

	<h1>POLICY</h1>	<u>Policy No:</u> GOV-COU-2010
<u>Policy Title:</u>	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	<u>Approval Date:</u> January 29, 2018
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<u>Category:</u>	Governance	<u>Next Review Date:</u> January 2023
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<u>Author:</u>	Community Engagement Consultant	<u>Last Amended:</u>
<u>Dept/Div:</u>	Office of the CAO	<u>Replaces:</u>
<u>Related Policies, Procedures and/or Guidelines:</u> GOV-COR-015 Corporate Accountability & Transparency		<u>Repealed:</u> <u>Replaced by:</u>

1. POLICY PURPOSE:

The City of Kitchener ('the City') is committed to the principles of participatory democracy as identified within the City's Open Government Framework. The City recognizes that engaged citizens make communities stronger and healthier. The involvement of the community and stakeholders in planning and decision making helps the City to better meet citizens' needs, which is fundamental to effective governance. The City is committed to promoting ongoing meaningful public engagement to connect individuals with a common interest to share priorities, solve problems and build community.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Community** – A group of people with common characteristics or interests, or who share an environment.
- **Community engagement** – The process of involving community in decision-making processes.
- **Community engagement plan** – A document to help staff identify engagement goals, stakeholders, resources, tactics, processes, communications, and clearly identify how feedback from the community with inform the City's work.

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- **Community engagement framework** – A tool to determine the appropriate level of involvement of the community in the engagement process. The framework identifies and defines the four forms of community engagement which provide different degrees of citizen empowerment: Inform, Consult, Collaborate, and Entrust.
- **Engagement** – The process of involving the public in decision-making processes.
- **Plain language** – Clear, concise writing designed so the reader will understand the message.

3. **SCOPE:**

POLICY APPLIES TO THE FOLLOWING:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Employees	
<input type="checkbox"/> All Full-Time Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> All Union
<input type="checkbox"/> Management	<input type="checkbox"/> C.U.P.E. 68 Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Non Union	<input type="checkbox"/> C.U.P.E. 68 Mechanics
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary	<input type="checkbox"/> C.U.P.E. 791
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> I.B.E.W. 636
<input type="checkbox"/> Part-Time Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> K.P.F.F.A.
<input type="checkbox"/> Specified Positions only:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Boards & Advisory Committees

This policy applies to:

- All departments of the Corporation of the City of Kitchener;
- All full-time, part-time and casual employees responsible for the design and implementation of community engagement activities; and
- Any community engagement activity undertaken by suppliers or external organizations on behalf of the City.

In some matters, the City is bound by legislation to involve the public in a specific way and in accordance with dictated timelines. The City takes direction from the Ontario Municipal Act, the Ontario Planning Act, the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, among others. The City is obligated to adhere to these requirements and if there is a conflict between legislated requirements and the provisions of this policy, legislated requirements will take precedence. The provisions of this policy enable

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the City to exceed the minimum legislated requirements in appropriate circumstances.

Ramifications of non-compliance with this policy could result in:

- a negative impact on satisfaction levels for citizens,
- poor decisions due to missed opportunities to involve citizens in the decision of Council,
- damage to the City's reputation,
- financial loss to the City,
- disciplinary action for employees.

4. POLICY CONTENT:

4.1 The decision to engage the community

The City will comply with all minimum legislated requirements that dictate public involvement, and exceed minimum requirements when appropriate. Community engagement may be required for City-led initiatives that:

- involve new regulations or changes to core services,
- are expected to be controversial,
- have significant financial impacts,
- may have adverse impacts on citizens.

For all other initiatives, the decision to engage the community will be determined by management and/or Council. Criteria to consider include, but are not limited to the following:

- initiatives identified in the City's Strategic Plan and/or Business Plan,
- as directed by the Corporate Leadership Team,
- as directed by a motion of Council.

As well, City staff should consider the importance of issues to citizens in determining when to engage the community. The City encourages the involvement of the public when one or more of the following conditions exist:

- public involvement will improve the City's understanding of the issues,
- the values and preferences of the community are applicable to the decision,
- new and diverse perspectives are needed to develop/evaluate options,

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- the public will have a role to play in the implementation of the decision,
- involving the public will build awareness, support and enthusiasm for the decision.

The decision to engage the community in these situations will be determined by evaluating the potential for community engagement to improve the quality of the decision or outcome and the risks associated with failing to adequately engage the community. This must be evaluated against time constraints, the availability of staff and other resources to plan and carry out effective community engagement activities, and the cost of involving the public in a meaningful way.

Community engagement may not be required in certain situations including, but not limited to the following:

- ongoing delivery of core services,
- urgent situations that would put the public at risk if delayed,
- decisions that are legislated/regulated.

In these situations, staff may still be required to inform the public of these decisions/initiatives.

Staff must inform the community engagement consultant of upcoming engagement initiatives, and must seek the approval of their directors and/or department head for non-routine, non-legislated significant engagement campaigns or for exceptions to this policy.

The Corporate Leadership Team provides direction to proceed with community engagement for initiatives that may be controversial, politically sensitive and/or have significant financial impacts.

4.2 Community engagement framework

The City of Kitchener community engagement framework will be used as a guide to determine the most appropriate method for engaging the community.

Community engagement processes are not all the same. For some initiatives the most appropriate way to engage the community is through clear and purposeful communication to inform citizens and build understanding within the community. In other cases, the most appropriate role may be collaborative; partnering with the community to jointly address a problem or opportunity. In other situations, multiple approaches will be used at different points in the process.

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This framework identifies four levels of engagement, as outlined below. The first level – Inform – is mandatory for all engagement initiatives, as the community needs access to relevant information to participate in a meaningful way. Engagement initiatives may include more than one level from the framework.

Inform

All community engagement initiatives must inform the public. This is intended to provide the public with balanced and objective information to support understanding of City initiatives. In some situations, community engagement will be limited to the sharing of information with the public with no additional levels of the engagement framework deployed. This may include, but is not limited to decisions that are legislated/regulated.

Consult

Consultation with the community allows participants to provide feedback by, for example, identifying preferences, or communicating values. This type of engagement provides a simple and structured exchange of information with citizens that is usually quick, convenient and cost effective.

Collaborate

Collaboration provides the opportunity for citizens to connect with other citizens, staff and/or council to understand issues from different perspectives, and solve problems together. The choice to take a more collaborative approach with citizens has both costs and benefits which must be carefully considered. Collaborative processes typically take significantly longer to plan and implement, require more staff support and involvement, and may have added costs for facilitators, rooms, materials, etc.

The City encourages engaging the community in a collaborative way when there is high potential for community involvement to influence the outcome or decision, and one or more of the following conditions exist:

- there may be a significant impact on the community,
- there is or may be significant controversy surrounding the issue,
- the community will have a substantial role in implementation,
- the options/solutions are not straight forward; original ideas are needed.

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Entrust

An entrust initiative empowers the community to make their own decisions. In these situations, the City may provide input or support for the decision-making process, organize information and facilitate connections to support resident-led projects. This level of engagement is most appropriate where there is a high level of public interest, sufficient resources and capacity to act within the community, and a high degree of community ownership is preferred. Citizens cannot be entrusted to make decisions that are the legal responsibility of the City or where there may be a risk to the public.

4.3 Role of the City

It is the responsibility of City staff to assess opportunities for community engagement in dealing with specific City-led initiatives (except for issues dictated by law or regulation), and to plan and manage the community engagement process. This includes reporting to Council on results when appropriate. The City will be transparent and accountable for acting in accordance with the commitment that is made to the public. Council and city staff will engage with citizens in a way that is respectful and considerate of all citizens and will demonstrate that the views and involvement of citizens are valued by the City.

The City will carefully consider and clearly communicate the public's role in the engagement process, how it will affect decision-making by staff, and the rationale for the level of engagement that will be used. The community will be informed in advance when there are clear and significant limits on the scope or degree of impact that community involvement will have on the matter at hand, so that citizens can make an informed decision about participation and will know what to expect from the process.

The City will communicate a clear and accurate statement of the problem to be solved, the opportunity to be explored or the decision to be made. The City will ensure that the public is aware of the nature of the decision to be made and the scope of authority the City has to influence that decision.

In making decisions, Council and City staff must balance a broad range of competing interests. The citizen's perspective is important and is typically not the only factor influencing a decision. The results of the community engagement process must be put in the context of applicable legislated requirements, city regulations, council-approved policies and strategies, technical considerations and financial constraints before a decision is made.

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When all factors are considered, the City may make a decision that is inconsistent with the majority of input received from the community through the engagement process. In these situations, the City will explain to the public how their contribution was taken into account and the rationale for the decision that was made. The results of community engagement are not a substitute for the democratic process and do not replace the legitimate role of elected representatives in decision-making.

4.4 Responsibilities

The Executive Director Office of the CAO, or designate, is responsible for policy review, and providing advice in relation to this policy.

City of Kitchener Community Engagement Team Responsibilities

The Community Engagement Consultant is responsible for supporting community engagement activity, including:

- work with project staff and Corporate Communications to develop or review appropriate community engagement plans, and provide guidance on activities;
- work with project staff to ensure that requests for proposals/tenders include appropriate requirements for community engagement plans and activities;
- liaise with suppliers and external organizations undertaking community engagement activities on behalf of the City to provide oversight of community engagement plans and activities;
- work with project staff to ensure the City has effective systems to monitor, record, coordinate and evaluate its community engagement activities;
- annually provide Council, staff and citizens with performance reports regarding the success of community engagement activities;
- work with Human Resources and City employees to develop and implement appropriate community engagement training, tools and supports for City employees;
- support citizens who are leading community engagement activities as part of an Entrust initiative.

City Staff Responsibilities:

City employees who are responsible for projects that involve community engagement will:

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- use the Community Engagement Policy to determine if community engagement is appropriate, with support from the Community Engagement Consultant as needed, and ensure that engagement activities comply with this policy;
- work with the Community Engagement Consultant, Corporate Communications and other affected staff to develop appropriate community engagement plans;
- work with the Community Engagement Consultant to ensure outreach tactics to support inclusion are appropriate when engaging within marginalized communities;
- notify the Community Engagement Consultant of any planned community engagement activities;
- ensure suppliers or external organizations undertaking community engagement activities on behalf of the City work with the community engagement team throughout the project to comply with Community Engagement Policy;
- ensure project reports accurately and objectively reflect engagement feedback, and notify participants of outcomes;
- support the Community Engagement Consultant to evaluate community engagement at the City of Kitchener;
- support citizens who are leading community engagement activities as part of an Entrust initiative.

Citizen Responsibilities:

Citizens are asked to:

- focus on the decision to be made or the question to be answered;
- recognize the City must consider the needs of the whole community;
- request alternative ways of participating if required;
- listen with the intent to understand the views of others;
- provide input and feedback within project timelines;
- encourage others to offer input;
- lead engagement activities as part of an Entrust initiative.

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Council Responsibilities:

The support of City Council is important for successful community engagement initiatives. Some of the key ways in which Council can continue to support community engagement activities include:

- attend and participate in public meetings and events for engagement initiatives;
- share information about campaigns with constituents through social media, newsletters, and other methods;
- have informal conversations and/or ward meetings with constituents about key issues;
- review the information gathered through community engagement campaigns and use it to inform key decisions;
- ensure that appropriate project timelines and resources required for community engagement initiatives are in place;
- encourage City employees to follow the Community Engagement Policy and Framework.

4.5 Community engagement plans

Community engagement plans are required for all major projects and initiatives that will consult, collaborate and/or entrust the community. A community engagement plan should include the following:

1. a clear statement of the problem to be solved, opportunity to be explored or decision to be made;
2. the role of the public in the initiative or project, the level(s) of engagement to be used and a rationale for that choice;
3. the key stakeholders and how they will be encouraged to participate;
4. the techniques that will be used for engagement that reflect the promise made to stakeholders according to the level of engagement selected;
5. a schedule of events and expected timelines;
6. required resources; and
7. the methods that will be used to track data and follow up with participants on the results.

Projects that will only inform the community do not require a community engagement plan, but may require a communications plan.

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4.6 **Techniques for engagement**

The City will use the most appropriate techniques to ensure an efficient and effective process and create a meaningful experience for the public.

The City will consider a broad range of options to engage the community and assess these options against community engagement goals, needs of the stakeholders, time and resources required for implementation, and the requirements of legislation and other city policies. Some engagement initiatives may require the support of independent third-party suppliers to obtain statistically-representative results.

The City recognizes that different stakeholder groups may have different needs. Specific outreach strategies, options and alternative methods of engagement should be made available to encourage participation by all stakeholder groups, within the constraints of City resources. Consideration will be given to time of day, amount of time required to participate, accessible location, language, technology requirements, and other potential barriers to participation.

4.7 **Inclusive participation**

The City will strive for participation that is inclusive of all stakeholder groups by seeking out and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected. The City will proactively encourage participation in community engagement processes and activities, and clearly communicate the benefits of participation for the individual citizen. Decisions that involve community engagement will take into account the relative impact of the matter on various stakeholder groups and the degree to which their voices are represented in the outcome of the engagement process. Before making a decision, Council may also have to consider carefully whether the aspirations and needs of future generations — who will perhaps be most affected by any change — might differ significantly from those of today's population.

The City will ensure that those who have an interest and those who are directly impacted by the decision will have access to the community engagement process. The City will strive for inclusive participation, giving voice to the broadest range of interests and perspectives within the context of the issue, taking into account the relative impact of the matter on various stakeholder groups. Special interest participants must be balanced with broad-based community involvement. Techniques must be considered to address barriers to participation for members of the community whose voices are rarely heard, including vulnerable populations.

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Community input that is received from the public that is not controlled for community representation has the potential for bias and will not be used to draw conclusions about the community as a whole.

4.8 Information for engagement

The City will provide participants with the information they need to be engaged in a meaningful way. The City is committed to open disclosure, equal access and distribution of accurate, relevant information. Council and/or staff contact information will be provided to the public so citizens can ask questions and obtain additional information if needed.

In accordance with the City's Corporate Accountability & Transparency Policy (GOV-COR-015), information must be fully accessible and understandable, using plain language and appropriate formats. As well, the City is committed to providing citizens with information that is timely, and freely available, and decisions are open for public review and discussion. In the event that open disclosure would conflict with legislation that protects information, legislated requirements will take precedence. When engagement is legislated or regulated, to comply with GOV-COR-015, staff must provide plain language descriptions to accompany legislated or regulated information requirements.

In situations where input from the public is to be obtained, questions and topics of discussion will aim to generate information from a citizen perspective, and will not require participants to have any technical knowledge or expertise to participate.

4.9 Reporting to the community on the results

The City will publicly acknowledge the results of the community engagement process. The City will acknowledge the input from the community, and participants who have consented to communication in accordance with Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation will be informed when a final decision is made (if applicable). The City will explain how the community's contribution was taken into consideration.

4.10 Participant feedback

The City encourages feedback from participants in community engagement activities to identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness of future initiatives. The City will actively seek feedback from participants to get broad-based input on the effectiveness of the City's community engagement processes. Citizens will have the opportunity to tell the City if they felt that they understood the process, if they had adequate information to contribute effectively, if they

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perceived that the process fairly considered their input; and if they were satisfied overall.

5. HISTORY OF POLICY CHANGES

Administrative Updates

2018-01-28 - New policy created as per Council directive - see CAO-17-026.

Formal Amendments

No amendment history to date