

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: Affordable Housing Catalyst Grant Allocations 2021

Date Prepared: March 31, 2021

Report To: Committee of the Whole

Councillor and Role: Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary, Housing

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required:

Seeking Council approval on 2021 Housing Catalyst Grant allocations

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The City of St. John's approved the 'Affordable Housing Strategy, 2019-2028', in November 2018. The strategy will address the municipality's housing needs by working in step with partners, stakeholders, and residents to create and maintain safe, suitable and affordable housing throughout the city.

Leading innovation is a strategic direction of the new strategy, intended to inspire and facilitate creativity in affordable housing projects. Implementation action 3.1 *Continue to offer the Housing Catalyst Fund grants yearly for affordable housing projects* is found under this direction.

The Housing Catalyst Fund allows the City to be a catalyst for practical and collaborative projects that produce tangible housing solutions for people. The City's role through this fund is to work collaboratively with community groups and other stakeholders (housing providers, service providers, non-profit organizations, builders/developers) to facilitate and plan housing solutions that will enhance the quality of life for individuals and families and build a healthier community.

In fall 2020, the City of St. John's signed an agreement to collaborate with the Community Housing Transformation Centre (CHTC) to enhance the impact and reach of the Housing Catalyst Fund. The new partnership adds \$100,000 to the City's \$50,000. Grants will continue to fund short term projects with a one to two-year timeline of completion, however the maximum grant amount available to applicants has increased from \$10,000 to \$30,000.

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A Housing Catalyst Grant selection committee was established to review submissions, and included a representative from CMHC, two representatives from CHTC, two citizen representatives with experience in the housing and homelessness sector, and three staff from the City of St. John's.

The City of St. John's Manager - Housing and the Affordable Housing & Development Facilitator declared conflicts of interest and recused themselves from the review of these applications.

The following matrix was used to evaluate projects:

Housing Catalyst Fund 2021: Selection Criteria		
Item #	Criteria	Weighting
1	Project aligns with Affordable Housing Strategy and CHTC's Priority Areas	25%
2	Impact of project	25%
3	Project responds to clearly identified need	20%
4	Project is realistic and feasible	15%
5	Clarity of request	15%

The selection committee is recommending 6 applications be approved for funding. They are as follows

Organization	Project	Grant Amount		
		City	CHTC	Total
End Homelessness St. John's	Hiring of a consultant to explore the prospects and problems associated with developing cohousing/house sharing projects for low-income individuals in St. John's.	-	\$30,000	\$30,000
Association for New Canadians	Hiring of a consultant to identify best practices and provide key recommendations on operating a transition house, particularly for newcomer women seeking shelter from family violence.	-	\$30,000	\$30,000
S.O.D. Housing Co-operative	Energy efficiency upgrades to downtown properties.	\$10,000	-	\$10,000
Empower	Work with various partners on the development of a model based on current needs, and source various levels of funding, to build or renovate accessible housing for people with disabilities.	\$5,000	\$25,000	\$30,000
Fundamental Inc.	The Community-Supported Micro-Living Pilot Project is looking to explore the opportunity for providing a housing-vulnerable youth with a community-sponsored micro-unit.	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$25,000
Cohousing NL	Offering an affordable cohousing participatory design workshop and information series.	\$10,000	-	\$10,000

When reviewed in their entirety there is \$15,000 remaining in the overall Housing Catalyst Fund. It is recommended that Council retain this amount for the next grant cycle.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: \$50 000 has been approved for the 2021 Housing Catalyst Fund. Once approved, the City will transfer \$15,000 to CHTC for the administration of projects that are co-funded.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: CHTC, and 6 partners in their affordable housing efforts
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: Affordable Housing Strategy 2019-2028- 3.1 Continue to offer the Housing Catalyst Fund grants yearly for affordable housing projects
4. Legal or Policy Implications: In 2020, the City of St. John's signed an MOU with CHTC outlining the Catalyst Fund Partnership agreement
5. Privacy Implications: N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Housing staff will work with Marketing and Communications and CHTC in releasing information.
7. Human Resource Implications: N/A
8. Procurement Implications: N/A
9. Information Technology Implications: N/A
10. Other Implications: N/A

Recommendation:

That Council approve the recommended 2021 Housing Catalyst Grant allocations and retain the unawarded amount to the 2022 grant cycle.

Prepared by: Jennifer Langmead, Supervisor – Tourism and Events

Approved by: Tanya Haywood, DCM – Community Services

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2021 Housing Catalyst Grants.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 31, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Judy Tobin - Mar 31, 2021 - 12:04 PM

Tanya Haywood - Mar 31, 2021 - 12:14 PM