



Public Engagement Framework

Sturgeon County 2016



Sturgeon County Public Engagement Framework

Executive Summary

In 2016, Council identified engaging with residents as one of its top priorities and directed Administration to develop a “Public Engagement Policy” (PLY_GOV_Public Engagement_2016) In response to this policy, a framework has been developed to provide for a consistent and effective approach to public engagement and outline expectations for public engagement with residents and stakeholders. All Sturgeon County staff and external consultants responsible for projects and initiatives will be accountable to following this policy. The framework outlines Sturgeon County’s guiding principles and best practices that will direct Sturgeon County’s public engagement efforts.

The policy aligns with Sturgeon County Council’s Strategic Outcomes and Priorities (See Strategic Plan) and specifically connects to the following **focus areas** and **strategic outcomes**:

Focus Area: Strong Local Governance and Regional Leadership

Community Outcome: We promote consistent and accountable leadership through collaborative and transparent processes.

Community Indicators:

- Percentage of decisions by Council that are consistent with the strategic direction of Sturgeon County
- Percentage of residents who are satisfied with the communication received by Sturgeon County

Goal 1.1

Sturgeon County provides efficient and effective leadership and management

Strategies

Residents are engaged as active participants in municipal governance; representing the broader community.

Focus Area: Maintain and Enhance Strong Communities

Community Outcome: We are committed to a safe, secure community, where our residents are respected and provided with access to opportunities.

Community Indicators:

- Rating of quality of life in Sturgeon County

Goal 3.1

Sturgeon County involves and engages the Sturgeon County community.

Strategies

Facilitate improved communications so all residents have ready access to information, including high speed internet.

Support and promote volunteerism in Sturgeon County.

Public Engagement Defined

External Public Engagement - a formal, defined, interactive process between Sturgeon County, the public and stakeholders, designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

Internal Public Engagement - a formal, defined, interactive process designed for employees to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

The Public - Anyone (including groups and individuals) who may have an interest in a specific topic or issue under discussion. The public may, or may not, be directly impacted by a decision on the issue.

A Stakeholder - An individual or group who has a specific interest or is impacted by a topic or issue. Stakeholders may include residents, non-residents, groups, organizations, individuals, industry representatives and/or Sturgeon County staff, depending on the issue.

Guiding Principles

Sturgeon County is committed to public engagement processes that encourages two-way communication, supports effective decision making while building trust with residents. Efforts will be guided by principles that support authentic Public Engagement in Sturgeon County will be planned, implemented, evaluated, and reported using these guidelines.

1. Public Engagement is ACCOUNTABLE and TRANSPARENT: public engagement outcomes are measured, evaluated, and reported in a timely manner.
2. Public Engagement is PROACTIVE: it is initiated early enough for participants to make informed decisions and impact the outcomes.
3. Public Engagement is CLEAR and FOCUSED: Sturgeon County and the public understand their respective roles in a public engagement process, including the level of involvement and how input will be used to inform decisions.

Defining the Issue

There are five (5) best practices that can make a difference to how everyone from elected officials to residents, participate in the issue and decision at hand:

1. Be as specific as possible about the issue and decision at hand.
2. Frame the issue and decision as an opportunity to discuss alternatives, solutions, and consequences.
3. Frame the issue and decision in neutral terms, as much as possible.
4. Ensure the scope of the issue and decision is appropriate and feasible
5. Keep the effort proportional to the size of the issue (i.e. numbers of residents involved)

Understanding SMART Outcomes:

Your outcomes should be **SMART** - *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely*. Always remember to ask and focus on answering **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE** and **WHY** questions.

SPECIFIC – Outcomes that are exact and focus on the five W's.

MEASURABLE – Concrete criteria for measuring progress.

When you measure your progress, you stay on track and reach your targets.

To determine if your outcome is measurable, ask **HOW** questions:

How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

ACHIEVABLE – Outcomes that can be achieved through good planning. Outcomes that may seem out of reach move closer and closer when you set attainable outcomes.

REALISTIC – Outcomes that you are willing and able to work on. (i.e. resources available)

TIMELY – Outcomes should be set within a time-period.

Your timeline gives you a reason to check your plan and reflect on your progress and adjust, if necessary.

Ten Principles of Effective Communication that Contribute to the success of your project

1. **Be truthful** – Ensure that your content and delivery is honest and accurate.
2. **Focus on the fundamentals** –Your content needs to focus on the issues and be clear and concise.
3. **Be comprehensive** – Make sure all the relevant information is included.
4. **Be consistent** – Strive for consistent tone, style, and truth across all your municipal communication.
5. **Be clear and concise** – Use plain language; organize your content and account for diverse audiences.
6. **Be relevant** – Be clear about why your communication matters to residents; ensure it address interests, issues, concerns, and perceptions.
7. **Be accessible** – Information should be easy to find, understand, to locate and use.
8. **Be timely** – Provide information early so that residents can ask questions and provide feedback.
9. **Demonstrate compassion** – Recognize how the issue may contribute to residents' interests, concerns.
10. **Encourage two-way communication** – Create opportunities for people to learn, shift perceptions, change their minds, offer new ideas and feel heard.

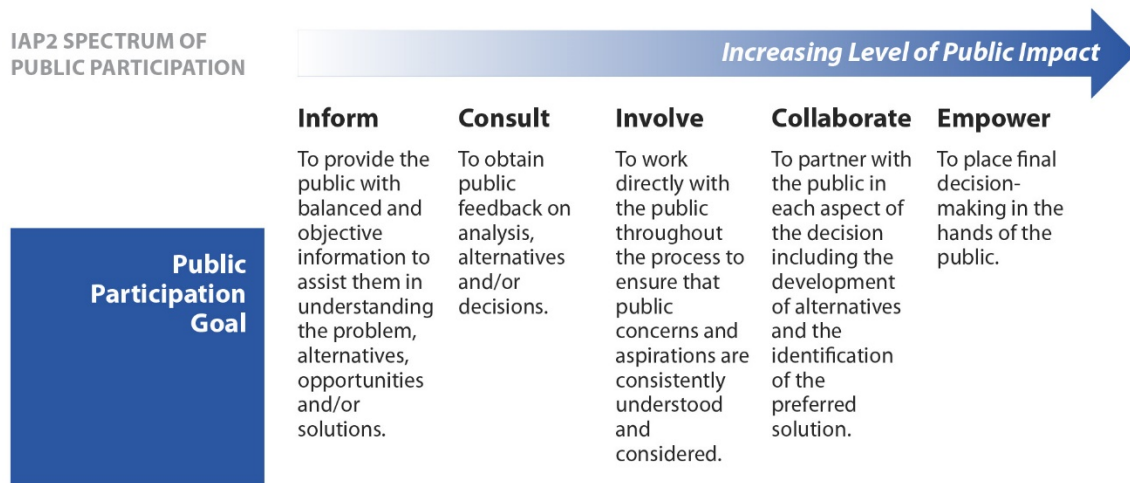
Source: AUMA & AMMDC Toolkit

Best Practices

IAP2 is an international association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.

Best practices among municipalities involve using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

[IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation](#) was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate and depend on the goals, time frames, resources, and levels of concern in the decision to be made.



Source: International Association of Public Participation

Developing a Public Engagement Plan

While some techniques and tools may help you achieve more than one outcome at a time, most issues and decisions will require multiple techniques and tools to meet all the identified outcomes.

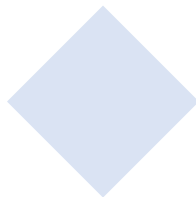
Techniques and Tools

While some techniques and tools may help you achieve more than one outcome at a time, most issues and decisions will require multiple techniques and tools to meet all the identified outcomes.

The following overview of tool and techniques but not limited to:

In-Person

- Informal meetings
- Workshops
- Community Meetings
- Open House
- Panels



Digital

- Survey
- Webinar
- Online Forums
- Social Media
- Polling

Public Engagement Plans

The Manager of the department, or the project (or designate), is required to develop a Public Engagement plan to outline the level of public engagement that will be used to inform or address a project, issue, initiative, or bylaw proposed by Sturgeon County. The Corporate Communications department may provide support in developing, implementing, and executing the plans.

Please note There are certain issues and decisions that the Government of Alberta has determined, as part of the Municipal Government Act, must integrate minimum levels of public engagement.

Public Engagement Plan Template		<input type="checkbox"/> Is the engagement mandated?
Project:		
Lead Department		
Project Lead		
Other Stakeholders/Partners		
Description of Project/Issue		
Strategic Plan Alignment <i>(Focus Areas & Core Values)</i>		
Decision or Outcome		
Decision-maker (s)		
Impact of decision or outcome <i>(scope and/or complexity)</i>		



Type of Decision	Inform	Consult	Deliberate	Participatory	Public Led
Project Timeline					
Lead Department					
Engagement Outcomes S.M.A.R.T pg.3					
Target Stakeholders	Internal			External	

Level of Engagement (IAP2 Spectrum)	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Tools <i>Identify Techniques & tools</i>	Internal			External	
Data Management <i>how will data be integrated into planning process</i>					

Resources Financial/Human	Budget	Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source (s)

Communication Plan	Audience (Targeted/Broad)	Timeline	Tools	Key Messages (s)

Logistical Planning Checklist	
Location Criteria	
Materials	
AV Equipment	
Office Supplies	