



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Planning Committee
From: Wayne Craig
Director, Development

Date: May 5, 2021
File: 08-4105-01/2021-Vol
01

James Cooper
Director, Building Approvals

Re: **UBCM Grant Application - Local Government Development Approvals Program**

Staff Recommendation

1. That the application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Local Government Development Approvals Program for \$500,000 be endorsed;
2. Should the application be successful, that the Chief Administrative Officer and the General Manager, Planning and Development be authorized on behalf of the City to enter into an agreement with UBCM for the above mentioned project; and
3. That a capital submission of \$740,000 for the Digitization of Development Approvals system (AMANDA) be approved with \$740,000 funded from Rate Stabilization Account, and that the Consolidated 5-Year Financial Plan (2021-2025) be amended accordingly.

Wayne Craig
Director, Development
(604-247-4625)

James Cooper
Director, Building Approvals
(604-247-4606)

WC/JC:jr
Att. 2

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Intergovernmental Relations & Protocol Unit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Finance Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Information Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) has announced a call for applications to the Local Government Development Approvals Program, a Provincial grant program funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as part of the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement. This report is in response to that announcement and provides an outline of the City's application to the program.

This report supports the following strategies within Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022:

Strategy #6 Strategic and Well-Planned Growth:

Leadership in effective and sustainable growth that supports Richmond's physical and social needs.

6.1 Ensure an effective OCP and ensure development aligns with it.

Strategy #8 An Engaged and Informed Community:

Ensure that the citizenry of Richmond is well-informed and engaged about City business and decision-making.

8.2 Ensure citizens are well-informed with timely, accurate and easily accessible communication using a variety of methods and tools.

Findings of Fact

In 2019, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs initiated the Development Approvals Process Review and engaged local governments and other stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities of the current development approvals process in BC. The City of Richmond participated in this process review. Building upon that work, UBCM on March 10, 2021 announced the Local Government Development Approvals Program ("the Grant Program"). UBCM, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, is making available \$15 million in funding to local governments "to support the implementation of established best practices and to test innovative approaches to improve development approvals processes while meeting local government planning and policy objectives".

The Grant Program's application window closes on May 7, 2021. The Grant Program can contribute to 100 per cent of the cost of eligible activities up to a maximum amount of \$500,000. The activities contained in the application are to be capable of completion within two years of the Grant Program approval.

A copy of the Grant Program and Application Guide is attached (Attachment 1).

City staff have completed an application in advance of the May 7, 2021 deadline, but require a Council resolution in support of the application. UBCM has requested that a Council resolution supporting the project and the grant submissions be submitted to UBCM within 30 days of the close of applications (i.e., no later than June 6, 2021).

Analysis

2020 Upgrade of Existing AMANDA Software Platform

In Spring, 2020, the City's Information Technology Department undertook a critical upgrade of the City's existing permitting and development application tracking software (AMANDA) to a web-based platform as per the City Council approved Digital Strategy. The AMANDA platform is fundamental as a central registry and permit assessment processing system for all Development Applications and Building Permits submitted to the City. The upgrade project was completed in March, 2021.

Grant Program Application Description and Anticipated Outcomes

A wide-range of activities are supported by the Grant Program; however, staff have strategically focused the application in the following areas outlined in the Program guide:

- *Improving information technology to facilitate development application processing (including supporting future implementation of digital application submissions).*
- *Conducting internal reviews of current development approvals processes to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness leveraging technology improvements.*

The City's application to the Grant Program seeks to build off the recent critical updates to the AMANDA platform by implementing business improvements and enhancements that support the day-to-day operations and activities of the Development Applications and Building Approvals Departments. Planned improvements include supporting digital applications, increasing opportunities for concurrent stakeholder input and enhanced information distribution directly to development clients, related stakeholders and the general public.

Key actions and outcomes anticipated with this implementation are:

1. Review of the development application processes by the City's Business Service Solutions Division to identify opportunities to improve efficiency/effectiveness to reduce application process times.
2. Updating the AMANDA platform's business rules and functions in keeping with the updated application review processes.
3. Additional enhancements to facilitate:
 - a) Development of a Web Portal enabling digital application submissions.
 - b) Improved information distribution to development clients and community members.
 - c) Development of a mobile inspection app for Building Permits.

The proposed improvements have an added benefit in that they would not only improve the development application process but also increase the public accessibility and availability of information related to development. This would contribute positively to the City's ongoing efforts to improve communication and engagement of community members.

Should the application to the Grant Program be successful, the City would be required to enter into a funding agreement with UBCM. As with any submission to senior governments, there is no guarantee that this application will be successful. City staff will provide an update to Council on the outcome of the City's application.

Financial Impact

A detailed budget has been prepared as part of the City's application to the Grant Program (Attachment 2). City staff estimate the cost of the scope of work associated with its application to be approximately \$740,000.

As noted above, the Grant Program can contribute a maximum of 100 per cent of the cost of eligible activities up to a maximum of \$500,000. The City's application requests funding for the maximum \$500,000 available through the Grant Program.

Staff recommend that a capital project submission in the amount of \$740,000 be approved by Council with \$740,000 funded from Rate Stabilization Account (RSA). Should the City be successful with the grant application, the amount received will replace the City funding from Rate Stabilization Account.

Conclusion

Staff recommend that Council endorse the application to the UBCM Local Government Development Approvals Program. The Grant Program provides an appropriate source of funding to support improvements and enhancements to the City's development approvals process and tracking software including improved access to information by the general public.



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JDR:js/blg

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: UBCM Local Government Development Approvals Program Guide
- Attachment 2: Proposed Draft Project Budget

Local Government Development Approvals Program

2021 Program & Application Guide

1. Introduction

In 2019, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs initiated the Development Approvals Process Review (DAPR). The Ministry engaged local governments and a broad range of stakeholders to discuss the challenges of current development approvals processes in B.C., to identify opportunities for addressing those challenges, and to develop an informed list of ideas about how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of processes. A [summary report](#) of engagement findings identified several key themes. The Ministry intends to move forward on initiatives that draw upon these, which may include work on development finance tools, public input processes and provincial referrals, in collaboration with local governments, the development sector and other stakeholders.

The Local Government Development Approvals Program, a component of the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement, is one element in addressing the DAPR Report findings.

Local Government Development Approvals Program

The development approvals process refers to all operational steps and decision making in relation to a local government's consideration of approving development, from the pre-application phase to the issuance of the building permit. The local government's review process ensures that development applications conform to policies, plans, and regulations for building and development.

The intent of the Local Government Development Approvals Program is to support the implementation of established best practices and to test innovative approaches to improve development approvals processes while meeting local government planning and policy objectives.

The Local Government Development Approvals Program is not intended to support projects where proposed deliverables require or are directly focused on provincial legislative changes.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has provided \$15 million in funding and UBCM is administering the program.

2. Eligible Applicants

All local governments (municipalities, regional districts, and the Islands Trust) in BC are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants can submit one application per intake.

3. Grant Maximum

The Program can contribute a maximum of 100% of the cost of eligible activities – to a suggested maximum of \$500,000.

Funding permitting, applications for projects that exceed the suggested maximum may be considered for funding provided that applicants are able to provide rationale for the request. If the total funding request

exceeds the available funding, applicants that have requested additional funds may be asked to reduce their funding request.

In order to ensure transparency and accountability in the expenditure of public funds, all other contributions for eligible portions of the project must be declared and, depending on the total value, may decrease the value of the funding. This includes any other grant funding and any revenue that is generated from activities that are funded by the Local Government Development Approvals Program.

4. Eligible Projects

To be eligible for funding, applications must demonstrate that proposed activities will meet the intent of the program and:

- Include new activities or represent a new phase of an existing project (retroactive funding is not available).
- Be capable of completion by the applicant within two years of the date of grant approval.
- For projects that are dependent on external partnerships, provide evidence that external partners (e.g. development community, provincial Ministry, other local governments) are willing to participate

5. Requirements for Funding

As part of the approval agreement, approved projects must meet the following requirements for funding:

- Any in-person activities, meetings, or events meet physical distancing and other public health guidance in relation to COVID-19.
- Activities must comply with all applicable privacy legislation under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* in relation to the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information while conducting funded activities. Personal information is any recorded information about an identifiable individual other than their business contact information. This includes information that can be used to identify an individual through association or inference.

6. Eligible & Ineligible Costs & Activities

Eligible costs are direct costs that are approved for funding, properly and reasonably incurred, and paid by the applicant to carry out eligible activities. Eligible costs can only be incurred from the date of application submission until the final report is submitted.

Table 1 identifies examples of activities that are eligible for funding. Please note that an internal review of current development approvals may be valuable before undertaking specific projects but is not a pre-requisite for funding. However, evidence of readiness and/or rationale to undertake proposed activities is required in the application form and may contribute to higher application scores.

It is expected that proposed activities may involve internal or external partnerships. Please refer to Section 4 for funding requirements for working with external partners. Eligible activities must be cost-effective.

Table 1: Activities Eligible for Funding

- A. Conducting internal reviews of current development approvals processes to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- B. Updating or creating specific internal approvals procedures that will result in more effective and efficient development approvals processes. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Creating or updating a development approvals process guide for use by staff
 - Updating the development approval procedures bylaw(s) to clarify or improve the process for applicants to apply for amendments to a bylaw or request the issuance of a permit (for consideration by Council or Board)
- C. Supporting efficient and effective decision making in order to further local government planning and development objectives. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Developing policies to determine the types of bylaw amendments for which the local government would or would not waive the public hearing (for consideration by Councils and Boards),
 - Updating development permit guidelines to specify clear decision-making parameters to support delegation of such decisions to staff (for consideration by Council and Board).
 - Developing amendments to a zoning bylaw to reduce the need for commonly requested variances (for consideration of adoption by Council and Board)
- D. Facilitating collaboration or coordination with external partners (e.g. development community, provincial Ministry, other local governments). Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Developing guidelines that clarify to applicants the requirements that an application must meet to be accepted by staff and expectations of local government-applicant interaction throughout the application process.
 - Establishing a pre-application process, including, for example, pre-application developer meetings.
 - Development of enhanced communication materials/training for subdivision
 - Review and development of guidelines/processes to improve provincial referrals and enhanced communications of provincial regulatory requirements
- E. Improving information technology to facilitate development application processing. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Undertaking assessments to support future implementation of digital application platform or digital permitting software.
 - Purchasing and implementing new or upgraded digital platforms or software
 - Training staff on software or platform, or on process changes required to adopt software or platform
- F. Training and capacity building for staff, elected officials (e.g. change management training), or external partners (e.g. application processes) in order to support the project.
- G. Other activities that support the improvement of the local government development approval process and that meet the intent of the program may be considered for funding.

Additional Eligible Costs & Activities

In addition to the activities identified in Table 1, the following expenditures are also eligible provided they relate directly to eligible activities:

- Incremental applicant staff and administration costs (i.e. creating a new position or adding new responsibilities to an existing position)
- Consultant costs (e.g. change management consultant, software consultant)
- Public information costs (e.g. FAQs for the public, guidance on how to participate in the public process, role of the decision-maker in the process)

Ineligible Costs & Activities

Any activity that is not outlined in Table 1 or is not directly connected to activities approved in the application is not eligible for grant funding. This includes:

- Development of funding application package
- Development of architectural, engineering, or other design drawings for the construction or renovation of facilities
- Routine or ongoing operating and/or planning costs or activities, including service subscriptions, or membership fees
- Capital costs (including computer hardware)
- Audit fees, interest fees, or fees to incorporate a society
- Fundraising, lobbying, or sponsorship campaigns
- Regular salaries and/or benefits of applicant staff or partners
- Project-related fees payable to the eligible applicant(s) (e.g. permit fees, community amenity contribution, etc.)
- Purchase of promotional items, door/raffle prizes, give-away items, and/or gifts for community members.
- Costs being claimed under any other government programs

7. Application Requirements & Process

Application Deadline

The application deadline is May 7, 2021. Applicants will be advised of the status of their applications within 90 days of the application deadline.

Required Application Contents

All applicants are required to submit an electronic copy of the complete application, including:

- Completed Application Form with all required attachments.
- Detailed budget that indicates the proposed expenditures from Local Government Development Approvals Program funding and that aligns with the proposed activities outlined in the application form. Although additional funding or support is not required, any other grant funding or in-kind contributions must be identified.
- Council, Board or Local Trust Committee resolution indicating support for the current proposed activities and willingness to provide overall grant management.

- For projects with external partners: written confirmation from the external partner confirming their role and willingness to participate.

Submission of Applications

Applications should be submitted as Word, Excel or PDF files. Total file size for email attachments cannot exceed 20 MB.

All applications should be submitted to:

Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: lgps@ubcm.ca

Review of Applications

UBCM will perform a preliminary review of all applications to ensure the required application contents have been submitted and to ensure that eligibility criteria have been met.

Following this, an Evaluation Committee will assess and score all eligible applications. Higher application review scores will be given to projects that:

- Demonstrate alignment with intent of the Local Government Development Approvals Program
- Are outcome-based and include performance measures
- Provide evidence of readiness to undertake proposed activities
- Include internal local government cross-departmental collaboration and/or collaboration with one or more external partners (e.g. development community, provincial Ministry, other local governments, etc.)
- Demonstrate cost-effectiveness

Point values and weighting have been established within each of these scoring criteria. Only those applications that meet a minimum threshold point value will be considered for funding.

The Evaluation Committee will consider the population and provincial, regional, and urban/rural distribution of proposed projects. Recommendations will be made on a priority basis and preference may be given to local governments with growth rates higher than 1% (2016 Census, Statistics Canada) between 2011 and 2016. All funding decisions will be made by UBCM.

All application materials will be shared with the Province of BC.

8. Grant Management & Applicant Responsibilities

Grants are awarded to eligible applicants only and, as such, the applicant is responsible for completion of the project as approved and for meeting reporting requirements.

Applicants are also responsible for proper fiscal management, including maintaining acceptable accounting records for the project. UBCM reserves the right to audit these records.

Notice of Funding Decision & Payments

All applicants will receive written notice of funding decisions. Approved applicants will receive an Approval Agreement, which will include the terms and conditions of any grant that is awarded, and that is required to be signed and returned to UBCM.

Grants are awarded in two payments: 50% at the approval of the project and when the signed Approval Agreement has been returned to UBCM and 50% when the project is complete and UBCM has received and approved the required final report and a financial summary.

Please note that in cases where revisions are required to an application, or an application has been approved in principle only, the applicant has 30 days from the date of the written notice of the status of the application to complete the application requirements. Applications that are not completed within 30 days may be closed.

Progress Payments

To request a progress payment, approved applicants are required to submit:

- Description of activities completed to date
- Description of funds expended to date
- Written rationale for receiving a progress payment

Changes to Approved Projects

Approved grants are specific to the project as identified in the application, and grant funds are not transferable to other projects. Approval from UBCM will be required for any significant variation from the approved project.

To propose changes to an approved project, applicants are required to submit:

- Amended application package, including updated, signed application form, updated budget, and an updated Council, Board, or Local Trust Committee resolution.
- Written rationale for proposed changes to activities and/or expenditures

Applicants are responsible for any costs above the approved grant unless a revised application is submitted and approved prior to work being undertaken.

Extensions to Project End Date

All approved activities are required to be completed within the time frame identified in the approval agreement and all extensions beyond this date must be requested in writing and be approved by UBCM. Extensions will not exceed six months.

9. Final Report Requirements & Process

Final reports are required to be submitted within 30 days of completion of the project. Applicants are required to submit an electronic copy of the complete final report, including the following:

- Completed Final Report Form with all required attachments
- Detailed financial summary that indicates the actual expenditures from the Local Government Development Approvals Program funding and other sources (if applicable) and that aligns with the actual activities outlined in the final report form
- Copies of any materials that were produced with grant funding (e.g. guidance material, reports on results of performance measurement)
- Optional: any photos or media related to the funded project

Submission of Final Reports

Final reports should be submitted as Word, Excel or PDF files. Total file size for email attachments cannot exceed 20 MB.

All final reports should be submitted to:

Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: lgps@ubcm.ca

Review of Final Reports

UBCM will perform a preliminary review of all final reports to ensure the required report elements have been submitted.

All final report materials will be shared with the Province of BC.

10. Additional Information

For enquiries about the application process or general questions regarding the program, please contact UBCM at lgps@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-0930.

UBCM - 2021 Development Approvals Program Grant - Detailed Project Budget
 City of Richmond Project: Digitization of Development Approvals

Project	UBCM Contribution Request	City of Richmond Contribution	Total Contribution
Digitization of Development Approvals	\$500,000.00	\$239,062.60	\$739,062.60

Eligible Activities	Projected Cost Estimate	Considerations/Comments
Process Mapping & Improvements Identification	\$ 162,750.00	Current and future state mapping, based on a total of seven application types, as well as, process improvements and documentation.
Technology Assessment	\$ 72,800.00	Business and technical review, GAP analysis, and recommendations.
Amanda Enhancements & Workflow Optimization	\$ 273,000.00	Review of automations, notifications, triggers, digitization, and workflow optimization based on the technology assessment.
Portal Services & Enhancements	\$ 70,200.00	Based on the technology assessment.
New Application(s)	\$ 23,400.00	Installation of Amanda Inspector App.
Integration	\$ 32,500.00	Integration into the City's digital nervous ecosystem (DNE).
Process Data Review	\$ 3,000.00	
Stakeholder Engagement	\$ 1,500.00	
Jurisdictional Scan	\$ 1,500.00	
Training & Development	\$ 24,024.00	Amanda7 Daily User training for up to 12 participants; bridge training for system administrators/SMEs; general training for Amanda7 system administrators; and Inspector app end-user training for inspectors in the field.
Contingency	\$ 74,388.60	
Total	\$739,062.60	