

POL-C-153 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

1. OBJECTIVE

The City of Swan (the City) is committed to engaging with the community to better understand its needs and aspirations and to encourage participation in decision making.

The objective of this policy is to provide guidance to the City in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community and stakeholder engagement.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Quality engagement is an essential foundation of good governance. The City is committed to inclusive, meaningful and relevant engagement with its community, recognising its obligations under the *Local Government Act 1995* as they pertain to participation, consultation and engagement.

Beyond its regulatory obligations, the City holds the strong belief that it is able to be more effective when the community has opportunities for incorporating their feedback, values, interests, needs and desires into the decisions that affect their lives.

This policy and the associated Community Engagement Toolkit promotes community involvement in City projects, plans, strategies and policy development.

2.1 Why do we engage?

Community engagement provides opportunities for people to give back to their own communities by involving and empowering them in decisions that affect them, leading to a stronger sense of ownership and belonging. In addition to this, engagement supports well-informed, appropriate and meaningful decisions that reflect what our community and stakeholders value. These factors are essential to the development of social cohesion, community satisfaction, and sustainability.

2.2 How do we engage?

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to community engagement activities. A variety of methods are utilised for the different purposes of engagement as well as the diverse range of groups and individuals in the community and their varying circumstances. This Policy and associated toolkit have been designed to ensure that engagements are inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, suited to their needs, and are designed to provide the appropriate level of community input.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The City has designed a Community Engagement Toolkit which will help to formalise and guide City officers and consultants in their approach to community and stakeholder engagement. The Toolkit incorporates community engagement planning, stakeholder management, and community engagement implementation.

3.1 Community Engagement Planning

- a) The City continually strives to incorporate community engagement into work practices across the organisation as an integral part of operations. The City will apply community engagement methodologies appropriate to the circumstances and desired outcomes of any specific engagement and/or project.

- b) For any project, the need for, and type of community engagement to be undertaken will be determined at the *project planning* stage in conjunction with the desired project outcomes. The project plan will also identify the most appropriate communication tools to ensure that the particular target group(s) are well informed of both the issue and related engagement opportunities. This will specifically be completed with the aid of the *International Association of Public Participation* (IAP2) framework, along with the Community Engagement Team at the City.
- c) The *engagement level matrix* (contained within the Community Engagement Toolkit and aligned to the IAP2 standard) is used to decide the type of engagement on the basis of:
 - i. Complexity: the degree of complexity of the decision that is under consideration.
 - ii. Impact: the extent to which the decision will impact the community.
 - iii. Sensitivity: the sensitivity of the decision, or its capacity to be highly contentious.
 - iv. Appropriateness: the level that community involvement can influence a decision or an outcome.

3.2 Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plans

- a) Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plans for specific projects or activities will ensure that:
 - i. The delivery methods and strategies are tailored for each project and its intended audiences and stakeholders;
 - ii. The problem to be solved or opportunity to be addressed is clearly identified;
 - iii. Clear and achievable goals or objectives are set;
 - iv. All roles in the engagement process are explicitly defined;
 - v. Key stakeholders for the project are researched and identified;
 - vi. The level of community engagement integrated into the decision-making process for the project is clearly explained; and
 - vii. The project is captured and evaluated for future engagements.

3.3 Community Engagement Implementation

- a) Irrespective of the method of community engagement chosen, the process will be open, responsive, genuine, inclusive, consistent and accountable.
- b) To promote the implementation of inclusive and effective engagement mechanisms, the City will:
 - i. Make a concerted, consistent effort to engage with parties for whom there are issues that may be of interest or concern;
 - ii. Be mindful of the need to guard against the possibility of being unduly influenced by vocal minorities or those with vested interests;
 - iii. Ensure the community is given adequate time and opportunity to respond during any consultation process; and
 - iv. Meet its obligations to provide prompt, effective feedback and follow through with any undertakings it gives or decisions made.
- c) Whilst it is not possible or useful to consult with the community on every issue, the City would like to ensure that the community is well informed on major issues, plans and projects, and has opportunities for consultation that enhance Council's decision-making.

- d) Staff undertaking community engagement activities will refer to the compliance requirements at the end of this policy and will adhere to the intent, objectives, codes, and guidelines outlined within:
- i. Local Government Act 1995
 - ii. Employees' Code of Conduct
 - iii. Strategic Community Plan
 - iv. Community Engagement Toolkit

4. DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES

4.1 Definitions

- a) For the purposes of this policy:
- i. 'Community Engagement' is any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make decisions (IAP2).
 - ii. 'Stakeholder' refers to any individual, group, agency or organisation that has a relationship with the City or is impacted by decisions of the City.
 - iii. 'Community' refers to individuals or groups residing, working or operating in the City of Swan Local Government Area (LGA). 'Community' is a subset of 'Stakeholder' and as such can be described as either.
- b) This policy applies to City employees and to consultants engaged by the City. It also recognises the important role Councillors play in facilitating dialogue and engagement with their constituents.

4.2 Principles and Values

- a) The City recognises the full spectrum of engagement activities from *inform* and *consult*, through to *involve*, *collaborate* and *empower* as advocated by the IAP2.
- b) The City will take a 'principles approach' to community engagement, following the guiding principles from IAP2:
- i. "Integrity" requires openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement;
 - ii. "Inclusion" requires an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard;
 - iii. "Deliberation" requires sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and space to weigh options, develop common understanding and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities; and
 - iv. "Influence" requires that people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.

Document Control

Document Approvals:			
Version #	Council Adoption		
1.	Ordinary Meeting of Council 19 May 2010 - adopted new policy		
2.	Ordinary Meeting of Council 10 September 2014 - adopted policy for 2 years		
3.	Ordinary Meeting of Council 7 June 2017 - adopted revised policy		
4.	Ordinary Meeting of Council 4 May 2022 - adopted revised policy		
Document Responsibilities			
Custodian:	Coordinator, Community Engagement	Custodian Unit:	Place Stakeholder Engagement Division
Document Management:			
Risk Rating:	High	Review Frequency:	Biennial
Next Review:	2024	ECM Ref:	1437589
Compliance Requirements:			
Legislation:	Department of Local Government Local Laws. Local Government Operational Guidelines. No.16. November 2011. City of Swan Local Planning Scheme No 17. Planning and Development Act 2005. Gazetted: February 2008, Amended March 2016. Western Australian Local Government Act 1995 s.103 'Codes of Conduct'		
Industry:	Department of Local Government Elected Members' Relationship with Developers. Local Government Operational Guidelines. No.12, April 2006. International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) framework		
Organisational:	City of Swan, Code of Conduct for Councillors and Committee Members City of Swan, Code of Business Ethics. City of Swan, n.d., Communications Help Book. City of Swan, n.d., Strategic Community Plan. City of Swan, n.d., Disability Access and Inclusion Plan City of Swan, n.d., Employees Code of Conduct. City of Swan, Place Plans (various). The City of Swan's values of: respect; excellence; accountability and leadership. The City of Swan's commitment to the Corporate Principles of the Business Excellence Framework, SIA Global 2021, also informs our community engagement approach		
Strategic Community Plan:	G1.1 Provide accountable and transparent leadership G1.2 Engage, communicate and consult with our community and stakeholders G2.1 Improve capability and capacity S1.1 Build a strong sense of community health, wellbeing and safety S1.2 Build social inclusion and connectivity in local places and areas		