

Staff Report

Community Services Department



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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: March 30, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Helena Foulds, Manager, Service Coordination & Improvement, 519-904-5802

PREPARED BY: Carrie Kozlowski, Executive Assistant & Grant Administrator, 519-783-8144

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Wards

DATE OF REPORT: March 20, 2026

REPORT NO.: CSD-2026-118

SUBJECT: 2026 Community Grants - Tier 2

RECOMMENDATION:

That 2026 community grants (Tier 2) in the amount of \$264,012 be approved as outlined in Attachment A to Community Services Department report CSD-2026-118.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

This report:

- outlines the process used to assess community grant applications.
- lists the organizations/groups that applied for 2026 Tier 2 funding, including the amount of each request and the recommended grant allocations (see Attachment A).

BACKGROUND:

Tier 2 community grants assist organizations/groups providing not-for-profit services intended for the common good of residents within the City of Kitchener. These grants typically fund new or emerging community organizations, events, and/or initiatives. Organizations providing municipal services in the following sectors are eligible for funding:

- arts and culture
- special events
- sports and recreation
- community support and development

A Peer and Staff Review Committee (PSRC) composed of three community volunteers and five staff (from arts/creative industries, special events, sport development, community development and grant administration) review applications based on the eligibility criteria set out in the Council approved Community Investment policy (FIN-GRA-525). This committee allocates resources within budget availability and makes funding recommendations to Council (outlined in this report).

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

In November 2018 (CSD-18-088), Council delegated the consideration of appeals to a panel of staff, which is comprised of the Director of Sport, Director of Economic Development, and Director of Neighbourhood Programs & Services.

REPORT:

The City received 88 Tier 2 grant applications, requesting a total of \$898,947 in funding. The available Tier 2 funding for 2026 is \$255,107. The PSRC/Appeal Panel recommends awarding funding to 51 of the 88 applicants, for a total of \$264,012.

Highlights of the 2026 Tier 2 grant process include:

- **Information sharing:** A marketing campaign was developed to promote the 2026 community grant funding opportunity and its benefits to eligible groups.
- **Thorough review of applications:** PSRC members completed an independent review/assessment of the applications against the grant criteria using an online decision-making platform. The committee participated in three group sessions (February 3, 5 and 11, 2026) to develop funding recommendations.
- **Opportunity for appeals:** Applicant organizations had the opportunity to appeal their recommended funding allocations. The appeal deadline was Wednesday, February 25, 2026.
- **Communication:** applicants were notified of the recommended allocations.

Assessment process

PSRC members, both community volunteers and staff, dedicate considerable time and effort to reviewing/assessing the applications. Then, the committee came together to make funding recommendations as a group. The PSRC's diversity of knowledge and expertise, in combination with the detailed review process whereby applications are considered against the Council-approved eligibility criteria ensures that funding recommendations are made responsibly within budget availability.

Appeal process

Tier 2 grant applicants are notified of the PSRC's recommended funding allocations and advised of the option to appeal the recommendation via an online form. In total, 7 organizations appealed the PSRC's recommended denial of their applications. The total value of the appeal requests was \$58,470. Upon review of the appeal submissions, the appeal panel upheld the PSRC's recommended denial of 3 of the 7 appellant groups, and allocated 4 an additional \$15,220 (\$14,700 cash, \$520 in kind).

Transfers to Tier 1

Given that the community grant program will be reviewed and revamped in 2026-2027, Staff do not recommend transferring any organizations to the Tier 1 grant program in 2026.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The budget for 2026 Tier 2 community grants is \$255,107. The PSRC recommends a total community grant allocation of \$264,012, resulting in a negative variance of \$8,905. The additional \$8,905 needed to meet this recommendation is covered by surplus funds available from the 2025 Tier 1 and Tier 2 ActiveNet grant allocations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – The 2026 Tier 2 community grant program was advertised on the City’s website and on social media. Previous Tier 2 grant recipients were informed of the 2026 application process.

All grant applicants were informed of the PSRC’s recommended grant allocations and were given the opportunity to appeal their allocations via an online form.

CONSULT – The PSRC provided invaluable expertise throughout the assessment process. Their commitment and dedication are very much appreciated. Both applicants and PSRC members are provided an opportunity to comment on the grant process, and comments are considered for implementation in the next grant cycle.

ENTRUST – Through the provision of grants, community groups/organizations are entrusted to deliver valued programs, initiatives and services to the community.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [CSD-18-088](#) Community Grants Appeal Process Update
- [FIN-GRA-525](#) Community Investment Policy

APPROVED BY: Michael May, Deputy CAO, Community Services Department

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – CSD-2026-118