



Report to Rural Initiatives and Planning Advisory Committee

From: Katherine Thompson, Manager of Administrative Services/Deputy Clerk

Date: March 27, 2024

Subject: Community Grant Program Application Eligibility Discussion

Recommendation(s):

RESOLVED THAT the Rural Initiatives and Planning Advisory Committee provide staff with direction in regards to which Community Grant Program applications are eligible to be considered as part of the grant scoring process.

Introduction:

The Rural Initiatives and Planning Advisory Committee is currently in the process of reviewing and scoring Community Grant Program applications for the 2024 funding period. Committee members had questions regarding the eligibility of certain applications.

Background and Discussion:

In order to be considered eligible for the Elgin County Community Grant Program organizations must meet two of the following three criteria:

- The organization's office is located in Elgin County
- The program or service benefits Elgin County
- The majority of service/program participants are from Elgin County

After reviewing the applications received, the Committee had some questions about the eligibility of certain applications regarding whether they met at least two of the three criteria above. Staff were directed to reach out to the organizations listed below to obtain the following information:

1. The physical location of the organization's offices/event location; and,
2. Statistics regarding how many Elgin County residents are served by the event or program vs. residents who reside within the City of St. Thomas?

At the time of this report (March 27) staff had received answers from five (5) of the seven (7) organizations in question and these answers are summarized below:

1. Quad County Support Services

Office: 195 Wellington St., Wardsville ON, N0L 2N0

Population Served:

The agency is person directed and goes to the homes of the people supported which includes all the boundaries of West Elgin.

They do not serve anyone in St. Thomas. Community Living Elgin serves St. Thomas individuals. Presently you must reside in the Quad County catchment area to be supported.

2. Elgin-St. Thomas Second Stage Housing

Office: 15 Golding Place St. Thomas

Population Served:

The organization serves all of Elgin County and St. Thomas applicants through this office. Throughout the year 2023 - 2024 it housed 19 women and 33 children in the transitional housing program. 26% of those in-house clients were from the County. They also offer transitional supports to women in the community that are needing emotional support, advocacy, housing search supports and referrals. Throughout the above listed year, they serviced 111 women in this program and 12% of those women were from the County.

Elgin St. Thomas Second Stage Housing thanks the County for on-going support. They are strongly committed to servicing women from rural areas where they are often more isolated and in need of resources. It is only with the support of the community that they are able to assure services are consistently available for any woman facing trauma from gender-based violence.

3. STEAM Education Centre

Office: 745 Talbot St., St. Thomas

Population Served:

The STEAM Centre defines its statistics based on Elgin County as a whole (therefore including St. Thomas) versus outside. The computer donation program is difficult to provide statistics for as many of the clients are unhoused and do not have a fixed address. Many live outside St. Thomas but come to the program through St. Thomas based agencies. Most individual computer applicants on average support families of 3 or more who also benefit from the equipment provided so the actual residents supported is much higher than listed here.

The two programs being considered for funding are the Computer Donation Program and the Coding Workshop Program.

Computer Donation Program

In the application STEAM refers to its Computer Donation Program that has provided over 900 computers since 2020. This range of computers was provided to London-Middlesex (including Chippewa of the Thames and Oneida Nations) and St. Thomas-Elgin County-Tillsonburg-Oxford County.

For community focused donations (individuals who apply and agencies for equity diverse individuals/newcomers/Indigenous populations) 57% went to those from St. Thomas and 20% to those living in Elgin County (non-St. Thomas). Approximately 693 total Elgin County combined residents received computers through the program which when multiplied by the 3 per household average would put local impact to 2079 residents.

For high risk elementary schools who receive equipment, 32% of students are coming from Elgin County and 26% from St. Thomas. The current demand on the waiting list is 43% Elgin County (non-St. Thomas) and 35% St. Thomas which is the reason for applying for this grant to expand reach further in this area.

Youth Coding Workshop Programs

The youth education coding and digital literacy program for the past two years has served 65% from Elgin County (non-St. Thomas) and 25% from St. Thomas. There has been a deliberate effort to focus on rural schools with their seed round of funding. Overall all of the programs combined - School education programs, youth camps, Indigenous STEAM, STEAM Community Studio, re//BUILD.IT Community Computer Donation Program serves 65% St. Thomas and Elgin County and 35% (London/Middlesex/Oxford).

4. Iron Horse Festival – Railway City Music Arts Festival

Event Location: Pinafore Park St. Thomas

Population Served:

In regards to the demographic makeup, there are no firm statistics as the festival used to be known as the Iron Horse Festival which until 2019, was a downtown street festival in St. Thomas. Any statistics would be from that event. Post COVID, the entire event was re-thought, re-branded, relocated, and reorganized as an Arts Festival – the target demographic is now much different. There are fewer residents from central St. Thomas and many more from the outskirts/suburbs and surrounding areas.

The organization focuses on presenting local artists not just from St. Thomas, but from across Elgin: Artists like 'Trope' from Port Stanley, Genevieve Fisher from Southwold, or Moore Ave. Underground from Aylmer/Malahide to name just a few.

The Artisan/Vendor market and Fine Art Exhibition draw participants from across the County, and similarly draws spectators from outside of Elgin to spend time (and money) in our communities as well as with the vendors/exhibitors.

The organization is hoping to have enough volunteers this year to assign some to do actual attendance counts and sample surveys to get a better feel for exactly who is attending and from where.

5. VON – Seniors Picnic in the Park

Event Location: The VON Office is located at 175 South Edgeware Road, St. Thomas and the event is held in Pinafore Park St. Thomas.

Population Served:

These statistics are not collected by the VON for this event.

At the time of this report, the following organizations have not yet provided answers to the questions asked; however, if answers are received before the meeting they will be circulated to the Committee for consideration:

- 6. Elgin County Pride**
- 7. Queer Qlub Drop in Centre**

Financial Implications:

The amount of funding available through the Community Grant Program for 2024 is \$74,358, this must be allocated amongst eligible applicants as decided by the Committee.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Serving Elgin	Growing Elgin	Investing in Elgin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring alignment of current programs and services with community need. <input type="checkbox"/> Exploring different ways of addressing community need. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaging with our community and other stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning for and facilitating commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural growth. <input type="checkbox"/> Fostering a healthy environment. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhancing quality of place.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring we have the necessary tools, resources, and infrastructure to deliver programs and services now and in the future. <input type="checkbox"/> Delivering mandated programs and services efficiently and effectively.

Local Municipal Partner Impact:

None.

Communication Requirements:

None at this time.

Conclusion:

Once the Committee has considered additional information and determined eligibility of the Community Grant Program applications in question, staff will remove those applications deemed ineligible from consideration and will prepare proposed grant funding applications to be presented at the next Rural Initiatives and Planning Advisory Committee Meeting.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

Katherine Thompson
Manager of Administrative Services/Deputy Clerk

Blaine Parkin
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk