



Clerks Services Staff Report

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Report Title: 2025 Annual Grants Program
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Reviewed By: Alex Smyth, Deputy Clerk
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report C19-2024 respecting 2025 Annual Grants Program:

1. Direct staff to include the annual grant request of Shelter Movers Southwestern to the 2025 draft Operating Budget; and
2. Direct staff to include the annual grant request of Hearts Open for Everyone (HOPE) to the 2025 draft Operating Budget.

Background:

Each year, the Township's Grant Program accepts applications for Annual Operating and Annual Capital Grants, both one-time and for the term-of-Council. In February of 2024, following the 2024 Operating Budget deliberation process, Council approved the 2024 Grants and Special Assistance budget.

The Grants and Special Assistance Policy was updated earlier this year to incorporate the addition of the Arts & Culture Grants category, introduce a new process for Annual Grants, and to streamline and enhance application processes and procedures. The update included a change to the application window for Annual Grant applications to be submitted, which is now July 1 to July 31. This change allows for less reporting and better planning and development of the draft operating budget at the staff level. With this report, staff are looking for direction on which organizations to include in the draft operating budget. No monetary decisions will be made until the budget deliberation process in January, 2025. This year, the Township received four Annual Grant Applications.

2024 Approved Annual Grants

Council approved Annual Grants in 2024 to the following organizations:

Organization	*New Grant Requested	Grant Amount Approved	Term or One-Time Grant
Woolwich Community Services		\$14,420	Term of Council
Community Care Concepts		\$11,938	Term of Council
Woolwich Counselling Centre		\$14,420	Term of Council
School Safety Patrol		\$1,637	Term of Council
Elmira Horticultural Society		\$1,500	Term of Council
Woolwich Seniors Association		\$10,000	Term of Council
Maryhill Historical Society*	\$7,350	\$1,800	One-time Capital
Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario*	\$5,000	\$3,150	One-time Operating

Comments:

Annual Grant Requests Summary for 2025

2025 – Summary of New Grant Requests		
Organization	Grant Type	Funding Requested
Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario	Operating Grant, for the Term of Council	\$5,000
Hearts Open for Everyone (HOPE)	Operating Grant, for the Term of Council	\$15,000
Junior Achievement South Western Ontario	Operating Grant, One-Time	\$5,000
St. Jacobs Home & School Association	Capital Grant, One-Time	\$100,000**
Total:		\$125,000

** Applicant intends to change the requested amount to \$10,000.

Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario

Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario, based in Cambridge, has requested a term-of-Council Annual Operating Grant of \$5,000 from the Township of Woolwich. Shelter Movers is a volunteer-powered charitable organization providing moving and storage services at no cost to individuals and families fleeing abuse. They are the only organization of its kind in Canada, providing free moving and storage to survivors of abuse.

They collaborate with local businesses, community agencies and health care professionals to support people, primarily women and children, as they transition to a life free of violence. One of their local partners in Woolwich Township is Woolwich Community Health Centre. Shelter Movers relies on grants and donations from private companies and municipalities, as well as its 150 volunteers dedicating 1500-2000 hours per year to serve residents in need.

With regards to how the application meets an identifiable need in the Township of Woolwich, the application states that last fiscal year they conducted five moves originating in Woolwich Township. In the first three and half months of this fiscal year, they have already conducted two client moves and their network in the area continues to develop, expecting a minimum of six client moves originating in Woolwich Township in fiscal 2025.

The applicant explains that \$5,000 would provide storage, truck rental and fuel for two to four families. Through the 2024 Budget process, Council approved \$3,150 of Shelter Movers' \$5,000 one-time Annual Grant request. For 2025, in response to growing demand for their services and the epidemic of domestic violence, Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario is requesting an Annual Grant of \$5,000 for the term of Council.

Since the applicant provides an essential service to vulnerable residents and the demand for those services continues to grow, staff recommend including Shelter Movers in the draft 2025 Operating Budget.

Hearts Open for Everyone (HOPE)

The mission of Hearts Open for Everyone (HOPE) is to foster a multicultural rural community where everyone feels genuinely welcomed and can be their true, authentic selves. HOPE states that through its programs and events, it is dedicated to creating shared community experiences that promote compassion, togetherness, and a deep sense of belonging, break down barriers, celebrate diversity, and build bridges between different cultures and communities.

HOPE's approach to achieving its mission include workshops and programs that address sociological issues, such as racism, and psychosocial challenges such as mental health and building resilience. It also organizes community events aiming to celebrate diversity and raise cultural awareness.

The Township has supported HOPE's events such as the Multicultural Festival and the Community Potluck, with a \$3,000 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB) grant in 2023 and \$2,980 in total grant funds for two HOPE events in 2024. For 2025, HOPE is requesting an Annual Operating Grant, for the term of Council, of \$15,000 to support the delivery of programs, initiatives, and community events, assist with volunteer management, and increase community engagement.

- **Workshops and Events:** Funding will support the development and implementation of workshops, events, and other community initiatives. This includes essential costs such as marketing and promotions, annual marketing tool fees, translation fees, speaker and catering fees, and venue bookings. These investments are crucial to ensuring that programs remain accessible, engaging and relevant to the community's needs.
- **Volunteer Management and Support:** To effectively deliver these programs, HOPE will enhance their volunteer management, which may include the purchase of volunteer management software, training, and resources to streamline volunteer coordination and ensure that they can maximize community involvement in initiatives.
- **Community Engagement:** The funding will enable HOPE to increase community engagement through targeted outreach and expanded program offerings. Investing in these areas will allow them to enhance their ability to serve more residents, create meaningful experiences and build a stronger, more connected community.

With the work that the applicant does in the community, and the events/programming HOPE wishes to continue and enhance which benefits all residents of Woolwich, staff recommend including HOPE's request in the draft 2025 Operating Budget.

Junior Achievement South Western Ontario (JA SWO)

For more than 60 years, Junior Achievement South Western Ontario (JA SWO) has been delivering programs to students on financial health, work readiness, and entrepreneurship from grade 4 through high school. Most of its programs are delivered by volunteers who bring their professional experiences into the classroom to help students connect program concepts with real-life situations. Volunteers use a mix of hands-on activities, discussions, and digital learning to engage students and ensure they retain and use what they learn. When it's not possible for a volunteer to be in a classroom, virtual volunteers or a teacher may facilitate the program.

In 2024, JA SWO requested a one-time \$10,000 Annual Operating Grant, stating that grant funds received from the Township of Woolwich would be used to deliver financial learning experiences to students in grades 4 - 12 in schools within the Township. Each program costs JA SWO \$1,000 to deliver; their goal for 2024 was 10 programs, with an average class size of 20 students, for a total of 200 students. Council declined the grant request from JA SWO for 2024. JA SWO had requested a one-time Annual Operating Grant of \$4,000 from the 2023 Annual Grants program and Council had also declined that request.

For 2025, JA SWO has applied for a one-time Annual Operating Grant of \$5,000 to deliver five programs in the Township of Woolwich, citing an increased need for young people in a post-pandemic era experiencing increases in economic insecurity and anxiety. JA SWO states in its application how its programs combat low high school completion rates, encourage post-secondary education pursuits, and open entrepreneurial pathways.

The Township has consistently considered school programs/curriculum to be a provincial responsibility; therefore, staff recommend that the JA SWO grant request not be included in the draft 2025 Operating Budget.

St. Jacobs Home and School Association (HSA)

The St. Jacobs Home and School Association (HSA) reports that the existing school playground at the St. Jacobs Public School has been removed and the students have no play structures for outdoor education, so funds are being raised to build a new playground and in partnership with the school students and staff, the regional board, and the local community. According to the applicant, the project is to make the school grounds accessible and inclusive for all students to learn and play, and the playground would also be accessible to the community as a whole. HSA is requesting a one-time Annual Capital Grant of \$100,000.

Similar requests for grant funding to be used towards the installation of playgrounds on school property have been declined in the past. The Township has maintained the perspective that school programming and facilities are a provincial responsibility, and that Township funds are needed for municipal infrastructure. Furthermore, there are grant programs such as the FCC AgriSpirit Fund, that have frequently provided substantial grants for accessible school playground projects in small communities.

Given the Township's stance that school programs and facilities are a provincial responsibility, that similar grant requests have been denied by Council in the past, and that the applicants have other avenues for grant opportunities, staff recommend that the St. Jacobs Home and School Association grant request not be included in the draft 2025 Operating Budget.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

None.

Financial Impacts:

Since the 2025 Annual Grants are part of the 2025 Budget process, there are no current financial impacts and Council is not being asked at this time to discuss or decide on grant amounts. Any potential financial impacts will be at Council's discretion during the budget process in January, 2025.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

The Annual Grants program aligns with the Township's commitment to promoting community connection, creating conditions for communities to thrive, and supports the following Community Strategic Plan priorities and key results:

- **Empower communities to be adaptable and engaged.** *The Annual Grants program strengthens and leverages volunteer resources by supporting community events and initiatives that foster and promote connection.*
- **Maintain an innovative customer service focus.** *The Annual Grants program supports volunteer initiatives via dedicated Township staff resources and grant distribution.*
- **Expand focus to include Community Events and Programs.** *The Annual Grants program supports organizations looking to create a greater sense of belonging and social cohesion among residents and showcase the municipality's unique identity through their community initiatives and events.*

Conclusion:

Staff are looking for direction from Council on which of the 2025 Annual Grant organizations to incorporate in the preparation of the draft 2025 budget and have recommended that Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario and Hearts Open for Everyone (HOPE) be included in the draft budget. Grant amounts are not being recommended or decided at this time as Council will have those monetary-specific discussions during the 2025 budget process.

Attachments:

1. Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario Annual Grant Application
2. Hearts Open for Everyone (HOPE) Annual Grant Application
3. Junior Achievement South Western Ontario (JA SWO)
4. St. Jacobs Home and School Association Annual Grant Application