



## **Civic Partner Operating Grant Program Civic Partner Q&A from May 27, 2024**

Thank you to everyone who attended the Civic Partner Operating Grant Program (the Program) workshop on May 27th. This Questions and Answers (Q&A) document has been compiled to address the questions raised during the workshop and the accompanying What We Heard Report (WWHR) provides a detailed summary of feedback collected from Civic Partners during the workshop.

Sharing the WWHR reflects our commitment to transparency and collaboration and helps ensure that the perspectives and feedback from Civic Partners is collected and informs the Program's development.

We recognize that the Program is a significant shift and guided by your feedback, we are finalizing the Program Guidelines and other materials. We will keep Civic Partners informed about timelines and opportunities for questions and answers as the project moves ahead. If you have questions at any time, please reach out to your Civic Partnership Consultant, or Lori Kerr, Manager, Major Partners.

Below are quick links to the key theme areas for the Q&A

- [Application and process](#)
- [Administrative Grant Review Committee](#)
- [Review criteria](#)
- [No lobbying requirement](#)
- [General questions](#)

### **APPLICATION AND PROCESS**

#### **1. How many Civic Partners are in the Related Authorities category?**

This category includes City of Calgary Wholly Owned Subsidiaries and Legislated Bodies. There are currently six organizations that fall into this stream.

#### **2. What if we missed including something on our application or information changes and needs to be updated on the application? Is there an opportunity to rectify it? Will the application be nullified?**

The application review process will provide opportunities for Civic Partners to clarify information in their applications and answer any questions.

#### **3. What is the timeline from application to decision? How long will each step in the process take/be allotted?**

An overall, general program timeline is being developed, and a tailored timeline will be provided as part of each Program rollout. It is anticipated that the Program will be first launched early Q1 2025 to bring funding recommendations to Council as part of the November 2025 budget adjustments process.

4. **Will there be an opportunity for feedback, post-process, on weaknesses of a Civic Partner's application? Will Civic Partners be informed of the rationale for the funding allocation?**

The process includes the Administrative Grant Review Committee coming to consensus on comments to share back with an applicant about their application and the funding recommendation.

## ADMINISTRATIVE GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE

5. **Who will be on the Administrative Grant Review Committee? Will this be shared and when?**

The Council approved Terms of Reference identify that an Administrative Grant Review Committee will develop funding recommendations. This Committee will have its own terms of reference document outlining their role and authority. As an Administrative Committee, membership will only include Administration (City staff) and while it does not fall under the Governance and Appointments of Boards, Commissions and Committees Policy (CP2016-03), it will embed leading practices from that Policy. Once recruited, the names of the Administrative Grant Review Committee members will be shared with Civic Partners.

6. **If Committee members are not allowed to communicate directly with Civic Partners and ask the right questions, how will this process work?**

While individual Administrative Grant Review Committee members can't reach out to Civic Partners for information, Civic Partners will have an opportunity to meet with the full Committee and respond to any questions. They can also reach out to their Civic Partnership Consultant or similar City Relationship Contact for support.

7. **If the rules preclude too many knowledgeable people on the Committee, then who is left and what quality will there be on the Committee?**

Administrative Grant Review Committee membership will focus on members with the appropriate skills, experience and knowledge needed to make informed recommendations that reflect the nuances and complexities of The City's partnerships with Civic Partners. Details will be outlined in the Administrative Grant Review Committee Terms of Reference.

8. **Is there overlap between Committee members and "Administrative Leadership"?**

It is anticipated that there may be some members of the Administrative Grant Review Committee drawn from leadership positions at The City. Leadership includes staff in levels from managers and above.

## REVIEW CRITERIA

9. **How is "community need" defined and who defines it? What are examples of community need?**

This has been changed in the draft Guidelines to "community needs" and would be defined by each Civic Partner specific to their area of work.

10. **What is a "community need" vs. "community want"?**

We would look to a Civic Partner to define the needs or demands they are meeting through their operations.

**11. Does the definition of community need change with each new Council?**

No, community needs would be defined by each Civic Partner specific to their area of work. Council may set different funding priorities within a budget cycle to respond or reflect what they are hearing about the evolution of community needs. A glossary of terms will be created to go along with the Guidelines.

**12. How can we measure the magnitude and scope of community need?**

We look to Civic Partners to define what community needs they are meeting in their work, and to provide the appropriate supporting data to demonstrate the magnitude of the need. We also recognize that measurement evolves over time, and Civic Partners will continue to develop and refine measures to understand how to meet community needs.

**13. If Council's objectives/policies/strategic vision change from one Council cycle to another, how will this impact this process and our partnership agreements?**

Similar to the current process, Civic Partners will need to demonstrate alignment with Council's priorities. Council's priorities are usually very broad for example "Economic, Social and Climate Resilience". During a specific cycle, Council may further refine these priorities, for example defining a focused priority on Downtown Revitalization. Civic Partners may not and are not expected to align with all with the refined priority areas. Depending on the cycle, Council may use the refined focus areas to make targeted investments.

**14. How can Civic Partners be expected to change their focus every four years to align with each Council's priorities?**

Civic Partners are focused on delivering their mandates and missions, which do not change with a budget cycle. It is not expected that Civic Partners shift their focus, but like current processes, funding requests need to demonstrate alignment with Council's priorities. As noted in the previous question, Council's priorities are usually very broad.

**15. What is meant by "track record"?**

The wording in the draft Guidelines for the review criteria has been changed from "track record" to "demonstrates results".

**16. How far back do the "demonstrated results" go? What if we don't have long term data to show how the Civic Partner has impacted Calgarians?**

This can be a discussion in the unique cases of organizations that are newer to the Civic Partner category where The City does not already have historical performance information.

**17. How is "demonstrates results" measured?**

This is where we ask Civic Partners how they benchmark their work (e.g., against sector colleagues).

**18. What if a Civic Partner's "results" were negatively impacted by the pandemic?**

Most organizations are impacted by significant events such as COVID, and we know that performance measurement data reflects the impacts. In addition, using the Results Based Accountability approach (RBA) [Results-Based Accountability - Clear Impact](#) measurement allows for narratives to be paired with data to provide context.

**19. How can new Civic Partners meet this criterion?**

We would work with new Civic Partners (through the City Relationship Contact) to help them provide the performance measurement data to help understand the impact of their services.

**20. To what extent are benchmarks a factor?**

We expect that all organizations engage in continuous improvement, and this would often include the use of benchmarks. Benchmarks may be internal, or by sector or industry comparators.

**21. Against whom should a Civic Partner be benchmarking itself? How are the benchmarks decided and who decides (e.g., the Civic Partner or The City)?**

We look to the Civic Partner to define the best benchmarks they use for their operations to support continuous improvement.

**22. Should Civic Partners be comparing to organizations in another city/province?**

This may be appropriate for some Civic Partners, but this is up to each organization as part of their continuous improvement work.

**23. Are Committee members familiar with relevant benchmarks?**

No, these are provided by each Civic Partner in the Civic Partner Annual Report, and they describe their performance against their identified benchmarks, or explain the use of benchmarks for stretch targets.

**24. How can a Civic Partner measure things like values and alignment with Truth and Reconciliation, etc.?**

In these areas, we are looking for demonstration of progress on addressing these items in their operations.

**25. How is “partner” defined in terms of this criterion? Can collaboration with partners include small “p” partners, not just Civic Partners?**

Of course. Not all Civic Partners work in partnerships, or work in partnership with organizations defined as “Partners” under the Investing in Partnerships Policy. The intent is not to force partnership work, but to capture and understand where Civic Partners are leveraging the work of other Civic Partners for shared results.

**26. If it’s a joint project with another Partner, is the grant joint? And what happens if one is successful in securing funding and the other isn’t (e.g., does the project still go ahead)?**

If two or more Civic Partners were partnering on an initiative, each Civic Partner would include their components of the joint work within their own application and identify the organizations they are partnering with. This ensures The City understands the individual organizational alignment, results, and costs.

**27. How does a Civic Partner deal with City facilities not willing to work/partner with them?**

We would encourage any Civic Partners with this issue to work with their City Relationship Contact to explore options.

**28. Is a Civic Partner penalized if it doesn't have a partnership with another Civic Partner?**

No. The intent is not to force partnership work, but to capture and understand where Civic Partners are leveraging each other's work for shared results.

**29. Is this about impact of a partnership or the number of partnerships a Civic Partner has?**

The intent is not to force partnership work, but to capture and understand where Civic Partners are leveraging each other's work for shared results.

**30. Would strong financial health and/or ability to generate earned revenue be viewed positively or negatively? How would a Civic Partners ability to leverage other funding or revenue impact their application (positively or negatively)?**

With limited funding, The City focuses on filling gaps that other funders or revenue sources won't cover, particularly in operating costs, and looking for opportunities to leverage funding. If a Civic Partner has a strong earned revenue model and/or healthy reserves, this may mean a lower requirement for City funds, but this is not a penalty-based model. We seek to work together in partnership to determine the best use of funds within an operation, knowing there is a limited overall envelope.

**31. How can a Civic Partner ensure it isn't penalized during a good year or when it has multiple revenue/funding sources?**

The Guidelines and Agreements for the Program do address issues related to year end operating surpluses. Terms of Agreements address this issue, for example by requiring notification if there is a year-end surplus, and related follow up steps to understand the reason for the surplus and plan.

**32. Who decides the appropriateness of Civic Partner staff compensation and how is it decided?**

Each organization's board of directors is responsible and accountable for managing staff compensation through approved policy and other direction. The City's role is to ensure Civic Partners have appropriate policies in place and encourage the use of sector-specific salary benchmarking to ensure levels are appropriate.

**33. If a Civic Partner can't leverage other funding sources, do they get priority over those who do when funding is allocated?**

A Civic Partners' operating model including revenue structure is part of the context of a decision as some Civic Partners, by virtue of their structure and mandate, have a higher reliance on City funding.

**34. What if a Civic Partner rents a City building (rather than managing or operating it) and would like to request funding to make it more accessible – where does that fit with the review criteria?**

Requests for capital-funded related to City-owned buildings should be discussed with your Civic Partner Relationship contact. Capital funding requests are not typically eligible under the Civic Partner Operating Grant.

**35. How can social impacts and other non-quantitative impacts be measured?**

We rely on Civic Partners as experts in their areas to define the best qualitative and quantitative measures needed to engage in continuous improvement and demonstrate success.

**36. How can a Civic Partner demonstrate how it uses the funding for impact?**

This would be tied to the performance measures (quantitative and qualitative measures) that are identified by the Civic Partner.

**37. Will new Civic Partners be at a disadvantage because they don't have a history and might need more opportunity to tell their story and plans?**

See answers for questions # 15-19.

**38. When is the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about the specific criteria?**

This would be part of the application process and the conversations between the Civic Partner and their Civic Partner Consultant or other City Relationship Contact. There will also be the opportunity during information sessions that are provided once the Program is implemented.

**39. What if there are criteria that apply to some Civic Partners and not others?**

There will be a "not applicable" option for some criteria.

**40. What are the required criteria vs. the optional ones? How are the criteria weighted? Where is the rubric for evaluation?**

A summary of the final evaluation criteria will be shared with Civic Partners as part of the next steps.

**41. What is the depth of response expected/required?**

This will vary between Civic Partners and the specific question in the application, but Civic Partners will be asked to provide concise information for the Administrative Grant Review Committee.

**42. Are there character limits?**

No, there are no character limits, but we will ask Civic Partners to ensure they provide concise information that is manageable for the review process.

**43. Can Civic Partners reference a previous report for this information or just update the report?**

Through the Civic Partner Annual Report, Civic Partner Audit Report and other tools, Civic Partners already provide a broad range of information and data about their organizations. The information will be summarized and provided to the Administrative Grant Review Committee, along with links to the full reports for reference as required.

**44. What, if any, information can be 'grandfathered'? Or will the information requested change each year, requiring a new application each year?**

Information from the Civic Partner Annual Report, Civic Partner Audit Report, audited financials, and Civic Partner Infrastructure Investment Program, (if applicable) will be used, where appropriate.

## NO LOBBYING REQUIREMENT

### **45. What is/are the reason(s) for the no lobbying requirement?**

The no lobbying requirement was approved by Council in the Terms of Reference. This supports a fair and transparent process where recommendations are based on a fulsome review of applications. Based on leading practices and engagement results, the consultant advised that a formal, structured grant program can help reduce the need, or perceived need, for lobbying to secure funding.

### **46. Why is lobbying viewed negatively?**

Concerns about the impact of lobbying on an open and transparent funding process were identified during the consultant's engagement including: lobbying for funding is not a transparent process; that when Civic Partners don't understand the funding process they are pushed to take a more political route, with the current process being unclear there is a perception that funding decisions are political; and if there was a proper grant process and application lobbying for funding would not be required. (from Oct 13, 2023 Q&A). Limits on lobbying related to funding requests is common at other levels of government, with some governments removing applications from a process if the applicant lobbies (not the approach we are taking).

### **47. Does Council understand the unintended consequences of a no lobbying requirement?**

Council engagement results in Phase 1 informed the Council approved Terms of Reference for the Program which include the 'no lobbying' clause.

### **48. What will be done about Civic Partners who essentially lobby "behind closed doors"? What are the consequences for breaking the no lobbying requirement? Who decides if a line has been crossed in terms of no lobbying? What happens if we're accused of lobbying but didn't do it?**

The intention through the Program is to create a rigorous process where Civic Partners feel that it is more beneficial for them to participate in the Program and follow the process for them to best present and communicate their needs for operating funding. By having open communication channels through a Civic Partner's City Relationship Contact, we are encouraging them to share any challenges they have with the Program or the process in the spirit of continuous improvement. Council will also be supported through a change management and communications plan.

### **49. How long (in weeks or months) is the no lobbying period?**

This will be detailed in the Program timeline but lobbying specific to a funding request will be from the submission of the request (Q1) to approval by Council (November).

### **50. Can the timeline between application and decision be shortened so the no lobbying period is shorter?**

The timeline is aimed at balancing the time a Civic Partner needs to prepare and submit an application, with the internal deadline related to the budget cycle.

**51. What if a Councillor sits on a Civic Partner's Board - how does that work vis-à-vis the no lobbying requirement (e.g., do they have to recuse themselves from the grant application process)? Are Civic Partners with a Councillor on its Board at an advantage?**

Members of Council are appointed to a small number of Civic Partner boards of directors. All members of board of directors have a duty of care and a fiduciary duty to the organization. Each organization has a code of conduct and conflict of interest policy in place to support to manage conflicts related to the board. The same applies to any members of Administration appointed to a board of directors.

**52. How can Civic Partners keep their Board members from lobbying Councillors, especially given the uneven power dynamic?**

We would leave it to each Civic Partner to inform their board about the requirements of the Program. If there is interest in additional support from The City to share Program information, Civic Partners are encouraged to reach out to their City Relationship Contact.

**53. What if there is a City Administration employee sitting on a Civic Partner's Board and they request information about a submission -- is it considered lobbying if I provide the information?**

Confirming an application has been submitted is not considered lobbying.

**54. If we can't lobby Council, how do we tell our full story, especially to new Councillors?**

The no lobbying clause is only specific to a request submitted to the Program and does not apply to ongoing conversations about an organization and its work. We know Civic Partners often work closely with Councillors on programs and services within their Wards and that this work would continue.

**55. How can we expect Council to fully understand why and what they are approving or not approving if we don't get the opportunity to tell them our story?**

The project team is working to develop the materials that Council will see in the budget package to support funding recommendations.

**56. What about a lobbying register?**

That is not being considered as part of this work.

**57. Can the no lobbying requirement apply to only the Committee and not to Council?**

The no lobbying requirement applies to both the Administrative Grant Review Committee and Council as approved by Council in the Terms of Reference.

**58. Can Administration be lobbied and if not, shouldn't they be added to the no lobbying requirement?**

All members of Administration are included in the no lobbying requirement. The Terms of Reference prohibit lobbying related to a specific funding request and does not specify who

may be the target of the lobbying (e.g., Administrative Grant Review Committee, all Administration, Council).

**59. What do we do if a Councillor asks us about something regarding our application?**

Informing a Member of Council that an application is under review is not considered lobbying. We recognize that Civic Partners work alongside Members of Council to implement programs and services in their ward and educate Councillors about their work and the intent is not to impact a Civic Partner's ongoing operations.

**60. If during the no lobbying period, a Councillor wants us to host an event in their Ward but we don't have budget for it, what should/can I tell them so I'm not violating the no lobbying requirement?**

See answer for question #59.

**61. What are the rules if a Councillor attends a Civic Partner's event during the no lobbying period?**

See answer for question #59.

**62. Can we lobby following the decision if we don't get the funding we requested?**

Technically, this is allowable under the Terms of Reference if the Program is not in the process of reviewing applications and Council has approved funding.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

**63. Is this competitive?**

There is always a limited funding envelope for all City services, and any changes to the overall funding envelope are guided by Council decisions about future tax rates.

**64. Is this a need-based assessment, merit-based assessment, or a hybrid?**

It is a hybrid approach focused on alignment with Council priorities, guided by the review criteria listed in the Terms of Reference and draft Guidelines.

**65. Why are we being asked to work within a one size fits all approach when each Civic Partner is unique in its services and needs?**

This Program is aimed at improving the corporate-focused approach that is not tailored for grant decisions. The use of streams aims to start a tailored approach, and overall, it will improve opportunities to ask tailored questions, and apply tailored criteria.

**66. Can we streamline this process, especially considering the reporting process already in place?**

The intent is not to increase the amount of work required, but to ensure the right information is collected. We will also leverage and build in information already submitted by Civic Partners through the Civic Partner Annual Report, and Civic Partner Audit Report.

**67. Where is the opportunity for additional, one-time funding requests?**

As stated in the draft Guidelines, this Program may be leveraged for one-time funding requests if needed. Similar to historical practices, any requests for new investments or

Growth Plans would be a cycle-by-cycle decision based on funding available, and direction from Council or Administration.

**68. What is the appeal process?**

As Administration has authority to recommend, not approved funding, the Program does not include an appeal process.

**69. What processes do other cities have in place for grant funding and how does Calgary compare?**

As part of Phase 1, a consultant undertook an extensive jurisdictional scan and embedded lessons learned into the recommendations. Municipal reviews and profiles were completed for City of Vancouver, City of Edmonton, City of Toronto and City of Ottawa. Each jurisdiction has a very different approach that can't be compared to others due to a number of factors including legal structure of some partners.

**70. If a Civic Partner clearly articulates a multi-year vision, how would that impact their case for funding?**

The Program will recommend funding levels for Council to approve that align with The City's four-year budget cycle. Funding requests outside of this four-year budget cycle can't be approved, but longer-term vision beyond the four-year cycle would be helpful to understand an organization's long-term plans.

**71. How do Civic Partners navigate the differences between The City's priorities and Council priorities?**

The City's lines of service are required to show alignment with Council priorities for each budget cycle, so there should not be different alignment required.

**72. What are the "trust-based philanthropy principles" (page 8 of the Draft Guidelines document)?**

As part of Phase 1 of this work, the final consultant's report provided information about Trust Based Philanthropy and embedded this approach in the recommendations. For example:

- Trust-Based Philanthropy (TBP) is a charitable approach that examines the relationships between donors, nonprofits and communities in order to rebalance power and decision making.
- It is an approach centred around relationship building, mutual learning and transparency between funders and non-profits.
- ...it is about moving towards new grant making structures that allow transparency and accountability and the ability to have deeper conversations regarding the goals, challenges and opportunities facing non-profits.