



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Council Initiatives 2013- 2017

Initiative Title:	<b>Public Engagement – Phase 2</b>
City Council Sponsor(s):	<b>Councillor B. Henderson / Councillor M. Walters</b>
Supporting Department and Lead Staff:	Chris Ward, Branch Manager, Drainage Services, and Rod Risling, Branch Manager Assessment and Taxation

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### BACKGROUND

- Following the 2013 Civic Election, City Council and Administration identified a need to review the City's public engagement activities. Many Edmontonians, stakeholders, Councillors, and members of City Administration observed that the City faces a number of challenges and opportunities in public engagement, including responding to evolving citizen expectations, supporting growth, ensuring consistent and quality processes, and capitalizing on opportunities for innovation.
- Furthermore, public engagement is a key aspect of Open City. Therefore, the Council Initiative on Public Engagement provides an opportunity to better align the City's engagement approach with this wider, emerging initiative on open government, which has the potential to fundamentally change the relationship that Edmontonians have with their city.
- The Initiative was designed using a phased approach with a broad mandate to examine public engagement practices at the City, while also striving to implement immediate continuous improvement efforts. It was recognized that making lasting improvements to public engagement must be part of a larger organizational change effort, and that a focus on internal change must be balanced by an effort to understand, empower, and enable the city's broader civil society.

#### *Historical context:*

- In the mid 2000s, the City of Edmonton identified the need to improve and clarify its approach to public involvement in a time of rapid growth and development.
- In November 2005, City Council approved City Policy and Procedure C513 – *Public Involvement*. This policy and related procedure was recognized at the time as leading-edge practice in North America.

- Policy C513 was implemented via a Public Involvement Framework called *Involving Edmonton*, which consisted of Core Commitments and Standards of Practice, a Continuum of Public Involvement, the Public Involvement Roadmap, and a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) template. Updated in 2008, this is still the Public Involvement planning approach that all City staff are expected to use.
- In late 2012, Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) approved the Corporate Approach to Public Engagement (CAPE), which resulted in a revamped Office of Public Engagement.
- In early 2014, CLT designated public engagement as one of the City's top three priority initiatives. At the same time, City Council also established an initiative on Public Engagement. Subsequently, the two initiatives were combined under the Council Initiative on Public Engagement.
- The Office of the City Auditor completed an audit of the City's approach to public involvement in June 2014. It identified areas for improvement and potentially the need to review C513 to address misaligned expectations between Council, citizens, and Administration.
- In early 2014, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) also began a review of civic engagement as part of developing its next strategic plan, and the Transportation Services Department initiated a review of its public involvement approach.

*Phase 1 of the Initiative:*

- From October 2014 to January 2015, the Council Initiative on Public Engagement initiated a broad dialogue with a cross section of Edmontonians, City staff, as well as the mayor and members of City council. This work was designed to start the conversation about public engagement in Edmonton. The Initiative needed to hear from citizens and City staff about why they believe public engagement matters (the benefits of public engagement) and what good public engagement looks like (elements of effective public engagement). It was also hoped this initial engagement would begin rebuilding relationships and trust, create understanding between the various stakeholder groups, and build a shared voice and a foundation for the next part of the Initiative.
- Participants were engaged through a series of workshops and a discussion guide that could be completed online or on paper. City staff were engaged through internal workshops. This resulted in the participation of a wide range of City leaders, elected officials, staff, community leaders, and other Edmontonians. Combined, the participants contributed nearly 1,400 hours of time and provided invaluable input and ideas.
- On January 17, 2015, 37 people representing the participants in the previous workshops came together in a capping workshop to discuss and synthesize the results of all of the previous work. This involved sifting through, organizing, and theming thousands of pieces of individual input. The result was a shared voice on

the key topics of why we should do public engagement and the elements or principles of effective public engagement.

- On January 21, 2015, a workshop was held with City Council and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). This workshop was facilitated using the exact same process that was used for the previous public and staff workshops. The results were then added to the results from the capping workshop to create a shared voice.
- Input was also received via responses to the online and paper discussion guide. This guide included the same questions and was organized in the same way as the workshops. The feedback received was incorporated into the input and ideas reviewed at the capping workshop, and therefore also played a role in creating a shared voice.
- On January 24, 2015, a half-day event called “Building on the Momentum” was held at the Shaw Conference Centre. All who had participated in the Initiative to date were invited to attend. The intent of the session was twofold: communicate to participants the results that had been achieved so far, and provide an opportunity for networking and to celebrate coming together to discuss and improve public engagement. The workshop results were presented by a volunteer who had attended one of the initial workshops and the capping workshop. At the same time, the results were made available on the City’s website.
- After the completion of all the workshops and the Building on the Momentum event, it became clear that more time and focused effort was needed to have conversations with a greater diversity of Edmontonians. Therefore, a series of workshops with aboriginal and multicultural groups were held. In addition to the two questions about why we carry out public engagement and what the key elements of effective participation are, these groups were also asked about the best ways to engage them going forward and what they see as the obstacles to and strategies for achieving effective public engagement.
- In 2014 The City of Edmonton participated in the national Everyday Political Citizen campaign. This annual campaign was created by Samara, an independent charitable organization that works to improve citizen engagement with democracy through innovative research and education. Canadians are encouraged to nominate those in their community who are exemplary “everyday political citizens.” Samara received more than 350 nominations from across the country and Edmonton accounted for almost 100 of these, by far the largest number from any municipality in the country. In addition to being nominated for the award, nominees in Edmonton were invited to a reception in January hosted by Councillor Michael Walters and focused on leadership development.
- An interim report for Phase 1 was issued in the spring of 2015, which detailed the Initiative’s initial activities and the answers to important foundational questions.

- In May and June 2015 a smaller group of leaders, staff and Edmontonians met to review and discuss all the input gathered and chart a course forward. At the first workshop in May they were focused on answering the question:
  - If this is what good public engagement looks like, what is standing in the way of us achieving it (the obstacles to effective public engagement)?
- The group identified the following obstacles:
  - Holding onto established practices inhibits flexibility and creative process to meet changing expectations of engagement.
  - The tension between individual (local) and community (city) interests restricts decisions.
  - Inconsistent or poorly executed processes limit effective “win-win” participation; and inconsistent, un-standardized public engagement processes (when and how to engage) and toolbox create distrust and discourage participation.
  - Gaps in understanding the complexity of stakeholder groups and how to involve them inhibit inclusiveness.
  - Unmet basic needs (safety, poverty, resources) limit putting a priority on engagement.
  - Vulnerability (both of citizens and City) leads to fear and attempts to control, which blocks authentic participation and connection.
  - Consultation fatigue from many projects saps energy and effectiveness of both City staff and public.
  - Non-transparent or poorly communicated content and process lead to information gaps, which block authentic relationships.
  - Competing priorities (individual such as busy lives and organizational such as project timelines and resource allocations) prevent effective participation.
  - Ineffective communication (content and delivery) creates misunderstanding and creates gaps.
  - Mutual distrust creates disconnect from authentic engagement and participation.
  - Bureaucratic processes that are difficult to understand and not open to change stifle creative participation.
  - Unsafe or unwelcoming places and processes stifle active engagement.
- In June 2015 the same group of leaders, staff and Edmontonians who had discussed obstacles in May, met to review and discuss strategies to overcome these obstacles. They were focused on the questions:
  - If these are the obstacles to effective public engagement, what can we do to get around these obstacles (the strategies for achieving effective public engagement)?
  - What are the strategic areas of focus that Phase 2 of the Initiative should focus its work on?

- The following five strategic areas of focus were identified:
  - **Strategic Area A - Community Leadership**  
Expand, diversify and facilitate community involvement and leadership in public engagement by fostering connection points and sharing influence.
  - **Strategic Area B - Evaluation, Reporting and Recognition**  
Create a culture of excellence and accountability for public engagement through improved transparency, measurement, and celebration.
  - **Strategic Area C - Vision, Policy and Framework**  
Create organizational foundations that support, inspire and guide effective public engagement as One City and Open City.
  - **Strategic Area D - Learning and Training**  
Improve public engagement knowledge and capacity through learning, leadership development, skill building, and training (City and citizen).
  - **Strategic Area E - Tools, Technologies and Practices**  
Expand and diversify public engagement tools and techniques, and pilot innovative public engagement processes.
- The Phase 1 Terms of Reference for the Council Initiative on Public Engagement committed to developing a Terms of Reference for Phase 2 at the conclusion of Phase 1. This approach was taken because it was understood that the results of Phase I would be needed to plan for Phase II.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

Phase 2 of the Council Initiative on Public Engagement will strive to:

1. Establish and facilitate the work of an Advisory Committee, which will develop a vision and principles for public engagement at the City of Edmonton.
2. Establish and facilitate the work of Working Groups that include City staff and community members. It is expected their work will be organized around the five strategic areas of focus identified in Phase 1. These Groups will develop and implement action plans that integrate the results of Phase 1.
3. Establish organizational practices and frameworks, and improve internal culture to deliver improved public engagement. Ultimately, the outcomes of a strong continuous improvement program for public engagement will include:
  - More and better opportunities for citizens to engage with their city and their government to continue building a great city.
  - Increased citizen satisfaction that their insights, knowledge and opinions are considered by the City of Edmonton in decision making by elected officials and administration.
  - Better decisions that strike the right balance between political leadership, administrative expertise, community knowledge, and citizen insights and preferences, which result in optimal project outcomes in terms of time, cost and quality .

- More awareness, understanding and public support for City policies, programs and services
- Improved flexibility and capacity to address evolving citizen expectations and match the most appropriate and innovative approaches to engagement to the issue being discussed or the decision being made.

## ***Phase 2 Work Plan Overview***

Detailed work plans will be developed by the Advisory Committee and Working Groups. They will be given the autonomy to build on the work done in Phase 1 by determining who the right people are to work on what issues in ways that lead to progress and positive change. As such, this Terms of Reference lays out the process for establishing the Advisory Committee and Working Groups, and provides a summary of the work completed in Phase 1, most importantly, the five strategic areas of focus.

## ***Advisory Committee***

The Advisory Committee is designed to create collaborative accountability and leadership for public engagement between City Council, City Administration, and community. It will develop a vision and principles for public engagement, based on the work done in Phase 1, and will oversee the creation and implementation of Working Groups to carry out work in Phase 2, providing review and guidance as needed.

The Advisory Committee will liaison with the two Council leads (Councillors Ben Henderson and Michael Walters) and will be made up of five Branch Managers and five members of the public. Those Branch Managers in each department who have a high concentration of public engagement in their areas will be asked to take part and it will be up to each department to designate one Branch Manager to be a member of the Committee. Public members will be selected based on achieving a wide representation of the Edmonton community, drawn from a pool of participants who expressed interest during Phase 1. The Office of Public Engagement will provide support for the activities of the Advisory Group, along with those of the Working Groups, and the Centre for Public Involvement (CPI) will be an ad hoc member of the Advisory Committee.

Through out Phase 1, the Initiative worked closely with a Branch Managers' Working Group, which was focused on the overall changing nature of public administration and evolving organizational culture, of which public engagement is a key part. The work of this Group will align directly with the new Advisory Committee via Branch Manager membership on the Committee.

## ***Working Groups***

Working Group members will be drawn from a pool of potential members made up of those who expressed interest in being members during Phase 1 of the Initiative, suggestions from the Advisory Committee, and public communication of the opportunity to potentially become a member. The Advisory Committee may provide criteria for Working Group membership, especially to ensure the City's wide diversity is represented. Each Working Group will be led by a chair and will determine its own priorities, which will be detailed annually in an Action Plan and reviewed by the Advisory Committee.

The Working Groups will work under the Advisory Committee, which will update both CLT and the Council leads on its work. Each Working Group will be funded via the Advisory Committee from the budget for the Council Initiative on Public Engagement, which is supported by various branches and which will be almost completely focused in 2016 and 2017 on supporting the work of the Committee and Working Groups.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

Public Engagement is a fundamental component of local government. The importance of engaging Edmontonians in the good governance of their City is identified in *The Way Ahead* and the City's Strategic Plans. Public engagement is also a key component for making the City's Leadership Principles come alive in how the City plans, implements, and evaluates its policies, programs, and services.

## **BUDGET REQUIREMENTS (2015)**

In 2015 the Initiative's budget is \$425,000, made up of contributions from various departments and branches. The same funding approach is expected in 2016 and 2017. Therefore, no new funding is being sought from Council.

## **TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF PROJECT PLAN**

The Council Initiative on Public Engagement will take place over the term of the current City Council (ending October 2017), divided into at least two phases, each with their own terms of reference and more detailed work plans, and with prior phases informing the development of future phases. The goal is to achieve a continuous improvement program over longer timelines, which builds on previous work and recognizes that lasting improvements are often part of a broader and sustained culture and organizational change effort.