SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATION

Exit Conference Date: February 12, 2024

Release Date: April 9, 2024

Report No. 24-02

City of Orlando
Office of Audit Services and Management Support

George J. McGowan, CPA
Director

Co-source Partner
RSM

CITY OF
ORLANDO

MEMORANDUM OF TRANSMITTAL

To: F.J. Flynn, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

From: George J. McGowan, CPA
             Director, Office of Audit Services and Management Support

Dates: Exit Conference: February 12, 2024
             Release: April 9, 2024

Subject: Special Events Coordination (Report No. 24-02)

The Office of Audit Services and Management Support, with major assistance from our co- source partner RSM, performed a review of Special Event Coordination, including the process of issuing special event permits (known as 18-A permits for the associated section of City Code that governs the process). As you know, the issuance of an 18-A permit is a complicated and comprehensive process involving several City departments, divisions and sections to ensure that special events occur safely and successfully. This review was requested by Transportation Department and the review team met with several other interested and involved parties, including event planners, as well as City staff involved with event management.

This work does not rise to the level of an audit and is considered an advisory consulting engagement under the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. All information included in this report is offered for consideration by City management and has been reviewed by the Transportation Department special events staff who has concurred with the observations and any associated recommendations for consideration.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended by the staff of the Transportation Department and the other departments consulted during this review.

GJM

c:
        The Honorable Buddy Dyer, Mayor
        Jody Litchford, Deputy City Attorney
        Kevin Edmonds, Chief Administrative Officer
        Deborah Girard, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
        Eric Smith, Police Chief
        Charles Salazar, Fire Chief
        Tanya J. Wilder, Transportation Director
        Corey Knight, Public Works Director
        Brooke M. Rimmer-Bonnett, Economic Development Director
        Lisa Early, Families Parks and Recreation Director
        James Young, Manager, Special Events Division, Transportation

The City of Orlando, Florida
Special Events Coordination

February 12, 2024

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TRANSMITTAL LETTER

February 12, 2024

George McGowan
City of Orlando
400 South Orange Ave.
Orlando, FL 32801

Pursuant to our approved Statement of Work dated August 10, 2023, with the City of Orlando ("City") and our Master Services Agreement dated January 1, 2021, we hereby present our report on Special Events Coordination. We will present this report to Management and the Director of Audit Services and Management Support. Our report is organized in the following sections:

Background	This provides an overview of the special events coordination process, including the roles and responsibilities of relevant departments, key systems used, and the application process.
Benchmarking Data	This section provides detail of the comparative analysis performed between the City of Orlando and chosen entities.
Additional Feedback	This section includes a summary of feedback from the event planner's perspective while coordinating with the City, along with our recommendations in response to these challenges.
Case Study	This section presents a hypothetical event, designed to illustrate the expenses and efforts involved in its execution. It also provides a comparative study among chosen entities.
Appendix	In the appendix, we have included a process flow chart describing the workflow of a special events application.

We would like to thank the staff and all those involved in assisting us with this engagement.

Respectfully Submitted,

RSM US LLP

RSM US LLP

BACKGROUND

Special Events Overview

The City of Orlando, Florida ("City"), serves as a hub for many large-scale events. These events, held on public property, range from cultural festivals, non-profit fund-raising initiatives, race runs, parades, etc. Under City Code of Ordinance, Chapter 18-A defines a "special event" as:

"Any celebration, gathering, ceremony, show, exhibition, concert, pageant, rally, demonstration, or assembly of any kind, which is, (a) calculated to attract at any one time the physical attendance or attention of over one hundred (100) persons, and (b) is held in or on any street, sidewalk, or right-of-way, or is held on other property which impacts adjacent streets, sidewalks, or rights-of-way to the extent that closure is necessary in order to assure the safety of vehicular and/or pedestrian movement in the area. In addition, any parade as defined herein shall be considered an outdoor public assembly."

Known as the "18-A" permit, after Code of Ordinance Chapter 18-A, the special events permit was first introduced in 1977. The process to obtain an 18-A Permit is comprehensive, involving the approval and input from various City departments, and designed to prioritize the safety and success of an event. The approval process includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Inter-departmental review of the submitted site and event plans
- Collaboration with event planners to make any necessary changes to site plans and event locations
- Review of insurance documentation
- Coordination with Maintenance of Traffic ("MoT") companies

After all relevant City approvals are obtained and required fees have been paid, the City can issue the special events permit. However, per Ordinance Chapter 18-A, the City reserves the right to deny a permit if the event poses a risk to public safety or violates city regulations. Once the permit is granted, event organizers must adhere to the submitted event details, as approved by the City.

Roles and Responsibilities

Several departments and individuals play critical roles in the approval and management of special events. Cross-collaboration between the following individuals is required:

- ❖ **Event Planner:** Responsible for completing the permit application and submitting the initial site route/map, revising and resubmitting any portion of the application as-needed, coordinating with the appropriate City departments to apply/obtain the proper permit, completing the stormwater questionnaire (for events featuring tent cooking), paying permit fees and invoices timely, and sending the notification letter to affected businesses/residents, if required.

- ❖ **Economic Development Department ("EDV"):** This department is comprised of several divisions, each dedicated to delivering customer service. All divisions within the EDV collaborate to issue permits, enforce city codes, regulate alcohol sales, and manage usage agreements.

- ❖ **Downtown Development Board ("DDB"):** The DDB is one of the divisions within the EDV that is responsible for reviewing and evaluating applications for events that take place within the downtown Community Redevelopment Area ("CRA"). Their review is to identify any preliminary concerns related to event details and, along with Transportation and the Special Events team within the Police Department, the DDB is one of the first reviewers of event details. The DDB ultimately provides recommendations to the City for permit approval for events taking place within the CRA.

- ❖ **Orlando Fire Department ("OFD"):** Responsible for performing physical site inspections, providing standby emergency medical services, and staffing extra-duty fire personnel, if required.

- ❖ **Orlando Police Department ("OPD"):** Responsible for providing police protection for 18-A events. In the event that additional police coverage is required, beyond that which can be staffed through the City, the event planner may need to solicit police coverage from neighboring jurisdictions. The Orlando Police Department also employs three (3) full-time equivalents ("FTEs") dedicated to special event coordination. These individuals are tasked with the initial screening of event applications and managing the overall, cross-departmental coordination required of the City. The special events team often serves as the event planner's primary point of contact within the City and assists planners in completing any additional required permits (i.e., free speech, loudspeaker, block party, fireworks, and aeronautical permits). 18-A Permits are ultimately issued by the OPD Lieutenant, Captain, and/or Deputy Chief after approval by City Council.

BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

❖ **Parking:** Responsible for reviewing site routes to identify any impacted parking meters and overseeing garages and lots associated with the event.

❖ **Parks and Recreation:** Responsible for reviewing any 18-A Permit applications that request use of City parks. Based on the size and complexity of the event, this department may staff an event ranger to monitor the use of the facilities, clean-up workers to maintain city grounds after the event, and electricians and/or plumbers to maintain facilities within the park.

❖ **Public Works (Streets and Stormwater, Solid Waste):** Responsible for issuing and reviewing the stormwater questionnaire, which is designed to gauge the environmental impact of the event. Based on the questionnaire responses, the department may provide recommendations to the event planner for how to minimize impact and share best practices. Event planners are responsible for trash receptacles and waste management. However, this department may provide trash services, upon the event planner's request.

❖ **Transportation:** Responsible for reviewing site routes/maps submitted by the event planner, identifying road redirections and closures, cross-referencing site plans with other events within proximity of the proposed event, collaborating with MoT companies to coordinate the transportation logistics of the event, and working to reduce the logistical impact of events on City residents. Currently, there is one (1) FTE within Transportation dedicated to special events coordination.

Event Planner Feedback

In addition to our discussions with various City departments, we also spoke to five (5) event planners who frequently and/or have recently organized a special event within the City of Orlando. The purpose of these discussions was to gain first-hand feedback from an event planner's perspective related to the design and functionality of the 18-A permitting process. RSM received overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the City's process, particularly related to the Orlando Police Department's Special Events team, who was praised for their exceptional customer service, availability for inquiries, and commitment to working with event planners to tailor events to meet compliance with City regulations.

While there were suggestions for improvement (refer to page 13), the comments received from event planners indicated that the City of Orlando's processes for special events permits were well-defined, as compared to the planner's experience with other jurisdictions.

Key Systems and Applications

The City utilizes MyGov (Version 4) to track and approve special event applications. This platform acts as a central hub for event organizers to submit their applications and all supporting documents, and for City departments to review and approve pending applications. The City also leverages the RollKall system to schedule police coverage of special events, and to facilitate payment to OPD. Event planners may also utilize RollKall to pay OPD invoices after all labor hours have been incurred.

BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

Special Events Application Process

Application Submission

Event planners are required to submit an application within MyGov at least 60 days prior to the event start date. The initial submission requirement contains details related to the site plan, location, and route. Optional uploads at this stage include general liability insurance documentation, liquor licenses and insurance documentation, MoT documents, and a 501(c)(3), if applicable. Upon submission, the applicant is guided to provide additional event details, including the start/end date, event planner contact information, and information related to alcohol use, road closures, food service, pyrotechnics/aerials, and use of event structures (i.e. tents and stages).

Initial Review

The Transportation Department and the DDB are the first to review the application after OPD's initial screening and after initial processing fees have been paid. Transportation's primary focus is to identify road closures and the feasibility of the submitted site plan, while the DDB performs a cursory review to determine if, for any reason, the nature of the event is inappropriate for City grounds. If Transportation denies the application at this time, the approval workflow is halted until the planner resubmits revised site maps. Approval from DDB, however, is not necessary for the approval process to proceed.

Departmental Evaluation

Following the initial approval by the Transportation Department, the application is then evaluated by the remaining departments in the approval workflow, each reviewing the applicable components of the application pertinent to their area of expertise. During this stage, the City may notify the event planner of additional required permits. For example, an event planner may submit a request for only an 18-A special event permit but may plan to utilize loudspeakers, which requires an additional permit. Additional required permits may include a firework permit, a tent permit, and/or an alcohol permit. Once all documentation has been received and any additional permits are requested, the application must be approved by City Council. To be included on the Council agenda, all departmental reviews must be completed at least two (2) weeks prior to the Council meeting. After City Council approves the permit, the Police Department fills any remaining security staffing needs, which may require the utilization of officers from outside jurisdictions, and the permit is issued.
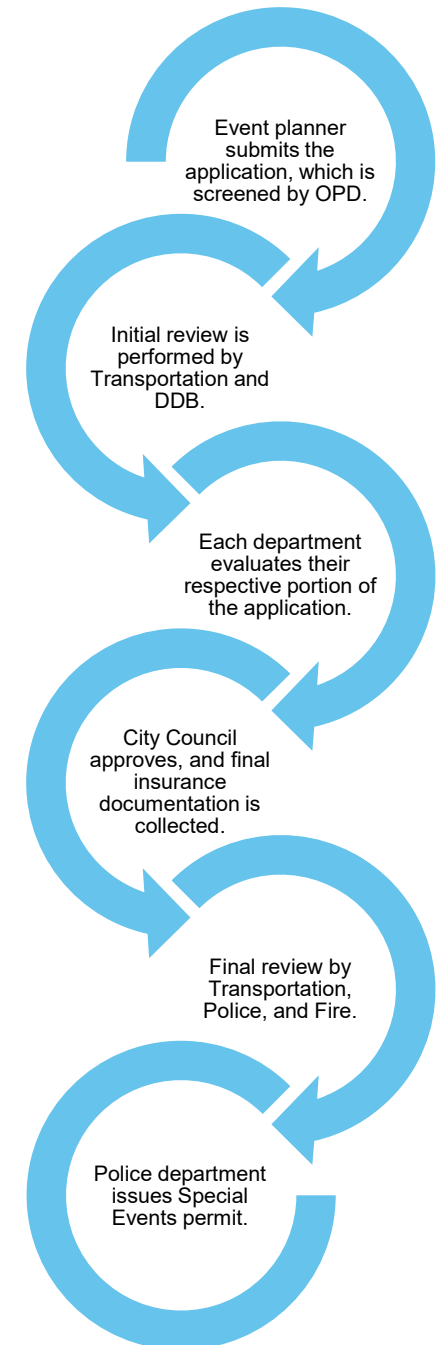
Insurance Documentation

If the event planner has not submitted already, they are now required to submit any outstanding insurance documentation, licenses, and waivers.

Final Review and Approval

Lastly, the Transportation Department conducts a final review to confirm that the MoT plan has been approved and that event details have not changed since the initial review. When needed, the Fire Department schedules an onsite, physical inspection. The event planner is responsible for sending a notification letter 10 days prior to the event start date to all businesses and residents affected by street closures. Upon completion of these steps, the Police Department performs a final review and will issue a special event permit within 60 days upon receipt of the application, barring any concerns.

See **Appendix A** for a detailed process map of the current 18-A permitting workflow.

Event planner submits the application, which is screened by OPD.

Initial review is performed by Transportation and DDB.

Each department evaluates their respective portion of the application.

City Council approves, and final insurance documentation is collected.

Final review by Transportation, Police, and Fire.

Police department issues Special Events permit.

BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

Fee Structure

As mentioned above, the approval of an 18-A Permit requires input and approval from multiple City departments. In the current fee structure, six (6) different departments collect permit fees. Revenue is allocated to their specific cost center, but ultimately resides in the City's general fund. The table below specifies the fees collected by each department.

City of Orlando – 18-A Special Events Permitting Fees

Fee Title	Fee Amount ($)	Collecting Department(s)	Fee stated in application?	Fee stated in ordinance?
Application Fees				
Permit Processing - attendees from 101-500 (no alcohol)	$ 100	Police / DDB	Yes	Yes
Permit Processing - attendees from 500+ (no alcohol)	$ 200	Police / DDB	Yes	Yes
Permit Processing - attendees from 101-500 (alcohol)	$ 200	Police / DDB	Yes	Yes
Permit Processing - attendees from 500+ (alcohol)	$ 500	Police / DDB	Yes	Yes
Permit Fees				
Public Assembly (double if within 14 days of event)	$ 100	Police	No	No
Loudspeaker	$ 20	Police	Yes	No
Tent (each until $1,000)	$ 64	City Hall	No*	No
Tent (each after $1,000)	$ 11	City Hall	No*	No
Block Party	$ 10	Police	No*	No
Aeronautical	$ 75	Police	No*	No
Fireworks	$ 50	Police / Fire Life Safety	No*	No
Special effects / pyrotechnics (double if within 14 days of event)	$ 150	Fire Life Safety	No*	No
Flat-rate Fees				
** Park rental fees - Gaston Edwards Park	$ 2,000	Parks and Recreation	No	No
** Park rental fees - Bill Frederick Park	$ 1,750	Parks and Recreation	No	No
** Park rental fees - Lake Baldwin Park	$ 800	Parks and Recreation	No	No
Road closure (for profit)	$ 350	Transportation	Yes	No
Road closure (non-profit)	$ 200	Transportation	Yes	No
Hourly Fees				
Park workers (minimum)	$ 15	Parks and Recreation	No	No
Park workers (maximum)	$ 85	Parks and Recreation	No	No
Extra-duty police	$ 45	Police	No	No
Fire inspection (minimum 4 hours)	$ 73	Fire Life Safety	No	No
EMT	$ 45	Fire Life Safety	No	No
Paramedic (regular rate)	$ 50	Fire Life Safety	No	No
Hazmat / bomb squad (regular rate)	$ 45	Fire Life Safety	No	No
Supervisor (regular rate)	$ 59	Fire Life Safety	No	No
Event Commander (regular rate)	$ 83	Fire Life Safety	No	No

* Separate permit application must be completed by the event planner.

** Additional parks are available for special events rental.

BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

Benchmarked Entities

Benchmarking data was obtained primarily through questionnaire forms and virtual interviews. Through collaboration with the City, we identified ten (10) jurisdictions to include in our benchmarking efforts, in addition to the five (5) event planners mentioned on page 3. Benchmarked jurisdictions were selected based on numerous quantitative and qualitative factors, including, but not limited to, program size and maturity, number of events, population, demographics, etc. The following entities were contacted and provided information regarding their experiences:

Benchmarked Respondents

1. City of Austin, Texas
2. City of Boulder, Colorado
3. City of Denver, Colorado
4. City of Miami, Florida
5. City of Nashville, Tennessee
6. City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
7. City of San Diego, California
8. City of Savannah, Georgia
9. City of Seattle, Washington
10. City of Tampa, Florida

Each of the entities listed above manages their own process for special events. Organizational structure, fee structure, and permitting process differed from entity to entity, depending on the size of the jurisdiction and its operations. Detailed comparative information can be found in the pages that follow.

BENCHMARKING DATA

Overview

The objective of our benchmarking was to conduct a comparative analysis between the existing special events structure within the City of Orlando and the selected benchmarked entities, in order to identify areas for improvement, gain efficiencies, and enhance customer service. Benchmark questions included, but were not limited to the following:

- What fees are collected for each special event?
- Do you ask for pre-payment for all fees?
- How are fees reviewed?
- Does ordinance language define fees?
- What systems or software are currently utilized to manage special events?
- How many full-time equivalents (FTE) are dedicated to special events coordination?
- Do you utilize pre-approved routes for all races and large events?
- What types of approval are required before an event permit is issued?
- What types of key performance indicators are tracked related to special events?

10 jurisdictions contacted

9 responsive jurisdictions*

Indicates that the entity responded to some, but not always all, requested data points and questionnaires. Partial responses were received and recorded.

5 FTEs (full-time equivalent), on average, are dedicated to special events coordination.

5 different systems used to manage special events throughout each of the respondent's cities. **38%** of cities utilize Eproval.

100% of cities require a notification letter to be sent out to affected businesses and residents.
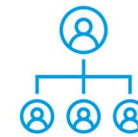
70% of cities have a separate department dedicated to Special Events.

100% of respondents deposit revenues into the General Fund versus a specialized events fund.

57% of cities ask for pre-payment for all fees.

BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

Detailed Results

Program Elements	Benchmarked Results	Current Practice (City of Orlando)	Recommended Approach
Does the City maintain a central listing of all fees collected from each Department?	No: 71%. Yes: 29%.	No.	Yes. Using the table on page 5, the City may also consider maintaining a record of how fees are calculated (i.e., hourly rates based on economic indicators, formulas, etc.). *Note 1*
Are all fees pre-paid?	57% of respondents stated that all fees are collected upfront, prior to the event. 43% of respondents stated that fixed fees are collected prior to the event, while variable fees are collected afterwards.	Some; fixed costs are invoiced prior to the event, and variable fees (i.e., hourly labor performed) are collected after the event.	Some; fees that are fixed costs should be collected beforehand, while hourly variable costs can be billed post-event. Event planners should be provided with a comprehensive quote during the application process. The City may consider requiring Event Planners to formally acknowledge or sign the quote. *Note 1*
Are fees defined in City ordinance?	70% of respondents do not define any fees in the Ordinance. This may be due to (1) an absence of centrally defined fees, (2) an absence of special-event-specific ordinance language, or (3) the ordinance generally stated that all fees are to be determined by the City Council, without any additional detail. 30% of respondents include specific fees in the ordinance language.	Only the public assembly fee is defined in City Ordinance.	While it may not be practical to list all special event fees in the Ordinance, fees should be defined internally, updated on a regular cadence, and maintained in a central location.
What is the application submission deadline (by Event Planner)?	Minimum: 14 days. Maximum: 90 days. Median: 52 days.	60 days.	Maintain Current Practice.
What is the application review deadline (by City)?	Minimum: 5 days. Maximum: 60 days. Median: 33 days.	60 days.	The City may consider utilizing project management tools and software to streamline the review process and shorten the review timeline.

Note 1 Refer to the "Additional Feedback" section for further commentary.

BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

Detailed Results (Continued)

Program Elements	Benchmarked Results	Current Practice (City of Orlando)	Recommended Approach
How is park usage priced?	86% of respondents stated park usage is based on a flat fee only, and 14% stated that park usage is priced at both a flat fee and a variable fee, depending on the event.	Daily and hourly.	Utilizing only a flat fee (including for set-up and break-down days) eliminates the administrative burden for the City and provides price clarity for event planners.
Number of FTEs dedicated to Special Events	Minimum: 1 Maximum: 8 Median: 5	4 total FTEs between the Orlando Police Department and the Transportation Department.	The City should consider performing an assessment to evaluate Special Events staffing as compared to the volume of work, budget available, and desired level of service. Each of these factors is interconnected and should counterbalance each other to maintain a state of equilibrium.
Is there a fixed number of pre-approved routes?	29% of respondents have pre-approved routes. 71% of respondents do not have pre-approved routes.	While certain routes may be utilized frequently, especially for annual events, there is not a listing of pre-approved routes for event planners to select. Planners may create their own route and submit it for approval.	The City may consider offering pre-approved routes for the event planner to choose from, while allowing event planners to submit their own route for approval on a case-by-case basis.
Are there pre-defined rates for police coverage?	71% of respondents have pre-defined rates for police coverage. 29% of respondents do not have pre-defined rates for police coverage.	Police rates start at $45/hour, and increase depending on police availability and event specifics.	Maintain Current Practice.
Are Traffic Control Specialists utilized in conjunction with police coverage?	29% of respondents utilize traffic control specialists. 71% of respondents do not utilize traffic control specialists.	Yes.	Maintain Current Practice.
Is there a defined maximum capacity for officers?	100% of respondents do not have a fixed number of officers per event; instead, staffing varies based on event details.	Number of officers are dependent on the event details and OPD officers. There is not a fixed number of officers per event.	Maintain Current Practice.

BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

Detailed Results (Continued)

Program Elements	Benchmarked Results	Current Practice (City of Orlando)	Recommended Approach
Does the jurisdiction provide a listing of recommended MoT companies to event planners?	86% of respondents provide a listing of vendors to the applicant, if requested. The remaining 14% do not.	The City routinely provides a listing of vendors that event planners may choose to work with.	Maintain Current Practice.
Are there any procedures in place to verify event planner legitimacy or experience?	57% of respondents have a process in place to verify the event planner's legitimacy (i.e., requiring a certificate of good standing). 43% of respondents do not have a process in place.	No process in place.	The City may consider defining procedures related to event planner verification. This may include requiring a certificate of good standing or performing a reference check for larger events.
Are notification letters required to be distributed?	100% of the responding jurisdictions indicated that a letter of notification is required to be sent by the event planner.	Yes – sent by the event planner.	Maintain Current Practice.
Are Key Performance Indicators ("KPI"s) tracked and monitored?	None of the benchmarked entities defined or monitored key performance indicators.	The City does not formally track any special-event-related KPIs.	The City may consider defining and monitoring KPIs to identify progress toward goals and identify areas for improvement. KPIs may include: application processing times, number of events requiring external police coverage, planners who strayed from application details, the number of events per year, etc.
How often are fees reviewed?	50% of cities update fees annually, at a minimum. 50% of cities either update fees as needed or have not yet updated fees since program inception.	No defined cadence for updating fees.	The City may consider reviewing, and if necessary, updating, fees on an annual basis.
Is the economic impact calculated or recorded?	71% of cities do not perform a calculation or analysis regarding economic impact of individual events. 29% of cities calculate impact for only large-scale events.	No calculation is currently performed.	The City may consider defining metrics related to economic impact, which may assist in the approval process and tracking KPIs related to special events.

BENCHMARKING DATA (CONTINUED)

Detailed Results (Continued)

Program Elements	Benchmarked Results	Current Practice (City of Orlando)	Recommended Approach
Have personnel been assigned to monitor the event?	57% of cities may have department-specific personnel monitoring aspects of the event but do not have Special Events personnel on-site to monitor overall event activities. 43% of cities have Special Events personnel on-site monitoring overall event activities.	No – each department may monitor functions specific to their area, but there is currently no City staff present at the event to monitor overall compliance.	The City may consider staffing each event with Special Events personnel responsible for monitoring overall compliance and adherence to the approved permit application. Data obtained from these monitoring activities should be utilized in tracking KPIs.
What technology is utilized to facilitate the special events process?	38% of cities use Eproval. 25% of cities use a homegrown, government site. 37% of cities use another application/tool.	MyGov	The city may consider evaluating current software to determine whether functionalities can be introduced to enhance interdepartmental communication and customer service experience. *Note 1*
When is City Council/Commission approval required?	50% of cities require approval under certain circumstances, such as an exemption from City Code or large-scale events. 50% of cities do not require City Council approval.	If the event contains a temporary structure, alcohol will be in the street, or if vending occurs on city property, City Council must approve of the event.	Maintain Current Practice.
Where are revenues deposited?	100% of respondents indicated revenue was recorded in the General Fund.	General Fund – however, some fees are collected by more than one department (i.e., processing fee, application fee, fireworks fee).	General Fund. The City may consider consolidating the number of departments collecting fees, and reducing any instances wherein two departments are collecting the same fee (i.e., firework or app fees). *Note 1*
Where are complaints/questions recorded?	86% of cities document in a central location. 14% of cities do not document/track feedback.	Each department tracks but does not keep a centralized location.	The City may consider centrally tracking complaints and frequently asked questions. This may assist in establishing a culture of continuous improvement, may be utilized to improve customer service, and contribute to meaningful KPIs.

Note 1   Refer to the "Additional Feedback" section for further commentary.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Areas for Improvement

As part of our procedures, we met with five (5) event planners who frequently and/or have recently collaborated with the City to host an 18-A special event. Each of these event planners has also coordinated special events within other cities across the nation and provided relevant user interface and industry perspectives. The following factors are those that presented themselves as areas for improvement for the City of Orlando's consideration:

Fee Visibility

Currently, there is no public-facing language that comprehensively lists all potential fees related to a special event, making it difficult for applicants to understand the total cost associated with their event upfront. The event planner's limited visibility into fees is further compounded by the fact that fees are sometimes collected by two (2) different departments. For example, to obtain a fireworks permit, both the Police and Fire Departments collect fees (see page 5 for detail). This disjointed approach can lead to confusion for applicants, who may be unaware of all the costs involved, or may be unsure whether fees are duplicative. The City may consider centralizing fee collections to promote transparency and reduce the potential for ambiguity.

Fee Payment Methods

In the current environment, event planners are required to remit payments to various departments through multiple means. Fees can be paid in-person at multiple collection sites, online via credit card, or by written check mailed to the appropriate department. Online fees, depending on the collecting department, may be paid through the MyGov website or through RollKall (OPD's platform for managing officer schedules and payments). Event planners who choose to utilize the RollKall platform are also subject to pay additional administration and processing fees. The need for event planners to remit payments through multiple methods, multiple times throughout the permitting process, and to multiple departments was cited as a point of dissatisfaction.

Permit Visibility

Event planners expressed confusion regarding which permit(s) are required from the City. Currently, a public-facing listing of all potential permits related to special events is not readily available (i.e., fireworks permit, loudspeaker permit). Planners indicated that after submitting their 18-A permit, they are made aware of additional required permits sometimes with limited time to prepare the necessary paperwork. The City may consider enhancing the special events website to include explanatory videos or a step-by-step, linear graphic detailing the comprehensive 18-A permitting process, including the various types of permits, fees, methods of payment, and inspections. The City may also consider centralizing the web presence of 18-A permits; we found multiple City web pages that contained information related to special events, calendars, contact information, and requirements. This information may differ from page to page, as many of these sites are managed by different departments and teams.

Application Visibility

Once the application is submitted through MyGov, the event planner can view the overall status of the application, but cannot track information specific to each department's review. The event planner is unaware of which department is currently reviewing or how long it has been in their queue. Additionally, the event planner cannot modify the event details to respond to City requests within the MyGov platform after the application has been submitted. Changes must be communicated via email, and interactions are manually logged in the notes section by the City's special events team. The City may consider creating functionality within MyGov that would allow event planners to see where their application is in the process, which department(s) have approved, and what the next step is.

Inspections

Event planners have expressed uncertainty regarding the criteria, frequency, and timing of fire inspections. Specific areas of concern were related to when inspections were required, when they were to be performed, what the total cost would be, and what confirmation they would receive from the City that a fire inspection has taken place. The City may consider enhancing language regarding fire inspections, such that event planners have clear guidance related to inspection requirements, timelines, and fees.

CASE STUDY

As part of our review, we created a hypothetical event ("Event X") to analyze the current fee structure within the City of Orlando, as compared to other jurisdictions.

Event Details	**Event Name:** Event X **Event Description:** A one-day event located at Luminary Green Park. This event includes food tents, alcohol, and live music. **Estimated Attendance:** 1,000 people

Estimated Fees	City of Orlando (Current Fees)		
	Fee Description	**Fee type**	**Fee Cost ($)**
	Permit Processing - attendees from 500+ (alcohol)	One-time fee	$ 500
	Public Assembly ▲	One-time fee	$ 100
	Loudspeaker Permit	One-time fee	$ 20
	Tent Permit ▲▶ (15 tents)	Each tent *(until $1,000)*	$ 960
	Tent Permit ▲▶ (5 tents)	Additional tent *(after $1,000)*	$ 55
	Fireworks Permit ▲▶	One-time fee	$ 50
	Special Effects / Pyrotechnics Inspection ▲▶	One-time fee	$ 150
	Road closure (for profit)	One-time fee	$ 350
	Park Rental fee	Hourly *(5 hours)*	$ 1,650
	Fire inspection (minimum 4 hours) ▲	Hourly *(4 hours)*	$ 292
	Extra-duty police ($45/hour) ▲	Hourly *(5 hours / 3 officers)*	$ 675
	Parking ($15/meter) ▲	Daily *(15 meters)*	$ 225
	Total		**$ 5,027**

▲ Fee not clearly stated in the special events (18-A) application   ▶ Additional application must be completed to obtain permit

CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

Payment Methods/Systems	In the current environment, the event planner would be required to pay the total of $5,027 through three (3) different methods (check, online payment, and RollKall system), at various times throughout the permitting process, to at least four (4) different departments (OPD, DDB, Fire Life Safety, and Parking). See details below. 1. Permit process fee, which is collected by OPD *and* DDB and shall be paid upon application submission. 2. Fees related to fireworks permitting, which are collected by OPD *and* Fire Life Safety, and must be paid before the event. 3. Fees related to extra-duty officers, which are collected by OPD and shall be paid after the event via a written check mailed to the department, or by credit card or eCheck directly in RollKall. The event planner may receive multiple invoices from outside jurisdictions (i.e., the City of Kissimmee). 4. Fees related to parking meters, which are collected by the Parking Department, and shall be paid after the event via credit card or written check.

CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

The table below outlines the potential fees determined by the details of the example event. It not only includes rates for the City of Orlando but also presents a comparison with three (3) other jurisdictions of similar size and scope. This comparison offers a comprehensive view of the fee structures across these locations (additional fees may be applicable, subject to the individual City).

Current Estimated Fees	City of Orlando	City of Tampa	City of Nashville	City of Austin
Fixed Fees				
Application	N/A	50	330	207
Permit Processing	500	N/A	N/A	122
Public Assembly	100	70	N/A	413
Park Rental *Note 7*	1,650	750	1,770	3,000
Alcohol Permit	N/A	27	750	30
Loudspeaker Permit	20	N/A	N/A	704
Fire Inspection *Note 1*	292	352	200	549
Fireworks Permit	200	*Note 2* 200	175	382
Road Closure	350	*Note 2* 150	155	*Note 4* 421
Subtotal (Fixed Fees)	$ 3,112	$ 1,599	$ 3,380	$ 5,828
Variable Fees				
Tent Permit *Note 3*	1,015	*Note 2* 820	149	1,534
Extra-duty Police *Note 5*	675	735	1,155	1,050
Parking (per meter) *Note 6*	225	225	315	75
Subtotal (Variable Fees)	$ 1,915	$ 1,780	$ 1,619	$ 2,659
Total	$ 5,027	$ 3,379	$ 4,999	$ 8,487

Note 1 City of Austin requires a two-hour base fee, with each additional hour at $168. We have included a rate for four hours. City of Orlando, Tampa, and Nashville offer singular hourly rates, but were calculated assuming 4 hours for comparison purposes. The City of Tampa requires two persons for outdoor pyrotechnical watch, therefore the rate presented above is doubled.

Note 2 According to the Special Events office in Tampa, the rates published and available on the site are for special events on private property. While some fees for City property events are, in some cases, the same, others are assessed based on the size and type of event.

Note 3 Each city varies in fees for tent permits: City of Orlando charges a $64 fee for each tent until $1,000, and every tent thereafter is $11; City of Tampa states that the first tent is $60, and every additional tent thereafter is $40; City of Austin states the first tent is $318, and every tent after is $64; City of Nashville states that each tent is $149, unless they are located on the same map and parcel number (then it is a one-time fee). We assumed 20 tents for Event X, all of which are located on the same map and parcel.

Note 4 The City of Austin assesses separate fees for street events. This fee includes a $145 application review fee, $200/block/day street closure fee, and the $38/hour safety inspection fee (2-hour minimum). The rate reflected in the table above does not include the 4% surcharge fee.

Note 5 Each city varies in fees for extra-duty police: City of Orlando charges $45/hour; City of Tampa charges $49; City of Austin charges $77; and City of Nashville charges $70 (additional fees may be assessed for the presence of sergeants and lieutenants). We assumed 3 officers worked 5 hours each for Event X.

Note 6 Each city varies in daily fees for parking meters: City of Orlando charges $15/day/meter; City of Tampa charges $15/day/meter; City of Austin charges $5/day/meter; City of Nashville charges $21/day/meter. We assumed 15 meters for Event X.

Note 7 Each city varies in park rental fees: The City of Orlando charges a fee of $300/hour for Luminary Green Park rental, as well as a $150 set up/breakdown fee. We assumed 5 hours for Event X. The City of Austin charges a base fee of $2,500 for daily use of the park, as well as a $500 set up/breakdown fee. This does not include additional fees that may be assessed, such as maintenance or electrical fees. City of Nashville charges a daily fee of $1,770, which includes the set up/breakdown fee. We did not receive a response from the City of Tampa regarding park rental fees.

APPENDIX A: SPECIAL EVENTS APPLICATION PROCESS FLOW
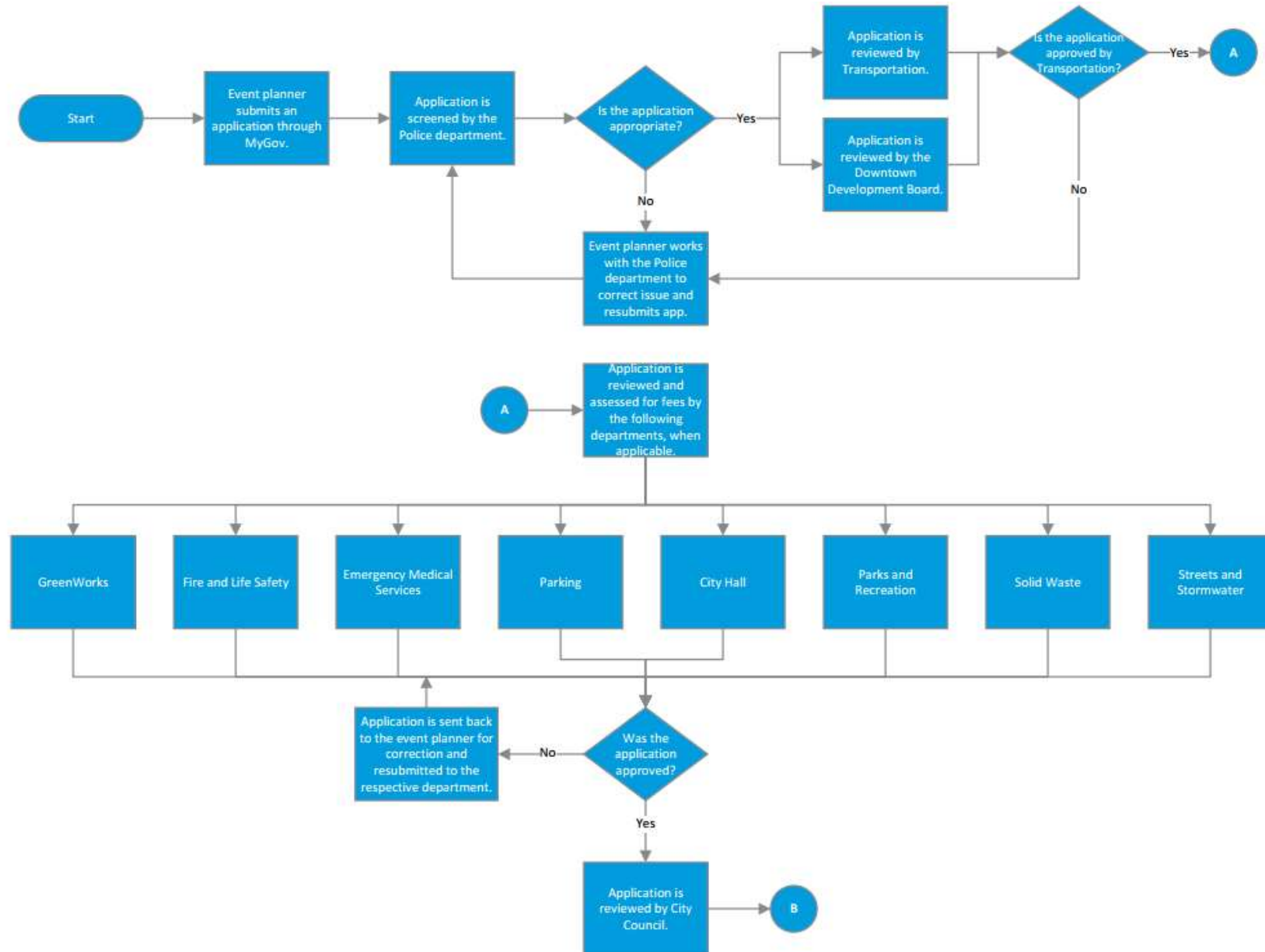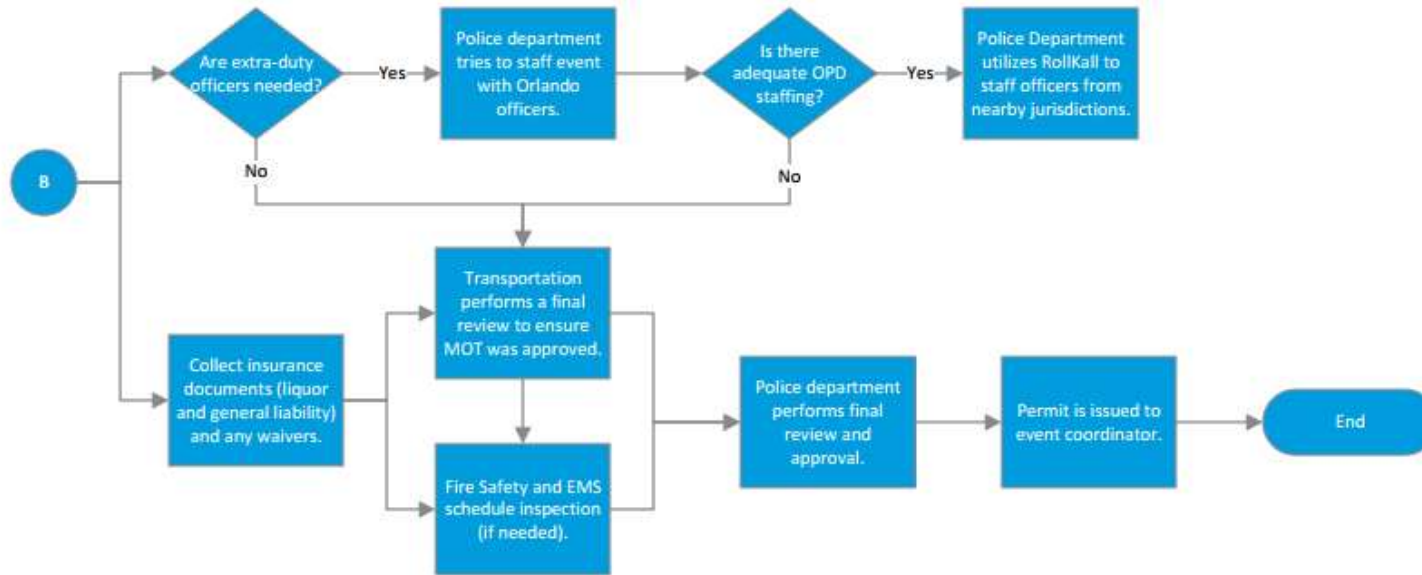
APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM

TO: George J. McGowan,
           Director, Audit Services and Management Support

FROM: Tanya Wilder, Director of Transportation Department
           James "Jim" Young, Special Events Division Manager

SUBJECT: Special Events Coordination Report by RSM

DATE: March 11, 2024

We have received the final draft of the Special Events Coordination Report completed by RSM.   The report provided information necessary to be used as guidance in the development of an action plan for the creation of a Special Events Division for the City of Orlando.   We accept the observations documented in the report.

The report received is well organized and provides background, benchmarking data, additional feedback, case study and an appendix of work flow process.   The report provides information which will assist in guiding a plan to consolidate and centralize Special Events staffing, processes, permitting, approvals, payments, event status, and activity for Special Events, as well as evaluation.

Thank you to the City's Audit Services, and to RSM for their work in the research, analysis, and documentation in all areas, as well as providing detailed results from the benchmarking, current practices, and recommended approaches.   The city will determine actionable items both utilizing the report, as well as the experience of staff and event applicants as a basis for the overall goals and objectives for the Special Events Division.

TW/jpy