Service Innovation
and Performance

Corporate Policy Framework

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Edmonton operates within the scope and context of the *Municipal Government Act*. Tools such as bylaws, policies and procedures are how the City translates legislation as well as its strategic intentions into clear directions with consistent, measurable actions. City Council uses policy to direct strategy and to direct Administration. It also delegates a range of powers and authorities to the City Manager through the City Administration Bylaw. The City Manager then uses policy tools to activate Council's policy intentions and to direct activities.

Policy tools that are not well defined lead to inconsistent decision-making, creating confusion for internal (employees) and external (residents, community groups, businesses, etc) stakeholders. It is critical that policies and related documents, as well as roles and responsibilities, are clearly developed and defined so that the City can achieve its desired strategic goals and operational outcomes.

In January 2021, the Service Innovation and Performance (SIP) Branch and department strategy sections were established following a review of corporate strategy functions as part of the *Corporate Strategy Transformation Project*. This new two-stream model, featuring a corporate stream and department stream, was created to align corporate strategic initiatives and maximize efficiencies and leverage excellent work across the organization. This new model balances activating corporate direction with coordinating strategic management, business intelligence and analytics, and service delivery in departments. A corporate policy service was also introduced, to apply this framework and to coordinate and manage strategic and operational policy activities, in collaboration with the department strategy streams and their business areas. One of the first focus areas for this corporate policy service was to establish a *Corporate Policy Framework* for the City of Edmonton.

A framework is an organizing system that outlines how components are connected and related to each other and how ongoing work is structured. This *Corporate Policy Framework* provides a reference for City employees who develop, approve or implement strategy and policy, or who direct operational activities. This framework defines policy tools available to them, what they can be used for, and who is accountable for key parts of the policy management process. Day-to-day application of this framework is supported by templates, planning tools that help identify priorities, and information and

training materials. These resources can be found at the City of Edmonton's internal
Corporate Policy site.

FRAMEWORK

ELEMENTS

The *Corporate Policy Framework* is one of the tools used to ensure that the City is
strategically managed and its application informs work undertaken with the *Strategic
Planning Framework*. This framework allows corporate lenses, using governance and
defined policy management processes and its tools, to support subject matter experts
who activate strategy and inform operational decision-making. The products of the
framework create the City's policy environment which in turn provides accountability to
our strategic direction and the services we provide.

Governance is the structure of delegations and accountabilities specific to setting policy
priorities, and developing, approving, implementing and reviewing policies.

Applying **corporate lenses** allows for holistic consideration of the need for, use of, and
impacts of policy tools. These include corporate governance (i.e. the authorities granted
to City Council and those delegated to the City Manager), legislative considerations, the
Executive perspective of the City's leaders, and strategic management of the
organization. Engagement - both internal and public - and the use of GBA+ are
fundamental to understanding how people (residents and staff) may experience
services, initiatives and programs that arise from policies.

Defined **tools and processes** ensure consistent approaches are applied across the City.

Collaboration with **subject matter experts** is essential for policy solutions that are informed by evidence, have impacts that matter, and are enforceable.

OUTCOMES

Outcomes from the application of the framework help to achieve the City's objectives:

- **Making Transformational Impacts:** Policy tools that connect the City's work to the values and goals in strategies such as *ConnectEdmonton*, the *Edmonton City Plan*, and the *Reimagine* report. This results in **residents being able to see the impact our actions have on our strategic goals, directions and program outcomes**.

- **Delivering Excellent Services:** Policy development processes that are accessible, useful and used by employees. This results in **consistent, appropriate policy and implementation tools (e.g. procedures, standards, guidelines, etc.) that the organization is accountable for**.

- **Managing the Corporation:** Policy tools that balance corporate oversight with operational flexibility and content expertise. This results in focused **policies that are responsive, appropriate to the organization's needs, and enhance decision-making**.

CORPORATE POLICY

CONTEXT

Corporate policies set out directions and intentions of Council and Administration in a manner that impacts how the City operates or guides its interactions with residents. Policies interact with many other documents, tools and guiding materials such as strategies, bylaws, and statutory and operational plans.

The *Municipal Government Act* grants City Council the authority to pass bylaws and set direction; these bylaws can be enforced with penalties, challenged in court and must comply with laws from other orders of government. Policies do not have this authority; policies and policy tools set corporate commitments and direct action, and when they do have requirements, they apply only to those that are accountable to the approver of the policy.

PRINCIPLES

The development, review and evaluation, and use of policy tools is governed by the following principles:

- **Relevant:** Policy tools align with the overall direction of the City of Edmonton and its priorities. Overall relevance is ensured through regular reviews of tools and revising or rescinding those which have become irrelevant or outdated.

- **Effective and Efficient:** Policy tools are viable, risk-managed, and sustainable. They are aware of and responsive to operational needs, requirements, and commitments including potential implications for stakeholders, while also being easily adaptable to changing conditions.

- **Consistency:** Policy tools are developed from an institutional perspective using a systematic approach. In doing so, policy tools are consistently coordinated, integrated, streamlined, structured, and formatted, using accepted formats, templates, and best practices.

- **Evidence-Based:** Policy tools are based on sound research and analysis with a focus on achievable and measurable results. Sound analysis and data are necessary for both developing and reviewing policy instruments and supporting future policy actions. Processes that support development, approval and reviewing are collaborative and transparent, ensuring that affected business areas are key contributors while also considering corporate requirements such as public engagement and the use of GBA+.

- **Open:** Policy instruments are developed and implemented through a collaborative and consultative approach. Policy tools are written in plain language and are made available to all staff, stakeholders, and residents, in a timely manner, as required.

TOOLS

This framework identifies four tools. To effectively address a policy issue, assessing the reason for a policy will help identify the tool best suited for addressing the need. Each tool in the framework has its own purpose and addresses a different organizational need.

Tool	Purpose	Questions to Ask
Policy	WHAT - Sets strategy or provides direction to implement strategy	• Is direction already provided by Council or in legislation? • What broad direction do employees need to implement strategy?
Procedure	HOW - Prescribes a process to achieve a policy's direction	• Do employees need a process or behaviors identified to carry out work? • What policy is this procedure connected to?
Standard	HOW MUCH - Indicates a minimum level or quality for work	• What does the base level of acceptable behavior or work from employees consist of to achieve something? • What is required to achieve an outcome?
Guideline	OPTIONS - suggest a course of action	• What suggested courses of action are available that promote consistency but allow flexibility? • What options could be considered in informed decision-making?

The purpose of a **policy** is to state what we intend to achieve and give high-level direction on how to achieve it.

- A policy is necessary when additional guidance is required to achieve strategic goals and direction. Policies inform decision-making, whether it is set out in a procedure or through program design.
- The key elements of a policy are the *Statement of intent* (what the policy aims to achieve) and the *Guiding Principles* (high-level descriptions of how the intention will be achieved).

Council policies are commitments to residents and the community, are aspirational in nature, and provide Administration with strategic direction. Council policies can set direction or can be used to provide further strategic direction by activating Policy Directions in the *Edmonton City Plan*. Council policies can also be used to set standards and processes for City Councillors and their staff.

Administrative policies provide direction to City of Edmonton employees on strategic and organizational matters that are under the authority of the City Manager.

A **procedure** is Administration's commitment to how a policy (Council or Administrative) will be activated. It sets processes, requirements or criteria that employees must follow, directing them in the actions they need to take to achieve the policy's intentions.

- A procedure is the appropriate tool if action or decision-making are required to achieve the outcomes of a policy. A procedure also creates a structure for performance monitoring and measurement because compliance is mandatory.

Standards set a minimum level of acceptable quality or actions. These can be standalone processes, requirements or criteria, but they do not activate policies and therefore a parent policy to set strategic direction is not required.

- Consider using a standard if measurement and compliance and performance monitoring are necessary, but a policy or strategic statement is not required.

With **guidelines**, employees are provided with suggested courses of action or decision-making criteria to guide their actions. Because compliance is not mandatory they provide additional flexibility.

- Guidelines are useful when consistency is sought but compliance is not required.

Policies, procedures, standards and guidelines are the four tools in this framework, however there are other tools that activate strategy or provide direction to employees or residents. These may include bylaws, statutory plans, strategies, frameworks, systems, plans, processes, manuals, forms, and others. These additional tools are not defined within this framework, but are noted here to acknowledge a range of tools that influence or direct the work of employees.

CITY OF EDMONTON POLICY TOOLS: SETTING STRATEGY AND DIRECTING ACTION
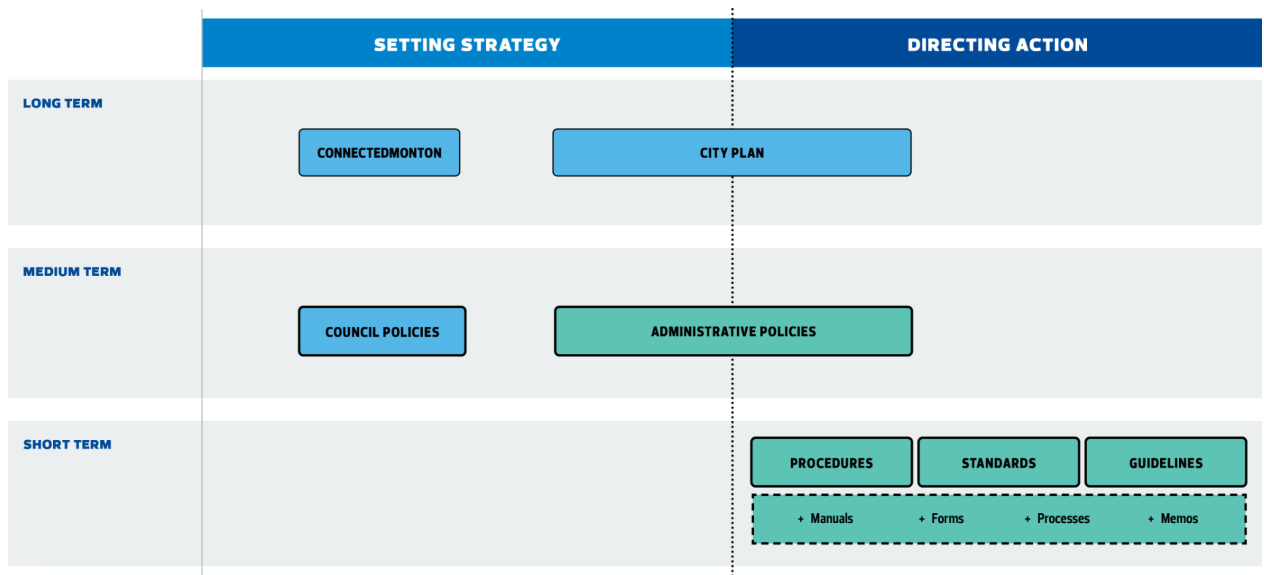
The City of Edmonton's policy tools are used to activate strategy and to direct the activities of City of Edmonton staff. They are part of a broader system of strategies, plans and management tools. In the diagram above, tools in **blue** are instruments of City Council and used to set strategy. Tools in **green** are instruments used by Administration.

ConnectEdmonton is Edmonton's Strategic Plan for 2019–2028. Its four strategic goals set *Directions*.

The **City Plan** is Edmonton's *Municipal Development Plan* & *Transportation Master Plan* and also sets strategic directions for environmental & social planning and economic development. It sets out *Choices* we are making to achieve our strategic goals and prepare for a city of 2 million people.

Council Policies activate strategic directions in the City Plan or set strategy when there is a need. **Administrative Policies** state the City Manager's position or direction on city-wide matters delegated to the City Manager and Administration.

Procedures direct City employees on how to carry out tasks or functions to activate or align with Council and Administrative Policies. Procedures must always have a parent policy they activate.

Standards are requirements that ensure work is completed with a minimum level of quality.

Guidelines promote consistency by presenting a suggested course of action.

People Leaders in the organization may also use other tools to describe and direct the activities of employees. These include **manuals, forms, processes, memos**, etc. These tools are not part of the Corporate Policy Framework.

POLICY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The policy management process describes the entire life cycle of policy tools in this framework, from Initiation and Development, Approval and Implementation, and finally Review and Evaluation.

Whether a policy response is requested by Council or initiated by Administration, the high-level steps to identify and develop the appropriate tool are the same.

Initiation begins the process and considers important questions such as *What is the need for the policy?*, *What will it affect?*, *Who will it affect?*, and *How will it affect them?* It identifies what the policy will address, selects the appropriate policy tool, and sets the approach for how it will be developed.

Development requires research and analysis, resulting in a draft policy, continues work with impacted groups, and starts using engagement consultation to identify how change will be realized and measured.

Approval is when a final, reviewed draft of the policy is submitted to City Council or the City Manager. The final numbered policy is posted on the City's website.

Once a policy is approved, **Implementation** begins. Employees, residents or both need to be made aware of the policy and begin to respond to it or put its intentions into action. A robust implementation plan presents what will change and how, and also considers how change will be supported, not just resourced.

After a policy has been approved and in effect - most often for a term of three years - it will go through a **Review** to identify gaps between intentions and results, and conflicts with other policies. An **Evaluation** of how the policy is affecting residents and/or employees provides valuable insight for new policies or revisions to existing policies. At this point an evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy in reaching strategy goals should also be completed. A policy may be revised, if necessary, or remain unchanged if it is still relevant and effective. If it is no longer required it may be rescinded.

GOVERNANCE

Governance in the framework addresses two matters: **Accountability** (Who has the authority to approve which type of policy tool?) and **Responsibility** (Who does which activity in the Policy Management Process?). This section sets out the essential elements of Accountabilities and Responsibilities.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

Clear accountabilities for approving policy tools ensures that authority is transparently identified and communicated. It is a delegated authority and enables leaders to create an environment of policy-informed decision-making.

POLICY FRAMEWORK TOOLS: APPROVALS			
Policy Tool	**City Council**	**City Manager**	**Deputy City Manager**
Council Policy*	x		
Administrative Policy		x	
City-Wide Procedure		x	
Department Procedure			x
City-Wide Standard		x	
Department Specific Standard			x
City-Wide Guideline		x	
Department Standard			x
* City Council approves Council Policies but its Committees can not.			

RESPONSIBILITIES

Consistent application of the *Corporate Policy Framework* ensures a strategic and holistic approach is applied when developing, approving and implementing policy tools, even when the scope appears to be limited to a single business area. A number of roles and areas across the organization have responsibilities in the policy management process. What is presented here is the highest level of responsibility. Roles in departments, because of structure, available resources, internal capacity, or volume of work, can be flexible in their approach to internal processes not addressed here.

POLICY MANAGEMENT PROCESS: RESPONSIBILITIES **Note:** *Table does not include <u>final approvals</u>, set out in previous section*					
	INITIATION	**DEVELOPMENT**	**APPROVAL**	**IMPLEMENTATION**	**REVIEW & EVALUATION**
Role	**Responsibilities**				
City Council	Request a policy or policy options; Contribute to annual corporate policy priorities (in its annual review of the				Consider the relevance and effectiveness of Council policies

	City Plan)				
City Manager	Request a policy or policy options / strategic outcomes / actions		Review Council Policies (i.e quality control) to go to Council for approval (via the OCM[1] / OCC[2])	Implement and activate Corporate Policy (with procedures, strategies, plans, frameworks, etc.)	
Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	Identify and approve annual corporate policy priorities (by approving the *Corporate Business Plan*); Cross-reference ELT's work plan with policy solutions		Review Administrative Policies (i.e quality control) to go to City Manager for approval		
Deputy City Manager (DCM)	Requesting a policy or policy options (from department or via ELT)		Review Council and Administrative Policies to City Manager; Review Procedures (city-wide) to City Manager; Review Standards and Guidelines (city-wide) to City Manager		
Department Strategy Section (DSS)	Participate in identifying policy work or opportunities; Alerting Corporate Policy Unit; Initial, in-department assessment of policy issue and approach; referral to Corporate Policy Unit; Contribute to annual corporate policy priorities	Oversight / corporate lenses on department policy work (engagement, GBA+[3], etc)	Final check before anything to DCM / Department Leadership Team (process and quality if needed, not content)		

	and reviews; Align department activities with City Plan; choices and strategy direction				
Branch Manager			Review policy tools developed by business areas before going to DSS	Resources for for implementing and change management activities; Report on implementing and change management activities / outputs	Resources for for evaluation and review activities; Report on review activities and evaluation outcomes
Business Area / Director	Connecting with DSS and Corporate Policy unit	Create draft policy tools (Subject Experts); implementing / review / evaluating / revising activities			
Corporate Policy Unit	Stewardship of the framework. Manage project intake process and monitoring tools; Provide advisory services (governance, process) to all participants; Lead (with DSSs) ongoing and annual strategic / corporate policy prioritizing; Track policy projects and annual reviews; Develop and maintain policy management toolkit,	Provide advisory services to business areas on policy development	Final check before Corporate Policy Advisory Group (confirmation on approach); Liaise with OCC (e.g. request policy number from OCC for final draft; prepare for posting)	Manage policy inventory (including interfaces for policy developers, staff and public)	

	including training and education				
Corporate Policy Advisory Group	Advice on governance and application of framework (type of tool, strategic development considerations, or alternative approach); Confirm approach for Council / Administrative policies (not procedures) and corporate-wide standards; Liaise with DSS on decisions		Final check (Council and Administrative policies / city-wide procedures and standards) before CMO (confirmation of final draft)		
[1] OCM - Office of the City Manager [2] OCC - Office of the City Clerk [3] GBA+ - Gender-based Analysis Plus					

DEFINITIONS

Administration	Every municipal council must establish, by bylaw, a position of Chief Administrative Officer (called the City Manager in the City of Edmonton). The City Manager is the administrative head of the municipal organization, and hires and delegates certain authority to employees. When the term *Administration* is used in policy making, it refers to the City Manager and the employees they hire and delegate authority to. The City Manager's responsibilities include: ● ensuring that the municipality's policies and programs are implemented ● advising and informing the council on the operation of the municipality ● performing other duties assigned by the council ● ensuring appropriate staffing is in place Councillors work with the City Manager to keep informed on what the municipality is doing and will depend on Administration to provide information so they can make sound decisions.
Bylaw	Bylaws are resident facing and used when City Council is acting under a specific legislative authority to enforce a law. They are used to require or restrict certain behaviours within the City. They use prescriptive, specific language which shows the obligation and necessity: Must, May, Can and Cannot. Penalties for non-compliance are specified within the Bylaw. They are used to delegate authority from City Council to the City Manager. Bylaws can only be approved by Council (not Committees).

Framework	A framework is an organizing system that shows how main components are connected and related to each other. The components provide the structure for ongoing work. The [Strategic Planning Framework](#) is another example of a framework at the City of Edmonton; it includes the high-level components required to manage a business. Components may have been developed separately or independently and form an interdependent system that enables strategic business management (Direction, Choices, Action, Resources, Performance, Assurance (Risk)).
GBA+	[Gender-based Analysis Plus](#) (GBA+) is a process to examine and address how policies, programs and services impact diverse individuals and groups. The plus prompts us to consider multiple identity factors, including age, race, ability, education, ethnicity, geography, health, language, class, sex and gender. The City has [embraced GBA+](#) as a way to improve planning and decision-making for citizens and staff. We use it to assess how our work might impact diverse groups of people and ask *Who is excluded? What contributes to this exclusion?* and *What will we do about it?* The inclusion of GBA+ analysis is a consideration for all policy development and revision in the City of Edmonton.
Guideline	A suggested course of action or decision-making criteria to guide the actions of employees. Guidelines are useful when consistency is sought but compliance is not required.

Policy	The purpose of a policy is to state what we intend to achieve and give high-level direction on how to achieve it. A policy is necessary when additional guidance is required to achieve strategic goals and direction. Policies inform decision-making, whether it is set out in a procedure or through program design. The key elements of a policy are the Statement of intent (what the policy aims to achieve) and the Guiding Principles (high-level descriptions of how the intention will be achieved). Council policies are commitments to residents and the community, are aspirational in nature, and provide Administration with strategic direction. Council policies can set direction or can be used to provide further strategic direction by activating Policy Directions in the Edmonton City Plan. Council policies can also be used to set standards and processes for City Councillors and their staff. Administrative policies provide direction to City of Edmonton employees on strategic and organizational matters that are under the authority of the City Manager.
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	A procedure also creates a structure for performance monitoring and measurement because compliance is mandatory.
Standard	Sets a minimum level of acceptable quality or action. These can be processes, requirements or criteria, but they do not activate policies and therefore a parent policy to set strategic direction is not required. Consider using a standard if measurement and compliance and performance monitoring are necessary, but a policy or strategic statement is not required.