

	<h1>Town of Cochrane Policy</h1>
Policy No.: Policy Title: Approval Date Revision Date: Division:	1106-01 Public Engagement Policy June 12, 2014 June 25, 2018 CAO - Communications

Policy Statement:

The Town of Cochrane recognizes that municipal decisions are improved by engaging residents and other stakeholders where appropriate. The Town is committed to creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue and participation in decisions that impact residents and will conduct transparent and inclusive engagement that is responsive and accountable, by:

- providing information to assist community members and stakeholders in understanding issues and opportunities;
- providing fair, equitable and accessible opportunities for positive contributions from community members and stakeholders;
- making every reasonable effort to reach, involve and include community members and stakeholders; and
- reporting public engagement results and Town of Cochrane decisions to community members and stakeholders.

This policy applies to all Town policies, programs, projects and services that have an impact on the public. There are many reasons why public engagement may be undertaken, but public engagement should always support decision-making that:

- designs or implements a new policy, program, project or service;
- evaluates, changes or eliminates an existing policy, program, project or service;
- fulfills a legislated or regulatory requirement; or
- responds to a community-initiated request.

1 Reason for Policy

- 1.1 To ensure a well-informed community.
- 1.2 To create an environment that encourages community participation.
- 1.3 To improve the quality of decisions being made.
- 1.4 To achieve a consistent, coordinated and outcome-driven approach to public engagement.
- 1.5 To enhance the legitimacy of decisions.
- 1.6 To forge a bond of trust and accountability between the Town of Cochrane and the community.

- 1.7 To facilitate public input into decision-making through effective and efficient consultation, involvement, collaboration and empowerment processes.
- 1.8 To adhere to public engagement requirements in the Municipal Government Act and other applicable legislation.

2 Related Information

- 2.1 Town of Cochrane Public Engagement Toolkit

3 Definitions

- 3.1 Town of Cochrane – Council and/or Town Administration.
- 3.2 Public engagement – purposeful dialogue between the Town and stakeholders to gather information to influence decision-making.
- 3.3 Legislation – pieces of law that govern the operations of the Town of Cochrane.
- 3.4 Stakeholders – anyone (person or group of people) who can impact or can be impacted by the results of a decision made by the Town, including Cochrane residents, the general public, customers, businesses, community organizations and partners, other government agencies and any other body interacting with the Town.

4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 Town Council to:
 - 4.1.1 Approve by resolution this policy and any amendments.
 - 4.1.2 Consider the allocation of resources for successful implementation of this policy in the annual budget process.
 - 4.1.3 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
 - 4.1.4 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
 - 4.1.5 Be guided by this policy when determining the level of public engagement required prior to making a decision.
 - 4.1.6 Ensure resources are adequate to facilitate staff's role in conducting a public engagement process.
- 4.2 Chief Administrative Officer to:

- 4.2.1 Implement this policy; approve procedures
 - 4.2.2 Ensure that this policy and procedure is reviewed every three years.
 - 4.2.3 Ensure policy and procedure reviews occur and verify the implementation of policies and procedures.
 - 4.2.4 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
 - 4.2.5 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
 - 4.2.6 Recommend to Council necessary policy amendment(s).
 - 4.2.7 Provide guidance to Council, ensuring that sufficient public engagement has occurred.
- 4.3 Senior Managers to:
- 4.3.1 Ensure implementation of this policy and procedure.
 - 4.3.2 Make recommendations to the Chief Administrative Officer of necessary policy or procedure amendments.
 - 4.3.3 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
 - 4.3.4 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
 - 4.3.5 Ensure Managers are trained in related procedures.
 - 4.3.6 Ensure all projects are reviewed in order to determine the appropriate level of public engagement.
- 4.4 Managers to:
- 4.4.1 Understand and adhere to this policy and procedure.
 - 4.4.2 Ensure implementation of this policy and procedure.
 - 4.4.3 Make recommendations to the Chief Administrative Officer of necessary policy or procedure amendments.
 - 4.4.4 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
 - 4.4.5 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
 - 4.4.6 Ensure Staff are trained in related procedures.
 - 4.4.7 Ensure all projects are reviewed in order to determine the appropriate level of public engagement.

4.5 Supervisors to:

- 4.5.1 Understand and adhere to this policy and procedure
- 4.5.2 Ensure employees are aware of this policy and procedure.
- 4.5.3 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
- 4.5.4 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
- 4.5.5 Ensure all projects are reviewed in order to determine the appropriate level of public engagement.

4.6 All Employees to:

- 4.6.1 Understand and adhere to this policy and procedure.
- 4.6.2 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
- 4.6.3 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
- 4.6.4 Obtain public engagement training, as appropriate.
- 4.6.5 Make every effort to identify and involve as many affected or interested individuals as possible by implementing a comprehensive public engagement process.
- 4.6.6 Evaluate the effectiveness of public engagement on decisions made.
- 4.6.7 Staff who are leading a Town project must identify opportunities for conducting meaningful public engagement.
- 4.6.8 Staff who are leading a Town project must follow the Town's Public Engagement Procedure and implement identified public engagement activities.

4.7 Communications staff to:

- 4.7.1 Develop and maintain the Public Engagement Procedure, including all processes, tools, training and data archives that relate to public engagement.
- 4.7.2 Guide, advise and implement all public engagement activities as identified through the Public Engagement Procedure.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Town is committed to:

Accessibility: providing fair and equitable opportunities to make a positive contribution.

- Provide a variety of ways for the public to access information for public engagement activities.
- Make a concerted effort to reach and involve those who are impacted directly or indirectly.
- Follow a flexible process to maximize opportunities for public involvement.

Transparency and Accountability: providing clear, timely and complete information, and ensuring decision-making processes, procedures and constraints are clearly explained and adhered to.

- Provide the public with relevant background and context, as well as information about how to participate.
- Ensure facilitation is conducted by neutral parties when appropriate.
- Share what was heard and how it was used in decision-making.
- Provide all relevant information to Town Council for their consideration, when Council has the final decision-making authority.
- Disclose decisions made (including rationale) and their related impacts.

Communication: providing opportunities for two-way dialogue in a fair, respectful and open process.

- Provide sufficient background information.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Clearly explain the process.
- Explain what is negotiable, what is not, and why.

Continuous Improvement: continuously evaluating and improving the public engagement process.

- Evaluate each public engagement activity to assess success.
- Actively seek ways to improve public engagement processes, procedures and activities.
- Remain current with best practices and tools for public engagement.

Participation: making every reasonable effort to reach, involve and hear from the community.

- Actively seek out groups who are not typically heard from.
- Make reasonable efforts to plan public engagement events at accessible locations, at a variety of times of the day and days of the week.
- Make reasonable efforts to provide childcare at public engagement events.
- Use a variety of communication methods to inform the community of public engagement opportunities.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

The Public Engagement Spectrum explains the five levels of public participation in Town of Cochrane decision making. As activities move within the spectrum,

the public has an increasing level of influence, and the Town has an increasing level of commitment to use public input in decision making.

Inform

The public is provided with information that is timely, accurate, balanced, objective, and easily understood so residents and stakeholders can understand issues, problems, alternatives and/or solutions, and services provided by the Town.

Consult

The public is consulted by the Town and encouraged to share feedback and perspectives which are then considered for policies, programs, projects or services.

Involve

The public is encouraged to get involved in adapting and adjusting approaches to policies, programs, projects or services.

Collaborate

The public collaborates with the Town to develop and build solutions regarding policies, programs, projects or services. This can also include community-initiated engagement.

Empower

The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the Town about policies, programs, projects or services.

5 End of Policy