

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS: A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE

# Civic Engagement at The City of Victoria





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“Improved engagement cannot be seen in isolation...it should be linked with improved decision-making procedures, improved ways of conflict resolution; and visibly improved responsiveness. If engagement does not lead to responsiveness and tangible results, the vision will not be achieved. Worse, apathy and cynicism will increase.”

Irwin Henderson, community member

# Executive Summary

Like many governments around the world, the City of Victoria recognizes that effective civic engagement is an integral part of good governance, and that the amount and quality of such engagement affects our quality of life. Few municipal governments in British Columbia has taken measures to review and formalized their approach to civic engagement. In 2009, City Council identified engaging with residents as one of its top priorities, following the endorsement of George Cuff's Governance Review and the adoption of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) principles for engagement.

This strategy identifies principles and best practices for reaching out to inform and involve citizens in public decision-making. These principles and practices complement the formal channels for public input identified in the Governance Review. While the consultation process for this strategy revealed a keen interest in improving how citizens and community-based organizations could connect more effectively with each other, the purpose of this strategy is to focus specifically on how the City of Victoria can better engage with residents to improve decision-making and service delivery.

## What is civic engagement? What are the benefits of a civic engagement strategy?

Civic engagement is "timely and meaningful citizen and stakeholder involvement in civic priority setting, decision-making, program development, and service delivery". Effective civic engagement is a key part of good governance. Civic engagement improves governance by giving policy makers better information to support their decision-making, program development and service delivery, while meeting rising citizen expectations of government transparency and responsiveness. The goal of civic engagement is not to produce an absolute consensus, but to ensure that the decision-making is well-informed and offers citizens the chance to contribute their ideas and knowledge to policy development. Research

shows that people, service and public trust are linked. An organization's engagement approach has a strategic role in relation to employee relationships, customer service and citizen engagement. A civic engagement strategy helps to ensure that the application of principles and best practices of engagement across the City is consistent.

This in turn assures that civic engagement has a positive impact on City decision-making.

## How was this strategy developed?

This strategy document is the result of a consultation process commissioned by the City of Victoria, and carried out by researchers at HB Lanarc Consultants and UBC. Over four months, input on how to improve civic engagement in Victoria was collected from over 200 citizens, stakeholders, City staff, and local "key informants".

The consultation process revealed a strong desire to build on past successes, to learn from past mistakes, to repair damaged relationships, and to rebuild trust. Another goal is to use current best practices and evolving tools and methods to develop a clear and consistent set of policies and procedures to improve engagement practice.

## Six Challenges for Engagement in the City of Victoria

The consultation process revealed six core challenges facing the City of Victoria's civic engagement efforts.

These challenges include:

1. confusion about roles and responsibilities in engagement;
2. how to set priorities when resources are scarce;
3. how to ensure that engagement efforts are consistent and co-ordinated across City departments and initiatives;
4. how to allocate resources for engagement;
5. how to ensure effective communication about City issues;
6. and how to engage a diversity of stakeholders and citizens in civic engagement.

## Clarifying Role Confusion

This strategy identifies distinct roles for City Council, Staff, and Citizens in civic engagement. City Councillors can strengthen their role as representatives by working with staff and citizens to identify top priorities for civic engagement, by publicly promoting civic participation in engagement initiatives, and by clearly acknowledging citizen input in decision-making. City Staff are best positioned to use their professional expertise in planning, managing and reporting back from engagement initiatives. Public Advisory Committees, Neighbourhood Associations and other stakeholders can assist in setting priorities for engagement and encouraging participation in civic engagement initiatives, while ensuring they are broadly representative of their constituencies. The role of Citizens is to assist in communicating, setting priorities, participating, voicing opinions and listening to others.

The historical public advisory committee structure was commonly referenced and considered fragmented and unclear. At the same time it seemed to often be the one or main form of public input leaving external groups uninvolved or disenfranchised.

## Identifying Priorities

The consultation process revealed some priority areas for engagement and resource allocation. In general, it was agreed that citizens should be engaged as early as possible in the policy development cycle. Citizens were interested in receiving better information about city issues, and the report outlines criteria for providing substantial information on all new initiatives. Citizens were also interested opportunities to have more empowered participation in key policy areas. In consultation with key informants and citizens two policy areas were identified as priorities for more in-depth and empowered participation: the Official Community Plan, and the Community Sustainability Strategy. These far-reaching plans will set a direction for the entire community and thus deserve greater profile and resourcing than would more narrow topics or more localized issues. In addition, citizens should be periodically consulted about their priorities for engagement.

## Ensuring Consistency & Coordination

Improving the consistency and co-ordination of the City's civic engagement initiatives was seen as key to maintaining trusting relationships and building a more engaged citizenry over time. The City's approach to customer service came up frequently as the often the first concern citizens had about barriers to accessing information or service. This report recommends implementing several internal systems for meeting this challenge. The systems include developing internal tools to ensure the application of guiding principles, using a consistent engagement planning process and tools such as project and consultation management software, and using metrics to evaluate engagement success. To increase the capacity of staff in using consistent systems the report recommends that staff training and knowledge-sharing opportunities be implemented across City departments.

## Allocating Resources

With priorities established, roles clarified and systems standardized, resources dedicated to engagement will be used more efficiently than before. However, the City must still ensure adequate resourcing of engagement efforts and must build this into budgets. Resourcing includes allocating time and staff support for planning, implementation and evaluation of civic engagement processes. Resourcing must also support training, organization-wide learning, expanded communication efforts, and consultation software mentioned above. The City should centralize an Office of Civic Engagement to help align City project management and planning areas to engagement resources and to implement consistency and co-ordination measures across the corporation.

## Improving Customer Service and Communication

The report recommends strengthening the ethos of City Communications towards two-way dialogue and investment in relationships. It also highlighted the need for more centralized, one-stop opportunities for customer service. A coordinated approach that provides increased opportunities for dialogue, improves ease of access to information, and ensures the use of standardized communication tools is already under development. Highlights of this approach include centralized customer service opportunities, making information easier to access electronically, ensuring timely notice of Council business and civic engagement opportunities, clarifying correspondence practice to ensure realistic expectations about feedback to city, centralizing customer services online, and developing outreach program “go to where the people are” a constant presence, not issue or project specific.

## Embracing Diversity

The strategy recommends that the City acknowledge and identify the needs and interests of distinct stakeholder groups in public engagement, and offers tools and strategic actions to accomplish this goal. A primary function of the Office of Civic Engagement would be to explore and “develop preferred ways to engage” with diverse stakeholders. The strategy also identifies common barriers to engagement, and identifies techniques for engaging underrepresented populations.

## Planning Tools and Resources

With the approval of this strategy, City staff will have increased responsibilities in terms of the number, scope and quality of engagement efforts they will be expected to lead or participate in. The final section of this report offers tools and resources to enhance the City’s capacity to effectively plan, manage and evaluate civic engagement. These tools include a series of “12-Steps to Successful Engagement” to think through the issues and design and deliver an effective engagement program; a “Techniques Toolkit” that is organized around the purpose of the engagement – to inform, to consult and involve, or to collaborate and empower; and a “Further Resources” section that provides links to other toolkits, frameworks, and websites that can be drawn from as needed.

# Introduction

Like many governments around the world, the City of Victoria recognizes that effective civic engagement is an integral part of good governance, and that the amount and quality of such engagement affects our quality of life.

This is because citizens and stakeholders have tremendous amounts of useful knowledge, ideas and energy to share with elected officials and municipal staff as they identify and examine community issues, as tough decisions are made, and as they develop and deliver policy and program responses for the common good.

In March 2009, City Council identified improving how the City (council and staff) engages with the public as one of its seven top strategic priorities. Council then agreed to develop and implement a “civic engagement strategy” to improve the scope, quality and efficiency of its interactions with citizens and stakeholders.

In June 2009, City Council also adopted the following principles from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2):

1. Those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
2. Promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Seek input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Communicate to participants how their input affected decisions.

To ensure progress on these principles, engagement practitioners and researchers from HB Lanarc Consultants and UBC were contracted to develop the “civic engagement strategy” in consultation with elected officials, staff, and especially with City residents. This document brings together strategies, policies, procedures and tools for improved engagement with the City, building on the IAP2 principles.

Related objectives of this strategy are to:

- Better understand the diversity and strength of public opinion
- Reach the “silent majority” of citizens more often
- Share different viewpoints and learn from each other
- Generate new ideas and solutions
- Build trust in decision-makers and more organizational capacity
- Enhance community capacity and social connections
- Identify barriers for engagement with “hard to reach” sectors

Finally, the “civic engagement strategy” must build upon the Governance Review recently endorsed in 2009, weaving engagement into the new framework of public input processes mentioned there.

George Cuff, in *Cuff's Guide for Municipal Leaders*, writes that engagement helps councils to meet their primary governance objective:

The public understands that those they elect are expected to provide governance leadership to the municipality in terms of the presumed policy interests and preferences of the public.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Cuff, *Making a Difference: Cuff's Guide for Municipal Leaders*, Municipal World, 2007, p. 27.

The Cuff Governance Review recommended the use of four main structures to ensure regular channels for civic engagement:

- Advisory Committees
- Neighbourhood Associations
- Presentations to council by groups or citizens
- Public dialogue sessions at the start or end of a Governance and Priorities Committee or standing committee meeting

We feel that these structures offer regular, routine and useful ways to access municipal government, keeping it transparent and accountable to residents and stakeholders. With ongoing effort to improve their connection to council decision-making and areas of staff responsibility, these structures will influence the overall direction of City policy, build trusting working relationships, and provide a necessary foundation for connecting with a broader cross-section of the public. Their potential for enhanced engagement is substantial and must be taken seriously, paying particular attention to the current and future role of neighbourhood associations.

However, one limitation is that these structures do not offer enough avenues for engaging with people who may be interested in the issues, able to contribute, or who will be affected by related decisions, but who lack the information, time and/or knowledge to seek out city staff, administrators, and council in these few ways. This was confirmed by the input received throughout the process.

The City recognizes that a more fully developed civic engagement strategy involves reaching out to engage citizens where they work and live, raising awareness and “opening doors” using innovative tools and channels, rather than expecting citizens to always come to the City. This report identifies additional methods for engaging the public that complement the four structures identified in the Governance Review, and suggests a further effort to develop these four structures as engagement vehicles.

Finally, there are arguments to be made for community-building efforts by government in the exercise of its various duties. While the consultation process for this strategy revealed a keen interest in improving how citizens and community-based organizations could connect more effectively with each other to enhance community well-being, this strategy consciously focuses on improving the City of Victoria’s capacity to engage effectively with residents to improve decision-making and service delivery.

This reflects the original direction given by City council, and the effort to build a sound foundation for engagement that can be expanded and enhanced later on.

## Focus On...Definitions

This strategy makes numerous references to “stakeholders” and “citizens”. During the consultation for this strategy, we applied the following definitions:

- **Stakeholders:** Organizations, community groups, and more formal associations that are representative of the wider community and have related interests.
- **Citizens:** The wider community and the general public, including people who are not officially voters.

# Defining Engagement and its Benefits

We define civic engagement as “timely and meaningful citizen and stakeholder involvement in civic priority setting, decision-making, program development, and service delivery”.

Improving how government bodies engage is a hot topic across the country, and has special relevance to BC. In November 2008, the Auditor-General of BC produced a report titled *Public Participation: Best Practices and Principles for British Columbia* which stated that governments are increasingly “...engaging the public in a range of public participation activities in order to be more transparent and demonstrate that significant decisions have been made with external views in mind”. (p.5)

In fact, increased efforts are now being made in municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments to engage more effectively, ensuring that the ideas and suggestions of citizens and stakeholders are actively sought, listened to and used as decisions are reached and programs developed.

The ultimate goal of efforts to enhance and expand civic engagement is to improve government decision-making, make information for citizens easier to access, and offer more – and more varied – opportunities for citizens to have input into matters that affect them.

This movement also seeks to meet rising citizen expectations of openness and responsiveness, to improve the quality of decisions reached and the effectiveness of programs and services, and to help government better address the range of issues that communities now face.

The core rationale for this shift is to improve governance:

“By moving away from a silo-based approach to a more integrative process involving further understanding of what citizens truly think and value, trust and confidence in government will be strengthened, in turn improving government’s ability to deal with the complexity of the issues”<sup>2</sup>

While engagement is becoming more commonplace, it is also expanding in scope and richness. To quote one practitioner:

“The field of civic engagement is advancing along several dimensions: scaling-up both in numbers and diversity of people involved; increasing the continuity of participatory mechanisms over time; strengthening the links between dialogue, decision-making and action...and increasing community capacity for collaboration.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to finding common ground and improving the perception that decisions are fair, civic engagement has additional benefits for policy makers and citizens.

For policy makers and staff, civic engagement enables them to hear new perspectives, learn new things, and gain more representative input that improves decision-making and the policies, programs and services that follow. From the perspective of citizens, increased opportunities for engagement and collaboration with government deepen citizens’ impact on, understanding of, and ownership of the decisions reached.

2 Sandra Klashinsky, “Public participation: Sustainable solutions require shift in decision-making process,” *Canadian Government Executive*, January 2010, p. 24

3 Patricia A. Wilson, “Deep Democracy: the inner practice of civic engagement”, *Fieldnotes: a newsletter of the Shambhala Institute*, Feb 2004, issue 3, p.5.

Other possible benefits include:

- Greater accountability to and transparency for the public
- Increased understanding between the public, staff, and elected officials
- Reduced conflict between different interests
- Improved efficiency of decision-making and implementation
- Promotion of organizational learning, improving service delivery
- Better solutions and products, more responsive to community needs/priorities
- Identifying and bringing community resources to bear on mutually agreed challenges and opportunities

However, the goal of civic engagement is not to achieve absolute consensus or agreement, nor is it to delegate the final decision to the community.

Mayor and council, better informed by constructive citizen and stakeholder input, will still have to make the difficult decisions demanded of them, and some stakeholders and/or citizens will not like some of these decisions.<sup>4</sup>

Rather the goal of civic engagement is to create opportunities for citizens from different points of view to come together to share their opinions with staff and elected officials, to listen to and learn from everyone concerned, and to assist decision-makers as they move forward in solving common problems.

Also, two US practitioners recently concluded that using a “problem solving approach” that respects differences while engaging different viewpoints can yield new insights and new ways to move forward:

“In a world defined by flux and contingency, the ability to bring alternative viewpoints to bear on a problem is crucial...Paradoxically, [this] increases the chances that participants will, despite their many real differences, be positioned to identify and pursue new, unforeseen and unexpected directions for working together.”<sup>4</sup>

Even when it proves difficult to find common ground, good civic engagement enables elected officials and staff to show that they understand and take into account different points of view in decision-making. Research also shows that citizens feel that being heard is an important part of a fair process, and that fair processes make it easier for citizens to accept outcomes they do not like (e.g. Lind and Tyler, *The Social Psychology of Procedural Justice*, 1988).

Victoria resident Blair Humphrey summed up this perspective this way:

“Council will always have to make difficult decisions, which will not please some of the citizenry. Being able to show how all aspects of an issue were considered, and having good reasons for making a decision, will minimize the negative aspects of these decisions.”

In addition, engagement also has a critical impact on creating trust and confidence in public institutions. A recent article in **Canadian Government Executive** highlighted findings from a BC Stats report:

“The most interesting finding by BC Stats were that a) a 2-way relationship does indeed exist between employee engagement and client satisfaction” and that b) a 2 point change in employee engagement scores is associated with 1 point change in service satisfaction scores. The results also show that by improving citizen satisfaction scores, we can generate greater employee pride and commitment.”<sup>5</sup>

### A critical image regarding engagement

The BC Auditor General's report provides a very useful image of a “continuum of engagement”, where the role and input of citizens in civic decision-making becomes stronger as you move towards the right hand side of the continuum. Their version reflects many elements of the IAP2 continuum of participation, and both stress that each level of engagement builds upon the previous one (starting with “Inform”).

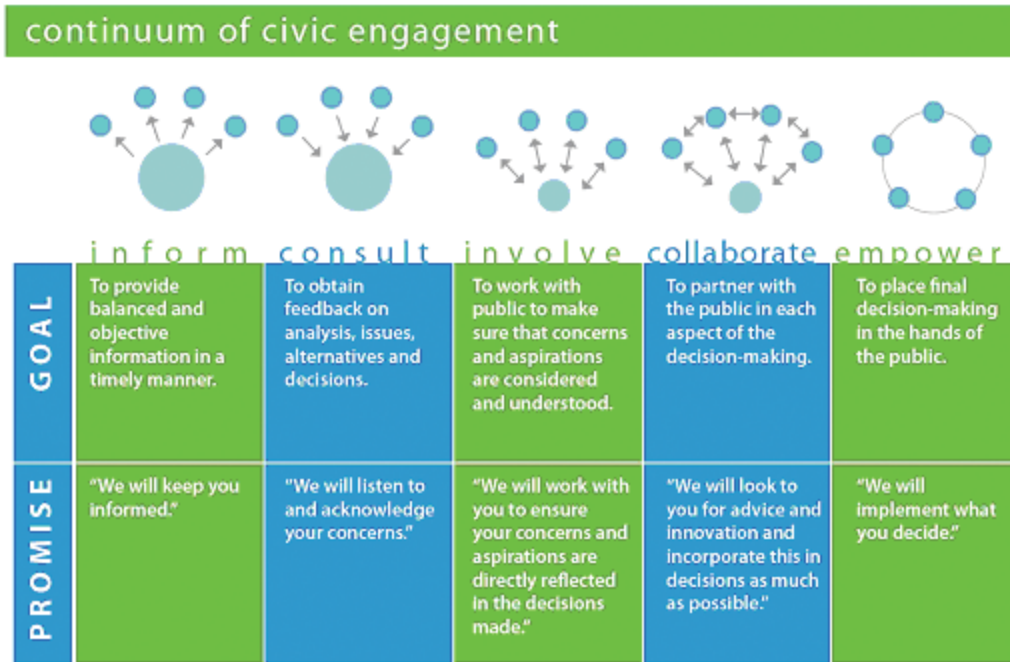
During development of this strategy, the continuum image was helpful in eliciting constructive comments about when the City should act in each level of participation, and in terms of exploring how to perform more effectively in the first four levels. It also emerged that the City had little capacity to support activities in the “empower” stage, since it was restricted from surrendering decision-making power to citizens by legislation, and since final decision-making was seen as core to the role of elected officials.

The continuum image is also helpful in that it describes the nature of the interaction at each level and defines both the objective and the commitment when engaging citizens at each level.

4 Alison Kadlec and Will Friedman, “Deliberation and the Problem of Power”, *Journal of Public Deliberation*, p. 14–15

5 Ralph Heintzman and Brian Marson, “Linked In: Research Proves that People, Service, and Public Trust are Linked”, *Canadian Government Executive*, January 2010, p. 12

We have slightly modified the image after much discussion, and present it here to ensure it remains a central element of this strategy:



Source: IAP2; Auditor General of BC

Finally, please note that later in this document we provide tools that equip City staff to assess when and how to act at different points on the continuum in a given engagement effort.

## Case Study: Downtown Late Night Task Force

Rowdiness, fighting, and street noise were some of the problems plaguing downtown Victoria in the late night hours. With a large student population, little night-time transit, and entertainment options centered on drinking, it was not surprising that downtown Victoria's reputation was suffering. In the summer of 2009, Mayor Dean Fortin formed a task force in partnership with the Chief of Police Jamie Graham and Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe to examine the situation and put forward recommendations for change.

### Process

The Task Force's goal was to create a strategy, based on community input, which would ensure that the city could maintain a safe and vibrant downtown in the late night. The Task force invited a broad range of stakeholders, including students, the restaurant and bar industry, and taxi operators, to participate in individual meetings over a two month period. During the meetings, participants were asked about their key concerns, proposed solutions, and the role they could play in advancing these solutions.

The Task Force then came back to the entire group of stakeholders in August to present what they had heard, to which they received a good level of support and further feedback. The final report, released during a press conference in November, had overwhelming levels of approval.

The City began implementing some of the recommendations in December, including putting in place more late night buses and transportation options such as taxis in supervised queues, increasing police and bylaw enforcement presence, and encouraging more food vendors in those areas, as well as setting up a Late Night Great Night Committee with stakeholders to enhance late night vibrancy and encourage the development of more activities and events downtown.

### Factors for Success

- **Be transparent:** The process was extremely open and transparent, right from the start. Some stakeholders initially had reservations about the City aiming to “shut down” downtown, but it quickly became clear that the Task Force was genuine about gathering the community's knowledge on the challenges and possible solutions.
- **Create ownership:** Stakeholders were invited to propose their own solutions to the problems they identified, which created ownership over the strategy that emerged later.
- **Explain why certain recommendations were chosen over others:** The final document not only reflected the input gathered, but it also explained why certain recommendations from stakeholders had not been implemented – thus preventing people from feeling that they had been unfairly excluded. The message from the Task Force was, “We hear you. We agree these are the issues. Let's work together to find some solutions.”
- **Keep a positive focus:** An important lesson learned during this consultation was that if you wanted to make downtown a better place, you had to “open doors” and create opportunities, not just clamp down on problems. In the end, the process won over the most severe critics, realizing that the City was not trying to shut down the city centre, but simply trying to make it a better place.
- **Articulate a clear goal that is shared among stakeholders:** Different perspectives and experience will inform a strategy to meet the goal within resources available.

# Strategy Development

Over four months, input on how to improve civic engagement in Victoria was collected from over 200 citizens, stakeholders, City staff, and local “key informants”. This reflected council direction to collect a variety of perspectives on these issues from a broad range of people in the Victoria community.

Activities included:

- 5 Key Informant Interviews and 7 Stakeholder Interviews, detailed one-on-one interviews with the following questions:
  - On what issues do you currently engage with the City?
  - What stories of successful engagement do you have to share? What made it work well?
  - What issues might you like to engage more on?
  - How would engagement best be done, in your view? What can the City do better?
  - Is there anything about your organization or the people you represent that the City doesn't understand or should know, that would affect how they work with or communicate with you?

Participants included representatives from Our Place, the Victoria Youth Council, the Intercultural Association, the Victoria Disability Resource Centre, Pacifica, the Sierra Club, Sustainable Energy, the Burnside Gorge Community Centre, and Wise Democracy

- Public Ideas Forum (PIF), an interactive and family-friendly event for the public. Boards have been appended to website.
- *IdeaScale*, an online discussion forum with voting capacity, generated 28 distinct ideas, with 24 informative comments, and approximately 1,100 votes (estimate 70-80 distinct participants so far)
- 2 focus groups with youth and immigrants to determine ways to address barriers to engagement and encourage more diverse voices (14 participants)
- Several workbooks completed – about 30 people participated in total.
- Email input from the community (29 emails)
- Discussion Pages on City of Victoria Facebook page
- Staff workshop held with 20 managers or senior program staff

- Council workshop for Mayor and Council
- Director Steering group
- Ongoing research into best practices for citizen engagement
- Over 12 submissions of public input into the first draft of the strategy

The rationale for this strenuous effort to reach out was that by moving beyond the input of just an “informed and connected minority”, the mix of people taking part in this and future civic processes and projects would be broadened and enriched, availing consultants, staff and council of different ideas, knowledge and perspectives that would benefit the project. Given the success of this outreach effort, the next citizen's survey conducted by the City will make further efforts to ensure representative input.

The input gathered directly informs this document and shows that there is a high level of interest and enthusiasm for meaningful civic engagement among City of Victoria Council members, staff and citizens.

Key findings include:

- City Council has shown a serious commitment to engage the public through its efforts to review and update its systems for governance and civic engagement. This has resulted in implementation of the Governance Report recommendations which have streamlined advisory structures and processes, confirming improving engagement and communications as Council priority, the current civic engagement initiative, observations made from the recent Alternative Approval Process, and an Official Community Plan update with an ambitious engagement target. Council's support for engagement, setting it as a priority and adopting the IAP2 principles, has continued with strong interest in and support for this initiative over the last few months, and will be drawn on again as the strategy moves into implementation.

- City Staff enthusiasm for engaging the public was evident as they shared what has succeeded in past engagement efforts: working with community organizations, reaching out to citizens where they live and work, and injecting civic engagement with celebration and fun. City staff have a strong desire to better understand and respond to resident priorities as they work with Council to develop and implement city policy. Staff are willing to engage in dialogue-based activities, learning from and drawing upon citizen and community ideas to improve projects and programs.
- Citizens reported numerous positive experiences with the City's civic engagement efforts, while also documenting areas and examples where their expectations were not met. Even more important, citizens were generally appreciative of the city's new efforts to improve and expand engagement, and were generous in offering ideas for how this strategy could deliver maximum benefit.
- There is a deep pool of engagement interest and capacity in the citizens of Victoria. Those who expressed a lack of confidence or distrust in historical experience did express a keen interest in seeing improvement.

At the same time, the consultation process has produced a clear picture of the core challenges that must be addressed. The six main challenges that the rest of this strategy seeks to address are:

1. **Role Confusion** – Clarifying the different roles and responsibilities of Council members, staff and citizens in civic decision-making, project and program design, service delivery, etc. Clarifying who makes policy, program and project decisions in our system of municipal governance. The roles of advisory committees require clarity.
2. **Prioritization** – Identifying areas and topics where civic engagement is most needed, as each issue requires a different level of engagement and resources are limited.
3. **Resourcing** – Ensuring that the top priorities for engagement receive enough resources to be done well and not raising false expectations about staff capacity to engage on all possible topics.
4. **Consistency & Co-ordination** – Ensuring clarity in how and when various engagement efforts are undertaken by and with the city, and coordinating efficiently across and among city departments and programs.

5. **Customer Service and Communication** – Ensuring that the public is aware of engagement policies and the processes they can participate in, as well as communicating back the results of engagement efforts to those concerned. Focus on provision of quality information and improved access to information.
6. **Diversity** – Recognizing that the community is not homogenous in its interests, preferred input methods, or understanding of City processes. Ensuring that resources, training and tools for outreach allow for more representative input.

# The Strategy

Overall, citizen and stakeholder consultation (supported by council, staff and citizens) during development of this civic engagement strategy revealed a strong desire to build on past successes, to learn from past mistakes, to repair damaged relationships, and to rebuild trust.

Another goal is to use current best practices and evolving tools and methods to develop a clear and consistent set of policies and procedures for engagement.

This strategy draws heavily on the public input gathered at all stages, as well as on comments and advice from City staff and council, and blends this with findings from research.

- **Part One** details key challenges for engagement identified by City Council, staff, citizens and community groups.
- **Part Two** then lists the main strategies that will to address these challenges.
- **Part Three** identifies key resources and tools required to fully implement this civic engagement strategy.

Note that all recommendations and wording in this document are submitted by the consulting team and will require review and formal acceptance by council.

## PART ONE:

# Challenges for Engagement

The consultation process produced a clear picture of six key challenges for meaningful and productive civic engagement in the City of Victoria. They are:

### 1. Role Confusion

Members of council, staff and citizens reported confusion and uncertainty about the role that each party should play in City decision-making. As elected officials, Council members are legally responsible for City decisions. Because they bear this responsibility, there was some uncertainty about the degree to which public and stakeholder input should impact the decision-making process. Because of this uncertainty, City staff reported sometimes having difficulty developing civic engagement processes that were timely and relevant for citizens.

Citizens themselves were not sure of the role their input was supposed to play in City decision-making, and expressed frustration when their input did not appear to have a direct impact on City decisions. One example is that both staff and residents recognized that neighbourhood associations have an important role to play in civic engagement, but some were concerned about the degree to which they could act as representative institutions.

Finally, the Governance Review suggested that the existing Public Advisory Committee structure be realigned to clarify and better support the formal governance structure of the City. Although the structure is clearly laid out in the Review, the mandate and function of City advisory committees (especially as related to decision-making and selection process) has not yet been fully articulated and implemented, and in some cases has become unclear as it did not articulate the role of administrative advisory committees and working groups.

In short, there are a variety of challenges with respect to the roles and responsibilities of Council, staff and citizens. Part Two of this report clarifies the roles and responsibilities of each party as a key strategy for improving the transparency and consistency of civic engagement. However, more work is required to clarify terminology and types of advisory committees used within the City of Victoria.

### 2. Prioritization

Civic engagement takes time and resources, both of which are in limited supply. Given limited resources, and a decentralized approach to engagement, City council and staff are concerned about when to organize large-scale and resource-intensive civic engagement, and when smaller-scale engagement was more appropriate. For which policy issues is it most important to engage in-depth? How should these be resourced within the City, and will the resources be made available? Which issues require more of a one-way information approach, and which require more robust efforts at further points on the engagement continuum? How can we reduce consultation fatigue and confusion among some stakeholder groups as they try to determine when and how they are to engage?

These issues present real challenges for the transparency, consistency and efficacy of engagement efforts. Part Two reports on the initial civic engagement priorities identified through the consultation process and make recommendations about how to manage the prioritization process in future.

### 3. Resourcing

Given competing demands and priorities from citizens and council, we recognize that there are limits to staff and organizational capacity to engage. Not every issue or concern deserves or can expect to receive extensive engagement effort, which poses as challenge in a community that has high expectations for providing input on City matters. When priorities are established, an appropriate engagement approach must be developed to meet those priorities, and there must also be sufficient staff and financial resources to complete the work or expectations will not be met and relationships damaged.

It should also be recognized that some stakeholders and citizens are also constrained by capacity constraints and can feel overwhelmed by the amount of consultation being asked of them. Expectations management appears to be a key issue going forward, since Victoria citizens and stakeholders seem to have very high expectations on many issues for their local government.

#### 4. Co-ordination & Consistency

Another issue identified by staff was how and when to use what kinds of civic engagement methods when timelines and resources were often limited. Citizens were confused as to why particular methods or processes were used to discuss a specific topic, yet a different method was used elsewhere. The approach applied by each department appears to vary significantly. Fairness and transparency were related concerns.

Citizens were also particularly concerned about engagement efforts that appeared to have little impact on decision-making, and wanted to avoid having engagement occur after key decisions had taken place. How and when input informs decisions was often noted to be unclear.

Part Two identifies strategies for ensuring that civic engagement processes happen in a timely and appropriate way, follow best practices of civic engagement, are supported by adequate resources, and are well co-coordinated with other City efforts. This must be a focus of implementation efforts for this strategy, since current organizational structures and culture are not necessarily conducive to civic engagement, and since capacity is stretched in attempting to ensure effective program and service delivery.

#### 5. Customer Service and Communication

Citizens are interested in having more timely and easy-to-access information about city processes, policy issues, programs, etc., and sees this as providing a basis for improved engagement. Navigating the many areas of City Hall and departments was noted as a significant barrier to receiving information and access to staff. A particular challenge for citizens, staff and Council was communicating clearly about the role and impact of citizen input on decision-making. There was a general consensus that the website must be updated as a foundational communications tool. Finally, there was a concern expressed by some that the historical communication approach was predominantly one-way rather than dialogic in nature. For some, they were satisfied with information and awareness and did not want to be more involved.

Part Two identifies strategies to address each of these communications challenges.

#### 6. Diversity

Different but useful perspectives on various issues can be gleaned from effective engagement efforts of citizens and stakeholders representing different socio-economic, cultural or demographic groups. Rejecting a “one-size fits all” approach and using multiple and/or customized approaches to draw in the voices and ideas of groups who are rarely effectively engaged is a key consideration of this strategy. The City must recognize that certain segments of the population experience barriers even at the “inform” stage of the engagement continuum, and that special effort must be made in this regard.

## Focus on...Barriers to Engagement

One of the goals of the Civic Engagement Strategy is to encourage more representative and broader engagement, not just for the “silent majority” who do not often get involved, but specifically for people who experience additional barriers, such as immigrants, youth, single parents and people with disabilities.

A great deal of effort was made during the information-gathering stages of this project to speak to a sample of these groups to learn how the City of Victoria could facilitate their involvement and remove barriers.

Some Victoria Quick stats:

- 60% of residents rent
- 21% of residents are single parents
- Household median income is lowest in the Region at \$38,888
- 12% visible minorities
- Largest demographic group is 25–39

Source: Census Canada 2006

Although these groups were diverse, it became apparent as we delved into the issues that the challenges they faced in terms of civic involvement were surprisingly similar:

- **Lack of knowledge about engagement opportunities at the municipal level:** Most people were unaware about ways in which they could become more involved. It was felt that the City did not do enough to promote or encourage civic participation, and many people mentioned that the City had a reputation for being “unwelcoming”, citing examples ranging from the layout of City Hall to the layout of the City website.
- **City’s reputation for being “indifferent” to diverse groups:** Many groups felt that they had not been invited to “sit at the table”. Although they may not have been specifically excluded, they were not actively included. Experiences ranged from organizations who felt ignored, to organizations who felt they had been invited to sit on Committees only as an afterthought.

## Case Study: Dockside Lands Redevelopment Project

### Background

The Dockside Lands, a 12 acre area, is an integral part of the Victoria Harbour. Dating from 1884, the area had been a vital part of the local economy, used for heavy industry such as shipping, railway works, and asphalt manufacturing. However, due to this history, the area was considerably contaminated by industrial waste. In 1989, the City of Victoria purchased the Dockside Lands from the Province of British Columbia for the sum of one dollar and the servicing costs to nearby Provincial Lands and all of the Dockside Lands. For the next 12 years, the City was unable to do much with the land, due to the unknown levels of environmental contamination and the consequent reluctance of the real estate industry to build there.

In 2002, the City prepared a business case for the Dockside Lands to assess potential development opportunities. Integrated project management and rigorous community engagement resulted in one of the most innovative redevelopment proposals by a Canadian municipality, to create a mixed-use community of 2500 residents and include live/work, hotel, retail, office, and light industrial uses. The Dockside Green community now stands out for its leadership in environmental sustainability, having won numerous awards including the 2006 Smart Growth Award, and in 2008 the Synergy building won the highest LEED Platinum rating in the world.

### Process

Preparing the business case involved two community consultation phases. The first was several open houses held following the release of the business case in order to inform the community of the basic issues and initial pro forma analysis. With the input received at the open houses and direction from the Steering Committee and Council, the options which met the “minimum break-even” policy were reviewed and “pro-formas” undertaken on the potentially viable land use, density and community amenity options.

Two viable options emerged from the review: the light industrial park option, and the mixed use option. These two options were taken through another set of open houses to present the information and gather feedback. A significant number of meetings were also held with the project manager and members of the Victoria West Neighbourhood Association, including an informal meeting at the start of the project to identify concerns.

### Factors for Success

- **Commit to communication:** A commitment was made at the beginning by the project manager to ensure communication and involvement of the community at key stages throughout the process. It was realized that the project had little chance of success without the community's support because previous attempts to develop the land had been derailed by fierce local opposition.
- **Meet informally:** Informal meetings between staff and concerned citizens were key to addressing community concerns, whether in restaurants, parking lots following the original meeting, or through phone calls. Due to time and resource constraints, constant community consultation was not possible, but frequent information exchanges at critical project stages and open, informal communication were important to the project's success.
- **Provide options:** Providing the public with options allowed them to learn about each option in turn, further understanding, and influencing the choice of a preferred option. The choice gave them ownership of the project, rather than setting up resistance to an option chosen by other.

Source: P Welbourn, H Cleghorn, J Davis, S Rose, *The Story of Brownfields and Smart Growth in Kingston, Ontario*, pp 252 – 267, 2008.

## PART TWO:

# Recommended Actions

### 1. Role Clarity

Recommended Action: Establish clear and distinct roles and responsibilities for Council, Staff and Citizens around civic engagement.

#### Recommended Roles:

**City Council:** Although Council is formally responsible for municipal decision-making, this responsibility is granted on the understanding that Council will represent the interests and values of the community. Civic engagement offers the opportunity for Council members to deepen their role as community representatives.

With respect to civic engagement, this report recommends that each Council member's role is to:

- \*Represent their constituents by staying in touch and working with citizens to determine top priorities for engagement. Options for “staying in touch” include attendance by Councilors at community meetings and events, providing open office hours for members of the public, and/or maintaining an email contact list of interested citizens.
- Work with staff to identify areas where public input can and will make a meaningful difference to decisions that council must make, and help set engagement priorities for the City.
- Help raise the profile of the City's engagement initiatives and input opportunities in order to ensure a high rate of participation by a wide range of citizens.
- Direct citizens to the established processes for garnering, monitoring and compiling input, and avoid circumventing these.
- Allow staff to take the lead role in identifying best practices and methods for engaging the public on various issues.
- Ensure that citizen demands for engagement opportunities are balanced with awareness of resource and capacity limits.
- Ensure that community input is well documented by staff, and that communication efforts are as complete and well-timed as possible
- Consider input gathered from citizens and stakeholders when making decisions, and clarify the rationale for decisions reached by council.

- Ensure time and resources are allocated to support successful engagement efforts
- Clearly articulate terms of reference and selection process for all advisory committees used to inform decision-making.

**City Staff:** It is important to separate the role of Council from that of staff. While Councilors are well positioned to be leaders in communicating with citizens and identifying citizen priorities, City staff are well positioned to be leaders in planning, managing and reporting back from engagement initiatives. As trained professionals, staff are responsible for developing and applying professional expertise in the area of civic engagement. This report therefore recommends that the role of City staff is to:

- Work with Council to identify areas and issues where public input can make a meaningful difference to council decisions, program development and service delivery.
- Establish channels and processes to clearly identify community priorities for engagement and then ensure that the City responds.
- Establish and communicate on engagement priorities, then apply a consistent set of policies and procedures in designing and implementing engagement activities.
- Consult with City Council, Public Advisory Committees, and Neighbourhood Association members re: engagement priorities, process design, framing issues for productive input, effective communications, and increasing engagement over time.
- Ensure timely and respectful communication with all those who engage, and show how their input has been used to influence decisions, programs and services.
- Engage in ongoing learning and professional development about civic engagement best practices.

**Public Advisory Committees:** The Governance Review recommended a new Public Advisory Committees component within its governance structure. The role of these committees is to provide early and regular public input to Council on issues of the Environment and Infrastructure, Community Development, and Planning.

In this capacity, Public Advisory Committees may play a role in the City's civic engagement initiatives by:

- Identifying and making recommendations to Council and staff on priority areas for broader civic engagement on the issues within each Committee's mandate.
- Giving input to City staff on how to set agendas and frame the issues for broader public discussion.
- Working through issues and choices as a complement to broader engagement efforts, and considering the input gleaned from the public to inform their own recommendations
- The City must clarify all advisory functions and roles within the City in a clear policy that outlines when each might be applied.
- It is common to have administrative advisory committees within municipal organizations however it should be articulated when and how these are formed for greater transparency.

**Neighbourhood Associations and other community groups:** City staff and the International Association for Public Participation report that civic engagement works better when Neighbourhood Associations and other community and stakeholder groups (such as businesses, environmental groups, arts groups, etc.) support civic engagement efforts.

In particular, Neighbourhood Associations have local knowledge, information and community networks that can be mobilized to make civic engagement meaningful and effective, and they have knowledge of community issues and assets. However, during our consultation some respondents raised concerns with how truly representative these bodies are of all interests and others raised concerns with how receptive staff and council were to their input.

There is also some history of mistrust between some of the associations, city staff and council. Finally, over 60% of all respondents in a recent Citizen's survey indicated that they were not aware of these associations.

Given these issues, this report recommends that Neighbourhood Associations' ideal role in civic engagement is to:

- Ensure that their advice and input is representative of a wide range of citizens in their community

- Provide advice about neighbourhood priorities for engagement to City Staff and Council
- Assist City staff in establishing agendas and framing the issues in civic engagement initiatives.
- Mobilize their networks and communications tools to support and participate in civic engagement initiatives
- Assist in communicating the results of civic engagement to local residents.
- Support city efforts to use input received from engagement efforts

**General Public:** Citizens are more than passive consumers of services provided by city staff and council and paid for by taxes. Citizens can and do contribute to informed decision-making and the quality of life in their neighbourhoods by raising their concerns and contributing their ideas and energy to various local initiatives. With this in mind, this report recommends the proper role of citizens is to:

- Help identify community needs, priorities, and assets
- Participate in engagement initiatives and encourage others to participate.
- Express their point of view and contribute their ideas.
- Be willing to listen to and learn from other community members.
- Recognize and grapple with the trade-offs involved in any policy issue.
- Support staff in their efforts to involve people in thoughtful discussions and informed decision-making
- Respect the efforts of staff and council to make wise decisions
- Vote in municipal elections

## 2. Prioritization

Because of limited time and resources, the City must work with staff and citizens to identify priorities for civic engagement. It is particularly important to identify priority areas or policies that require more resource-intensive and in-depth engagement. Our consultation process asked councilors, staff and citizens a number of questions about this issue, including when in the policy cycle it was most important to engage citizens, what level of engagement was of the most value, and what policy areas were a priority for engagement.

In general, it was agreed that citizens should be engaged as early as possible in the policy development cycle. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Governance Review and with international best practices for civic engagement.

Citizens reported two priorities in terms of the level of engagement:

- More quality information. The most popular idea on the Ideascale website was to improve communication about city issues and services. Ideas for improving information flows included establishing a centralized telephone (311) information line, creating online customizable news feeds and calendars for city services, and providing other electronic tools for connecting city residents with their issues of interest. Plain language is required to avoid over-use of technical jargon and bureaucratic language.
- More empowered participation. The second most popular suggestion on Ideascale was the institution of Wisdom Councils, a process that invites randomly selected citizens to help identify community priorities and (in a modified form) to make action recommendations. This is one of many evolving methods that gather citizens together to learn about policy issues and make concrete recommendations. Although citizens do not have final decision-making power when these tools are used, the integrity of these processes depends on a commitment by decision-makers to respond to public recommendations.

In consultation with key informants and citizens who participated in the Public Ideas Forum, two policy areas were identified as priorities for more in-depth and empowered participation: the Official Community Plan, and the Community Sustainability Framework. These far-reaching plans will set a direction for the entire community, and will shape or influence many other decisions and strategies, and thus deserve greater profile and resourcing than would more narrow topics or more localized issues.

#### Recommended Actions:

- City always provides a substantial level of public information on all new initiatives and changes to services and operations in a timely way, using updated communications & co-ordination methods (discussed below). Substantial information is understood to be: a clear and balanced explanation of the issue, a description of the process that will be followed to reach a decision, a list of possible courses of action, and directions on how to request more information, give comment, and/or participate directly.
- City provides resources for broad and in-depth engagement on important high-level plans affecting the entire City
- City engages in periodic consultation with citizens and stakeholders to identify top priorities for in-depth engagement. More specifically, we also recommend that Neighbourhood Associations be engaged in developing a system for gathering public input on engagement priorities in consultation with staff and

the City's advisory committees (to complement what is learned from the bi-annual citizen survey).

- City pursues mid-range level of civic engagement activities (open houses, going to where the people are, etc.) on a case-by-case basis using or adapting engagement tools included in the toolkit. This will require customization to suit local conditions as there is no cookie-cutter approach.

### 3. Coordination & Consistency

Co-ordination and consistency in civic engagement efforts was a top priority for citizens, stakeholders, and City staff. This was seen as key to maintaining trusting relationships and building a more engaged citizenry over time. As a result, efforts to ensure co-ordination and consistency in city engagement efforts are at the core of this strategy. This report recommends implementing several internal systems for meeting this challenge, but also stresses to all readers that some time will be required for capacity building to be effective and for systems and practices to evolve. Patience, understanding and support will be required on all sides as implementation of the strategy moves ahead.

#### Recommended actions:

- **Develop tools to ensure the application of guiding principles, a consistent engagement planning process, and metrics for engagement success**
  - City staff will use a consistent Project Charter document that includes consideration of a civic engagement plan for all projects. This Project Charter will reference the IAP2 principles adopted by council and will integrate the "12 steps for Effective Engagement" laid out at the end of this document.
- The City will use indicators to evaluate and report on its short and long term engagement success. To ensure organizational learning and to increase capacity for effective engagement, the City will be emphasizing ongoing evaluation of its engagement efforts. Despite the challenges, evaluation must be part of every engagement effort, as it helps increase and share learnings from each initiative. The sidebar table offers a list of principles to define success, as well as matching indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) the City should use to evaluate success. This list covers commonly used principles and indicators for success, but others can be added as needed. For more information, refer to the article, *Measuring the SUCCESS of Civic Participation* by the Institute for Local Government in the Appendix. Prepare annual report on civic engagement efforts.

## Focus on...Indicators of Success

Principle	Qualitative indicators	Quantitative indicators
Inclusion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All groups who are affected by the decision are involved in the engagement</li> <li>There are no practical or financial barriers to participating in the engagement process (see list of barriers on pg. 17 of this document UPDATE AS NEEDED)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of individuals participating in each engagement effort</li> <li>Number of agencies and/or stakeholder groups participating in each engagement effort</li> <li>Number of individuals or agencies participating from underrepresented groups</li> </ul>
Balanced and Complete Information:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on issue is balanced and relevant</li> <li>Public has information and criteria that will be used by decision-makers</li> <li>Clear information about how public input will be used</li> <li>Public makes use of information in their feedback to City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys checking public understanding of information communicated</li> <li>Count of references to information provided by City in public and media responses</li> <li>Amount of media coverage of engagement process</li> </ul>
Fair Process:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process uses methods that are appropriate for meeting goals of engagement</li> <li>Stakeholders are involved in design of engagement process</li> <li>Process offers multiple opportunities and venues in which to be heard</li> <li>Stakeholders and participants give feedback that process was fair and transparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of residents making use of different opportunities for engagement</li> <li>Stakeholder &amp; participant surveys on fairness of process (e.g. felt the process was transparent, whether they felt heard, had opportunity to offer ideas, had opportunity to dialogue with other citizens,)</li> </ul>
Impact:	<p>Public input makes a demonstrable difference to decision-making process, policy or next actions by City</p> <p>Impact of public input is communicated back to public within agreed timeframe</p>	
Capacity Building:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The engagement process provides citizens and stakeholders with additional skills, knowledge and experience on the issue</li> <li>The process identifies opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to continue to work on the issue</li> <li>The process helps to build relationships between City staff and residents, and among residents</li> <li>Staff identify and communicate lessons learned from the engagement that may be applied to future processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exit surveys on what participants learned from the engagement process</li> <li>Number of new contacts for stakeholder/citizen database</li> <li>Number of additional opportunities identified for citizens to continue working on the issue</li> <li>Number of follow-up conversations or meetings held with stakeholders and/or citizens on issue</li> </ul>
Resources Used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget was accurate and sufficient to achieve engagement goals</li> <li>The overall cost was comparable to similar engagement exercises conducted by the city or partner organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total hard &amp; soft costs (see Resource Plan &amp; Monitoring Tool)</li> </ul>

- Increase capacity of staff in using consistent systems and tools
  - Staff should employ use of project management software such as Microsoft Project to ensure that engagement efforts are woven into projects at the most appropriate stages and through their life as well as mapped corporately
  - City will consistently use civic engagement software such as Consultation Manager or EngagementHQ to centrally track and coordinate engagement processes and stakeholder contact information, eliminating duplication of effort.
  - City will increase training and learning opportunities for staff across all departments, and will encourage sharing of learnings and cross-department support over time
  - Integrate activities between departments to increase capacity, maximize resources and streamline community involvement
  - City should adopt rigor in management of projects and planning to ensure decision making process and policy development is realistic and clearly articulated. Engagement can be designed in early stages to support the overall process. This will minimize risks within project timeline and ensure public participation has been incorporated into project planning.

#### 4. Resourcing

With priorities established, roles clarified and systems standardized, resources dedicated to engagement will be used more efficiently than before. However, the City must still ensure adequate resourcing of engagement efforts and must build this into budgets.

##### Recommended actions:

- Proper resourcing includes budgeting time and staff support for planning, implementation and evaluation of civic engagement processes.
- Resourcing must also support training, organization-wide learning, expanded communication efforts, and consultation software mentioned above.
- Closely link or align City project management and planning areas to engagement resources for increased internal efficiencies and planning synergy and greater emphasis on citizen impacts earlier in project planning stages. Could assist in getting feedback on proposed engagement strategy in early stages.
- Develop city-wide process for reviewing all capital projects and determining engagement rating to assist in budget development.
- City should centralize an Office of Civic Engagement to help implement these activities across the corporation and shift resource focus from one-way communications to formalized two-way dialogue.

### Focus on...Office of Civic Engagement

This dedicated unit would support Council and staff in identifying priorities for engagement, in close communication with community groups and stakeholders. It would also explore and develop “preferred ways to engage” with these groups, and with those who are usually not engaged. It would also train key staff within each department to scope, plan, manage and evaluate their own civic engagement activities. The mandate of the Office of Civic Engagement should include a corporate project management function to monitor timelines and milestones across the organization to ensure engagement activities are coordinated, supportive of process and deliver results back to the community when they said they would or trigger an update on unforeseen delays.

This unit would play a support and coaching role to build capacity for engagement within different city units and departments. This also addresses a concern voiced in other cities that a central civic engagement office does not always have enough technical knowledge to properly frame and communicate about the wide variety of engagement exercises that are needed.<sup>6</sup> This is similar to the existing support service departments within the organization.

Finally, an office dedicated would not duplicate staff roles that already exist across the corporation. An office that provides support and coaching is an innovation that has been effective in the City of Edmonton and is recommended in a recent article in the International Journal for Public Participation.<sup>7</sup>

6 Pamela Robinson, “Civic Engagement and the City of Toronto: Review and Reflection on Current Practices and Future Approaches” Governing Toronto Advisory Panel, <http://www.toronto.ca/governingtoronto/pdf/robinson.pdf>

7 Ross Brinkert, “The Roots of the Policy Process: Using Conflict Coaching to Initiate and Sustain Public Manager Commitment to Civic Engagement,” International Journal of Public Participation, September 2009.

## 5. Customer Service and Communications

Historical communication practice was noted by some citizens to be predominantly “one-way” and lacking standardized practice and policy amongst departments. A coordinated approach that provides increased opportunities for dialogue, improves ease of access to information, and ensures the use of standardized communication tools is already under development and is encouraged.

### Recommended Actions:

- **Centralize customer service.** Create easier personal and telephone access to city services, making it easier for residents to communicate with departmental staff in person. Ensure more consistent electronic communications:
  - Post information related to Council meetings consistently and well in advance in an easily identifiable and centralized location on the city website
  - Have all issues or initiatives that have an engagement component listed in one place on the City website, with a link to further information and responsible staff for each
  - Develop a centralized list of contact information for stakeholder and community groups, along with guidelines for staff on how to update and use this list for individual projects
  - Expand on established policies for consistent use of Facebook and other social media tools to increase the number and diversity of people providing input electronically (setting targets for such participation is also recommended).
  - Review customer service processes to identify opportunities for improvement
- **Make information easier to access electronically.** Easier access involves creating new tools and allowing sufficient time for residents to access and respond to information. Suggestions for tools included subscribable news feeds and city services calendars, info about specific rezoning applications, and the use of online networking tools. We understand a much improved Website with easier access to current information, consultation updates and City activities is underway.
- **Increase advance notice of Council meetings and civic engagement initiatives,** and make documents for City Council and other meetings available electronically to the public in advance. Introduce minimum three week notification of engagement opportunities such as open houses or information sessions

- **Develop electronic tools for residents to independently identify and submit concerns and requests to City staff.** Such tools might include an easily accessible “webform” coupled with a clear set of standards for how staff will respond to citizen-initiated issues.
- **Clarify correspondence practice.** Clarify what residents can expect in terms of receiving a response when they submit letters, emails and other comments as part of engagement efforts.

Increase notification of public meeting dates, feedback opportunities and program changes.

- **Shift ethos from one-way communication to more two-way dialogue and investment in relationships.** This broad ethos will be implemented across the board in civic engagement activities. However it can also guide the development of regular contact with different community groups. Recommended actions include:
  - Developing outreach program “go to where the people are” for regular attendance, information sharing, and listening at community events – neighbourhood markets, festivals, etc.
  - Formalizing a series of neighbourhood coffee shop meetings or neighbourhood forums each year to hear from a wide range of people across the city. Requires presence by Councilor liaison and staff. Two per year in each neighbourhood.
  - Expanding the use of social media and online forums
  - Develop mechanisms for “closing the loop” in all stages of the engagement continuum so that citizens understand the outcome or stage of process.

## 6. Diversity

The goal here is to ensure that staff and council understand and respond to the diversity of community members and stakeholder perspectives, and that stakeholder identification by the city reflects this diversity on an ongoing basis.

### Recommended Actions:

- Start by identifying 10 stakeholder groupings within community and identify key actions that would improve how they can get informed and participate in Civic matters. Consult them on proposed new methods of sharing information.
- Outline stakeholder identification in planning stages of each project to identify who has the greatest interest and involvement in decision being made. Describe ways the City will include them.
- Outline stakeholder categories that are considered “harder to reach” historically (e.g. urban poor, single parents, renters, seniors, new immigrants, youth, etc).
- Formalize and clarify how Victoria Youth Council fits into Governance Structure
- Where possible or applicable, remove barriers that prevent some from attending city meetings, such as child minding, transportation, language and scheduling
- Set targets to attract and target those who have never participated before. Plan “bring a partner” incentives to draw more into discussions.
- Introduce long term Youth Outreach Program to curriculum for senior high school students. Work with the School District to involve youth more consistently in civic consultation processes and educate them on the importance of engagement
- Understand meeting schedules and production timelines to utilize stakeholder and Neighbourhood Association newsletters and communications tools to convey information in a timely and efficient way.
- Work with community organizations to identify and then develop information packages for different segments of the community. For example, create information packages for new immigrants who may not know how connect with City programs.
- Invite representatives from socially and economically diverse groups to sit on City Advisory Committees
- Examine demographics of existing City Advisory Committees to identify gaps in representation, and make special efforts to address these gaps
- Ensure regular outreach from City staff and Councilors to organizations serving immigrants, people with disabilities, low-income people, and other organizations representing people who experience barriers to engagement
- Designate staff member to coordinate and facilitate engagement of under-represented populations.
- Ensure stakeholder and community contact lists maintained by the city are checked for inclusivity.
- Explore opportunities for Mayor and Councilors to host online discussion forums on specific topics on regular basis
- Strengthen bi-annual citizen survey by utilizing independent third party to conduct representative, statistically valid survey at the same time every two years. Piggy back specific questions about key initiatives in survey.
- Introduce bi-annual business survey to conduct representative, statistically valid survey at the same time every two years. Piggy back specific questions about key initiatives in survey.
- Develop comprehensive strategy to increase participation in municipal elections.

## Case Study: Customer Service Response Program

In 2004, as part of an initiative to improve customer service, the Engineering Department created a Customer Service Response Program to find out how its projects were impacting neighbourhoods.

This program assessed the impact of 5 engineering projects on surrounding residents, gave the community an opportunity to provide their input, and allowed the City to improve processes and services in the future.

In November and December of 2004, customer service surveys were hand delivered or mailed to 5 different neighbourhoods impacted by Engineering Works during that time period: Hollywood Crescent; Chambers Street; Quadra Street; Asquith Street; and Finlayson Street. The survey asked residents about:

- Awareness of project scope, information, and benefits
- Interactions with City staff – e.g. responsiveness, knowledge, understandability, courtesy, and timeliness
- Logistics – signage, access, parking, traffic, worksite cleanliness

Response rates were always very high, ranging from 15% to 48%. A great deal of the feedback received from the survey was positive, helping residents to feel that the City was listening to them and wanted to improve services which also led to better morale for staff.

Complete reports have been done for each of the five neighbourhoods, summarizing key issues raised by citizens and providing recommendations (improving coordination with different City departments, ensuring that customer inquiries are responded to in a timely manner, etc.).

Although the surveys only covered 5 neighbourhood projects, many of the recommendations have since been implemented for all future projects. One example is project team coordination, which ensures that there is a designated staff person to oversee the project from start to finish.

### Success factors

- **Short and simple surveys:** The survey was one double-sided page, and focused on the project itself rather than a huge “laundry list” of questions.
- **Tangible topic that directly affects residents:** Residents were directly affected by the projects, and hence they were more likely to become involved.
- **Range of feedback available:** Residents were able to have telephone or face-to-face interviews to supplement the survey.
- **Residents were informed of survey from the very start:** Preconstruction letters informed residents that a survey would take place after the project was completed
- **Openness and responsiveness:** Staff were open to residents’ input, and the consultation was genuine. Staff did not have pre-conceived ideas, and the results were not pre-determined.
- **Make recommendations that address citizens’ concerns:** The final report developed a set of recommendations that dealt with the main concerns raised by the community.
- **Do not assume that all people or areas experience the same issues:** The surveys addressed each neighbourhood separately, and did not assume that issues would be the same in each place.

## Case Study: Victoria Arts Scan

### Background

The Victoria Arts Scan is an arts and cultural mapping project designed to inventory information on Victoria's arts and cultural assets – the scope of arts and cultural organizations and resources that currently exist in Victoria.

The LifeCycles Project Society, a local non-profit group, has been contracted to collect data and create an inventory, as well as prepare a report that identifies opportunities and gaps in Victoria's current arts and cultural community and make recommendations for future priorities. This information will be used to develop the City's first Arts and Cultural Plan in 2010.

### Process

An Arts and Cultural Steering committee is developing the database of arts and cultural organizations. The Steering committee provides advice to the Victoria Arts Scan mapping project, and includes representatives from the Capital Regional District (CRD), the Open Space Arts Society, the Community Arts Council and the Professional Arts Alliance of Greater Victoria.

In December 2009, LifeCycles began meeting with representatives from Victoria's arts and cultural community, including music, visual arts, theatre/performing arts, dance, film/video, and literary sectors. Consultation will be completed by mid-March 2010.

In addition to one-on-one meetings with stakeholders, two surveys were developed – one for arts organizations, and one for the public. The information collected will form part of the inventory.

Two public events are also being held to bring people together, gather more information, and share ideas. A focus group will engage people working in the arts to share their vision on the City's role in supporting the arts and cultural community. Moreover, a successful lecture and group discussion was held at City Hall, when 130 people gathered to listen to a public lecture about the City of New Westminster's new Arts Strategy, and to discuss their vision for the arts and cultural community.

### Factors for Success

- **Have a rigorous communication plan:** communications for events included color ads in a variety of local newspapers, extensive e-mailing to the arts organizations, attractive graphic collateral tools such as posters, and earned media, including a prominent mention in Saturday Times Colonist newspaper just before the event. As a result there were twice as many people at the January 20 launch event as expected. Similarly there has been a very good response to the website.
- **Develop surveys targeted to the right audiences:** There are separate surveys for different segments of the population: general public; artists; and arts organizations.
- **Key informant interviews:** A significant number of stakeholders are being involved through 20 key informant interviews
- **Combine formal and informal engagement techniques:** The process involves surveys, interviews, events and informal meetings.

## PART THREE:

# Resources, Training and Tools

With the approval of this strategy, City staff will have increased responsibilities in terms of the number, scope and quality of engagement efforts they will be expected to lead or participate in. Some of these engagement efforts will be initiated by community groups or citizens, but the bulk will be organized and managed by staff who will take the results into account when developing and delivering policies, programs and services.

There will thus be increased expectations for thoughtful, meaningful and creative engagement by council, citizens and stakeholders, which presents a challenge as well as an opportunity. These expectations can be managed through communicating the fact that engagement is a demanding practice, that resources are not endless, that priorities have to be established, and that the capacity of the organization will build over time, but they will still be there.

High expectations may cause some concern on behalf of staff, especially since no two issues, projects or processes are exactly alike. To be clear, consistent and effective, staff will have to follow a consistent design process while also shaping their engagement initiatives to respond to different demands, conditions and constraints.

The next section offers a series of steps, worksheets, and templates to help staff move through the process of designing and implementing an effective engagement project.

This section includes:

- A. 12-Steps to Successful Engagement:** A series of steps to think through the issues, clarify why you are engaging the community in a project or process, gauge the level of readiness and resources in your department for consultation, and design and deliver an effective engagement program. Worksheets borrowed from other municipalities are interspersed throughout the 12-steps (providing simple templates for you to create effective strategies, and to identify the unique challenges and opportunities your project faces) which end with resources for evaluation.
- B. Techniques Toolkit:** Organized into 3 sections – techniques to inform; techniques to consult and involve; and techniques to collaborate and empower – this section recommends and provides information on some of the most useful techniques to fulfill each of these objectives. Please note that this is only a small selection of the tools and techniques that exist for engagement, and it is intended that this “toolkit” grow over time.
- C. Further Resources:** Links to other toolkits, frameworks, and websites that can be drawn from as needed.

## A. 12-Steps to Effective Engagement

When deciding how to engage citizens and stakeholders, it is important to follow a consistent process. Each of the 12 steps below poses questions that staff should answer in order to create a useful engagement plan.

### 1. Be Clear on the Objectives of the Project

Although it may appear obvious, taking time at the very beginning to clearly summarize and express the main issues or concerns to be addressed by the project is essential to designing the right process.

Later on, this will help the project team communicate project context, background and objectives, and **how public input will impact the decision**. Being clear on the purpose will also help you to accurately define scope, increase accountability, and save a great deal of time and money later on.

## Worksheet: Understanding the Project and Defining Purpose, Scope and Outcomes of Public Involvement

Source: Involving Edmonton

Project Name:	
What is the decision being made in this project?	
Who will make the final decision? (Council, Senior Management, etc.)	
What is the scope of this project? Does the final outcome affect just one department, one area of the city or the whole city?	
<p>Will or how will this project decision impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other municipal decisions or projects</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specific communities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Businesses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Individuals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The environment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Etc.</li> </ul>	
Are there historical factors or previous decisions that will affect how this project is implemented?	

<p>Why would you involve the public in this discussion? What exactly do you want to achieve?</p>		
<p>What information do decision makers need to assist them in this decision? How has this been verified?</p>		
<p>What factors will influence the decision about level and scope of consultation? (Time, resources, etc.) How?</p>	<p>Factor</p>	<p>Impact</p>
<p><b>Driving Questions</b></p>		
<p>What specific information are you seeking from the public?</p>		
<p>How will this information add value to the decision making process?</p>		

## 2. Be Clear on the Objectives of the Consultation

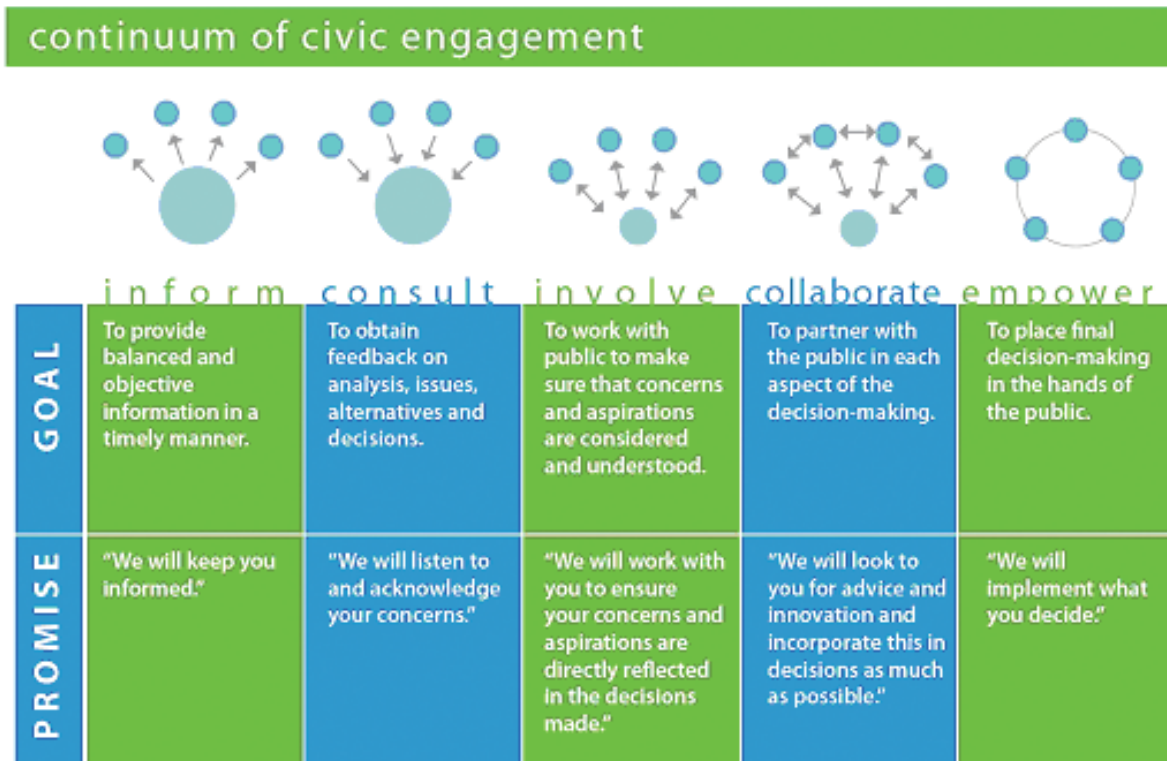
As you begin to flesh out your thinking on the objectives of the engagement, briefly review the IAP2 principles adopted by council in June 2009 to ensure alignment of your efforts with these principles:

1. Those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
2. Promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Seek input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Communicate to participants how their input affected decisions.

Next, review the continuum shown below, and think about whether you want to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and/or empower during your initiative. There will always be an element of “informing” in your engagement initiative, while empowerment will be quite rare. The focus of your reflection should therefore be on where in the middle three levels you want to focus and why.

Remember that a core rationale for engagement is to expose decision-makers to a range of perspectives and ideas on the issue they are faced with, to give a sense of community feeling, and to better inform decisions.

It is, therefore, important to clarify the kind of information and input from the community that would help decision-makers make better decisions. Think through the kind of questions you are asking citizens and stakeholders, and be clear on what information you are gathering.



Source: IAP2; Auditor General of BC

Worksheet: Project Scoping Tool

<p>What are the key decision points?</p>	
<p>What are the timelines for the project?</p>	
<p>What information do we need from the stakeholders?</p>	
<p>What are the timelines for public involvement?</p>	
<p>How will stakeholder input be incorporated at this decision point?</p>	

### 3. Confirm the Readiness of Your Organization and/or Department for Engagement

Having done some initial thinking about the engagement project, use this checklist to more carefully gauge whether your department is ready for and committed to civic engagement. You should be able to answer “yes” for the majority of the following questions before you move the engagement planning ahead.

#### Worksheet: Is Your Department Ready to Involve the Public?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do you know what you want to achieve from the engagement process?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are you clear about the boundaries of the task – what is fixed and what is still open?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the level of participation being proposed match the expectations of the various outside interests that will be involved?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can you respond to the outcomes of the engagement, even if the results are not exactly what your organization would have wished?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are you aware of the “real agenda”, if any, behind the process? Are you aware of any “hidden agendas” (real or perceived) that may derail the process?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are you aware of the history of issues to be discussed and positions of various stakeholders involved?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do you know who owns the process within the City, and if</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is more than one owner? Do you have a plan for how these competing ownership claims will be managed?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are senior manager and politicians prepared to make a public commitment?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are you, and all the team members, aware of what resources are available for this project and the amount of time available?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do the resources available match the expectations from partners and community members?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have you received permission from the appropriate managers and – where appropriate – direction from Council?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are you aware of any similar or overlapping processes underway or planned by the City or by partners?</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Source: City of Richmond Participation Toolkit

#### 4. Collect Existing Information to Improve Knowledge and Save Resources

Before you start developing detailed plans for engaging citizens and stakeholders, try to collect as much information as possible on similar projects that have taken place before. This will be very helpful in terms of preventing duplication of effort, reducing “consultation fatigue”, and saving time and resources for all concerned.

- a) **Check if similar work has already been done, is being planned, or is underway** – do not “reinvent the wheel”. If civic engagement has been carried out on a similar project in the past, you might be able to adapt the previous method and process rather than starting from scratch. Similarly, if similar work is planned by another department or staff member, you may be able to join forces so you are not competing for the same audience or wasting resources. Spend time talking to colleagues and community partners to get a better idea of the broader picture.
- b) **Check what work has been done elsewhere.**  
Familiarizing yourself with similar initiatives taking place elsewhere in the Capital Region and/or BC can help you to identify what worked well and prevent repetition of mistakes.
- c) **Use the material you have gathered, along with new information you have generated, to write a summary of the issue or project that you wish to engage on.** This will be critical in two main ways – in ensuring that you can inform and educate people with this information before asking them to engage in discussions or planning, and in creating a “frame” for the future engagement. In other words, you define and clarify both the issue and the questions to be answered by providing balanced information and a clearly worded description of the engagement topic. Doing this well in advance will pay off in efficient, clear and constructive engagement.

### 5. Identify the Stakeholders and the Range of Citizens to be Engaged

It is important to identify all the stakeholders and “segments” of the citizenry that you might need to engage with, and to think through the needs of the different groups. The two tools below help you to do this quickly.

#### Worksheet: Stakeholder Mapping

A simple and quick **stakeholder mapping exercise** will help you to consider the degree to which stakeholders are interested in, and may have influence over, your project.

1. Brainstorm all the groups who might possibly be involved or have an interest in your project. Write the names of these groups down on sticky notes.
2. Create the following matrix on some flipchart sheets and post on a wall.
3. Place the stickies on the matrix, considering both their level of influence (low or high), and their likely level of interest (low or high).
4. Decide who to focus on involving in your initiative and consider the best ways to reach those people

		Level of Influence
LEVEL OF INTEREST	High	
	Low	

## Worksheet: Participant Identification Template

Project/Process: \_\_\_\_\_

Answering the questions below will help to context your thinking about potential participants

1. Geographic Boundaries or Scope of Consultation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Impact of Decision: \_\_\_\_\_

3. History of the area or the issue that might affect who wants to be involved:

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### Potential Participants by Community of Interest

- Business associations
- Businesses
- Development associations
- Development companies
- Industry associations
- Industry companies
- Citizens
- Aboriginal
- Alternative Lifestyles
- Ethno-cultural
- Multicultural
- Religious
- Seniors
- Urban Poor
- Youth
- Area councils
- Community leagues
- Arts/Festivals/Historical
- Educational Boards and Associations
- K-12 Institutions
- Post-Secondary Institutions
- Emergency Services
- Public Safety
- Environment
- Health
- Persons with Disabilities
- Media
- Adjacent Municipalities
- City Administration
- Mayor and Council
- Other Municipalities
- Boards-Agencies-Commissions
- Federal Government
- Provincial Government
- Sports and Leisure Groups
- Service Agencies and Boards
- Transportation

## 6. Gather a Small Group to Comment on the Initial Plan

Once you have completed the tasks above, you should be able to describe the issues, the questions and the likely participants clearly. You will also be able to develop a very initial engagement plan that includes participation targets, as well as phases and timelines for the engagement.

This initial plan should be a sketch of how you will gather input on a policy issue or project, and how the information that you gather at each step will influence what comes next. Think of each step in the process as helping you answer key questions, and write those questions out. Then situate those questions in a project timeline diagram and identify likely activities to answer those questions. You now have an initial plan.

At this point, you may consider discussing this initial plan with a small group of stakeholders and or representative members of the public, allowing you to gather feedback on the plan before you begin.

Contact or gather a small focus group of key stakeholders to ask:

- Do they understand the issue to be discussed, and the rationale for engagement?
- Can they augment the initial list of stakeholders and participants you have developed?
- Is the phrasing of the engagement logical and are the questions meaningful and complete?
- Do they agree with the participation process recommended or do they have suggestions?
- Do they have insights about how to communicate around the project – what are key community concerns, hot button issues and ways of framing the issue? Who are the key people to reach?
- Are they willing to participate in and promote the engagement?

Use the feedback gathered to revamp your engagement plan, being particularly clear on the timeline and how the information and input gathered will influence the project or policy.

## 7. Determine the Most Appropriate and Effective Engagement Techniques

Having clarified the scope and objectives of the civic engagement process, where it fits on the continuum of engagement, key audiences, the timeline, the questions, etc., you are ready to decide what methods or techniques to use at which stage of the project.

Use the following worksheet and the toolkit in the next section to identify the methods or techniques you will use. Then develop a complete version of a project work plan by connecting these details with the process and timeline you developed earlier.

## Worksheet: Engagement Techniques Strategy

Participant (From Participant Identification Tool)	Level of Interest	Level of Involvement from the Continuum	Potential Size of Group or Numbers of Participants	Involvement Tools that Match Needs
<i>Sample: Community Leagues</i>	<i>High— want active participation</i>	<i>Information sharing and consultation— collaborating to develop solutions</i>	<i>Representative group—15 members</i>	<i>Attend community meetings, newsletters, web site, advisory committee</i>

## 8. Determine the Resources (Budget and Time) That the Project Will Need.

The next step is to assign appropriate resources to the project work plan. Once underway, closely monitoring and efficiently managing the budget is crucial.

Different types of resource needs include:

- Staff time; carefully check that the staff you need are available to supporter the engagement in the ways you require and at the times you need them. Do not assume their availability.
- Consultant costs: when necessary, consider what kind of outside expertise (bringing technical information or engagement skills) your process will require
- Information and materials: website development and maintenance, graphic design, displays, etc.
- Communications: Include advertising, newsletters, brochures, surveys
- Logistics: Include facility rentals, prizes, catering, printing expenses, signage
- Participant funding and outreach to reduce barriers to participation: Include interpretation/outreach; participant honorariums, transportation, childcare.

## Worksheet: Example Resource Plan and Monitoring Tool

Hard Costs	Proposed Costs	Final Costs	Variance
<b>Staff/Contractors</b>			
Public involvement consultants			
Allotment out of expert consultant budgets			
Communications consultant			
<b>Data Gathering</b>			
Public opinion polls/surveys			
On-line surveys			
<b>Technical Requirements</b>			
Computer analysis process			
Equipment			
<b>Logistics</b>			
Facilities			
Refreshments			
<b>Communication</b>			
Advertising			
Web development and maintenance			
Web-casting sessions			
Print materials			
Presentation materials			
<b>Participant Costs</b>			
Travel			
Child care			
Translation/interpretation			
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>			
<b>Soft Costs</b>			
Project team costs			
Special event HR costs			
Additional internal consulting costs			
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>			
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			

## 9. Promote Your Public Participation Process.

Communications is a vital part of any engagement effort, so take some time to be strategic in developing your communications effort. Use the worksheet below to take this strategic perspective.

Balanced and objective information should be shared widely as soon as possible to ensure awareness and understanding of the initiative. An “invitation to participate” early and at key points throughout must be part of your communication effort.

Resources for communication need to be allocated in the project or process budget to properly promote your events and kick-start the input. Consult with Communications staff before budgeting costs.

Finally, there may be cost-free methods of raising awareness, such as leveraging your existing stakeholder database and using earned media.

Think about the stakeholders identified through the previous exercises, and consider efficient ways to reach them – contacting non-profit organizations and community leaders may be the best ways of getting word out. There may also be existing community events, networks and communication vehicles that you can “piggy-back” on.

## Worksheet: Communications Strategy

Communications Issues/Opportunity			
Background			
Communications Environment	<i>Key Factors</i>		
Communications Objectives			
Desired Communications Outcomes			
Target Audiences	<i>Who are your primary audiences? Secondary?</i>		
Key Communications Messages			
Strategic Communications Approach			
Communications Products/Tools	<i>e.g. handouts, use of web site, advertisement</i>		
Communications Actions Plan and Timelines	Action	Details	Timing
Measurement and Evaluation			

## 10. Implement and Document the Engagement Activities

As you implement the engagement initiative, follow the project work plan as closely as possible while also making necessary adjustments over time. This maintains the integrity of the project while allowing for adaptation and responsiveness; be cautious as to any major change in the plan because participant trust will be threatened by changes in mid-stream.

Fully prepare yourself and your team to carry out each activity; time spent in pre-planning pays off tremendously in terms of the quality, productivity and efficiency of each activity. **This cannot be stressed enough.**

Documentation and reporting out on each phase of work or activity builds trust and momentum for your initiative as it progresses. When participants see that “you did what you said you would do” in early phases, and when the reporting from each phase reflects their input, trust builds and momentum grows.

Finally, remember that clarity of the issues and options will improve as the process moves ahead, as engagement efforts usually start with a broader set of factors, information or questions, and then moves through options to choice-making. Have patience as this process moves along.

## 11. Ensure That the Information You Collect is Used Effectively, and Report Back.

When people engage in these initiatives, they want to be sure that you are listening to their input, and that the process they have been part of has influenced the decision or project. This does not necessarily mean that they expect their specific idea to “carry the day”, but that the eventual decision has been influenced by input gathered.

To ensure this, you must make a concerted effort to document the input gathered, and to share that input with decision-makers. Both of these things ensure a higher level of accountability.

Sometimes, every phone call will need to be recorded, while at other times, summaries of comments received will be enough – this will have been decided as you originally scoped the boundaries of the project. Software such as “ConsultationManager” and “EngagementHQ” can assist with managing data from different input streams.

Reporting back to participants as soon as possible after an event, and at key stages, with documentation of input gathered and next steps is crucial to building trust and accountability. Be creative in how you report back, and use a variety of methods such as newsletters, emails, local newspapers, and websites – do not assume that all your audiences are computer literate. In addition, communications should be timely, jargon-free and accessible.

Finally, information and ideas gathered should influence the final decisions or end product, and it should be clear to participants how their input is being used and its importance to the overall process and project outcomes.

The following worksheet can help you to monitor the type of stakeholder input and how it was used.

Worksheet: Stakeholder input tracking

Date Recorded	Source of Information	Key Points	Was Input Used? Why or why not?	Where can Stakeholders Find Input?

## 12. Monitor and Evaluate

To ensure organizational learning and to increase capacity for effective engagement, the City will be emphasizing ongoing evaluation of its engagement efforts.

Currently, few municipalities monitor and evaluate the engagement they carry out, so it is hard for them to gauge how effective it was or the benefits derived from the costs incurred. Despite the challenges, evaluation must be part of every engagement effort, as it helps increase and share learnings from each initiative.

One simple but essential activity for the project team is to gather feedback on the process from people who participated in it. This input can be gathered using feedback forms handed out at the end of events, and/or through online questionnaires.

To develop the City of Victoria's overall approach in evaluating its civic engagement efforts, we must start by identifying the "success factors" we are most concerned with.

The following table offers a list of principles to define success, as well as matching indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) the City should use to evaluate success. This list covers commonly used principles and indicators for success, but others can be added as needed.

Please note that these indicators may be used to evaluate individual civic engagement processes as well as to evaluate the overall scope of the City's civic engagement efforts.

## Worksheet: Project Evaluation

Evaluation criteria/indicators of success for the process. Ask decision makers and stakeholders about their indicators of success.	<i>This will be a successful process if ...</i>
Are the criteria relevant and meaningful to the project, tied to the project objectives and outcomes, and the Core Commitments and Standards of Practice?	
What specifically are you evaluating about the Public Involvement Process?	<i>Ensure the methods you use match the types of information you are trying to gather and are appropriate to the people you are talking to.</i>
What methods will you use? Are you using quantitative or qualitative evaluation methods?	
Who would best provide the required information?	
How information will be used, recorded, tracked and analyzed? And by whom?	
How will the interim and final evaluation results be used?	
How will you communicate evaluation results?	
How will you take action on improving this or other processes?	

## Case Study: Greenways Plan

As a plan that will unfold over the next 50 years, the Greenways Plan aims to establish a human-powered transportation network, restore natural habits, and provide recreation opportunities in the City of Victoria.

Following a resolution by the Council to develop a Greenways Plan, the planning process got underway with a meeting of 25 participants from a variety of neighbourhood associations and stakeholder groups in January 2002. During the meeting, participants offered input on the Greenways planning process model and the Terms of Reference for a steering committee, which was appointed by Council two months later.

A \$15,000 grant from the Provincial Capital Commission allowed the City to undertake an extensive community consultation which included:

- Greenways Survey to collect input on existing and desired greenways. Out of 1600 surveys distributed, over 580 were returned – a response rate of 36% from a representative cross-section of the community.
- City-Wide Greenways Day featuring speakers, community mapping exercises, walkabouts, and a bike-about.
- Greenways mapping booths set up in prominent locations throughout the City to engage community members in completing the survey and taking part in mapping exercises
- Liaising with the Neighbourhood Association Network and local neighbourhood associations to take part in mapping exercises and walk-about.
- Volunteers and UVic geography students helped to compile the data gathered during the community consultation process.
- Field trip for steering committee, volunteers and staff to visit completed Greenways in Vancouver and New Westminster.

Community input was synthesized and analyzed such that it directly influenced a draft Greenways Plan, which was then distributed through all the City departments and Advisory Committees for feedback. The draft plan was also introduced into the community through a well-attended Open House which allowed staff to gain some valuable insights. Full funding of this plan is not yet confirmed.

### Success Factors

- **Go to where the people are:** Staff and volunteers did extensive outreach in the community, setting up booths in unusual locations, such as malls and liquor stores, to get a diversity of voices. They accessed the “silent majority” who wouldn’t otherwise participate.
- **Have trust in the input of the community:** Staff and the Steering Committee were receptive to ideas from volunteers and the general public. Volunteers were given a considerable amount of latitude and responsibility to design events and activities, and “wacky ideas” were often embraced.
- **Have an open mind:** Staff and the Steering Committee were open to new ideas and often had to re-evaluate their priorities according to public feedback.
- **Design the process with the people involved:** Staff advertised that an engagement process was about to begin and asked people to help plan the process. The steering committee arose as a consequence of this advertisement, but a great deal of the volunteer input and creativity came from involving the public from the very start.
- **Keep steering committees small:** The steering committee was highly effective and close-knit, at only 7 members. Staff and a Council liaison brought the total at any one meeting to only 9.
- **Use an iterative consultation process:** Regular updates throughout the process helped people to stay involved and see the results of their input, and provided an opportunity to test whether the team and the product were “hitting the mark”.

For more information visit: [http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/departments\\_plnsrv\\_green\\_grnwys.shtml](http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/departments_plnsrv_green_grnwys.shtml).

## B. Techniques Toolkit\*

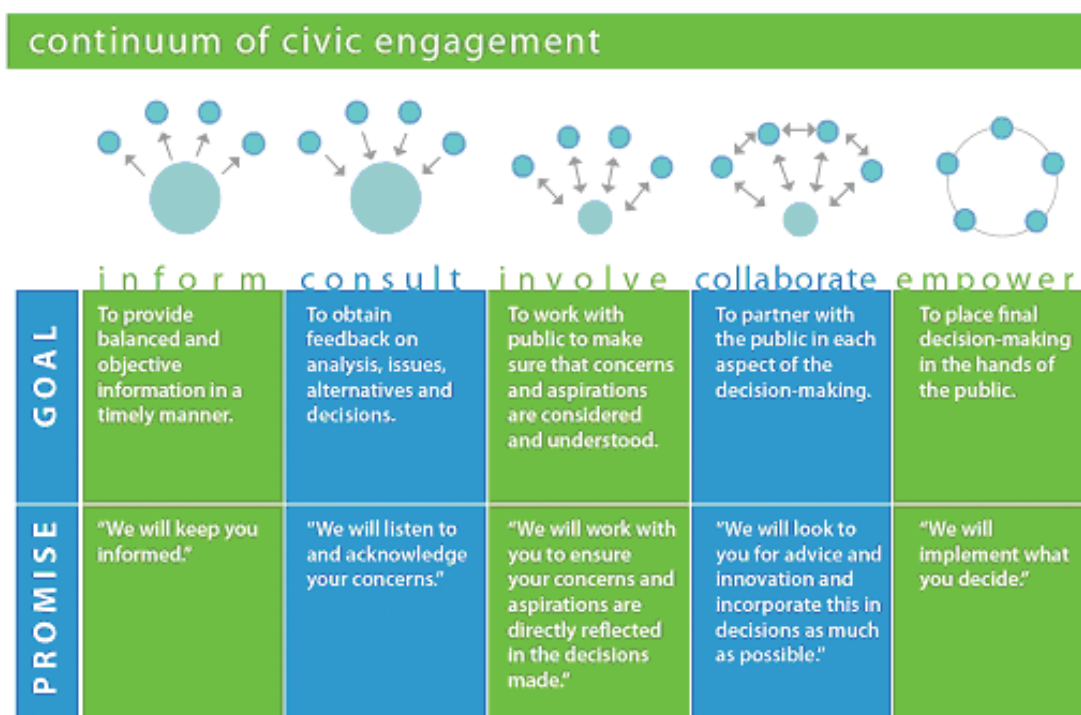
The following section provides a select list of effective engagement tools and methods, organized according to the levels of engagement in the continuum. Staff will have to be trained to use this toolkit (or a modified version thereof) and will have to decide in each case which tools to use under which conditions.

In deciding on how to consult and which tools to use, staff will need to consider which methods of civic engagement would best reach the target audience.

Remember that a combination of techniques can be used, and should be selected according to the objectives of the project; remember also that tweaking or innovating with the formats and tools to suit local conditions is valid.

One key guideline when using this toolkit is to think about whether you are informing or involving. For example, if you are simply informing, do not use a method designed for feedback collection. If the goal is to involve, on the other hand, then consider whether citizen input is needed to generate ideas, create a document, review a draft, or develop recommendations – this will determine the kind of tools you should use.

\*The following toolkit references existing toolkits from IAP2, the City of Edmonton and the City of Richmond.



Source: IAP2; Auditor General of BC

## Focus on...Framework for Dialogue and Deliberation

The recent test of the use of a Wisdom Council in Victoria proves that non-traditional forms of engagement are becoming increasingly important. However, it can be difficult to differentiate between the different types and purposes of dialogic engagement, since different techniques are best suited to fulfill different objectives.



The National Council for Dialogue and Deliberation recently developed a very useful framework which identifies 4 engagement streams and the methods that fall under each:















1. Exploration: The primary purpose is to encourage people to learn more about themselves, their community, an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions
2. Conflict transformation: The primary purpose is to resolve conflicts, foster personal healing and growth, and improve relations among groups
3. Decision-making: The primary purpose is to influence policy decision and improve public knowledge
4. Collaborative action: The primary purpose is to empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution







For more information, and to see which tools are listed under each of these streams, please see the NCDD Streams of Engagement document listed in the Appendices.

### Techniques to Share Information

The following techniques can be used to **inform** the community. The goal is to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. Every consultation will have some form of information-sharing.





Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
Earned media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Earned” media refers to the media that you can get for free – through media articles that come from press releases, news conferences, media packages, or letters to the editor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being pro-active is essential to benefiting from earned media. Try to build relationships with the media, so they come to you for facts. In addition, develop a Communications Plan with the Communications Department.</li> <li>Earned media is often more valuable than “paid media” because people are more likely to pay attention and take it seriously and can heighten the perceived importance of a project.</li> <li>However, before sending out a press release about your project, consider if it is newsworthy – if you inundate the news departments with notices about irrelevant projects, they will soon begin to ignore you.</li> <li>You have little control over how the information will be presented – reporters may look for a “spin” to make the story catchier.</li> </ul>	  \$









Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
Advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid ads on the radio, in newspapers, on TV, or the internet.</li> <li>• Certain municipal processes require advertising, e.g. municipal and land use bylaws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the level of coverage you are aiming for, effective ad campaigns can be expensive</li> <li>• Timing is critical for advertising – ensure that people have enough notice of events, but do not advertise so far in advance that they forget about it when the actual date arrives.</li> <li>• Consult the Communications department to ensure that your ads follow corporate guidelines.</li> </ul>	  \$\$\$
Printed materials (bill stuffer, brochures, flyers, FAQ's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These materials provide the facts of the project to a wide-cross section of the community, and can be used for many purposes.</li> <li>• Materials can also be posted online and attached to emails, so printing costs are not necessarily prohibitive.</li> <li>• Printed materials are useful for communicating the objectives and scope of a project, and for clearing up misconceptions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials can be distributed economically, by attaching them to municipal utility bills, or making them available online.</li> <li>• The cost of printed materials can mount up, especially if they are glossy and full-colour.</li> <li>• Keep the writing clear, simple and free of jargon.</li> </ul>	    \$\$
Information hotlines/ designated contact person	Information hotlines can either lead to a pre-recorded message, or a designated contact person. Although the Internet, to some degree, fulfills these obligations, telephone contacts are still important to ensure that your project is accessible to those without computers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information hotlines can provide barriers to people who are not fluent English speakers.</li> <li>• Having a designated contact person ensures that people don't get the "run-around" when they call</li> <li>• The point person must be knowledgeable on all aspects of the project, and be committed to providing prompt and accurate responses.</li> <li>• This builds credibility, controls the flow of information, and conveys an image of accessibility</li> </ul>	    \$
Public displays and kiosks	Public displays and kiosks can be placed in strategic locations throughout the community to engage people who would not otherwise "come to you". They can be used to both share information, as well as gather input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays can be unattended, if left in recreation centres, libraries, and other municipal buildings.</li> <li>• Using students and volunteers to staff the kiosks are good ways of doing extra outreach in selected areas.</li> <li>• There are a range of companies that can help you to develop interactive, touch-screen information and survey kiosks.</li> <li>• Displays are good ways of distributing a range of materials, fact sheets, and newsletters.</li> </ul>	    \$\$







Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
Site visits or tours	Information shared through site visits and tours are highly impactful, as seeing the reality of the situation often stimulates a more informed level of discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits are best aimed at key stakeholders and advisory committees.</li> <li>• Be clear on the purpose and objectives of the site visit.</li> <li>• Site visits can set up expectations on what the final product will be like.</li> </ul>	  \$
Websites	Websites are now a routine part of engagement efforts, and they provide avenues for a range of information sharing, feedback, and involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Websites are good ways of involving younger audiences, or people who would otherwise not attend meetings.</li> <li>• Do not over-rely on the websites, as many people still do not have internet access, e.g. low income, seniors</li> <li>• Websites, while they should be visually appealing, should also be accessible to people who use text-recognition software – make sure all links are labeled, and text is not presented as an image or graphic.</li> </ul>	  \$\$
Discussion document	Discussion documents provide an opportunity for sharing in-depth information on priority areas. They encourage participants to look at the whole picture in a balanced way, rather than provide rote answers to their areas of interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion documents often become long, dry, and unwieldy; this discourages people from tackling your 50 page-document.</li> <li>• Provide an executive summary, and keep language simple and accessible</li> <li>• Use probing questions that encourage further discussion</li> </ul>	  \$

## Techniques to Consult and Involve

The following techniques can be used to **consult and involve** the community. The goal is to obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions, as well as to work with the community to ensure that aspirations and concerns are understood and considered.







Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
Key informant interviews	Interviews are excellent ways of gathering initial information and learning about specific situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An interview requires an established format with a set number of questions – don't be tempted to have too many questions, as people will inevitably speak for longer than expected. 4–6 questions are more than enough.</li> <li>It is useful to share your notes with the interviewee afterwards, to ensure that you captured all the main points</li> <li>More than one interview should be done with each interest group, to make sure that the information gathered is representative and valid.</li> </ul>	  \$
Surveys (mail/telephone/online)	Surveys are a good way of getting a snapshot of opinions, across a wide range of demographic groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The level of statistical validity depends on the type of survey you undertake. Generally, it is harder to get a representative sample or statistical validity from online surveys, although they are easy and affordable to organize. However, they are good ways of engaging with youths, working people, and anyone who would not otherwise participate.</li> <li>Mail and telephone surveys can be more representative – however, they are quite expensive to arrange, due to the costs of carrying out the surveys and coding the results</li> </ul>	Varies widely depending on whether it is online or telephone/mail.
Open Space Technology (OST)	OST is an approach for hosting meetings focused on a specific and important purpose or task – but beginning without any formal agenda, beyond the overall purpose or theme. Participants create the agenda themselves at the beginning of the session by sharing their most important issue in a “Marketplace of Ideas”, and self-organizing into groups related on these issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Space Technology is a self-organizing practice that invites people to take responsibility for what they care about. It is an innovative approach to creating whole systems change and inspiring creativity and leadership among participants.</li> <li>For more information, go to <a href="http://www.openspaceworld.org/">http://www.openspaceworld.org/</a>.</li> </ul>	  \$

Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
World Café	World Cafés enable groups of people to participate together in evolving rounds of dialogue with three or four others while at the same time remaining part of a single, larger, connected conversation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small, intimate conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into questions or issues that really matter in their life, work, or community.</li> <li>• For more information, go to <a href="http://www.theworldcafe.com">www.theworldcafe.com</a>.</li> </ul>	  \$
Focus groups	Focus groups are small group discussions with 6-8 participants. An established format and a trained facilitator can effectively “dig deeper” for participant insights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled facilitators are essential to encouraging better levels of discourse.</li> <li>• It is essential to have the same process and questions for each focus group, if you are doing more than one, so that the results are comparable.</li> <li>• An honorarium should be provided to participants for their time</li> </ul>	  \$\$
Online forums	Online forums are web-based discussions that can occur in real time or over a period of time, and are complementary to face-to-face engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant guidelines are essential, and these instructions should be simple to understand.</li> <li>• Forums need to be moderated in order to vet the input and focus the discussions</li> <li>• Sites such as <a href="http://www.ideascale.com">www.ideascale.com</a> allow participants to vote comments “up” or “down”</li> <li>• The amount of real-time forums should be limited to allow for participation from a wide range of people</li> </ul>	  \$\$\$
Workshops	Workshops are either small or large structured events with a set process and structure to facilitate discussion on specific topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No more than 25% of the workshop time should be dedicated to providing information.</li> <li>• Ensure that larger workshops offer opportunities for everyone to participate, through regular small group discussions.</li> <li>• Begin with a clear idea of the desired outcomes, both when planning the event, and when communicating with participants.</li> <li>• Participants should have an opportunity to provide feedback.</li> <li>• Circulate the summary of the workshop to participants, and articulate how the information will be used.</li> </ul>	  \$\$

Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
Presentations	Presenting to organizations throughout the community is an excellent way of building relationships and doing outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations are most likely to be well attended if they piggy-back on to existing meetings.</li> <li>• Make a special effort to meet with groups which are harder to engage, such as immigrants and youth, as they are often under-represented in public processes.</li> <li>• Ensure that your presentation is short and simple, as there will likely be many questions. Do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or jargon. Speak clearly to your audience.</li> <li>• Provide handouts so that people can review later.</li> </ul>	  \$
Open houses/ Community fairs	Open houses were traditionally static, information sharing events. However, by including interactive stations, entertainment, and other ways of providing input they can be exciting and appealing to a wide range of people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be a risk of overwhelming participants with too much information. Make sure that displays are visually appealing and only share the information that is important.</li> <li>• Staff at the open house should be well briefed prior to the event</li> <li>• Staff should discuss the issues and options with attendees but not show bias while gathering input.</li> <li>• Open houses can offer a range of other engagement exercises as separate “stations” within the larger event.</li> </ul>	  \$\$
Kitchen table discussions	Kitchen table discussions, also known as “coffee klatches” are informal meetings of community members (without staff involvement) to discuss certain issues and share feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing a good kitchen table guide is essential – this would include background information, discussion questions, and a form for completing feedback and sending back to the project team.</li> <li>• It can be difficult to get a significant level of uptake on kitchen table discussions, as these are mainly community-driven.</li> </ul>	  \$

## Techniques to Collaborate and Empower

The following techniques can be used to **collaborate with and empower the community**. The goal is to partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making.

Technique	Description	Considerations	Cost
Expert committees	Expert committees help to identify the important questions, provide unbiased information, and review recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experts should be sought for a range of areas to provide a balance of perspectives, e.g. technical, socio-economic.</li> <li>Information from experts should be “translated” into simple language before being shared with the wider community.</li> </ul>	  \$\$
Task forces	A task force is a committee charged with a specific task, deliverables, under specified deadlines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task forces should be kept small, with clear guidelines.</li> <li>A staff member should work with the task force to provide support and guidance.</li> </ul>	  \$\$
Advisory committees	Advisory committees are representative of a broad range of stakeholders, and provide advice or guidance in a range of areas. They are tasked with providing advice and guidance to Council in particular priority subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is important to ensure that advisory committees are truly representative of the community – examine the demographics of the group and take steps to recruit more participants from groups that are being left out.</li> <li>Advisory committees should have a clear Terms of Reference and be aware of the level of decision-making responsibilities they hold.</li> <li>A staff member should work with the advisory committee to support and guidance</li> </ul>	  \$\$

### Focus on... Advisory Committees

On June 30, 2009, City Council endorsed a new decision-making model to align advisory committees with Council priorities and create more meaningful opportunities for civic engagement. The new model is designed to improve Council decision-making and make the advisory committee structure more valuable to those contributing and to informing Council decisions. The new model consists of Council Standing Committees and public advisory committees to support the standing committees. The evolution of these committees continues, with ongoing discussion of how to clarify the terms of reference and the selection process for the public advisory committees.

## C. Further Resources

### Toolkits and Frameworks:

- *Manual on Building a Public Participation Process*, City of Edmonton:  
<http://www.edmonton.ca/citygov/commservices/buildingapublicparticipationprocess04.pdf>
- City of Richmond Public Consultation Toolkit
- *Community Engagement Framework*, Vancouver Coastal Health:  
[http://www.vch.ca/ce/docs/ce\\_framework.pdf](http://www.vch.ca/ce/docs/ce_framework.pdf)
- *Effective Engagement: A Guide to Principles and Practice*, Scottish Drugs Forum:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158647/0043039.pdf>
- *Public Participation Toolbox*, IAP2: <http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/toolbox.pdf>
- *Our Growing Understanding of Community Engagement*, Tamarack Institute:  
[http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/home/ce\\_report.pdf](http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/home/ce_report.pdf)
- *How to Consult: A Practical Consultation Toolkit*:  
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/council--democracy/consultations/dudleysconsultation-toolkit>
- *Outreach and Involvement Handbook*, City of Portland:  
<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=98500>
- *The Guide to Effective Participation*, Partnerships Online:  
<http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/index.htm>
- *Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook*, CPN Civic Renewal Movement:  
<http://www.cpn.org/tools/manuals/Community/pdfs/VSPHandbook.pdf>

### Consultation and Diversity:

- *W3C Web Accessibility Initiative*: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>
- *Ask Me: Guidelines for Effective Consultation with People with Disabilities*:  
<http://www.nda.ie/resourceNew.nsf/askme.pdf>
- *Involving Older People: Lessons in Community Planning*:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47210/0027015.pdf>
- Guidelines on Involving People from Black and Minority Ethnic and Faith Backgrounds:  
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/cs-con-toolkit-stage3-bme-devon-2.pdf>

### Useful websites:

- Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement:  
<http://tamarackcommunity.ca/>
- International Association for Public Participation:  
<http://www.iap2.org/>
- Victoria (Australia) Local Government Association *Consultation and Engagement Resource Website*:  
<http://www.vlgaconsultation.org.au/>

APPENDIX ONE:

# NCDD Engagement Streams Framework

**Exploration**

**Primary purpose:** To encourage people/groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions.

<p><b>Key Features</b> Sustaining assumptions, creating a space that encourages a different kind of conversation, using ritual and symbolism to encourage openness, emphasis on listening</p>	<p><b>Important When...</b> A group or community seems stuck or muddled and needs to reflect on their circumstance in depth and gain collective insight</p>	<p><b>Examples of Issues</b> Strengthening democracy, understanding a community of practice</p>	<p><b>Organizer's Strategy</b> To encourage new insights and connections to emerge by creating a space for people to share both their thoughts and their feelings.</p>	<p><b>Key Design Questions</b> How can we ensure that people feel safe expressing what inspires and touches them? What kind of techniques or rituals will stimulate listening and sharing, without making people uncomfortable?</p>
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**Methods:** Conversation Café, Intergroup Dialogue in the classroom, Wisdom Council, Wisdom Circles, Open Space, Appreciative Inquiry, Bohm Dialogue, Socrates Cafe

Notes:

**Conflict Transformation**

**Primary purpose:** To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups.

<p><b>Key Features</b> Creating a safe space, hearing from everyone, building trust, sharing personal stories and views</p>	<p><b>Important When...</b> Relationships among participants are poor or not yet established and need to be. Issue can only be resolved when people change their behavior or attitude, expand their perspective, or take time to reflect and heal.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Issues</b> Political polarization, Jewish-Muslim relations, race relations, value-based conflicts, healing after crises or trauma</p>	<p><b>Organizer's Strategy</b> To create a safe space for people with different views to talk about their personal experiences and feel heard. Often, to set the groundwork for deliberation and action.</p>	<p><b>Key Design Questions</b> How can the issue be framed so that all sides are brought to - and feel welcomed at - the table? What are people's needs relating to this issue, and how can divergent needs (healing, action, respect) be met effectively? If a conflict exists, how overt and volatile is it? How, if at all, will you transition people to "what's next"?</p>
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**Methods:** Sustained Dialogue, Intergroup Dialogue in communities, Victim-Offender Mediation, Public Conversations Project Dialogue, Web Lab's Small Group Dialogue, Compassionate Listening

Notes:

**Decision-Making**

**Primary purpose:** To influence policy decisions and improve public knowledge.

Key Features	Important When...	Examples of Issues	Organizer's Strategy	Key Design Questions
Naming and framing, weighing all options, considering different positions (deliberation), revealing public values, brainstorming solutions	The issue is within government's (or any single entity's) sphere of influence	Budgeting, land use, health care, social security	To involve a representative group of citizens in thorough conversations about complicated policy issues. Ideally, the group is empowered/supported by government.	How can we best represent the public (random selection, active recruitment, involving large numbers of people)? Should/can public officials participate in the process side-by-side with citizens? What kinds of materials need to be developed or obtained? How can we ensure that this process influences policy?

**Methods:** National Issues Forums, Citizens Jury, Deliberative Polling, 21st Century Town Meeting, Citizen Choicework, Consensus Conference

Notes:

**Collaborative Action**

**Primary purpose:** To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution.

Key Features	Important When...	Examples of Issues	Organizer's Strategy	Key Design Questions
Using D&D to generate ideas for community action, developing and implementing action plans collaboratively	The issue/dispute requires intervention across multiple public and private entities, and anytime community action is important	Regional sprawl, institutional racism, youth violence, responding to crises	To encourage integrated efforts among diverse stakeholders, sectors, organizations, etc. involved in the problem	Who needs to be at the table? What kind of power dynamics exist already? What group/leader/institution is most resistant to change? What group tends not to be at the table, although they're affected?

**Methods:** Study Circles, Future Search, Appreciative Inquiry, Charrettes

Notes:

**Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes**

**21st Century Town Meeting**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Decision-Making	Hundreds to thousands in 1 room at small tables	all-day meeting	Open; recruit for representativeness	AmericaSpeaks' 21st Century Town Meetings enable the general public to give those in leadership positions direct, substantive feedback on key issues. Each meeting engages hundreds or thousands of general interest citizens at a time, utilizing innovative technology to effectively and quickly summarize citizen input. ( <a href="http://www.americaspeaks.org">www.americaspeaks.org</a> )

**Appreciative Inquiry**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration & Collaborative Action	From 20 to 2,000	from 1-hour interviews to 4- to 6-day summits	Internal and external stakeholders	Appreciative Inquiry is a change method that encourages stakeholders to explore the best of the past and present in their organizations and communities. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. ( <a href="http://www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu">www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu</a> )

**Bohmian Dialogue**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration; can also be used for Decision-Making	Small group	no set length or number of meetings	Open or invitation	Created by late physicist David Bohm, Bohmian Dialogue is focused on attending to and discussing individual internal dynamics--assumptions, beliefs, motivations, etc. The idea is not to eliminate them from happening, but to surface them in the conversation in a way that furthers the dialogue. ( <a href="http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm">www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm</a> )

**Charrettes**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Collaborative Action	A small team of professionals and a much larger group of stakeholders	Intense work sessions last 1-3 days typically; some last 1-2 weeks	Participants represent a range of organized groups, but others with a stake in the issue are encouraged to attend	A charrette is a collaborative and consensus-building design methodology that incorporates input from all stakeholders (the developer, relevant government agencies, and the community). A "charrette team" of experts uses stakeholder input in an continual "feedback loop" to prepare and refine a plan for development with the goal of reaching consensus among the stakeholders. Charrettes, which combine modern design studio and town meeting, help overcome inertia and create meaningful master plans. ( <a href="http://www.charretteinstitute.org">www.charretteinstitute.org</a> )

**Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes**

**Citizen Choicework**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Decision-Making	Multiple small groups	1 session, ranging from 2 hours to all day	Open; recruit for representativeness	Public Agenda's Citizen Choicework helps citizens confront tough choices in productive ways. Participants work through values conflicts and practical tradeoffs, and develop a sense of priorities and direction. Key principles include nonpartisan local leadership, inclusive participation, and unbiased discussion materials that "start where the public starts." ( <a href="http://www.publicagenda.org">www.publicagenda.org</a> )

**Citizens Jury**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Decision-Making	Small group	five-day meeting	Random selection	The Citizens Jury process is a method for gathering a microcosm of the public, having them attend five days of hearings, deliberate among themselves and then issue findings and recommendations on the issue they have discussed. ( <a href="http://www.jefferson-center.org">www.jefferson-center.org</a> )

**Consensus Conference**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Decision-Making	Large group	2 weekends for participants to prepare, 2-4 day conference	Random selection	Consensus Conferences, developed in Denmark, typically involve a group of citizens with varied backgrounds who meet to discuss issues of a scientific or technical nature. The conference has two stages: the first involves small group meetings with experts to discuss the issues and work towards consensus. The second stage assembles experts, media and the public where the conferences main observations and conclusions are presented. ( <a href="http://www.thataway.org/46192a">www.thataway.org/46192a</a> )

**Conversation Café**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration; can also be used for Conflict Transformation	Single or multiple small groups	1 or more 60- to 90-minute sessions	Open; publicize to encourage representativeness	Conversation Cafés are hosted conversations which are usually held in a public setting like a coffee shop or bookstore, where anyone is welcome to join. A simple format helps people feel at ease and gives everyone who wants to a chance to speak. ( <a href="http://www.conversationcafe.org">www.conversationcafe.org</a> )

**Compassionate Listening**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Exploration	2 to 200 people; usually fewer than 30	30 minutes to 3 days, depending on how many people are involved	Open to whoever is drawn; often listeners are brought in to hear the stories of oppressed or oppressors	In Compassionate Listening, listeners use reflection and skilled inquiry to help speakers deepen their own understanding and awareness. CL engenders generative listening which is non-judgmental, questions that are non-adversarial, and an ability to remain open when witnessing strong feelings and divergent viewpoints. The process can help soften hearts and create the safety necessary for honest, respectful dialogue and sustainable solutions. ( <a href="http://www.compassionatelisting.org">www.compassionatelisting.org</a> )

**Deliberative Polling**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Decision-Making	Up to several hundred people in small groups in 1 room	weekend-long meeting	Random selection	Deliberative Polling combines deliberation in small group discussions with scientific random sampling to provide public consultation for public policy and for electoral issues. Members of a random sample are polled, and then some members are invited to gather at a single place to discuss the issues after they have examined balanced briefing materials. Participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained moderators. ( <a href="http://cdd.stanford.edu/">http://cdd.stanford.edu/</a> )

**Future Search**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Collaborative Action, can also be used for Conflict Transformation	60 to 80 people	3 days	All inclusive (attempts to bring in all involved)	Future Search is an interactive planning process which helps a group of people discover a set of shared values or themes (common ground) and agree on a plan of action for implementing them. ( <a href="http://www.futuresearch.net">www.futuresearch.net</a> )

**Intergroup Dialogue**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration & Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Collaborative Action	Single or multiple small groups	Regular weekly meetings of 2-3 hours	Open; recruit for representativeness	Intergroup dialogues are face-to-face meetings of people from at least two different social identity groups. They are designed to offer an open and inclusive space where participants can foster a deeper understanding of diversity and justice issues through participation in experiential activities, individual and small group reflections, and dialogues. ( <a href="http://www.umich.edu/~igrc/">www.umich.edu/~igrc/</a> & <a href="http://www.depts.washington.edu/sswwweb/idea/">www.depts.washington.edu/sswwweb/idea/</a> )

Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

**National Issues Forums**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Decision-Making	Up to hundreds in 1 room at small tables	1 two-hour meeting	Open; recruit for representativeness	National Issues Forums offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues and to work toward creating reasoned public judgment. NIF is known for its careful issue framing and quality issue guides which outline 3 or 4 different viewpoints. ( <a href="http://www.nifi.org">www.nifi.org</a> )

**Open Space Technology**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration; can also be used for Collaborative Action	Up to hundreds in 1 room, then break up in interest groups multiple times	from 4 hours to ideal of 3 days	Varies	Open Space Technology is a self-organizing practice that invites people to take responsibility for what they care about. In Open Space, a marketplace of inquiry is created where people offer topics they are passionate about and reflect & learn from one another. It is an innovative approach to creating whole systems change and inspiring creativity & leadership among participants. ( <a href="http://www.openspaceworld.org">www.openspaceworld.org</a> )

**Public Conversations Project Dialogue**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Collaborative Action	Small group	Multiple 2-hour sessions	Involves all sides of an existing conflict	The Public Conversations Project helps people with fundamental disagreements over divisive issues develop the mutual understanding and trust essential for strong communities and positive action. Their dialogue model is characterized by a careful preparatory phase in which all stakeholders/sides are interviewed and prepared for the dialogue process. ( <a href="http://www.publicconversations.org">www.publicconversations.org</a> )

**Socrates Café**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration	3 to 30 people	1-2 hours	Whoever is in the class or at the meeting, or whoever responds to the flyers or articles	Socrates Cafés and other forms of Socratic Dialogue encourage groups inside and outside the classroom to engage in robust philosophical inquiry. The Cafés consist of spontaneous yet rigorous dialogue that inspires people to articulate and discover their unique philosophical perspectives and worldview. They invite diverse viewpoints and require engaged and empathetic listening. They don't force consensus or closure, but are open-ended and can be considered a success if there are more questions at the end than there were at the outset. ( <a href="http://www.philosopher.org">www.philosopher.org</a> )

**Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes**

**Study Circles**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Collaborative Action; can also be used for Exploration and Decision-Making	Up to hundreds meeting in separate small groups; come together later for Action Forum	4 to 6 2-hour sessions	Open; recruit for representativeness	Study Circles enable communities to strengthen their own ability to solve problems by bringing large numbers of people together in dialogue across divides of race, income, age, and political viewpoints. Study Circles combine dialogue, deliberation, and community organizing techniques, enabling public talk to build understanding, explore a range of solutions, and serve as a catalyst for social, political, and policy change. ( <a href="http://www.studycircles.org">www.studycircles.org</a> )

**Sustained Dialogue**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Decision-Making & Collaborative Action	Small group	Numerous 2 to 3-hour sessions	Open; recruit for representativeness among conflicting groups	Sustained Dialogue is a process for transforming and building the relationships that are essential to democratic political and economic practice. SD is not a problem-solving workshop; it is a sustained interaction to transform and build relationships among members of deeply conflicted groups so that they may effectively deal with practical problems. SD seems to move through a series of recognizable phases including a deliberative “scenario-building” stage and an “acting together” stage. ( <a href="http://www.sustaineddialogue.org">www.sustaineddialogue.org</a> )

**Victim Offender Mediation**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Conflict Transformation	Small group	Multiple 2- to 3-hour sessions	All inclusive (attempts to bring in all involved)	Victim Offender Mediation is a restorative justice process that allows the victim of a crime and the person who committed that crime to talk to each other about what happened, the effects of the crime on their lives, and their feelings about it. They may choose to create a mutually agreeable plan to repair any damages that occurred as a result of the crime. In some practices, the victim and the offender are joined by family and community members or others. ( <a href="http://www.voma.org">www.voma.org</a> )

**Web Lab’s Small Group Dialogue**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Exploration	Up to hundreds working in small groups online	Participants read & write posts during set duration (such as 3 wks) for each group	Open	SGD is a unique discussion tool that fosters intimate, high-quality online exchanges. By limiting group size and lifespan, each member’s value is visible, encouraging a sense of belonging and an investment in frequent visits. SGD offers participants the ability to genuinely connect with one another rather than creating a collection of people with no sense of accountability who leave a series of drive-by postings. ( <a href="http://www.weblab.org">www.weblab.org</a> )

**Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes**

**Wisdom Circle**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration	Small group (3-12 people)	One or more 1- to 3-hr sessions; ongoing monthly sessions are ideal	Usually used with an existing group	A Wisdom Circle is a small group dialogue designed to encourage people to listen and speak from the heart in a spirit of inquiry. By opening and closing the circle with a simple ritual of the group's choosing, using a talking object, and inviting silence to enter the circle, a safe space is created where participants can be trusting, authentic, caring, and open to change. Also referred to as Council process and Listening Circles. ( <a href="http://www.wisdomcircle.org">www.wisdomcircle.org</a> )

**Wisdom Council**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration; can also be used for Decision-Making & Collaborative Action	10-12 people initially (and sometimes periodically), then entire community	Several-day session with group of 12, followed by informal large-scale dialogue	Initial 10-12 are randomly selected from community; broader segment is open to everyone	Wisdom Councils are microcosms of larger systems like cities and organizations that engage in a creative, thoughtful exploration of the issues affecting the system. A specialized facilitation process is used called "Dynamic Facilitation" - a nonlinear approach for addressing complex issues that allows shared insights and aligned action to emerge. The outcomes of the Wisdom Council, which are reported back to the community, can catalyze further dialogue, self-organizing action and change throughout the larger system. ( <a href="http://www.wisedemocracy.org">www.wisedemocracy.org</a> )

**World Café**

<b>Focuses On</b>	<b>Size of Group</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participant Selection</b>	<b>Description</b>
Exploration	Up to hundreds in 1 room at tables of four	Single event ranging from 90 minutes to 3 days	Often held at conferences, involving all attendees; otherwise, invitations boost representativeness	World Cafés enable groups of people to participate together in evolving rounds of dialogue with three or four others while at the same time remaining part of a single, larger, connected conversation. Small, intimate conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into questions or issues that really matter in their life, work, or community. ( <a href="http://www.theworldcafe.com">www.theworldcafe.com</a> )

## APPENDIX TWO:

# Measuring the Success of Civic Participation

*The following article is excerpted from the Institute of Local Government.*

You've devoted time, money and staff energy to a public involvement effort about an important plan, issue or policy. But did the process make any difference? Did the local agency benefit? Were the participants satisfied with their experience? What worked and what didn't? And what lessons will your city or county take from this experience into future civic participation activities?

Each local effort to develop and implement a public involvement process is unique. Each issue or policy you address is different, including the number or demographics of those participating, the specific means through which participants generate ideas and recommendations, and the way local officials ultimately use the results in decision-making. The history, conditions and dynamics of each community setting also differ.

Regardless of the approach, local agencies that take the time to assess their civic engagement activities are more likely to learn from the experience and improve their future efforts.

### Looking at Outcomes

Local officials can use a minimum of four outcomes to assess the success of their agency's efforts to involve the public, including:

1. The appropriateness and effectiveness of the public involvement process design and implementation, including the participants' satisfaction with the process. Did the chosen process or approach fit the problem, and was it done well?
2. The real impacts on public decisions, policies and actions. Were the ultimate decisions different – and better – than would otherwise have been the case?
3. The effect on the community's capacity for democratic participation. Has the public involvement process made it more or less likely that the necessary information, skills and willingness to get involved are present in the community?
4. How, if at all, has a particular public participation effort enhanced a local agency's ability to effectively sustain and support civic engagement? Was the public engagement process considered a one-time affair, or have sponsors used it to build a more sustained capacity for soliciting the public's ideas and recommendations?

Most formal studies by academics and others seem to focus on the first category; fewer focus on the second; still fewer on the third; and the fourth often receives very little attention. Relatively few local agencies appear to formally review their public engagement in a systemic way. Rigorous evaluations of more complex and longer-term outcomes can take significant time and resources.

However, civic participation sponsors and organizers can ask basic but crucial questions that provide important feedback to assess a specific activity and improve future efforts. While the result may not be a rigorous scientific study, the information is useful, especially if the results are shared broadly within the local agency.

### Key Questions to Ask

While these questions are broadly applicable, local agencies should choose those that are most appropriate and helpful. These questions are most relevant to assessing stand-alone civic engagement events that seek the public's ideas and recommendations.

**Was a comprehensive plan in place?** Did appropriate local officials develop and support a clear public involvement plan that included a stated purpose, ties to city vision or goals, participation targets, a process design, a timeline, clear staff roles, a budget and how local officials would integrate any developed recommendations into their ultimate decision-making?

**Did participation meet your goals?** Was the actual participation appropriate to the issue? Was the participant selection process effective? Did local officials make successful efforts to involve the community's diverse population? What worked and what didn't to help secure the participation you intended?

**Was the process appropriate for participants?** Was background information provided to participants so they were prepared to take part? Were materials used in the process helpful? Were there sufficient opportunities for deliberation among participants that allowed for the exchange of informed views, consideration of alternatives and the formulation of recommendations? Was the process appropriate for the nature of the input and the degree of specificity you were seeking? Were participants' language capacities taken into consideration? If a consultant or facilitator was used, did he or she provide a safe and well-managed environment for people to participate effectively?

**Did discussions lead to action?** Did public officials demonstrably consider the ideas or recommendations resulting from the public involvement process in their final decision-making? Did the public involvement process result in local officials making a more informed and/or better decision? Was there greater support for the resulting new policy or action? Did participants receive feedback on how their recommendations were or were not used?

**Were participants satisfied?** Did participants view the public involvement process as transparent, well-managed and appropriate to the issue(s) under consideration? Did they believe their input was welcomed, heard and considered? Would they be more or less likely to participate in other such processes in the future?

**Was communication effective?** Was information about the public involvement process and its outcomes communicated effectively to the broader public?

**Did the process enhance capacity?** Did the public engagement process provide residents with additional skills, knowledge and experiences likely to encourage their role as committed and effective community members? How can the local agency continue to draw on and develop these capacities?

**What are the key lessons?** Has the review of the public engagement effort involved the community and other sectors? What are the most important lessons identified, and how can the local agency apply them to its future public involvement efforts? And will these lessons be shared across those city or county offices that often engage the public?

While not exhaustive, grappling with these questions helps to ensure that individual civic engagement efforts are indeed reviewed and that the local agency develops a shared and growing body of knowledge about public involvement. These efforts result in more strategic and effective civic participation over time.

## Broader Measurements and Results

A handful of cities are taking steps to build assessment and organizational learning into broader civic engagement efforts. Colin Gallagher, neighborhood services coordinator for the City of Salinas, reports that his office is in the process of developing performance indicators and a budget for assessing its outreach and civic engagement efforts. The performance planning work is being carried out in collaboration with city residents and within the work plan set for neighborhood services by the city council. The City of Salinas will publish measurement results on its website. Gallagher explains that, to date, the city has assessed individual public meetings using such questions as:

- Was there a clear purpose for the meeting?
- Did the purpose tie into the city council goals?
- Was contact information generated as a result of the meeting?
- How many were contacted and consequently attended?
- Was an actionable item developed as a result of the meeting?

Anne Hallock, Ventura's civic engagement manager, says that the city now measures several civic participation factors annually in a statistically significant survey. This includes a measurement of residents' satisfaction with the city's communication with the public, volunteerism rates and residents' awareness of local government activities. Qualitatively, she suggests that the results of Ventura's civic engagement are reflected in the rejection or acceptance of public decisions.

Cherise Brandell, Menlo Park's civic engagement manager, notes that informal feedback systems have been used in the past, but the city is currently developing a more consistent method for evaluating individual activities and overall efforts. These measures assess the outcomes and indicators identified in a community engagement program "logic model" that lays out specific strategies, short- and long-term desired outcomes and indicators of success.



1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6  
[www.victoria.ca](http://www.victoria.ca)

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