

# Survey Summary

a summary of feedback received in the Community Grants Program survey and a response from staff

The Halifax Regional Municipality's [5-Year Strategic Priorities Plan](#) (2021-2025) includes updating the Community Grants to reflect Council's priority outcomes within the program's funding categories and to make the application and decision-making process easier to understand.

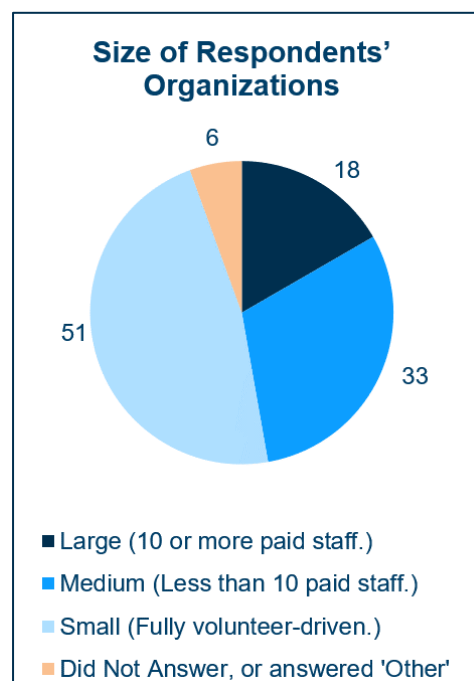
As part of this process, the Community Grants Program conducted an engagement survey in the summer of 2022 to better understand the experience of past and prospective applicants. We looked at the types of organizations that exist in our community, received suggestions on how to improve communication materials, and collected feedback on refined funding categories and priority outcomes.

Recent applicants were directly invited to participate in this survey. It was also advertised widely to the public through posters, newspapers, and the municipality's social media platform to ensure that organizations unfamiliar with the program and public stakeholders could provide feedback.

## Who Responded?

We received **179 responses**. This included representatives of at least **108 organizations**, as well as members of the public who were not representing organizations and people who did not disclose their organization. A small number of those organizations (6) had more than one person submit on their behalf.

Among people who represent organizations, most said that they were with a **small, fully volunteer-driven group**.



## Funding Category of Greatest Interest

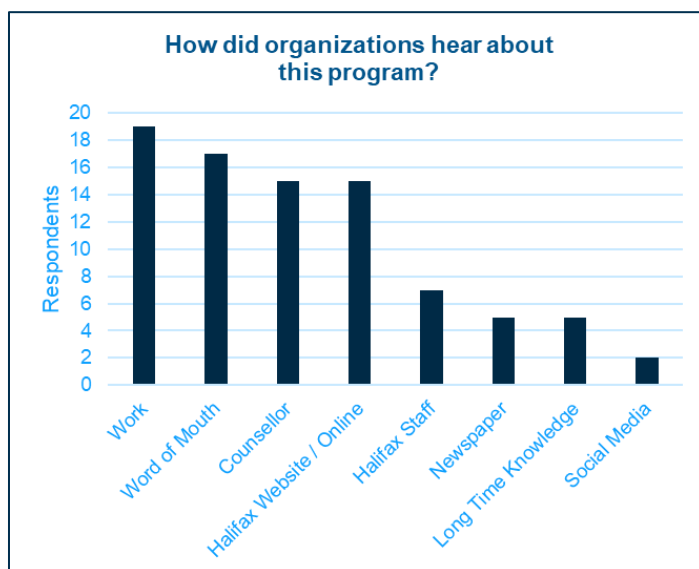
Category	Responders
Affordable Housing	11
Community Arts	8
Community Histories	13
Diversity & Inclusion	6
Emergency Assistance & Neighbourhood Safety	7
Environment	9
Leisure	11
Recreation	12

The survey asked participants to select their funding category of greatest interest from the list provided. Many people did not select a category (80), some selected more than one category (16), and a few suggested new ideas for categories (8).

The number of people who selected only one category are in the table on the left.

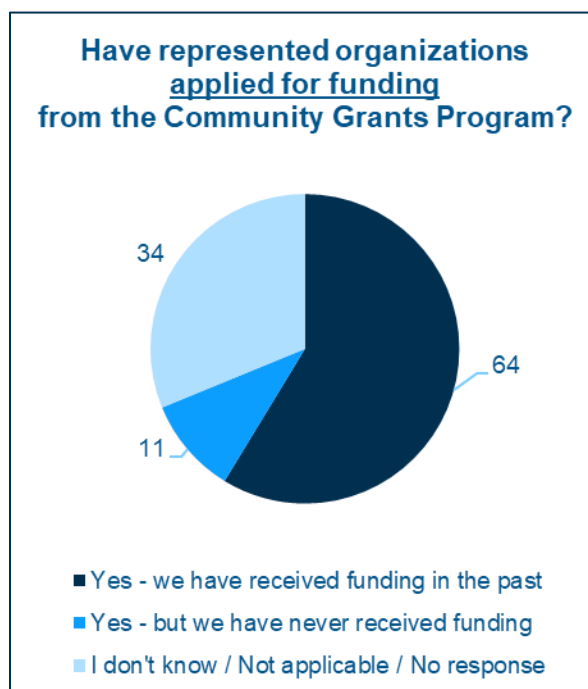
## How did you hear about this program?

Not everyone was familiar with the Community Grants Program before responding to this survey. Among those that were, we asked how they first heard about the program. Loosely grouped into themes, we see that people learn about this program from their work (whether paid or volunteer), word-of-mouth, and communication from their councillor.



## Have you applied to this program before?

Although no responders said that they had not applied before, several declared that they did not know whether their organization had applied in the past (or did not respond to the question). **This reflects the nature of the not-for-profit sector**, having either high employee/volunteer turnover or a small number of people actively involved in the grants-writing process.



## What we heard, and what we are doing

### Feedback on the program structure

**Our organization is not a “*registered*” not-for-profit/charity organization (or is a branch of a national organization/charity) and we have a project in need of support.**

Non-registered groups may consider partnering with a registered organization to submit a joint application. (Remember that the registered organization can only submit one application per year). This option is now clearly explained in the Guidebook and policy.

**We would like a grant to support operating expenses.**

Unfortunately, our program does not have the capacity to support operating grants. Instead, we seek projects with a long-lasting benefit.

**We would like a grant to support stipends.**

Stipends are not eligible expenses, nor are items for personal ownership (like gift cards). That said, if you are looking to pay someone for their work as a professional, there are many situations where professional fees are eligible. For example, grants have been awarded to support professional fees for legal services, accessibility audits, web site development, and property surveys.

**Projects related to healthcare or education should be eligible.**

The Community Grants Program is a municipal grants program. Health and education initiatives are primarily the responsibility of the Province and are not a part of Halifax Regional Municipality’s jurisdiction.

**How do we report “in-kind contributions” on the budget?**

We ask that you do not include in-kind contributions in your project budget, but we do take them into consideration. Please describe these contributions in the written description of your project.

### **Application and reporting deadlines are too rigid.**

The strict application deadline ensures fairness for all applicants. As for the reporting deadline, we can allow a one-year extension if your project is not complete by the reporting deadline.

### **Feedback on the Funding Categories and Priority Outcomes**

#### **Affordable Housing is a bigger problem than the Community Grants Program can address.**

The Municipality has other supports in place for Affordable Housing initiatives, including the Affordable Housing Grant Program – a separate program from the Community Grants Program. Right now, the intent of the Affordable Housing funding category in the Community Grants Program is to offer support for housing initiatives that are not currently supported by other programs. This can cause navigational issues as people try to find the appropriate program.

We have had preliminary conversations about offering all Affordable Housing grants through a centralized program under HRM Planning and Development.

#### **Some funding categories may seem to overlap. Where does my project fit?**

Several people gave examples of projects that could fit into more than one category, be it Art or Leisure, Leisure or Recreation, or Diversity & Inclusion or Community Histories. If you are in doubt, we strongly encourage you to contact our office.

When we assess grant applications, we try to evaluate similar initiatives together. We will be adding more examples to the Community Grants Program Guidebook to help applicants select the most suitable category.

#### **With respect to registered heritage properties, why do non-profit organizations apply to the Community Grants Program while buildings owned by private residents and businesses apply to the Heritage Incentives Program?**

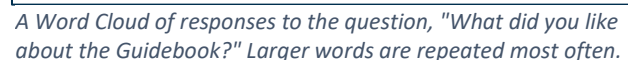
We have started discussions with our colleagues in HRM Planning and Development to create a consistent process for all grants for heritage restoration. If any changes are made in the future, they will take time – so for now, please continue to send capital requests for registered heritage properties owned by non-profit organizations to the Community Histories category.

We received a lot of feedback and support for listed priority groups, especially in the Diversity & Inclusion category. Seniors especially felt that they were overlooked. We have made changes to the Guidebook to clarify the inclusion of seniors.

One of the priorities in the draft Environment category was to “increase the participation and representation of culturally diverse communities in environmental stewardship”. We are aware that communities are quite active in environmental stewardship, and this is reflected in the priority outcomes for the Environment category.

**The updated Guidebook looks good.**

People especially liked examples of past projects and graphics. Many people requested that we add more of them. We will do that!



**We would like to receive emails about the grants' application cycle.**

To ensure equal access to opportunity, we do not maintain a mailing list.

We will make greater use of other municipal communications channels including the Halifax homepage and social media channels. We will also use community newspapers and possible community-based radio stations to advertise the call for applications.

**We had very positive experiences with the person who received our application.**

This feedback was nice to read. Thanks!

## Questions

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Grants & Contributions

Finance and Asset Management

Halifax Regional Municipality