CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

# Staff Report for Decision

File Number: A2-13 / A3-46

DATE OF MEETING APRIL 28, 2021

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**SUBJECT LEAP PROGRAM REVIEW – PHASE 3**

## OVERVIEW

### Purpose of Report

To provide the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness with the results of Phase 3 of the Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) Program Review as well as recommendations for program revisions for consideration.

### Recommendation

That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness approve the recommendations outlined in Phase 3 of the LEAP Program Review and recommend Staff forward them to for Council for consideration.

## BACKGROUND

At the 2020-MAR-18 meeting, Council made a motion to approve a review and update of the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program in 2020; and refer the review of the program to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) to develop recommendations for changes for Council's consideration.

At the 2020-JUL-29 ACAI meeting, Staff presented a phased review process for consideration and the committee passed a motion that the ACAI approves of and conducts the review process, as presented, for the LEAP Program.

At the 2021-FEB-24 ACAI meeting, Staff presented the results of Phases 1 and 2 of the LEAP Review. At that meeting, a motion was passed to approve Phase 3 to proceed.

## DISCUSSION

Phase 3 of the LEAP Program Review provides recommendations for program revision, based on an analysis of the information gathered and reviewed in Phases 1 and 2.

In general, the framework for the financial access program has proven to be quite sound but in need of some refinement to make it more accessible to the community. Changes to the program administration, program name, eligibility requirements, application and approval process, benefits, and the marketing and promotion of the program are being recommended.

The proposed recommendations for LEAP Program changes are as follows:

**Recommendations for Implementation by September**

1. To help reduce the stigma around applying for the program, consider changing the name of the program so that it does not include a reference to lack of financial resources (i.e. LIFE – Leisure Inclusion for Everyone).

2. To make the application process easier, reduce supporting documentation to one piece of photo identification, proof of residency, and Notice of Assessment (NOA) from prior year.

3. To provide flexibility, approval could be acquired under special circumstances from staff (i.e. family is slightly above Low Income Cut-Off but has proof of undue hardship).

4. To provide clarity around program eligibility, create an online self-assessment eligibility tool.

5. To eliminate the requirement to apply at a facility front desk, provide an online application form/process.

6. To ensure application and supporting materials are easily understandable, ask Literacy Central Vancouver Island to proofread revised application form and other related program materials.

7. To help reduce the stigma around applying for the program, offer private appointments for applicants who wish to discuss the program with a Recreation Coordinator.

8. For specific demographics, whose financial situation is unlikely to change, consider changing the requirement to reapply, from every year, to every two years.

9. To provide enhanced access to drop-in activities, create the option to renew the pass if 50 drop-ins are used prior to the end of the one-year term for the pass.

10. To ensure that community members are aware of the program, create a marketing and communications plan for the program which would include building relationships, and networking with potential community partners and key organizations.

11. To ensure that clients are aware of the option to register for four programs at a reduced rate, create enhanced program information materials.

12. To determine if program is having the intended impact, create some target measures for re-evaluation in one year.

**Recommendations Requiring Further Exploration**

13. To potentially expand eligibility, do some research to determine what the impacts would be of including post-secondary students or, if there is a potential partnership opportunity with Vancouver Island University (VIU).

14. To provide alternate options of proof of need, research other documentation that could replace the requirement for the NOA such as, proof of Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), proof of disability assistance (Persons with Disabilities [PWD]), proof of Income Assistance or, a letter from an adjudicator/referral agency.

These changes to the LEAP Program will enhance the ability for those living at, or below, the low-income threshold to access pool, arena, drop-in gym and program services, which will be a huge benefit to these individuals and families.

In addition, through the research conducted and reviewed in Phases 1 and 2, there is evidence that supports what Recreation Coordinators are already aware of, that there are many other barriers to participation in parks, recreation and culture that could be addressed to a greater extent. For this reason, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Division will be reviewing and recommending changes to current operations which may support a higher degree of focus on inclusion and diversity.

## OPTIONS

1. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness approve the recommendations outlined in Phase 3 of the LEAP Program Review and recommend Staff forward them to for Council for consideration.

    - The advantages of this option: The recommendations are relatively easy to implement and will enhance community access to the LEAP Program.
    - The disadvantages of this option: More staff time will be required to implement and support the changes.
    - Financial Implications: There will be some nominal costs involved in creating new program information and application materials, a communications and marketing plan, and additional staff time. These costs can all be absorbed in the regular operating budget.

2. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness approve the recommendations, with revisions, in the LEAP Program Review and recommend Staff forward them to for Council for consideration.

    - The advantages of this option: Committee members will have the opportunity to identify any other issues of concern that are not addressed by the recommendations as is.
    - The disadvantages of this option: Additional staff time, costs, or other resources may be required to implement and support the suggested revisions.
    - Financial Implications: Additional costs, that may not be able to be covered within the current operating budget, may be incurred depending on the revised recommendations.

3. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness provide alternate direction.

    - The advantages of this option: Committee members will have the ability to provide alternate suggestions for program revision.

- The disadvantages of this option: Depending on the changes suggested, revisions to the program may take longer to implement, and require additional resources.
- Financial Implications: Dependent on the alternate direction.

**SUMMARY POINTS**

- Council recommended that the Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) Program be reviewed to ensure that it was still meeting community needs.
- Phase 3 of the Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) Program Review is complete and provides 14 recommendations for program revisions.
- If implemented, Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) Program revisions will enhance access to recreation opportunities for individuals, or families, living at, or below, the Low Income Cut-Off Thresholds.

| **Submitted by:** | **Concurrence by:** |
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