
Recommendations for Compiling and Distributing the Seasonal Leisure Guide

Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council that the phased approach to reducing the size and distribution of the Leisure Guide, as outlined in this report, be endorsed.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline the phased approach that the Administration is undertaking to reduce the size and distribution of the City of Saskatoon's seasonal Leisure Guide publication in a manner that would have the least impact on the recreation programs and services offered by the City of Saskatoon, Community Associations and other community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations.

Report Highlights

1. The seasonal Leisure Guide (Guide) is an important, cost-effective (\$0.15 to \$0.37 per printed and distributed copy) communication tool to promote recreation programs, facilities, and services offered by the City of Saskatoon (City), Community Associations, and other community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations.
2. Research findings indicate the printed Guide is the main source of recreational information for Saskatoon residents and 68% consider it to be valuable. A condensed version of the printed Guide is supported by 74% of residents, with 70% supporting a limited print distribution. Less than half of residents (44%) support the idea of having the Guide available online only.
3. Based on the research, and to mitigate the risk of negative impacts on program participation and revenues, the Administration has identified a phased approach to reducing the size and distribution of the printed Guide. The phased approach represents an effective change-management strategy that will allow the City to enhance and highlight current digital resources and implement the educational and awareness components necessary for residents and stakeholders to adopt a new Guide model.

Strategic Goals

This report supports the Strategic Goal of Quality of Life by providing access to facilities and programs that promote active living. It also supports a culture of Continuous Improvement by providing high quality services to meet the needs and expectations of citizens. In addition, it supports Environmental Leadership by reducing our environmental footprint.

Background

At its July 23, 2015 meeting, City Council approved the Recreation and Parks Master Plan to provide a framework for guiding the development, delivery, and improvement of recreation and parks programs, services, and facilities. The information contained in the Guide supports the goals and service outcomes of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

At its December 12, 2016 meeting, City Council requested the Administration to provide a report with alternative options for compiling and distributing the Guide, including electronically, in the future for the purposes of efficiency.

Report

Current Print and Digital Production of the Leisure Guide

The Guide is an important, cost-effective communication tool (\$0.15 to \$0.37 per printed and distributed copy) used to promote recreation programs, facilities, and services offered by the City, Community Associations, and other community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations.

The Guide is produced and distributed three times per year in print and in digital formats, prior to program registration, in the Fall (August), Winter (December), and Spring/Summer (March). For more details on the production and distribution schedules of each Guide, refer to Attachment 1. A smaller 24-page MiniGuide publication is distributed in the Summer (June). The information in this report excludes the MiniGuide.

Each printed Guide ranges from 100 to 120 pages and is distributed to approximately 100,000 Saskatoon and area households, Leisure Centres, and libraries. The Fall and Winter editions include a large section dedicated to Community Association program information. Each Guide includes an Advertisers' Section in which community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations can purchase space to promote their programs. The advertising revenue directly offsets the cost to produce the Guide.

The information contained in the Guide is also available on the City's website in multiple formats, including:

- a) PDF version of the full publication (saskatoon.ca/leisureguide);
- b) Leisure Online (saskatoon.ca/leisureonline), a recently enhanced digital platform for registered program information and online registration;
- c) Drop-in Online (saskatoon.ca/dropinonline), a comprehensive up-to-date listing of facility and amenity hours, including drop-in programs that do not require registration; and
- d) Community Association program listings (saskatoon.ca/communityassociations).

Market Research Study

In late 2017 and early 2018, the Administration conducted a market research study to evaluate how Saskatoon and area residents and key stakeholders use the Guide, future changes they wish to see made to its format and distribution, and their state of

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readiness to move towards online-only access. The study included both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) research, including a comparison with other municipalities. Attachment 2 provides the 2017 Leisure Guide Survey Executive Summary Results and Attachment 3 provides the 2018 Leisure Guide Focus Groups Key Take-Away Report.

Research findings indicate the printed Guide is the main source of recreational information for Saskatoon residents.

- a) 68% of residents consider the printed Guide valuable;
- b) 62% look through it and keep the printed Guide for reference each season;
- c) 64% of residents consider the online Guide valuable; and
- d) The above percentages increase to 80%, 73%, and 77% respectively for households with children younger than 18; a demographic which represents a key customer segment for registered programs.

Keeping the Guide in its current format is supported by 76% of residents; however, 74% also support reducing the number of pages, with more detailed information online.

Residents are also opening up to the idea of not distributing the Guide to every household, with a higher proportion of residents supporting a limited print distribution (70%), compared to keeping the distribution as is (61%); however, this change is not supported by the Community Associations (64% oppose) or community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations that advertise in the Guide (61% not likely to advertise).

Phased Approach to Guide Format and Distribution Changes

Based on the research findings and to mitigate the risk of negative impacts on program participation and revenues, the Administration has identified a phased approach to reducing the size and distribution of the printed Guide, as outlined below. For more detail on the phased approach, refer to Attachment 4.

Phases	Timeline
Condense Number of Drop-In Pages and Increase Online Promotions	Winter 2018 to Fall 2019
Engage Community Associations	Fall 2018 to Summer 2019
Online Enhancements and Increase Promotions	Fall 2018 to Winter 2019
Condense Community Association Section	Fall and Winter 2019
Awareness Campaign	Spring 2020 to Spring 2021
Eliminate Home Delivery / Provide Pick-up Only Locations	Spring 2021

By targeting a reduction of 50 to 60 pages over two years, the City will be able to reduce the print cost for the Guide by \$56,250 to \$67,500 annually, starting in 2019. The reduction in print costs will be redirected to the resources required to complete the phases of the work outlined above.

At its December 12, 2016 meeting, City Council approved the Award of Contract to The StarPhoenix for the administration, production, and distribution of the Guide. The term of the agreement is for a two-year period (January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2018), with the option to extend for two additional one-year periods, subject to the two parties reaching an agreement on pricing. Should City Council endorse the phased approach, the Administration will exercise the option to extend the contract to December 31, 2020, to allow sufficient time for the changes to be implemented. Leading up to January 2021, the City will issue a competitive Request for Proposal, reflective of the new model, for production and distribution of the Guide.

Options to the Recommendation

Option 1: Expedite Phased Approach

This option would eliminate home distribution by Spring 2020. This option is not recommended as it would not allow for a planned, change-management approach, nor does it support the desire and needs of the community or stakeholders as outlined in the research.

Option 2: Digital Only

Less than half of residents (44%) support the idea of having the Guide available online only. The risk of not producing and distributing a printed Guide for the public would initially have an unknown negative impact on participation and the revenue generated by recreation programs and facilities offered by the City, Community Associations, and community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations that advertise in the Guide. As well, it may compromise the City's ability to meet the needs of Saskatoon residents, especially those who do not have internet access. A digital Guide would not contain an Advertisers' Section as there is no internal capacity to sell, produce, and administer ads. Potential savings from eliminating a printed and delivered Guide would not be recognized as these resources would be needed to seasonally promote facilities, services, programs, and related registration periods to replace the trigger lost by the printed, delivered Guide. Based on the elimination of the City of Regina's printed Leisure Guide, a potential 5 to 10% decrease in overall registrations on registration day, with dryland recreation programs being most negatively impacted by 15 to 20%, is estimated.

Option 3: Status Quo

This option would maintain the current model of printing and home distribution for the Guide; however, this option would not align with the City's digital first strategy, nor the desire of the community to move toward this desired future state.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

A statistically significant telephone and online survey was completed in November 2017 with 400 Saskatoon residents, as well as stakeholder surveys with Community Associations and community-based sport, culture, and recreation organizations that advertise in the Guide. Focus groups were also held in March 2018 consisting of three groups comprised of residents that represent a diversity of demographics.

Communication Plan

Residents will be informed of changes to the Guide and online services each season through a comprehensive communication plan that typically includes complimentary advertisements in The StarPhoenix online and print publications, updates on the City's website and Leisure Online, social media advertisements, public service announcements, on-site facility promotions, and local radio and TV commercials.

Environmental Implications

The recommended strategy will lessen the environmental impact of the printed Guide by significantly reducing the number of printed pages over the next two years.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, privacy, financial, or CPTED implications or considerations.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

If approved, the recommended strategy will be fully implemented by Spring 2021.

Public Notice

Public notice, pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachments

1. Seasonal Leisure Guide Production and Distribution Schedule
2. 2017 Leisure Guide Survey - Executive Summary (Insightrix Research Inc.)
3. Leisure Guide Focus Groups Key Take-Away – April 2018 (Insightrix Research Inc.)
4. Phased Approach to Guide Format and Distribution Changes

Report Approval

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