

SPECIAL EVENT PERMITTING SURVEY 2019/2020

Introduction

The Special Event Permitting Survey was shared with Special Event Offices in government organizations across Canada and the US. The survey was available online from December 2019 to January 2020 and comprised of nineteen closed and open-ended questions. The total number of responses received was 54.

Survey Results

1. QUESTION 1: In which State/Province do you currently reside?

Fifty-four (54) survey responses were captured from 20 different US and Canadian states and provinces. The majority of responses (nearly 63%) were from US states, with the remaining from Canadian provinces. In the US, the most responses were received from California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Virginia and Washington state. The majority of Canadian responses were from Ontario (only three provinces responded – B.C., Alberta and Ontario).

Chart 1 – Responses to Question 1

Country	Number of Responses	%
USA	34	63%
Canada	20	37%

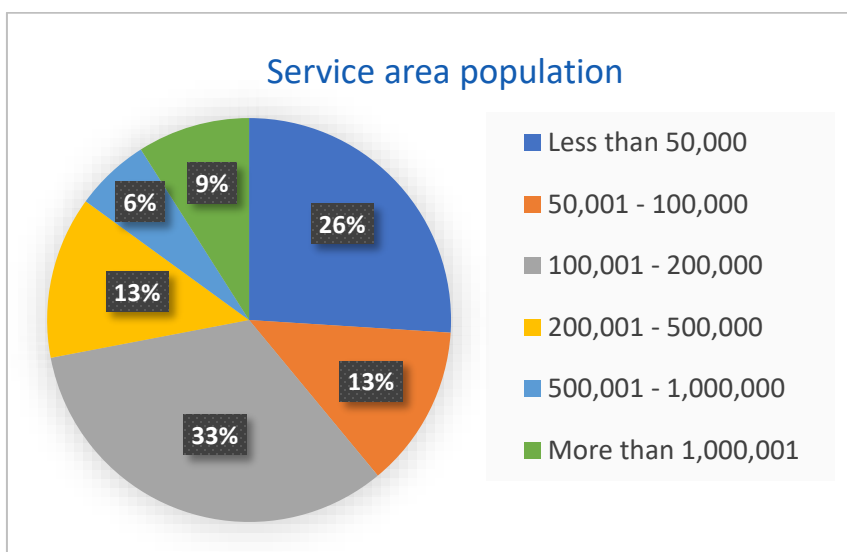
2. QUESTION 2: What is the approximate population of your service area?

Of the fifty-four responses received, more than 72% of communities have a population smaller than 200,000. Nearly 28% of responses were from communities with a population greater than 200,000. Five responses (9%) were from communities with more than 1 million people.

Chart 2.1 – Responses to Question 2

Population Range	Count	%
Less than 50,000	14	26%
50,001 - 100,000	7	13%
100,001 - 200,000	18	33%
200,001 - 500,000	7	13%
500,001 - 1,000,000	3	6%
More than 1,000,001	5	9%

Chart 2.2 – Service Area Population – Pie Chart



3. **QUESTION 3: (a) Do you work in an Event Office or a department responsible for issuing special event permits? (b) If “No”, what government department, agency or other company do you work for?**

Ninety-five percent of people who completed the survey work in an Event Office or another department responsible for issuing Special Event permits. Three people who completed the survey do not work in the department responsible for permitting. Instead, they work in Parks & Recreation, Corporate Communications, or the Event and Tourism Office. These three respondents completed the survey on behalf of their community.

Chart 3.1 – Responses to Question 3 (a)

Response	Count	%
Yes	51	95%
No	3	5%

Chart 3.2 – Responses to Question 3 (b)

Response	Department of Respondent
No	Parks & Recreation
No	Event and Tourism Office
No	Corporate Communications

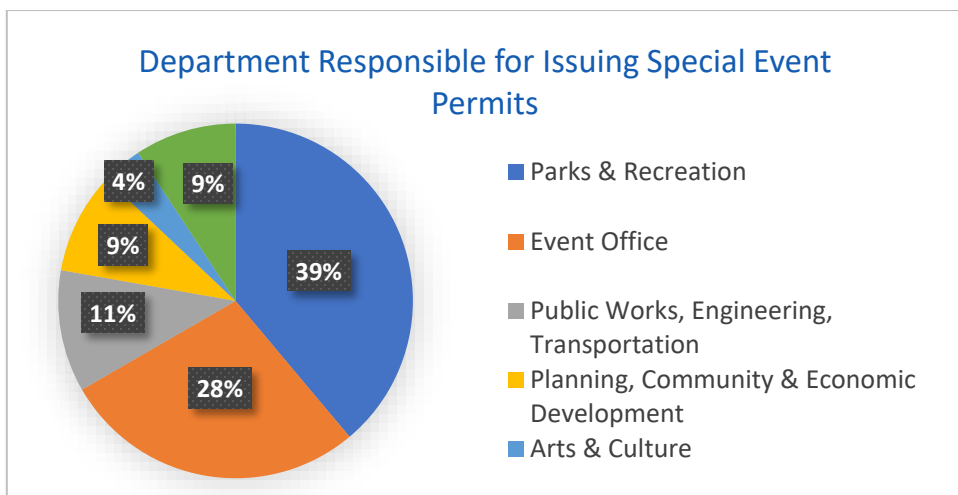
4. **QUESTION 4: Which department is responsible for issuing special event permits?**

The majority of responses received (67%) were completed by staff who work in Parks & Recreation (39%) or the Special Event Office (28%) in their government organization. The remaining responses were from staff across different departments including Public Works/Engineering/Transportation (11%) and Planning/Community/Economic Development (9%). Most event permits are being issued either by departments specifically designed to support events (Special Event Office), or by departments that are impacted by events or have the authority to grant events special permission to use roads and other public services. Only nine percent of respondents work in the Arts & Culture department which isn't surprising since arts and culture are non-legislated functions of government and, therefore, are more likely managed externally by non-profit groups such as arts' councils.

Chart 4.1 – Responses to Question 4

Department	Count	%
Parks & Recreation Department	21	39%
Special Event Office	15	28%
Public Works, Engineering, Transportation	6	11%
Planning, Community & Economic Development	5	9%
Arts & Culture	2	4%
Other (Health & Safety, City Clerk, Communications)	5	9%

Chart 4.2 – Special Event Permitting Department – Pie Chart



5. QUESTION 5: (a) Does your community have a Special Event Policy, Bylaw or Code? (b) If Yes, when was it last updated? If No, why not?

The majority of respondents work for a government organization that has a Special Event policy, bylaw or code in place. However, interestingly 9% were unsure if this piece of legislation existed in their organization. Of the organizations that have an existing piece of legislation (83%), nearly half of them have been updated within the last three years, and 20% within the last 12 months. There is an opportunity for many organizations (33%) to revisit their legislation and either update or develop new legislation that support Special Event permitting.

Chart 5.1 – Responses to Question 5 (a)

Response	Count	%
Yes	45	83%
No	4	8%
Unsure	5	9%

Chart 5.2 – Responses to Question 5 (b)

Year Last Updated	Count	%
1996	1	2%
2001	2	4%
2006	2	4%
2010	1	2%
2012	2	4%
2013	3	5%
2014	2	4%
2015	2	4%
2016	3	5%
2017	2	4%
2018	5	9%
2019	10	18%
2020	1	2%
Unknown	7	13%
No response / Unsure if a policy/bylaw/code exists	11	20%

6. QUESTION 6 & 7: How many special event permit applications did your organization process in 2018? How many special event permit applications did your organization process in 2019?

All respondents indicated how many special event permit applications they received both in 2018 and in 2019. Just over half of the respondents received less than 100 applications in 2018 and 2019. The most significant increase in the number of applications received was for communities with less than 50,000 people. These smaller communities experienced an almost 15% increase in the number of applications, year over year. For communities with between 200,000 to 500,000 people, the number of permit applications increased by an average of 8.82%. Of the eight communities with more than 500,000 people, the number of applications actually decreased by an average of 1.63%. With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting events around the world, it is anticipated that the number of permit applications in 2020 will drop across all communities, regardless of their population.

Chart 6.1 – Responses to Question 6 - 2018.

Number of Permit Applications	Count – in 2018	%
0-50	14	26%
51-100	14	26%
101-150	8	15%
151-200	8	15%
201-500	8	15%
501+	2	3%

Chart 6.2 – Responses to Question 7 – 2019.

Number of Permit Applications	Count – in 2019	%
0-50	16	30%
51-100	11	20%
101-150	8	15%
151-200	6	11%
201-500	11	20%
501+	2	4%

Chart 6.3 – Number of Permits by Year Based on Population Size – Bar Chart

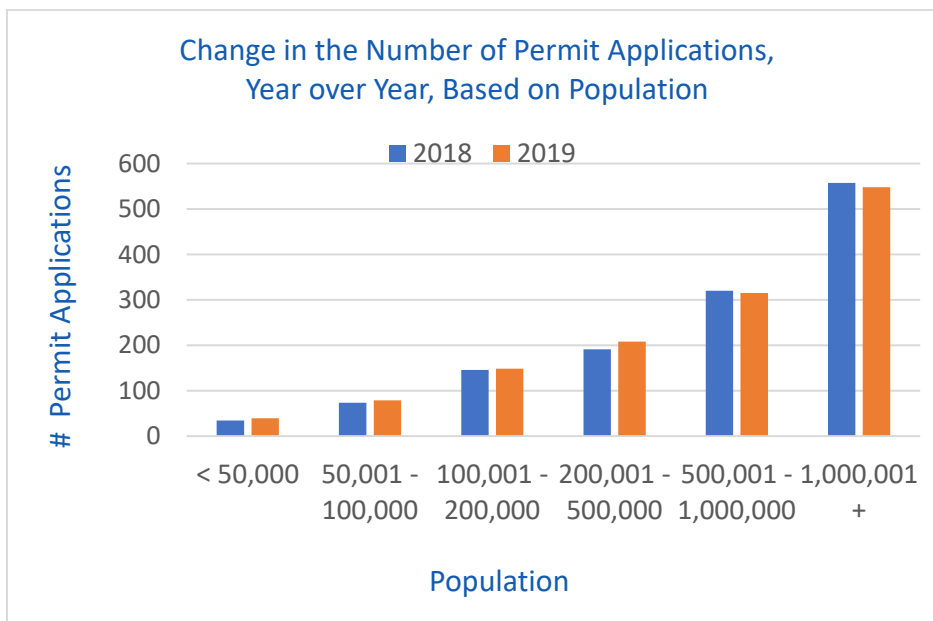


Chart 6.4 – Percentage change in the number of applications, year over year, based on population

Population Range	Number of Applications in 2018	Number of Applications in 2019	% Change
< 50,000	34.30	39.43	14.96%
50,001 - 100,000	73.57	78.57	6.80%
100,001 - 200,000	145.61	148.44	1.95%
200,001 - 500,000	191.14	208.00	8.82%
500,001 - 1,000,000	320.00	315.00	-1.56%
1,000,001 +	557.40	548.00	-1.69%

7. **QUESTION 8: Do you anticipate more, less or the same number of applications in 2020?**

Forty-six percent of all respondents anticipate receiving more event applications in 2020 (at the time of this survey). On average, the communities that were anticipating an increase in the number of permit applications expect to receive 14.48 more applications. Of those communities anticipating fewer applications, the average decrease is 20.77 applications. With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting events around the world, it is anticipated that the number of permit applications in 2020 will drop across all communities, regardless of population.

Chart 7 – Responses to Question 8

Number of Applications	Count	%	Average change in the number of permit applications anticipated in 2020
More applications	25	46%	+14.48
Less applications	12	22%	-20.77
No change in the number of applications	17	32%	-

8. **QUESTION 9: On average, how many hours does the approving department spend in meetings with event organizers, other departments and agencies on one permit application?**

The average number of hours spent by approving departments in meetings with event organizations, other department and agencies is five hours. Overall, the majority of respondents spend between 1-6 hours in meetings (per application). More than eighteen percent spend more than 7 hours on each application, with two communities stating they spend more than 30 hours per application.

Chart 8.1 – Responses to Question 9

Number of Hours	Count	%
Less than 1 hour	2	4%
1-3 hours	31	57%
4-6 hours	11	20%
7-15 hours	8	15%
30+ hours*	2	4%

* No responses indicated they spend more than 15 hours or less than 30 hours in meetings.

Chart 8.2 – Average hours spent in meetings (single permit) – Pie Chart

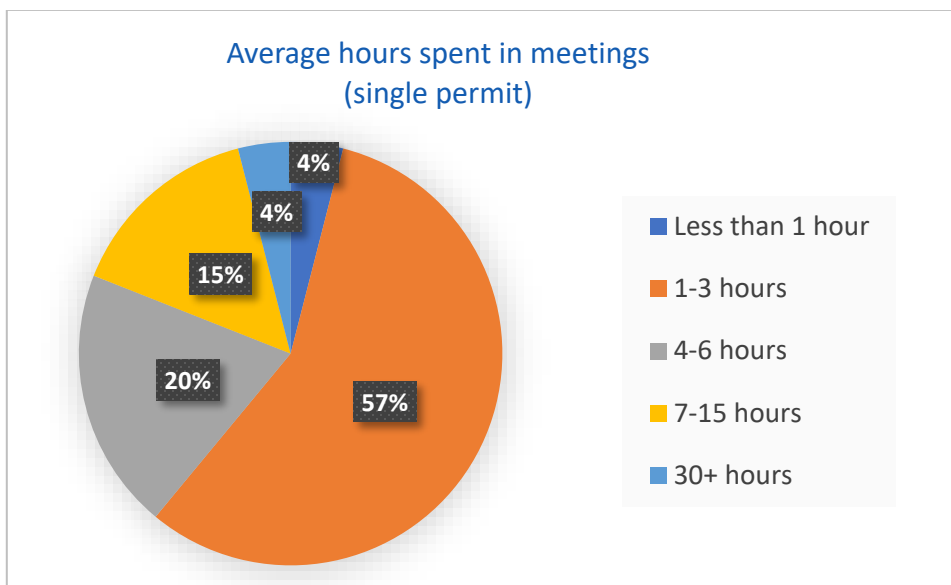


Chart 8.3 – Average number of hours

Average number of hours spent in meetings for one Special Event permit application	5
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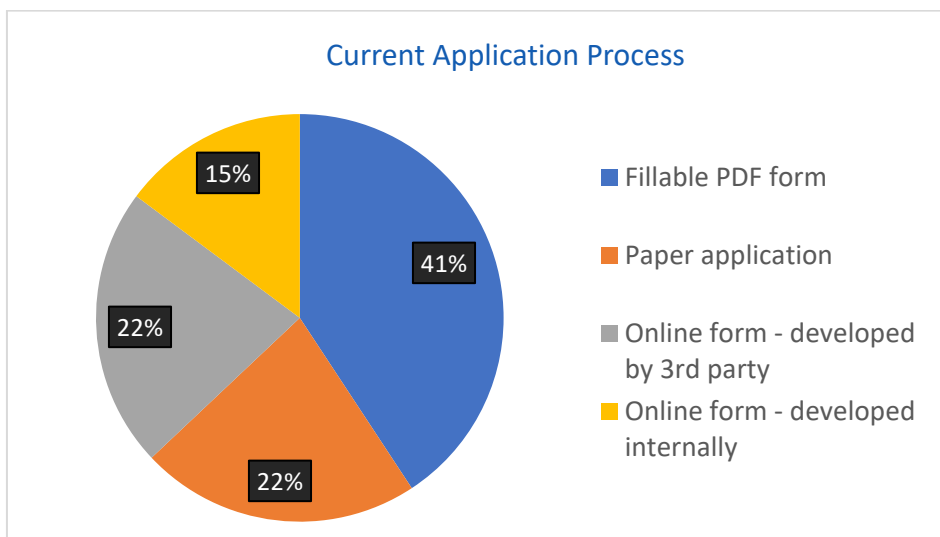
9. **QUESTION 10: What is your organization's current special event permit application process?**

Seventy-eight of respondents use some form of online application form for Special Event Permit application forms. Twenty-two percent of these respondents use a third-party developed online form or solution, and 15% have developed their form or solution internally. A significant number of respondents still use a paper application form to apply for a Special Event Permit (i.e. the event organizer must pick up or print a form, handwrite their responses directly on the form, and submit the form in paper format, along with supporting documents).

Chart 9.1 - Responses to Question 10

Application Process	%
Fillable PDF form	41%
Paper application	22%
Online form - developed by 3rd party	22%
Online form - developed internally	15%

Chart 9.2 – Current Application Process - Pie Chart



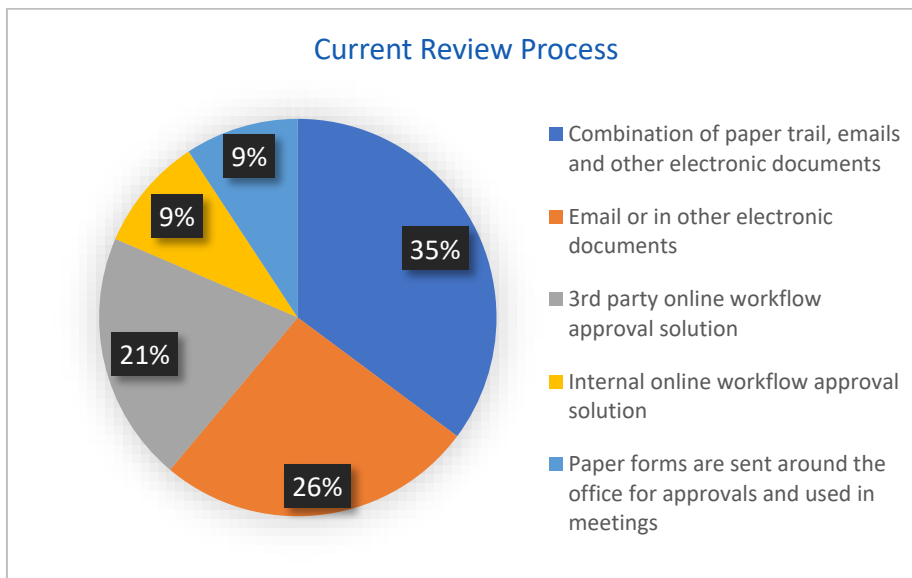
10. **QUESTION 11: What is your organization’s current review/approval process?**

Seventy percent of respondents rely on email, other electronic documents and paper forms to process a Special Event Permit application. Thirty percent of communities are using either a third-party or internally developed solution to process applications.

Chart 10.1 - Responses to Question 11

Review/Approval Process	%
Combination of paper trail, emails and other electronic documents	35%
Email or in other electronic documents	26%
Paper forms are sent around the office for approvals and used in meetings	9%
3rd party online workflow approval solution	21%
Internal online workflow approval solution	9%

Chart 10.2 – Current Review Process - Pie Chart



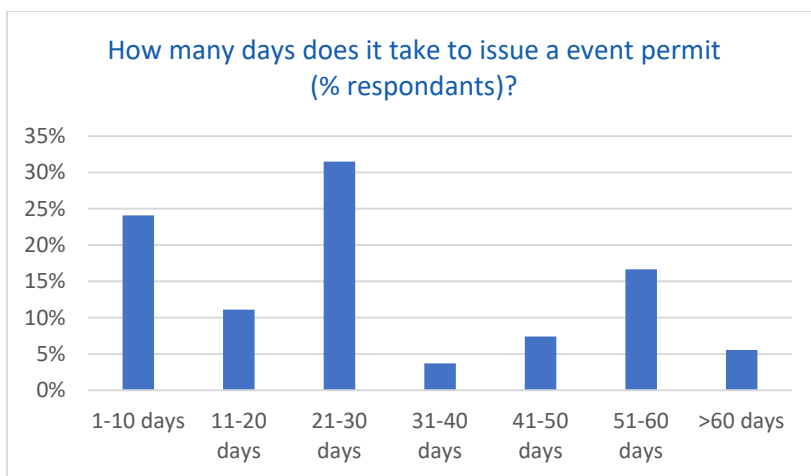
11. QUESTION 12: From the time a special event application is received to the time the permit is issued, how many days (on average) does it take to issue a special event permit?

The majority of respondents are taking between 21-30 days to review, approve and issue a Special Event permit application. Overall, 66% of all communities are able to process a permit in less than 30 days, however, it still takes 23% of communities more than 50 days to process an application.

Chart 11.1 - Responses to Question 12

Number of Days	Count	%
1-10 days	13	24%
11-20 days	6	11%
21-30 days	17	31%
31-40 days	2	4%
41-50 days	4	7%
51-60 days	9	17%
More than 60 days	3	6%

Chart 11.2 – Number of Days to Issue an Event Permit - Bar Chart



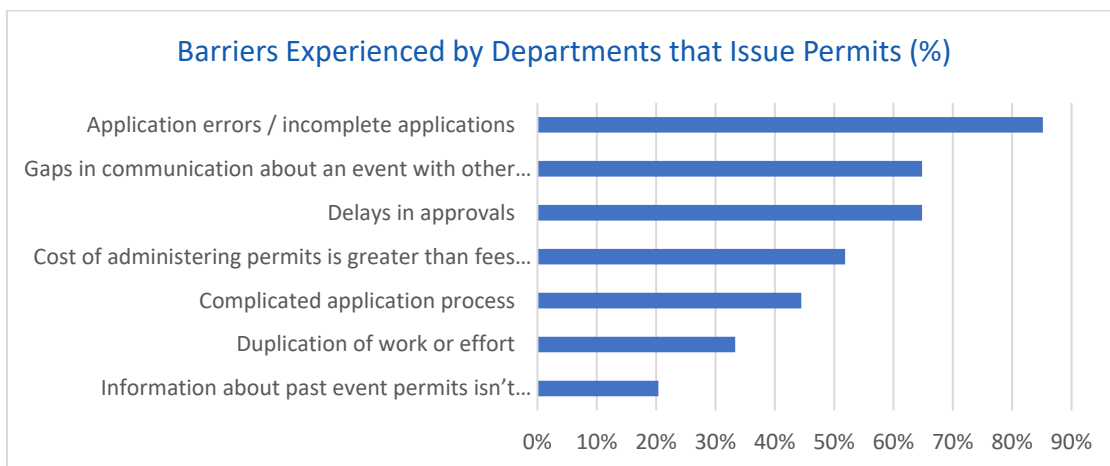
12. QUESTION 13: Does the department responsible for issuing permits experience any of the following barriers to processing special event permits?

The top barrier experienced by Event Offices when processing a Special Event permit is application errors and/or incomplete applications. An overwhelming 85% of respondents found this a major barrier, followed closely by ‘gaps in communication about an event with other departments and external agencies’ and ‘delays in approvals’, both resonating with 65% of respondents. The barrier that had the least support from respondents was ‘information about past event permits isn’t retained/starting from scratch each year’, at 20%.

Chart 12.1 - Responses to Question 13

Barriers	Count	%
Application errors / incomplete applications	46	85%
Gaps in communication about an event with other departments and external agencies	35	65%
Delays in approvals	35	65%
Cost of administering permits is greater than fees collected	28	52%
Complicated application process	24	44%
Duplication of work or effort	18	33%
Information about past event permits isn’t retained / starting from scratch each year	11	20%

Chart 12.2 – Barriers experienced by Departments that issue permits - Bar Chart



13. QUESTION 14: How many staff are employed to support Special Events? Full-time? Part-time?

The majority of respondents (70%) have one or two full-time employees working specifically on supporting special events in their community. The majority of communities also have one or two part-time employees (56%). More than half of the communities (57%) surveyed have between one and 2.5 equivalent (FTE) positions. Note: For the purpose of this report, a part-time employee is considered to be half (0.5) of a full-time (1.0) position.

By population, the average number of FTEs for a community with fewer than 500,000 people is 2.7. The average number of full-time staff (across all populations) is 2, while the average number of part-time staff (across all populations) is 2.75.

Chart 13.1 – Responses to Question 14

Full-time Employees	Count	%	Part-time Employees	Count	%
0	2	3%	0	18	34%
1	19	35%	0.75	1	2%
2	19	35%	1	22	40%
3	5	9%	2	9	16%
4	3	6%	5	1	2%
5	1	2%	10	2	4%
6	3	6%	11	1	2%
7	1	2%			
10	1	2%			

Chart 13.2 – Total Full-time Equivalents (FTEs)

Number of FTEs	Count	%
0.5	2	4%
1-2.5	31	57%
3-6.5	18	33%
7-10	3	6%

Chart 13.3 – Number of Full-time and Part-time Employees by Population

Population Range	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total FTE
Less than 50,000	1.79	1.64	2.61
50,001 - 100,000	1.86	2.00	2.86
100,001 - 200,000	2.17	1.54	2.94
200,001 - 500,000	1.93	1.14	2.5
500,001 - 1,000,000	1.33	0.33	1.49
More than 1,000,001	7.40	5.40	10.1
Average Number of employees	2.75	2.01	

14. QUESTION 15: (a) Does your organization also produce events? (b) If "Yes", how many events did your organization produce and fund in 2019 (# events)? (c) If "Yes", what was the annual budget for producing special events in 2019?

Most government organizations surveyed (74%) produce events internally, i.e. the staff who are responsible for issuing Special Event Permits to third party event producers are also producing events for the community. Of those communities that produce events internally, 57% produce between one to ten events annually. Sixty-three percent of communities that produce events are working with a budget less than \$200,000.

Chart 14.1 - Responses to Question 15 (a)

Response	Count	%
Yes	40	74%
No	14	26%

Chart 14.2 - Responses to Question 15 (b)

Number of Events Produced Internally	Count	%
1-10	23	57%
11-20	11	27%
21-40	3	8%
41+	3	8%

Chart 14.3 - Responses to Question 15 (c)

Budget	Count	%
\$1 - \$100K	17	43%
\$101 - \$200K	8	20%
\$201 - \$300K	5	13%
\$301 - \$500K	2	5%
\$501 - \$1m	6	15%
\$1m+	1	3%
unknown	1	3%

15. **QUESTION 16: (a) Does your organization charge an administration fee for processing and issuing a special event permit (this should NOT include other fees such as venue rentals)? (b) If "Yes", what is the administration fee? (c) If "No", why not?**

Sixty percent of respondents charge an administration fee for processing a Special Event permit application, with 28% charging less than \$50 per application, and 44% charging under \$100 per application.

Of the communities that don't charge a fee, the three most common reasons offered were: the cost to pay for the administration of issuing permits is recovered through other means (e.g. other permits and user fees); event permitting is provided as a service to the community, therefore, property taxes cover the cost; and, they haven't had time to develop a fee structure and policy, but plan to in the future.

Chart 15.1 - Responses to Question 16 (a)

Response	Count	%
Yes	33	60%
No	21	40%

Chart 15.2 - Responses to Question 16 (b)

Fee Range	Count	%
\$1 - \$50	15	28%
\$51 - \$100	9	16%
\$101 - \$200	5	9%
\$201 - \$300	2	4%
More than \$300	2	4%
No Fee	21	39%

Chart 15.3 – Special Event Permit Administration Fee – Pie Chart

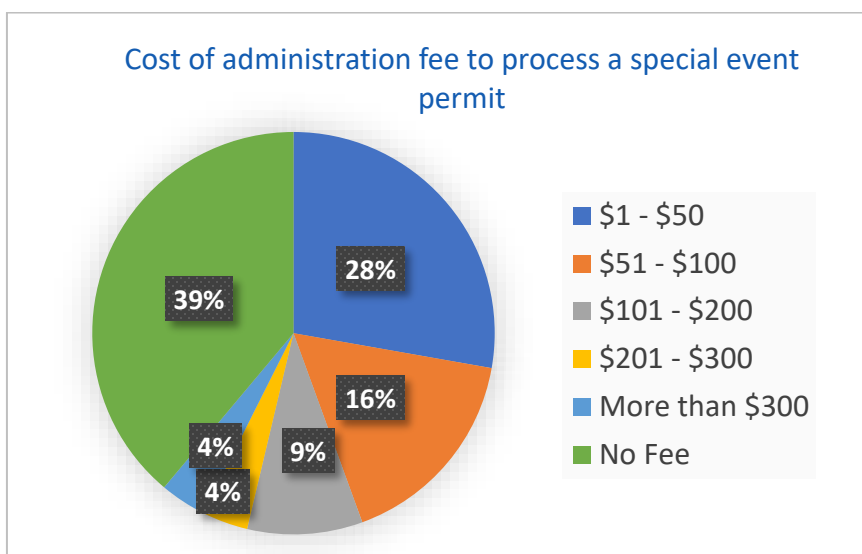


Chart 15.3 - Responses to Question 16 (c)

Reasons Given for Not Charging an Administration Fee
1. Public community events
2. Revenue collected from other event permits
3. Just collect the rental portion and charge a nominal fee for insurance if the Town provides
4. Events bring civic pride, educational opportunities, economic stimulation, etc., all of which contribute to a greater quality of life in our community. permit fees are not applied to help encourage event sustainability
5. Reluctance on the part of management to charge for events which are related to first amendment expressions.
6. Council recognizes the value of supporting the community groups who volunteer their time to host special events for residents
7. No approved fee aside from an event permit fee (which includes administrative costs)
8. There is no one entrance/exit spot from our events
9. Unknown
10. There are other fees that the organizer pays for, i.e. road closures, food permits
11. Fee is included in the venue rental fee
12. It hasn't been part of our policy as of yet
13. We don't feel that the time required to complete a permit needs a fee
14. No one has taken time to implement fee
15. We are a municipality, if they come to us to host an event, they are already paying fees to use city property
16. Provided as a service to the community
17. Is not in the policy to charge an admin fee
18. Never have
19. We've talked about it. May one day move to this model. Other than wanting to encourage a wide variety of events (cost isn't a barrier), I'm not sure why
20. Only if an application is submitted within 60 days of the event
21. A long process and cost study is needed

16. QUESTION 17: What other types of permits does the department responsible for special event permits issue?

Of the additional permits issued by Special Event Offices, facility rentals (59%), filming permits (48%) and food truck or vendor permits (39%) were the top three responses from survey respondents. Thirty percent of the Special Event Offices who completed the survey are also responsible for issuing street closure and photography/video permits. The additional permits are either complementary to events and support their execution (e.g. facility rentals and street closures) or follow similar permitting requirements and approvals as events (e.g. filming).

Chart 16 - Responses to Question 17

Type of Permit	Count	%
Facility rental	32	59%
Filming	26	48%
Food truck or vendor	21	39%
Street closure	24	30%
Photography & Video	16	30%
Noise variance	10	19%
Sign or temporary flag display	9	17%
Other	8	15%

17. QUESTION 18: What would you like to improve about event permitting where you work?

The top area that Special Event Offices would like to improve about event permitting in their organization is attracting new events (61%). Following closely behind at 57% each, communities would like to be able to gather more information about events, simplify their application process, and provide online permit applications.

With the advent of COVID-19, we anticipate that attracting new events will continue to be a priority for Special Event Offices in 2020.

Chart 17 - Responses to Question 18

Improvement	Count	%
Attract new events to our community	33	61%
Gather more information about events in our community (e.g. economic impact)	31	57%
Simplified application process	31	57%
Provide online permit applications	31	57%
More staff	27	50%
Better policies and procedures	24	44%
Ability to email an electronic permit	22	41%
Changes to fees	21	39%
Reduce the impact of events on our community	18	33%
Produce less events internally	11	20%
Focus on special events and less on other types of permits (e.g. filming)	11	20%

18. **QUESTION 19: Please provide any additional comments.**

Chart 18 - Responses to Question 18

Additional Comments
1. Currently a team of two develops and executes all internal events. A single full-time person has 25% of their portfolio time given for developing, implementing, evaluating and processing all outdoor event permits. It is not enough.
2. To summarize, the tourism office works with event organizers to find appropriate venues, liaise with the City departments who will assist (licensing, bylaw, ems, leisure services).
3. Great survey. Thank you very much for facilitating!

Additional Observations

1. COVID-19

This survey ran before the COVID-19 pandemic was announced by the World Health Organization in March 2020. Although the questions in this survey do not consider the direct impact of COVID-19, we can use the results from this survey, year over year, to track the impact of the pandemic on North American Event Offices.

For example, we will be able to measure the change in the number of events from 2019 to 2020 and establish if there is a direct correlation between COVID-19 and the change in number. We can also measure the impact of staffing levels, changes in the type of barriers affecting Event Offices, and the overall change in the number of Event Offices that have moved their event permitting processes over to digital solutions as a way to enable online approvals.

2. Sample Size

Although the sample size for this survey was relatively small (54 responses), it provides valuable insight into the structure, operation and barriers of Event Offices. With the survey being held annually (Nov-Jan), the number of responses is expected to increase which will provide us with more insight into the results.

Future Surveys

If you would like to participate in the next Special Event Office Survey (winter 2020/2021), please subscribe to our email list for updates - www.eproval.com/company.

Phone: 1-855-787-2228 | info@eproval.com | www.eproval.com

Suite 304 – 343 Railway St. Vancouver, BC Canada V6A 1A4
