

COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTMENT REPORTING

Appointment: Explore Edmonton Corporation

Classification: Corporations

Councillor(s): Mayor Amarjeet Sohi

Reporting Period: November 1, 2022 - April 30, 2023

Mandate

Explore Edmonton Corporation works in collaboration with tourism industry partners to showcase Alberta's capital city to the world. Explore Edmonton supports Edmonton's hotels, attractions and businesses that depend on tourism for their success through providing solutions to drive more visits, longer stays and increased tourism spending, including through event attraction. Explore Edmonton also offers a variety of programs and services in order to help industry partners to thrive and prosper, and manages the Expo Centre and the Convention Centre.

Background

Explore Edmonton Corporation is an agency of the City of Edmonton, governed by a board of directors. Shared leadership, partnerships and a collaborative approach to shared outcomes are essential for ultimate success in building a prosperous city and region. Explore Edmonton's strategy aligns with the City of Edmonton's economic development plans and goals. As a key partner in Edmonton's economic development ecosystem, their work includes strategic collaboration to maximize the collective economic and social impacts to the overall prosperity of Edmonton.

In 2020 the organization was shifted from the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) model into Explore Edmonton Co., reflecting the significant change in the organization's mandate which involved a greater focus on tourism and venue management and a shift away from innovation, start-up and business attraction and retention.

During the 2023-2026 budget process with the City of Edmonton, Explore Edmonton submitted a request to increase base funding from \$11.7 million to \$17.8 million, \$18.6 million, \$17.8 million and \$19.0 million in 2023 through 2026. The increase in base funding was rationalized to address parts of the scope of work that were unfunded and not accounted for when the original base funding was set at \$11.7 million in 2020. This included stewardship of the Northlands assets, producing signature events such as K-Days and Farmfair International, destination development and a stronger focus on local marketing.

A \$5 million increase to Explore Edmonton's base funding was approved on a one-time basis for 2023.

Shared Priorities and Advocacy Areas

Explore Edmonton and the City of Edmonton work together, alongside partners such as other orders of government, not-for profits, industry partners and the business community to fulfill shared strategic priorities:

- City of Edmonton's ConnectEdmonton strategic goal of Regional Prosperity
 - Promote Edmonton's position against other cities in a number of selected national and international rankings as a place to live, visit and invest in
 - Advance the Downtown Vibrancy Strategy in alignment with visitor attraction
- Edmonton Economic Action Plan
 - Action 2 - Align relevant economic development activities, reporting metrics, funding agreements, and grants to ensure we're working together as effectively as possible.
 - Action 19 - Develop and implement an integrated place brand strategy.
 - Action 24 - Utilize and coordinate the City of Edmonton's event strategy and Explore Edmonton Tourism Master Plan as tools to support investment by creating awareness about local opportunities for businesses and people.

Report on Activities, Projects, and Outcomes

Explore Edmonton's 2023 Business Plan defines actions to strengthen Edmonton experiences and events, increase awareness, attraction and satisfaction, as well as improving operational excellence with an aim to build economic and social prosperity as well as environmental sustainability.

2023 targets include raising the Economic Impact of the organization from \$182 million (2022 result) to \$201 million - noting that there are also indirect and induced economic impacts from this work.

Upcoming Events and Milestones

Other key actions planned for 2023:

- Leverage Juno Awards as a pilot program to reimagine and strengthen Destination Activation for major attracted events in Edmonton.
- As part of the 10-year Tourism Master Plan (TMP), 2022 has seen the roll-out of a 3-year tactical plan focused on executing the following strategies: (1) Indigenous Tourism Strategy (2) Regenerative Tourism Strategy and (3) Night-time Economy Strategy.
- In alignment with the TMP, build a Place Brand Strategy in collaboration with the City of Edmonton to strengthen the awareness and perception of Edmonton as a tourism destination.
- Support EIA and new route development with investment into marketing and trade support once routes are confirmed.
- Update major sport and cultural event attraction strategy.
- Modernize the Edmonton Convention Centre and EXPO Centre to remain competitive and to improve guest experience.
- Installation / expansion of Electric Vehicle charging capacity.

Evaluation

It is recommended that the City of Edmonton continue to work with Explore Edmonton to advance municipal priorities and areas of shared interest including how to advocate for the City's interests, and increasing the coordination and collaboration of our economic development agencies and partners.