	Council Policy	
	Public Participation	
	Policy Type: GOVERNANCE PROCESS	GP-D-2.2


Public participation **often** requires community involvement in the decision making process. Council commits to invite meaningful engagement with citizens to fully appreciate and understand the impact of Council decisions; and to ensure that the citizens of Okotoks have an opportunity to be involved in municipal issues as a collaborative process.

Policy Statement:

1. This policy recognizes that:
 - a. governance is a partnership of citizens, elected officials and administration;
 - b. there is an ever-growing interest and need by the citizens to know and to participate in decisions that affect them and their community;
 - c. Council is committed to foster and encourage public participation in the business of governance and has documented this in our Business Plan;
 - d. **not all decisions will require public participation as it is dependent upon Council perspective, issue complexity, the potential for conflict, and overall impact**; and
 - e. the *Municipal Government Act* requires municipalities to adopt a public participation policy that identifies the types or categories of approaches and circumstances that will be used to engage stakeholders, and to review this policy every four years.

Principles of Engagement:

1. Participation is meaningful. The questions used are genuine and the input gathered impacts the policy, plan, program, design or service in question.
2. Participation is scoped and scaled appropriately to the issue's importance/impacts, possible degree of conflict and diversity of opinion.
3. Participation is informed. There is framing of issues and sharing of research, facts and alternative options supported by thoughtful contributions by all parties.
4. Participation starts early and continues throughout the process. Input opportunities are integrated into all stages.
5. Active outreach is undertaken to reach those most likely to be interested in or impacted by the initiative.
6. Diverse voices are heard and conflict is reduced. A range of tools helps to access a wide range of information, ideas and opinions.
7. The process is transparent and communication-rich to include sharing of information/options, documentation of input, and sharing of decisions/actions.
8. The process is sufficiently resourced by the organization with human and financial assets provided that respects capacity limits.
9. Proper roles are confirmed for individual citizens, stakeholder/community groups, municipal staff and Council members in designing processes, gathering input, making decisions, and taking actions.
10. The process helps build organizational and community capacity for participation, dialogue and collaboration.


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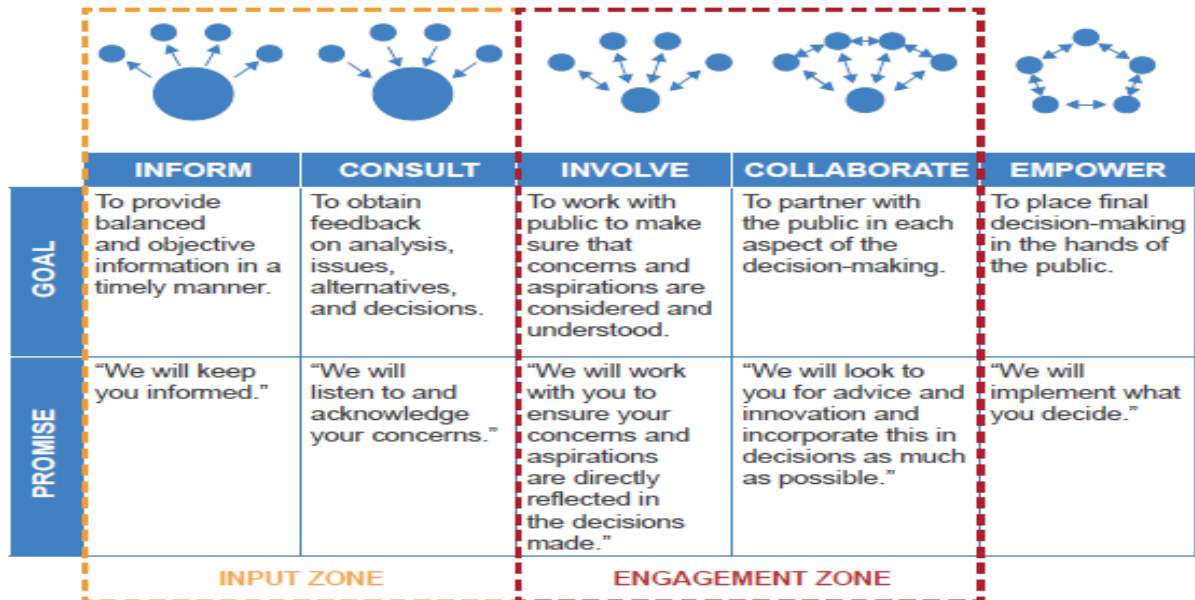
Core Values for Public Participation:

1. Public participation is based on the principle that those that 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, where appropriate.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing 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 want to 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 decision.

Input and Engagement Zones:

1. The following image produced by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and known as the "Spectrum of Public Participation" has been adapted by Okotoks to add input and engagement zones, will be followed.
2. The IAP2 Spectrum will be applied to assist in the process design and selection of the most appropriate tools and formats.
3. This Spectrum can be simplified into two zones:
 - a. The "Input Zone" which includes the "inform" and "consult" levels of participation.
 - b. The "Engagement Zone" which includes the "involve" and "collaborate" levels.


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International Association of Public Participation

Roles and Responsibilities in Developing Public Participation Strategies:

1. The Okotoks Public Participation Strategy and Toolkit provides a detailed process to ensure role clarification, strategic alignment and the appropriate selection of the level of participation and associated tools. Highlights of this process are depicted in the following process flow chart.

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