



**THE CITY OF CALGARY  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

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**Application to the City of Calgary Council Innovation Fund**

**Date:** May 24, 2018

**Name of Project:**

Improving budget transparency: Helping Calgarians understand how taxes are invested.

**Sponsor:** Councillor Peter Demong

**Phone Number:** 1-403-268-2430

**Address:** Office of the Councillors, 4 Floor Administration Building, 313-7 Avenue S.E.

**Affected Business Unit(s) and/or Departments:** One Calgary Program team, Finance

**Amount of Funds Requested:** \$150,000

**Summary Description of Project (Max 1 page)**

While Calgarians' interest in knowing how their property tax dollars are invested has remained high over the past four years (in recent citizens satisfaction surveys 92%-93% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement), the percentage of Calgarians who believe The City is doing a "good job" in meeting this interest continues to go down: in 2014 67% of citizens agreed or strongly agreed The City was doing "a good job of providing citizens with information about how their property tax dollars are invested in various City services," while in 2017, 60% of citizens agreed or strongly agreed, representing a 7-point drop in three years.

Through the One Calgary Program, the 2019-2022 business cycle will focus on improving the transparency of how citizen's tax dollars are invested by aligning plans and budgets to services The City provides, instead of departments. This will allow us to put the value citizens perceive from the services offered at the centre of the next business cycle, and create a strong customer/citizen focus. Integrated with the 2019-2022 service plans and budgets is a suite of performance measures and indicators to monitor the values created by City services and ensure accountability towards a customer focus. This will allow The City to continuously adjust and improve its services to respond not only to citizen needs and expectations, but also changing circumstances.

With that work forming, current City communication channels, including the property tax bill and online tools and information such as The City's service value story, and property tax calculator can be integrated and enhanced to provide improved transparency with tax dollars that reflects the work being done by the One Calgary Program. Resources are required to better define The City's value for tax dollars story, and update and improve the current information and online tools to be as useful and engaging as possible in telling this story. Once these improvements have been made, a robust marketing push will accompany the roll-out to ensure citizens are aware of the new resources and updated information.

The deadline for applications to the City of Calgary Innovation Fund is the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month. Applications can be dropped off at the Mayor's Office. All applications will be reviewed at the next Priorities and Finance Committee (PFC) meeting. PFC will then forward the proposal, along with a recommendation, to Council to be voted on at the next scheduled Council meeting.





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#### **Proposed Timeline (including proposed date of final report):**

We are looking to complete this work for December 2018. Below are the high-level timelines identified for this scope of work.

Date	Milestone	Deliverable
June 18, 2018	Presentation to Council during Strategic Session of Council	Augmenting the current live site: Background, why the transformation, what we heard and plan to move the online tax calculator to align to services.
June 30, 2018	Soft launch, some elements go live	What we heard pages: Build Citizen Satisfaction and Engage study into the site and story.
September 2018	Service information, first layer	High level service information available for citizens prior to Standing Policy Committee meetings.
November 2018	Full site launch	Includes service landing pages, service performance pages etc.

#### **How does this project meet the criteria of the fund as set out in the Terms of Reference for the Council Innovation Fund?**

Referencing, “One-time start-up or ‘seed’ funds for initiatives or programs which will support or contribute to Council’s priorities”, we believe this work supports Council’s priority of “A Well-Run City”. Specifically, “...the need to speak in a collective voice that improves communication with Calgarians to help them understand: the services The City delivers; how their taxes are invested; that their municipal government functions to service Calgarians; and that their municipal government is well-run and efficient.”

By clearly defining The City’s “value story” and using modern tools online, we can better communicate the value of our services and be transparent about how the tax dollars of Calgarians are invested, in a consistent way. Building a renewed online story and improving our financial information and tools, including the online tax calculator, will enable The City to create awareness of our services, the value for tax dollars and our success along the way. Furthermore, these tools and information can be used by both Council and Administration in their external communications with citizens, customers and communities to provide consistent and engaging information to Calgarians.

#### **What does success look like and how will it be measured?**

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We see several success metrics: firstly, citizens will have better and more transparent information on how their property tax dollars are invested, and the resulting service value. Secondly, staff will be able to provide information in a more citizen-centric way which will improve information flow to citizens and customers. Lastly, building out a stronger online story about the services The City provides will enable a forum for future related information to be pushed out in a more efficient way through a channel Calgarians can access from anywhere, any time.

Please see **Attachment 2** for an overview of the proposed work including goals, proposed work and cost breakdown.



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