

Attachment 4 - Heritage Organization Operating Program Guidelines

1. Program Overview

The Heritage Organization Operating Partnership Program (HOOP) is an operating grant program administered by the Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC) to provide stable, accountable municipal funding to not-for-profit heritage organizations that deliver museum and heritage services of public benefit. HOOP replaces Museums and Heritage Services (MHS) directed grants with a grant program that aligns with the City of Toronto Community Grants Policy and EDC grant administration standards. The program establishes a transparent, consistent framework for eligibility, application, assessment, and accountability.

2. Program Objectives

HOOP supports organizations that:

- operate, interpret and program museum and heritage assets of significance to Toronto;
- deliver inclusive, accessible, and publicly engaging heritage programming;
- advance City of Toronto priorities related to equity, access, cultural participation, and placemaking; and
- contribute to cultural tourism, learning, and civic engagement.

3. Program Eligibility

3.1 Eligible Organizations

HOOP eligibility is limited to not-for-profit heritage organizations that meet all of the following criteria:

Organizations must:

- be a legally incorporated not-for-profit or registered charitable organization in good standing;
- be based in Toronto or deliver heritage services primarily for the benefit of Toronto residents; and
- deliver museum or heritage services of public benefit.

In addition, organizations must meet at least one of the following eligibility conditions:

- operate from, steward, or animate City-owned heritage or museum assets under an agreement with the City;
- have a Council-approved mandate or direction to deliver museum or heritage services on behalf of the City; or
- have an established, long-standing municipal funding relationship supporting a recognized public heritage function.

The City may amend HOOP eligibility or add eligible organizations through City Council approval.

3.2 Ineligible Organizations

The following are not eligible for HOOP funding:

- for-profit organizations;
- agencies of the provincial or federal government;
- organizations without a public heritage or museum mandate; or
- organizations in default of City of Toronto obligations or indebted to the City.

4. Funding Type and Term

- HOOP provides operating funding to eligible organizations.
- Agreements may be single-year or multi-year, subject to:
 - Council-directed budget allocations;
 - satisfactory performance and reporting; and
 - divisional approval under delegated authority.
- Contribution agreements are time-limited and do not constitute entitlement to ongoing funding.

5. Eligible Use of Funds

HOOP operating funds may be used for eligible organizational and program costs, including but not limited to:

- staffing and organizational operations related to heritage service delivery;
- public programming, exhibitions, and interpretation;
- learning, outreach, and community engagement initiatives;
- youth employment and training opportunities;
- marketing and audience development;
- collections care and non-capital conservation activities; and
- administrative costs directly related to program delivery.

HOOP funds may not be used for:

- capital construction or major repairs (unless explicitly approved);
- debt repayment; or
- activities outside the scope of the organization's approved mandate.

6. Application Process

6.1 Application Requirement

All HOOP funding recipients are required to submit an application as part of the program process. Submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

Applications must include:

- **Organizational Profile and Governance** – An overview of the organization's history, mandate, vision, and governance structure, including board and senior leadership, and the organization's role within Toronto's heritage and museum ecosystem.
- **Contribution to Toronto's Heritage Ecosystem** – A description of how the organization delivers public museum or heritage services, stewards, interprets or animates heritage assets, supports access to heritage experiences, and contributes to city-wide cultural and community benefit.
- **Planned Programming, Services, and Operations** – An outline of proposed programming, services, and core operating activities to be delivered during the funding period, including target audiences, public access strategies, and plans to sustain organizational operations.
- **Equity, Access, and Inclusion** – A description of current and planned measures to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility within governance, staffing, programming, public engagement, and use of space.

- **Public Outcomes and Benefits** – Identification of anticipated outcomes and benefits, including how activities support public engagement, learning, access, workforce development, or other City-identified priorities.
- **Operating Budget and Financial Information** – A detailed operating budget and relevant financial information, including the role of City funding in supporting organizational sustainability and public service delivery.
- **Compliance and Declarations** – Confirmation of compliance with City requirements, including insurance, reporting obligations, anti-harassment and discrimination policies, and other requirements applicable to grant recipients.

6.2 Application Timing

- Application deadlines and timelines will be communicated directly to eligible organizations by EDC.

7. Assessment and Review Process

HOOP applications are not competitive with one another. Applications are assessed individually using program-specific criteria that reflect each organization’s role, scale, and operating context. Applications will be reviewed by EDC staff and an advisory committee of three (3) community members based on:

- demonstrated alignment with program objectives;
- public value and community benefit;
- organizational capacity and governance;
- financial need and sustainability; and
- demonstrated ability to deliver proposed outcomes.

Funding recommendations are approved under delegated authority within the Council-approved EDC budget allocation.

8. Funding Agreements

All approved recipients must enter into a formal agreement with the City of Toronto.

Agreements will outline:

- approved funding amount and term;
- objectives and outcomes
- approved activities and deliverables;
- reporting and payment schedules;
- terms and conditions; and
- conditions for amendment, suspension, or termination.

9. Reporting and Accountability

HOOP recipients are required to submit annual reports demonstrating:

- achievement of planned activities and outcomes;
- use of City funds in accordance with the approved budget;
- alignment with City priorities and program objectives; and
- compliance with the terms of the contribution agreement.

Failure to submit required reports or meet contractual obligations may impact current or future funding.

10. Equity, Access, and Public Benefit

HOOP recipients are expected to:

- provide inclusive and accessible programming;
- engage diverse communities and audiences;
- remove barriers to participation where possible; and
- demonstrate responsiveness to Toronto's diverse histories and communities.

Equity considerations form part of the assessment and reporting process.

11. Program Administration and Authority

- HOOP is administered by the Museums and Heritage Services section of the Economic Development and Culture Division of the City of Toronto.
- Funding is subject to annual Council budget approval.
- The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, is authorized to approve funding allocations and execute contribution agreements in accordance with Council authority and City policy.

12. Program Review

EDC will periodically review and update HOOP guidelines to ensure continued alignment with:

- City policies;
- Council directions; and
- sector needs.