HUME CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND PLANNING GUIDE

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Community Engagement Framework

Introduction

Council has made a commitment to residents' participatory rights in decisions that affect their life through its *Social Justice Charter* and the *Hume's Citizen Bill of Rights*. This commitment has been reaffirmed through the *Hume City Plan 2030*, and the *Council Plan 2009 – 2013*.

Effective community engagement not only provides Council with an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with the community, but provides for sound investment in better decision making by ensuring decisions are informed of community needs and aspirations. When done in a meaningful way, it contributes to building trust between the community and Council, and also raises the quality of, and strengthens representative democracy while building community capacity.

What is community engagement

Community engagement is a planned two-way process by which specific, identified groups of the community are given the opportunity to provide input that enhances decision making processes on issues that may impact on their well-being or interests.

Community engagement strengthens the trust between the community and Council by providing a platform for the community to have their voices heard, their views considered and acknowledged, and they're informed of, and involved in, issues which may impact on their lives[1].

Aim of framework

This framework has been developed to assist Council in undertaking community engagement activities with its diverse community. The framework aims at developing a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered. Specifically, the aims of this framework are to:

- Ensure community views are understood and considered when developing Council plans, strategies, policies and service delivery.
- Ensure the community has the opportunity to participate in the conduct of Council through inclusive and equitable engagement practices.
- Strengthen community connectedness by creating opportunities for the community to get involved with, and have their say on, matters which are important to them.
- Improve the relationship and level of trust between the community and Council by ensuring the community is informed about and involved in Council activities.
- Enhance the coordination, planning and promotion of Council's community engagement activities.
- Strengthen feedback and communication from Council so the community knows when and how their input has been considered to inform decisions.

[1] Adapted from: OECD *Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation*, PUMA Policy Brief No. 10, July 2001 and Department of Environment and Sustainability *Effective Engagement: building relationships with community and stakeholders*, Book 1, 2005.

While the framework aims at developing a consistent approach to community engagement across Council, some engagement and consultation activities may be the result of statutory requirements. The *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, along with a number of other pieces of legislation require Council to give notice, consult or engage with the community in a specific way.

How was this framework developed?

The community engagement framework has been developed through a collaborative approach with the community via the establishment of a Community Engagement Reference Group (CERG).

To gain membership on the CERG, 180 randomly selected members of the community were sent individualised invitations to participate in the CERG by completing a brief *Expression of Interest* form. An invitation and *Expression of Interest* form was also provided on Council's website.

With 22 residents responding to the *Expression of Interest*, selection on the CERG was drawn from random, while ensuring there was broad community representation based on key demographics such as ward of residence, age, gender and cultural background.

The CERG met six times during April to late May to develop the framework. These meetings included background briefings on Council, community engagement and the *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation* and a series of discussions. The CERG considered past Council engagement activities and were presented with key results concerning community engagement from Council's annual community survey.

Figure 1: CERG Information and discussion process

In addition to reviewing existing information, members from the CERG facilitated a series of community workshops during the first week of May.

Invitations to attend these workshops were provided to unsuccessful residents who completed the *Expression of Interest* form, along with 160 individualised invitations to randomly selected residents (40 for each Ward). In addition to invitations, workshops were advertised in local papers, Council's website, Hume Libraries facebook page and a number of random telephone calls were made inviting residents to attend.

With 44 residents attending one of four workshops across Hume; the workshops aimed at gathering broader community input into the development of the framework, while providing CERG members with a firsthand experience in undertaking a community engagement activity. Community input and learning's from these workshops were then discussed by CERG members to inform the development of the framework.

Corporate framework - Hume City Plan 2030 and Council Plan 2009-2013

This document supports Council's Vision, Mission and Values by providing a clear framework for engaging the community on decisions that may impact on their lives.

Figure 2: Council's Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Hume City Council will be recognised as a leader in achieving social, environmental and economic outcomes with a common goal of connecting our proud community and celebrating the diversity of Hume.

Mission

To enhance the social, economic and environmental prosperity of our community through vision, leadership, excellence and inclusion.

We Value

Our Citizens

We will promote democratic representation and genuinely engage our citizens to promote a sense of belonging within a healthy, safe, strong and diverse community.

We will lead the way to identify community needs and best practice service delivery models and advocate for an integrated approach to service provision.

Our services and facilities will be high quality and we will pursue efficiency and continuous improvement through customer focus and innovation.

Our Staff

We will demonstrate this by encouraging, supporting and developing our employees to achieve service excellence and a sense of unity, pride and fulfilment.

Partnerships with the Federal and State Governments

We will work together to achieve the equitable provision of services and infrastructure to meet current and future community needs.

Our Community Organisations

We will work in partnership with them to build community wellbeing, resilience and capacity.

Specifically, this framework aims at facilitating Council's requirements outlined in the community's long term *Hume City Plan 2030*; including that we:

- Ensure Council's decision making takes into consideration adopted Council policies and strategies and reflects community expectations and aspirations.
- Actively communicate and engage with the community to raise awareness and increase participation in decision making processes.
- Facilitate and promote community input into decision making processes through appropriate and effective community consultation, engagement and participation.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Council Plan 2009-2013 outlines a key strategy to "Support appropriate electoral representation for the Hume community" by developing a community engagement strategy. Specifically, the Council Plan requires the community engagement strategy to include:

- Developing guidelines to ensure customers and the community are listened to and provided with opportunities to be involved in decisions that affect them
- Increasing community awareness of Council activities and issues that may impact on them
- Researching customer needs and satisfaction with services
- Ensure engagement and consultation methods are appropriate for the key stakeholders impacted by the decision
- Ensure the 'feedback loop' is closed (residents are advised of the key findings and outcomes)

- Increasing community satisfaction with “Councils level of consultation with the community on local issues” (currently Satisfaction = 33.8%).

While the initial action within the Council Plan referred to the development of a strategy, it was determined to modify the action to develop a Community Engagement Framework. This framework will deliver on the desired outcomes articulated in the Council Plan to reinforcing Council’s Community Engagement approach, and building capacity within the organisation to effectively undertake community engagement and consultation activities.

Statutory framework

Consultation and engagement requirements for Local Government are outlined within a number of legislative acts in Victoria. In particular, the *Local Government Act 1989* outlines Council’s role to include “acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making” as well as “fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.” (s.3D). Further to this, The *Local Government Act 1989*, requires Councils to “develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides” and that “all services provided by a Council must be responsive to the needs of its community” (s.208B).

The *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* provides further requirements that relate to community engagement by stating “every person in Victoria has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives” (s.18). This Act also includes provisions by which “every person has the right to freedom of expression which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, whether within or outside Victoria” (s.15).

Acknowledgement

Hume City Council would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the community in the development of this framework, including residents who participated in Council’s annual Community Survey and those who attended one of the four Community Engagement Framework workshops in May 2011. Council would like to provide special acknowledgement to the following eight community members who comprised the Community Engagement Reference Group:

- Ros Armstrong – Airport Ward
- Sue McKeon – Aitken Ward
- Gary Findlay – Aitken Ward
- Akram Mashhour – Aitken Ward
- Dylan Ward – Jacksons Creek Ward
- Hope Jenkins – Jacksons Creek Ward
- Emel Senbay – Merri Ward
- Ian Williamson – Merri Ward

Principles and practice of Community Engagement

Principles

Developed from feedback during the Community Engagement Framework Workshops, discussions with the CERG and best practice; these principles guide Council's approach to effective community engagement:

1. Timely
   - Engagement with the community is planned during the project planning stages to maximise the level of influence the community is able to have.
   - The timing of community engagement activities avoids events such as school holidays and religious festivals.
   - Community engagement occurs preferably during the scoping and identification of issues.

2. Sincere, respectful and meaningful
   - Genuine opportunities are created for the community to participate in issues of significance to the community.
   - The purpose of the engagement is clear and members of the community are informed on how their involvement will influence the decision-making process.

3. Inclusive and accessible
   - All members of the community have a right to participate in the development of decisions that may impact on their lives.
   - Several methods of community engagement may be required to ensure engagement activities are responsive to community needs.
   - Consideration is given to engaging with community members of different cultures and faiths, abilities and family or working commitments.

4. Responsive
   - Council will actively engage with, and listen, to the diverse range of needs and expectations of the community.
   - Council commits to considering community feedback in an open and transparent manner.

5. Provision of information and feedback
   - Information about the project will be easily and freely available to enable participants to be fully informed when providing input into community engagement activities.
   - Information will be provided in 'plain English' and avoid using specialist terms, jargon or acronyms. Special consideration will be given to the differing literacy and education levels in the community, and translated materials provided when relevant.
   - Feedback is provided to participants at all key stages of the project. Community engagement activities are documented and minutes/ notes provided to those who participated within 20 business days.
   - Updates and final outcomes for community engagement projects are published on Council's website and where appropriate *Hume Pride* and other mediums.

6. Privacy and confidentiality
   - People's privacy and confidentiality will be respected before, during and after community engagement activities have taken place.
   - Participants' personal information will remain confidential and will be managed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2001* and Council's *Information Privacy and Health Records Procedure*.

Respect for Country

As part of Council's commitment to recognising the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and in line with Council's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition Policy* (CP2010/05/86), consideration should be given to providing acknowledgement to the traditional custodians of the land and waters in which the community engagement activity is being held.

In most cases the following acknowledgement will be sufficient at the commencement of community engagement activities:

> *"I would like to acknowledge that we are on Gunung-Willam-Balluk land. The Gunung-Willam-Balluk of the Wurundjeri were the first and original people of this land."*

If the community engagement activity is of a significant nature or where dignitaries such as Councillors, Members of Parliament or traditional owners are attending, consideration should be used in providing a more formal acknowledgement. A 'Welcome to Country' can be arranged with the consent of the Traditional Custodians, or the following statement may be used:

> *"I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on country for which the members and elders of the Gunung-Willam-Balluk community and their forebears have been custodians for many centuries. The Gunung-Willam-Balluk of the Wurundjeri are the Traditional Custodians of this land. I would like to pay respect to the existing family members of the Gunung-Willam-Balluk and to Elders passed and present."*

If you require further assistance with the acknowledgement or would like to arrange a 'Welcome to Country', please contact Council's Access and Equity Planner within the Social Development Department.

Role of Council representatives

Community engagement sessions aim at providing opportunities for the community to give input into decision making processes. Council staff, consultants and Councillors who attend or facilitate engagement sessions are there to provide background information, listen and assist the community in providing input. Council representatives and staff should reframe from being participants in the process or express either their professional or personal opinions, as this may hinder or skew the input provided by the community. Internal engagement activities should be provided where possible to allow staff input into processes.

Community engagement register

An internal register for recording community engagement activities will be established in order to enhance the coordination and promotion of community engagement. The register will assist Council staff in avoiding duplication or over engaging by promoting upcoming activities which could potentially have synergies to other projects. This register also aims at avoiding clashes between activities, help with forward planning for community engagement projects and assist in the evaluation and reporting of activities and outcomes to the community.

The register will be maintained by Council's Research Department and reviewed 12 months following its inception, with consideration given to expanding the register to create a publically accessible version.

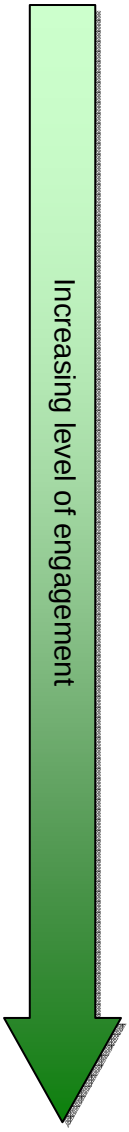
Organisational capacity building and training

In order to assist in the implementation of this framework, learning and development opportunities on community engagement practices will be encouraged across the organisation. By promoting these opportunities, Council will continuously build the capacity of the organisation to deliver community engagement by providing staff with the appropriate skills and knowledge to plan for, manage and facilitate engagement activities.

An interactive online toolkit on Council's intranet will also be developed to assist staff in managing and facilitating community engagement activities. This toolkit will include of a series of fact sheets on community engagement methods, templates for planning, checklists and other additional useful resources.

Levels of community engagement

Hume City Council's approach to community engagement has been developed using the International Association for Public Participation's *IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation*. This spectrum outlines five levels of community engagement, with the lowest level of engagement being 'Inform', while 'Empower' involves the greatest level of public participation in decision making processes.



Inform	
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
Our commitment to you	We will keep you informed.
Public participation tools	Fact sheets, websites, information sessions.

Consult	
Public participation goal	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
Our commitment to you	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Public participation tools	Written submission, focus groups, surveys, public meetings.

Involve	
Public participation goal	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
Our commitment to you	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Public participation tools	Workshops, deliberative polling, expert panels.

Collaborate	
Public participation goal	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Our commitment to you	We will look for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Public participation tools	Advisory committees, participatory decision-making.

Empower	
Public participation goal	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Our commitment to you	We will implement what you decide.
Public participation tools	Citizen juries, ballots, delegated decision.

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While the *IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation* has been adopted for this framework, within the context of Local Government, the highest level of 'Empower' will rarely be achievable or appropriate. The spectrum notes that the level of 'Empower' places the "final decision-making in the hands of the public". As elected representatives for the community, final decisions will ultimately rest with the elected Councillors.

Community engagement plans need to be tailored for each project, identifying the appropriate level of community engagement for that project. It should be noted however, that while a project may have an overarching engagement level, a stakeholder analysis may result in some sections of the community having a greater or lesser level of participation depending on the level of impact the decision may have. During the life-time of the project, it may also be necessary to adjust the level of engagement, depending on the stage of the project.

How and when we will engage

When commencing a project, consideration will need to be given to determine the level of impact any decision may have on the community and stakeholders.

The following guide will help determine the level of impact. Generally speaking, the higher the level of impact, the greater the level of community engagement.

Level 3	Criteria (one or more)	Current examples
There is a **high** level of impact or risk (perceived or real) on the City as a whole, or a section of the community. There is potential for any decision to create controversy and/or have varying levels of acceptance within the community.	▪ Significant impact on attributes that are considered to be of high value to the community (e.g. lifestyle or physical environment) ▪ Likely to have a high level of interest across Hume City or local areas ▪ Potential for a high level of controversy or conflict across Hume City or local areas ▪ High levels of complexity in the issue being considered ▪ Likely to impact on vulnerable sections of the community ▪ There is a loss or significant change to any service or facility provided by Council.	▪ Long term City Plan ▪ Regional community facility plans ▪ Closure of Council service or facility ▪ Leisure Strategy ▪ Youth Strategy ▪ Learning Together Strategy ▪ Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan ▪ Major review of Social Justice Charter ▪ Review of Hume City Plan 2030 ▪ Major change to HACC service
Level 2	Criteria (one or more)	Current examples
There is a **medium** level of impact or risk (perceived or real) on the City as a whole or a section of the community. It is likely that the decision will be accepted by the majority of the community impacted, however the decision may be an inconvenience for some sections of the community.	▪ There may be some impact on attributes that are considered to be of high value to the community or a section of the community (e.g. lifestyle or physical environment) ▪ Some sections of the community concerned are likely to have a high level of interest ▪ Potential for some controversy or conflict across Hume City or local areas ▪ There is a medium to low level of complexity in the issue being considered ▪ There is some loss or change to any service or facility provided by Council.	▪ Redevelopment of a regional park ▪ Minor changes to eligibility criteria to access a service ▪ Redevelopment of a local playground ▪ Redevelopment of sporting facilities ▪ Minor review of Social Justice Charter
Level 1	Criteria (one or more)	Current examples
There is a **low** level of impact or risk (perceived or real) on the City as a whole or a section of the community. It is likely that the decision will be widely accepted by the community and seen as having positive outcomes or being required.	▪ No negative impact on attributes that are considered to be of high value to the community (e.g. lifestyle or physical environment) ▪ Low level of interest across Hume City or local areas. ▪ Low to no risk of controversy or conflict across Hume City or local areas. ▪ Only a small change, or enhancement to any service or facility provided by Council.	▪ Upgrade of local playground or park ▪ Extension of operating hours for a service ▪ Local street or streetscaping upgrades ▪ Introduction or changes to a local activity program (e.g. a learning program)

Note: Where there's a situation which requires Council to respond quickly to avoid an immediate threat to the health, safety or wellbeing of the community, it may not be possible or feasible to involve the community prior to taking action.

When considering the level of impact, it is important to factor in existing knowledge about the community. It may be helpful to review results from Council's annual Community Survey, existing research and consultation, along with experiences from other Council staff. Feedback from community members and research into how other communities in Victoria have responded to similar situations or decisions should also be considered.

For example, using the impact guide above, the development of Council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) can be identified as a Level 3 impact due to its potential to have a significant impact on an attribute (health) considered to be of high value to the community. However in the development of the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013* the level of impact was determined to be Level 2, due to the following factors:

- Low level of community interest in the plan.
- No significant (negative) changes in the health outcomes of the community since the last plan.
- Intent that the plan would build on and consolidate actions from the previous plan, therefore there would a minimal risk of controversy.
- Extensive community engagement and consultation had been undertaken as part of the previous plan. This information and the areas for action remained current for the development of the new plan.

Once the level of impact has been determined, the *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation* can be utilised to determine the overall level of engagement required. The diagram below provides guidance to the level of engagement required, based on the level of impact identified.

With a Level 3 impact, the level of public participation should be aimed at the Collobrate level.

Level 2 impact should normally aim at having public participation aimed at the Involve level, although in some circimstances Collobrate may be approporate.

Level 1 impact will normally be located at the Informed level of public participation, although some minor consultation activites may occur before making a final decision.

With all levels of impact, a stakeholder analysis is critical in determining what level of engagement may be required. Even at Level 3, not all stakeholders will need to have the same level of engagement; many stakholders only being required to be engaged at the Informed, Consult or Involve level.

Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the framework

To assist in the implementation of this framework, a number of additional activities will occur. These include:

- Development of an internal Community Engagement Register of upcoming events.
- Implementation of training and development opportunities to build organisational capacity to undertake community engagement.
- Review and refinement of Council's "Your Say" section in the internet to improve feedback of past and present engagement activities.
- Development of an online community engagement resource on Council's intranet including guidelines on how to engage 'hard to reach' members of the community and tools for undertaking community activities.

In order to assist with the monitoring and review of the framework, the following items from Council's Community Survey will act as Key Performance Indicators:

- Community satisfaction with "Council's level of consultation with the community on local issues".
- Community satisfaction with "Council keeping the community informed of key issues".
- Community satisfaction with "Council encouraging community discussion on key issues".

Item	2010/11 Result	2012/13 Target
Council's level of consultation with the community on local issues	3.18	3.25
Council keeping the community informed of key issues	3.30	3.35
Council encouraging community discussion on key issues	3.28	3.35

Council will be provided with quarterly update reports outlining the range of community engagement activities undertaken and the key outcomes concerned. Twelve months following the adoption of the framework, a review will be undertaken to determine the success of the implementation and further refinements that may be required.

Planning guide for community engagement

Step 1: Setting engagement objectives and boundaries

At the beginning of any community engagement within a project, it is important to ensure that the objectives are clearly defined.

A review of existing information, including any past engagement activities should be undertaken before finalising the objectives. In particular, project managers should consider:

- Who will be making the final decision?
- What are the questions you would like the engagement activities to answer?
- What do you want the engagement to achieve?
- What level of engagement do you feel is appropriate?

It's important at this stage to identify the project's negotiable and non-negotiable goals. By identifying and understanding what is negotiable, project managers will be able to:

- Clearly communicate and provide information about what decisions have already been made.
- Identify and communicate what is outside of Council's sphere of influence.
- Clarify the areas on which Council will be seeking engagement from the community.

It's important to make sure that the non-negotiable goals are actually that. The more non-negotiable goals a project has, the less likely the community will want to participate. Non-negotiable goals should be clearly defined and communicated to avoid confusion and unrealistic expectations – therefore minimise the risk of conflict and disillusionment towards Council.

Step 2: Identify the stakeholders

It is important to identify all groups and individuals within the community what will be affected or have an interest in the decision being made. Not all stakeholders will need to be engaged at the same level, so you will need to identify their needs to determine what engagement activities might be required and at which stage of the project.

When identifying your key stakeholders, it's also important to consider the public's perception on the issue or topic you're engaging on. Consider past experiences with the community concerning similar issues or any pervious consultation or research which may have been undertaken.

In order to develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders, the following steps may be useful:

- Brainstorm with a cross section of staff within Council.
- Contact the Research or Social Development departments in relation to past consultations or interested community groups.
- Ask key members of the community and other identified stakeholders who they think might be interested.
- Call for expressions of interest or consider advertising in local papers and other media.
- Identify any hard to reach groups who may be impacted by outcomes – special consideration should be given on how to engage these sections of our community.

It's important to note that when considering stakeholders, it is advised to avoid grouping people of cultural and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds as one stakeholder. Consideration will need to be given to each cultural group on how best to engage; ensuring engagement techniques take into consideration cultural requirements or other barriers which may otherwise prevent effective engagement.

When undertaking your stakeholder analysis it is important to include:

- What are the key issues or areas of interest for the project
- Who the key stakeholder groups are
- What their level of interest may be
- Who are the key contacts for the group.

Once you have completed your stakeholder analysis, review the project objectives, including the negotiable and non-negotiable goals.

Step 3: Determine the level of impact

The Community Engagement Framework outlines three main impact levels to inform the level of community engagement required. A detailed explanation of these levels can be found on page 10, however a brief description is below:

Level of impact	Brief description
Level 3 (high)	There's potential for any decision to create controversy and/or have varying levels of acceptance within the community.
Level 2 (medium)	It is likely that the decision will be accepted by the majority of the community impacted, however the decision may be an inconvenience for some sections of the community.
Level 1 (low)	It is likely that the decision will be widely accepted by the community and seen as having positive outcomes or being required.

To determine the level of impact, firstly consider the key stakeholders who may be interested in or impacted by the decision. When determining the level of impact for each stakeholder group, it may be appropriate to consult with other staff across Council to inform your analysis.

During different stages of the project, it may be necessary to review the level of impact due to changes in the situation or increasing understanding of the implications of outcomes.

Step 4: Select the appropriate engagement methods

Determining the level of impact for each stakeholder group will allow you to identify what levels of participation you should be considering for your project. Not all stakeholders will require the same levels of engagement and engagement methods should be selected carefully based on the needs and demographics of each group.

There are many reasons why people don't get involved with Council engagement activities. Consideration should be given to the types of engagement activities being planned to ensure they are inclusive and maximise the potential for participation.

Some of the main reasons people do not participate include:

- Lack of information and awareness of the issues
- Perception that their input will not make a difference
- Lack of follow-up with issues raised in the past
- Not knowing how their input has been used in the past
- Intimidating or inappropriate engagement methods
- Language or cultural barriers
- Accessibility – venue, time, holidays, disability access etc.

Once the level of impact and the level of participation have been selected, you will need to ensure you select the appropriate methods and tools to engage the community. Although not an exhaustive list, the following matrix will assist staff in identifying what tools or methods could be used.

★★★ Strongly desirable ★★ Desirable ★ May be appropriate

Level of participation & method/tool	Level of impact		
	Level 3 (high)	Level 2 (medium)	Level 1 (low)
INFORM	★★★	★★★	★★★
Personal telephone contact	★★	★★	★
In person meeting	★	★	★
Written correspondence, mail out	★★★	★★	★
Fact sheets, brochure	★	★	☆
Notice/advert in paper	★★★	★★	
Media release	★★★	★	
Site display	★	★	★
Displays/information at community meeting spaces (e.g. Shopping Centres)	★★	★★	★
Information sessions/briefings	★★★	★★	★
Social media	★★☆	★★	★
Email – community contacts	★★	★★	★
Community radio (e.g. 3ZZZ for CaLD communities)	★★	★	☆
Website – information/updates	★★★	★★★	★★★
Banners/posters/signs	★★	★★	★
CONSULT	★★★	★★★	★☆
Suggestion box		★	★
Telephone survey	★★	★★	★
Written survey	★★	★★	★
Hotline/phone-in	★	★	★
Written submission	★★★	★★	☆
Public exhibition	★★★	★	
Intercept interviews	★★	★★	
Focus group sessions	★★	★★	★

Level of participation & method/tool	Level of impact		
	Level 3 (high)	Level 2 (medium)	Level 1 (low)
World café	★★	★★	
Public meetings	★	★	
Feedback form	★★	★★	★★
Social media	★★	★★	☆
Online discussion forum	★★	★★	
INVOLVE	★★★	★★★	
Meetings with key stakeholders	★★★	★★★	★
Meetings with other target community groups, e.g. parents, youth, aged, disabled, various CaLD groups	★★	★★	★
Workshop sessions	★★	★★	
Site tour/meeting	★★	★★	
Public Art session	★	★	
Community forum/debate	★	★	
Community reference groups	★	★	
Deliberative polling	★	★	
COLLABORATE	★★	★	
Community summit	★		
Expert reference groups	★★		
Community reference groups	★★	★	
Joint Advisory Committees	★★	☆	
EMPOWER			
Citizens Jury	☆		
Ballot	☆		

Step 5: Timelines and budget

Timelines and budget for community engagement will vary from project to project and will be dependent on a number of factors, including the level of impact, level of public participation required and the community engagement tools and techniques chosen for each stakeholder group. Consideration will also need to be provided to any legislative requirements and timeframes which may impact on the project.

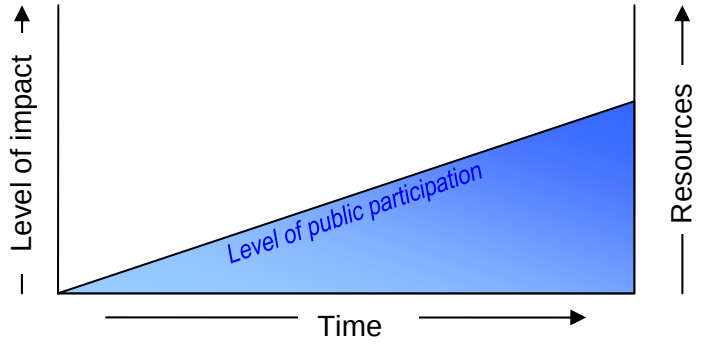
Generally speaking, the higher the level of impact and more stakeholders you have, the more time and resources will need to be allocated to community engagement. Therefore it is essential that a community engagement plan is developed before commencing the project and should be included in the overall plan and budget for your project.

Early engagement is recommended for Level 3 projects, especially where the project is dealing with complex issues, requires community education or capacity building or is of a contentious issue. Projects at this level will often need a period of informing the community about the issues at hand, before consulting, involving or collaborating.

An important factor in determining timeframes will be key community events such as school holidays, religious festivals and other major events. Where possible these should be avoided in order to maximise the ability for people to participate.

When considering budget and resource allocation, the type of engagement tools chosen will be a significant factor. Each tool requires different levels of practitioner skill, time and budget. For controversial projects, it may be necessary to use an independent facilitator to ensure a balanced and unbiased approach and provide a greater level of credibility and confidence with the community. This independent facilitator may be an external consultant, or another Council staff

member who has the required skills and is not directly involved in project or responsible for putting forward Council's position on the topic being considered.



Step 6: Reporting and feedback

Providing feedback and reporting to the community is essential to ensure ongoing engagement with the project and with future projects.

When developing your engagement plan, identify at which points throughout the project you will be providing feedback or reporting on progress.

In order to maintain engagement, and create confidence in that feedback is being considered, community engagement session should recorded and minutes or notes made available to participants within 20 business days. This will help ensure ongoing interest and allow participants to provide you with any feedback or corrections about what has been recorded.

It is important to remember to maintain privacy and confidentiality in all reporting and feedback provided. Participant names and identifying information should be removed unless you have the written consent of each individual to publish or release their personal information.

To assist with providing feedback the following steps should be undertaken:

- Offer to capture contact details of all stakeholders and community members who would like to be involved or participate in an engagement process.
- Ensure that contact details are kept up to date throughout the project.
- Detail how and when each stakeholder group will receive feedback during the project and after completion.
- Ensure that feedback is accessible to all stakeholders.
- Keep contacts informed of key project stages and send details of any relevant upcoming engagement activities or details of Council reports for comment.
- Ensure the privacy and confidentiality of individuals are maintained at all times.

When reporting on the final outcomes of the project:

- Define how the final outcomes will be documented and circulated.
- Provide feedback to participants on how their information was considered in the development of the final outcomes.
- Where appropriate, ensure project outcomes are reported on Council's website and through other mediums.

Step 7: Evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation and monitoring is an important part of improving community engagement processes and should be encouraged throughout the project.

For all major projects, or those identified as having a Level 3 or Level 2 (where relevant) impact, a summary evaluation should be prepared on the community engagement undertaken. This summary should include information concerning the project, the community engagement process and the key outcomes.

Undertaking this evaluation will help the organisation better improve its community engagement processes, celebrate success and learn from past experiences. The summary evaluation should also be made accessible to the community, particularly those who participated in the community engagement activities, via Council's website and other mediums as appropriate.

When developing your evaluation, the following participant questions may assist:

- How would you rate the quality of the project information you received?
- How would you rate the facilitation of the session?
- Participants were provided with adequate information and resources to participate in a meaningful way
- The session was conducted in an open and transparent manner
- The session provided me with sufficient opportunity to contribute my views
- A variety of views, opinions and needs were heard and discussed
- The decision making process for this project has been fair and appropriate
- There's been a high level of trust between the community and Council on the project

The Research Department will be able to provide further assistance in developing evaluations for community engagement activities.

Key protocols when conducting community engagement

There are a number of Council policies and recommended protocols that need to be considered or adhered to when conducing community engagement activities.

Media Releases

- Media Releases are to be approved and distributed by the Marketing and Communications Department.

Brochures, fact sheets and leaflets

- All brochures and leaflets must be provided to the Marketing and Communications Department for approval against branding and content prior to distribution.
- Final copies of brochures and leaflets must be recorded on TRIM, and copies should be forwarded to Customer Service to assist with any customer enquiries.

Community surveys

- Community surveys are required to be approved by the Coordinator Research prior to distribution.
- Community surveys that relate to the whole of the municipality or are of a sensitive nature should be endorsed by the relevant Director, and in some cases by the Executive Management Team and Council.
- Customer Service should be advised of the distribution of community surveys, with instructions on how to respond to any enquiries, including validation of telephone surveys (excluding minor customer satisfaction surveys).
- Councillors should be provided with a copy of community surveys being distributed in their Wards prior to distribution (excluding minor customer satisfaction surveys).

Community meetings (public meetings, information sessions, workshops etc)

- Community meetings must be approved by the relevant Manager, and if of a sensitive nature, by the relevant Director, and in some cases by the Executive Management Team and Council.
- The Council Calendar and Community Engagement Register should be checked when arranging meetings to avoid clashes with other events.
- Customer Service should be advised of any community meetings that involve broad community participation, with instructions on how to respond to any enquiries, including validation of telephone surveys.
- Councillors should be made aware of all community meetings that involve broad community participation or are of a Ward or Council significance.
- A summary of meeting notes should be provided to all participants within 20 working days of attending the event.

Written correspondence

- All correspondence received by Council should be responded to within 10 working days, as per Council's *Service First Charter*.
- Correspondence that makes a decision or financial commitment on behalf of Council must be endorsed and signed by the appropriate delegated Officer.

Online discussion forums

- Online discussion forums must be endorsed by the Coordinator Research.
- Online discussion forums must be approved by the appropriate Department manager.

Social media

- The use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc) must be approved by the relevant Director in discussion with the Organisation Planning and Improvement and Marketing and Communications departments.
- The moderating and posting of comments representing Council must adhere to Council's Terms and Conditions of Employment, and other relevant policies and procedures.