



# Public Participation

Communications  
Policy S3

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| <b>Policy:</b>               | S3 – Public Participation |
| <b>Policy Department(s):</b> | Communications            |
| <b>Adoption Date:</b>        | June 11, 2018             |
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## Policy Purpose

In accordance with Section 216.1(1) of the Municipal Government Act, this Public Participation Policy recognizes the value of public participation and establishes the foundation for meaningful and effective public participation.

The Public Participation policy establishes guidelines for when public participation may be used to support decision making, core values that the County will follow, and how it can be implemented.

## Policy Statement

1. Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal Stakeholders in Public Participation by:
  - 1.1. Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision;
  - 1.2. Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests;
  - 1.3. Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and
  - 1.4. 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 statutory required can enrich the decision making process.

## Definitions

“CAO” means the person appointed by Council to the position of Chief Administrative Officer under the Municipal Government Act for the County or designate.

“Council” means the duly elected Council members of the County of Grande Prairie No. 1.



“County” means the municipality of the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 having jurisdiction under the Municipal Government Act and other applicable legislation.

“Decision makers” means the County’s decision makers, specifically County Council, County committees, CAO and senior management.

“International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)” means an international organization that seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation.

“Stakeholders/audiences” 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; “Public Participation” means any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision-making and uses this public input to make more sustainable decisions. Also known as “Public Engagement”.

“Public Participation Strategy” means the detailed plan used to design and deliver effective public participation.

“Public Participation Tools” means the tools (contained in a document called a “Toolkit”) that may be used, alone or in combination, to create public participation opportunities.

## Policy Guidelines

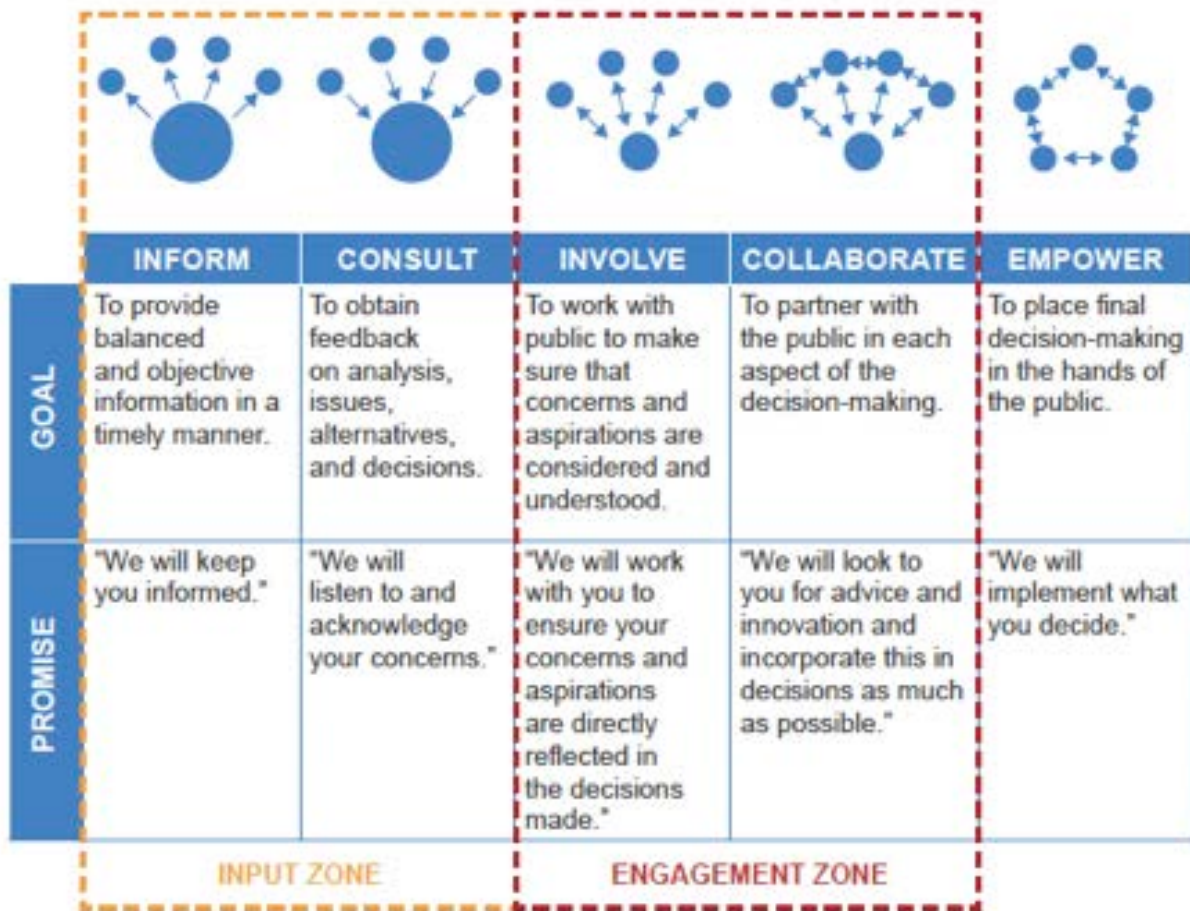
1. Public participation supports decision-making processes related to County policies, projects and services that have an impact on the public. They may be implemented in the following circumstances:
  - 1.1. To fulfill legislation or regulation requirements;
  - 1.2. To respond to requests initiated by the community or Council;
  - 1.3. To support new policy, projects, or service implementation;
  - 1.4. To support existing policy, projects, or service evaluation and change;
  - 1.5. To address potential impacts on the community, such as quality of life, or the environment; and
  - 1.6. To address issues associated with strong community views, concerns, or emotions.
2. This Public Participation Policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the Municipal Government Act.
3. Council supports effective public participation to:
  - 3.1. Improve decision making;
  - 3.2. Enhance community relations;



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- 3.3. Increase understanding of community values;
  - 3.4. Be responsive to community values, needs and wants;
  - 3.5. Ensure inclusive public involvement; and
  - 3.6. Enhance Council's ability to effectively represent the community as a whole.
4. The International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Core Values guide all public participation processes.
    - 4.1. Those affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
    - 4.2. Promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
    - 4.3. Promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
    - 4.4. Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
    - 4.5. Seek input from participants in designing how they participate.
    - 4.6. Provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
    - 4.7. Communicate to participants how their input affected decisions.
  5. The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum provides guidance to determine the level of public participation appropriate for each project. Movement across the spectrum represented the increasing level of public influence on decision-making and level of commitment from the County and the public.
    - 5.1. Inform: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. Note, the Inform level of the spectrum involves strategic communications; however is not true engagement as it does not involve a two-way dialogue with stakeholders.
    - 5.2. Consult: To obtain public input and feedback to test concepts or options and/or clarify issues or expectations.
    - 5.3. Involve: to work directly with the public throughout the process to better understand each other's perspectives, concerns, and goals.
    - 5.4. Collaborate: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives, recommendations, and preferred solutions.
    - 5.5. Empower: To delegate some or all aspects of decision making to the public.



- 5.6. The Spectrum is divided into two zones: the Input Zone and the Engagement Zone.
- 5.6.1. The Input Zone applies to routine or non-complex projects and collects information from the public through input or feedback based methods. (Inform, Consult).
- 5.6.2. The Engagement Zone applies to projects that are more complex, high profile, or controversial and engages the public in conversation and dialogue focused methods. (Involve, Collaborate).
- 5.6.3. Empower is not included in either zone.



*International Association of Public Participation*



6. Key elements of effective public participation include ensuring that:
  - 6.1. Information provided is timely, complete and accessible;
  - 6.2. A reasonable timeline for participation (i.e. early involvement to avoid the notion that a decision is already made) is provided;
  - 6.3. The appropriate level of engagement is undertaken for the issue or project;
  - 6.4. Those who are affected by the issue or initiative are able to participate;
  - 6.5. The process is adaptive to the needs of the Municipal Stakeholders; and
  - 6.6. Results are transparent and are communicated in a timely manner.
7. The County commits to reporting results to participants broadly on the feedback gathered and how it will be used. No single input, comment or activity determines the outcome of a given process. Ultimately, Council reserves the right to decide as they see fit.

## References

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| <b>Legal Authorities</b>                     | Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26   |
| <b>Related Plans, Bylaws, Policies, Etc.</b> | Policy B1 – Policy Development   |
| <b>Other</b>                                 | Public Participation Guidelines – Administrative Directive<br>Public Participation Toolkit for Staff in the Corporate Intranet |

## Revision History

| <b>Review Date</b> | <b>Description</b>                  |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| December 12, 2022  | Reviewed and Amended CM20221212.023 |
| June 11, 2018      | June 11, 2018 CM20180611.1035       |