

# **Researching the Best Practices for Winter Economic Opportunities**

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## **1. Executive Summary**

This research study aims to explore the transformation of Saskatoon into a more vibrant and thriving winter city, capitalizing on the unique opportunities presented by winter. The literature review establishes the significance of winter in shaping a place's characteristics and experiences, highlighting the need to view it as an opportunity rather than an obstacle. Additionally, the study emphasizes the social impacts and implications of the winter economy, going beyond purely economic considerations.

The vision for Saskatoon as a winter city that promotes prosperity, activity, livability, and inclusivity is central to this study. It advocates for the reimagining of the city landscape, infrastructure, and culture to embrace and celebrate the winter season. Through community engagement, diverse and inclusive winter activities, and addressing accessibility and affordability concerns, Saskatoon can create a thriving winter city where residents eagerly anticipate and enjoy the offerings of the season.

The WintercityYXE strategy, developed collaboratively by the City of Saskatoon and the community, serves as the foundation for this study, with the winter economy being a key theme. The study aims to identify best practices and provide recommendations on policies, programs, and strategies that can unlock the untapped potential of Saskatoon's winters.

To conduct this study, we examined the issue of low participation in winter activities and the consequent negative impact on the economy using the social return on investment (SROI) methodology. Considering the social impact of each course of action, addressing the issue of the winter economy in Saskatoon requires improving the residents' life experiences and overall quality of life, which would consequently lead to economic growth.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the winter economy issue, we approached it from various perspectives and sought input from different stakeholder groups. The primary component of our study involved conducting a series of interviews with key stakeholders, including the City of Saskatoon, its partners, and organizations actively involved in the winter economy sector. Additionally, to expand our data collection and enhance the reliability of our findings, we researched other cities known for their winter activities and carried out a community survey.

The main themes identified from the qualitative portion of our study revealed six themes: (1) cultural shift and mindset, (2) event consistency and variety, (3) marketing and promotion, (4) shift towards biking and walking, (5) promotion of the Meewasin Trail, and (6) wintercity grants. Significant findings from the survey include low to medium satisfaction levels with the availability of winter outdoor events, and low awareness and participation. A set of guiding recommendations was formulated to propose courses of action for the City of Saskatoon, partner organizations, and stakeholders involved. These recommendations aim to fulfill the aspiration of transforming Saskatoon into a more lively and vibrant winter city.

The main themes in our findings suggest that the winter economy issue has its roots in cultural habits and values of the residents. Events could be more consistent. Marketing and promotion can be improved, shifting to biking and walking in winter can be more encouraged, Meewasin Trail has to be more supported, and Wintercity grants amount and structure can be enhanced to fulfill the desire to transform Saskatoon to a more vibrant winter city.

## 2. Introduction

Vannini et al. (2012) introduced the term "weather places" to argue the relationship between weather and the characteristics of a specific location. It recognizes that weather has both a physical impact on a place and influences how people perceive and interact with that place. Weather places are formed through social experiences and responses to weather, including shared strategies for dealing with it. The term acknowledges that weather profoundly shapes the opportunities and conditions of our lives, sometimes permanently. This is particularly relevant in winter cities where the arrival of winter brings significant changes in social activities and movements. For example, people may spend more time indoors (referred to as "hibernation") or temporarily relocate to warmer regions ("migration") (Stout, Collins, & Evans, 2022).

Winter has always been an integral part of life in Saskatoon as a winter city, with its cold, dark, and snowy days shaping the city's identity. However, instead of merely enduring the winter months, there is a growing recognition of the potential to transform Saskatoon into a vibrant and thriving winter city. By embracing the unique characteristics of winter, such as its snowy landscapes and chilly temperatures, Saskatoon can create a community that thrives and flourishes during this time of the year (Saskatoon, 2022).

The term "winter cities" defines certain urban centers by their weather; long, cold winters distinguish winter cities from other places (Stout, Collins, & Evans, 2022).

It should be noted that not all winter conditions are viewed negatively. Recent research conducted in Scandinavia and Canada reveals that **sunshine**, **snowfall**, and **snow cover** encourage outdoor activities during winter, whereas darkness, rainfall, and icy or slushy terrain act as barriers (Larsson & Chapman, 2022). While acknowledging the challenges posed by

winter, it should not be perceived as an obstacle to be overcome but rather an opportunity to embrace and celebrate, rather than simply endured (Stout, Collins, & Evans, 2022). Previous studies have shown the natural environments of Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Saskatoon, particularly their river systems, as key elements of winter cities. The North Saskatchewan River valley in Edmonton and the South Saskatchewan River valley in Saskatoon offer recreational opportunities and serve as settings for winter festivals and educational activities. In Winnipeg, the frozen Assiniboine and Red Rivers, along with the River Trail, play a significant role in defining the city's winter experience. Engaging with the natural environment in winter means facing cold conditions but emphasizing the opportunity to embrace and appreciate the unique beauty of winter. Celebrating winter in these cities involves experiencing its materiality, including the cold temperatures, as an integral part of the city's identity. The relationship with rivers and cold temperatures shapes the shared and defining features of prairie cities and contributes to the creation of distinctive winter experiences (Stout, Collins, & Evans, 2022).

Furthermore, Saskatoon is not alone in facing the challenges of a cold winter and its effects on the local economy, as many other cities go through similar cold winters. Examples from other North American and European cities demonstrate how people are actively participating in outdoor markets, festivals, and other activities despite the cold weather.

The key to success lies in providing reasons for people to be outside, such as markets, ice skating, music, and attractive lighting. Winter cities should focus on developing a vision that showcases opportunities for public activity throughout the winter, highlights local identity, and creates an appealing physical environment. Winter markets, celebrations, and events contribute to the vibrancy of these cities and help foster a sense of community (Walljasper, 2009). Hence,

despite the variations among these winter cities, there are valuable insights to gain from each of them.

## WintercityYXE

The City of Saskatoon and the community developed an action plan called “WintercityYXE – Saskatoon's Winter City Strategy” for how the community can achieve a shared vision of a winter city. “**Winter Economy**” is one of the three major pillars that was identified with specific objectives, desired outcomes, and actions.

The expected outcomes of winter economy strategy are:

- Street activation in the public realm.
- A variety of activities that invite people outside in the winter.
- Increased economic activity during the winter months.
- Use snow as a resource.

Actions need to be taken to achieve these goals are:

- Develop and support winter/shoulder-season outdoor cafés.
- Develop and support seasonal/pop-up winter business opportunities.
- Research best practices for winter economic opportunities.
- Support activities that animate winter street life.
- Research opportunities to use snow as a resource (e.g., minimize the need to store snow in a snow management facility).

The two other main themes are “**Winter Life and Culture**” and “**Winter Design**”. The broad objectives of these themes are:

- Support winter activities that encourage social activities in winter by promoting indoor and outdoor events and reducing barriers for participants.
- Provide information about winter safety and inclusion.
- Support for the need of vulnerable populations.

All three themes are closely connected and intertwined. Without successful “winter life and culture” and “winter design” it is not possible to have a prospering economy.

The goal of designing a winter city is to unlock the untapped potential of Saskatoon's winters and create an environment that fosters prosperity, activity, livability, and inclusivity for its residents. It involves reimagining the cityscape, infrastructure, and culture to embrace and celebrate the winter season. Through innovative initiatives, strategic planning, and active community involvement, Saskatoon can become a place where residents eagerly anticipate and embrace the opportunities that winter presents.

Furthermore, a winter city approach prioritizes inclusivity, ensuring that all residents, regardless of age, abilities, or socioeconomic background, can fully participate in and benefit from the winter experience. By removing barriers, such as accessibility challenges and affordability concerns, Saskatoon can create a winter city that embraces diversity and provides equal opportunities for all to enjoy the season's offerings.

While the main focus of this study is the winter economy and promoting its growth, we also aimed to examine the issue from a social perspective. This suggests that we took into account the social impacts and implications of the winter economy, beyond purely economic considerations. By adopting a social lens, we explored how the winter economy can contribute to social well-being, community development, and the overall quality of life for individuals living in winter

cities. This broader perspective allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the winter economy and its potential benefits beyond financial aspects.

According to Nicholls et al. (2012), focusing on measuring and accounting for financial value often overlooks the broader concept of value that includes social and environmental aspects. This limitation leads to incomplete information and potentially suboptimal decision-making. The Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework aims to address this by incorporating social, environmental, and economic costs and benefits into the assessment of value. SROI is fundamentally about value itself rather than money. It goes beyond mere numbers and includes qualitative and quantitative information, case studies, and financial data to tell a comprehensive story of change, providing a basis for decision-making. *“It is a framework for a more complete understanding of how people are affected by the activities of an organization in order that resource allocation decisions can take these effects into account.”* (Nicholls, 2017, p. 127).

Carrying out SROI involves six principles: 1. Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders, 2. Mapping outcomes, 3. Evidencing outcomes and establishing impact, 4. Valuing outcomes, 5. Establishing the SROI ratio, and 6. Reporting and embedding findings (Nicholls, Lawlor, Neitzert, & Goodspeed, 2009).

By incorporating the first few steps of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework, we applied a structured approach to assess the social value generated by the winter economy. After identifying the scope of the study, we recognized key stakeholders, involved them accordingly in our study, and documented what changes can be done and what are their impacts on the community and economy. This allowed us to go beyond financial metrics and consider a wider range of social factors, such as community engagement, cultural changes, social inclusion, and overall well-being.

After adopting the SROI analysis approach, we began by defining the scope of our study. Subsequently, we identified the main stakeholders associated with the winter economy issue. To actively engage these stakeholders, we conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). Through these interviews, we gained insights into the resources they were willing to and capable of investing in, as well as their anticipated outcomes from these investments. However, it is important to acknowledge that the absence of quantitative data prevented us from assigning specific numerical values to each proposed action or strategy.

In conclusion, Saskatoon has the potential to transform itself into a thriving winter city that celebrates and capitalizes on the unique opportunities winter brings. By reimagining the city's infrastructure, fostering community engagement, and promoting inclusive and diverse winter activities, Saskatoon can become a place where residents and visitors alike eagerly anticipate the winter months. Through strategic planning and a collective effort from stakeholders, Saskatoon can embrace its winter identity, creating a prosperous, active, livable, and inclusive community that thrives throughout the winter season.

### Primary goals of this study

Saskatoon's winter strategy is structured around three main themes: Winter Economy, Winter Life & Culture, and Winter Design. Each theme has specific objectives, desired outcomes, and actions outlined in the WintercityYXE strategy. These themes encompass addressing economic challenges associated with winter, celebrating the quality of life in Saskatoon even during the coldest months, fostering enthusiasm for winter, supporting vulnerable populations, and improving community comfort and accessibility in winter conditions (Saskatoon, 2022).

The exploration of the winter economy is identified as one of the focal themes in Wintercity YXE strategy; *“How can we address challenges associated with winter to create a more vibrant economy in the winter?”*

The purpose of the present study is to research and identify the best practices to promote the winter economy in Saskatoon. The vision portrayed by the city is to celebrate and make the best of winter both for businesses, residents, and tourists. The inevitable snow and cold weather can be turned into an opportunity with social and economic values to Saskatoon.

This study primarily focuses on understanding the perspectives and concerns of stakeholders and gathering input from community partners on how to support the winter economy. Through comprehensive research, the study aims to provide recommendations on current policies and programs, as well as proposed strategies for the future that can unlock untapped potential in Saskatoon.

### **3. Methodology**

Qualitative methods allow researchers to investigate and understand complex and nuanced phenomena in their natural settings. They provide a rich, detailed, and in-depth exploration of the subject matter, capturing the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved. Furthermore, qualitative methods offer flexibility and adaptability during data collection and analysis, allowing researchers to refine research questions and explore emerging themes or issues. The iterative nature of qualitative research enables researchers to adjust their approach as new insights emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

To be more specific, the present research employed a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology and interviews in particular prioritize the perspectives and voices of the participants. They provide an opportunity for participants to express their thoughts, emotions, and interpretations in their own words, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of their unique experiences.

Regarding the interview structure, we employed a semi-structured approach. This means that while we had prepared a set of predetermined questions in advance, we also incorporated follow-up questions based on the specific responses provided by each interviewee. By using this semi-structured format, we aimed to have a balance between having a framework for consistent data collection across interviews and the flexibility to adapt and explore new avenues of inquiry based on the participants' inputs.

As an addition to our main study, we decided to complement our methodology with a quantitative analysis. Considering that the residents of Saskatoon are one of the key stakeholders for winter strategy and winter economy, as they are affected by the changes and have the

potential to impact the success of any future strategies, we opted to conduct a community survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather residents' opinions, preferences, levels of satisfaction, and future needs.

### Data collection

To carry out this study, we conducted interviews with a total of 11 individuals who represented various key stakeholder groups namely the city staff (**Internal Stakeholder: IS**) and the rest of participants (**External Stakeholder: ES**). In order to find suitable participants, we utilized the City's connections and reached out to potential interviewees.

The interviewees/stakeholders consisted of individuals involved in various aspects of designing, planning, executing, consulting, and marketing winter strategies and winter economies. These individuals represented a range of organizations including private, public, and non-profit entities.

Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, allowing us to gather comprehensive insights from the participants. The interview panel consisted of the student researcher, the supervisor (Principal Investigator), a representative from the city, and the interviewee(s). Interviews were conducted either Online via Zoom or in-person.

Regarding the quantitative portion, we administered an anonymous survey inviting residents of Saskatoon; the primary purpose of this survey was to gain preliminary insights from residents regarding winter activity in the city (see Appendix B). Fifty individuals participated in the survey.

It is worth noting that the Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan granted an exemption for this study as per **Article 2.5 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)** based on its non-harmful nature and its focus on

data collection (see Appendices C and D). Furthermore, there were no anticipated risks associated with the data collection for the participants. However, we adhered to the protocols by obtaining participants' consent and providing them with a clear explanation of the study's objectives in advance.

## Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews was transcribed using an AI platform (Otter.ai). The transcriptions served as the primary source for analysis. To derive meaningful insights from the interview data, a thematic analysis approach was adopted. This involved a combination of manual coding and the utilization of NVIVO software.

First, the transcripts were carefully reviewed to familiarize the researchers with the content and gain an overall understanding of the data. Initial ideas and patterns were identified, and preliminary codes were assigned to capture key concepts, themes, and recurring topics within the dataset. These initial codes were developed through an iterative process.

Following the manual coding process, NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software, was utilized to facilitate further analysis. The software allowed for efficient organization, sorting, and retrieval of the coded data.

Themes were identified through careful consideration of patterns, similarities, and differences within and across the interviews. This enabled the identification of key themes, patterns, and insights that emerged from the participants' responses. The resulting analysis provides the foundation for the subsequent interpretation and discussion of the findings in the report.

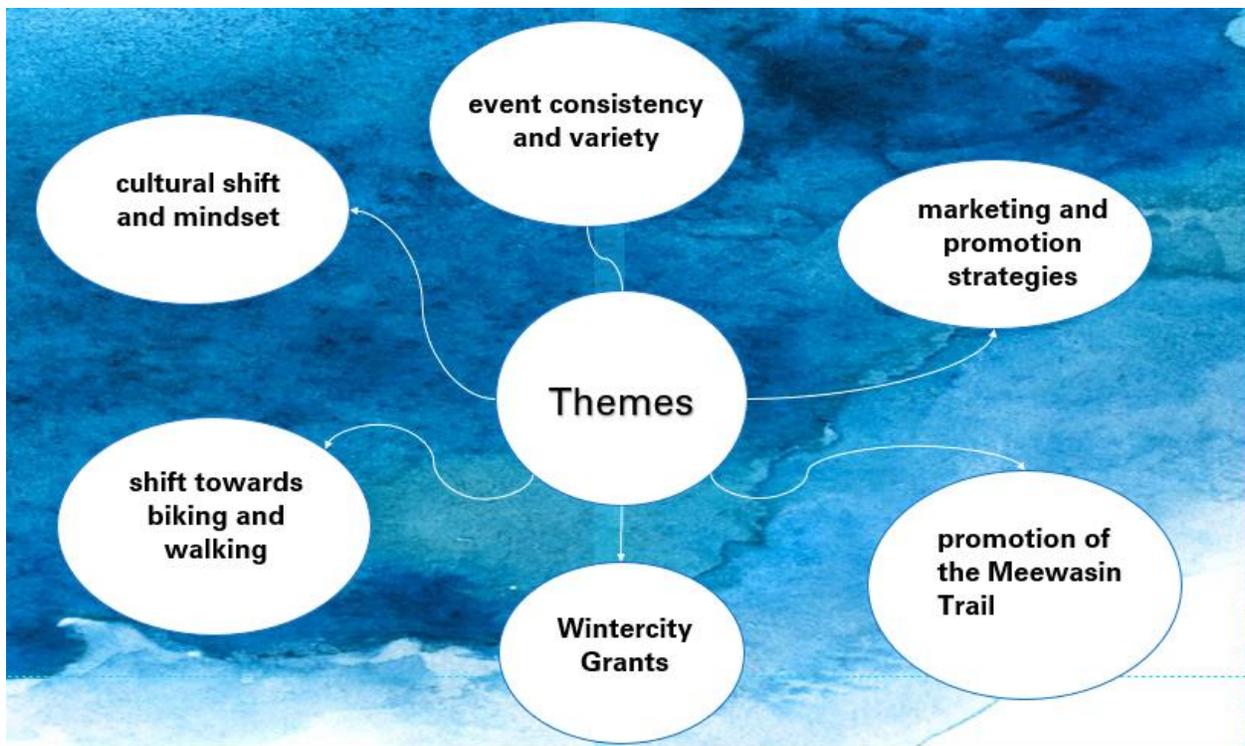
Finally, based on the results from the community survey, we used SPSS as a statistical software to conduct an analysis of the survey results. Additionally, the open-ended questions included in

the survey were manually coded, and some themes were identified and incorporated into the report.

## 4. Findings

### Themes from Interviews

This study investigates the issue of winter economy in the city of Saskatoon through the lens of semi-structured interviews conducted with various partners and stakeholders. The interviews revealed prominent themes including **cultural shift and mindset**, **event consistency and variety**, **marketing and promotion strategies**, the **shift towards biking and walking**, the **promotion of the Meewasin Trail**, and the impact of **Wintercity Grants** (see Figure 1). The findings of this study will contribute to informed decision-making and the development of strategies aimed at fostering a thriving and vibrant winter economy in Saskatoon.



*Figure 1. Themes from Interviews*

## Cultural Shift and Mindset

The long periods of cold weather, limited daylight, and challenging outdoor conditions may have ingrained a preference for indoor activities and a general inclination to stay sheltered during the winter months. This mindset might have been passed down through generations, shaping the collective attitude towards winter recreation. While acknowledging that Saskatoon experiences cold and dark

*"Think we have to first talk about winter life and winter mindset. And if we are at the right mindset, and we create the right mindset, then we can have a better winter living, attitude and environment. If we have a better winter attitudes and environment, now that winter economy looks after itself." said an ES.*

winters, it is important to note that advancements in technology, infrastructure, and winter gear have significantly improved the accessibility and comfort of outdoor activities. Innovative winter sports equipment, well-maintained trails and parks, and the availability of warm and protective clothing have made it easier than ever to engage in outdoor pursuits during the winter.

A significant and recurring theme identified through the stakeholder interviews is the profound impact of people's cultural orientations and mindset on their involvement in winter activities. This theme was highlighted by the majority of interviewees, who emphasized how deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and personal perspectives about winter activities can shape individuals' inclination or reluctance to participate in winter-related activities.

The relationship between culture and participation in winter activities substantially influences the winter economy. The level of engagement and enthusiasm exhibited by individuals within a community can directly impact the overall success of winter-based businesses. A positive cultural attitude towards winter activities has a correlation with participation rates, increased tourism, and higher consumer spending, all of which contribute to a thriving winter economy.

For instance, some business owners made the effort to keep their patios open during the previous winter, but it was observed that the majority of people preferred to dine indoors. As a result, the owners made the decision to close their patios for the upcoming winter season.

On the other hand, a mindset that views winter as a time of hibernation or discomfort may lead to a lower rate of participation in winter sports, events, or tourism-related activities. Such a perspective can have negative effects on local businesses, tourism revenue, and employment opportunities within the winter economy sector. Understanding cultural and mindset related values is crucial for boosting a sustainable winter economy.

Apart from the dissimilarity in weather and climate between Saskatoon and European winter cities, the habit of not venturing out during winter contributes to the relatively low involvement of the community in events. Consequently, this has a negative impact on the local economy. *“In European cities where people already have this habit ... it's their culture already ingrained for years and years and years. They would be sitting out on a patio with a blanket wrapped around them. I mean, that's where we all get this idea from. But here, it just isn't the current thinking.”* said an ES.

According to Massey (1986), individuals tend to develop their initial value systems during their early years, primarily influenced by their family, immediate surroundings, and cultural environment. This early stage, known as the imprint period, plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's fundamental beliefs and values. During this period, children are highly receptive to absorbing information and forming their initial value system. The behaviors observed and experienced during this stage have a profound impact on shaping their belief systems and understanding of right and wrong.

Furthermore, outdoor activities that specifically cater to children have a higher likelihood of drawing more people outside, considering the need for adult supervision. As a result, activities that target this specific age group have the ability to attract people from various age groups and can bring more benefits to local businesses and the winter economy.

Another key aspect discussed was the importance of encouraging newcomers to embrace outdoor activities during their initial winters in Saskatoon. It was recognized that if newcomers do not engage in winter activities early on, they may become accustomed to staying indoors throughout the winter months in the future. This highlights the need to proactively promote and facilitate outdoor experiences for newcomers to foster a positive winter mindset. Considering the Government of Saskatchewan's aspiration to increase the population from its current count of 1.17 million to 1.4 million by 2030 (see Figure 2) the engagement of newcomers in winter activities is crucial (saskatchewan.ca, 2019).

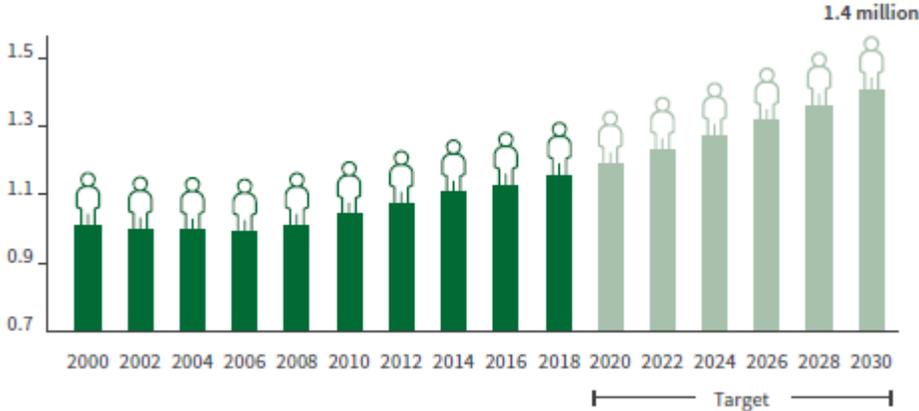


Figure 2. Population growth vision

Consequently, our recommendation is for the city to provide greater support for activities that include children and newcomers, as they appear to offer a more promising avenue for creating a significant influence on the cultural attitudes and behaviors of the community.

A potential approach to achieve this is by implementing a grant system that takes into account the nature of the winter activity. Specifically, if an activity is specifically designed for children or newcomers, applicants could receive increased funding or non-financial benefits, depending on the availability of the City's resources.

Furthermore, festivals were identified as potential vehicles for acculturation, allowing for the celebration of winter activities and the integration of residents into the local winter culture. Festivals can serve as platforms to showcase the joys and possibilities of winter, further contributing to the desired cultural shift.

Finally, although the goal is to make Saskatoon a better city and support businesses, it is essential to be realistic about expectations. Changing deep-rooted attitudes and behaviors in citizens is a complex and long-term task that requires ongoing efforts and perseverance. Achieving a change in culture requires a long-term effort and is challenging to measure. It was emphasized that short-term victories should not be expected in order to witness a significant cultural shift, which brings us to the next key finding which is consistency in winter events and programs.

#### Event Consistency and Variety

One important aspect highlighted is the desire of different stakeholder groups to focus on events that happen over the years. This emphasis on longevity is driven by the need for consistency and reliability in winter events. For the community to truly embrace Saskatoon as a winter city, they need to witness events and activities that occur consistently. A lack of continuity can lead to frustration and undermine efforts to establish a winter culture. In order for promotional events to be effective, it is essential to maintain consistency. If events are organized in one year but

abruptly discontinued in the following years, it becomes ineffective and impedes the sense of trust within the community. Inconsistency hinders the community's ability to rely on and fully engage with these events. *“For me in my position is to have that consistency and that legacy piece so that we can communicate it, we can create content around it, and we can promote it. if we talk about it, one year, we write blogs about it, we create content about it, and it's not there the next year, or it's not a legacy piece, like warming shelters on the river valley or access to snowshoes or cross-country skis, it's really hard for us to do our work.”* said an ES who manages marketing and promotion campaigns.

To incentivize businesses to sustain their operations in the winter sector, one possible approach is to provide tax incentives. For instance, businesses that have been actively engaged in winter-related activities for an extended period could be offered a slightly reduced tax rate. This incentive aims to encourage businesses to continue their involvement in the winter sector and contribute to the overall development and growth of winter-related offerings in the community.

In conclusion, consistency is crucial in ingraining the desired culture and transforming the community's mindset. It is imperative that events, activities, and services maintain a reliable and uninterrupted presence over the years. Any form of inconsistency has the potential to undermine all the previous efforts and hinder the progress made in shaping the community's outlook.

### Marketing and Promotion

The success of the winter economy and the achievement of a cultural shift are contingent upon effective communication and marketing efforts. Without these crucial components, neither the winter economy can thrive, nor can the desired cultural shift take place. Several key codes from the interviews highlight effective strategies to enhance marketing efforts and attract both locals and tourists during the winter season.

One suggestion that emerged is encouraging businesses, especially patios, to include more winter photos on their social media platforms and Google Maps. By showcasing their operations during winter, businesses can instill confidence in potential customers that they are open and active year-round. Additionally, it is important for these photos to be inclusive, representing various demographics (e.g., ethnicity, gender identity, disabilities, and religion), as people appreciate seeing themselves reflected in promotional material and it can have a favorable impact on residents' sense of connectedness and trust (Eisend, Muldrow, & Rosengren, 2022).

*“You can then include [these contents] in your recreation documents. People [from different demographics] want to see themselves [in the promotional materials]” said an ES.*

Furthermore, despite these developments, the cultural inertia surrounding winter activities persists. It may be attributed to a lack of awareness or promotion of the available options, limited exposure to winter-centric recreational opportunities, or simply a prevailing mindset that associates winter with indoor settings *“we want them to also embrace winter and living in the winter. There’s no such thing as bad weather, only appropriate clothing. In other words, how do you prepare for and protect yourself against the context you're going to be living [in] and operating?”* said an ES. Therefore, to enhance community engagement and awareness of outdoor events, we recommend creating a unified comprehensive calendar. This guide could be distributed via mailboxes, posted on the city’s social media platforms, and made available through Discover Saskatoon and other city partners. This document could even be transformed into a desk calendar and sold by the city at a reduced price. Given that Discover Saskatoon currently offers a calendar showcasing winter events in Saskatoon, its expertise and knowledge make it an ideal partner to develop a comprehensive document. This document can be shared with all city partners and businesses.

Furthermore, proper lighting and managing darkness are emphasized as critical factors in creating a welcoming and visually warm atmosphere. Welcoming, safe, and visually appealing lighting at nights with proper factors such as color, brightness, intensity, shapes, and patterns is recommended to promote buildings and outdoor spaces (Núñez, 2020). Although there is a negative perception of darkness embedded in language, having a balance between light and dark rather than trying to eliminate darkness entirely seems to be a more promising promotion strategy *“we're using lighting for placemaking Sure, we need it for safety in the winter, but for placemaking is where the magic happens,”* said an ES. Overusing lighting can result in light pollution and hampers people from enjoying delicate lighting and decorations. Cities such as Reykjavik and Amsterdam are two examples of innovative lighting design, including light festivals and considering the winter darkness in urban planning (Núñez, 2020).

Business improvement districts (BIDs) play an important role in providing power resources for effective lighting arrangements. According to interviewees, some streets are excessively illuminated, which hinders the visibility and appreciation of winter lighting by visitors. *“Once you over light, then it becomes ineffective,”* said an ES.

Additionally, it is suggested to the city, its partners, and the community that winter lighting should extend beyond Christmas decorations, with a lower intensity, to maintain an inviting nature of the street throughout the winter season.

Another strength of Saskatoon is its affordability in terms of event-related costs, both for visitors and coordinators. This advantage can be leveraged and communicated properly to attract event organizers and make Saskatoon an appealing destination for hosting various cultural, business, and sports events. Other competencies of Saskatoon that are recommended to be stressed in tourism advertising are Meewasin trail, art galleries such as Remai Modern Museum, quality

restaurants, having the chance to be exposed to indigenous culture, and the opportunities for e-biking around the river, which can also support local businesses.

Last but not least, highlighting the kindness and accommodating nature of Saskatoon's residents in marketing campaigns is an underscored and often a taken for granted asset that should be utilized in tourism advertising.

*"I think ... a major asset that we underestimate, and [ which is] underrepresented or underutilized is the quality of the people that live here," said an ES.*

The importance of city departments improving communication and coordination was also highlighted. Currently, other partners such as BIDs sometimes serve as intermediaries between the city departments *"But we talk to like every single department for whatever random reason. We're often the message messenger between to say, did you know your own city department is doing XYZ," said ES.* Strengthening collaboration and streamlining communication channels can lead to more efficient and cohesive marketing efforts.

To implement these initiatives, the city can collaborate with its capable partners who have the resources and expertise to execute the aforementioned strategies and changes. Discover Saskatoon emerges as a key resource for communication, event organization, and information dissemination. It provides support in business development and serves as an implementation partner for the City of Saskatoon's vision of a thriving winter economy. Furthermore, its strong relationships with core international markets like the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan position Saskatoon as an attractive destination for tourists seeking nature, agricultural, culinary, and indigenous experiences. BIDs, organizations such as On Purpose Leadership, and Meewasin are a few examples of other partners that can assist in promoting winter economy in Saskatoon.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of interviews underscores the importance of effective marketing and promotion strategies in boosting Saskatoon's winter economy. Through initiatives such as incorporating winter photos, creating comprehensive event guides, improving lighting, emphasizing the city's strengths, and leveraging partnerships with Discover Saskatoon, the city can enhance its appeal as a vibrant winter destination for both locals and tourists.

### Shifting towards Biking and Walking

Shifting to biking and walking during the winter months has emerged as a significant aspect of improving both the quality of life and the winter economy in Saskatoon. Encouraging cycling throughout the winter is seen as a promising avenue for achieving these goals. One way to support this is by piloting E-Bike charging facilities, which can incentivize more people to embrace cycling as a viable mode of transportation during the colder months.

To help the local economy, clearing sidewalks becomes crucial, as it enables both cyclists and pedestrians to make stops along their routes and contributes to local businesses and shops. According to one interviewee and their experience in winter conferences, looking at the example of a winter city in Europe, a deliberate decision by the mayor was made to reduce dependence on vehicular traffic and prioritize cycling, and it led to significant infrastructure changes that encouraged people to embrace biking.

Therefore, a suggested pilot project to further enhance the winter biking and walking experience is the implementation of heated sidewalks or installing windbreakers, particularly in areas with high foot traffic and pedestrian activity, such as downtown. This initiative would not only promote the comfort and accessibility of winter walking but also create a more inviting environment for cyclists to navigate the city streets. It is worth noting that the snow clearing

efforts carried out by the city of Saskatoon are at a satisfactory level according to the interviewees.

To promote winter biking, community-wide education and awareness initiatives are needed. This can involve providing safety guidelines, sharing information on proper clothing and equipment, and addressing the prevailing perception around winter walking and biking *“these are all experiences that you can experience in Saskatoon if you own your own snowshoes, or you have your own fat bike,”* said an ES. Organizing group rides and collaborating with local organizations can help inspire and engage the community. By increasing awareness and knowledge about winter biking, more people can embrace this sustainable and active mode of transportation during the colder months.

By integrating these efforts, including promoting winter cycling, providing infrastructure support, fostering education and awareness, and considering innovative projects like heated sidewalks, Saskatoon can take significant steps towards shifting to biking and walking during the winter months. These initiatives have the potential to enhance the overall quality of life, improve the local economy, and establish Saskatoon as a thriving winter city.

#### Promotion of the Meewasin Trail

The Meewasin Trail in Saskatoon holds great potential for the winter economy, as more visitors to Meewasin and the nearby BIDs can lead to increased opportunities for window shopping and local business engagement. However, it is crucial to strike a balance between human use and the preservation of this ecologically significant trail. Meewasin, with its three pillars of conservation, development, and education, faces the challenge of preserving the trail within an urban context. The trail itself is considered one of the most imperiled ecosystems on the planet and requires

careful conservation efforts. Tracking visitor numbers through a mechanical counter, Meewasin has observed a significant volume of visitors, approximately three times the population of Saskatoon in previous years, which highlights the popularity of the trail. However, this increased foot traffic also puts pressure on the natural environment, raising the question of how to maintain a balance between attracting more visitors and ensuring the preservation of the trail.

Despite the importance of Meewasin and its role in the community's well-being and the economy, the organization is understaffed and could benefit from additional funding to enhance the condition of the trail and attract more visitors.

Another challenge faced by Meewasin is the short-term budgeting, which impedes long-term planning. From a tourism standpoint, planning 18 to 24 months in advance is essential, but the annual budgeting approach hinders

*“Meewasin, through its lifetime, you know, has been through some really significant funding cuts that impact [Meewasin] greatly,” said an ES.*

this process. To address this, it is recommended to allocate more stable funding to Meewasin, allowing for long-term planning and aligning with the organization's 100-year plan developed by Raymond Moriyama (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3. From 100 Year Conceptual Master Plan by Raymond Moriyama*

However, given Meewasin' s importance as a crucial resource for the city, there are measures that can be taken to enhance its appeal and create a more inviting "place" for the community.

According to Stout et. al, (2022), placemaking is a term that refers to intentional and strategic human activity aimed at transforming public spaces into engaging and meaningful places. It focuses on promoting public values, such as access to cultural activities, social opportunities, and common infrastructure. Successful placemaking generates a range of benefits for stakeholders, including improved health and safety, increased vitality and social interaction, enhanced civic pride, and greater inclusiveness.

Placemaking can be approached in two different ways that work hand in hand: community-based and market-driven. Community-based placemaking emphasizes public participation and focuses on local values, history, culture, and the natural environment. It aims to create places that enhance quality of life, social interaction, equity, and sustainability. On the other hand, market-driven placemaking prioritizes the needs of market actors, such as corporations, aiming to create public places that protect investments, appeal to target markets, and stimulate economic activity. This approach often contributes to economic development and competitiveness, even serving as a branding strategy for cities. According to the literature review and our findings, we believe that both of these practices need to be implemented simultaneously in order to enhance Meewasin and improve the quality of life for the community. This, in turn, will contribute to the winter economy.

Considering the placemaking strategy to promote Meewasin Trail, we suggest drawing inspiration from other winter cities and implementing strategies such as incorporating more storytelling and festivals on the Meewasin Trail. Winter festivals serve as important placemaking activities, activating public spaces, showcasing cultural heritage, and fostering a sense of collective celebration. These festivals are seen as genuine expressions of local identity, weather, and place, going beyond mere economic development or place marketing.

These initiatives would help convey narratives that celebrate the history and culture of Saskatoon, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and community engagement.

Furthermore, from the tourism perspective, there is an opportunity for Meewasin to explore the creation of a pilot winter tourism program, similar to their existing summer program known as "Naughty by Nature."

In summary, Meewasin holds tremendous potential for the winter economy, but careful consideration must be given to balancing visitor engagement, conservation efforts, and long-term planning. By providing adequate funding and stable revenue streams, Meewasin can further enhance the trail, attract more visitors, and contribute to the growth of Saskatoon's winter tourism industry.

Wintercity Grants

The Winter City Grant program plays a crucial role in supporting the winter economy in Saskatoon. However, one common challenge highlighted by stakeholders is the strict deadline, which sometimes results in missed opportunities for businesses with innovative ideas. To address this, a suggestion is to introduce a secondary application date or a more flexible deadline, allowing businesses to

*"In my experience, in my feedback from a couple of our partners, members that we heard from feedback of, this grant wasn't enough to even start to create an opportunity to create that legacy within our community," said an ES.*

apply even if they come up with ideas after the initial deadline. This approach would enable the city to accommodate late applicants and foster greater participation in the grant program.

Another recommendation is to provide more one-to-one mentorship and guidance from BID managers to businesses to encourage them to apply for the grants. BID managers possess

valuable insights about the neighborhood and can help businesses brainstorm ideas that align with the specific needs and goals of the local businesses. This collaborative approach would not only enhance the quality of proposals but also create a stronger sense of community engagement.

However, it is worth noting that many stakeholders have raised concerns about the size of the grants awarded through the Winter City Grant program. The current micro-grant structure, with amounts ranging from \$2,000 to \$2,500, may not be sufficient for event organizers to have a significant impact. *“[With] small grants, [businesses] can put on like a small Saturday event in the winter months, but that doesn't create a consistency or reliability for our community members to truly be able to consider this as a winter city,”* said an ES. To address this, it is recommended that the city considers allocating more funds or reducing the number of grants awarded, thereby allowing for larger grant amounts per recipient. This would provide businesses with the necessary resources to execute impactful winter initiatives and drive positive change within the community.

Ultimately, it is crucial for the city and the Government of Saskatchewan to view the investment in the winter economy as an opportunity rather than a cost. By increasing financial support and considering the unique needs of underserved populations such as low-income households, older adults, newcomers, people with disabilities, and youth, the Winter City Grant program can have a more inclusive and meaningful impact. Considering the previous discussion regarding the need for increased support for winter events involving children and newcomers, the grant amount can be determined based on the inclusion of these specific groups in the application.

Additionally, there is a suggestion to support both outdoor and indoor events, recognizing the inherent challenges of planning outdoor activities in winter while still acknowledging the importance of getting people out of their houses and engaged in community events.



## Community survey

We believe that people are the driving force behind the winter economy, and their opinions and satisfaction levels are decisive for the economy to thrive during winter. Therefore, as they are key stakeholders in this study, we decided to conduct a survey to learn more about the community's needs and preferences (see Appendix B).

To gain a better understanding of what the community wants and how satisfied they are with the current state of winter activities, events, and the strategies implemented by the City of Saskatoon to create a better winter city, we conducted an online survey within the community. Fifty people volunteered to participate in our study.

## Demographics of the participants

The gender distribution graph advocates for the inclusion of all genders and demonstrates an approximately equal distribution of male and female participants (see Figure 5).

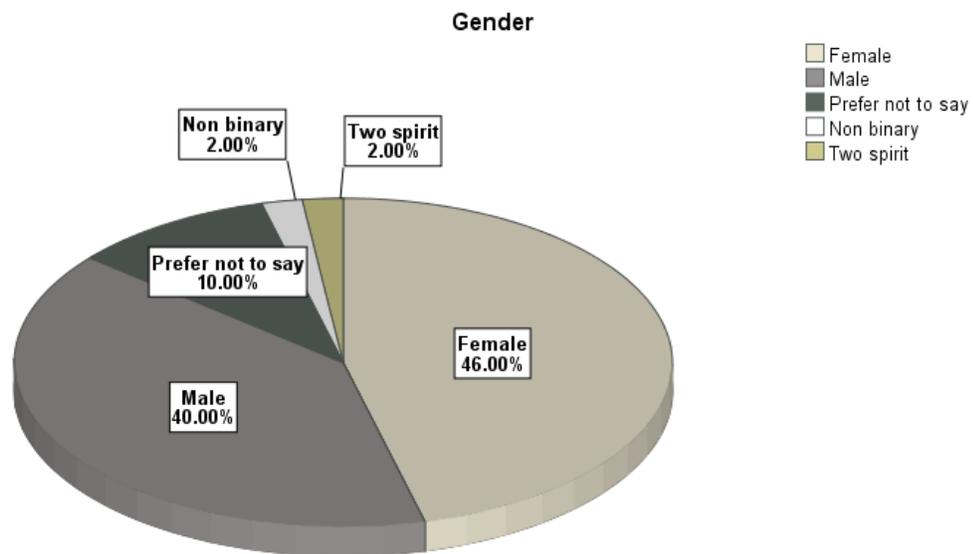
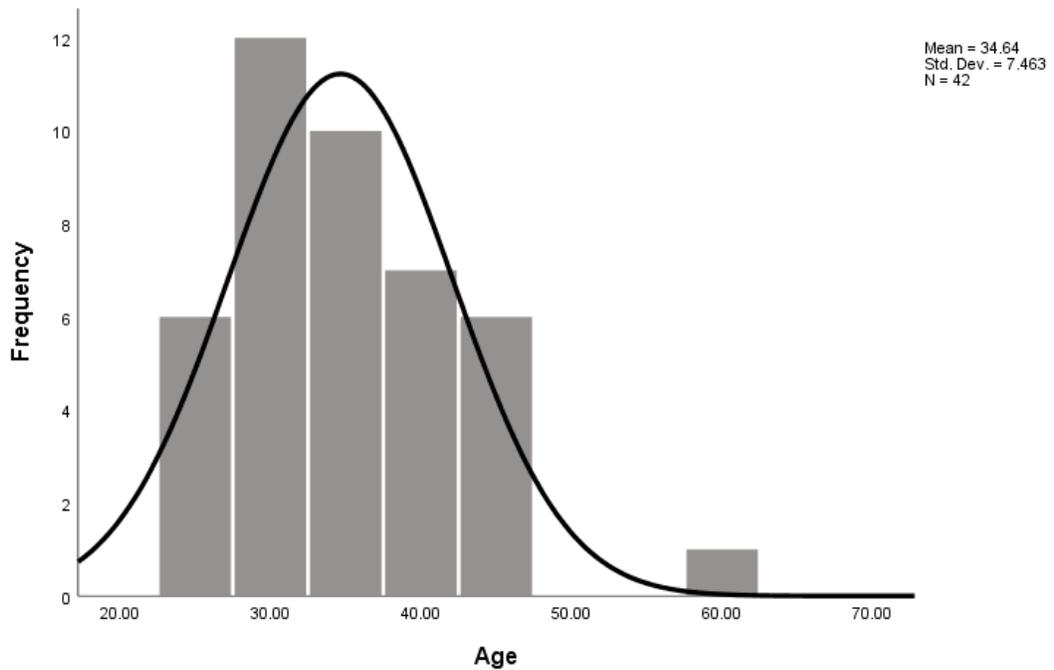


Figure 5. Gender Distribution

Regarding the age distribution in the dataset, it does not appear to be perfectly normal based on visual inspection. However, it does indicate that participants were from diverse age groups (see Figure 6).



*Figure 6. Age Distribution*

The following figure demonstrates the marital status of our participants (see Figure 7).

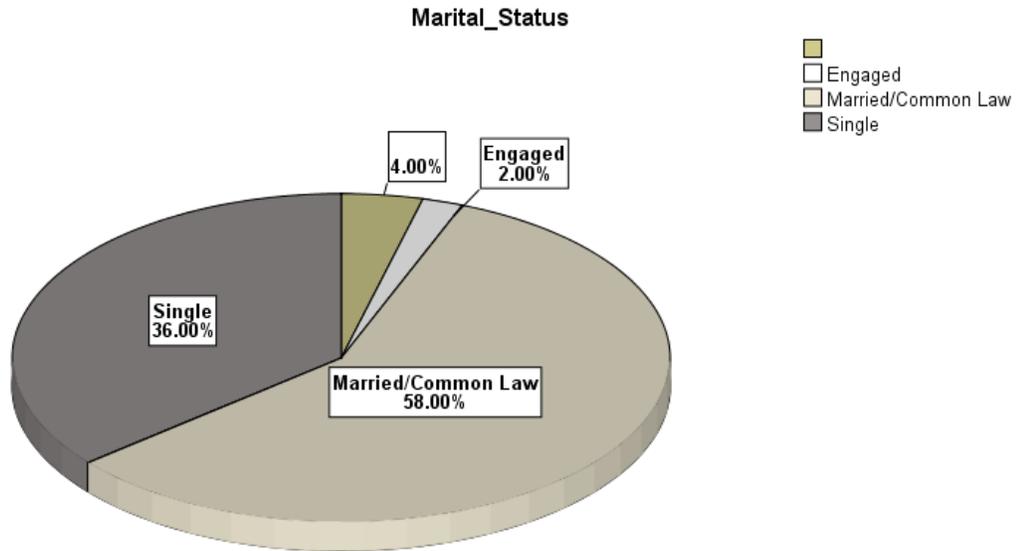


Figure 7. Marital Status

The data shows that 96% of the participants identified themselves as residents of Saskatoon. This high percentage of local residents strengthens the reliability of our findings (see Figure 8).

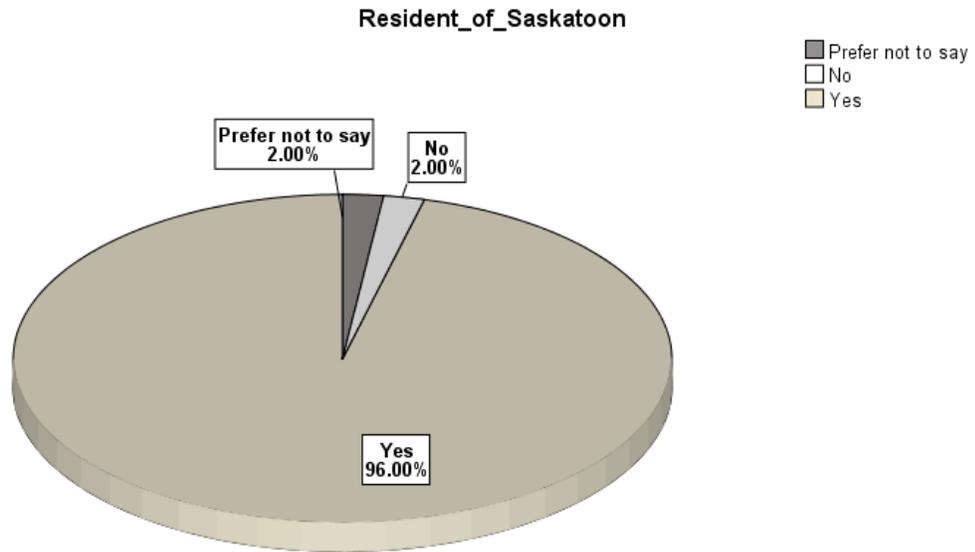


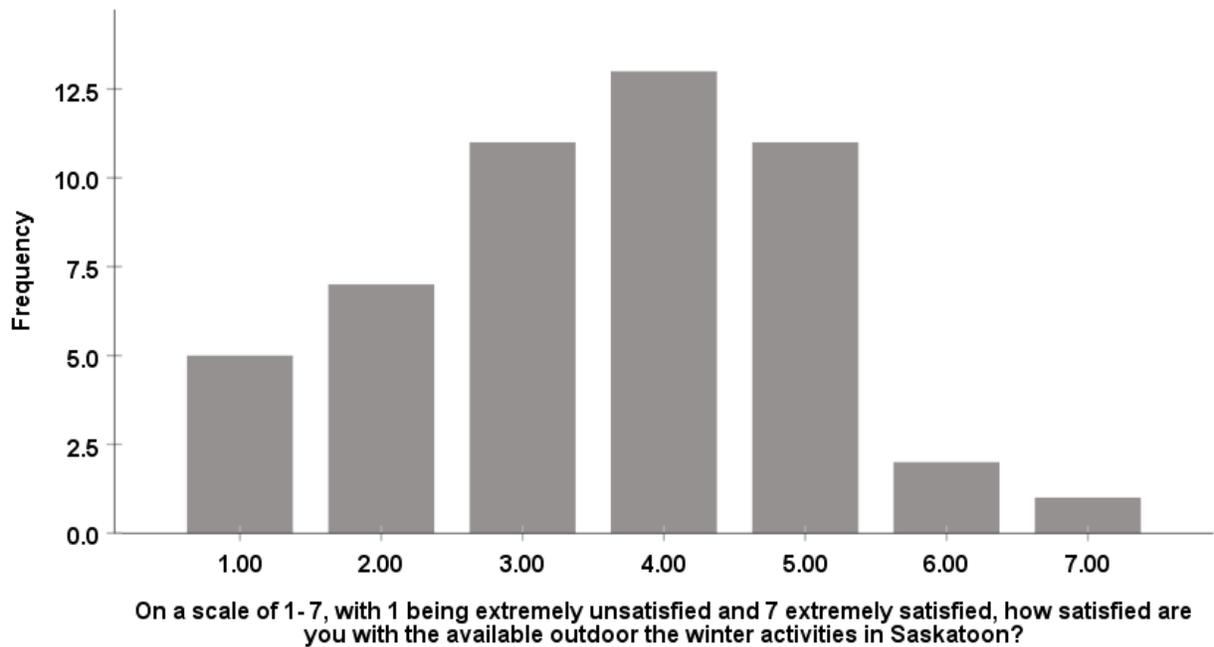
Figure 8. City of Residency

## Community Survey Findings

The survey asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the available outdoor winter activities in Saskatoon on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing "extremely dissatisfied" and 7 representing "extremely satisfied." A total of 50 participants responded to the survey.

Looking at the distribution of responses, it's evident that the majority of respondents (72%) rated their satisfaction between 1 and 4 (4 included) on the 7-point scale. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents had some level of dissatisfaction or neutral feelings towards the available outdoor winter activities.

At the lower end of the satisfaction scale, 10% of the respondents rated their satisfaction as 1, indicating extreme dissatisfaction. However, at the higher end, only 2% of the respondents rated their satisfaction as 7, representing extreme satisfaction (see Figure 9). This suggests that there is room for improvement in enhancing the overall satisfaction level of outdoor winter activities in Saskatoon.



*Figure 9. Satisfaction level of Saskatoon*

Comparing the results from the two questions regarding satisfaction with outdoor winter activities in Saskatoon and participants' neighborhoods, we found out participants approximately had similar perceptions of their satisfaction with outdoor winter activities at both the city-wide and neighborhood levels.

However, the dataset for satisfaction with outdoor winter activities in participants' neighborhoods shows a slightly higher percentage of extreme dissatisfaction (rating 1 on the scale) compared to the satisfaction with activities in Saskatoon as a whole (see Figure 10). This indicates that participants might have more specific concerns or issues with the activities in their immediate neighborhood.

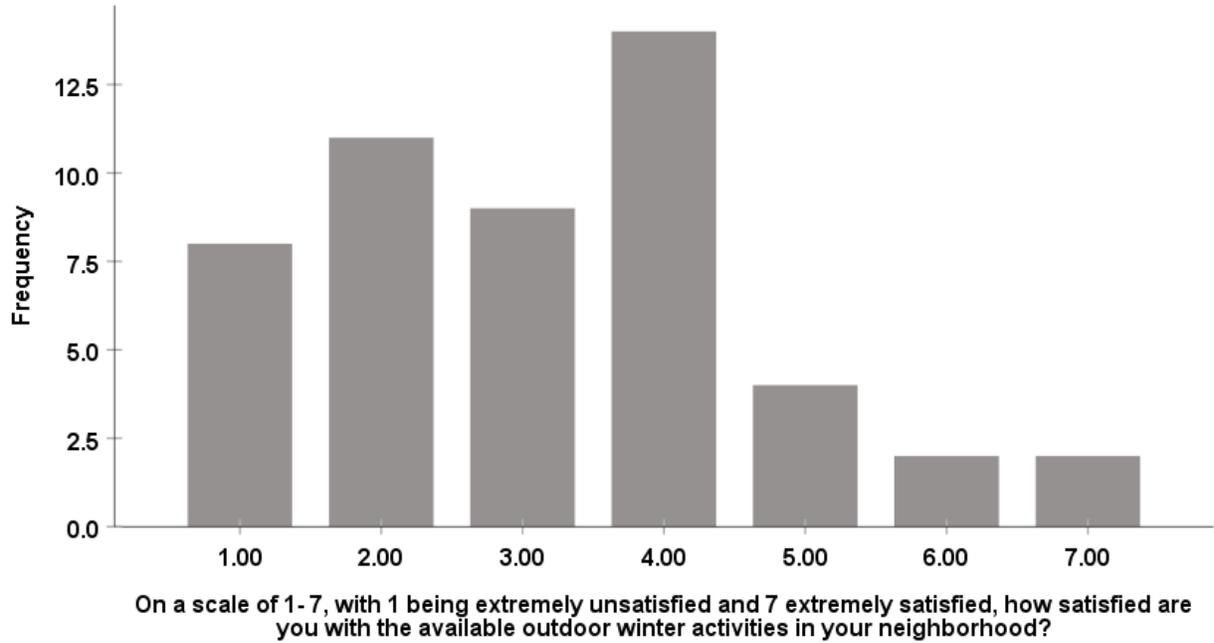


Figure 10. Satisfaction level of neighborhood

In order to obtain a deeper insight into the causes of participants' dissatisfaction and identify potential measures for enhancing the community's winter experience, particularly regarding outdoor activities, the survey proceeded by posing two additional questions.

1. *“How can the City of Saskatoon offer you a better experience in the winter, especially when you want to enjoy time outside of your home?”*
2. *“What criteria are important when you want to choose an outdoor activity in the winter?”*

Based on the feedback provided by participants, we have identified the following issues as their expectations and desired changes in Saskatoon. These changes aim to enhance their outdoor experience and motivate them to enjoy the outside more during the winter season, thereby resulting in more residents attending outdoor activities.

- Many participants expressed a desire for outdoor spaces that provide thermal comfort, such as heated tents, fire pits, windbreaks, and warm-up areas. They also mentioned the importance of lighting, well-groomed ski trails, public bathrooms, and warm-up shelters. Participants mentioned enhancing outdoor spaces through the inclusion of more public art, lighting, and public spaces designed with thermal comfort in mind. Suggestions included closing off pedestrian areas with fire pits, seating, and food options, as well as incorporating trees, buildings, and windbreaks to improve microclimates.
- Some participants suggested diversifying winter experiences by offering a combination of indoor and outdoor activities. They mentioned the need for more indoor play areas for families, indoor activities for babies and kids, and affordable indoor options for adults. They highlighted the need for activities suitable for all, including the unhoused and those with limited financial means. Suggestions were made to offer free activities, provide rentals for winter sports equipment, and ensure information about amenities and facilities is readily available.
- According to them, when compared to other similar provinces, Saskatoon has a notably lower number of events. Festivals and events were mentioned as important aspects of winter livability. Participants highlighted the desire for free or affordable festivals, weekly organized activities, and events in different neighborhoods that cater to various age groups.
- Participants suggested neighborhood-based winter fun, sculpture walks, light shows, and decorative lighting. They also mentioned the importance of maintaining sidewalks, pathways, and bridges for pedestrians, as well as providing additional opportunities for activities.

- Many participants emphasized the need for better advertising and promotion of winter events and activities. Suggestions included creating a dedicated social media page or platform to provide information on available activities and events, as well as broader advertising efforts to raise awareness.
- The analysis highlights a concerning finding regarding the level of awareness among a significant portion of the participants. Specifically, 40% of the respondents indicated that they are not aware of events and festivals offered during the winter, such as WinterShines or Winterruption (see Figure 11). The lack of awareness among a sizable portion of the participants suggests that there may be a gap in communication or promotion strategies related to these winter events. It raises questions about the effectiveness of current marketing efforts and the reach of information regarding these cultural and recreational activities.

Addressing this issue is crucial for event organizers and stakeholders involved in promoting the winter economy. Enhanced marketing campaigns, collaborating with local businesses, community organizations, and tourism boards, increased community engagement in the planning and promotion of winter events, identifying specific demographics or segments of the population that are less aware and tailoring marketing efforts to reach them can be some of the possible ways to tackle this problem.

Are you aware of events and festivals that are offered during the winter (such as WinterShines or Winterruption)?

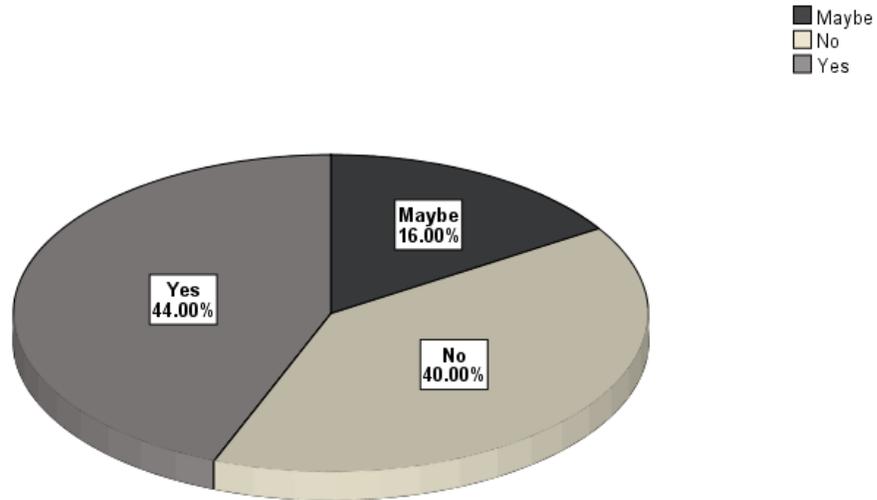


Figure 11. Awareness of events

As depicted in the diagram below, a significant number of participants indicated that they did not participate in any winter events over the last two years (see Figure 12). The dataset suggests that factors such as lack of awareness, as well as adverse weather conditions, contributed to the lower rate of participation.

Did you participate in any winter events or festivals in Saskatoon over the last two years?

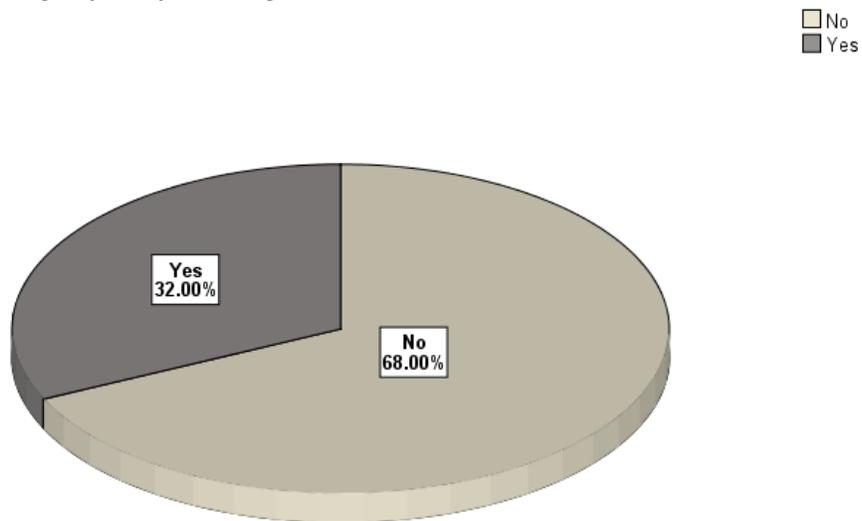
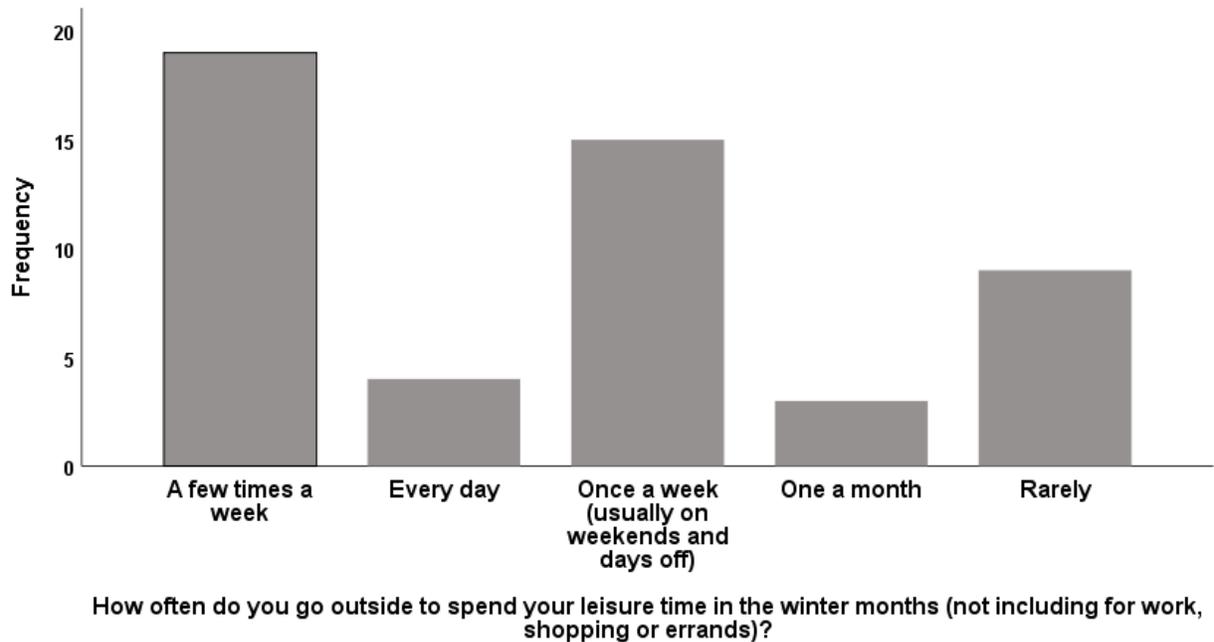


Figure 12. Participation in winter events

The following diagram demonstrates the participation frequency in winter events (see Figure 13).



*Figure 13. Frequency of participation in outdoor activities*

Moreover, according to the respondents, accessibility, cost, fitting their schedule, and being inclusive for all family members are important to them when deciding which winter activity to attend. These criteria were most frequently mentioned by participants, respectively.

Accessibility was highlighted as a significant factor, indicating that individuals preferred activities that were easily reachable and convenient to access. To improve accessibility, organizers could focus on selecting locations that are well-connected, providing clear transportation options, and ensuring venues have appropriate accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

As mentioned earlier, participants expressed a higher level of satisfaction with city-wide outdoor activities compared to the available activities in their neighborhoods. Therefore, we suggest that

one way to attract more participants is to host additional activities in each neighborhood. This would eliminate the need for people to travel to other neighborhoods in order to enjoy an event.

Cost was another important consideration for respondents. People expressed a desire for affordable or reasonably priced activities that wouldn't strain their budgets. Considering the fact that one of the overarching goals of this project is to find ways to benefit the underserved residents, it is recommended to consider options such as offering discounted tickets for families, providing package deals, or partnering with local businesses to offer special promotions to people with financial stress.

Being inclusive for all family members was mentioned as a key criterion. To address this, organizers could strive to provide diverse activities that cater to different age groups and interests. Offering family-friendly options, such as child-friendly activities or designated areas for relaxation, can enhance the overall experience for attendees with families.

This strategy can be beneficial in several ways. First, including all family members means more participation which in turn can lead to higher revenue for local businesses. Second, as we discussed earlier, including children is crucial to ingrain the culture of going out in the wintertime and can lead to long-term benefits for Saskatoon's economy.

One potential recommendation is to revise the structure of available grants. We suggest evaluating grant proposals each year and providing funding based on the nature of each project, rather than having a flat rate for all projects. For instance, if a project fulfills all three criteria of being in an accessible area, affordable, and inclusive for all family members, it should receive a higher funding allocation. This approach would incentivize applicants to propose projects that meet the aforementioned criteria.

## 5. Discussion and Recommendations

The promotion of outdoor winter activities and the subsequent boost to the winter economy holds significant importance in Saskatoon. This study aimed to explore effective strategies for promoting the local economy during the winter season by conducting interviews and a community survey. This summary presents recommendations based on the key themes and insights derived from the interviews and the community survey, offering a comprehensive overview of the findings.

- The study highlights the focal influence of cultural orientations and mindsets on participation in winter activities and its impact on the winter economy. The findings suggest that deeply ingrained beliefs and perspectives about winter activities shape individuals' inclination or reluctance to engage in them. A positive cultural attitude towards winter activities correlates with higher participation rates, increased tourism, and greater consumer spending, all contributing to a thriving winter economy. On the other hand, a mindset viewing winter as a time of hibernation or discomfort may lead to lower participation rates and negative effects on local businesses and employment opportunities. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural values and mindset-related factors in fostering a sustainable winter economy. Recommendations include **targeting and supporting activities for children and newcomers, facilitating outdoor experiences for newcomers, and utilizing festivals as platforms for celebrating winter activities** and integrating residents into the local winter culture. However, it is acknowledged that changing deep-rooted attitudes and behaviors is a complex, long-term endeavor that requires ongoing efforts and realistic expectations.

- The importance of consistency and longevity in winter events and activities was emphasized by stakeholders, as it contributes to the establishment of a winter culture in Saskatoon. In order to foster a sense of trust and engagement within the community, it is crucial to ensure that events occur consistently over the years. Discontinuity and lack of reliability can lead to frustration and hinder the community's ability to fully embrace and participate in winter-related initiatives. To incentivize businesses and encourage their sustained involvement in the winter sector, **some financial and non-financial incentives could be considered as a potential approach**. These incentives would reward businesses that have actively participated in winter-related activities and contribute to the growth and development of winter offerings in the community. Following up on the previous theme (culture shift and mindset), maintaining consistency is key to ingraining the desired culture and transforming the community's mindset towards embracing winter as an integral part of Saskatoon's identity.
- The success of Saskatoon's winter economy and the desired cultural shift rely on effective communication and marketing strategies. Key recommendations emerged from the interviews, including the **encouragement of businesses to showcase winter photos** on social media platforms, creation of a **unified comprehensive calendar** to enhance community engagement and awareness of outdoor events, the **importance of proper lighting** to create a welcoming atmosphere, **advertising the affordability advantage of Saskatoon for hosting events**, **highlighting the city's/community's kindness and accommodating nature** in marketing campaigns, and **the need for improved communication and coordination among city departments and partners**. Collaboration with capable partners like Discover Saskatoon, BIDs, and organizations

such as On Purpose Leadership and Meewasin can facilitate the implementation of these initiatives. By implementing these recommendations, Saskatoon can enhance its appeal as a vibrant winter destination and boost its winter economy.

- Shifting to biking and walking during winter in Saskatoon is seen as promising a way to improve quality of life and the winter economy. Encouraging winter cycling is important, and **piloting E-Bike charging facilities** can help incentivize this mode of transportation. Clearing sidewalks is crucial for supporting local businesses and enabling cyclists and pedestrians to make stops along their routes. To enhance the winter biking and walking experience, suggestions include **piloting the implementation of heated sidewalks or windbreakers**, particularly in high-traffic areas like downtown. Community-wide education and awareness initiatives are needed to promote winter biking, including safety guidelines and addressing perception barriers. Organizing group rides and collaborating with local organizations can engage the community. By integrating these efforts and considering innovative projects, Saskatoon can shift to biking and walking during winter, thereby improving quality of life and the local economy.
- The Meewasin Trail in Saskatoon has the potential to boost the winter economy by attracting more visitors and supporting local businesses. However, it is essential to balance human use and the conservation of this ecologically significant trail. Meewasin faces challenges in terms of funding and short-term budgeting, hindering long-term planning. **Stable funding and aligning with the organization's 100-year plan** can address these issues. **Placemaking strategies, including community-based and market-driven approaches**, can enhance the trail and improve quality of life for the community. **Drawing inspiration from other winter cities, incorporating storytelling**

**and winter festivals on the trail** can celebrate Saskatoon's history and culture. Additionally, **exploring a pilot winter tourism program** can further enhance visitor engagement. By addressing these challenges and implementing strategic initiatives, Meewasin can contribute to the winter economy and the growth of Saskatoon's tourism industry.

- Last but not least, the Winter City Grant program plays a vital role in supporting the winter economy, but there are challenges that need to be addressed. Stakeholders have expressed concerns about the strict deadline and have suggested the **introduction of a secondary application date or a more flexible deadline to accommodate late applicants. One-to-one mentorship from BID managers can help businesses generate innovative ideas and strengthen community engagement.** Another concern is the size of the grants, with suggestions **to allocate more funds or reduce the number of recipients to provide larger grant amounts. It is important for the city and government to view investment in the winter economy as an opportunity and consider the needs of the residents, especially underserved populations.**

**Supporting both outdoor and indoor events** is recommended, acknowledging the challenges of planning outdoor activities in winter while promoting community engagement. By addressing these issues and promoting inclusivity, the Winter City Grant program can stimulate innovation, economic growth, and a vibrant winter culture in Saskatoon.

- The survey revealed that respondents expressed some level of dissatisfaction or neutral feelings towards the available outdoor winter activities in Saskatoon at both the city-wide and neighborhood levels, but there were slightly higher levels of extreme dissatisfaction

in participants' neighborhoods. To address the issues and enhance the community's winter experience, participants provided feedback on their expectations and desired changes (see Figure 14). This included the need for **outdoor spaces with thermal comfort, diversification of winter experiences with indoor and outdoor activities, more festivals and events, neighborhood-based winter fun, better advertising and promotion, and addressing the lack of awareness** about winter events. Participants also highlighted the importance of **accessibility, cost, and inclusivity** when choosing winter activities. **The structure of grants could be revised to allocate funding based on specific project criteria, such as accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity.** These measures aim to enhance the outdoor experience, encourage community engagement, and benefit the underserved residents of Saskatoon. The following figure demonstrates the common themes that emerged from participants' responses regarding the desired changes they would like to witness in the future.



Figure 14. Community Survey responses.

## Limitations and Future Studies

It would be beneficial to conduct a follow-up study based on our community survey to identify neighborhoods that displayed higher levels of dissatisfaction. This follow-up study could provide valuable insights into the specific issues and concerns within these neighborhoods. For example, conducting in-depth interviews or focus groups with residents from dissatisfied neighborhoods to gain a deeper understanding of their specific concerns and gather suggestions for improvement.

Additionally, it is recommended to propose a set of measurable financial and non-financial indicators that can be used to evaluate and establish a baseline for each indicator. For instance, collecting data on the following indicators can be insightful in measuring the impact of each event or course of action on the winter economy: **continuity of businesses, number of days open during the winter months, average number of patrons/customers per day, number of visitors to events, job creation, and revenue generation**. These indicators can then be measured after a certain period (bi-annual evaluation is recommended) to assess the impact of various actions taken to address the winter economy issue.

One limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size for the community survey. The number of participants involved was limited, which affected the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results, and further research with larger and more diverse samples is needed to validate the findings and ensure their broader applicability.

It is recommended that to conduct a similar evaluation after a few years to reassess the current state of affairs and measure the impact of the suggested and implemented modifications that have been put into action. By conducting a follow-up study, we can evaluate the progress made in enhancing outdoor winter activities in Saskatoon and determine the effectiveness of the strategies

that have been implemented. This will provide valuable insights to guide future improvements and refine the winter experience for the community.

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## 7. Appendix

### Appendix A: Interview questions

It is worth noting that the interviews followed a semi-structured format, with certain questions being pertinent to specific stakeholder groups while others were not applicable.

1. **Could you please introduce your organization, yourself, and explain how your role is related to winter strategy and the winter economy?**
2. **What other resources and inputs are you able and willing to invest in order to achieve your desired outcomes for winter strategies?**
3. **Considering all the inputs that you are capable of allocating (financial resources or any other forms of assets), what are the most important objectives you would like to see change or improve in the future?**
4. **Who are your stakeholders, and how do you prioritize their involvement in the development and implementation of the winter strategy and economy?**
5. **What methods do you employ to encourage the community to participate in outdoor events and contribute to the local economy? How about attracting tourists?**
6. **Apart from the efforts made in the past, what other changes or initiatives would you like to see in your organization and in Saskatoon? Are there any untapped potentials within the city?**
7. **What lessons can be learned from other winter cities in Canada and other countries facing similar winter conditions? What unique experiences can Saskatoon offer to its visitors?**
8. **What factors do you believe have deterred more people from participating in these activities? What obstacles prevent them from enjoying their time outdoors?**
9. **How do you view temporary markets and pop-up businesses as a means to enhance the winter economy?**
10. **Do you have any final questions or comments for us? Can you suggest any other stakeholders that we should speak to?**

## Appendix B: Community Survey

1. On a scale of 1- 7, How satisfied are you with the available outdoor winter activities a. in Saskatoon b. in your neighborhood?

### Saskatoon

Strongly unsatisfied..... Neutral..... Strongly Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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### Your neighborhood

Strongly unsatisfied..... Neutral..... Strongly Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

2. How can the City of Saskatoon offer you a better experience in the wintertime, especially when you want to enjoy your time outside your home? \_\_\_\_\_ (Open ended question)

3. What criteria are important to when you want to choose an outdoor activity in the winter? [Please select all that apply]

- Accessibility
- Costs
- Being inclusive for all family members
- Enabling physical activity
- Fitting my schedule
- Other (please explain briefly): \_\_\_\_\_ (blank box)

4. Name a few outdoor activities in the winter you enjoyed the most. Please briefly explain what you liked about them. \_\_\_\_\_ (blank box)

5. Are you aware of events and festivals that are offered during the winter (such as WinterShines, Winterruption, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

6. Did you participate those events in the last two years?

- Yes
- No

If not, what changes could be made that would influence you to attend in the future?"  
\_\_\_\_\_ (blank box)

7. How often do you go outside to spend your leisure time in the winter months (i.e., not for work, grocery and other necessary jobs)?

- Every day
- A few times a week
- Once a week (usually on weekends and days off)
- One a month
- Rarely

8. How do you think the City's limited resources should be used to support winter livability in Saskatoon? (i.e., moving around, festivals and events, art/light and placemaking, design and planning)

\_\_\_\_\_ (blank box)

### Demographic Questions

1. With which gender do you identify?  
----- (blank box)
  - Prefer not to say
2. What is your age?  
----- (blank box)
  - Prefer not to say
3. For comparison purposes only, which one of the following categories best describes your annual household income before taxes?
  - Under \$25,000
  - \$25,000-\$50,000
  - \$50,000-\$75,000
  - \$75,000-\$100,000
  - More than \$100,000
  - Prefer not to say
4. Are you married?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to say
5. How many dependent children do you have?
  - 0
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4 or more
  - Prefer not to say
6. Are you a resident of Saskatoon?
  - Yes
  - No
7. In which neighborhood do you live?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (blank box)
  - Prefer not to say

## Appendix C: Ethics Application Exemption 1



To: Suresh Kalagnanam, PhD, CPA, CMA, CGA  
Associate Professor  
Edwards School of Business

Date: March 3, 2022

Re: Letter of Exemption – E284

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Thank you for submitting your request regarding the project entitled *Evaluating the Winter Economy in Saskatoon*. The application meets the requirements for exemption status as per **Article 2.5 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)**, which states “*Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review.*”

It should be noted that though your project is exempt of ethics review, your project should be conducted in an ethical manner (i.e. in accordance with the information that you submitted). It should also be noted that any deviation from the original methodology and/or research question should be brought to the attention of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board for further review.

*Digitally Approved by Diane Martz, Chair  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
University of Saskatchewan*

## Appendix D: Ethics Application Exemption 2



To: Suresh Kalagnanam  
Student: Erfan Mahmoodzadeh  
Date: 4 January 2023  
Re: E372 – Letter of Exemption

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Thank you for submitting your request regarding the project entitled xxx. The application meets the requirements for exemption status as per **Article 2.5 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)**, which states *“Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review.”*

It should be noted that though your project is exempt of ethics review, your project should be conducted in an ethical manner (i.e. in accordance with the information that you submitted). It should also be noted that any deviation from the original methodology and/or research question should be brought to the attention of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board for further review.

*Digitally Approved by Pammla Petrucka, Chair  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
University of Saskatchewan*