



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: October 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund (MESF) 2024
Funding and Future Program Protocols

PREPARED BY: Dave Douglas, Manager, Waste & Environmental
Management, x2395
Michael DiPasquale, Supervisor, Waste Operations, Waste &
Environmental Management x3710

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report entitled “Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund (MESF) 2024 Funding and Future Program Protocols” be received;
2. AND THAT the external funding application “The Urban Farm Initiative” for site expansion and improvements be approved for \$9,596 and be funded from the MESF Reserve;
3. AND THAT proposed amendments to the funding approvals process for future MESF applications be received as noted in this report; and
4. THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to recommend that funding from the Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund (“MESF”) be provided for an external application as reviewed and recommended by the internal staff committee. In addition, staff are proposing revisions to the MESF funding approval process in order to increase efficiency.

BACKGROUND:

Council created the MESF in 2002 to provide funding for innovative and leading environmental initiatives that support GreenMarkham and the City’s waste diversion targets. Applicants can request a maximum of \$10,000 from the MESF per project per year. Eligible organizations include other levels of government, public agencies, school boards and Markham community groups. Individual residents and “for profit” organizations are not eligible to apply. In 2020, Council approved the addition of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Small Grant (“SNSG”) program as part of the MESF designed to support resident-led sustainability projects with grants up to \$500.

All approved MESF projects are expected to meet at least one of the following objectives:

- Is a leading environmental innovation that can be showcased by Markham
- Promotes education, and participation in sustainability in Markham
- Supports the City’s environmental policies and strategic plan

The MESF program is administered by the Waste & Environmental Management section of the Environmental Services Department. The application process and eligibility

criteria are posted on the City’s website and promoted up to the intake deadline of March 31st. After intake, all applications are screened for eligibility and then reviewed by an internal staff committee with representation from a range of departments including Environmental Services, Sustainability & Asset Management, Economic Growth, Culture & Entrepreneurship, and Operations. The review process involves assessing each application using established evaluation criteria combined with feedback from staff subject matter experts on the committee. Following approval of the applications by the committee, staff then seek Council approval for funding disbursement through submission of an annual report.

The table below indicates the number of MESF and SNSG applications approved and the related funding amounts disbursed from 2020 to 2023.

Year	Approved MESF Applications	Approved SNSG Applications	Total Funds Disbursed	Comments
2020	2	3	\$11,430.90	
2021	0	0	0	No applications due to COVID-19
2022	4	5	\$36,197.39	
2023	1	0	0	Applications deferred to 2024
Total	7	8	\$47,628.29	

**OPTIONS / DISCUSSION:
Approved 2024 MESF Application**

The internal staff committee has approved one MESF application for the 2024 funding year. This application was initially deferred from 2023. A summary of the applicant’s initiative is provided below:

The Urban Farm Initiative

The Urban Farm Initiative has developed a well-established community garden located at the Unionville Alliance Church (4898 16th Avenue). The applicant has proposed an expansion project that will provide additional gardening space by converting an unused plot of land to produce several crops intended for both the church’s food bank and Markham Food Bank.

The total funding requested for this initiative is \$9,596 for the purchase of tools, lumber, and installation of site fencing to support the 3,000 square foot expansion. The project supports Markham’s food security priority and aligns with the City’s community sustainability plan. This application meets MESF program requirements and community funding criteria and is recommended for approval by staff.

Proposed Revisions to the MESF Funding Approvals Process

In an effort to streamline the funding approvals process and ensure timely disbursement to successful MESF applicants, staff are proposing to revise the approval process,

specifically leveraging delegated authority in alignment with the risk-based approach that underpin the corporation’s Expenditure Control and other financial and administrative policies. Under the Expenditure Control Policy, approvals for contract awards and purchases are delegated to Management Staff, based on accountability measures and controls in place, including sufficient approved funding for the purchase and undertaking a competitive process.

Under the current MESF process, funding disbursements are made following an established process and after ensuring sufficient funding is in place. Going forward, staff are proposing that the internal committee review applications and prepare recommendations to the Director of Environmental Services for funding approval (up to \$10,000 in MESF funding). For SNSG applications, eligible to receive up to \$500 of funding per year, staff are proposing that the internal committee review applications and prepare recommendations to the Manager of Waste & Environmental Management for funding approval.

Staff are not recommending any changes to the intake or evaluation processes for both MESF & SNSG applications, or any changes to the application deadline of March 31st.

Annual reporting will be provided to the Executive Leadership Team and Council for information purposes and public transparency. This revised funding approvals process is supported by the Treasurer and the Commissioner of Community Services.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

One (1) approved MESF project to be funded from the MESF Reserve in the amount of \$9,596. The current Reserve balance is \$63,632.74 as of August 31, 2024. This disbursement would reduce the current reserve balance to \$54,036.74. Following the 2024 MESF application period, the Director of Environmental Services will re-evaluate the need to top-up the Reserve fund balance as part of the 2026 capital budget process.

The table below summarizes the recommended expenditure from the MESF Reserve.

MESF Reserve Activity	
2024 Funding Plan and Account Balance	
Initial Balance (August 31, 2024)	\$63,632.74
The Urban Farm Initiative	(\$9,596.00)
Remaining Balance	\$54,036.74

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommend approval for a funding disbursement in the amount of \$9,596 for The Urban Farm Initiative. Additionally, staff recommend delegation of funding approvals for MESF and SNSG as noted in this report.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Aligns with *Goal #3 – Safe, Sustainable & Complete Community* and *Goal #4 – Stewardship of Money & Resources*

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Finance, Sustainability & Asset Management, Economic Growth, Culture & Entrepreneurship and the Operations Departments have been consulted.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Eddy Wu
Director, Environmental Services

Morgan Jones
Commissioner, Community Services