

SNAPSHOT: Festivals and Special Events Support

Creative City Network of Canada – Intermunicipal Comparative Framework Project

Municipal involvement in festivals or special events requires the co-operation of numerous municipal departments and programs if it is to succeed. Festivals and special events present a good opportunity to consider the broader context of local government involvement in the cultural life of a community.

By-laws, policies, and advisory groups

Communities of all sizes report **advisory, council, or staff committee structures** to assist in the coordination of events and festivals. Forty-three percent of respondents report that Council members serve on a festival or special event advisory committee, commission, or board. Thirty-one respondents cited **policy, permit, and license requirements** from departments or agencies such as Liquor Control, Legal Liability, Engineering, and Health (see Table 1). Thirty respondents have noise by-laws to consider and 25 have by-laws that regulate the use of parks and public spaces. In addition, municipalities co-operate with police and fire departments for traffic management and road closures.

TABLE 1
Festivals and special events legislation, policy, plans, or strategies, and Council-appointed committees

	Yes	In proc.	Total	Council members?	
Legislation	9	6	15		
Policy	17	6	23		
Cultural Plan/Strategy	5	3	8		
Council-appointed committees, Commissions, boards, or advisory groups	12	2	14	6	43%
<i>Other local government legislation and policies governing festivals and special events: **</i>					
Permit requirements	32				
Noise by-laws	30				
Parks and public spaces use	25				
Other *	6				

* Other responses:

Festivals and Special Events procedure in development
Liquor Control Board, Legal Liability, Engineering, Health Department
Police, Fire, and Liquor Board
Signage; Road closures
Insurance

** Overall, 31 respondents indicated *other* local government legislation and/or policies governing festivals and special events in the areas above.

33 municipalities responded to the *Festivals and Special Event Support* section of the survey.

Data years reflected in this report: 2003–2005

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Administrative structures

Almost three-quarters of municipalities responding have an administrative structure to assist in the coordination of services for festivals and special events. Municipalities under 100,000 are likely to report a single person with a title that co-ordinates the work of other committees and departments. Cities and larger municipalities are developing interdepartmental (staff) event support teams, such as Vancouver’s Festival Committee or Ottawa’s Event Central, a one-stop shop for event planning.

Eighty-one percent of the 31 responding municipalities are **directly involved in organizing annual festivals and special events** (see Table 2). Rather than supporting, assisting, or funding community or non-profit organizations to create these events, municipal staff and other resources are directed to these community events, which may include Canada Day and First Night or New Year’s Eve celebrations. Twenty-seven municipalities have organized one-time events. Examples of such special events include:

- Civic functions such as openings, dedications, and public art unveilings
- Centennial celebrations
- Millennium celebrations
- Royal visits
- RCMP musical ride
- New Year’s Eve special event
- Winterlights Festival
- Hamilton Homecoming
- Tall Ships Festival
- 2010 Olympic Festival
- Trans Canada Trail Opening
- Windows on the World – International Sommet de la francophonie
- East Coast Music Awards
- 400TH Anniversary Celebrations of the Founding of Acadie (in 2003)
- Moose in the City public art event
- Communities in Bloom National Judges visit—community participation
- City’s Anniversary Celebration
- Marconi Transatlantic Communications 100th Anniversary
- Grey Cup

61% of the responding municipalities offer start-up or project grants and 55% offer annual operating grants.

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TABLE 2			
Direct organizing/programming and support of festivals and special events			
	Yes	In proc.	Total
Direct organizing/programming			
Direct programming: Annual events	25		25
Direct programming: One-time events	19		19
Funding and other support			
<i>Type of program:</i>			
Project or start-up grants	18	2	20
Annual operating grants	16	2	18
Incentive grants	3	0	3
Organizational development grants	1	0	1
In-kind facility or site assistance	1	1	1
In-kind provision of municipal services (traffic control, policing, electrical hook-ups etc.)	17	1	18
Other *	6	1	7
Other non-grant support	25	0	25
<i>What is supported by these festivals and special events programs:</i>			
Annual community celebrations (e.g., First Night)	27		
Community festivals with an arts component	22		
Heritage or multicultural festivals	21		
Arts festivals	22		
Community festivals with a heritage component	20		
“Free to the public” component of festivals	18		
Other **	2		
<i>* Other types of support responses:</i>			
Marketing and promotional support—a strategy is in process for a major festivals/events campaign with corporate sponsors, billboards and media advertising becoming the City’s main support	0	1	1
One-time Special Events Reserve	1	0	1
Equipment, canopies, staging, sound systems	1	0	1
Festivals can access funding from our cultural grants program	1		1
Organizing group can apply for a Heathy Community Fund grant	1		1
Special Council grants	2	0	2
Comments: Other – Community foundation city grants Marketing and promotional support: a strategy is in process for a major festivals/events campaign with corporate sponsors, billboards and media advertising becoming the City’s main support Festivals can access funding from our cultural grants program Organizing group can apply for a Heathy Community Fund grant Event organizers may apply for special Council grants as part of annual grant program <i>outside</i> of City’s arts and heritage program			
<i>** Other responses:</i>			
Participation of target groups (e.g., Aboriginal, youth at risk, low-income, and women); Sport			
Overall, 26 respondents indicated direct organizing/programming; 28 respondents indicated funding and other support of festivals and special events.			

Funding support to festivals and special events

When non-profit groups organize these special events and festivals, municipalities may support the organizations through programs specifically designed for festivals and special events, or through more general support programs, such as **project and operating grant** programs. Some municipalities, such as the City of Vancouver, provide support to festivals and special events organized and run by non-profit organizations both through general cultural grant programs and through a targeted program (e.g., Celebration Grants). This snapshot examines grant or support programs designed specifically for festivals and special events run by non-profit organizations, not all support given to festivals and special events by a municipality.

Thirty-three municipalities provide **support designed specifically for festivals and special events** run by non-profit organizations. Sixty-one percent of the responding municipalities offer start-up or project grants and 55% offer annual operating grants. Three municipalities offer incentive funding but only one offers organizational development grants.

The most commonly supported festivals and special events are annual community celebrations (e.g. First Night), community festivals with an arts component, and arts festivals.

The “**free to the public**” component of festivals is considered an important element of the service provided (and of the rationale for support) whether a festival is supported through a festival-specific program or a more general project or operating support program. Over half of the programs described fund the free element of public festivals.

Non-funding support to festivals and special events

Municipalities report a wide array of non-grant support that includes:

- Facility access, meeting rooms, staff support with logistics, promotional assistance and coordinated promotion on a case-by-case “partnership” basis, assistance with contacts, and hosting of receptions
- Consultative services, equipment loan, volunteer assistance, and assistance with festival grant applications to other levels of government
- Provision of mobile facilities including toilets, lighting, bleachers, garbage containers, tables, water, fencing, canopies, staging, and sound systems
- City services including garbage pick-up, grounds set-up, equipment delivery, road closures, and clean-up
- Assistance from Events Coordinator, online/print events list, and planning guidelines
- Offsets for up to \$1,000 for cost of civic services, use of city parks and streets, transit shelter advertising space, barricades, and some staff time

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Adjudication of funding requests

In 83% of the municipalities responding, the assessment of festival funding applications are made by staff and presented to Council for approval (see Table 3). Approximately one third of the responses indicate that groups may make a direct request to Council or the Mayor, on an ad hoc basis, and the resulting support may or may not be considered a grant. A further 27% report recommendations that come from a community-based committee to Council for approval. Overall, 25 municipalities report that all decisions regarding festival and event support require approval by Council. In one municipality only, a jury or peer assessment process of festival funding is arm's-length, binding, and not subject to Council approval.

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TABLE 3	
Adjudication of festivals/special events funding	
Decision-making process	Process used
Staff assessment, approved by Council	25
Direct submission by arts groups to Council, and decision by Council	8
Jury or Advisory Committee process which includes community non-arts representatives and artist representatives. Recommendations to Council or Council Committee for approval	6
Peer assessment/jury process by arts discipline (peer review). Recommendations to Council or Council Committee for approval.	2
Advisory Committee (community based, no designated arts representative), recommendations to Council or Council Committee for approval	2
Peer assessment/jury process by arts discipline (peer review). Does not require Council approval	1
Other *	6
<i>In the adjudication of festival/special event grants:</i>	
All decisions are subject to approval by Council	25
Jury and/or peer assessment process is arm's-length, binding, and not subject to Council approval	3
<p>* <i>Other</i> responses:</p> <p>Ad hoc case-by-case letters of request for assistance to Director of Parks and Recreation or Mayor, not grants</p> <p>Funding formula used</p> <p>Recommendations do not go to Council for approval</p> <p>Staff assessment and approval through a budgeted program</p> <p>Staff assessment, committee recommendation, and Council approval for Special Events reserve; Staff recommendation and committee review for Summer Festival Grant</p> <p>No formal adjudication process</p> <p>Overall, 30 respondents indicated one of these options.</p>	

Snapshot: Public Art has been updated from the Creative City Network of Canada's *Intermunicipal Comparative Framework Project (Phase One Pilot)* to incorporate additional responses that followed the pilot group of respondents.

The full Phase One Pilot Report is available at www.creativecity.ca/framework

Respondents: Banff, AB; Brantford, ON; Camrose, AB; City of Kitchener, ON; City of Windsor, ON; County of Oxford, ON; District of Saanich, BC; Edmonton, BC; Fredericton, NB; Grand Prairie, AB; Halifax Regional Municipality, NS; Hamilton, ON; Highlands, BC; Kelowna, BC; Kingston, ON; Mississauga, ON; Moncton, NB; Nanaimo, BC; New Westminster, BC; North Vancouver (City & District), BC; Ottawa, ON; Port Coquitlam, BC; Port Hope, ON; Port Moody, BC; Portage la Prairie, MB; Prince George, BC; Red Deer, AB; Regina, SK; Richmond, BC; Saskatoon, SK; Sooke, BC; St. Catharines, ON; St. John's, NL; Strathcona County, AB; Toronto, ON; Township of Esquimalt, BC; Vancouver, BC; West Vancouver, BC.

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