

DATE OF MEETING May 21, 2025

AUTHORED BY DAVE STEWART, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER

SUBJECT 2025 COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT GRANT APPLICATIONS

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present to the Finance and Audit Committee the recommended Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant allocations for the 2025 intake.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a total of \$17,500 in accordance with the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines and Criteria as attached, and that the grant allocations be as follows:

- a) Broombusters Invasive Plant Society - \$2,000
Project: Nanaimo Parkway Broom Removal 2025
- b) Frank J Ney Parent Advisory Committee - \$5,000
Project: FJN Elementary Outdoor Classroom
- c) Nanaimo Area Land Trust and Friends of Cottle Creek - \$5,000
Project: Monitoring Riparian Forest Health in Linley Valley
- d) Nanaimo Area Cycling Coalition Society - \$1,000
Project: Cycle in Nanaimo
- e) Nanaimo Science - \$1,500
Project: Science in the Park
- f) Nanaimo Climate Action Hub - \$3,000
Project: Nanaimo Climate Action and Solutions Expo

BACKGROUND

In 2023, the City of Nanaimo introduced the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant program to support small environmental sustainability and climate projects. The grant supports projects that would not be covered by other City grants and would improve the environmental health of natural systems, enhance residents' connections to nature, provide educational values, and contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation.

A total of \$20,000 in funding is available for this grant intake. The grant can provide up to \$5,000 per project for eligible projects. The Grant intake for 2025 was launched on 2025-FEB-14 and remained open until 2025-APR-04.

The evaluation of applications involved an integrated review committee with staff from Sustainability; Parks, Recreation and Culture; and Finance. Staff reviewed the applications according to the Grant guidelines and criteria (Attachment A) and the City Plan and Integrated Action Plan priorities.

DISCUSSION

Eight Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant applications were received. A total of \$32,687 was requested, which was \$12,687 more than the available grant funding. Staff are recommending a total of \$17,500 be allocated as follows. Not all funding is allocated because the requested items are deemed either ineligible expenses or not meeting the intent of the grant.

Applicant	Project Name	Requested Amount	Recommended Amount
Art Action Earwig	A Circle of Protection	\$5,000	\$0
Broombusters Invasive Plant Society	Nanaimo Parkway Broom Removal Project 2025	\$2,000	\$2,000
Frank J. Ney Parent Advisory Committee	FJN Elementary Outdoor Classroom	\$5,000	\$5,000
Nanaimo Area Land Trust and Friends of Cottle Creek	Monitoring Riparian Forest Health in Linley Valley	\$5,000	\$5,000
Nanaimo Area Cycling Coalition Society	Cycle in Nanaimo	\$2,687	\$1,000
Nanaimo Science	Science in the Park	\$5,000	\$1,500
Nanaimo Climate Action Hub	Nanaimo Climate Actions and Solutions Expo	\$3,000	\$3,000
South End Eco Development	SEED Library of Things	\$5,000	\$0
Total		\$32,687	\$17,500

A summary of each application, including the staff review team's feedback, is provided below.

1. Art Action Earwig

Project Summary: Two “contemporary participatory art” celebrations for Rivers Day and Earth Day.

Staff Comments: Art Action Earwig previously received funding from the 2023 Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant. The evaluation team was impressed with the applicant's commitment to working with Snuneymuxw First Nation, including receiving a letter of support from the Nation; however, they would have liked to see more environmental focus, including increased plantings in key areas identified by

City Staff. The review team noted the majority of the project budget was for 'artist and facilitator fees' or 'co-producer fees' and felt the application would be better suited for a cultural and events grant as opposed to an environmental grant.

2. Broombusters Invasive Plant Society

Project summary: To remove Scotch broom from the lands adjacent to the Nanaimo Parkway.

Staff Comments: Broombusters also previously received grant funding in 2023 for removing broom in a similar area. The review team was impressed with the applicants' long-term commitment to removing broom in our area since 2008. While the project is partially funded by the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) funding, the applicants noted additional funding is required to remove broom in areas not covered by the MOTT funding. Scotch broom is extremely flammable and poses a fire risk if not removed; as such, the project scored well for impact and climate resiliency due to its importance in preventing wildfire spread.

3. Frank J. Ney PAC

Project summary: To build an outdoor classroom for the students of Frank J. Ney Elementary School and remove invasive species, and replace them with a pollinator garden and native trees and shrubs.

Staff Comments: The applicant previously applied for this grant in 2023 for a similar project, but were not awarded any funding. At that time, Staff were concerned that the applicant had not shown a partnership with the school regarding the use of the outdoor classroom. The applicants have addressed that concern by including a letter from the school principal and one of the teachers in the current application. This application scored the highest in the staff review process. Staff were impressed with the quality of the application, the plans for the outdoor classroom space, and how the project will support the school's continued outdoor learning.

4. Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT) and Friends of Cottle Creek

Project summary: To conduct a field assessment of riparian zones to determine if the forests maintain "properly functioning conditions" for future ecological sustainability.

Staff Comments: This application represents a partnership between NALT and the Friends of Cottle Creek. The review team was impressed with the quality of the application, including its science-based approach to understanding environmental health. The application takes a unique and holistic approach to riparian monitoring by looking at the forest area that supports watershed health.

5. Nanaimo Area Cycling Coalition Society

Project Summary: To promote the presence of the newly established Society in support of more people in Nanaimo choosing to adopt car free or car light mobility practices.

Staff Comments: The establishment of a volunteer cycling advocacy organization in Nanaimo fills an important gap that was created when a previous local cycling organization stopped functioning a number of years ago. The applicants have worked with the City in supporting cycling events such as GoByBike week and actively participate in the City and RDN's *Acting for Climate Together* program. The review team supports providing funding for a website and promotional material and activities to facilitate its initial community outreach efforts.

6. Nanaimo Science

Project Summary: To expand Science in the Park into a year-round environmental education program.

Staff Comments: The review team liked the program but wanted to see information regarding the number of people that attended the summer program or other information to show the demand and need to extend the program beyond the summer.

7. Nanaimo Climate Action Hub (NCAH)

Project Summary: To host a Climate Solutions Expo at the Wellington Hall over two days.

Staff Comments: Prior to the establishment of the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant, NCAH received a Community Vitality grant in 2023 for their Climate Pledge program. NCAH has worked well with the City in the past and has a history of supporting action on climate change. The proposed expo will provide residents an opportunity to connect with local climate focused groups and learn more about local climate actions. City Staff plan to work with NCAH to ensure the event reflects City Plan priorities.

8. South End Eco Development (SEED)

Project summary: To continue and expand the library of things project and tool library project.

Staff Comments: SEED received a 2024 Community Environmental Sustainability Project grant to establish the tool sharing project. After the grant was approved, SEED requested and received permission to revise the project budget to focus less on tool purchase (they were able to have tools and other items donated) and instead include an honorarium to support the volunteer hours needed to inventory and manage the library. The 2025 application also includes an honorarium and hopes to expand the library, host workshops, recruit volunteers, and add a mural to the shed. The review committee would have liked to see more information regarding the use of the existing library and felt many of the expenses included in the budget could be considered ongoing or operational expenses.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a total of \$17,500 in accordance with the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines and Criteria as attached, and that the grant allocations be as follows:
 - a) Broombusters Invasive Plant Society - \$2,000
Project: Nanaimo Parkway Broom Removal 2025
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d) Nanaimo Area Cycling Coalition Society - \$1,000
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- The advantages of this option: Six proposed projects of higher merit based on fulfilling the guidelines and criteria of the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant will receive full or partial funding.
- The disadvantages of this option: Two applications will not receive any funding, while other applications will only receive partial funding.
- Financial Implications: The recommendation allocates \$17,500 of the \$20,000 in available project funding. The remaining funding will be reallocated to other City projects.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternate direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant was launched in 2023 to support small and creative environmental sustainability and climate projects.
- The City received eight applications requesting a total amount of \$32,687.
- Staff are recommending \$17,500 of the \$20,000 be awarded to six proposed projects.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines & Criteria |

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

Wendy Fulla
Director, Finance

Jeremy Holm
Director, Planning & Development

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