

Civic Hospitality to Conventions Policy C01-005

ISSUE

In September 2022, City Council approved changes to the administrative responsibilities for Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions. Administration completed a review of this policy in collaboration with the Mayor's Office, City Solicitors, the City Clerk's Office and Discover Saskatoon and is proposing several changes. This report is seeking approval to repeal and replace Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions with Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Business Events.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Finance recommend to City Council:

1. That Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions, be repealed and replaced with Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Business Events, as outlined in Appendix 1;
2. That the City Clerk be directed to repeal Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions and replace with the updated Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Business Events, as outlined in Appendix 1; and
3. That the City Clerk be directed to amend Council Policy C03-003, Reserves for Future Expenditures, as outlined in Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND

The overarching purpose of [Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions](#) is to attract business events to Saskatoon that will provide an economic benefit, enhance the city's image and showcase Saskatoon's hosting capacity. Grant funding from this program is utilized to assist groups and organizations host business events in Saskatoon.

The Standing Policy Committee on Finance, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) on June 14, 2021, resolved:

"That the Administration work with the Mayor's Office to complete a review and an update of the City Council Civic Hospitality Fund and report back to the Standing Policy Committee on Finance."

Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions was established in 1978, and was last updated in 2006.

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) held on September 26, 2022, considered the following item and resolved:

- "1. That Option 1, Change the Administrative Responsibilities for Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions, as described in the September 12, 2022 report of the General Manager, Community Services, be approved and that appropriate changes to the Policy be made in coordination with the City Clerk's Office; and

2. That the maximum grant amount to any one organization be increased from \$5,000 to 7,500.”

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Since fall 2022, Administration has been working together with the Mayor’s Office, City Solicitors, the City Clerk’s Office and Discover Saskatoon to review and update Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions. Administration has also been working in collaboration with Discover Saskatoon to review and enhance the application package, the funding level evaluation model and the post event follow-up evaluation report used for this grant program to ensure transparency and consistency in funding approvals/denials. Given the number of changes to the policy, the scope of the changes and the complete reorganization of the Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions, Administration is recommending repeal and replacement rather than amendment of the existing policy (see Appendix 1).

Highlights of key proposed changes in the Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Business Events (Policy) are noted below.

Policy Title and Purpose

- Discover Saskatoon suggested changing conventions to “business events” in the title and throughout the Policy as this is a more current term used in the hospitality industry.
- Wording changes have been proposed as per suggestions from Discover Saskatoon and the City Solicitor’s Office.

Definitions

- Conventions Saskatoon no longer exists so this definition has been removed.
- New definitions have been proposed including definitions of a business event, target markets, eligible expenses, ineligible expenses and funding level evaluation model to provide further clarity.

Policy

- Wording changes have been proposed to provide greater clarity throughout the Policy.
- Policy Restructuring - The Policy has been restructured to clearly outline eligibility criteria, the application process and other steps in the process through to the post event evaluation report and payment process. These changes clarify each step in the process for applicants.
- National or International Conventions - Following a review of the business events funded in the past, and in an effort to make this grant program more inclusive/reflective of past practice, the specific references to international and national conventions have been removed. Eligible events must meet the definition of a business event, which is outlined in the Policy. The size and scope of events are still considered in the determination of the amount of funding that may be provided under the Policy. Further, any larger scale events would have the option of applying for funding through the City of Saskatoon’s (City) Special Event grant program or this grant program but cannot apply for funding from both City programs for the same event.

- Eligibility Criteria - The requirements an applicant must meet are outlined in the Policy. Key new additions include that the applicant must be a nonprofit organization, and the applicant must commit to completing a post event follow-up report.
- Grandfathered Events - Previously, there was a clause referencing that a “Grandfather clause may apply to specific conferences that have traditionally received funding support under the previous policy”. The Mayor’s Office provided the listing of events which were considered as grandfathered events. Administration is recommending that all references to grandfathered events be removed from the Policy. These events would be eligible to apply, provided they meet the criteria in the Policy. If City Council approves this change, organizations which were considered grandfathered events would be advised of this change in writing.
- Application Intake Dates - In the past there was only one intake date, and a discretionary fund was set aside for late applications. Discover Saskatoon suggested allowing applications to be submitted throughout the year and adjudicated in batches, four times per year, to provide greater flexibility for groups submitting applications. A statement has been added to clarify that applications submitted for events scheduled to commence less than 12 months in advance of the first scheduled day may only be considered under special circumstances and at the discretion of the City.
- Administration of the Policy - As per the resolution of City Council in September 2022, Administration will be taking over the administration of the Policy from the Mayor’s Office, so the Policy has been amended to reflect this change.
- New Clauses - New clauses have been recommended to ensure grant recipients acknowledge the City’s financial support, to clarify that the City is not assuming any obligations for events and to clarify that alcohol, cannabis and staff costs are ineligible expenditures.
- Post Event Follow-up Evaluation Process - The proposed post event follow-up evaluation process provides greater accountability to grant recipients for use of the funds. Funding will not be released until the post event reporting has been completed to the satisfaction of the City. The final grant amount will be confirmed following a review of the post event evaluation report. The maximum funding amount has been updated as per the resolution of City Council, in September 2022.

Responsibilities

- Updated responsibilities for Administration and the Standing Policy Committee on Planning Development and Community Services have been suggested in the updated Policy.
- As per the current policy, Discover Saskatoon has a significant role in the administration of this grant program, including reviewing and evaluating application packages and providing recommendations to the Mayor’s Office for approval or denial of funding. Recently, Discover Saskatoon advised Administration that they do not have the capacity to continue with this role. As a result, in the replacement policy, it is proposed that Administration take on the role of reviewing, evaluating and approving grant funding based on objective criteria as per the Policy and outlined in the Funding Level Evaluation Model. These administrative tasks can be accomplished within existing resources.

Administration is in the process of reallocating some existing clerical resources to support all special event grant processes. No new financial resources will be required to administer this grant.

Administration has worked with Discover Saskatoon on updating the application package/funding level evaluation model and the post event evaluation report. These documents are in the final review stage and will be ready for implementation.

Consequential amendments are required to [Council Policy C03-003, Reserves for Future Expenditures](#) to update the language and provide greater clarity on the purpose of the reserve, the source of funds and the application of funds (see Appendix 2). In the past this information was included in Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions and should have been included in the Council Policy C03-003, Reserves for Future Expenditures. Corporate Financial Services has been consulted and is supportive of these changes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications tied to the approval of the recommendation outlined in this report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal, social or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to City Council approval of the recommendations in this report, Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions will be repealed and replaced with the updated Policy and the consequential amendments to Council Policy C03-003, Reserves for Future Expenditures, will be implemented.

Subject to City Council approval of the recommendations in this report, the new Policy and updated grant program will be included on the City's website on the Grants page. Organizations that were considered grandfathered events will be advised they would be eligible to apply for funding, provided they meet criteria outlined in the Policy.

The administration of this grant program has been transitioned from the Mayor's Office to Community Services Divisions, Recreation and Community Development Department.

Administration will be completing a further review of the Special Events and Profile Saskatoon Grant and the Civic Hospitality to Business Events Grant to identify potential efficiencies and will present options in a future report with additional changes to these grant programs.

APPENDICES

1. Proposed City of Saskatoon Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Business Events
2. Proposed Amendments to City of Saskatoon Council Policy C03-003, Reserves for Future Expenditures
3. Current City of Saskatoon Council Policy C01-005, Civic Hospitality to Conventions

REPORT APPROVAL

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