



Considerations for Modernizing Public Engagement at the City of Saskatoon

Discussion Paper

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1 Introduction

In late 2014, the City of Saskatoon (COS) established a Risk-Based Management (RBM) Program to provide “a systematic, proactive and ongoing process to understand and manage risk and uncertainty...” (COS, 2014, p. 2). Following the adoption of the RBM program, the City conducted a strategic risk assessment to identify high, medium and low priority risks.

One of the high priority risks identified during that process was, “the City’s engagement and communications initiatives and opportunities may not be effectively reaching its citizens.” (COS, 2017b, p. 21)

Since that time, the City of Saskatoon’s Communications & Public Engagement Division completed a report to City Council in September 2017 providing an Overview of Communications outlining the evolution of the Division, our role and functions, how we compare to other cities and a 2018 resource plan. In addition, a number of implements have been made to support active engagement projects, developing a stakeholder management strategy, and creating public engagement procedures.

However, there is still a strong need to continue to improve engagement as demonstrated by the results presented in Table 1 of the 2018 Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey and the Civic Services Survey: Performance, Priorities & Preferences.

Table 1: Public Engagement Results

| | Performance Measure | 2018 Performance |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Public Engagement | City of Saskatoon does enough to get public input on decisions it makes. (Strategy) | 53% Telephone 45% Online = 49% |
| | The City provides meaningful opportunities to participate in engagement activities (Engagement Plan/Execution) | 87% Telephone 79% Online =83% |
| | The City communicates how it will use public input to help make its decisions (Reporting Out) | 68% Telephone 55% Online =62% |

Data from the City of Saskatoon 2018 Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey and the Civic Services Survey: Performance, Priorities & Preferences.

Fundamentally, a public engagement process will encourage transparency, gather input from residents and stakeholders to enhance the project, and communicate how this input has influenced the outcome.

Decisions at the local government’s level affect the daily lives of community members more than other levels of government, creating increased expectations around decision making, prioritizing, and opportunity creation. Council and Administration require input from residents and stakeholders in order to adequately weigh the facts, data, options, public value and trade-offs. To increase the likelihood of suitable decision making, it is critical that Council and Administration are consistently seeking out and hearing input from residents and stakeholders.

Therefore, the purpose of this position paper is to identify a path forward as it relates to a Council Public Engagement Policy and an Administrative Framework. To provide appropriate context and analysis the remainder of this document is organized as follows:

- Section II provides a common understanding of the important role of public engagement for the City of Saskatoon. We have the potential to utilize our citizens as a partner and vital resource in the decision making process.
- Section III provides background information on the history of public engagement at the City of Saskatoon and our current state.
- Section IV provides a comparison of public engagement in other jurisdictions as it relates to policies, procedures and reporting structures.
- Section V outlines a path forward, and proposes recommendations to improve the City's efforts to engage Saskatoon citizens based on municipal best practices.

2 Public Engagement Overview

2.1 Public Engagement Terminology

One of the challenges when discussing public engagement is the variety of similar terms used by different municipalities, organizations, and scholars. These terms include public participation, public engagement, and community engagement. This section defines and distinguishes between the different terms.

Public Participation: “Public participation is an umbrella term that describes the activities by which people’s concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues.” (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015, p. 14)

Public Engagement: “Refers to a variety of in-person and online methods for bringing people together to address issues of public importance. Public engagement is more specific than ‘civic engagement,’ which generally refers to the public’s role in civil society (Bingham, 2010), and ‘stakeholder engagement,’ which does not necessarily involve members of the lay public.” (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014, p. 65S)

Community Engagement: “Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices.” (*COPR Role of the Public in Research Work Group, 2008*)

All of these definitions are similar in the sense that they describe a process by which people influence changes or decisions. This is a critical distinction, since the term “engagement” is also often used to describe interactions between individuals and organizations (often through social media) but these interactions are rarely connected to a decision-making process.

2.2 What is Public Engagement?

From the terminology described in subsection 2.1, we can say that Public Engagement includes formal and informal interactions ranging from information sharing to more active consultation through to collaboration in the decision making processes. Applying this in a city context, the amount of influence residents and stakeholders have on decision making increases in accordance with the level of engagement but responsibility for final decisions typically remains with City Council.

Effective engagement that is open, transparent and participatory allows room for diverse perspectives and new solutions to improve the quality of decisions. More clearly:

- Engagement is...
 - about meaningful participation
 - connected to a decision
 - about providing decision makers with a variety of perspectives to consider
 - gaining valuable input from stakeholders
 - required if certain criteria are met
 - about building social capital
 - informed decision making
- Engagement should be...
 - inclusive to involve those who are affected by a policy in the decision-making process
 - meant to positively benefit the substance, transparency, legitimacy, and fairness of policy development and the general view of government
 - both proactive and reactive, it can be a strategy to proceed anticipated change or resistance to change or it can be used as a tool to react to immediate political peril, an opportunity of a policy window, or because of other concerns or frustrations with the policy making process
- Engagement is not...
 - "checking a box"
 - simply to inform and/or educate
 - about creating or producing consensus or project buy-in or project endorsement
 - one-way communication
 - needed for every project

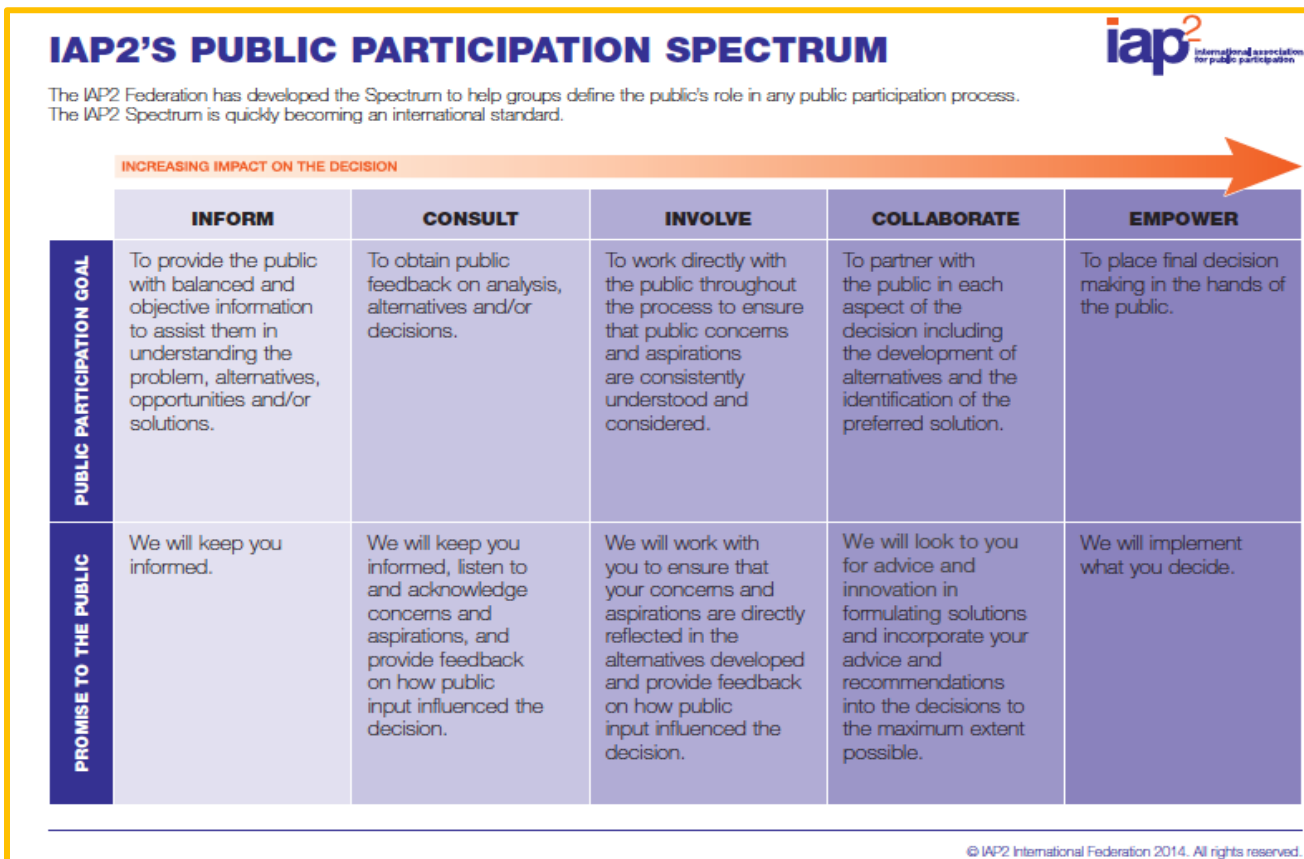
2.3 Engagement Spectrum

In the early 2000's there was a shift in language from 'public participation' to 'community engagement' (Ross, Baldwin, & Carter, 2016). The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2, <http://iap2.org>), an international leader in public participation, continues to use the terms 'public participation' and 'community engagement' interchangeably. IAP2 defines public participation as involving "those who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process. It promotes sustainable decisions by providing participants with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way, and it communicates to participants how their input affects the decision. The practice of public participation might involve public meetings, surveys, open houses, workshops, polling, citizen's advisory committees and other forms of direct involvement with the public."

Ross, Baldwin, and Carter (2016) note that when distinctions are made between community engagement and public participation, public participation is often more specific, whereas community engagement tends to be more general and longer term. For the purposes of this paper, we use the terms public participation and community engagement interchangeably.

IAP2 designed a spectrum of public participation identified in Figure 1 “to help groups define the public’s role in any public engagement process” (IAP2, 2014).

Figure 1: IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum



Reprinted from International Association for Public Participation (2014).

The spectrum includes five categories of public participation process: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering the public. Each of these categories has clear objectives and are linked to increasing participatory forms and public commitment. This spectrum is the international standard for public participation (IAP2, 2014). Many governments in Canada and worldwide have adopted or adapted this framework.

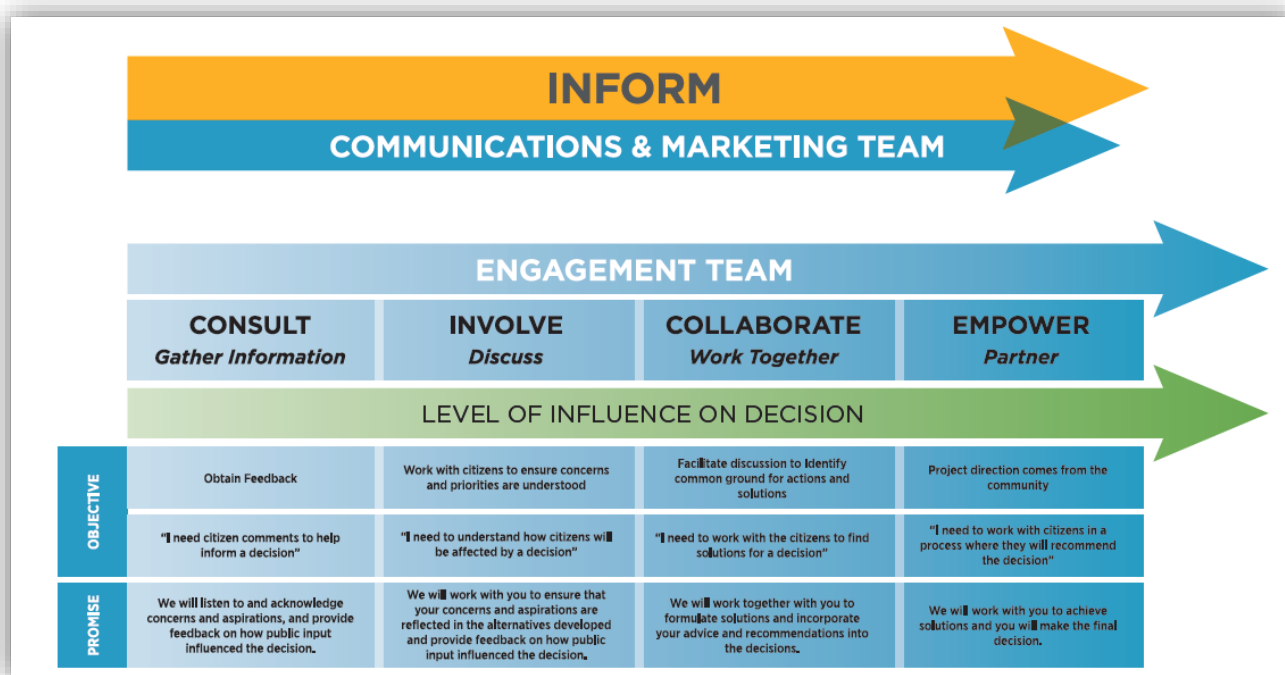
The spectrum is not meant to place a value judgement on one level over another. It is also not intended to be a linear tool because in one project there may be different stakeholders who are engaged at

different levels, at different times, all within the same overall strategy. Additionally, new information or learning might change the level of participation in the process partway through.

Since the 1990s, government around the world have adopted variations of this spectrum for their own uses and needs. One of the adaptations made by the City of Saskatoon is to pull out the “inform” level and put it across the top in a yellow arrow, to represent how informing happens throughout the entire engagement process. The City’s approach is illustrated in Figure 2.

This version adds further context to the objectives as well as role clarity for the City. Most significantly, it places the inform level as a separate and concurrent feature to each level of the engagement spectrum. This approach is common among other municipalities, as a way of noting that the informing function must happen throughout any engagement process, regardless of how it happens, but that it is not considered engagement in and of itself.

Figure 2: City of Saskatoon Public Engagement Spectrum



Adapted from International Association for Public Participation (2014).

The City’s approach shows how communications and marketing are not only a key ingredient but also integral to the success of engagement. As we move up the spectrum, the level of influence on the decision increases, represented by the green arrow.¹

¹ Please note that one project can be a many different points on the spectrum throughout its lifespan-or even at the same time (ie. different stakeholder groups or audiences being at different levels, even simultaneously).

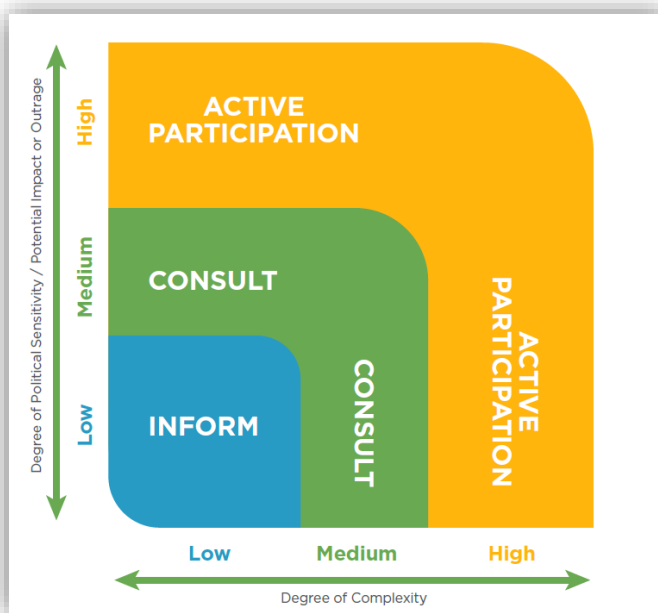
2.4 Engagement Complexity

There is an ongoing conversation within the public participation community about updating the IAP2 spectrum, as it has not significantly changed since the early 1990s while the practice has evolved since that time. The IAP2 Spectrum is often presented as if decision-makers have control when in reality, communities and individuals have power to change a situation regardless of what Administration might like. It can also be used to impose one organization’s expectations on participants rather than opening up a conversation about how affected individuals and communities want to participate. At times the spectrum can perpetuate patterns of marginalization and reinforce power imbalances. More bluntly, it does not enable a more holistic, community-building approach. And finally, the spectrum does not take into account factors including risk, complexity, controversy, and potential outrage, which may require higher levels of participation than initially thought.

These key critiques must be considered and mitigated when developing an engagement strategy. Figure 3 offers a version of an Engagement Complexity Matrix. This adaptation is from the consulting firm Dialogue Partners. Its usefulness comes from the fact that it simplifies the levels into three core categories, but maps them onto the level of complexity and degree of political sensitivity/impact or outrage involved to add nuance to the approach.

The bottom **x axis** speaks to the degree of complexity from low to high. Complexity is how complicated the project is. For example, highly complex projects have many different moving parts that are interacting with each other, often have many unknowns, many people involved, and large scopes. Whereas, the side **y axis** is about the level of political sensitivity that comes with this project, and the level of possible outrage you could expect from those who are highly impacted.

Figure 3: Engagement Complexity Matrix



Adapted from the consulting firm Dialogue Partners.

2.5 Why Engage?

Before discussing approaches to community engagement, it is important to consider why we engage in the first place. Public participation is not just about producing consensus, but rather about building social capital while engaging the public and ensuring that policy development and decision making is informed (Berkes, 2009; Cuff, 2007; Putnam, 1995; Landrie-Parker, 2018). At minimum, public participation is about involving those who are affected by a policy in the decision-making process. This corresponds with the “all affected interests principle” of democratic theory, by which “those affected by a decision ought to have a chance to take part in shaping that decision” (MASS LBP, 2017 p. 10). In the language of community organizing, this is termed “nothing about us, without us.”

Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006) explain that governments also engage as a way to promote citizenship and have “positive benefits to the substance, transparency, legitimacy, and fairness of policy development as well as the general view of government held by citizens” (as cited in Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014, p. 70S). Nabatchi and Amsler (2014) explain that it is just as likely, however, that government uses engagement “as a reaction to an immediate political peril, to seize the opportunity of a policy window, or because of other concerns or frustrations with the policy making process. For example, government officials may use engagement to help break deadlocked decision-making bodies or to generate some political (and public) will for making unpopular policy decisions on difficult issues” (p.70S). This indicates that engagement can be both proactive and reactive, and can be used as a political tool – not without consequences. However, there is a risk that citizens will see through these efforts as a form of posturing or manipulation.

With an understanding of the rationales used to support public participation, this paper now considers the key outcomes or benefits of engaging community members in decision-making. Table 2 summarizes the beneficial outcomes that can arise from meaningful public participation. These outcomes are described at individual (citizen), collective (community), and institutional (government or organization) levels.

Table 2: Desired Outcomes

| Individual | Collective | Institutional |
|---|--|---|
| Increases knowledge and the robustness of individual opinions. | Leads to better understanding of social issues. | Positive benefits to the substance, transparency, legitimacy, and fairness of policy development. |
| Fosters trust, cultivates civic skills such as political efficacy and public spiritidness, increases likelihood of future participation in politics and communities, and improves citizens' perceptions about the legitimacy of democratic processes. | Helps build capacity to understand and address social issues and problems by cultivating social capital, fostering leadership or individual and organizational commitment and ability to solve problems, and increasing access to resources. | Increases public justification for policy options, and fosters policy consensus, which in turn improves the justice of decisions, eases implementation, and increases the effectiveness of public action. |
| Exposes people to a greater diversity of ideas leading to more open-mindedness, learning more from others, and engaging in a deeper consideration of issues; enabling people to become more "other-regarding" by developing empathy and tolerance. | Collaboration can help resolve community-based issues, such as the micro-politics of conflict over service provision, land-use planning and infrastructure projects. | Easier implementation especially when the problem requires individual actions, behavioral changes, or small group efforts on a large scale. For example, a city can enact a recycling policy, but if people lack the knowledge or incentive to recycle, it will fail. |

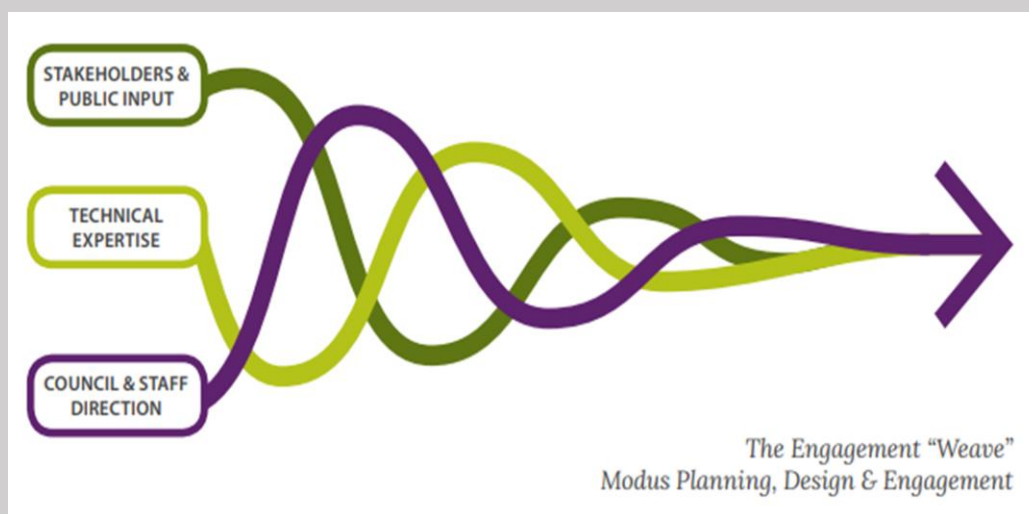
Adapted from Nabatchi and Amsler (2014); Ryfe, and Stalsburg (2012, p. 23); Mansbridge (1995); Pateman (1970); Pincock (2012); Yankelovich (1991); Kinney (2012); Mathews (1994); Hemmati (2002); Innes and Booher (2004); Head (2007); Barrett et al. (2012); Elster (1998); Fung (2003, 2005); and Lukensmeyer & Torres (2006, p. 5).

2.6 How to Engage?

Public Participation experts Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015) remind us that “to realize the full potential of participation, we need to focus on what citizens actually want: problem solving, civility, and community. If we start with these goals in mind, it becomes easier to understand why official avenues for engagement do not appeal to the public” (p. 5-6). Unfortunately, many of our conventional mechanisms and approaches to engagement are unable to live up to the goals of problem-solving, civility, and community. In order to achieve the benefits and desired outcomes of engagement, Nabatchi and Leighninger argue that governments must have a “robust participation infrastructure.” This includes: “the laws, processes, institutions, and associations that support regular opportunities for people to connect with each other, solve problems, make decisions, and celebrate community” (p. 6). The next section of the paper outlines values, criteria, and process considerations for the creations of such infrastructure. It also expands on the key barriers and opportunities to providing effective engagement.

Who to Engage? The Engagement Weave

Governments conduct public engagement to involve people in decisions that will ultimately affect their lives. This can bring powerful benefits and insight, but is just one of several important streams of information, and requires collaboration between community members and stakeholders, technical experts, and policy-makers. This engagement “weave” diagram shows how these different groups work together over time to move from the general to the specific, finding consensus and agreement by working together. Information and ideas from all of these streams should interact, leading to learning, shared insights and the emergence of new ideas throughout a project or process. No single input, comment, or activity determines the outcome, and Council (as the elected decision-makers) ultimately reserve the right to decide as they see fit.



Reprinted from City of Pitt Meadows (2017. p. 6).

2.7 Engagement Values

Meaningful public engagement processes are grounded in a set of guiding principles or core values. To accompany the Participation Spectrum, IAP2 has also developed a set of core values that are widely accepted as the basis for 'good engagement.' The values are based on the belief that people who are affected by a decision should be involved in the decision-making process and that their contribution to this process will influence the final decision. The IAP2 values posit that public participation:

- is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process;
- includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision;
- promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers;
- seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision;
- seeks input from participants in designing how they participate;
- provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
- communicates to participants how their input affected the decision. (IAP2, 2017)

Moro (2005) sets the criteria presented in Table 3 by which to measure good public participation. Good participation must add value, empower publics, improve social trust and social capital, and must have sufficient public involvement. Trust and social capital are key components of successful public participation. Trust is a determinate of success, which assists in the networking and relationship building. Social capital is integral in cooperation and collaboration.

Table 3: Criteria for Good Public Participation

| Value Added | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Effectiveness | Better achievement of the goals and objectives. |
| Efficiency | Efficiencies that save time, money, social tensions, and so on. |
| Impact | Wider, deeper and more permanent effects on target situations and subjects. |
| Pertinence | Greater relevance to the issues dealt with by the policy. |
| Empower | |
| Problem solving | The value people get from being empowered to solve the issues they face. |
| Awareness | Increased awareness by involving public in decision making. |
| Social Trust & Social Capital | |
| Trust | Future assumptions based on the actions of others. |
| Capital | The strength of the norms and social networks that influence society. |
| Public Involvement | |
| Quantity | Relative to the situation. |
| Frequency | The frequency and intensity of public involvement vary person to person. |
| Forms and tools | The forms and tools used in public involvement cross a large spectrum, some more likely to garner public involvement. |

Adapted from Moro (2005).

Within these criteria, various characteristics that would influence the success of the participation process can be identified. These characteristics include “representativeness, independence of participants, early involvement, influence on final policy, transparency of process to the public, process

criteria, resource accessibility, structured decision making, and cost effectiveness” (Hurlbert, 2014, p. 60). These characteristics involve an adaptable, engaged, early and long-term public participation process that encourages shared knowledge production and a shared understanding of the issues. The more authentic the public participation process, the more transparent the decision-making process, therefore creating transparency and increasing trust and confidence.

In any public participation process, the largest hurdle to cross is differing expectations from participants and organizers. These include expectations of process design, decision-making power, analysis and evaluation (Shiple & Utz, 2012). Decision-making is rarely linear but rather iterative. Therefore, decision making processes require an iterative and adaptive process.

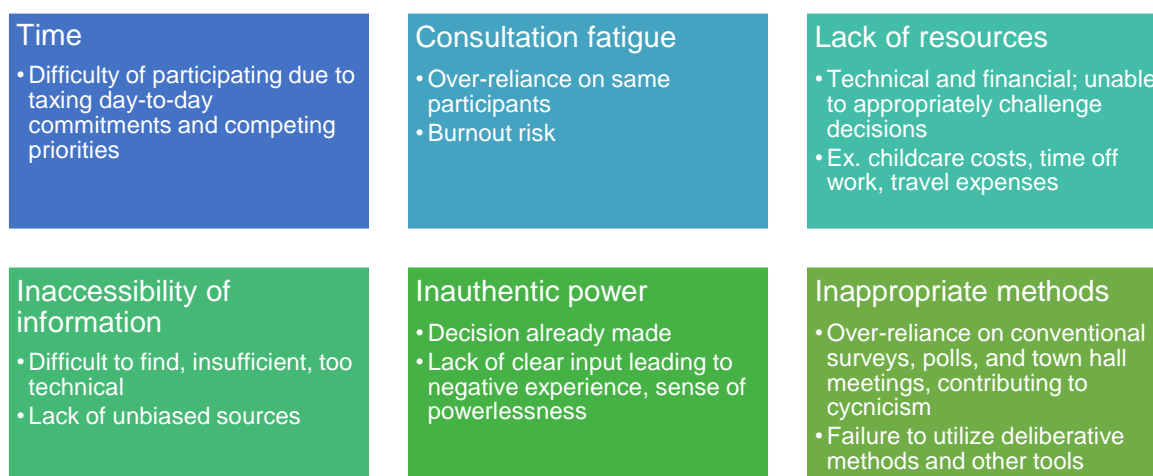
It is imperative that the design of an engagement plan includes:

- Description of why community engagement is required and the desired outcomes (ex. exploration, conflict resolution, decision making or collaborative action. (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014)
- Method of participation and analysis of intended participants, ensuring that the methods selected do not limit access to the engagement activity. (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014; Webler & Tuler, 2002)
- Approach to participant recruitment; voluntary self-selection, random selection, targeted, and incentive-based recruitment can be used individually or in combination with each other (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Each strategy has potential benefits and deficits.
- Materials and information provided in an accessible format and language, to encourage informed decision making.
- Resourcing, including definition of roles and responsibilities.
- Well-developed evaluation measures and processes.

That said, once again emphasis is on the importance of having an adaptive approach and modifying the plan based on emerging needs and new realities.

Figure 4 outlines six common barriers that must be considered during the development of any engagement plan. A comprehensive engagement process needs to identify barriers to engagement and include strategies for addressing these barriers.

Figure 4: Barriers to engagement



Adapted from Diduck and Sinclair (2002); Land-Murphy (2009); Shipley and Utz (2012); and Nabatchi and Leighninger, (2015, p. 267).

It is also worth mentioning the barriers perceived by government officials. These include:

- Finding adequate time, money, and resources for engagement;
- Engagement making it more difficult to broker compromises; and
- Requiring them to “interact with an uninformed, hostile, and disrespectful public.” (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014, p. 75S)

Given the principles and framework for engagement the next section of this document reviews how they are applied in a local government context. Specifically, the next section of the document explains how this framework is applied at the City of Saskatoon.

3 Public Engagement and the City of Saskatoon

3.1 Background

In July 2004 Saskatoon City Council adopted a Public Participation Strategy for Community Initiatives and Land Use Development (refer to Attachment 1 – Local Area Plans Implementation Schedule

Enhanced Citizen Participation and Consultation Model Proposal and Enquiry – Council Swystun – CK.4000-1). The strategy document includes a definition, purpose, principles, outcomes, what the stakeholders and public can expect, and general guidelines and checklists for staff.

In September 2006, City Council received a Community Engagement report from Administration (File No. LS4110-1 and CK230-1) outlining a Community Engagement program that consists of resources for Administration (brochures, manuals and training), resources the Community (brochures, logos, and website) and A guide to City Planning & Development in Saskatoon.

In December 2009 City Council adopted a community engagement plan for the City of Saskatoon's Community Visioning initiative (File No. CK. 4350-62 and CC 100-1). In coordination with this Initiative, the City of Saskatoon implemented a coordinated corporate approach to community engagement. A Community Engagement Coordination Team, which was in existence at that time, reviewed all proposed projects to incorporate the timing and implementation with the Community Visioning initiative.

Of course, citizen expectations change and evolve over time. These evolving expectations are driven in part by a globalization of knowledge, emerging technologies and competing demands for people's time. This suggests, then, that the Public Participation Strategy adopted in July 2004 over a decade ago no longer reflects these new realities.

In September 2017, City Council received a report from Administration providing An Overview of the Communications Division (File No. CK. 230-1; CP. 0365.005). The purpose of this report was to provide an overview of the Communications Division including the history, current state, a comparison to other cities and a look forward at emerging trends and needs. The objective is to provide Committee with a thorough understanding about the role, functions, and work of the Communications Division, along with known existing and emerging challenges and opportunities.

The report identified that new and effective methods for public engagement are being used, so the City of Saskatoon engagement model should reflect this changing environment. The 2018 Civic Services Survey results indicate there is a strong need for improving public engagement and that our current approach no longer meets these changing expectations. It is no longer perceived to be effective by citizens or internally at the City of Saskatoon; therefore, the process approved in 2004 and again in 2009 needs to be reconsidered.

3.2 Current State

As a result of the report received by City Council in September 2017, the City of Saskatoon created a Public Engagement Section, within the Communications Division of Corporate Performance. This was the initial step in developing and building a more sustainable structure to support public engagement throughout the corporation. As of June 2019, the Section includes a Public Engagement Manager and one permanent Public Engagement Consultant. There are also two temporary Public Engagement Consultants dedicated to providing engagement support to the Growth Plan and various Environmental initiatives.

With this small incremental increase in engagement capacity, the corporation still remains heavily reliant on staff within the various divisions to manage the majority of the City's public engagement activities on a daily basis. Most of these staff come from varied backgrounds (engineers,

communications, marketing, planners, etc.) and have not necessarily been formally trained in engagement, particularly for deeper and more deliberative forms of engagement on complicated projects. There is a need for greater coordination and consistency among the projects, and for shared standards of practice to ensure that engagement is authentic, purposeful, and appropriate. There is a significant opportunity to provide training and resources to these staff members, while continuing to add staff resources to the Engagement Section.

In addition to the structure and capacity to support public engagement,

Table 4 outlines additional achievements of the Public Engagement Section in its first year of operation.

Table 4: Public Engagement Section

| Item | Description |
|---|---|
| Support to divisions on active engagement projects | Over 20 projects across the corporation, working closely with projects such as the Unified Waste Utility/Curbside Organics, Climate Change Mitigation, Naming the North Commuter Parkway, Bus Rapid Transit, and Multi-Year Business Plan & Budget |
| Initial work has started on a for improved stakeholder management. | Promotion and management of online Citizen Advisory Panel group, creation of the Indigenous Technical Advisory Group and collaboration on the U of S Memorandum of Understanding. |
| Building public engagement procedures | A new Engage program identifier was created to increase public awareness and an Engage page was created at www.saskatoon.ca/engage to make it easier for the public to find engagement opportunities. A City engagement calendar is now regularly updated and monitored, with weekly emails sent to Council, Administrative Leadership Team, and others every Monday. A Community Engagement Procedure for Saskatoon Light & Power Infrastructure Projects has been established. Additionally, standard templates and tools have been developed, including engagement plans, intake assessments, evaluation forms, stakeholder maps, and project tracking an internal training program has been piloted within the corporation. Various improvements have been made for online surveys and online mailing lists. |
| Improved tracking for analytics | Tracking system for active engagement projects, activities, and participant numbers |

However, as mentioned earlier, engagement is identified as a corporate risk (COS, 2016, 2017b). This risk is generally derived from the notion that City Divisions are implementing their own, disjointed engagement activities, resulting in a lack of coordination and creating the potential for duplication of efforts. The Strategic Risk Register further explains that there is an expectation gap between citizens and the City that may be leading to dissatisfaction with services caused in part by outdated and

ineffective initiatives, and a reluctance to change. As a result, there are more improvements that need to be made to adequately and effectively mitigate the risk.

4 Community Engagement in other Jurisdictions

Several Canadian municipalities studied have community engagement policies approved by City Council that set out the overarching purpose, principles, and expectations of engagement. These are often accompanied by an Administrative document outlining the procedures and providing further guidance.

Others develop an all-encompassing “Engagement Framework” which contains similar content to a Council Policy, as well as laying out procedures. Often members of Council, Administration, and public might be involved in developing or affirming this framework but it ultimately lives within the Administration. Several municipalities appear to solely have Administrative procedures in place, which emphasize project planning, implementation, and relevant tools.

There tends to be a high degree of overlap between all three approaches and the difference between frameworks and procedures in particular is blurry. Table 5 indicates the approach taken by a variety of municipalities, based on the public information that was available.

Table 5: Municipal Approaches

| Municipality | Council Policy | Engagement Framework | Engagement Procedures |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| City of Edmonton | ✓ | | ✓ |
| City of Calgary | ✓ | ✓ | |
| City of Guelph | | ✓ | |
| City of Victoria | | ✓ | |
| City of Ottawa | | | ✓ |
| City of London | ✓ | | |
| City of Halifax | | | ✓ |
| City of Vancouver | | | ✓ |
| City of St. John’s | ✓ | | |
| City of Kingston | | ✓ | |

The following sections will outline the typical contents of both policies and procedures from a number of municipalities.

4.1 Council Policy

Most municipalities across Canada share similar sections in their community engagement Council Policies. These main sections are: Purpose, Policy, Procedure, and Review Period/Amendments. Below we will describe the contents of each section and give concrete examples from the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary.

4.1.1 Purpose

This section outlines the objectives and function of the policy. It may describe the policy's contents, in brief. For example, the City of Calgary's engagement policy states: "The Engage Policy provides the guidelines for the development and implementation of engagement processes for stakeholders, both external and internal, in order to achieve the following:

- alignment with City Council's priorities for citizen-centric service delivery;
- support for City Council's decision making by providing information about stakeholders opinions and perspectives;
- consistent and clear engagement practices; and
- enhancement of The City of Calgary's reputation as an organization that listens to citizens and stakeholders.

Administration is directed to develop and adhere to the Engage Administration Framework – outlining how The City's commitment to engagement will be carried out, how it will be resourced, and how accountability will be managed." (2013, p. 1)

4.1.2 Policy

In this section, relevant definitions are provided, followed by a vision and guiding principles for public engagement. The vision is not included in all policies; for some, they capture similar sentiments in the purpose statement and objectives instead.

Definitions

Most cities define "public engagement", and some also define terms like "public" and "stakeholder." For example, Calgary defines "Engagement" as "purposeful dialogue between The City and citizens and stakeholders to gather information to influence decision making." (2013, p. 1)

Vision

A description of the desired future state. For example, Edmonton's vision for engagement is "A City where we are connected, invested, and proud to participate in shaping our community." (2017b, p. 3).

Guiding Principles

Most municipalities outline between 5-7 principles to guide their engagement practice. Generally these are 2-4 words, followed by a longer description statement or sub-points that make it clear how the principles will be applied. An example of guiding principles can be found in Table 7: Public Engagement Principles on page 29.

4.1.3 Procedure

This section of the policy outlines where the policy will be applied, where procedural roles and responsibilities rest, and may include a brief overview of the engagement process including a Public Engagement Spectrum.

Application of the Policy

This section describes how and when the policy is applied. This may indicate that engagement should ultimately be supporting a decision-making process for policies, programs, projects and services that

have an impact on the public. For example the City of Calgary states “This policy applies to the following types of opportunities for engagement that exist within The City:

- Engagement in specific planning, policy, and project initiatives that directly or indirectly impact citizens and stakeholders.
- Mandated/legislated processes involving public participation.” (2013, p. 4)

Roles and Responsibilities

Some municipalities keep this brief and high-level (such as Edmonton), while others more specifically list the roles and responsibilities for Council, Administration, and sometimes even Stakeholders (such as St. John’s). For example Edmonton notes “The role of decision makers - City Council or Administration - in public engagement is to strive for the best understanding of the public’s views and perspectives on topics and issues, consider public input in decision making, and communicate to the public how their input was used and why decisions were made. Public engagement is one factor in the decision making process and will have more or less influence relative to other factors for every specific decision.” (2017b, p. 2)

Public Engagement Spectrum

Most cities include a spectrum of 4-5 strategies and associated promises related to public engagement. Some use the exact spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, Figure 1). However most cities use an adapted version – often with slightly different terminology or condensed categories. Most have also omitted or moved the inform part of the spectrum since it is an ongoing communications function that may support or happen independently of engagement. For example Calgary uses “Listen and Learn”, “Consult”, “Collaborate” and “Empower” (2013, p.5), and Edmonton uses “Advise”, “Refine”, “Create”, and “Decide.” (2017b, p. 3)

4.1.4 Review period/Amendments

Follows the City’s standard approach for the frequency of policy review and for recording policy amendments that are made.

4.2 Administrative Procedures

As described previously, municipalities have varying approaches to outlining their engagement procedures. Some combine procedures into a larger strategy or framework document, while others have formalized governance procedures.

Edmonton has a City Procedure approved by the City Manager that is part of their Administrative Policies, under the authority of the City Manager. This two-page document outlines Citizen Engagement, Honouring People, Accessible Involvement, Continuum of Public Involvement (spectrum), and Engagement Roadmap (process steps). It includes items like “Participants will know what is included in the discussion and what isn’t, and what decisions will be made or have been made, and who will make the final decision.” (City of Edmonton, 2005, p. 1)

In contrast, Calgary’s Engage Framework is 25 pages long and includes many tools. It is intended to spell out the engagement best practices, in line with the expectation set by the Engage Policy. The Framework clarifies these best practices and is intended as a guide for staff, outlining the purpose and process of engagement, key concepts, expectations, workflows, and important tools. The internal tools

include a project assessment worksheet, Engage process steps, spectrum of participation, roles and responsibilities, and guiding principles.

Guelph (2015a) and Victoria (2017) have similarly lengthy framework documents, with comparable content to Calgary. They also provide guidance on when to engage and how to determine the appropriate level of engagement.

Most cities' procedure documents are internally focused. However, the City of Victoria's framework appears to be more public-facing, while also providing guidance to internal employees. Figure 5 demonstrates a compelling visual of their engagement process. They also provide a breakdown of the different types of City projects, and the minimum level of engagement that can be expected, along with expected stakeholders and techniques.

Figure 5: City of Victoria Community Engagement Process



Reprinted from City of Victoria (2017, p. 10).

Most procedures clearly lay out the other City procedures (or policies) that apply to community engagement. The common areas are as follows:

4.2.1 Accessibility

This section generally lists the connections to existing City policies or procedures regarding accessibility, including items like plain language, translation and interpretation services when

necessary, accessible facilities, and available information. For example, Calgary (2013) references the need for alignment with the following policies: Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy, Plain Language Policy, and the Welcoming Community Policy. Another example is Guelph (2015a), which references the need to follow the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which applies to all City employees providing customer service. They also include an attachment about plain language.

4.2.2 Information and Privacy

This section lists any relevant legislation or policy regarding freedom of information and protection of privacy. For example, Guelph references the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA): “When obtaining personal information from community members, keep in mind the regulations about how that information may be used. Please contact the Access Privacy and Records Specialist and/or see Appendix C for guidelines.” (2015a, p. 19)

4.3 Reporting Structures

Table 6 outlines the five main scenarios for how Engagement is situated within the various municipalities across Canada.

Table 6: Engagement Reporting Structures Comparison

| Structure | Description | Cities | Examples |
|---|--|--|--|
| Engagement Section | Section within Communications Division or equivalent, reporting to Director of Communications | Saskatoon, Calgary, Vancouver, Kelowna, Kingston | Calgary's Director of Customer Service & Communications reports to the CFO, who reports to City Manager |
| Engagement Division - Corporate | Division within a corporate Department that may also include functions such as Communications, Strategic Development, Customer Service, and Policy Coordination. | Edmonton, Red Deer, St. John's, Victoria, Winnipeg | Edmonton's Director of Engagement reports to Deputy City Manager, Communications & Engagement (GM equivalent), who reports to City Manager. Winnipeg's Office of Public Engagement reports to Director of Customer Service and Communications, who reports to City Manager. |
| Engagement Division – City Manager | Located within the City Manager's Office and reporting directly to City Manager. | Toronto*, Guelph, Burlington | Guelph: Engagement is within Corporate & Community Strategies, within the Chief Administrative Officer's Office *Toronto: Other City staff in line divisions may support or conduct engagement, but this group is accountable for supporting the corporate Civic Engagement Strategy. |
| Decentralized | Engagement Specialists are hired for specific departments and work fairly independently of one another. | Ottawa, Toronto, Waterloo | In Ottawa, Community Consultation Specialists are part of Business Support Services Branch within Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development. Other departments also have staff conducting engagement independently of this unit. |
| Para-Municipal Body | Engagement function exists as an arms-length agency with independence from the City | Montreal | Montreal's Office of Public Consultant has a President, Permanent Secretariat, Collaborators, and Commissioners. |

Where Engagement sits within a municipality seems to depend heavily on the City's culture, context, history, existing structure and goals.

Decentralized models are most likely to succeed in corporations in which other support and strategic services are similarly distributed. A para-municipal body might be most relevant for a City with more defined regulatory or bylaw requirements for citizen consultation, where there is a large population, and/or where civil society groups are highly active. Locating Engagement within the City Manager's Office can be advantageous when a municipality is striving for a unified engagement approach with strong ties to strategic priorities and policy development.

When Engagement and Communications are separate but closely linked divisions, Engagement is given independence and clear direction while still leveraging the collaborative benefits of being housed in a Department that includes Communications and other resident-facing services. Housing Engagement within a Communications Division generally occurs when engagement was initially a function of Communications staff and grew to become its own specialized team.

For the City of Saskatoon, engagement currently falls under the Communications & Public Engagement Division. Prior to 2014 the public engagement function was primarily led by the Community Services Department.

4.4 How did they do it? Engaging on Engagement

Municipalities across Canada utilized various degrees of internal and/or external engagement to develop their formalized engagement policies and processes, striving for formalized public engagement that would be meaningful both for the public and for municipal decision makers. The degree to which municipalities conducted engagement to develop their engagement policies and processes depended on factors such as resources, direction from leadership, and pre-existing capacity.

A sample of Canadian municipalities that utilized community engagement to develop their engagement policies and practices are described below. They are grouped into the following categories based on the degree of engagement utilized in the development process: extensive, significant, moderate, and other.

4.4.1 Extensive Public Engagement

Edmonton

From 2014 through 2017, the City of Edmonton conducted a three-year process called the Council Initiative on Public Engagement, resulting in an updated City Council Public Engagement Policy, an Administrative Engagement Procedure (to guide engagement implementation), and an Engagement Framework (including templates and expectations for planning, reporting, training, and evaluation). This development process included two phases of engagement.

In phase 1, over forty initial workshops were conducted, attended by more than 1,000 City staff and members of the public. These workshops explored topics such as the purpose of public engagement, key elements to engagement, and how the City and the public can best work together. Input was also received online through a discussion guide organized in the same way as the workshops. Volunteer representatives from the workshops helped to discuss and theme this input. Further workshops were then conducted with City Council, the Executive Leadership Team and previous participants, and also

included a greater diversity of stakeholders, such as Indigenous and multicultural groups. Topics in these additional engagements explored obstacles, strategies to overcome these obstacles, and opportunities. In total, participants contributed approximately 1,400 hours of time for the engagements in phase 1, helping to develop a shared understanding of what public engagement should look like.

In phase 2, an advisory committee was formed, including representation from City Council, Administration, and the public, to provide oversight and guidance to the process. Multiple concurrent working groups composed of City staff, public, and, at times City Councillors, focused on the following areas: vision, policy and framework; tools, techniques and practices; community leadership; learning and training; and evaluation, reporting and recognition.

https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/documents/CIPEPhases1and2FinalReport.pdf

4.4.2 Significant Public Engagement

Kitchener

The City of Kitchener conducted an engagement review over an eight month period in 2016, resulting in a renewed engagement vision, strategy and implementation plan. The process consisted of interviews with Mayor and Council; facilitated discussions and workshops with staff and citizen advisory committees; an online survey; and informal, open-ended conversations with citizens at public events. In total, over 700 residents and stakeholders were engaged in this renewal.

The input received through these engagements were synthesized into four themes (before engagement, during engagement, after engagement, and general), which contain sixteen recommendations. Because many of these recommendations require staff and financial commitments, they will be introduced to Council as needed during future annual budget cycles.

<https://www.kitchener.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/Documents/COR%20COMMunity-Engagement-Review---Final-Draft.pdf>

Victoria

The City of Victoria does not have a Council policy for public engagement but does have an engagement strategy, framework, and a “roadmap.” Residents and staff were engaged to inform these documents a four month period in 2012. Input on how to improve civic engagement was collected from over 200 citizens, stakeholder, City staff, and local “key informants.” The engagements revealed challenges for engagement, clarified role confusion, identified priorities, and recognized a need to ensure consistency and coordination, as well as improve customer service and communication, when it comes to public engagement. Resourcing needs in relation to engagement were also identified.

https://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Communications/Documents/Civic_Engagment.pdf

4.4.3 Moderate Public Engagement

Guelph

The City of Guelph’s Community Engagement team gathered input from internal staff stakeholders, City Advisory Committees, and several non-profit community groups, as well as received support from the University of Guelph. The team combined this input with extensive research to create a community engagement policy and framework. The development process primarily involved internal stakeholders. Input from external stakeholders was limited, and did not include any input from the general public.

https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/community_engagement_policy.pdf

4.4.4 Other

Vancouver

The City of Vancouver established the Mayor's Engaged City Task Force to with the mandate to increase neighbourhood engagement and improve upon the many ways the City connects with Vancouver residents. They already had an engagement strategy in place prior to this work.

The Task Force was made up of 22 residents from variety of backgrounds and ages. They took their work back to community through over 13 creative engagement events and forums, and then developed 19 Priority Actions, 6 Recommended Ideas, and a set of metrics to measure progress. Public Participation was one element of this task force's work, but it went far beyond and included recommendations that led to pilot projects of improvements to customer service, voter registration, development process improvements, and initiatives like Pop-Up City Hall, Doors Open Vancouver, and Block Parties.

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/final-report-engaged-city-task-force-2014.pdf>

5 A Path Forward – Summary and Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to provide an overview of the form and function of public engagement across various municipalities. In doing so, this paper set appropriate context to explain the different models of public engagement policy, frameworks and procedures. Each model carries its own advantages and disadvantages, and in this case a combination of the above may be the most effective way to achieve a strong community engagement direction.

In Section 2 Public Engagement Overview, we learned that public engagement describes a process by which people influence program changes or policy decisions. A well-defined public engagement approach is useful to the decision making process because it:

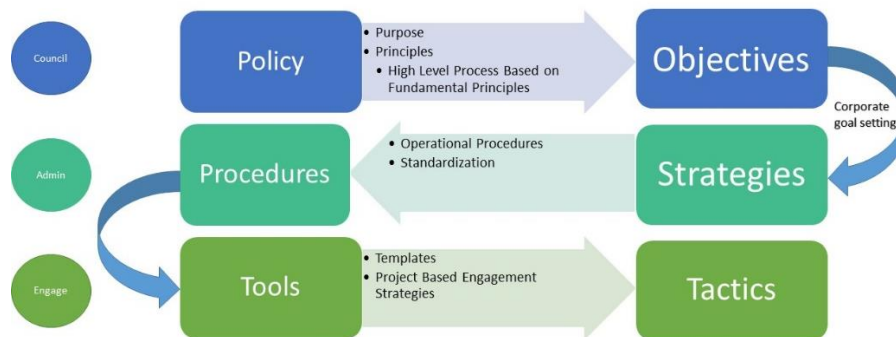
- promotes engaging the individuals who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process;
- promotes sustainable decisions by providing participants with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way;
- is about building social capital; and
- promotes informed decision making and it communicates to participants how their input affects the decision.

In Section 3 Public Engagement and the City of Saskatoon, we explained that the City of Saskatoon currently does not have a Council Public Engagement Policy or Administrative Framework, despite the strong interest in public engagement from City Council, the Administration, stakeholder groups, and citizens. Section 4 Community Engagement in other Jurisdictions, by contrast, summarized how several cities have adopted more formal approaches, through the use of policies, procedures or frameworks, to set expectations and outcomes with respect to engagement. Given this discussion, how should the City of Saskatoon reform and modernize its approach to public engagement?

5.1 Framework for Public Engagement

This section will outline the path forward for Public Engagement at the City of Saskatoon. Figure 6 introduces a useful model on which to structure public engagement efforts and framework development in a municipality. In this model, City Council provides guidance on an overall policy and related objectives. Administration then develops procedures and strategies in-line with the policy. The responsibility for developing tools, including templates and tactics, then rests with the Public Engagement Section.

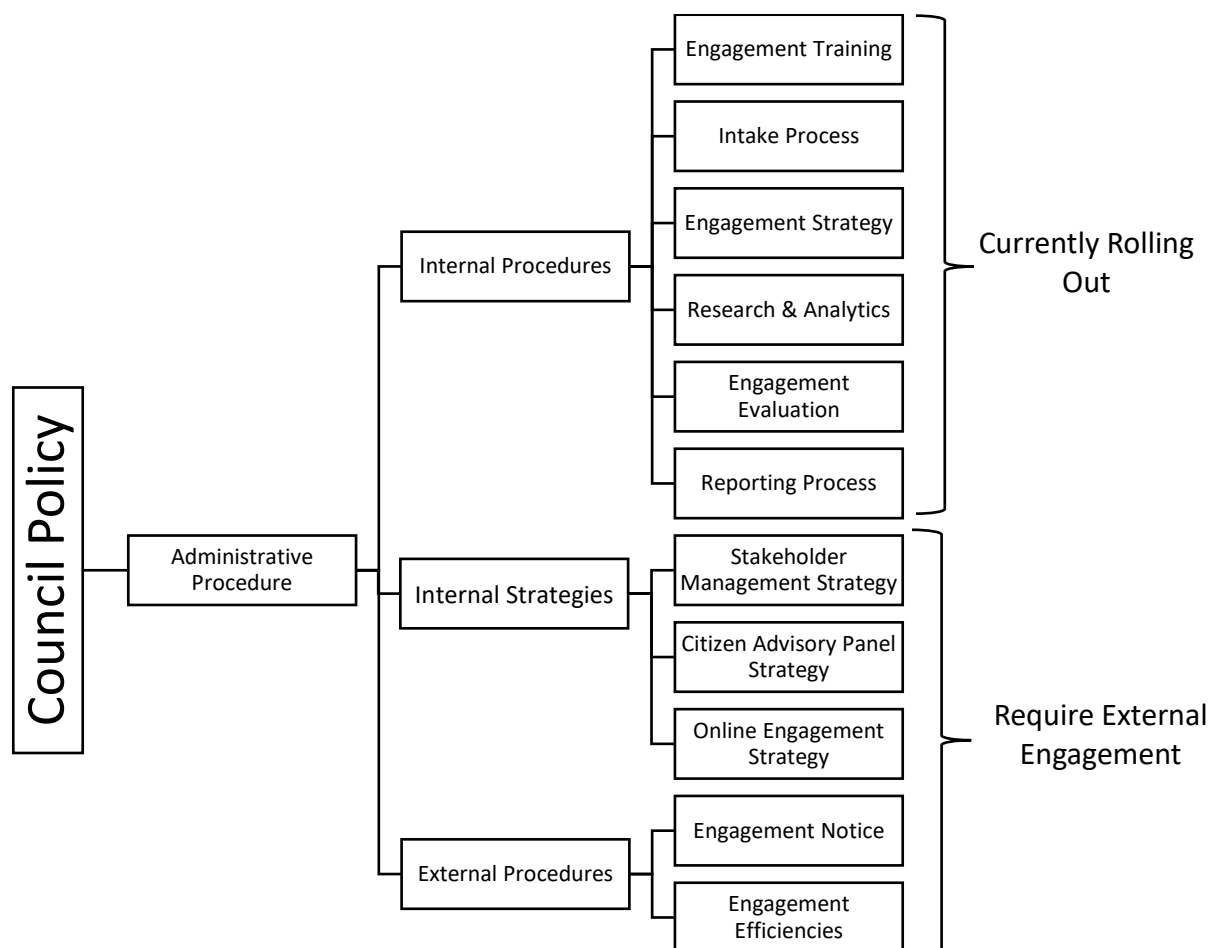
Figure 6: Model to Develop a Public Engagement Framework



Administration utilized this model (Figure 6) as the basis for the development of a Public Engagement Framework for the City Framework for the City of Saskatoon (

Figure 7). This framework, which is essentially a map forward, incorporated the information and criteria presented throughout this discussion paper.

Figure 7: Public Engagement Framework for the City of Saskatoon



5.2 Council Policy on Public Engagement

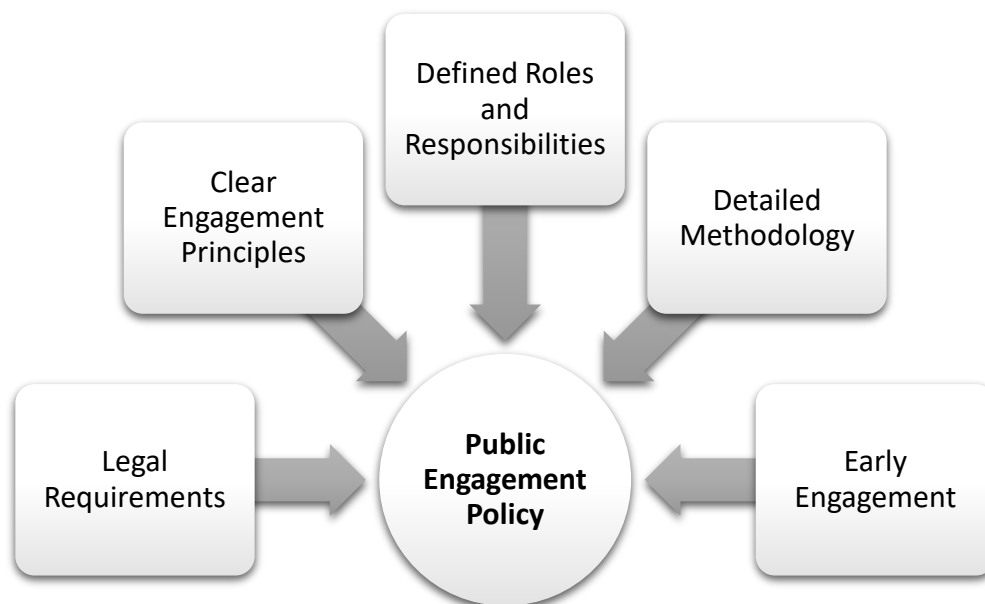
One component of this framework is a Council Policy on Public Engagement. A Council Policy on Public Engagement will

- recognize and affirm the City of Saskatoon’s commitment to public engagement;
- support and encourage community members and stakeholders to become more involved in municipal decisions;
- encourage public engagement as a source for a better understanding of the strength and diversity of public opinion and public value;
- provide clear and consistent direction for public participation so Administration, Council, and the public know what to expect;
- provide clear descriptions for the roles of Administration and Council the public engagement process; and

- provide support to staff in the creation, execution, evaluation and reporting on engagement strategies.

A successful public engagement policy will need to acknowledge and incorporate some minimum elements. These elements are presented in Figure 8: Criteria for a comprehensive public engagement framework.

Figure 8: Criteria for a comprehensive public engagement framework



These elements must be considered during policy and framework development and will make up the bulk of the end product. The following paragraphs discuss each element and how to include these sections in a Council Policy.

5.2.1 Legal Requirements

The first section to include in a comprehensive public engagement policy is legal requirements. The legal requirements section will need to identify that this policy and framework does not supersede any legal requirements for consultation. The Cities Act requires Council to adopt a Public Notice Policy, which sets out the methods of notice and minimum time for giving notice for items included in the policy. For example, to consider the matter of permanently closing or blocking off a street, lane or walkway, 10 days' notice must be provided through a newspaper, posting on the City website, and posting at City Hall. <https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-clerk/civic-policies/C01-021.pdf>

5.2.2 Engagement Principles

The second section will need to clearly define the public engagement principles. These principles will lay the foundation for the framework and be used to guide the engagement process. During the planning and development phase the Public Engagement Section will need to work closely with all parties to develop guiding principles for the policy. These principles may be developed through

consultation with the community. Many examples of guiding principles share similar components that fully aligns with the core values of the IAP2 (Australian Government, 2018; Chuong, Walton, Marini, & Maksimowski, 2015; City of Edmonton, n.d.; Province of British Columbia, 2013).

A corporations public engagement principles are typically developed in the policy/framework development process and subsequently represent in said document. The City of Saskatoon does not have such a document, in light of the Public Engagement Section has developed working principles based on industry best practice (Table 7: Public Engagement Principles).

Table 7: Public Engagement Principles

| Principle | Description |
|--|--|
| Inclusivity | This principle ensures engagement processes are designed in a way that promote and allow for adequate community contributions while building relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders. |
| Early Involvement | This principle stresses stakeholder involvement as early as possible to allow for and encourage active participation. |
| Decision Making | This principle stresses that the engagement process must include an authentic opportunity to influence the decision. |
| Transparency and Accountability | This principles ensures the engagement process is well defined in terms of stakeholder input level of engagement and outcomes. |
| Open and Timely Communication | This principle highlighted importance of objective, timely and accurate information sharing. |
| Relationship Building | This principle stresses the importance on relationship building rooted in mutual trust and respect. |
| Evaluation | This principle ensures continuous improvement of the engagement process. |

Adapted from the guiding principle documents of the City of Guelph, The City of Edmonton, the Province of British Columbia and the Australian Government (Australian Government, 2018; Chuong et al., 2015; City of Edmonton, n.d.; Province of British Columbia, 2013).

5.2.3 Roles & Responsibilities

The third section is clearly defined roles and responsibilities. A comprehensive policy will have a detailed description of relevant roles and responsibilities. This will include high level roles of the Council, and Administration. For instance, the role of City Council might include ensuring that there is a standard public engagement process, and reviewing the results of engagement processes to inform Council decisions. The role of City Administration could include supporting the public engagement framework, principles, and objectives, and carrying out the actual engagement processes. The public’s role is to actively participate in the public engagement process.

5.2.4 Methodology (Engagement Strategy)

The next section needs to include a detailed process to determine an effective and appropriate approach to the engagement process. The methodology should ensure alignment between objectives, principles, and processes of engagement while provided a detailed description of these processes and

the evaluation criteria. Other considerations for methodology can include the incorporation of community-driven or community-led methods and the incorporation of specific stakeholder groups.

5.2.5 Early Engagement

The final section is early engagement. Although the concept of early engagement is often included in the core principles, this concept should be a fundamental part of a comprehensive framework or policy for public engagement. Early engagement allows for clear understanding of consultation and engagement expectations. Without the time to build meaningful relationships that can foster collaborative conversations, it will be quite difficult to fully articulate expectations for engagement - for all parties.

As demonstrated earlier in the paper, there are a number of ways municipalities approach engagement. Some have a Council Policy, others have an Engagement Framework and others have both.

As the City of Saskatoon waits on approval for a Council Policy, Administration continues to evolve the framework including piloting standardized intake, engagement, evaluation and reporting processes; development of training modules; and research on internal strategies related to citizen advisory panels, stakeholder management and online engagement. The framework and any engagement procedures will be reconfirmed once a Council Policy is adopted.

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