



**City of Kingston  
Report to Council  
Report Number 26-085**

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**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Craig Desjardins, Director, Office of Strategy, Innovation & Partnerships  
**Resource Staff:** Dajana Turkovic, Workforce Development Analyst  
**Date of Meeting:** February 17, 2026  
**Subject:** Community Benefit Program Fund Allocation- Kingston Solar LP (Samsung) Renewable Energy Project

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: 5. Drive Inclusive Economic Growth

Goal: 5.3 Diversify Kingston's economic base.

**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update of the work of the Kingston Rural Economic and Community Development Working Group (the Working Group) over the past year and seek Council's approval for the allocation of funding from the Samsung Community Benefits Fund in the amount of \$44,000 to support 2026 activities.

In 2025, the Working Group, in collaboration with City staff, advanced a series of initiatives focused on improving access to programming and services, strengthening community vibrancy, and enhancing communication with rural residents and businesses. A central accomplishment was the launch of the Rural Community Program Fund pilot, which supported five community-led projects through a competitive intake and generated more than 2,200 participants. Funded projects strengthened rural cultural expression, expanded recreational opportunities, and

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supported agri-tourism and local business activity, demonstrating strong community uptake and high value for money.

Building on these results, the Working Group recommends continuation and modest expansion of the Rural Community Program Fund in 2026 with an allocation of up to \$30,000 to support six (6) community-led projects. Complementary investments are also proposed to strengthen awareness and engagement through a coordinated rural communications and marketing plan (up to \$12,000) and to pilot a Community Spaces Initiative (up to \$2,000) that activates existing rural facilities, particularly fire halls, as hubs for no-cost or low-cost community programming.

Together, these initiatives form an integrated approach to rural community development that aligns with City-wide community grant and neighbourhood activation programs, emphasizes resident-led solutions, and promotes equitable access to programming across Kingston.

The total recommended allocation of \$44,000 can be accommodated within the existing Samsung Community Benefit Program Fund and is expected to deliver tangible benefits in community connection, local vibrancy, and quality of life for rural residents.

**Recommendation:**

**That** Council approve the recommendations of the Rural Economic and Community Development Working Group for the allocation of funds from the Samsung Community Benefit Program Fund for:

1. Up to \$12,000 for the implementation of a marketing and communications plan to improve awareness of, and engagement with, rural Kingston residents, businesses, and community organizations, including rural newsletters, curbside signage, and targeted social media.
2. Up to \$30,000 for the continuation of the Rural Kingston Community Program Fund to provide up to six (6) grants of \$5,000 each to support rural organizations and partnerships to create or enhance events, cultural activities, recreational products, and community beautification projects, and that Council delegate to the Rural Economic and Community Development Working Group the evaluation and approval of projects to be funded.
3. Up to \$2,000 to support Rural Community Space Activation activities that deliver small-scale, locally focused programming and community events in rural facilities.

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**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY DIRECTOR

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**Craig Desjardins, Director, Office  
of Strategy, Innovation &  
Partnerships**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required
Jenna Morley, City Solicitor	Not required
Ian Semple, Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services	Not required

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**Options/Discussion:**

The Rural Economic and Community Development Working Group represents the interest of Kingston's rural residents and businesses. This includes farms, community, business and agricultural development. For many years, the group was the Rural Advisory Committee to Council and was changed to a Working Group in January 2024. The purpose of this change was to reduce the formality of meetings required by an advisory committee and to encourage greater discussion between members and City staff.

City staff and the rural working group meet bi-monthly to discuss various topics that impact rural Kingston. The working group has been looking closely at the Samsung Community Benefit Fund exploring a number of different projects that would enhance rural Kingston and provide high value to its residents.

In 2016, the Kingston Solar LP (Samsung) Renewable Energy Project – Community Benefit Program was established to help ensure that the Kingston Solar LP (Samsung) Renewable Energy Project provides a positive return to the rural community. During the 20-year lifespan of the project, Kingston Solar LP provides an annual contribution of \$92,000 (\$1,250 per megawatt generated) to the Community Benefit Program Fund.

The City has discretion regarding the use of the funds provided under the Community Benefit Program so long as they are dedicated to community betterment projects. The Working Group is seeking to advance priorities in rural Kingston including access to infrastructure and programming and enhanced communication to residents. Staff and the working group continue to explore numerous projects inviting several guest speakers to help determine areas of high value and impact as outlined in this report.

**Rural Community Program Fund Pilot – 2025 Outcomes and Evaluation**

The Rural Community Program Fund was launched in 2025 as a pilot initiative to support innovative, community-driven projects in rural Kingston. Funded through the Samsung Community Benefit Fund designated for rural Kingston, the program provided grants of up to \$5,000 per initiative to create or enhance events, cultural offerings, recreational experiences, and community beautification projects. The program was designed to stimulate rural vibrancy, strengthen local identity, and support experiences that benefit both residents and visitors.

Five projects were approved through a competitive intake process where 18 applications were received. Applications were assessed against criteria including new or enhanced rural experiences, uniqueness and authenticity, local impact, feasibility, partnerships, and visitor attraction potential. Collectively, funded projects spanned new event creation, cultural programming, recreation infrastructure, and farm-based tourism experiences, demonstrating a diverse range of community priorities and approaches.

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The projects supported include:

**Honeybee Festival**

A new festival focused on pollinator education and agriculture, featuring learning workshops and hands-on activities for families and visitors. The event attracted approximately 200 participants and supports the growth of agri-tourism and environmental awareness in rural Kingston.

**Grass Creek Disc Golf**

Support for signage at the disc golf course providing an ongoing, free-to-access recreational amenity. The project delivers long-term community value by supporting healthy, active lifestyles and attracting niche recreation users to the area.

**Music in the Pines**

A small-scale rural music series delivered through two events with approximately 85 attendees. The project supports local musicians, creates intimate cultural experiences, and contributes to rural placemaking and identity.

**Drawn to Nature – Art Party**

A creative arts event combining nature-based activities with hands-on art programming. Approximately 50 participants attended, expanding access to cultural experiences in rural communities and supporting local artists.

**Forman Farms Pumpkinfest**

A seasonal, family-oriented farm festival delivered over two weekends with more than 1,900 attendees. The event strengthens agri-tourism, supports a local farm-based business, and creates a recurring rural destination experience.

These projects collectively strengthened rural cultural expression, recreational opportunities, and agri-tourism offerings, while supporting local organizers, artists, and farm operators. The overall cost efficiency of the program was strong, with the fund investment equating to approximately \$10 per participant. In addition to short-term participation impacts, at least one project resulted in a permanent installation that will continue to generate community benefit beyond the funding period.

**Program Results**

Reported attendance across funded initiatives exceeded 2,200 participants, with approximately 70 percent of attendees originating from rural Kingston. This suggests strong local uptake and confirms that the program is reaching its intended audience while also supporting modest visitor draw to rural areas.

Two improvement opportunities were identified through program delivery:

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1. Introduction of a standardized invoice and expense-tracking template for recipients to streamline payment processing and reconciliation.
2. Enhanced City-led promotion of funded initiatives through the new Rural Community webpage and coordinated municipal communications channels to maximize visibility and impact.

The 2025 Rural Community Program Fund pilot has demonstrated clear value in advancing rural community development, supporting new and enhanced programming, and strengthening local culture, recreation, and agri-tourism. Strong application volume and participation levels indicate ongoing demand.

### **Rural Communications and Marketing – 2025 Outcomes**

In 2025, the City staff implemented a targeted communications approach to improve awareness of rural programs, funding opportunities, and community events, with a focus on reaching residents through channels that are accessible and trusted in rural communities. Core tactics included direct-mail Rural Happenings newsletters, promotion through the City website and Get Involved Kingston platform, partner distribution lists, and limited use of social media.

Two mail-out editions of the Rural Happenings Newsletter were delivered in late January and early May, with content focused on rural grants, community events, and opportunities to engage with City initiatives. These newsletters provided a consistent and recognizable communication vehicle for rural residents and supported improved uptake of programs such as the Rural Community Program Fund and participation in rural events.

Overall, 2025 communications contributed to increased visibility of rural initiatives, stronger alignment between the Rural Office and community partners, and improved awareness of funding and programming opportunities. Feedback from partners and program applicants indicated that the newsletters and coordinated promotion helped clarify what supports were available and how to access them.

### **Continuation of the Rural Community Program Fund – 2026**

Based on the positive outcomes of the 2025 pilot, it is proposed that the Rural Community Program Fund be continued in 2026 to further support innovative, community-driven initiatives in rural Kingston. The fund has demonstrated strong demand and clear value in enabling rural organizations, community groups, and partnerships to create or enhance events, cultural activities, recreational products, and community beautification projects.

For 2026, an allocation of up to \$30,000 is proposed to support six (6) projects, with individual grants of up to \$5,000 per project. This funding level builds on the 2025 model while modestly expanding the number of projects that can be supported, thereby increasing geographic reach and the diversity of rural experiences.

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Eligible project categories would remain consistent with the pilot program and include new or enhanced events, cultural initiatives, recreation and trail-related projects, community beautification, and rural tourism products. Projects would continue to be assessed using established criteria, including local impact, feasibility, partnerships, uniqueness and authenticity, and potential to attract residents and visitors.

The Rural Community Program Fund is intended to serve as a low-barrier, flexible tool that empowers local communities to advance place-based ideas, test new concepts, and build capacity. Continuation of the fund in 2026 will further strengthen rural culture and identity, support small-scale economic activity, and contribute to community vibrancy and quality of life across rural Kingston.

### **Communications and Marketing Plan – 2026**

Building on the 2025 approach, a modest, coordinated communications and marketing plan is proposed for 2026 to further strengthen awareness, engagement, and collaboration in rural Kingston.

#### **Communication Goals**

- Strengthen awareness of rural programs, grants, and community events.
- Foster collaboration between rural residents, City staff, and community partners.
- Increase engagement across print, digital, and in-person communication channels.

#### **Key Tactics**

- **Rural Happenings Newsletters (Direct Mail):**  
Three editions proposed for Late January, Early May, and Early September to provide consistent, seasonal updates on programs, funding, and events.
- **Curbside (Curbex) Signage:**  
Temporary signage to promote key programs and community events, particularly Rural Community Program Fund intakes and Community Space Initiative activities.
- **Digital Promotion:**  
Targeted social media advertising, updates to the Rural Webpage, and listings on Get Involved Kingston and City event calendars.

The proposed 2026 communications and marketing plan maintains a practical, cost-effective approach that prioritizes direct mail and visible local promotion while complementing these efforts with digital channels. This balanced strategy is intended to ensure rural residents are aware of available programs and opportunities, support strong participation in rural initiatives, and continue building connections between the City and rural communities.

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**Rural Community Spaces Initiative- 2026 Pilot Project**

The Rural Community Spaces Initiative is a proposed 2026 pilot program led by the Rural Office that activates existing rural community facilities, specifically fire halls, as welcoming, multi-purpose community hubs through a series of small-scale, locally focused events. It is important to acknowledge the work already underway through the Free Spaces Initiative and fee waiver programs previously approved by Council. Developed in collaboration with Kingston Fire & Rescue, the initiative is designed to improve access to services, strengthen community connections, and increase engagement with City programs and partner organizations in rural Kingston.

The program proposes a calendar of five (5) themed community events delivered throughout the year, including a March Break Reading Day, Bike Swap/Kids' Rodeo, Seniors Day, Fire Prevention Day, and a Business Day. Each event targets a specific population group such as families, children, seniors, or local businesses, and is co-delivered with City departments and community partners including Library Services, Kingston Fire & Rescue, BGC South East, EarlyON, seniors' organizations, Rotary, Frontenac Paramedic Services, and Kingston Economic Development.

Common objectives across the initiative include providing no-cost or low-cost programming, increasing awareness of available services, promoting safety and wellness, reducing social isolation, and creating informal opportunities for rural residents to connect with service providers and each other. Programming elements include literacy and reading activities, cycling safety and skills training, fire prevention education, service and resource expos, gentle movement and wellness demonstrations, and one-on-one advisory tables.

Events will be supported through a consistent marketing approach using the rural newsletters, the City's Rural Webpage, the Get Involved Kingston platform, partner distribution lists, social media, and temporary curbside signage. Typical event budgets range from approximately \$1,200 to \$2,000, with opportunities for in-kind contributions and co-funding from partners for food, materials, and programming support.

The Rural Community Spaces Initiative is intended to create repeatable, scalable community touchpoints that build stronger rural engagement, improve access to information and services for rural residents, and foster new community traditions, while making efficient use of existing rural facilities and partnerships.

**Alignment with Other City of Kingston Programs**

The Rural Community Program Fund and the Community Spaces Initiative are designed to complement and extend existing City of Kingston community investment and engagement programs, including the Neighbourhood Activation Grant Program, by applying similar principles through a rural-specific lens. Collectively, these programs share a common objective of

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empowering residents, community groups, and local partners to initiate projects that strengthen neighbourhoods, enhance quality of life, and foster social connection.

Like the Neighbourhood Activation Grant Program, the Rural Community Program Fund supports small-scale, community-led projects that are responsive to local needs and priorities. Both programs emphasize accessibility, low administrative burden, and modest grant amounts that enable groups to test ideas, deliver local events, and build capacity. The Rural Community Program Fund enhances this model in rural Kingston, recognizing the distinct geography, service access challenges, and community structures present in rural areas.

The Community Spaces Initiative further aligns with this approach by activating existing public facilities, specifically fire halls, as community gathering spaces that host no-cost or low-cost programming. This mirrors the City's focus on using community assets to create inclusive, welcoming spaces for connection, learning, and participation.

Together, these programs form a coordinated continuum of community support that spans urban neighbourhoods and rural communities. They reinforce the City's broader commitment to equity of access to programming, resident-led solutions, and place-based investment, while allowing each program to be tailored to the unique characteristics of its target communities.

This alignment ensures consistency in program philosophy, reduces duplication, and creates opportunities for cross-promotion and shared learning between program areas. Over time, insights from rural projects can inform enhancements to city-wide community grant programs, and vice versa, strengthening the overall community development ecosystem across Kingston.

### **Public Engagement**

The Rural Working Group represents the interests of rural Kingston residents and businesses and meetings are open to the public.

### **Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations**

The recommendations include provisions that would provide increased access to programming and recreation for all residents.

### **Financial Considerations**

The total cost of the recommendations in this report is \$44,000 and will be funded by the Samsung Community Benefit fund which has a current balance of \$717,980.62. Following approval, \$673,980.62 would remain in the fund.

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**Contacts:**

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**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

Dajana Turkovic, Workforce Development Analyst

**Exhibits Attached:**

None