

# CORPORATE POLICY



Policy Title: **Neighbourhood Grant Policy**  
Policy Category: **Municipal Services**  
Policy No.: M-015  
Department: Community Services  
Approval Date: June 19, 2023  
Revision Date: N/A  
Author: Halie Gilmore, Neighbourhood Coordinator  
Julie Legg, Supervisor, Neighbourhood Services  
Travis McCallum, Policy Analyst  
Attachments: None  
Related Documents/Legislation: City of Waterloo Neighbourhood Strategy,  
Community, Culture and Recreation Services Affiliation Policy,  
Sports and Recreation Grant Policy,  
Arts Grant Policy  
Key Word(s): neighbourhood, community-building, grants

## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

The City of Waterloo recognizes that resident-led and delivered initiatives contribute to community building that fosters neighbourhood identity and a sense of belonging. The Neighbourhood Grant Program is one way the City supports neighbourhoods and helps residents build strong communities.

There are three distinct neighbourhood grant streams: mini grant, neighbourhood fund, and operating grant. This Neighbourhood Grant Program supports a range of resident-led initiatives by providing financial resources and guidance from City staff.

## **PURPOSE:**

The Neighbourhood Grant Policy outlines a framework for delivering the three grant streams including eligibility requirements, application processes, assessment, and funding conditions. The policy supports understanding, transparency, and consistency in grant application, assessment, and allocation of funds.

<b>Mandatory Policy, <i>Municipal Act</i>:</b>	No
<b>Policy Administration Team, Review Date:</b>	May 5, 2023.
<b>Corporate Management Team, Review Date:</b>	May 24, 2023

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Affiliated Neighbourhood Association:** A community organization of residents from a Waterloo neighbourhood that works collaboratively with, and is recognized by, the City of Waterloo through the City's Affiliation Policy.

**Affiliation Service Agreement:** A formal agreement between an Affiliated Neighbourhood Association and the City of Waterloo that specifies mutual expectations and benefits to the respective parties.

**Applicant(s):** City of Waterloo resident(s) that have submitted an application for any stream of the Neighbourhood Grant Program.

**Block Connector:** A City of Waterloo resident that supports neighbourhood connections by planning one or more initiatives per year to connect neighbours. Block Connectors must be signed up through the City of Waterloo Block Connector Program and have completed the necessary orientation.

**Capital funding:** Funds used for one-time expenses related to structures, equipment, or other long-term assets.

**City:** The Corporation of the City of Waterloo.

**City staff:** Individual(s) employed by the Corporation of the City of Waterloo who administer the Neighbourhood Grant Program.

**Community use agreement:** An agreement signed by property owners and the City of Waterloo that formalizes community use and access to property. Agreements may differ based on the proposed initiative.

**Education institution:** An elementary, secondary, or post-secondary school located in the City of Waterloo.

**Foundational Operating Grant:** A type of operating grant that can be awarded to eligible Affiliated Neighbourhood Associations that have entered into an Affiliation Service Agreement with the City of Waterloo. Affiliated Neighbourhood Associations are eligible to receive this grant after operating for five years.

**Homes Association:** Groups of people who live in the same geographic area defined by a covenant or previously subject to covenants, which manage common property through elected boards with representation from the property owners. For the purposes of this policy, Homes Association refers to groups that have recreational facilities and paid membership tied to property use.

**Neighbourhood:** A district where people live. Neighbourhood boundaries can change over time and can be defined differently depending on individual sense of belonging. For the purposes of this policy, the term neighbourhood will refer to a single neighbourhood or more than one neighbourhood working together and will consider

neighbourhoods to have flexible boundaries that comprise a portion of City of Waterloo area.

**Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee:** A City staff-selected committee comprised of two to four volunteer community members and City staff responsible for neighbourhood services. The Committee has a mandate to assess applications to the neighbourhood fund stream and make decisions within the scope of the program's budget, policy, and committee terms of reference.

**Non-affiliated neighbourhood group:** A group of residents from the same Waterloo neighbourhood that does not have an Affiliation Service Agreement with the City of Waterloo or operate as a Home's Association, but operates cohesively to deliver neighbourhood initiatives.

**Not-for-profit organization:** An organization that does not pursue a profit and allocates all funding to support its goal or cause.

**Operating funds:** Funds for regular, ongoing costs. These may include, but are not limited to, costs associated with reoccurring initiatives, advertising, email and website costs, rental fees for meeting space, event supplies, and more.

**Project funds:** Funds to support one-time, temporary, and/or innovative endeavors with a specific objective that is completed in a specific timeframe with a clear beginning and end date. Project must be different from, or in addition to, current core services and programs.

**Religious organization:** Organizations whose identity and mission are derived from a religious or spiritual tradition, and which operate as registered or unregistered, not-for-profit, voluntary entities.

**Resident-led initiatives:** Initiatives that are collectively developed and implemented by neighbours in their own neighbourhood.

**Staff Feasibility Committee:** Group of City staff that review applications for the neighbourhood fund stream to evaluate alignment with City policies and processes and to assess and support feasibility.

## SCOPE:

This policy applies to:

- City of Waterloo residents interested in applying to the Neighbourhood Grant Program,
- Applicants to the Neighbourhood Grant Program,
- Recipients of funds through the Neighbourhood Grant Program,
- City staff involved in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Grant Program, and
- Members of the Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee.

**POLICY COMMUNICATION:**

This policy will be communicated by means of:

- Posting the policy on the City of Waterloo website
- Providing a copy to all City staff involved in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Grant Program
- Providing a copy to all members of the Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee
- Including a webpage with plain language information about the Neighbourhood Grant Program and how to apply

It is the applicant's responsibility to be proactive in seeking out program information including applications and intake periods that are posted on the [neighbourhoods website](#).

**POLICY:****1.0 General information**

The Neighbourhood Grant Program is intended to support neighbourhood initiatives that are:

- Primarily resident-led and delivered,
- Aimed at community-building and enhancing sense of belonging,
- Focused on a Waterloo neighbourhood(s), rather than a city-wide focus,
- Equitable, accessible and inclusive, and
- Broadly supported by the neighbourhood.

The Neighbourhood Grant Program has three funding streams:

- The mini grant stream provides up to \$300 in capital and/or project funds to support eligible applications.
- The neighbourhood fund stream provides up to \$7500 in capital and/or project funds to support eligible applications.
- The operating grant stream provides up to \$500 per year in operating funds to support eligible applications.

To determine what grant stream would be the best fit, interested applicants are encouraged to review details about the three grant streams on [the neighbourhoods website](#). Applicants are also encouraged to connect with City staff for support throughout the process.

**2.0 Eligibility requirements****2.1 Eligible initiatives and operations**

Across the three grant streams, initiatives and operations must meet all of the following guidelines:

- Be focused on a neighbourhood(s) (not city-wide) within Waterloo city limits

- Occur on accessible public land, or private land that is readily accessible by all residents of the neighbourhood (access is not restricted to members in any way)
- Be free or low cost for participants
- Not be revenue generating, unless revenues are to be used by a neighbourhood group for other neighbourhood focused initiatives
- Have or committed to pursue, with City staff support, all required permits and permissions prior to implementation
- Involve neighbourhood residents in planning and execution
- Demonstrate interest and support from neighbourhood residents
- Be implemented mostly using volunteers
- Be inclusive and accessible and encourage diverse involvement and participation
- Contribute to neighbourhood community-building, wellbeing, connection to place, and/or neighbourhood identity and belonging

## 2.2 Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses differ across the three grant streams as outlined below.

Mini grant stream:

- Project materials
- Food
- Equipment or technology rental (or purchase if required for the initiative on a long-term basis)
- Entertainment
- Capital asset development/improvement

Neighbourhood fund stream:

- Project materials
- Food
- Equipment or technology rental (or purchase if required for the initiative on a long-term basis)
- Entertainment
- Capital asset development/improvement

Operating grant stream:

- Costs associated with annual, reoccurring initiatives after two years of implementation
- Costs associated with ongoing activities (this may include email and website costs, rental fees for meeting space, event supplies, food, etc.)

Ineligible expenses across the three grant streams:

- Items already purchased
- Alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, or any other drugs

- Purchase of equipment, technology, licences/certifications that will have ongoing personal benefit to the applicant (outside of neighbourhood initiatives). The applicant should instead explore rental options for the duration of an initiative
- Any activity related to election campaigning for federal, provincial, municipal, or school board candidates, including promotional activities and advertising

### 2.3 Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants for the mini grant stream include:

- One or more City of Waterloo resident(s)
- Affiliated Neighbourhood Associations
- Non-affiliated neighbourhood groups
- Homes Associations
- Applicants from educational institutions who are applying as neighbours outside of a specific institution or role with the educational institution
- Religious organizations if they can demonstrate support from the surrounding neighbourhood and the initiative is not religious in nature or restricted to membership in any way
- Not-for-profit organizations if they are neighbourhood based, they can demonstrate support from the surrounding neighbourhood, and the initiative is not restricted to membership or organizational eligibility criteria in any way

Eligible applicants may receive funding through the mini grant stream twice in a year. Block Connectors may receive funding through the mini grant stream three times in a year. Applicants must show proof of completing the previous initiative before they are eligible to receive additional funding.

Eligible applicants may apply for the mini grant to support the same initiative once per year, for up to two years. After applying for the same initiative for two years, applicants may pursue funding through the operating grant stream to support the initiative in the third and following years.

Eligible applicants for the neighbourhood fund stream include:

- Two or more City of Waterloo residents from different addresses
- Affiliated Neighbourhood Associations
- Non-affiliated neighbourhood groups
- Homes Associations
- Applicants from educational institutions who are applying as neighbours outside of a specific institution or role with the educational institution
- Religious organizations if they can demonstrate support from the surrounding neighbourhood and the initiative is not religious in nature or restricted to membership in any way
- not-for-profit organizations if they are neighbourhood based, they can demonstrate support from the surrounding neighbourhood, and the initiative is not restricted to membership or organizational eligibility criteria in any way

Eligible applicants may receive funding through the neighbourhood fund stream twice a year. Applicants must show proof of completing the previous initiative before they are eligible to receive additional funding.

Eligible applicants for the operating grant stream include:

- Affiliated Neighbourhood Associations that do not receive a Foundational Operating Grant
- Non-affiliated neighbourhood groups
- Two or more City of Waterloo residents from different addresses who are not part of other neighbourhood organizations (homes associations, affiliated neighbourhoods associations, non-affiliated neighbourhood groups) who have planned and delivered the same neighbourhood initiative for more than two years and are seeking support to continue the initiative

Eligible applicants may receive an operating grant once per year. Applying for the operating grant stream does not preclude eligible applicants from applying to the other grant streams for eligible projects.

Ineligible applicants across all grant streams include:

- Groups that have been previously awarded funding through the Neighbourhood Grant Program who have not taken reasonable steps to complete the project and who have not returned the funding to the City
- Educational institutions
- Political organizations or any organization focused on political activities or activism
- Government organizations
- Commercial businesses or for-profit organizations
- Other not-for-profit organizations and registered charities, beyond those listed in the eligible applicants' section for each grant stream above

Although educational institutions are not eligible to apply, other eligible applicants may apply for initiatives that will occur on property owned by educational institutions. Neighbourhood support must be demonstrated. Efforts must be taken to ensure the initiative is open and accessible to all neighbours, it is not restricted to members of the educational institution, and funded items do not have ongoing benefit solely to those participating at an educational institution.

### **3.0 Application Process**

Applicants interested in applying for any of the three grant streams can follow the respective application processes outlined on the [neighbourhood website](#) and the program guide.

#### **3.1 Intake periods**

Mini grant and operating streams: Applications may be submitted at any time throughout the year. City staff will review applications as they are submitted and will respond to applicants in a timely manner.

Neighbourhood fund stream: Applications for the neighbourhood fund stream may be submitted at certain intake periods throughout the year. These periods will be determined by City staff and published for prospective applicants on the [neighbourhood website](#).

#### 4.0 Application Assessment

There are different review and approval processes associated with each stream as outlined below.

4.1 Mini grant stream: Applications for the mini grant stream are reviewed by City staff. When applications are submitted, City staff will review each application and determine if it meets applicable eligibility requirements listed in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. City staff may reach out to the applicant for more information to support this review process.

If the project is deemed eligible and feasible, the requested amount up to \$300 will be issued to the applicant. City staff will be available to help guide applicant(s) through the next steps.

If the project is not eligible and feasible, City staff will follow up with the applicant to explain concerns. Eligible applicants with eligible initiatives will have the opportunity to make modifications and resubmit their application.

4.2 Neighbourhood fund stream: Complete applications for the neighbourhood fund stream must be submitted by the published grant deadlines. Applications submitted after the grant deadlines will not be reviewed until the next round.

- a) First, City staff responsible for neighbourhood services will review each application and determine if it meets applicable eligibility requirements listed in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. City staff may reach out to the applicant to clarify application, project, or eligibility information to support this review process. Grant application(s) that are deemed ineligible will not be shared with the Staff Feasibility Committee and the Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee for review and consideration.
- b) Next, the Staff Feasibility Committee will review eligible grant applications to offer operational and risk management advice and to identify requirements for permits and approvals. This information will be shared with the Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee to inform decision-making.
- c) Then, the Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee will review eligible applications and use a standard assessment tool, based on this policy, to evaluate each application and make funding allocation decisions.

The Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee will be comprised of City staff responsible for neighbourhood services and two to four community members with neighbourhood community building experience. Community



members will apply to be on the committee and will be selected by City staff responsible for neighbourhood services. Full details on the committee and membership are included in the terms of reference.

The Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee will use the following criteria to prioritize applications:

Priority will be given to applicants who do not receive funding from any other City source, such as new or emerging neighbourhood groups.

Priority will be given to first time applicants and applicants who have not received funding through the Neighbourhood Grant Program during the previous twelve months.

Priority will be given to new initiatives. Applicants seeking funding for recurring or ongoing initiatives will be considered if funding remains after applications for new projects are evaluated.

Priority will be given to initiatives that demonstrate reconciliation, diversity, equity, and inclusion in planning and organizing neighbourhood-led ideas.

- d) City staff will notify all applicants of final funding decisions within 4-6 weeks of the grant deadline. This timeline allows City staff to gather information to support project success and for the Neighbourhood Fund Review Committee to make funding decisions.
- e) Successful applicants will be notified by a letter that outlines the amount of funding they have received, requirements for permits and approvals, and any other considerations related to the grant funding.
- f) When an application is deemed not eligible or not funded, the reason(s) will be shared with the applicants to help inform future grant applications.

4.3 Operating grant stream: Applications for operating grant stream are reviewed by City staff. When applications are submitted, City staff will review each application and determine if it meets applicable eligibility requirements listed in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. City staff may reach out to the applicant for more information to support this review process.

If the application is deemed eligible and feasible, the requested amount up to \$500 will be issued to the applicant. City staff will be available to help guide applicant(s) through the next steps.

If the application is not eligible and feasible, City staff will follow-up with applicant to explain concerns.

## 5.0 Conditions

The following conditions apply to all grant streams in the Neighbourhood Grant Program:

- a) Notice of receipt of a grant does not imply approval of municipal permits and other permissions.
- b) Grants may be awarded in installments based on milestones in the completion of the project.
- c) Full or partial amounts of grant funding may be held back until permits and permissions are received from the City of Waterloo and/or other agencies/organizations as required.
- d) Successful applicants may be required to put additional measures in place to ensure the safety of project participants. This may include a requirement for adequate liability insurance, depending on the nature of the project.
- e) Neighbourhood Grant Program recipients must acknowledge the support of the City of Waterloo on all promotional materials that relate to their project and as otherwise determined by City staff.
- f) Grant funds must be used as per the approved grant application. Any significant changes to the original grant application must be discussed with and approved by the appropriate City staff prior to implementation. If the proposed changes are acceptable, the grant funding may be revised to reflect the changes. If the proposed changes are not acceptable to the City, approval may be revoked and grant funding will not be forwarded to applicant or the applicant will be required to return any grant funding already provided. Failure to seek approval from the City for any changes from the approved grant application may result in ineligibility for future funding or the need to return any grant funding received.
- g) Projects should typically be completed within one year (12 months) of receipt of funding. Extensions may be provided for extenuating circumstances.
- h) Capital investments that are not on City of Waterloo property may require a community use agreement to ensure continued access and use by the community prior to receiving grant funding.
- i) Upon completion of an initiative, grant recipients are required to connect with City staff within 30 days to provide notification of completion.
- j) Submission of a grant application does not guarantee the applicant will receive full or partial funding.
- k) Grants should not be considered renewable in subsequent years.

- l) All grant opportunities are contingent on the allocation of funding as part of the City's budget process.
  
- m) If all available funding for the Neighbourhood Grant Program is allocated before the end of the year and no additional funding can be sourced, a notice will be posted on the [neighbourhoods website](#) to advise prospective applicants that the program is not accepting any applications.

## **6.0 Appeals**

Appeals will not be considered. The decisions of City staff and the Neighbourhood Grant Review Committee regarding applicant eligibility, application assessment, and grant allocation will be considered final.

### **COMPLIANCE:**

In cases of policy violation, the City may investigate and determine appropriate corrective action.