

Big Lakes County Policy

Grant Funding Policy

Policy Number:	ADMIN-55
Legal Authority:	N/A
Approved by Council:	April 26, 2023
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Policy Statement

Big Lakes County (County) recognizes the value of community groups and the necessity of sustaining healthy, safe, and vibrant communities through the grant funding program, which provides a broad range of grant funding opportunities to Community Organizations whose activities provide valuable programs and services to County residents. These programs are in place to help develop a sense of connection and empower residents to build strong and caring communities. The County's grant program exists to enhance the Community Organization's ability to flourish and thrive while offering valuable services to our community.

Purpose

The purpose of the County's grant funding policy is to provide a framework for the equitable distribution of financial resources to support community-driven initiatives that align with the County's strategy plan. The County recognizes that communities have unique needs and priorities, and aims to support grassroots efforts that promote social, economic, and environmental integrity. The County's goal is to create a transparent and accessible grant process that encourages participation from organizations representing diverse perspectives and experiences to residents, by investing in community-driven projects, our goal is to foster collaboration, innovation, and sustainable change that positively impacts the County.

The goal of this program is to support experiences that:

- Preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance the natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities.
- Enrich the lives of residents by providing opportunities for relaxation, learning, and socialization to promote personal growth and well-being.
- Foster healthy communities through initiatives that encourage active participation and social engagement.
- Provide teaching, learning, and skill development opportunities for residents of all ages.
- Encourage active participation and social engagement within the community.
- Create and enhance community spirit to promote a sense of belonging and togetherness.
- Enhance community-based recreation, arts (expression of ourselves), and culture (identity).

- Provide open access to County residents for programs and facilities.

Programs/Facilities will focus on:

- Healthy and active living
- Education
- Community enhancement initiatives
- Youth and seniors programming

Grant Funding categories include:

- Community Halls
- Recreation Facility Operations
- Heritage/Museums
- Sponsorships
- Hamlet/Rural Cleanups
- Cemeteries
- Special Capital Requests

Definitions

"Accountability" shall mean that community partnerships demonstrate good governance practices, such as financial accountability, transparency, due diligence, equity, and fairness to assure the best value for public funds.

"Annual Cemetery Grant" shall mean grant funding provided to Cemeteries/Community Organizations.

"Annual Operating Grant" shall mean grant funding provided to Community Organizations towards maintaining its operations and programming. Please refer to each Grant for allowable expenses.

"Application" shall mean a completed application form or letter of request by the Community Organization which describes the project/event and the grant funding requested.

"Application Deadline" shall mean October 31st of the year prior to when grant funding is required by the Community Organization.

"Capital" or "Capital Project" shall mean a tangible capital asset, or specific project work in relation to a tangible capital asset, which will be used for the duration of one year or more, including:

- Facility/site construction, renovation or repair;
- Facility/site assessment, study, design, or construction documents to support the above projects; or
- Furnishings and/or equipment for use by the Community Organization.

“Capital Project Grant Funding” shall mean grant funding that is approved by Council on a case-by-case basis through annual budgetary deliberation. This grant funding specifically supports the Capital Projects of Community Organizations located within the County.

“Cemetery” shall mean a registered cemetery under the Cemeteries Act, RSA 2000, in which land is set apart or used as a burial ground for deceased human bodies or other human remains.

“Community Hall/Facility Funding” shall mean grant funding provided to established Community Organizations towards maintaining their facilities.

“Community Organization” shall mean a duly registered society identified by Council as the provider of community services for the purposes of this policy.

“Conflict of Interest” shall mean a situation that has the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person because of the possibility of a conflict between the person’s self-interest, and their professional interest/public interest.

“Council” shall mean Big Lakes County Council.

“County” shall mean Big Lakes County.

“Cultural Programming” shall mean the development of the mind or body through education, interpretation, arts, literary means, aesthetics, and heritage. Programs and activities include (but are not limited to) seniors support, neighbourhood development and art in public places.

“Donation” shall mean any item requested towards the Community Organization that seeks support. Donations refer to in-kind contributions only.

“Emergency Capital Project Grant Funding” shall mean grant funding that is approved by Council on a case-by-case basis throughout the year, to support Community Organization Capital Projects that are deemed as an emergency.

“Events & Sponsorship Grant” shall mean conditional grant funding to Community Organizations upon application for events or activities that benefit the region.

“Hamlet/Rural Clean Up Grant” shall mean unconditional grant funding to the Community Organization on completion of the cleanup event taking place at a designated hamlet or County owned roadside.

“Heritage/Museum Funding” shall mean grant funding provided to established Community Organizations with a heritage mandate towards maintaining their facilities.

“In-kind donations” are donations that do not involve a direct cash contribution but instead might include providing promotional items, services, or waiver of user/rental fees.

“Recreation Programming” shall mean any play, activity, amusement, exercise, competition, or more, used for the refreshment, relaxation, and fitness of the body or mind. Programs and activities include (but are not limited to) playground programs, group fitness, and drop-in sports.

“Seniors Programming” shall mean grant funding provided to established Community Organizations consisting of senior citizen members.

“Sustainability” shall mean the relationship between financial longevity and organizational self-sufficiency in resourcing required for maintaining general operations independent of funds.

Policy

During annual budget deliberations, the County allocates operating and capital grant funding for recreation and community facilities and community and cultural programming as outlined below:

1. Guidelines

- 1.1. Council shall establish a Grants Budget to a maximum of up to 6.0% Property Tax Revenue (municipal tax levy only) as a budget to be distributed through all grant funding categories.
 - 1.1.1. Of the total Grants Budget, 85% shall be allocated to Operational Grant Funding, whereas 15% shall be allocated to Capital Grant Funding.
- 1.2. Projects/Community Organizations/Sponsorships eligible for grant funding must provide services to County residents.
- 1.3. All Community Organizations requesting grant funding must be registered or incorporated under the Province of Alberta Societies Act.
- 1.4. Applications must be submitted to the County's Grants Officer, or designate, prior to the application deadline. Council will have final approval on all grant funding allocations.
- 1.5. Each grant funding category has a limited supply of funds. Not all eligible projects may receive grant funding, and some may receive less than the original requested amount.
- 1.6. Grant funding must be applied for annually. An application submitted does not guarantee approval.
- 1.7. Retroactive grant funding requests will not be accepted.
- 1.8. Council may approve the total or partial amount requested or deny any request received.

- 1.9. Approved organizations will be required to complete financial reporting at the end of the project/year. If there is any outstanding reporting from previous projects, the organization will not be considered for new grant funding until acceptable reporting has been submitted to the County.
- 1.10. Council will prioritize grant funding requests according to need and availability of County funds.
- 1.11. All applications for grant funding must be completed, signed, and accompanied with the following documents:
 - 1.11.1. Current list of the board of directors.
 - 1.11.2. Current Financial Statements (approved at the most recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)). Financial statements must include signatures from two executive members of the organization.
 - 1.11.3. Current/upcoming annual revenue and expense operating budget.
 - 1.11.4. AGM minutes of the previous year that the society has applied for grant funding. For example, if a group has applied for grant funds from the County's 2023 budget, then they must have AGM minutes from 2022.
 - 1.11.4.1. The Community Organization must intend to hold/have held an AGM within the year they are applying for grant funds. If a Community Organization plans to hold its AGM past the application deadline (in either November or December), the County will accept the previous year's AGM minutes and corresponding documents as an interim submission until final documents are available.
 - 1.11.5. Most recent Proof of Filing from the society's annual return/charitable status. If a society does not have proof of filing for more than one consecutive year on file, the County cannot approve their request. For example, if an organization is applying for 2023 grant funding in 2022, they must have 2021's proof of filing.
- 1.12. If the County is missing more than one consecutive year's Financial Statements, Budget, Proof of Filing, or AGM minutes from the applicant, their request may be denied.

2. Operational Grant Funding – Hamlet Recreation

- 2.1. Applicants seeking grant funding must complete a Recreation Facility Grant Application and submit it to the Grants Officer, or designate, for review.
- 2.2. Community Organizations and societies that operate a community facility (other than a hall) used for instructional programming, organized recreation, community

functions, special events, rentals, or providing services to the community are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants should have status under the Societies Act or Agricultural Societies Act.

- 2.3. Facility types that are eligible for grant funding include a campground, ball diamond, football field, playground, hiking/recreation trail, picnic area, community garden, park, curling/skating rink, riding arena, bowling alley, fitness centre, tennis court, museum, and seniors programming.
- 2.4. Applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with Council having final decision based on applicant operating expenses, other grant funding sources, and alignment with the County's priorities as stated in the "Purpose" section.
- 2.5. Operational grant funding requests for recreational facilities may be County funded up to 30% of the facility's current year budget to a maximum of \$50,000 based on Council's final decision.
- 2.6. Allowable expenses include insurance, utilities, ongoing yearly maintenance, and janitorial expenses. Grant funds cannot be used for start-up costs, debt reduction, endowments, capital projects, or celebrations.
- 2.7. Council shall recognize one (1) Community Organization in each Hamlet for the purposes of grant funding established pursuant to this policy.

Operating funding (up to 30% of organizations yearly budget)

ORGANIZATION	MAXIMUM GRANT FUNDING
Hamlet Recreation	Maximum of \$50,000

3. Operational Grant Funding – Community Halls and Organizations

- 3.1. Applicants seeking grant funding must complete a Community Hall Grant Application and submit it to the Grants Officer, or designate, for review.
- 3.2. Community Organizations and societies operating community halls for programming, community functions, special events, rentals, or community services are eligible to apply, provided they have status under the Societies Act.
- 3.3. Applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with Council having final decision based on applicant operating expenses, other grant funding sources, and alignment with the County's priorities as stated in the "Purpose" section.
- 3.4. Allowable Community Hall expenses include operational costs such as insurance, utilities, ongoing yearly maintenance, and janitorial expenses. Grant funds cannot be used for start-up costs, debt reduction, endowments, capital projects, or celebrations.

3.5 Operating funding (up to 30% of organizations yearly budget)

GRANT FUNDING CATEGORIES	MAXIMUM GRANT FUNDING
Community Halls and Organizations	Maximum of \$10,000
Hamlet Recreation	Maximum of \$50,000
Seniors Programming	Maximum of \$5,000
Museums	Maximum of \$20,000

4. Capital Project Grant Funding

- 4.1. Applicants seeking grant funding shall complete a Special Capital Projects Application and submit it to the Grants Officer, or designate, for review.
- 4.2. Eligible special capital projects include new construction, renovations, major repairs, or major purchases of furniture/equipment. Renovations that address building codes and safety compliance will be given priority.
- 4.3. Capital project grant funding requests may be funded up to 50% of the project or up to \$25,000.
- 4.4. All capital grant funding requests are required to provide a project plan, benefit to the community and County, and a financial plan as referenced in the Application Guidelines. The application will be reviewed by the Grants Officer, or designate, and a recommendation made based on policy criteria for Council consideration.
- 4.5. Council may consider emergency grant funding requests due to extenuating situations year-round during the regular scheduled Council meetings on a case-by-case basis.
 - 4.5.1. Organizations may submit a Capital Funding Grant Application, or request for payment prior to project completion. Due to limited funds and high demand for County funding, grant funding is not guaranteed.
 - 4.5.2. Community Organizations must be able to show that their project needs are emergent and shall provide proof towards a situation that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property, or the environment, if the capital project is not undertaken.

5. Sponsorship Grant Funding

- 5.1. Applicants seeking grant funding must complete a Programs & Events Application and submit it to Grants Officer, or designate, for review.
 - 5.1.1. Events, Sponsorship & In-Kind Donation applications are evaluated prior to budgetary deliberations, along with general grant funds allocated on a first come, first served basis.

- 5.1.2. All approved applications from the Community Organization for grant or sponsorship grant funding can be paid directly by administration once all the proper paperwork is submitted by the group. Payments will only come back to Council if the group asks for more than 10% over the budgeted amount or are not included in the budget.
- 5.1.3. Applications will be accepted by the County year-round.
- 5.2. Allowable expenses for grant funding will be related to delivering the program or event, such as speaker fees, official's fees, facility rental, rental equipment, event or program supplies, contracted services, general operational expenses, etc.
- 5.3. Ineligible expenses for grant funding include capital expenses, utilities, honorariums, staffing, etc.
- 5.4. Events being held for fundraising purposes that benefit an individual are not eligible. Fundraising events must be for specific community enhancement projects.
- 5.5. Special agreements or joint agreements may be in place to capture one or more of the listed categories to assist inter-agency cooperation with neighbouring communities.
- 5.6. Requests for support must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - 5.6.1. General Exposure and Profile – the event/activity enhances the general profile and increases overall awareness of the County.
 - 5.6.2. Economic Benefit - the event/activity attracts visitors to the County thereby providing economic benefit to local businesses.
 - 5.6.3. Promote Civic Pride and Sense of Place – the event/activity will enhance recreational/cultural opportunities for County residents.
- 5.7. The County recognizes that certain events are strongly identified as beneficial within the community; therefore, these events may require on-going grant funding. The County may pledge grant funding for more than a one-year period. However, the annual application process is required. On-going support is not guaranteed.

6. Hamlet & Rural Cleanup Grant Funding

- 6.1. All Cleanup Grant initiatives must be conducted within the County.
- 6.2. Hamlet and Rural Cleanup is to include pickup, bagging, and hauling of all garbage to the landfill site or placing in an identified location, including paper, bottles, or other refuse found on specified roadside ditches within municipal boundaries.

- 6.3. Administration shall schedule the event location and date with the approved Community Organization and review all safety procedures.
- 6.4. Payment of Hamlet and Rural Cleanup funding will be paid after the project has been completed. Retroactive payments may be granted at the sole discretion of Council.
- 6.5. To receive grant funding, the organization must complete a Rural and Hamlet Cleanup claim form and return all county property used for the cleanup.

ACTIVITY TYPE	ACTIVITY GRANT FUNDING
Roadside Cleanup	\$100 per km, up to 20 km
Hamlet Cleanup	\$1,000 per hamlet per year

7. Cemetery Grant Funding

- 7.1. The applicant shall be the owner or caretaker of a registered Cemetery that operates under or partners with a Community Organization, in good standing, with the Province of Alberta, or shall have charitable status with the Government of Canada.
- 7.2. Should a cemetery be owned by the County, grant funding will be contingent on the Community Organization signing a maintenance agreement with the County.
- 7.3. The County shall only fund Cemeteries/Community Organizations located within County boundaries.
- 7.4. Cemetery/Community Organization representative shall annually submit a grant funding application for Council approval including documents listed in 1.11. – 1.11.4. and proof of cemetery ownership through land title, through a document showing Incorporation under the Alberta Cemeteries Act, or a letter of support from a local registered society.

FACILITY TYPE	FUNDING TYPE
Cemetery	Maximum of \$2,000

8. General Procedures

- 8.1. Grant funding requests must be submitted to the Grants Officer, or designate, on an approved County grant application form.
- 8.2. Applications will be reviewed by the Grants Officer, or designate, and recommendations will be provided to Council for approval.
- 8.3. The County will notify applicants of final decision in writing.

- 8.4. Project/Program change requests after annual grant process may be approved by Chief Administrative Officer, or designate, contingent upon policy compliance.
- 8.5. A Grant Accounting Report must be completed before the annual deadline. Failure to submit may result in denial of future grant funding requests.
- 8.6. Eligibility for grant funding is limited to non-profit organizations serving residents within the County.
- 8.7. Community Organizations are eligible for grant funding based on the category indicated in Application Guidelines.
- 8.8. Organizations funded under existing cost-share agreements are ineligible for separate community grant funding.
- 8.9. Applications are evaluated based on criteria outlined in procedures.

9. Reporting

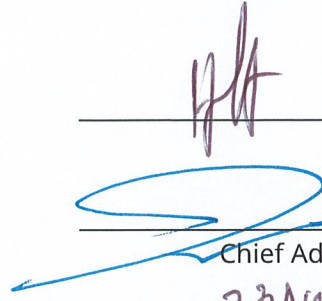
- 9.1. Grant recipients must submit a project report and financial statement annually for operating and sponsorship grant funding and upon project completion for capital grant funding.
- 9.2. Within 6 months of the completion of the grant expenditure, an outcome report must be filed with the Grants Officer, or designate, verifying the expenditure of the grant.
- 9.3. Failure to submit a report, or delinquency in submission, may affect consideration for future grant funding applications.

10. Recognition

- 10.1. Dependent of the amount of grant funding received, grant recipients will be required to recognize grant funding received from the County. Recognition may appear as indicated below:
 - On-Site Signage (in consultation with County)
 - County Logo/Name in Advertising
 - County Logo/Name recognized on Agency Social Media
 - County Logo/Name in Agency Newsletter
 - County Logo/Name recognized at a public event

Non-Compliance

Violations of this policy will be treated like other allegations of wrongdoing at the County.
Allegations of misconduct will be adjudicated according to established policies and procedures.



Reeve *for*

Chief Administrative Officer
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Date of Final Signature