



**Policy Title:** Festival and Event  
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**Report Number:** CD2024-0272  
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**Last Amended:** 2024 June 18  
**Policy Owner:** Arts & Culture

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

1.1 The Festival and Event policy (The Policy) provides a foundation for the effective development and management of festivals and events throughout Calgary. The Policy directs transparent allocation of City of Calgary resources and fosters the growth of vibrant and innovative festivals and events in Calgary.

1.1.1 The Policy aligns with The City's values for enhancing the quality of life by providing Calgarians and visitors with a vibrant place to live. It is achieved by being a vital ingredient in Calgary's ongoing development as an eventful city, as well as providing opportunities for people to enjoy an innovative, creative city through year-round art, sport, community and cultural festivals and events.

1.1.2 The Policy aligns with The City's values for inclusive communities by investing and facilitating a spectrum of cultural events which are accessible to all Calgarians and provide outlets for creative expression. The policy provides opportunities for new, emerging and established events to thrive.

1.1.3 The Policy supports Calgary's global reputation, which attracts tourism, new investment and new Calgarians. By supporting the delivery of year-round local festivals and events, while setting the stage to attract events of an international caliber. This includes City of Calgary investment in creative industries, strategic partners and civic infrastructure. It is also a driver of economic diversity, which enables a healthy creative and cultural sector.

## **2. PURPOSE**

2.1 The Policy establishes a clear definition of Festivals and Events supported by The City of Calgary, as well as what activities are not considered a festival or event under this policy.

2.2 The Policy establishes procedures for how The City of Calgary provides support to the organizers of publicly accessible festivals and events, including identifying which City of Calgary requirements are applicable.

2.3 The Policy establishes procedures for a Festival and Event Subsidy Program (FESP). See also 3.8.



2.4 The Policy establishes procedures for the reduction of financial barriers for event organizers who meet the definition under 5.1.3.

2.5 The Policy does not establish procedures for evaluating, bidding and hosting “partner-bid events” for Calgary, and/or bids for events led by City Council or City Administration. The formal bid process is out of scope for The Policy. See also 3.11.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

3.1 “Appeal process” means a method for an organization to have a second assessment for event approvals and/or financial support. Details are outlined in the Management Framework.

3.2 “Arts & Culture” means the division in the Partnerships business unit with the authority for the administration and implementation of all elements of The Policy.

3.3 “Corporate Event Steering Committee” means a group within City Administration which provides oversight to The City of Calgary Festivals and Events process. The representation of the committee, as well as the related processes are detailed in the Management Framework.

3.4 “Corporate rates and fees” means the standard user fees City business units charge for services provided to the public. These rates may differ from the Fee Schedule for Festivals and Events. See also 3.6, 3.16 and 5.1.7, and the Management Framework.

3.5 “Cultural Leadership Council” (CLC) means an external advisory group to City Administration. The purpose of the CLC is to provide guidance and expertise on cultural development work at The City of Calgary to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and heard. The CLC is also a champion for the local cultural sector, to promote the advancement of arts and cultural plans, initiatives and strategies, along with the Cultural Plan for Calgary.

3.6 “Fee Schedule for Festivals and Events” means the list of user fees charged to Arts & Culture, by business units, for services provided to festival and event organizers. This may differ from the “Corporate rates and fees” schedule. See also 3.4, 3.16 and 5.1.7 and the Management Framework.

3.7 “Festival” or “Event” means an organized gathering of people for the primary purpose of supporting art, sport, community and/or cultural experience within a limited period of time, and which is available to the public.

3.7.1 The definition of festival or event includes a parade of people and/or animals, and/or vehicles which will travel in unison for the purpose of celebration.

3.7.2 To meet the definition of festival or event that must be approved through Arts & Culture as per this policy, a festival or event must (i) need the support and/or services from two or more City of Calgary business units, and/or (ii) have

a significant impact on public property, public facilities and/or public safety that triggers a review by the Interdepartmental Event Team, such as any one of the following:

- (a) serving alcohol and/or cannabis on public land, if permitted under the policies provided by provincial legislation for Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (unless the activity falls within exception conditions defined by The City of Calgary);
- (b) using fireworks or other types of pyrotechnic displays on public land (note that there may be restrictions or permissions required for using fireworks or other types of pyrotechnic displays on private land, but this is out of scope for this policy);
- (c) setting up one or more temporary occupiable structures (such as tents or stages) on public land that require a Building Permit (note that requirements or permissions needed for setting up temporary structures on private land, only apply if there is more than one business unit involved, otherwise they are out of scope for this policy), or
- (d) utilizing roadways or sidewalks on public land that triggers the need for a review by the Interdepartmental Event Team.

3.7.2.1 If a festival or event organizer is unsure whether their proposed festival or event must be approved through Arts & Culture, it is recommended they follow the intake process described on The City's website (Calgary.ca) to obtain guidance.

3.7.3 Activities which are out of scope for this policy include protests and/or demonstrations. For clarity, protests include specified protests as defined in Bylaw 17M2023.

3.7.3.1 An activity meeting the definition for a festival or event may be evaluated to confirm if the festival or event actually held fell outside the scope of this policy. Such an event may be prevented from receiving support in the future, as outlined in The Policy. Refer to the Management Framework for details.

3.7.4 Festival or event applications from organizations who are not in good standing with The City of Calgary will not be accepted by Arts & Culture, as per the escalation processes listed in the Management Framework. These applicants can request permits and services directly through impacted business units.

3.7.5 Any conduct that is contradictory to the requirements for a festival or event approved through Arts & Culture may result in the event being asked to conclude their activities immediately and/or may be prevented from being an approved festival or event in the future.



3.7.6 The following non-commercial, film-related activities are compliant with this policy: presentation of a film as part of the program of events, film production activities that are accessible and for the benefit of the public, filming of a festival or event where the filming is secondary to the production of a public festival or event, and hosting of a festival focused on film.

3.7.6.1 Film industry movie and/or television productions and activities for commercial purposes are out of scope for The Policy.

3.7.7 Activities which are out of scope for Arts & Culture's approved festivals and events can still request services directly from other City of Calgary business units who will determine if permissions and/or permits are required.

3.8 "Festivals and Events Subsidy Program" (FESP) means the City Administration program, led by Arts & Culture, which ensures the reduction of City of Calgary financial barriers for event organizers to support a thriving festival and event industry. See also 5.1.

3.9 "Interdepartmental Event Team" (IET) means a group of subject matter experts who are requested to provide services, approvals and/or support to festivals and events in Calgary. This includes business unit representatives in City Administration and external partners. See also 5.3.3.

3.10 "Management Framework" means a document City Administration is responsible for developing that will contribute to the overall direction and priorities determined by Council and act as a blueprint for the implementation and administration of The Policy. The Management Framework will continue to evolve over time as practices, standards, administrative processes and outcome measures are developed and evaluated.

3.11 "Partner-bid events" means events that were successfully awarded to Calgary through a formal bid process. See also 2.5.

3.12 "Partnerships" means the business unit with the authority for administration and implementation of all elements of The Policy.

3.13 "Subsidized support" means the reduction or absorption of user fees for festival and event organizers who qualify. Subsidized support is reflected in the reduced amount of the invoice billed by Arts & Culture to festival and event organizers. See also 5.1.

3.14 "Subsidy" means the difference between the user fees charged to Arts & Culture by business unit service providers and the charge to event organizers who qualify for subsidized support. See also 5.1.

3.15 "Subsidy funding" means the budget dollars approved by Council used to reduce costs for festivals and events which qualify for subsidized support or grants. See also 5.1.



3.16 “User fees” means the cost of City of Calgary services related to the delivery of festivals and events which are charged to festival and event organizers. Depending on the service, user fees may be standard, as found on the Corporate Rates and Fees list, or may be reduced for festival and event organizers by the originating business unit. This reduction will be shown on the Fee Schedule for Festivals and Events and is in addition to any FESP subsidies provided by the Arts & Culture division. See also 3.4 and 3.6 and the Management Framework.

#### **4. APPLICABILITY**

4.1 The Policy applies to:

- (a) City departments and business units who provide support or services for festivals and events. See also 3.7;
- (b) all City departments and business units who could impact the efficient delivery of festivals and events in Calgary, including business units who could impact event sites, event infrastructure and/or access to event sites. See also 5.3.3;
- (c) all festival and event organizers who meet the definition in 3.7. See also 3.7.7.

#### **5. PROCEDURE**

##### **5.1 “Subsidy funding” strategy**

5.1.1 The Festivals and Events Subsidy Program (FESP) receives operating funds from Council each year as a result of the four-year Service Plans and Budgets cycle.

5.1.2 Subsidy funding will be used to cover costs related to the following:

- (a) Internal recoveries for business unit expenses specific to supporting City-approved festivals and events which qualify for subsidy. See 5.1.7 for exclusions.
- (b) Grants that support the festival and event industry.

5.1.3 Recipients who qualify for FESP financial support include event organizers who are registered not-for-profits, charitable organizations, or business improvement areas.

5.1.4 The City of Calgary will develop and maintain a fee schedule specifically for festivals and events which lists approved business unit expenses which qualify for internal recovery.

5.1.5 City business units that provide services to festivals and events will attempt to minimize fees charged to festival and event organizers, where possible.



5.1.6 Approved business unit expenses which qualify for internal recovery are listed on the Fee Schedule for Festivals and Events. Details are outlined in the Management Framework.

5.1.7 Certain user fees listed in the Corporate Rates and Fees schedule (for services provided by business units to festival or event organizers who qualify for the Festival and Event Subsidy Program (FESP)) are ineligible for internal recoveries via Arts & Culture. These fees are considered to be “waived” or “absorbed” by the related business unit.

(a) Business unit expenses which do not qualify for internal recovery as per 5.1.7 are detailed in the Management Framework. Examples include, but are not limited to, transactional fees (City processing fees which are not an additional cost to the business unit) including Parks and Open Spaces permitting fees, Street Use Permits, and City Administration fees, and Risk Management Fees.

(b) The related business unit cannot charge waived/absorbed fees directly to the festivals and events organizers who qualify for subsidized support.

5.1.8 Festivals and Events which qualify for subsidized support will only be charged a portion of the standard service user fees.

5.1.8.1 “Subsidized support” allocation process: the amount of subsidized support for each festival and event organizer who qualifies is dependent on Arts & Culture’s budget as approved by Council as per processes detailed in the Management Framework.

5.1.9 Festivals and Events which do not qualify for subsidized support will be charged all applicable service fees, as per processes detailed in the Management Framework.

5.1.9.1 Festivals and Events organizers who do not qualify for subsidized support can follow the appeal process.

## **5.2 Roles and responsibilities: festival and event organizers**

5.2.1 Organizers of festivals and events approved by The City of Calgary are required to enter into appropriate legal agreements with The City.

## **5.3 Roles and responsibilities: City of Calgary**

### **5.3.1 Arts & Culture division, Partnerships business unit**

(a) Arts & Culture is the policy owner responsible for The Policy.

(b) Arts & Culture is responsible to lead the management of festivals and events as defined within this policy for The City of Calgary.



(c) Arts & Culture is responsible to develop the “Fee Schedule for Festivals and Events.”

(d) Arts & Culture is responsible to develop and maintain the Management Framework.

(e) The Cultural Leadership Council (CLC) provides guidance and expertise to Arts & Culture, including the implementation of The Policy and Management Framework. The CLC is responsible to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and heard.

### **5.3.2 Corporate Event Steering Committee (CESC)**

(a) The Corporate Event Steering Committee is responsible to provide oversight to The City of Calgary Festival and Event process.

### **5.3.3 Interdepartmental Event Team**

(a) Business units and external partners involved in providing support and services to festivals and events must participate in an Interdepartmental Event Team (IET).

(b) The IET will complete technical and tactical reviews of each festival and event application, as assigned. The reviews will determine the type and level of services and support required for each festival and event.

(c) The City of Calgary will assume the responsibility for providing or requiring appropriate services, equipment, facilities, safety requirements and sites for approved festivals and events which meet the definition in section 3.7.

(d) The IET is responsible to determine if the event application does not meet the standards for appropriate use of City venues or assets.

### **5.3.4 City departments and business units who could impact event sites, event infrastructure and/or access to event sites**

(a) The City of Calgary will mitigate impacts that corporate projects or service changes have on event sites, infrastructure and/or access.

(b) Mitigating impacts to festivals and events will be incorporated into the corporate planning of service changes or capital projects. Arts & Culture will be included as an audience engaged in the planning phase.

(c) When impacts to festivals and events cannot be (or were not) mitigated, related costs will be the responsibility of the business unit initiating the impacts, or a cost-sharing plan will be negotiated with Arts & Culture.

## 5.6 Guiding Principles

- (a) The Policy aligns with the Guiding Principles developed as part of the Eventful City Strategy. See Schedule 1.

## 5.7 Management Framework. A Management Framework:

- (a) will be developed and stewarded by City Administration;
- (b) provides a list of current priorities for City Administration's role in festivals and events;
- (c) provides a list of guiding documents;
- (d) outlines day-to-day processes and procedures;
- (e) outlines process for "Open and Transparent Evaluation Process," as defined in Schedule 1; and
- (f) will be reviewed, at minimum, each time The Policy is reviewed.

## 6. SCHEDULE

### Schedule 1 - Guiding Principles from the Eventful City Strategy

- (a) Value: The City of Calgary recognizes the contributions festivals and events make to our quality of life and in building complete communities through socials, cultural and economic benefits.
- (b) Open and Transparent Evaluation Process: The City of Calgary will lead in developing event-friendly principles and processes to evaluate, assess, measure and support events and festivals. They will be guided by equitable and respectful decision-making.
- (c) Tracking and Reporting: The City of Calgary will work collaboratively to collect annual data to be evaluated against a comprehensive model of shared and aligned principles, policies and strategies to inform reports to Council and the community regarding key aspects of the industry. The City is committed to community consultation to monitor implementation, measure progress and commit to continuous improvement.
- (d) Accessibility and Inclusion: The City of Calgary will work to support an environment in which all people can participate in Calgary's cultural, social and economic life through the festivals and events The City supports, regardless of a person's geographic location, affiliation and demographics.
- (e) Economic and Environmental Sustainability and Resilience: The City of Calgary, in collaboration with community partners, will support events that meet community and



Council priorities and provide tools and education for those who are seeking support in order to see ongoing innovation and resilience in the industry.

**8. AMENDMENTS**

Date of Council Decision	Report/By-Law	Description
2016 February 01	N/A	Recreation became Calgary Recreation. The title was updated in the policy.
2024 June 18	CD2024-0272	Updated to current Council policy template. Key changes are related to updating definitions, defining scope and updating organizational structure.

**9. REVIEW**

Date of Policy Owner's Review	Description
2022 October 05	Arts & Culture review resulted in decision to amend Council Policy CSPS032.