



Sustaining growth. Strengthening communities.



DRAFT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK





July 2015

This Framework was compiled by Community Development and Strategic Communications business units. For further information contact City of Ballarat at 5320 5500 or visit www.ballarat.vic.gov.au

City of Ballarat respectfully acknowledges the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work.

City of Ballarat acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.



INTRODUCTION

This Community Engagement Framework outlines a Council commitment to engage its community to the best of its potential.

As a policy document it sets out a whole of Council commitment to, and understanding of, community engagement in Ballarat. We are not starting from scratch. We recognise that some effective community engagement has and is happening in the city. However, there are a number of processes that could have been run more effectively and inclusively, and it is some time since Council put forward a document renewing its commitment to the process of community engagement.

Through the production and implementation of this Framework our aim is to raise the profile, improve the quality and achieve better co-ordination of community engagement.

To produce this Community Engagement Framework we listened to what people have told us, reflected on previous and current community engagement across the city, and considered research that has already been done here and elsewhere.

The production of this document is a milestone point. We see community engagement as important in building a better relationship between, and a stronger understanding of, communities in Ballarat.

Community engagement is not a single activity; it is a way of working. It is about inclusion and involvement, input and influence. Engagement comes with an equal need for responsibility, accountability and a willingness to work with others towards a common goal. As our learning and practice develops, so will the communities.

Community Engagement
is the process of involving
people in the decisions that
affect their lives.



The City of Ballarat objectives for community engagement are designed to genuinely involve community members in the work of Council with opportunities for participation extending online and via traditional methods.

From large projects that will redefine the city to important neighbourhood-based initiatives, the City of Ballarat aims to capture and consider the interests and views of our residents, employees, visitors and businesses.

Through the following objectives the City of Ballarat aims to capture and consider the interests and views of the community.

To provide engagement opportunities for our community to participate in the City of Ballarat's decision-making processes ensuring outcomes that benefit our community and reflect their input.

To provide a strong foundation for understanding and working with our community – promoting a shared responsibility for decisions and trust in the decision-making process.

To strengthen collaborations, partnerships and new ways to involve and empower the community.



PRINCIPLES

The following principles are informed by the International Association of Public Participation core values and reflect the City of Ballarat's organisational values of Leadership, Resilience, Loyalty and Outcomes.

Whilst engagement does not replace the final decision-making power of Councillors or the CEO, it is invaluable in the way it enhances Council's capacity to make well-informed, acceptable and sustainable decisions.

When engaging the community in a decision making-process, the City of Ballarat commits to:

- Engage community members before developing a new strategy or plan.
- Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected by or interested in a decision.
- Provide relevant, timely and balanced information so people can contribute in a meaningful way.
- Provide a variety of appropriate ways for people to have their say.
- Actively listen so that people's ideas and input assist the final decision.
- Consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process.
- Tell the community about the final decision, and how their input was considered.
- Review and evaluate with the community the effectiveness of our engagement strategies.



TECHNIQUES

Community engagement can involve a wide array of activities and initiatives. The level and extent of the activities differs depending on the type of process or project.

In a traditional context, community engagement opportunities exist through question time at Council meetings and through membership on one of Councils' many advisory committees.

The practice and purpose for constant improvement in community engagement is to adapt to change and develop techniques that fit the type of engagement that is appropriate. The traditional methods of engagement still apply, but evolving ideas to engage and contemporary methods continue to provide broader opportunity for all.

Technology and online tools continue to close the gap between organisations and community, broadening out the reach and providing opportunity for all levels of engagement. These tools include the use of open data, visual and virtual interpretations, and platforms to provide a more comprehensive way of engaging the community.

The contemporary model decision-makers

Organisations and community cooperate to develop and deliver key outcomes for both, with a focus on decision making, contribution and project delivery.

have also transformed; the capacity to share the lead on engagement is more acceptable and not necessarily the domain of the responsible organisation.

The need for community engagement to adapt to the fast pace of information provision and opportunity, outcomes and feedback is aligned to responding to how the community wish to engage. There is a need for instant responses, updates and actions, quick decision-making and conclusive outcomes.

Engagement can be represented by a wide range of sectors, all of which may have an interest but not be totally accountable in relation to project delivery or outcomes. Engagement may not always be about an end decision, it can be about building relationships, capacity building, problem solving, behavioural change and community connectedness.

This framework follows the International Association of Public Participation levels of community engagement. The scale ranges from providing information (a low level of engagement) through to active participation (a very high level of engagement).



Informing takes place when information is circulated to assist in understanding about a project / strategy or decision that is going to happen or has already happened.

Consulting takes place when a project requires some input, feedback or advice before part of the project / strategy or decision is progressed.

Active participation takes place when the community or specific stakeholders are engaged to work out what needs to be done and to develop solutions that are incorporated into decision-making.

All engagement processes need to inform; most will have some level of consultation and some will include active participation.

- Direct Mail
- myBallarat Magazine
- General Website Services
- Dedicated Online Engagement Website
- Online Community Engagement Calendar
- Social Media
- Customer Service
- Public Exhibitions
- Organisational Relationships

INFORM

- Open House Drop-In Feedback Sessions
- Dedicated Online Engagement (myTownHall)
- Community Meetings and Events
- Written Submissions
- Social Media Feedback
- Standardised Online and Paper Based Surveys
- Opinion Polling
- Customer Service Calls

CONSULTATIVE PARTICIPATION

- Open House Drop-In Project Planning Sessions
- Advisory & Section 86 Committees
- Community Project Reference Groups
- Community Workshops & Summits
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Community Action Teams (Engaging Communities Program)
- Participatory budgeting.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION



RESOURCES

The Community Engagement Framework will be supported by the following City of Ballarat

Staff Guide to Community Engagement

A step-by-step practical advice for staff on how to select and use the most appropriate tools for an engagement process, with support through the Survey Operations Group and Community Engagement Panel.



Engaging Children in Decision-Making

A practical ideas guide for engaging children up to the age of 12 in effective decision-making. It outlines a range of opportunities to consult with children and issues to consider as part of best practice.



Training

Training will be provided to staff to increase knowledge of our engagement process and to build internal capacity to deliver robust engagement activities across the City of Ballarat.



Inclusive consultation & communication with people with a disability.

Developed by the Department of Planning and Community Development, this guide to accessible communications is an essential resource to community engagement for the City of Ballarat.



Engagement Planning Calendar

Will assist in planning engagement activities to avoid duplication of engagement processes and identify areas for combined community engagements.



One Stop Online Engagement Tools

The implementation of myTownHall in February 2015 gives the Ballarat community a single online source for interaction with all consultations conducted by City of Ballarat. It sets a standard online interface and style for all projects and allows individuals to register and provide feedback on any live projects.



Social Media

As of May 2015 the City of Ballarat has a base Facebook and Twitter audience of more than 17,000 people. As both an informative and consultative mechanism, all consultations will continue to be advertised through this medium and this platform used to return results of polls and surveys back to the community.



myBallarat Magazine

Printed seasonally, the myBallarat magazine is delivered to every home and business in the City of Ballarat. According to online polls as at May 2015 myBallarat is the number one source for the community to keep updated with council.



Mount Pleasant October 2014



MONITORING

Community engagement activities will be reviewed in an annual Community Engagement Framework Council Report. Activities will be monitored for effectiveness through both qualitative and quantitative measures including:

Customer Service
Enquiry Types and
Statistics



Number of Public
Engagement Events



Community Engagement
Panel and Survey
Operations Group



Consultation
Participation Numbers



Online Engagement
Activity Reports



Independent Community
Satisfaction Reports





FRAMEWORKS

Statutory Framework :

There is no overarching legislation which sets out how local governments must undertake community consultation and engagement.

The **Local Government Act 1989** is inclusive of any site specific planning matters, the annual budget process and other statutory processes such as special charge schemes.

The **Local Government Amendment (Performance Reporting and Accountability) Act 2014** requires that, from July 2015, each local government authority must report on the existence and application of community engagement policies and guidelines.

The **Planning and Environment Act 1987** sets out the procedures for preparing and amending planning schemes, obtaining permits under planning schemes, enforcing compliance with planning schemes and other administrative processes. As part of this, the Act sets overarching notification requirements, however, in some instances planning scheme amendments and planning permit applications may be exempt from notification requirements.

The **Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008** outlines ways in which local councils are expected to plan for the health and wellbeing of their communities. Under section 26(2)(c) a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan must provide the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan.

References :

- IAP2 Australasia 2014, Certificate of Engagement.
- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) www.iap2.org.au
- IPAA (2013) Stakeholder Engagement Manual
- The City of Sydney (2013) Community Engagement Strategy
- The City of Adelaide Community Engagement Strategy (cited 2015)
- The City of Hobsons Bay (2015) draft Community Engagement Policy



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