

County launches 2019 Community Grant initiative

Written By **MARNI WALSH**

Applications for 2019 Community Grants are now available through the County of Dufferin.

Funds are reserved for projects that address areas in need of support or development in the community. Residents interested in applying must submit a completed application form and supporting documents before April 15.

In 2018, the County of Dufferin entered into an agreement with Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) to administer the Community Grant program. HCIA has put together a grant team that will review the applications and evaluate them against established criteria. The criteria ensure that submissions support one of five County priority areas, which include Cultural Enhancement, Economic Development, Human Services, Seniors Support, and Youth Engagement.

“HCIA was itself an applicant for funding in past years,” says Project Lead Shirley Boxem. “For the 2018 granting cycle, we proposed managing the process on behalf of the County, seeing that the application and review method could benefit from analysis and re-work. The county saw the opportunity to better align how it manages grants and align with priorities.”

The HCIA leader says, “Any County that is able to make room for community support like this must be applauded. Running a County is about so much more than managing the essentials and balancing the books. What are issues that affect many of us but no one has the ability to address? What are the gaps we see and also the things we want to see more of that make this a great place to live? How can we bring more people together and be more inclusive?”

She added, “A key ingredient is surely a government that demonstrates leadership in a variety of ways.”

All projects submitted for Dufferin Community Grants must be sustainable and a registered non-profit or charitable organization, or partnered with one. All project proposals must have a clear benefit for the participants or the community as a whole.

The grants are one-time funding opportunities - with eligible expenses including advertising, marketing, and the purchase of goods and services for the project. After project completion, organizations may be subject to a project review, and required to submit invoices and proof of payment for goods and services.

Shirley Boxem says HCIA is hoping to see “projects that enhance our community in the priority areas.” She says, “That enhancement could take many forms. New ideas that stimulate thinking, new collaborations, or different opportunities for community.”

However, Ms. Boxem acknowledges, “New projects for one time funding are not easy to do. Funding in the past has typically added impact or a new component to planned activities.” She says, “The applications demonstrate that there are underfunded efforts and populations in our community.”

According to Ms. Boxem, there were 20 applications last year with a wide range of requests. “Most of them were around adding capacity to established efforts, such as a music group requesting new sheet music; a community beautification organization asking for additional materials; or a community event needing marketing funds.” She says, “Generally the funds have helped make events or efforts better.”

“The immediate benefit of the Community Grants “is supporting wonderful efforts by super citizens and groups,” says Ms. Boxem. “As we socialize the new application process and get the project results, we are hoping to glean inspiring stories to share. People can be motivated to connect, contribute, volunteer, and many other things when they hear a story that resonates with them. It inspires people into action and to be part of creating the community that they want - one that is inclusive and resilient to challenges that we

all face.?

The application form for Community Grants is available on the Dufferin County website, and can be submitted to info@dufferincounty.ca.