

2025

BUSINESS PLAN



EXPLORE
EDMONTON

JANUARY 2025



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Explore Edmonton respectfully acknowledges that we are located within Treaty 6 territory and Métis homeland. We acknowledge this land as the traditional home for many Indigenous Peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Dene, Saukteaux, Anishinaabe, Inuit and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.

ABOUT EXPLORE EDMONTON

Explore Edmonton has a unique mandate. As the Destination Management and Marketing Organization (DMMO) for the city of Edmonton, we exist to promote the development and growth of the visitor-based economy. Our mandate, however, extends beyond promotion as a DMMO. Explore Edmonton manages two award-winning venues – the Edmonton EXPO Centre and the Edmonton Convention Centre. We are also event producers for marquee events such as KDays, Canadian Finals Rodeo, and Farmfair International. Our three lines of businesses collectively help drive growth in the visitor economy, enhance the city’s global reputation, and improve the quality of life for residents.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

At Explore Edmonton, we’re the storytellers and stewards of this vibrant city, weaving together its tourism ecosystem and visitor economy through direct marketing, travel trade partnerships, strategic sales, event production and collaborations with industry allies. By driving leisure visits, attracting business events and conventions, as well as attracting major sporting and cultural events, we drive significant direct economic impact for the city and region. We collaborate with hotel partners, attractions, festivals and events, and partner organizations like Edmonton Global, to position Edmonton as a four-season destination of choice.

To guide us on this journey, we have developed a comprehensive Tourism Master Plan strategy. This roadmap aligns our efforts with long-term goals and ensures the viability of Edmonton as an inclusive, vibrant destination well into the future. By focusing on sustainable growth, regenerative strategies, community engagement, and growth of our Indigenous experiences, we are committed to building a resilient tourism ecosystem that benefits everyone. This includes Edmontonians. After all, residents can be our greatest ambassadors, and their love for the city can help fuel the visitor economy.

At Explore Edmonton, we’re not just promoting a destination. We’re building a legacy of experiences and connections that resonate with visitors and residents alike.



VENUE MANAGEMENT

Explore Edmonton manages the Edmonton Convention Centre and Edmonton EXPO Centre on behalf of the City of Edmonton. We connect people who want to hold events to our award-winning venues. Our Edmonton Convention Centre is recognized as one of the five best venues in North America and the Edmonton EXPO Centre is the largest venue of its kind in western Canada. The size and versatility of our venues allows for world-class events, unlimited opportunity, and more profitability for our partners.

EVENT PRODUCTION

Our journey in hosting owned events began in 2021. This includes KDays, Farmfair International and, most recently, the Canadian Finals Rodeo. We also nurture urban agriculture at the Edmonton Urban Farm. Their work not only supports the community and the agriculture industry, but also adds a unique, local flavour to our offerings.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Explore Edmonton's impact is big. In 2024, our three lines of business – destination management and marketing, venue management and major event production – spurred approximately \$430 million in total economic impact.

Explore Edmonton's 2025 Business Plan aims to build on the success of 2024 and the rebounding visitor economy of the past several years. In 2024, visitors spent over \$2 billion in the Edmonton area.

As destination stewards, we will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders across the visitor economy to create new experiences and enhance existing ones. We will advance the goals of the 10-year Tourism Master Plan, including the Indigenous Tourism Strategy.

Our venues, Edmonton Convention Centre and Edmonton EXPO Centre, are key assets for the city, hosting key business, sports, culture and community events. We will develop a road map to ensure both venues stay competitive in the long term.

We are also major event producers, and we will strive to reimagine KDays and steward Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair International as premier events, attracting regional, national and international visitors.

A key advantage of combining all three lines of business within Explore Edmonton is that we work as one team – marketing and selling Edmonton as a premier destination to key target audiences around the world. At the same time, we collaborate with local tourism businesses, festivals, attractions, Edmonton Destination Marketing Hotels, the hospitality industry and others throughout the visitor economy to enhance our city's offerings. We also work closely with Edmonton Global, Edmonton Unlimited, Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, and other economic development and industry partners.

Together, with all these partners, our employees and the City of Edmonton, we are building a bigger visitor economy with more jobs and opportunities for businesses to thrive. In 2025, we will seek to strengthen our relationships and understanding of our stakeholders' needs.

Underpinning our 2025 Business Plan is a commitment to elevating organizational excellence and ensuring our employees have the tools they need to do their work efficiently and provide the best value to Edmonton.

Explore Edmonton is a foundational organization that builds a more vibrant, inclusive, healthy and prosperous Edmonton. Together, in 2025, we will amplify how we sell and celebrate Edmonton.

Traci Bednard
President and CEO
Explore Edmonton



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

As of October 2024, the year-to-date visitor spending in the Edmonton area grew to over \$2.1 billion . This represents a 13.4% year-over-year (YoY) increase, which is ahead of the national average of 5.5%. Compared to the pre-pandemic baseline (2019), there has been a 37.0% increase in spending, which is also ahead of the national average of 29.5%. The majority of this expenditure comes from domestic travelers, who accounted for approximately 85% of the total spend and led the visitor segments in terms of expenditure growth both YoY and compared to 2019. For U.S. and international visitors, who represent the highest spend-per-visitor, expenditure was up 10.6% YoY and 13.5% compared to the pre-pandemic baseline, respectively.

In 2024, Edmonton's hotel occupancy was 58.5%, representing a 1.7 percentage point increase YoY and 4.2 percentage points compared to 2019 . During the same period, the Average Daily Rate (ADR) was \$147, a 6.7% increase YoY and a 17.7% increase over 2019. Despite these increases, Edmonton has room for improvement in comparison to other destinations in the country.

At the end of 2024, Alberta's tourism employment rose by 3% YoY but was below 2019 levels by 2.5%. Nationally, employment rose by 3.8% YoY but was also below 2019 levels (by 1.8%).

In the most recent resident sentiment survey in September 2024 led by Travel Alberta, residents were asked how likely they are to recommend the city as a destination. This measure, called a Net Promoter Score (NPS), was not positive for Edmonton residents. With visiting friends and relatives as one of the largest visitor category, having residents as promoters of the city (vs detractors) is important. Although NPS is negative, there has been steady improvement over the years. Residents are also becoming more aware of the value of tourism and the impact it has on their community.

When looking globally, Edmonton's Tourism Sentiment Score was 28.4 for Q4 2023. This score is based on online conversations across the globe about the destination and categorizes these as positive or negative in sentiment. We are proud to be amongst the top with a global rank of #76. In particular, our Restaurants & Dining are among the top 10% of destinations around the world. This is an advantage for Edmonton when attracting potential visitors.



¹ Destination Canada: Canadian Tourism Data Collective - Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting

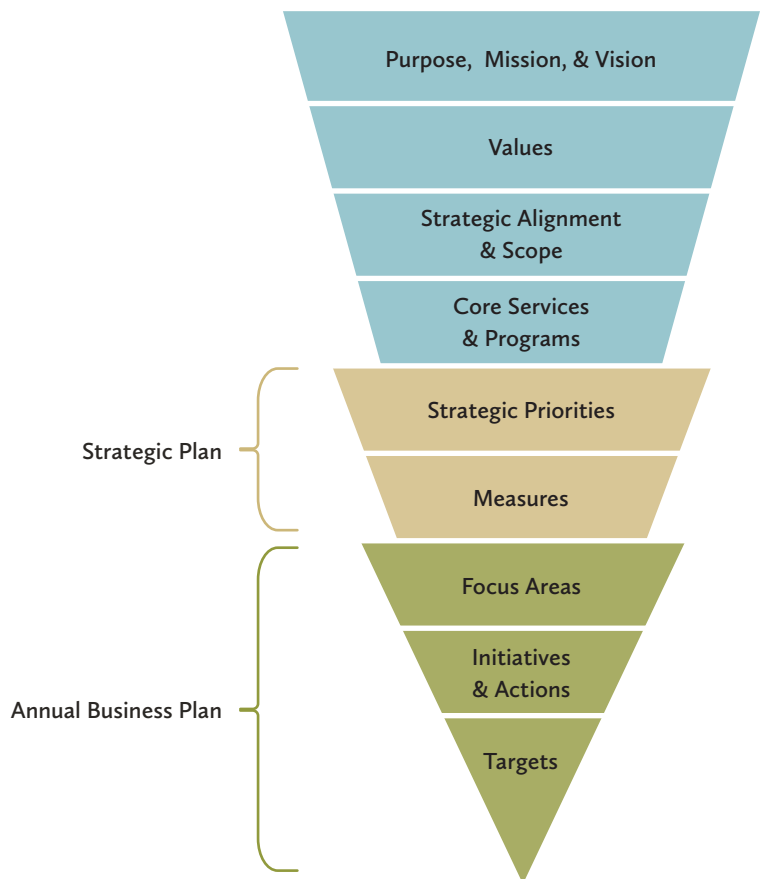
² STR-CoStar: Edmonton Hotel Data

³ Tourism HR Canada: Tourism Employment Tracker



OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Before creating a business plan, it is essential to review and understand who we are as an organization. Our purpose, mission, and vision shape all our programs, services, and projects. The figure to the right depicts how we plan.



PURPOSE, MISSION, VISION

PURPOSE

Explore Edmonton exists to promote the development and growth of the visitor-based economy, as well as to improve the quality of life for Edmontonians. As part of this ecosystem, we manage two venues that facilitate connections at events and produce marquee events that contribute to the visitor economy and supports community.

MISSION

We aim to inspire visitors and residents to discover Edmonton. By showcasing our city's unique experiences and rich culture, we invite more people to immerse themselves in what makes Edmonton special.

VISION

We envision Edmonton as a top destination for delivering extraordinary, year-round experiences. Our goal is to make Edmonton a place where more people come to explore, live, and fall in love with the city's charm and vibrancy, transforming locals and visitors into passionate ambassadors.





VALUES

Our values describe the core ethics and principles that guide our decisions and inspire us. They reflect appropriate workplace behaviour and play an important role in building a positive culture.

PUBLIC STEWARDSHIP

We have been given a tremendous responsibility — to be stewards of public trust as well as the architect of bold ideas.

LEAD THE WAY

We step up. Start something. Change something. Connect and support others who are willing to take a risk — on our teams, in our city.

SELFLESS APPROACH

Everything we do is done in collaboration — within our teams, across our organization and with our stakeholders / clients — and when we win, we win together.

MAKE AN IMPACT

When every action, big or small, can make an impact, every action contributes to building a city that matters.

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

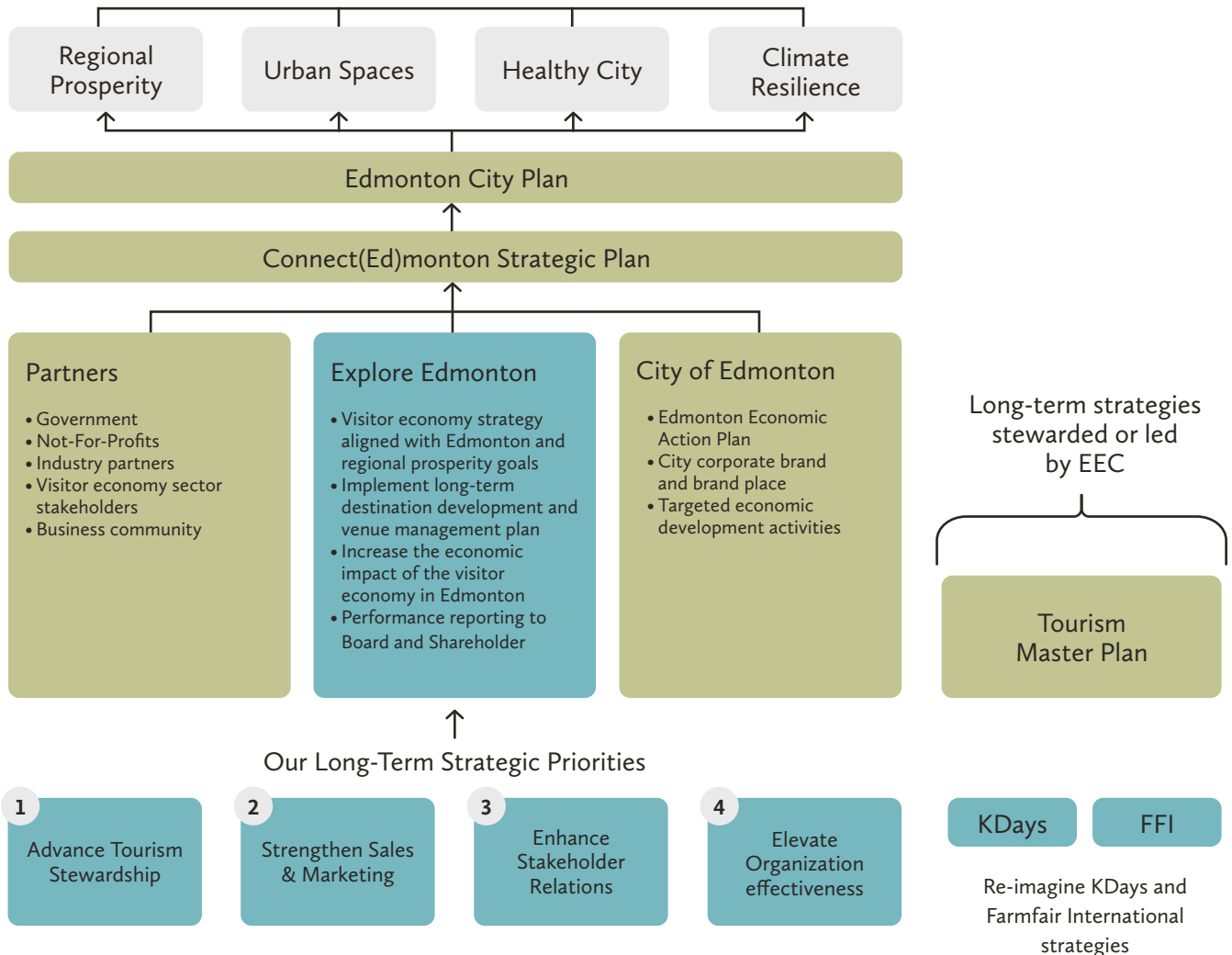
We have a genuine commitment to the success of each other, our Shareholder, and our community.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND SCOPE

Explore Edmonton is an agency of the City of Edmonton, governed by a board of directors. Our leadership, partnerships and collaborative approach to shared outcomes are essential for ultimate success in building a prosperous city and region. Our strategy aligns with the City of Edmonton’s economic development plans and goals (see Appendix A). As a key partner in Edmonton’s economic development ecosystem, our work includes strategic collaboration to maximize the collective economic and social impacts to the overall prosperity of our city and region.

Partnership examples include:

- Government (all levels)
- Not-for-profits (e.g., Edmonton Global, Edmonton Destination Marketing Hotels Assoc.)
- Industry partners (e.g., YEG, Travel Alberta, Indigenous Tourism Assoc.)
- Visitor economy sector stakeholders (e.g., hotels, restaurants, attractions)
- Business community (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)



CORE SERVICES / PROGRAMS

Explore Edmonton delivers a wide breadth of services and programs across all three lines of businesses, supported by our Shared Services teams.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

The Destination Strategy team focuses on strategic planning and supports the evolution of Edmonton as a destination of choice for travellers and residents. With a sole focus on the supply side of tourism, they support the development of compelling experiences, quality infrastructure, and valued services to entice repeat visitation. Core functions include:

- Destination development
- Experience and product development
- Industry development (training)
- Travel trade development
- Visitor services and activation
- Sustainability

The Global Marketing team exists to deliver value for stakeholders and partners by building positive brand recognition for Edmonton and inspiring travellers and event organizers to choose Edmonton as their destination. They are the keepers and promoters of our destination's global brand, boldly showcasing Edmonton's story, our experiences and brand differentiators to the world. Core functions include:

- Campaign strategy and execution
- Brand building and maintenance
- Content generation and media/PR promotion
- B2B lead and revenue generation
- Online engagement and platform maintenance



The Events and Business Development team directly impacts Edmonton's visitor economy by attracting major sports, cultural and business events. They elevate the Edmonton event experience by building strong relationships, growing event potential, and connecting to prospective partners. The Events team showcases Edmonton on the global stage through major event hosting and thought leadership. They contribute to our community's social prosperity through responsible event hosting that benefits Edmontonians. Core functions include:

- Event attraction and development funding
- Driving attributable direct sales
- Lead generation and acquisition
- Client relationship management
- Event servicing / activation
- Event advocacy



CORE SERVICES / PROGRAMS

VENUE MANAGEMENT

The Edmonton EXPO Centre brings people together to experience the biggest and best trade shows, live entertainment, sporting events, conferences, galas and more. Spread over 522,000 square feet, the Edmonton EXPO Centre is the largest venue of its kind in Western Canada with seven exhibit halls, mid-size arena, conference centre and exquisite ballrooms. We welcome more than 1.3 million visitors each year.

The Edmonton Convention Centre is a community asset and a reflection of Edmonton. Its purpose is to elevate Edmonton as a conference and convention destination through culinary excellence and inspiring and sustainable experiences.

Both venues deliver the following services:

- Event attraction/retention
- Event servicing
- Facilities management
- Culinary creations

Empowering Edmonton's growth and vibrancy through strategic partnerships, our Sponsorship team at Explore Edmonton is dedicated to fostering mutually beneficial collaborations that enhance our city's cultural, economic, and social landscape. By cultivating meaningful relationships with sponsors, we aim to elevate Edmonton's profile as a premier destination for residents, visitors, and businesses alike, driving sustainable growth and prosperity for our community.



EVENT PRODUCTION

Explore Edmonton leverages KDays, CFR, FFI, the urban farm and volunteer program to create meaningful and impactful experiences for Edmontonians. Leveraging our events and programs, we celebrate our local culture, advance economic opportunity and foster social cohesion.

SHARED SERVICES

Shared Services is comprised of the Finance, IT, People & Culture, Business Systems, and Communications & Connections teams, as well as our Administration team.

As a trusted business partner, our purpose is to provide governance, stakeholder and communications advice, and scalable solutions to enable and accelerate business outcomes aligned with Explore Edmonton's strategic roadmap.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategic priorities define what our long-term direction is over the next few years.

1 ADVANCE TOURISM STEWARDSHIP

As stewards of the destination, we will work in partnerships to enhance existing and develop new experiences / events, and to attract new events that benefit the visitor economy and community. As part of our 10-year Tourism Master Plan (TMP), we will continue to collaborate with our partners to execute strategies developed (including the important Indigenous tourism strategy) and deliver on the remaining goals identified in the TMP.

As strategic stewards of Edmonton's convention assets, we will establish a road map to ensure both venues maintain market competitiveness and continue to be the venues of choice for event organizers. For events produced by Explore Edmonton, we are reimagining KDays and Farmfair International, and Canadian Final Rodeos as premier events.

2 STRENGTHEN SALES & MARKETING

We will strengthen our sales efforts across all lines of business, targeting major sport, cultural and business events; focusing on client/event retention; and increasing community participation (residents/businesses). We will undertake marketing and communication activities that build brand awareness and positive recognition for Edmonton, targeted towards event organizers/ participants, leisure travellers, as well as residents. This content can also be shared by partner organizations and ambassadors for Edmonton (e.g., residents) to drive interest in what our destination offers.

3 ENHANCE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

We engage with a wide range of stakeholders to develop and grow the visitor-based economy and to deliver exceptional experiences and services. This includes events hosted at our venues and events that we produce.

We will strive to gain an increased understanding of each of our stakeholders' needs, which provides a foundation for improvement and more effective relationships.

Our key stakeholders include: employees; venue guests/ clients; DMMO partners such as event organizers, tourism businesses, other organizations in the business community; residents; as well as sponsors, funders, and governments.

4 ELEVATE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS

To drive value for the community and our Shareholder, we need to be innovative and competitive. This will require us to adapt our processes, tools, systems and reporting, which will empower our employees to deliver on our priorities. With this transformation, we will need to ensure we have the right capacity (with a focus on safety, security, and wellness) and long-term financial sustainability.

2025 FOCUS AREAS AND INITIATIVES / ACTIONS

To advance our strategic priorities, Explore Edmonton has identified five key focus areas for 2025:

2025 Focus Areas	Strategic Priorities Alignment			
	1. Advance Tourism Stewardship	2. Strengthen Sales & Marketing	3. Enhance Stakeholder Relations	4. Elevate Organization Effectiveness
1. Building Civic Pride				
Arming locals with information/tools so they can be ambassadors encouraging visitation to the city.		✓	✓	
2. Revenue Generation				
Identifying revenue opportunities to help ensure long-term financial sustainability.			✓	✓
3. Enhancing the Visitor Experience				
Ensuring visitors have a positive experience in our city, solidifying Edmonton's reputation.	✓	✓	✓	
4. Employee Experience				
Offering services and programs to help build engagement and ensure overall well-being.				✓
5. Operational Effectiveness				
Building up foundational elements (e.g., processes, systems, governance), which enables the organization to deliver on their mandate.				✓

With these focus areas in mind, Explore Edmonton will undertake key initiatives / actions, along with delivering on our core work. Detailed on the following pages, these key initiatives / actions will shift how we work long-term.





FOCUS AREA 1: BUILDING CIVIC PRIDE

INITIATIVE	ACTION
Develop and implement an integrated <i>Civic Pride communications strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplify campaigns and activations for owned (EEC-produced), attracted and community events with the public. • Encourage buy-in from the corporate community to support and enhance established campaigns and communications. • Implement an internal communications strategy that empowers employees to demonstrate how their work supports civic pride.

FOCUS AREA 2: REVENUE GENERATION

INITIATIVE	ACTION
Develop a <i>Government Relations strategy</i> to identify opportunities that match government priorities (all levels) with EEC priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in collaboration with all levels of government to identify key priorities that align with EEC priorities, which enables all parties to achieve their goals. This also includes supporting/facilitating EEC partners (e.g., rights holders) with government relations. • Evolve internal processes to manage funding opportunities (identification, application and reporting).
Create an enhanced <i>Ticketing Sales strategy</i> to generate additional sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a ticketing sales strategy that identifies key markets, product offerings, and lead times for EEC-produced events.
Execute next phase of the <i>Sponsorship strategy</i> to generate revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and execute strategic sales campaign with initial focus on key EEC assets and with a broader market
Evolve <i>Venues Sales strategies</i> to maintain and grow revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage opportunities with ancillary venues and seasonal spaces (e.g., Alberta Art Gallery and Klondike Park). • Pursue opportunities to produce or co-produce events.



FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

INITIATIVE	ACTION
Develop a comprehensive <i>Visitor Experience plan</i> that fulfills or exceeds expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive visitor experience plan that includes what services EEC, as well as partners, can provide to visitors before and during their visit. • Share content/itineraries with partners to maximize distribution. • Leverage opportunities to showcase what Edmonton offers (e.g., venues/facilities, events).

FOCUS AREA 4: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

INITIATIVE	ACTION
Focus on <i>Leadership Development</i> at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize resources to focus on developing leadership skills at all levels in the organization.
Modernize overall <i>Compensation framework</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess overall compensation framework and identify updates to align with employee needs and alignment with the market.
Continue implementation of the <i>Culture & Engagement strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve employee engagement survey program. • Update onboarding programs. • Create opportunities for team cohesion, access to perks, and wellness initiatives.

FOCUS AREA 5: OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

INITIATIVE	ACTION
<i>Applications training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training for organizational applications with subject-matter experts (e.g., Microsoft programs, Asana, etc.) to optimize utilization of systems.



ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Explore Edmonton has established the strategic organizational measures below that will demonstrate our progress in achieving our strategic priorities. Each year, targets will be established as part of the annual planning process.

	Strategic Priorities Alignment				2024 RESULTS	2025 TARGET
	1	2	3	4		
Investment Benefit						
Economic Impact (direct)		✓		✓	\$265M	\$272M
Gross revenue (NEW)			✓	✓	N/A	1.8% increase
Stakeholder Sentiment (NPS)						
Balanced NPS (Visitor Economy Stakeholders/Partners, Venues Clients/ Guests, Employees)	✓	✓	✓	✓	39	39
Community-Environment						
GHG (Final 2024 results)	✓	✓			N/A	15,012
Employee EDI Sentiment (FT/PT)			✓	✓	83%	85%
Volunteer hours	✓	✓	✓	✓	13K	8K
% procurement* (NEW)	✓		✓		N/A	3% increase

*Edmonton businesses, small businesses, social enterprises, diverse-owned businesses, and Indigenous-owned businesses.

FINANCIALS

In 2024, the City of Edmonton approved a \$6M increase to Explore Edmonton’s base funding of \$11.7M on a one-time basis for the 2024 fiscal year. Through the fall Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment process, Explore Edmonton submitted a request to increase base funding on an ongoing basis in the amount of \$6M as a restoration and continuation of the level of support provided in 2024.

The restoration of funding will address and maintain the service level for current programs and provide Explore Edmonton with the stability to allow for enhanced focus on advancing resident sentiment and the visitor experience. The table below depicts the 2025 budget with \$17.7M funding from the City of Edmonton:



2025 PROPOSED BUDGET

(\$000s)

Revenue	
Conference Centre Revenue	\$ 41,398
Produced Events	\$ 20,490
Grants and Partnership	\$ 11,476
Other	\$ 616
Total Revenue	\$ 73,980
Expenses	
Payroll and Related Costs	\$ 40,885
Cost of Food & Beverage Sold	\$ 4,748
Rent, Utilities, Taxes, Insurance	\$ 4,558
Maintenance and Repair	\$ 1,711
Operating Expenses	\$ 9,437
Marketing and Promotion	\$ 10,460
Administration and General Expenses	\$ 19,923
Total Expenses	\$ 91,723
Net Operating Requirement	\$ (17,743)





GLOSSARY

<i>Action</i>	A specific task, program or project undertaken by a business unit that works towards improving a priority and attaining a result.
<i>Measure</i>	Tools or processes that can be used to track the success and progress of achieving a result linked to a priority.
<i>Mission</i>	Describes what our organization does currently, for whom, and how.
<i>Priority</i>	A high-level summary of strategic expectations.
<i>Purpose</i>	What our organization was created to accomplish.
<i>Shareholder</i>	City of Edmonton
<i>Stakeholder</i>	A broad range of organizations that include government, not-for-profits, industry partners, visitor economy sector stakeholders, and the business community. It also encompasses visitors, clients/guests, employees and Edmontonians. Stakeholders may vary based on the nature of the work.
<i>Target</i>	An achievable goal that will let us know we have accomplished a result or portion of a result (e.g., 75% Stakeholder satisfaction).
<i>Values</i>	Describes our organization's culture and desired behaviours.
<i>Vision</i>	Describes the way we envision our organization. It communicates that dream to our employees and customers in an inspirational manner.
<i>Visitor Economy</i>	Direct, indirect, and induced economic activity resulting from visitors' interactions within a destination.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX A CITY OF EDMONTON ALIGNMENT

Explore Edmonton is aligned to the City of Edmonton's plans as outlined below:

City Plan: 2020-65 Visionary Plan

Big City Moves (collective projects): Greener as we Grow

Strategic measures:

- Greenhouse gas emissions generated by City assets
- Greenhouse gas emissions generated by the community
- Recycled solid waste

Connect(Ed)monton: 2019-28 Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal: Regional Prosperity

Indicator: Global Awareness

- Edmonton's position against other cities in a number of selected national and international rankings as a place to live, visit and invest in.
- Jointly owned by the City of Edmonton and Explore Edmonton (formerly Edmonton Economic Development Corporation).

Edmonton Economic Action Plan: 2021-2030 Action Plan

Action 2: Align relevant economic development activities, reporting metrics, funding agreements, and grants to ensure we're working together as effectively as possible.

Action 19: Develop and implement an integrated place brand strategy.

Action 24: Utilize and coordinate the City of Edmonton's event strategy and Explore Edmonton Tourism Master Plan as tools to support investment by creating awareness about local opportunities for businesses and people.

- Performance Measure: Economic impact (as measured by Explore Edmonton).

**EXPLORE
EDMONTON**