

Community Recreation and Culture Branch

Edmonton

Equitable Allotment and Allocation Model

March 2026

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Purpose

In response to the Equitable Recreation Programming Audit, and as part of the UP-Lift Equity Plan, the City of Edmonton is committing to the equitable allocation of space to maximize Public Good across the City's inventory of Community facilities. The City of Edmonton Equitable Allotment & Allocation Model aims to prioritize opportunities that provide the greatest public benefit, address community needs and remove barriers for underserved and underrepresented populations.

The *UP-Lift: Equitable Recreation Programming Plan Vision* - Equity is fundamental to the way we work. Our city is diverse and we embrace differences with empathy and curiosity. We work so that all Edmontonians have equitable access to recreation. We proactively eliminate barriers to participation, and strive to make everybody feel safe, respected and valued for who they are. Inclusion inspires us to do our best work for each other and those we serve.

The Benefits-Based Approach to Allocation

Nine major urban centers from Western Canada collaborated, with input from industry experts, to build a framework based on shared best practices; this framework is built on the Benefits-Based Approach. The notion of a Benefits Based Approach to developing public policies for parks and recreation departments is anchored in *A Framework for Recreation Canada*[1]. For the past decade, most efforts to develop public policies in Canadian municipal parks and recreation departments have used this approach.

The Benefits Based Approach is based on understanding of a Public Good as an *indirect benefit to all members of a community*. In other words, Public Goods benefit all citizens of a community regardless of whether they use a service or how much they use it. This approach suggests that for all public services, there is a ratio of direct benefit to users vs. indirect benefit to all that can place a service on the

[1] A Framework for Recreation in Canada: A Pathway for Wellbeing was endorsed nationally in 2017 and is currently being updated. It introduces the notion of public benefits which anchors the notion of The Benefits Based Approach to public policy development in municipal parks and recreation departments. Framework for Recreation in Canada - Canadian Parks & Recreation Association

continuum and dictate how "public" the service is and therefore its priority relative to other services.

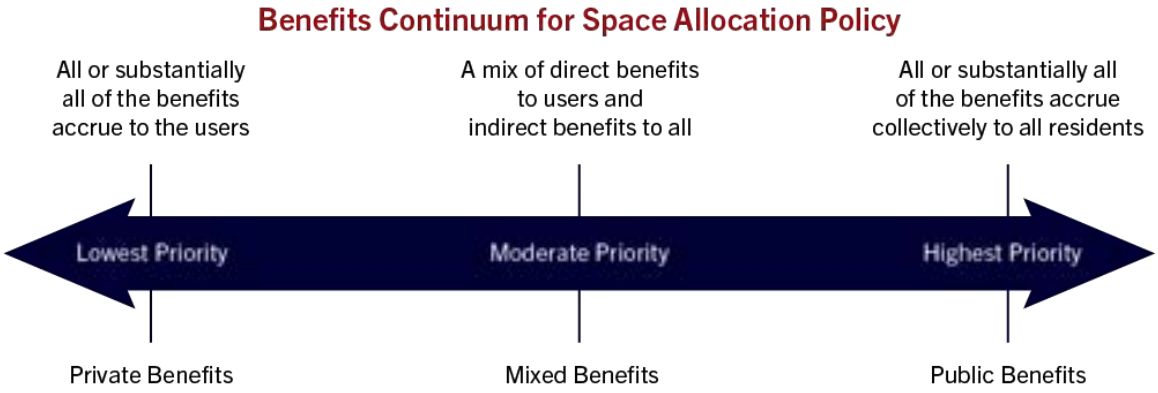


Figure 1.The Benefits Based Continuum

Principles of Allocation

The allocation process should focus on aligning the right groups with the right spaces at the right times. In doing so, it must adhere to some principles of allocation that respect and build on the notion of Public Good:

- **Demonstrated Need**: Allocation should be based on demonstrated need for access to and use of space and recognizes that historically based allocation processes can perpetuate inequalities and may not be the best use of limited available resources. Need does not equal demand and will be considered independent of demand. *Demand reflects expressed interest, while need reflects priority based on equity, access, and community impact.* Often, the people who have the greatest needs in a community are the least able to express a high demand for services.
- **Effective & Efficient Use**: The allocation of spaces should aim to make the most effective and efficient use of the available inventory, while considering financial sustainability.
- **Consideration for All**: Opportunities to use space should be available to all who live in the city of Edmonton regardless of age, race, ethnicity, ability, financial means, sexual orientation or gender identity.

- **Universal Availability & Inclusion**: The allocation process should actively consider how to better serve underserved and underrepresented populations such as equity deserving groups as they are identified and emerging.
- **Good Governance**: The allocation process must be clear, consistent and publicly available, and must include a fair process to resolve conflicts or appeals.

Demonstrated Need Criteria

Demonstrated Need should be established using verifiable data sources and objective indicators. Need may be identified through one or more of the following lenses:

- **Equity-Based Need** – Evidence of systemic barriers or service to historically underserved or underrepresented populations.
- **Geographic Need** – Documented disparities in facility access or service availability.
- **Strategic Need** – Alignment with Council priorities, municipal mandates, emerging recreation trends and culturally significant programming.



Figure 2. Demonstrated Need Criteria

Categories of Uses

To operationalize the Benefits Based Approach, various types of uses can be identified along the Benefits Continuum, by which the proportion of direct benefit to users vs. indirect benefit to all citizens varies and can be used to initially prioritize

those uses. Categories of uses and users have been identified so that priorities can be assigned to each interaction between these categories.

Direct City Programming

These categories of use represent all City-led (or partner-delivered on City's behalf) programming options available to individual citizens. City-led initiatives are designed to provide low-barrier entry that welcome all residents at any stage or ability. This includes time used by members and admission-based participants, thereby guaranteeing that services like public and lane swimming, public skating, as well as open gym access, remain available to the general public. These and other registered programs provide essential life-skills and support for underserved and underrepresented groups that may not be addressed by the private or non-profit sectors.

- **Public Access (Drop-in use)**: Designated time reserved for unstructured, spontaneous use by the general public (e.g., public skating, open gym, or lane swimming). Public access ensures that municipal amenities remain accessible to all residents without the requirement of group affiliation or pre-requisite enrollment.
- **Program – Fundamental**: City-led (or partner-delivered on City's behalf) registered programs that provide essential life skills, physical literacy and critical compliance training (e.g., Learn to Swim, foundational movements, lifeguard training). These programs are considered a core municipal service, providing the "building blocks" for long-term health and safety.
- **Program – Advanced & Specialty**: City-led (or partner-delivered on City's behalf) programs designed for advanced skill development or to serve a specific demographic (e.g., advanced oil painting, specialized fitness).

Rentals

The category of Rentals represents service delivery by third-party organizations and individuals to provide specialized, community-driven opportunities using municipal facilities as their platform. The rental category supports the sustained development of organized sport, arts and civic celebration through the following categories:

- **Rental – Regular Activity**: A formal booking agreement provided to organizations and citizens to schedule consistent, long-term programming of an amenity over a defined period.
- **Rental – Special Event – Public**: Rental for an event that is open and free to all residents promoting community celebration without financial barriers to the participant.
- **Rental – Special Event - Private**: A rental for an event where use is controlled and limited through invitation and/or the sale of tickets (e.g. Sports tournament or swim meet).

Categories of Users

- **Priority Access Status**[2]: A group, program, or initiative that aligns with the UP-Lift: Equitable Programming Plan's Mission and/or is granted priority access consideration to address community needs or municipal mandates. This category includes:
    - Equity & Inclusion: Groups that face systemic barriers to traditional group affiliation, or serve underserved and underrepresented populations (e.g., Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, people with disabilities.)
    - Strategic Initiatives: Council mandated programs, professional sport partnerships or specific opportunities that deliver significant civic, economic, or high-performance value. (e.g., Mandated Youth After School Programs, Professional sport partnerships).
    - Registered Community League Programs: Community League programs such as Community Swims and Community Skates that are designed to offer inclusive, affordable, and easily accessible recreational opportunities close to where residents live.
- **Affiliated Minor Recreation**: A non-profit entity primarily focused on youth-oriented sport, recreation, or arts activities. Eligibility for affiliation is contingent upon registered participation of at least 75% Youth (17 years of age or younger) and 75% Edmonton residents and completion of the affiliation information request form.

[2] *More information on Priority Access Status consideration and determination in Appendix B.*

    - In instances where demand for an amenity exceeds available supply, priority may be restricted to organizations that maintain the following:
        - Active standing with a recognized sport or arts governing body.
        - Groups must demonstrate that their registration remains open and inclusive to the general public.
- **Affiliated Adult Recreation**: A non-profit entity primarily focused on adult sports, arts, or recreational activities. Eligibility for affiliation is contingent on 75% Edmonton residents, registration remains open and inclusive to the general public and completion of the affiliation information request form.
    - In instances where demand for an amenity exceeds available supply, priority may be restricted to organizations that maintain the following:
        - Active standing with a recognized sport or arts governing body.
        - Groups must demonstrate that their registration remains open and inclusive to the general public.
- **Casual Minor**: An individual youth or youth-oriented group that does not meet the requirements for affiliation. This includes informal social play or formal organizations whose primary purpose is not sport, recreation, or the arts.
    - Community Groups: Faith-based organizations, service clubs, or political groups.
    - Private/Social Bookings: Birthday parties, informal group of young badminton players.
    - Unverified Groups: Recreational clubs that do not meet the 75% residency requirement; schools not part of Joint Use agreement.
- **Casual Adult**: An individual adult or adult-oriented groups that do not meet the requirements for affiliation. This includes informal social play (e.g., a group of friends booking a court) or formal organizations whose primary purpose is not sport, recreation, or the arts.
    - Community Groups: Faith-based organizations, service clubs, or political groups.
    - Private/Social Bookings: Family reunions, birthday parties, or weddings.
    - Unverified Groups: Recreational clubs that do not meet the 75% residency requirement or non-profit status.

- **School Groups**: All groups from the Catholic, Public and Francophone School system that are included in the Joint Use Agreement (JUA).
- **Commercial Recreation**: A for-profit business or privately-owned entity that provides sport, recreation, or arts programming (e.g., private sports academies, professional dance studios, or fitness franchises)
- **Commercial**: All other commercial entities (e.g. a trade show in a field house)

Typically, affiliated groups are long time users with an established track record of good governance and responsible use of space. Groups that are newer, and perhaps have the potential to become affiliated, can start either as an unaffiliated group (e.g. Casual minor or adult) or as a Priority Access Status group, if applicable. There is a formal process to become affiliated and to lose affiliation status (e.g. inappropriate use of space, not paying invoiced rental fees). For more details on the criteria for affiliating groups, please refer to *Appendix A*.

Priority Matrix

Explanation of Priorities

Aligning with the benefits-based approach, the allocation & allotment process aims to provide a proportionate distribution of time to all uses, when supply is available, rather than an absolute displacement of one activity by the other.

The ranking of 1 (highest) through 7 (lowest) is determined by the intensity of public benefit provided by the activity/use.

- **High Public Benefit (Ranked 1-3):** Uses with the lowest barriers to entry, providing essential life-skills, or those serving underrepresented populations.
- **Community Benefit (Ranked 4-6):** Organized non-profit sports and arts that build long-term health and wellness.
- **Private/Social Benefit (Ranked 7):** Activities where the benefit is primarily for the individual or a commercial entity.

Edmonton's Priority Matrix

		USES / USAGE					
USERS		**Direct City Programming**			**Rental**		
Sub Category: Age		Public Access (Drop-in)	Fundamental Program	Advanced & Specialty Programs	Regular Activity	Special Event - Public	Special Event - Private
Individual Use							
Unrestricted age drop in will be considered at Highest (1)	Pre-school (<5 years)	Highest (1)	Highest (1)				
	Youth (5-18 years)	Very High (2)	Very High (2)	Moderate (4)			
	Adult (18-64 years)	Moderate (4)	Moderate (4)	Low (5)			
	Senior (65 + years)	High (3)	High (3)	High (3)			
Group Use							
Priority Access Status					Highest (1)	Highest (1)	Highest (1)
Affiliated Minor Rec					Very High (2)	High (3)	Low (5)
Affiliated Adult Rec					Moderate (4)	Moderate (4)	Low (5)
Casual Minor					Low (5)	Low (5)	Very Low (6)
Casual Adult					Very Low (6)	Very Low (6)	Very Low (6)
Local School Groups					JUA	JUA	JUA
Commercial Recreation					Very Low (6)	Very Low (6)	Lowest (7)
Commercial					Lowest (7)	Lowest (7)	Lowest (7)

Table 1. City of Edmonton Allotment & Allocation Priority Matrix

Historical Use

The City of Edmonton recognizes that access to consistent times and locations are valuable for the operational stability of affiliated groups. However, the City of Edmonton continues to expand in population, as does the demand for a variety of services requested. To ensure that public resources are not restricted by historical precedent at the expense of current community needs, the City of Edmonton will not guarantee the automatic "rollover" or renewal of *all* historical booked time from one season to the next. To ensure that each allocation season reflects the current needs of the community, the following procedure may apply:

- The City reserves the right to withhold a strategic percentage of a total amenity's inventory from the annual allocation process.
- This reserved time may be reallocated to address emerging initiatives or groups that demonstrate a high "Public Good" and/or serve underrepresented populations.
- Returning user groups should anticipate that a portion of their previously allocated hours may be periodically rebalanced.
- Time that is not designated for change of use may be returned to historical users.

Applicable Facilities

This model is applicable for use within community based facilities, such as Leisure centers, Recreation centers, school gymnasiums, ice arenas and sport fields. Purpose-built facilities, as well as metropolitan facilities may follow different mandates and may not be included in this model.

Implementation Milestones

A phased implementation approach is required to ensure that allocation changes are aligned with operational realities. This approach allows for iterative testing, readiness preparation, and stakeholder engagement.

- **Milestone #1** - *Development of the Edmonton Equitable Allocation Model*
  - Target Completion: March 2026 (*Complete*)
  - Develop and complete the Edmonton-specific allocation framework that defines how recreation space is distributed across programming and community use.
- **Milestone #2** - *Start of Organization-wide implementation*
  - Target Completion: June 2026
  - Finalize the tools required to implement the model across all recreation amenities, recognizing that allocation planning is seasonally staggered and operationally complex. Implementation will be tailored by amenity type requiring a customized implementation approach, targeted stakeholder communication and alignment with seasonal booking cycles.

Amenity	Process	Implementation Timing
Aquatics	Allotment Planning	November 2026
Aquatics	Allocation Cycle	January 2027
Sport Fields	Allocation Cycle	January 2027
Arenas	Allocation Cycle	February 2027
Dryland Spaces	Allotment Planning	February 2027
Gymnasiums	Allocation Cycle	July 2027

Table 2. City of Edmonton Allotment and Allocation Cycles

- **Milestone #3** - *Full Adoption of the Allotment & Allocation Model*
    - Target: September 2027
    - To achieve a fully implemented, consistent application of the allotment and allocation model across all relevant recreation spaces. The model will be consistent, transparent, defensible and aligned with corporate priorities.

Appendix A: User Group Affiliation Questionnaire

Organizational Information

1. **Name of Group**: *
2. **Primary Contact**: *
3. **Non-Profit Status**: Is your group a registered Non-Profit Society in Alberta?
4. **Governance Structure**: Does your group have a volunteer (unpaid) leadership board?
5. **Insurance**: Does your group carry General Liability insurance in an amount not less than Two Million Dollars ($2,000,000.00) per occurrence for death, bodily injury, property damage, and personal injury?

Membership & Residency

6. **Total Registered Participants**: (Total number of active members).
7. **Edmonton Residency**: Does your group meet the 75% Edmonton residency requirement?
    a. What is the *actual percentage* of Edmonton residents in your membership?
8. **Youth Focus**: Does your group meet the 75% youth registration requirement?
    a. What percentage of your participants are *17 years of age or younger*?

Affiliation & Standards

9. **Governing Body**: Are you affiliated with or a member of a provincial or national governing body for your specific activity?
10. **Equity & Inclusion**: Does your group have a formal *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)* policy? *(Please append the document)*.
11. **Financial Accessibility**: Does your group have a policy or program (e.g., sliding scale, bursary) that allows participants who cannot afford regular fees to be included? *(Please append the document)*.

Good Standing

Affiliated groups must remain in good standing with the City of Edmonton, and, when applicable, with their respective Sport Governing Body.

- All invoices for facility rentals and services must be paid on appropriate terms.
- Up to date General Liability insurance must be provided to the City.
- Affiliated groups must adhere to all City bylaws and facility Terms and Conditions. Reports of property damage, noise violations, or safety breaches will be investigated and may jeopardize this status.

Appendix B: Consideration for Priority Access Status (Equity & Inclusion)

In alignment with the UP-Lift Equity Plan's Mission, the City of Edmonton recognizes that groups serving historically underserved or underrepresented populations may face systemic barriers to formal incorporation, residency tracking, or traditional governance structures. To help ensure equity across City amenities, the Priority Access Status Designation has been developed as an administrative tool used to bridge the gap between systemic barriers and community need.

Important Note on Access: This status is not designed as an application-based category for the public; it is a designation granted by the City of Edmonton to provide amenity access.

Categories of Designation

Equity & Inclusion Designation

The Equity & Inclusion designation is granted to initiatives serving historically underserved or underrepresented populations (e.g., Indigenous youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, people with disabilities) that face barriers to formal affiliation.

To be considered for designation, groups or programs must demonstrate the following:

- Systemic Barriers: The Group faces barriers to formal incorporation, residency tracking, or accessibility constraints.
- Community Impact: The programming directly addresses a gap in service for underrepresented groups.
- Non-Duplicate Service: Programming is unique and does not mimic existing City programs or affiliated group offerings.
- Mission Alignment: The programming clearly supports the City's recreation and wellness mandates, and prioritizes local involvement.

Examples of this may include:

- Formal documentation showing the group's specific purpose is to serve underrepresented demographics such as Indigenous youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ or people with disabilities.
- A high-level summary of membership representing underserved communities (e.g. 75% of participants are from underserved communities).
- Evidence of programming delivered or adapted to specific cultural protocols (e.g., requiring gender-specific swims or smudge-friendly spaces).
- Requirements for specialized equipment or facility modifications that aren't readily available in all City facilities.

Facility Access Provision

Granting Priority Access Status (Equity and Inclusion) provides priority consideration, but it may not guarantee specific facility locations or exact time-slot preferences. The City will provide access based on the following “reasonable use” parameters:

- Space will be allocated in proportion to the group’s current demand and the City’s available inventory.
- The most applicable sport Standard of Play may be used to reflect adequate usage.
- Time will be provided at facilities that can *technically* meet the specific needs of the activity (e.g. appropriate floor surfaces or accessibility features).
- The City will make reasonable efforts to ensure allocated times are suitable for the demographic served (e.g. ensuring youth programming is not scheduled during late-night hours).
- The final determination of time and location rests with the City of Edmonton to ensure scheduling efficiency.

Strategic Initiative Designation

The Strategic Initiatives designation is intended to align with Council-mandated goals or enhance the city’s reputation as a premier destination for sport and culture. These initiatives include council-mandated programs or initiatives, professional and

amateur sport partnerships or specific opportunities that deliver significant civic, economic, or high-performance value. Examples of these initiatives include:

- Council-mandated Youth afterschool programs
- Commitments to Truth and Reconciliation Initiatives
- Council-mandated high-performance training pathways
- Established or new space use agreements with professional sport organizations
- National/International championship opportunities
- Emerging sports of relevance

Granting Authority and Process

To ensure accountability, transparency, and consistent application, the granting of Priority Access Status (PAS) follows a defined administrative process:

Identification

- Potential candidates for Priority Access Status may be identified through the review of facility booking requests, written intake forms, or program proposals submitted to the City.
- City staff may request additional information to determine whether the program or organization aligns with the demonstrated need criteria, including equity-based, geographic or strategic considerations. Where relevant, groups may be asked to self-identify the populations they serve.
- If a specific location or amenity is requested, membership needs to be proven specific to the applicable region.

Internal Review

City of Edmonton staff will conduct an administrative review to assess:

- Alignment with demonstrated need criteria
- Operational feasibility of the space request
- Previous/Current use of amenities (e.g., who is historical user/program, what is program registration or attendance of drop in)
- Current number and distribution of programs holding Priority Access Status

Approval

- Priority Access Status must be formally approved by the Equitable Allotment Committee, composed of members from multiple City of Edmonton recreation sections. The committee will proceed with the majority decision to grant, modify, or decline Priority Access Status based on alignment with municipal priorities, operational feasibility, and overall system balance.
- The committee will provide a statement of approval or denial, based on transparent criteria.

Annual Validation Process

Granting of Priority Access Status (PAS) does not constitute a permanent entitlement. To ensure that limited facility inventory continues to serve the highest public benefit, all PAS designations are subject to annual review. During this review, City staff will assess whether the program or organization continues to meet the criteria for Priority Access Status. The review will confirm the following:

1. The organization has demonstrated responsible facility use and remains in good standing with the City, including:

- Consistent and appropriate use of allocated space
- Payment of applicable fees in accordance with City terms
- Compliance with facility policies, bylaws, and terms and conditions

2. The program or organization continues to meet the Demonstrated Need criteria that supported the initial Priority Access Status designation, including:

- Ongoing service to underserved or underrepresented populations
- Continued presence of systemic barriers to participation (financial, cultural, or administrative) that limit the ability to operate within the affiliated model

Where the conditions supporting Priority Access Status are no longer present, the PAS designation may be discontinued. Organizations that have developed the capacity to operate within the standard recreation allocation framework (for example, by obtaining non-profit status or meeting affiliation

requirements) will be transitioned to the appropriate Affiliated Youth or Affiliated Adult category for future allocation cycles.

Transition to Partner-Delivered Program

The City recognizes that some organizations may provide a service so unique and vital that they may eventually move beyond being a Priority Access Status group to becoming a long-term delivery partner.

If an organization has received Priority Access Status designation for multiple years and has proven to be the most effective way to reach a specific underserved population, recommendations may be made to transition to a partner-delivered program.

Financial Terms

Priority Access Status recognizes high public value but maintains the requirement for operational cost recovery:

- Subsidized Rate: Groups will be billed at the Minor Affiliated Rate.
- Alternative Subsidy: If a minor rate is not applicable, a 50% discount off the standard adult or commercial rate may apply.
- Direct Costs: Groups remain responsible for incremental costs (e.g., specialized staffing, security, or supplemental cleaning).