
Public Engagement Procedure

Procedures

1. When Public Engagement is Required

Public engagement is required when:

- It is legislated
- Council or County Administration requests it

Public engagement may be required when:

- Citizens or stakeholders request it
- Citizens' quality of life may be affected
- The natural environment may be affected
- Geographical communities or communities of interest may be affected
- There are already strong views on the issue
- Many people will be affected

Public engagement is not required when

- The decision has already been made
- The project- or issue-related decision has already been made
- The issue relates to the development of an administrative policy that doesn't require or involve public consultation
- Stakeholder input will not be considered

2. Public Engagement Continuum

The Public Engagement Continuum gives guidance to County staff to help determine the level of engagement for a particular project. The levels represent increasing degrees to which the public can impact the decision or outcome.

Input - Obtain feedback from citizens and stakeholders to test ideas or concepts, clarify issues, and identify possible solutions.

Listen and Learn - Create opportunities for County staff, Council, citizens and stakeholders to enter into a dialogue together to explore each other's perspectives, goals, plans, concerns, expectations, and possible solutions.

Collaborate - Partner with citizens and stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives, recommendations and preferred solutions.

Empower - Delegate some or all aspects of decision making to citizens and stakeholders.

Clear, concise, non-biased information and communication is the basis of all public engagement processes.

3. Steps to Completing a Public Engagement Process

Please note that the Senior Advisor, Public Engagement can provide detailed information about each of these steps to staff.

A. Planning the Public Engagement Process

1. Assess the need for public engagement
2. Define the purpose of the public engagement process
3. Estimate your budget
4. Determine the degree to which the public will impact the decision (continuum of engagement)
5. Identify the stakeholders involved
6. Develop a risk management plan
7. Choose your tools and strategies to get public input
8. Create a data management and data analysis strategy
9. Develop a communication plan
10. Set a budget
11. Complete a Public Engagement Plan Worksheet (PE Toolkit)

B. Implementing the Public Engagement Process

1. Fill out the action plan
2. Implement the public engagement process
3. Monitor public engagement feedback throughout the process

C. Evaluating the Public Engagement Process

Participants at any kind of engagement session should be given the opportunity to provide feedback specifically on that session itself, as well as the engagement process as a whole, including communication and planning.

This feedback should include, at a minimum:

- % of participants who agree the purpose of the activity was clearly explained
- % of participants who agree they had enough information to contribute to the topic
- % of participants who agree they understand how the input from the engagement activity will be used
- Cost per project

At the completion of an engagement process staff members will review and rate the following areas of the project:

1. Accountability
2. Inclusiveness
3. Transparency
4. Commitment
5. Responsiveness

The information from this evaluation will be reviewed by department staff prior to launching subsequent engagement projects, in order to transfer any learnings to future processes. Key learnings should be shared with Public Engagement Team members to allow for improvement across departments.

Annually:

- % of Council reports that have the public engagement section filled out
- % of County residents that agree their awareness of public engagement has increased

- % of County staff who agree they felt safe when involved in Public Engagement processes/events
- % of projects that have a documented public engagement plan

D. Communicating the outcome of the public engagement process
Report back to all stakeholders involved in the public engagement process.

4. Responsibilities

Strathcona County has an internal resource dedicated to public engagement. The Senior Advisor, Public Engagement is responsible for overseeing the public engagement processes in the County, leading and mentoring staff who plan, implement and evaluate those processes, and providing expert advice to County staff when difficult situations arise from public engagement processes.

The Senior Advisor, Public Engagement will:

- Focus on best practices, ongoing learning and continuous improvement for public engagement in the County.
- Foster a culture of public engagement in Strathcona County.
- Chair all Public Engagement Team meetings.
- Develop evaluation measures and report on progress of public engagement processes on an annual basis.
- Provide leadership on the delivery of high quality public engagement processes in the County.
- Develop and disseminate standard language to staff writing Requests for Proposals (RFP) and Negotiated Requests for Proposals (NRFP) that must be included when public engagement (either internal or external) is a requirement of the RFP/NRFP.
- Assist County staff to determine when public engagement is required.
- Lead, mentor and collaborate with County staff involved in public engagement processes.
- Recommend and coordinate appropriate training opportunities.
- Oversee the development and management of tools and processes that benefit the practice of public engagement in the County.

The following outlines the responsibilities over County staff in various roles with regard to public engagement:

Senior Leadership Team will:

- Lead organizational change within Strathcona County to create a culture of public engagement throughout the organization.
- Ensure department directors understand their responsibilities for implementing the Public Engagement Policy and Framework for both internal and external public engagement processes.
- Give serious consideration to the input gathered in public engagement processes.
- Direct staff to initiate public engagement, when appropriate.
- Seek assistance from, and consult with, the Senior Advisor, Public Engagement, as needed.

Department Directors and Managers will:

- Support public engagement initiatives within Strathcona County.
- Ensure staff understand and adhere to the Public Engagement Policy and Framework for both internal and external processes.
- Ensure that the Public Engagement Policy is adhered to by all consultants and contractors hired to do public engagement on behalf of the County.
- Ensure internal and external public engagement processes are planned, initiated,

- conducted, reported and evaluated in a timely manner.
- Ensure that staff include the standard language in all RFPs and NRFPs when public engagement (either internal or external) is a requirement of the RFP/NRFP.
- Assign and support staff participation on the Public Engagement Team as needed, ensuring time and resources are available.
- Support identified staff to participate in public engagement training and professional development.
- Lead the culture of public engagement throughout the organization.
- Identify public engagement opportunities within the respective departments and inform the department Public Engagement representative or the Senior Advisor, Public Engagement in a timely manner

The Public Engagement Team member will:

- Act as an ambassador and liaison for Public Engagement Policy and Framework in their respective departments, sharing new information and best practices with department colleagues.
- Share information with the Public Engagement Team and Senior Advisor, Public Engagement, on upcoming and current public engagement opportunities and activities within their respective departments.
- Foster a culture of public engagement in Strathcona County.

Strathcona County employees who lead public engagement activities will:

- Understand and use the Public Engagement Policy, Framework and guiding principles for public engagement processes.
- Consult with and share information on public engagement opportunities and activities with the departments' Public Engagement Team member and the Senior Advisor, Public Engagement.
- Ensure that the standard language is included in all RFPs and NRFPs when public engagement (either internal or external) is a requirement of the RFP/NRFP.
- Contribute to the community of practice (Strathcona County employees leading public engagement processes) by focusing on best practices, ongoing learning and continuous improvement for public engagement in the County.

County employees who are planning, implementing and evaluating public engagement processes are expected to use the information provided in both the Public Engagement Framework and the Public Engagement Handbook.

Procedure Record

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Administrative Review: Communications

Approved by:

Signed – Rob Coon
Rob Coon
Interim Chief Commissioner

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Date