

Business Licensing

Led by: Director of Development, Business & Building Services

Service Description

Business Licensing ensures that businesses are licensed, safe and able to open, grow and invest in Calgary. Business Licensing maintains relevant bylaws to ensure Calgarians' expectations for safety and consumer protection are met. Business licensing peace officers play a key role by supporting and educating businesses to ensure compliance with bylaws and provincial statutes.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

Awards

Award for Crime Preventions & Community Policing Initiatives

Expansion of Business Experience Representative service to all Business approvals, resulting in a single point of contact for businesses (noted in Business Licensing Initiatives one, three and four).

Business Licence Customer Research project is a longitudinal research project to better understand the business licence customer journey. Wave one (noted in Business Licensing Initiative five) was completed, and a working group was formed to implement quick wins and lessons learned. As continued research looks at the full customer experience adjustments and improvements will continue to be made with specific work to improve any pain points identified.

Business Licence Bylaw changes to salvage collectors, auto wreckers and salvage yard businesses and a supporting awareness campaign has resulted in decreased theft and an Alberta Police Chief's Crime Prevention Award (noted in Business Licences six, seven and 11).

Service Challenges

As multiple approvals are required to ensure safety of Short-Term Rentals, applications are increasingly complicated and require more effort and time to complete. Further recommendations will be brought to Council in 2024.

COVID fee relief has created a backlog of expired business licences. The business continues to work through this backlog on a case-by-case basis identifying which have closed and educating those who are new to the renewal process to increase compliance.

Business licences which require other approvals, police checks or development permits remain more challenging for customers to navigate and require more coordination with partnering. This includes working directly with partners if issues arise as well as scheduled annual dialogs to align work and improved shared outcomes.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

Limited regulation of sharing economies like Short-Term Rentals will continue to put some health and safety requirements at risk.

Decreased tolerance for regulation will need to be balanced with licencing changes and explaining value of business licences.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

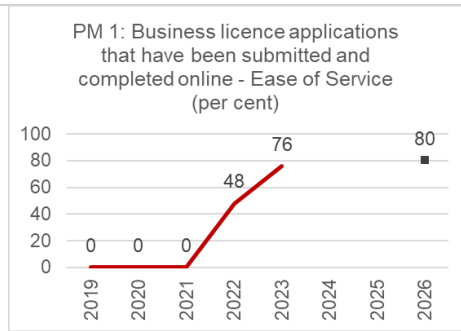
➔ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

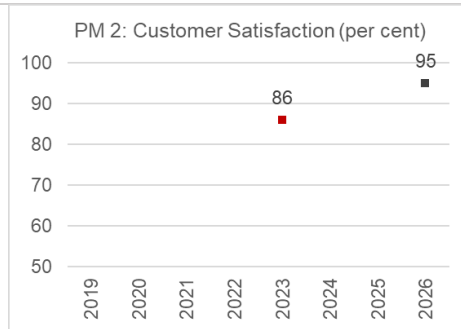
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

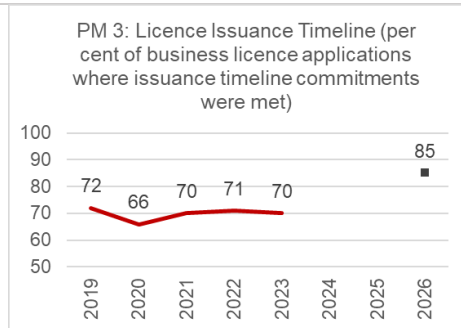
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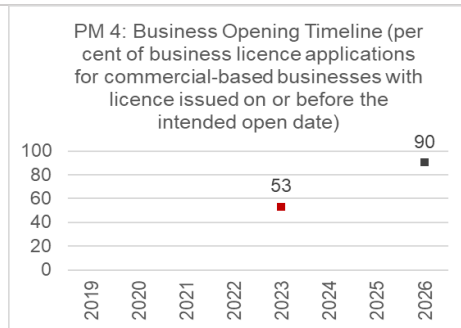
Since The City of Calgary's enabling online issuance of business licenses in May 2022, the per cent of business licence applications received online has increased. The opportunity exists to learn from customers and improve this rate. The data suggests improvements to the apply@calgary.ca system, focusing on user experience could encourage more businesses & customers to complete applications online. Continued work will focus on listening to customer feedback and making adjustments which are intuitive and user-friendly.



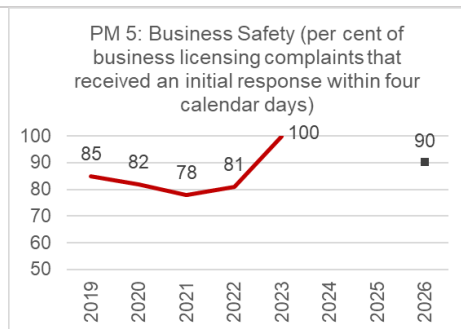
The implementation of customer surveys for new licenses in September 2023 has provided valuable feedback; it shows a higher satisfaction rate amongst. The average rate of satisfaction has increased to 93per cent following survey's recent expansion to include new licensees, which offers a broad perspective on customer experience. Moving forward, the City will maintain high satisfaction rates and address any emerging issues from survey feedback to meet the ambitious expected future performance in 2026.



Issuance timelines have remained consistent as the volume of licenses has increased. This demonstrates that the expanded Business Experience Representative service, started in May 2022, has been effective in improving timeline adherence for issuing business licenses. With the designated representative in place the service was well-positioned to deliver the a standard of service regardless of volume. This consistent performance throughout growth provides the opportunity to adapt to volume increases and improve overall timelines.



Customers optimistic open dates have impacted this measure, increased education has had positive impact however not enough to change the curve significantly. This measure has illuminated the complexities of capturing this data, and of the varying needs of businesses. Further investigation required to determine the best measure of improving predictability.



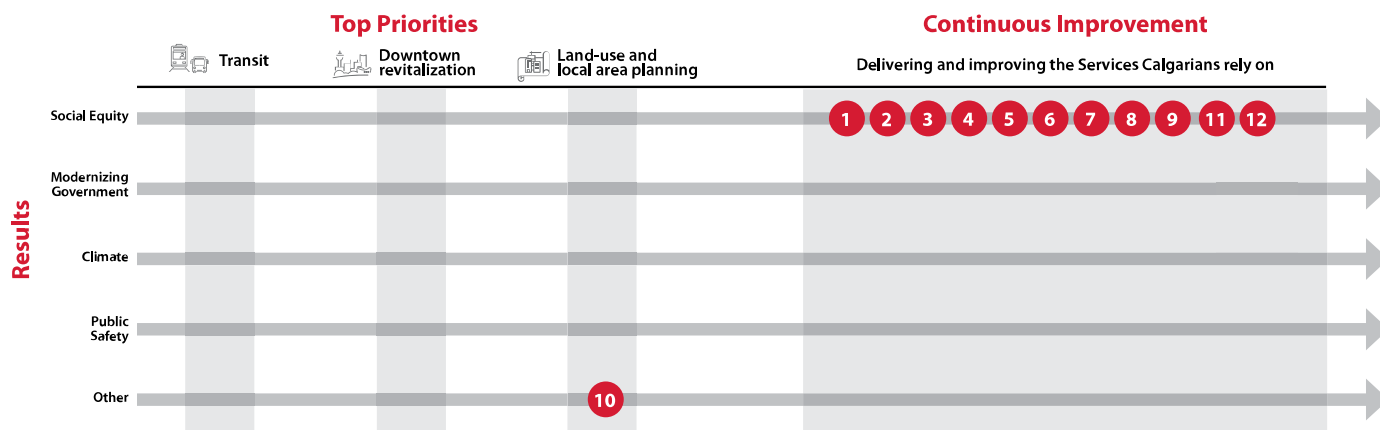
Sitting at 100 per cent, this performance measure shows a consistent upward trend from 2021. The success of this metric is largely due to fast response times to customer complaints. This was achieved by breaking work into zones; officers are paired by zone to ensure calls are dealt with. This works because if one officer is off duty, their partner will contact the complainant to resolve the issue. Files are checked daily by a sergeant and inspector. The zone partners make sure these files are completed on time. Initial responses are typically via phone or email which aids in efficiency.










Progress on Service Delivery

Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



- Legend**
- Completed
 - Progressing as planned
 - Not progressing as planned
 - Not started
 - Initiative number

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Help businesses open on time by educating them on what they need to do to get a business licence, and by providing fast and predictable timelines that are measured and monitored with clear metrics.	<p>The Business Experience Improvement program saw Business Experience Representatives (BER) expanded to all business licence applications being assigned to a representative. Through working with the representative, business licence applicants can receive education specific to their situation. The representative can monitor progress and work with the customer to manage timeline progression.</p> <p>Webinars for business owners continue to be an effective way to communicate with new and returning customers. Both the number of webinars increased, and participation increased.</p>	
2 Provide customer service that is knowledgeable, prompt, and tailored to different business types, ensuring sufficient information is always available and accessible.	Formalized training to front line workers provides more hands-on practice to help them become more knowledgeable. The training starts with basic applications to build a strong information base, it then expands into the specifics of different business types and more complex situations.	
3 Improve communication with the business community by focusing on clearly communicating the relevant information that is required for a business customer to be successful in their journey and the internal information to staff in order for them to deliver a consistent and fast service.	<p>With the expansion of the Business Experience Representative (BER) to a full file management service all business customers will receive clear communication throughout their journey which allows a consistent and fast service. The designated representative can work in a customized way and check in with business customers where they see pieces missing or identify potential problems.</p> <p>This single touchpoint means business customers receive information that is specific to their situation and know where to turn if they have questions.</p>	
4 Make it easier for businesses to navigate getting a business licence through the Business Experience Representative program (a one-stop support for business applicants) by expanding it to more business sectors.	The BER program has been expanded to support all business sectors that require a business licence. Business Licensing tracks and compares the number of licences issued to comparable municipalities. This comparison helps to inform whether Calgary is overregulated compared to other municipalities. Comparing to other municipalities helps to establish and maintain a baseline of standards so that Calgary is viewed as a desirable city to own and operate your own business while living and playing here.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
<p>5 Provide a more tailored customer service, including process improvements, specialized education by business type or need, and targeted communication by taking a customer-focused approach to delivering our service through proactive engagement with business and enhanced customer service data. An example of this is the development of customer journey maps.</p>	<p>The Business Licence Research Project (previously noted as the Business Research Initiative) Wave one has been completed and a working group was formed to implement quick wins and lessons learned so far.</p> <p>This work has begun to map out customer journey's and is using focus groups to dig deeper into pain points to better understand what solutions will have the biggest impact.</p> <p>The longitudinal research continues into 2024 with specific focus on business approvals that also required additional approvals.</p>	
<p>6 Respond to emerging markets and changing legislation by developing adaptable processes that can be expanded or adjusted to include new business types, including new sectors in the shared economy (e.g., short-term rentals, waste & recycling businesses, home-based childcare).</p>	<p>Unique to all other license home based childcare licences include additional police checks at application and monitored through renewal. This annual renewal come due at the same time with high volumes and to complet them quickly.</p> <p>Changes to the salvage collector licence to reduce catalytic converter theft continue to be implemented and saw positive changes in late summer and early fall.</p> <p>Focusing on increased compliance through understanding for short term rentals by customizing education and building relationships with companies who facilitate these rentals.</p>	
<p>7 Enable a vibrant and safe business sector by reviewing the Business Licence Bylaw for gaps and opportunities and recommending changes to Council, as identified by the Financial Task Force to modernize our approach.</p>	<p>Ongoing review and evaluation allow for alignment with the Business Licence Bylaw. The changes made early in 2023 have resulted in awareness campaigns on fire inspections and catalytic converters. Continued work with the Fire Department to ensure safety in Short Term Rentals. As well, Business Licence Bylaw changes to salvage collectors, auto wreckers and salvage yard businesses and a supporting awareness campaign has resulted in decreased theft decrease thefts of catalytic converters.</p>	
<p>8 Ensure that businesses see value for money in their business licence by understanding business needs, communicating what a business licence does for them and for Calgarians, and analyzing revenue and reviewing fees.</p>	<p>Specific industries and business types have been targeted with webinars and awareness campaigns, including restaurants and breweries. These interactive communications allow for increased understanding of what approvals and licences are required to help business owners provide safe businesses.</p>	
<p>9 Create more ways for businesses to interact with Business Licensing services by enhancing the use of technology and digitizing processes. This includes improved self-serve functions, a fully online customer support model, digital licence, and businessMyID.</p>	<p>Online applications and renewals continue to be fully active and are continually updated to incorporate changes from the approved Land Use Bylaw and any process changes.</p> <p>The online experience in monitored through customer surveys and can be updated when areas of improvement are identified.</p> <p>As we continue monitoring the online experience, tools, such as artificial intelligence are being researched and we work with other leaders in this area to identify potential opportunities to use such tools to increase self-serve options and our online materials.</p>	
<p>10 Improve availability of information for businesses to understand what buildings might be suitable for their business through data sharing and business maps.</p>	<p>Business Map continues to be an online tool available to business owners and prospective business owners to support them in searching for new locations.</p> <p>Moving forward focus will be to increase Business Map usability and further integrated into the user experience.</p>	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
<p>11 Meet Calgarians' desire for safety and consumer protection by monitoring compliance with bylaws and provincial statutes. Our first goal is voluntary resolution through education, using enforcement where it is necessary.</p>	<p>To communicate new fire inspections requirements for Short Term Rentals, two webinars were provided to support business owners' ability to ensure safety. One of these targeted condo boards (466 views) and another was open to the public (93 live, 498 views).</p> <p>Changes made to auto wreckers and salvage yard businesses decreased catalytic converter thefts. This followed the changes to Bylaw and a significant public awareness campaign. This work won an Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police (AACP) Award for Crime Preventions Initiatives for the Catalytic Converters project in Calgary.</p>	
<p>12 Build and maintain a respectful, inclusive and equitable workplace that is representative of the community by ensuring our policies and services support The City's commitment to (our employees).</p>	<p>Planning & Development Services introduced a new People Committee in September 2023. The committee and its upcoming working groups will support actions in celebration & recognition, health & wellness, and equity, diversity, inclusion & belonging (EDIB). Business Licencing will contribute to the Development, Business and Building Services (DBBS) EDIB work Plan. PDS also launched an Indigenous educational series called "Seasons for Reconciliation" and continues work on the Indigenous Cultural Heat Map project.</p>	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

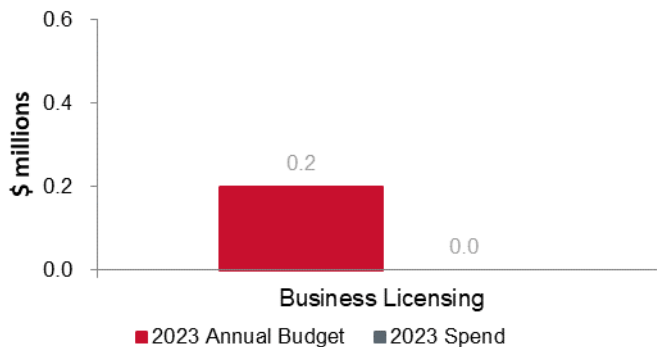
Business Licensing has no operating budget variance for the reporting period.

Key results achieved include:

- Expansion of the Business Experience Representative service to all business approvals
- Business Licence customer research project completed wave one using online surveys and in-dept interviews with business licence customers to better understand customer journey and make service improvements.
- Alberta Chiefs of Police crime prevention award for changes to the Business Licence Bylaw which reduced catalytic converter theft.

Business Licensing is a self-supported service line and any operating surplus or deficit would be contributed to the Business License Sustainment Reserve. In 2023, Business Licensing had an operating surplus, due to salary savings from intentionally managing the workforce, which was contributed to the business licensing reserve. COVID-19 relief package was approved by Council in 2021 to waive business license and renewal fees from 2021 March to 2023 March. Business license fees waived for Q1 of 2023 are approximately \$1.0 million, which was offset by a draw from corporate funding.

Capital Budget and Spend as of December 31, 2023



Capital Budget Updates - 2023 total capital budget vs 2023 spend:

Business Licensing has spent 14.1 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget. Lower capital spend is due to reprioritization of funding for One City Coordinated Records Management System (OCRMS) from other departments (i.e. IT) which has pushed out funding requirements within Business Licensing service line to 2024.

The 2023 capital expenditures include modernization of government through technology initiatives such as the One City Coordinated Records Management System (OCRMS) program. This means business customers can expect effective management, protection, preservation of their information.

Annual acquisition and lifecycle of equipment required for Business Licensing Peace Officers is being done under a larger program for which Bylaw Education & Compliance is the steward. These investments contribute to compliance and the ongoing work to reduce expired licence back-log incurred by the COVID renewal relief.