

EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY IN APPLICATION PROCESSES - COMMUNITY LEAGUE OPERATING GRANT AND COMMUNITY LEAGUE INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the September 9, 2022, Community Services report CS01247, be received for information.

Requested Council Action		Information only	
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle		ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals	
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.		Healthy City	
City Plan Values	ACCESS		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	N/A	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	N/A
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians Outcome: Edmontonians are connected and included in our neighbourly society		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	● C110 - City/Community League Relations ● C502A - Community League Grants ● A1476 - Municipal Funding Arrangements ● A1460 - Grants and Other City Contributions		
Related Council Discussions	● February 21, 2018, Community and Public Services Committee - CR_5330 Community Project Process ● May 16, 2022 Recreation Centre Master Plan - District and Local Level - Funding Strategy Options for Recreation Centres CS00386		

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 19, 2022, City Council meeting, the following motion passed:

That Administration provide a report, in consultation with Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, with recommendations for amendments to the Community League

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Operating Grant and Community League Infrastructure Program with the intent of enhancing equity and efficiency in application processes and distribution of funds.

Executive Summary

- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and City Administration have collaborated for many years, specifically in the development of the Community League Grant Programs.
- The City of Edmonton Community Resources Grants Team (Grants Office) administers the Community League Emerging Grant, Community League Operating Grant and Community League Infrastructure Program, collectively referred to as the Community League Grant Programs.
- Community leagues play an important role in the development of neighbourhood level amenities including community halls, playgrounds, rinks, basketball courts and other amenities that contribute to the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton, which is the City's guiding document for the provision of recreation opportunities and amenities within Edmonton.
- City Administration and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues have been discussing the grant programs and how to ensure equity in the allocation processes and how to utilize information collected from leagues to strengthen the programs.

REPORT

The funds for the Community League Grant Programs reside within the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' budget allocation from the City and the grants are processed and distributed by City Administration. There are currently three grants: Operating, Emerging and Infrastructure.

- The Community League Operating Grant is an annual grant available to community leagues for the operation of their facilities and provision of programs and services. Community League Operating Grant has a total budget of \$2.784 million. In 2022, 161 community leagues received operating funding that ranged between \$6,555 and \$70,199.
 - The funding allocation includes a base amount of \$4,900 that is provided to each league, the remainder of the budget is allocated to leagues based on the population in the leagues' geographic area, using a per capita amount.
- The Community League Emerging Grant Program, which is within the Community League Operating Grant budget, assists in the establishment or development of a new community league, the re-establishment of a defunct or previously amalgamated community league or merging of two or more existing community leagues. The maximum grant awarded is \$5,000

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and a community league is eligible for this once in its lifetime. At this time this program will remain as it is currently offered.

- The Community League Infrastructure Program was developed in 2011 during the Tripartite License Agreement discussions with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. The Tripartite License Agreement is a land-use agreement between the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and individual community leagues.
 - The Community League Infrastructure Program is a 50:50 cost-sharing funding program for capital costs designed to preserve and enhance existing community league facilities that provide an overall benefit to the community and value to Edmontonians, as well as support for the building of new amenities.
 - The grant program is allocated to three types of projects: Planning, Standard (Small, Medium and Large) and Completed. City Administration worked with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues as part of the development of the grant program to do visual building assessments on all community league buildings to identify health and safety concerns and infrastructure issues that leagues should plan to address through the grant program.
 - In 2021, City Administration, in consultation with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, paused the “large” category of project funding and the Community League Infrastructure Program funding was reduced by \$500,000 from \$2.75 million to \$2.25 million for 2021 and 2022 to in order to assist the City with addressing the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the funding will return to the full amount of \$2.75 million.

Efficiencies in Application Processes

Over the years, improvements to the application processes have been part of the annual review process. City Administration and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues aim to ensure that application processes are straightforward and meet accountability expectations. Support is available for leagues that need help with their applications through their Neighbourhood Resource Coordinator, the Grants Office and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.

In 2021, with funding provided through a service package, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues worked with City Administration to introduce a database that has increased efficiencies in the collection of information. The database collects information from each league, such as:

- Number of volunteers and volunteer hours
- Direct and Indirect programming offered
- Membership
- Facility usage - program, event and rental use

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- Financial reporting
- Methods of engagement
- League priorities

This information from leagues has streamlined processes and is available to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and City Administration. It assists applicants with their operating grant application, provides key information for the Federation to report on as part of the Tripartite Agreement and supports the Federation in strategic planning.

Improving Equity

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and City Administration have discussed a number of opportunities to improve access to and equity within the Community League Grant Programs.

The Community League Operating Grant funding formula favours community leagues that have a higher population base and currently does not consider the number of programs/services they offer, their actual operating costs and/or their willingness to provide access to their space for not-for-profit and multicultural groups.

Since the inception of the Community League Infrastructure Program in 2011, 25 out of 162 community leagues have never applied to or received these funds. Some community leagues have completed multiple infrastructure projects while others have not completed any. There are many possible reasons for leagues not applying for this program including not having a building, meeting the eligibility requirements, not having enough volunteers to support the efforts, inability to raise the matching funds or the leagues may have simply chosen not to complete any improvements. In contrast, some community leagues have applied for multiple projects over the course of the grant program.

Other inequities relate to the physical infrastructure across the city. In some neighbourhoods, where community volunteers are active, connected and engaged, community owned amenities like rinks and community gardens are in place and well maintained by the community. Those same communities also often have newer playgrounds and other amenities in existence through leveraging the current Neighbourhood Parks Development Program which is a cost share program to build new or renew existing park infrastructure that is owned and maintained by the City after being constructed. In other neighbourhoods, those same amenities are in varying conditions. Communities that could most benefit from having access to community amenities are in many cases unable to support these initiatives, due to barriers the local residents may face, and are therefore the ones where this infrastructure is absent or in the greatest need of upgrade or repair.

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Before being in a position to make a strong recommendation of how to move forward with adapting the grant programs to be more equitable, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues would need to socialize proposed program change options to their membership.

The following options could be implemented to help address inequity concerns:

Community League Operating Grant

- Develop two fundings streams: one for the operating cost of league amenities, based on their financial reporting submitted to allow the basic facility operating costs to be covered. The second stream could be for league engagement to support programs and activities.
 - The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues is looking at how best to prioritize available budget funding and how to reallocate existing funding to better meet immediate needs of leagues.
- Further review of the Community League Operating Grant to achieve better alignment with how other City operating grants are provided for consistency in providing community funding.

Community League Infrastructure Grant

Considerations being discussed:

- Collect data on amenities of all the community leagues and identify what is available throughout the city. This could be through the database or by employing other approaches.
- Completing updated building assessments to understand the current condition of existing infrastructure.
- Increase collaboration between leagues to work together to add needed amenities.
- Alignment to the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning, specifically around neighbourhood amenities.
- Support development of community amenities in neighbourhoods that do not have the capacity, volunteers and/or money, to do that on their own.

Following this, the Community League Infrastructure Program grant could be adjusted in various ways including: changing eligibility criteria, matching value and assessment criteria.

Related Park and Facility Development Information

In addition to the Community League Grants programs, the Community Parks Framework is a proposed new approach the City is considering to support the development and renewal of community park amenities. The proposed framework intends to replace the Neighbourhood Park Development Program which was initiated in 1983. The transition to this new approach is anticipated to begin in 2023 and has been incorporated into the budget considerations for 2023 to 2026. The Community Parks Framework will ensure equitable access to community park

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amenities and aims to support the City's investment in development and renewal of amenities by optimizing long-term, data-driven, strategic investment. Under the proposed framework, new and renewed park assets such as playgrounds will be funded entirely by the City, whereas the Neighbourhood Park Development Program is cost-shared with communities.

The Community-Led Construction Projects process is also available to communities when planning and constructing projects and remains in place through the transition to the Community Parks Framework. New and renewed park assets delivered through this program are initiated, planned, constructed, operated and maintained entirely by communities. City project managers are assigned to provide professional project support free of charge, such as for budget planning, scheduling, design and construction oversight, providing value to communities so as to reduce project risk and liability.

The proposed Community Parks Framework will align with the City policies such as [The City Plan](#), [ConnectEdmonton](#), [Breathe](#), GBA+ and the Infrastructure Asset Management Policy to guide strategic development and renewal in a consistent, equitable and responsible manner. Engagement on the framework took place May through July 2022 with a focus placed on stakeholder engagement (Community Leagues, School Boards, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, etc). Funding to transition the Neighbourhood Parks Development Program and initiate the Community Parks Framework is currently being advanced as part of the 2023-2026 budget process.

Budget/Financial Implications

On April 13, 2022, Executive Committee approved a motion that Administration prepare an unfunded service package for the Community League Operating Grant and Community League Infrastructure Program and return to the 2023 - 2026 budget deliberations. Budgetary impacts have not yet been calculated so it is premature to bring the unfunded service package forward at this time.

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues will work with Administration throughout the next year to re-establish grant criteria and parameters that achieve a more equitable distribution of funding to the community leagues. Any budget implications, including inflationary impacts and new funding required to support the updated grant program, will be brought forward for consideration during a future Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

This report was drafted in consultation with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. Many of the options identified have not yet been tested with their membership and therefore more follow up will be required. This engagement may also provide other ideas and options to be

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considered, before the Community League Operating Grant and Community League Infrastructure Program are updated.

GBA+

Some of the areas for further exploration include understanding who is currently benefiting from the Community League funding model and who is not:

- Newer communities with larger boundaries and higher population within the current funding structure benefit. Older more mature communities with smaller boundaries and fewer residents tend to receive fewer dollars, however, these community leagues and the amenities they have support the City in achieving its goal of 15 minute communities. These funds are not allocated based on the number of programs offered, number of people participating or any other variables.
- Newcomers often settle within neighbourhoods where the cost of living is affordable and access to services greatest. For many of these newcomer communities, the community league system is not a familiar system and therefore these residents may be excluded from the benefits that come from the community league system.
- Community leagues are heavily reliant on volunteers and formal volunteer positions. This focus favours groups with extensive social networks, time and money.
- Lower income families living in these communities are often unable to volunteer in community league events as they may not have surplus time, income and ability. However, these families would benefit equally from activities if that was taken into consideration by leagues when considering how funds are allocated within their budgets.
- Community leagues may be perceived as focusing on programming which represents members who can afford membership and on volunteers who commit time and energy.