
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY GUIDELINES

Version 1 Adopted on 19 January 2012 by Council Resolution 0112/029

Introduction

These guidelines apply to all aspects of Council's operations and community engagement activities, and are to be implemented in conjunction with Council's Community Engagement Policy which is consistent with the local government principles (*Local Government Act 2009*).

The local government principles are—

- (a) transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and
- (b) sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services; and
- (c) democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement; and
- (d) good governance of, and by, local government; and
- (e) ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees.

A genuine, consistent and committed approach to community engagement by all Council staff, councillors and contractors engaged by Council will lead to improved decision-making and improved outcomes for the Carpentaria community.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses that public input to make decisions¹

When is community engagement required?

A local government must consult with the community when:

- it is required by legislation;
- an issue may have potential impacts on the health, safety or well-being of any community member.

A local government should consult with the community when:

- any proposed changes will impact on current users/customers of a Council service or facility;
- any proposed changes will affect the rights or entitlements of community members, including minority groups;

¹ International Association of Public Participation Australasia (IAP2)

- there is potential impact on surrounding neighbours;
- the Council wants to identify community issues, needs and priorities;
- the Council wants to monitor customer satisfaction with Council's services and facilities;
- there is a level of controversy or sensitivity about a particular issue; or
- there is conflict among community members about an issue.

In all instances, the level and type of engagement undertaken should be appropriate to the topic or issue².

Who is responsible for community engagement?

Community engagement is the responsibility of all staff, elected councillors and consultants appointed by Council. Council will decide the high level strategic issues on which it will engage with the community. These issues will be linked to an identified corporate plan priority or a significant emerging regional issue. Councillors have responsibility for engaging with their local communities. Council staff has responsibility for engaging the community in their day to day business activities and on agreed projects and activities. In doing so, staff will consult with the councillors in order to establish the engagement techniques that will be used.

Community engagement planning, implementation and review

Community engagement activities undertaken by Carpentaria Shire Council endorse the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence. Council staff must consider the following matters during the planning, implementation and review phases of community engagement:

1. Identify the program or service issue.
 - What is the issue?
 - Are there any anticipated risks or challenges?
 - Have any decisions already been made?
 - What are the genuinely non-negotiable issues?
2. Define the engagement objectives.
 - What are the objectives of an engagement process?
 - What are the limitations and constraints in the engagement process?
 - Is consensus decision making a goal?
3. Identify the engagement participants.
 - Who are the stakeholders (program/service users, providers, regulators etc)?
 - Who should be involved in the engagement process?
 - Do specific population groups need to be targeted (e.g. the elderly, youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians or people from a non-English speaking background)?
 - What is the process for effective consultation with key stakeholders internally and across government?

² Community Engagement in Queensland Local Government, a Guide

4. Identify the decision making and approval process.
 - Who are the decision makers?
 - What are the relevant agency decision making processes?
 - What are the key decision making milestones?
 - How will decision makers be kept informed about the process?

5. Decide on the level of engagement (refer to the attached IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum)
 - What level of engagement – information, consultation or active participation – is appropriate to the program/service issue?
 - What level of engagement is appropriate for the participants?

6. Choose the engagement methods and techniques
 - What methods should be used in the engagement process?
 - Are the chosen methods appropriate to the objectives and the participants?
 - Have non-traditional methods been considered?
 - What information is required by engagement participants?
 - What mechanisms are appropriate for conveying information to participants (e.g. pamphlets, letters, PowerPoint presentations, media stories or advertisements etc.)?
 - Is the information relevant, comprehensive and appropriate?

7. Quality control
 - Do those leading the engagement process have effective engagement skills?
 - Would using a skilled facilitator assist in the process?
 - What strategies are to be used to manage expectations or conflict?

8. Maximise the ability of stakeholders to participate
 - What are the possible barriers to participation and the means to overcome them?
 - What are the most appropriate methods to invite participation?
 - Have special interest groups been considered?
 - Has support and advice been obtained from community leaders or organisations on relevant protocols for consulting with community members?

9. Formulate the timetable
 - Is the engagement process a one-off activity, or is it ongoing?
 - Is the timetable realistic?
 - Is the engagement timed to feed into decision making processes?

10. Estimate the resources
 - What resources and staff are required?
 - Is there a need for staff training?
 - Is there a need for external personnel (e.g. a facilitator or mediator)?
 - Is there a need to hire a venue, organise catering etc.?

11. Outcomes and implementation

- Are the engagement outcomes clearly defined?
- How will decisions reached through engagement feed into agency decision making processes?

12. Feedback to participants

- How will engagement participants be provided feedback throughout the process?
- How will they be provided feedback on the final decision and how they contributed to that decision?
- How will the outcomes of the engagement process be conveyed to agency senior management, Councillors and other decision makers?

13. Evaluate the engagement process.

- Has an engagement evaluation process been developed?
- How will a successful engagement process be defined and measured?
- How will the results of engagement be shared across Council, other relevant agencies and across government?
- How will the lessons feed into planning for future engagement strategies?³

³ Engaging Queenslanders, Community Engagement in the Business of Government, Queensland Government Department of Communities

1. IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM



International Association
for Public Participation
Australasia

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, 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:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep You informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns 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 direct 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.
Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Web Sites • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Advisory • Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

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