

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, February 8, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To obtain Council support for an application to the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility to receive funding through the [Inclusive Community Grant \(ICG\)](#).

Report Highlights

- The Ontario government's Inclusive Community Grant (ICG) program helps communities be more inclusive by ensuring the needs of Ontarians of all ages and abilities are considered when planning for various community initiatives.
- The ICG program offers a grant up to \$60,000 per successful applicant for projects taking place between September 2022 and March 2023.
- The City is completing an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan for Council approval in April 2022. The ICG program is an opportunity to secure funding to help implement the recommendations outlined in the plan. In addition, staff will leverage grant funding to enhance the online presence of community information and services for older adults and identify strategies to better engage older adults and seniors in City decisions that impact or interest them.
- Implementing Council-approved priorities is critical. The ICG application is an opportunity to better leverage and align the future Citizen Satisfaction Survey findings with implementing the recommendations in the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan while further informing the next Strategic Plan for the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

Recommendations

1. THAT Council endorse both the City's application and project plan to the Inclusive Community Grant program;
2. THAT this report be forwarded to the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force for further endorsement; and,
3. THAT this report be sent to Vaughan's Ontario Members of Provincial Parliament, the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, and York Region.

Background

The City of Vaughan is taking steps to create a more age-friendly community where all residents can be active and engaged members of society at every stage of life.

As the senior population across Canadian communities continues to increase, it is more important than ever to support the health and well-being of older adults. For example, the City of Vaughan is a growing municipality, expected to reach a population of approximately 500,000 by 2041. It is projected that older adults (55 years and older) will make up the largest portion of the population of Vaughan, representing more than 30 per cent of the total population by 2031.

Within the 2018-2022 Term of Council, Vaughan established an Older Adult Task Force.

The Older Adult Task Force has a mandate to make recommendations on implementing action items related to the City's Older Adult Strategy, including exploring opportunities to move towards an age-friendly community and the promotion of healthy, active living for seniors.

It should be noted that during the January 31, 2022, meeting of the Older Adult Task Force members endorsed the proposal outlined in this report for ICG funding.

Guided by the Older Adult Task Force, the City developed and is currently finalizing an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan for Council approval in April 2022.

Developed through a range of research activities, including robust engagement with the older adult community in Vaughan, the draft ten-year Age-Friendly Community Action Plan sets out a long-term vision, collective goals and inclusive strategies to support seniors to age at home and live well in their communities. The Age-Friendly Community Action Plan will be presented to Vaughan Council in April 2022 for further discussion and approval.

The draft Age-Friendly Community Action Plan includes a recommendation to enhance the City's communication and engagement with older adults.

The current draft of the plan contains a series of recommended actions the City will take to achieve its goal, one of which is enhancing the online presence of community information and services through developing a coordinated, website-based information portal. This portal may contain a broad range of local information, including but not limited to community events; sport, recreation and cultural programming; housing supports; health and community supports (i.e., mental health supports, primary care, in-home supports, friendly visiting); employment services and volunteer opportunities; languages services; healthy food programs and services; income support services; transportation services and more. The portal would serve as a “one-stop-shop” for information, increasing awareness of available services and reducing barriers to access. The information portal will also be invaluable for both older adults and their caregivers and family members.

To ensure Vaughan's policies, services and built infrastructure can best support an age-friendly community, active and ongoing participation in community engagement opportunities is required. Incorporating the voice of older adults in decision-making is vital to ensuring city-building efforts reflect the perspectives and needs of the older adult community. The COVID-19 pandemic has required municipalities across Canada to pivot towards greater digital engagement, increasing access and inclusion to many but reducing access for some – including seniors. While many older adults are online, some still may not have access to the internet or comfort and confidence in engaging online. The City has an opportunity to build on its Council-approved Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy by identifying specific strategies that may be employed to ensure older adult voices are included in all City engagement opportunities.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Grant Funding Policy, 09.C.01](#)

[Age Friendly Community Action Plan, Report](#) July 2021

Analysis and Options

The proposed project will employ a City driven, community-centred approach through continued, robust engagement with Vaughan's older adult community.

A vital component of this project is the implementation of a city-wide Citizen Satisfaction Survey. Vaughan's Citizen Satisfaction Survey provides the City with essential data and insights that inform business planning, city-building and critical marketing and communication initiatives. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Vaughan has not conducted the Citizen Satisfaction Survey since 2018. Furthermore, the questions have remained static since the survey's launch in 2007. This project presents a unique

opportunity to refresh the questionnaire to include a series of new questions focused on the needs and perspectives of Vaughan's older adult community and determine how those needs may have shifted as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The refreshed survey would enable the City to establish new benchmarks and inform city-building in a post-COVID-19 era.

Building on the data collected through the Citizen Satisfaction survey, the City will subsequently hold several workshops or focus groups with members of Vaughan's older adult community – including citizens, caregivers and organizations serving older adults. These engagement sessions would be used to validate the key findings of the survey and more deeply engage with the community on key topics of interest. Participants would be selected to represent a range of ages, abilities, identifies (e.g. 2SLGBTQ+, racialized communities), geographies (i.e. all five wards) and perspectives to ensure the full diversity of Vaughan's older adult community is included.

These key community engagement activities will develop a community-informed information and services portal and an actionable guide to effectively engaging the older adult community in Vaughan.

Input collected directly from the community would help the City better understand the older adult community's current awareness of available information and services, existing barriers to accessing information and desired features for the new portal. The survey would also help staff assess the present proportion of older adults participating in community engagement activities, identify barriers to joining City conversations and highlight opportunities for increased inclusion and engagement in all City engagement activities. City staff would engage with the Older Adult Task Force throughout.

The proposed project timeline is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Project Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of survey vendor	June – August 2022
Citizen Satisfaction Survey redesign and development	September – October 2022
Citizen Satisfaction Survey implementation	November 2022
Delivery of survey results	December 2022
Procurement of focus group vendor	November – December 2022
Older adult focus groups	January – February 2023
Final report to Council	March 2023

Implementing Council-approved priorities is critical. The ICG application is an opportunity to better leverage and align the future Citizen Satisfaction Survey findings with implementing the recommendations in the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan while further informing the next Strategic Plan for the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

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Financial Impact

An ICG grant has the potential to significantly reduce project expenses and save tax dollars.

The project expenses are estimated to be up to \$80,000. Based on past Citizen Satisfaction Surveys conducted by the City, the budget is approximately \$55,000. To ensure participation is broad enough to reflect the diversity of Vaughan's older adult community, it is recommended the City host a series of focus group sessions. The budget for these focus groups is approximately \$20,000.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

As is the case with every Citizen Satisfaction Survey undertaken by the City, the survey results are made public and presented to Members of Council during a Committee meeting. In addition, the final results report will be posted online at vaughan.ca, shared with York Region, as well as other stakeholder organizations and individuals who contribute to Vaughan's city-building efforts.

Conclusion

With Council approval on the recommended grant application and project plan, the ICG application will be submitted and the funding allocated to support making Vaughan an age-friendly city.

For more information, please contact: Jessica Stronghill, Stakeholder and Community Engagement Specialist, Jessica.stronghill@vaughan.ca.

Attachments

N/A

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Nick Spensieri, City Manager