

User Advisory Group - Meeting #3
 Metro Hall – July 27, 2019
 Summary of Input

About this Document

This document is a summary of the input and feedback received at the third User Advisory Group (UAG) meeting. It is intended to be an accurate record of the UAG’s discussion. It does not represent the recommendations or findings of the UAG or the Project Team. This document was shared with UAG members for review and feedback at the fourth UAG meeting on September 21, 2019.

Executive Summary

The UAG is a representative group of 20 randomly selected Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) users. The purpose of the UAG is to gather in-depth user feedback to shape PF&R’s new registration and facility and space booking system.

The third UAG Meeting took place between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. on July 27, 2019 at Metro Hall. The theme of this UAG meeting was a continuation of the theme discussed in the second UAG meeting, *Enroll and Book: how users register for programs and book facilities and space*. 14 UAG members attended the meeting. There were four absences and two late arrivals.

This summary document has 3 sections, reflecting the structure of the UAG meeting:

1. Fairness Guiding Principles
2. Allocation World Café
3. Waitlist Lightning Round

Within each section, we highlight key themes from the discussion.

1. Fairness Guiding Principles

UAG members were divided into two groups and asked to discuss what fairness means in the context of recreation. Members were asked to respond to different definitions of fairness and develop a set of principles to help define fairness in recreation.

This section includes a table that summarizes the fairness guiding principles that members came up with.

Fairness Principle	Definition	Feedback from UAGs on What it Could Look Like in Practice
Needs-based Pricing	A fair system is one in which the cost of programming is proportionate to each user’s financial need and ability to pay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Free programming is available to those who need it, and is not provided to those who can afford to pay. – Free Centres accept payment or donations from users who wish to contribute. – The cost of programs to users is determined through means testing. – Programs are priced on a sliding scale based on different income levels.

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Fairness Principle	Definition	Feedback from UAGs on What it Could Look Like in Practice
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Those who demonstrate financial need receive free programming “credits” that are transferrable to any community centre—similar to the approach currently taken with the Welcome Policy, the City's recreation subsidy program.
Community Building	A fair recreation system is one in which communities are brought together through programming, and where residents can access programs in their local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Residents have priority access to registration at their local community centre. – Free Centres are monitored to make sure they are not acting as an obstacle to local neighbourhood connection and cohesion by attracting those who have the ability to travel across the City for free programs.
Transparency	A fair recreation system is one in which information about processes, outcomes and effectiveness is made clear to the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public reporting on the impact and outcomes of equity-related programs, including how recreation subsidies and access are allocated to different user groups – Waitlist queue information is readily available so that users can make informed decisions about their programming options.
Personal Integrity	A fair system is one in which residents act with integrity and take personal responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Residents who can afford paid programming abstain from using free programs. – Residents attend the programs they register for, or contact PF&R to give up their spot in a timely manner. – Policies and potentially financial penalties are in place to address users who register for programs and do not attend.
Equal Opportunity	A fair system is one that serves the needs of diverse users by anticipating and removing any structural barriers to access they may face.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There are minimal barriers to entry based on factors like language, financial status, and geography. – There are ways to standardize or limit the number of programs one family or individual can sign up for each session. – PF&R works to increase education and awareness about recreation programs and access programs to bring new users into the system. – Users are prompted to enrol in programs that are not full to increase access and utilization of existing resources across the system.

2. Allocation World Café

UAG members were divided into two groups and asked to discuss a variety of program allocation rules. Program allocation rules are different approaches to dividing limited resources, and the rules that members discussed as part of this exercise were drawn from jurisdictional research, conversations with PF&R staff and previous UAG meetings.

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This section includes a list of the specific program allocation rules the UAG members discussed, a high level summary of the feedback members shared about each one, as well as a summary of the key themes that emerged from the conversation.

— Members discussed the following program allocation rules:

- **Geographic Priority:** Under this allocation rule, local residents are given priority access to register for programs at recreation centres in their neighbourhoods.

Some UAG members expressed support for this approach as they noted that building tight community ties through recreation is important, and that they often prefer to access recreation services in their local areas. Others noted that this approach might limit user choice and that facilities and programs are not equally allocated across the city.

- **Market Pricing:** Under this allocation rule, program prices increase and decrease according to demand. This means that popular programs are more expensive, while less popular programs are more affordable.

Most members agreed that this model is not appropriate for PF&R, noting that it would negatively impact families that could not afford to pay.

- **Registration Limits:** Under this allocation rule, a limit is placed on how many programs an individual or family can take.

Some members were opposed to this rule, while some were supportive of the idea of ensuring that certain users are not using a disproportionately high number of programs. Those who did not support this approach noted that it is difficult to know why certain families may need to access more programs, and that the reasons for a family's program choices are highly personal. They felt that this could make identifying a limit challenging.

- **Lottery:** Under this allocation rule, program spaces are randomly allocated. Residents opt into a lottery process and have an equal chance of being registered for each program of their choice.

Some members considered a lottery to be fair due to its random nature, while others expressed concerns about opportunities to "game the system."

- **First Time Use Priority:** Under this allocation rule, first time users of a program are given priority during the registration process. The objective of this approach is to welcome new users and ensure that limited resources are shared to as wide a group of residents as possible.

Many members did not support this allocation rule, noting that it could make progressing through program levels more difficult.

- **First Come, First Served:** Under this allocation rule, registration takes place on a first come, first served basis. This means that every resident has the opportunity to register at the same time, and the first one to successfully register gets the program space. This is the approach currently employed by PF&R.

Members shared divergent feedback about this allocation rule. Some noted that it is a fair approach and gives every resident an equal opportunity to register, while others noted that it does not account for barriers and inequities that they may face.

- **Needs-Based Pricing and Needs-Based Priority:** Under needs-based pricing, the fee that residents pay for programming is based on financial need. This means that low income residents would pay a lower fee than high income residents. Members also suggested needs-based priority

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as a related allocation rule for discussion. Under this approach, a portion of program spaces are set aside for low income residents.

Members diverged as to whether needs-based pricing and needs-based priority would support a fair recreation system.

- Members were generally interested in how different allocation rules could increase fairness across the recreation system. They felt strongly that all residents should be able to access PF&R programs and services.
- They were especially interested in opportunities to equalize outcomes, increasing access for lower income individuals, and improving the recreation customer experience.
- Members engaged in a robust debate throughout this exercise. There was no consensus on preferred allocation rules.
- Overall, members emphasized the need to consider multiple factors (e.g. geography, experience using recreation services, etc.) when considering new approaches to allocation.

3. Waitlist Lightning Round

UAG members were asked to share their feedback about the current program waitlist process and imagine how the process could be improved. This section includes an overview of the key themes and feedback from the discussion:

- At each stage of the waitlist process, members want increased communication and transparency from PF&R. Members provided specific suggestions such as transparency about the popularity of programs, automated updates about waitlist status and the option to receive updates through preferred communication channels (e.g. text, phone, email).
- Members emphasized the importance of having access to easy self-service options in the online system, including the ability to see their position on the waitlist and take themselves off.
- Members were interested in how PF&R can encourage registrants who do not plan to attend programs to release their program space. They suggested that clear communication was key, and some members were interested in exploring no show fees or other penalties.
- Members strongly supported the idea that individuals who are signed up for multiple waitlists for the same program should be taken off all waitlists if they receive a spot in that program, even if it is not at their ideal location. Members noted that it is important to create capacity in the system for those who remain on waitlists.