

FOR: FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: April 15, 2026

DEPARTMENT: CORPORATE SERVICES

SUBJECT: **BEYOND VAN GOGH: THE IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE FUNDING REQUEST**

**OVERVIEW**

**Purpose of Report**

To provide the Finance and Audit Committee with options to consider in response to the funding request for financial assistance for *Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* that will be run in Nanaimo from July 18 to August 29, 2026.

**Recommendation**

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council direct staff to proceed with one of the options presented relating to the funding request for *Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*.

**BACKGROUND**

The Port Theatre, Vancouver Island Conference Centre (VICC), Nanaimo Museum and Tourism Nanaimo have partnered to present *Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* to Nanaimo from July 18 to August 29, 2026.

*Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* is a large-scale, multi-sensory exhibition that uses sweeping digital projections, sound, and storytelling to bring more than 300 of Vincent van Gogh’s artworks to life around you. Instead of viewing paintings on traditional walls, visitors walk through expansive rooms where iconic pieces like *The Starry Night* and *Sunflowers* move, shift, and surround them in 360 degrees, creating a vivid journey through Van Gogh’s life, emotions, and artistic evolution.

The projections follow the life and artwork of Vincent Van Gogh, in a continuous loop every hour, on the hour. People enter and walk through the exhibit at their leisure, surrounded by moving images and sound.

The Port Theatre, Nanaimo Museum and VICC have collectively invested \$225,000 to purchase the event. Tourism Nanaimo has also invested in the production relating to marketing, destination promotion and coordination with local partners to help ensure the event drives visitation and broader economic benefit for the city, from outside the region.

The vision behind the exhibit is to bring a new level of art and culture to Nanaimo and increase the City’s reputation as a cultural centre. The exhibit is expected to draw between 25,000-30,000 visitors from Vancouver, the lower mainland, Victoria, Vancouver Island and Washington State which will all have a positive economic impact for Nanaimo.

## **DISCUSSION**

On 2026-FEB-19, the city received a funding request (Attachment A) related to the production:

*The four partners (Port Theatre, Nanaimo Museum, VICC & TNS) respectfully request a financial grant from the City of Nanaimo in the amount of \$100,000 (One Hundred Thousand Dollars) to assist in bringing this production to Nanaimo, and realizing the various positive social, cultural and economic impacts and benefits as its return on the investment into this cultural exhibition.*

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*The financial grant will be utilized:*

- *Towards programs like education and affordable access for families and children.*
- *To reduce barriers to participation, helping ensure the exhibit is accessible to families, youth, non-profits, and first-time arts audiences across the community.*
- *For School District student and Recreational Summer Camp participation.*

The budget for the exhibit is listed in Attachment A. Any surplus generated is intended to serve as future seed funding to support the introduction of additional exhibits and events in subsequent years, helping to build long term sustainability and mitigate financial risk.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

If Council wanted to grant this request, funding could come from the Special Initiatives Reserve. There is approximately \$333,752 in unallocated funds in this reserve resulting from projects/initiatives coming in under budget.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH CITY PLAN**

The report is aligned with the following City goals:

- A Healthy Nanaimo: Community Wellbeing and Livability
  - [C3.6 Recreation, Culture & Wellness]
- An Empowered Nanaimo: Reconciliation, Representation and Inclusion
  - C4.2 Equity & Inclusivity
  - C4.5 Culture]
- A Prosperous Nanaimo: Thriving and Resilient Economy
  - [C5.6 Tourism ]

## **ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

The report is aligned with the following Council Strategic Framework priorities:

- Implementing City Plan Action Plans and Key City Management Plans ]

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the \$100,000 grant request to the *Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* event.
  - The advantages of this option: Provides funding for programs like education and affordable access for families and children.
  - The disadvantages of this option: There would be less funding available for other City initiatives.
  - Financial Implications: Funding for this grant could come from the Special Initiatives Reserve as some projects funded from here have come in under budget. The 2026-2030 Financial Plan will be updated to include this grant.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council deny the \$100,000 grant request to the *Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience* event.
  - The advantages of this option: There would be funding available for other City initiatives
  - The disadvantages of this option: There may be less funding available for education and affordable access to the exhibit.
  - Financial Implications: none
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternative direction. |

### **KEY MESSAGES**

- The Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience will be held at the Vancouver Island Convention Centre from July 18 to August 29, 2026.
- The exhibit is put on in partnership with the Vancouver Island Convention Centre, The Port Theatre, Nanaimo Museum and Tourism Nanaimo.
- The \$100,000 funding request would provide funding for programs like education and affordable access for families and children. |

## **ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT A: 2025-FEB-19 Funding Request Letter |

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