

**COVID Executive Response Group (CERG) Report to
Strategic Meeting of Council
2021 April 26**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED
C2021-0511
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COFLEX Summary of Initiatives

RECOMMENDATION(S):

Administration recommends that Council receive this report for the Corporate Record.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This report provides a summary of the initiatives that have received funding from the COFLEX program approved by Council to fund The City's non-emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? Initiatives that have received COFLEX funding are now actively helping to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on residents, businesses, and City staff.
- Why does it matter? Reducing the impact of the pandemic helps individuals, families, and businesses to cope with the pandemic now, and will also speed Calgary's recovery after the pandemic.
- The COVID-19 Executive Response Group (CERG) was delegated authority by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to approve COFLEX initiatives to provide a rapid and nimble response to the pandemic.
- The 2021 operating gap, currently projected at \$62 million, will be managed in coordination with the COFLEX program to support ongoing delivery of City services.
- As of April 2020, \$73 million in COFLEX funding has largely been allocated to 17 non-emergency response initiatives. A summary is provided in Attachment 2.
- Quarterly progress reports, along with monthly check-ins, will be provided by each COFLEX initiative to CERG to ensure that COFLEX funds are being used to the greatest effect.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A well-run city
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

During the mid-cycle budget adjustments in November 2020, Council approved the creation of the COFLEX Program to manage the allocation of Municipal Operating Support Transfer (MOST) grant funding. The program has also supported ongoing corporate expenditure management to provide operating support for the delivery of regular services. The briefing note and recommendations approved by Council are contained in Attachment 1.

COVID Executive Response Group

To enable rapid and flexible decision-making, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) delegated authority to assess and approve COFLEX applications to the COVID-19 Executive Response Group (CERG). While the Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) continues to lead The City's emergency response to the pandemic, CERG's mandate is focused on guiding non-emergency responses, and supporting CEMA as needed. The membership of CERG includes General Managers from several operational departments, the Chief Financial Officer, the City Manager's Office, the Business & Local Economy team, the Mayor's Office, and CEMA.

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MOST Funding & Regular Operating Support

Based on revenue impacts and additional costs caused by the pandemic, The City of Calgary received \$202 million in MOST funding from the Province. Approximately \$73 million of this funding has been set aside for new COFLEX initiatives to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on citizens and businesses, with the balance used to address the financial impacts from COVID in 2020 and the expected financial gap in 2021 (currently estimated at \$62 million but subject to change).

Administration continues to assess the impact of the pandemic on regular City operations and budget variances. CERG is carefully managing the allocation of COFLEX funding to help address further operating impacts should they occur during the third wave of the pandemic.

COFLEX Approval Process & Initiatives

Shortly after approval of the COFLEX Program by Council, CERG developed a simple intake process for business units to apply for COFLEX funding. An internal communication program also ensured broad awareness and understanding of the program and its objectives.

Consistent with Council direction, each application identified alignment with one or more of the four COFLEX priority areas. The four priority areas are listed below, with the proportion of the COFLEX funds allocated as of mid-April shown in brackets.

- Coping with COVID (38%)
The City is a nimble, constructive facilitator to help our people, community, and businesses safely cope during the pandemic.
- Supporting our Partners during COVID (37%)
The City lends a hand to our civic & community partners, enabling them to continue serving Calgarians during and after the pandemic.
- Preparing for Uncertainty around COVID (4%)
The City is proactive and flexible in its response if the length or severity of the pandemic are worse than expected.
- Planning for Life with / after COVID (21%)
The City is ready to move quickly to reactivate the city, its citizens and economy after the height of the pandemic.

From mid-December through mid-March, applications were assessed by CERG on a weekly basis. Funding decisions were communicated back to applicants in the same week to enable rapid implementation of each initiative. As cumulative applications approached the \$73 million in available funding in late March, CERG modified the intake process to conduct a preliminary review of applications each week. This was

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followed by a comprehensive assessment in mid-April to confirm which applications should receive the remaining funding.

As of mid-April, a total of 17 COFLEX initiatives have been approved by CERG and are at various stages of implementation. An overview table with descriptions and funding allocations is provided in Attachment 2. Several other COFLEX applications were denied because they did not clearly support the four focus areas, were already included in approved budgets, or would not achieve the desired benefits in the short term.

CERG will continue the flexible and rapid management approach to allocate remaining COFLEX funds through the third wave of the pandemic. The group will also provide ongoing support to CEMA and discuss other non-emergency pandemic response measures as needed.

Ongoing COFLEX Monitoring

CERG will monitor the progress of each COFLEX initiative to ensure that the funds are being used to greatest effect, without disrupting the operational flexibility of each business unit implementing the initiatives. A process is already in place for CERG to review quarterly status reports on each initiative, including progress on spending COFLEX funds in a timely manner and identification of any potential risks. Informal updates with project managers for each initiative will also occur on a monthly basis to ensure the timely sharing of information as the pandemic continues to evolve in the coming months.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- ☐ Public Engagement was undertaken
- ☐ Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- ☒ Public/Stakeholders were informed
- ☒ Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

As required, individual business units have engaged stakeholders on the development and implementation of their COFLEX initiatives. To ensure that COFLEX initiatives are being implemented quickly and nimbly, this engagement has not been centrally managed by CERG. A representative from the Business & Local Economy team is also a member of CERG and provides regular insights into the needs of local businesses in Calgary.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The extended duration of the pandemic has had significant impacts on people's physical activity, social interactions, and financial stability. Many COFLEX initiatives are designed to create opportunities for responsible physical activity, social interactions, and wellbeing support.

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Several COFLEX initiatives also address the impacts of social disorder that have increased over the course of the pandemic.

Environmental

Several initiatives are designed to increase the use of walking and cycling (e.g., adaptive roadways) and to support public transit during and after the pandemic.

Economic

Many COFLEX initiatives are focused on providing short-term relief to businesses and civic & community partners that have been significantly impacted by public health restrictions since the start of the pandemic. These relief efforts are also designed to support economic recovery after the pandemic by improving resilience for local businesses and building certainty for businesses to begin investing in Calgary's future.

Service and Financial Implications

Other: Primarily no financial impact, with some cost avoidance

The use of the MOST funding, along with operational efficiencies in response to the pandemic, means that COFLEX initiatives are being implemented without any financial impact to The City. In several cases, such as waiving fees, the use of COFLEX funding allows The City to avoid impacting regular operating budgets or reserves.

RISK

With the previous direction to proceed with the COFLEX program from Council, Administration is successfully implementing a wide range of initiatives to help address the impacts of the pandemic. Ongoing accountability will be maintained through the quarterly reporting process, along with informal monthly check-ins, allowing CERG to mitigate risks to any initiatives as they begin to emerge. CERG is carefully managing the remaining COFLEX funds to help address additional operating budget variances should they occur due to the third wave of the pandemic.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Summary of COFLEX Initiatives and Funding Allocations

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan	Transportation / CERG Chair	Approve
CERG Members	Various	Consult