

Subject: 2025-2027 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Grant and Awards

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Recommendations

1. That report COM 16-2025 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update Council on the approved 2025–2027 Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) projects which focus on the six areas for investment under the Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS): Indigenous Well-Being, Mental Health and Addiction, Income and Employment, Food Security, Housing and Early Childhood Development.
- These grants will support the work being done by a diverse range of community agencies who are addressing important issues for residents living in poverty.
- Information related to funded initiatives and evaluation metrics will be made publicly accessible on the Regional website. Staff will bring a report to committee related to year one NPI outcomes in 2026.
- NPI was the second grant program to pilot a new granting approach, leveraging findings from the “Building Safer Communities Grant Program.” Staff will bring a report to committee related to the use of the granting program to distribute funds for Building Safer Communities and NPI in fall 2025.

Financial Considerations

In 2018 the Niagara Region introduced the NPI to address the NPRS through the community services operating budget and has continued into 2025. In total, \$4.5M has been allocated evenly over three (3) years to support these community projects ending December 31, 2027. The NPI budget for 2026-2027 is contingent on Council approving the same level of investment through 2026-2027. A further breakdown of the seven contracts awarded for the community projects will be discussed in the Awarding and Post-Award Feedback section.

Analysis

NPI Grant Process

The NPI Grant Program was used to fund community-based poverty alleviation and reduction initiatives for people living in poverty. Recommendations from the NPRS, which are based on local needs and best practice, informed selection of six areas of investment for the 2025-2027 NPI grant program. Agencies across Niagara received information about the NPI grant program through local planning tables, foundations, an agency distribution list, information sessions, and Regional social media. The Call for Applications opened in October 2024 and remained open for six weeks. Agencies submitted applications online using the Good Grants management platform, previously piloted with success by Building Safer Communities. Twenty-eight community agencies applied, requesting over \$7M in total funding. A Grant Review Panel, made up of three Regional staff and five community representatives, completed their review, using a standardized scoring matrix that matched proposal requirements.

Staff will bring a report to committee related to the use of the granting program to distribute funds for Building Safer Communities and NPI in fall 2025.

Awarding and Post-Award Feedback

The chart below lists the seven recipients who have entered into agreements with Niagara Region in accordance with COM 22-2024 to support project delivery and reporting over three years:

| Project Name | Agency | Year 1/\$ | Year 2/\$ | Year 3/\$ |
|---|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Kowaamjigewin | NPAAMB | \$187,043 | \$189,248 | \$185,513 |
| PATH – Program for Addiction Treatment and Healthcare | REACH | \$227,989 | \$300,000 | \$300,000 |
| Intensive Outreach Team | Gateway | \$244,067 | \$251,457 | \$250,186 |
| Bridges to Prosperity | Workforce Collective | \$190,440 | \$187,470 | \$167,340 |

| Project Name | Agency | Year 1/\$ | Year 2/\$ | Year 3/\$ |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| After Care Support | Birchway Niagara | \$247,797 | \$252,146 | \$254,949 |
| The Bridge Food Recovery Expansion | The Bridge | \$233,297 | \$149,468 | \$143,990 |
| FEED Niagara | Community Care West Niagara | \$59,367 | \$60,211 | \$88,022 |

Annual reviews will occur before starting the second and third years of funding.

All applicants were informed that they can request a follow-up meeting with program staff to receive feedback on their grant application, including the decision rationale based on the application evaluation results.

Evaluation Metrics

Evaluation will use qualitative and quantitative measures to tell the story of change. Expected outcomes include:

- Improved access to treatment for mental health and addiction issues
- Reduced barriers to access Ontario Disability Support Program
- Increased money recovered from tax filing
- Increased retention of housing
- Increased capacity and infrastructure for perishable food recovery and access to food year-round
- Established and funded Indigenous prosperity strategy
- Increased local capacity to implement community work, policies, and practices

Alternatives Reviewed

This report is initiated by staff to provide Council with an update on progress related to NPI investments in the context of the broader Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Alternative methods of awarding funding through traditional procurement methods (e.g., Negotiated Request for Proposals) can be utilized but may impede the ability to

distribute funds to community organizations within constrained limited project timelines, can be administratively burdensome to community organizations and present additional costs to community organizations to access and submit bid documents. Granting allows for flexibility in design and equity-based considerations when awarding funds to successful recipients.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy is an action within the Equitable Region strategic priority. The selected NPI grant projects will address important issues identified by the community in the areas of Indigenous Well-Being, Mental Health and Addiction, Income and Employment, Food Security, Housing and Early Childhood Development for residents living in poverty. The use of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative granting program improves access to funding opportunities for community agencies to implement recommendations in the poverty strategy to respond to community needs.

Other Pertinent Reports

- [COM 22-2024 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Fund and Grant Program](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=38052)
(https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=38052)
[COM 22-2024 Appendix 1](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=38053)
(https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=38053)
- [COM 22-2021 Path Forward to Building a Five Year Poverty Reduction Strategy](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19006)
(https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19006)
[COM 22-2021 Appendix 1](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19007)
(https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19007)
[COM 22-2021 Niagara Prosperity Initiative Path Forward Presentation](https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19005)
(https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=19005)

Prepared by:

Marc Todd, Manager
Social Assistance &
Employment Opportunities
Community Services

Recommended by:

Henri Koning, MHSc
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Lori Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities, Lisa Gallant, Poverty Reduction Strategy Advisor, John Pickles, Program Financial Specialist, and reviewed by Donna Gibbs, Director, Legal Court Services.