Community Engagement Toolkit

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Sections Outlined

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Introduction

This toolkit complements the City's Community Engagement Policy CE003. It includes templates, resources, and detailed information on tools and techniques.

Commitment to Transparency:

The City will provide participants with the information they need to be engaged in a meaningful way. The City is committed to open disclosure, equal access and distribution of information in the context of the decision to be made. The City will strive to be the first and most accurate source of all information related to the decision to be made. Council and/or staff contact information will be provided to the public so citizens can ask questions and obtain additional information if needed.

The City will follow up with stakeholders to publicly acknowledge the results of each community engagement process. City staff will acknowledge the input from the community and demonstrate to the community that they are listening and taking what they hear into account. When a final decision is made, stakeholders will be informed, and City staff will explain how the community's contribution was considered.

Setting Realistic Expectations:

Stakeholder contributions are unscripted, conversation-based, and often emotionally charged. It can be stressful, and at times, it can get messy. Although we may wish that all our stakeholders will be happy with the outcome at the end of a project, that is generally not realistic. The purpose of engagement is not to make everyone happy; it is to connect the community.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

iap²

international association for public participation

The IAP2 has developed the spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process.

The IAP2 spectrum of engagement demonstrates the possible types of engagement with stakeholders and communities, from inform to empower, identifying the public participation goal and promise to the public for each.

Spectrum of Engagement

INFORM
provide information

Objective:
Providing information on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions

Promise:
We will keep you informed

CONSULT
gather information

Objective:
Obtaining feedback/ gathering information on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions

Promise:
We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge your concerns, aspirations and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision

INVOLVE
discuss

Objective:
Working with the community/stakeholders to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered

Promise:
We will work with you to ensure that your needs and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed

COLLABORATE
work together

Objective:
Facilitating discussion between the community/ stakeholders and the City to identify common ground for actions and solutions

Promise:
We will work with you to build alternatives

EMPOWER
partner

Objective:
Creating a supportive environment where the final decision power is given to the community/ stakeholders

Promise:
We will work with you to achieve common solutions, and you will make the final decision

Spectrum of Engagement

Inform and Consult

There are many situations when the decision to inform and consult with the public is the most appropriate form of community engagement. These options represent a simple and structured exchange of information with citizens that is usually quick, convenient and cost-effective.

01. Inform

In accordance with the City's Community Engagement Policy, the City is committed to providing citizens with information that is accurate, timely, and freely available, and decisions are open for public review and discussion. For people to be engaged, they have to be informed. Therefore, the decision to engage the public in any way will involve a commitment to provide relevant information that is highly accessible in plain language as a minimum requirement for all community engagement processes.

02. Consult

When the community is consulted on a decision, the City will strive for inclusive participation and representation of stakeholder groups. Community input from the public, which is not controlled for community representation, has the potential for significant bias and will not be used to conclude the community as a whole. The City will acknowledge all public input and give it careful consideration in the decision-making process.

Involve, Collaborate and Empower

The choice to involve, collaborate or empower citizens has both costs and benefits, which must be carefully considered. Involve, Collaborate and Empower processes typically take significantly longer to plan and carry out; they require more staff support and involvement and may have added costs for facilitators, rooms, materials, etc.

03. Involve

The Involve level of public participation is more than a consultation. To involve means to include. At the involve level, the community is invited into the process, usually from the beginning, and is provided multiple, if not ongoing, opportunities for input as decision-making progresses.

04. Collaborate

Collaboration provides the opportunity for citizens to connect with other citizens, understand the issue from different perspectives, learn from each other, and solve problems together with City staff and Council.

05. Empower

The City encourages dialogue with citizens about areas in which they are empowered or entrusted to take responsibility to act on their own. In these situations, the City may provide input or support for decision-making, organizing information and facilitating connections. This level of engagement is most appropriate where there is a high level of public interest, resources and capacity to act are available within the community, and a high degree of community ownership is preferred. Citizens cannot be "empowered" to make decisions that are the City's legal responsibility.
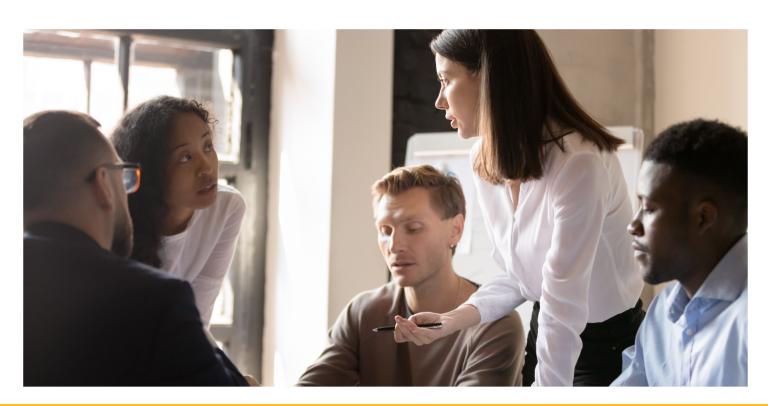
Four Step Process

Step 1: Purpose – Scope and Stakeholders

Understanding the project's goal, who is involved and who will be impacted is critical to determining the level of engagement required.

Complete the Community Engagement Assessment Tool (CEAT).

Helpful hints:

- A project charter will help you identify the project's objectives, scope and stakeholders.
- Define your stakeholders with their level of interest and how the community's influence will inform the final decision.

Four Step Process

Step 2: Inclusivity & Influence – Design your engagement activities

Projects that will inform the community require a plan with communications activities only.

Projects that consult, involve, collaborate and/or empower require a community engagement plan defining engagement and communications activities.

Complete the Community Engagement Planning Tool (CEPT).

Helpful hints:

- Design your engagement activities to be inclusive and accessible.
- Use a variety of engagement activities to provide people with accessible options to participate.
- Avoid conducting community engagement around key dates, such as the December holiday season and public holidays, unless it allows specific groups to participate.
- Work with the Communications Advisor to develop content and promotional material.
- Citizens and stakeholders are often reluctant to provide input if they aren't sure it will make a difference. People need information about the engagement process, such as:
  - The overall engagement timeline.
  - What is the project?
  - Why do we need it?
  - Who is impacted?
  - What are the options?
  - What are the constraints?
  - Dates, times and locations of engagement events/links to online engagement opportunities.
  - Information about who will be reviewing input and making decisions.

Four Step Process

Step 3: Transparency – Delivering engagement activities
Engagement is about meaningful dialogue. Connect and work with stakeholders through the opportunities outlined in the CEPT, and do so in a genuine, open and honest manner.

➤ **Carry out the activities outlined in the CEPT.**

Helpful hints:
- Build credibility and trust in your engagement process.
- Clearly communicate beforehand how the community's involvement will influence certain aspects of the project.
- Deliver engagement activities at days, times, and locations that meet the needs of the stakeholders.

Step 4: Close the Loop – Analyze the results, communicate key findings and complete lessons learned to inform future engagement activities
This step has two important components. The first is to report back to stakeholders on what was heard, including what decision was made and how the input was used. If applicable, remember to update the Our City project page or the project page on the City's website. The second is to evaluate the engagement activities so that, as an organization, we can continually improve the process and the tools we use for engagement.

➤ **Complete the Community Engagement Evaluation Tool (CEET).**

Helpful hints:
- Document key takeaways.
- It's not about proving an engagement effort was successful; it's about improving activities going forward.

Appendices

Appendix A
Community Engagement Assessment Tool

Appendix B
Community Engagement Planning Tool

Appendix C
Community Engagement Evaluation Tool

Appendix D
Plain Language Guide

Appendix E
Engagement Activities Guide

Community Engagement Assessment Tool

Project Name:	
Project Lead:	
Linking Projects:	
Have any promises been made about stakeholder and citizen involvement?	Y/N — (If yes, engagement must be a medium at a minimum)

	Scale of 1-5 (1= Very Low, 5= Very High)	Guide to Scoring
How interested do you anticipate the community will be in your project?		Very Low - no community interest Low - 1 stakeholder group Medium - 2 stakeholders High - 3-4 stakeholders Very High - more than 5 stakeholders
What is the expected cost of the project?		Very Low <$25K; Low $25K-50K; Medium $50K-100K; High $100K-$250K; Very High $250K+
What impact will the project have on City's reputation? Note* Could positively or negatively impact the reputation or perception of the City		Very Low - No Impact Low - Minor Impact - may affect public perception of the City for one stakeholder group Medium - Moderate Impact - may affect public perception of the City for two to three stakeholder groups High - Serious Impact - most likely will change public perception of the City of four stakeholder groups Very High - Significant Impact - may greatly change public perception of the City among five or more stakeholder groups
How many people do you anticipate the project will impact in the community?		Very Low - <1,000 people will be directly impacted as a result of this project Low - 1,000 to 2,499 people will be directly impacted as a result of this project. Medium -2,500 to 4,999 people will be directly impacted as a result of this project High - 5,000 to 9,999 people will be directly impacted as a result of this project. Very High - >10,000 people will be directly impacted as a result of this project.
Are there components (or pieces) of the project that the community can influence?		Very Low - None -Legislated/Regulated change Low - one component can be influenced Medium - a few components can be influenced High - multiple components can be influenced by the stakeholders Very High - all components can be influenced
What is the risk if community engagement does not occur?		Very Low - the situation is urgent and the public may be at risk if the decision is delayed Low - the project is not controversial in anyway Medium - the project may be controversial High - the project is expected to be controversial Very High - the project is expected to be highly controversial - subject of intense public argument or disagreement
Total Score	0	
Engagement Assessment Level	Low, Medium or High	

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Community Engagement Assessment Tool

Engagement Scoring Matrix			
Assessment Score	Low (6-10)	Medium (11-20)	High (21-30)
Engagement process responsibility	Managed entirely by project lead with support from Communications	Managed by project lead with support from team as well as input or advice from the communications advisor	Managed by project lead with support from team as well as input or advice from the communications advisor
Sign off on the engagement plan	Relevant Director	SLT	Committee/ Council
Engagement level	Inform	Consult/Involve	Collaborate/Empower
Suggested types of engagement activities	Media releases, social media, public notices, ads, posters, reports and presentations to Committee/ Council, fact sheets, digital screens, info booths	Town halls, focus groups, site tours, open houses, workshops, card storming, project page on City website, (use Our City Tools - Survey, Stories, Guestbook, Forum, Ideas, Places)	Workshops, working groups, advisory committees, crowdsourcing, voting, citizen jury or panel, project page on City website (use Our City Tools - Survey, Stories, Guestbook, Forum, Ideas, Places)

NOTES:
Before starting to design any engagement activities, first complete the community engagement assessment. Project leads are responsible for completing this assessment, and ensuring that the engagement is planned, delivered, and evaluated.

Community Engagement Planning Tool

Project Name:

Project Lead:

Intent of Activity (Outcomes):	Stakeholders: (can be pulled from project charter)	Engagement Activity (e.g. public information session, survey)	Dates of Engagement Activity:	Promotional/ Communications: (e.g. social media, postcards, mail drop)	Dates of Communication:	Who is Responsible

Key Messages:	(indicate if specific to a stakeholder group)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Issues Management:	(indicate if specific to a stakeholder group)
They say	We Say

Community Engagement Evaluation Tool

Project Name:

Project Lead:

What were the key findings?

What surprised you?

What concerned you?

What engagement activities worked well?

What would you do differently?

Plain Language Guide

Plain language makes community engagement more inclusive, transparent and equitable. It also improves trust and respect for the engagement process and the City. People are more likely to participate when they easily understand what they are reading. Use plain language in all aspects of engagement, from the letter informing the community of the process to handouts and displays to the evaluation feedback. It is often helpful to test terms or diagrams beforehand with people who are unfamiliar with the content. If they don't understand, the wording needs to be refined.

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING PLAIN LANGUAGE MATERIALS:

A document, website or other information is in plain language if the:
1. Basic approach specifies and considers who will use it, why they will use it, and what tasks they will do with it. Consider if the basic approach:
- Identifies the audiences and is clearly created for them
- Focuses on the major audiences, their top questions and tasks
- Does not try to be everything to everyone
- Keeps in mind the average reader's level of technical expertise

2. Language minimizes jargon and uses sentence structure, strong verbs, word choice, and other similar techniques to ensure the audience can read, understand, and use the information. Consider if the language:
- Has a conversational style rather than a stuffy, bureaucratic style
- Is simple and direct without being too informal
- Whenever possible, uses an active voice. When the subject of a verb does something (acts), the verb is in the active voice. When the subject of a verb receives the action (is acted upon), the verb is in the passive voice
- Active voice: Conor hit the ball
- Passive voice: The ball was hit by Conor
- Uses reasonably short sections, paragraphs, and sentences
- Uses sentence structure, especially the verbs, to emphasize key information
- Uses transitions to show the link between ideas, sections, paragraphs, or sentences
- Uses words familiar to the audience
- For online information, match the text of links to the page title the link points to

3. Design reinforces meaning and makes it easier for the audience to see, process, and use the information. Consider if the design:
- Organizes the information in a sequence that's logical for the audience
- Uses layout to make information easy to find, understand, and use

Plain Language Guide

- Uses principles of good design, including appropriate typography, font size, line spacing, colour, white space, etc.
- Uses visuals to make concepts, information, and links easier to see and understand
- For online information, minimizes the number of levels, layers information appropriately, and avoids too much on one page

4. Structure is well-marked so the audience can find the information it needs. Consider if the structure:
- Uses many informative headings to guide the audience to the key message
- Information most important to them
- Helps the audience to complete tasks quickly
- Breaks content into topics and subtopics that match the audience's needs for information
- For a document, minimizes cross-references

5. Hierarchy helps the audience distinguish between critical and less important information. Consider if the hierarchy:
- Puts the most important information first
- Omits unnecessary information
- Uses visual design and language to distinguish between main points and supportive detail
- Uses advance organizers for the whole and at the section, paragraph, and sentence levels to give the audience a frame for subsequent information

6. Author, whether an individual or an organization, creates a sense of reliability and trustworthiness. Consider if the author:
- Demonstrates a concern for the audience
- Anticipates the questions and needs of the audience
- Uses an appropriate tone for the audience
- Provides a revision date to show the age of the information
- Shows how to get additional information

7. Overall, the audience can:
- Understand the main purpose and message
- Complete the task, if this is being asked
- See how the design and the content reinforce each other
- Scan to find information
- Follow the language easily

Engagement Activities Guide

The following sections provide recommended public engagement activities for each level of engagement. This content is modified from the IAP2 Techniques for Effective Public Participation handbook. Detailed information about how to implement each technique can be found through IAP2 or online.

Inform

Activity	What it is
Fact Sheet (mailouts)	Concise print piece that shares the technical details of a project in plain language.
Media Release	Update to the media on details relating to a project.
Project Page on City website	Digital information repository, easily accessible from anywhere, on any device.
Info booth	A kiosk where information is available to the public. They may be staffed or not. Can include a computer, tablet, etc. and should be located in a high-traffic pedestrian area.
Social media posts	Digital project updates shared through social media channels.
Digital screens at City facilities	Digital piece that shares the technical details of a project in plain language and with visuals.
Reports or presentations to Committee/Council	Shares the technical details of a project in more formal language.

Engagement Activities Guide

Consult

Activity	What it is
Focus group	Small-group facilitated discussion used to gauge public opinion.
Open houses, public meetings and town halls	Informal setting where participants rotate through informative stations.
Site tours	Educational opportunity for stakeholders to walk through a site related to the project and discuss with technical experts.
Surveys and polls (Our City website tools)	Questionnaires to collect public input or feedback on specific topics and questions.

Engagement Activities Guide

Involve

Activity	What it is
Workshop	Public forum where participants work in small groups on defined assignments.
World café	Brings people together in simultaneous rounds of conversation about questions that matter. Small group discussions facilitated by a table host to ensure conversation etiquette and take notes. Groups can report back.
Card storming	Process to gather input or responses to a question from a large number of people. Helps to identify many ideas and issues about a topic and organize them into common themes or groupings.
Stories, guestbook, forum, ideas, places (Our City website tools)	Tools to gather input from individuals and enable individuals to build off of each other's ideas.

Engagement Activities Guide

Collaborate

Activity	What it is
Advisory Committee	A committee with a specific mandate of an ongoing nature, which meets regularly to provide recommendations to a decision-maker.
Ad hoc Committee	A committee with a specific mandate of a limited nature that is disbanded after providing recommendations to a decision-maker (completion of the mandate).
Design Charettes	Intensive session where participants re-design project features.
Task Force	A group of experts who collaborate to achieve specific goals, tasks, or projects within a set time frame. A task force results in an end-product, such as a report to a decision-maker or the completion of a project. A task force is subject to less stringent procedures to allow for more flexibility with deliberations.

Engagement Activities Guide

Empower

Activity	What it is
Voting	A democratic process that gives participants a set number of alternatives and asks them to choose the best one. Note* This technique is only at the Empower level when the decision is made based on the majority vote.
Citizen jury or panel	Gather a randomly selected and demographically representative panel of citizens for several days to carefully examine an issue. Note* This process is at the Collaborate level if the jury presents recommendations to the decision-maker and public. It's at the Empower level when the jury is given the authority to make the final decision.

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