

DATE OF MEETING | MARCH 20, 2019 |

AUTHORED BY | RICHARD HARDING, DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION |

SUBJECT TRAVEL ASSISTANCE GRANTS APPROVAL PROCESS

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To request direction from Council to change the approval process for the Travel Assistance Grants Program. |

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a change in the process for approving Travel Assistance Grants by:

- (a) authorizing Staff to approve Travel Assistance Grants as per the criteria; and,
- (b) directing Staff to provide a report to the Finance and Audit Committee with bi-annual updates on the distribution of funds.

BACKGROUND

The City of Nanaimo provides a contingency account for amateur sports and cultural groups, and individuals to travel within B.C. (excluding travel on Vancouver Island) and out of province to a Regional, National or International Championship. These funds are available to sports and cultural groups qualifying in Provincial or Regional competitions. The current policy provides \$50 per person to a maximum of \$1,000 per application for travel within B.C. or \$100 per person to a maximum of \$2,000 per application for travel outside of B.C. Requests are considered on a first-come, first-served, basis, as funds remain available each year. There is a total budget of \$7,500 available annually for these grants and applications range from a minimum request of \$50 and a maximum of \$2,000.

Staff review all applications and forward the staff recommendation to the Finance and Audit Committee to receive final approval from Council. This multi-step approval process can be slow for groups waiting on funds for assistance. Typically, grant recipients do not receive the funds until after their travel expenses have been incurred. Allowing staff to approve the grants directly, based on the clear criteria as set out in the grant, would speed up the process and allow the applicant to receive the funds much more quickly.

If the change in process is approved, Staff could report on the grant budget on a bi-annual basis to provide information on how the funds have been distributed.

The Appeals Process would remain unchanged and would still be considered through the Committee and Council process. |

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a change in the process for approving Travel Assistance Grants by:
 - (a) authorizing Staff to approve Travel Assistance Grants as per the criteria; and,
 - (b) directing Staff to provide a report to the Finance and Audit Committee with bi-annual updates on the distribution of funds.
 - **Budget Implication:** There is no impact to the 2019-2023 Financial Plan.
 - **Policy Implication:** Change in policy for the approval process for Travel Assistance Grants.
 - **Engagement Implication:** Enables response for an applicant in a more timely manner.
 - **Other Implications:** Reduced amount of reports to Council would mean a reduction in Staff and Council time.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not approve a change in the approval process for Travel Assistance Grants.
 - **Budget Implication:** There is no impact to the 2019-2023 Financial Plan.
 - **Engagement Implication:** Response to applicants would continue to take several weeks.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Each grant application is evaluated by Staff based on the grant criteria.
- The current process for Travel Assistance Grants requires approval through the Finance and Audit Committee and then Council approval.
- A request for funds can be a minimum of \$50 up to a maximum of \$2,000.
- The Appeals Process would remain unchanged and continue to go to Council for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A – Travel Assistance Grant Criteria

Submitted by:

Richard Harding
Director, Parks and Recreation