

CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURE



POLICY	Community Engagement Policy
CATEGORY	Corporate
AUTHORITY	Community and Social Services (CSS)
RELATED POLICIES	Communications, Privacy and Access to Information, Accessibility
APPROVED BY	Colleen Bell, Executive Director, Community and Social Services
EFFECTIVE DATE	January 1, 2014
REVISION DATE	August 7, 2015

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Guelph believes that residents play an essential role in local decision making. Proactive, well designed and timely community engagement:

- Ensures that local needs and aspirations are placed at the heart of municipal decision making.
- Supports the development of relevant, influential policy and effective local services and programs.
- Helps to inspire and empower residents and other stakeholders to contribute to improving individual wellbeing, the wellbeing of neighbourhoods and the wellbeing of Guelph as a whole.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that City employees deliver comprehensive and consistent approaches to engaging with residents and other stakeholders in municipal decision making.
- Improve the wellbeing of individuals, neighbourhoods and Guelph as a whole through effective engagement.
- Ensure that City employees are equipped with the skills, knowledge and supports to deliver excellence in their engagement activities based upon agreed and transparent values, principles and procedures.
- Provide clarity to residents, other stakeholders, Councillors and City employees about their roles and responsibilities in the community engagement process to ensure consistent, inclusive and effective community engagement.

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- Develop and communicate agreed standards for community engagement practices across the City and to strive for continuous improvement.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All departments of the Corporation of the City of Guelph
- All full-time, part-time and casual employees responsible for the design and implementation of community engagement activities
- Any community engagement activity undertaken by consultants or external organizations on behalf of the City

This policy does not supersede the requirements of any current legislation (e.g. The Planning Act) that guides the community engagement activities of the City and its departments. It is designed to complement these activities and ensure that they also satisfy internal standards.

DEFINITIONS

Community – A group of people with shared interests or values or who share an environment

Community Engagement – The process of involving the public in the decision making processes of issues that affect them

Community Engagement Framework – The Community Engagement Framework provides decision makers and community members with a consistent approach that sets a standard of excellence for community engagement processes in the City of Guelph

Engagement – The overarching process of involving the community in decision making processes

Plain Language – Clear, concise writing designed so the reader will understand the message

Spectrum of Engagement – The different types of community engagement: Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower

Wellbeing – The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression, focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populous, balanced time use, high levels of democratic engagement and access to and participation in leisure and culture

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement processes will embrace these principles.

1. **Inclusive:** The City designs engagement processes that allow all community members a reasonable opportunity to contribute and to develop a balanced perspective. The City builds relationships with stakeholders by using a range of activities to engage diverse participants.
2. **Early Involvement:** The City involves community as early as possible in the engagement process so stakeholders have time to learn about the issue and actively participate.
3. **Access to Decision Making:** The City designs processes that will give participants the opportunity to influence decisions.
4. **Coordinated Approach:** The City coordinates community engagement activities to use community and City resources effectively.
5. **Transparent and Accountable:** The City designs engagement processes so that stakeholders understand their role, the level of engagement and the outcome of the process.
6. **Open and Timely Communication:** The City provides information that is timely, accurate, objective, easily understood, accessible, and balanced.
7. **Mutual Trust and Respect:** The City engages community in an equitable and respectful way that fosters understanding between diverse views, values, and interests.
8. **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:** The City evaluates engagement activities to ensure engagement processes are effective.

RESPONSIBILITIES

City of Guelph Community Engagement Team Responsibilities

The Community Engagement team is responsible for implementing the Community Engagement Framework across the Corporation of the City of Guelph. The role of the Community Engagement Team is to:

- Participate in an initial project assessment with the project team and the Corporate Communications team
- Work with project staff to develop or review appropriate Community Engagement Plans
- Work with project staff as needed to implement Community Engagement Plan activities

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- Work with project staff to develop request for proposals / tenders, to include appropriate Community Engagement Plans and activities
 - Liaise with consultants to provide oversight of Community Engagement Plan and activities
 - Work with project staff to ensure the Corporation has effective systems to monitor, record, coordinate and evaluate its community engagement activities
 - Annually evaluate and update the Community Engagement Framework
 - Annually provide Council and employees with performance reports regarding the success of the Community Engagement Framework and Policy
 - Work with Human Resources and City employees to develop and implement appropriate community engagement training and supports for City employees

City Employee Responsibilities

City employees who are responsible for projects will:

- Use the Community Engagement Framework to determine if community engagement is appropriate, with support from the Community Engagement Team as needed
- Work with the Community Engagement Team to develop appropriate Community Engagement Plans
- Develop Community Engagement Plans for all project charters, business plans, project plans or request for proposals/tenders, to ensure adequate timelines and resources for community engagement
- Invite Community Engagement staff to the initial project assessment meeting to discuss community engagement needs for that project
- Notify the Community Engagement team of any planned community engagement activities
- Ensure that community engagement activities comply with the Community Engagement Framework and Policy
- Ensure consultants or external organizations undertaking community engagement activities on behalf of a City department work with the Community Engagement Team throughout the project to comply with Community Engagement Framework and Policy
- Ensure the project report accurately reflects stakeholder feedback
- Support Community Engagement staff to evaluate community engagement at the City of Guelph

Participant Responsibilities

Participants are asked to:

- Focus on the decision to be made or the question to be answered
- Recognize the City must consider the needs of the whole community
- Request alternative ways of participating if required
- Listen to understand the views of others
- Provide input and feedback within project timelines
- Encourage others to offer input

Council Responsibilities

As key leaders within the City, the support of City Council is important for successful community engagement. Council is asked to:

- Encourage City employees to follow the Community Engagement Policy
- Review information gathered through community engagement processes to inform Council decisions
- Consider appropriate project timelines and resources needed for community engagement

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Community Engagement Framework includes an evaluation component that is based on the Guiding Principles. This allows City employees to measure the effectiveness of engagement activities at each step of the process and encourage continuous learning. Community Engagement staff will evaluate and update the Community Engagement Framework annually based on clear performance indicators, City employees' feedback and emerging practices. A community engagement database will store all engagement plans and evaluations, and provide input to the ongoing revision of the Framework. A community engagement calendar will be developed to allow coordination of engagement activities across the Corporation. In collaboration with the Human Resources department, the Community Engagement team is working to develop City employee core competencies for community engagement.