

FAIR CALGARY- SINGLE ENTRY SERVICE MODEL UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fair Calgary Policy (CSPS019), approved by Council in 2006 November, ensures all Calgarians have equitable access to programs, services, facilities and public spaces directly provided by The City of Calgary (The City). In 2013 December, Council directed Administration to move forward with the design and implementation of a single-entry service model consolidating eight City subsidy application processes into one intake and approval system.

A consolidated and coordinated single-entry system will result in a more effective and efficient assessment of customer eligibility and will ensure the customer has easier access to subsidy programs and services. Through a dignified and more accessible process, customers will tell their story one time and once approved, be automatically informed of the programs and services for which they are eligible.

A phased implementation plan has been developed. The first phase of the single-entry system will be in place by 2014 December. In phase one, customers will apply as they do currently, however approval of their application will trigger income approval for The City's other low-income programs and services. The key benefit for Calgarians is they will only have to provide their information once, thereby streamlining the time and effort required to apply for income eligibility. On-line applications will also be introduced in phase one, increasing convenience to the customer, and improving internal efficiency by reducing red tape and the need to process duplicate applications across multiple programs.

Phase two will be launched by 2015 May, introducing new face-to-face locations to better meet customer needs. Phase two will support centralized application processing for a more coordinated approach. This, combined with the ability to apply on-line, will greatly enhance the choices available to citizens. Additionally, in phase two, an enhanced model of service will be introduced, leveraging existing Community & Neighbourhood Services (CNS) resources for Calgarians. This may include enhanced social supports such as community program information and referral, as well as more intensive support from social work staff. The addition of these resources significantly enhances services, to more fully engage customers with more complex needs.

It is anticipated that no new funding is required to deliver on the current service delivery proposal, as existing resources will be leveraged and repurposed from existing budgets. Any changes not accommodated within current business plans and budgets, relating primarily to the operations of the service delivery model, will be brought forward as part of Action Plan 2015-2018. This new single entry system will help increase accessibility, fairness and respect for low-income customers.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the SPC on Community and Protective Services recommend that Council receive this report for information.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

Previous Council direction for this policy is outlined in Attachment 1. This report responds to CPS2013-0814 Fair Calgary Policy Update report, directing Administration to report back to

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Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services, with a progress update on the single-entry system no later than 2014 June.

BACKGROUND

The City currently provides subsidized programming for low-income Calgarians through eight programs in five different business units. These programs include:

- Fee Assistance Program (Recreation);
- No Cost Spay/Neuter (Animal & Bylaw Services - ABS);
- City Links and the Property Tax Assistance Program (CNS);
- Three Low Income Transit Pass Programs for adults, youth and seniors (Transit); and
- Waste and Recycling Rebate (Waste & Recycling Services).

In 2013, over 61,000 applicants qualified for the eight subsidized programs and services. This represents an increase of approximately ten per cent from 2012. Several factors have influenced the increase from 2012 to 2013 including:

- The introduction of a low-income youth pass program;
- Raising of income eligibility levels in Transit from 75 per cent to 87.5 percent of the Low Income Cut Off (LICO); and
- Collaborative communication promoting all low-income programs.

Each of the programs currently operates a separate application and approval process. This results in fundamental challenges for low-income citizens seeking access to subsidized City programs and services. Challenges associated with the current state model include:

- Having to prove one's low-income status multiple times impacts the dignity of the customer;
- Having to submit multiple applications across multiple programs is cumbersome;
- Lack of awareness of all available programs and services limits customer access;
- Limited methods, hours and locations to submit applications restricts access; and, as a result,
- Long wait times to process applications in several programs prevent the customer from accessing services in a timely manner.

Additionally, the current state is ineffective for the Corporation as customer applications can be processed multiple times by staff in up to four business units. A single-entry service model will result in more effective and efficient assessment of eligibility to the various programs and will reflect a citizen-centric approach to customer service.

Participating business units have achieved several successes in moving towards the development of a single-entry system. Effective 2014 January, any citizen whose household income falls below 100 per cent of the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) is eligible for all major City subsidized programs. From a customer point-of-view, having consistent income criteria makes it easier to understand eligibility requirements and to access services. For example, someone who is eligible for a low-income transit pass will also be eligible for swimming lessons. Additionally, all programs have agreed on common requirements for proof of income, creating further consistency for the customer. Another success in moving toward a single-entry service

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model is increasing the awareness of available services and programs. This has been achieved through collaborative communication methods, namely a joint program brochure and the www.calgary.ca landing page.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

To deliver the single-entry service model, impacted business units have been working together to enhance their understanding of the current state and developed a collaborative service model. Information Technology (IT) and Human Resources have provided much needed expertise and support in advancing this important initiative.

A new database is being developed which provides the foundation for the single entry system. The database will deliver a true real-time, 'prove-income-only-once' IT system and provide for the long-term needs of our low-income customers. Development of the IT database aligns with the replacement of Transit's existing Low-Income Pass System (LIPS), which will provide significant data integration and sustainment cost savings in the future. Funding for the development of this IT system has been identified within current budgets.

A review of human resource requirements and realignment opportunities has been undertaken to effectively support the customer in a new single-entry service delivery model. This review has resulted in an approach that is flexible and scalable, mindful of future growth both in terms of customers, but also in terms of strategic program growth at The City.

The phased approach outlined herein is inclusive of the eight existing subsidy programs offered by The City including the Recreation Fee Assistance Program, No Cost Spay/Neuter, City Links, Property Tax Assistance Program (PTAP); three Low Income Transit Pass Programs for adults, youth and seniors; and Waste and Recycling Rebate. Once approved for Recreation Fee Assistance program, Calgarians will also be able to access program benefits provided by Fee Assistance Partners including YMCA, Talisman, Cardel, South Fish Creek Recreation Association, Vecova, Fort Calgary, Heritage Park, Calgary Zoo, TELUS Spark, Calgary Public Library and others. Incorporation of the IT system into partner infrastructure will be considered in future phases including the four new recreation facilities.

A Phased Approach

To ensure a timely and stable introduction of the single-entry system, a phased approach has been identified and Attachment 2 provides an overview of the implementation plan. All phases will realize the following benefits:

- The customer tells his/her story only once;
- One application is required to apply for all eight programs;
- Income eligibility approved once for all eligible programs;
- Increased choice for the customer in how they wish to submit an application;
- Increased awareness of subsidy programs;
- Seamless information sharing between programs; and
- Eliminated duplicate application processing.

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Phase One – Launch Single-Entry Service Model - 2014 December

Information Technology has been working closely with the eight programs to develop detailed business processes. The IT database will enable seamless information sharing between programs and facilitate the processing of a single application and single income approval for the customer. This database is on schedule to be implemented by 2014 December.

During phase one, service to customers will continue “as is”, with business units continuing to process and approve applications for customers as they do currently. However, the customer will be able to submit a single low-income application and be income-approved once, as programs will share approval information. Programs will be proactive in automatically informing the customer of the other opportunities for which they qualify and how to access the other programs. For example, income approved Transit customers will be informed that they automatically qualify for Recreation Fee Assistance and, depending on circumstances, may also qualify for No Cost Spay Neuter Services, Property Tax Assistance/Waste and Recycling Rebate and/or City Links. Programs will continue to assess their processes to ensure consistent communication and experience for the customer. A communication plan and strategy is currently being developed to inform citizens of the improvements to the system. Staff will be trained in the new service delivery model and IT database in advance of implementation.

Phase one will be resourced within the current business plans and budgets of the impacted business units which includes Animal and Bylaw Services, Community & Neighbourhood Services, Recreation and Transit.

Phase Two – Enhanced Service Offerings – 2015 May

In the next phase, two new face-to-face service counters will be set up based on the following criteria:

- geography that reflects a high-density of subsidy assistance customers;
- accessible to the public; and
- effective and efficient operational costs.

Density mapping for Calgary Transit and Recreation Fee Assistance customers has been completed and is provided in Attachment 3. This accounts for over 93 per cent of our current subsidy assistance customers. Considering these variables, current City facilities in the northeast and centre city are the most likely locations. During phase two, it is expected the front-facing service counters would operate six days a week, eight hours a day during non-standard weekday hours (e.g. noon - 8:00 p.m.) to allow flexibility and access for persons working during the day.

Phase two will build on the launch of the IT database and centralize the application processing and service delivery model within CNS. This approach will allow for the development of a knowledgeable, well-trained and flexible workforce that can process applications submitted through a front-facing service counter, mail, or on-line depending on the customer or program need. This will be a positive efficiency outcome that currently does not exist.

Coordinating the service delivery model also provides the unique opportunity to build on the experience and knowledge of service areas across CNS as outlined in Attachment 4. In

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In addition to submitting a subsidy application to access programs and services, customers can be linked to additional City or community-based resources through the existing information and expertise of InformCalgary or social support experience of crisis workers, depending on the specific needs of the customer. It is expected that most customers will access subsidy programs or services only, but this enhanced level of service will be available for those who require it.

It is estimated that up to 7.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) would be required to resource two new, front-facing, single-entry service counters. Discussions have occurred between participating business units to identify the best approach to allocate existing resources to operate and coordinate the new service delivery model, while still providing sufficient resources to sustain program operations. Based upon these discussions, it is anticipated that single entry phase two will be delivered using existing resources. If challenges arise through these initial, critical phases, Administration will report to Council on any significant challenges and associated mitigations strategies. If there are resource implications Administration will bring forward any requests as part of Action Plan 2015-2018.

Phase Three – Continuous Improvement - Beyond 2015

Phase three involves continuous program improvement. A more formal evaluation will be undertaken in 2016, to assess the need for future growth, and understand customer needs and preferences to provide better service. Collaborative work will continue to develop new, robust business processes, including realigning and redefining roles and responsibilities for service delivery including additional locations.

As the program evolves, new, emerging subsidy programs may be a good fit with the single entry model. A regular environmental scan of City and partner programs and services will be part of ongoing governance of the single-entry system. This will make certain that customers receive the maximum benefit, and promote internal effectiveness and efficiency.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Multiple stakeholders were consulted in the development of this report, including ABS, CNS (including the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative), Recreation and Transit. Consultation with 3-1-1 has occurred and will continue through the development of the single-entry system. The role of 3-1-1 will be important, and a coordinated approach will be critical for effective customer service. Externally, Fair Calgary Community Voices (an advocacy group of organizations that guides the actions of Fair Calgary), has been key to advising on the overall direction of the single-entry service model, and the implementation of the Fair Calgary policy. Further engagement with both internal and external stakeholders will continue as planning and implementation of the system continues.

Strategic Alignment

This report aligns with The City's 2020 Sustainability Direction, specifically, "By 2020, 100 per cent of low-income Calgarians have improved access to low-income programs and services."

This initiative aligns with the Customer Service Framework Commitment: 'Listen. Respect. Act.'

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Single entry aligns with Council's 2015-2018 Action Plan priorities, specifically, "A city of inspiring neighbourhoods" and "A well-run city".

A single-entry system reflects a citizen-centric approach to cutting red tape and transforming government by providing a simpler, more streamlined approach for the customer. The single-entry system is also consistent with elements of the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative, and its priorities — especially, "Everyone in Calgary can easily access the right supports, services and resources."

Administration continues to explore alignment with other "one-window-in" initiatives, including the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative's work towards a client-centred, common-service access platform. As well, Alberta Human Services is examining common-service access for its programs and services. Administration will continue to explore opportunities to build partnerships into future plans for The City's low-income single-entry system.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social: An equitable approach to the delivery of subsidized fees is consistent with an inclusive city. A single-entry service model will allow Calgarians to access services with dignity and respect, and in turn, become active community members. Increased access to subsidy programs and an enhanced support system contributes to an improved quality of life for the customer.

Environmental: Providing more access to the transit low-income pass program means less reliance on personal automobiles and reduces net emissions produced in Calgary.

Economic: A more consistent approach to providing reduced user-fees/fares, and single-entry to access low-income programs and services will contribute to a city where people want to live, work and invest. Enhanced access to City services will increase the ability of those on low incomes to improve their personal outcomes and increase their contributions to our city economically as well as socially.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There are no impacts to the current operating budget for phase one implementation.

It is estimated that in phase two, a total of 7.5 Full Time Equivalents would be required to fully resource two new front facing service counters six days per week, eight hours per day. The total FTE budget for the service delivery model is estimated to be approximately \$600,000. An additional \$70,000 in operational sustainment costs have also been identified. It is expected that the operating budget for phase two will be funded within current program budgets by realigning existing resources.

Any changes not accommodated within current business plans and budgets, relating primarily to the operations of the service delivery model, will be brought forward as part of Action Plan 2015-2018.

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A Council Innovation Fund grant of \$48,000 has supported this process, and provided needed resources for the development of new business processes for the single-entry system. Additionally, the fund has supported the development of the joint programs and services brochure. To date \$15,176 has been spent. Remaining funds will provide project support in 2014 Q3 and Q4 to develop detailed operational business processes and program requirements for phase two implementation by 2015 May.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

Capital costs, including the development of the IT database are within current budgets.

Risk Assessment

With an improved customer service-oriented, single-entry service model, there is a risk of increased program demand, and corresponding budget impacts of decreased revenue and/or increased cost of providing subsidies. This may result in unachieved revenue targets and/or longer waiting periods to receive programs and services. To mitigate this risk, impacted business units are collaborating to make sure resources are used effectively to deliver a robust and sustainable single-entry process. Any impacts that cannot be mitigated would be brought forward during future budget adjustment processes for Council's consideration.

A seamless transition to the new single-entry system could be a potential risk to the initiative. As with any change, clear and consistent communication with both internal and external stakeholders and customers on short and long term changes will be a critical component to the success of the transition.

Managing personal information may also be a risk and will be mitigated by undertaking a privacy impact assessment.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Administration has been working collaboratively to identify an implementation plan for an innovative single-entry system that results in maximum customer benefits in a timely fashion, while balancing the current resources available to deliver the program. In phase one the customer will notice significant changes including the ability to submit a single application to obtain income approval, and also be informed of the range of subsidy programs available. By 2015 May, full implementation will be introduced and include new geographically targeted service counters, offering more local face-to-face interactions for application processing and enhanced social supports. This is a significant service enhancement with the ultimate goal of more fully engaging citizens with complex needs to help improve their quality of life.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Previous Council Direction
2. Single-Entry System Overview
3. Subsidy Customer Density by Community
4. Enhanced Service Model