

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Date Issued: April 24, 2012

Mandated by: City Council

Current Revision: August 24, 2021

Cross Reference:

- Public Engagement Framework
- International Association of Public Engagement (IAP2)

Next Review: January 1, 2026

Responsibility: Director, Corporate Communications

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Public Engagement Policy and Framework is to provide guidelines and procedures as to when and how to engage the Public and Stakeholders.
- 1.2 Public Engagement provides opportunities for Stakeholders and the Public to participate in transparent and inclusive municipal processes, to bring forward an additional diversity of perspectives, to support Administration in identifying challenges and develop alternatives and to assist Council in making decisions.

2. POLICY

- 2.1 The City of Fort Saskatchewan recognizes and values Public Engagement in its decision making processes. Public Engagement processes shall include a range of opportunities for the Public to participate and be informed, and these opportunities will consider the needs of a diverse audience.
- 2.2 The City of Fort Saskatchewan shall conduct Public Engagement when:
 - 2.2.1 It is required by legislation; or
 - 2.2.2 When requested by Council or Administration.
- 2.3 The City of Fort Saskatchewan may also consider Public Engagement activities when:
 - 2.3.1 New programs or services are being considered;
 - 2.3.2 Significant changes to existing programs or service levels are being considered, or there are significant changes in service delivery; or

- 2.3.3 Identifying priorities or preferences for guiding documents such as Council's Strategic Plan, The Municipal Development Plan, and reports/plans/studies.
- 2.4 Public Engagement is integrally linked with decision making and approaches to engagement reflect the type of decision being made. Engagement activities will be appropriate for the level of public involvement guided by these types of decisions:
- 2.4.1 Directive –the City makes a decision they are authorized to do so.
 - 2.4.2 Consultative –the City makes the decision but wants the public's help in assessing and understanding the possibilities or impacts of the decision, or notification and input are required by law.
 - 2.4.3 Collaborative –the City makes the decision with a shared or joint approach with the public or another municipality to assess priorities, possibilities for partnerships and preferred solutions.
 - 2.4.4 Citizen-led – the City authorizes its citizens to make the decision. Citizens lead the consultation, make a decision and report the decision back to the municipality.
- 2.5 Public Engagement will be undertaken in good faith, utilize multiple approaches and strive to make people feel it is important and meaningful to be involved. Participants will be provided with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way. Consultations will demonstrate to citizens that their feedback and opinions matter and will show participants that their input has been heard and indicate why and how decisions are reached.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 *Administration* – means the City Manager or designate(s) for the City of Fort Saskatchewan.
- 3.2 *City* – means the municipal corporation known as the City of Fort Saskatchewan.
- 3.3 *Council* - means the Mayor and Councillors of the City, both together and individually.
- 3.4 *Continuum of Public Engagement* – means the IAP2 spectrum of public participation determined by the type of decision being made and the levels of participation of engagement: Inform; Consult; Involve; Collaborate; Empower. The levels represent increasing degrees to which the Public can impact the decision or outcome.
- 3.5 *International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)* – means the association of practitioners who seek to advance and extend the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.
- 3.6 *Public* – means residents and Stakeholders who have an interest in, or are affected by, an outcome or decision.
- 3.7 *Public Engagement* - means any process that seeks to gather a range of opinions and perspectives, gives a voice to the Public, and is intended to increase Public confidence in the decision making process.

- 3.8 *Public Engagement Framework* – means the City's procedures manual for Public Engagement planning and execution.
- 3.9 *Stakeholders* – means a person, group, or organization who have an interest in, or are affected by, an outcome or decision.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The City is committed to Public Engagement processes that encourage two-way dialogue, build trust, and support effective decision-making. All Public Engagement efforts shall be guided by principles that support effective and authentic Public Engagement that is clear, concise, and non-biased. These principles are:
- 4.1.1 Inclusiveness – seeking out and accommodating diverse voices and perspectives and respecting the collective wisdom of the community;
 - 4.1.2 Transparency – communicating the purpose, timing, roles and responsibilities and constraints of Public Engagement and providing timely feedback on the views collected and how they impacted the decision made;
 - 4.1.3 Accountability – ensuring that Council receives all relevant information for its consideration and respecting that Council is the final decision making authority and ensuring that the public receives all relevant information when asked to participate in the decision making process;
 - 4.1.4 Communication – using a variety of communications methods to most effectively reach the Public and valuing and providing opportunities for two-way dialogue; and
 - 4.1.5 Responsiveness – evaluating and modifying Public Engagement plans as needed.
- 4.2 This Policy applies to all City Administration directing projects or initiatives that include Public Engagement as well as external consultants. The Public Engagement Framework shall be the resource for planning and implementing Public Engagement processes.
- 4.3 Administration is responsible to act on the direction of Council if Public Engagement is deemed necessary and shall report to Council on the level of participation that will be used.
- 4.4 The City shall follow IAP2 public participation practices. IAP2 provides public participation practitioners with tools, skills, networking and training opportunities to advance and extend the practices of public participation. . IAP2 carries out its mission by organizing and conducting activities to:
- 4.4.1 Serve the learning needs of members through events, publications, and communication technology;
 - 4.4.2 Advocate for public participation to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of affected stakeholders and meet the needs of decision-making body;
 - 4.4.3 Promote a results-oriented research agenda and use research to support educational and advocacy goals;

4.4.4 Provide technical assistance to improve public participation.

- 4.5 All Public Engagement opportunities shall be posted on the City's website, along with corresponding reports and data resulting from Public Engagement.

5. AUTHORITY / RESPONSIBILITY TO IMPLEMENT

- 5.1 The Director, Corporate Communications shall be authorized to establish procedures for the implementation of this Policy which are consistent with the governing principles.
- 5.2 General Managers shall ensure that the guidelines for Public Engagement are followed by Administration.
- 5.3 Public Engagement processes that seek to differ from the Public Engagement Framework require prior approval from the City Manager.