

Public Engagement Framework April 2021

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| **SHARE YOUR VOICE**
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

The City's Public Engagement Policy is the foundation for the Framework. It describes when the policy applies, the role of decision-makers, the importance of respectful and safe discussion and debate, and commitment to hearing from diverse voices.

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

- Public Engagement Promise
- Definition of Public Engagement
- Vision and Guiding Principles
- Public Engagement Spectrum
- Six Step Public Engagement Process

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

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

If you are working on a City policy, program, project or service that impacts the public, the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Policy (C593) applies to you and your work. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the City of Edmonton:

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

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

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

THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROMISE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUR PROMISE

This is your city.

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

We believe engagement leads to better decision making.

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

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

We will show you how you help influence City decisions.

Share your voice with us and shape our city.

DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is a process that creates opportunities for people to contribute to decision-making by City Council and Administration about the City's policies, programs, projects, and services, and communicates how public input is collected and used.

The City of Edmonton values public engagement processes and activities that contribute to policy, program, service and project decisions by providing City Council and Administration with the best possible information to support decision-making.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

Guiding Principles:

- **A shared responsibility** - Engaging people in an authentic way contributes to robust solutions to challenging issues and encourages participation that supports democratic decision-making.
- **Relationship-building and perspective-seeking** - Meaningful engagement values various perspectives and experiences; it recognizes that respect and equitable processes foster trust and stronger relationships.
- **Proactive, timely, and transparent** - People have enough time and notice to engage early in the process which enables considered input and impact on decision-making, and clearly communicates how input will be assessed and used during engagement and reported on afterwards.

- **Inclusive and accessible** - Engagement planning and delivery is inclusive and accessible to best serve our City by encouraging two-way conversations and strategies that reach diverse communities and ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued.
- **Innovative and continuously improving** - As Edmonton grows and evolves, we aspire to co-create and embrace new and better engagement processes, tools and tactics based on a sound approach to evaluating success.

THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

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



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

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

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

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

THE SIX STEP PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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



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

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

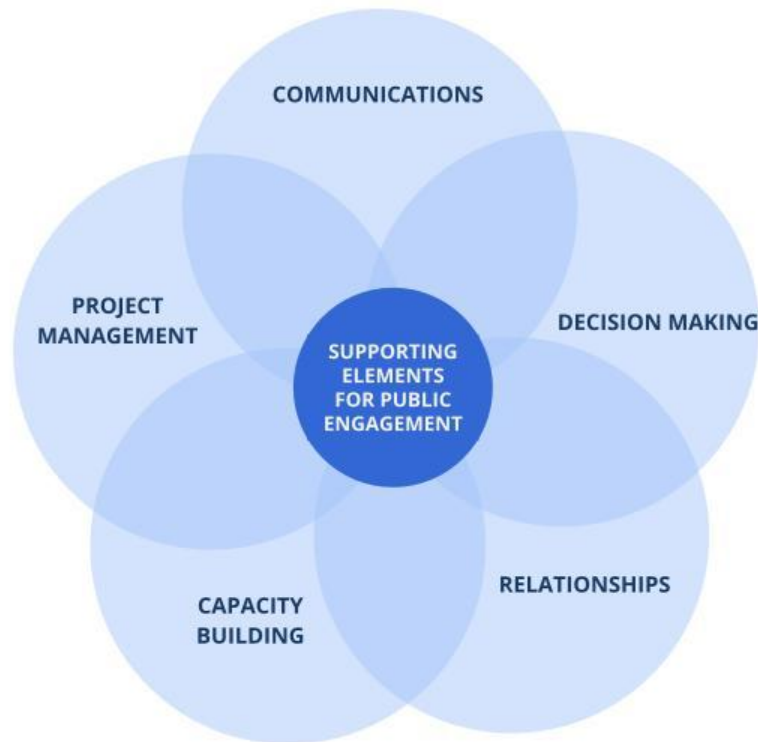
Planning & Design: Once a project team determines that public engagement is needed, and what decisions will be informed using public input, a plan is developed to execute the strategy defined in the previous step. Digital and in-person public engagement activities and approaches are designed and the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

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

Analysis & Reporting: In this step, the data collected from the public is synthesized, analyzed and considered against other project data and decisions identified in the strategy step. Other project data may include Council direction, City Policies, budget considerations and internal expertise. Decisions identified during the strategy step are adjusted or adapted based on this analysis. This information is then shared with the public and stakeholders through internal and external reports.

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

SUPPORTING ELEMENTS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



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

Communication activities should happen:

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

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

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

Capacity Building and Relationships - For the City to undertake meaningful public engagement, we require staff and the public to have the knowledge and tools to engage. Building the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal practices needed to participate in public engagement activities with implementers (i.e. City staff), decision-makers, and the public is an ongoing and evolving process. The capacity, and willingness, to participate in City public engagement processes is supported by relationships built between the City and the public based on trust and respect.

COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Public engagement places a large focus on continuous learning and improvement. By continually evaluating, and improving on, our practices we ensure our tools, techniques, and approaches can meet the needs of all participants in the public engagement process: implementers (i.e. City staff), decision makers, and the public.

This commitment is enacted in a number of ways. Regular and ongoing evaluation of public engagement processes and capturing lessons learned supports learning and continuous improvement as the City reviews, revises and refines public engagement work undertaken. Further, the team working on public engagement seeks out leading and best practices in the field of public engagement and incorporates them into City of Edmonton approaches and processes. Finally, by recognizing, celebrating, and sharing City of Edmonton success stories throughout the City, with the public and with other public engagement practitioners around the world.

APPLYING THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Framework is championed by Communications and Engagement, which supports this work through leadership, advice, planning, training and evaluation. However, implementation and accountability for the success of the Public Engagement Framework is a shared responsibility for all departments and branches that undertake public engagement.

Furthermore, the public can play an important role in the planning and implementation of public engagement. Public input is vital for providing the right external context and checking City assumptions. Indeed, public engagement that is planned with, created or informed by the public often yields better results.

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