

# Civic Youth Fellowship

PILOT SUMMARY  
2023



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# About the Project

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# A little bit about the Civic Youth Fellowship



The goal of the Civic Youth Fellowship (Council Internship) was to encourage youth from diverse backgrounds to gain leadership skills, grow their professional network, learn new skills in the public sector and experience meaningful mentorship and career development opportunities. The intent of the program was for community-based partnership to lead enhanced opportunities for diverse youth within the municipal government. In the City of Edmonton's case, the offices of City Council members.

The program was designed to facilitate two-way learning between the youth and the Council members and their staff.

## The Partners

- Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF)
- Islamic Family & Social Services (IslamicFamily)
- The Africa Centre
- City of Edmonton
- kihêw waciston Indigenous Centre (MacEwan University)



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# Strategic Alignment



The Council Internship actively recruited youth from diverse backgrounds in an effort to create two-way dialogue between the youth and the City Council members and their teams.

This initiative supports the creation of an inclusive and compassionate Edmonton, the goal we aspire to in Edmonton's City Plan and complements the Anti-Racism Strategy, the Indigenous Framework, and the City's Art of Inclusion Framework.

The diverse communities that comprise Edmonton continue to call for opportunities to embed their community members' perspectives and engagement into city processes. In particular, the youth perspective. As the leaders of the future, this program invests in that opportunity to have Edmontonians from all backgrounds help shape Edmonton's future.



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# Pilot Overview



This internship was modeled after a similar project in the Toronto area but took a “made in Edmonton” approach featuring a community-based partnership to advance the pilot. The project partners worked collaboratively to provide the opportunity for 13 youth (18+) to join City of Edmonton Council Offices for a period of eight weeks.

## Key principles of the internship:

- The pilot would be co-funded by the partners but, the interns would be paid by the community organization in a true effort to co-create and collaborate with the community partners
- The interns would be paid a living and competitive wage (\$25/hour for 36.9 hours per week) for the duration of their eight week term
- The interns would have access to mentorship, network development and both administrative and community-based supports
- The internship would include a suggested project for the interns to complete during their tenure with the Council Offices
- The interns would be supported by the community partners with pre-training courses (four) to prepare them for the internship
- The collaborative project team would take every effort and opportunity to address barriers, and wherever possible, learn about barriers they weren't aware of



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# Our Goals for the Pilot



- To test innovative and creative ways to partner with community partners to deliver programming and services in a collaborative way
- To provide 13 diverse youth the opportunity to increase their civic participation through learning more about municipal government
- To provide youth with opportunities to develop their skills, network and professional experience through a short-term internship within the municipal government
- To provide City Council members and their staff with an opportunity to learn from diverse voices and explore new ways of working with Edmontonians

# Internship in Numbers

**120K****Total Funding****70****Youth Applicants****30****Youth Interviewed****18****Short-listed Candidates****6****Training Sessions**  
4 for the Youth  
2 for City Council**13****Total Interns/Fellows  
Placed in Council Offices****6****Total Interns with part-time  
or full-time employment  
following the internship.****03**

# Project Timeline

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## OCTOBER

Project Team &  
Funding Confirmed

## JANUARY

Recruitment  
Process Begins

## FEBRUARY

Collaborative Project Team  
Reviews Applications &  
Selects Final Candidates

## MARCH

Pre-Learning  
Begins for  
Interns &  
City Council

## APRIL

Interns are matched  
with Council Offices.  
Interns & Council  
Celebrate Internship  
Launch

## MAY & JUNE

8 Week  
Internship



# Budget Breakdown



Each of the partners provided investment towards the total funding required to pay the interns (\$100,000). In addition, all the partners provided in-kind and other financial contributions in order to ensure the interns were given the best possible experience. This included ensuring they had the work materials needed, providing them with transit passes to ease costs of working downtown and any costs associated with providing the pre-learning/training sessions.

PARTNER	CONTRIBUTION
CANADIAN RACE RELATIONS FOUNDATION	\$25,000 FOR INTERNSHIP \$5,000 FOR LAUNCH EVENT
ISLAMICFAMILY & AFRICA CENTRE	\$25,000 FOR INTERNSHIP
CITY OF EDMONTON	\$50,000 FOR INTERNSHIP (MATCHING) + OPERATIONAL COST (ACCESS TO LAPTOPS & BUS PASSES)
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 120,000.00</b>



# 05 Selecting Our First Interns

## Application and Recruitment

The applicants were invited to submit their expressions of interest through a multimedia approach (submitting a resume and paper or video application). They were asked to answer questions related to what inspires them about their communities, what makes them passionate about local government, what issues or priorities are the most important to them, what ward they live in and what they love about where they live and what is a project or practical step they would take to improve their neighbourhood.

Following the submissions, IslamicFamily and Africa Centre completed a first round of interviews with the candidates. The short-listed candidates were invited to participate in the four-day pre-training. At the end of the training, 13 interns would be selected for the internship and the remaining candidates would be matched with other opportunities (organized by the community and funded by Canada Summer Jobs).

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*Candidates were evaluated based on:*

- *How they have supported community building, past volunteer experience, or community involvement*
  - *Their ability to be concise and communicate their ideas clearly*
  - *Their understanding of local municipal issues (especially ward specific issues); and*
  - *Their references*
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## City Council & Intern Matching

During the four-day pre-training, the short-listed candidates participated in a session about crafting creative, concise and compelling pitches. As a result, each of the candidates prepared a short one to two minute video answering a question related to Edmonton's City Plan.

### *Pitch Video Question:*

*City council's four big goals are:*

*1. Healthy City, 2. Urban Places, 3. Regional Prosperity and 4. Climate Resilience.*

*Pick one and tell us what it means to you & a suggested action council can take.*

The video clips were compiled and shared with City Council (and Council staff) for review. The Council teams reviewed each of the clips and submitted a Google form with their top five choices for interns (and ideas) that were a good fit for their offices. City Council also received their resumes for review in this process. The project team reviewed the results and incorporated their personal knowledge of the interns from the pre-training and made final matches. These matches were then shared and communicated with both City Council and the successful interns.

# Building for Success



## Pre-Learning for Interns & City Council

Each of the interns participated in pre-training with the community partners and special guests. The four sessions were outlined as follows:

MARCH 4, 2023	MARCH 11, 2023	MARCH 25, 2023	APRIL 29, 2023
			
<b>ORIENTATION &amp; WELCOME</b>	<b>CASE STUDY ON INCLUSIVITY</b>	<b>CREATING A BRIEFING NOTE</b>	<b>WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning about your peers</li><li>• Share hopes and fears</li><li>• Effective messaging: Making a good pitch</li><li>• Project: craft an authentic experience for a Councillor</li><li>• Resources for mental health</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having an exit plan / identifying opportunities during your placement</li><li>• Being prepared to prepare others</li><li>• Anti-racism and politics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identity based data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equity considerations</li><li>• Communications / media voice</li></ul>
<b>GUESTS:</b> HOWAIDA HASSAN YASIN CETIN	<b>GUESTS:</b> TRISHA ESTABROOKS DAVID SHEPHERD	<b>GUESTS:</b> HAIQA CHEEMA RAKHI PANCHOLI GARNETT GENUIS	<b>GUESTS:</b> MALCOLM AZANIA

City Council Members and Council Staff were also invited to two learning sessions prior to the launch of the internship:

### **Lunch and Learn: Council Internship Logistics March 28 (Virtual)**

This session primarily focused on the technical and operational aspects of the internship. How it worked, background on the internship, opportunities and training scheduled for the interns and what day one looked like.

### **Creating the Intern Experience April 6 (Virtual)**

This session provided the opportunity to reflect on how to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for the new intern and how to make the most out of their time together. This session was an opportunity to learn and share together how to create the most valuable and meaningful experience for the intern and the Council Offices.

# Learning Opportunities Throughout the Internship

In addition to the pre-training sessions provided by the community partners, the City also organized learning opportunities and engagement opportunities throughout the eight weeks of the internship including:

- Employee onboarding
- Tour of City Hall
- Municipal Governance 101 training
- State of the City Address
- Lunch and Learns: Anti-racism work at the City, Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, corporate security information session and applying for jobs at the City
- Communications roundtable
- World Cafe with the Executive Leadership Team
- Ask Me Anything with the City Manager
- Community events (Indigenous Framework Artwork Reveal, Moosehide Campaign, Red Dress Day, World Refugee Day, Ward-Specific Events)
- Attending council and committee meetings

City of Edmonton Deputy City Manager Jennifer Flaman also provided each of the interns with the opportunity to do a Strengthfinders Assessment and attend a facilitated discussion about their assessment findings.

The Interns also had access to the Political D.I.V.A.S (which stands for Democratic, Intersectional, Visionary, Anti-Oppressive and Supportive), a peer support group for BIPOC women in politics and advocacy. All interns were invited to participate in the meet ups each month to build their networks and access informal support from other political staff.



# Key Learnings from the Pilot

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Following the completion of the eight week internship. The partnership reached out to both the youth interns and City Council members and their staff to collect feedback on the internship.

Throughout the internship, feedback was collected through a variety of sources:

- Mid-point check-in's with City Council and Council Staff
- Pre & Post survey's with the Youth Interns
- Post survey with City Council and Council Staff
- Conversations throughout the internship
- De-brief with the Youth Interns and the Partners

*“Before the fellowship, I did not have the strongest idea of what municipal government is, but now I understand how each sector of government has a role to play in day-to-day operations.”*

*- Council Intern*



# What did Council Offices learn from the interns?

*“Always love working with young people, especially if it means opening the door to more BIPOC youth to civic politics.”*  
- City Councillor

- The importance of training, managing, overseeing and delegating to staff and interns. It's a significant amount of work and commitment, and the investment upfront pays off in the long run.
- How to integrate new members to their teams, building a team dynamic and practice being mentors.
- That community engagement is multidimensional and there are new ways to connect and engage with people to learn about community experiences and concerns.
- Council Offices reported learning more about the challenges and experiences that youth are facing, particularly those from different ethnic backgrounds. They appreciated that the interns raised issues that had not yet been on the radar for the offices, and brought a new lived experience perspective to those issues.
- Council Offices appreciated the excitement, enthusiasm and willingness for the interns to share their experiences with their new colleagues. Staff were reminded that “we work in a pretty neat place!”



# What did Council Offices hope the interns learned?

- Greater knowledge and experience about municipal government, how the Council Offices run, civic processes and how the local government differs from other orders of government.
- Council Offices hoped that interns walked away understanding the “behind the scenes” of local government, the multi-faceted roles of a councillor, and how important the support they have is.
- The realities and complexities of civic politics, governance and operational management and the importance of constituency issues in policy making.
- How to be more engaged with their city and participate in civic government, either as a staff member, through politics or as advocates and community members.
- The importance of relationships and being strong communicators in this work. And in particular, how building and maintaining relationships can act as springboards for future endeavors.

*“Being immersed in that environment and seeing how municipal governments interact with different stakeholders and the public helps me get a better understanding of what happens behind the scenes.*

*Looking into that environment then studying about it gives you a new outlook on how these government relations with the public work and how they synonymously need each other.” - Council Intern*

# What did the interns learn from their experience?



*“Edmonton is taking great steps in building an equitable city.” - Muhammed Ali Altaf*

- How to network, meet with new people and navigate networks that align with your values and career goals.
- Technical experience such as writing briefing notes, making and delivering presentations, completing jurisdictional scans, doing research projects and writing other communications materials.
- The process of policy making, various areas of policy development and the considerations that go into it.
- The various aspects of politics, what they enjoy and don't enjoy as much, so that they can leverage that in their future career choices.
- General learning about working in offices and professional environments alongside team members.
- Many interns reported learning or developing an insight into municipal processes that they had previously not fully grasped.
- Interns reported that learning from the Councillor/Mayor 's staff members was as valuable as learning from their match.

*“[What I am taking away from this 8 week internship] is that I should be more confident in myself. My opinions matter, and by simply reaching out to people/organizations more of my personal agenda can be achieved.”  
- Tiger Bellerose*

# What was the impact of the internship? .....



- Council Interns expressed that they were able to meet with a lot of people they may have never met otherwise and significantly grew their networks throughout the eight weeks.
- Council Interns shared appreciation for the complexity of policy making and how difficult it can be to ensure that all voices are heard and “everyone is happy.” Diversifying perspectives and access to civic engagement will take time, however programs like this are a great start to shrink the gaps and make changes easier to occur.
- Council and Council staff indicated that the impact of having an intern in their office over the eight weeks was rewarding, positive and provided an opportunity for a different perspective in the office - particularly as it relates to the variety of issues that end up in a Council Office each day.
- There’s never a shortage of work in a Council Office, so having another person who was eager and willing to learn, support the office and advance the work, was welcomed and appreciated.



***“[Our intern] was a ray of light in our office!”  
- City Council Staff***



***“I feel more relaxed and rest assured about my future. For this internship has taught me valuable life skills that I can take into any workspace, what a healthy workspace looks like, and most importantly that I will be fine moving forward in my career” - Tiger Bellerose***



***“Before the fellowship, I did not have the strongest idea of what municipal government is, but now I understand how each sector of government has a role to play in day-to-day operations.” - Council Intern***



***“This 8 week internship has really opened my eyes to the possibilities of careers that I can pursue with dedication and hard work. Before this internship, I could never imagine myself in a position of leadership such as working in politics, however, this internship has made me realize that people in politics are just like any other person and that it takes great character and hard work to work in leadership.” - Muhammed Ali Altaf***

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# Opportunities for Future Iterations

## Thoughts from the Interns:

- Many of the interns expressed that the internship was too short. They wanted a bit more time to understand the municipal government (both Administration and the Council Offices). They recognized that their Council members were busy and so a longer internship would provide a bit more opportunity for face-to-face time, attending events with Council Office members, and networking with more people.
- More in-depth onboarding would be helpful especially to learn from Council staff themselves about the expectations around the office, how it operates and the roles of staff within the Council Offices so they could be supportive and the various “ins” and “outs” of working within political offices.
- An introduction one-to-one with the Council member would be helpful to learn about each other and build a connection early, with a few scheduled one-on-one’s throughout the term.
- More opportunities for the interns to share their thoughts on any of the policies and projects that they are helping with or that they could provide relevant and fresh perspectives on.

## Thoughts from Council Staff and Councillors:

- Supporting and mentoring an intern can take a significant amount of work, and some Council Offices felt that pressure throughout the internship.
- There was a need to set expectations more clearly early on, remembering that for many of the interns, this may be their first professional career experience. Ensuring in-depth training and support is provided up front would be helpful. Each intern brought different skills, assets and experiences to their roles.
- Council and Council staff recognized that this was a pilot and that there was a lot of opportunity for growth including more communication, more support from Administration and community partners, stronger leadership from the project team and a thoughtful training plan.

*“I would like for our office to participate in this again as I think it was a great learning experience for not just our intern but for us as well.” -  
City Councillor*

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## Recommendations for 2024

Overall, Council Offices indicated that the internship did meet or exceed their expectations and many would be interested in participating again. The feedback indicated a need for a bit more structure to be considered with more communication up front. As a pilot, the project team experienced many learnings and is excited to build upon the feedback provided for the next year. Some of the immediate improvements are:

- Two clearly defined project options (one policy-based, one engagement-based) that the intern can discuss with their council team at the beginning of the internship. This will improve the experience for the intern, being able to pitch what they are passionate about and where their skill sets and interest align, while also ensuring that there's a diversity in projects based on the needs of the Ward during the internship period.
- City Council Offices will receive a detailed internship package prior to participating that outlines all the key dates, expectations, training and internship logistics. City Council Offices will be invited to participate in as much (or as little) of the pre-training sessions as they would like to, and will be invited to meet with the intern group prior to submitting their top five intern choices.
- The Project Team heard loud and clear that an eight-week window was a bit too short for the intern to get fully immersed into the Council Office team and environment. This will be reassessed for the next round of the internship, with a few comprehensive training sessions at the beginning that will provide more onboarding and preparation for the interns before they begin their first day.

Taking into consideration all the feedback we have received about the Council Internship from all participants, the project team will be recommending a revised and more structured program for 2024.

# Acknowledgements

This pilot would not have been possible without multiple people stepping up to support it. There were multiple staff members across each of the partner organizations who stepped up to support this project and make it successful. While we know there is always opportunity for learning, the success of this pilot is shared with the youth who took a chance on this new opportunity, City Council who embraced something new, staff at each of the partner organizations who went above and beyond their daily responsibilities to implement this pilot and those who championed the project from the beginning. This type of collaborative practice and investment will help us begin to make true and lasting systemic changes.

*“I loved the partnership with IFSSA and Africa Centre.*

*I believe they are extremely important partners that need to continue to be on the table.” -*

*Muhammed Ali Altaf*

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# About the Partners:

## Africa Centre

The Africa Centre, is the largest pan African non-profit organization in western Canada, serving as a community hub that provides programs and services from a place of cultural awareness and competency to the families in our diverse community. We acknowledge the diversity of our cultural background as a source of the strength that brings capacity and competencies to shape a thriving community in Alberta. We have a strong African indigenous cultural foundation incorporated across our programs and services.

## Canadian Race Relations Foundation

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation was created in 1996 to reaffirm the principles of justice and equality for all in Canada. The mandate of the Foundation is to facilitate throughout Canada the development, sharing and application of knowledge and expertise to contribute to the elimination of racism and all forms of racial discrimination in Canadian society.

## kihêw waciston - MacEwan University

kihêw waciston, which means “eagle’s nest” in Cree, is a home away from home for MacEwan University's Indigenous students. Here, you can gather, work and grow in a community that honours the distinctive knowledge of Indigenous peoples and supports you on your post-secondary journey. As MacEwan University’s Indigenous Centre, we offer personal, academic, financial and cultural support. While many of our services are directed at Indigenous students, kihêw waciston's doors are open to everyone in the MacEwan community.

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## IslamicFamily

IslamicFamily supports the mother who is fleeing abuse without making her compromise her identity or safety. We support the man seeking counselling that respects his values. We support youth looking for a creative platform that appreciates and amplifies their voice. We support families beginning new lives amidst hardship. We are Islamic Family & we are created to serve.

IslamicFamily is an Imagine Canada accredited charity, the winner of the Government of Alberta's Inspiration Award for its work combating domestic violence (2020) and the Canadian Mental Health Association's Professional Service Award (2020).

For more than 30 years, we have been driven to disrupt systemic inequity, to reflect a rich tradition with beauty, to innovate and to serve with excellence. IslamicFamily serves 5,000 clients every month, runs Edmonton's second largest food bank, provides aid in financial crisis, supports victims of gender-based violence, settles refugees and delivers a range of preventative programming for youth. Islamic Family is rooted on Treaty 6 and proudly serves all of Alberta.

## City of Edmonton

Located on Treaty 6 Territory and with a population of over one million, Edmonton is one of Canada's youngest and fastest growing cities. We're building a resilient and diverse economy, attracting the best and the brightest and striving to be a world leader in environmental sustainability. We value quality of life, community safety and a welcoming spirit that embraces new people and new ideas.

