



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Jennifer Spence, Environmental Stewardship Coordinator

DATE: June 11, 2024

MEMO NO.: MEM-CSE-2024-002

SUBJECT: 2024 Climate Change Investment Fund Allocations

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with an overview of the 2024 Climate Change Investment Fund (CCIF) allocations.

BACKGROUND:

The CCIF supports community organizations that undertake projects in Halton Hills that support implementation of Council's Strategic Plan, especially the Vision of Halton Hills as a "nature-rich" community, and Council's priority areas of Natural Areas and Heritage; Infrastructure and Asset Management, and Safe and Welcoming Community.

To maximize and leverage community and volunteer capacity and engagement, the fund provides modest micro-grants (up to \$2,500 per project) to eligible projects that support volunteer-driven projects. Funding covers expenses such as plants/trees, signage, supplies, educational materials and honorariums for guest speakers.

Projects funded through the CCIF support community engagement, connect residents with nature, enhance natural assets, and promote opportunities to bring neighbourhoods together to contribute to a common environmental goal.

The CCIF, previously called the Community Sustainability Investment Fund (2014-2020), has provided over \$96,000 in funding to 81 projects since it was first offered. This funding has leveraged additional cash and in-kind contributions of over \$875,000. In other words, each \$1 awarded by the Town has translated into about \$9, or a 900% increase.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many community groups postponed activities and the program was not offered in 2023. For the 2024 funding cycle, program interest has increased to pre-pandemic levels.

Applications are evaluated based on transparent criteria including:

- Aligns with environmental priorities in the Strategic Plan and other Council-approved plans
- Provides a larger community benefit
- Engages volunteers and residents to participate in the project

Submissions are reviewed for eligibility and to confirm that duplicate funding has not been granted through other Town programs. Eligible projects are scored by Community Services staff individually and scores are aggregated to identify submissions recommended for award to the Commissioner of Community Services.

COMMENTS:

The 2024 CCIF was open for applications from February 1 to May 8, 2024. The program was promoted across all Town's communication channels, with additional support through online advertisements. It was also promoted at three community events and communicated via email to over 140 community organizations. Potential applicants were encouraged to discuss their project with Town staff prior to submitting their application.

Nine applications were received. Upon review, eight projects were approved to receive funding – resulting in the award of the full annual available budget of \$15,000.00 (Table 1). Supporting these projects will leverage community investment (additional cash and in-kind contributions) of \$42,752.20. This includes other external grant funding, donations, and volunteer time that the community group has secured for their project.

These volunteer-driven projects include native tree and pollinator plantings, habitat creation, community garden programming, indigenous knowledge and partnerships, and educational materials to engage the community.

All of the projects provide a community benefit and involve engaging residents and building social cohesion around a diverse demographic, including seniors and youth. As a result, these projects contribute to building a healthy environment and community by enhancing and increasing natural assets, supporting biodiversity, encouraging environmental stewardship, and supporting recreational outdoor activities. Further details on each project are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1: 2024 Approved Projects

Group Name and Description of Project	Total Project Value (including in-kind)	CCIF Funding
Acton Seniors Centre - Hillsview Acton Revitalization Garden involves creating a pollinator garden outside of the Acton Seniors Centre.	\$6,817.00	\$1,200.00
Bird Friendly Halton Hills - Bird Friendly Habitat Project involves creating a songbird friendly garden, soil for native flowering plant giveaway, educational videos, and other promotional materials for educational outreach.	\$17,055.00	\$2,275.00
Bird Friendly Halton Hills – Anishinaabe Bird Name Project involves a series of community-engaging and educational activities designed to raise awareness of indigenous and environmental stewardship, working with bird experts from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.	\$5,270.00	\$2,150.00
Friends of the Old Seed House Garden – Funding to purchase native plants, trees and shrubs to enhance the Old Seed House Garden.	\$1,075.00	\$875.00
Halton Environmental Network – Supporting Education Program at the Acton Community Garden includes workshop materials (plants, vermicomposting, compost, soil, tools) and promotional materials (garden storybooks, printing posters).	\$4,493.00	\$2,500.00
Halton Hills Eco-Film Fest – The EcoFilm Fest will offer 5+ educational environmental film screenings open to the public. Events will also include guest speakers, educational displays, and other resources.	\$16,109.00	\$1,000.00
Trees for Halton Hills - Tree planting project includes planting 180 2-gallon native trees on property adjacent to Town Hall.	\$3,833.50	\$2,500.00
Trees for Halton Hills and Pickleball Association – Emmerson Park project includes planting caliper trees and shrubs to provide relief from the wind and to provide shade.	\$3,100.00	\$2,500.00
Total	\$57,752.50	\$15,000.00

The one proposal that was not approved was similar to a proposal already submitted and did not meet the requirement to be a clearly distinct project. The two projects receiving less funding than requested are able to meet the objective of the project at a smaller scale and/or the request exceeded the maximum funding allowed per project.

Funding recommendations were developed within the limits of the \$15,000 capital budget by the CCIF selection committee and approved by the Commissioner of Community Services under delegation of authority approved through BY-LAW NO. 2023-0046. Letters of award will be issued in mid-July. Successful grant recipients have 14 months to complete their project, including the requirement to submit a final report to Town staff.

In 2024, with Council's new Strategic Plan in place and as part of regular continuous improvement, Town staff will be reviewing the CCIF program to ensure that it continues to meet the Town's strategic objectives, responds to community group needs, and identifies potential opportunities for synergies with other Town funding programs in order to continue to deliver the program effectively and efficiently. Recommendations of this review will be brought forward to Council for consideration.

CONCLUSION:

The CCIF leverages funding for community projects that support the Town's Strategic Plan and environmental goals. These projects aim to enhance local environmental health and promote collaboration, community engagement, and environmental stewardship to support a higher quality of life in Halton Hills.

Reviewed and approved by,

Michelle Bourdeau, Manager of Environment & Climate

Dharmen Dhaliah, Director of Climate Change and Asset Management

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer