A GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR
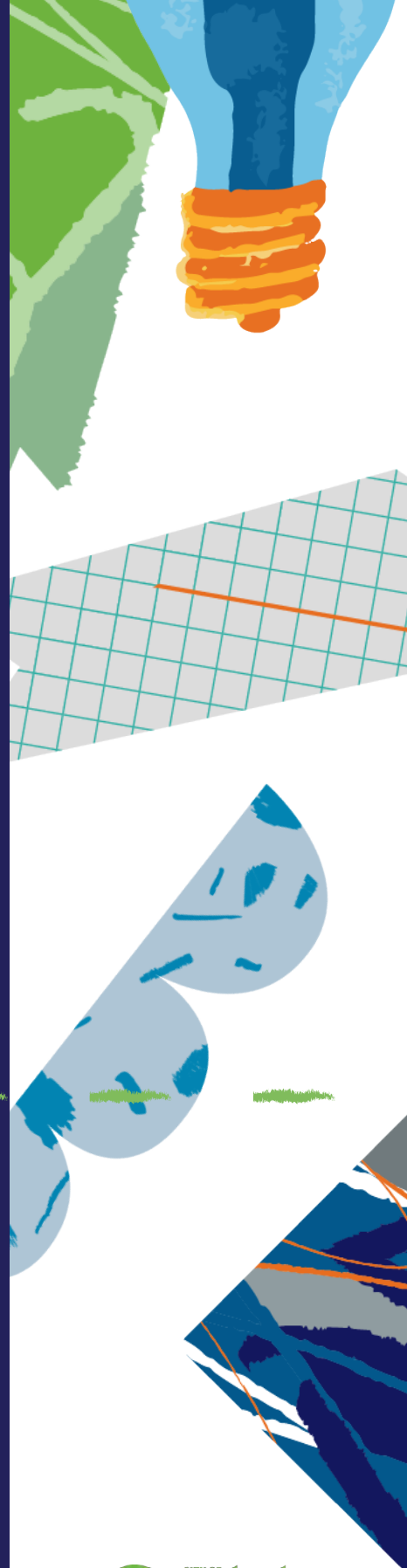# Advisory Committees of Council

Dr. Leah Levac
Dr. Wai Yin Chan
Sam Laban
Dylan McMahon
Asa Coleman
Dr. Simon Pek

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that this work took place within the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We recognize that these lands are home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, past and present, and that we have a responsibility to understand and respond to the consequences of colonization as we work to transform western governance systems.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of:

UNIVERSITY *of* GUELPH

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

COMMUNITY ENGAGED
SCHOLARSHIP INSTITUTE

Table of Contents

Introduction

WHY DID WE DO THIS PROJECT?

Advisory Committees of Council (ACOCs) are a well-established component of municipal governance in Canada. These committees can provide a venue for ongoing interaction between constituents, City Councils, and municipal staff. They address a wide range of topics, including accessibility, transit, heritage, the arts, and more. They can also offer valuable policy advice in crucial areas of municipal responsibility.

Despite their widespread use, little research has explored how ACOCs function. Existing ACOCs differ significantly in terms of their structure, scope, and membership, and there are few resources available to assist Ontario's 444 municipalities in developing and operationalizing new and existing ACOCs. The City of Guelph's Clerk's Office is interested in better understanding the form and function of the City's ACOCs and having a tool to guide their future development. Since January 2023, a collaboration between the Clerk's Office at the City and the University of Guelph, hosted by the Guelph Lab,[1] has been working to respond to this need. This report presents a Framework that the City of Guelph, and potentially other municipalities, can use to guide their creation and use of ACOCs.

As an important community engagement tool, ACOCs, and in turn the ACOC Framework, are underpinned by the recognition that community engagement is important – vital even – not only in principle, but also for the fulsome functioning of democratic governments. The City of Guelph defines community engagement as "the practice of involving the public in the decision-making processes related to matters that affect them and that they can meaningfully influence" (City of Guelph, 2023a, p. 5). We use the term community engagement throughout this report to align with the City's practice, recognizing that terms such as public engagement, civic engagement, and citizen participation are often used to convey similar meaning. Except when referencing others' work, we do not use the term citizen. This is because ACOC membership is not confined to those who are legally citizens (only residency is a requirement).

Community engagement can contribute to the effectiveness, legitimacy, and justice of democratic governance (Fung, 2006), and produce positive outcomes for both governments and members of the public who participate (Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). Current ACOC members who completed a survey as part of the research and community engagement that informed this report told us they felt more connected to and responsible for the community and had both a renewed and greater interest in what is happening in Guelph, and a deeper understanding of municipal functions and operations.

---

1 The Guelph Lab is a collaboration of the University of Guelph's College of Social and Applied Human Sciences, and the City of Guelph. The purpose of the Lab is to address challenges that have direct impact on, and relevance for, the community. The Lab aims to develop solutions to challenges faced by the community that cannot be solved without some form of government intervention. The Lab does this by bringing together municipal, community, and university expertise and knowledge. For details, please visit https://www.guelphlab.ca/

However, ineffective processes can discourage participation, undermine the government's legitimacy, and entrench injustices (Moscrop & Warren, 2016; Barnes et al., 2003; Bryson et al., 2012). Further, historic and ongoing experiences of colonialism complicate relations between Indigenous residents and western governments, including in terms of how to create appropriate engagement protocols, and in some cases, in terms of whether Indigenous people wish to engage. Generally, community engagement efforts struggle to respond to systemic power imbalances and barriers to participation, a point that was echoed by residents who contributed to developing the Framework *(Residents in a community engagement session).* Meaningfully engaging with people who face structural forms of oppression requires actively challenging oppressive systems including sexism, colonialism, racism, and ableism (Levac et al., 2022; Pin, 2021), and working to overcome related barriers to participation to facilitate more genuine contributions and trust between residents and government officials *(Residents in a community engagement session).* Still, even meaningful efforts to ameliorate systemic barriers to participation produce mixed outcomes (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2017; Petite, 2021; Walsh, 2017) and thus need to be carefully and continuously monitored.

The City's Community Engagement Policy (City of Guelph, 2023b) articulates the following "principles for designing and delivering community engagement…[including] practice inclusive design and address identified barriers to participation; focus on the needs and experiences of equity-denied groups; engage early and evolve its approach as it goes; connect dots [between engagement opportunities and ongoing City work]; meet people where they are; deliver diverse engagement opportunities; spark curiosity and joy; and report back [to the community]" (pp. 3-4). These principles, informed by a recent review of the City's engagement policy and related practices, and supported by relevant literature, informed both the process of developing the Framework, and the Framework itself.

GUELPH'S ACOCs

In Ontario, very few advisory committees are required by provincial legislation.[2] Those required include planning advisory committees (Planning Act, 1990) and accessibility advisory committees (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005). Other advisory committees are enabled – though not required – by provincial legislation, including advisory committees related to heritage (Ontario Heritage Act, 1990), minor variances in land use (Planning Act, 1990), museums (Ontario Municipal Act, 1990), and property standards (Building Code Act, 1992; Guelph's Property Standards By-law, 2000). Beyond those required or enabled by provincial legislation, many municipalities choose to create and maintain several other advisory committees on different topics such as arts and culture, transportation, and economic development *(see Appendix A)*. Their design (both legislated and not) is left largely to the municipality. The City of Guelph maintains 15 ACOCs *(see Appendix B)*.[3] Nearby and/or comparable municipalities host an average of 10 *(see Appendix A)*.

---

2   Committees of Adjustment are not required by provincial legislation but are enabled by relevant legislation to receive delegated authority.
3   There are other committees that fall out of the scope of this report and the Framework developed but that may benefit from applying some of the principles and guidelines offered in this report. These include the Guelph Cemetery Commission and the Art Gallery of Guelph. The City appoints members to these committees but exercises limited oversight.

WHY DOES THE CITY NEED A FRAMEWORK?

Previous research about ACOCs in Guelph reveals that there is wide variation in their mandate and authority, overall purpose and objectives, membership composition and term lengths, staff liaison roles, reporting processes (and frequency), and meeting frequency (Buchnea & Laban, 2021). Further, despite their widespread existence, there are not clear guidelines to inform how they are designed, and little information about their effectiveness, the experiences of residents who serve on them, or the experiences of public servants and elected officials who try to learn from and engage with them. Moreover, recent media attention in Ontario (Coleman, 2020, 2022; Vivian, 2016, 2021) suggests that there is concern about how well ACOCs function, if and how they serve City Council, what is expected of them, how they fit with other community engagement efforts, and how best to support their work. Ultimately, there are very few resources available to guide the City of Guelph as it creates, designs, operates, evaluates, and reforms or dissolves an ACOC.

The ACOC Framework aims to fill this gap and guide the City's decisions about ACOCs. It is a set of guidelines for deciding whether to establish an ACOC, and how to design it. It draws on extensive primary and secondary research and community engagement, described in more detail below and elaborated in Appendix C. The Framework is organized into four stages, each of which focuses on a distinct dimension of creating and designing an ACOC. These include the major decision to establish an ACOC (Stage 1); articulating its purposes, formation, required resources, membership, and recruitment (Stage 2); guidelines regarding its design including creating its Terms of Reference (TOR), affirming its establishment by City Council, creating a training plan for ACOC members and staff, and preparing for the first meeting (Stage 3); and guidelines for evaluating ACOCs (Stage 4). If an ACOC is required by legislation, or if City Council makes the decision to create an ACOC (Stage 1), all other stages (Stages 2 to 4) should be followed.

How did we create the Framework?

The ACOC Framework is the result of research, community engagement, and analysis informed by an approach to research that falls under the broad umbrella of engaged scholarship, a form of scholarship that brings together academic and non-academic partners to identify and respond to community-identified problems. Taking an engaged scholarship approach implies several practices in terms of the project leadership, design, and analytical approach. Key details of our approach are noted here and outlined further in Appendix C.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

As already noted, the project that led to this report was hosted by the Guelph Lab. The core team includes Dr. Leah Levac, Sam Laban, and Dr. Wai Yin Chan from the University of Guelph, and Dylan McMahon from the City of Guelph. Other team members include Elizabeth Barber and Donna Tremblay (past employee) from the City of Guelph, Dr. Simon Pek from the University of Victoria, Dr. Sean Geobey from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Anthony Piscitelli from Conestoga College, and two University of Guelph graduate students, Asa Coleman and Chloe Carducci, who contributed to information gathering and analysis, and a range of administrative tasks.

RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The core team worked collaboratively to design the project, with guidance from all team members. To gather information for developing the Framework, we relied on several strategies. We reviewed academic literature and community-based/government documents related to the role of residents in local policy making and planning, and to promising practices in community engagement and participatory forms of governance. We also collected research data through surveys with current ACOC members, and through interviews with current ACOC members, City staff (those who interface directly with ACOCs, Clerk's Office, and Executive Team), City Council, and staff from other municipalities. To complement the research data, we held community engagement sessions with residents who used to serve as ACOC members, who had previously expressed an interest in governance-related issues within the City, and/or who were invited by the City or a local community organization to participate in a discussion about how to make ACOC membership more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible (see also Table 1).

Table 1. Research and community engagement participants ([Appendix E](#) includes the demographic data for all informants).

Participants	Research / Engagement Method and Number of Participants
Current ACOC members	50 survey responses; 7 interviews
City staff	20 individual interviews
Residents who participated in a community engagement session	38 individuals across 3 community engagement sessions
Staff from other municipalities	5 interviews
Members of City Council	8 interviews

The Framework reflects what we learned from the information we gathered, the expertise and experience of the members of the project team, and extensive and ongoing feedback from two groups of residents. The first was a working group of eight current ACOC members who volunteered to participate in a series of four, half-day and full day meetings spanning several months. The second was a group of community reviewers, comprised of three residents who attended the equity and inclusion-focused community engagement session, and subsequently provided feedback on a draft of the Framework. The complete list of contributors is noted in [Appendix D](#).

The ACOC Framework

The Framework is divided into two parts. Part 1 of the Framework covers seven key commitments that should underpin all ACOCs. These commitments are also embedded in Part 2 of the Framework, which outlines specific actions and decisions that should guide the creation and operation of ACOCs.

PART ONE: KEY COMMITMENTS OF ACOCs

1 ACOCs are an important form of **community engagement**.

2 ACOCs should help shape the City's **strategic goals**.

3 ACOCs should adopt a **deliberative approach**.

4 ACOCs should contribute **lived and professional expertise**.

5 ACOCs should include members with **diverse identities and perspectives**.

6 There should be **clear communication** between ACOCs and City Council.

7 ACOCs should be **adequately resourced**.

PART TWO: CREATING AND OPERATING ACOCs

STAGE ONE
Should the City form an ACOC?

STAGE TWO
Deciding the ACOC's purpose and formation

STAGE THREE
Developing the details of the ACOC

STAGE FOUR
Evaluating the ACOC

YES, the City should form an ACOC →

NO, the City should not form an ACOC

PART 1: KEY COMMITMENTS OF ACOCs

Our research, community engagement, and analysis suggest that there are seven commitments that should underpin all ACOCs. Beyond the specific commitments detailed below, which are also reflected in various dimensions of Part 2 of the Framework, the City should embrace the intent of these commitments, which is that if residents who serve as ACOC members are to feel invested in the success of the City, they must be treated as having valuable insights and expertise to offer, and as through their role as advisors to City Council serves an important purpose in the City's governance, and is thus worth supporting.

Commitment 1: ACOCs are an important form of **community engagement.**

> **The City should think about ACOCs as one possible community engagement tool amongst a suite of options available. They are an opportunity for residents to learn about topics they care about and participate in ongoing discussions that contribute to important decisions affecting their community. ACOCs offer the City, and specifically City Council, an opportunity to get carefully considered advice from the residents they serve.**

When ACOCs are considered a community engagement tool, it becomes clearer that not all challenges facing the City and requiring input from residents warrant the creation of an ACOC. Instead, thinking about ACOCs as a form of community engagement can help City Council and City staff consider whether other forms of engagement are more appropriate. This is explored in more detail in Part 2 of the Framework.

Commitment 2: ACOCs should help shape the City's **strategic goals**.

> **An ACOC should provide the City with long-term, high-level guidance, that helps shape the City's strategic and other guiding priorities as outlined in relevant documents (e.g., the Strategic Plan, Master Plans, the Community Plan). Accordingly, ACOCs should help shape the policy agenda rather than respond to it.**

ACOCs should become a more prominent part of the City's governance architecture. The City's "policy pyramid" makes this distinction clearly – ACOCs can best help the City answer the question, "Are we doing the right things?" rather than, "Are we doing things right?". This commitment positions ACOCs as an important community engagement mechanism for enabling residents to shape the city they live in. This commitment also means that ACOC members should be involved in defining problems and identifying potential solutions rather than exclusively being asked to provide feedback on solutions that are already being proposed or have already been decided, a concern raised by several research and community engagement participants. ACOCs may still provide feedback on the implementation of strategies (i.e., more operational decisions) when appropriate or when legislated to do so but should primarily be engaged in the development of policies, strategies and master plans, and the evaluation and updating of these as the City's priorities shift over time. Stage 1 in Part 2 of the Framework focuses on ensuring that ACOCs are created with this commitment in mind.

Commitment 3: ACOCs should adopt a **deliberative approach.**

> **ACOCs should facilitate ongoing discussions amongst members, and between members and City staff. Discussions should adopt a deliberative approach – where participants engage in an informed, facilitated dialogue and hear and offer thoughtful reasons about their positions. Discussions that take a deliberative approach can lead to deeper exploration of public issues, consideration of a wider range of policy options, and more careful attention to potential policy consequences.**

There are many documented benefits of using a deliberative approach, including that it can help avoid errors in policy choices (Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007), and foster legitimacy and trust between residents and the government because residents see the impacts of their participation more directly (Neblo et al., 2010).

Where inclusion is a priority, a deliberative approach is generally preferred over more individual forms of participation, like online surveys, where residents offer input without the opportunity to interact and learn with and from others. However, deliberation can still reproduce inequities (Kadlec & Friedman, 2007). Adopting a deliberative approach therefore also requires building the deliberative capacity of participants, including related to them learning about the problem and related resources, and developing empathy about how others experience the problem (Suiter et al., 2020). Part 2 of the Framework highlights some basic considerations for ensuring ACOCs adopt a deliberative approach.

Commitment 4: ACOCs should contribute **lived and professional expertise.**

> **Both lived and professional expertise are valuable to the work of ACOCs. Accordingly, both should be considered when residents are recruited and appointed, and these different forms of knowledge should be treated as equally valuable when defining and proposing solutions to important challenges and questions facing the City.**

In this report, we use the term lived expertise to refer to the knowledge that someone gains through their personal experiences. We are particularly interested in the lived expertise of those whose voices and experiences are often overlooked in public policy making, and who are often negatively impacted by public policy decisions. This emphasis recognizes the historic and ongoing delegitimization of some forms of knowledge, and some peoples' voices. We use the term professional expertise to refer to knowledge that someone develops through formal education, training, and applied learning through relevant work and volunteer experience.

There is not a specific formula for determining how much lived versus professional expertise is beneficial in any policy area, and certainly many people bring both, but it is important to try and articulate the balance of types of expertise an ACOC seeks. Additionally, it is sometimes useful to explicitly seek out the voices and experiences of residents who have not previously engaged with the City because they may have new and useful insights to share. The ideal composition of any given ACOC, and how to best achieve this through a combination of recruitment strategies, are points of consideration in Part 2 of the Framework.

Commitment 5: ACOCs should include members with **diverse identities and perspectives**.

At the heart of community engagement is the idea that all residents have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, yet many residents face barriers to equitable participation. At the same time, more diverse groups (i.e., including those whose membership includes people who are often excluded) can offer more considered recommendations and advice. ACOCs should therefore address barriers to participation to ensure all residents can meaningfully contribute as ACOC members, and to improve the contributions of ACOCs to the City.

Many residents face barriers to equitable participation, including when it comes to serving on ACOCs. For instance, low participation rates for people living with poverty have long been documented (John, 2009). As well, western governments continue to uphold colonialism and have struggled to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people and take their knowledges seriously. These and other forms of exclusion are a problem not only for democracy, but also for realizing the full promise of community engagement, which is that heterogeneous groups will offer more well-considered recommendations. Although this is not always the case, plenty of research does support this promise. For instance, more collaborative forms of governance can facilitate the participation of people with low socioeconomic status (John, 2009), and when relationship conflict is managed, "racial diversity in groups is beneficial for making complex decisions" (Manata, 2021, p. 45). As such, efforts to ensure that residents with diverse identities and perspectives can serve on ACOCs, and contribute meaningfully to their work, must permeate all aspects of their design, from recruitment to procedural dimensions. In Part 2 of the Framework, the use of inclusive design principles, funding guidelines, and the recommendation to use representative random sampling – the best-known approach for achieving descriptive representativeness (Fung, 2006) – are among the features aimed at helping to realize this commitment.

Commitment 6: There should be **clear communication** between ACOCs and City Council.

> **ACOC members must know how and when their advice has been received by City Council. At the same time, City Council must clearly understand what ACOCs think about the issues and decisions they are considering.**

The importance of clearer communication between ACOCs and City Council was noted frequently by current ACOC members and members of City Council alike during interviews and discussions of the working group. As highlighted below, meeting this commitment is likely to contribute positively to the perceived legitimacy of the ACOC (Bua & Escobar, 2018), and to building trust amongst ACOC members that their contributions are being valued.

Realizing this commitment will include: staff reports to City Council that clearly outline the advice or recommendations of ACOCs; consistent feedback from staff to ACOCs after they have provided their advice; and, regular opportunities for ACOC Chairs to present to City Council alongside staff. There are also specific communication protocols between ACOCs and City Council as part of the process of evaluating ACOCs, which are outlined in Part 2 of the Framework.
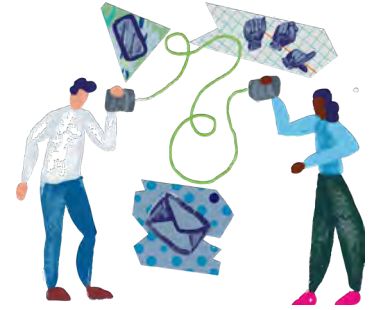
Commitment 7: ACOCs should be **adequately resourced**.

> **As an important form of community engagement, ACOCs must be adequately resourced to realize their potential. Resources can help ensure more equitable opportunities for participation, and that ACOCs can fully serve their important role in shaping the community.**

The importance of adequate resources to support community engagement is well documented. Mirza et al. (2012) pinpoint that governments must invest in evaluating public engagement capacity, providing resources to design effective engagement processes, and nurturing leadership to engage with local communities. Resources may also be useful for reducing barriers to engagement (Mirza et al., 2012). Resource requirements are elaborated in Part 2 of the Framework, and include funds for:

- *staffing related to administration and legislative compliance (via the Clerk's Office);*
- *staffing related to effectively supporting ACOCs (via staff liaisons);*
- *researching and implementing a more diversified recruitment process;*
- *training committee members and City staff who support ACOCs; and*
- *compensating, and covering participation-related expenses for ACOC members, which is an important equity-related commitment for enabling the meaningful contribution of a wide range of residents, including those who face substantial economic barriers.*

PART 2: CREATING AND OPERATING ACOCs

Part 2 of the Framework outlines a process for creating and designing ACOCs. This section provides extensive detail and supporting rationale, that are also the result of our research, community engagement, and analysis. Within Part 2, there are four stages: 1) Should the City form an ACOC?; 2) Deciding the ACOC's purpose and formation; 3) Developing the details of the ACOC; and 4) Evaluating the ACOC.

Stage 1: Should the City form an ACOC?

In Stage 1, the people (typically either City Council or City staff) contemplating the creation of an ACOC should consider whether an ACOC is the best community engagement option for the problem or topic at hand. Stage 1 is guided by four questions: Q1) Is the ACOC required by provincial legislation? Q2) Is the topic appropriate for an ACOC? Q3) Is an ACOC an appropriate engagement tool? and Q4) Are there sufficient resources to support an ACOC on this topic?

Q1: Is the ACOC required by provincial legislation?

This question supersedes the others. ACOCs are either legislated by the Province of Ontario or established through a vote of City Council. If there is a legislated requirement for an ACOC, the Framework directs the person using it to Stage 2. The Framework also encourages City Council to ensure that legislated ACOCs meet the guidelines laid out in the rest of the Framework, including related to being adequately resourced, as detailed in Stage 1, Q4.

If an ACOC is not required by provincial legislation, it could still be an appropriate way forward. However, if the answer to any of the other three questions in Stage 1 is 'no', the Framework recommends pursuing an alternative form of community engagement. Whomever is recommending the creation or continuation of an ACOC should be able to use the below guidelines to demonstrate that the answer to each of Q2-Q4 is 'yes'.

Q2: Is the topic appropriate for an ACOC?

Historically in Guelph, non-legislated ACOCs seem to have been established at the behest of elected officials or City staff, typically in response to emergent concerns, though there is no formal documentation of this. There is also no clear record of why an emergent topic or concern was addressed through an ACOC versus another community engagement mechanism. This has made it difficult for the City to make consistent decisions about the existence and function of ACOCs. The Framework recommends that the topic is appropriate for an ACOC if it:

- *is linked to/identified as a priority in the City's latest Strategic Plan or another current guiding document (e.g., Community Plan or Master Plans);*
- *is of ongoing importance/requires ongoing attention for at least the term of the existing City Council;*
- *will benefit from information and ideas generated through a deliberative approach amongst residents with diverse lived and professional expertise; and*
- *is not already being addressed through another community engagement tool and/or ACOC (City staff can check this with the City's community engagement team and Clerk's Office).*

Q3: Is the ACOC an appropriate engagement tool?

An ACOC is a sustained form of community engagement that is useful for some, but not all, situations where resident insights and preferences are useful for informing municipal priorities and decisions. This means that an ACOC is not necessarily the right tool to select when there is a problem confronting the City. The Framework recommends that an ACOC is an appropriate engagement tool if:

- *there is an opportunity for the ACOC to contribute to understanding/defining the topic (or problem) and possible solutions (i.e., to contribute early in the process);*
- *the professional and lived expertise of ACOC members are useful for informing a range of decisions related to the proposed ACOC; and*
- *City Council is prepared to receive and consider advice from an ACOC on the topic.*

If an ACOC is not the best engagement tool available, it does not mean that community engagement is not important for the topic being considered. Instead, the Framework recommends consulting with the City's community engagement team to discuss other options. There are dozens of community engagement tools available (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Tindal et al., 2017), including many that are already used by the City of Guelph and/or other municipalities. These include townhall meetings, online platforms, opportunities to delegate and provide comments, staff working groups, and citizens' assemblies. There are also numerous guidelines for thinking through the design dimensions of various community engagement options (e.g., Bryson et al., 2012). Because the focus of this report is on ACOCs, and because of the expertise within the City's community engagement team, we have not focused on elaborating alternative engagement tools here. However, Appendix F offers a brief description of a few alternative tools that are either commonly used, or were raised by participants during our research, community engagement, and analysis.

▶ Q4: Are there adequate resources to support an ACOC on this topic?

Interview participants from across groups (e.g., City staff, members of City Council, residents) highlighted the importance of adequately resourcing ACOCs, with minor variation in what they considered 'adequate'. Staff we interviewed explained that at present, limited staffing means that required (statutory) ACOCs receive more support (e.g., more access to training, dedicated Clerk's Office staff to help ensure legislative compliance), despite the City's desire to provide similar services to all committees *(Interview with City staff)*. Research also supports the idea that ACOCs must be appropriately resourced to perform their essential functions (Clark & Friedman, 2020), and that a lack of funding can hinder their contributions (Busenberg, 2007). Members of the working group also emphasized the importance of adequate resources, noting that well-functioning ACOCs are important for realizing the City's community engagement commitments *(Discussion of the working group)*. The Framework recommends that sufficient resources for an ACOC include:

- *the Clerk's Office being able to provide support for legislative needs and compliance, including related to meeting documentation, procedural guidance, and reporting relationship to City Council;*
- *the Clerk's Office being able to plan and provide sufficient (as articulated in Stage 2) training for ACOC members and staff liaisons;*
- *the Clerk's Office being able to research and implement necessary recruitment procedures;*
- *a staff member, whose responsibilities include providing strategic guidance to the City, being available to serve as a staff liaison for the ACOC;*
- *the prospective staff liaison having sufficient time to participate in and support training, work with the ACOC Chair to set agendas, fulfill reporting and communication functions between the ACOC and City Council, and respond to ACOC member requests for information; and*
- *funds to compensate, and cover participation-related expenses for, ACOC members.*

These resource requirements fall roughly into two categories: human resources and implementation-related supports. In terms of human resources, to meet the legislative compliance requirements, and the recruitment and training needs of ACOCs, the Clerk's Office will require more capacity. Additionally, serving as a staff liaison to an ACOC will need to make up a sizeable component of a person's duties for them to be able to fully support the ACOC as envisioned by the Framework. The working group emphasized the vital role that staff liaisons play in supporting ACOCs and encouraged careful attention to ensuring the appropriate selection and training of staff liaisons *(Discussion of the working group)*.

In terms of implementation-related supports, financial supports targeted directly at ACOC members are critical for ensuring that ACOCs can fulfill their role, and for reducing barriers to participation. These supports include covering participation-related expenses such as transportation, family care, and accessibility-related needs (for instance, if an ACOC member needs to be supported by an attendant during meetings) and compensating ACOC members. Compensation is important for valuing the contribution of all ACOC members, and it is especially important for equity-denied community members, who often also face financial barriers. Compensation can address barriers to participation, but it is also important for countering a broader concern that residents who have historically been marginalized get asked to volunteer their time to meet the City's equity-related goals, while paid staff members disproportionately come from more privileged identity groups *(Residents in a community engagement session).*

Stage 2: Deciding the ACOC's purpose and formation

Once a decision to establish an ACOC is made, its purpose, formation, and design must be clearly articulated. Stage 2 offers a series of prescriptions and practices for creating an effective ACOC, in response to four important questions that should be addressed during this stage: Q1) What are the topic and purpose of this ACOC? Q2) What should the membership composition of this ACOC be? Q3) What recruitment methods should this ACOC use? And Q4) Who is an appropriate staff liaison for this ACOC?

▶ **Q1: What are the topic and purpose of this ACOC?**

This question asks for a detailed description of what the ACOC will focus on and why it matters. As part of determining the topic and purpose of the ACOC, the name of the committee and its description should be sufficiently clear and specific so that if a resident were to read it, they would have a good understanding of what the ACOC is about and why it is important for responding to challenges facing Guelph. When we invited community reviewers to begin reviewing the Framework, the first concern they highlighted was that the names of most ACOCs are unclear, and it is difficult to understand what they do from their names *(Community reviewers)*. In general, ACOCs should have clear and short titles, and should include the term "advisory committee".

Broadly, all ACOCs should have a similar overarching purpose, which is to provide the City with considered, long-term, high-level guidance, linked to its strategic and other guiding priorities. Our data, relevant literature, and the City's Community Engagement Charter, support the idea that this guidance should happen early in the policy process (i.e., related to better understanding and articulating problems facing the municipality, and considering solutions).[4]

---

4   We used the policy cycle (Young & Quinn, 2002, p.12) when we asked research participants where an ACOC's work should be positioned. The policy cycle, attributed to American political scientist Harold Lasswell, is a simple heuristic that is widely used as an imperfect way to describe the stages of policy making. The version we used included the following: Stage 1: Problem definition/Agenda setting; Stage 2: Constructing the policy alternatives/Policy formulation; Stage 3: Choice of solution/Selection of preferred policy option; Stage 4: Policy design; Stage 5: Policy implementation and monitoring; Stage 6: Evaluation. For details, please visit: https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/writing_effective_public_policy_papers_young_quinn.pdf

A member of the working group also highlighted the importance of early and meaningful engagement in their consideration for becoming an ACOC member:

> "[…] I should consider if I should volunteer somewhere else because I really want to make sure [that an ACOC member plays] a collaborative role on the committee. I'm there to contribute, not to be spoon-fed" (Working group member).

ACOCs can also be involved in later stages in the process (e.g., commenting on proposed solutions), but late-stage engagement unaccompanied by earlier involvement is often experienced by residents as tokenism, and overlooks the fact that ACOC members may be in a unique position to provide critical information about how residents are experiencing a particular problem and/or for whom it is a problem. Tokenism is similar to what Sutcliffe and Cipkar (2017) describe as symbolic engagement, whereby participants do not have actual influence over the matters they are being asked to advise on. Hoppe (2011) notes that if decision-makers (in this case, members of City Council) have no intention of sincerely acknowledging residents' input as an important part of the decision-making process, there will be a gap between the promises and the intended outcomes of deliberative community engagement mechanisms, such as ACOCs.

Unfortunately, according to some interview participants, symbolic engagement is sometimes happening in Guelph. Both City staff and ACOC members report that some City staff sometimes treat engaging with ACOCs as a 'checkbox' to qualify their actions with little room for proper input *(Interviews with City staff and ACOC members)*. The commitment to adopting deliberative approaches articulated in Part 1 of the Framework is one feature of the Framework that responds to this concern. Deliberative approaches invite residents to participate in an ongoing dialogue that includes "an examination of an issue involving the weighing of reasons for and against a course of action" (Gauvin, 2009, p.1). As already noted, deliberative practices offer many benefits besides interfering with tokenism, including capacity building for further/future community engagement (McGurk et al., 2006), and better access for those who are traditionally less likely to participate in politics (Neblo et al., 2010).

Besides contributing early in the policymaking process, another purpose of some ACOCs is to make decisions on behalf of City Council. For this reason, City Council delegates authority to some ACOCs. In the City's Delegation of Authority By-Law, "delegation" is defined as, "duties conferred by City Council on City staff, and is inclusive of both powers delegated from City Council to City staff and powers granted by City Council to City staff" (p. 2). The By-Law articulates every delegation of authority within the City, which in rare cases, extends beyond City staff and to ACOCs. An example of this is the Committee of Adjustment, which holds delegated authority to approve (or deny) minor variances and land severances. Some City staff we interviewed explained that delegating authority to ACOCs can help maintain integrity in decision-making (i.e., protect decisions from political interference). Others described it as a way of protecting City Council from potentially fraught decisions and/or as a way of helping to manage their workload *(Interviews with City staff)*.

Q2: What should the membership composition of this ACOC be?

This question encompasses three interrelated considerations. The first is how lived and professional expertise will benefit the work of the ACOC, and which of these is most relevant. The second is the extent to which the City wishes to engage with residents who have not previously been engaged. The third is related to reflecting the community's demographic diversity.

In terms of the first consideration about reflecting an appropriate combination of lived and professional expertise, research and community engagement participants across groups were generally supportive of recruiting and appointing ACOC members with both professional and lived expertise. ACOC members who responded to the survey prioritized professional expertise and lived expertise over other possible grounds for recruiting new members (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. ACOC members' selection criteria for new members.

How would ACOC members select new members

- Lived expertise
- Professional expertise
- Demographic characteristics that contribute to the ACOC's diversity
- Represent residents of specific neighbourhood, specific groups, communities, etc.
- Previous ACOC membership experience
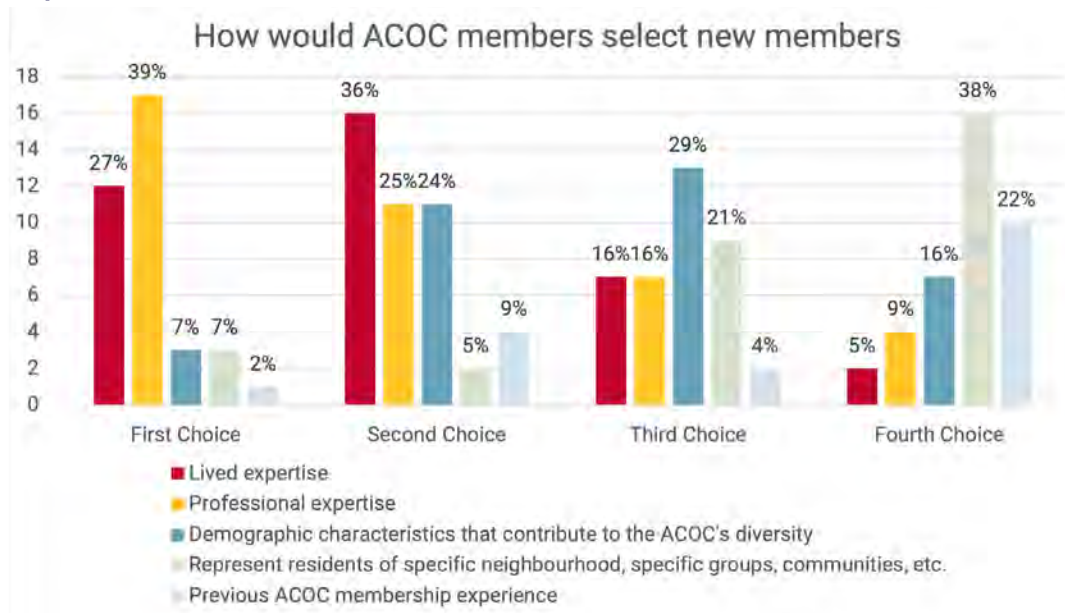
In surveys and interviews, members of ACOCs with more technical responsibilities (e.g., Committee of Adjustment, Guelph Economic Development Advisory Committee, Heritage Guelph, Natural Heritage Advisory Committee, Planning Advisory Committee, Property Standards Committee) tended to prioritize professional expertise over lived expertise when asked how they would prioritize selection criteria for new committee members. Nearly 90 percent of ACOC members who responded to the survey agreed that their ACOCs were contributing both professional and lived expertise to the recommendations and decisions they put forward (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. ACOC members' views on the contribution of their ACOC's professional and lived expertise.
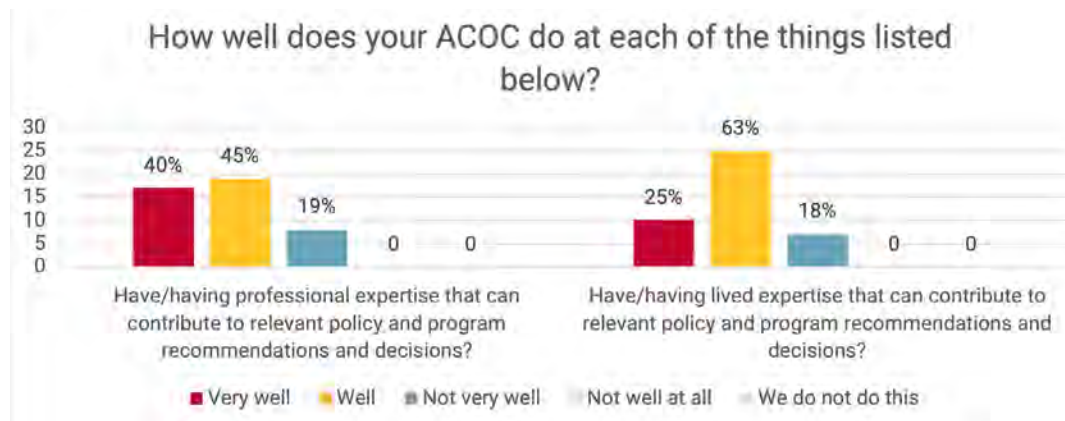
Staff we interviewed were also divided about the best balance of lived versus professional expertise. Some interviewees questioned the need for professional expertise on committees considering the strong professional expertise of City staff, while others offered sentiments in line with the following:

> "[...] if you have the right people at the table, they can really bring some very fine-tuned expertise that either our staff wouldn't have or would complement the expertise that our staff has" (Interview with City staff).

Given the Framework's emphasis on ACOCs taking on a more strategic and high-level role in the policy-making process, it seems likely that lived expertise will become increasingly important.

As well, although a particular ACOC might demand slightly more of one or the other, there was general agreement that both types of expertise are valuable and should be considered when selecting members for any ACOC.

The second consideration – engaging with residents who have not previously been engaged with the City – attempts to summarize a concern raised by interviewees and working group members that the membership of ACOCs may currently be comprised of people who are already heavily involved with the City through other community engagement mechanisms. Highly engaged residents often bring important knowledge, insights, and commitment. At the same time, a lack of engagement with others means that ACOCs might be missing out on the potential contributions of residents who, for any number of reasons (i.e., do not know about, do not see themselves reflected in, do not think it is useful), are not putting themselves forward to serve as ACOCs members. This consideration does not imply that everyone in the community must be engaged, nor that highly engaged residents should be discouraged from continuing to engage; only that we should provide everyone the opportunity to participate if they wish to (Aslin & Brown, 2004).

The third consideration links to the City's desire to reflect the community's demographic diversity in its community engagement efforts. This is a relatively recent, explicit goal of the City which is supported by many, and has, over the past few years, led to gathering the demographic characteristics of ACOC applicants and appointments *(Interviews with members of City Council and City staff)*. These efforts have led to some increased diversity amongst ACOC members, but it is still limited. As one City staff person pointed out:

> *"[...] ACOCs are missing out often on lower income families, people of colour, and women who are responsible for childcare" (Interview with City staff).*

Improving the demographic representativeness of ACOCs is important beyond realizing the City's goal of doing so. Community engagement is premised on the idea that residents should have equal opportunities to participate. Although participation may technically be open to every resident aged 18 or older, research highlights substantive barriers to participation for women living with low income (Levac, 2020), people living with poverty (John, 2009), Indigenous people (Mohammed et al., 2017), people with disabilities (Harris et al., 2012), and others. However, this is not only an equity problem. It also has ramifications for the recommendations that ACOCs make. For instance, in a comprehensive study of public participants in housing related policy decisions, Einstein et al. (2019) find that, "individuals who are older, male, long time residents, voters in local elections, and homeowners are significantly more likely to participate in [planning and zoning board meetings…and] overwhelmingly (and to a much greater degree than the general public) oppose new housing construction" [abstract]. Finally, and as noted in line with one of the seven key commitments guiding the Framework, research supports the idea that diversity can inform more robust group decisions.

At the same time, members should not be expected to represent or speak on behalf of others who share their demographic characteristics. Residents in the equity and inclusion-focused community engagement session expressed widespread frustration that the City seems to rely significantly on a small group of regular "marginalized" participants to meet their "diversity" goals *(Residents in a community engagement session)*. For each ACOC, a particular demographic may appropriately be 'over-represented' relative to the general population to ensure ample opportunities for providing input.

These three considerations are interrelated but not redundant. For instance, engaging with historically marginalized residents whose lived expertise has frequently been overlooked might also contribute to improving the demographic diversity of ACOCs. However, people with diverse demographic characteristics also hold diverse technical expertise. Concurrently, residents who have not typically been engaged might have faced structural barriers to participation or might simply be unaware of the existence of ACOCs. Ultimately, the answer to this question will help elaborate the value that different forms of expertise and experience can contribute to a problem and will be linked to the ACOC's purpose.

Q3: What recruitment methods should this ACOC use?

Recruiting residents to serve on ACOCs is challenging for the City. Some ACOCs struggle regularly to meet quorum, and open recruitment efforts sometimes produce results that do not meet the committees' needs. For instance, committee spots sometimes remain vacant even after an open recruitment process. Linked to the above consideration about reaching residents who are not regularly engaged, we heard widespread concern from residents that most residents do not know about ACOCs and why they exist, suggesting that open recruitment efforts are falling short *(Residents in a community engagement session)*. Further, City staff raised concerns that ACOCs tend to engage residents who are already highly involved in community engagement opportunities, as opposed to the broader community *(Interview with City staff)*.

It was important to people we interviewed and met with that residents still be invited to apply through open recruitment calls, but nearly everyone agreed that open recruitment should not be the only mechanism for soliciting ACOC members. Working group members and several other contributors highlighted the importance of targeted recruitment and expressed considerable interest and excitement with the idea of pursuing representative random sampling as a complementary way to recruit ACOC members.

In the Framework, we therefore recommend three forms of recruitment: open recruitment; targeted recruitment; and representative random sampling. This expanded strategy is motivated by several concurrent goals of the City, including: increasing the demographic diversity of ACOC membership; ensuring that most residents have knowledge about the possibility of participating in an ACOC; and increasing application rates. These recruitment strategies can complement each other. In other words, any given ACOC could be comprised of members recruited through one or more of the methods. Ultimately, the mix of recruitment methods for an ACOC is related to the expertise needs of the committee, and the City's broader community engagement goals, including with regards to demographic representation. All recruitment strategies lead to a form of self-selection; regardless of the recruitment mechanism, residents must agree to put themselves forward to be considered for an appointment to an ACOC.

Open recruitment

Open recruitment refers to wide-spread, non-targeted outreach aimed at inviting any eligible resident to self-identify as an ACOC applicant. This most closely resembles the current recruitment strategy used by the City. Open recruitment is important for enabling the involvement of residents who are deeply invested in specific topics/areas that overlap with the City's priorities. These residents often have critically important insights to share based on their lived and/or professional expertise. Two main drawbacks of this approach are that it does not seem to be reaching a broad audience (i.e., those not typically engaged), nor does it seem to be realizing the City's goal of having demographically representative ACOCs.

Moving forward, working group members suggested that in addition to disseminating open recruitment calls through common communication channels (e.g., City website, email distribution lists, local news media outlets), the City should explore how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or volunteer organizations recruit volunteers; setting up booths at City events; building connections with high schools, colleges, and universities; and other approaches that could be adopted on a trial basis to determine their effectiveness at increasing both the quantity and diversity of applicants. In an open recruitment process, an eligible resident can apply to serve on an ACOC by completing the prescribed application process. When there are more applicants than seats available, City staff should review applications and recommend residents for appointment based on pre-determined criteria that align with the relevant ACOC (e.g., in terms of required expertise). Final appointments are the purview of City Council.
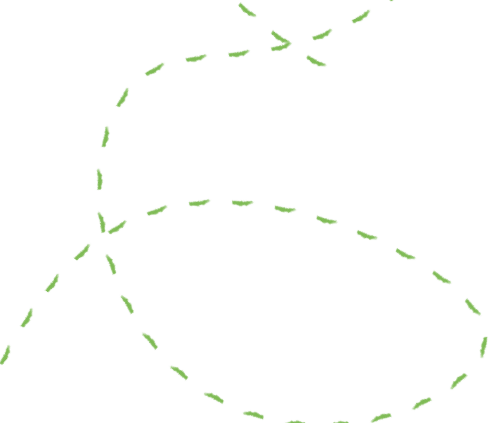
Targeted recruitment

Targeted recruitment is "the process by which individuals are [invited or] appointed consciously and purposefully as members of a collective, according to specific characteristics…" (Krick, 2021, p. 145). This is also part of the City's current recruitment strategy, but it happens in an ad hoc way. City staff reported that this approach often involves using existing networks and contacts to encourage residents with lived and/or professional expertise to put their names forward as candidates. The benefit of a targeted recruitment approach is that it can respond to specific demographic and expertise gaps amongst applicants recruited through an open recruitment process. The drawback of this approach is that it is more labour intensive and may need to be accompanied by additional educational opportunities (e.g., presentations to prospective applicants) to encourage those identified through the process to apply. A targeted recruitment process differs from an open recruitment process in that there is a dedicated effort to reach residents who fill particular needs that the City has identified, and encourage them to apply. Ultimately, even with a targeted recruitment approach, a prospective ACOC member must still apply, and be appointed as described above.

Representative random sampling

Random sampling in community engagement is based on the idea of sortition, the ancient practice of randomly choosing residents to perform important civic duties, which allows for symbolic equality among potential participants (Sintomer, 2023). Community engagement scholars and practitioners have built on this idea to create civic lotteries, which are "[tools] used by governments to convene broadly representative groups of citizen volunteers to tackle public policy challenges" (MassLBP, n.d.). The primary benefit of this approach is that it is the best-known approach for achieving descriptive representativeness (Fung, 2006) in community engagement efforts. Comprising groups of randomly selected residents for community engagement activities also positively effects participants' issue awareness, enhancing their competence, empowering them, and improving their trust in public servants (Jo, 2021).

Residents who seek out community engagement opportunities – such as through serving as an ACOC member – are likely also participating in other forms of community engagement (Lowndes et al., 2001). Because residents become aware of engagement opportunities through their ongoing participation, non-engaged residents are likely less aware of opportunities to engage with City Council (Lowndes et al., 2001). In other words, introducing representative random sampling to the range of recruitment options, which will minimally introduce many residents to the existence of ACOCs, is perhaps the single most important step for the City to take in terms of its dual goals of improving the demographic diversity of ACOCs, and increasing engagement across the population (Bobbio, 2019).

Although the use of representative random sampling is increasingly common in targeted community engagement efforts (e.g., creating a citizens' assembly – see Appendix F – to grapple with a specific, time-limited policy problem), the use of representative random sampling to serve a municipality's ongoing community engagement recruitment needs is uncommon. Further, there are several considerations regarding the design of representative random sampling processes, which the team has not yet fully explored. Finally, the City's community engagement team has expressed interest in exploring the potential benefits of representative random sampling to their work more broadly. As such, the Framework advises representative random sampling as an important recruitment method for ACOCs but does not articulate the specific design parameters that should be employed. Instead, as noted in the accompanying staff report, the team recommends that they be charged with further investigating the design and resource requirements of representative random sampling for presentation to City Council before the City's next four-year budgeting cycle.

In all cases, recruitment materials should include details about the general and specific purposes and objectives of the ACOC, membership requirements, required commitment, and associated compensation and expense policies. The timing and frequency of recruitment efforts should also be considered. Some other municipalities with which we spoke (Burlington and Kitchener) recruit members once every two years, rather than twice a year, which is commonly the case in Guelph. Interestingly, Burlington also hosts a public orientation session halfway through their ACOC recruitment campaign where senior staff, elected officials, and staff liaisons discuss the importance of ACOCs, how they fit with the work outlined in Burlington's strategic plan, and how they serve the municipality's governance functions more broadly. Besides being an interesting addition to recruitment efforts, this speaks to feedback provided by residents during a community engagement session that more opportunities to learn about the City and its functions could have important effects on broader engagement efforts *(Residents in a community meeting)*.

Q4: Who is an appropriate staff liaison for this ACOC?

The staff liaison plays a critical role in supporting and coordinating the ACOC. Working group members reinforced this point generally, and by detailing their own experiences regarding how important a dedicated and available staff liaison is to the work of an ACOC *(Discussion of the working group)*. The staff liaison should provide some administrative support, such as by helping to set agendas, and liaising with other staff who wish to present to the ACOC. They should also provide support as requested by the ACOC members, such as through bringing additional information/research to future meetings.

The staff liaison also provides direct support to the Chair of the committee, including by offering guidance on managing difficult situations and offering support in helping to advance the work of the Committee. The staff liaison should have day-to-day responsibilities that include providing strategic direction to the City and should typically be a more senior staff person with experience regarding the City's overall operations. This is important for ensuring that the work of the ACOC is linked to high-level decision-making. In other words, it would be challenging for a professional/technical staff person or a staff person with less experience to serve as a staff liaison for an ACOC. If ACOCs are positioned to contribute to addressing more strategic issues, then strategic level staff (typically managers and general managers) will need to act as staff liaisons. Liaising with an ACOC should be seen as an important part of a staff member's responsibilities.
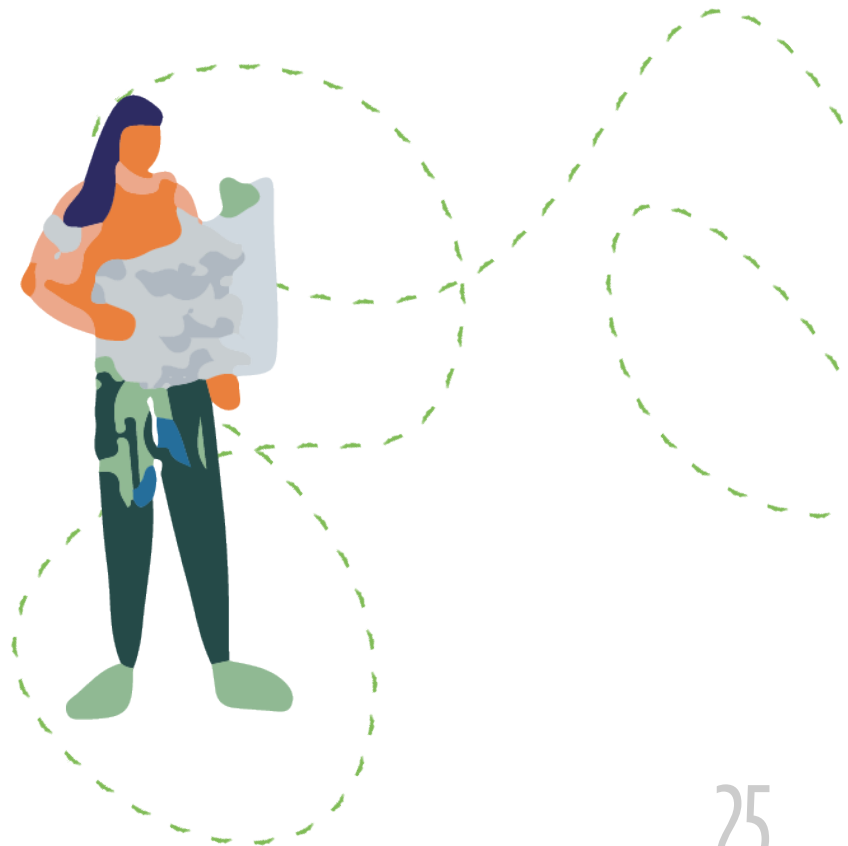
Stage 3: Developing the details of the ACOC

Stage 3 describes several operational features of ACOCs. These features draw on the details developed in Stages 1 and 2 (e.g., the purpose of the ACOC is used to inform the terms of reference) or are features that should be consistent across ACOCs. Stage 3 serves as a checklist that the staff person(s) responsible for proposing the ACOC can use to confirm the details of the ACOC being developed. Part way through Stage 3, City Council is asked to provide final approval for the proposed ACOC (they also directed its creation in Stage 1). Pending approval, the staff person(s) responsible proceed with the rest of the tasks. At the end of Stage 3, all documentation and logistic requirements necessary for supporting the ACOC should be in place. This stage involves six main tasks: 1) Create the Terms of Reference (TOR); 2) Confirm the person who will serve as the staff liaison; 3) Seek final approval from City Council; 4) Create a training plan for the *ACOC members*; 5) Create a training plan for *staff* who will liaise and interact with the ACOC; and 6) Plan and prepare the agenda for the first meeting.

▶ 1. Create the Terms of Reference (TOR)

When Council recommends that an ACOC be established, several operational details should be confirmed before the ACOC is put in place. Working group members repeatedly stressed that a robust Terms of Reference (TOR) is essential for promoting more effective ACOCs and making the role of ACOC members clearer *(Discussion of the working group)*. The TOR for each ACOC should be drafted by the staff person(s) responsible for proposing the ACOC. They should be tailored to the specific ACOC but should also comprise several common elements. Our research, community engagement, and analysis suggest that each ACOC's TOR should include:

The ACOC's topic and purpose, clearly articulated

This should include a clear explanation of how the ACOC aligns with the priorities set out in the City's strategic/planning documents.

The ACOC's membership, including the desired mix of lived and professional expertise

Decisions made in Stage 2 about the ACOCs desired membership composition should be included in the TOR. This will help ensure that ACOC members recognize the types of expertise available to the group, and that these are all valuable to the work of the ACOC.

Related to ACOC membership, we asked interview participants about the possibility of members of City Council serving as ACOC members (this is currently not allowed in Guelph). Though most interviewees did not favour inviting members of City Council to serve

on ACOCs or attend ACOC meetings, both members of City Council and ACOC members expressed a sense of isolation from one another. Orientation sessions and member appreciation events could provide at least minimal opportunities for relationship building between these groups *(Interviews with members of City Council and City staff).*

The recruitment methods the ACOC will use

As with the membership details, decisions made in Stage 2 about the recruitment methods the ACOC will use should be noted in the TOR. This lends itself to ensuring that ACOC members and the public have as much information as possible about how the ACOCs membership came to be.

The roles and responsibilities of ACOC members

The roles and responsibilities of ACOC members are currently detailed in City policies related to ACOCs, but should also be stated (and, in some cases, elaborated) in the TOR to ensure that ACOC members have easy access to all relevant details about their engagement. Over time, updates to TORs may result in corresponding policy updates. General details about the roles and responsibilities of ACOC members (i.e., found across all ACOC TORs) should include things such as preparing for meetings, attendance requirements, mandatory training requirements, and actively participating and contributing to the ACOC.

Specific roles and responsibilities for a particular ACOC will vary but could include details related to exercising their delegated authority (if applicable), responding to specific City plans that they will be asked to contribute to, and so on.

Given that ACOCs are the most sustained form of community engagement available to the City, ACOC members play an important role in reflecting the community's broader needs and priorities. To this end, ACOC members might benefit from having clearer opportunities to learn directly from other residents about their experiences and preferences. As such, ACOCs might want to ask their respective staff liaisons to consider working with the City's community engagement team to gather resident perspectives on matters being presented to the ACOC for consideration. Conversely, when staff members or departments approach the community engagement team seeking guidance on how to gauge the public's response to a particular problem or policy question, the engagement team might direct the department to engage with one or more ACOCs as part of its engagement plan. Finally, the City's community engagement team might identify other ways for ACOC members to be involved in providing resident input into relevant policy decisions, for example by hosting conversations with residents about a particular issue and feeding the results back into the policy-making process. In their study of policing-focused community advisory boards (CABs) in the United States, Clark and Friedman (2020) suggest that the functions of CABs include serving as "a bridge"

for policing agencies and communities…providing a somewhat formal structure through which community members can share their views and concerns" (p. 167). Overall, what these ideas signify is that there is a desire for ACOC members to play a more active and substantive role in reflecting residents' needs and preferences across areas of strategic importance in the City of Guelph.

The roles and responsibilities of the staff liaison, the Clerk's Office, and other support staff

As with the roles and responsibilities of ACOC members, the roles and responsibilities of staff liaisons, the Clerk's Office, and other support staff are detailed in City policies related to ACOCs, but should also be stated (and, in some cases, elaborated) in the TOR to ensure that ACOC members have easy access to all relevant details about the roles of City staff with whom they engage. Over time, updates to TORs may result in corresponding policy updates.

Staff liaisons provide critical support for ACOCs, including related to setting agendas, facilitating the future development of, and revisions to, TORs, and maintaining communication between ACOC members and City Council. Staff liaisons are also responsible for adequately informing ACOC members about decisions made by City Council and staff related to the work of the ACOC. Further, staff should provide ACOC members with relevant information and data at their request to inform their discussions and decisions *(Interviews with City staff)*. Staff liaisons should also monitor and mitigate potential conflicts between different parties to ensure ACOCs function well (Leighninger, 2012; Collingwood & Reedy, 2012). Finally, staff liaisons should ensure ACOC members are provided fair opportunities to be heard during discussions (Collingwood & Reedy, 2012).

The primary responsibilities of the Clerk's Office include providing administrative and procedural (legislative) support to the ACOC, leading recruitment efforts, engaging with ACOC members to foster relationship building, managing media relations, and planning and arranging training for ACOC members and City staff *(Interviews with City staff)*.

The size of the ACOC

Ideally, an ACOC should have seven, nine, or eleven members, including the Chair. An odd number of members ensures that if voting is required, the result will not end in a tie. The recommended size is smaller than current ACOCs. An ACOC with fewer than 12 members should enable more opportunities for members to share their ideas, leading to more efficient meetings without compromising the quality of the discussion. It may also facilitate the deliberative approach being recommended.

The meeting schedule and format

ACOCs should meet monthly (except as restricted by legislation, or where a specific rationale for changing the meeting frequency is provided) and meetings should be no more than two hours long. All ACOC meetings and training sessions should be offered in hybrid format (with both in-person and virtual participation options) to facilitate members' participation.

Details about the flow of communication between the ACOC and City Council, including how recommendations from ACOC members are incorporated into staff reports

ACOCs should adopt the following communication procedures:

• *Staff reports must clearly articulate the recommendations (and key points of discussion) of ACOCs as well as whether and why these recommendations are being advised by staff; reports should also include other factors that influenced/informed staff recommendations such that ACOC members are clear about how their advice fits with a broader set of considerations.*

• *Staff reports that contain advice/recommendations from a particular ACOC must be sent to that ACOC at the same time as they are provided to City Council.*

• *When staff reports are provided to ACOC members, the accompanying message must explain to ACOC members when the report will be discussed at City Council, and how ACOC members can participate in the meeting (to affirm their support or convey dissent), including that ACOC Chairs are invited to present at City Council and are not limited by the regular 5 minute limit placed on other delegates; staff liaisons must facilitate members' further participation in this way.*

These specific details arise from the fact that research and community engagement participants across groups agreed that the relationship between ACOCs, City staff, and City Council needs to be clarified, even though this is laid out to some degree in the ACOC Administration Policy (City of Guelph, 2021). One of the most frequently raised topics across interviews and working group discussions in this regard was the lack of clarity about the transmission of information between ACOCs and City Council. Working group members reported a lack of clarity about how ACOC agendas are set, and why some topics and questions come to ACOCs but not others. Related, working group members, current ACOC members and members of City Council reported being unclear about how ACOCs contribute to the work of City staff and/or to the decisions made by City Council. A member of the working group also highlighted the importance of ACOC members receiving feedback from the City regarding the ACOC's contributions:

> *"Committees get feedback, this is number one. If the resources are not there to get the feedback, then I would agree that the committees are useless. If I don't get feedback/I work in a vacuum, then there's no point [to become ACOC member]" (Working group member).*

This is an important problem to resolve since a legitimate process (Bua & Escobar, 2018) and effective lines of communication (Roy, 2012) are crucial for successful advisory committees. Both ACOC members and working group members highlighted the need for clarity as to how advice from ACOCs is being used (or not) by City Council and City staff; this is also supported by research about effective ACOCs (Roy, 2012).

Some ACOC members feel strongly that direct communication between ACOCs and City Council is necessary. Similarly, some members of City Council would like, where possible, to receive more direct, unfiltered feedback from ACOCs on policy and program proposals. As one member of City Council noted:

> *"Advisory committees have been set up primarily for us to have input from the citizenry, and we are defeating one of the singular purposes of those committees by having them essentially meeting with staff and rarely having Council involvement" (Interview with member of City Council).*

As noted earlier, lack of transparency about how residents' contributions are informing municipal decisions causes frustration and can lead to disengagement, is contrary to promising practices of advisory committees (Roy, 2012), and can undermine the City's substantive efforts to advance community engagement. The recommended reporting procedure between ACOCs and City Council outlined above aims to honour this priority while maintaining legislative compliance.

Finally, the TOR should also include all other necessary details as dictated by Administration Policy (City of Guelph, 2021). The TOR for a new ACOC should be drafted by the staff person/people proposing the ACOC, with input from the Clerk's Office and the staff liaison (if they have already been identified). Each ACOC should review its TOR once per term, as part of the assessment and evaluation process (see Stage 4) and make recommendations for revising its TOR as needed.

2. Confirm the person who will serve as the staff liaison

As explained in Stage 2, the staff liaison should be a staff person who can advise on high-level decision-making and bring deep knowledge regarding the strategic goals and priorities of the City. The City should identify a staff person who is able not only to provide administrative support to the Chair and the whole committee, but also to collaborate with ACOC members and ensure their contributions are sought early in relevant policy-making processes. Staff liaisons should therefore be positioned within the City in a way that allows them to identify opportunities for ACOCs to contribute to strategic policy and planning discussions. This likely means that professional/technical staff are not well positioned to serve as staff liaisons for ACOCs. If ACOCs are to tackle more strategic issues, then strategic level staff (typically managers and general managers) will need to act as staff liaisons.

Beyond their positioning within and knowledge of the City, staff liaisons also need facilitation, conflict management, consensus-building and related skills (see training requirements below), as well as a sharp awareness of how inequities can be perpetuated even through deliberative approaches. Related, and perhaps most difficult to ensure, appropriate staff liaisons must deeply appreciate and respect the valuable contributions that ACOCs can make to determining and advancing the City's strategic priorities and high-level policy directions.

3. Seek approval for the ACOC from City Council

City Council is the only body with the authority to create or dissolve an ACOC. Members of City Council, who will have initiated the creation of the ACOC during Stage 1, will be well equipped to decide whether to finalize its establishment after the above details have been considered and are presented as part of the recommendation to City Council to establish the ACOC.

If the creation of an ACOC is approved, the staff person(s) responsible can proceed with the next tasks in this Stage and can refer the newly recognized ACOC to the Clerk's Office, so they can begin recruitment.

4. Create a training plan for ACOC members

When local governments support residents' capacity development, it can improve related problem-solving work and policy outcomes (Koontz, 2005). This aligns with a key benefit of community engagement, which is its educative effect on residents (Bassler et al, 2008). Aligned with this knowledge, there was broad agreement across research and community engagement participants that ACOC members need training to help them perform their duties. While 60 percent of respondents expressed that they received enough resources and supports, almost 30 percent of survey respondents stated that the City does not provide enough training to help them become an effective ACOC member (see Graph 3).

Graph 3. Resources and supports received by ACOC members to help them do their jobs.

How much of the resources and supports on training do you receive to help you do your job as an ACOC member?

- Too much
- Enough
- Not enough
- I do not receive this support, but I don't need it
- I do not receive this support, but I wish I did
- I don't know

2% 63% 29% 4% 4% 2%

Training (e.g., presentations about how government works, about how to chair a meeting, about existing policies and legislation relevant to my ACOC)

Some of this training should be mandatory for committee members *(Discussion of the working group)*, while other sessions could be optional. Current ACOC members believe that the relevant history and information of ACOCs should be provided to new members as part of their orientation *(Interview with ACOC members)*.

Our research, community engagement, and analysis suggest that mandatory trainings should include:

- *legislation relevant to the committee;*
- *details about roles and responsibilities as outlined in the ACOC's TOR;*
- *meeting procedures and protocols including understanding ACOC's and members' roles and purview, procedures and hierarchy, specific terms like motions, resolutions, conflict resolution, etc.;*
- *practices related to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); and*
- *information about Indigenous rights.*

The first three bullets relate to standard operational features of an ACOC. The last two bullets speak not only to commitments, but also to a shortcoming of this report. "EDI" (sometimes "DEI") is commonly used to signal an organization's intention to respond to racism, sexism, and other forms of exclusion. We tried to pay attention to EDI through our research and community engagement efforts, and related recommendations. Indigenous rights are sometimes lumped in with EDI discussions but can benefit from unique attention because of the distinct and ongoing experiences of colonization that shape the lives of Indigenous people. Because of limitations we faced in undertaking the research and community engagement that informs this report (see limitations section below), we did not meaningfully engage with Indigenous people[5] or organizations in preparing this report. Nevertheless, the importance of doing so was raised by some interviewees and members of the working group and is reinforced in places such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015) and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry's Calls for Justice (2019), both of which include calls targeting municipalities.

ACOC members should also have access to optional trainings, including those focused on:

- *the structure and function of municipal governments, and how ACOCs play a role in this work;*
- *interacting with City staff and City Council; and*
- *content relevant to their specific ACOC, including opportunities for visits to committee-relevant facilities (e.g., the Waste Resource Innovation Centre).*

---

5   A few people who participated in the research and community engagement that informed this report identified as Indigenous, and we do not mean to discount their contributions. Instead, we are highlighting that we did not employ a specific strategy to meaningfully engage with Indigenous people or organizations.

Additional training for Chairs and Co-Chairs would also be useful. This could include media training, conflict management and facilitation training, and training on public speaking. ACOCs that are required or enabled by provincial legislation and those with delegated authority should receive additional guidance around decision-making procedures, including past examples of how decisions have been made (*Discussion of the working group*).

Community engagement participants and some staff interviewees suggested that general training and information sessions about how municipal governments and ACOCs work should be available widely in the community. As noted earlier, linking broader civic engagement efforts to the work of ACOCs would not be without precedent, as similar initiatives are underway in at least one nearby municipality. The benefits of this include supporting broader community engagement efforts, as well as future ACOC recruitment.

5. Create a training plan for City staff who will liaise and interact with the ACOC

In the City's Community Engagement Charter, the City commits to nurturing relationships with residents to foster trust and safety; building capacity for participation; and ensuring that participation opportunities are meaningful. These commitments underpin the fact that residents should have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives (City of Guelph, 2023a). Providing supports and training for City staff can also benefit the City's broader commitments. How staff facilitate and support advisory committee members' participation is crucial to enabling members to participate more actively and meaningfully (Chess & Purcell, 1999).

Research and community engagement participants also emphasized the importance of strong training for City staff who work with ACOCs, particularly to strengthen their engagement and communication skills, and other skills related to facilitating the deliberative approach that ACOCs should use. Another critical area in which City staff will require training is policy development, as well as when it is appropriate to incorporate residents' input in the policy-making process (Interviews with City staff).

Therefore, it is vital to provide training to staff liaisons. This training should include:

- *the various roles and responsibilities of City staff who interact with ACOCs;*
- *facilitation and conflict management skills;*
- *when and how to engage with ACOC members;*
- *how to align the ACOC's operations with this Framework;*
- *how to run the committee and execute administrative and procedural functions (e.g., take minutes, documentation) in a way that complies with relevant legislative requirements;*
- *how to communicate complex ideas using clear language;*
- *how to build meaningful relationships with ACOC members;*
- *practices related to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); and*
- *information about Indigenous rights.*
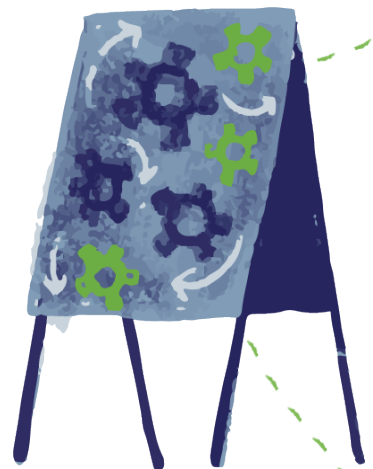
6. Plan and prepare the agenda for the first meeting

The final task in Stage 3 of the Framework is to develop a plan for an ACOCs first meeting. This task is a symbolic way of highlighting several things that should be communicated to and discussed with ACOC members. The list responds to gaps and priorities highlighted by research and community engagement participants in terms of ensuring the smooth operation of an ACOC. The following things should be discussed in the first ACOC meeting:

- *Members' experiences, expertise, and expectations for the committee, in a way that emphasizes the value that both lived and professional expertise will bring to the committee's work.*
- *The committee's TOR, including a detailed overview of the committee's duties, objectives, and outputs, along with the rationale for these.*
- *The plan for reviewing the TOR (does not apply to newly created ACOCs) and developing the self-assessment tool that the ACOC will eventually use to guide the evaluation of the committee (see Stage 4).*
- *The flow of information between the ACOC and City Council, including what information the committee will receive and when, and what options they have for engaging directly with City Council (see communication details outlined above in the discussion about components of the TOR).*
- *How and with what level of detail the committee's deliberations should be shared with the public.*

While all ACOC meetings are, by legislative requirement, open to the public, ACOCs have some flexibility to determine the level of detail that is shared in perpetuity. For instance, the minutes of each ACOC meeting must be publicly available (i.e., posted to the City's website and available at the request of residents), but these communicate decisions rather than important and nuanced discussion and deliberation that may have preceded the decision. Accordingly, some ACOCs choose to post full recordings of their meetings to the City's website. There are benefits and challenges of doing so, and these should be discussed by the ACOC's membership, which should be invited to determine the parameters of what information will be shared.

- *How members will receive compensation and funds to cover participation-related expenses.*

The Framework does not make a specific recommendation about how to manage providing compensation to, and covering participation-related expenses for, ACOC members because this will require policy changes and adapted administrative processes that will best be determined by City staff, likely in the Clerk's Office. However, given that a key reason for providing compensation and covering participation-related expenses is to help alleviate barriers to participation, we do note that people who face financial barriers to participation are also unlikely able to cover expenses upfront and then be reimbursed. As such, advanced payments are likely necessary.

Stage 4: Evaluating the ACOC

The City does not have an established process for evaluating ACOCs *(Interviews with City staff)*. This means there are no specific parameters that define an ACOC's success or effectiveness, and no tools to help guide assessments accordingly. This makes it difficult not only to celebrate their successes, but also to remedy their shortcomings. It also complicates decisions about when an ACOC is no longer serving its intended purpose. The following two recent examples of ACOCs being dissolved highlight that these decisions – while guided by a shared concern about their lack of purpose – were not based on a consistent process:

> *"[…] we very quickly realized that [the River Run Centre's board] was a figurehead and they thought they had power that they didn't, and that that was putting us in a position of potential issue or conflict, especially if there had been anything that had happened or gone wrong… So we eliminated the River Run Board there" (Interview with City staff).*

> *"We have tried to back away from advisory committees unless we think that there is a meaningful purpose to them. I'm not a fan of having committees set up for the sake of people thinking they're contributing if there's not actually anything. If we're not actually taking their input and using it – so the Sports Hall of Fame Advisory Committee, we were able to [...during COVID […] dissolve that committee, and the Kiwanis Club just runs the Sports Hall of Fame completely" (Interview with City staff).*

To remedy the lack of an assessment process and criteria, the Framework recommends the creation of a self-assessment tool for each ACOC. The goal of the self-assessment process is for each ACOC to consider its own effectiveness, including whether it's achieving its purpose. Using a self-evaluation approach is feasible and appropriate because it is not too resource-intensive, and it relies on the knowledge of people who are most involved in the work of the ACOC. Uddin's (2021) conceptual model and checklist for guiding an advisory committees' self-evaluation highlights the importance of assessing fairness, effectiveness, and inclusiveness. It could be helpful for assessing residents' participation in the committee (Ibid., pp. 170-172), as well as the ACOCs' effectiveness (Ibid., pp. 173-175). At the same time, the assessment process we recommend ensures that assessment criteria are developed early in the ACOC's tenure so that desirable features of the ACOC's process and results are determined before they are measured (Rowe & Frewer, 2000).

Stage 4 provides guidelines for reviewing and evaluating ACOCs. The goal of this stage is to ensure that each ACOC continues to provide the City with long-term, high-level guidance, linked to its strategic and other guiding priorities. Inherent in this consideration is whether the ACOC is being adequately resourced. If the ACOC is not fulfilling its purpose, this stage creates an opportunity to address challenges, amend the TOR, and/or propose the ACOC's dissolution. This stage includes four main steps, that occur over the four-year cycle of City Council.

Step 1. Complete TOR review

This step should take place within the first year of a new term of City Council for a previously existing ACOC, or one year following the creation of the ACOC.

The TOR review of a *previously existing ACOC* should be informed by:

- *the self-assessment of the ACOC conducted by its members at the end of the previous term (see step 4);*
- *exit interviews from any ACOC members who left before the full self-assessment was undertaken;*
- *the report to City Council that detailed the work of the ACOC in the previous term; and*
- *input from the Clerk's Office, the ACOC's staff liaison, and other City staff who have interacted with the ACOC.*

The TOR review of a *new ACOC* should be informed by:

- *a facilitated discussion with the ACOC's members that considers topics such as the extent to which the ACOC's work is accurately reflecting their purpose as outlined in the TOR; and*
- *input from the Clerk's Office, the ACOC's staff liaison, and other City staff who have interacted with the ACOC.*

Step 2. Create self-assessment tool

The ACOC will create a self-assessment tool concurrently with its TOR review (i.e., within the first year of a new term of City Council, or one year following the creation of the ACOC). The timing is important because, as noted above, the self-assessment should anticipate rather than respond to the ACOCs performance. The self-assessment tool should be created with input from the Clerk's Office, the staff liaison, and members of the ACOC being assessed. The working group advised that it should also be used to guide exit interviews with ACOC members who leave before the full self-assessment is undertaken *(Discussion of the working group)*.

Because the self-assessment tool will ideally be unique to the ACOC that creates it, its dimensions cannot be fully articulated here. However, it should generally seek both quantitative and qualitative inputs, and include questions about:

- *the general purpose of ACOCs, such as whether members have been able to contribute to high-level, strategic discussions;*
- *the alignment between the ACOC and its TOR, such as whether ACOC members feel that they are achieving their purpose as articulated in their TOR;*
- *adequate resourcing, including the extent to which they have received appropriate training, staff supports, and compensation;*
- *engagement and satisfaction, including whether members feel that their time is well spent, that their professional and lived expertise are considered and respected by other members and City staff, and that an ACOC is an appropriate engagement tool for the topic/problem at hand; and*
- *inclusion and representation, including the demographic representativeness of the committee's membership, and the extent to which members feel their committee contributes sufficient professional and lived expertise to the City.*

▶ **Step 3. Report to City Council**

Around the end of the first year of a new term of City Council, City Council will receive a package that includes:

- *a report of the activities of the ACOC in its previous term;*
- *the results of the ACOC's self-assessment (including a summary of interim exit interview results); and*
- *the results of the TOR review and any resulting recommendations.*

City Council will be asked to make decisions about the ACOC (i.e., continue, modify, dissolve) and in response to specific recommendations put forward in the report. This report does not preclude the possibility of other reporting to City Council, which may be desirable in cases where challenges arise, or as otherwise requested by City Council.
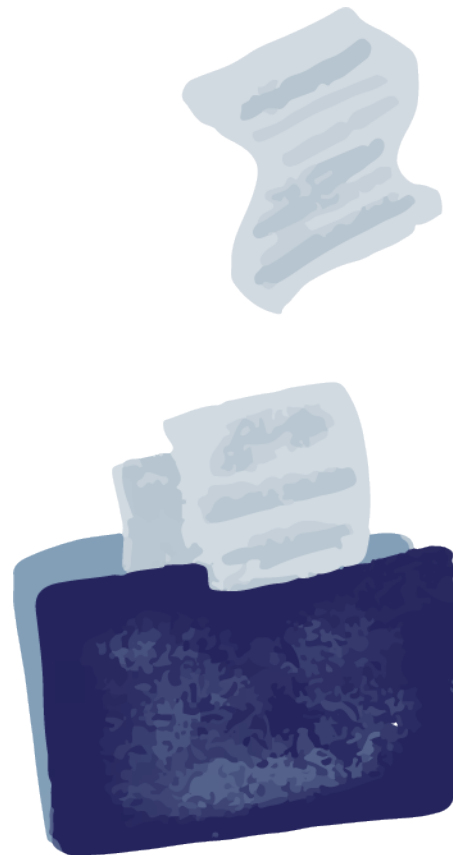
Step 4. Complete self-assessment

This step should take place within the last year of the term of an ACOC, which coincides with the end of a term of City Council. The self-assessment should be guided by the assessment tool created in step 2. The self-assessment should be completed by both ACOC members and City staff associated with the ACOC.

As noted in Step 1, the self-assessment will inform the TOR review, which happens at the beginning of a new term of City Council, which is also when new ACOC appointments occur. In cases where a self-assessment raises substantial concerns about the ACOC in terms of its effectiveness, purpose, or otherwise, the Clerk's Office will carefully consider its recommendations for moving forward with appointments at the beginning of the new term of City Council to avoid disingenuous appointments.

This assessment and evaluation cycle should begin in earnest in 2025, with each ACOC developing a self-assessment tool that year. In 2026, each ACOC should complete its self-assessment, leading to a TOR review of each ACOC in 2027, which will be the first year of a new term of City Council. City Council will receive its first round of reports (step 3) in late 2027-early 2028 (unless otherwise requested).
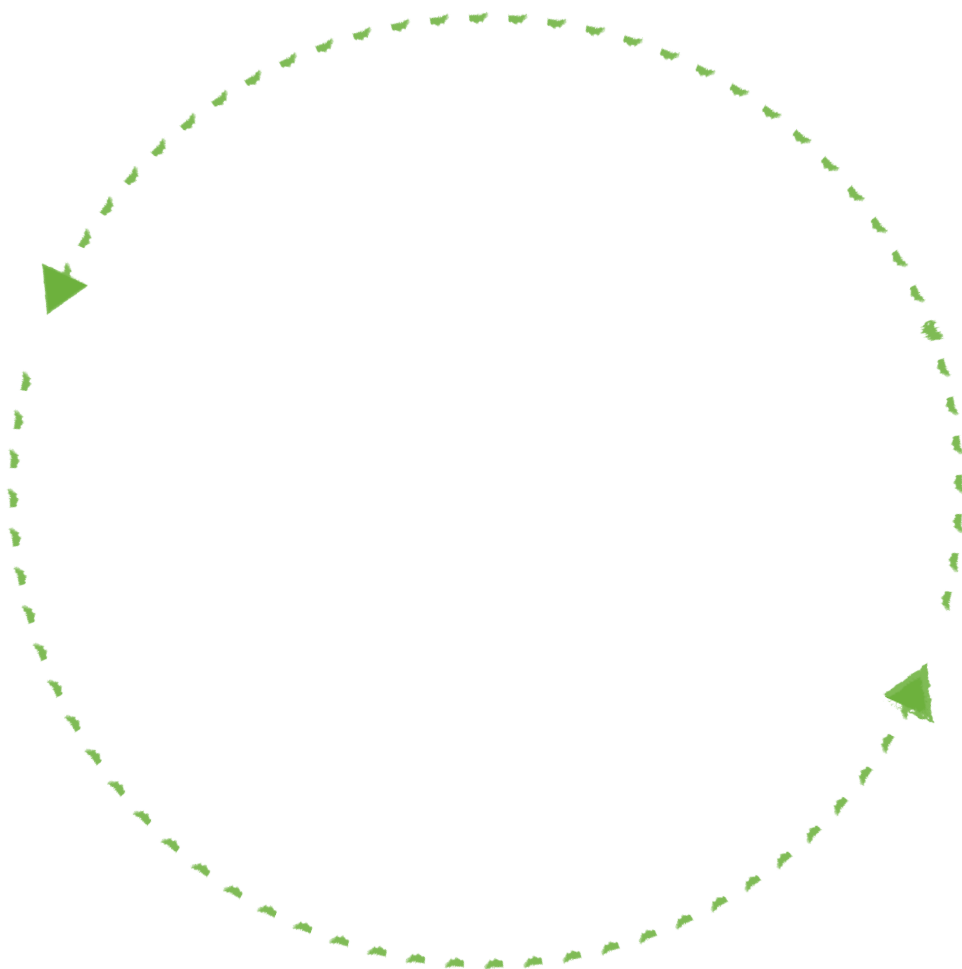
Project limitations

Two important limitations of the research, community engagement, and analysis presented in this report warrant mention. One limitation is that we did not meaningfully explore the relationship between Indigenous residents, their communities/Nations, and the City and its ACOCs. Considering the historical context; the complexity of Nation-to-Nation relationships; and our incomplete understanding of the full suite of policies that govern relations between Indigenous communities/Nations and the City of Guelph, we did not actively consider whether ACOCs are or could be an appropriate engagement tool for enhancing engagement between Indigenous residents and the City. As such, additional research and community engagement are needed on this front. As noted in our recommendations regarding ACOC member and staff training, we also recommend more attention to building understanding amongst City Council, City staff and residents regarding the rights and experiences of Indigenous people in Guelph.

Another limitation is that we did not have sufficient time to fully explore either the functioning of ACOCs in nearby municipalities, or international examples of promising practices regarding resident advisory committees at the local level. We did undertake a limited scan of key features of ACOCs in 12 other Ontario municipalities (see Appendix A), which we verified with staff of those municipalities. We are also confident that the literature we reviewed offered insights into the question of promising practices of ACOCs beyond Canada. Nevertheless, additional work in both areas could have strengthened the contents of the report and led to additional insights.

Conclusion and next steps

ACOCs are a long-standing and important part of the City's community engagement efforts, though they have not always, or by all people, been regarded as such. The proposed Framework provides guidance for determining when community engagement through ACOCs is needed; clarifying the purposes and intended outcomes of ACOCs; ensuring their design and implementation are informed by interested people and groups; and establishing an evaluation process focused not only on their effectiveness, but also on more robust and regular communication between ACOCs and City Council.

As highlighted by the seven commitments that ground the Framework, and that underpin its design, implementing ACOCs according to the Framework will bring about substantive changes to how ACOCs operate and what role they play in the City's governance architecture moving forward. These commitments include:

1. *ACOCs are an important form of community engagement.*
2. *ACOCs should help shape the City's strategic goals.*
3. *ACOCs should adopt a deliberative approach.*
4. *ACOCs should contribute lived and professional expertise.*
5. *ACOCs should include members with diverse identities and perspectives.*
6. *There should be clear communication between ACOCs and City Council.*
7. *ACOCs should be adequately resourced.*

These commitments are important because they synthesize many of the important considerations raised repeatedly through our research, community engagement, and analysis. Many residents, current ACOC members, members of City Council, and City staff who contributed to this report are supportive of important proposed changes to current practices, including the positioning of ACOCs at a more strategic level, and earlier in policy-making processes; the addition of representative random sampling to the City's recruitment strategies; and attention to evaluating ACOCs. Many people with whom we spoke agree that the City will not meet its commitments to advancing equity and inclusion without realizing these and other details of the Framework, including the need to compensate, and cover related expenses for, ACOC members. Advancing equity is important not only for achieving basic commitments to demographic representativeness, but also for making substantive progress on critical and challenging issues facing Guelph.

The Framework is not designed as a buffet. Each stage depends on and complements the others, and is informed by extensive research, community engagement, and analysis. If ACOCs are to serve as an effective and meaningful community engagement tool for both the Corporation of the City of Guelph (their policy and program needs and community engagement commitments) and the residents of Guelph (their inclusion and democracy needs), the City must commit to the full realization of the Framework.

References

Abelson, J., Forest, P., Eyles, J., Casebeer, A., & MacKean, G. (2004). Will it make a difference if I show up and share? A citizens' perspective on improving public involvement processes for health system decision-making. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy, 9*(4), 205–212. https://doi.org/10.1258/1355819042250203

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11

Aslin, H.J. & Brown, V.A. (2004). *Towards Whole of Community Engagement: A Practical Toolkit*. https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/77450

Baiocchi, G., & Ganuza, E. (2017). *Popular Democracy: The Paradox of Participation.* Stanford University Press.

Barnes, M., Newman, J., Knops, A., & Sullivan, H. (2003). Constituting "the public" in public participation. *Public Administration, 81*(2), 379-399. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00352

Barrett, G., Wyman, M., & Schattan, P.C.V. (2012). Assessing the policy impacts of deliberative civic engagement. In T. Nabatchi, J. Gastil, M. Leighninger, & G. M. Weiksner (Eds.), *Democracy in motion: Evaluating the practice and impact of deliberative civic engagement* (pp. 181–204). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199899265.003.0009

Bassler, A., Brasier, K., Fogle, N., & Taverno, R. (2008). *A How-To Guide for Community Leaders Developing Effective Citizen Engagement.* The Center for Rural Pennsylvania. https://www.rural.pa.gov/getfile.cfm?file=Resources/PDFs/research-report/archived-report/Effective_Citizen_Engagement.pdf&view=true

Beaulieu, M., Breton, M., & Brousselle, A. (2018). Conceptualizing 20 years of engaged scholarship: A scoping review. *PLoS ONE, 13*(2): e0193201. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0193201

Bobbio, L. (2019). Designing effective public participation. *Policy & Society, 38*(1), 41–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2018.1511193

Bryson, J. M., Quick, K. S., Slotterback, C. S., & Crosby, B. C. (2012). Designing public participation processes. *Public Administration Review, 73*(1), 23–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02678.x

Bua, A., & Escobar, O. (2018). Participatory-deliberative processes and public policy agendas: lessons for policy and practice. *Policy Design and Practice, 1*(2), 126-140.

Buchnea, A. & Laban, S. (2021). *The City of Guelph's Advisory Committees of Council.* Guelph, ON: Community Engaged Scholarship Institute. https://www.cesinstitute.ca/city-guelphs-advisory-committees-council

Building Code Act, 1992, S.O. 1992, c. 23. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/92b23

Busenberg, G. J. (2007). Citizen participation and collaborative environmental management in the marine oil trade of coastal Alaska. *Coastal Management, 35*(2), 239-253.

Chess, C., & Purcell, K. (1999). Public participation and the environment: Do we know what works? *Environmental Science & Technology, 33*(16), 2685-2692.

City of Guelph. (2021). *Advisory Committees of Council – Administration Policy.* https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/Advisory-Committees-of-Council-Administration-Policy.pdf

City of Guelph. (2023a). *Community Engagement Charter.* https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/The-City-of-Guelph-Community-Engagement-Charter-June-2023.pdf

City of Guelph. (2023b). *Community Engagement Policy.* https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/The-City-Of-Guelph-Community-Engagement-Policy.pdf

City of Guelph. (2023c). *Speak or send comments to Council or Committee.* https://guelph.ca/city-hall/mayor-and-council/city-council/agendas-and-minutes/delegations-and-comments/

Clark, L., & Friedman, B. (2020). Community Advisory Boards: What works and doesn't? Lessons from a national study. *American Journal of Criminal Law, 47*(2), 159-180.

Coleman, J. (2020, September 29). Hamilton City Hall v. LGBTQ Committee: The Misuse of the Integrity Commissioner, a four-part series. *TPR Hamilton | Hamilton's Civic Affairs News Site.* https://www.thepublicrecord.ca/2020/09/hamilton-city-hall-v-lgbtq-committee-the-misuse-of-the-integrity-commissioner-a-four-part-series/

Coleman, J. (2022, December 29). BRIEF: Ottawa will update Local Board definition following Hamilton divisional court ruling. *TPR Hamilton | Hamilton's Civic Affairs News Site.* https://www.thepublicrecord.ca/2022/12/brief-ottawa-will-update-local-board-definition-following-hamilton-divisional-court-ruling/

Collingwood, L., & Reedy, J. (2012). Listening and responding to criticism of deliberative civic engagement. In T. Nabatchi, J. Gastil, M. Leighninger, & G. M. Weiksner (Eds.), *Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement* (pp. 233-252). Oxford University Press.

Einstein, K.L., Palmer, M., & Glick, D.M. (2019). Who participates in local government? Evidence from meeting minutes. *Perspectives of Politics, 17*(1), 28-46.

EKOS Research Associates Inc. (2022). *Canadian Attitudes to Electoral Reform and the Need for Representativeness.* https://www.fairvote.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Fair-Vote-Canada-Report.doc.pdf

Farkas, K.R.H. (2013). Citizen (in)action: The limits of civic discourse in city council meetings. *Critical Discourse Studies, 10*(1), 81-98.

Fung, A. (2006). Varieties of participation in complex governance. *Public Administration Review, 66*(s1), 66–75. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00667.x

Gauvin, F-P. (2009). *What is a Deliberative Process?* National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy. https://www.ncchpp.ca/docs/DeliberativeDoc1_EN_pdf.pdf

Gaventa, J., & Barrett, G. M. (2012). Mapping the outcomes of citizen engagement. *World Development, 40*(12), 2399–2410. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.014

Guelph's Property Standards By-Law. (2000). https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/PropertyStandardsBylaw.pdf

Harris, S. P., Owen, R., & De Ruiter, C. (2012). Civic engagement and people with disabilities: The role of advocacy and technology. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, 5*(1). https://doi.org/10.54656/awpe1856

Hoppe, R. (2011). Institutional constraints and practical problems in deliberative and participatory policy making. *Policy & Politics, 39*(2), 163-186.

Jäske, M. (2019). Participatory innovations and maxi-publics: The influence of participation possibilities on perceived legitimacy at the local level in Finland. *European Journal of Political Research, 58,* 603-630.

Jo, S. (2021). Different processes, different outcomes? Assessing the individual-level impacts of public participation. *Public Administration Review, 81*(1), 137-151.

John, P. (2009). Can citizen governance redress the representative bias of political participation? *Public Administration Review, 69*(3), 494–503.

Kadlec, A., & Friedman, W. (2007). Deliberative democracy and the problem of power. *Journal of Public Deliberation, 3*(1), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.49

Koontz, T.M. (2005). We finished the plan, so now what? Impacts of collaborative stakeholder participation on land use policy. *The Policy Studies Journal, 33*(3), 459-481.

Krick, E. (2021). *Expertise and Participation: Institutional Designs for Policy Development in Europe.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Lang, E. (2023, April 26). Yukon to form citizens' assembly to study options for new voting system. *CBC News.* https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-to-form-citizens-assembly-to-study-options-for-new-voting-system-1.6822686

Leighninger, M. (2012). Pictures from a (r)evolution. In T. Nabatchi, J. Gastil, M. Leighninger, & G. M. Weiksner (Eds.), *Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement* (pp. 19-34). Oxford University Press.

Levac, L., Cattapan, A., Haley, T. L., Pin, L., Tungohan, E., & Wiebe, S. M. (2022). Transforming public policy with engaged scholarship: better together. *Policy and Politics, 50*(3), 403–424. https://doi.org/10.1332/030557321x16485722290035

Levac, L. (2020). Engaging with women in low income: Implications for government-convened public engagement initiatives and deliberative democracy. In L. Levac & S.M. Wiebe. (Eds.), *Creating Spaces of Engagement: Policy Justice and the Practical Craft of Deliberative Democracy* (pp. 253-273). University of Toronto Press.

Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L., & Stoker, G. (2001). Trends in public participation: Part 2 – Citizens' perspectives. *Public Administration, 79*(2), 445-455.

Lukensmeyer, C.J., & Brigham, S. (2002). Taking democracy to scale: Creating a town hall meeting for the twenty-first century. *National Civic Review, 91*(4), 351-366.

Manata, B. (2021). Investigating the impact of racial diversity in decision-making groups: The moderating role of relationship conflict. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, 14*(1), 40-50. Doi: https://doi.org/10.34891/7whc-j568

MassLBP. (n.d.). *The Nine Ideas that Shape Our Work.* https://www.masslbp.com/nine-ideas

McGurk, B., Sinclair, J.A., & Diduck, A. (2006). An assessment of stakeholder advisory committees in forest management: Case studies from Manitoba, Canada. *Society and Natural Resources, 19*(9), 809-826.

Mirza, R., Vodden, K., & Collins, G. (2012). *Developing Innovative Approaches for Community Engagement in the Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Region.* https://www.open.gov.nl.ca/collaboration/pdf/community_engagement.pdf

Mohammed, M., Walker, R., Loring, P.A., & Macdougall, B. (2017). Perpetuation or remediation of structural violence toward Aboriginal Peoples through city planning and policy processes. In C. Andrew, F. Klodawsky & J. Siltanen (Eds.), *Toward Equity and Inclusion in Canadian Cities: Lessons from Critical Praxis-Oriented Research* (pp. 292-316). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Moscrop, D.R.H., & Warren, M. (2016). When is deliberation democratic? *Journal of Public Deliberation, 12*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.256

Neblo, M.A., Esterling, K.M., Kennedy, R.P., Lazer, D.M.J., & Sokhey, A.E. (2010). Who wants to deliberate – and why? *American Political Science Review, 104*(3), 566-583.

No, W., Mook, L., & Schugurensky, D. (2017). Ideation in an online participatory platform: Towards a conceptual framework. *Information Polity, 22,* 101-116.

OECD (2021). *Innovative Citizen Participation.* https://www.oecd.org/governance/innovative-citizen-participation/

Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18

Ontario Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25

Ourcare. (n.d.). https://www.ourcare.ca/

Papadopoulos, Y., & Warin, P. (2007). Are innovative, participatory and deliberative procedures in policy making democratic and effective? *European Journal of Political Research, 46*(4), 445–472. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2007.00696.x

Petite, W. (2021). A city and its people: exploring limitations to participation within modern urban space. *Studies in Political Economy, 102*(2), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/07078552.2021.1949786

Pin, L. (2021). From aldermanic patronage to aldermanic menus: Racial exclusion and the reinvention of participatory democracy in neoliberal Chicago. *Studies in Political Economy, 102*(3), 309–330. https://doi.org/10.1080/07078552.2021.2000213

Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13

Rowe, G., & Frewer, L. J. (2000). Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation. *Science, Technology & Human Values, 25*(1), 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/016224390002500101

Roy, A.E. (2012). *An Institutional Analysis of Canadian Advisory Committees: Linking Committee Structure and Function to Policy Changes.* [Master's Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia]. https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/15537/Roy_2012_MMM.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Sintomer, Y. (2023). *The Government of Chance: Sortition and Democracy from Athens to the Present.* Institut Universitaire de France.

Suiter, J., Muradova, L., Gastil, J., & Farrell, D.M. (2020). Scaling up deliberation: Testing the potential of mini-publics to enhance the deliberative capacity of citizens. *Swiss Political Science Review, 26*(3), 253-272. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12405

Sutcliffe, J. B., & Cipkar, S. (2017). Citizen participation in the public transportation policy process: A comparison of Detroit, Michigan, and Hamilton, Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, 26*(2), 33–51. https://cjur.uwinnipeg.ca/index.php/cjur/article/download/95/48

Tindal, C.R., Smith, P.J., Tindal, S.N., & Stewart, K. (2017). *Local Government in Canada*. Ninth Edition. Toronto: Nelson Education.

Tyler, T., & Markell, D. (2010). The public regulation of land-use decisions: Criteria for evaluating alternative procedures. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies, 7*(3), 538-575.

Uddin, K. (2021). Conclusions: A conceptual model of fair and effective public participation process in urban planning. In K. Uddin (Ed.), *Public Participation Process in Urban Planning* (pp. 160-176). Routledge.

Vivian, R. (2016, March 16). "Token" input not enough for advisory committees, they want more. GuelphToday.com. https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/token-input-not-enough-for-advisory-committees-they-want-more-3549353

Vivian, R. (2021, January 25). "Mistrust" between city staff and Heritage Guelph prompts call for independent facilitator. *GuelphToday.com*. https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/mistrust-between-city-staff-and-heritage-guelph-prompts-call-for-independent-facilitator-3288263#:~:text=facilitator%20%2D%20Guelph%20News-,'Mistrust'%20between%20city%20staff%20and%20Heritage%20Guelph,prompts%20call%20for%20independent%20facilitator&text=The%20relationship%20between%20city%20staff,facilitator%20can%20help%20mend%20fences.

Walsh, R. (2017). *Reboot: A Democracy Makeover to Empower Australia's Voters.* Melbourne University Press.

Young, E., & Quinn, L. (2002). *Writing Effective Public Policy papers: A Guide for Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe.* Open Society Institute. https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/writing_effective_public_policy_papers_young_quinn.pdf

Appendix A: ACOCs in other Ontario municipalities

To inform our research, community engagement, and analysis, we reviewed some key features of ACOCs in 12 other municipalities. We chose these because they are frequent points of reference for the City of Guelph (i.e., are often used as comparators), are nearby, have similar population sizes, and/or were identified as municipalities with unique practices related to ACOCs. The other municipalities we explored were:

- Ajax
- Barrie
- Brantford
- Burlington
- Cambridge
- Greater Sudbury
- Hamilton
- Kitchener
- London
- Milton
- Ottawa
- Region of Waterloo

Across these municipalities:

- The average number of advisory committees is 10.
- Most host between 9 and 13 ACOCs. Three municipalities have far fewer: Ottawa (4), Region of Waterloo (4), and Milton (6).
- Except for ACOCs required by, or enabled through, legislation, the following are some common topics addressed by ACOCs:

Topics / Areas	# of Municipalities with this ACOC
Environment	8
Art and culture	7
Diversity, inclusion, and racism	6
Transportation	5
Overall development	4
Elections	4

Topics / Areas	# of Municipalities with this ACOC
Senior residents	4
Economic development	3
Audit / compensation review	3

- Less common topics addressed by ACOCs include: cycling and trails, animal welfare, downtown development, and immigration and refugee supports.

- 11 of 12 do not compensate all ACOC members. The exception is Ajax, which provides varying levels of compensation to all committee members based on a tiered schedule (i.e., those with decision making authority receive higher compensation than those that are strictly advisory).
  - Other than Ajax, all municipalities offer some compensation to committees with decision making authority (e.g., Committee of Adjustment, Municipal Election Compliance Audit Committees, General Appeals Committee).
  - Typically, members of these committees receive a per diem or flat rate per meeting and receive reimbursement for mileage costs incurred.
  - For Committees of Adjustment: 3 municipalities pay committee members an average of $75, 1 municipality pays $250 per meeting.

- All 12 provide training for ACOC members. In all cases, this includes an introductory orientation for new members, offered virtually and in person.
  - 10 of 12 municipalities outline training details including procedural operations of committees and relevant policies for committee members such as accessibility standards, conflict of interest and code of conduct.

- Five (Ajax, Barrie, Hamilton, London, and Ottawa) offer some reimbursement for costs incurred by committee members.
  - All five provide transit or parking reimbursement for all committees.
  - Hamilton and Ottawa offer dependent care coverage to reduce barriers for participation.
  - Seven provide mileage reimbursement ONLY for Committees of Adjustment.

- All 12 have some eligibility criteria for prospective ACOC members.
  - All 12 require members to be residents of the municipality.
  - Eight of 12 specify an age requirement for committees (i.e., must be 18 years or older)
  - Seven of 12 specify that the committee's composition is determined by the committee's TOR and specific mandate.

Note: The project team did not compare staffing levels/support provided by City staff, so comparisons should be used cautiously.

Appendix B: ACOCs of the City of Guelph

1. Accessibility Advisory Committee*
2. Committee of Adjustment#
3. Community Grant Allocation Panel
4. Guelph Economic Development Advisory Committee
5. Guelph Museums Advisory Committee^
6. Heritage Guelph#
7. Municipal Property and Building Commemorative Naming Committee
8. Natural Heritage Advisory Committee
9. Planning Advisory Committee*
10. Property Standards Committee#
11. Public Art Advisory Committee
12. Tourism Advisory Committee
13. Transit Advisory Committee
14. Waste Resource Innovation Centre Public Liaison Advisory Committee
15. Water Conservation and Efficiency Public Advisory Committee

LEGEND:

(*) required by provincial legislation

(#) regulated through provincial legislation

(^) bounded by community standards set by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture

Appendix C: Research, community engagement, and creating the framework

OUR APPROACH

To create the ACOC Framework, we used an engaged scholarship approach. Engaged scholarship "is fundamentally interested in how university-based researchers, community organisations, [governments,] and community members use rigorous approaches to come together to identify community-identified problems and advance social justice" (Levac et al., 2022, p. 5). Engaged scholarship embraces several principles, including reciprocity (partners in the research should all benefit from the research), knowledge democracy (different forms of knowledge are important and useful to understanding and responding to problems facing communities), and boundary crossing (learning across scholarly disciplines and sectors is useful) (adapted from Beaulieu et al., 2018). These principles can also be useful for guiding public policy making (Levac et al., 2022).

In this case, the project was hosted by the Guelph Lab, a partnership between the City and the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences at the University of Guelph. The Guelph Lab is financially supported by both partners. It aims to bridge academic, government, and resident knowledge to respond to complex challenges facing Guelph. The partners on this project are the Clerk's Office at the City and researchers and facilitators affiliated with the university's Community Engaged Scholarship Institute and Department of Political Science. The project is funded by the Guelph Lab (including with contributions from the University and the City), Dr. Leah Levac's Canada Research Chair program, and Mitacs, an organization that funds students and postdoctoral researchers working on collaborative, problem-solving research. The design of the research, along with our analysis and, ultimately, the Framework, relied on the project team's collective knowledge and experience in the areas of public policy, local boards and governance, community engagement, deliberative and participatory democracy, and engaged scholarship.

INFORMATION GATHERING

To inform our work, we undertook several research and community engagement methods, including a literature review, survey, semi-structured interviews, and community meetings. We received ethics approval from the University of Guelph (REB #23-02-022).

Literature review

We conducted both academic and community literature searches to find material focused on strengths and challenges of participatory and deliberative democracy, the role of residents in local policy and planning, the form and function of advisory committees and boards, and participant selection. To locate academic literature, we used two approaches. First, we did a keyword search in Omni, the University of Guelph's search engine. We used search strings such as "advisory committee" OR "advisory board" and "municipal". We also reviewed the reference lists of key articles to locate other relevant material. Second, we did targeted searches in cases where questions were raised for which we did not have answers. For example, there was considerable disagreement in our data about whether ACOCs should provide professional or lived expertise. As such, we searched explicitly for research that spoke to this question to help inform our recommendations.

To locate community literature, we entered similar keywords as we used in our academic literature search into Google, and scanned results in search of reports produced by relevant organizations, both locally and internationally. For instance, we used this approach to locate relevant OECD documents. We also searched the websites of specific organizations that are active in the areas of this research, such as the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). We compiled academic and community literature in folders organized thematically and wrote summaries of each article. These were then used to support, refute, or revise elements of the Framework

Survey (N = 50 participants)

We designed and distributed an online survey to all 104 existing ACOC members and received 50 complete responses. Before its distribution, we tested the survey with both City staff and existing ACOC members to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions being asked. The survey was distributed by the Clerk's Office, and included an option for respondents to contact us if they required support to complete the survey. The survey included Likert-scale and open-ended questions and explored members' perceptions of the actual and desired role(s) of ACOCs, if/how ACOCs contribute to the City's policy development and decision-making, and members' understandings of their roles (including related to their attitudes and ideas about representation). The survey also included several demographic questions, the results of which are presented in Appendix E.

Semi-structured interviews (N = 40 participants)

We conducted semi-structured interviews with current ACOC members (N = 7), City of Guelph staff (N = 20), members of City Council (N = 8), and staff from other municipalities (N = 5).

ACOC member interviewees were those who completed a survey, expressed an interest in participating in an interview, and responded to a follow-up request to schedule an interview. These interviews were designed to complement respondents' survey data (i.e., we asked interviewees some questions tailored to their survey responses), and included general questions about representation and accountability, necessary supports, and examples of successes and challenges of ACOCs.

The Clerk's Office identified prospective City of Guelph staff interviewees because they interacted in some way with ACOCs. These included members of the City Clerk's Office, staff who present to ACOCs, staff who support an ACOC (as staff liaisons), and members of the City's Executive Team. These interviews explored the operation of ACOCs (resources, working routines, etc.), perceptions of the role(s) of ACOCs, working patterns/relationships with ACOCs, and if/how ACOCs contribute to City policy making and decision making. Staff from other municipalities were also identified by the Clerk's Office and were asked similar questions. The purpose of interviewing staff from other municipalities was to gain additional insights and possible promising practices related to the functioning of ACOCs elsewhere. All members of City Council were invited to participate in an interview. These interviews explored the role of ACOCs in decisions of City Council, explicit examples of ACOC contributions and challenges, representation on ACOCs, and perceptions of ACOC efficacy.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed us to follow interesting threads that emerged during each interview, leading to rich insights. Following each interview, we emailed a demographic survey to participants that mirrored the demographic questions included in the survey of ACOC members. These results are included in Appendix E.

Community engagement sessions (N = 38 participants)

We co-hosted three community engagement sessions in collaboration with City staff as part of our information gathering process. These included two sessions with residents who used to serve as ACOC members or who had previously expressed an interest in governance-related issues within the City (N = 6), and one engagement dinner with residents who were invited by the City or a local community organization to participate in a discussion about how to make ACOC membership more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible (N = 32). We hosted a specific community engagement session on this topic because structural barriers to meaningful participation in policy and governance are well-documented, and both engaged scholarship and promising practices in community engagement prioritize learning directly from people who have and/or continue to experience structural barriers. To enable participation, we provided a small honorarium, dinner, and activities for children so that families could participate. We hosted the event in an accessible space and offered to provide disability-related accommodations for anyone who needed them.

CREATING THE FRAMEWORK

The Framework reflects what we learned from the information we gathered, the expertise and experience of the members of the project team, and extensive and ongoing feedback from two groups of residents.

The first was a working group of eight current ACOC members who volunteered to participate in a series of four, half-day and full day meetings spanning several months. The working group discussed their experiences as ACOC members, reviewed key themes emerging from the research, and reviewed drafts of the Framework as it evolved. The working group was designed using principles of engaged scholarship and deliberative democracy (e.g., honouring diverse forms of knowledge, building capacity of participants, practicing inclusive facilitation, attending to power dynamics in groups, and reducing structural barriers to participation). While the research team is ultimately responsible for project outputs, the main ideas and feedback of the working group have been carefully considered and included in the resulting Framework.

As well, the working group was invited to offer its support or dissent of the final Framework, the results of which are documented in Appendix G.

The second was a group of community reviewers, comprised of three residents who attended the equity and inclusion-focused community engagement session. Our decision to take this multi-faceted analytical approach, including to engage with a wide range of contributors over several months, was informed by the idea that robust, acceptable, procedurally fair processes are important for instilling public confidence (Tyler & Markell, 2010). It was further informed by a promising practice in community engagement, which is to ensure that residents are aware of how their contributions are being used to inform policy and program decisions (Abelson et al., 2004). Dimensions of the proposed ACOC Framework are motivated by similar commitments. The complete list of contributors is noted in Appendix D.

Supported by these groups of residents, we used an iterative approach to analyzing the results of our research and community engagement. We transcribed all interviews and used the qualitative coding software Nvivo to highlight common themes across interviews. During community engagement sessions, at least one member of the team took careful notes, which were subsequently compiled and coded using a similar process. Our coding was driven largely by the questions we asked, focusing on themes such as the purpose of ACOCs, ACOCs and representation, and supports and barriers to participation. To improve reliability, all core team members participated in gathering information, and at least two team members reviewed each resulting transcript. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analyses revealed members' perceptions of the kinds of work committees have or have not been doing, how effectively ACOCs have been operating, and what resources have been (or should have been) provided. Because the results of the survey will also contribute to a broader research project, only results relevant to the Framework have been included.

Appendix D: List of contributors

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Name	Advisory Committee
Bakopoulos, Eleni	Public Art Advisory Committee
Casey, Samantha	Waste Resource Innovation Centre Public Liaison Advisory Committee
Harrington, Liam	Municipal Property and Building Commemorative Naming Committee
Lohuis, Carol	Community Grant Allocation Panel
Puddister, Mike	Natural Heritage Advisory Committee
Ricke, Marc	Guelph Museums Advisory Committee
Saxena, Anuradha	Tourism Advisory Committee
Shinde, Dilip	Waste Resource Innovation Centre Public Liaison Advisory Committee

COMMUNITY REVIEWERS

Akande, Olabanji

Garcia, Galo

Schuller, Joanne

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS[6]

Name	Job Title and Department / Unit
Adkin, Tammy	Manager, Museums and Culture Public Services – Culture and Recreation
Aldunate, Melissa	Manager, Policy Planning Planning and Building Services
Arjoon, Kevin	Director, Office of the City Clerk/City Clerk City of Burlington
Allt, Phil	Councillor, Ward 3
Brubacher, Tim	Deputy Clerk/Manager Council Services Region of Waterloo
Busuttil, Linda	Councillor, Ward 4
Caron, Leanne	Councillor, Ward 5
Caton, Erin	Councillor, Ward 1
Chapman, Christine	Manager of Economic Development, Infrastructure Development, and Enterprise Economic Development and Tourism
Clack-Bush, Colleen	Deputy CAO, Public Services
Cooke, Wendy	City Clerk/Director of Legislative and Court Services City of Barrie
Cunneyworth, Sarah	Accessibility Coordinator Facilities and Energy Management, IDE
Di Lullo, Trista	Secretary-Treasurer, Committee of Adjustment Council and Committee Coordinator City Clerk's Office, Corporate Services
Downer, Cathy	Councillor, Ward 5
Elliott, Jason	Senior Environmental Planner Planning and Building Services

---

6   All City staff and members of City Council interviewed are from the City of Guelph unless otherwise noted.

Name	Job Title and Department / Unit
Finoro, Maria	Advisory Committee Member
	Planning Advisory Committee
Fitzpatrick, Paul	Advisory Committee Member
	Property Standards Committee
Fusco, Amanda	Director of Legislated Services/City Clerk
	City of Kitchener
Gauthier, Chris	City Clerk/Director of Clerk's Services
	City of Brantford
Goller, Rodrigo	Councillor, Ward 2
Guthrie, Cam	Mayor of Guelph
Holmes, Jayne	Deputy CAO, Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Jaworiwsky, Alex	Manager of Tourism and Destination Development
	Economic Development and Tourism
	Infrastructure Development and Enterprise
Laird, Kuusta	Advisory Committee Member
	Community Grant Allocation Panel
Lee, Trevor	Deputy CAO, Corporate Services
Lefler, Leah	Environmental Planner
	Planning and Building Services
Mallon, Jack	Planner I - Heritage
	Planning Services - Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise
McMahon, Dylan	Manager, Legislative Services; Deputy City Clerk
O'Rourke, Dominique	Councillor, Ward 6
O'Brien, Stephen	General Manager, City Clerk's Office/City Clerk
	City Clerk's Office, Corporate Services
Prigione, Judi	Administrative Assistant
	Public Services, Guelph Transit
Ratcliffe, Susan	Advisory Committee Member
	Tourism Advisory Committee

Name	Job Title and Department / Unit
Root, Lorelei	Advisory Committee Member
	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Sandor, Andrew	Council and Committee Assistant/Deputy Secretary-Treasurer
	City Clerk's Office, Corporate Services
Shouldice, Stephanie	Environmental Program and Planning Coordinator
	Compliance and Performance, Environmental Services
Smith, James	Advisory Committee Member
	Committee of Adjustment
Stewart, Scott	Chief Administrative Officer
Turner, Dan	Environmental Management System Specialist
	Compliance and Performance, Environmental Services
Vokes, Emma	Deputy City Clerk
	City of Branford
Warren, Leanne	Accessibility Project Specialist
	Facilities and Energy Management
Young, Harry	Advisory Committee Member
	Property Standards Committee

Appendix E: Demographic information of contributors

The following tables present demographic data from research and community engagement participants. Overall, the data highlight that despite important recruitment efforts by the City, there is still limited demographic diversity amongst the membership of ACOCs. Further, members of City Council and City staff tend not to reflect the diversity of the populations they serve.

In the tables that follow:

- Survey respondents are current ACOC members who completed a survey and provided demographic information (N=50).

- Interview participants include members of City Council and staff from the City of Guelph, staff from other municipalities, and current ACOC members who participated in an interview and provided demographic information (N=33).

- Residents are those who participated in a community engagement session and provided demographic information (N=20).

Except for 'prefer not to answer' responses, which provide no identifiable information, '<5%' is used to protect respondents when fewer than 5% of respondents selected a particular response.

Table E1. Identification with ethnic or cultural groups

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
White / European	65%	82%	60%
Black/African/Caribbean	<5%	<5%	10%
Indigenous (Inuit/First Nations/Métis)	/	<5%	10%
Latin American (Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Brazilian, Colombian, etc.)	/	<5%	5%
South Asian (East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)	6%	/	5%
Identify with more than one ethnic/cultural groups	/	<5%	/
I do not identify with any of these ethnic or cultural groups	10%	<5%	10%
Other (please specify)	6%	6%	/
Prefer not to answer	4%	/	/

Table E2. Identification as a person with disability

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
No	89%	88%	50%
Yes	6%	9%	50%
Prefer not to answer	4%	3%	/

Table E3. Gender identification

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
Woman (cisgender)	55%	53%	75%
Man (cisgender)	40%	38%	20%
Nonbinary/My gender identity is not listed	/	<5%	/
Prefer not to answer	4%	3%	5%

Table E4. Sexual orientation

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
Heterosexual	74%	82%	65%
Bisexual	4%	<5%	10%
Gay/Lesbian	<5%	<5%	/
Queer	/	<5%	5%
My sexual orientation is not listed	<5%	<5%	5%
Prefer not to answer	12%	6%	15%

Table E5. Age

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
15-19	<5%	/	/
20-24	<5%	/	/
25-34	10%	18%	10%
35-44	16%	23%	20%
45-54	10%	23%	20%
55-64	34%	23%	30%
65 and over	16%	9%	20%
Prefer not to answer	6%	3%	/

Table E6.Level of education

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
Completed college/university	32%	35%	16%
Completed graduate education	28%	38%	26%
Completed high school	/	/	11%
Professional degree	22%	6%	5%
Some college/university	6%	9%	26%
Some graduate education	<5%	9%	/
Some high school	<5%	/	16%
Apprenticeship training and trades	<5%	/	/
Prefer not to answer	2%	3%	/

Table E7. Struggle to meet own or family's basic needs (e.g., food, housing, transportation, healthcare)

Response Options	Survey Respondents	Interview Participants	Residents
Never	50%	62%	25%
Rarely	20%	21%	/
Sometimes	14%	12%	25%
Often	<5%	<5%	20%
Always	/	/	30%
Prefer not to answer	8%	3%	/

Appendix F: Examples of other community engagement tools

As noted in the body of the report, municipalities employ dozens of different community engagement tools (Tindal et al., 2017), and there have been many efforts to consider their respective effectiveness (e.g., Rowe & Frewer, 2000). This appendix is neither exhaustive nor evaluative. Its purpose is to highlight a few community engagement tools other than ACOCs that are used in the City of Guelph and/or were discussed during our research and community engagement process.

TOWNHALL MEETINGS

Townhall meetings are speaker-focused public meetings in which all residents are welcome to participate. They offer residents the opportunity to speak directly to, and ask questions of, city staff and elected officials, but provide limited opportunity for discussion. In the City of Guelph, monthly meetings to discuss planning and development applications resemble townhall meetings. Challenges with this form of community engagement include that their specific customs and procedures, which may be considered necessary for efficiency, constrain participation (Farkas, 2013, p. 85), and city officials maintain power through setting the agenda, organizing the meeting, and retaining discretion for who gets to speak (Ibid., p. 83). As a result, topics not included on the original meeting agenda are not discussed and residents must look for other engagement opportunities if they want to discuss something that is not on the City's agenda. Generally, the environment at a townhall meeting is not conducive to learning and may cause friction between different parties (Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002, p. 351).

ONLINE PLATFORMS

Online community engagement platforms are available in many Ontario municipalities (and elsewhere). In the City of Guelph, the online community engagement platform is called *"Have Your Say"*; it hosts short surveys about issues being discussed, or plans underway, in the City. The surveys are typically accompanied by a clear description of the project, and which of its dimensions are open to resident feedback. The purpose of online platforms is to gather public views on specific topics and give the option to residents to participate in governance spaces regardless of their age, race, socio-economic status, and location (No et al., 2017, p. 102).

The expectation is that these forums are user-friendly, responsive, and committed to the participatory process (No et al., 2017, p. 104). Online platforms can also improve accessibility for some residents. Online platforms can be an effective tool for gathering views from the community, but they play a limited role in community engagement, because they mostly invite residents' views at a later stage in the project when opportunities for meaningful contributions are limited. Further, online platforms may generate relatively superficial feedback, and residents who do not have regular access to technology or who face other barriers, such as low literacy, are missed using online platforms.

DELEGATIONS AND COMMENTS

Every resident can send written comments to the City Clerk's office, or register to speak, about items on the agenda of the Committee of the Whole, or City Council. Groups or entities outside of the City can also delegate an individual to present their group's interests and concerns (City of Guelph, 2023c). Delegating may facilitate dialogue between residents and elected officials and highlight the interests of some residents/ groups of residents (Jäske, 2019). However, delegations are short (generally only five to 10 minutes) and serve as a one-time engagement opportunity that is unaccompanied by follow-up opportunities. Further, items on which residents can delegate are those already on the City Council Agenda, meaning residents are invited to respond to the priorities of City Council rather than help identify priorities. Finally, delegating can be intimidating and entails a formal application procedure which can create barriers.

STAFF WORKING GROUPS

Staff working groups provide a more flexible alternative to ACOCs because they are not subject to the same rigid legislative requirements as ACOCs. They were raised as an option during discussions with members of the project team and interviews with City staff. Working groups differ from ACOCs in that they report to staff rather than to City Council. They can contribute meaningful lived and professional expertise of residents on more time-limited or time-sensitive matters. They could still follow many of the guidelines suggested in the ACOC Framework to ensure broad opportunities for resident participation, and fair operational procedures. For instance, the City of Burlington has a Housing Strategy Working Group, consisting of the Mayor, two City Council members, a representative of a Member of Parliament, a Region of Halton staff member and 20 volunteers from different sectors. The working group supported the development of a housing strategy over a 15-month period from 2021 to 2022.[7]

---

7   For details, please visit working group guidelines for the City of Burlington Housing Strategy.

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

Citizens' assemblies combine the benefits of representative random sampling (see description in report) of residents, with a very specific challenge confronting a government. They have been used in Canada to make recommendations on topics ranging from electoral reform (EKOS Research Associates Inc., 2022; Lang, 2023) to primary care (Ourcare, n.d.). Citizens' assemblies are widely regarded as facilitating deliberation amongst a more representative group of residents, on an important issue facing a government. However, as with the results of all community engagement tools, the outcomes of citizens' assemblies must be seriously considered. Sutcliffe and Cipkar's (2017) study of Hamilton, Ontario's citizens' jury (like a citizens' assembly) to inform the City's public transportation policy found that residents' participation was tokenistic and more symbolic than effectual. Minimally, a citizens' assembly must be given enough time, and advisory and administrative support, to function effectively.

Appendix G: Working group statement

We are a group of eight residents of Guelph and current ACOC members who endorse the Framework. We served as the working group that helped guide the research, community engagement, and analysis presented in the ACOC Framework. We see great potential in ACOCs. They can be opportunities for residents to learn about their community, develop new skills, and positively shape the present and future of Guelph. ACOCs must be recognized as an important part of how the City operates.

Over the past few months, we met over several days, or portions thereof, to carefully consider how effectively ACOCs function and who should serve on them. We are unanimous in our belief that greater diversity of membership is vital. This includes efforts to reduce barriers to participating on committees, and efforts to reach residents who have not engaged with the City before.

In addition, we want to emphasize six elements of the ACOC Framework that we think are particularly important to the success of ACOCs.

1. **Reporting and communication relationship:** We believe that City staff must work to support the reporting relationship between ACOCs and City Council. The unfettered advice and recommendations of ACOCs must reach City Council in full. Similarly, ACOCs must know how and when their advice has been received by City Council, and if and how that advice has been considered. We are concerned that the advice and recommendations of ACOCs too often goes unheard.

2. **The role of the staff liaison:** We believe staff liaisons should have senior level responsibility for strategic planning and policy development at the City. This reimagined role for staff liaisons will support effective collaboration between staff and ACOCs and enable ACOCs to effectively contribute to City policies and plans.

3. **Terms of Reference (TOR):** TOR for each committee must be clear, up to date, and regularly revisited. The TOR is the most important document for ensuring ACOC members, City staff, and City Council have a clear, shared understanding of the work of each ACOC. Revisiting the TOR is the best way to check that each ACOC remains relevant and useful, and therefore remains a valuable use of residents' time and expertise. We support a review of all existing TOR as soon as possible, and within the current term of City Council.

4. **New recruitment method:** We think novel recruitment efforts are critical for engaging with and recruiting the diverse range of residents needed for ACOCs. Changes in how residents access information and news mean that the City needs new ways to reach them. We are excited by the possibilities of representative random sampling.

5. **Covering expenses and compensation:** We believe that compensating and covering participation-related expenses should be an option for all ACOC members and is essential to fulfilling the City's equity-related commitments. Residents cannot participate if they face financial barriers to doing so.

6. **Adequate resources:** We believe that the City should dedicate adequate resources to supporting the full functioning of ACOCs so that they can contribute fully to the City's governance and operation.

Overall, we are proud of our contribution to creating the Framework. It reflects our collective belief in the highest potential of ACOCs, and we encourage City Council to support the Framework in full. Adopting the Framework and adequately resourcing ACOCs moving forward will be both a reflection and a renewal of City Council's commitment to supporting effective community engagement.