

Community Engagement Framework





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1. Purpose

The purpose of the Community Engagement Framework is to:

1. Inform the community about the City of Ballarat's commitment and approach to engagement and encourage them to become involved.
2. Recognise diversity within the community and incorporate this into the planning and design of engagement activities.
3. Enable a consistent, transparent and high-quality approach to the design and delivery of community engagement.
4. Provide guidance to City of Ballarat Officers, Councillors and community on our engagement principles, methods and available resources.



2. Definitions

The City of Ballarat defines community engagement as:

'Community engagement is providing a range of opportunities for a two-way exchange. Community engagement strengthens relationships, shapes decisions and enables us to learn from each other.'

Other definitions relevant to the Community Engagement Framework and supporting materials are defined below.

Community: A group of people, the members of which reside in the same geographical area or have a shared background, interest, affiliation or membership.

Stakeholder: Any individual or group of people with a specific stake in the outcome of a decision.
(Note: Stakeholders can be part of your community, or your community members can be stakeholders.)

Hard-to-reach: Individuals and groups that are more difficult to involve in community engagement and have multiple barriers to engagement.

Communication: Imparting or exchanging information or ideas, utilising a range of channels and mediums.

Participation: Participation by communities in activities that help achieve desired outcomes.

Deliberation: An engagement process with a select group of community members. The process focusses on a defined issue, weighs up options and provides recommendations to decision-makers.

Partnership: Occurs when two or more people or organisations work together to realise or achieve a goal.



3. Commitment

The City of Ballarat has a strong commitment to engage with the community. The City of Ballarat recognises that engagement leads to well-informed decisions at an operational and strategic level, achieves effective and transparent governance, and is fundamental to bold, vibrant and thriving communities.

The Community Engagement Framework is based on a set of principles. It recognises that engagement is a planned process which should be tailored to particular circumstances, taking into account factors such as complexity, community values, sensitivity, timing and opportunity.

The updated Community Engagement Framework builds on the original document and strengthens the City of Ballarat's commitment to high quality engagement. The revision was completed as an outcome of a comprehensive engagement process to gain feedback on the existing framework, reflections on current practice, and ideas for future engagement.

The City of Ballarat is part of an international pilot program for UNESCO's new long-term approach to managing change in historic cities, called the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach. One of its critical steps is to work with local people to shape the future of their city. The City of Ballarat is doing this in several ways, the principles of which have been embedded in the Community Engagement Framework:

- Engaging with communities at stages where their input will meaningfully guide and impact on project development and delivery
- Continuously asking what people love and want to retain about Ballarat and what they imagine for its future
- Starting with an understanding of community values to inspire change
- Showing how community feedback has informed project development and delivery

4. Objectives and Principles

Described below are the City of Ballarat's community engagement objectives:

- Deliver 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.
- Provide a strong foundation for understanding and working with our community – promoting shared responsibility for decisions and trust in the decision-making process.
- Strengthen collaborations, partnerships and new ways to involve and empower the community.

Described below are the City of Ballarat's 10 community engagement principles:

1. We will enable the community to provide meaningful and relevant input into decision-making.
2. We will be clear about the objectives of engagement and the opportunities to influence decision-making.
3. We will be respectful of all community members, City of Ballarat Officers and Councillors.
4. We will provide accurate, timely and accessible information.
5. We will provide engagement opportunities for all community members, including those considered hard-to-reach.
6. We will provide multiple and varied opportunities for the community to participate in each engagement process.
7. We will consider the needs and interests of the community and stakeholders in the decision-making process.
8. We will inform the community of the final decision and how their input was considered.
9. We will review and evaluate the effectiveness of the community engagement.
10. We will plan, resource and report on our engagement processes appropriately.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone with a relationship with the City of Ballarat has a role in the successful implementation of the Community Engagement Framework. The key roles and responsibilities are described in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good level of understanding of the Community Engagement Framework, Handbook and Resources. • Adhere to the engagement principles in their day-to-day interactions with community members. • Respectful of engagement processes, City of Ballarat Officers, community members and stakeholders.
Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good level of understanding of the Community Engagement Framework, Handbook and Resources. • Use the Framework, Handbook and Resources to design and deliver engagement processes. • Coordinate engagement activities across departments and groups. • Seek out engagement champions when requiring support and guidance.
Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good level of understanding of the Community Engagement Framework, Handbook and Resources. • Advocate for the consistent implementation of the Framework. • Resource staff to deliver community engagement. • Advocate to Councillors about the role of community engagement.
Engagement Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of understanding of the Community Engagement Framework, Handbook and Resources. • Support Officers to design and deliver community engagement. • Identify opportunities to build on community engagement practice with a focus on continuous improvement. • Lead the review and evaluation process.
Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful of engagement processes, Councillors, City of Ballarat Officers, other community members and stakeholders. • Constructively participate in engagement processes. • Share local knowledge, values and experiences.
Representative Bodies and Advisory Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring a representative voice to Council processes. • Strengthen relationships between Council and community members. • Advocate for minority groups. • Encourage and promote community engagement opportunities among networks. • Disseminate information among networks.

6. Why?

Effective engagement strengthens the City of Ballarat's decision-making by connecting community and stakeholders to the policies, projects and services that impact their lives.

Community engagement has many benefits for Councillors, City of Ballarat Officers, and the groups and individuals that create Ballarat's diverse community. A clearly defined engagement process helps to ensure that people participate in a meaningful way - where they understand how they are informing a decision. This can strengthen the relationship and trust between community and the City of Ballarat.

Community engagement supports the City of Ballarat to deliver fit-for-purpose services and confidently plan for the evolving needs of current and future populations. Community engagement can give people a greater sense of ownership and involvement in the City of Ballarat's decisions, as well as creating new ties or strengthening existing relationships between community members.

Other benefits include:

- Broadening community participation in democratic processes
- Building a stronger evidence base to inform decisions
- Facilitating greater mutual understanding between the City of Ballarat and community
- Supporting the City of Ballarat to meet its legislative requirements
- Increasing transparency in decision-making processes
- Strengthening community networks and resilience
- Sharing the ownership of opportunities and challenges benefiting/impacting both the community and the City of Ballarat
- Supporting the City of Ballarat to advocate on behalf of community.

The City of Ballarat has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation to describe why the City of Ballarat engages below:

Inform: Information is circulated to assist in understanding a project/strategy or decision that is going to happen or has already happened

Consult: Seeks input, feedback or advice before part of the project/strategy or decision is progressed

Collaboration: Community or specific stakeholders are engaged to establish what needs to be done and to develop solutions that are incorporated into decision-making.



7. When?

The City of Ballarat engages with its community through its day-to-day operations, service provision and planned engagement processes.

The City of Ballarat has identified a number of activities where community engagement occurs that range from strengthening relationships and providing information, to informing the City of Ballarat's strategic decisions. This engagement may occur through ongoing relationships through advisory committees, planned engagement processes or through day-to-day interactions over the counter and service provision.

The six activities are described below:

- **Strategic** - inform strategic decisions related to policy, plans or programs
- **Statutory** - obtain feedback to inform statutory approvals related to policy, plans, programs
- **Research** - obtain evidence to review or design services programs
- **Dialogue** - enable an ongoing dialogue with the community
- **Transactional** - respond to queries or concerns
- **Awareness** - create awareness through local media or other avenues

The City of Ballarat is responsible for determining when to engage and the level of influence community can have in the process. This level of influence may be determined by technical requirements, timeframes and available resources. Instances where the City of Ballarat may only be able to provide feedback on the outcome of a decision-making process include emergency management, public risk issues, internal policy development, response to legislative requirements or time sensitive matters.

When the City of Ballarat must engage:

There are a number of pieces of Victorian legislation that describe when councils must engage with their communities. These include:

The Local Government Act (1989)

Describes the objectives, roles and functions of local government in Victoria. It specifies community engagement must inform the following:

- Developing a Council Plan
- Developing a Council Budget

Further information about the core role of councils is found in **Appendix 1**. Information about upcoming proposed amendments to the Local Government Act is also found in Appendix 1.

The Planning and Environment Act (1987)

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

The Local Government Amendment (Performance Reporting and Accountability) Act (2014)

Requires each local government authority to report on the existence and application of community engagement policies and guidelines.

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 for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan.

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Council-led community engagement processes on key local issues will ensure the City of Ballarat complies with this charter founded on the following principles:

- Human rights are essential in a democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law, human dignity, equality and freedom
- Human rights belong to all people without discrimination, and the diversity of the people of Victoria enhances our community
- Human rights come with responsibilities and must be exercised in a way that respects the human rights of others

Other relevant sections of the Charter include:

- Section 15 (Freedom of Expression)
- Section 18 (Taking Part in Public Life) of the Charter.

As a public authority, the City of Ballarat has an obligation to act in a way that is compatible with the human rights described in the Charter.

8. Who?

The City of Ballarat's projects, policies, service provision and operations intersect in the day-to-day lives of community members and stakeholders across the whole municipality. Engagement should seek to connect with a broad range of community members to create fair and inclusive engagement processes.

The following is a snapshot of the different types of stakeholders in Ballarat.

- Arts and culture community
- Business and industry
- Carers
- Chamber of commerce
- Children
- City of Ballarat employees
- Community service providers
- Commuters
- Emergency services
- Environmental groups
- Families
- Government departments
- Heritage groups
- Indigenous community
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community
- Local, State and Federal MPs
- Mayor and Councillors
- Media
- Neighbouring councils or other local government organisations
- Not-for-profit organisations and groups
- People experiencing homelessness

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People with a disability
- Public transport user groups
- Ratepayers
- Residents
- Schools, education facilities and students
- Seniors/senior groups
- Service groups
- Sporting, leisure and recreational clubs and groups
- Students
- Visitors to Ballarat
- Volunteers/volunteer organisations
- Young people



9. How?

Successful engagement programs are underpinned by careful planning which clearly define the engagement purpose, identifies who needs to be engaged, and chooses the appropriate activities.

The City of Ballarat undertakes a series of steps in designing and delivering inclusive engagement processes to genuinely inform decision-making processes.

Designing a fit for purpose engagement plan

The steps below are to be documented in the engagement plan template which is approved by the relevant decision-maker before engagement commences.

1. SCOPE

A shared agreement about the engagement purpose needs to occur to ensure there is organisational buy-in about the process prior to engagement commencing. Good planning starts with defining the scope of the engagement by:

- Clearly articulating the project scope, and level of community and stakeholder influence
- Defining the engagement objectives, negotiables, non-negotiables and scope
- Integrating the engagement design with internal risk management procedures
- Agreeing on the evaluation criteria to measure the effectiveness of the engagement
- Gaining City of Ballarat buy-in, feedback and sign-off regarding the engagement objectives and negotiables.

2. STAKEHOLDERS

Understanding who needs to be engaged is an essential component of designing an engagement approach. It is important to think about who is interested or impacted by the project as well as people who may have a barrier to participating in the engagement activities. Community and stakeholders are defined by:

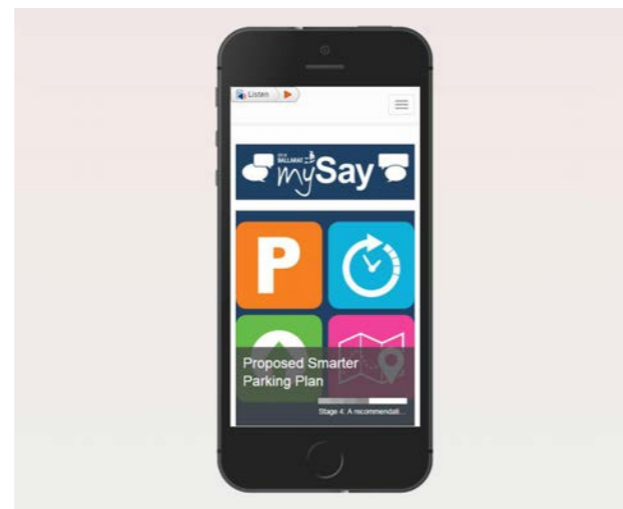
- Identifying stakeholders and their possible values and likely level of interest in the project
- Considering the possible hard-to-reach groups
- Understanding who has or has not been involved in previous related projects
- Awareness of other projects, opportunities or community issues that may influence community participation in the engagement.

3. ACTIVITIES

High levels of involvement in community engagement is achieved by selecting activities that overcome barriers to participation. To select the right activities, the engagement purpose and stakeholder analysis should be combined by:

- Asking the community how they want to be involved (where possible)
- Co-ordinating with other City of Ballarat engagement activities
- Promoting opportunities for community strengthening through education and connection
- Using a range of different engagement methods that provide people with accessible options to participate
- Selecting tools that collect relevant project information and data
- Agreeing on an approach to information management and data analysis
- Complementing face-to-face activities with online engagement.

Once community engagement activities have occurred, the feedback needs to be consolidated and analysed. Depending on the engagement and number of activities, this can take significant time and resources. This information is then presented in a community engagement findings report, which will include details about the engagement process and feedback provided. This report should be made available to the participants and broader community with information on next steps to 'close the loop' on the engagement process.



4. PROGRAM

Community engagement activities require careful planning to ensure they provide the community with the appropriate project information to support participation, and can be adequately resourced by City of Ballarat Officers. A successful engagement program can be designed by:

- Providing the appropriate lead times when promoting the project to stakeholders
- Providing targeted project information in advance of engagement activities to support informed participation
- Delivering engagement activities at days, times and locations that meet the needs of the community and stakeholders
- Providing a timeframe of when participants can expect feedback.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Continuous improvement in community engagement practice is achieved through evaluating activities from the outset from both the participant and the City of Ballarat's perspective to determine their effectiveness. The evaluation findings should be documented to support further engagement planning by:

- Selecting an appropriate monitoring and evaluation approach
- Measuring the engagement process from the beginning
- Understanding and evaluating the depth and breadth of participation to inform future engagement
- Capturing and sharing the learning from the engagement.
- The City of Ballarat's overarching engagement evaluation framework is in Section 10 of this Framework.



10. Evaluation

The City of Ballarat is committed to learn from each engagement process. Outlined in Table 2 are Key Result Areas (KRA) and indicators to be used when evaluating community engagement.

Table 2: Key Result Areas and Indicators

KRA	Indicator
Planning, resourcing and structures enable the achievement of engagement objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The detail of engagement planning was consistent with stakeholder/community expectations 2. The time and budget allocated was consistent with stakeholder/community expectations 3. The internal structures and responsibilities were clarified early in the engagement planning
Timely and clear communication builds trust and increases participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Stakeholders/community were given sufficient time and information to engage in a meaningful way, and at influential stages of the process 5. Outcomes and commitments made to stakeholders/community were recorded and followed through in a timely way 6. The results of the process were communicated back to stakeholders/community.
Diversity of participation ensures balance and enables deep understanding of stakeholder and community perspectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The stakeholders/community engaged was representative of the project impact and risk 8. The engagement process ensured there was equitable opportunity for participation for a diverse range of perspectives to be shared 9. There was transparency of communicating engagement details including goal, negotiables, timelines and events
Influence to the extent promised builds sustainable decisions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. The influence/input from stakeholders/community matched the level of engagement promised 11. The decision or outcome was considered “sustainable” (economically viable, technically feasible, environmentally consistent and socially acceptable)
Goal orientated engagement builds support and honours the time and resources committed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. The engagement process enabled practical project outcomes to be achieved 13. Stakeholders/community demonstrate support for the engagement process
Engagement builds learning opportunities for all	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. The process enabled knowledge capture and sharing to improve practice 15. Participation in the engagement process benefited the stakeholders/community involved

Adapted from the City of Melbourne Evaluation Framework (2014)



References

IAP2 Core Values

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international organisation advancing the practice of public participation. The IAP2 framework is underpinned by seven core values that are aimed at ensuring organisations make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.


These values are:

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the final decision.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM



The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Legislation

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic.) governs the objectives, roles and functions of local government in Victoria. Section 3C(3) of this Act states six core roles of a Council, being:

- Acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision-making
- Providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement
- Maintaining the viability of the Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner
- Advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments
- Acting as a responsible partner in government by taking into account the needs of other communities
- Fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.

The State Government has recently undertaken a review of the Local Government Act. The draft legislation signals some changes to expectations around community engagement.

The draft provides an expectation that councils will:

- Adopt and maintain a community engagement policy
- Collaborate with the community in the development of the 4-year council plan and its first council budget after elections
- Develop a community vision with the local community
- Develop local laws in accordance with the council's community engagement policy.

The rate cap variation will still require community engagement (as per current requirements).

The draft bill includes five principles for undertaking engagement that align strongly with IAP2 core values.

In summary the bill includes:

1. A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope
2. Participants must be provided with information to inform their participation
3. Participants must be representative of the persons and groups affected
4. Participants are entitled to support to enable meaningful and informed engagement
5. Participants must be advised of how the results of the engagement influenced the council's decision-making.

The amended Local Government Act is expected to be enacted in late 2018.

