

CED001 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINE

OVERVIEW

Brisbane City Council is committed to inclusive and meaningful community engagement. This helps Council to make informed decisions by considering the views of the people who may be impacted. Community engagement is a core part of how Council plans and delivers projects, initiatives, strategies and services.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with [CED002 Community Engagement Policy](#).

APPLICABILITY

All Council workers as defined in [HRP040 Code of Conduct](#) who are working on any project that:

- requires Council to engage with the community and stakeholders
- may impact directly or indirectly upon members of the community and other stakeholders
- may be improved by community and/or stakeholder input.

LEGISLATION

[City of Brisbane Act 2010](#)

DEFINITIONS

Definitions for terms used within this Guideline can be found in [CED002 Community Engagement Policy](#).

PRINCIPLES

Key principles can be found in [CED002 Community Engagement Policy](#).

GUIDELINE

A consistent approach

These guidelines provide a resource tool to support Council workers:

- plan deliver, evaluate and report community and stakeholder activities
- choose the appropriate level and methods of engagement
- involve the right target audience at the right time
- evaluate and report on community engagement processes and activities
- stay aligned with Council's [CED002 Community Engagement Policy](#), the Engagement Institute (Australasia) and the IAP2 frameworks and standards [CA22/1043593](#).

What do we mean by Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a planned and purposeful process where Council works with the community and stakeholders to:

- provide clear and timely information
- invite input and feedback
- consider and reflect (where possible) the community's ideas, concerns, aspirations and feedback in decision making.

Engagement often happens over several stages and may occur at multiple points during a project or initiative.

Why we engage?

Community engagement helps Council to:

- understand community priorities, perspectives and aspirations
- strengthen relationships and build trust
- improve project outcomes and minimise risks
- make well-informed and sustainable decisions
- demonstrate transparency and accountability.

Council seeks to take account of the views, issues and aspirations shared by the community and to balance these with other considerations/influences such as project constraints and opportunities, technical investigations, relevant design standards and guidelines, budgetary and legislative constraints, Council's policies/plans/strategies/principles and other relevant requirements, to make informed and sustainable decisions.

What counts as Community Engagement in Council?

Community engagement may involve:

- inviting community input in the early stages of a planning project (i.e. to understand connections to a project focus area, experiences, perspectives, aspirations and local knowledge to help shape projects and decisions)
- informing the community – raising awareness and understanding about a project update, a decision, change or initiative
- seeking feedback on draft plans or proposals for projects, policies or initiatives from those who are interested in or may be impacted by decisions
- meeting legal or policy requirements to engage the community.
- reporting back to the community and stakeholders – what was heard and how input and feedback was used in decision making.

Community engagement is not the same as:

- general customer feedback
- market research
- service satisfaction surveys.

These activities focus on customer service, overall experience and sentiment. While these are valuable forms of input, they are usually one off and not directly tied to a specific decision-making process. They can however, play an important role in the early stages of identifying or shaping project/initiative planning and may highlight the need for community engagement activities.

When may Community Engagement not be appropriate?

Engagement should not be undertaken when:

- Council has already made a final decision
- there is an urgent issue requiring immediate actions
- the matter is commercial-in-confidence or involves privacy or safety issues
- the topic is not open to public influence.

In these cases, clear communication is still essential to explain the decisions and why community engagement wasn't possible.

Note: Accountability for project communication activities sits with the project/initiative owner. Key frameworks and tools that inform Community engagement practice in Council include:

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (the Spectrum) – a framework for determining the appropriate level of engagement (based on project intent, community engagement stage and purpose, the level of potential impact of the project/proposal) and defines the community's role in any engagement approach. The Spectrum outlines 5 levels of engagement - Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower (each level comes with a different goal and promise to the community).

Note: the Empower level of engagement is not relevant as final decision making is made by Council as required by the Act.

IAP2 Australasia Methods Matrix tool – helps practitioners select appropriate engagement methods for different situations, audiences and community engagement stages (see Appendix 1 for instructions to access this online tool).

IAP2 Australasia Practice Framework (the Design Plan Implement Review model) – a structured approach to the engagement process to ensure that engagement plans are thoroughly considered and well thought out whilst monitoring and refining throughout the process.

IAP2 Core Values – defines the expectations and aspirations of the community engagement process.

IAP2 Quality Assurance Standards – describes the important elements of any engagement process and provides a set of 'standardised principles' to ensure consistency in quality and support practitioners carrying out engagement processes.

IAP2 Code of Ethics – supports and reflects IAP2's Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation and speaks to the actions of practitioners.

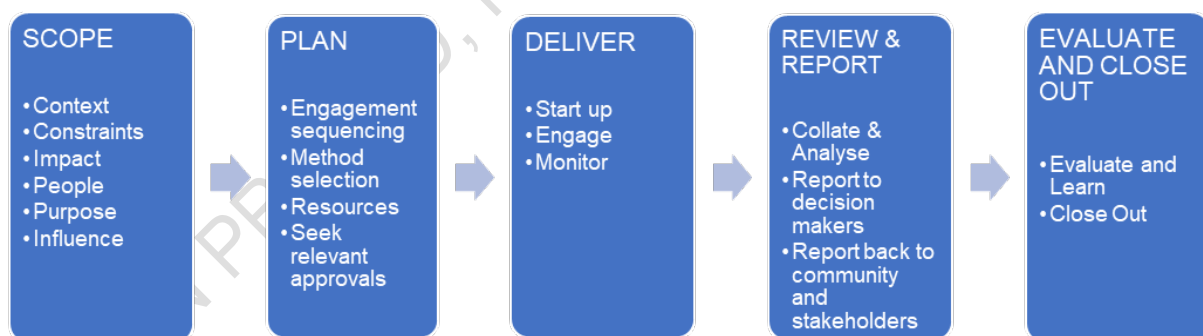
These frameworks and standards help to guide Council in:

- deciding how deeply to involve the community
- understanding what promises are being made to the public
- choosing the right methods for each situation
- planning, delivering and evaluating community engagement approaches and practice.

Council approach to community engagement

Community engagement methods may vary according to the purpose, goal and level of engagement, a project phase, or for key stakeholders involved. What needs to be consistent is Council's approach to how to engage.

Council follows a five-step process.



Note: When planning for in-person community engagement it is recommended to undertake a risk assessment and mitigation measures to ensure officer safety and well being.

What does good engagement look like?

Good engagement is:

- planned and purposeful
- inclusive and respectful of diverse voices
- timely – starting early enough to make a difference
- accessible – using methods that suit the audience
- clear – explaining what's being asked and why
- transparent – reporting back and showing how decisions were made
- relevant and useful community input and feedback to inform project decisions

- adheres to Council's Privacy policy (when undertaking community engagement activities and handling and storage of community/customer input and feedback).

What Council aims for

By following these guidelines, Council aims to:

- make decisions that are well informed, and evidence based (community input and feedback is considered along with technical investigations and relevant Council policies, strategies and design standards)
- provide meaningful opportunities for community input
- be open, transparent, and accountable
- educate and inform the community
- build trust and support good governance
- align with our Enterprise Design Principles, specifically 'people-centred design input' or 'outside-in thinking'.

AUTHORITY

Executive Management Team: 31 January 2011

Chief Executive Officer: 9 March 2023

Chief Executive Officer: 29 April 2026

GUIDELINE OWNER

Community Experience Manager, Customer Experience, Customer Services

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Principal Engagement Officer, Customer Experience, Customer Services

RELATED INFORMATION

Records Manager container: 109/268/189/234

[CED002 Community Engagement Policy](#)

[Instructions to access the IAP2A Engagement Methods Matrix Tool \(CA22/1043593\)](#)

[Information Privacy Act 2009](#)

[Planning Act 2016](#)

REVIEW DATE

Due: 29 April 2028

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