

CORPORATE POLICY



Policy Title: **Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program Policy**
Policy Category: **Municipal Services**
Policy No.: M-008
Department: Community Services
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Author: Nadia Nassar, Policy Analyst
Attachments: None
Related Documents/Legislation:

Key Word(s):

POLICY STATEMENT:

In keeping with the guiding principle of equity and inclusion, as outlined in the City of Waterloo Strategic Plan, the Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program promotes inclusive recreational services by reducing financial barriers. The program expands access to sports and recreation by providing funding to eligible low-income residents of the city of Waterloo.

PURPOSE:

The Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program Policy establishes the conditions by which staff will operationalize the program, including eligibility and administrative practices.

To supplement this policy, communications about eligibility requirements, funding limits, and application processes are advertised to the community through appropriate materials.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to:

- all applicants to the Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program,
- staff responsible for any part of the operation of the Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program.

This policy establishes the conditions necessary for eligibility for the City of Waterloo's Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program, as well as criteria for the development of

Mandatory Policy, *Municipal Act*: No

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procedures and processes governing the administration of the program. This policy does not pertain to any other recreational subsidy program offered by the City of Waterloo (e.g. Facility Rental Discount), nor any fee assistance programs operated by other organizations or the fees of recreational programs as determined by the Fees and Charges by-law.

POLICY COMMUNICATION:

This policy will be communicated by means of:

- posting on the City of Waterloo website,
- posting on the City of Waterloo intranet accessible by staff,
- providing copies to staff responsible for operating the Fee Assistance program,
- including user-friendly instructions on how to access the policy on application forms and informational material provided to the public.

DEFINITIONS:

Administrator: The principal City of Waterloo staff responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Fee Assistance Program (i.e. Community Support Administrator) or their designate.

Affiliated City of Waterloo organization: A non-profit organization with whom the City of Waterloo has entered an affiliation agreement and is therefore eligible to have the fees for their programs subsidized for Fee Assistance clients.

Applicant: A person who submits an application to be considered for Fee Assistance for themselves or on behalf of their family unit.

Client: A person who has been deemed eligible to receive Fee Assistance and has received proof of said eligibility.

Family Unit: Two or more people that live in the same home and are related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption. In shared custody, only one parent/guardian can apply on behalf of a child.

Fee Assistance program: The Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program, a benefit program offered by the City of Waterloo to eligible clients, intended to reduce financial barriers to recreation programs for low-income residents.

LICO-BT (Low-income cut off, before tax): The family unit income level, before taxes, below which a household will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. This level is determined by Statistics Canada through their LICO-BT thresholds, published annually for each region.

Line of credit: A pre-set amount of money available to each client by the City of Waterloo which can be used to make payments on fees for recreation programs offered by the City of Waterloo or affiliated City of Waterloo organizations.

Manager: The Manager responsible for overseeing the operation and performance of the Fee Assistance program or their designate.

Personal information: Recorded information about an identifiable individual, including, but not limited to, their name, address, age, gender, resident status, and income. See the *Municipal Freedom of Information Act* R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 56, as amended.

Recreation program: A sports, fitness, leisure, arts, or culture program offered for recreation purposes. This includes instructor-led activities as well as unstructured programs (e.g. public swim). This includes only registered programs or a series of passes for recreational activities.

POLICY:

1. Eligibility

- 1.1. To be eligible to receive funding through the Fee Assistance program, a person must:
 - be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident of Canada, or have protected person status as a refugee in Canada,
 - live in the city of Waterloo, and
 - have a family unit income below the LICO-BT threshold for the Region of Waterloo.
- 1.2. A person who is in Canada temporarily, such as an international student or temporary foreign worker, does not qualify for the Fee Assistance program.
- 1.3. Staff will regularly update low-income eligibility conditions based on the Statistics Canada LICO-BT thresholds for the Region of Waterloo.
- 1.4. Multiple members of a family unit may be included in one application for Fee Assistance.
- 1.5. The individual submitting a Fee Assistance application, for themselves and/or on behalf of member(s) of their household, must be 18 years of age or older.
- 1.6. Applicants must have received consent to apply from all members of their family unit age 18 or over.

- 1.7. All applicants must provide documents proving eligibility for the Fee Assistance program for each intended client.
 - 1.7.1. A list of accepted documents to prove eligibility is located on the City of Waterloo website and is included on the application form.
 - 1.7.2. A list of income types which will be exempt from consideration for low-income status is located on the City of Waterloo website.
 - 1.7.3. No eligibility documents will be required for dependents under the age of 18.
- 1.8. Funding for the Fee Assistance program is available to individuals of any age who meet the aforementioned eligibility requirements.
- 1.9. Qualification, application for and/or receipt of funds from another assistance program does not affect an applicant's eligibility for the Fee Assistance program.
 - 1.9.1. Staff may recommend to applicants that they apply to other fee assistance programs not associated with the City of Waterloo first in order to maximize overall available funding for the applicant and the community.
- 1.10. Decisions on the eligibility of applicants will be made by the Administrator.

2. Funding

- 2.1. Staff will set a maximum amount of available funding per person per year, according to budget availability.
 - 2.1.1. Annual limits per person will be advertised through relevant channels, including the City of Waterloo website, and will be kept up to date.
- 2.2. Staff reserve the right to close the program to applicants based on budget availability.
 - 2.2.1. If the program is closed, staff will inform all applicants and the program closure will be communicated on the City of Waterloo website.
- 2.3. Funding will be provided in the form of a line of credit, which can be applied to any eligible program.

- 2.4. No funds will be given directly to the client, any other person or organization, other than an affiliated City of Waterloo organization, but will be applied to fees on the client's behalf by the City of Waterloo.
- 2.5. Funds are not transferrable between clients.
- 2.6. Clients may choose to have the program fee paid in its entirety or pay a portion of the fee themselves to extend the available funding.
- 2.7. Total funding for all clients may vary from year to year, and based on the budgeting process of the City of Waterloo.
- 2.8. Funding for the Fee Assistance program is only available in the funding year in which the application is submitted. Applicants may submit their applications at any time during the year in which they wish to receive funding. Staff will determine the start and end periods of the funding year, which will align with programming needs.
- 2.9. Funds from the Fee Assistance program are not refundable.

3. Eligible Programs

- 3.1. Funds from the Fee Assistance program can be used to pay for participation and registration fees for City of Waterloo recreational program or any program offered by an affiliated City of Waterloo sports or arts/culture organization.
 - 3.1.1. Funds from the Fee Assistance program cannot be used to pay for equipment, supplies or other costs related to participating in any program.

4. Process

- 4.1. All applications will be reviewed within 15 business days of the day on which the application is received.
- 4.2. All applicants will be sent a notification of their acceptance or rejection.
- 4.3. All accepted applicants will receive proof of eligibility for the Fee Assistance program, which must be shown or submitted when registering for eligible programs.

5. Privacy and Personal Information

- 5.1. Personal information will be collected, used, disclosed, stored, and disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* R.S.O 1990, c. M. 56, as amended, as well as any other applicable legislation, by-laws, and City policies and procedures.
- 5.2. The City of Waterloo will collect only the personal information necessary to review the eligibility of applicants and administer the Fee Assistance program. Personal information shall be collected directly from the applicants applying on behalf of themselves and/or member(s) of their family unit.
- 5.3. Personal information provided by applicants and clients will only be used for the purposes of identifying eligible applicants, administering the Fee Assistance program, communicating with applicants and clients on matters related to the Fee Assistance program or any other purpose permitted or required by law.
- 5.4. The City will take reasonable steps to safeguard the personal information collected in the course of the administration of the Fee Assistance program, in accordance with applicable City policies and procedures.
- 5.5. The City will not disclose the personal information collected in the course of the administration of the Fee Assistance program without individuals' consent, unless otherwise permitted or required by law.
- 5.6. Fee Assistance program records containing personal information will be disposed of in accordance with the City retention By-Law.

6. Misrepresentation

- 6.1. If an applicant gives false or misleading information during their application process, they will be provided the opportunity to clarify their information or withdraw their application.
- 6.2. Notwithstanding 6.1, if staff have reason to suspect that an applicant has deliberately provided false or misleading information, they will inform the Manager and the Manager will determine the appropriate course of action.

7. Program Withdrawals and Cancellation

- 7.1 Clients who withdraw from a City of Waterloo program at any time before or during the program will be subject to the City's Program Withdrawal Policy ([M-005 Program Refund and Withdrawal Policy](#)).

- 7.2 Clients who cancel their registration or withdraw from a program run by an affiliate of the City of Waterloo will be subject to the affiliate organization's refund, cancellation or withdrawal policy.
- 7.3 If a program run by an affiliate of the City of Waterloo is cancelled, the client will be subject to the affiliate's cancellation and/or refund policy.
- 7.4 If a City of Waterloo program in which a client is registered is disrupted mid-session, staff will determine the appropriate course of action depending on the situation.

8. Review

- 8.1. The performance of the Fee Assistance program will be reviewed annually.
 - 8.1.1. Information related to demand for the Fee Assistance program will be tracked and used in determining future budget requests.
- 8.2. The Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program Policy may be reviewed for compliance and amendment at any point at which the Fee Assistance program is reviewed. The policy will be reviewed at minimum once every Council term.

COMPLIANCE:

In cases of policy violation, the City may investigate and determine appropriate corrective action.