



Policy Title: Community Services Program Policy

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Business Unit: Community Services

BACKGROUND

In late 2003, all business units within Community Services undertook a review to identify opportunities to deliver services differently; collaborate and streamline service delivery; and focus on citizen priorities by re-allocating budgets to align with the changing needs of Calgary's growing population. The resulting CVP sustainability reports (CPS2003-47, CPS2003-50, CPS2003-62) identified the opportunity to develop an integrated recreation program policy to facilitate more effective and efficient leisure service delivery to Calgarians and address accountability and performance measurement in three Business Units within Community Services & Protective Services: Recreation, Community and Neighbourhood Services (CNS) and Parks.

PURPOSE

The Recreation Program Review Project was launched to develop a program policy that aligns with the Triple Bottom Line, Fair Calgary and other Council directions. Collectively, these will guide Community Services' actions, services and decisions in facilitating equitable access to recreation¹, arts, culture, sport, social and environmental education² programs³ (for the purposes of this policy these will collectively be referred to as "recreation programs"). In developing the policy, the issue of balancing the provision of recreational programming so that programs, services and facilities are fair, accessible, targeted to citizens needs and operationally sustainable was identified as critical to the design of a new approach to programming across The City of Calgary.

The Community Services Program Policy guides the facilitation of efficient, effective and collaborative programming internally and externally, while allowing for individual business unit outcomes where required. Using this policy, staff involved in recreation programming will provide programs that are consistent, high quality and reflective of the diverse recreational needs and preferences of Calgarians.

¹ **Recreation** includes all those activities in which an individual chooses to participate in his/her leisure time and is not confined solely to sport and physical recreation programs, but includes artistic, creative, social, environmental education and intellectual activities (adapted from the National Recreation Statement, 1987).

² **Environmental Education** embraces the values of nature appreciation, stewardship, responsible citizenship, and the development of values and skills that lead to actions involving wise choices for an environmentally sustainable future.

³ **Programs** are defined as formal, planned, instructor led opportunities for individuals to develop skill or understanding in a specific content area; whether through registering for, or dropping into, a scheduled activity. It does not refer to participant led unstructured activities that are accessed at public open spaces or through admission into a facility, nor the rental of parks, playgrounds or facilities by individuals or groups.



The City of Calgary believes that recreation is integral to developing healthy, resourceful, active, creative, and involved citizens and that public recreation services have a significant role to play in the health and stability of communities. As a result, The City recognizes their obligation to the facilitation of recreation programming to its citizens. With current trends including childhood obesity, inactive lifestyles, and reduced arts, sport and recreation in schools, The City's role in the facilitation of recreation programs enhances the quality of life of Calgarians and reduces barriers to participation including ease of use, cost, accessibility, cultural differences, and varied abilities.

Program Policy Mission: Community Services enhances Calgarians' sense of health and well-being by providing leadership to Calgary's leisure delivery system; and by providing recreation programming that builds social, economic, and environmental value.

POLICY

To respond to the diverse needs of Calgarians, the Recreation Program Policy will support inclusiveness, contribute to building a sense of community, reflect the integrated approach between recreation, health, and community services and respond to a wide range of interests. In doing so, four policy directives have been established.

1. Provision of a level of tax support for introductory and basic skill development programs focusing on children, youth, families and low income Calgarians

To determine the degree of tax support provided to recreation programs, The City of Calgary will recognize that the benefits of recreation accrue to both the individual and the community and will develop recreation program pricing principles that offer a blend of user fees and tax support to reflect this shared public value.

To foster an environment where opportunities for recreation programming are available to all citizens, Community Services will provide, advocate, encourage and promote recreation programs, services, admissions and public spaces that are accessible and affordable.

To contribute to equitable access to recreational opportunities for all citizens, The City of Calgary will manage a program of fee assistance for registered recreation programs and facility admissions that low income Calgarians will be able to access with dignity and respect.

To facilitate an effective balance between priorities and resources, The City of Calgary will set pricing guidelines for recreation programs in accordance with the Community Services Department's three-year budget and business planning cycle.

2. Provision of recreation programming in publicly operated facilities and open spaces through direct delivery



To encourage a diverse range of quality recreation program opportunities for Calgarians, The City of Calgary will provide services directly to the community when a gap is identified and other providers are not able or willing to respond to, or meet, community needs, or where The City of Calgary can do so more efficiently or effectively.

To assist in achieving financial viability of existing and future recreational infrastructure, The City of Calgary will design and deliver some market demand recreation programs that can contribute to capital and operational sustainability.

3. Provision of leadership in the co-ordinated and co-operative planning and delivery of recreation programming through collaboration and partnerships

To balance the provision of recreation programming across the leisure service delivery system, The City of Calgary will support joint use and joint service agreements with other service providers and community organizations to meet recreation program priorities.

To provide leadership to Calgary's leisure delivery system, The City of Calgary will support collaborative relationships with other recreation program providers in order to meet community need, avoid unnecessary competition, discover gaps in the delivery of services, leverage resources and establish compatible service delivery plans.

4. Provision of support to build community capacity and enable community-driven recreation program delivery

To facilitate volunteers and not-for-profit organizations in attaining self-sufficiency in the delivery of recreation programming, The City of Calgary will encourage a healthy leisure delivery system for Calgary by collaboratively supporting leadership development and capacity building of both individuals and organizations.

To optimize community involvement in the provision of recreational programs, The City of Calgary will provide consultative services to community based organizations, using a community development approach, in the areas of research, development, implementation and evaluation of recreation programming.

PROCEDURE

As a result of this policy, The City of Calgary will use a regional, integrated outcome based approach to facilitate recreation programming in Calgary by adopting one or more roles, depending on the needs of the program and community. These roles include:

1. a direct provider of services;
2. an arms-length provider or coordinator of services;
3. a planner of community recreational trends, needs, and preferences;
4. a supporter of, and collaborator with, other leisure services organizations;



5. an enabler and builder of community capacity to deliver recreation programs;
6. a monitor of leisure activities and partnership obligations; and
7. a role model of best practices and standards for leisure activities and programs.

This continuum recognizes that there are numerous leisure providers within the city and provides a variety of methods by which the municipality can facilitate the availability of a diverse range of recreation opportunities for individuals and groups, consistent with available resources. While balancing equitable access with sustainability, programming priority will be given to activities that:

- encourage social inclusion and social cohesion
- provide introductory and basic skill development
- focus on target groups such as children, youth, families and low-income Calgarians
- promote healthy, active and creative lifestyles
- build strong communities
- contribute to sustainable environments
- contribute to personal health and well-being
- provide constructive alternatives for high risk populations
- increase personal growth and leadership; and
- serve a diverse potential market.

Implementation of the Program Policy will be rolled out strategically and progressively over 2006 and 2007. This will include a major launch, development of business processes, staff training and orientation, development of common practices in program analysis and an integrated communication system. In facilitating recreation programs and providing leadership to the leisure delivery system, Community Services staff will utilize common integrated strategies that include:

1. applying a regional, integrated outcome-based approach to the design and delivery of recreation programs and services to address cross-departmental and cross-business unit outcomes generated by recreation programming; and
2. applying performance measurement processes and shared accountability criteria to assess the value and impact of programs relative to successfully achieving Department business plan outcomes.

In addition to applying the integrated strategies identified in the Community Services Program Policy, Community Services will be guided by the *Community Service Program Policy Guidebook* and *Fair Calgary Principles and Fairness Filters*. The guidebook will be distributed directly to those staff facilitating recreation opportunities for Calgarians. A summary of how the “Fairness Filters” will be applied to recreational programming is provided in Attachment 1.



ATTACHMENT 1

**Applying the Fair Calgary Fairness Filters to the
Community Services Program Policy.**

1. **Accessibility.** Recreation programs are provided on a continuum that ranges from neighbourhood programs that respond to local demand and geographic interest, to city-wide programs that respond to specialty interests and targeted markets. Community Services programs will be strategically and geographically situated to allow reasonable access for Calgarians regardless of the type of community they reside in. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the programs are effective in reaching their intended targets and strategically located to optimize access.
2. **Availability.** Community Services programs will be developed, maintained and delivered in such a manner as to promote maximum availability and opportunity. Availability will be measured by identifying if the program is offered at times when people want it and need it and by how much time the program is actually operating, compared to the amount of time it could potentially be operated. Additional measures will be based on the scheduling of programs and activities within open spaces and facilities. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the programs are appropriately scheduled and utilized by Calgarians in the times available.
3. **Affordability.** Community Services programs will be designed and operated in a manner that makes them financially accessible to diverse users and income levels. Subsidization policies will be designed and based on a user's ability to pay. Partners will also be sought out that can contribute in a meaningful way to the sustainable delivery of program plans. Thoughtful, knowledgeable design of programs will reduce operating costs and, where required and appropriate, create revenue opportunities. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the residents who need or want the programs have enough resources to bear the cost.
4. **Acceptability.** Community Services programs will be suitable for users involved in a variety of activities including recreation, arts, culture, sports, environmental education and wellness activities. The programs will complement and enhance service standards established by The City of Calgary, and will complement other existing programs that are available to Calgarians. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the programs best meet the diverse needs of Calgarians.
5. **Accommodation.** Community Services programs will be accessible to people with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities and will include a wide range of ages, abilities and skill levels, in accordance with available resources and the Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy. Programs will be multi-dimensional, addressing



existing community programs requirements as a priority, but having the flexibility to change as user needs and expectations change. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the programs are adjusted and adapted for people with disabilities and if inclusive practices have been successfully applied.

6. **Adequacy.** Community Services programs will provide programming that meets user needs and preferences and as a result, Community Services will complete analysis such as regular customer satisfaction surveys and needs and preferences studies that will assist in identifying user demand. Once user demand has been identified, programming staff will utilize an outcome-based approach to program planning to provide maximum customer satisfaction. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the programs are required, sufficient, and suitable to meet the diverse needs of residents.

7. **Achievement.** Community Services programs involve the use of public funds, meaning that the process must provide for public scrutiny and review and must meet the standards for public accountability. Programming staff will create early public awareness of all projects and their benefits to encourage user participation. Reporting measures will be developed and regularly applied during all phases of program research, development, implementation and delivery. This will foster individual and community ownership of the programs. In developing performance measures in this area, Community Services will ask if the residents are satisfied with the programs and if the programs are successful.