

Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale

A Toolkit for Community Engagement

July 2020



Toolkit for Community Engagement

The Toolkit for Community Engagement is part of our engagement resources for staff and is created with the intent of assisting you to set up your own community engagement strategies. Other resources you can draw on are the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Engagement Strategy, Community Engagement Policy, work instruction as well as key staff with specialist engagement knowledge and an online engagement portal.

How do we decide to engage?

Currently, we are required as a local government to undertake engagement with our community when we create a ten year Strategic Community Plan. Under various legislations, our community must also be engaged on such matters as local laws, differential rates, planning and other matters and aspirations, which are relevant to the diverse needs of individuals within a community.

Examples of projects where we must engage include:

- Corporate plans including the Strategic Community Plan.
- Any strategic plans and policies that will have a significant impact on residents, community, the environment, business and the economy.
- Land-use and development plans including local environmental plans, and development control plans.
- Where legislation requires community notification or consultation.

Best practice in community engagement goes beyond the requirement to simply consult and can be more impactful when decision making is done in conjunction with the community from the beginning of a project proposal or earlier. For example, when we can see an important decision in the distance, we can get ahead and prepare with our community for the conversation we want to have.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 International) promotes the following **core values** of engagement which:

- Is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

- Includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- Promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- Communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

What are our engagement resources?

We have created a selection of community engagement resources to guide our process. These include the Community Engagement Policy and the Community Engagement Strategy, which are publicly available as well as a staff user guide and toolkit. We also have community engagement key staff personnel and an online engagement portal.

When do we plan to review this document?

The toolkit will be reviewed every four years before its anniversary date, allowing it to be updated to reflect the changes of the growing community and capture any variations to engagement practices.

When deciding if we need to undertake community engagement, we consider the broad context of the project or issue at hand and ask:

Will there be a significant change or is there opportunity or desire from Council for the community and stakeholders to influence the change?

YES

If your answer to the above is yes, it is likely the five step guide on page 6 is for you.

Other considerations to make when determining whether or not community engagement is necessary include the following.

- Will the project or issue benefit from a better understanding of what an informed community would value in relation to the decision?
- Are there complex 'trade-offs' involved in the decision?
- Is there a history associated with the project or issue that may impact on the current situation?
- Does the project or issue have the potential to become highly politicised?
- Is there opportunity to build or maintain positive relationships through engaging proactively and openly with a section of the community?
- Is there a chance there may be public outrage if the community is displeased with, or feels no ownership over, the outcome?
- Do you need to take into account any relevant legislation?
- If you consider the risk factors, does the decision rate as high risk?

NO

If your answer to the above is no, there may be no need to develop and implement an engagement plan, but it may still be necessary to communicate to inform relevant community members or groups, as appropriate, particularly if there is a perceived level of change from a community perspective

Five steps for community engagement



- 1. Research** objectives messages stakeholders
- 2. Plan** methods risk mitigation
- 3. Implement** engage and communicate
- 4. Evaluate** assess results
- 5. Report** engagement outcomes

Once you have made a decision to engage, you may use the following as a guide, along with the work instruction, to help draft an engagement plan.

1. Research

There is an expectation the Shire represents the whole community, recognises diversity within the Shire and remains responsive to community needs. In preparing for engagement your research will help you to understand the issues and stakeholders to define the purpose of engagement and the messages you use when you engage them.

Important points to communicate include information about how much influence participants will have over the decision, how they will be involved, key dates and how and when participants can access community engagement outcomes information and reports.

What is the purpose of engagement?

- Is there a decision to be made, if so can you describe the decision to be made in one sentence?
- There may be several decisions to be made at different stages of the project.
- What is the relevant background to the project?
- What do you want to achieve from engagement?
- Is there a statutory/legal requirement to engage?
- What is the relevant legislation to take into account?

What are the key messages to deliver through engagement?

- How will the objectives and scope of the community engagement be made clear to the participants?
- How will the input gathered through engagement be used?
- What strategic questions will be asked to understand stakeholders values in relation to the decision?
- What elements are fixed and cannot change (non-negotiable) and what can be influenced and shaped by stakeholders and the community (negotiable)?
- Are messages and information about the project being communicated in clear, non-technical language?

Who are identified as stakeholders?

Stakeholders are any individual or group with an interest in the decision being made. They may be residents, ratepayers, business owners, community interest groups, agencies or hard-to-reach groups. Many people belong to more than one community and will engage with Council on issues which are relevant to them at a particular time.

A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest or a community of affiliation or identity (such as business or sporting clubs).

Each of our communities and places across the Shire have unique aspects. We consider what works for each of our local places when we seek to engage with people there.

- Who will be affected by, interested in, or able to influence or inform the decision?
- Do you understand how they may be affected and the nature and intensity of their interest, their capacity and willingness to participate and what are any barriers to that participation?
- What action can be taken to remove or minimise barriers to participation?
- Who and where are your targeted stakeholder individuals and groups?
- Given the stakeholders, what areas or locations should be targeted as part of the engagement?
- Are there opportunities or upcoming events either online or face to face, where you could take your engagement to 'go to where people are'?
- Are you adapting different methods to suit the different communities you are planning to engage?

2. Plan

When engagement is considered appropriate, an engagement plan will be written for projects with appropriate methods of participation, depending on the nature and complexity of the project. You can use our work instruction or draft your own engagement plan.

As a minimum, an engagement plan should include:

- A statement of the purpose, aim or objectives of engagement.
- Relevant background.
- Key messages.
- Staff responsible.
- Targeted stakeholders.
- Program of engagement and communication methods or activities.
- Timeframe of activities, reporting and decision steps.
- Process for evaluation and analysis of outcomes.
- The impact of outcomes on the decision (closing the loop).

Engagement and communication methods

Community engagement can be done in many effective ways to allow participation in decision making for projects which impact members of the community.

Using the information gathered through your research you may have already identified your preferred method(s) for community engagement.

How are you going to engage?

- Given what you have found through your research, what methods are appropriate for the different stakeholders you are seeking to reach?
- What methods are appropriate for the type of decision required?
- What resources are required to undertake the engagement and how long will the public participation take?
- What are your planned start and end dates?
- Are there any events or opportunities for you to 'go to where people are at'?
- Have you considered the how the people you are engaging with may prefer to be engaged?

Level of engagement

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is an internationally recognised tool, which helps define stakeholder roles in an engagement process. When you are planning engagement for your project, use this tool to determine and communicate the 'level of engagement'. In other words, the level of influence engagement will have on the decision process.

The level of public influence on the decision may be different at each stage of the process. In many instances you will use several methods, for example to inform and involve stakeholders.


 Increasing public influence on the decision

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Letter · Email · Signage · Public display · Social media · Advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Questionnaire · Online – Have Your Say · Door knocking · Interview · Pop up · Interactive public display · Public open house · Feedback form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focus group · Working group · Workshop · Pop up at venue or event · Public open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focus group · Working group · Workshop · Public open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Working group · Workshop

Reference: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), 2018. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

The following table is a guide, which may assist you to identify some suitable methods for your engagement, given the expected level of impact of the decision.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS OVERVIEW			
Expected level of impact	Identifying criteria – any or all	Engagement approach generally taken	Examples of engagement methods
High impact Shire wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High level of impact on all or a large part of the Shire. · Any significant impact on attributes that are considered to be of high value to the whole of the Shire, such as the natural environment or heritage. · Likely high level of interest across the Shire. · Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Engagement plan developed in collaboration with the Corporate Communications team and approved by Manager. · Early engagement with community and stakeholders. · Involves a broad range of stakeholders and community members. · Utilises a variety of engagement methods to give people who want to contribute, the opportunity to do so. · Updates are provided to interested stakeholders and local community. · Budget allocated to deliver community engagement. · Council briefed on engagement plan. · Process is evaluated to assess the quality and overall effectiveness of the engagement and assist the Shire's commitment to continually improve our engagement practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focus group · Workshop · Questionnaire · Online – Have Your Say · Interactive public display board · Public open house · Door knocking · Interview · Popup at venue or event · Meeting · Working group · Feedback form

ENGAGEMENT METHODS OVERVIEW			
Expected level of impact	Identifying criteria – any or all	Engagement approach generally taken	Examples of engagement methods
<p>High impact</p> <p>Local</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High level of impact on a local area, small community or user group(s) of a specific facility or service. · Significant change to any facility or service to a local community. · Potential for a high degree of community interest at the local level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Engagement plan developed in collaboration with the Corporate Communications team and approved by Manager. · May range from seeking comment on a proposal to involving the community and stakeholders in discussion on proposed options. · Comprehensive information is made available to the community to enable informed input. · Uses a combination of face to face and online engagement methods to encourage broad participation at different levels. · Feedback is collated and made available to all stakeholders. · Updates are provided to interested stakeholders and local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Questionnaire · Online – Have Your Say · Door knocking · Interview · Popup at venue or event · Working group · Feedback form · Letterbox



ENGAGEMENT METHODS OVERVIEW			
Expected level of impact	Identifying criteria – any or all	Engagement approach generally taken	Examples of engagement methods
Low impact Shire wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lower level of impact across Shire. · Level of interest among various communities or stakeholder groups. · Potential for some although not significant impact on state or regional strategies or directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Engagement plan developed in collaboration with the Corporate Communications team and approved by Manager. · Approach may range from seeking comment on a proposal to involving the community and stakeholders in discussion and debate on proposed options. · Ensures informed input through making comprehensive information available to the community. · Uses a combination of face to face and online engagement methods to encourage broad participation at different levels. · Feedback is collated and made available to all stakeholders. · Updates are provided to interested stakeholders and local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Questionnaire · Online – Have Your Say · Interactive public display board · Popup at venue or event · Feedback form
Low impact Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lower level of impact on a local area, small community or user group of a specific facility or service. · Only a small change to a facility or service at the local level. · Low interest at the local or user group level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Communication strategy that provides high quality, accessible information to those affected by and interested in the change or decision. · Approach consists of advising the community or stakeholders of a situation or proposal or informing of a decision or direction. · Communication channels relevant to the target audience are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Door knock · Letterbox · Email · Signage · Social media · Advertising

Communication considerations

Social media and online engagement

In planning the engagement methodology, it will help to consider what suitable communication tools you will use to promote engagements.

Remember to allow sufficient lead time for the approval of communication materials, booking of advertisements, organising distribution of information or invitations to events, etc. Ensure some flexibility to adapt to any changes which may occur from shifts to the scope or schedule of the project.

Social media is increasingly becoming a part of daily life and an accepted method of instant communication. The use of social media by the Shire and Elected Members can improve communication with our community, and share the positive and professional identity of our organisation. The Shire Social Media Policy is designed to provide a framework for social media used at the Shire, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.

One aspect where social media provides a great advantage is by distributing information quickly to our communities and stakeholders. This is best achieved when it is accompanied by links to reliable and reputable sources of information. Any 'call to action' is best to link back to the Shire website.

Social media, such as Facebook, is best used to ensure the Shire is reaching their target public, particularly as a tool for communications campaigns. While we appreciate social media can be used to drive interest in issues, it is not our primary platform, where there are other ways we may listen and engage in dialogue.

Our primary and preferred channel for online engagement is Have Your Say. This online engagement tool is used to engage our communities and stakeholders on a range of projects to gain community feedback. Online techniques under Have Your Say include surveys, mapping tools, idea generators and other interactive tools.

Have Your Say as a vehicle for engagement enables us to track, make sense of, and report on innumerable data sets, which are essentially the thoughts, values, ideas and opinions of our communities and stakeholders.

Complaints management

We take the opportunity to learn from all feedback seriously. We appreciate when people attend our engagements, on occasion people will take the opportunity to raise other issues, feedback or complaints with the Shire. It will be helpful for your engagements to be prepared to incorporate 'off the table' topics or ideas, and where suitable, correctly direct information into the Shire to be understood and resolved.

The Shire maintains a separate Complaints Resolution Policy. Any complaints received relating to engagement activities will be managed in line with this policy.

How will you review and track the success of your engagement plans?

As your plan comes together, it is important to think about how you are going to capture and record important information, which includes information to measure and evaluate the outcomes of your different engagement methods. The outputs from each phase of your engagement can be planned to help you evaluate achievement of your outcomes and success along the way. Consider how you will evaluate in your deliver, and plan to capture the information you need as you implement.

3. Implement

Engage and communicate

If you have developed an engagement plan using the Shire template, it will have the objective(s), identified stakeholders and the methods to engage them as well as the technique. Now – to put your good planning into action.

4. Evaluate

At the planning stage, you will have considered in your plans how to document outcomes and review the effectiveness, with two aspects to your evaluation.

- What you heard from community regarding input on the decision.
- What you heard from the community regarding satisfaction with the process.

It is important to evaluate both, because what we know is that people can be more willing to live with decision they don't like, when they are part of and engaged through a fair process.

How well did you document what you heard?

- How did you record the public participation for your report?
- Did you capture everything you needed?
- Can you reflect, report and share what you heard easily with decision makers?
- How do you evaluate what the success of your engagement is?
- What outcomes and results did you track to capture feedback?

What has the community engagement told you?

- Did you meet your engagement objectives?
- Did your engagement help to meet the project objectives?

What has the community told you about the process?

- How did you ensure the participants understand their role?
- Were people able to follow and understand the decision-making process?
- How did you monitor and evaluate the process along the way?
- How did you monitor and respond to risks?
- Did you plan, prepare and ensure engagement activities aligned with Council Policies?

Planning for success – evaluating your planning

- How well did you plan for what you will evaluate?
- Did you seek to determine participant satisfaction?
- How did you keep a record of what you heard?

5. Report

Influence

Your evaluation and reporting of outcomes through a community engagement outcomes report will enable you to communicate important information to the public, in line with our principals and core values about how community and stakeholder input was used in the decision making process. We call it 'closing the loop'.

Close the loop – remember the key to your report to Council on the community engagement outcomes is to describe the simple facts.

- What was asked.
- What we were told.
- What we did.

A key in closing the loop with participants is to report their influence over the decision.

This means the community can see how and why a decision is made, what information Council considered, and any legislative requirements (when relevant) Council followed.

What effect/change has occurred as a result of the engagement?

- How has the engagement informed the decision that needed to be made?
- What was the understanding and influence drawn from engagement?

It is important to acknowledge in your report that not everyone may have participated in the engagement. There are many ways for the community to provide feedback or raise questions outside of formal engagement periods and Council will always consider and respond to community views and concerns.

In reaching decisions Council balances a range of factors to ensure that decisions are in the public interest. These factors include strategic priorities as outlined in corporate plans and related policy, community input, the objectives of the Strategic Community Plan, land use priorities identified in strategic plans and applicable policies and guidelines.

Where will your report be published?

Council commits to notify the community of decisions and details how their views were considered in reaching the decision. This is assisted by updating the Have Your Say project page, updating the website and in some instances publication of submission reports, exhibition reports and notices of decisions.



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