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Council Policy

Engage Policy

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Policy Statement

The City of Kelowna's Engage Policy is guided by the Public Engagement Guiding Principles, IAP2 (International Association of Public Participation) Framework and Standards of Practice when engaging the community on City-led projects, policies, or initiatives to ensure there is a consistent and effective approach to public and stakeholder engagement.

Purpose

Public engagement means to inform and/or involve those affected or interested in a decision. It leads to sustainable decisions by providing participants with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way, early in the process and describes how citizen input affects the decision.

The City recognizes that the decision-making process is improved by engaging citizens and other stakeholder groups when appropriate. Public engagement will apply to four areas where Council has responsibility for the final decision making which include: project, policy or planning initiatives; customer service changes; volunteer participation; and community and neighbourhood development/programming.

The Engage Policy supports Council's decision making, balancing a range of key considerations including: technical feasibility, financial viability, environmental viability and socially acceptable.

The Engage Policy achieves the following:

- Aligns with City Council priorities and the City's corporate focus of "Engaged Communities"
- Supports City Council's decision making by providing information on citizens' and stakeholders' opinions
- Ensures consistent and clear practices for involvement and/or information sharing
- Ensures an appropriate level of engagement based on assessed community impact and benefit
- Identifies the parameters and resources for public engagement
- Ensures adherence to the Public Engagement Guiding Principles

Objective

The City will use various techniques and channels to encourage information sharing and dialogue based on eight public engagement guiding principles. These principles outline what the public can expect from the City.

- Accountability: City leaders and staff are accountable for ensuring meaningful public engagement.
- Inclusiveness: Public dialogue and decision making processes, reach out to, and encourage participation of the community.
- Transparency: Public decision-making processes are accessible, honest and understandable.
- Fiscally sustainable: Ensure methods and resources for public notice and engagement reflect the magnitude and complexity of the initiative.
- Early involvement: Helps identify issues and look at opportunities and challenges during concept development, design and implementation of city policies, projects and initiatives.
- Timely communications: Ensure there is enough time within the engagement process to provide information to the community.

- Clear and accessible information: Ensures the use of plain language in a wide variety of formats and channels of communication.
- Suitable process: Design and implementation of public engagement processes and techniques that reflect the magnitude and complexity of the initiative. Processes adapt to changing needs and issues as they move forward.

Process

The strategies and methods that will be used to involve and inform those affected by a decision are based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation, an international standard. The City of Kelowna Engagement Guide and templates will support staff in delivering quality engagement practices in the community as outlined in three phases:

Phase 1 - Assessing Community Impact

The term 'level of community impact' refers to the magnitude of change citizens may experience as a result of a project/issue or change in policy or service.

The assessment criteria has four levels of impact which range from:

- Level 1 - High impact city wide
- Level 2 – High impact on select area and/or defined groups
- Level 3 – Moderate impact city wide
- Level 4 – Moderate impact on select area and/or defined groups

Phase 2 - Identifying and Achieving Goal of Public Engagement, IAP2 Spectrum of Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower.

This phase outlines the commitment(s) made to citizens and stakeholders and examples of techniques and tools that align to each goal.

INFORM – GOAL: To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner. “We will keep you informed.”

CONSULT – GOAL: To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions. “We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and preferences, and will provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.”

INVOLVE – GOAL: To work with the public to make sure concerns and aspirations are considered and understood. “We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations inform the outcome to the maximum extent possible.”

COLLABORATE – GOAL: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision making. “We will look to you for advise and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible.”

EMPOWER – GOAL: To place final decision making in the hands of the public. “We will implement what you decide.”

Phase 3 – Developing the Public Engagement Plan

Effective preparation and implementation of a public engagement process can provide City of Kelowna with perspectives from different points of view, based on knowledge and experiences and at the same time the ability to manage expectations by defining areas where the public can inform the outcome on an initiative.

This phase will help in the achievement of the engagement goals outlined in Phase 2 and set the expectation for projects in which public engagement is a consideration.

Implementation of the process makes decisions richer and the solutions more sustainable, effective and easier to implement.

Resource Allocation

Prior to committing to any level of public engagement on a project or initiative, the procedures will be used by the City to determine the level of investment and human resources required to support the appropriate level of engagement effectively and efficiently.

All engagement activities will occur within approved project plans. Project managers must secure resources, expertise in IAP2 practices and funding through annual work planning and budget processes.

Amendments

R249/14/04/14 – Policy adopted.