



STAFF REPORT

Community Programming & Outreach Services

Title: **Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy**
Report Number: COM2026-012
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Council Date: April 20, 2026
File: N/A
Attachments: Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy
Ward No.: Citywide

Recommendations:

1. That Council approve report COM2026-012.
2. That Council approve the M-017 Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy.

A. Executive Summary

Artists in Neighbourhoods is an art program that supports the development and exhibition of collaborative community art initiatives in local neighbourhoods. These initiatives occur when an artist co-creates an artwork with a community, and when all participants play a role in its creation. The City of Waterloo supports these initiatives by providing financial resources, in-kind support, and guidance from City staff. The program has operated since 2023 and was developed in collaboration by the Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries teams based on [Neighbourhood Strategy](#) and [Culture Plan](#) action items. To better support the program and communicate grant requirements, these teams have prepared the Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy.

A new, council approved policy is required to support the unique nature of assisting neighbourhood-level collaborative community art initiatives, as they tend to be outside the scope of other policies. This new policy advances the implementation of both the Neighbourhood Strategy and the Culture Plan by nurturing place-based neighbourhood pride, belonging, identity, and placemaking. This policy also aligns with the City's strategic priority of fostering complete communities.

The Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy outlines a definition for eligible collaborative art initiatives, applicant eligibility, process for applying, and clear responsibilities of successful applicants. Overall, this new policy supports the following objectives:

- Provide clear support for art initiatives at the neighbourhood level for vibrant communities
- Provide eligibility criteria and definitions for artists, neighbours, and projects
- Ensures clarity, consistency, and transparency related to evaluating applications
- Provides a framework for Artists in Neighbourhoods that City staff can reference

B. Financial Implications

Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries will administer the program within their annual operating budget.

C. Technology Implications

No technological implications.

D. Link to Strategic Plan

(Strategic Objectives: Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion; Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action; Complete Community; Infrastructure and Transportation Systems; Innovation and Future-Ready)

(Guiding Principles: Equity and Inclusion; Sustainability; Integrity; Workplace Wellbeing; Community-centred; Operational Excellence)

Complete community: Objective 1, 2, 3, and 4 of complete community is supported by the policy. Objective 1 is to invest in arts experience and celebrate diversity and uplift diverse communities. Objective 2 is to promote vibrant public spaces. Objective 3 is to continue to implement the Neighbourhood Strategy which included an action item to establish a neighbourhood-led community art program. Objective 4 supports actions to meet community needs, including ensuring public spaces are welcoming.

Community-centered: Supporting strong and liveable neighbourhoods is an important goal of the Artists in Neighbourhoods program. This includes supporting collaborative community art initiatives that enhance neighbourhood vibrancy and strengthen community connections.

E. Previous Reports on this Topic

COM2026-004 – Supporting Neighbourhood Community Building: 2025



Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy

COM2026-012

Background

The Artists in Neighbourhoods Program supports collaborative community arts initiatives that bring artists and neighbours together to co-create art. Initiatives are intended to transform community spaces through the production, display, or exhibition of an artwork. Neighbours and artists should form a partnership to create these projects. Examples of projects include visual arts like murals, banners, or sculptures, performance arts like dance, music, or theatre, or creative storytelling like poetry, sewing, or signage. To support these initiatives, the Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries teams developed the Artists in Neighbourhoods program based on Neighbourhood Strategy and Culture Plan community feedback and final recommendations. Artists in Neighbourhoods is a neighbourhood art program that offers supports such as funding, in-kind resources, and guidance from City staff. The initiatives supported by the program:

- Foster connected and vibrant neighbourhoods
- Nurture place-based neighbourhood pride, belonging, identity, and placemaking
- Bring together diverse sectors of the community into a collaborative dialogue about art
- Produce artwork that enhances the public realm and adds additional vibrancy to the City's temporary public art program
- Provide paid opportunities for artists to connect and deliver programming to local communities
- Offer skill and capacity building experiences for neighbours and artists

Since the creation of the pilot program in 2023, Artists in Neighbourhoods has supported 11 collaborative community art initiatives and provided \$39,840 in funding. Initiatives include murals from recycled materials such as fence art on neighbourhood storage boxes; sculptures; a nature walk field guide; community quilt; and more. Projects have occurred in a variety of locations throughout the community such as community gardens and park spaces. Depending on the location, projects have received support from various divisions, including Parks, Forestry, and Cemetery Services, Recreation Services,

Building Services and Corporate Security, and the Facility, Allocation, and Bookings teams.

To build on the success of the pilot program, a policy has been prepared to formally establish the program, clarify program details, and outline requirements. This ensures clarity, consistency, and transparency when delivering the program. The policy will further enhance the implementation of the Neighbourhood Strategy, which is a priority in the City's Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2026. Specifically, it will further Action 3 of the Neighbourhood Strategy which recommended the creation of a community art program at the neighbourhood level.

The policy will continue to support the Culture Plan, specifically Action 3.1, which recommends exploring opportunities that create a distinct sense of identity and culture at the neighbourhood level.

Furthermore, the policy enhances the actions in the Public Art Plan by increasing artistic programming in neighbourhoods. It also supports the 2019-2024 Economic Development Strategy which aims to create paid opportunities for artists and small businesses to thrive in Waterloo.

Program Implementation

The Artists in Neighbourhoods grant program supports two streams of applicants, with both artists and neighbours eligible to apply. As outlined in the policy, an expression of interest is submitted first to support review of basic eligibility and identify if project modifications are needed to suit the neighbourhood scope. Projects selected through the expression of interest stage are then invited to submit a final application for review by the Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee. As part of this process, staff can help match neighbours and artists on compatible ideas based on community interest and artist proposals. Regardless of the applicant type, projects are co-created with both neighbour and artist. This helps bring both artist and neighbourhood skills together to leverage these strengths for unique and community-focused projects.

The policy formalizes program requirements and Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries teams will continue to deliver the program collaboratively. This cross-departmental approach combines neighbourhood-led involvement and support for local artists, resulting in impactful projects within community spaces.

Furthermore, projects must comply with City policies, procedures and bylaws, including the Temporary Public Art Procedure, Public Art Policy, and the Sign Bylaw. City staff provide support to applicants to streamline required processes, ensuring projects are compliant with City requirements.

Both Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries teams will commit up to \$10,000 per calendar year, for up to \$20,000 total, to support eligible Artists in Neighbourhoods projects within their annual operating budget. Currently, applicants can

apply for up to \$5,000 per initiative. City staff will monitor the funding allotment through program processes to ensure it is meeting community needs.

Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy Overview

To meet the needs of neighbours and artists, support clarity, and advance the Neighbourhood Strategy and Culture Plan, the policy outlines:

- A definition for collaborative community art initiatives, including criteria to clearly define what initiatives are eligible for the program
- A clear list of eligible expenses to receive financial support
- A detailed outline of who is eligible to receive support from the program
- A process for applying to the program and how applications will be assessed
- Responsibilities for successful applicants

Purpose of the Policy

The Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy will encourage the following outcomes:

- (1) Provide clear support to make art possible at the neighbourhood level for vibrant communities. Implementing the policy will ensure the program will continue to provide the necessary support.
- (2) Ensures clarity, consistency, and transparency related to assessing applications and providing support. Establishing a policy that outlines an assessment criteria, evaluation process, and guidelines will support consistency, clarity, and transparency.
- (3) Provides City staff with a policy-directed framework to reference when making decisions. Implementing the policy will provide City staff with a formalized framework in addition to existing program processes to reference when determining and communicating eligibility.

Conclusion

The Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy will support neighbours and artists efforts when organizing collaborative community art initiatives. This policy approach aligns with the City's strategic priority to foster strong, connected, and complete communities.

CORPORATE POLICY



Policy Title:	Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy
Policy Category:	Municipal Services
Policy No.:	M-017
Department:	Community Services and CAO
Approval Date:	April 20, 2026
Revision Date:	N/A
Author:	Anmol Nagra, Junior Neighbourhood Engagement Specialist Julie Legg, Supervisor, Neighbourhood Services Sonya Poweska, Culture Program Specialist Amy McCullough, Policy and Project Coordinator
Attachments:	None
Related Documents /Legislation:	City of Waterloo Neighbourhoods Strategy, Community, Culture and Recreation Services Affiliation Policy, Temporary Public Art Procedure, A-018 Public Art Policy, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 Sign Bylaw (2016-050)
Key Word(s):	Art, community-building, grant, neighbourhood

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Waterloo recognizes that the creation of collaborative community art is a valuable experience that fosters neighbourhood identity and a sense of belonging. Through the Artists in Neighbourhoods program, the City supports local artists and residents to bring creative projects to life. Supporting collaborative community art creates vibrant public spaces and helps neighbours connect.

The Artists in Neighbourhoods program supports artist or neighbour initiated projects by providing financial resources, in-kind support, and guidance from City staff.

PURPOSE:

The Artists in Neighbourhoods Grant Policy outlines a framework for delivering the program including eligibility requirements, application processes, application assessment, funding conditions, exhibition approvals, and agreements. The policy

Mandatory Policy, Municipal Act:	No
Policy Administration Team, Review Date:	February 23, 2026
Corporate Management Team, Review Date:	March 25, 2026

supports understanding, transparency, and consistency in grant application, assessment, and allocation of funds.

DEFINITIONS:

Accessibility: The goal of making information, goods, services, activities, and/or environments meaningful and usable for people with disabilities. The term implies conscious planning, design, and/or effort to make sure something is barrier free to people with disabilities. Accessibility also benefits the general population, by making things more usable and practical for everyone, such as for older adults and families with small children. Accessibility has a distinct meaning for people with disabilities and should not be confused with 'availability' for non-disabled people.

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 Community, Culture and Recreation Services 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 neighbours and Region of Waterloo artists that have submitted an application for the Artists in Neighbourhoods program.

Artist: Artist refers to any individual, collective, or group engaged in creative and demonstrated artistic practice. This includes, but is not limited to, creators working in visual, digital media, literary, performing, musical, interdisciplinary, collaborative, ephemeral and emerging or experimental art forms. For the purposes of this policy, an artist may be a single creator, a duo, a collective, a collaborative group, or an arts organization producing work with artistic intent. An artist is defined by their active engagement in creating original works of art, guided by a definable creative vision or practice, and demonstrated through experience, training, cultural knowledge, lived experience, or community-based artistic traditions.

Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee: A City staff-selected committee comprised of a Creative Sector Advisory Committee member, a Neighbourhood Grants Committee member, and City staff responsible for Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries programming. The committee will assess applications and make decisions within the scope of the program's budget and policy.

City or City of Waterloo: The Corporation of the City of Waterloo or the geographic area of the City of Waterloo, as the case may be.

City staff: Individual(s) employed by the Corporation of the City of Waterloo who administer the Artists in Neighbourhoods program.

Collaborative community art: Art that involves a collaboration between an artist and a community. It occurs when a community co-creates an artwork with an artist, and where all participants play a role in the creation of the art.

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.

Equity: Equity is a principle that facilitates access, representation, opportunities and meaningful participation for all individuals.

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.

Inclusion: A continuous practice of making everyone feel welcomed and respected, as they are. It involves actively creating spaces that allow people to show up as their authentic selves. This sometimes involves accommodations.

Neighbourhood: Neighbourhoods are areas where people live. Neighbourhood boundaries can change over time and can be defined differently depending on each individual – some neighbourhoods have a specific name and boundaries, and others may be groups of neighbours residing in a certain area (like around a park).

Neighbour: A resident who currently lives at a City of Waterloo address and is engaging in activities in their own neighbourhood.

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 Homes 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.

Temporary public art: Temporary public art refers to creative works, made by artists, installed in public spaces for a limited period of time. This time can range from days up to 15 years. Temporary public art projects can be delivered by emerging and established artists. Temporary public art may take many forms including murals, banners, sculptures, projections, digital media, ephemeral art, and other contemporary practices. Temporary public art can be designed to respond to social issues, cultural conversations, community

engagements, neighbourhood specific initiatives, landscapes, and environmental themes. All temporary public art on city-owned property must adhere to the temporary public art procedure.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to:

- Eligible applicants identified in section 2.3 of the policy interested in applying to the Artists in Neighbourhoods program
- Applicants to the Artists in Neighbourhoods program
- Recipients of funds through the Artists in Neighbourhoods program
- City staff involved in the delivery of the Artists in Neighbourhoods program
- Members of the Artists in Neighbourhoods 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 Artists in Neighbourhoods program
- Providing a copy to all members of the Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee
- Including a webpage with plain language information about the Artists in Neighbourhoods program and how to apply on the City of Waterloo website

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

POLICY:**1.0 General Information**

The Artists in Neighbourhoods program is intended to support neighbours and local artists to create collaborative community art projects that are:

- Aimed to engage neighbours and enhance sense of belonging
- Primarily resident and artist led and delivered
- Supported by neighbours in the surrounding neighbourhood
- Equitable, accessible and inclusive
- Focused on Waterloo neighbourhood(s), rather than a city-wide focus

The Artists in Neighbourhoods program has two application streams:

- Neighbour-initiated stream: organized by a group of two or more City of Waterloo neighbours that are interested in collaborating with an artist to create a temporary public art project in their neighbourhood.
- Artist-initiated stream: organized by a local artist for a temporary public art project in a specific City of Waterloo neighbourhood. Artists will connect with local neighbours and/or a neighbourhood association or group to collaborate on the design and implementation of the project.

Interested applicants are encouraged to review details about the two application streams on the [Artists in Neighbourhoods website](#). Applicants are also encouraged to connect with City staff for support throughout the process.

2.0 Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Eligible initiatives

Artist-initiated and neighbour-initiated streams must meet all the following requirements:

- Align with the City of Waterloo's A-018 Public Art Policy.
- Involve collaboration between neighbours in the City of Waterloo and an artist.
- Be a temporary public art project.
- Contribute to neighbourhood stories, neighbourhood identity, neighbourhood vibrancy, and community building.
- Be based in a neighbourhood within the City of Waterloo limits, not across the city.
- Be displayed/performed in a location that can be publicly accessed. Should the artwork be placed or performed on a private property, access must be maintained and open to all residents of the neighbourhood for the life of the project. Access must not be restricted by membership in any way.
- Be free for participants and all residents of the neighbourhood.
- Demonstrate interest and support from neighbourhood residents.
- Have or committed to pursue necessary permits, follow applicable bylaws, and undergo necessary review processes outlined by the City of Waterloo with City staff support.

2.2 Eligible expenses

The following expenses are **eligible** to be funded through this program:

- Artist fees
- Consumable materials and supplies such as paint, clay, wood, and similar materials or supplies
- Equipment or technology rentals such as scaffolding, ladders, printers, and similar equipment or technology
- Permit, approval, and insurance costs

- Logistic costs including, but not limited to, materials, transportation, insurance, and installation
- Volunteer recognition costs associated with recognizing volunteers for their contributions to the project
- Printing costs associated with promotional materials, notification letters, and similar costs
- Costs associated with supporting collaboration between artist and neighbours such as space rentals, food and beverages, interpretation and translation, and childcare

The following expenses are **not eligible** to be covered through this program:

- Ongoing operating fees associated with the artist's work (for example, administrative costs or rental fees for artist workspace)
- Purchase of equipment, technology, licenses, or certifications that will have an ongoing personal benefit to the applicant outside of the project (for example a course, printing press, 3D printer, kiln, etc.). The applicant should explore rental options for the duration of the project
- Culturally recognized items may be incorporated with care and respect, but any use that could be perceived as exploitative, inappropriate, or disrespectful, as determined by the City, will be deemed ineligible and will not be reimbursed
- Items already purchased prior to final grant approval
- Alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, or any other drugs
- Funds paid to members or directors of not-for-profit organizations and neighbourhood groups including Homes Associations, affiliated Neighbourhood Associations, and non-affiliated neighbourhood groups

2.3 Eligible applicants

2.3.1 Neighbour-initiated stream

Eligible applicants for the neighbour-initiated stream include:

- Two or more City of Waterloo residents from different addresses
- Affiliated Neighbourhood Associations
- Non-affiliated neighbourhood groups
- Homes Associations

Neighbour applicants that are not part of a neighbourhood association or group must apply as community members outside of formal institutions such as schools or clubs.

2.3.2 Artist-initiated stream

Eligible applicants for the artist-initiated stream must:

- Live in Waterloo Region
- Have demonstrated skills and experience as an artist

- Have an established portfolio or body of work
- Be recognized by their peers for their skill set and experience in demonstrating their craft

2.3.3 Ineligible applicants

The following applicants are **not eligible** for all streams:

- Groups that have been previously awarded funding through the Artists in Neighbourhoods 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
- Not-for-profit organizations and registered charities that do not operate with an arts mandate or that are not neighbourhood based

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 and it is not restricted to members of the educational institution. Funded items must not have ongoing benefit solely to those participating at an educational institution. Educational institution or school board permission is required for these projects and section 5.0, condition i) outlines details for possible community use agreement requirements.

3.0 Application Process

- a) Applicants interested in applying must submit an expression of interest, using the application form provided, by the submission deadline as set by the City. The expression of interest will not be considered for review if submitted after the submission deadline.
- b) The expression of interest form will be reviewed by City staff, and eligible applicants will be asked to complete a final application to provide more details on their project. The final application form will be emailed directly to eligible applicants with a specified deadline. Late final applications will not be considered for review.
- c) All final applications will be assessed by the Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee.

3.1 Intake period

The expression of interest has one intake period in the calendar year. This period will be determined by City staff and published for prospective applicants on the [Artists in Neighbourhoods website](#).

4.0 Application Assessment

4.1 Expression of Interest

- a) Following the expression of interest deadline, City staff responsible for Neighbourhood Services and Arts and Creative Industries programming will review each application and determine if it meets applicable eligibility requirements listed in sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3.1, and 2.3.2.
- b) Staff may reach out to applicants to share an update on their application status and seek additional clarification.
- c) Eligible applicants will be sent a final application.

4.2 Final application

- a) Final applications will be reviewed and scored by the Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee using the following assessment criteria:
 - Feasibility
 - Is the project viable given the proposed materials, level of neighbourhood support, available resources, and location?
 - Can the project be executed in the timeframe and budget specified?
 - Does the artist have the skill set and experience to complete the project?
 - Artistic Merit
 - Does the project require an artist to execute?
 - Does the project display artistic excellence?
 - Will the project produce an aesthetically pleasing result?
 - Is the artist using art to unite the neighbourhood?
 - Impact on the Community
 - Will there be short term or long-term positive impact on the community?
 - Will the artwork make a lasting connection between the art/artist and the community?
 - Will the project allow for multiple participants while making meaningful connections?
 - Is the artist using art to connect the community?
 - Community Involvement
 - Will the community benefit from participation in the program?
 - Will the project connect the community through collaboration?
 - Is the neighbourhood interested in participating?

- Is the artwork being created specific to the neighbourhood?
- Does the initiative have connections to neighbourhood stories or a neighbourhood identity?
- Does the project identify and reduce barriers to participation?

Projects will be funded based on their alignment to the assessment criteria. Projects that do not sufficiently align may not receive funding regardless of whether funds are available.

The Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee will prioritize first time applicants and applicants who have not received funding through the Artists in Neighbourhoods program previous round of funding.

- b) City staff will notify all applicants of final funding decisions within 4-6 weeks of the final application deadline. This timeline allows City staff to gather information to support project success and for the Artists in Neighbourhoods Review Committee to make funding decisions.
- c) Successful applicants will be notified by a letter that outlines the amount of funding they have received, when funding will be released, requirements for permits and approvals, and any other considerations related to the grant funding.
- d) 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.

5.0 Conditions

The following conditions apply to the Artists in Neighbourhoods 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) 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.
- d) Grant recipients must acknowledge the support of the City of Waterloo on all printed materials that relate to the grant request or as determined by staff.
- e) 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 in writing 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 the 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.

- f) Projects must be completed within one year (12 months) of receipt of funding. Extensions may be provided for extenuating circumstances beyond control such as extreme weather, serious illness, or venue cancellations.
- g) Upon completion of an initiative, grant recipients are required to connect with City staff within 30 days to provide notification of completion.
- h) Submission of a grant application does not guarantee the applicant will receive full or partial funding.
- i) 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.
- j) Grants are awarded for one year only and are not eligible for renewal.
- k) All grant opportunities are contingent on the allocation of funding as part of the City's budget process.

6.0 Agreements

Successful applicants are required to sign an agreement letter with the City that outlines how much funding will be released, expectations applicants need to follow, and maintenance responsibilities.

7.0 Appeals

Appeals will not be considered. The decisions of City staff and the Artists in Neighbourhoods 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.