

Social Programs

Led by: Director of Recreation & Social Programs

Service Description

Social Programs provides accessible and equitable programs and services that improve quality of life, contribute to inclusive communities, and promote social, mental, and physical wellbeing of Calgarians. We give Calgarians skills to build social resiliency and the supports they need to thrive. We leverage funds from other orders of government and private foundations through contractual agreements and collaborative partnerships. We offer social recreational programming for families, children and youth; career planning and employment support for youth; coordination of the delivery of senior's home maintenance services; and the administration of the Fair Entry Program.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

Social Programs made good progress advancing priorities, completing several projects in 2023. The Calgary Parking Low-Income Market Permit and High-Speed Low-Cost Internet programs went live, providing Fair Entry clients with reduced-cost street parking and internet access. The Revised Fair Entry Eligibility review for seniors accessing low-income transit passes is live. The Youth Employment Centre experienced a 16 per cent increase in youth seeking support, with a 15 per cent increase in new client registrations. The Seniors Services Home Maintenance program now serves 1,750 seniors living with low-income (up 500 clients since mid-year and 840 clients since 2019), the highest number of clients served since the program launched. Transit Access Eligibility completed reviews to improve client access processes, including the Paratransit Peer Review and Vehicle Exclusion Review.

Service Challenges

More Calgarians are facing challenges due to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and pressures from the economy, increasing demand on Social Programs. Staff capacity has delayed some projects, including the Calgary AfterSchool amalgamation, but project managers are advancing outcomes as capacity allows. Fair Entry's capacity has been expanded through a pop-up location in City Hall School's vacant space to enhance service delivery, despite delays to the renovation of the third floor Municipal Building location.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

Calgarians experiencing vulnerabilities continue to face severe issues. The youth unemployment rate continued to rise in 2023 and is now sitting at 14.3 per cent. Many industries that typically hired for seasonal positions did not hire at the same volume due to lower consumer spending and uncertainty in the economy. Fair Entry continues to experience very high demand, averaging an additional 2,000 applicants per month. This demonstrates the increasing pressures Calgarians are facing and why Social Programs is experiencing challenges responding to the demand for programs and services.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

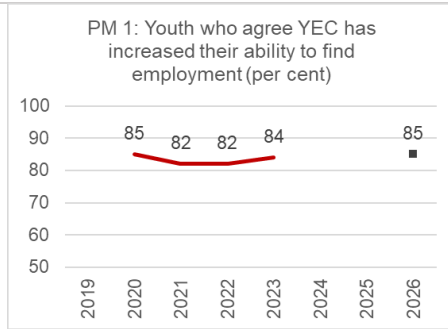
→ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

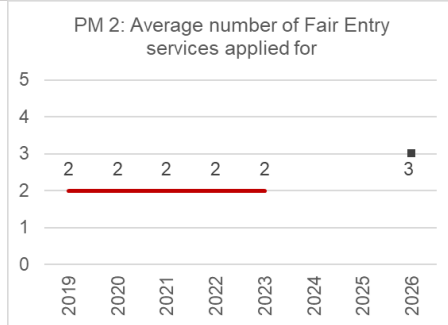
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

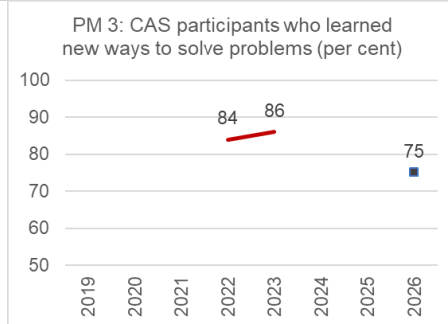
Status



In 2023, Alberta had the third highest youth unemployment rate in Canada. Youth are an untapped labour market that can assist in addressing the staffing shortage faced by many industries in Calgary. Youth Employment Centre equips youth for employment readiness with skills development, enabling youth to confidently secure jobs that provide investment in the local economy and create economic resilience. This measure has remained consistent over the past five years, throughout the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other broad economic challenges.



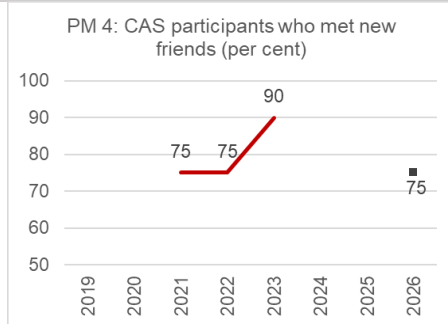
Many Calgarians continue to be impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and broader economic forces that have worsened their financial circumstances. This has resulted in a need for more reduced-rate services that are essential to their wellbeing. Currently, there are seven subsidy programs available through Fair Entry, including the Telecom Subsidy (High-Speed Low-Cost Internet) which was launched in mid-November 2023. This new program is anticipated to augment the average number of programs applied for in 2024.



Calgary After School offers no-cost programs to children and youth, with a focus on developing social emotional learning. Through participation in CAS, children and youth say they have developed new skills and gained tools needed to solve problems in their lives. By continuing to fund CAS programs, more children and youth will continue to build resilience, preparing them for life.



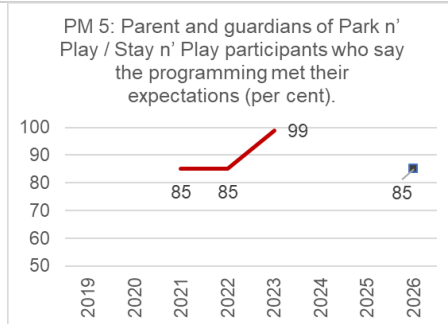
The percentage of participants who learned new ways to solve problems through CAS remains stable in 2023 compared to 2022 (the variation from the 2023 mid-year update is likely due to the low sample size of program evaluations completed at that point in the year).



CAS's no-cost programs focus on social emotional learning, providing participants opportunities to develop friendships and social skills. These friendships and social emotional skills in turn build resiliency among children and youth facing vulnerabilities. CAS provides equitable access to opportunities that equip participants with skills and tools for life-long learning and development.



With a focus on making connections and emotional regulation, the percentage of participants who met new friends through CAS increased significantly from 75 per cent in 2022 to 90 per cent in 2023.



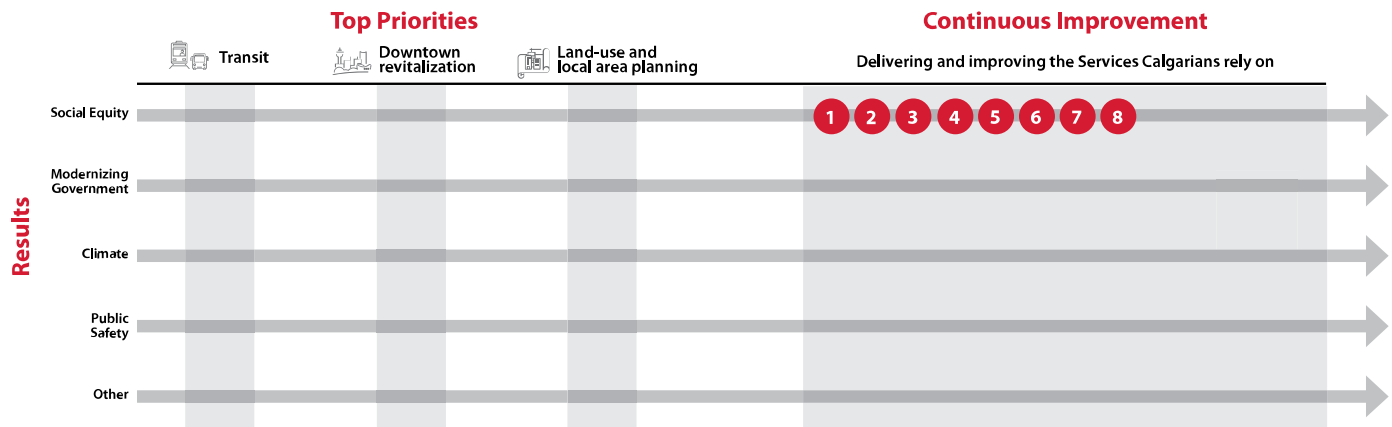
Nearly all parents/guardians of Park n' Play (6-12 year olds) and Stay 'n Play (3-5 year olds) participants found that the programming met their expectations. These safe, supervised programs help children make new friends in a play-based learning environment. Games and activities are designed to encourage youth on their path to healthy and active lifestyles.







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

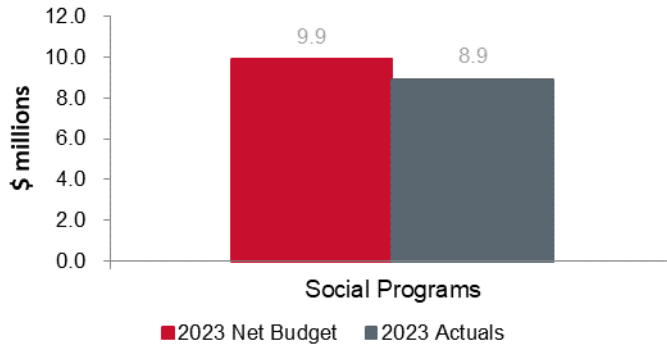
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Support social wellbeing by providing no- and low-cost, local and equitable programs for Calgarians facing negative social conditions.	Participation in no- and low-cost programming increased significantly this year, with 17,800 visits (up 27 per cent from 2022) to free summer programs by over 7,000 individuals (up 34 per cent from 2022). Several Transit Access Eligibility projects are complete, including the Paratransit Peer Review, Phase-out 5-Point Harness Project and Vehicle Exclusion Review, with more planned for 2024. The Low-Income Seniors Yearly Calgary Transit Pass is fully in effect, with provincial government support.	
2 Provide Indigenous cultural opportunities for children and youth to further Truth and Reconciliation actions by delivering targeted programming.	The Indigenous Calgary After School Pilot Project has achieved significant milestones. Four Elders were engaged and informed the development of the Connecting to Mother Earth curriculum for CAS programs. The Pilot successfully ran in fall 2023 at six sites with 120 children participating. The program will expand to 14 CAS sites in 2024/2025 resulting in an over 600 children participating in the Connecting to Mother Earth Curriculum. A 2024 objective will include exploring how to implement Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action in LEAD Youth programs.	
3 Support youth with employment readiness, skills development and employment through the Youth Employment Centre to help them successfully transition into meaningful employment.	Over 38,000 youth connected with the Youth Employment Centre to attend workshops, employment fairs and access the resource area for job searching and career planning, representing a 16 per cent increase from 2022. The Youth Employment Centre also experienced a 15 per cent increase in new client registrations. Almost 3,000 youth registered for individual assistance with job searching, connecting to employers and career planning.	
4 Provide career development opportunities for at-risk youth by partnering with and supporting potential employers.	This work is resourced to begin in a future year.	
5 Improve service delivery to clients of Seniors Services Home Maintenance Program through file digitization.	Projects supporting file digitization are underway and are included in a larger Subsidy Assistance Management System (SAMS) project to support business process improvements. This includes Robodial, an opt-in telephone system for seniors to receive messages about service delivery information (e.g., snow clearing). The SAMS project is now on hold, contingent on the SAMS V3 system upgrade.	
6 Support community connections for students and their families by streamlining the process for providing access to free and low-cost school space.	Enhancements were made to the school database software in early 2023 and it continues to be used by not-for-profit groups offering low-to-no cost programming in schools. Additional enhancements have been identified and prioritized for 2024 and IT is currently completing cost estimates. However, since there is currently no allocated budget it is unclear when this work will be completed.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
7 Deliver culturally appropriate and trauma-informed programming for refugee children and youth facing complex social situations.	High numbers of refugees continue to arrive in Calgary. Social Programs continued to partner with Calgary Catholic Immigration Society to provide programming to 1,346 refugee children and youth in 2023. Social Programs partnered with Recreation Opportunities to teach martial arts once a week as a pilot program so participants could learn self-control and emotional regulation skills. This activity was a huge success and the pilot will transition to ongoing programming. Parents were also very appreciative that their children were safe in these programs after fleeing from war.	
8 Meet the needs of low-income Calgarians by maintaining Fair Entry service levels, providing access to City services at reduced rates.	Social Programs made good progress advancing priorities, completing several projects in 2023. The Calgary Parking Low-Income Market Permit and High-Speed Low-Cost Internet programs went live, providing Fair Entry clients with reduced-cost street parking and internet access. Fair Entry experienced the highest volume of service requests in 2023, with over 61,000 subsidy applications processed (an average 2,000 more applications per month than the previous year). Currently, 113,000 Calgarians (90 per cent of Calgarians living with low-income) are approved for Fair Entry.	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of December 31, 2023



Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

Social Programs has a favorable operating variance of \$1.0 million. The main reasons contributed to the variance are savings in snow clearing costs through the Seniors Home Maintenance Program due to a dry start of the winter season and staff shortages in the Calgary AfterSchool program that impacted program offerings in the first half of the year.

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

Social Programs has no capital budget in 2023.