Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit
Introduction

Interaction with our community is happening daily and in various ways and means. A Community Engagement Framework has been developed to identify the extent and context in which the City of Greater Bendigo interacts with the community. The guidelines support the implementation of the Council’s community engagement policy (Appendix A). The accompanying toolkit provides the ‘how to’ prepare for and deliver community engagement.

What is community engagement?

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) provides a detailed definition of Community Engagement – that recognises that the term ‘engagement’ invokes discussions about diversity of language and can cover consultation, extension, communication, education, public participation, participative democracy or working in partnership.

The DEPI definition is ‘that engagement is a generic, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships.

The word ‘community’ is also a very broad term used to define groups of people, whether they are stakeholders, interest groups, citizen groups, etc. A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of practice), or a community of affiliation or identity (such as industry or sporting club).

‘Community engagement’ is therefore a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation or identify to address issues affecting their well-being. The linking of the term ‘community’ to ‘engagement’ serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.’ Reference www.dse.vic.gov.au/effective-engagement/introduction-to-engagement/what-is-community-engagement

Community engagement can take many forms and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed the ‘IAP2 public participation spectrum’ to help groups define the public’s role in any public participation process.

Good community engagement will lead to:

• better project and service delivery outcomes
• improve the quality of policy being developed
• build more resilient relationship with the community
• enhancing reputation and check council is meeting local needs
• increased understanding of community issues
• better shared partnerships and networks.
• deal with complex issues and emerging issues
• opportunities for a diversity of voices to be heard
• communities are able to identify priorities for themselves and own the solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public participation goal</strong></td>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IAP2 – foundations for public participation
How do you determine if you need to undertake community engagement?

Engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation and/or identify to address issues affecting their well-being. By linking ‘community’ to ‘engagement’ the scope and focus shift from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.

- Will there be a CHANGE in the level of existing environment, space, accessibility, convenience, or the actual provision of a service to the community?
- Is there opportunity for stakeholders to influence your project or its outcome?

The 7 step guide is for you!
Follow the steps below to help you with the community engagement process.

There may be no need to develop and implement a Community Engagement Plan. It may still be necessary to ‘inform’ relevant community members or groups, as appropriate, particularly if there is a perceived level of change from a community perspective.

Other considerations

What is the broader context of the project or issue at hand?
When determining whether or not Community Engagement is necessary, consider the following:
- Is there a history associated with the project or issue that may impact on the current situation?
- Does the project or issue have the potential to become highly politicised?
- Is there an opportunity to build or maintain a positive relationship through engaging proactively and openly with a section of the community?
- Is there a chance that there will be considerable public outrage if the community is displeased with, or feels no ownership over, the outcome?
- Do you need to take into account any relevant legislation?
1. Define

What is the decision to be made?
- Can you describe the decision to be made in one sentence? (for many projects there may be several decisions to be made at different stages of the project)
- Do you need to take into account any relevant legislation?
- Can you clearly describe the objectives and purpose of the community engagement?

2. Identify

Who needs to be engaged?
- Who is or will be affected by, interested in, or who can influence or inform the decision?
- Do you understand how they are affected and the nature and intensity of their interest, their capacity and willingness to participate and what are any barriers to that participation?
- Using the above information identify the preferred method(s) of community engagement

3. Understand

How are you going to engage?
- What level of participation is required? (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate or Empower)
- What resources are required to undertake the engagement and how long will the public participation take?
- Define how their input will be used.
- Have/how will the objectives and scope of the community engagement been/be made clear to the participants?

4. Document

How are you going to record and report the public participation?
- Plan, prepare and ensure engagement activities align with Council Policies
- Ensure that the participants understand their role and the engagement is recorded and reported back to the community
- Are there any risks that need to be managed?
- Need to constantly monitor, provide feedback and evaluate the process

5. Implement

Engage
- You have developed an action plan that has the objective(s), identified stakeholders and the best way to engage them as well as the technique, now put all your work into action

6. Learn

What has the community engagement told you?
- Monitor progress, budget and timelines to meet objectives
- Monitor and respond to risks

7. Influence

What effect/change has occurred as a result of the engagement?
- How has the engagement informed the decision that needed to be made?
- Close the loop (what we asked, what we were told and what we did)
- Report to Council on the community engagement outcomes
1.1 Can you describe the decision to be made in one sentence? (for many projects there may be several decisions to be made at different stages of the project)

• Be clear about the decision to be made;
• Meet with other Council officer to clarify the decision that needs to be made;
• Draft a ‘decision statement’

Identifying the project/issue/task

In a sentence or two, describe the project/issue/task:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Identify the proposed changes to the level of service to the community from the project/issue/task:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

In one sentence, identify the DECISION that needs to be made:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
1.2 Do you need to take into account any relevant legislation?

A Community Engagement process will only be useful if decision makers are aware of, and endorse, its use. Community Engagement processes can raise community expectations; this can have a negative impact when processes are undertaken and then ignored by decision makers.

This does not mean decision makers will necessarily commit to adopting the community perspective or recommendation. Rather, working with decision makers prior to undertaking the Community Engagement process can ensure that you develop an appropriate level and type of Community Engagement process for each project or issue. This will also enable you to clearly communicate the purpose of the engagement, and how the resulting community input or feedback will be used in the decision making process. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that any process is in line with Council’s relevant legislative requirements.

- Gaining support from decision makers

Indicate who you will need to gain approval from:

- I need support from my direct supervisor
- I need EMT to sign off on the process
- I need to inform Council/undertake a Council briefing
- I’m not sure who needs to approve this (see your supervisor for advice)

Some community engagement processes will need to accommodate statutory obligations of Council:

- Identify any legislative requirements in relation to making the decision and ensure that the community engagement is designed to recognise this, and it will be communicated to stakeholders
- Are there any specific steps to meet the legislative requirements that are different to any additional steps to engage?
- Demonstrate taking into account broader legislative requirements such as human rights in making decisions

1.3 Can you clearly describe the objectives and purpose of the community engagement?

- Objectives

Identify the practical purpose of the engagement process (ie. What do you want to have by the end – a decision/document/commitment/next step etc):

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Identify the experience you would like the participants to take away from the process (ie. Feeling heard, seeing their input influence a decision, a clear understanding of the issues, hearing different perspectives):

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
1.3 Continued

After you have clarified the decision, consider the type of decision that needs to be made.

- Are there elements that are non-negotiable?
- Are you asking community members to explore ideas (open community engagement), or respond to set criteria or options (closed Community Engagement)?
- It is important to clarify these parameters at the start, and make these clear to all participants at the commencement of the Community Engagement process.

### Engagement process

Will the Community Engagement be ‘open’ or ‘closed’?

- **Open** - An open Community Engagement process allows community members to assist with setting the parameters of the issues relating to the project.
- **Closed** - A closed Community Engagement process asked community members to respond to identified solutions, usually with an ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ option.
- **Other** - Eg. Elements of both open and closed engagement

Note: It is important to ensure that community members understand whether or not your engagement process is ‘open’ or ‘closed’ and for you to design your process accordingly. For example, do not ask an open question about an issue if you only want a yes or no answer to a set of predetermined solutions.

### Impacts

From your perspective, list the possible positive and negative impacts:

**Positive impacts/outcomes:**

- 
- 
- 

**Negative impacts/outcomes:**

- 
- 
- 

### Levels of risk and complexity

Consider the level of overall risk, is there likelihood for political sensitivity, community outrage or other harm? Note: The higher the risk the greater the need for higher level participation Tick the appropriate level of risk.

- **High**
- **Medium**
- **Low**

Consider the level of complexity, is the project/issue easy to understand or complex in nature? Note: The more complex the issue, the greater the need for deliberative participation. Tick the appropriate level of complexity.

- **High**
- **Medium**
- **Low**
Step 2 - Identify: Who needs to be engaged?

2.1 Who is or will be affected by, interested in, or who can influence or inform the decision?
- Consider how to recruit participants
- Develop a list of potential participants and their level of interest; don’t forget internal participants
- Consider ways to identify ‘hard to reach’ participants to maximise their contribution
- Identify any anticipated barriers, such as physical, communication, economic, language, cultural and social

2.2 Do you understand how participants are affected and the nature and intensity of their interest, their capacity and willingness to participate and what are any barriers to that participation?
- What are you seeking from participants?
- Can you identify their needs and how can they add value
- Do they have specific interests, local knowledge
- Will individual/group interests potentially impact the community engagement process?
- Can you demonstrate that you have identified how to most effectively engage with participants, including if barriers to participation need to be removed and if reasonable adjustment is required

2.3 Using the above information identify the preferred method(s) of community engagement.
- How will the objectives and the scope of the community engagement be explicitly communicated to the participants?
- What level of information do participants need?

Participants
Who are the specific participants? (this list may help you to think through participants)
- Permanent residents
- Non-permanent residents
- Users
- Non users
Other:
- Tourists
- Volunteers
- Staff
- Community groups
- Business groups
- External agencies
- Government departments
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Indigenous Australians
- People with disabilities
- Aged
- Young families
- Early years
- Students
- Youth
Other:
3.1 What level of participation is required? (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate or Empower)

- A number of different levels may be suitable depending on your objective(s)

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) identifies and defines various levels of Community Engagement. The following IAP2 spectrum depicts these different levels and the promise to the participants you will engage with.

Select suitable techniques for Community Engagement

Choosing a technique or a combination of techniques for community engagement is a critical step in the engagement planning process. It is important that you know what you are asking from the participants when you decide to use a specific engagement technique. You should only choose techniques that are suited to the purpose of your particular engagement.

Selection of the technique will vary according to the:

- Project context – project goals and objectives and anticipated outcomes.
- Community context – within which your project sits – your community profile and the social and political context.
- Project parameters – size, budget, timelines and resources allocated.
- Project teams skills and availability.

You may need to employ varying types of engagement for the same participants during the lifespan of your project. A range of techniques may be utilised and consequently the promise made at differing stages in the project process will need to be accommodated.

Levels of participation

Based on the potential negative impacts and overall risk, and the complexity of the issue, choose an appropriate level of participation. This will assist with the design of your process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide balanced</td>
<td>Seek feedback on alternatives</td>
<td>Work directly with the</td>
<td>Partner with the community</td>
<td>Final decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and objective</td>
<td>and/or decisions</td>
<td>community during the process</td>
<td>during each aspect of</td>
<td>making power sits with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td></td>
<td>to ensure needs are</td>
<td>decision making</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>considered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise to keep</td>
<td>Promise to keep community</td>
<td>Promise to ensure aspirations</td>
<td>Promise to look to the</td>
<td>Promise to implement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community informed</td>
<td>informed, listen to issues &amp;</td>
<td>are directly reflected in the</td>
<td>community for advice</td>
<td>what the community decides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provide feedback as to how</td>
<td>alternatives and provide</td>
<td>and incorporate this advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>input affected the decision</td>
<td>feedback as to how input</td>
<td>into the alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>affected the decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example techniques

- Fact sheets
- Web sites
- Open days
- Public comment
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Workshop
- Deliberate polling
- Citizen Advisory Committee
- Citizen juries
- Ballots
- Delegated decisions

Checklist

☐ Does the technique match your overall program objectives, purpose of engagement and anticipated outcomes?

☐ Are you being inclusive of all participants? If not, what do you need to consider in order to be more inclusive?

☐ Can you adapt the techniques to better suit your work and community context?

☐ Have you developed an evaluation method for this technique in your plan? Will it capture the techniques success and effectiveness in engaging the community as well as capturing new ideas and learnings for Council?

Appendix B – provides a valuable list of techniques for assisting in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community engagement activities. This is not intended to provide an exhaustive list, but rather it offers a broad selection of techniques covering all types of engagement from ‘inform’ to ‘empower’.
Choosing a process/technique

Method(s) chosen:__________________________________________________________________________________________

Strategic Engagement Plan

Project name:_______________________________________________________________________________________________

Contact person:___________________________________________________________________________________________ Date:_____________________________________________________

What success looks like for:

The project team:__________________________________________________________________________________________

The organisation:__________________________________________________________________________________________

The community/other stakeholders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will keep you</td>
<td>We will keep you</td>
<td>We will look to you</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that</td>
<td>We will implement what you decide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informed</td>
<td>informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns</td>
<td>for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and</td>
<td>your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and provide feedback on how your input</td>
<td>incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to</td>
<td>alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>influenced the decision</td>
<td>the maximum extent possible</td>
<td>influenced the decision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stakeholders

Tools
Step 3 - Understand: How are you going to engage?

3.2 What resources are required to undertake the engagement and how long will the public participation take?

- Estimating the time required to ensure effective and meaningful participation

3.3 Define how participants input will be used.

- Data collected during community engagement must be recorded and analysed, a summarised report will be prepared and provide a useful way to inform decision makers.
- Can you accurately understand and reflect the views and opinions provided by participants.

3.4 Have/how will the objectives and scope of the community engagement been/be made clear to the participants?

- How will you ensured that participants understand the council’s priorities and the level of influence on the decision to be made.
- Will participant’s contribution influence the project equally?

▶ Planning for participation

It is important to have the right advice and support along the way - have you thought about who needs to be involved in the planning and running of your community engagement process?

- You’ve completed your participants list; now you also need to consider who specifically can participate in the process.

▶ Who needs to be involved in planning?

Consider whose advice or input is required to plan your community engagement.

☐ I’m happy to do the planning myself (with or without some support)
☐ I’d like to get another Council officer to assist with the planning the process
☐ An independent external consultant/facilitator should assist with developing the process
☐ I’m not sure who needs to be involved in the planning (See your supervisor for advice)

▶ Who needs to be involved in undertaking the process?

Consider who will facilitate your engagement process.

☐ I’m happy to do it myself (with or without some support)
☐ I’d like to get another Council officer to assist with the process, so I can focus on content
☐ An independent external consultant/facilitator should run the process
☐ I’m not sure who needs to be involved in running the process (See your supervisor for advice)

▶ Who can participate?

Is the process open to all, or are random targeted or representative invites necessary?

☐ Open to everyone in a given community to participate
☐ Targeted to certain groups/stakeholders
☐ Random invites (to gain previously unheard perspectives)
☐ Stratified random sample (to gain perspective representative of wider community)
Step 4 - Document: How are you going to record and report the public participation?

4.1 Plan, prepare and ensure engagement activities align with Council Policies.

📍 Develop an Action Plan for implementation

Use your selected techniques to detail a step by step plan. Use this Who, What, When, Where, How framework to list all the things that need to be covered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>(needs to be there, know about it, help out? Etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>(contribution can people make? Etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>(will it take place, will results be known? Etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>(should we meet, should we advertise? Etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>(will I communicate, to ensure I obtain relevant input? Etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

📍 Operational Engagement Plan

Project name: ____________________________

Contact person: _________________________  Date: _________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Type</th>
<th>Technique/ Activity</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Resources required</th>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Start and finish dates</th>
<th>Feedback method</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
<th>Start and finish dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Public gatherings: Workshops/forums/meetings

If your community engagement Plan incorporates any type of public gathering, you will need to consider how the session will run. The facilitation of your public gathering is vital to the success of your overall community engagement process. Planning to ensure your event is inclusive, participatory, consistent with your community engagement aims, and relevant to the topic are all necessary elements of a well facilitated public event. Sometimes it will be appropriate for you to run the session yourself, other times you may need someone else to do it. At times it is best to have a facilitator who is independent of Council. This will allow you to separate the content and process, and to maintain the integrity of the process in a controversial or high pressure situation.

Facilitation

Appropriate facilitation can make or break your community engagement process. If you’re planning to facilitate the session yourself, why not plan it with a colleague, or ask for some feedback on your plan? Sharing your ideas before the event will help you to clarify the purpose and ensure that your approach will be inclusive and engaging. There are a number of staff who have undertaken an intensive facilitation training course and are available to assist you.
**Step 4 - Document:** How are you going to record and report the public participation?

4.2 Ensure that the participants understand their role and the engagement is recorded and reported back to the community.

- Demonstrate a clear and equitable process for engaging with stakeholders, including understanding and responding to any concerns.
- Incorporate effective mechanisms for communicating the results of the public participation activities to stakeholders, including how these were used in the decision-making process and the final decision made.
- Document how you will capture the participants’ input to inform the decision being made so that the resulting records are a complete and accurate reflection of the participation.

4.3 Are there any risks that need to be managed?

- Identify the risks to the objectives of the public participation exercise, particularly those that rate highly.
- Demonstrate that participants have understood, mitigated and/or managed these risks, including situations where time or resource constraints have meant a compromised approach to public participation.

4.4 Need to constantly monitor, provide feedback and evaluate the process.

- Clearly describe how progress will be measured in terms of timelines, resource use and achieving the public participation objectives.
- Put in place a clear approach for evaluating success, including outcome measures to assess the achievement of objectives and a post-participation process for evaluating and reporting on the success of the exercise.
- Have you applied a clear and appropriate evaluation framework to assess the success of the community engagement exercise against the objectives set at the outset?
- Have you consulted the participants involved to understand their perception of any weaknesses and strengths of the community engagement and potential areas for improvement?
- Have the results of the evaluation been documented?

**Establish evaluation measures**

It is important to evaluate your community engagement process for a number of reasons:

- To determine the success of the process;
- To determine the success of the outcome;
- To learn from the process and reflect on any changes that you could make for next time;
- For organisational learning about ‘what works’ in community engagement for different situations; and
- To demonstrate links between processes and outcomes.

**Evaluation**

Use these questions as a guide to assist with developing an evaluation.

What needs to happen for this process to be a ‘success’?
(Consider the perspectives of both Council and Community/other stakeholders):

How will you know if this has been achieved?
(i.e. the visible signs of ‘success’):

What data will you need to indicate this?
(what will you need to demonstrate the results):

How will you collect this data?
(participant feedback, surveys, informal discussions etc.):

How will you document the learnings (both positive and negative) from this process, for future learning for yourself and others in the Council?
### Community Engagement Evaluation Plan Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of evaluation</th>
<th>Key evaluation questions</th>
<th>Who is interested in the answers?</th>
<th>Sources of evidence</th>
<th>Methods of measurement</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
<th>When (expected timing of the evaluation activities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How successful was the engagement? | Did we stay on track?  
How did it help the project?  
Did it come in budget?  
What was in the press?  
Who wrote letters of complaint?  
How fast was approval given of the project design? | | | | | |
| What could we do better? | What took us by surprise?  
What didn’t work? | | | | | |
| What did we learn? | If we had a similar project, what would we do differently?  
Do the same? | | | | | |

Don’t confuse presenting data with presenting your evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is NOT an evaluation</th>
<th>This IS evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36 people attended the workshop</td>
<td>The workshops did not attract as many participants as planned. Only 36 people attended compared to the original target of 60. The participant demographics was also not representative of the intended audience. A likely reason for this is that the workshop clashed with a number of other community events that drew potential participants away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86% of the participants have stated they are taking shorter showers</td>
<td>The project delivery model was successful in driving more sustainable behaviors. This is supported by 86% of respondents stating that they had reduced their showering time from their participation in the project. A key factor in changing behavior was the shower timer that was provided to participants to prompt them to get out,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 You have developed an action plan that has the objective(s), identified stakeholders and the best way to engage them as well as the technique, now out all your work into Action.

Action!

After all the planning and preparation, you’re now ready for the ‘doing’! A few last minute things to think about:

If your Community Engagement includes a gathering:
- Confirm the venue/catering/equipment is all booked, and that any assistance with setup etc is organised
- Think about the setup of the space you are using – try to make it; comfortable, welcoming, inclusive and interesting
- Greet people as they arrive and ensure everyone has a name tag; and
- Start and finish on time

“The people who come/contribute are the right people!” – this principle is one to embrace for all your community engagement. Focus on the people who are contributing their time; give them your full attention and value their input.

You’ve got objectives, you know your stakeholders and you’ve thought about how they can participate, you’ve chosen a technique, developed an action plan and thought about how you’ll evaluate once it’s all done – the next step is to put all this work into action! Good luck!
Step 6 - Learn: What has the community engagement told you?

6.1 Monitor progress, budget and timelines to meet objectives

- Document and monitor expenditure, progress against timelines and progress towards achieving the intended objectives of the public participation exercise

6.2 Monitor and respond to risks.

- Document how you have monitored and responded appropriately to the risks identified during the planning of the public participation exercise
Step 7 - Influence: What effect change has occurred as a result of the engagement?

7.1 How has the engagement informed the decision that needed to be made?

- **Prepare a Feedback Report for stakeholders**

  It is important for participants to know before the process commences how their input/feedback will be used. Equally as important is informing participants about how they themselves will receive feedback about their involvement in the process, and the resulting outcome or decision. Collect participant contact details and provide feedback in a timely manner (within 2-3 weeks of end of engagement process). To maintain the integrity of the process and to ensure transparency, where possible give participants access to a copy of the notes that represent the feedback/input they gave to the process. Maintain contact if the project or issue is ongoing, and provide updates to participants as appropriate.

  *When collecting personal information, you need to ensure you comply with the Information Privacy Act and City of Greater Bendigo Information Privacy Guidelines. View the Principles at www.cpdp.vic.gov.au/*

7.2 Close the loop (what we asked, what we were told and what we did).

- **Feedback to participants/stakeholders**

  Communicate the outcomes of the process to participants.

  - [ ] Letter/email sent directly to all participants
  - [ ] Follow up meeting
  - [ ] Website/Groundswell/mass media
  - [ ] Other:

  *Note: ensure you obtain relevant contact information and advise participants of how/when you will be communicating with them.*

- **Is ongoing communication required?**

  Where projects occur after the engagement process, progress updates to be provided.

  *How will you continue to communicate with participants (and the wider community) about the progress of the project?*

  _____________________________________________________________

  _____________________________________________________________

  Will the implementation of the project sit with another area of Council

  - [ ] Yes
  - [ ] No

  *Identify the Units/teams you may need to be in contact with to obtain updated information:*
7.3 Report to Council on the community engagement outcomes.

- **Prepare a Report for decision makers**
  
  Inform Council or decision makers of the way the process was undertaken as well as the outcome. If you are required to complete a Council Report or Brief following your project ensure that your Community Engagement Plan and Evaluation Plan are included.

- **Report to decision makers (to be completed AFTER the engagement process)**
  
  Use your evaluative data to compile a report that reflects on the process as well as the outcome you obtain. Reflect on the objectives and aims that you set out at the beginning of the community engagement process to assess your process. It can be useful to think about and document what you would do differently next time.
Appendices

- Appendix A - Community Engagement Policy
- Appendix B - Matrix of Techniques
- Appendix C - Role of Councillors in Community Engagement
### Appendix A: City of Greater Bendigo Community Engagement Policy

**Approval Date:** February 2016  
**Review Date:** (Generally two years)  
**Author:** Lindy Wilson, Social Planner  
**Responsible Director:** Prue Mansfield, Director Planning and Development

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### 1. PURPOSE
The purpose of this policy is to detail Greater Bendigo's commitment to effective and relevant community engagement. For the City of Greater Bendigo (City) community engagement embraces ongoing dialogue with our communities to improve decision making processes through inclusive, accessible and responsive community participation.

(a) Community engagement is defined as ‘a way to improve communities by identifying and addressing local ideas, concerns and opportunities by involving the public in certain processes that affect them and their community’.

(b) The City aims to be recognised as open and honest with the community it represents, willing to listen to and value what residents have to say about an issue. On a daily basis, the City makes decisions which affect the lives of its residents. One of the mechanisms the City uses from time to time to interact with its community is community engagement.

(c) Community engagement does not replace the decision-making functions of Council, or the organisation, but informs it.

(d) While it is not possible to consult with the community on every issue, the City would like to ensure that the community is as well informed as it can be on major issues, plans and projects, has the necessary factual information to form an opinion and has opportunities through community engagement to enhance Council’s decision-making.

### 2. BACKGROUND
Community engagement plays a vital role in assisting Councillors and City staff to work together with communities and other stakeholders to achieve the stated Vision of Council: Greater Bendigo – Working together to be Australia’s most liveable regional city.

Community engagement underpins the Council values as expressed in Council Plan 2013/2017 (updated 2011-2016); Council wants the community to continue to have reason to be proud of the city and will do this through: Transparency; Efficiency and effectiveness; Inclusion and consultation; Clear decisive and consistent planning and respect for community priorities and needs.

Engagement involves a range of activities that allow citizens:
- to be informed of City activities
- to be involved with Council in improving the community
- to provide input to Council on local issues; and
- to help make decisions

Engagement allows the City to:
- gather information, data and facts
- gather a range of opinions
- understand better the opportunities and concerns
- learn about unintended consequences
- building alliances and relationships for the future
- bring different groups together for a common outcome
- think about how to address/minimise impacts

These activities range from everyday informal discussions, contact with stakeholders during service delivery, group discussions or meetings, formal consultation processes, through to the City supporting community members in taking action on issues themselves.

Engagement is not just about discussion and relationships; it leads to real outcomes in communities such as better services, facilities, policy and infrastructure. Engagement can help these outcomes be achieved by community members being more informed of the City’s direction and activities, being able to have input into some decisions, better understanding the City’s decisions and priorities and working more collaboratively with the City.

Engagement does not mean that every detail of the City’s operation is open to community comment or control. Nor does it mean that staff will be distracted from their delivery of services. There are many situations where engagement is not necessary and a Community Engagement Framework will clearly identify these situations.

### 3. SCOPE
This policy applies to Councillors, staff and consultants responsible for community engagement undertaken for or on behalf of the City.

Community engagement at the City occurs before a decision is made. It encompasses formal, planned opportunities for participation in exploratory, capacity building or decision making processes; information delivery or sharing; and the informal building of networks and relationships; and individual interactions between the organisation and residents.

### 4. POLICY
It is policy that, in undertaking community engagement, encourages practices within the City that can result in:

(a) Residents knowing when and how the City will consult them and when Council needs to make a decision on their behalf.

(b) The City Community being well-informed about issues, strategies or plans that may directly or indirectly affect them.

(c) Councillors, Council staff and consultants (engaged by the City) engaging effectively and appropriately within the community when making decisions or forming policies and plans.

(d) Community engagement being appropriate, designed for task and audience across all areas of activities.
Appendix A: City of Greater Bendigo Community Engagement Policy

5. PRINCIPLES OF GOOD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Greater Bendigo aims to be the most liveable regional city in Australia. One measure of liveability is the number of people taking part in public discussion. Good decision-making is influenced by a number of factors including the way the City engages the community in the process. Councillors and staff have chosen the following principles of community engagement as the prerequisites for a quality outcome.

Good community engagement in Greater Bendigo:

- As a general principle Councillors and staff want to move from conventional forms of community engagement to a more collaborative process, especially when dealing with complex, multifaceted issues involving many different groups. Those with an interest can come together to co-create a possible solution. Councillors and staff also recognise that no single model or formula fits all situations and the method, extent and depth of community engagement or collaboration will vary according to the issue or challenge.

- More specifically good community engagement means:

  **Valuing community input**
  - It draws on the collective intelligence of our community to help us make better decisions and implementable plans

  **Building trust**
  - Between Greater Bendigo City Council, staff and our community
  - To be most effective requires a foundation of trust between the organisers and the participants

  **Taking the effort to get the best outcome**
  - Is not simple or easy and takes skill, time and resources

  **Beginning early**
  - Requires early agreement on how to engage and who with, although this needs to be responsive over time
  - Requires an early understanding on how to involve Councillors and their role in the process on a case-by-case basis

  **Developing good questions first**
  - Does NOT require that we know the answers/solutions BEFORE we engage
  - Is essentially about identifying the right questions

  **Closing the loop**
  - Reports back to those who have participated and the community at the conclusion of the community engagement process
  - Seeks feedback from those who participated and evaluates the quality of the process

6. IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Greater Bendigo has developed a Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit to assist in the implementation of this policy and also a quick reference guide to ensure consistency, accountability and transparency in the practice of the community engagement across the organisation.

7. REFERENCES

- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
  The City of Greater Bendigo has observed the freedoms, rights and responsibilities outlined in The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities in the development of this policy.

- Local Government Act 1989
  The City of Greater Bendigo has observed the requirements outlined in the Local Government Act 1989 in the development of this policy. Specifically sections ‘223 Right to make submission’.

- Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act 1999
  Specfically ‘Section 208B(e)’, which states ‘a Council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides’.

- UN Brisbane Declaration
  The Brisbane Declaration on community engagement has drawn on a number of sources for global definitions and aspirations for community engagement including the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) core values. The process of developing the Declaration aimed to act as a catalyst for mobilising the global community and developing common understanding, shared visions and goals.
## Table 1 – Engagement techniques for INFORM level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider techniques for INFORM level</th>
<th>Always think it through</th>
<th>What can go right</th>
<th>What can go wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Printed Materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fact sheets</td>
<td>• Keep it short and simple</td>
<td>• Can reach a large target audience</td>
<td>• Distribution planning inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Newsletter</td>
<td>• Make it visually interesting and engaging but not too busy or slick</td>
<td>• Public look for information in regular format eg. newsletter, media column</td>
<td>• Materials do not reach the mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Media advertising – local papers</td>
<td>• Proof-read all documents</td>
<td>• Allows for technical and legal reviews</td>
<td>• Materials not read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brochures</td>
<td>• Ask randomly selected staff members to trial material and provide feedback before distribution to the public</td>
<td>• Written comments returned in reply paid format</td>
<td>• Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Issue papers</td>
<td>• Use language that is inclusive and jargon free</td>
<td>• Documentation of public involvement facilitated</td>
<td>• Information misinterpreted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Letters</td>
<td>• Always include opportunities for comment and include reply paid forms or envelopes to encourage two-way communication</td>
<td>• Mailing list development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Media releases</td>
<td>• Explain public role and how comments have affected project decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Media conference</td>
<td>• Offer interpretation services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Displays</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Council Offices</td>
<td>• Establish regular sites if possible to build on community culture</td>
<td>• Information is accessible to the public at relatively little cost</td>
<td>• Distribution sites are overcrowded with information and the materials get lost among the collection of materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Libraries</td>
<td>• Develop a distribution list</td>
<td>• Public use the distribution locations to look for materials</td>
<td>• There is no active promotion of the materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community centres,</td>
<td>• Make sure personnel at locations know what materials are about &amp; where they are located &amp; who to contact for further information</td>
<td>• Public visit Council facilities and may learn more about service provision</td>
<td>• Upkeep of information at sites is not well managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shopping centre</td>
<td>• Consider electronic displays, eg. Touch screens, TV video loop presentations</td>
<td>• Public ask for further information at Council distribution sites</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Schools</td>
<td>• Make sure materials are removed when past their use by date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Childcare centres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Information directly into the householder</td>
<td>• Needs to be visible and easy to navigate</td>
<td>• Capable of reaching a large audience at low cost</td>
<td>• People without access disadvantaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep information updated</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Popular information resource</td>
<td>• Technical difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Hard to navigate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 – Engagement techniques for CONSULT level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider techniques for CONSULT level</th>
<th>Always think it through</th>
<th>What can go right</th>
<th>What can go wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed Materials, Displays, Website</td>
<td>Refer to Table 1</td>
<td>Refer to Table 1</td>
<td>Refer to Table 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Council staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Councillors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consultants</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Key stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community groups (including marginalised groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Keep it short and simple</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use clear, jargon free, inclusive language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use easy to read diagrams and visuals that are consistent with the verbal and written content</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Control of information/presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Opportunities to clarify misinformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reach a wider variety of people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build community capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate &amp; readjust approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Some groups may be left out of briefings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Inaccurate information may be passed on to community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expectations may be raised</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Information may be used inappropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mailed Surveys/Questionnaires/Response Sheets</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Blanket distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Random distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Selected distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Surveys/Questionnaires should be developed using specific guidelines and trialled before distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collection and method of analysis to be considered and clarified</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Level of engagement and parameters need to be clear</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can gather information from people other than those with special interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gather information from people who might not attend meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can gather specific information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Statistically tested results have more credibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Response rate can be poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communities over surveyed</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can be labour intensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Questions may be misinterpreted</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Results not trusted</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Results not fed back to communities effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Attendance at:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Briefings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technical resource persons must be perceived as credible by communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure technical resource persons have access to information about the communities attitudes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build credibility &amp; address public concerns about equity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facts in dispute can be debated and consensus reached</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Resource availability may be limited</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities and may lack empathy with community concerns</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Open House</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communities engage at their own pace in a comfortable environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Drop in to individually to view plans, ask questions, give opinions, have an informal chat and a coffee, tea etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be there when you say you are going to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consider the demographics of the area and time sessions accordingly</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Greet people at the door and explain the format, provide comments sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Give people a task eg. “good/bad” dots to place on the displays to record their preferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Facilitates a wide variety of people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Break down perceived barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fosters communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More convenient for people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engages people more effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Minimise aggressive approach to Council staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Resource availability may be limited</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities and may lack empathy with community concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback Register</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Resident pool for feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Check the register content is relative to your purpose</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gather input from a broad range of people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Register maintenance can be resource intensive</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 3 – Engagement techniques for INVOLVE level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider techniques for INVOLVE level</th>
<th>Always think it through</th>
<th>What can go right</th>
<th>What can go wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Printed Materials, Displays, Website, Briefings, Information Contact, Technical Assistance, Open House</strong></td>
<td>Refer to Tables 1 and 2</td>
<td>Refer to Tables 1 and 2</td>
<td>Refer to Tables 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Groups</strong></td>
<td>• Clear tasks</td>
<td>• Provides opportunity to test material</td>
<td>• Participants may feel restricted by the approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use to test message with randomly selected people or to gain input to assist planning for engagement</td>
<td>• Relevant representation</td>
<td>• Verify prior assumptions</td>
<td>• May be perceived as exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skilled facilitation</td>
<td>• Raise unexpected additional benefits</td>
<td>• May be costly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>• Be clear and open about the intent</td>
<td>• Gather clear understanding of public concerns and issues</td>
<td>• Can be very time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Face to Face</td>
<td>• Consider questions carefully to gather relevant information</td>
<td>• Individuals feel inclined to provide input based on personalised format</td>
<td>• Participants can take their issues out on the interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Telephone</td>
<td>• Ensure effective information recording methods</td>
<td>• Able to reach more people by varying timeframe for interviews</td>
<td>• Participants are tired of being interviewed on a range of issues and will not engage willingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshops</strong></td>
<td>• Know how you plan to use public input before the workshop</td>
<td>• Participants can use the opportunity to raise their concerns, needs, issues</td>
<td>• Small numbers of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commence with presentation and allow for interaction in small groups with feedback to larger group to bring all the information together at the end of the workshop</td>
<td>• How you are going to manage the group – rules for engagement</td>
<td>• Foster equity and credibility</td>
<td>• Resistance to breaking up into small groups by some participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use trained facilitators and give them clear instructions to ensure the aims of the workshop are achieved</td>
<td>• Opportunity to hear the “silent” voices</td>
<td>• Special interest groups monopolise the workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How are you going to feedback outcomes of workshop to participants</td>
<td>• Special interest groups get to listen to other voices</td>
<td>• Participants alter the agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unexpected additional benefits</td>
<td>• Facilitators not impartial or not skilled enough to deal with some behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Relational benefits</td>
<td>• Information session format used rather than workshop format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field Trips</strong></td>
<td>• Set up booking system to manage demand effectively</td>
<td>• Opportunity to develop rapport with stakeholders</td>
<td>• Feedback not recorded effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tour of project site or comparable site for stakeholders, elected members, community groups, media</td>
<td>• Make accessible to diverse groups</td>
<td>• Increase knowledge of issues and process for all involved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide itinerary/tour guide</td>
<td>• Unexpected additional benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plan question/answer session</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plan refreshment break and provide water during the trip</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consider safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of participants can be limited by resource availability</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Intention can be misinterpreted</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Project site may reveal unintended conditions</td>
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<td>• Aggrieved participant may take the opportunity to monopolise captured audience</td>
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</table>
### Table 4 – Engagement techniques for COLLABORATE level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider techniques for COLLABORATE level</th>
<th>Always think it through</th>
<th>What can go right</th>
<th>What can go wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Council Advisory Committees with specific focus</strong></td>
<td>• Chairperson needs to be engaging, clear and inclusive</td>
<td>• Potential for larger number of representatives on specific issues and increases ‘representativeness’</td>
<td>• Can be costly - providing necessary assistance to these groups so they can overcome any barriers to participation (e.g. may include need for interpreters, childcare, assistance for disabled, staff time for administration and support)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• There needs to be formal mechanism for Advisory Groups to feed directly into Council’s decision making process, otherwise it may be tokenistic</td>
<td>• Developing skills of larger number of people</td>
<td>• Participants may misunderstand their role as advisors, not decision makers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The Terms of Reference and focus of Advisory Group need to be clearly defined</td>
<td>• Detailed input can be gained</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Tasks/actions need to be outlined and carried out</td>
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<td><strong>Community representatives on Council committees</strong></td>
<td>• Input is ongoing - this aids planning and other developmental processes</td>
<td>• Demonstrates Council’s commitment to citizen participation in decision making</td>
<td>• There is a limit to number of community representatives who can be on a committee, so they are not able to represent everyone</td>
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<td>• Representatives, if they are not Councillors, are seen by community and Council as ‘independent’ Establishing Council Committees such as ‘Other Special Committees’ are referred to in Section 88 of the Local Government Act (1989)</td>
<td>• If combined with support, can develop skills of representative so they can develop skills of people in their own community</td>
<td>• Costly to develop skills of representatives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Requires timely administration and individual liaison in particular the provision of minutes and reports to assist decision making</td>
<td>• Opportunities to develop multi-sector partnerships e.g. public, private, Non Government and community partnerships and bring together different resources, skills and energies to respond to priority issues in the community</td>
<td>• Can be costly to provide necessary administration and assistance to overcome barriers to participation such as interpreters, bilingual workers, assistance for sensory disabled, childcare etc.</td>
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### Table 5 – Engagement techniques for EMPOWER level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider techniques for EMPOWER level</th>
<th>Always think it through</th>
<th>What can go right</th>
<th>What can go wrong</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mediation/Negotiation/Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>• Establish firm guidelines&lt;br&gt;• Ensure the role of the mediator/negotiator and participants are clear&lt;br&gt;• Seek commitment to the process</td>
<td>• Helps participants towards an understanding of others viewpoint&lt;br&gt;• Forward thinking approach sets new directions&lt;br&gt;• Win/Win outcomes&lt;br&gt;• Promotes accountability on both sides</td>
<td>• Can be difficult to identify who the parties are and who and what they represent&lt;br&gt;• Time and resource intensive&lt;br&gt;• Knowledge and skill base required to facilitate mediation/negotiation not acknowledged</td>
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<td>Designed to create shared meanings through effective listening and reflective questioning</td>
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<td><strong>Citizen Juries</strong></td>
<td>• Ensure the sessions are managed by a skilled facilitator&lt;br&gt;• Be clear about how the results will be used&lt;br&gt;• Ensure a cross-section from the community&lt;br&gt;• Consider current levels of expertise of participants</td>
<td>• Great opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue&lt;br&gt;• Positions of interest can shift&lt;br&gt;• Limitations and possibilities can be identified&lt;br&gt;• Can dispel misinformation&lt;br&gt;• Can build credibility&lt;br&gt;• Can provide unexpected benefits</td>
<td>• Group selection can be mistrusted&lt;br&gt;• Participants may not show up on the day&lt;br&gt;• Sessions can lose focus&lt;br&gt;• Cost can be extensive</td>
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<td>Group of citizens selected to learn about an issue and then examine the data by questioning decision-makers, technicians, and interested parties – all of who are witnesses to the process. The Jury makes recommendations based on their evaluation of the discussions</td>
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<td><strong>Design Charrettes</strong></td>
<td>• Plan how the design sessions will take place&lt;br&gt;• Provide clear information and guidelines for participants&lt;br&gt;• Provide clear parameters&lt;br&gt;• Provide technical support&lt;br&gt;• Provide opportunities to foster creative ideas</td>
<td>• Can create effective partnerships and working relationships with communities and individuals&lt;br&gt;• Can develop sense of trust for all concerned&lt;br&gt;• Can identify issues and concerns in early stages of projects&lt;br&gt;• Can result in improved outcomes</td>
<td>• Participants can be exposed to views and arguments from different backgrounds&lt;br&gt;• Special interest lobbying can be diffused&lt;br&gt;• Can develop capacity in communities&lt;br&gt;• Can provide unexpected benefits</td>
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<td>Sessions where participants become involved in the design of a projects features</td>
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<td><strong>Deliberative Polling</strong></td>
<td>• Ensure a skilled facilitator is used&lt;br&gt;• Commit to full process&lt;br&gt;• Consider resources required and check against budget and hidden costs&lt;br&gt;• Aim for a cross-section of participants from communities&lt;br&gt;• Plan to develop capacity in communities</td>
<td>• Participants can be exposed to views and arguments from different backgrounds&lt;br&gt;• Special interest lobbying can be diffused&lt;br&gt;• Can develop capacity in communities&lt;br&gt;• Can provide unexpected benefits</td>
<td>• Mistrust of the organisers and unfamiliar process can hamper participation&lt;br&gt;• People do not have the time required to commit to the process&lt;br&gt;• Timeframes are unrealistic&lt;br&gt;• Agenda too ambitious or not specific enough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selecting people from communities to measure informed opinions. Essential elements required to ensure a democratic deliberative process are, influence, inclusion and deliberation (Carson, Hartz-Karp, 2005).</td>
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One of the most important roles of a Councillor is to participate in making policy and decisions on behalf of their community. Community expectations about decision-making processes have changed over time. The days of citizens electing representatives and leaving them to make decisions on their behalf during their term of office without being engaged in the process are long gone. Increasingly, citizens expect to have some control over matters that affect their living environment, and to see governments actively telling them about what plans they have, and listening and responding to concerns about matters which impact on the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of their local community.

Facilitating informed decision-making
Some issues to consider regarding Councillor roles in the community engagement process follow.

- It is prudent that Councillors not take an active “hands on” role in the community engagement process, but rather maintain a neutral position and be clearly seen as listening to what their community has to say.

- However, in circumstances where a Councillor has stated a position, it may be appropriate for a statement to be openly made that this is the case. This leaves it in the hands of the community to have input into swaying the strength of, or conviction to maintaining that stated position. In these cases, the argument for Councillors not having a hands on role during the community engagement process is strengthened, to avoid community perception of a biased process.

It is important to maintain the integrity of an objective and unbiased community engagement process. Whilst it is difficult to make hard and fast rules about how to achieve this, some useful tips follow.

- During the community engagement planning phase, consider nominating suitably experienced staff, engaging specialist consultants, or inviting prominent citizens or community leaders to chair sessions or to facilitate workshops with key stakeholder groups to identify the main issues and gauge their engagement expectations.

- On occasion it may be acceptable for Councillors to have more prominent roles in community engagement processes. Care needs to be taken however, that Councillors maintain the integrity of an objective and unbiased community engagement process as previously discussed.

- It may be appropriate for the Mayor to “chair” a process by playing a “master of ceremonies” role, but take care that this does not extend to a hands-on, facilitator role.

- The presence of Councillors during the information gathering phases, for example at community forums, demonstrates an interest in hearing what the community has to say, but they must clearly be seen as listening. Where they have particular information or facts to contribute, care should be taken by Councillors to provide information in an objective and non-defensive way.

Councillors ultimately need to consider the outcome of any community engagement process within the context of strategic planning directions for the whole Council area, resource and budgetary constraints, and broader regional or State policies where relevant.

Having made a final decision, community confidence will be enhanced by providing feedback to those who participated about how their input was taken into account in the decision making process. Councillors have an important role in this regard, for example, the Mayor may convey messages verbally, in writing or through the media, which adds strength to the message that “we have listened and taken your views into account in our decision making”.

Appendix C: The Role of Councillors in Community Engagement