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Report 2024-101

Report Title: Grant Activity Biannual Report

Committee Name: Corporate Support

Committee Meeting Date: July 30, 2024

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Grant writer
Communications

Reviewed by: Kate Campbell
Director of Communications & Information Technology
Communications

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: August 14, 2024

Strategic Plan Priorities: Innovate for Service Excellence
 Ignite Economic Opportunity
 Foster a Thriving Community
 Propel Sustainable Growth
 Champion a Vibrant Future

Information Report

“That the Corporate Support Committee receive Report 2024-101 ‘Grant Activity Biannual Report’ for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information.”

Purpose

To provide a summary of grant activity between January 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024.

Background

The Communications Department plays a vital role in achieving Northumberland County’s Community Strategic Plan and priorities across its 10 operating departments. This is

accomplished through a coordinated and strategic approach to corporate communications, which includes centralized grant writing services.

To help Northumberland County secure funding from public (federal and provincial governments) and private sources for various projects, programs, and services, the Grant writer is responsible for:

- Developing and nurturing relationships with funders, and leveraging knowledge of the funding landscape to identify government and industry channels that can support Northumberland County's initiatives for the community.
- Providing timely advice and information to stakeholders regarding funding opportunities, requirements, and procedures.
- Collaborating with staff and community partners to develop and present compelling projects that meet funder requirements.
- Researching and crafting persuasive content that aligns with the County's mission and vision.
- Coordinating the submission of proposals.
- Supporting departmental leads, as needed, to meet reporting requirements for successful applications.
- Building community capacity for securing funding for investment in Northumberland.

Between January 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024, three funding applications led by the Grant writer were confirmed as successful. Seven were confirmed as unsuccessful.

The successful applications included:

- \$100,000 from Employment and Social Development Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund for a safe, fully accessible outdoor area at 800 Division Street in Cobourg. This space will support children's treatment and recreation, along with cultural awareness and outdoor education programs. This project represents a collaboration between Northumberland County's EarlyON Child and Family Centre, Five Counties Children's Centre, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, and YMCA Northumberland.
- \$11,327 from the Rotary Club of Cobourg to launch an Agri-Therapy Program in the greenhouse within the new Golden Plough Lodge (GPL) long-term care home. This program will allow residents and their families to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of the greenhouse and gardening; present a fresh environment to engage the community with more volunteer opportunities; and provide staff with a greenspace to breathe, center themselves, and boost overall resilience.
- 76 hours of support (\$5,432 approx. value) from the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation's Community Outreach and Engagement Program. Over the course of 12 months, Northumberland County staff will collaborate with the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation team to develop and implement a community engagement strategy aimed at creating our first Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Plan.

At the time of this report, six applications are awaiting funder decisions, valued at \$3,071,752.06.

Consultations

When at capacity, the Grant writer offers support to departments independently completing grant applications rather than leading the development process. This support includes prefilling applications with basic information, sharing pre-written content, reviewing draft applications and related appendices, and making recommendations on application positioning strategies. Additionally, the Grant writer provides consultation support to member municipalities and community partners upon request.

Between January 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024, four funding applications supported by the Grant writer were confirmed as unsuccessful.

At the time of this report, two supported applications are awaiting a funder decision, valued at \$1,214,666.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

Grant writing activities are conducted in compliance with all relevant legislation.

Discussion / Options

N/A

Financial Impact

Between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024, Northumberland County secured:

- \$16,759 from Foundations/Corporations/Private Organizations

During this time, community partners secured:

- \$100,000 from Federal Government

TOTAL: \$116,759

To review additional details regarding application-based grant funds secured between 2018 to present, please visit [Northumberland County's Performance Dashboard](#).

Member Municipality Impacts

A grant proposal submitted by partners, rather than a sole applicant, may have a higher chance of securing funding. To align with the County's mission to position Northumberland as a leader in best practices, Northumberland County encourages collaborative partnerships. We promote joint application opportunities and consultations with member municipalities, Alderville First Nation, and community partners whenever possible. Between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024, Grant writer capacity building activities have included:

- Growing the Weekly Funding Opportunities E-blast distribution list by over 17%, ensuring that Northumberland County Directors and Managers, Alderville First Nation, the seven member municipalities, and non-profit organizations within Northumberland receive timely notification and information regarding available funding opportunities. Presently, 74 Northumberland County staff and 119 member municipality/community partners receive the Weekly Funding Opportunities E-blast.

- Refreshing the Weekly Funding Opportunities E-blast so that it is easier to read on different devices and is more engaging. The refreshed E-blast launched on May 13, 2024. Detailed analytics are helping to measure the effectiveness of the E-blast. Specifically:
 - The open rate is the percentage of recipients who open an email out of the total number of emails delivered. A higher open rate indicates that more recipients are interested in the email content. The average open rate for the E-blast by County staff is 51% and by member municipality/community partners it is 39%. In the context of municipal government, a favorable email open rate typically ranges from 40% and 46%.
 - The click rate is the percentage of recipients who click on one or more links within the email out of the total number of emails delivered. A higher click rate shows that the recipients find the email content compelling and are motivated to take action. The average click rate for the E-blast by County staff is 36% and by member municipality/community partners it is 16%. In the context of municipal government, a favorable click rate falls between 2% and 5%.
 - The unsubscribe rate is 0% for County staff, member municipalities, and community partners.
- Enhancing the County’s outcomes measurement practices – imperative for successful funding applications – by leading a cross-organization project to refresh the [Northumberland County’s Performance Dashboard](#) with the focus on improving user experience and navigation. This update included the integration of 12 new metrics related to Corporate Financial Wellbeing, Court Services, Housing & Shelter, Paramedic Services, and Talent Attraction & Retention.
- Scanning the funding landscape for specific opportunities, as requested by internal and external stakeholders, and providing timely advice and information on funding opportunities, requirements, and procedures. Eight Funding Opportunity Scans have been completed for specific initiatives and provided to Northumberland County staff, member municipalities, and/or community partners.
- Delivering guidance to external stakeholders to generate value for the community through increased funding to the community overall. Grant writing support via the review of draft applications and related appendices, as well as recommendations on application positioning strategy are provided to member municipalities and community partners, on request.
- Engaging in speaking opportunities at pertinent community events and training sessions to elevate the quality of grant submissions – and the likelihood of success – from the community of Northumberland. A workshop focusing on an Outcomes Measurement approach to grant writing was delivered at Venture13 during this period. 100% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better equipped to create high-impact, outcomes-focused funding applications after attending the workshop.

Conclusion / Outcomes

Contemporary issues such as the cost-of-living, international alliances/conflicts, the environment, and the lingering COVID-19 pandemic are continuing to shape monetary and fiscal

policies across the globe. This impacts how much grant funding is available and what sort of activities are considered eligible for application-based grant funding.

During the height of the pandemic (2020-2022), the federal and provincial governments engaged in large-scale counter-pandemic fiscal programs. Northumberland County capitalized on these opportunities, increasing the number of applications submitted annually by up to 144%. This proactive approach allowed us to secure significant funding during a critical period.

With core inflation decelerating and growth remaining tepid, recent economic data suggest that Canada and Ontario will likely avoid a recession and may begin recovering later in 2024 ([Bank of Canada reduces policy rate by 25 basis points](#); Jun 5, 2024).

In line with this economic outlook, the 2024 Federal and Provincial budgets continue to prioritize application-based grant opportunities that focus on housing/homelessness; education; green economy; high cost of living; public health care; infrastructure; economic renewal; and labour shortages.

In the 2024 document titled, 'Making Canada's Growth a Success: The case for a Municipal Growth Framework', the Federation of Canadian Municipalities calls on the Federal government to modernize municipal funding noting that "for many municipalities, especially small, rural, remote and northern communities that have limited staff resources, the application process associated with government grants and transfers is often a significant barrier to applying for funding" (p. 43).

At the same time, generative Artificial Intelligence tools are changing the face of grant writing. These tools can expedite the task of wordsmithing. This means that funders are going to receive even more applications, which is going to further increase the level of competition for available funds. This trend reinforces the value of Northumberland County consistently using an 'Outcomes Measurement Logic Model' as a method to design projects that outshine the competition.

Looking ahead, the Communications Department will continue to use these insights and tools to improve our grant applications, aligning them strategically with funding priorities to increase the County's chances of success.

Attachments

N/A