

Staff Report



To

Department Corporate Services Department
Meeting Date Committee of the Whole - 03 Apr 2023
Subject Community Engagement Framework
Report Number SR- 1990
Prepared by Trevor Cornelius

Recommendation

That the report from the Corporate Services Department, Communications Division, dated April 3, 2023 re: Community Engagement Framework, be received; and that

1. That the Committee of the Whole recommends that Council approve the proposed Community Engagement Framework as presented; **OR**
2. That the Committee of the Whole provides feedback and direction to staff on the presented Framework and the updated draft Framework be included on a future Committee of the Whole Agenda for further discussion.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present a draft Community Engagement Framework which will create a consistent and clearly defined process for what community engagement looks like in Loyalist Township. The draft framework was based on the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation.

The framework identifies the Township's **guiding principles** for engagement, different **levels of engagement** and a **five step workplan** to be followed when planning engagement activities. Also included in the framework is a tools and techniques matrix which identifies commonly used communication and engagement methods.

Through the effective implementation of the framework, the Township can deliver engagement processes that follow our guiding principles, use the highest level of engagement appropriate to the situation, and follow a consistent and clearly defined workplan to engage residents and stakeholders.

Report Highlights

- Establish a corporate-wide framework for community engagement based on the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation.
- Provide a clear and consistent engagement approach to support engagement processes delivered by Loyalist Township.
- Establish resources and guidelines for staff to support them in developing effective and well-planned engagement processes.
- Catalogue the variety of tools, techniques and tactics that Township staff can use to develop effective community engagement opportunities.
- Consult with Council on potential enhancements to communication tools.

Report Details

Background and Analysis

The development and implementation of a community engagement framework was identified as a key strategic priority during the creation of Loyalist Township's Strategic Plan for 2019-2023.

Goal of the Community Engagement Framework

The Loyalist Township Community Engagement Framework outlines the Township's commitment to create a consistent and clearly defined process for what community engagement looks like in Loyalist Township.

Through the effective implementation of the framework, the Township can identify and use the highest level of engagement appropriate to the situation.

The goal of community engagement is not to achieve consensus, but to ensure that decision-making is well informed and, when appropriate, provides stakeholders with the means and opportunity to share their ideas, experience and knowledge on issues that affect them.

The Framework provides a variety of communication and marketing tools and techniques and a framework to be followed to inform and engage the public on a variety of municipal activities coordinated every year.

Development of the Community Engagement Framework

At the beginning of 2021 staff developed a draft Engagement Framework after:

- research on successful community engagement strategies employed by comparators municipalities
- consultation with members of staff in each departments who commonly engage with the public
- evaluation of communication tools and tactics

Once a draft was developed, the Framework was tested and refined on several Township projects. Projects include the Community Hub, the Township's Infrastructure Master Plan, Budget consultation and key localized infrastructure projects, such as the Nielson Store Dock Reconstruction.

Overall, the framework aims at developing a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered. The framework establishes guiding principles for community engagement, while providing staff with tools and techniques that can be implemented to ensure a consistent engagement experience for Township residents.

Guiding Principles

The framework contains guiding principles which are to help in the design of effective engagement plans which reflect the interests and concerns of the public.

The guiding principles are:

- Planning and Preparation
- Accessible and Inclusive
- Collaboration and Shared Purpose
- Openness and Respect
- Transparent and Accountable
- Sustained Engagement and Participation

Levels of Engagement

The Framework identifies five levels of community engagement to establish. The five levels are inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. These levels of engagement are based on the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation. The goal of community engagement isn't necessarily to progress through all levels of the spectrum, however, it is about determining the appropriate level of engagement based on the situation.

Community Engagement Five Step Work Plan

This is the five step plan that every Township employee, council member, contractor, or anyone engaging with the community on behalf of the Township will use while planning any engagement activities. It is intended to make the plan clear and accessible, while establishing an inclusive, positive, and consistent process.

The five steps are:

1. Preparing to Start
2. Determine the Community Engagement Strategy, Tools & Techniques
3. Implement and Gather Public Input
4. Analyze Data, Communicate & Share the Results
5. Evaluate the Community Engagement Process & Outcome

2023 Communication Investment

As part of the 2023 Operating Budget, Council approved an enhancement to advertising of approximately \$30,000. This enhancement was proposed to support the Township's commitment to engaging our residents and stakeholders. A portion of this funding has been used to build a public engagement kit that staff can use to brand and identify themselves as Township representatives when participating in public engagement events.

The remainder of the budget was purposed for building equity for residents that are unable to receive digital communications from the Township. In the budget presentation, staff proposed the following communication tools to help achieve this outcome:

1. Recurring Township ads printed in local newspapers to promote public awareness.
2. Quarterly direct mail to all Township households.

These expenses were estimated to total \$23,200 on an annual basis.

Staff are interested in consulting with Council on these investments and would like to receive feedback from Council on any other alternatives they would like explored by Township staff.

Conclusion

Prior to the implementation of the Framework, the Township employed a variety of approaches to interact with the community on projects, studies, initiatives, services and programs. Through the adoption of a Community Engagement Framework, the Township can establish well-planned community engagement strategies, helping to ensure that the application of principles and best practices of engagement across the Township are consistent. With a consistent approach, expectations and understanding can be established for how citizens and other stakeholders can become involved.

Financial Implications

The implementation of this framework will have no financial impact itself. Any associated communication expenses have already been presented as part of the 2023 operating budget, however, with enhancements to the 2023 advertising budget, staff would like to see Council input on some proposed advertising options.

Risks or Stakeholder Implications

The implications of operating without a clearly defined Community Engagement Framework could include:

- Inconsistent communication and engagement processes;
- Poorly informed residents without the means and opportunity to share their ideas, experience and knowledge;
- Less data and input from residents to inform decision-making;
- Diminished customer service; and
- Decreased buy-in and connection with the community.

Communication and Consultation Plan

The draft Community Engagement Framework has been distributed and presented to Township Directors and Managers for review and input prior to presentation to the Committee of the Whole. Once the Framework has been adopted:

- The Framework will be posted and available to residents on the Township website.
- Staff training will be conducted to ensure that any staff engaging with the community understand the processes and tools contained within the Community Engagement Framework.
- Engagement reports will accompany staff reports to detail the engagement process followed and the resulting feedback.

Alternatives

There are two alternatives being proposed for consideration:

1. That the Committee of the Whole recommends that Council approve the proposed Community Engagement Framework as presented; **OR**
2. That the Committee of the Whole provides feedback and direction to staff on the Community Engagement Framework and the updated draft Framework be included on a future Committee of the Whole Agenda for further discussion.

Attachments

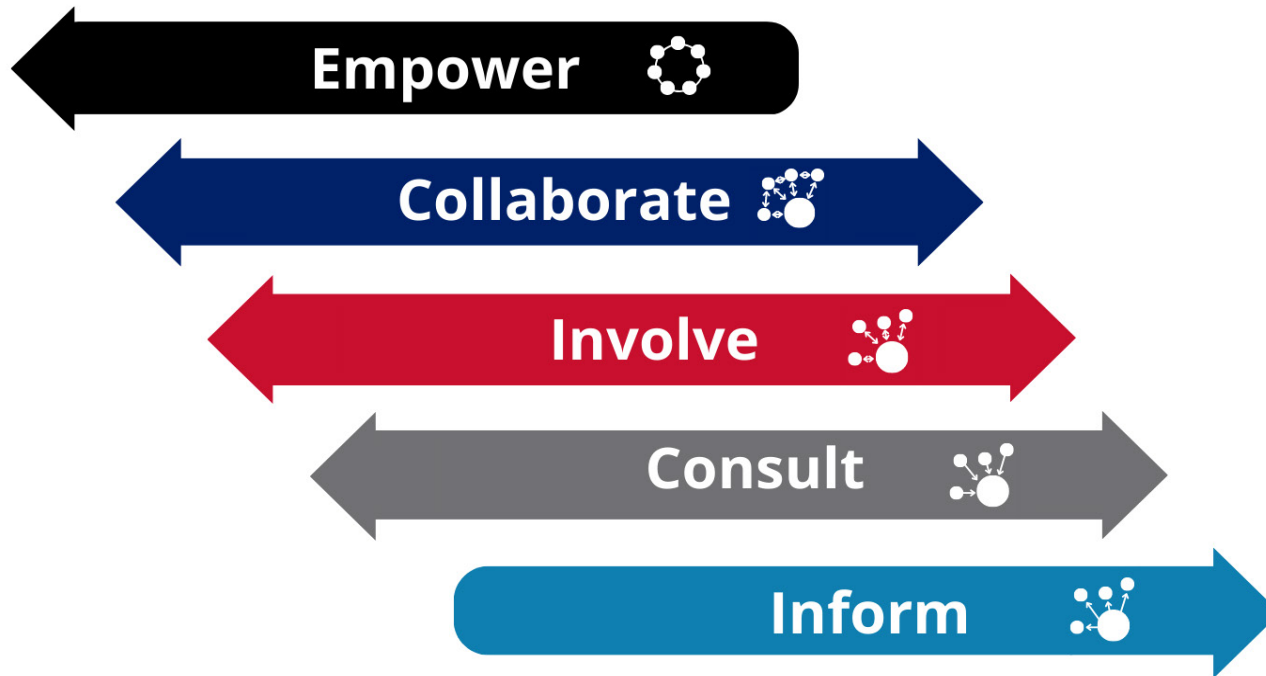
[Community Engagement Framework Interactive](#)

Approved by

Approved by
Jenna Campbell, Director of Corporate Services
Rebecca Murphy, Chief Administrative Officer

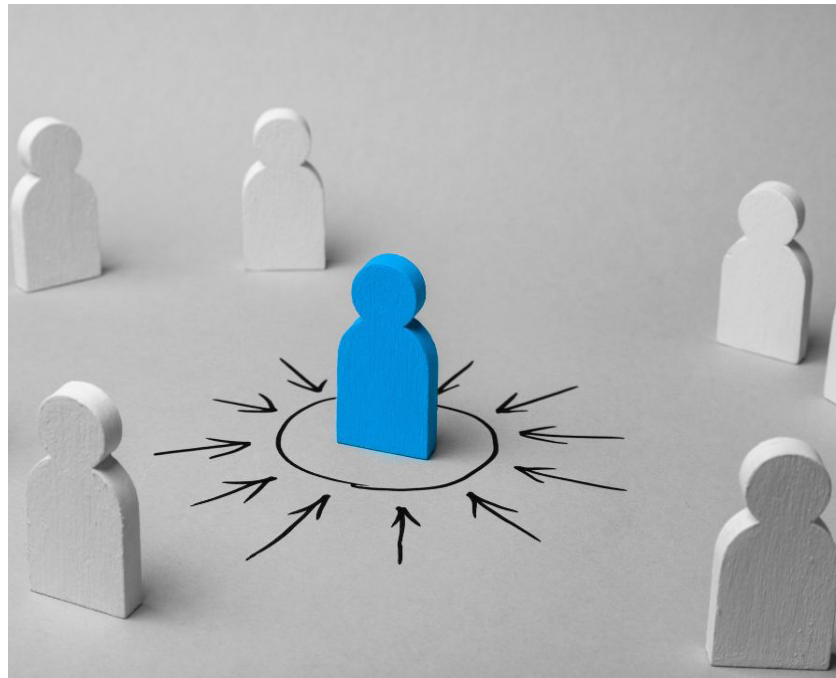
Status:
Approved - 29 Mar 2023
Approved - 30 Mar 2023

Public Engagement Framework



Contents

<u>Goal of Community Engagement</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>What is Community Engagement.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Why Does Loyalist Township Have a Community Engagement Framework?.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Loyalist Township Community Engagement Guiding Principles.....</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Determining Level of Community Impact.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Community Engagement Five Step Work Plan</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Appendix.....</u>	<u>17</u>



Goal of Community Engagement

The Loyalist Township Community Engagement Framework outlines the Township's commitment to create a consistent and clearly defined process for what community engagement looks like in Loyalist Township.

Through the effective implementation of the framework, the Township can identify and use the highest level of engagement appropriate to the situation.

The goal of community engagement is not to achieve consensus, but to ensure that decision-making is well informed and, when appropriate, provides stakeholders with the means and opportunity to share their ideas, experience and knowledge on issues that affect them.

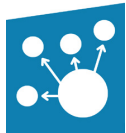


What is Community Engagement

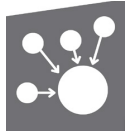
Community engagement involves the various ways in which communication between the local government and the public is forged with a goal of community understanding and involvement in projects, studies, initiatives, services and programs. Engagement with the public is also participatory democracy that can put decision-making powers in the hands of the people in collaboration with the local government.

Dialogue between the public and local government is achieved through active participation by individuals and groups within the community. The purpose of this dialogue is to acquire the knowledge, experiences, and opinions of community members before decisions are made.

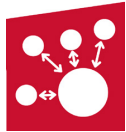
Community engagement is any process that involves the public in problem solving and uses public input to help make decisions. It means regularly informing or engaging the community on projects, studies, initiatives, services, and programs through:



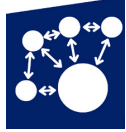
Informing: Community engagement begins with the sharing of information to all involved participants.



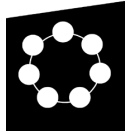
Consulting: Community engagement is reliant upon gathering and understanding the views, aspirations, and ideas of the public and clearly indicating how the input will affect the issue or decision.



Involving: At the Involving level, connections with the community happen through two-way discussions and on-going feedback during various stages of the decision-making process.



Collaborating: The public participates in the identification and development of the preferred impact and alternatives and determines the desired outcomes.



Empowering: Stakeholders make final and binding decisions about their own future.

Why Does Loyalist Township Have a Community Engagement Framework?

The development and implementation of a community engagement framework was identified as a key strategic priority during the creation of Loyalist Township's Strategic Plan for 2019-2023.

A well-planned community engagement framework helps to ensure that the application of principles and best practices of engagement across the Township are consistent and effective. With a consistent approach, expectations and understanding can be established for how citizens can become involved.

The Framework provides a variety of communication and marketing tools and techniques and a framework to be followed to inform and engage the public on a variety of municipal activities coordinated every year.

Who should use this Framework?

This Community Engagement Framework is intended to be understood by all individuals involved in Township operations, projects, and initiatives. This includes staff, council members, contractors, others assisting the Township in any project, initiative, study, and the public.

When should you use this Framework?

The Community Engagement Framework provides a clear process and tools to support both short-term and long-term projects implemented by Loyalist Township. Whether it be the feedback for the Official Plan or a road closure, there is no single approach to community engagement. The Framework does, however, have a variety of techniques and tools to support informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and/or empowering the public.

Community Engagement Tools & Techniques:

See Appendix A for a comprehensive list of tools and techniques the Township regularly uses to engage with stakeholders.



Loyalist Township Community Engagement Guiding Principles

These Guiding Principles can serve to help in the design of effective engagement plans which reflect the interests and concerns of the public.

Planning and Preparation:

Providing a clear plan including defining the content, design, and organization of the community engagement process and effectively communicating with the community is crucial to achieving purposeful feedback and ideas from the residents of Loyalist Township. The thoughtful engagement of the public and the meaningful consideration of their concerns and ideas is vital to any decision-making process.

Accessible and Inclusive:

Inclusive community engagement fosters a sense of welcoming, belonging, recognition and safety for all people, where diverse perspectives and ways of life are sought, valued, and respected. Consideration should be given to the accessibility of the engagement space the use of plain language, implementation of alternate formats such as large print and the availability of communications supports.

Many people have historically experienced and continue to experience marginalisation because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background, citizenship status, or other identities and lived experiences. Due to overt exclusion and/or systemic physical, social, and financial barriers, these groups are frequently under-represented in leadership and engagement processes.

Inclusion in community engagement means to involve people who reflect the demographic, attitudinal and experiential diversity of the communities that may be impacted by a decision. Diverse participation guides information on the engagement from the start to the end which will inform schedules and logistics, as well as identify any cultural needs of the participants.

In recognition of Indigenous Peoples' ancestral ties to these lands and their inherent and distinct Treaty, constitutional, and human rights, the Township holds a responsibility and desire to work in a spirit of reconciliation in all engagement processes.

Loyalist Township Community Engagement Guiding Principles

Collaboration and Shared Purpose:

The sharing of information and ideas is encouraged to support a shared cause and to ensure that participants can work together as closely as possible. Clear feedback is reliant upon the building of trust through dialogue and the maintenance of open and efficient communications as outlined for the process. Individuals should collaborate as much as possible to maximise the use and inclusion of different skill sets, backgrounds and ideologies throughout every step from planning to implementation.

Openness and Respect:

In the interests of achieving shared goals as quickly as possible, individuals should be open to the opinions and ideas of others and approach them in an unbiased manner.

It is important to value, respect and appreciate the perspectives and insights of all participants. Everyone should be given the opportunity to provide their feedback without interruption. People should feel safe to speak their minds and share all information relevant to an issue. Without this assurance people may be led to withhold information, ideas, or opinions could offer improved resolution of a problem.

Guidelines for participation will be visible, where appropriate, at community engagement sessions. To ensure a respectful atmosphere for all participants and facilitators, participants could be asked to remove themselves if they do not treat others respectfully.



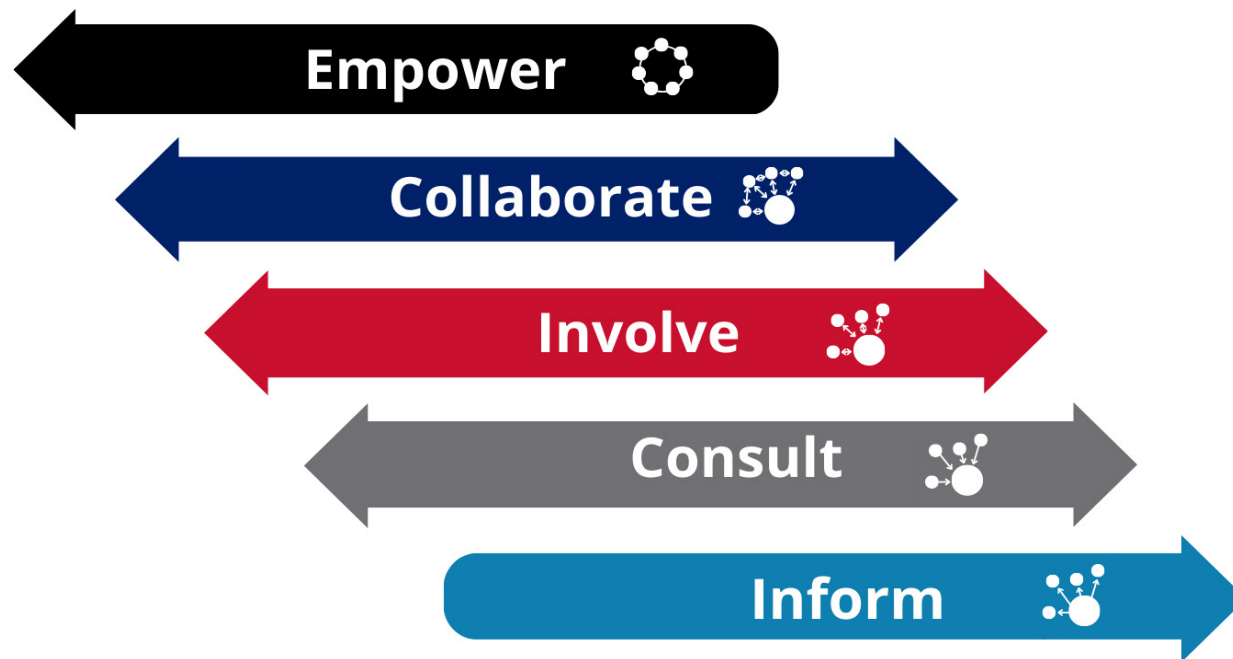
Loyalist Township Community Engagement Guiding Principles

Transparent and Accountable:

Continual transparent interactions and accountability throughout the engagement process is critical. The ability and willingness to answer any lingering questions presented by the public will increase buy-in and encourage further input.

Sustained Engagement and Participation:

Engagement facilitators and participants should maintain continuous engagement and participation throughout every process they are involved in to see it through to completion. In addition, the more practiced people become, the easier the engagement process will be in the future.



Determining Appropriate Level of Community Engagement

Level of Community Engagement

	Inform 	Consult 	Involve 	Collaborate 	Empower 
Application of Level of Community Engagement	Apprise stakeholders of any project, issue, or decision that would impact them Provide additional information to stakeholders to clarify matters as required. Input cannot change the outcome, but information needs to be shared with community.	Gather feedback or build consensus regarding decisions, projects, and issues Establish what priorities, parameters and options should be the focus of the project or program moving forward.	Engage directly with stakeholders while in the process of resolving an issue or completing projects and making decisions. Connect with the community on a deeper level through on-going public feedback during the decision-making process. Most often found in the planning or implementation phase of a process. Stakeholder expertise form an important part of the solution.	Generally used for projects with a well-defined or limited scope. Creates a deeper partnership with stakeholders by communicating throughout the process. The public participates in the identification and development of the preferred impact and alternatives are not prescribed beforehand. The public develops and determines the desired outcomes. Stakeholder expertise is required to find a solution.	The citizens of the community make final and binding decisions about their own future.

Determining Appropriate Level of Community Engagement

Level of Community Engagement

	Inform 	Consult 	Involve 	Collaborate 	Empower 
Implementation	Notify the community of upcoming projects, issues, proposals, information relevant to upcoming decisions. Respond to any further questions the public may have. Screen for further levels of engagement.	Gather feedback and comments on proposals, decisions, facilities and projects. Analyze feedback and use data to inform decision-making. Screen for further levels of engagement.	Two-way discussions and on-going feedback during various stages of the decision-making process. Use more personal communication that is spread throughout more of the process. Analyze feedback and use data to inform decision-making.	This is a longer process than consultation or involve and may include regular meetings with stakeholders. Provide opportunities to influence decision-making and setting priorities together. Stakeholders develop preferred impact and alternatives. Stakeholders gather feedback and analyze data to inform decision-making. Stakeholders recommend outcomes.	May involve a Township wide referendum or vote whereby the people determine their own future.

Determining Appropriate Level of Community Engagement

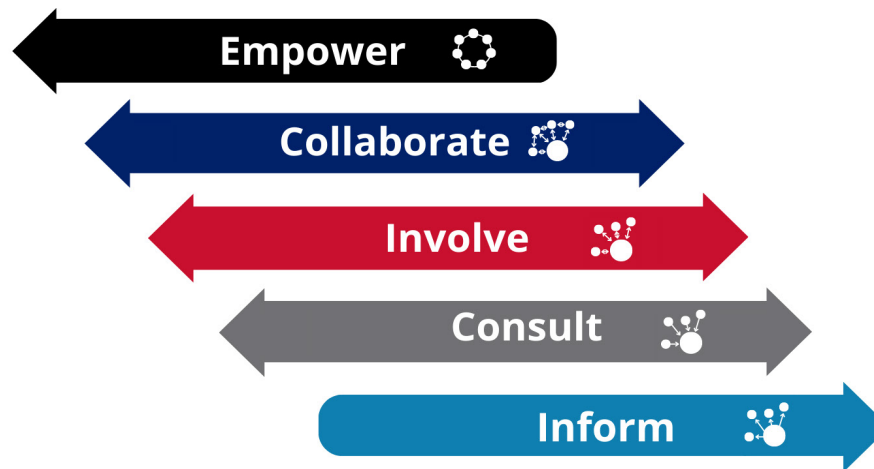
Level of Community Engagement

	Inform 	Consult 	Involve 	Collaborate 	Empower 
Communication Style	Township to Community One-way	Township to community and Community to Township Two-way	Township to community, back to Township and then to community Two-way and interactive	Township to community, community to Township and back and forth multiple times	Township to community, community to Township with final decision being made by community. Township to communicate outcome of community's decision
Considerations	One-way communication is most efficient for routine or emergency activities. Can serve as a preparatory stage, prior to more engagement.	Concerns raised by the public should be acknowledged, and feedback on how that input influenced the decision should be communicated. Public input tends to be one way at this level.	Concerns and opinions should be directly reflected in and influence the options that are considered as part of the decision. Requires a more open timeframe due to feedback loop through various stages.	Best used when there is an opportunity for a shared agenda and flexible time frames for the deliberation of issues.	Not used frequently in municipal settings Limited but significant scope of applications

Determining Appropriate Level of Community Engagement

Level of Community Engagement

	Inform 	Consult 	Involve 	Collaborate 	Empower 
Examples	Web sites Fact sheets Direct mail	Public information sessions Surveys	Workshops Deliberate polling	Citizen advisory committees Consensus-building	Ballots Delegated decisions
Decision Making	Township	Township	Township	Township with recommendations from stakeholders	Stakeholders



Community Engagement Five Step Work Plan

This is the five-step plan that every Township employee, council member, contractor, or anyone engaging with the community on behalf of the Township will use while planning any engagement activities. It is intended to make the plan clear and accessible, while establishing an inclusive, positive, and consistent process.

Step 1: Preparing to Start

Define the initiative and assess the need for community engagement

Before beginning, it is important to clearly identify the issue you are hoping to address and decide if you should be engaging with the community. To help you assess the need for community engagement, start with some of these questions:

- What is the scope of the project?
- Will engagement help you better understand the issue, make better decisions, and/or new ways to solve it?
- Is it the appropriate time to hold meaningful community engagement?
- Have you allocated sufficient time to implement the appropriate level of engagement?
- What other departments, staff members of agencies need to be involved in the planning and execution of the engagement process?
- What resources will be required?
- Are there specific stakeholders who are impacted?
- Will the project cause any disruptions to everyday life?

Potential stakeholders

Identify what people or groups will be affected. Will there be disruptions to certain people's lives or livelihoods? Whose lives will be impacted by these changes?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Citizens | • Agencies |
| • Township | • Township staff |
| • Community groups | • Council members |
| • Upper tiers of government | • User groups |
| • Development community | • Adjacent landowners/tenants |
| • Business community | • Partners and Vendors |

Community Engagement Five Step Work Plan

Step 2: Determine the Community Engagement Strategy, Tools & Techniques

- Using the [Determining Appropriate Level of Community Engagement Table](#), identify the appropriate level of engagement for your project.
- Use the Tools and Techniques Matrix to determine the tools and techniques are most effective at reaching the target audience.
- Assess the resources available for your engagement process.
- Consider the following questions:
 - How long will the information be relevant.
 - For how long will new developments be occurring?
 - Is the information accessible to everyone?
 - How complex is the topic you are trying to address?

Step 3: Implement and Gather Public Input

This is the part of the process where the aim is to welcome stakeholders and ensure that public involvement is respected and valued as communication is carried out. There may be a need for refinement in the implementation phase as the reality of influencing factors become more apparent. There may be a need to extend the public engagement timelines due to lack of feedback or the need for additional or more diverse feedback.



Community Engagement Five Step Work Plan

Step 4: Analyze Data, Communicate & Share the Results

It is important to ensure that careful consideration is given to the analysis of feedback and data through the engagement process. While staff must interpret the feedback and data and often offer a recommendation or proposal, reports should include primary or raw data from engagement efforts in addition to analysis from staff.

It is important to inform the internal and external stakeholders of outcomes, decisions, and next steps. Stakeholders value the follow-up and rationale for the decision. Be sure to report:

- What decisions were made,
- Why those decisions were made, and
- How public input was used to inform decision-making.

Things to consider:

- Who do you need to communicate the decision and rationale to?
- How will you report the findings from your engagement process to ensure the data is easily consumable? What findings will you present?
- What format will you use? (i.e., online, electronic, or printed report, detailed or summary document).
- How will you promote and distribute your findings?
- How will you manage feedback/reaction to the decision and rationale?



Community Engagement Five Step Work Plan

Step 5: Evaluate the Community Engagement Process & Outcome

It is important to evaluate the community engagement process and outcome to identify new opportunities to enhance engagement.

Sit down with others involved in the engagement process to evaluate the effectiveness of the process and consider the following questions:

- Did the engagement reach those affected?
- Was the communication timely?
- Did participants feel informed and engaged?
- Was the process inclusive?
- Were there any barriers that needed to be addressed?
- Was the appropriate level of engagement selected?
- Did the feedback have an impact on the recommendations and/or decisions?
- Was the necessary time allocated for the engagement process to be effective?



Appendix

Appendix A – Tools & Techniques Matrix

[Engagement Tools Dashboard.xlsx](#)

