

Update: Council Initiative on Public Engagement

Initiative Title: Council Initiative on Public Engagement
City Council Lead(s): Ben Henderson, Andrew Knack, Michael Walters
Department Lead(s): Carolyn Campbell, Rob Klatchuk, Cory Segin

Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term With New Mandate

Objective:

The Council Initiative on Public Engagement had a broad mandate to examine public engagement practices at the City, while also striving to implement immediate continuous improvement efforts. Its objective was to recommend a new public engagement policy, procedure and framework, along with all of the supporting work.

Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of April 2017:

On April 11, 2017 City Council passed a new Public Engagement Policy for the City of Edmonton. It includes:

- detail and clarity about the Policy's purpose and when it applies;
- guidance on the role of decision makers regarding public engagement;
- highlighting the importance of respectful and safe discussion and debate;
- a clearer definition of public engagement, linking it with decision making and highlighting the importance of reporting back to people about how their input was used;
- a vision, guiding principles, spectrum and supporting elements for public engagement;
- removing "inform" from the public engagement spectrum and using citizen-centred language to describe the spectrum; and
- key supporting elements for public engagement that are critical for success.

The Policy is supported by a new Public Engagement Procedure, which describes the City's public engagement goals and outcomes and outlines the roles and responsibilities of Administration in delivering the Policy, including the roles of the new Communications and Engagement Department and the new Engagement Branch. This new department and branch were not a direct result of the Initiative, but the Initiative's work did support their creation.

The Engagement Branch champions public engagement at the City of Edmonton and supports this work through leadership, advice, planning, training and

evaluation. However, public engagement implementation and accountability are the responsibility of all City branches and departments that undertake public engagement.

The Policy is also supported by a Public Engagement Framework, which includes:

- Public Engagement Learning and Training Method,
- Public Engagement Planning, Communications and Reporting Process, and
- Public Engagement Evaluation and Recognition Approach.

This Framework is the guiding document for how public engagement will be trained, planned, delivered, evaluated, reported and communicated.

In presenting the new Policy to Council, Administration also outlined a 20 point Action Plan, focused on the key actions that will be undertaken over the next 18 months to implement the Policy. These actions are organized into six areas:

- Organizational development and culture;
- Community leadership and capacity building;
- Public engagement planning, delivery and reporting;
- Public engagement learning and training;
- Public engagement evaluation; and
- Communications for public engagement.

One of the actions is the development of a comprehensive evaluation approach for public engagement, which will start in 2017 with the collection of data regarding several measures and the completion of a public engagement performance report early in 2018.

Future Steps:

At this point, the mandate of the Initiative has been completed and the implementation work is being transitioned to the Engagement Branch.

However, to provide even more transparency and accountability regarding the change to public engagement culture and practice, the Initiative's Council Sponsors have identified the need to continue the active collaboration between administration and the public achieved so far by creating a Guiding Coalition for Public Engagement.

The Coalition's role will be to monitor the City's progress on delivering on its public engagement Action Plan and ensure community perspectives remain forefront throughout the implementation. The Coalition will work collaboratively to provide advice and guidance about the City's delivery of public engagement processes and activities through regular reviews of reports and performance measures.

Evaluation

The original mandate of the Initiative has been achieved through the approval of a new Public Engagement Policy, Administrative Procedure, Framework and associated support pieces, which are designed to improve the City's approach to public engagement and evolve its organizational culture.

In addition, the City is transforming how it is organized and resourced to deliver public engagement through the creation of a new Communications and Engagement Department, Engagement Branch and Public Engagement Section.

In order to enable the creation and implementation of a Guiding Coalition for Public Engagement, it is recommended that the Initiative continue with a new mandate to:

- Monitor the City's progress on delivering its public engagement Action Plan through reports and performance measures,
- Ensure community perspectives remain forefront throughout the implementation, and
- Work collaboratively to provide advice and guidance about the City's delivery of public engagement processes and activities.

The detailed Terms of Reference for the Guiding Coalition is currently being developed, but initially the Coalition will have:

- Approximately 20 members, representation from Administration and the public, drawn from the pool of people who participated in the first and/or second phases of the Initiative in order to provide continuity. A key task during the first six months of the Coalition will be to develop a strategy to recruit new members and a transition plan for how and when new members will be added and current members will depart over the following year.

As the Guiding Coalition evolves, eventually:

- Administrative members will include some who participated in the first and/or second phases of the Initiative and some who did not and will represent the various levels and departments of the City, and
- Public members will include some who participated in the first and/or second phases of the Initiative and some who did not and will represent the diversity of Edmontonians.