



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Customer Service Review of the Community Partnership and Investment Programs (CPIP) Appeal Process

Date:	November 21, 2013
To:	Executive Committee
From:	Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	AFS # 18375

SUMMARY

At its meeting on May 28, 2013, the Community Development and Recreation Committee directed the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) to review the appeals process currently used for Community Partnership and Investment Programs (CPIP) and report back on options to improve the process.

In response, this report recommends the dissolution of the current CPIP Appeals Committee and directs Division Heads responsible for the administration of CPIP programs to establish and administer open, accountable and accessible appeal processes for the 2014 allocations process.

To ensure better customer service, this new Appeals Panel will schedule appointments with appellant organizations. In addition, shared principles, criteria and mechanisms (where appropriate) will be created for appeals processes across all CPIP areas. These strategies will serve to enhance the City's commitment to provide an open, accountable and accessible grants management system, including grant appeals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council dissolve the current Community Partnership and Investment Programs (CPIP) Appeals Committee;
2. City Council direct the Division Heads responsible for the administration of CPIP programs to establish and administer open, accountable and accessible appeal processes for the 2014 allocations process; and,
3. City Council amend the approval authority delegated to Division Heads responsible for the administration of CPIP programs to include approval of recommendations from Appeals Panels.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications arising from this report beyond what has already been approved in the 2013 Operating Budget. The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer have reviewed this report and agree with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of June 23, 2008, City Council approved a series of recommendations to streamline and improve funding administration. The proposed improvements to the appeal process are consistent with these recommendations.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2008.CD16.5>

At its meeting of May 23, 2013, the Community Development and Recreation Committee requested the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration review the appeals process currently used for Community Partnership and Investment Programs and report back on options to improve the process.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getMinutesReport&meetingId=6836>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The CPIP Appeals Sub-Committee, comprised of four members drawn from the Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) and the Economic Development Committee (EDC), hears appeals made by grant applicants regarding the eligibility and allocations reports under the purview of CDRC and EDC.

Challenges in engaging the CPIP Appeals Committee prompted a call for this review. Due to scheduling conflicts and an inability to achieve quorum at the Appeals Committee, grant appeals are sometimes heard at the CDRC meetings directly or delegated to the Executive Director, SDFA. This year, all 2013 appeals were heard at the CDRC meeting thereby resulting in more than 30 community organizations spending the better part of a day waiting for the opportunity to appeal their funding decision alongside regular CDRC business. Following a motion by CDRC, Council directed SDFA to look for ways to improve the appeals process for constituents.

This fall, community-funding staff conducted a review of the Appeals process. Staff explored various ways to strengthen third party oversight on granting decisions with an objective of making the process less burdensome on appellants. Key informant interviews were conducted with other municipal funders and City of Toronto granting divisions. In addition, a survey was completed by City community funding applicants.

COMMENTS

Recommended Improvements to the Appeals Process

Based on the review, the City's CPIP appeals process can be improved by:

1. dissolving the current CPIP Appeals Committee;
2. forming an Appeals Panel comprised of representatives from the community sector, non-granting City divisional staff, and the Toronto CPIP Coordinating Committee¹;
3. introducing schedule appointments with appellants; and,
4. creating shared principles, criteria and mechanisms (where appropriate) for appeals processes across CPIP areas that do not historically fall under the CPIP Appeals Committee.

These proposed changes to the appeals process align with the three principles of good governance: openness, accountability, and accessibilities.

Openness:

An appeal is an opportunity for grant applicants to have their funding decision reconsidered. The process serves to ensure that decisions are fair and comply with the City grants policy.

According to the results of the recent applicant survey, 86% of respondents indicated that the appeals process was an important feature of the City's grant programs. In particular, applicants valued the opportunity to speak directly to decision-makers, to clarify elements of their proposal, and to voice concerns about the process and the decisions made.

¹ TCCC is composed of representatives designated by each grant delivery Division

In the spirit of transparency, the proposed Appeal Panel meetings will be subject to the City's policy of open and accessible government, where there is advance notice of the meeting and meetings are held in public.

Accountability:

Adopting an Appeals Panel supports the goal of strengthening third-party oversight on the City's decision-making processes by engaging individuals who are not involved in the original review or management of an application. 80% of the applicants surveyed strongly supported the inclusion of community sector representation on the panel in order to bring independent expertise to the process.

Unsuccessful applicants, who are dissatisfied with a funding decision or condition, will have the opportunity to present their concerns to the Appeals Panel for further consideration. Based on the information provided and the amount of funds available, the panel will make recommendations to the Executive Director, SDFA. Part of the mandate of the Appeals Panel will also be to identify any errors that occurred in the initial staff review process for remedy.

Accessibility:

Since the 2007 release of the Wellesley Institute's report "We Can't Afford to Do Business this Way," the City has embarked on efforts to streamline and improve the way it administers funding. The report argued that funder requirements place an administrative burden on the non-profit and charitable sector that shifts an organization's focus away from delivering on their mission. A more recent report released in June 2013, entitled "Fair Exchange: Public Funding for Social Impact through the Non-Profit Sector", highlighted ways that funding processes can be designed to best support results. In response to this research, the Community Funding Unit of SDFA is currently streamlining its application process Investment applicants and implementing a multi-year funding framework in the Community Service Partnership Program.

The review of the Appeals process provides another important opportunity to identify ways to reduce the burdens of funding administration. Moving to a panel model will allow for scheduled, timed appointments for appellants. This will significantly reduce the time community organization staff, and volunteers spend waiting for their chance to speak to the committee about their funding application. Several survey respondents stated that their previous experience with the appeals process was both time consuming and inconvenient.

Written appeals will continue to be accepted for those organizations that are not able to appeal in person.

Appeals Panel Mandate

Each Division Head will form Appeals Panels that will assume a mandate similar to the current CPIP Appeals Committee: to hear appeals made by grant applicants regarding eligibility and allocation recommendations, to recommend the appeals allocation, and to identify for staff any relevant policy issues arising during the appeals process.

S DFA community funding staff will develop and strike an Appeals Panel for its programs to begin their work in keeping with the timelines for the 2014 allocations. EDC and SSHA, which both previously reported to the CPIP Appeals Committee, will do the same in accordance with the principles and criteria described in this report. Each division will develop a Terms of Reference that stipulates the purpose of the respective Panel, membership, decision-making protocol and term of service. Panel members' evaluation of the process will be part of any recommended changes for future years.

Delegated Authority to Approve Panel Recommendations:

This report recommends that Council delegate authority to Division Heads responsible for the administration of CPIP programs to include approval of recommendations from Appeals Panels in their respective grant programs. This will ensure that appeals funds are expended in a timely manner, and furthers the streamlining efforts of the City's grants programs.

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