



## WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

|                                      |                                                    |                                           |                                              |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Information <input type="checkbox"/> | Recommendation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Decision Request <input type="checkbox"/> | Councillor Activity <input type="checkbox"/> |
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**To:** West Hants Regional Municipality Committee of the Whole

**Submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Johnston-Isenor, Manager Recreation & Community Engagement

**Date:** September 10, 2025

**Subject:** Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy – RCOFN-015.00

### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

*Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act - Section 57*

### RECOMMENDATION

Committee of the Whole recommend that Council adopt the Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy RCOFN-015.00

### BACKGROUND

|                                   |                                            |                                      |                                            |                                              |                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Property <input type="checkbox"/> | Public<br>Opinion <input type="checkbox"/> | Environment <input type="checkbox"/> | Social <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Economic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Councillor<br>Activity <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|

In April 2025 Council updated the Grants and Contributions Policy RCOFN-12.00 and at that time made council aware of an additional funding stream that could be created to support the Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategic Plan Strategic Action #5 (below):

***Help make businesses, community organizations, and events more accessible and inclusive to people of all ages and abilities in alignment with Access by Design 2030: Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia and Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2022-2025)***

***5.5 Establish a municipal grant program to financially support small businesses completing accessibility improvement projects.***

Staff further indicated this recommendation would be presented as an amendment to the policy in advance of the 2026 Grants and Contributions application process to include a funding

stream for grant applications specifically dealing with small business accessibility improvement projects.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Program is designed to have one application intake per year with the annual application deadline being the third Thursday in February in alignment with the Grants and Contributions Program. This program is designed for small businesses with less than 99 employees

Staff met with the chair of the Accessibility Committee, Michel Bourgeios in the development of the grant policy and additionally see members of the Accessibility Committee being included in the annual grant review process for these grants.

This funding stream will include support for accessible entryways including design, construction and installation of an accessible ramp; accessible entry doors (door openers, push button entry, wider doorways), handrails and guardrails, level landings (for entrances for wheelchair maneuverability)

Staff are recommending a new policy be created as opposed to an amendment to the Grants & Contributions Policy RCOFN-12.00 to clearly delineate between this small business program and the grant funding program for volunteer community organizations.

## **NEXT STEPS**

If approved as amended, staff will annually implement the Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy RCOFN-015.00.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

All funding considerations will be approved on an annual basis, following the approval of the Operating Budget. Based on the current 2025-26 Operating budget, and the proposed ceiling within the policy, this could add up to an estimated \$254,304.29 to the operating budget to support this grant program.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Committee of the Whole may choose to not approve the Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Policy.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

RCOFN-015.00 Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy.

## **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW**

**The creation of the policy will enable Council to support this important initiative. The overall grants contribution will be discussed during budget deliberations.**

**I support the recommendation.**

Report Prepared by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Kehoe, Director Community Development

Report Prepared by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Johnston-Isenor, Manager, Recreation and Community Engagement

Report Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carlee Rochon, Director of Financial Services

Report Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

The West Hants Regional Municipality wishes to support small businesses in making physical improvements that enhance accessibility for people with disabilities. The program aims to reduce barriers to access, promotes inclusion, and ensures that all community members can fully benefit from and support local small businesses.

This policy will establish eligibility requirements, identify types of funding available, explain how this is established each year, and outline application, monitoring and reporting requirements. Application forms and guidelines will be developed by the Administration in support of the policy intent.

## **2.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE**

The policy objective is outlined as follows:

1. **Improve Accessibility**  
Support small businesses in making physical modifications that enhance access for people with disabilities and other underserved populations.
2. **Promote the Built Environment Accessibility Standards**  
To assist small businesses in meeting the requirements of the Built Environment Accessibility Standards and meet the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations.
3. **Advance Equity and Inclusion**  
Reduce systemic barriers of accessible goods, services and environments for all community members regardless of ability.
4. **Support Small Business Resilience**  
Help small businesses remain competitive and sustainable by expanding their customer base through improved accessibility.

**5. Raise Awareness and Build Capacity**

Educate small business owners about accessibility best practices and provide guidance on long-term planning for inclusive improvements.

The objective of this policy is to treat all small businesses fairly, equitably, and reasonably, within the parameters as follows:

1. Eligible participants: Must be a small business with 99 employees or less and be physically located within the West Hants Regional Municipality. Applicants must demonstrate how they are striving to create safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces, in line with the West Hants Regional Municipality Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy Plan (page 38-43)
2. Eligible improvements:
  - Attached exterior accessibility ramp (including handrails and guardrails, level landings, anti-slip covering)
  - Accessible entry doors (door openers, push button entry, touchless entry, wider doorways)
  - Maximum grant amount: Up to \$5,000 per small business
3. Match requirement  
Minimum of 50% cost share required from applicant
4. Use of Funds  
Funds must be used within the fiscal year awarded.
5. On an annual basis Council will determine the amount of funding during the budget process.

### **3.0 AUTHORITY**

Authority is provided under Section 57, Municipal Government Act, as amended. The total of the amounts paid for grants in a fiscal year's operating budget will not normally exceed 1.5% of the taxes for general municipal purposes levied by the municipality.

### **4.0 ELIGIBILITY**

Pursuant to Section 57 of the *Municipal Government Act*, grants or contributions may be expended where required by the Municipality to a:

- A small business with 99 employees or less that is physically located within the West Hants Regional Municipality.
- This policy would exclude any organization that would be eligible under the Grants and Contributions Policy RCOFN.012.00

## **5.0 TYPES OF GRANTS AND MAXIMUM FUNDING ALLOCATION**

Grants are generally provided in the form of funds and tied to a specific outcome. This type of support must be reported annually by the Municipality annually as required by legislation.

### **5.1 Barrier-Free Small Business Accessibility Grant**

- Maximum Contribution \$5,000
- To assist with design, construction and installation of an accessible entrance to meet the Nova Scotia Building Code.

## **6.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

- 6.1 Municipal Council sets the funding limits and annual budget allotments within this Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy.
- 6.2 Applicants will complete the appropriate Municipal application form and supply the requested documentation.
- 6.3 Application deadlines and expiry periods may apply.
- 6.4 All applications are approved by Council and applicants will be notified by letter of approval or denial. The letter will state any terms and conditions that apply to the grant approvals.

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- 6.5 The Municipality reserves the right to deny any application it deems not within its objectives.
- 6.6 All proposed work must comply with Municipal, Provincial and Federal regulations and applicants are required to obtain all necessary permits and permissions including West Hants Regional Municipality Encroachment Agreement, Development Permits, and/or Building Permits prior to commencing work.
- 6.7 The following are the evaluation criteria that will be applied when reviewing grant applications:
- a. Project fits within the objectives of the Municipality (Section 2.0).
  - b. The small business is in good standing with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies and has met all the filing and payment obligations.
  - c. The application has demonstrated how the business has/is creating inclusive spaces that meet the diverse needs of everyone (as outlined in the Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy Plan: page 38 to 42).
  - d. The project is economical.
  - e. The project brings value to the residents of the Municipality.
  - f. The funding provided by the Municipality may enable the organization to leverage dollars from other funding agencies.
  - g. The applicant has demonstrated that they will recognize the Municipality's contribution.
  - j. The applicant has demonstrated its own commitment to the project (i.e., In-kind donations, financial contribution etc.)
- 6.9 Individuals are not eligible for funding under the Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Program where legislation allows the Municipality to do so.

- 6.10 Funding will not be provided to offset accumulated deficits or funding shortfalls. Funding consideration is based only on budgeted revenues and expenditures in the year for which the assistance is requested.
- 6.11 The applicant organization must spend or allocate grant funding within the current fiscal year for which it has been approved and for the sole purpose under which it has been granted unless approved by the Municipality. Organizations which receive funding must submit a final report within 30 days of the project end date. Organizations will be required to submit photos, copies of final invoices and proof of payment (i.e. paid receipts/cancelled cheques) for purchases/services rendered in completion of the project. Organizations are further required to submit a copy of the final building inspection report from West Hants Regional Municipality.

## **7.0 APPLICATION PROCESS**

- 7.1 Requests for funding under this program must be submitted on or before the third Thursday in February annually. Public notification will be provided of the submission date and requirements for all grant programs.
- 7.2 All applications must be accompanied by the required documentation to be considered complete when received.
- 7.3 Incomplete applications may not be processed.
- 7.4 Late applications received after the deadline set by Administration will not be processed.
- 7.5 Applicants receiving a grant under the Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy will not be eligible to receive a grant or contribution under any other grant program established by Council in the same fiscal year.

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## **8.0 GENERAL TERMS**

- 8.1 Granting of assistance in any one year is not a commitment to future funding.

## **9.0 THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION**

- 9.1 The Administration of West Hants Regional Municipality receive, and process written and complete submissions by applying established parameters, within the budget approved by Council.
- 9.2 Grant applicants determined to be ineligible for funding will be notified, in writing as soon as is practically possible.
- 9.3 The Chief Administrative Officer will provide a written report to Council on the recommended disposition of funds, annually.
- 9.4 Requests for Barrier Free Small Business Accessibility Grant funding received outside of the established grant application period will not be considered.
- 9.5 Successful applicants will be notified with an official letter with instructions and reporting requirements.
- 9.6 Pursuant to the Municipal Government Act, Section (65C), a list of grants approved by West Hants Regional Municipality to community organizations will be published annually on the municipal website. The information will include the name of the applicant, name of the business and grant funding approved.

I, Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk of the West Hants Regional Municipality, in the Province of Nova Scotia, do hereby certify that this is a true copy of



**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
BARRIER-FREE SMALL BUSINESS  
ACCESSIBILITY GRANT POLICY**

**RCOFN-015.00**

the Policy as adopted by the Council of the West Hants Regional Municipality at a meeting duly called and held on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_ (month), \_\_\_\_ (year).

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*Deanna Snair*  
Municipal Clerk

| Adoption                                                                                                  |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Notice to Council                                                                                         | Not Applicable |
| Approval                                                                                                  | Date           |
| Description: Initial approval of the Barrier-Free Small Business Accessibility Grant Policy RCOFN-015.00. |                |