



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: April 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Celebrate Markham Grant Program 2026-2027 – May 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027 – Funding Approvals
PREPARED BY: Vinay Sharda, Director Economic Growth, Culture & Entrepreneurship and President, DMC, Ext. 4871

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report titled, “Celebrate Markham Grant Program 2026-2027 – May 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027 – Funding Approvals” be received; and,
2. THAT Council approve the recommendations of the Interdepartmental Staff Review Committee in *Attachment 1*, which includes 95 Celebrate Markham applicants for community-led events and programs, totaling \$327,000; and,
3. THAT Council approve \$105,500 for City-led events and programs; and,
4. THAT Council approve \$30,000 for the Markham Arts Council annual programs and activities; and,
5. THAT the unallocated funding from Seniors Clubs, Sports Events and Major Community Festivals totaling \$36,500, be transferred to the Culture Events and Programs funding stream; and,
6. THAT Council authorize delegated authority for the Director of Economic Development, Culture and Entrepreneurship and President, DMC, in consultation with the City Treasurer, to reallocate the funding envelope annually to better align resources with current demand and program uptake; and,
7. THAT the Celebrate Markham Guidelines be updated to allow only the City of Markham Business Improvement Area (BIA) to submit multiple applications across all funding programs within the annual funding cycle, and that all other organizations be eligible for only one grant application per funding cycle; and,
8. THAT funding disbursed under Celebrate Markham is conditional on recipients’ adherence to all program requirements contained in the Celebrate Markham Guidelines, including financial reporting, due diligence and relevant supporting documents as required by the City; and,
9. THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Celebrate Markham Grant Program 2026-2027 contains recommendations for the funding cycle for events and programs that take place from May 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027.

PURPOSE:

To recommend Celebrate Markham Grant awards for events and programs between May 1, 2026, and March 31, 2027. Grant recommendations are included in *Attachment 1 – Celebrate Markham 2026-2027 Annual Funding Recommendations*.

BACKGROUND:**Funding Envelope**

On October 13, 2015, Council approved a revised Celebrate Markham Grant Program (Program) after conducting a comprehensive program review involving consultation with stakeholders. As part of this approval, the funding for the Celebrate Markham Grant was set at \$370,000.

On November 27, 2024, the City of Markham's Budget 2025 was adopted. As part of Budget 2025, the annual funding envelope for Celebrate Markham increased by \$92,500 from \$370,000 to \$462,500 based on a formula of \$1.25 per capita. The incremental \$92,500 went toward doubling the funding for the four major festivals (Markham Music Festival, Markham Jazz Festival, Taste of Asia and Unionville Festival) and increasing the funding for signature events of City-wide importance.

The Celebrate Markham Grant is divided into two funding streams: one for community programs and events and another for City-led events. Celebrate Markham also provides funding for Arts Councils.

Celebrate Markham Program Guidelines

The Program is a municipal grant program that provides funds for events, festivals, and activities to not-for-profit groups and organizations, including for start-up and early-stage organizations, held in the City of Markham. The intent of the Program is to encourage residents to participate in their community and connect with one another and, to attract visitors. The Program also encourages all organizers to work towards self-sufficiency for their projects.

As stipulated in the Celebrate Markham Guidelines, grant recipients must complete and submit a Project Outcome/Financial Report, which includes reporting on community partnerships, participation and attendee statistics, outcomes, community impact, learning and program feedback, as well as detailed reporting on actual expenses versus projected budget and associated variance explanations within 90 days of the event completion.

In addition, certain financial reporting information is required depending on the grant request amount, which is detailed in *Table 1*.

Table 1 – Current Reporting Requirements

Revised Minimum Reporting Requirements	
Grant Threshold	Minimum Reporting Requirements
Less than \$10,000	Financial statements (minimum of income statement and balance sheet) for the most recent fiscal year and the previous year, prepared by the organization and signed by the Board attesting to the statements' accuracy, appropriateness and fair representation
\$10,000 - \$19,999	Complete set of the applicable financial statements for the most recent fiscal year and the previous year, prepared through a Compilation Engagement and completed by a Licensed Public Accountant** external to the organization.
\$20,000 & over	Complete set of the applicable financial statements for the most recent fiscal year and the previous year, prepared through a Review Engagement and completed by a Licensed Public Accountant** external to the organization.

These are minimum requirements. Organizations may submit statements that provide higher levels of assurance (e.g., fully audited statements where available). ON a case-by-case basis, the City also reserves the right to request additional information, including financial statements that represent higher level of assurance, where required/warranted.

** Holds a Public Accounting License (PAL) issued by the Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) of Ontario

A Staff Review Committee was formed to evaluate applications in these key areas:

1. Organizational Readiness
2. Project Merit
3. Community Impact
4. Partners and Inclusivity
5. Waste Planning (Zero Waste Event)
6. Work Plan
7. Project Budget

The Interdepartmental Staff Review Committee includes representation from the following City departments:

- Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship (3 Coordinators and a Manager)
- Financial Services (Financial Planning)
- Recreation (Senior Manager, Manager and Coordinator of Sport Development)

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Funding Envelope

As part of Budget 2025, Celebrate Markham’s annual funding envelope increased by \$92,500 from \$370,000 to \$462,500, based on a formula of \$1.25 per capita. The total funding envelope is \$462,500 for the 2026-2027 Celebrate Markham Grant Program (\$327,000 for the Community-led Programs & Events, and \$135,500 for City-led Events and Markham Arts Council).

The 2026-2027 funding envelope includes re-allocations among program areas to better align resources with current demand and program uptake. Funding was shifted from categories with lower utilization to those experiencing higher participation and demonstrated need, ensuring the overall envelope remains balanced.

Table 2 below overviews the available funding envelope and maximum amount per application, along with the revised allocation amounts, for the Community-Led Programs and Events stream.

Table 2 – Community-Led Programs and Events Funding

Program	Annual Funding 2026-2027	Funding Re-allocated	Re-allocated Annual Funding 2026-2027	Maximum Amount Per Application
Culture Events and Programs	\$98,000	\$36,500	\$134,500	\$5,000
Major Community Festivals – Established*	\$80,000	\$0	\$80,000	\$20,000
Major Community Festivals – Other	\$60,000	-\$17,000	\$43,000	\$10,000
Seniors Clubs	\$47,000	-\$2,500	\$44,500	\$3,000
Sports Events	\$42,000	-\$17,000	\$25,000	\$10,000
				\$20,000**
Total Community-Led Events	\$327,000		\$327,000	

*For Markham Music Festival, Markham Jazz Festival, Taste of Asia and Unionville Festival

** For international or world level sports events

Table 3 below overviews the funding allocated towards City-led events and Arts Councils.

Table 3 – City-Led Events and Markham Arts Council Funding

	Events	Annual Funding 2026-2027
City Led Events	Black History Month	\$105,500
	Canada Day	
	Doors Open Markham	
	Markham Milliken Children’s Festival	
	Markham Santa Claus Parade	
Total City Led Events		\$105,500
Arts Councils	Markham Arts Council	\$30,000
Total Arts Councils		\$30,000
Total City Led Events and Arts Councils		\$135,500

The most optimal allocation of Celebrate Markham funding to support City-led events will be finalized by Staff as initiatives are planned and implemented and costs (and any revenue offsets) are firmed up.

This funding is intended or expected to enable event/program delivery as proposed by the applicants, including any required operational needs related to Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) measures.

Outcome of the Review of Applications for the Community-Led Programs and Events Stream

For the 2026-2027 funding cycle, the City received 95 applications requesting \$546,000 under the Community-Led Programs and Events Stream. *Table 4* summarizes the requested funding and the Staff-recommended amounts based on the evaluation of the applications in key areas, as noted earlier in the report.

Table 4 – Community-Led Programs and Events Funding Allocations

Grant Category	# of Applications Received	Funding Requested	# of Applications Recommended for Funding	Total Funding Recommended	Total Funding Envelope with Reallocated Funds	Funds Remaining
Culture Events and Programs	53	\$271,000	31	\$134,500	\$134,500	\$0
Major Community Festivals	12	\$160,000	12	\$123,000	\$123,000	\$0
Senior's Clubs	26	\$80,000	20	\$44,500	\$44,500	\$0
Sport Events	4	\$35,000	3	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$0
Total	95	\$546,000	66	\$327,000	\$327,000	\$0

Given the volume of applications and consistency with prior years' approach, some applicants will receive less than their requested amounts based on the Interdepartmental Staff Review Committee scoring.

There are 29 applications that are not recommended as they failed to meet one of the following criteria:

- Applicants applied multiple times and only one application was considered.
- Application did not meet the requirements specified under the funding category.
- Application was incomplete or was missing critical information.
- Application did not attain a high enough score to be eligible for funding consideration.

The Interdepartmental Staff Review Committee's recommended approvals are in *Attachment 1—Celebrate Markham 2026-2027 Annual Funding Recommendations*.

Enhancements to Celebrate Markham Program Guidelines

The City of Markham Business Improvement Area Committees (BIA's) play an important role in connecting the community and attracting visitors. BIA's have also demonstrated that they have the necessary resources, experience and support to deliver quality community events and programs that continue to grow in attendees and have positive economic impacts. It is recommended that BIA's be eligible for approval on multiple applications across all funding programs within the annual funding cycle and that all other organizations be

eligible for only one grant application per annual funding cycle.

While the Celebrate Markham program does not approve road closure decisions, Celebrate Markham staff will continue to support event organizers by connecting them with the City’s Events and Operations teams, as appropriate, to review and clarify applicable requirements. Each event and location presents unique considerations, which will be assessed by Events and Operations staff to determine the most appropriate mitigation measures. Celebrate Markham will evaluate and continue to support the road closure costs associated with a select number of large-scale City and BIA related events; where additional funding might be required, the City Treasurer will determine and implement the most appropriate funding source / offset..

Next Steps

Staff will continue to review the program going forward and identify any further changes to streamline program administration, while ensuring appropriate due diligence and risk management considerations. Any administrative changes going forward will require the approval of the City Treasurer.

Upon approval of the staff report and funding allocations, staff will follow up with applicants to inform them of the decisions related to their applications.

Staff will continue to evaluate and implement continuous improvement processes to the grant program.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A total available funding envelope of \$462,500 is available for Celebrate Markham activities delivered between May 1, 2026 and March 31, 2027, and is provided in detail in *Table 5*.

Table 5 – 2026-2027 Celebrate Markham Funding Overview

Funding Stream	\$
Celebrate Markham 2026 Funding	\$462,500
Total 2026 Funding Available	\$462,500
Celebrate Markham Funding Recommended for Approval	
Community Events	\$327,000
City Led Events	\$105,500
Markham Arts Council	\$30,000
Total 2026-2027 Celebrate Markham Spend	\$462,500
Remaining Celebrate Markham Reserve	\$0

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This initiative aligns with the strategic focus for community engagement to promote meaningful involvement and participation of residents, businesses and organizations that result in improved citizen engagement.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Financial Services, Economic Growth, Culture and Entrepreneurship, Recreation, People Services Departments and Destination Markham Corporation.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Vinay Sharda
Director, Economic Growth
Culture & Entrepreneurship &
President, DMC

Andy Taylor
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 - Celebrate Markham 2026-2027 Annual Funding Recommendations