

Office of the Chief
Communications Officer

Edmonton

Public Engagement Framework

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Edmonton is committed to involving the people who are affected by the decisions it makes. We seek diverse opinions, experiences and information so that a wide spectrum of information is available to decision makers.

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Framework supports the City's Public Engagement Policy, describing the City's overall approach and commitment to public engagement.

The City's Public Engagement Policy is the foundation for the Framework. It describes when the policy applies, the role of decision makers, the importance of respectful and safe discussion and debate, and commitment to hearing from diverse voices. In general, the Policy governs *when* and *why* engagement occurs, while the Framework guides the *how*.

The Framework includes additional supporting elements that enables the City's overall public engagement approach and implementation including:

- Public Engagement Commitment
- Definition of Public Engagement
- Vision and Guiding Principles
- Public Engagement Spectrum
- Public Engagement Considerations
- 6 Step Public Engagement Process

The Framework also describes the supporting activities of public engagement, commitment to continuous learning and improvement and how to apply the public engagement framework.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Policy (C593D) applies to City policies, programs, projects or services that impact the public. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the City of Edmonton:

- Achieves a consistent, coordinated, outcomes-driven and equity-based approach to public engagement;
- Facilitates public input to decision-making through appropriate, effective and efficient consultation, involvement, collaboration and empowerment processes; and
- Adheres to the public engagement requirements within the *Municipal Government Act* and other applicable legislation.

Public engagement is one factor in the decision making process and will have more or less influence relative to other factors for every specific decision.

This Policy applies to public engagement regarding all of the City's policies, programs, projects and services whether it is planned and delivered by City staff, contractors or community partners.

THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITMENT

A COMMITMENT TO YOU

This is your city.

We value your input on how we maintain, grow and build Edmonton.

We believe engagement leads to better decision making.

We are committed to reaching out to diverse communities in thoughtful and meaningful ways.

We want to understand your perspectives and build trusting relationships with you.

We will show you how you help influence City decisions.

Share your voice and shape our city.



Edmonton

DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public Engagement is a process that creates opportunities for people to contribute to decision-making by City Council and Administration about the City's policies, programs, projects and services.

The City of Edmonton values public engagement processes and activities that contribute to policy, program, service and project decisions by providing City Council and Administration with information to support decision-making. Administration communicates how public input is collected and used.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Vision: *A city where we are connected, invested and proud to participate in shaping our community.*

Guiding Principles:

- **Shared responsibility** - Engagement is a shared responsibility between the City and people. Creating opportunities for engagement in an authentic way encourages people to choose to participate which supports democratic decision-making.
- **Relationship-building and perspective-seeking** - Meaningful engagement values various and local perspectives and community experiences; it recognizes respect and equitable processes foster trust and stronger relationships.
- **Proactive, timely and transparent** - People have enough time and notice to engage early in the process which enables considered input and impact on decision-making. We are transparent by clearly communicating how input will be assessed and used during engagement and reported on afterwards.
- **Equitable, inclusive and accessible** - Engagement planning and delivery is equitable, inclusive and accessible to best serve our City by encouraging two-way conversations and strategies that reach diverse communities and ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued.
- **Innovative and continuously improving** - As Edmonton grows and evolves, we aspire to co-create and embrace new and better engagement processes, tools and tactics based on a sound approach to evaluating success.

THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

The Public Engagement Spectrum explains the four roles the public can play when they participate in City of Edmonton public engagement activities. It also indicates the City's purpose for engaging. As one moves within the spectrum, there is an increasing level of public influence and commitment from the City and the public.

The selection of a role is determined based on the nature and scope of the decision and the level of public impact.



Advise: The public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects or services.

Refine: The public is involved by the City to adapt and adjust approaches to policies, programs, projects or services.

Create: The public collaborates with the City to develop and build solutions regarding policies, programs, projects, or services. This can include community initiated engagement.

Decide: The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the City about policies, programs, projects or services.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Public Engagement activities will consider:

- Equity, diversity and inclusion - The City values diversity of perspectives and lived experience. City staff will ensure efforts are made to accommodate diverse needs in order to reduce barriers and encourage participation, in alignment with the City's diversity and inclusion commitments and use of Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+).
- Indigenous Peoples - Engagement will honour the City of Edmonton's Indigenous memorandums of understanding and relevant guiding policies and frameworks.
- Respectful and safe discussion and debate - Discussion and debate that underlies public engagement activities will be conducted in a respectful and safe manner by all participants: City staff, contractors, community partners, interested and/or affected parties and the general public.
- Relationship-building - To guide in relationship building consider using the Indigenous Framework's principles, roles and commitments.

Instances where public engagement may not be considered could include:

- Circumstances where change management would be more appropriate;
- Internal policies, procedures and processes;
- Confidential or in-camera decisions;
- Emergency or public safety-related decisions; and/or,
- An instance when public feedback will either not influence a decision or when a decision has already been made.

Role of Engagement in Change Management

Change Management is critical to address the challenges of introducing new projects, processes or systems or changes to existing ones. Those responsible for managing these projects, processes or systems ensure change management plans are made, risks are identified, communication is clear, community partners, interested and/or affected parties are supported throughout the change. While public engagement can contribute valuable insights and help inform decisions during change processes, engagement is not a substitute for change management planning.

THE 6 STEP PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The 6 Step Public Engagement Process is used to deliver meaningful, consistent and outcomes-driven public engagement at the City. It is made up of six steps: Identification, Strategy, Planning & Design, Implementation & Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting and Evaluation.



Identification: At the identification step, the Public Engagement team seeks to understand the needs of City project teams, if public engagement is required and how best to support public engagement if so. The project request is reviewed for alignment with relevant City documents including the Public Engagement Policy, the [City of Edmonton's Corporate Business Plan](#), and [City Plan](#).

Strategy: In this step, project teams look to answer the question: "is public engagement required or helpful in decision making?" If yes, they further decide when and to what degree. Starting with assessing the decisions that need to be made, project teams develop a clear understanding of how Edmontonians' perspectives and opinions can impact initiatives and projects.

Planning & Design: Once a project team determines public engagement is needed, and what decisions will be informed using public input, a plan is developed to implement the strategy defined in the previous step. Digital and in-person public engagement activities and approaches are designed and the right tools, techniques and methods are selected to support gathering information for the project decisions that Edmontonians are being engaged about.

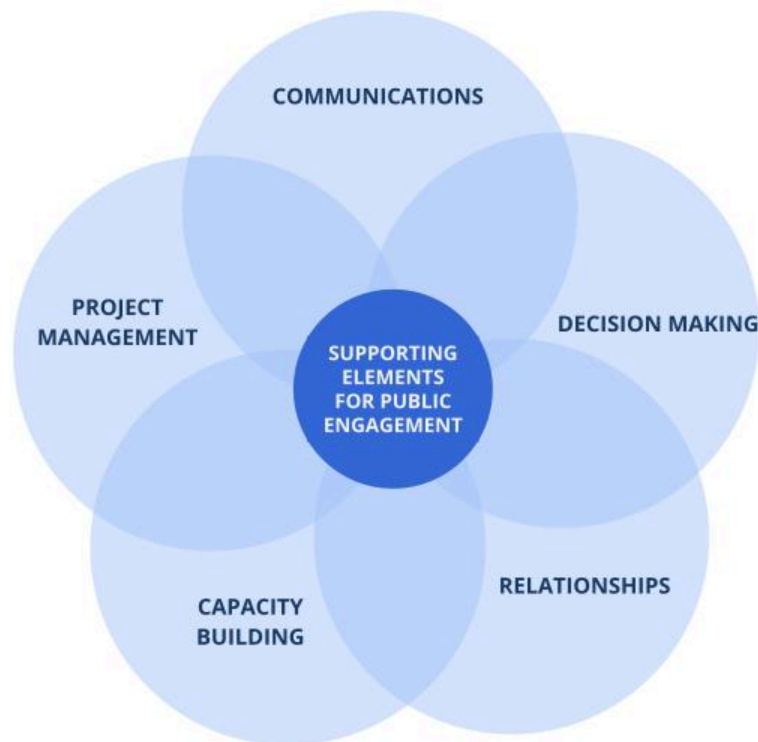
Implementation & Data Collection: This step involves carrying out public engagement activities to collect public input. During this step, key attention is paid to evaluating each public engagement activity so lessons can be learned to improve and refine any subsequent public engagement activities.

Analysis & Reporting: In this step, the data collected from the public is synthesized, analyzed and considered against other project data and decisions identified in the strategy step. Other project

data may include Council direction, City Policies, budget considerations and internal expertise. Decisions identified during the strategy step are adjusted or adapted based on this analysis. To be accountable, this information is then shared with the public, community partners, interested and/or affected parties through internal and external reports.

Evaluation: The entire public engagement process is evaluated to determine areas of success and areas for improvement. The City measures and reports on the alignment of public engagement activities to the five guiding principles as part of continuous improvement. This information is used to create lessons learned documentation to support continuous learning and improvement of public engagement practice.

SUPPORTING ELEMENTS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Communications - The City and the public are informed and learn about City policies, programs, projects and services through transparent and timely communications. Communication activities should be accessible, plain language and demonstrate active listening and responsiveness. Communication activities should happen:

- **Before** public engagement so that potential participants know about the upcoming opportunities and have the background information and context they need to meaningfully engage.
- **During** public engagement so that participants know what is happening in the process and hear back about how their input is being incorporated.
- **After** public engagement so that participants hear back about what was done with their input as well as how the overall process went

When people are informed about and understand a project, they are better able to participate and provide meaningful feedback.

Project Management and Decision Making - Public engagement activities should be aligned to project schedules, budgets and decisions clearly identifying decisions, decision makers and decision making processes for every public engagement process. Decision makers consider the information collected through public engagement when making decisions regarding any of the City's policies, programs, projects and services that impact the public. The link between how public engagement will or has influenced project decisions should be clear.

Capacity Building and Relationships - For the city to undertake meaningful public engagement, staff and the public need to have the knowledge and tools to engage effectively. Building the knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal practices to participate in public engagement activities - whether as implementers (i.e. city staff), decision makers or members of the public - is an ongoing and evolving process. The capacity and willingness to participate in City public engagement processes are strengthened through relationships built on trust and respect between the City and the public.

COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Public engagement places a large focus on continuous learning and improvement. The needs of all participants in the public engagement process can be met by continually evaluating and improving on Administration's engagement practices, tools, techniques and approaches.

This commitment is enacted in a number of ways. Regular and ongoing evaluation of public engagement processes and capturing lessons learned supports learning and continuous improvement as the City reviews, revises and refines public engagement work. The Community Engagement team, within the Office of the Chief Communications Officer, regularly researches leading and best practices in the field of public engagement and incorporates them into City of Edmonton processes. Finally, by recognizing, celebrating and sharing City of Edmonton success stories across the organization, with the public and with other public engagement practitioners around the world.

APPLYING THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Framework is championed by the Office of the Chief Communications Officer but its implementation and accountability are the responsibility of all City departments and branches that undertake public engagement. Engagement staff throughout the organization support the successful implementation of the policy and framework through thoughtful leadership, advice, planning and evaluation.

Furthermore, the public can play an important role planning for and implementing public engagement. They are critical for providing the right external context and checking City assumptions. Public engagement informed by, and sometimes planned with, or jointly created by the public can often be better public engagement.

Increasing awareness of the City's public engagement approach and activities respects the relationship the City has with all of its diverse citizens, supports inclusion, builds trust and provides a good starting point for better engagement.