

FESTIVAL SUPPORT AND GROWTH

RECOMMENDATION

That the June 13, 2022, Community Services report CS00949, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Council is being informed about how the City of Edmonton supports local festival and event producers and on opportunities to work with diverse event organizations to hold more festivals in Edmonton's core areas, and to support and grow existing festivals in these areas.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 30, 2021, City Council meeting the following motion passed:

That Administration explore opportunities to work with Business Improvement Areas, multicultural and Indigenous groups to hold more festivals in our core areas, and identify opportunities to support and grow existing festivals in these areas.

Executive Summary

- Edmonton has an Event Policy, Strategy, Events Sport and Cultural Attraction Plan and a Festival and Event Delivery Action Plan to guide how the City of Edmonton works with and supports local and attracted festivals and events.
- Administration works closely with the Edmonton Arts Council and Explore Edmonton to support the attraction and delivery of festivals and events in Edmonton.
- Engagement was completed with Business Improvement Areas, existing smaller Indigenous and multicultural festival and event organizations, local signature and foundational festivals producers, the Edmonton Arts Council and Explore Edmonton to discuss opportunities and support required.

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- The four main themes that emerged from the engagement sessions include requests for additional funding, capacity building, marketing and communications support and support to address site constraints.
- Based on these themes, Administration has outlined a number of opportunities that could be considered to further support festivals and events' growth in Edmonton.

REPORT

Festivals and events are important strategic investments in Edmonton; they provide the opportunity for Edmontonians and visitors to connect, be active in their community and celebrate Edmonton's heritage, diversity and unique identity throughout all seasons. They support the goals of The City Plan and Economic Action Plan by celebrating arts, culture, sport and recreation and acknowledge Indigenous heritage while honouring many diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences that residents bring from around the world. The diversity of events also contribute to the local economy, connect people, showcase local and international talent, and draw people to Edmonton.

In October 2018, City Council approved the new Events Policy, C603, as part of report CR_4999 Major Events Strategy. In this report, Administration also outlined the Event Growth and Attraction Strategy, Edmonton Events Sport and Cultural Attraction Plan and the Festivals and Events Delivery Action Plan. Event classifications were developed as part of the Festival and Event Delivery Action Plan to help determine appropriate City support to events in Edmonton based on the type of event.

In June 2021, Administration presented report CS00190 Hosting Events and Festivals in the City, which resulted in updates to the Festival and Events Delivery Action Plan and during the Fall 2021 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment, in December 2021, Council approved an additional \$200,000 in ongoing funding to increase the subsidy for Edmonton Police Services support costs from 50 per cent to 75 per cent for signature and foundational events. Signature and foundational events are annual festivals that have high to moderate attendance, can be single or multiple days, and are mainly produced by professional event producers. Examples include the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Edmonton Heritage Festival and Cariwest Parade and Festival. These operational documents are updated regularly, as required, and outline how the City supports the attraction and delivery of festivals and events in Edmonton.

A strategic partnership between the City of Edmonton, Explore Edmonton and the Edmonton Arts Council supports the success of festivals and events as they develop and grow in the city. This support includes cultural and sporting/recreation events that are produced locally (e.g., Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Silver Skate Festival) and those that are attracted to Edmonton (e.g., JUNOs, International Ice Hockey Federation World Juniors Hockey Championships).

The role of Explore Edmonton is to market and sell Edmonton beyond the city's limits to attract visitors, major events, meetings and conventions. They do this by supporting the development of transformational experiences that have a uniquely Edmonton flavour, thus generating greater economic impact and social benefit.

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Administration works collaboratively with Explore Edmonton through the Edmonton Events partnership, which is mandated to bid for and attract national and international sporting and cultural events to the city. These events offer significant economic, community/social and reputational benefits that help advance Edmonton's brand nationally and globally. This work is guided by the Changing Field of Play report presented at the June 27, 2017 City Council meeting, presented by Council appointed Citizens Panel on Major Events, as well as the Edmonton Events Sport and Cultural Attraction Plan.

The role of the Edmonton Arts Council is to support the art and cultural landscape in Edmonton. The guiding document, Connections & Exchanges: A 10-year Plan To Transform Arts and Heritage in Edmonton seeks to infuse culture, arts, and heritage into every aspect of civic fabric, support cultural makers and interpreters, and grow Edmonton's arts and heritage audiences.

The Edmonton Arts Council is the mechanism to provide operating grants to local not-for-profit festivals and events and has recently implemented annual and multi-year funding to approximately 48 organizations that produce festivals and similar events. They also help to build organizational capacity for festival operators. The Edmonton Arts Council does not provide financial support to attract cultural events such as the JUNOs or Canadian Country Music Awards, however, they are engaged in bid development and hosting as required.

Administration also supports the delivery of outdoor festivals and events on City property by coordinating required civic services and permits as per the Festival and Event Delivery Action Plan, which provides strategic direction for funding festivals, and defines and guides the provision of civic services for festivals and events. Attachment 1 outlines the existing support provided by Administration to events and festivals, as well as future opportunities based on the stakeholder insights shared below.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

The information presented in this report was gathered through engagement with Indigenous and multicultural festival and event producers, Business Improvement Areas, winter festivals, and signature and foundational festival and event organizations along with the Edmonton Arts Council and Explore Edmonton. Attachment 2 includes the full list of stakeholders who were engaged in the development of this report. Based on this feedback, four key themes emerged — Funding, Capacity Building, Marketing & Communications, and Site Constraints.

Theme 1 - Funding

Festival and event producers, whether they were large or small, indicated there is a need for robust and flexible funding which is responsive to their changing needs. All are struggling post COVID-19 and indicated that costs for infrastructure such as tents, fencing, portable toilets, trailers, fuel, program artists and entertainment have increased, while previous revenue sources such as sponsorships, grants and donations have decreased.

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The City provides funding through many different programs, including funding to the Edmonton Arts Council to support Edmonton artists and arts and festival organizations, as well as subsidies for civic services, emergency preparedness and public transit for larger events; and grants for winter festivals and neighbourhood events. However, stakeholders indicated that they would like to see increased funding to some of these programs along with funding for a new micro grant that supports niche and emerging not-for-profit festivals and events producers who have been in existence for more than one year or a Business Improvement Area that produces events for the general public. Niche events are specialized and emerging events that hold a local, community or neighbourhood profile, encourage community participation and align with civic priorities. They are primarily single day events and usually smaller, homegrown and run by Edmonton based non-profit associations, volunteer groups or community leagues.

Existing foundational and signature winter festival stakeholders also expressed a desire to see a funding increase to the existing WinterCity grant to allow smaller niche winter festival and event organizations to access funding without impacting existing festivals funded through this grant.

Theme 2 - Capacity Building

Smaller, multicultural and Indigenous festival and event producers indicated they need support and resources in order to develop and grow their events in a way that is sustainable, meets public safety requirements and ensures quality is maintained.

In May 2022, Administration relaunched the Emerging Immigrant and Refugee Communities Support program and has identified capacity supports as a cornerstone element of the program and partnering with various Immigrant Serving Agencies and the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations to offer various types of organizational support such as board governance, program development and partnership brokering to assist in advancing on projects and initiatives driven by community identified needs.

Stakeholders also indicated that additional support would be helpful to build capacity with new and emerging festivals. Several long standing festivals have expressed an interest in mentoring new festivals but are challenged to provide this expertise without remuneration given current organizational and financial constraints. Stakeholders support the idea of mentorship programs to connect new event producers with seasoned event producers to share knowledge and pass on expertise to others in the Edmonton art and cultural community. The Edmonton Arts Council has piloted some of this work already and Administration will work with them to understand how to further enhance this work.

Theme 3 - Marketing and Communications

Festivals and events stakeholders indicated that marketing and communications support to promote their festivals using City of Edmonton and Explore Edmonton channels would be helpful. Currently, the City amplifies signature and foundational festivals' marketing efforts using existing City social media channels. Explore Edmonton features a number of signature festivals on the Explore Edmonton website and have begun discussion with festivals to

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showcase their events and help develop products and experiences that are authentic to Edmonton.

Theme 4 - Site Constraints

The permit fees for use of parkland has been identified by Indigenous and multicultural festivals as a barrier. Business Improvement Areas have identified the cost to close and use arterial and collector roads for events as prohibitive to hosting events in their area as many do not have appropriate open space or parkland available for programming events.

Site location identification and selection for new festivals is a complicated process as long standing and recurring festivals and events are granted historical date(s) and location priority, while new festivals and events often apply with limited time for planning (due to limited resources) and therefore less site availability.

Stakeholders indicated that it would be important that the funds from a new micro grant be unencumbered and used at the discretion of the event organizer to help offset infrastructure such as tents and toilets; fees such as civic services, permit fees for use of park spaces, roads closure costs and special event permits (development, building, fire, etc.); or for program elements such as arts and entertainment. The development of a micro grant program would support a variety of not-for-profit festivals and events, including multicultural, Indigenous and Business Improvement Areas as well as other marginalized organizations such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, 2S+ (LGBTQ2S+) and those with disabilities. The micro grant would support emerging and smaller existing event producers to address event planning challenges and offset the costs of the event, resulting in an improved event industry that promotes and celebrates distinct communities that contribute to Edmonton, its quality of life and unique sense of place. Private events and those intended to raise funds for various charities would not be considered for this funding.

Budget/Financial Implications

As per Attachment 1, if the items requiring financial support to advance were approved by City Council, a total budget of \$500,000 (representing a 0.03 per cent tax increase) would be required to initiate the opportunities identified, excluding the yet to be determined Edmonton Arts Council funding request. Administration anticipates that Edmonton Arts Council will bring forward a funding request as part of the fall 2023-2026 budget deliberations.

All proposed additions to the 2023-2026 budget are being prioritized based on tax levy impacts and limited resources. Subject to the outcome of Administration's insights review and prioritization, an unfunded service package of \$500,000 may be brought forward for consideration as part of the 2023-2026 budget deliberations.

GBA+

Administration engaged with diverse stakeholder groups including Indigenous and multicultural festival and event producers, Business Improvement Areas, winter festivals, and signature and foundational festival and event organizations along with the Edmonton Arts Council and Explore Edmonton. However, there are other groups who also produce smaller niche size events such as LGTBQ2S+ event organizations and producers, and charitable

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organizations who host events such as runs and walks, primarily to raise funds for those with disabilities, diseases and or disadvantages, that have not yet been engaged for this report.

Some smaller, volunteer driven niche events wanting to start or grow a city-wide festival in core areas are challenged to do this given both the expertise required and the costs associated. As part of exploring future opportunities, Administration will consider how best to support the smaller niche events that also contribute to Edmonton's heritage, diversity and unique identity throughout all seasons.

Support from the City comes in many forms and although some groups were not engaged for this particular report, there is a general understanding that all smaller festival and event producers would benefit from additional funding and capacity building. The micro grant proposed in this report would benefit smaller festival and event procedures along with information workshops, and knowledge sharing by festival event liaisons related to process and procedures.

Further, by focusing only on core areas as directed by the motion, there is a missed opportunity for the role of festivals and events in areas outside of the core and in developing 15 minute districts which could create opportunities to establish and invigorate other districts where daily life, work and play intersect.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Existing Support and Future Opportunities
2. Stakeholder Engagement List