Community Engagement Framework

District Council of Grant

Contents

Definitions

Communication

The provision of information to and from the community.

Community

All people who live, work, pay rates, conduct business, visit, utilise services/facilities/public spaces within the District Council of Grant.

Consultation

Two-way provision of information by Council to the community that enables them to respond, express concerns and identify issues, so these can be considered before final decision making.

Council

The District Council of Grant.

IAP2

International Association for Public Participation.

Public Participation

A process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision.

Stakeholder

Individuals, a group of individuals, organisations or political entities directly affected or involved with the outcome of a decision or the impact of a strategy/project/proposition.

What is Community Engagement?

Community Engagement describes the range of activities aimed at increasing community awareness and participation. It means our community getting involved in Council decisions that are important and sits at the heart of democratic processes in local government.

Why Community Engagement?

Council recognises that people have a right to be informed and have a say on projects and activities that are important to them, or which have an impact on their daily lives.

Council's vision, mission and strategies as outlined in the District Council of Grant Strategic Management Plan 2020-2030 (the Plan), are underpinned by community engagement. The value of community engagement is further reinforced through the Plan's strategic goal to lead and engage with our communities.

Community engagement is mutually beneficial for Council and the community as it assists to:

- Increase understanding and improved project and service outcomes through sharing information, meaningful feedback and partnerships;

- Increase trust and community confidence in decision making;

- Enhance accountability and transparency through open and genuine communication.

Council Members are elected to represent their community's interests and it is their responsibility to make decisions. Input from the community is pivotal in this process as your feedback provides Council with key information that can support or influence decisions.

Our Engagement Approach

Council is committed to proactively engaging community on important issues and opportunities. We want to strengthen relationships to build a greater understanding of community needs and views which will assist us to make informed and transparent decisions.

In order to achieve this, we have developed a Community Engagement Framework (the Framework), which demonstrates the District Council of Grant's commitment to:

• A consistent community engagement approach;

• Improving awareness and understanding of community engagement;

• Establishing the principles and definitions for engagement; and

• Providing guidelines and a toolkit for planning and delivering community engagement.

The District Council of Grant recognises the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum as the international standard for effective community engagement. The spectrum helps us determine the level of engagement and the extent to which community and stakeholders may influence a decision. Generally the more complex a decision is, the higher the level of engagement required.

The flowchart below shows the proposed general process for starting engagement and how decision making works within Council.

NEED OR OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFIED

• Community request(s) or Council motion;
• Council business planning;
• A legislated obligation; or
• An operational need to engage.

RESEARCH & PLANNING

• The need/opportunity is investigated; and
• A report is presented at an Ordinary Council Meeting, where Council determines direction for the project/proposal.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

• A Community Engagement Plan is developed and implemented; and
• Collation and analysis of engagement feedback into a report (for engagement level consult-empower);

REPORTING

• Presentation of report including findings and recommendations for Council's consideration; and
• Council makes decision on the proposed project/proposal.

FEEDBACK

• The outcome of Council's decision is reported back to stakeholders and the community.

Inform ——→✕←—— *Involve* ——→✕←—— *Empower*

Low Level Community
Engagement

Medium Level Community
Engagement

High Level Community
Engagement

	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Goal	One way communication to provide balanced and objective info to increase understanding about a topic.	Two way communication process for gaining feedback, ideas and alternatives to inform decision making.	Working directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and ideas are consistently understood and considered.	Partnering with the public at every stage of the decision making process and to develop alternatives, and identify preferred solutions.	Building the capacity of the community to lead their own plans for change and have final decision making power.
Role of participants	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Lead
Examples of when level may be appropriate	In the event of an emergency.	Undertaking a survey about a park upgrade.	Hosting workshops to develop a strategic plan.	Establishing a Working Group to co-design a project.	Provide event management training and funding for community to plan and deliver an event.
Possible methods	• Newsletters • Social Media • Public Notices • Websites • Fact Sheets • Drop-in Sessions • Club and Organisation meetings	• Surveys • Polls • Public Exhibition • Focus Groups • Drop-in Sessions • Township meetings	• Workshops • Advisory Groups • Township meetings	• Working Groups • Advisory Committees	• Training events • Facilitation of networks

Adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum
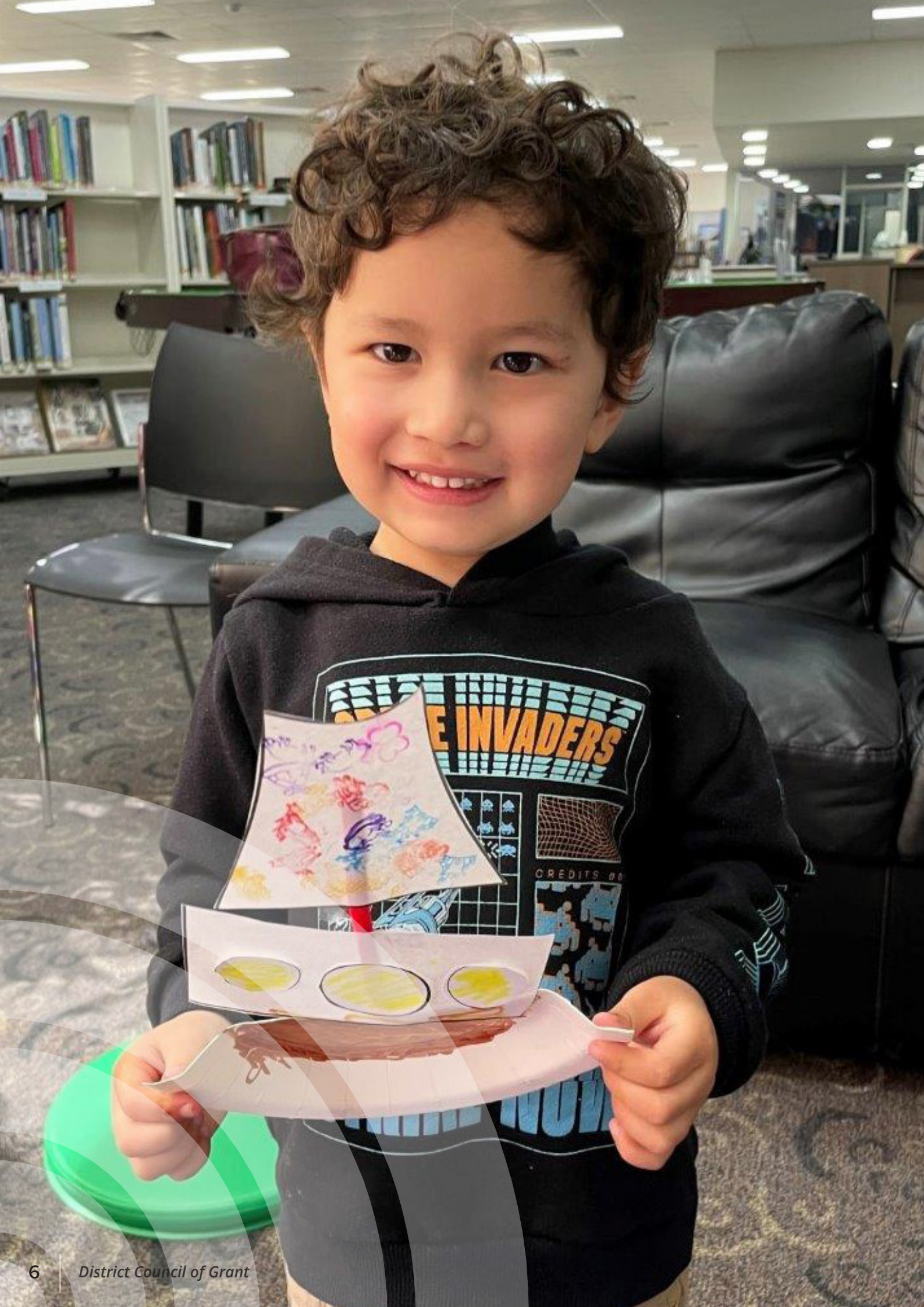
Engagement Framework Context

Legislative Requirements

Section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) requires Councils to adopt a Public Consultation Policy which outlines minimum consultation standards for Councils in relation to various sections of the Act. Council will always engage with the community where there is a legislated requirement to do so and aims to genuinely engage exceeding the requirements in the Act.

Council endorsed a Public Consultation Policy (the Policy) in December 2015 which includes a matrix outlining the statutory engagement requirements for 19 core council activities, some examples of these activities include:

- Making/amending local laws;
- Selling Council property;
- Developing Annual Plans;
- Setting the budget; and
- Making changes to Planning Policies.

The Policy provides the foundation for engagement however where applicable the framework will be applied to enrich Councils engagement practices.

Strategic Documents

Council's Strategic Management Plan 2020-2030 outlines the vision, mission and strategies for our district and communities over the next 10 years. It is the primary reference point from which Council's functions, actions and priorities will be developed, and our budget and resources allocated.

One of the Plan's goals is to "Lead and Engage with Our Communities". Under this goal sits ten strategies that demonstrate Council's genuine desire to engage with the community in a proactive, accessible, transparent, and open way. The development of this framework is a key strategy to be implemented from the plan and provides the roadmap for the delivery of the remaining strategies under this goal.

Community Feedback

We promoted the 'Have Your Say' campaign widely (Facebook, Community newsletters, media release, radio advert and Your Say DCG) to determine our communities preferences for engagement.

We heard from eleven (11) participants and found that:

- Most people had not been involved in Council engagement activity before as they did not know how;

- People most wanted to know about Council decisions relating to the environment followed by Council services, plans and strategies; and

- Public meetings and workshops were the most popular ways to get involved followed by online and social media.
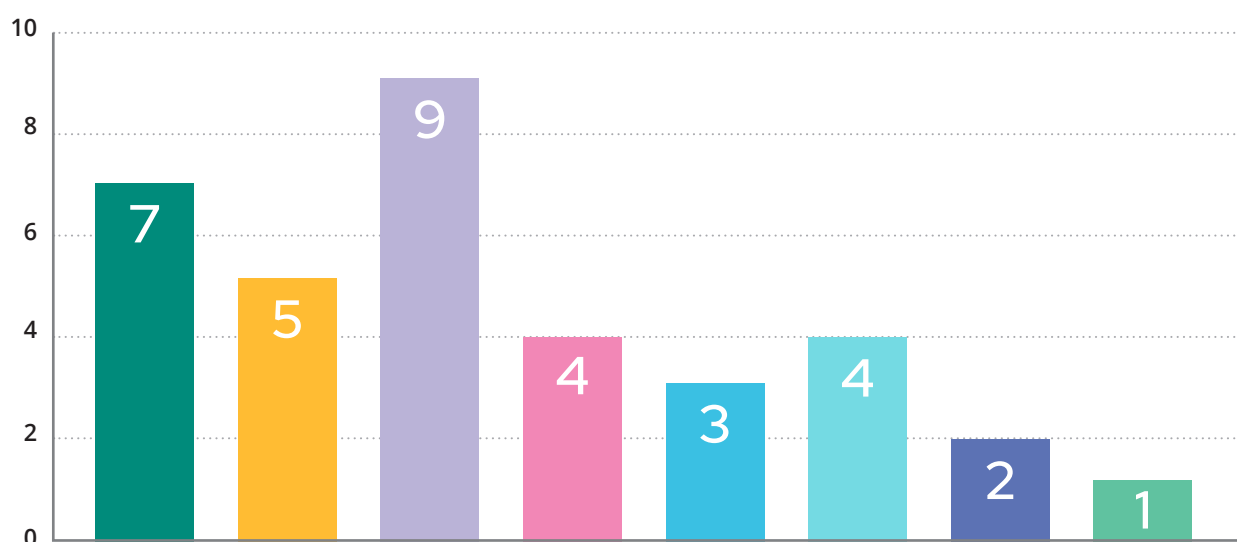
Question options

- Online (eg Your Say DCG)
- Social Media (eg Facebook)
- Public Meetings/ Workshops
- Surveys (Paper based or phone)
- Joining a committee
- Informal conversations
- Newsletters/ Media Releases
- Printed Media (eg brochures or letter drops)

Your Say DCG participant registration information has also been analysed and considered as part of this Framework, particularly the responses to the question *'Please let us know the areas of Council you are interested in'.*

The multiple choice options for this question were:

- Budget and Management Plans;
- Community Services and Programs;
- Council Programs;
- Elected Member Engagement;
- Environmental Services;
- New and Future Projects;
- Open Space;
- Parklands and Recreation;
- Policy; and
- Works Programs.
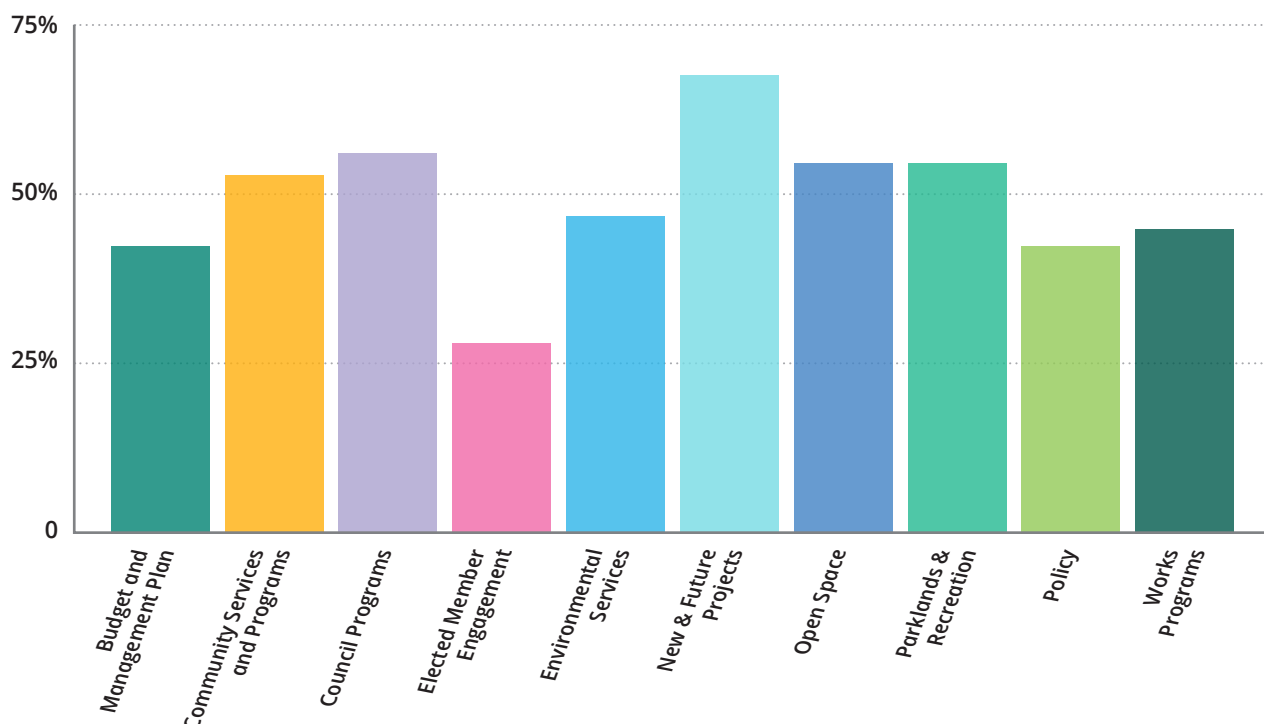
What this tells us is that our community primarily wants to know the latest news about current and upcoming projects and activities, what is going on across the community and our recreation and open spaces. Council will need to implement a number of different engagement methods particularly township meetings and to keep promoting Your Say DCG. Therefore when Council is planning community engagement it is important to consider the results above and ensure we are encouraging participation across multiple areas of Council that are of interest to our community.
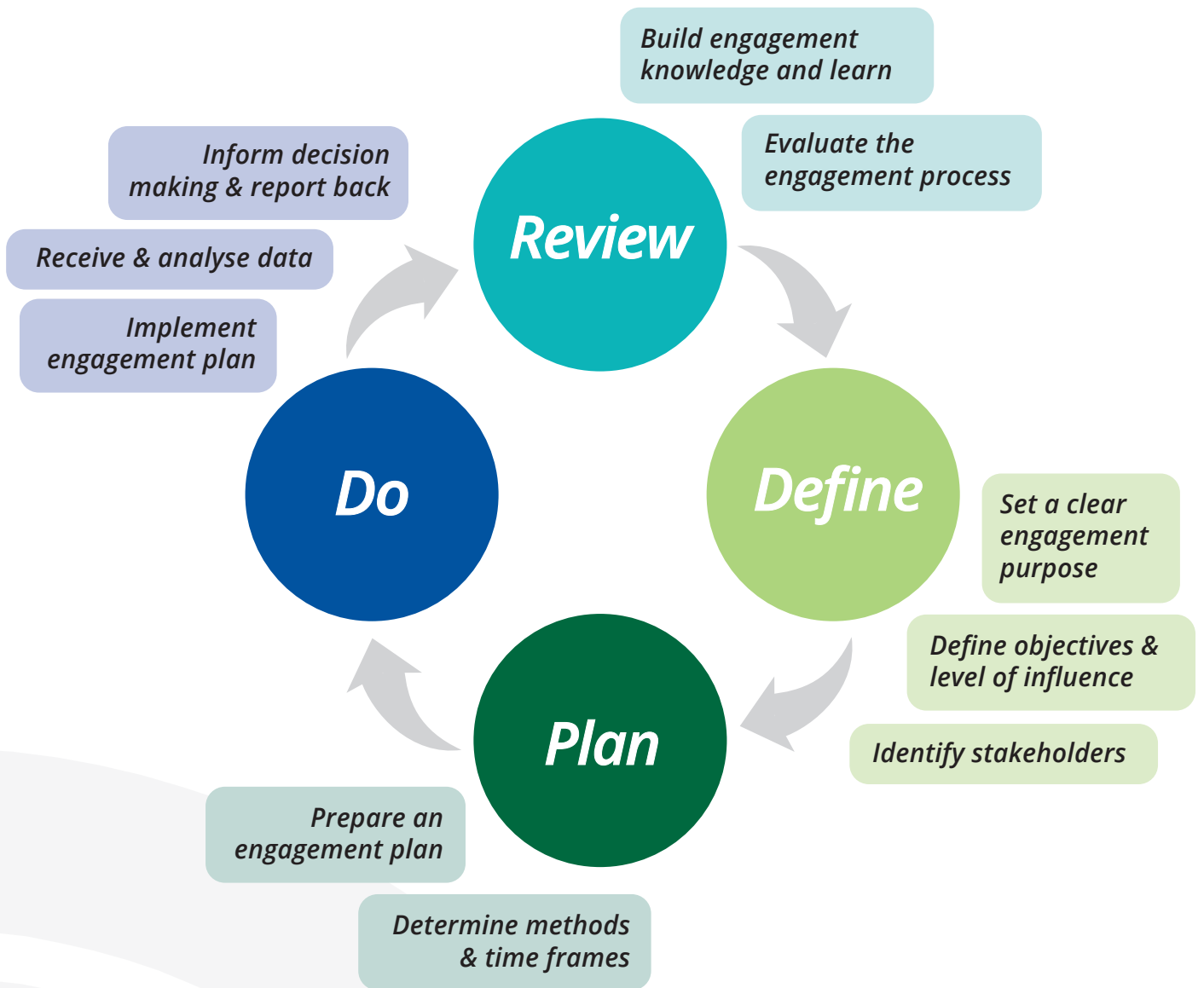
Our Engagement Values

The engagement values underpinning this Framework provide the foundation for community participation that is coordinated, consistent and best practice.

The values are the standards by which Council will undertake engagement and outline what the community can expect from Council in relation to our community engagement practices.

Value	Council's Commitment
Strong Relationships	*We will act in a honest, open and respectful manner through active listening and acknowledgment of the diverse experiences and knowledge of our community.*
Transparency	*We will share information openly to promote informed decision making by the community, Council and staff.*
Clear Communication	*We will define our engagement objective, explain the process, seek feedback and report back. The communication methods we use will be effective and accessible.*
Accessibility	*We will enable to community to participate in engagement opportunities by using appropriate methods and tools. Relevant information will be provided in a timely and accessible way.*
Inclusivity	*We will make sure participation in our engagement activities are representative and uphold our stakeholders right to be involved in decisions that affect them.*
Meaningful Opportunities	*We will provide valuable opportunities for the community to influence decision making and incorporate feedback gained during engagement processes. The community will also be given feedback on how their input has been considered.*
Continuous Improvement	*We will reflect on our engagement practices to refine them in future and identify barriers to engagement so that we can implement measures to remove/reduce these.*

Our Engagement Framework

Build engagement knowledge and learn

Evaluate the engagement process

Review

Inform decision making & report back

Receive & analyse data

Implement engagement plan

Do

Define

Set a clear engagement purpose

Define objectives & level of influence

Identify stakeholders

Plan

Prepare an engagement plan

Determine methods & time frames

Define

This is the first stage of the community engagement process. It is where the need to engage is determined along with an understanding of the context in which the engagement will occur.

The purpose for engaging is clarified, the community engagement objectives and the level of influence are established, and key stakeholders are identified.

Council will:

- Have a clearly defined community engagement purpose;
- Decide when to engage by considering community impact and interest;
- Determine the level of participation and influence;
- Always engage when legally required; and
- Provide anyone affected or interested with the opportunity to participate.

Deciding to engage

It is essential to determine whether there is a need to engage to avoid wasting Council resources and the community's time by participating in an engagement process that will not influence an outcome or decision.

The following table provides prompts when to engage, if more information is required prior to engaging, or if informing is sufficient.
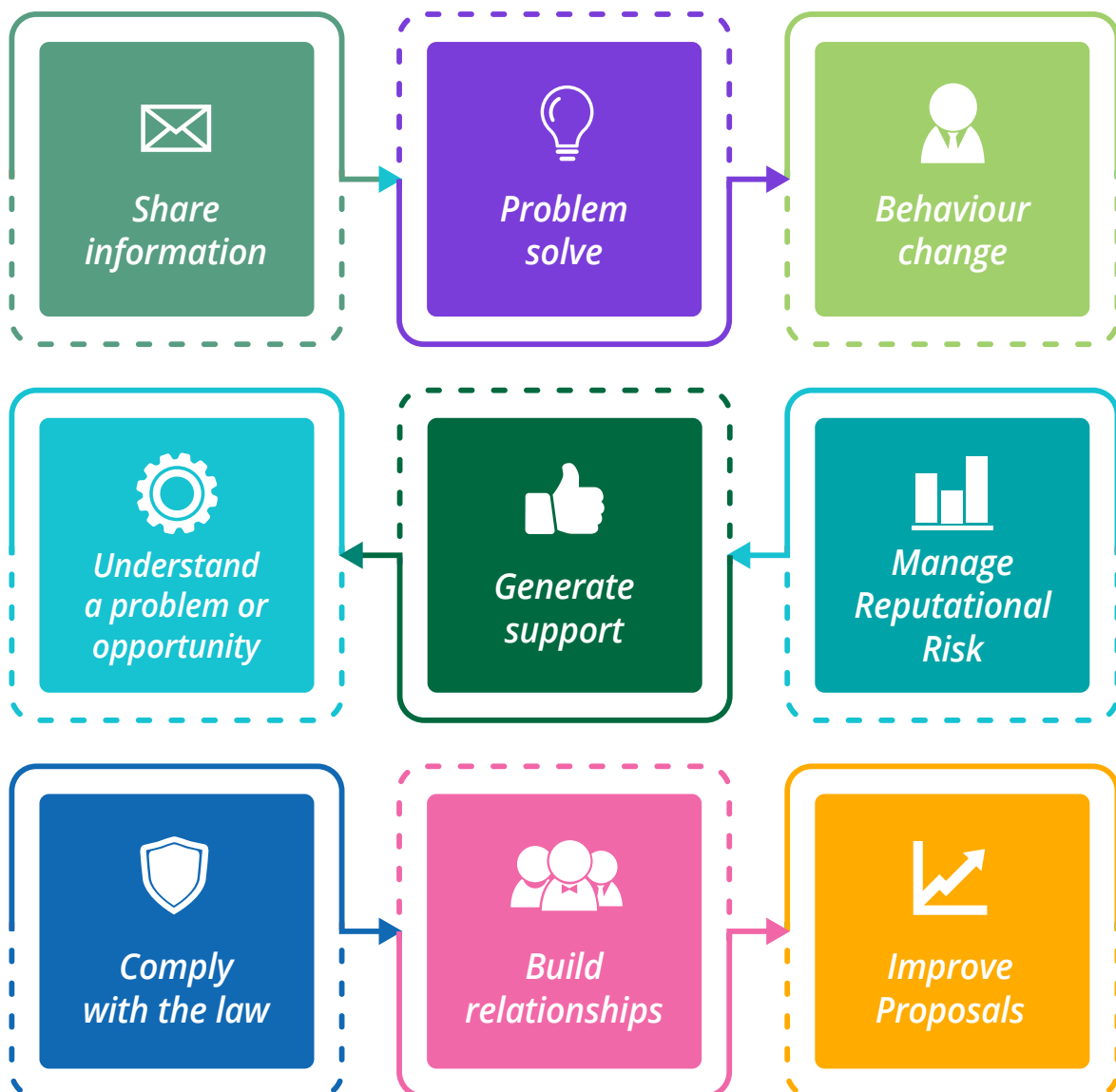
Question	Answer	Decision to engage
Has the decision already been made?	**Yes**	ℹ️ *Inform the community*
	Unsure	❓ *Seek more information*
	No	✅ *Engage!*
Is there any legislative requirement to engage?	**Yes**	✅ *Engage!*
	Unsure	❓ *Check Consulation Policy*
	No	✅ *Engage!*
Has there already been a community engagement process on this activity/ project?	**Yes**	✅ *Engage!*
	Unsure	❓ *Seek more information*
	No	✅ *Engage!*
Will community involvement influence/enhance the outcome of the project/ activity?	**Yes**	✅ *Engage!*
	Unsure	❓ *Determine level of influence*
	No	ℹ️ *Inform the community*
Are there benefits to the community for participating?	**Yes**	✅ *Engage!*
	Unsure	❓ *Determine level of influence*
	No	ℹ️ *Inform the community*
Does internal engagement need to occur?	**Yes**	✅ *Engage!*
	Unsure	❓ *Determine level of influence*
	No	ℹ️ *Inform relevant staff*

Setting a clear Engagement Purpose

- *What do we want to know?*
- *How will the result be used?*
- *What does success look like for the project?*

Some common engagement purposes include:

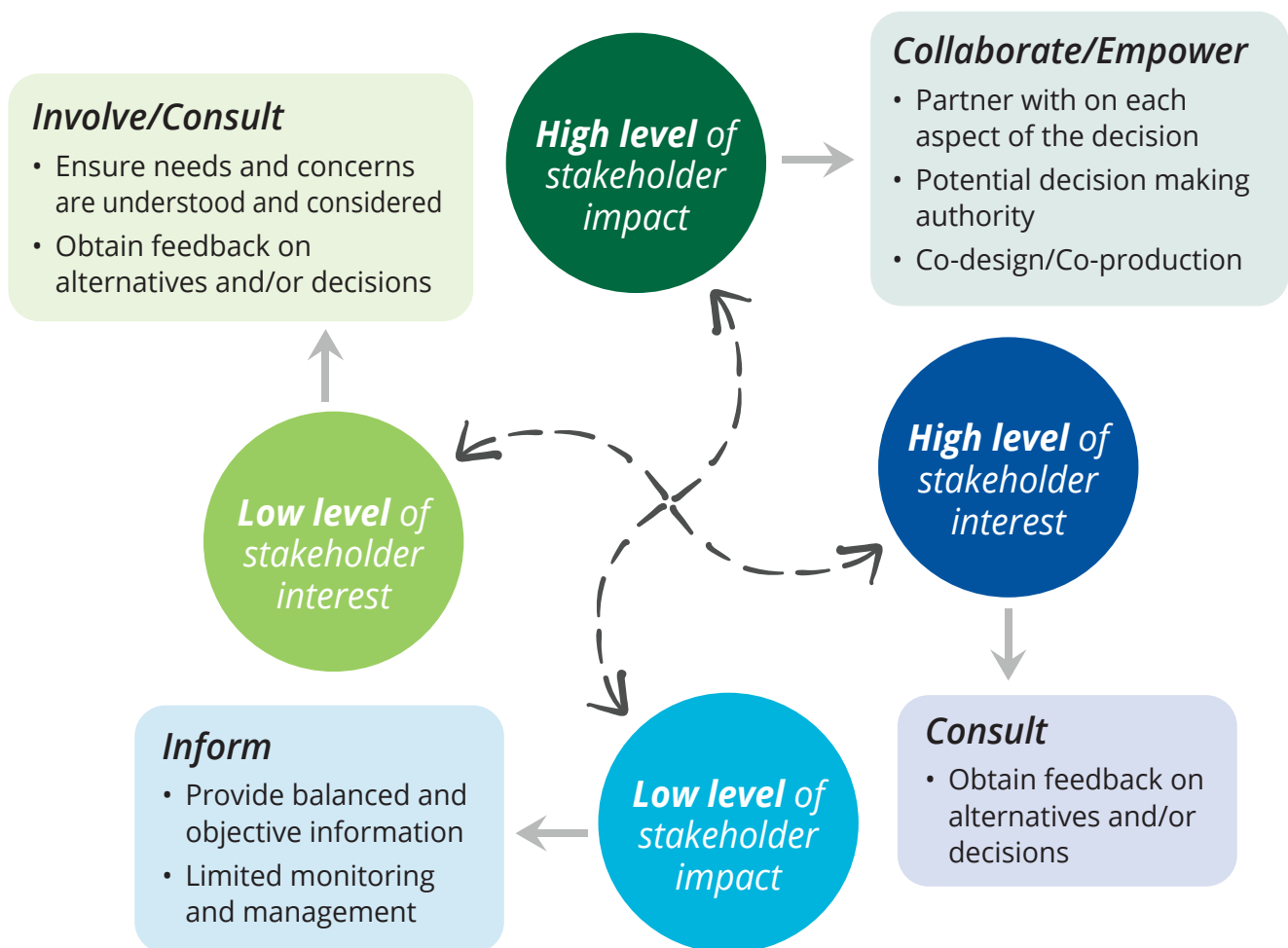|		
Share information	*Problem solve*	*Behaviour change*
Understand a problem or opportunity	*Generate support*	*Manage Reputational Risk*
Comply with the law	*Build relationships*	*Improve Proposals*

Define objectives and level of influence

- How much decision making power are we willing and able to hand over to our community stakeholders;
- Clarify what elements can be influenced and those that cannot (negotiables and non-negotiables);
- Objectives guide how and who will be involved, what needs to be asked of them and how their input will be captured;
- Objectives need to explain what you want to achieve from the engagement; and
- Define the measurables, how will you know if the engagement's been a success?

Stakeholders

Anyone who is likely to be affected by or has an interest in a decision or outcome will have the opportunity to participate. Council will identify potential stakeholders and the influence they may have on the engagement outcome using our internal Community Engagement Planning Tool (the Tool).

The below diagram illustrates the level of engagement required for different types of stakeholders depending on their level of interest and impact on the activity/project.

Involve/Consult
- Ensure needs and concerns are understood and considered
- Obtain feedback on alternatives and/or decisions

High level *of stakeholder impact*

Collaborate/Empower
- Partner with on each aspect of the decision
- Potential decision making authority
- Co-design/Co-production

Low level *of stakeholder interest*

High level *of stakeholder interest*

Inform
- Provide balanced and objective information
- Limited monitoring and management

Low level *of stakeholder impact*

Consult
- Obtain feedback on alternatives and/or decisions

Identify Risk

As with most projects and activities delivered across Council there is an element of risk with stakeholder engagement. Identifying and managing any potential risks early in engagement planning will make for a more effective process and decrease the likelihood of issues arising later on and negatively impacting the engagement process or project outcome(s).

This table highlights common (but not limited to) engagement risks and possible ways to minimise the impact on the project/activity.

Common risks	Management strategies
Stakeholders not understanding the engagement objectives or expectations about level of influence.	• Establishing the level of influence and engagement objectives at the start of the project/activity. • Ensuring stakeholders understand their level of influence and the engagement objectives.
Negative public feedback due to stakeholders having insufficient time or information to participate.	• Plan for early engagement, including communicating how and when stakeholders can participate. • Close the engagement loop so that stakeholders know how their feedback has influence the project/activity.
Stakeholders feeling excluded from the engagement process eg due to disability, language barriers or geographic isolation.	• Ensure that engagement methods and times are accessible and targeted for stakeholders eg easy read documents, diverse ways to participate (online or in person), and culturally appropriate.
Receiving feedback which significantly impacts the project/ activity late in the delivery phase, which leads to time delays and resource implications.	• Engage at the start of a project/activity eg focus groups with key stakeholders to influence the development of the project/activity. • Be clear on the level of influence at each project stage. • Close the communication loop by informing the stakeholder how their feedback has influenced the project/activity.
Failure to engage with diverse or hard to reach members of the community.	• Set up project control groups and/or consult with other members of staff and key stakeholders to ensure that those that are affected by the decision are included in the engagement activity. • If the project/activity has concluded without consultation then hard to reach stakeholders should be informed and included in any future relevant engagement activities.

Plan

In this stage Council determines how to implement the engagement process. With a clear understanding of the engagement purpose and key stakeholders gained during the 'Define' stage, the levels and methods of engagement are determined during 'Plan' using the IAP2 Spectrum.

Council will:

- Set clear expectations about what is negotiable and the level of influence on decision making that the community can expect to have;

- Customise the engagement methods to ensure accessibility and inclusion; and

- Develop an engagement plan which includes evaluation processes.

Prepare an Engagement Plan

Prior to implementing any engagement activities an engagement plan needs to be developed to ensure a coordinated and adequately resourced process.

The Tool will be used across Council for consistent, targeted and organised engagement.

Council's Community Engagement Plans will include the following information:

- Engagement purpose and objectives;

- Stakeholders;

- Methods and timeframes;

- Resource requirements; and

- Monitoring & evaluation processes.

Methods & Timeframes

Depending on the community engagement audience and desired outcome, the methods, resources and timeframes for engagement will vary for each project/activity.

A mixture of engagement methods ensures that the engagement is accessible to different stakeholders and is relative to the participation level required.

For the engagement activities that identify the participation level of 'Consult' Your Say DCG should be used as the primary platform for providing information and collecting data.

Participation opportunities will also need to be provided for stakeholders not online, for example town meetings, drop in sessions or letter drop.

The following diagram provides examples of the different engagement methods across the participation spectrum.

Inform

- Your Say DCG
- Website
- Social Media
- Adverts
- Emails
- Community Newsletters
- Posters
- Public Notices

Consult

- Surveys (Online and paper)
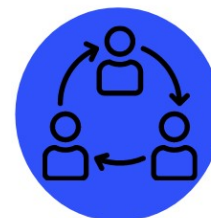- Online forums
- Focus groups
- Written submissions

Involve

- Workshops
- Focus groups
- Community meetings

Collaborate

- Working parties
- Advisory Committees

Empower

- Participatory budgeting & auspicing

The level of required resources (eg time, skills and budget) generally increases from Inform through to Empower, which needs a high level of time and skill to be implemented effectively.

The table below outlines common Council projects, the required level(s) of engagement, how to engage and the associated timelines.

When	Engagement level(s)	How to engage	Timeframe
Capital Works programming	Inform ➞ Collaborate	*Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases *Seeking views:* • Surveys • Workshops • Forums • Township meetings	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation
Local Laws	Inform ➞ Involve	*Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases *Seeking views:* • Surveys • Forums	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation
New Council plans, projects & strategies	Inform ➞ Collaborate	*Seeking views:* • Surveys • Workshops • Forums • Township meetings • Advisory groups *Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases • Community newsletters • Drop-in Sessions	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation
Reviewing Council plans & strategies	Inform ➞ Consult	*Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases *Seeking views:* • Surveys • Forums	Flexible to meet desired outcome
Policies/ By-Laws	Inform ➞ Consult	*Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases *Seeking views:* • Surveys • Forums	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation
Planning/ Land Use	Inform ➞ Involve	*Seeking views:* • Surveys • Workshops • Forums • Township meetings • Advisory groups *Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases/Public notice	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation

When	Engagement level(s)	How to engage	Timeframe
Service Levels	Inform → Collaborate	*Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases/Public notice *Seeking views:* • Surveys • Workshops • Forums • Township meetings	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation
Rates	Inform → Consult	*Making info publicly available:* • Website, Your Say DCG & social media • Media releases/Public notice • Community newsletters *Seeking views:* • Surveys • Forums • Township meetings	A minimum of 21 days or as per legislation

Monitoring and evaluation

Best practice evaluation occurs throughout a project, from the start to the end there are opportunities to reflect on the process and refine it to ensure effectiveness.

Generally community engagement effectiveness is measured by:

- Reach (number of people participating);
- Representation of the community (who is participating);
- The quality of the engagement process (are we meeting our objectives and managing risk);
- The strength of the relationships built throughout the process and into the future (developing trust with the community);
- Insights gained through the engagement process (influence of feedback on project/activity); and
- Level of satisfaction with the project/activity outcome.

Collecting this information throughout engagement allows for continuous improvement and to ensure that Council is meeting its engagement objectives as outlined in the 'Plan" stage. Monitoring and evaluation does not add to the workload when incorporated into the engagement plan at the start. By doing so early it ensures that the required information is captured throughout the engagement process.

The engagement planning tool defines evaluation details for the process, engagement and outcomes. By doing so Council can monitor what is working well, what can be improved and how did the engagement impact the project/activity.

Do

Once the engagement planning tool is complete its time to implement in stage **Do**. This includes encouraging stakeholders to participate, and collecting their feedback to inform our decision making.

Council will:

- Promote engagement opportunities to ensure the community is aware of participation opportunities;
- Actively listen and record feedback;
- Report back on the findings and decisions in a timely and accessible way; and
- Use the findings to influence decisions or advocate.

Promote engagement opportunities

As part of planning the engagement process, consideration needs to be given to how the engagement opportunity will be promoted to stakeholders and the community. This will be determined as part of the engagement plan and delivered at this stage.

Examples of engagement promotion include:
- Facebook posts;
- Community newsletters;
- Targeted letter drops;
- Public notice/media release; or
- Radio adverts.

Receive and analyse data

Depending on the level of engagement and methods outlined in the engagement plan the collection of data may take a number of different forms. As mentioned above for engagement processes starting with 'Consult' Your Say DCG is the primary platform of collecting and analysing data.

If feedback is provided through other avenues such as written submissions, phone calls or Facebook comments then this data needs to be collated and recorded as part of the engagement process using the engagement platform.

Inform decision making and report back (closing the loop)

Engagement includes the commitment that the community's contribution will be considered and that they will be informed about how their contribution was used. All views collected during Council engagement processes will be considered and assessed in context of other relevant data, legislation, or information.

To ensure transparency in decision making, Council will:

- Consider the results in the Engagement Feedback Report;
- Refer back to the purpose and objectives of the engagement process; and
- Demonstrate how the engagement results have been used to influence the final decision and outcome.

The way in which Council reports the results and consultation outcomes to the community may vary depending on the engagement purpose and levels. However, it needs to be timely and accessible while protecting confidentiality of the participants.

We asked   You said   We did

Review

This is the final stage of the engagement process and ensures that Council is continuously improving our engagement practices and increasing our understanding of the community. We also want to assess the value of our engagement processes so that we can continue to enrich our services and increase community satisfaction.

Council will:

- Evaluate our engagement processes;
- Build our knowledge and learnings; and
- Maximise the impact of community input by sharing insights internally.

Evaluate the engagement

Council will review and evaluate the methods implemented and the outcome(s) achieved.

Primarily what needs to be considered during the evaluation is:

- Were the engagement objectives achieved?
- What worked well?
- What could be improved or done differently?
- How have the engagement results impacted the outcome of the project or activity?
- Where will the data be stored and how will staff know where to access it if required?

Build knowledge and learnings

Continuous improvement is one of Council's engagement values, reflecting and refining our community engagement practices and processes will ensure that we are always improving our engagement. Learning from what worked well or not in previous engagement processes will increase our understanding and assist us to build and grow the skills and knowledge to better meet our community's needs.

District Council of

Grant