



## **REPORT**

**REPORT TO:** Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

**REPORT FROM:** Mandy Keller, Senior Manager of Community Development

**DATE:** May 25, 2021

**REPORT NO.:** RP-2021-0013

**RE:** Community Partnership Program

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Report RP-2021-0013 dated May 25, 2021 regarding the Community Partnership Program be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the proposed Community Partnership Program policy and guidelines as outlined in Report RP-2021-0013 be approved in principle;

AND FURTHER THAT administrative changes to the existing Municipal Assistance operating budget be referred to the 2022 Budget Committee in order to align with the Community Partnership Program outlined in Report RP-2021-0013;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back on the launch of the Community Partnership Program as outlined in Report RP-2021-0013 as part of the 2022 Community Partnership Program review in Q1 of 2022.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan approved by Council in November 2020 through GC-2020-0108, recognized the opportunity to review the Municipal Assistance Policy (MAP) to identify and address additional supports that may be required to enable groups to respond to the needs of the community. This also aligned with previous Council direction and staff efforts to update the MAP to ensure it was relevant and structured to meet the evolving needs of the community.

The Municipal Assistance Policy (MAP) was originally approved in 2008 as a guide to working in collaboration with community partners who provide opportunities and services that promote and enhance a healthy, safe, and active community, while reflecting the values of the municipality.

Through ongoing work and consultation with Council, local community groups, service clubs and sports organizations, key trends have emerged in our community that need to be addressed to sustain community engagement and provide additional support. Key issues include:

- Lack of sponsorships available for events and programs or increasing challenges to secure sponsorships.
- Insufficient funding from granting sources to sustain events and programs.
- Increased financial pressures for insurance and for security or policing at events due to attendance levels and incidents.
- Lack of governance, board development and regeneration of members due to the long serving nature of the members of established groups and organizations.
- Support and expertise needed for operating activities, events, and initiatives (e.g., logistics in planning an event, adherence to public health legislation, risk management of volunteers).
- Lack of partnership or resource sharing due to lack of knowledge of how to collaborate or who to partner with.
- Struggles with volunteer recruitment, retention, and best practices in volunteer management.

### **Community Partnership Program (CPP) Draft Review**

In February 2017, Town staff presented Council a draft of the proposed Community Partnership Program (CPP) to garner feedback and to discuss the proposed implementation and next steps. Feedback collected included:

- Council suggested that the core criteria should be maintained but a greater emphasis for groups to develop independence be built into the program.
- Council supported the revisions to the proposed deadline and application submission requirements.
- Council did not support the reduced funding for all groups that have high profile events that fit within the mandate of the Town of Halton Hills and requested further information on the impact to groups should this program be adopted as drafted.

As part of the Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) review outlined by staff in Memorandum RP-2017-0008, further consultation with community groups was suggested to collect the additional information requested by Council in February 2017:

- Overall health of the community group.
- Level of dependence on MAP funding.
- Level of satisfaction with the current MAP.
- Relevance of the MAP criteria.
- Level of perceived value of initiative to the community.
- Willingness to provide Council with detailed financial information demonstrating need for financial assistance.

## **Community Consultation**

In January 2018, staff launched a survey via the online platform Let's Talk Halton Hills to community groups, including current and past applicants of the Town's MAP. The survey was completed by fifteen (15) respondents including seven (7) organizations who have applied for MAP. Highlights of the survey results include:

- Volunteer recruitment and financial issues are the most pressing concerns faced by the responding organizations.
- 26% of the respondents suggested making changes to the MAP.
- 85% reported that municipal funding represented less than 10% of their project funding.
- Fostering a Healthy Community and Affordability/Accessibility are viewed as the two most important criterion for the Town to consider when assessing municipal funding requests.
- 95% indicated their organization is prepared to provide financial information to Council as requested.

In addition to the survey one on one meetings with key groups that receive municipal assistance occurred. Many of the groups identified that municipal funding (specifically fee waivers including the permit and loan of equipment) was required to ensure events continued to run by the volunteer groups. This allowed their resources to be allocated more effectively to cover other related expenses such as insurance and policing.

In surveying the local community organizations leading events within the Town of Halton Hills, some could not continue to run the event if funding were not provided for the fee waivers including the permit and loan of equipment.

To supplement this municipal funding specific consultation, focus turned to broader community engagement as part of the development of Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan. As noted above the Plan reaffirmed that a fulsome, supportive, and accountable funding approach needs to be in place to assist groups in addressing issues that affect their activities, events, and initiatives. In response, staff have proceeded with the revising and confirmation of the Community Partnership Program (CPP) that addresses feedback, incorporates additional opportunities, and better aligns with updated council priorities and the strategic goals of several Town plans.

## **COMMENTS:**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Council in principle to adopt the proposed Community Partnership Program for providing municipal grants to eligible registered community groups in place of the Municipal Assistance Policy. The proposed Community Partnership Program policy with guidelines can be found in Appendix A

## **Community Partnership Program (CPP) Overview**

The Community Partnership Program (CPP) seeks to establish partnerships with eligible community groups and organizations for the delivery of activities, events, and initiatives located in Halton Hills. The allocation of municipal funds through this partnership program produces a high level of return on investment in many ways including resultant tourism, meeting the community's expectations for assistance, the encouragement of volunteerism and enhanced use of Town facilities.




The Community Partnership Program (CPP) policy establishes the scope, objectives, governance, and guidelines for the allocation of municipal funds and resources to eligible groups and organizations for community-based activities, events, and initiatives that support the strategic priorities of the Town (Council and Departments).

The administration of the Community Partnership Program will be as noted in the governance section of the policy and through adherence of the guidelines. Specifically, a key opportunity of the CPP is that staff will be responsible for assessing applications, confirming funding recommendations, and bringing a report with the investment decisions to Council for final approval.

Funding recommendations will be vetted and confirmed through several mechanisms as appropriate and through consultation with subject matter experts and other relevant strategic leadership groups (e.g., Special Events Committee, Active Easy Alliance, Arts & Culture Working Group, Public Art Advisory Board and Climate Change Task Force). This vetting will also ensure that collaboration across all Town funding programs occurs to avoid duplication of other existing and/or planned Town supports and to confirm the distribution of Town investments is coordinated and appropriate to the objectives of each funding program (e.g., climate change investment, arts related funding, Community Improvement Plan).

The Community Partnership Program (CPP) has been developed to clearly define the alignment with Town strategic priorities, directly consider the community needs, and highlight the concept of working in partnership with the Town. The below chart outlines priorities of the CPP which will assist community groups and organizations to clearly understand what activities, events, and initiatives will be supported.

<b>Partnership Priorities (Select One)</b>		
<b>Community &amp; Neighbourhood Engagement</b>	<b>Activities/events/initiatives that:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create community gatherings and celebrate rural character, culture, agriculture, and local history.</li><li>• Build connected and more engaged neighbourhoods.</li><li>• Focus on outdoor activities and connecting residents to nature.</li></ul>	<b>Examples include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food and drink festivals</li><li>• Fall fairs</li><li>• Parades for celebrations or special occasions</li><li>• Farmer's Market</li><li>• Neighbourhood block</li></ul>

	<p>Supporting Strategic Actions, or Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council Priority - The community is supported in looking for ways of celebrating its rural character and drawing visitors from across the continent to enjoy its landscape and produce.</li> <li>○ Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy - Cultural Vibrancy Goal: establish a strong sense of what it means to be part of the Halton Hills community that people can relate to and are proud to be a part of.</li> <li>○ R&amp;P Action 4 - Enhance the number of innovative and meaningful initiatives that connect Halton Hills' residents to nature.</li> </ul>	<p>parties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive by/Drive through events</li> <li>• Community initiated public art</li> <li>• Community Gardens or "Grow a Row" programs</li> <li>• Build a Little Library</li> <li>• Tree planting and neighbourhood improvement projects</li> </ul>
<p>Active Living</p> 	<p>Activities/events/initiatives that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Recreation for ALL</li> <li>• Focus on active recreation, sport, active transportation, healthy lifestyles.</li> <li>• Make improvements to parks and facility.</li> </ul> <p>Supporting Strategic Actions, or Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ R&amp;P Action 1 - In response to changing lifestyle preferences, provide opportunities for regular and convenient access to participation that reaches the largest population at a basic, general, and introductory level.</li> <li>○ R&amp;P Action 6 - Parks, community centres and other recreation facilities should be constructed, expanded, and/or refurbished as required to meet local needs, operate effectively, and to function as multi-use hubs where possible.</li> </ul>	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport, Bike, Walk and Run events</li> <li>• Play Street events</li> <li>• Free Pop-up sports programming</li> <li>• Older adult walking club</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Recreation Program</li> <li>• Geocaching/Scavenger Hunts</li> <li>• Sports/Coaching Training on inclusion for all</li> </ul>
<p>Community Wellbeing</p> 	<p>Activities/events/initiatives that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and encourage inclusion, community health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Support families, youth, seniors, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.</li> <li>• Promote and create quality opportunities for civic participation and volunteerism.</li> </ul> <p>Supporting Strategic Actions, or Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council Priority, youth and seniors' initiatives –The youth and senior population of Halton Hills is supported by a variety of services and facilities tailored to their needs.</li> <li>○ R&amp;P Action 2 - Work collaboratively with support organizations to identify, attract and intentionally include an increased number of participants from populations facing constraints accessing</li> </ul>	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism training and workshops</li> <li>• Food Security Programs/Food Drives</li> <li>• Intergenerational program</li> <li>• Early Years community open house</li> <li>• Awareness events for a social issue</li> <li>• Volunteer recruitment initiatives</li> <li>• Newcomer programs</li> </ul>

	recreation and parks services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ R&amp;P Action 9 - Work collectively with other service providers to promote volunteerism and engage more volunteers in the delivery of service.</li> <li>○ R&amp;P Action 10 - Continue to build capacity in the area of Community Development focusing on the physical, social and mental wellness of residents for an improved quality of life</li> </ul>	
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## **Guidelines**

The Community Partnership Program (CPP) guidelines have been developed through an extensive review of the current MAP, consultation with community groups and with reference to best practices in administering grants. The resulting guidelines (included as Appendix A) provide detailed information regarding the Funding Streams, Key Criteria, Eligibility and Ineligibility, Application Requirements, Application Review and Terms and Conditions. Key elements of the guidelines are highlighted below.

**Support and Assistance:** A focus of the CPP and a core function of Community Development staff's work is to ensure assistance is provided to community groups to enable them to build capacity and become self-sufficient including having adequate volunteer resources, strong governance, and group linkages for collaboration. Those seeking funding are encouraged to work with Town staff to confirm their activity/event/initiative alignment with partnership priorities and select funding stream options accordingly.

**Accountability:** Community groups must comply with the enhanced requirements and terms and conditions of the CPP. These requirements ensure that groups adhere to common practices such as financial responsibility, volunteer management, evaluation and proper post reporting of activities, events, and initiatives to protect the Town of Halton Hills as a partner. Specifically, requests and reporting must contain detailed financial information that clearly identifies need, utilization of funds, and all revenue sources differentiating 'cash' and 'in-kind' resources.

**Eligibility:** The emphasis of the CPP is support for activities, events, and initiatives because of demonstrated need and alignment with criteria versus concern with 'who' the applicant is. That said the CPP is targeted to Groups and Organizations (who are community registered groups or can meet registered group criteria). It does however leave open to individuals, faith organizations, social service agencies, service clubs, and for-profit groups/organizations that qualify within the guidelines of the CPP. Some specific applicable criteria would be activities, events, and initiatives that are open to all, having broad community impact, and that are collaborative. Alternatively, the CPP has provided details regarding ineligibility including any projects to raise money for core operating expenses, paying for accumulated deficits or debt, making direct financial donations or grants to a third-party.

**Independence and New Opportunities:** The focus of the CPP is support for new and innovative activities, events, and initiatives. The guidelines of the CPP combined with

support and assistance is intended to move groups towards independence and sustainable operation so that an organization or initiative is not perpetually funded, and funding freed up to support other opportunities. The terms outlined in the CPP indicate funding may be reduced over five years and then no longer available for any specific activity, event, or initiative.

**Once a year intake (April):** The intake in April date will capture approval for the most activities, events, and initiatives occurring in the same year and then wraps to the following year for anything that might occur in the first quarter before the following intake. One intake will allow for confirmation of the full annual forecast and then the allocating of funds best managed within the limits of the operational budget. That said, if there are additional funds needed that coverage from tax rate stabilization be considered. Staff will review and forecast budget needs for community funding and make recommendations for annual operating budget to proactively address future demands.

**Funding Streams:** Five categories have been established to reflect the current needs of the community and to help groups clearly identify the ways that their funding request will be used. Community groups can choose one funding stream or they may apply for more than one funding stream for their activities, events, and initiatives. If a community group or organization is requesting funds from more than one stream the combined total can be up to a maximum of \$5000. The chart below outlines the funding streams of the CPP.

<b>Funding Streams (Select One or more to a maximum \$5,000)</b>
<p><b>1. Organizational Effectiveness</b></p> <p>Support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening internal practices and addressing challenges such as development activities, governance, marketing and promotion, strategic planning, training, and volunteer management</li> </ul> <p>Up to a maximum of \$5,000 (One time per activity, event, and initiative)</p>
<p><b>2. Municipal Support</b></p> <p>Support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiver of municipal fees. This includes expenses related to facility rental permit, road occupancy permit, loan of municipally owned or controlled equipment fees and delivery (sports equipment, picnic tables, pylons, barriers, etc.) and other pre-approved support for new activities, events, and initiatives.</li> </ul> <p>Up to a maximum of \$2,500 (One time per activity, event, and initiative)</p>
<p><b>3. Community Projects</b></p> <p>Support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New activities, events, and initiatives that innovatively seek to meet or resolve a defined need within the community.</li> </ul> <p>Up to a maximum of \$5,000 (One time per activity, event, and initiative)</p>

The above Three streams build the foundation of support for the CPP, while streams Four and Five represent more specific areas of support expanded upon below.

**Neighbourhood projects:** This funding stream will allow for grass roots opportunities. Although part of the overall community partnership program these smaller grants will be promoted differently. In addition, there is a more realistic expectation placed on the level of group organization for application and award of funding in this stream.

#### **4. Neighbourhood Projects**

Support for:

- Empowering residents and neighbourhood groups to create and host new activities, events, and initiatives designed to celebrate and to build healthier, connected and more engaged neighbourhoods. \*Exempt from the community registered group, financial and insurance conditions of guidelines.

Up to a maximum of \$250 (One time per activity, event, and initiative)

**Designated Special Events:** This funding stream is intended to back core events that a municipality would typically lead. Approvals for events aligning with this criterion ensures that groups and volunteers are supported to continue to lead these events that have a legacy in Halton Hills. This is not to say that other events will be unsupported through the CPP, however annual application and the long-term expectation of self-sufficiency is lessened. Ultimately it is in the best interest of the Town to provide this sponsorship as opposed to having to take on the direct or “in-house “operation of these events that are expected by the community.

#### **5. Designated Special Events**

Support for:

- Operation of municipally significant, reoccurring historical community events (occurring for 10 or more years). These events;
  - Are essential to community life and draw broad community participation.
  - Support cultural vibrancy, economy, and tourism.
  - Demonstrate coordinated effort and collaborative leadership.
  - Adhere to an extensive audit as part of the partnership.

5-year approval to cover the costs of municipal support and specified opportunities for organizational effectiveness. Revaluated at the end of each 5-year term.

In a general survey of events run by community organizations within Southern Ontario, it was determined that many events are run by the municipality due to the capacity of local community organizations. Typical events include Canada Day, Winterfest Celebrations, Santa Claus Parades, and local tourism events (i.e., Farmers Markets, summer concerts).

Although the range of funding varied widely among the municipalities surveyed, 95% of the 46 municipalities were organizing and coordinating the bulk of the community events



“in-house” with budgets ranging from \$400,000 to over \$1,000,000. This cost includes the amount for event program staff and funding for the event activities.

Staff are proposing the following events be considered designated special events:

- Acton Agricultural Society – Acton Fall Fair
- Acton BIA Events - Winter Carnival, Canada Day, Farmer’s Market, Trick or Treat on Mill and Leathertown Festival
- Acton Fire Fighters Association - Canada Day Fireworks and the Acton Santa Claus Parade
- Georgetown Agricultural Society – Georgetown Fall Fair
- Georgetown BIA Events – Georgetown Farmers Market, Bike It, Holiday Market, Masquerade on Main and Rock n’ Roll Classics
- Georgetown Lions Club - Georgetown Santa Claus Parade
- Glen Williams Town Hall - Canada Day in the Glen
- Georgetown Highland Games
- Light Up the Hills - Ignition Night and Displays

Staff recommend working with the above listed groups to do an audit of need and overall health throughout 2021. As part of the 2022 Council reporting of the CPP the confirmed designated special events will be recommended for approval.

### **Budget Implications**

The current budget for the Municipal Assistance Program is \$105,200. If Council were to approve the CPP in place of the MAP as presented, it is not expected that the budget allocation will change other than the administration of renaming and reallocation of the existing operational budgeted amount.

Staff is recommending that in addition to changes with the existing MAP cost centre, that funds be reallocated to separate cost centres for the management of existing formal agreements and individual assistance for recreation programs and services.

- Specific and unique formal agreements exist with Ballinafad Community Centre (\$5,000 annually) and Willow Park Ecology Centre Agreement (\$12,350 annually) although the monies are allocated within the MAP budget. Staff is recommending these amounts be reallocated to the Community Development Division operating budget cost centre and managed separately of the CPP, with accountability continuing through the existing agreements.
- This subsidy program assisting individuals in accessing recreation programs and services is well established and governed by the affordability framework. As such staff is recommending the reallocation of \$10,000 to be administered through the Recreation Services Division operating budget cost centre.

As noted above changes are required of an administrative nature these will be reflective in the 2022 operational budget but in general the funding streams are projected to be allocated as follows:

Organizational Effectiveness	\$5,000
Municipal Support	\$6,850
Community Projects	\$10,000
Neighbourhood Projects	\$1,000
Designated Special Events	\$55,000
<b>Total CPP Budget allocation</b>	<b>\$77,850</b>

### **Community Partnership Program Implementation**

The Community Partnership Program (Appendix A) achieves the following objectives:

- Provides municipal funds and/or other forms of supports within budgetary limits.
- Evaluates applications fairly and equitably utilizing criteria-based assessments.
- Ensures accountability, fiscal responsibility, and competence of groups/organizations.
- Advances the self-sustainability and effectiveness of community groups and organizations.
- Focuses more on the activity, event, or initiative itself rather than the type of applicant.
- Closely aligns with Council's Strategic Plan and the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan

Upon Council approval of the transitioning of the Municipal Assistance Policy (MAP) to the Community Partnership Program (CPP) staff will proceed with next steps as detailed below:

- A soft launch of the Community Partnership program will occur in 2021 once procedures and applications have been developed and the website updated. The formal launch will then occur early 2022 with promotion leading up to the April intake.
- Given the COVID-19 pandemic, events are being cancelled or modified, however 2021 Municipal Assistance operational funds will still be needed for waiver of fees and loan of equipment. In addition, there may be some community projects that could qualify for 2021 funds under the CPP guidelines for MAP funds. Staff propose intake for community projects as needed throughout 2021. Even with disbursements as noted above, staff do anticipate an overall savings in the cost centre with projected expenditures falling within existing budget.
- Notification and introduction to the CPP guidelines for existing users of the Municipal Assistance Program will occur. Specifically for those events that are to be considered designated special events there will be a detailed communication and audit of need in 2021. Staff will work with the additional event organizers not deemed designated special events who have consistently accessed funding through MAP to communicate expectations of the CPP for self-sufficiency. Staff will then work closely with them over the next several years to understand their events costs and help build financial/sponsorship capacity to be self-sustaining.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Staff notes the following alignment of proposed Community Partnership Program with the Council Strategic Plan 2020-2025:

**Shaping Growth:** ensuring balanced and sustainable community.

**Transportation:** supporting active transportation.

**Climate Change and Environment:** reducing our carbon footprint.

**Fiscal and Corporate Management:** service levels that support the quality of life.

**Local Autonomy and Provincial Advocacy:** working collaboratively with other agencies, governments, and other bodies.

**Youth and Seniors Initiatives:** support for services and facilities tailored to their needs.

In addition, the Community Partnership Program will align with some of the key goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals including:

- Good health and wellbeing
- Gender equality
- Reduced inequalities
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Partnerships for the goals

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

All financial implications of the CPP are addressed through the transition from the MAP and use of associated funds contained in the operational budget. Any future funding needs for the overall Community Partnership program (CPP) will be referred to the Budget Committee for consideration as part of the annual corporate Operating Budget review.

## **CONSULTATION:**

Staff has consulted with key groups to gain information into the health of our local community organizations. Staff has also consulted with other Town staff from Finance, Climate Change and Asset Management, Economic Development, Innovation and Culture.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Staff has engaged with the community and key groups through survey, one on one meetings and through a fulsome consultative process as part of the development of Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the cultural vibrancy and social well-being pillar(s) of Sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Good.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

The Town's website will be updated to reflect the Community Partnership Program. The CPP will also be shared directly with community groups who have received Municipal Assistance in past years.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Town of Halton Hills appreciates and recognizes the value and benefits of working in collaboration with community groups, service clubs and sports organizations as demonstrated in Council's priorities and the former Municipal Assistance Policy. As such, staff have provided a fulsome report on how the proposed Community Partnership Program will support current community trends and needs and request Council's support in principle for the program's implementation in 2021 and 2022.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Harris".

Warren Harris, Commissioner of Recreation and Parks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Mills".

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer