

Summary of the Evaluation of the Harbourfront Centre Funding Program (2018-19 to 2022-23)

Overview

The **Harbourfront Centre Funding Program (HCFP)** provides the Harbourfront Centre (HC), located on the Toronto waterfront, with funding to support fixed operating costs. This funding supports the HC's ability to:

- leverage funding and pursue other revenue-generating strategies; and
- provide continued access to cultural, educational and recreational programs and activities on the Toronto waterfront for the general public.

The evaluation of the HCFP focused on questions of program relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.



Evaluation findings

Relevance

The HCFP is addressing a continued need for operational funding.

The funding:

- is critical for HC's continued operations; and
- allowed for HC operations to remain stable, ensuring it could continue to provide diverse programming to the public, even during the pandemic.

HCFP is aligned with federal government and departmental priorities, roles, and responsibilities. HCFP provided HC with \$29.3 million in regular funding to maintain operations and \$27.5 million in supplemental funding to enhance and maintain HC's facilities. However, HC's financial needs, including those to support capital costs, exceed resources available through the HCFP. HC is facing long-term funding deficits for operations and for capital improvements.

Operational Funding



- Salaries and benefits
- Site operating costs
- Marketing and sponsorship
- Administrative costs of maintaining operations

Supplemental Capital Funding



- Capital infrastructure

Effectiveness

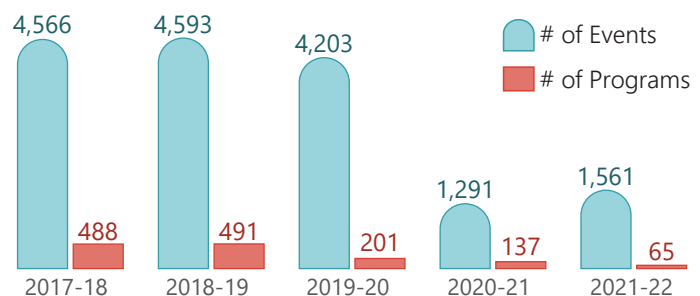
There is evidence of the achievement of many expected outcomes. The HCFP:

- enabled HC to provide cultural, recreational, and educational programs and events with engagement from the community; and
- contributes to longer-term expected results of Torontonians and visitors valuing HC's social, cultural, and economic impacts.

HC's operations are heavily reliant on the funding HC receives from federal and municipal governments. While the HCFP funding has represented an important portion of the Centre's operating budget, HC does not currently have a sustainable financial foundation for administration and operations. It was too early to determine the impact of the HCFP funded capital improvements on HC's capacity to attract other sources of funding.

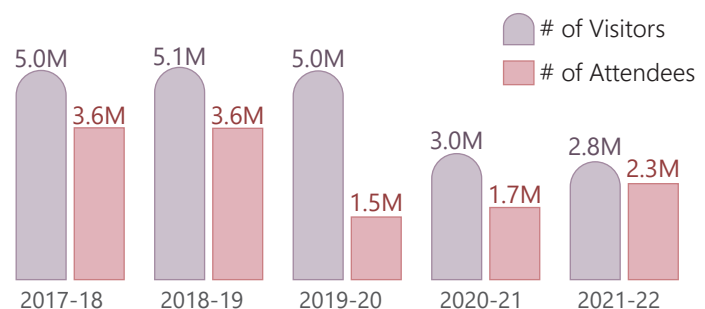
The HCFP's performance was negatively impacted by the pandemic.

HC's Cultural, Recreational and Educational events and programs (2017-18 to 2021-22)



The decrease in Programs for 2019-20 is attributed to a change in measurements methodology.

HC visitors & attendees (2017-18 to 2021-22)



The decrease in Attendees for 2019-20 is attributed to a change in data collection.

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Efficiency

The lack of dedicated HCFP operational funding:

- puts a strain on PCH resources;
- limits support and attention on the HCFP; and
- presents a risk in that the Arts and Culture Sector Strategy Branch does not have sufficient resources to provide in-depth monitoring of HC.

However, efficient program delivery of the HCFP is supported through:

- clear contribution agreements and reporting requirements;
- strong relationships; and
- understanding needs between both parties.

It was also noted that the level of engagement with HC through the HCFP exceeds the level of communication required with other comparable-sized funding recipients.

Possible ways to improve HCFP delivery:

- securing dedicated PCH operational resources; and
- delivering HCFP through the PCH Ontario regional office for closer connections to the recipient.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommends that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs:

1

Directs HC to develop a plan to diversify its sources of revenue, including the setting of targets that support its long-term financial sustainability. HCFP should support HC by facilitating discussions with current and potential public funding partners.

2

Reviews the current program administration model to determine whether there are alternative models that would improve overall efficiency of the HCFP.

3

Reviews the HCFP's performance measurement framework to improve its overall relevance and to better track the achievement of intended outcomes.