

RR-2(c)



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 12, 2016
Contacts: Sandra Gajic
Contact No.: 604.665.3020
RTS No.: 11595
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: October 18, 2016

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Community Services
SUBJECT: Underutilized Spaces at Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) 2017-2019 -
Community Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council authorize Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) staff to create an annual subsidy grant program to animate underused VCT spaces and enhance their profile while increasing partnerships with the community, subject to:

- i) a maximum expenditure of \$150,000 in 2017; \$200,000 in 2018; and \$200,000 in 2019;
- ii) the funding source to be the net income generated by VCT's 2017- 2019 operations and revenue targets; and,
- iii) a VCT staff-driven process to allocate the grant amount to community partners in accordance with Cultural and Social grants' policies.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval for a grant program to subsidize Council approved rental rates at underused VCT spaces. VCT has been successful in the Council approved 2016 pilot program and is requesting a three year annual subsidy grant program to continue the community engagement momentum built within the 2016 pilot program at VCT (Appendix "A")

Based on the success of the 2016 grant program, VCT experienced greater utilization and diversity of users on the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza, Annex and Orpheum's former Granville Street box office, by groups and events that supported the City's goals of cultural engagement, health and wellness.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

April 19, 2016: Council approved the decision to provide VCT with authority to run a one year pilot to subsidize the use of some of its underutilized public spaces to community groups that support arts, culture, diversity, local food and wellness, from its own net revenues (up to \$100,000).

October, 2014: Council adopted the Healthy City for All: Healthy City Strategy 2014-2025, that identifies Feeding Ourselves Well, a key goal to increase access to healthy and nutritious food for all residents.

In 2013, Vancouver's Culture Plan: Strategic Direction for the Next Five Years was presented to Council providing the framework to support a diverse, thriving cultural ecology. The plan identified five key strategic directions: further develop adaptable support programs; support increased community participation and engagement; foster artistic and cultural leadership; optimize investment in civic cultural assets; and invest in our creative economy.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

As a main focus of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) revitalization project, management at VCT has aimed to increase utilization, increase community engagement and animate public VCT spaces. To achieve this goal, VCT created a council approved one-year pilot project to make unused public spaces available at rates below Council approved rental rates to community groups with a focus on arts, culture, local food and wellness. The grant has been very successful - building community engagement and strategic partnerships for the VCT while increasing utilization of underused spaces. VCT saw higher utilization and a larger diversity of user groups, who brought more patrons to our venues and awareness to the VCT.

Strategic Analysis

Appendix A shows the pilot project has provided a significant increase of 42% in utilization and a 31% increase of diversity within user groups for ANNEX. The bookings have increased from 85 contracted bookings in 2015 to 122 contracted bookings in 2016. Some of the grant recipients for this space are Ballet BC, Caravan World Rhythms Society and Reality Curve Theatre.

The QET Plaza has seen a 6% decrease in bookings (due to the Vancouver Christmas Market's relocation to Jack Poole Plaza) but we have seen a 111% increase of diversity within user groups. The user numbers have increased from 9 organizations to 19 organizations in 2016. These granted events celebrate our focus on arts, culture, local food and wellness with organizations such as Taiwanese Festival, Zumba Vancouver, Tango Vancouver, Vancouver Farmers Markets, Il Centro - Italian Cultural Centre and Taiwanfest.

With the pilot program grant we were able to develop a strategic partnership with the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association by providing their Downtown Ambassadors program with a satellite location at the Orpheum Granville Street box office. This program provides a much needed presence to the area and welcomes visitors and locals alike into the historical entrance.

Our goal is to continue the momentum created with the pilot program and continue to successfully negotiate short term rental engagements with arts organizations, not-for-profit local community driven groups (food; fitness, dance, martial arts or similar health and wellness-focused groups) as well as community based festivals/events celebrating diversity within the city.

Continuing this initiative will contribute to Vancouver's liveable city status by providing urban space for community engagement focusing on local food, health, wellness and diversity as addressed in the Healthy City Strategy.

Recommendations informed by consultations with the community and other COV departments:

On the basis of our consultations we have concluded that the continuation of this grant program is much needed and really welcomed by the community. We are proposing a three year annual grant program to a maximum of \$150,000 in 2017 and \$200,000 in 2018-2019 which would be managed within the approved VCT operating budget.

The subsidy would be:

- Eligibility criteria
 - o Organizations must have cultural, social or other NFP mandate
- The programs must support COV's health; wellness; social and cultural strategic goals
- The amounts granted will be based on Council approved rates for any of VCT spaces with the priority given to:
 - o QET Plaza (average grant would be up to \$6,000 for productions and events requiring technical support and \$500 with no production and non-technical usage)
 - o Annex (average grant would be \$1,500 for productions/performances - the amount will be dependent on type of usage)
 - o Orpheum Granville Street Box Office (average grant would be \$500 - the amount will be dependent on type of usage)
 - o Lobbies of all venues as gallery type spaces for activations of visual and media arts programs and non-traditional usages such as dance and visual arts classes (average grant would be \$2,000)
- Process will be as follows:
 - o The intake will be ongoing throughout the year
 - o The applications will be taken on a first come-first served basis
- VCT will track all usage and ask users to report back (attendance; exposure; profitability)
- VCT will report back to Council yearly on the success of the grant program with recommendations for the future.

Having the flexibility to grant community uses and the ability to waive the rent for these underutilized VCT spaces will be a significant benefit to both the public and to community groups. One example of this public benefit would be the Farmers Market site on the QET Plaza once a week, year-round.

Based on the average grant amounts stated above, we expect the impact to be significant for the community - a minimum of 20 organizations in the not-for-profit sector would benefit from rent-free access to QET Plaza alone with the expected attendance well over 100,000.

Financial

VCT is proposing this annual subsidy grant program be managed within the approved VCT 2017-2019 Operating budgets, using net income generated from VCT operations to expand availability to community groups and increase access to the general public.

The subsidy grant program, with a maximum expenditure of \$150,000 in 2017, \$200,000 in 2018, and \$200,000 in 2019 will be funded from the net income generated by VCT's 2017-2019 operations.

Allocation of the funds to community partners will be a VCT staff-driven process, in compliance with Cultural and Social Grants guidelines and policies.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends an approval to provide the VCT with authority to run a three year annual grant program to subsidize the use of some of its underutilized public spaces by waiving the published rental rates to community groups that support arts, culture, diversity, local food and wellness, funded from VCT own net revenues.

* * * * *

VANCOUVER CIVIC THEATRES SUMMARY OF INCREASED UTILIZATION

| Number of Booked Days | Annex | QET Plaza |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 2015 | 85 | 99 |
| 2016 | 121 | 93 |
| Grand Total | 206 | 192 |
| % increase/decrease | 42% | -6% |

| Number of Different Users | Annex | QET Plaza |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 2015 | 36 | 9 |
| 2016 | 47 | 19 |
| % increase/decrease | 31% | 111% |