



REPORT

To: Rural Budgets Administration Committee

Report Number: FN-RBAC-113

From: Teri Vetter, Chief Financial Officer

Date: November 25, 2021

Subject: Utility Extension Grant Policy

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Rural Budgets Administration Committee recommend that the Regional Board adopt the Utility Extension Grant Policy, which sets out the principles and guidelines governing the issuance of PRRD grant funding for the extension of electrical or natural gas utility services to registered property owners within the Electoral Areas of the PRRD administered by the Rural Budgets Administration Committee.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

In alignment with the PRRD Strategic Plan, a comprehensive review of the Rural Budgets Administration Committee (RBAC) Funding Policies booklet, comprised of some formal policies and other additional guidelines the Committee routinely followed and were included in the booklet for convenience, was launched. The RBAC Funding Policies booklet was approved by RBAC in 2014, to assist staff and Directors with funding decisions, as a 'one stop shop' for information regarding grant policies and guidelines.

The various RBAC Funding Policies were written to assist RBAC in their decision making process for the award of grants to support improvements, and increase programs and services for those communities located in the rural areas of the PRRD. The RBAC Funding Policies booklet, in its current form, functions as a large multiple page manual that contains various guidelines for a number of different grant funding options; it is not user friendly, easy to follow, or interpret. In an effort to streamline this document, enhance and clarify for staff and RBAC consistency around grant administration, and to make it easier for potential grant applicants to understand the eligibility, application, and reporting requirements, four new policies have been created based on the information contained in the existing RBAC Funding Policies booklet. These new policies are consistent with and reflective of local government legislative requirements and best practices. This report provides information on the proposed Utility Extension Grant policy which will replace the previous guidance included in the Policies Booklet.

The proposed Utility Extension Grant Policy establishes guidelines to assist RBAC with administration of grants to rural property owners seeking improved hydro electrification and natural gas services to their properties. This new policy contains clear and concise information for all readers and is written in the appropriate formatting style that is consistent with other grant policies. In addition to providing a purpose, scope and definitions, the policy section of the document outlines the principles for the calculation of a Utility Extension grant, the maximum allowable, applicant criteria, how to apply and payment of funds.

Existence of a clear policy outlining eligibility requirements and what will be considered when making a determination will be helpful to new Directors, staff that are not intimately familiar with the history and practices around grant decision making, and the public, who will be able to discern if they are eligible, what information to supply, and how their application will be processed.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Rural Budgets Administration Committee provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

- Organizational Effectiveness
- Comprehensive Policy Review

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

Utility Extension grant contributions are provided from the Fair Share Reserve from each of the Electoral Areas.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

Once the Utility Extension Grant policy is approved by the Regional Board, it will be posted on the PRRD website.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

Upon approval of the Utility Extension Grant Policy, the existing Electrical and Natural Gas Extension grant applications will be updated by staff to ensure they align with information that is reflected in the new adopted policy.

In the RBAC Funding Policies booklet, the existing “Electrical Extension Grant Policy and Applicant Guide” does not indicate an “adopted” date, and it is unknown if it was a guideline adopted by RBAC to self-govern their determinations, or if it was Board approved as a policy that RBAC must adhere to as part of the delegation of the authority to administer Fair Share and other funds, such as Gas Tax and Peace River Agreement funds, to the Committee (via Bylaw 1166, 1998). In any event, the existing “Electrical Extension Grant Policy and Applicant Guide” and in fact the entire RBAC Funding Policies Booklet will be considered repealed and obsolete upon Board adoption of the attached policy.

Attachments:

1. Final Draft Utility Extension Grant Policy

External Links:

1. [Rural Budgets Administration Committee Funding Policies](#)