategy

The Community Investment Strategy (CIS) lets people know how the City will support and work with Community Benefit Organizations. It aims to ensure the City makes clear, consistent and open decisions.

Equity-Deserving

The term equity-deserving is used to refer to groups who are marginalized by social structures and experience social and financial disadvantages. These groups experience oppression that can take many forms including racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression.

Fiscal Sponsor

An incorporated not-for-profit organization or registered charity that satisfies all eligibility requirements of the Community Priorities Grant program. The fiscal sponsor handles administration of the funding and ensures that all terms and conditions are followed on behalf of the grassroots group and is responsible to the City for the grassroots group's compliance and for repayment of any amount owing.

Grant Acknowledgment

A form signed by the Applicant which acknowledges their agreement to be bound by the terms and conditions outlined in this policy.

Grassroots Group

An unincorporated community benefit organization providing programs and/or services that are aligned with at least one CIS priority.

Incorporated Not-For-Profit Organization

Incorporated not-for-profit organization refers to entities incorporated under either federal or provincial not-for-profit legislation. These organizations may or may not have charitable status. Registered charities are included.

In Good Standing

An organization is In Good Standing if:

1. It has no overdue amounts owing to the City, including property taxes, fees and charges;
2. It is not in default under any agreement with the City, including any previous grant; and

3. It is not a party to an active legal proceeding against the City, unless the General Manager determines that the proceeding is unrelated to the Activities and does not affect the organization's eligibility.

In operation for at least one year

An organization declares the date on which their organization began operating as a Community Benefit Organization.

Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19 (the "Code") is a provincial law that gives everybody equal rights and opportunities without discrimination in the social areas of services, goods and facilities; occupancy of accommodation; contracts; employment; and membership in trade unions, trade or occupational associations and self-governing professions.

The *Code's* goal is to prevent discrimination and harassment on the grounds set out in Part I of the Code, including:

- race
- ancestry
- place of origin
- colour
- ethnic origin
- citizenship
- creed
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- gender expression
- age
- marital status
- family status
- disability

Operating Grant

A financial grant provided to support part of an organization's operating expenses or on-going program/service costs (e.g. day-to-day costs, staffing, overhead)

Other Levels of Government

Other levels of government including:

- Crown Agencies and Corporations (Federal and Provincial)
- Hospitals
- School Boards
- Universities, Colleges of Applied Arts and technology and Post Secondary institutions
- Approved agency designated as a Children's Aid Society
- Community Care Access Centres
- Local Boards
- Boards of Health

Political organization

An organization that formed for a political purpose or engages in partisan political activity (activities which support or oppose specific political parties, candidates, or elected officials).

Working Group

The Community Priorities Grant Allocation Working Group described in this policy.