



# Public Participation Policy

**Category: Governance/Administration**

**Policy No.** Council-1003

**Corresponding Procedure No.**

**Approved:** October 25, 2022

**Resolution No.:** RES-401-2022

**Effective Date:** October 25, 2022

**Next Review Date:** 2026

**Supersedes Policy No.** Public Participation Policy, May 22, 2018

## PURPOSE:

In accordance with section 216.1(1) of the *Municipal Government Act*, every council of a municipality must establish a public participation policy for the municipality, and;

According to Alberta Regulation 193/2017 Public Participation Policy Regulation, Section 2,

*A municipality's public participation policy must identify*

- a) *the types or categories of approaches the municipality will use to engage municipal stakeholders, and*
- b) *the types or categories of circumstances in which the municipality will engage municipal stakeholders*

This Public Participation Policy has been developed to recognize the value of public engagement and to create opportunities for people affected by a decision to be involved, in an effort to help inform the overall decision-making process, while also considering the need to govern in an efficient manner.

This policy is in addition to, and does not modify or replace, the statutory public hearing requirements in the *Municipal Government Act*.

## POLICY STATEMENT:

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal Stakeholders in Public Participation by:

- 1) Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision;
- 2) Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests;
- 3) Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and,

	<p>4) Recognizing that although Councillors are elected to consider and promote the welfare and interest of the Municipality as a whole and are generally required to vote on matters brought before Council, facilitating Public Participation for matters beyond those where public input is statutorily required can enrich the decision-making process.</p>
<p><b>DEFINITIONS:</b></p>	<p>“<b>CAO</b>” means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality or their delegate.</p> <p>“<b>International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)</b>” means the association of practitioners who seek to advance and extend the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.</p> <p>“<b>Municipal Stakeholders</b>” means the residents of the Municipality, as well as other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Municipality.</p> <p>“<b>Municipality</b>” means Clearwater County.</p> <p>“<b>Public Participation</b>” or public engagement includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the Municipality.</p> <p>“<b>Public Participation Plan</b>” means an internal plan prepared by Administration which identifies which Public Participation Tools to be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.</p> <p>“<b>Public Participation Tools</b>” means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. in-person participation which may include at-the- counter interactions, door-knocking, interviews, meetings, round-tables, town halls, open houses and workshops;</li> <li>ii. digital participation which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards/discussion forums, and online polls or surveys;</li> <li>iii. written participation which may include written submissions, email, and mail-in surveys, polls and workbooks; and,</li> <li>iv. representative participation which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee or citizen board.</li> </ul> <p>“<b>Spectrum of Public Participation</b>” – means the IAP2 spectrum of public participation determined by the type of decision being made and the levels of participation of engagement: Inform; Consult; Involve; Collaborate; Empower. The levels represent increasing degrees to which the Public can impact the decision or outcome. See Appendix B.</p>

<p><b>PRINCIPLES:</b></p>	<p>Clearwater County is committed to Public Participation processes that encourage two-way dialogue, build trust, and support effective decision-making. All Public Participation efforts shall be guided by principles that support effective and authentic Public Participation that is clear, concise, and non-biased. These principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(1) Authentic Intent:</b> A primary purpose of public engagement is to generate perspectives to help shape municipal action or policy.</li> <li><b>(2) Shared Responsibility:</b> Public participation allows for informed decision-making and is a shared responsibility of Council/Administration (to provide opportunities) and Municipal Stakeholders (to educate themselves and contribute).</li> <li><b>(3) Transparent and Accountable:</b> The County communicates how Municipal Stakeholder input affects the decision-making process and provides updates as to outcomes/decisions.</li> <li><b>(4) Inclusive and Accessible:</b> Provides Municipal Stakeholders with the information they need to participate in safe and deliberate exchanges, demonstrating respect for and encouraging discussion about others' opinions and beliefs.</li> <li><b>(5) Continual Improvement:</b> Public participation is dynamic and requires ongoing evaluation and adjustment to continuously improve and address the changing needs of the Municipal Stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>This Policy applies to all County Administration staff directing projects or initiatives that include Public Participation as well as external consultants.</p> <p>Administration is responsible to act on the direction of Council if Public Participation is deemed necessary and shall report to Council on the level of participation that will be used.</p> <p>Administration shall follow IAP2 public participation practices and spectrum of public participation (see Appendix B). IAP2 provides public participation practitioners with tools, skills, networking and training opportunities to advance and extend the practices of public participation</p>
<p><b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b></p>	<p><b>(1) Council Responsibilities</b></p> <p>(a) Council shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identify any opportunities for Public Participation as early as possible in the decision-making process;</li> <li>ii. Review this Policy at least once every four years to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of Public Participation;</li> <li>iii. Promote and support Public Participation and consider input obtained through Public Participation; and,</li> <li>iv. Ensure appropriate resources are available to solicit Public Participation in accordance with this Policy.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>(2) Administration Responsibilities</b></p> <p>(a) Administration, through the CAO or delegate shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identify any opportunities for Public Participation as early as possible in the decision-making process;</li> <li>ii. Ensure a coordinated approach to Public Participation across the organization;</li> <li>iii. In accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council, develop Public Participation Plans;</li> <li>iv. Assess this Policy and make recommendations to Council about Public Participation Plans and resourcing;</li> <li>v. Communicate to Council and the public, when appropriate, the effectiveness of a Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used;</li> <li>vi. Report the findings of the Public Participation to Council; and, evaluate effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used in a particular circumstance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES</b></p>	<p><b>When to implement</b></p> <p>a) Administration shall develop and implement a Public Participation Plan (see Appendix A plan template) under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality’s budget deliberations and/or capital plans;</li> <li>ii. When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality’s strategic plans or business plans;</li> <li>iii. As otherwise directed by Council.</li> </ul>
<p><b>POLICY EXPECTATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>1) Legislative and Policy Implications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with the <i>Municipal Government Act</i>, the <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</i> and any other applicable legislation.</li> <li>b) All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies.</li> <li>c) This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted to the Municipality’s website.</li> <li>d) This Policy will be reviewed by Council at least once every four years.</li> </ul> <p><b>2) Public Participation Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Public Participation will be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Public Participation activities will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner using IAP2 core values and code of ethics.</li> <li>c) Public Participation plans will consider early, ongoing and diverse opportunities to provide input.</li> <li>d) Municipal Stakeholders who participate in any manner of Public Participation are required to be respectful and constructive in their participation. Municipal Stakeholders who are disrespectful, inappropriate or offensive, as determined by Administration, may be excluded from Public Participation opportunities.</li> <li>e) The results of Public Participation will be made available to Council and Municipal Stakeholders in a timely manner in accordance with municipal policies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS:</b></p>	<p><b>1) Plan Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) When so directed by this Policy or Council, Administration shall develop a Public Participation Plan (see Appendix A which shall consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;</li> <li>ii. The impact of the matter on Municipal Stakeholders;</li> <li>iii. The demographics of potential Municipal Stakeholders in respect of which Public Participation Tools to utilize, level of engagement and time for input;</li> <li>iv. The timing of the decision and time required to gather input;</li> <li>v. What information is required, if any, to participate; and</li> <li>vi. Available resources and reasonable costs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Public Participation Plans will, at minimum, include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A communication plan to inform the public about the Public Participation plan and opportunities to provide input;</li> <li>ii. Identification of which Public Participation Tools will be utilized;</li> <li>iii. Timelines for participation;</li> <li>iv. Information about how input will be used;</li> <li>v. The location of information required, if any, to inform the specific Public Participation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>2) Reporting and Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Information obtained in Public Participation will be reviewed by CAO or delegate and a report shall be provided to Council.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Digital copies of original submitted feedback forms will be provided to Council as a whole, in confidence, as requested.</li> <li>b) The report shall include, at minimum, the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. An overview of the Public Participation Plan and how it was developed;</li> <li>iii. An assessment of the effectiveness of the plan based on the level of engagement and the quality of input;</li> <li>iv. A summary of the input obtained; and,</li> <li>v. May include recommendations for future Public Participation Plans.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<b>LEGISLATION:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provincial Act(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Provincial Regulation(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Council Resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>Cross Reference:</b>
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**Revision History**

Version	Date of Change	Description
Public Participation Policy	May 22, 2018	First approval by Council
Public Participation Policy	October 25, 2022	Updated with clarification of definitions

## Appendix A – Public Participation Plan Template

### PROJECT NAME:

- Enter name as it would appear of a Council Agenda Item

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

- Brief description of the nature of the matter for which public participation is being sought (new program/service; budget/capital planning; strategic plans).

### ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES:

- What is the question to be asked or the decision sought?
- What decisions have been made that are not open to stakeholder input? Why?
- Have promises been made to stakeholders about their involvement? Yes, no, not sure. If yes, identify.
- Identify objectives of engagement program.

### PROJECT BACKGROUND:

- Background information and circumstances that lead to project/issue and give context relevant to effective stakeholder engagement.

### RELATED ISSUES/DECISIONS:

- Brief description of previous or related issues or decision that may have bearing on the project/issue.
- What is the sensitivity of the project – political, time, resources or stakeholders? High, medium or low?

### MUNICIPAL STAKEHOLDERS AND IMPACT:

- Identify demographics of municipal stakeholders (external partners/agencies, internal stakeholders, any group(s) or residents) who are involved in or impacted by a decision or action and are invited to participate.
- The role of each stakeholder will/may differ, depending on the issue, initiative or project, and its impact.
- Identify the level of impact the project is expected to have on stakeholders (e.g. high, medium, low).

### SCOPE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

- Clarify the scale and level of engagement anticipated (i.e. inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower) at the various stages of the consultation process.

### TIMEFRAME/BUDGET:

- Describe the overall timeframe and milestones.
- Cost estimate for implementing the plan and process for receiving budget approval.

### EVALUATION:

- Measurements of success:
  - Compliance with policy principles
  - Completed within approved budget and timeframe
  - Results used by decision-makers and stakeholders to understand how input was used
  - Level of stakeholder satisfaction with process and outcomes



## 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 is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, 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.
<b>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, 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 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.

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## CORE VALUES

IAP2 Federation's Core Values for Public Participation professionals define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

**1** Public participation is based on the belief that those who 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.

**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 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.

## CODE OF ETHICS

IAP2 Federation's Code of Ethics a set of principles that guides us in our practice of enhancing the integrity of the public participation process. As practitioners, we hold ourselves accountable to these principles and strive to hold all participants to the same standards.

### 1. PURPOSE

We support public participation as a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.

### 2. ROLE OF PRACTITIONER

We will enhance the public's participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.

### 3. TRUST

We will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the process among all the participants.

### 4. DEFINING THE PUBLIC'S ROLE

We will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.

### 5. OPENNESS

We will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.

### 6. ACCESS TO THE PROCESS

We will ensure that stakeholders have fair and equal access to the public participation process and the opportunity to influence decisions.

### 7. RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES

We will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."

### 8. ADVOCACY

We will advocate for the public participation process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.

### 9. COMMITMENTS

We ensure that all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.

### 10. SUPPORT OF THE PRACTICE

We will mentor new practitioners in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of public participation.

