

# UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

## Edmonton City of Learners

### Recommendation

That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, write a letter to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Network of Learning Cities endorsing Edmonton's application for membership.

### Executive Summary

This report focuses on the opportunity for the City of Edmonton to lead a coalition of community partners, including the Edmonton Public Library, to apply to join the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). The GNLC is an international policy-oriented network, coordinated by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg, Germany. This intentionally collaborative work fosters partnerships, equity and diversity, builds capacity, and provides cities with an opportunity to be recognized internationally for their learning and development strengths.

This initiative builds on the City's current strengths and commitments to learning and development by aligning cross-sector collaborations to support inclusive learning to enhance: individual empowerment, social inclusion, economic development, cultural prosperity, and sustainable development. This opportunity directly activates The City Plan, and strategic priorities for: Healthy City, Urban Places and Regional Prosperity. It also aligns with the City's post-secondary collaboration guiding pillars: Branding Edmonton, Collaborative City-Building, a focus on People and Prosperity and a shared commitment to Innovative Problem-Solving.

### Report

#### Activating the City's Strategic Goals - GNLC Alignment

1. ConnectEdmonton - Vision 2050 will be achieved through strategic actions, partnerships and collaboration with a focus on Healthy City - wellness and equity, Urban Places - growth and vibrancy and Regional Prosperity - innovation, competitiveness, and global brand, in alignment with the GNLC priorities.

2. The City Plan's target to attract, inspire and retain one million more - recognizes the need to focus on skills and talent - leveraging partnerships and shared advocacy opportunities to ensure regional prosperity and global competitiveness in a changing world.
3. The Corporate Business Plan's focus on public programming, awareness and education that is grounded in The City Plan and ConnectEdmonton also aligns with the GNLC actions.
4. The Economic Action Plan's strategic principles are activated by becoming a UNESCO GNLC, with a focus on entrepreneurs from racialized and marginalized communities. This strategy also promotes and supports academic programs that advance and diversify the local economy.
5. Edmonton Place Brand Strategy highlights international talent attraction as an opportunity for our city, and in alignment with ConnectEdmonton and City Plan, recognizes the need to partner with key stakeholders for brand alignment. Intentionally pursuing recognition opportunities is also built into the strategy - as proposed by the GNLC coalition approach.

#### **UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities**

The GNLC defines a learning city as one that effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education; revitalizes learning in families and communities; facilitates learning for and in the workplace; extends the use of modern learning technologies; enhances quality and excellence in learning, and fosters a culture of learning throughout life. The network supports its member cities by:

1. Promoting policy dialogue and peer learning;
2. Documenting effective strategies and best practice;
3. Fostering partnerships;
4. Providing capacity development;
5. Developing tools and instruments to design, implement and monitor learning cities' strategies.

The GNLC supports all 17 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular focus on SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. These goals support the activation of City of Edmonton's City Plan, Economic Action Plan, Place Brand Strategy and the Post-Secondary Collaboration Pillars: City-Building, Brand Edmonton, People and Prosperity and Innovative Problem-Solving.

### **City of Learners - Edmonton**

In 2008, City Council supported a network of Edmonton stakeholders invested in lifelong learning. This led to the establishment of a Council supported City of Learners initiative with Edmonton Public Library in 2013.

With a clear focus on collaborating for the benefit of our city, the City of Edmonton can support this progressive step by drawing together a coalition of aligned partners to promote our city as a learning destination, while building cross-sector collaborations to enhance our significant assets - including formal and informal programs and services led by dedicated organizations and citizens.

### **Aligning Partner Priorities, Services and Resources**

The mandate of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning takes a holistic and integrated, inter-sectoral, and cross-sectoral approach to lifelong learning as the guiding paradigm for twenty first century education. This collaborative approach builds on the Edmonton Public Library's City of Learners initiative, and the City of Edmonton's Community Learning Plan (2013).

The City has already begun joining together with community stakeholders to explore the potential to partner to meet this opportunity, including the Coalition of Provosts and Edmonton Public Library. The City will coordinate a Steering Committee who will champion the application process and the development of the Community Learning City Action Plan. The City will also convene and support a Coalition of Supporters, organizations who are leading and supporting community learning. This engagement will put Edmonton on the path for building our sectoral strengths and building lasting relationships for taking on future joint efforts for the benefit of our city.

### **Benefits to Members**

The Global Network of Learning Cities focuses on broad community factors that serve citizens throughout life and across learning institutions (basic to higher education), families and communities, and workplaces while:

1. Mobilizing resources across sectors to promote inclusive learning
2. Enhancing the quality and excellence in learning
3. Extending the use of modern learning technologies

### **Cost and Commitments to Join the GNLC**

There is no application or membership fee for the GNLC. In 2019, a multi-donor funding approach was established to facilitate voluntary contributions.

### **Next Steps:**

1. Pending endorsement - the GNLC application and Learning City Plan will be completed in collaboration with the city's learning and development partners.

- The application will be submitted to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO by September 2021. The Canadian Commission will decide whether the application moves forward to the International UNESCO Learning City body. Selected cities will be announced in February 2022.

### Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

<b>Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton has a globally competitive and entrepreneurial business climate / The Edmonton Region is a catalyst for industry and business growth</b>			
<b>Outcome(s)</b>	<b>Measure(s)</b>	<b>Result(s)</b>	<b>Target(s)</b>
Successfully apply to join the UNESCO GNLC and become members	Edmonton becomes a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities	Edmonton's application is accepted by UNESCO	Q1 2022
Edmonton's key learning, development and social agencies join together to support the application and lifelong learning strategy as part of a Learning City network (i.e. community coalition)	There is a diverse representation of types of learning opportunities/stakeholders represented to ensure diverse learning needs and opportunities are served within the community..	Coalition of lifelong learning stakeholders is established.	Q3 2021
The City of Edmonton leverages its position to broker cross-sector relationships and collaborations to support learning and development for all Edmontonians	Successfully broker cross-sector discussions/relationship between Edmonton's economic development agencies - and local training providers who are positioning themselves to meet new economic workforce development trends.	Edmonton continues to support diversification and growth in response to emerging economic and business trends.	Q1 2022
New partnerships and collaborations are facilitated among stakeholders	Number of new learning based partnerships (local, national and international)	Edmonton's reputation within the province, nation and globally is showcased as a learning city.	Q2 2022

### Risk Assessment

<b>Risk Element</b>	<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Risk Score (with current mitigations)</b>	<b>Current Mitigations</b>	<b>Potential Future Mitigations</b>

Governance	The activation and implementation of the UNESCO Learning City strategy is dependent on a coalition of partners and while the City can lead and steward, partner input and activation is critical to success.	2 - Unlikely	2 - Moderate	4 - low	Regular community reporting and communications on progress and emerging stakeholder opportunity and value.	Emergent communications and engagement strategies to draw in new partners around aligned actions.
Public Perception	Formally integrating the City of Learners local initiatives with the international UNESCO Learning City network to support the promotion of the Edmonton City brand on an international scale.	1 - Rare	1 - Minor	2 - low	Regular and ongoing media scanning for UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities issues.	Close alignment with the UN Global Network of Learning Cities coordinating body to understand current membership and initiatives that are underway - and prospective issues.