

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Responsible Officer:	Community Connections Officers – Community Engagement
Owner:	Community Partnerships
Responsible Director:	Healthy Communities and Environments
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	Local Government Act 2020
DOCSETID:	3304829

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1. detail the City's commitment to effective and relevant Community Engagement;
- 1.2. facilitate informed and sustainable decision making;
- 1.3. improve information delivery and sharing; and
- 1.4. promote a consistent inclusive and accessible approach to engagement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The City is committed to the Municipal Community being as well informed as they can be on major issues, plans and projects. Where the Municipal Community can influence part, or all of a decision, they are provided the necessary information to form an opinion and opportunity to provide input through a community engagement process.
- 2.2 Community Engagement plays a vital role in assisting Council and the City of Greater Bendigo as an organisation to work together with the Municipal Community and other stakeholders to achieve the vision: *Greater Bendigo – Creating the world's most liveable community*.
- 2.3 In May 2017, VAGO published the report *Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector*. The report informs and guides best practice for Community Engagement in the Local Government Sector and this policy incorporates the recommendations.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors and all Workplace Participants.

4. DEFINITIONS

Act means the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

City means the Greater Bendigo City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

Council means all Councillors collectively.

Councillor means the individual holding the office of a member of Greater Bendigo City Council.

Community Engagement means the process in which the City and Municipal Community connect with each other to exchange views, ideas, and information to (i) inform decisions (ii) build capacity and (iii) strengthen relationships.

Deliberative Engagement means an engagement process with a select group of participants. The process focuses on a defined issue. It weighs up options and provides recommendations to decision-makers.

Deliberative engagement in the Local Government Act must be applied to the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, (Long Term) Financial Plan, and the Asset Plan. It is located on the collaborate-empower end of the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation.

International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2)

IAP2 is a leading organisation in public engagement practice and has a series of tools which support the delivery of engagement, specifically core values, public participation spectrum, code of ethics for public participation practitioners, and quality assurance standards.

IAP2 Spectrum of Participation defines the level of participation and the public's role in an engagement process ranging from inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

Municipal Community means:

- (a) people who live in the municipal district of the Council;
- (b) people and bodies who are ratepayers of the Council;
- (c) traditional owners of the land in the municipal district of the Council; and
- (d) people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipal district of the Council.

VAGO means the Victorian Auditor-General Office.

Workplace Participants all employees, contractors, volunteers, consultants and any individuals or groups engaging with the community for or on behalf of the City.

5. PRINCIPLES

The following six principles underpin this policy:

- 5.1 **Transparency** - A Community Engagement process must have clearly defined objectives and scope.
- 5.2 **Clarity of purpose and scale** - Participants in Community Engagement activities are provided relevant and timely information in order to inform the level of participation and Community Engagement is scaled proportionate to the issue at hand.
- 5.3 **Inclusion** - Participants in Community Engagement must be representative of the people or groups affected by the Community Engagement subject matter with particular focus on people of different genders, ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds, religions, locations, and sexual orientations.
- 5.4 **Access and Participation** - Participants in Community Engagement are provided a variety of engagement methods that suit their needs to enable fair access to meaningful and informed engagement.
- 5.5 **Closing the loop** - Participants in Community Engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process has or will influence the City's decision making.
- 5.6 **Evaluation** – Community Engagement is evaluated to assess whether the objectives and outcomes have been achieved and/or the Community Engagement Policy Principles have been followed to identify learning and improvement opportunities.

6. POLICY

- 6.1 The Council and City are committed to:
 - 6.1.1 genuine Community Engagement that adheres to the principles of this policy;
 - 6.1.2 using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum to assist with selecting the level of participation;
 - 6.1.3 supporting equitable representation in community engagement for policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public through the use of the equity assessment process;
 - 6.1.4 considering value for money, policy principles and scale of engagement required, in line with the IAP2 spectrum;
 - 6.1.5 providing the community with information that is clear, easy to understand and accessible to all people, and delivered in consultation with the Communications unit;
 - 6.1.6 clearly communicating which aspects of the engagement are negotiable, and which are not negotiable;
 - 6.1.7 using various techniques and approaches to maximise public participation within reasonable timeframes;
 - 6.1.8 prioritising the collection, analysis and use of gender disaggregated and intersectional data to ensure representative participation;
 - 6.1.9 informing the community about how their input has influenced the final outcome or decision, and;

6.1.10 undertaking evaluation processes to learn from each Community Engagement experience and ensure continuous improvement of our consultation practices.

6.2 The City recognises that no single model or formula fits all situations. The method, extent and depth of Community Engagement will vary according to the scope and scale of the issue, strategy, budget or plan.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all workplace participants to plan, design and deliver Community Engagement suitable for the scope and scale of the issues, strategy or plan, and be in line with the principles and commitments in this policy. Where a practice is prescribed by regulations, such as Deliberative Engagement, it is delivered in accordance with the legislation.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- [Planning and Environment Act 1987](#)
- [Essential Services Commission Act 2001](#)
- [Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#)
- [Road Management Act 2004](#)
- [Victorian Disability Act 2006](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)
- [Gender Equality Act 2020](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010](#)
- [Multicultural Victoria Act 2011](#)
- [Department of Premier and Cabinet – Public Engagement Framework \(2020\)](#)
- [Greater Bendigo Council Plan](#)
- [Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025](#)
- [Social Justice Framework 2022-2032](#)

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to Community Partnerships.

9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter the policy, such changes may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or

update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee, and with the approval of Executive Management Team, or where required, resolution of Council.

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
<i>April 2016</i>	<i>LW</i>	<i>Health and Wellbeing</i>	<i>Development of Community Engagement</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>FJ</i>	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<i>Review</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>RM</i>	<i>Legal Services</i>	<i>Administrative changes following commencement of Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>November 2022</i>	<i>FJ</i>	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<i>Administrative changes include community Engagement SharePoint</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2024</i>