

CORPORATE POLICY



Policy Title: **Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program Policy**
Policy Category: **Municipal Services**
Policy No.: M-008
Department: Community Services
Approval Date: May 6, 1991
Revision Date: May 8, 2023; April 19, 2021 and September 21, 2009
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Attachments: None
Related Documents/Legislation: *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
R.S.O 1990, c M. 56

Key Word(s):

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program promotes equity and inclusion in recreation by reducing financial barriers. The program expands access to sports, recreation and arts and culture programs by providing funding to eligible low-income residents of the City of Waterloo.

PURPOSE:

The Fee Assistance Leisure Access Program Policy sets the criteria to operate the program, including eligibility, procedures and processes governing the administration of the program.

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 does not pertain to:

- Any other recreational subsidy program offered by the City of Waterloo (e.g. Facility Rental Discount),
- Any fee assistance programs operated by other organizations,
- The fees of recreational programs outlined in the Fees and Charges by-law.

Mandatory Policy, *Municipal Act*: No
Policy Administration Team, Review Date March 17, 2023
Corporate Management Team, Review Date April 12, 2023

POLICY COMMUNICATION:

This policy will be communicated by:

- Posting on the City of Waterloo website,
- Posting on the City of Waterloo intranet accessible by staff,
- Staff responsible for operating the Fee Assistance program,
- Including user-friendly instruction on how to access the program on application forms and informational material provided to the public.

DEFINITIONS:

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

Affiliated City of Waterloo organization: A non-profit organization that the City of Waterloo has an affiliation agreement with is 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 met the criteria to receive Fee Assistance and has received confirmation of eligibility to access the program.

Family Unit: Two or more people that live in the same home and are related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption; or an individual with no dependents and not in a marriage or living in a common-law relationship. In shared custody, only one parent/guardian can apply on behalf of a child.

Fee Assistance Credit: A pre-set amount of money made 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. The funds are not provided directly to the client but are tracked as a line of credit through the city's registration system.

LICO-BT (Low-income cut off, before tax): Income levels set by Statistics Canada for the family unit, published annually for each region. Below the LICO, families will spend a larger share of income for food, shelter and clothing than the average family.

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 and Protection of Privacy 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:
 - Live in the city of Waterloo and,
 - Have a family unit income below the LICO-BT threshold for the Region of Waterloo.
- 1.2. Instead of providing proof of income, all refugees who have arrived in Canada within one year of their Fee Assistance application date will have the option to provide proof of permanent residency or refugee status for each family member, along with proof of residence in the city of Waterloo.
- 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 proof of income or address will be required for dependents under the age of 18.

- 1.7.4. As noted in 1.2., refugees who choose to submit proof of permanent residency or refugee status in place of proof of income will be required to provide documents for applicants of all ages, including 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 association 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.
- 1.11. The Manager responsible for the program, or their delegate, after careful consideration of the circumstances and in consultation with program staff, may make exceptions on a case by case basis to accommodate individual requests in limited, extenuating circumstances.

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 as a Fee Assistance credit, in the form of a line of credit, which can be applied to any eligible program.
- 2.4. Total funding for all clients may vary from year to year, and based on the budgeting process of the City of Waterloo.

- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. Funds are not transferrable between clients.
- 2.7. 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.
- 2.8. 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 programs or any program offered by an affiliated City of Waterloo sports or arts/culture organization.
 - 3.1.1. Funds may be used to purchase supplies only if they are mandatory for participation in the program and accounted for in the overall program fee.

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 believe 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.