



Communities in Bloom Alberta

Program Guide



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Background

Inspired by Britain in Bloom, Tidy Towns of Ireland and Villes et Villages Fleuris de France, Communities in Bloom (CiB) is a Canadian non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility, beautification and improving quality of life through community participation and the challenge of a national program, with a focus on the protection and promotion of green spaces.

The inaugural edition of the Communities in Bloom program took place in 1995, and 29 participating municipalities were honoured at the first awards ceremonies on Parliament Hill. Communities in Bloom now includes hundreds of communities participating across the country in either the national or provincial levels of the program, or in an international challenge involving communities from the United States, Asia and several European countries.

In Alberta Communities in Bloom started with Edmonton participating in the National Edition in 1995. In 1996 the Town of Millet became the first community to Participate in the Alberta Edition. Since 1996 **over 185 communities** in Alberta have participated in the Provincial Communities in Bloom program!

Program Benefits

Communities have recognized many benefits from participating in the CiB Alberta program, including, but certainly not limited to:

- Increased civic pride and community involvement,
- Participation from all demographics,
- Citizens, groups, organizations, business and municipal government all mobilized and working together,
- Year-round projects and continuous improvement for the entire community,
- Information and cultural exchange within the community and with neighboring, provincial, national and international communities,
- Valuable information and feedback from trained judges,
- Decreased vandalism,
- Economic development and increased property values,
- Marketing and promotional opportunities,
- Positive benefits for the tourism, hospitality and retail industries, and
- Improved quality of life.

As a Communities in Bloom Alberta member, your community has the right to use the Communities in Bloom logo in signage and other materials. An internationally recognized symbol of a growing and prosperous community!

How to Participate

1. Gather Information

Communities interested in becoming a Communities in Bloom Alberta member and participating for the first time are encouraged to contact the CiB Alberta's Provincial Coordinator, Sharon Miller, at sharon@cibalberta.ca or 403-598-5346 to find out more information and/ or arrange for a CiB introductory presentation.

2. Complete the Registration Form

Fill out the Member Registration Form on our website <https://www.cibalberta.ca>

3. Establish a Communities in Bloom Committee within your community

A local CiB committee is usually comprised of community volunteers, including municipal employees, businesses, and members of the community. Additionally, representatives of local associations, businesses and organizations interested in horticulture, heritage, economic development and tourism and improving community life.

The purpose of the committee is to:

- Involve as many people as possible in the community by means of local contests and other initiatives, which increase awareness about the program, its benefits, and opportunities,
- Act as liaison with the municipal authorities, and
- Create and coordinate sub-committees to help with various projects within an evaluation element.

4. You will receive a getting started package by email. If you have chosen to participate as an Evaluated Community, additional information will arrive in the late spring.

5. Stay Connected

Through our newsletter, Facebook page and regular emails, CiB Alberta stays connected year-round with current and past participating communities. Watch your inbox! Also, plan to attend the Provincial Conference and Awards in the fall to network and share ideas, learn and celebrate our communities.

Website: <https://www.cibalberta.ca>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CiBAlberta>

Choosing a Participation Category

Evaluated Member Communities

When a community registers in the Evaluation Category, the community, along with other communities in the same population grouping, will be visited and evaluated by a team of qualified volunteer judges.

Evaluated communities are visited, reviewed, and scored using the National Communities in Bloom standardized Evaluation Form. Each community is awarded with a Bloom Rating, and a special 'Mention'. The Mention identifies a specific achievement or initiative within the community that year.

To be eligible to participate the following year in the National Edition of CiB, communities must have earned the maximum 5 Blooms and receive a recommendation from the Provincial Edition. Should a community choose not to participate in the National Edition, they can maintain their eligibility for the National program for up to three years by retaining their Provincial membership.

Member Communities

Member Communities are those which choose not to be evaluated for the current year but wish to retain the connection to Communities in Bloom Alberta. Communities will sometimes take a break from evaluation to work on special projects or regroup their volunteers.

A community may remain a member community for two years. In the third year they must become an Evaluated Member community to ensure they continue to reflect the spirit of Communities in Bloom within their community.

Novice Member Communities

Communities that are new to the CiB program, or have not been a member for 5 or more years, can choose to participate as a Novice Member. The Novice program is a fabulous way to begin to understand the Program, the evaluation process, and celebrate their success. With the evaluation, the community can gain valuable information from the Evaluation Team.

This member category includes an evaluation experience with the judges. The intention of the Novice category is for the community to participate as an Evaluated Member the following year. Communities are not permitted to remain in the Novice category for more than one consecutive year.

Evaluation

The Communities in Bloom evaluation team will visit the community and evaluate based on the following criteria and sectors – communities will receive a copy of the current Evaluation Form prior to their visit from the team.

Sectors of Evaluation

The following sectors are considered within each Category of the evaluation.

Municipal:

- Municipal properties, parks and green spaces, streets, streetscapes
- Properties owned and run by municipality such as museums, historical sites

Business and Institutions:

Properties owned and managed by

- Business: commercial sector, shopping centres, Business Improvement Areas (BIA), industrial parks, manufacturing plants
- Institutions: schools, universities, churches, hospitals, service and community organization buildings (such as YMCA, Legion), private museums, Government and Crown Corporations buildings (such as Canada Post, provincial and federal parks, etc.)
- Tourism bureaus and Chamber of Commerce offices
- Farms: in rural communities, farms can be considered in this section

Residential:

- Citizens and citizen groups acting within their own properties
- Residential property owners, rate payer groups including condos and co-ops

Community Involvement:

- Individuals, community organizations, citizen groups (includes youth programs) – all contributing to various aspects of community improvement, including municipal spaces maintained through the efforts of volunteers and community members.
- Organized clubs such as horticultural societies, garden clubs, community associations, school groups.
- Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, Optimist.
- Participation (financial and/or in-kind or employee participation) by the municipality, businesses, and institutions within the community.

Categories

Community Appearance

Community appearance reflects an overall effort by the municipality, businesses, institutions and the residents throughout the community to create great first impressions and a sense that there is continuous attention and upkeep to critical elements of a community that benefit quality of life and economic vitality. Elements for evaluation are: parks and green spaces, medians, boulevards, sidewalks, streets; municipal, commercial, institutional and residential properties; ditches, road shoulders, vacant lots, signs and buildings; weed control, litter clean-up, graffiti prevention/removal and vandalism deterrent programs.

Environmental Action

Environmental action pertains to the impact of human activities on the environment and the subsequent efforts and achievements of the community with respect to environmental stewardship, policies, by-laws, programs and best practices for waste reduction and landfill diversion, composting sites, landfill sites, hazardous waste collection, water conservation, energy conservation, and activities under the guiding principles of sustainable development pertaining to green spaces.

Heritage Conservation

Heritage conservation includes efforts to preserve and protect both natural and cultural heritage within the community. Preservation of natural heritage pertains to policies, plans and actions concerning all elements of biodiversity including flora and fauna ecosystems and associated geological structures and formations. Cultural conservation represents the “persona” of a community and refers to the heritage that helps define the community including the legacy of tangible elements such as heritage buildings, monuments, memorials, cemeteries, artifacts, museums and intangible elements such as traditions, customs, festivals and celebrations. The participation of groups such as historical societies, traditional cultural groups, and conservation groups is considered.

Tree Management

Woodlands, Canopy Management, Urban and Rural Forestry includes the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions, and residents with regards to written policies, by-laws, standards for tree management protection (selection, planting, and maintenance), tree replacement policies, pollinator-friendly tree selection, tree inventory including heritage, memorial, and commemorative trees, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs.

Landscape

Landscape includes planning, design, construction and maintenance of parks, green spaces and cemeteries suitable for the intended use and location on a year-round basis. Elements for evaluation include native and introduced materials; biodiversity, materials and constructed elements; appropriate integration of hard surfaces and art elements, use of turf and groundcovers. Landscape design should harmonize the interests of all sectors of the community and provide safe and secure public spaces. Standards of execution and maintenance should demonstrate best practices, including quality of naturalization, use of groundcovers and wildflowers along with turf management.

Plant & Floral Displays

This category evaluates the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents to design, plan, execute, and maintain plant and floral displays of high-quality standards. Evaluation includes the design and arrangements of flowers and plants (annuals, perennials, bulbs, ornamental grasses, edible plants, water efficient and pollinator friendly plants) in the context of originality, distribution, location, diversity and balance, colour, and harmony. It also pertains to flowerbeds, carpet bedding, containers, baskets and window boxes.

Evaluation Day and Reports

The Evaluation Day Tour & Itinerary

Make good use of the judge's time. The evaluation day itinerary should include a visit that addresses each of the Evaluation Categories, and the Sectors involved. Ensure the judges have the opportunity to interact with key individuals within the community.

Let the judges see what you are proud of, but do not hesitate to ask questions about areas that you would like to work on.

The Evaluation Report

Two person teams of trained volunteer judges travel to participating communities during July and August. Using the standard evaluation form and scoring process, judges assess the efforts and achievements of each community within each of the categories: community appearance, environmental action, heritage conservation, tree management, landscape, and plant and floral displays.

Based on a tally of the points awarded by the judges under each of the categories, the community is assigned a "Bloom Rating" of 1 to 5 blooms.

The judges submit the completed evaluation reports to the Provincial Coordinator at the end of their judging tour.

Communities are provided with their results and a copy of the Completed Evaluation Report at the Provincial Conference & Celebration in the fall.

A Community Profile

A Community Profile is an important document that Communities in Bloom (CiB) judges will use as a reference both while in the community, and later when completing their evaluation. Please note: a community profile, regardless of format, is NOT part of the evaluation, but rather a resource and tool for everyone.

Besides being an informational tool for the judges, the Community Profile is an excellent means of promoting a community to visitors, town administration, local sponsors and potential volunteers. A Profile becomes a history of Communities in Bloom in your Community!

You can create a hand-made or electronic version (or both) of your Community Profile. There are numerous advantages to creating an electronic version of the Community Profile:

- Put your Community Profile on your community website and on the CiB website.
- Easily update your Community Profile for next year.
- Provides your Town Council with a summary of the community. It is easy for Council to use when promoting your community.
- Plan to send an electronic version (PDF) of your Community Profile for inclusion on the CiB Alberta website, and for the judges.

A suggestion of placing hard copies of the Community Profile in the local and regional libraries and Visitor Information Centers, at the administration building/town hall, and on the community's website, has proven very effective.

To successfully meet the needs of the judges and the community, the Community Profile should consider each of the following guidelines:

- Be clearly and concisely written, describing the community efforts and achievements for each of the standard CiB judging elements, i.e., Community Appearance, Environmental Action, Heritage Conservation, Tree Management, Landscape (including turf and groundcovers), and Plant and Floral Displays.
- Community involvement is a fundamental principle of the Communities in Bloom program. Information is needed under each heading about contributions from the community. e.g., municipal, business/industrial, service clubs, churches, schools, not-for-profit groups, and residents.
- Describe how the recommendations from previous evaluations have been addressed.
- Be current and relevant to the present-day situation in the community. i.e., updated annually.
- Include lists of Communities in Bloom Committee members, municipal officials, staff, and local sponsors.
- Include the one-page Municipal Information Form you will have completed prior to evaluation.
- Electronic versions make your information easier to share and promote your community.
- It is recommended that the Community Profile be proofread and edited by people not directly connected to the local CiB Committee before printing. Another set of eyes never hurts!

The Community Profile generates a feeling of pride in your community and can be successfully complimented with supplementary information in a binder. This binder can include photographs of local CiB events, brochures, flyers and print/photo/newspaper/magazine clippings (complete with source, date and page).

It is helpful to judges to arrange all information in sections corresponding to the **Evaluation Categories**, and **Sectors**. This supplementary information is useful for judges to examine while in a community.

With careful advance planning, the Community Profile can be prepared so that it is excellent in form and content, and inexpensive to produce.

Examples of Community Profiles can be found on the CiB Alberta website.

Community Promotion

All members of Communities in Bloom Alberta are listed on both the National website, www.communitiesinbloom.ca and the Alberta website, www.cibalberta.ca

Participating communities are featured quarterly in Alberta's provincial Communities in Bloom newsletter.

Communities can also find their electronic Community Profile on the CiB Alberta website. A wonderful source of ideas from other communities!

The CiB Logo

Only Member Communities of Communities in Bloom may use the CiB logo. The logo may be used in the following circumstances:

- Newspaper articles,
- Signage,
- Websites
- Merchandise,
- Advertising that supports the CiB program in your community.

