

MUNICIPAL GRANT PROGRAMS FOR COVID-19 BUSINESS SUPPORT

Issue

Direction regarding further development of a proposed Business Support Grants Program Policy presented at the May 4, 2020 Emergency Advisory Committee is required.

Motion Proposed by Administration

That the Municipal Grant Programs for COVID-19 Business Support report be accepted as information and that further development of a proposed Business Support Grants Program Policy is no longer necessary.

Report, Analysis and Financial Implications

History

On May 4, 2020 a report was presented to the Emergency Advisory Committee providing an update on the Economic Development Business Recovery Plan and recommending the adoption of a Business Support Grants Program Policy.

The June 1, 2020 COVID-19 Business Recovery Survey Report listed several needs identified by the 285 survey respondents. The top eight (8) responses are listed below. None of the responses to the survey requested municipal business support grant funding:

Need Identified	%	Action
Grants & Funding Info	16	Resources provided on Okotoks website
Small Business Loans	15	https://www.okotoks.ca/doing-business/business-support-and-recovery
COVID-19 Info for Employees	11	
Joint Marketing	11	To be delivered as a business-to-business initiative; potential for coordination by business groups (OEE, RDBA).
Relax Sign Rules	7	Additional discretion/variance exercised by the Town for COVID-19 related announcements
Mental Health	8	Programs delivered under OEE 2020 Strategic Plan, resources provided on Okotoks website
Employee Training	6	
Use Public Spaces for Business	5	Outdoor Patios Pilot Project, Town of Okotoks

The temporary waiver of many planning fees as approved by Council on April 27, 2020 benefited businesses and homeowners alike. As of the date of writing this report, the de facto grant amounted to more than \$26,000 in waived development permit fees (approximately 40% or over \$10,000 non-residential) and almost \$40,000 in Certificate of Compliance fees (approximately 5% or \$2,000 non-residential).

The Town contributed further funding through the Economic Development Business Disaster Recovery budget to the newly formed Okotoks Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in the amount of \$11,256 for a mental health education initiative to support local entrepreneurs. The initiative was a collaboration of the Okotoks & District Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Highwood, and the River District Business Association to offer eight (8) webinars, eight (8) training sessions, and eight (8) coaching sessions to assist businesses in support of company culture, psychological safety, and healthy employee experience during COVID-19.

Business Supports in other Alberta Communities

The following municipal grant programs relating to COVID-19 relief for businesses were identified in a web search. Many involve partnerships with Community Futures or local Chambers of Commerce:

Edmonton Economic Recovery Grant:

- Phase 1: Matching micro-grants for businesses adapting to COVID-19 (June - December 2020). Most micro-grants will be \$1,000;
- Phase 2: Matching grants of up to \$25,000 for longer-term diversification initiatives (Beginning January 2021).

Grande Prairie Downtown Incentives Program:

- Urban Residential Grant for downtown residential infill;
- Patio Grant – 50% of patio cost, up to \$5,000;
- Demolition Grant – 50% of demo cost, up to \$50,000 (relates to residential infill).

Medicine Hat Business Innovation Grant:

- Grants of \$500 to \$15,000 to encourage innovation, maintain or enhance revenue streams, adapt to workplace guidelines.

Olds Business Reopening Program:

- Up to \$500 for storefronts and up to \$100 for home businesses to adapt to workplace guidelines (PPE, distancing, etc.).

Pincher Creek Business Recovery Support Program:

- Business Support Coordination up to \$500;
- Professional Development Fund up to \$1,000.

#OpeninBeaumont Campaign:

- Social Media Tools.

Bow Valley Restart Fund:

- Grants of up to \$5,000.

Canmore Business 2 Business Voucher Program:

- Up to \$2,000 to access professional services to assist in building resiliency.

Based upon the feedback from our businesses, our environmental scan of current municipal service offerings and the level of support for priorities already provided, creation of a grant program is not recommended at this point in time. The situation will be continuously monitored and updates provided to allow for quick adjustment if the circumstances warrant.

Strategic Plan Goals

<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage Community Growth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Provide Strong Governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide Quality Community Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhance Organizational Excellence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Foster Economic Vitality
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Promote Environmental Excellence

Governing Policies/Bylaws/Legislation or Agreements

- Bylaw 21-20 Fees, Rates, and Charges Amendment – temporary waiver of several Planning fees to assist in recovery from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Okotoks Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Project Planning Form: Mental Health Initiative – outlining the mental health program for business.

Public Participation Strategy

n/a

Alternatives for Consideration

n/a

CAO Comments

At this time, I support the recommendations of administration however I believe the situation could change and therefore investment in the ongoing dialogue with the business community is critical for the future.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Business Supports Plan and Updates Report to Emergency Advisory Committee May 4, 2020
- 2) Draft Business Support Grant Policy
- 3) OEE Project Planning Form: Mental Health Initiative

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