



**City of Kingston**  
**Information Report to Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee**  
**Report Number ARCP-25-002**

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**To:** Chair and Members of the Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee

**From:** Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services

**Resource Staff:** Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts & Culture Services

**Date of Meeting:** December 12, 2024

**Subject:** Update on the City of Kingston Arts Fund Review and Next Steps for Funding in 2025

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: 4. Foster a Caring and Inclusive Community

Goal: 5.7 Foster culture, history, education, arts and recreation (CHEAR).

**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Arts, Recreation & Community Policies (ARCP) Committee on the review of the City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) that is nearing completion. The final CKAF recommendations, as well as an updated CKAF Framework, will be presented to the ARCP Committee at its meeting on February 27, 2025, and to Council at its meeting on March 18, 2025. It's expected that changes to the CKAF, pending approval, will be made throughout 2025, and be fully implemented in 2026.

This timeline ensures that the presentation of the final CKAF recommendations developed through the review will be considered following the approval of the 2025 municipal operating budget and it also aligns with the renewal of the Service Level Agreement of the Kingston Arts Council (KAC), who administers the CKAF on behalf of the City, and where additional services may be identified, both of which will assist in feasibility of implementation.

This report also lays out considerations to guide the administration of the CKAF in 2025 during a transition year to ensure continuity of arts funding to the community, time to complete the

**December 12, 2024**

Page 2 of 12

delivery of projects underway by current grant recipients, and a chance to provide new opportunities for funding to eligible groups that do not currently receive a CKAF grant.

**Recommendation:**

This report is for information only.

December 12, 2024

Page 3 of 12

**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

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**Jennifer Campbell,  
Commissioner, Community  
Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

December 12, 2024

Page 4 of 12

## Options/Discussion:

### Background

The City of Kingston has a long history of providing grants to local arts, culture and community-based non-profit organizations, collectives and groups. Through these investments, the City recognizes the role that arts, culture, heritage and strong and connected neighbourhoods play in elevating the distinct characteristics of a city and in creating access to unique cultural experiences that reflect the lives and values of those who live in the city.

The CKAF was first established in 2007 and has been an important source of funding for arts in Kingston, and in turn, grant recipients have had significant impacts in the City by delivering public programming, engaging audiences and providing opportunities to participate in the arts, paying artists and employing staff, and contributing to cultural vitality. They have also been able to access other levels of arts funding with municipal support. The CKAF was also integrated into the City's first-ever 10-year Culture Plan, approved by Council in 2010, and which concluded in 2020. A renewal of the Culture Plan is identified in Council's current [Strategic Priorities](#) and is expected to be completed in 2026.

To-date, the CKAF has invested in arts organizations, collectives and artists through two grant streams including Operating Grants and Project Grants, and the administration process of the CKAF is described in a Plan for Administration ([Council Meeting 03-2024, January 9, 2024](#)), which is approved by Council annually. Since the beginning, the CKAF has been administered by the KAC as outlined in their Service Level Agreement ([Report Number 24-101](#)). The annual CKAF grant recommendations, determined through an open application and peer assessment process, are approved by the KAC Board of Directors and by Council who ratify the results ([Report Number 24-168](#)). In 2024, this grant funding totaled \$613,088 that included the City's annual investment of \$612,790. The KAC publishes [annual reports](#) that include impact reporting on the CKAF, that highlights total audience numbers, number of public activities, new works created and presented, total revenue generated by grant recipients, number of volunteers engaged, and funding paid to artists and artistic staff. The CKAF continues to be a source of critical funding for the arts in Kingston, helping to support operations and programming by arts organizations, and delivery of engaging and accessible arts projects.

### Analysis

Based on community and Council interest, and to ensure the CKAF remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the arts sector as well as public interest and access to arts experiences and opportunities, staff have advanced the much-needed work to complete a formal and comprehensive review of the CKAF. The City enlisted the support of Saffy, a consulting firm specializing in city-building, culture, design and research, to lead the CKAF review. Saffy employed a human-centred, equity-informed approach to the project, focusing on collaborative research and inclusive methods of community engagement.

December 12, 2024

Page 5 of 12

The review of the CKAF, as described in this report, included a review of funding goals, grant streams, eligibility, application and adjudication processes, fund administration, fund amounts and ranges, and accountability and reporting requirements, all to best support ongoing and emerging needs in the local arts and culture sector and to ensure continued alignment with Council priorities and/or new arts and culture plans and policies. The review has also applied an IIDEA (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) lens to all areas to create new and enhanced access to the CKAF going forward.

The CKAF review was conducted in three phases:

**Phase 1 – Preparation and Project Vision: January 2024 – February 2024.** This phase involved establishing the evaluation framework for the review, as well as a thorough analysis of all relevant background materials, market research and jurisdictional scan of other municipal funding programs and conducting discovery interviews with City staff and key CKAF partners to set the vision and context for the project.

**Phase 2 – Consultation and Public Engagement: April 2024 – August 2024.** Over the course of five (5) months, broad consultations were held with individuals and groups who have a vested interest in the CKAF and arts funding in Kingston. This included CKAF recipients, applicants, jury members, community and cultural organizations, as well as artists, arts workers, cultural producers, arts supporters and residents.

The public engagement evaluation framework included:

- **Project Champions:** Selected through an equitable and democratic adapted civic lottery process they became an extension of the team, engaging the public, artists and community through gatherings, events and pop-ups. This approach aimed to ensure that greater diversity was represented in the consultation process.
- **Interviews:** Six (6) interviews were held with key community members, including longstanding CKAF grant recipients, arts organizations and other local funders for a broadened perspective on community-based funding in Kingston.
- **Online Public Survey:** Captured a broad selection of voices through both qualitative and quantitative data and generated 218 responses.
- **Focus Groups:** Two (2) focus groups of artists, grant applicants and recipients, and community members actively involved in the arts sector locally.

Through public consultation, key themes and findings were identified. These themes, alongside of sector standards/best practices and local context/constraints/opportunities will be considered in the draft recommendations and new grant framework and include:

- Enhanced awareness for grant applicants in terms of application, evaluation criteria, adjudication and selection process;

December 12, 2024

Page 6 of 12

- More investment in diversity and inclusivity within the arts, supporting marginalized voices, challenging dominant cultural narratives, and ensuring that the arts are accessible to a broader range of communities;
- Reduce administrative burdens and address accessibility challenges with the application and reporting, providing enhanced support to grant applicants for navigation of the funding system, which makes it challenging for emerging artists, festivals, events and organizations to apply and secure funding;
- Revise funding evaluation criteria and allocation amounts to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources, focusing on IIDEA;
- Provide a more inclusive and alternative application methods and opportunities, including video and/or oral submissions for certain application components or grant streams;
- Streamlined role of peer assessment jury to be focused on reviewing, assessing and ranking applications, with funding allocations to be determined by the KAC based on rankings and in consultation with the jury;
- Expand funding structure and grant streams to be more adaptable, support organizations and artists better, and enable more creativity;
- Offer enhanced clarity on eligible applicants to access operating grants that includes professional, semi-professional and emerging arts organizations, as well as groups and organizations who offer arts education and training as part of their mandate, and for those who leverage the arts and work across other sectors and industries to support community development and well-being;
- Revise maximum and minimum grant amounts based on historical average grants to create more room in grant streams for new applicants and to achieve greater equity;
- Pilot a multi-year grant cycle for grant recipients who receive recurring, annual operating funding, both for arts organizations and annual festivals, in coordination with municipal budget cycles and to reduce administrative barriers for applicants, the KAC and the City, and to assist longer-term planning;
- Identify and propose opportunities to Council for approval on an ongoing basis for additional focus areas for the CKAF that aligns with other arts-strategies and priorities, for example: the Kingston Music Strategy approved by Council in December 2023 speaks to how the CKAF could support musicians, i.e. through funding for music recording projects; based on available CKAF funding, consider annual opportunities to direct some funding through streams to these priority areas; and
- Review investment levels to the CKAF and to the KAC to support program changes, make space for new applicants, support sustainability and stability for arts organizations, and direct funding to individual artists.

**Phase 3 – Analysis and Final Recommendations: October 2024 – December 2024.** A final report on the CKAF review project that includes an overview of research and discovery findings, assessment of the impact of CKAF to-date, a summary of what we heard through the public engagement, and draft recommendations is being developed. The final report will include a new CKAF Framework that will outline goals and priorities, modified Grant Streams and allocations,

December 12, 2024

Page 7 of 12

application processes, assessment and decision-making processes, accountability measures/impact assessment and reporting requirements. This Framework will act as the guiding document for the administration of the CKAF going forward, pending Council approval.

Within the new Framework, currently in the final stages of development, modifications to Grant Streams, eligible applicants and funding allocation amounts are a core component. The new Grant Streams being considered are included in Table 1 below and the current Grant Streams within the existing Plan for Administration are included in Table 2 below for reference and comparison. Staff brought a report to the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee at its meeting on November 12, 2024 ([Report Number AAC-24-004](#)) and feedback on the new Grant Streams was shared and collected and is being considered in the final CKAF report and recommendations.

**Table 1 – Draft New CKAF Grant Streams**

Grants Stream	Description and Streams	Allocation % of Total CKAF and Grant Ranges
Arts Operating	Annual and multi-year grants supporting operations, programs and services for not-for-profit arts organizations (professional, semi-professional and emerging organizations) in all artistic disciplines, as well as community-engaged organizations working in communities through the arts, providing arts education and learning as part of their mandate, and implementing strategies to reduce or eliminate barriers to public participation in the arts.	45% of total available fund  Grant Range (Min/Max) \$10,000 - \$65,000
Arts Festivals	Annual and multi-year operating grants for production and presentation of established and emerging arts festivals and recurring event series' that have a City-wide impact.	35% of total available fund  Grant Range (Min/Max) \$10,000 - \$55,00

December 12, 2024

Page 8 of 12

Creation and Presentation – Individual Artists Grants	Grants for artists, duos and collectives for the creation of new artistic work and/or public presentation in Kingston and further afield.	10% of total available fund Grant Range (Min/Max) \$3,000 - \$10,000
Arts Projects	One-time funds for creative projects, capacity building, partnerships, increasing access, collaboration between arts and other sectors/industries, and community engagement through the arts.	10% of total available fund Grant Range (Min/Max) \$3,000 - \$12,000

**Table 2 – Current CKAF Grant Streams**

Grants Stream	Description and Streams	Allocation % of Total CKAF and Grant Ranges
Arts Operating	Annual grants that support incorporated nonprofit arts organizations located in Kingston who exhibit high achievement in arts programming and fulfill a significant role in the Kingston community through the arts.	70% of total available fund Grant Range (Min/Max) \$10,000 - \$75,000
Arts Projects	Annual grants that support arts projects from individual artists, collectives and incorporated nonprofit organizations, funding the creation and presentation of arts projects that demonstrate engagement with the Kingston community and engage professional artists and pay artist fees.	30% of total available fund Grant Range (Min/Max) \$5,000 - \$15,000

Within the new CKAF Framework, an updated and streamlined application and assessment process will also be presented, and there will be a correlating CKAF grant cycle timeline, which is included in Table 3 below. This timeline is similar to other City cultural and community grant programs, including the City of Kingston Heritage Fund (CKHF) and the Neighbourhood



December 12, 2024

Page 9 of 12

Activation Fund (NAF), and aligns more closely with the annual municipal budget approval timelines, which will also enable more integrated reporting to Council and the public on the City’s broad cultural investment.

**Table 3 – CKAF Grant Lifecycle**

Application	Assessment	Council Approval	Reporting
Communications, outreach, professional development, information sessions	Staff and peer assessment review and meetings	Report to Council on grant recommendations for approval and distribution of grants to recipients	Final report on impact
<b>New Timelines</b>			
September – October	November – December	January – February	Within 1 year
<b>Current Timelines</b>			
February – April	May	June – July	Within 18 months

**Next Steps for Arts Funding in 2025**

2025 will be a transition and bridging year for the CKAF to move from the existing structure to the new Framework, pending approval. As noted in Table 3, its anticipated that applications for the CKAF will open annually in September, with a first intake currently projected for September 2025, which means that successful recipients will receive their grants in February 2026.

Staff are proposing a strategic approach to distributing the CKAF in 2025, based on the timelines noted, when the final CKAF recommendations and Framework are brought to the ARCP Committee in February 2025. This transition plan reflects the longstanding intention of arts funding in Kingston and will aim to ensure continuity of operational funding for current grant recipients, create opportunities for groups who do not currently have a CKAF grant to access funding before the new applications open, and ensure successful delivery and completion of community projects that currently have a CKAF grant. The approach also aims for efficiency in

December 12, 2024

Page 10 of 12

administration and to create equal access points for organizations, groups, collectives and artists to apply to the new CKAF. Staff will work with the KAC to begin some community outreach to review options and opportunities for transition in 2025, share the City's proposed approach and ensure that there is awareness of the strategy.

This means that the municipal allocation to the CKAF in 2025 will support the proposed strategic approach to the CKAF and in 2026 will support distribution of funding through the new Framework.

The strategic approach to the transition of CKAF in 2025 will consider:

**Sustaining Operations of Arts Organizations:** Groups that currently receive an annual CKAF Operating Grant, which is generally the same year over year with inflationary increases, will be required to submit an Interim Report only and pending approval of the report by the KAC, they will be awarded a 2025 Operating Grant at their 2024 Grant level. This funding would be released no later than June 30, 2025. The amount of these 2025 Operating Grants is proposed to be held at the 2024 levels, but adjustments may be made once the municipal budget process is completed in January 2025 and once the 2025 CKAF budget is approved. All recipients, as well as new applicants, will then be required to apply within the updated Grant Framework in September 2025, and applications will be assessed within the new evaluation criteria.

**Completing Arts Projects:** Various groups were awarded CKAF Project Grants in July 2024, which must be applied to projects that occur after that timeframe and before December 31, 2025, meaning events can be completed at any time over 2025. Recipients that are delivering one-time projects will complete their projects within this timeframe and will be eligible to apply within the new Grant Framework in September 2025, with funding to be received in 2026.

Groups that received a 2024 Project Grant for recurring festivals and/or annual event series/concerts, will continue to use the funds awarded to support their programming as intended in 2025. Therefore, they will also not be impacted by this transition plan as they will be able to spend their 2024 Project Grant amount in 2025 and then apply to the new Grant Framework in September 2025, with funding to be received in early 2026. There may be some other considerations needed for recurring festivals who may be seeking a level of funding support in late 2025 to plan for 2026, but this will be reviewed with grant recipients. Many of the recurring festivals and events, in both the existing Operating and Project Grant Programs, will be able to apply to the new Arts Festivals stream, which are operating grants within the new Framework and provide a more enhanced level of stability instead of relying on project grants year over year.

**Providing New Opportunities for Funding:** Groups that did not apply to or receive a 2024 CKAF Operating or Project Grant and were planning on submitting in 2025 to support operations and/or deliver a project will be invited to meet with the KAC and City staff in February 2025 to review eligibility to receive a one-time partnership grant that must be spent by December 2025.

December 12, 2024

Page 11 of 12

Any group seeking a partnership grant must submit a brief application and budget. This would be determined on a case-by-case basis and based on available funding, but the goal will be to ensure funding in 2025 is distributed to those who are not currently supported by the CKAF. These one-time grants would not guarantee future support through the new CKAF Framework but would recognize that new organizations or groups seeking funding through the CKAF would not be able to access funding until 2026.

**Accelerating Funding for Individual Artists:** Within the updated CKAF Framework, a new grant stream is being proposed that will provide funding directly to individual artists for creation and presentation. If the Framework is approved in February by the ARCP Committee and then by Council, as part of the transition plan next year, there could be a prioritization of an open call for applications, peer assessment process and distribution of grants for individual artists, to take place by June 2025 and in advance of the call for applications for the other grant streams.

**Launch Applications, New CKAF Framework:** Following delivery of all the approaches listed above, an open call for applications for all other grant streams (Arts Operating, Arts Festivals and Arts Projects) will launch in September 2025, available to all new and existing applicants. This will be supported through broad outreach, communications, professional development and awareness building in the community, led by the KAC.

**Report to the ARCP and Council:** In December 2025, staff will bring a report to the ARCP Committee and Council to provide an update on the CKAF in 2025, including groups who received a 2025 CKAF grant through the various opportunities listed above in the transition of the CKAF. **Note:** within the new Framework, pending approval, Council will still approve grant recommendations through a report issued annually in February.

### **Public Engagement**

Broad public engagement was completed as part of the CKAF review, as noted earlier in this report, and the review leveraged the City's Get Involved platform for promotion.

### **Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations**

IIDEA principles will be applied to the CKAF recommendations and final Program Framework across all areas including grant streams, eligibility, and evaluation and assessment criteria. IIDEA considerations were also integrated into the Public Engagement framework and various tactics, especially through the Project Champions and their selection through an open, civic lottery process.

### **Existing Policy/By-Law**

The CKAF aligns with the Kingston Culture Plan, approved by Council in September 2010, and it is anticipated it will evolve through this CKAF review and in relation to the renewal of the Kingston Culture Plan that has been included as part of Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities.

**December 12, 2024**

Page 12 of 12

The CKAF also aligns with additional arts-based strategies, such as the Kingston Music Strategy (approved in December 2023).

**Notice Provisions**

None

**Financial Considerations**

The budget for CKAF grants is approved annually through the municipal operating budget process, as part of the Arts & Culture Services budget. Costs associated with CKAF grants will be included in the City's 2025 operating budget, developed in accordance with the Mayor's budget direction.

**Contacts**

Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts & Culture Services, 613-546-4291 extension 1277

**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted**

None

**Exhibits Attached**

None