

CIVIC PARTNER 2019 ANNUAL REPORT SNAPSHOT- CALGARY SCIENCE CENTRE SOCIETY (TELUS SPARK)

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Purpose: Spark exists to entertain people of all ages in creative encounters with science, technology and engineering.

Vision: Through visits to Spark, and encounters with Spark in the community, people are lifted up by the positive power of curiosity, experimentation and problem-solving.

Registered Charity

One Calgary Line of Service: Economic Development and Tourism

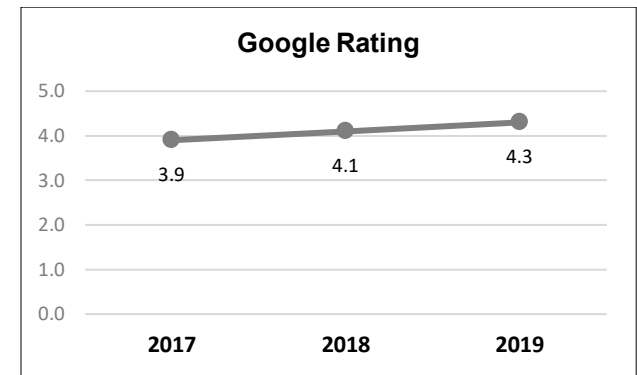
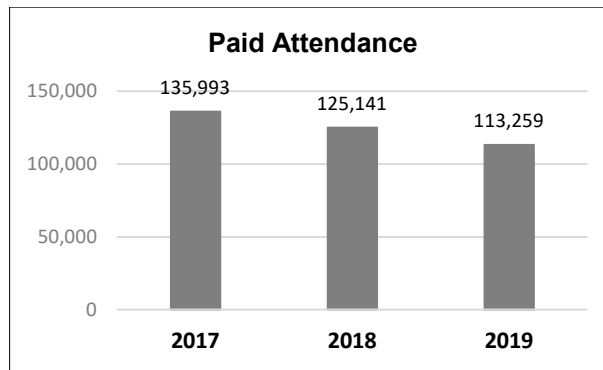
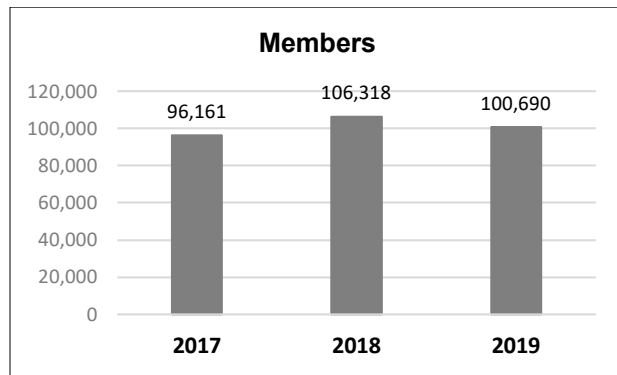
2019 City Investment

Operating Grant:\$2,139,562

Capital Grant: \$21,420

City owned asset? Yes

2019 Results



The story behind the numbers

- Stable memberships shows that the science centre well serves a specific community (families with children).
- The declining attendance tells the story of why we needed to launch a new Roadmap that explicitly mandates the science centre to embed and champion Calgary companies and technology. The science centre is a highly visible science and technology hub.
- TELUS Spark’s Google Rating is based on almost 4,000 reviews and reflects efforts to improve the visitor experience.

Current state 2020: COVID-19 impact

- TELUS Spark was closed from March 13 to July 10, leading to approximately \$4 million in lost revenue.
- Re-opening started in July with reduced capacity, reduced hours and outdoor exhibits. In September, the main and second floor galleries upstairs eatery opened. Timed ticketing and social distancing is in place, and attendance is about 25 per cent of regular attendance, and 18 per cent of regular membership levels.
- The changes initiated during the closure, including organizational design work, audit of program quality, commitment to engage a broader range of Calgarians, will be integrated into long term improvement of operations.

September service impact: Moderate

Current demand for service: Demand has increased notably.



Organizational Structure: Independent External Organization

Fiscal Year: December 31, 2019

Manage/Operate City Owned Asset: TELUS Spark

City 2019 Operating Grant: \$2,139,562

City 2019 Capital Grant: \$21,420

STRUCTURE

1. Vision, Mission and Mandate:

Purpose

Spark exists to entertain people of all ages in creative encounters with science, technology and engineering.

Vision

Through visits to Spark, and encounters with Spark in the community, people are lifted up by the positive power of curiosity, experimentation and problem-solving.

Mandate

Spark helps people of all ages fuel up for the future. At Spark, science, technology and engineering are embedded in cultural experiences. This creates new points of access to the disciplines at the core of innovation.

Aspiration

All Calgarians will take pride in their science centre. Through skilled and confident programming, Spark will attract visitors from around the city, province and globe, and immerse them in emotive experiences as they explore ever-evolving, quirky and thought-provoking galleries. By 2025, Spark will be one of the 10 most-worth-visiting science centres in the world.

2019 RESULTS

2. What key results did your organization achieve in 2019 that contributed to one or more of the One Calgary Citizen Priorities? (*A Prosperous City, A City of Safe & Inspiring Neighbourhoods, A Healthy and Green City, A Well Run City*)

A Prosperous City – In 2019, the Calgary science centre launched a new Roadmap for the 2020s, which explicitly mandates the science centre to embed and champion Calgary companies and technology. The science centre is a highly visible science and technology hub. *It committed in 2019 to renovations that will help shape a new narrative about Calgary that supports and grows local companies, and helps therefore to attract talent and new businesses beyond the energy sector.*

A City of Safe & Inspiring Neighbourhoods – Through a partnership with 58 social service agencies, Spark welcomed more than 15,000 Calgarians free of charge with a Community Access



Pass. In addition, Spark began conversations with potential partners including the Stampede, Rivers District, East Village, Zoo, Calgary Economic Development, Tourism Calgary and Travel Alberta about a riverside gondola project that would add a safe riverside tourism experience into the 10-year Destination Strategy for tourism sector development in Calgary. The gondola would link multiple attractions and high-density districts, and amplify the likelihood of retaining tourism traffic to Banff for a night in Calgary. It would solve a last-mile problem that the Calgary science centre will have when it is renovated and attracts a wider range of audiences. (The science centre is not accessible by bus, and challenging to access from the c-train with wheelchair, stroller or in inclement weather, in other words, a good part of the year ☺)

A Healthy and Green City – Spark is a LEED gold building. In 2019 we maintained this status with green cleaning products, fixing the grey water flushing system, and we explored a project to install solar panels in the parking lot. We also initiated programming designed to attract audiences that arrive along the bike path, and cheered on Calgarians in the early morning hours along the bike path by the science centre on the Ride Your Bike to Work Day.

A Well Run City – Spark strove to be a well run Civic Partner by engaging citizens in how the science centre evolves, and by using the dollars provided by taxpayers in efficient and value-added ways.

3. What quality improvement changes did you make, or operational efficiencies did you find in 2019?

Spark made a significant number of improvements across the (1) visitor experience (2) relevance to Calgarians and (3) internal culture. All were designed to add greater value to Calgary from its one and only science centre under the direction of a new CEO, hired in April 2019.

The list below outlines the area identified for quality improvements, followed by the names of the programs implemented to achieve these improvements.

Reach New Audiences

- Fiver Fridays -- \$5 admission for 18+ audiences for five Fridays during the back-to-school season with mental health and wellness theme
- Family Fridays -- \$5 admission for children after 5 pm on Friday. New extended hours every Friday night throughout the fall and winter

Make Each Visit Memorable

- Spark After Dark – new name and brand for monthly nights for adults
- Bill Nye, The Science Guy – partnership event with high-profile speaker at the Jubilee
- 50th Anniversary Moon Landing – community destination for important cultural event



- Body Worlds Animals – brought an international attraction

Be a Meeting Place for Science and Culture

- Tech Sector Programming – identified and supported the technology organizations in Calgary with special rates. Provided a free venue for events like the multi-partner Health Hackathon, and helped the Indigenous team preparing for the international First Robotics competition with free meeting space
- Indigenous Engagement Specialist – hired an Indigenous PhD candidate to implement Spark's commitment to reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

Make Each Visit Easy

- New Guest Experiences – signage, wayfinding, guide training all added and upgraded
- Simplified Membership – a complicated membership program was made simple and easy.

Connect Group Experiences with the Venue

- K-12 Education Program was audited in full to better connect the school trips to the venue
- Facility Rentals – a commitment was made to add “science centre flair” to every venue booking

Offer a Wider Range of Things to Do

- Bright Spark Design Group – a design group was assembled with external and internal members to renovate the galleries
- Good Chemistry Campaign -- a fundraising plan to support the above was initiated

4. What program, service or initiative was most successful in 2019? What lessons learned from this experience can inform future work?

The Spark store saw an almost doubling in revenue as a result of bringing in a new manager and director from a retail sales background. We are now applying these profitability principles to all elements of the operation. Not only will it increase the ability to self-generate revenue, it also improves the experience for visitors, which they express through their decisions to invest in products and services.

5. What is one success story from 2019 that demonstrates how you worked in partnership with other community, private or public organizations to achieve shared results for Calgary and Calgarians?



It is hard to select one. Perhaps the one with the highest long-term impact was the partnership with Thin Air Labs, a private organization, along with members from public organizations such as the University of Calgary, to align Spark’s renovation with Calgary’s cultural and economic goals.

RESOURCES

6. Please estimate how The City’s operating funding was allocated in 2019. Mark all areas that apply by approximate percentage. For example, 45% allocated to staffing costs, 10% to evaluation or research, etc.

%	Advertising and promotion
%	Programs or services
%	Office supplies and expenses
%	Professional and consulting fees
30%	Staff compensation, development and training
%	Fund development
38%	Purchased supplies and assets
32%	Facility maintenance
%	Evaluation or Research
%	<i>Other, please name:</i>

7. Did volunteers support your operations in 2019? If yes:

How many volunteers?	240
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	19,559

8. What resources did your organization leverage to support operations in 2019?

Spark generated/leveraged \$4.63 for every dollar of civic funding received from all other sources of revenue. General admission and membership revenues earned \$2.13, school and paid programs earned \$0.56, sponsorships and donations earned \$0.47 and rentals, food beverage, retail store combined earned \$1.44.

9. Using the chart below, please report your 2019 performance measures that demonstrate: how much you did, how well you did it, and how Calgarians are better off. Please identify through **BOLD font**, 1-2 measures that are most significant and could be presented in a chart.

	Performance Measure Name	2017 results	2018 results	2019 results	What story does this measure tell about your work?
How much did you do?	Paid attendance	135,993	125,141	113,259	The declining attendance tells the story of why we needed to launch a new Roadmap for the 2020s.
How well	Google rating	3.9	4.1	4.3	This story shows that hard work to improve the



did you do it?					visitor experience, based on almost 4,000 reviews.
How are Calgarians better off?	Memberships	96,161	106,318	100,690	The stable memberships shows that the science centre well serves a specific community (families with children)

10. Briefly describe how your key results in 2019 contributed to Council approved strategies (As applicable.) For example: Calgary in the new economy: An economic strategy for Calgary; Calgary Heritage Strategy; Climate Resiliency Strategy; Resilient Calgary; Enough for All poverty reduction strategy; Cultural Plan for Calgary; Downtown Strategy; Foundations for Hope: Calgary’s Corporate Affordable Housing Strategy; Open Spaces Plan; Recreation Master Plan; Sport for Life Policy.

Calgary in the new economy – launched new Roadmap to connect the science centre to the emerging tech economy

Cultural Plan for Calgary – building partnerships through the new Roadmap with more diverse communities as program partners and audiences

Resilient Calgary – develop social cohesion and next generation problem-solvers through a shared commitment to collaborative ways of knowing with science at the core

11. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2019 that you want to highlight?

- 2019 Finalist, Canadian Association of Science Centres, Best Program
- 2019 Finalists for the Venue of the Year in the Calgary in Meeting Planners International’s Empire Awards
- White Hat Award for Exceptional Service: Volunteer Tourism Hospitality – Taylor Eveleigh
- White Hat Award for Exceptional Service: Attraction – Donna Kipta
- Calgary’s Child 2020 Award for Best Museum for Families
- Calgary’s Child 2020 Award for Best Place to Take your Kids on a Crummy Day
- Calgary’s Child 2020 Honourable Mention for Best City of Calgary Tourist Attraction

12. CAPITAL AND ASSET MANAGEMENT (for Civic Partners managing City-owned assets)

Asset: Science Centre building at 220 St. George’s Drive

a) Provide a summary of your organization’s 2019 capital work, including specific lifecycle/maintenance projects or new capital projects.

- Two capital projects were approved in 2019 to be funded through the city including the repair of the underground cistern and the building automation upgrade.
- Only the cistern project was completed in 2019 and the building automation project was delayed into 2020

b) What funding did your organization leverage to support capital activities in 2019?



- The cistern project cost \$28,560 and 75% was funded through city funding and the additional 25% was funded through Spark's reserves
- The building automation project has a budget of \$200K with 75% to funded by the city and 25% from Spark's reserves.

COVID-19 UPDATE

13. Briefly describe the key impacts of COVID-19 on your operations to date.

The Calgary science centre was closed from March 13 to July 10. Four months of operations represents approximately \$4 million in lost revenue. Spark laid off all but 21 of its staff members within weeks of the closure.

Because of the federal wage subsidy, combined with the City of Calgary operating grant, we were able to bring back people and services. We were very active in the spring with online education support, and used the closure to "come back stronger." This included redoubling of focus on the renovation plan, audit of all education programs, a commitment to reach new audiences where they live, and a close look at the internal culture and capacity to build a world-class science centre in the next five years.

At the beginning of July, we started to re-open. With capacity caps, we welcomed guests in July and August to a feature exhibit and a new outdoor experience. On September 2, we re-opened the main floor galleries for the first time since the covid closure. On September 18, we re-opened the second floor galleries and the upstairs eatery. The entire science centre now re-open fully, with timed ticketing and social distancing in place. Attendance though is at about 25% of required to maintain operations without a subsidy.

14. What operational efficiencies did you implement to address the impact of COVID-19 up to September 1, 2020?

While closed, our operations director wound down the building so it was humming on a bare bones energy budget. It is a very efficient building to begin with, so this was impressive. About a month prior to re-opening to the public, we started to wind back up.

From an HR perspective, we used the opportunity to look at the organizational structure and its ability to deliver on the goal of becoming one of the top 10 most-worth-visiting science centres in the world by 2025. Roles that may have accreted over time but no longer directly supported the clear common goal were eliminated. A significant organizational design process was started, led by an expert consultant.

15. Were there any program or service changes made during the response to COVID-19 that you plan to integrate into longer term operations? For example, shifting some programming online, or modifications to your delivery model or operations.



Yes. The shift to more online programming will be continued as part of a new audience development program (it does not generate sufficient revenue at present to be operated as a sustainable program).

The changes that were initiated during the covid closure – such as the organizational design work, the audit of program quality, the commitment to engage a broader range of Calgarians – will be integrated into long term improvement of operations.

**COVID-19 Service and Impact Demand Update
Reporting for September 2020**

The following information is collected to align with City of Calgary report to Council on the current impact of COVID-19 on delivery of services and programs and may be shared with Council separately from the previous Civic Partner Annual Report Template content.

Service Impact: Please choose the one option below that best describes the impact of COVID-19 on your programs or service in the month of September 2020.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Negligible	Minimal to no impact on service. Service is currently operating close to normal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Minor	Continuing to provide programs and services but some coping strategies required – able to be addressed with existing strategies and resources.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moderate	Some challenges on ability to achieve objectives. Some delay. Some aspects of the programs or service are only being met in part.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Significant	Difficulties to achieve objectives. Delays or notable aspects of objectives not completed. Falling well-short of normal operations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Severe	Unable to meet normal objectives due to serious extended disruption. (e.g. full facility closure, major decrease in users)

Service Impact Narrative: Please briefly describe the impact of COVID-19 on your service for the month of September. You may want to include any major issues/events you experienced.

- We are NOT able to offer school programs in person.
- We are NOT able to offer public programming that gathers crowds.
- We are NOT able to fill the theatres within the building due to the need to distance, leading to some unhappy customers on busy days.
- We are NOT able to rent out the venue for conferences, weddings, events, except for groups of 50 or fewer.
- We ARE offering school programs online.
- We ARE offering off-site programming that people can partake in their own small cohorts (guided road trips, drive in).



- We ARE closing on Mondays and Tuesday for the first time since the science centre opened in this location, maybe even its history.

Current Demand for Service: At this point in time, based on what you know right now, what is your best estimate of the current demand for your service compared to typical demand?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Demand is steady, largely business as usual.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demand has increased notably.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demand has decreased notably.

Service Demand Narrative: Please provide a supporting narrative that describes how COVID-19 has impacted the demand on your programs or services for September 2020. This may include any new program or service impacts that your organization has faced in the past month.

Since the science centre re-opened in July 2020, attendance has been about 25% of regular paid attendance and 18% of regular membership levels. Worth noting: this is better than the North American industry average of 18% across the board.

This is likely due to two facts:

- 1) We had a popular Body Worlds exhibit in the atrium at the time of the covid closure. We stored it for four months and then re-opened with this feature on offer. The highly interactive and hands-on exhibit galleries stayed closed.
- 2) We hosted a summer Drive-In in the parking lot and it kept the science centre visible

As of September 18, Body Worlds will be gone and all of the exhibit halls will be open again.

New impacts are mounting.

No school field trips are allowed this fall and this dramatically affects one of the largest profit sources for the science centre.

It is unclear if visitors will be comfortable with hands-on exhibits even with covid modifications in place. With the current attendance numbers and the prospect of a fall surge in covid cases, the extension of the wage subsidy will be the primary factor affecting ability to offer services in 2021.