

Council Policy

Policy Number: (PLY_GOV_Public_Engagement_2016)

Public Engagement Policy

Date Approved by Council: October 11, 2016 County Commissioner: 

1. Purpose

To establish a framework for a consistent and effective approach to public engagement and outline expectations for public engagement with residents and stakeholders.

2. Revision History

<i>Approval Date</i>	<i>Revision Number</i>	<i>Modification</i>
<i>TBD-Year/Month/Date</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>New Document</i>

3. Persons/Areas Affected

All County staff and external consultants responsible for projects and initiatives will be accountable to following this Policy.

4. Policy Statement

Sturgeon County is committed to open, accountable and responsive decision-making, which includes appropriate and timely levels of engagement with the public, as outlined in the public engagement continuum IAP2 found within the foundations of International Association for Public Participation.

This Policy covers public engagement processes inclusive of all external and internal public engagement opportunities such as; statutory, non-statutory and other proposed applications, plans, projects, and studies that may have an impact on the residents of the County.

5. Definitions

External Public Engagement - a formal, defined, interactive process between Sturgeon County, the public and stakeholders, designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

Internal Public Engagement - a formal, defined, interactive process designed for employees to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

The Public - Anyone (including groups and individuals) who may have an interest in a specific topic or issue under discussion. The public may, or may not, be directly impacted by a decision on the issue.

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A Stakeholder - An individual or group who has a specific interest or is impacted by a topic or issue. Stakeholders may include residents, non-residents, groups, organizations, individuals, industry representatives and/or County staff, depending on the issue.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Public and Stakeholders

- Are encouraged to meaningfully engage with the County so their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build a stronger community.
- Are encouraged to increase their understanding and knowledge about local issues as well as their role in Sturgeon County's decision-making process so they can participate meaningfully.

Role of Sturgeon County

- Responsibility to inform, consult, and engage the public about decisions that affect them.
- Provide public engagement opportunities that are open and transparent.
- Give consideration to the Public's input gathered in public engagement processes.
- Enable staff to build skills and knowledge to engage the public in a meaningful way.
- Are committed to working together with the public to continuously improve its public engagement processes.
- Believes that involving the public and stakeholders in public engagement leads to better, more informed decisions.

Guiding Principles

Public Engagement in Sturgeon County will be planned, implemented, evaluated and reported using these guidelines.

1. Public Engagement is ACCOUNTABLE and TRANSPARENT: public engagement outcomes are measured, evaluated and reported in a timely manner.
2. Public Engagement is PROACTIVE: it is initiated early enough for participants to make informed decisions and impact the outcomes.
3. Public Engagement is CLEAR and FOCUSED: Sturgeon County and the public understand their respective roles in a public engagement process, including the level of involvement and how input will be used to inform decisions.

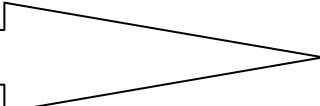
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Engagement Policy Spectrum of Strategies and Commitment to Stakeholders

The Engagement Policy includes a spectrum of five strategies and associated commitments that follow the Spectrum of Engagement of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

When Sturgeon County embarks on an engagement process for planning, policy, and project purposes, the scope of engagement and the commitment to stakeholders will be clarified at the beginning of the process.

Increasing Level of Public Impact 				
<p>Inform To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</p>	<p>Consult To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</p>	<p>Involve To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</p>	<p>Collaborate To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</p>	<p>Empower To place final Decision making in the hands of the public.</p>
Commitment to Stakeholders				
<p>We will keep you informed.</p>	<p>We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>We will work together, seek your advice and innovation in formulating solutions and we will incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>We will implement what you decide.</p>
Engagement Tools				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Web sites • Open Houses • Media • Face-to-face meetings • Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Surveys • Feedback forms • Online and personal comments • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making • Workshops (World Café, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballots • Plebiscites • Delegated decisions

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7. Procedures

Not Applicable

8. Cross Reference

Alberta Municipal Affairs, "Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities."