

City of Learners Initiative - Community Learning Plan

Recommendation:

That the May 28, 2013, Community Services report CR_89, be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides an update on the status of the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative and information on the Community Foundational-Learning Plan.

Report

Under the leadership of Councillor Don Iveson, a network of Edmonton organizations and representatives invested in lifelong learning formed an informal committee to explore approaches necessary to cultivate Edmonton as a Learning Community. There was a strong belief that by bringing together representatives and organizations from across the city and by working together more effectively, the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative could make substantial gains to improve lifelong learning for all, contributing to the development of sustainable and inclusive communities.

The Edmonton City of Learners Initiative was able to draw on two resources for expertise. First, a range of institutions, organizations and individuals, who already contribute to lifelong learning in Edmonton, formed the City of Learners Steering Committee to help guide the process. Second, at various stages of

their work, the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative worked closely with the Canadian Council on Learning, which was very effective in advising and supporting the initiative's decision making.

Vision and Direction

The City of Edmonton has joined more than 300 cities world-wide that have embraced the concept of a "learning city" as a means of improving the economic and social well-being of individuals, families and communities.

To guide this work, the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative established the following vision:

- Edmonton is a vibrant city where people of all ages embrace lifelong learning as a fundamental component of their personal, organizational and societal lives. The Learning City initiative will stimulate the creation of conditions in which every citizen of Edmonton has the opportunity to be engaged with meaningful lifelong learning that enhances our personal and community lives by learning to live together; learning to know; learning to do; learning to be.

Both the Canadian Council on Learning and the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative have used UNESCO's Four Pillars of Learning framework, an internationally recognized model, to conceptualize a broad understanding of learning. The four pillars are:

- *Learning to Know* involves the development of skills and

knowledge needed to function in the world. These skills include literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and general knowledge.

- *Learning to Do* refers to the acquisition of applied skills that are often linked to occupational success, such as computer training, managerial training and apprenticeships.
- *Learning to Live Together* involves developing values of respect and concern for others, fostering social and interpersonal skills, and an appreciation of the diversity of Canadians.
- *Learning to Be* refers to learning that contributes to the development of a person's body, mind and spirit. Skills in this area include personal discovery and creativity, and can be acquired through reading, use of the internet and activities such as sports and the arts.

In addition, On May 12, 2010, City Council declared Edmonton a City of Learners.

Community Foundational-Learning Plan

With a clearly established vision and direction, the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative took on the responsibility for stimulating lifelong learning opportunities for Edmontonians. To advance this vision, it has compiled the Community Foundational-Learning Plan. The plan engages and coordinates learning goals across groups and agencies in the city of Edmonton.

The Community Foundational-Learning Plan has identified shared strategies and priorities in the areas of literacy, early learning, and health and learning:

- *Literacy*: Edmontonians achieve and maintain levels of literacy that allow them to actively participate in society and achieve their life goals. *Outcome: To increase Edmontonians' literacy skills through incidental, community based and formal learning.*
- *Early Learning*: Every child has a firm foundation for life long learning and healthy development. *Outcomes: To ensure a sound base of development for early and lifelong learning. To ensure equitable opportunities for all Edmonton children.*
- *Health and Learning*: Edmonton is a healthy community through equitable access to healthy learning and opportunities to participate in healthy lifestyle. *Outcome: To encourage Edmontonians to embrace healthy lifestyle choices.*

Edmonton City of Learners Initiative's joint efforts to date offers optimism for the communities' ability to implement such strategies. In addition, a continuum of options ranging from collaboration, to leveraging, to resourcing was identified to offer numerous opportunities for involvement.

Next Steps: Governance and Implementation

Edmonton City of Learners Initiative, from the outset, was recognized as a meeting ground for collaboration among the partners, but the City would not necessarily lead the initiative implementation. Given the positive reception for the initiative and the enthusiasm for continued collaboration to move forward with the implementation of the strategies, a coalition-based governance framework is recommended.

As the initiative moves forward, the network of organizations and partners may, at their choosing, continue to be organized under the City of Learners banner, with the Edmonton Public Library serving as the 'home' of the coalition. Edmonton Public Library's recently approved five-year Strategic Plan dedicates one of its four pillars to supporting and enabling learning, and specifically commits to 'Be the home of the City of Learners'.

Supported by the community, the Edmonton City of Learners Initiative will continue to collaborate on emerging lifelong learning opportunities.

Corporate Outcomes

- Improve Edmonton's Livability
- Diversify Edmonton's Economy

Public Consultation

On June 8, 2010, an "Edmonton City of Learners Dialogue" was held, where participants were engaged in several breakout discussions that provided a structured opportunity to make recommendations on two key topics: the identification of opportunities and challenges, as well as the selection of priorities.

Next, to map out a go-forward strategy for each priority area, a group of individuals with expertise and knowledge was gathered together. These discussions helped confirm and design effective approaches for each of the priorities, which were captured as strategies in the Community Foundational-Learning Plan.

To garner reactions to the proposed strategies and the draft plan, and to seek guidance from stakeholders on how the initiative would best support its partners to achieve its goals, on February 25th and March 1st, 2011, a second "Edmonton City of Learners Dialogue" was held.

Attachments

1. Community Foundational – Learning Plan

Others Reviewing this Report

L. Cook, Chief Executive Officer,
Edmonton Public Library