ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

Economic Development Initiatives Grant Program

Council Policy

C-350

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Policy Owner:	**Intergovernmental Services and Economic Development**
Adopted By:	**Council**
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Purpose

1 This policy establishes Rocky View County's Economic Development Initiatives Grant Program (the "grant program") to provide financial support to eligible chambers of commerce and business associations within Rocky View County (the "County").

2 The grant program supports initiatives that promote business retention, business growth, and economic prosperity in alignment with the County's economic development plans and objectives.

3 This policy establishes Council's role in approving the grant program budget, determining organizational eligibility, approving grant funding, and establishing the requirements for eligible initiatives, eligible and ineligible expenses, accountability, and reporting.

Policy Statement

4 Council recognizes the value that organizations provide in supporting economic prosperity in the County.

5 Council supports partnership opportunities with these organizations and, subject to budget availability, may provide grant funding to organizations for initiatives beyond their routine operations that enhance opportunities for businesses to operate and grow within the County.

Policy

Authority and Responsibilities

6 Council:

(1) allocates an annual budget for the grant program;

(2) determines organizational eligibility;

(3) considers and makes final decisions on grant funding applications;

(4) may approve, partially approve, decline, defer, or impose conditions on any application; and

(5) approves any exceptions to this policy, where Council considers an exception appropriate.

7 The Chief Administrative Officer:

(1) establishes and manages procedures for the administration of the grant program;

(2) receives and reviews applications;

(3) assesses applications in accordance with this policy and prepares funding recommendations for Council;

(4) manages conflict of interest matters in accordance with this policy;

(5) manages grant funding agreements, reporting requirements, and program monitoring; and

(6) provides program updates and outcomes to Council, as required.

Eligible Organizations

8 The following organizations are established as eligible organizations for grant funding under this policy, having previously been determined eligible by Council:

(1) the Airdrie Regional Chamber of Commerce;

(2) the Bearspaw Chamber of Commerce;

(3) the Bragg Creek and Area Chamber of Commerce; and

(4) the Langdon and District Chamber of Commerce.

9 To remain eligible, an organization identified in section 8 must demonstrate continued compliance with this policy and eligibility criteria in Attachment A.

10 An organization not identified in section 8 may be considered for eligibility by Council if it meets the eligibility criteria in Attachment A.

(1) Meeting or continuing to meet the eligibility criteria does not guarantee grant funding and does not create an entitlement to grant funding in any fiscal year.

(2) Final grant funding decisions remain subject to Council approval and annual budget availability.

Application Requirements and Submissions Deadline

11 Organizations seeking grant funding must submit a completed County-approved application form by the annual application deadline established by the Chief Administrative Officer, including:

(1) project plan or business case outlining the implementation, rationale for funding, and expected outcomes of the proposed initiative;

(2) the proposed budget for the initiative, program, or service;

(3) the organization's most recent financial statements;

(4) list of the organization's officers and directors; and

(5) any other information that may be required to assess the application, as determined by the Chief Administrative Officer.

12 Applications received after the annual application deadline, or applications that do not include all required documentation, may be deemed incomplete and ineligible for grant funding, as determined by Council.

13 Incomplete or late applications will be presented to Council for information but will not from part of Administration's funding recommendations to Council.

Evaluation and Approval Process

14 Following the annual application deadline, the Chief Administrative Officer evaluates applications for compliance with this policy and assesses the proposed initiatives against the eligibility criteria in Attachment A and the initiative and expense criteria in Attachment B. The Chief Administrative Officer uses this assessment to prepare funding recommendations for Council.

15 The Chief Administrative Officer's review and recommendations do not limit Council's discretion to approve, partially approve, decline, defer, or impose conditions when deciding on grant funding applications.

16 Council considers the Chief Administrative Officer's evaluation and makes final grant funding decisions.

(1) Grant program decisions made by Council are final and Council does not consider reviews or appeals of its grant program decisions, except where an error or omission in the evaluation, application of the grant program criteria, or decision-making process is identified. In such circumstances, Council may, at its discretion, reconsider the decision for the limited purpose of addressing the error or omission.

Grant Funding

17 Upon approval from Council, grant funding recipients must:

(1) sign a grant funding agreement with the County prior to the grant funding being released. The grant funding agreement may include conditions, as determined by the Chief Administrative Officer, that must be met; and

(2) use the grant funding for the approved initiatives and eligible expenses, and within the terms set out in the grant funding agreement.

18 Unspent grant funding must be returned to the County unless otherwise approved in writing by the Chief Administrative Officer or permitted under a grant funding agreement.

19 The County may require repayment of grant funding, in whole or in part, if:

(1) funds are used for ineligible expenses;

(2) funds are used for purposes other than an approved initiative;

(3) a recipient fails to comply with this policy;

(4) a recipient fails to comply with a grant funding agreement;

(5) an approved initiative is not completed in accordance with a grant funding agreement;

(6) information provided to the County is false, misleading, or incomplete; or

(7) a conflict of interest is not disclosed, required resolution measures are not implemented, or the conflict is not adequately addressed in accordance with this policy.

Eligible Initiatives and Expenses

20 Grant funding must be used only for eligible initiatives and expenses, and must not be used for ineligible expenses, as set out in Attachment B, unless otherwise approved by Council.

21 Council may determine that an organization is ineligible for future funding due to non-compliance with this policy or a grant funding agreement.

Reporting and Accountability

22 Recipients must submit all reports required under a grant funding agreement, including:

(1) a progress report, if required by the Chief Administrative Officer, providing an update on the status of approved initiatives, expenditures to date, and any issues affecting delivery; and

(2) a final project report, submitted within one month following completion of a grant funding agreement, summarizing how grant funding was used, the outcomes achieved, and the resulting benefits to businesses within the County.

23 Required reporting must include:

(1) confirmation of how grant funding was used;

(2) actual expenses compared to the approved budget;

(3) measurable outcomes achieved;

(4) number of businesses served or engaged;

(5) benefits to businesses in the County;

(6) copies of invoices and receipts; and

(7) any other information required by the Chief Administrative Officer.

24 The Chief Administrative Officer may consider information contained in progress reports and final project reports when:

(1) evaluating future applications;

(2) determining compliance with this policy and grant funding agreements; and

(3) preparing recommendations for Council.

25 Provided the changes do not constitute a material change, the Chief Administrative Officer may approve:

(1) extensions to reporting deadlines;

(2) minor amendments to approved initiatives; or

(3) minor reallocations between approved budget line items.

Conflicts of Interest

26 The board, directors, officers, or employees of an organization applying for or receiving grant funding must disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest that may affect the fair and impartial administration or use of grant funding.

(1) A conflict of interest may arise where an individual's personal, financial, or professional interests conflict, or appear to conflict, with the organization's obligations under this policy or a grant funding agreement.

27 The Chief Administrative Officer, in their discretion, may assess whether an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest exists and whether measures are required to address the conflict. The organization must provide any additional information requested by the Chief Administrative Officer to support this assessment.

28 Resolution measures may include, but are not limited to:

(1) requiring disclosure of the nature and extent of the conflict;

(2) requiring the individual concerned to withdraw from discussions, decisions, or activities related to the grant application or grant funding;

(3) requiring the organization to implement safeguards to manage the conflict or prevent the conflict from influencing decisions or the use of grant funding; or

(4) requiring other measures considered appropriate by the Chief Administrative Officer to ensure the transparent and accountable administration of grant funding.

29 The Chief Administrative Officer will determine whether the conflict of interest has been adequately addressed and resolved. Where the conflict cannot be adequately addressed, the Chief Administrative Officer may refer the matter to Council for consideration where a Council decision is required.

30 Where a conflict of interest is not disclosed, the organization fails to comply with required resolution measures, or the conflict cannot be adequately addressed, the Chief Administrative Officer may withhold, suspend, or terminate grant funding, or require repayment of grant funding, in accordance with this policy, the applicable grant funding agreement, and applicable legal requirements.

Public Disclosure and Transparency

31 Applications, approved grant recipients, funding amounts, funded initiatives, Council decisions, and program outcomes may be publicly disclosed through Council reports, County communications, financial reporting, or other public accountability processes, subject to applicable legislation respecting access to information and protection of privacy.

References

Legal Authorities	• *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c M-26 • *Societies Act,* RSA 2000, c-S-14 • *Boards of Trade Act (Canada)*, RSC 1985, c B-6
Related Plans, Bylaws, Policies, etc.	• *Service Provision to Governments, Agencies, or Organizations* C-173
Related Procedures	• N/A

Other	• *Agriculture Master Plan* • Council's *Strategic Plan* • *Economic Development Strategy* • *Municipal Development Plan*

Policy History

Amendment Date(s) – Amendment Description	• N/A
Review Date(s) – Review Outcome Description	• N/A

Definitions

32 In this policy:

(1) "application" means a formal submission by an eligible organization requesting grant funding under the grant program, using County-approved forms and including all required information and documentation to evaluate the proposed initiative;

(2) "business association" means a recognized organization, having operational boundaries in the County, that supports, promotes, advocates, and protects the interests of the business community;

(3) "Chamber of Commerce" means an organization registered under the Societies Act or the Boards of Trade Act (Canada) having operational boundaries in the County, that supports, promotes, advocates, and protects the interests of the business community;

(4) "Chief Administrative Officer" means the Chief Administrative Officer of Rocky View County as defined in the *Municipal Government Act,* or their authorized delegate;

(5) "conflict of interest" means a situation where the personal or professional interests of an organization's board member, director, officer, or employee conflict, or appear to conflict, with the organization's responsibilities under this policy or grant funding agreement;

(6) "Council" means the duly elected Council of Rocky View County;

(7) "economic prosperity" means the County's economic growth, security, and competitiveness;

(8) "final project report" means a report submitted following completion of, or upon expiry of, a grant funding agreement, using the County-approved template, that summarizes how grant funding was used, the outcomes achieved, and the resulting benefits to businesses within the County;

(9) "grant funding" means financial support provided by the County to an eligible organization through the grant program to support initiatives beyond routine operations, subject to Council budget approval;

(10) "grant funding agreement" means the agreement between the County and a recipient organization that outlines the terms, conditions, reporting requirements, and obligations associated with the grant funding once it has been awarded;

(11) "grant program" means the Economic Development Initiatives Grant Program as established by this policy;

(12) "incomplete application" means an application that does not include all required information or documentation submitted by the applicable deadline;

(13) "initiative" means a specific, time-bound project or activity proposed by an organization that is in alignment with the County's economic development plans and objectives and that goes beyond the organization's day-to-day operations;

(14) "material change" means a change that significantly alters one or more Council-approved initiatives, expected outcomes, funding allocation, implementation timeline, or other aspect of a Council-approved grant such that, in the opinion of the Chief Administrative Officer, the change should be reconsidered by Council;

(15) "organization" means a chamber of commerce or business association operating and having operational boundaries in the County;

(16) "progress report" means a report submitted during the term of a grant funding agreement, using the County-approved template, that summarizes the status of approved initiatives, expenditures to date, outcomes achieved to date, and any material issues affecting implementation or completion of the initiatives;

(17) "recipient" means an organization that receives grant funding under this policy;

(18) "re-granting" means the process by which a recipient organization distributes grant funds it has received to another organization, group, individual, or initiatives. Re-granting is not permitted under this program, except where explicitly approved by Council for a specific initiative;

(19) "retroactive expenses" means expenditures incurred prior to approval by Council of an application under the grant program;

(20) "Rocky View County" or "the County" means Rocky View County as a municipal corporation and the geographical area within its jurisdictional boundaries, as the context requires; and

(21) "routine operations" means regular, ongoing costs required to operate an organization, including salaries, office rent, utilities, insurance, and general administration, that are not directly tied to a specific funded initiative. Salaries or wages for staff working directly on a funded initiative may be considered eligible expenses if clearly documented and time-limited to the initiative.

Attachment A – Eligibility Criteria

33 To be considered an eligible organization, and to remain eligible, an organization must meet and maintain the criteria set out in this Attachment.

Standing

34 The organization must:

(1) not be in default of any existing agreement with the County, in arrears with the County, or non-compliant with this policy, any previous grant funding agreement or associated reporting requirements, unless otherwise approved by Council;

(2) be a legally registered organization and in good standing with applicable legislation; and

(3) maintain appropriate governance documentation, as applicable, including bylaws, board structure, and financial statements.

Operational Presence within Rocky View County

35 The organization must:

(1) have defined operational boundaries within the County; and

(2) carry out programs, services, or initiatives that support businesses in the County.

Mandate Alignment

36 The organization must:

(1) have a mandate that supports business retention, growth, advocacy for businesses, and economic development; and

(2) demonstrate alignment with the County's economic development plans and objectives.

Financial Accountability

37 The organization must maintain financial records appropriate to its size and activities that support transparent and accountable use of grant funding.

Attachment B – Eligible Initiatives and Expenses

38 To be eligible for grant funding under this policy, initiative(s) must:

(1) align with the County's economic development plans and objectives;

(2) support business retention, business expansion, investment readiness, business attraction, economic diversification, sector development, workforce-related business supports, or business community capacity;

(3) provide a demonstrated benefit to businesses operating within the County;

(4) be specific, time-bound, and measurable;

(5) go beyond the organization's routine operations; and

(6) comply with this policy, grant funding agreements, and any other applicable County requirements.

Eligible Expenses

39 Grant funding must be used only for expenses directly attributable to an approved initiative and separate from the organization's routine operational expenses.

40 Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to:

(1) speaker or facilitator fees for business development events;

(2) materials and supplies required to deliver the initiative;

(3) facility or venue rental costs for initiative-related events;

(4) event-specific insurance coverage;

(5) marketing and promotional expenses directly related to the initiative; and

(6) short-term staffing or contracted support directly related to the initiative.

Ineligible Expenses

41 Grant funding must not be used for:

(1) routine operations (e.g. rent, utilities, office expenses, ongoing software subscriptions, or any costs unrelated to initiative delivery);

(2) ongoing staff salaries or benefits, including regular payroll, board member or volunteer honoraria, per diems, or reimbursements, unless the compensation is directly tied to a specific initiative, clearly outside normal duties, time-limited, documented, and explicitly approved by Council;

(3) board or membership costs, such as membership drives, dues management, internal governance, or board recruitment;

(4) routine or duplicated programming or programming that is limited to members without broader business community benefit;

(5) hospitality and discretionary expenses (e.g. catering, meals, or refreshments) unless clearly tied to the initiative and justified in the application;

(6) retroactive expenses, including any costs incurred prior to the submission of a completed application, prior to Council approval of grant funding, or prior to the effective date of the grant funding agreement, unless explicitly approved by Council for a specific initiative;

(7) capital or financial infrastructure, including capital purchases, infrastructure upgrades (equipment, renovations), depreciation, amortization, or recoverable taxes (e.g., GST);

(8) re-granting, including donations, sponsorships, contributions to other organizations, charities, or third-party events, unless explicitly approved by Council for a specific initiative; and

(9) initiatives, programming, or services related to institutional uses, such as religion or schools, or business that do not provide access to the general public or operate in the County.