

FAIR CALGARY POLICY UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fair Calgary Policy ensures all Calgarians have equitable access to programs, services, facilities and public spaces directly provided by The City of Calgary. The policy was approved by Council in 2006 November and this report provides an update on significant developments achieved in 2013. Last year over 45,000 Calgarians accessed low-income programs and services provided by The City.

Recently, there have been three major advancements through Fair Calgary. First, enhanced service to youth, through the low-income transit pass, is currently being piloted. Second, The City will move all major programs to 100 per cent of the pre-tax low income cut-off (LICO) by 2014 January. Thirdly, work has advanced on a single-entry system to simplify access to low-income programs by aligning all participating business units into one coordinated process. This has been supported through the establishment of common eligibility criteria, common proofs of income and the use of common marketing tools. Seven options were analyzed based on their ability to increase accessibility, promote dignity, improve customer service and be effective and efficient. Based on this analysis a new City Application Architecture Framework system is the preferred option. It is anticipated that costs associated with the development of this new system can be accommodated within approved budgets.

While much has been accomplished in 2013 towards the single-entry system, work remains to complete the detailed service delivery model including business processes and roles and responsibilities associated with implementing the system. As an interim step, work is underway to create and implement a common application form for all low-income City programs and services, by 2014 Q1. Additionally, business units including Calgary Transit, Recreation, Animal & Bylaw Services (ABS), and Community & Neighbourhood Services (CNS), are committed to working together to design the implementation phase of the system. It is anticipated the new service delivery model will be designed by 2014 Q1 with a phased in implementation schedule through 2014. These foundations will be built upon and evaluated, including planning for continual growth through 2015.

This new single-entry system will reflect a citizen-centric approach to customer service by providing a more dignified approach to accessing subsidized services for low-income Calgarians and will be a significant departure from current business practices.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the SPC on Community and Protective Services recommend that Council direct Administration to report back to Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services with a progress update on the single-entry system no later than 2014 June.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES, DATED 2013 DECEMBER 06:

That the Administration Recommendation contained Report CPS2013-0814 be approved.

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Excerpt from the Minutes of the SPC on Community and Protective Services, dated 2013 December 06:

“Further, that the Legislative Assistant attach the e-mailed presentation to Report CPS2013-0814, prior to being forwarded to Council.”

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

Attachment 1 outlines the previous Council direction for this policy. This report responds to the direction of CPS2012-0852 to report to the SPC on Community and Protective Services regarding the progress of the Fair Calgary Policy.

BACKGROUND

The goal of the Fair Calgary Policy is to ensure effective and efficient access to City services for all Calgarians following the principles of dignity, equity, accessibility and availability. To further support and strengthen Calgary's social infrastructure, Administration has been working with internal and external stakeholders to implement Fair Calgary. The policy provides a framework to improve participation in The City's programs and services and a lens to identify areas for improvement. The low-income programs and services offered by The City have significant reach. Of the approximately 118,000 low-income individuals in Calgary, over 45,000 accessed at least one of The City's subsidized program or service offerings in 2012.

On 2012 December 17 Council directed Administration to develop and implement a pilot program for a low-income transit pass option for youth. Since the pilot was introduced 1,153 youth have been approved for the program. Additionally, Transit has worked with the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) to provide an estimated 1,200 Low Income Youth monthly passes to be distributed through the CBE's Fee Waiver program to increase access. Transit will continue the Youth Low Income Monthly Pass through 2014 and will include it as part of the Fare Strategy review due in a report to the SPC on Transportation and Transit in 2014 February.

Secondly, effective 2013 January, Council approved an increase in income-eligibility to 87.5 per cent of LICO. Since that approval the reach of the regular monthly Low Income Pass program has increased. Comparing 2012 October with 2013 October, 4,492 more individuals applied and were assessed as eligible for the program. Furthermore as approved by Council through report PFC2013-0655 Senior Transit Pass Update Report, Transit will move to 100 per cent LICO income eligibility effective 2014 January. This will mean an additional 22,500 low income Calgarians will be eligible for the pass program.

In addition to the changes implemented by Calgary Transit, work has continued on the single-entry system. Engagement with stakeholders identified fundamental challenges for low-income citizens seeking access to subsidized City programs and services. By using the Fair Calgary policy as a guide, along with the customer service framework, Administration has identified the following areas for improvement:

- having to prove one's low-income status multiple times across multiple programs and multiple locations is an undignified process for the customer;
- lack of awareness of all available programs and services limits customer access;

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- limited locations, hours and methods 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.

A single-entry system will result in more effective and efficient assessment of eligibility to the various programs and will reflect a citizen-centric approach to customer service.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Participating business units, including Calgary Transit, Recreation, ABS and CNS, have achieved a number of successes in moving towards the development of a single-entry system. First, effective 2014 January, any citizen whose household income falls below 100 per cent of LICO will be eligible for all major City low-income programs. This means access for more Calgarians and provides the foundation for single-entry across all City 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. Second, all programs have agreed on common proofs of income (Attachment 2), creating further consistency for the customer.

Another success in moving toward a single-entry system is increasing the awareness of available services and programs. Awareness has been enhanced through:

- Business units' collaboration on the production of the Low-Income Programs and Services brochure (Attachment 3). To date, 25,000 brochures have been distributed in the community through partner agencies, community events and at fee subsidy "points-of-sale" by participating City business units.
- The brochure has been complemented with a social media campaign and the development of a single landing page on calgary.ca. This on-line presence provides a single place for citizens to go for information on low-income programs and services. Since 2013 August, this page has received over 2,200 visits and the Low-Income Programs and Services brochure, available in PDF, has been downloaded almost 700 times in the last 90 days.

Recommended Option for a Single-Entry System

Participating business units have developed a business process model for a fully integrated single-entry system that allows the low-income customer to access City services with dignity and respect. Seven options were considered for their suitability to address the long-term needs of a single-entry system. The options considered include:

1. Status quo
2. A photo ID card
3. 311 Customer Service Request system
4. InfoPath/SharePoint
5. Re-purposing Transit's current Low-Income Pass System (LIPS)
6. A new IBM Business Process Management System
7. A new City Application Architecture Framework system (recommended)

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To varying degrees, each option would enhance information sharing, which is the essential link between a single-entry system and the business units providing the programs and services. However, most of the options lacked integration between data systems, resulting in inefficient processes and delayed application processing. Additionally, existing information systems are nearing the end of their life-cycle which further complicates the design of the new system.

Therefore, based on the results of the rigorous business process exercise, it was determined that the only option that could accommodate all of the complex requirements was option 7. A new architecture framework system enables customized development in a robust environment and delivery of a true real-time, 'prove-income-only-once' system. This is the only option that can incorporate both the common low-income check processes, and the necessary unique processes of the individual programs into one technological solution. This option therefore provides for the long-term needs of an effective single-entry system. A detailed overview of the options and recommended solution is contained in Attachment 4, Management Program System Recommended Solution.

Furthermore, this new architecture framework provides the opportunity to integrate with the replacement of Transit's existing Low-income Pass System (LIPS), which provides significant data integration with sustainment cost savings in the future. It is estimated this long-term solution could be developed over the next six to nine months. An application has been submitted to the Corporate Technology Committee to provide funding within approved budgets for the recommended technological solution. Any additional costs associated with the design of the system will be covered through approved business unit budgets.

Next Steps

In the short-term, development of a common low-income application form is underway. This will allow the same application to be submitted for multiple services and programs. This common application represents another step in the creation of a single-entry system and a foundation for future technological solutions. The common application is currently being developed with business units and is scheduled to be implemented in 2014 March.

In addition to a technological solution, a comprehensive service delivery model is currently being developed. Key requirements for the service delivery model have been identified and include:

- Targeted neighbourhood locations for face-to-face application and approval during non-standard hours of operation;
- Multiple forms of access (including on-line);
- Shortened response times for application approvals;
- Streamlined annual renewal process;
- Improved accessibility through more effective communication with the customer about the programs and services they are eligible to receive;
- Appropriate staffing to deliver all aspects of the low-income application review and approval; and
- Seamless information sharing across programs, facilitating improved customer access to the programs and services.

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To achieve this, substantial change to existing internal business processes are required, including realigning and redefining roles and responsibilities. To mitigate budget implications, several opportunities have been identified. First, re-alignment within CNS will provide additional resources and strong leadership for the new service delivery model. Additionally, partnerships and resource sharing between the involved business units will provide resources to operate and coordinate the new model. In an update to Council, no later than 2014 June, Administration will identify specifics of the new service delivery model including resource deployment, specific roles and identified locations for single-entry access. Any changes not accommodated within current business plans and budgets will be brought forward for Council's consideration as part of the 2015-2018 Business Planning and Budget Cycle (BPBC4).

The movement to a single-entry system will provide improved customer service for Calgarians accessing low-income programs and services. The change will impact the business plans of several business units including ABS, CNS, Calgary Transit and Recreation and to a lesser extent Waste and Recycling Services. These changes will involve the re-allocation of resources among participating business units to fulfill the new, single-entry mandate. Building on successes, the following milestones are anticipated:

- 2014 Q1: A common application form will be introduced across all programs.
- 2014 Q1 and Q2: The service model will be developed including a human resource review of new positions, the integration of existing staff into their new role and identification of preliminary locations to offer the new service.
- 2014 Q3: The single entry system will be phased in and piloted. Over this same time frame the supporting technological infrastructure will be developed.
- 2014 Q4: These concurrent processes will culminate in the launch of a single-entry system with adjustments to address any service gaps presented during BPBC4.
- 2015: Continued enhancement, evaluation and expansion will occur.

Finally, Administration continues to ensure alignment with other "one-window-in initiatives". The Fair Calgary single-entry proposal is consistent with the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative's (CPRI) work towards a client-centred, common-service access platform. The Government of Alberta is also examining common-service access for its programs and services. Administration will continue to explore opportunities to build partnerships into future plans for a City of Calgary low-income single-entry system.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Multiple stakeholders were consulted in the development of this report. Internally, ABS, CNS (including CPRI), Recreation and Transit were consulted. Externally, Fair Calgary Community Voices (an advocacy group of organizations set up to guide the actions of Fair Calgary) has met with Administration regularly to provide feedback on priorities for enhanced access to low-income programs and services. Further engagement with both internal and external stakeholders will continue as implementation of the Fair Calgary policy continues, including the single-entry system.

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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." The establishment of consistent customer service standards and focus on improved access for application processing aligns with the Corporate Customer Service Framework. A single-entry system reflects a citizen-centric approach to cutting red tape and transforming government, providing a simpler, more streamlined approach for the customer. The single-entry system is also consistent with elements of the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI), specifically the concepts of community hubs and "One Story".

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

An equitable approach to the delivery of subsidized fees is consistent with an inclusive city. A single-entry system will allow marginalized Calgarians to access services with dignity and in turn become active members in their communities.

Environmental

No implications are associated with this report.

Economic

A more consistent approach to the provision of 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.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

A Council Innovation Fund grant of \$48,000 has supported business process management for the single entry system and development of the joint programs and services brochure. To date \$12,606 has been spent. The remaining \$35,394 will continue to support business process management expertise for the next phase in the development of a detailed service delivery model, as well as the on-going development of a common application form. An update on the progress of a fully integrated system, including budget requirements, will be provided no later than 2014 June. Any changes not accommodated within current business plans and budgets, relating primarily to the actual operations of the service delivery model associated with the system, will be brought forward as part of BPBC4 in 2014 November.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

With anticipated approval of funding from the IT development pool, the costs associated with the development of the recommended technological solution are within current program budgets. The costs for developing a single-entry system are approximately \$425,000. In addition, for efficiency, two specific programs requiring technical solutions will also be included in this development: \$175,000 for development of an integrated version of Transit's LIPS and \$150,000 for the integration of Property Tax Assistance program software (replacing current ineffective spreadsheets). Total costs are \$750,000 for the entire integrated system.

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Risk Assessment

Without an effective resource allocation plan current customer service challenges will be inherited by the new single-entry system and result in only minimal gains for the customer. To mitigate this risk, all business units will collaborate to ensure resources are used effectively to deliver a robust and sustainable single-entry process.

As with any change, clear and consistent communication with both internal and external stakeholders on short and long-term changes will be a critical component to facilitate a seamless transition to a single-entry system for business units and customers.

With an improved customer service-oriented single-entry system there is a risk of increased program demand and corresponding budget impacts from revenue-producing business units. Any impacts would be brought forward during budget adjustment processes for Council's consideration.

A privacy impact assessment will be undertaken to mitigate any risks associated with managing personal information.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

A single-entry system will provide easier and more dignified access to subsidized City programs and services for low-income Calgarians. Implementing this integrated single-entry system is a departure from current business practices and involves significant organizational as well as technological change. Therefore a simplified common application form across low-income programs is recommended in the interim, while a fully-integrated single-entry system is developed.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Previous Council Direction
2. The City of Calgary Low-Income Programs and Services - Common Proofs of Income Eligibility
3. Low-income Programs and Services Brochure
4. Fair Calgary Subsidy Assistance Management Program System Recommended Solution
5. **Public Submission**