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STAFF REPORT TO ARTS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2012

SUBJECT

One-year review of IDEA grant program

PURPOSE/ISSUE

Arts Advisory Council recommendations for changes to the IDEA grant program

HISTORY/BACKGROUND

The IDEA grant program was launched in March of 2011. Following the initial year of the program the Arts Committee requested that a review take place with any recommendations for improvement to the program to be brought forward at the Arts Committee's January 2012 meeting. Approval of any changes would take place in time for the first deadline of the second year of the program in March 2012.

COMMENTS

An Arts Advisory subcommittee consisting of Marilyn Sing, Louise Macdonald, Patrick Fleck and James Lam (staff) met on December 13, 2011. The subcommittee reviewed the guidelines and application form, the list of IDEA grant recipients, the final reports from organizations who have completed projects, and in particular, the feedback received from organizations in section 8 of the final report which sought feedback on the program. Their findings were presented to the entire Advisory Council on January 3, 2012.

There was general agreement that with only two deadlines that it was difficult to identify clear trends. This observation notwithstanding, the following points were noted:

- There was general concurrence that the second intake seemed to result in more innovative arts activities than the first
- Similar to the pattern seen in project grants a greater number of applications were received at the first deadline as compared to the second
- Feedback from applicants on the guidelines and the application form indicated that the guidelines were easy to understand and the interactive application form was easy to use
- Final reports had been received on 6 out of 16 funded grants. Feedback received in the program evaluation section in the reports indicated that the maximum grant amount of \$1000 was too low; an average of \$1800 was indicated as being about right for a maximum grant.

- Print advertising has been increased. Distribution of the grant deadlines continues through other channels including the Arts Development website, Facebook and Twitter, and distribution by community partners.

The suggestion was made that requests to a grant program tend to reflect the published maximum award regardless of need or resources. Despite this notion there is value in considering a modest increase both in terms of providing incentive as well as reflecting the costs of producing an event.

Staff noted that the second deadline of May 31 pushes approval of IDEA grants to July and well into the summer, posing difficulties for organizations wishing to plan summer events. For this reason staff have adjusted the second deadline to May 4 to permit approvals to take place in June.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The current annual allocation for the IDEA grant program is \$50,000 per year. The current maximum grant is \$1000 allowing the potential for 50 grants per year. In the first year there were 16 grants awarded. Increasing the maximum grant to \$1500 would result in a potential maximum of 33 grants per year.

SUMMARY

An initial examination of the limited data indicates that the IDEA grant program appears to be accomplishing its goals, which were “to encourage arts activities by organizations whose primary mandate was not the arts and to support one time opportunities or encourage new, innovative or developmental arts projects and events.”

An increase to the current, modest grant maximum of \$1000 may encourage more interest and activity in the sector to which the program is targeted.

A second year of implementation will provide more data with which to identify trends and to gauge the ongoing success and value of the program.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Increase the maximum award for IDEA grants to \$1500 for the second year of the program and review the program again following the completion of a second year of deadlines.



James Lam, Manager
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