

Report to Council



Date: May 8, 2023
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: 2023 UBCM Community Excellence Awards applications submission
Department: Partnership Office

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information the report from the Intergovernmental Relations Manager regarding applications for the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Excellence Awards, dated May 8, 2023.

AND THAT Council supports the award application submissions of the following City projects for the 2023 UBCM Community Excellence Awards:

- Governance category: Artificial Intelligence powered chatbots – snow, revenue and landfill
- Service Delivery category: Kelowna International Airport YMCA Childcare facility
- Sustainability category: FireSmart Chipping Program for urban interface wildfire mitigation
- Asset Management category: Abbott St. Quick-Build Active Transportation Corridor

Purpose:

To approve staff to apply to the 2023 UBCM Community Excellence Awards.

Background:

The annual Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Excellence Awards recognize and celebrate member local governments that have implemented projects or programs that showcase outstanding initiatives. The awards are designed to profile innovation and unique approaches and serve to inspire other communities to adopt similar projects and programs in their own communities.

Last year, the City submitted projects in each category, and was bestowed the highest achievement award – the 2022 UBCM Community Excellence President’s Committee Choice Award – for the Real Time Flood Response EOC Dashboard.

Discussion:

Pursuing awards is an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the achievements by City teams that deliver on Council's priorities and support our vision of being a City of the Future. It also puts a spotlight on the innovation, service, teamwork and leadership delivered by the City of Kelowna. In turn, receiving awards positions Kelowna as a desirable place to live, work, play and invest to the community, our residents, and senior levels of government. Below are the four proposed projects, identified by project leads, that exemplify excellence in each of the UBCM Community Excellence categories.

Excellence in Governance

Artificial Intelligence powered chatbots: snow, revenue, and landfill

Our Intelligent City vision is to find ways to improve the lives of residents through access to online services, technological innovation and collaborative problem-solving. Our artificial intelligence (AI) powered chatbots are a great example of this digital transformation direction in action.

In December 2020, we launched Citybot on kelowna.ca to answer questions about COVID-19 and its impact on City services. Since then, Citybot has expanded to answer general questions, as well as transfer enquiries to topic-specific bots that are ready to handle questions about revenue (property tax, utility billing, etc.), landfill, recreation and snow (during winter months). Our revenue, landfill and snow bots can be accessed on the City website, as text-based bots, and over the phone, as voice assistants, which can answer questions directly or transfer callers to staff for additional help.

In the case of our snow bot, 80 per cent of calls were handled without human intervention. This freed up staff time to advance other priority work, attend to more complex requests and better support those visiting City Hall. The City's shift towards digital solutions ensures increased transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in governance and service delivery.

Excellence in Service Delivery

Kelowna International Airport YMCA Childcare facility

YLW is the largest municipally-owned airport in Canada. Responding to the community's high need for childcare spaces, as Kelowna continues to experience exponential growth, and in support of our strong aviation economic sector, YLW and the City of Kelowna have partnered with the YMCA and KF Aerospace to build a new licensed childcare facility on the YLW campus. The project will support families who work at the Airport and KF Aerospace by providing access to 86 new quality, affordable and inclusive childcare spaces. Access to reliable and affordable childcare close to the workplace will continue to remove barriers to encourage diversity in the aviation trade and sector workforce.

The YLW childcare facility, set to open this fall, received a \$3.7 million grant from the Provincial Childcare BC New Spaces Fund. The project highlights the ability for local governments to adapt business practices to best serve community need and the strength and value of partnerships to serve our residents while supporting strong economic growth.

Excellence in Sustainability

FireSmart Chipping Program for urban interface wildfire mitigation

As we see and experience the continual impacts of climate change, global warming, and increasingly dry and hot weather, Kelowna is well-versed in the wildfire risks for the community and region – from the 2003 devastating fires to more recent Emergency Operations Centre activations. The City's commitment through the proactive Urban Forestry Management program looks at a variety of tactics to protect the community and mitigate the risk of wildfires in the city's urban interface area.

Kelowna's FireSmart Community Chipping Pilot program in 2022 removed nearly 100 metric tons of hazardous debris from over 250 private properties across the city. The Community Chipping program started as a pilot to prioritize areas of the city where homes and properties are more likely to have landscaping that contains highly flammable plants and shrubs. The pilot program's success resulted in it being offered again in 2023, and the curbside pickup dates offered in May are already fully subscribed – indicating the broader community's desire to safeguard and mitigate the risk of wildfires in our city. The community chipping program is funded through the BC Ministry of Forests administered by UBCM and is part of the City of Kelowna's year-round commitment to reducing the risk of wildfires.

Excellence in Asset Management

Abbott St. Quick-Build Active Transportation Corridor

The current landscape of rising inflation, global supply chain challenges, and trades labour shortages have resulted in municipalities needing to evaluate and prioritize asset management and capital projects. Rather than pause or defer the project, the City looked for a way to work within this challenging landscape to still deliver and advance our active transportation network with the Abbott St. Quick-Build Active Transportation Corridor project, from Christleton to Cedar Avenue. This project used a quick-build approach that combined interim materials within existing street space and limited new construction to deliver faster and at a lower cost. This included 1,200 metres of cycle track added to the existing asphalt, along with concrete barriers and planter boxes that act as a physical buffer between vehicles and people biking. The project is part of the city's network of expanded multi-modal routes of transportation and allows residents and visitors to explore the city without the use of a vehicle.

Conclusion:

With Council's approval, staff will submit applications for the UBCM 2023 Community Excellence Awards in the outlined categories. The application deadline is May 19, 2023. Award recipients will be announced in-person during the 2023 UBCM Convention in September.

Internal Circulation:

Information Services
Kelowna International Airport
Infrastructure (Transportation)
Parks Services
Partnership Office

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:
External Agency/Public Comments:
Communications Comments:

Submitted by: A. Bazett, Intergovernmental Relations Manager

Approved for inclusion:



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cc:

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