

DATE OF MEETING JUNE 22, 2022

AUTHORED BY LAARA CLARKSON, MANAGER, RECREATION SERVICES

**SUBJECT LEISURE ECONOMIC ACCESS PASS (LEAP) PROGRAM
PROPOSED CHANGES FALL 2022**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness an overview of the proposed changes to the Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) Program to continue reducing barriers and increase program participation.

Recommendation:

That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) recommend that Council approve the additional LEAP program changes to allow applicants to demonstrate financial need through alternate methods of proof as described in the 2022-JUN-22 Staff report and allocate them a valid pass for two years, and endorse the revised policy as attached to the 2022-JUN-22 report by the Manager of Recreation Services.

BACKGROUND

In 2020 and 2021, a review of the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program was undertaken and several phases were brought forward to the ACAI committee for input. As a result, some considerable changes have been made to reduce barriers and make LEAP more accessible to the community.

Some of the key improvements implemented last fall include:

- A reduction in the number of supporting documents required.
- Eligibility criteria reduced to Notice of Assessment (NOA) only.
- Application forms are now accepted online.
- Recreation coordinators now offer appointments in person or over the phone for applicants who wish to discuss their situation in a private setting.
- Authorized staff are able to use discretion for individual circumstances for applicants slightly above Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) amount.
- An additional 50 drop-in pass renewal option has been added for clients who use all their visits prior to the end of their pass.

In addition to the above changes, a new official LEAP Policy was created and adopted by Council. During the review, several other suggested possible improvements to the LEAP program for future consideration included the following:

- Allow alternate options for residents to demonstrate financial need that could replace the requirement to provide a NOA.

- Reintroduce an adjudicator or referral agency option for clients who are already have disclosed financial information to a trusted agency or organization in the community.
- For specific demographics, whose financial situation is unlikely to improve significantly within a year, consider changing the requirement to reapply from every year to every two years.
- Research potential impacts of allowing eligibility for post-secondary students or, if there is a potential partnership opportunity with Vancouver Island University (VIU).
- Look for options regarding reducing transportation barriers such as partnerships with public transit providers.
- Include options for access to City owned cultural facilities in addition to the recreation options currently offered with the program.
- Develop a future marketing and promotional campaign of the LEAP program.

DISCUSSION

Recent changes to the LEAP program have been well received. Staff are now proposing to move forward with implementing additional recommended changes to the Council policy in the fall 2022.

These changes include;

- Introducing alternate methods of proof of financial need for applicants who have already had their financial situation scrutinized by another level of government or provincial agency.
- Allowing clients approved in this manner to receive a LEAP pass valid for two years instead of one.

Programs or services, which would meet the threshold for clients qualifying for LEAP, are:

Program/Service:	Governing Body:	Timeframe:
BC Income Assistance (IA)	Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction	On-going, clients report monthly while receiving assistance
Children & Youth in Care (CYIC)	Ministry of Children & Family Development	On-going, while in care
Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) (65 yrs +)	Government of Canada department of Employment and Social Development	Annual review – based on CRA notice of assessment
Community Living British Columbia (CLBC)	Crown Corporation, Government of BC	Once eligible the client must notify CLBC if their situation changes
Refugee Programs ie. Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program (CUAET)	Government of Canada department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	Up to 3 years

The proposed changes have been incorporated into the draft LEAP Policy amendment marked in red for the Committee's consideration (see Attachment 1). If supported, the revised policy would go to Council for formal consideration on July 4, 2022.

OPTIONS

1. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) recommend that Council approve the additional LEAP program changes to allow applicants to demonstrate financial need through alternate methods of proof as described in the 2022-JUN-22 Staff report and allocate them a valid pass for two years, and endorse the revised policy as attached to the 2022-JUN-22 report by the Manager of Recreation Services.
 - The advantages of this option: Implementation of the program recommendations will reduce barriers in the application process, and increase community access to the LEAP program.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Applicants will continue having to apply with a NOA as proof of financial need.
 - Financial Implications: Any financial impact is nominal and can be covered in the current operating budget.
2. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness do not support the recommendation to approve the additional LEAP program changes to allow applicants to demonstrate financial need through alternate methods of proof.
 - The advantages of this option: None.
 - The disadvantages of this option: People experiencing financial barriers may find it difficult to access the program.
 - Financial Implications: None.
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

- A review of the Leisure Economic Access Policy (LEAP) program was conducted by staff, with input from The Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness in 2020-21.
- Several key changes were made to the LEAP program in 2021 which reduced some barriers to applying.
- Further recommendations from the review will be implemented in fall 2022, such as an alternate approval option and two year renewal periods in specific cases.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – LEAP Policy Amendment – Proposed Changes

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Concurrence by:

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