

Community Engagement Policy

2021 - 2025





Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Wyndham City acknowledges that Aboriginal people have lived in this area for tens of thousands of years. Council acknowledges the Wadawurrung, Woiewurrung and Boonwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of these lands around the Werribee River. We also recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who now participate in the life of this city and contribute to its richness. Council pays respect to the wisdom of Elders, past and present. We share commitment to engaging communities with respect for the land and the rights of Aboriginal people to determine their future in this place.

Thank you to community members

Wyndham City would like to thank community members who contributed to the development of the Community Engagement policy. The feedback and data collected through our community conversations held throughout July and August 2020 highlighted key themes which helped us to develop our approach to community engagement as outlined in this policy.

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Introduction

Wyndham City's definition of Community Engagement

Community engagement is a planned, two-way process that provides opportunities for community to have meaningful involvement and share lived experiences to inform Council's decision making.

Background

Community engagement is an important process that allows communities to have their say on decisions that affect their lives. It is therefore a crucial input into good decision making and as the arm of government closest to the people, Council has an important role to ensure community engagement is genuine, transparent and appropriate.

Wyndham City's Community Engagement Policy 2021-25 (the Policy) sets out our expectations and principles for community engagement. It guides best practice community engagement processes and outcomes through consistent and transparent approaches.

The policy has been developed in consultation with the Wyndham community and our staff. It outlines the type and form of community engagement proposed, having regard to the significance and complexity of the decision to be made.

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires that councils must adopt a Community Engagement Policy by March 2021. This policy was updated in September 2022.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide Wyndham City's commitment to genuine, transparent and appropriate community engagement.

Scope

This policy applies to all forms of community engagement by Councillors, officers and consultants acting on behalf of Council including but not limited to:

- the planning, delivery and evaluation of any community engagement activity
- engagement with the community regarding issues, proposals and Council decisions such as projects, strategies, plans, programs or service delivery, and
- engagement with key groups in the community.

The policy does not apply to Council processes such as service requests or complaints.

Council still has to make difficult decisions

Council recognises that community engagement does not replace appropriate decision making by elected representatives but that these decisions can be enhanced through understanding the needs of the community and the impact of these decisions.

Councillor Code of Conduct

The Councillor Code of Conduct includes Councillor conduct principles that must be complied with.



Principles of engagement and our policy statements

The below principles and policy statements guide all community engagement processes at Wyndham City.

Principle	Policy Statements
A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope	• We will define the engagement objectives, negotiables, non-negotiables and scope of community engagement processes. • We will clearly communicate the reasons for the engagement and level of influence for people involved. • We will capture and use the learnings from service delivery and customer data in planning community engagement.
Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation	• We will ensure people have the information with enough time so that they can participate meaningfully in engagement activities. • We will use a range of different engagement methods that provide the right information for people to be informed and provide input.
Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.	• We will identify at the outset those people who are impacted by or interested in the decision being made. • We will use our existing networks and connections to reach out to people, attempting to reach a diverse audience. • We will endeavour to reach a broad cross section of the community and acknowledge that the most vocal and active voices don't necessarily represent broader community views.
Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement	• We will support all participants to engage and reduce barriers to participation. • We will use culturally appropriate engagement methods. • We will support people to be involved in the ways that are most relevant to them. • We will engage with people in the places they are connected to, and in spaces that are welcoming and accessible.
Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making	• We will be transparent about how involvement will shape decision-making at the outset of the engagement. • We will communicate the negotiables and non-negotiables of a project. • We recognise and will be guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) principles and practices. • We will communicate with those involved or impacted by a decision being made via the engagement process, findings and what the outcome of the engagement is. • Councillors will be presented with the broad variety of views provided by the community and are impartial and active listeners in the process.

Level and type of community engagement

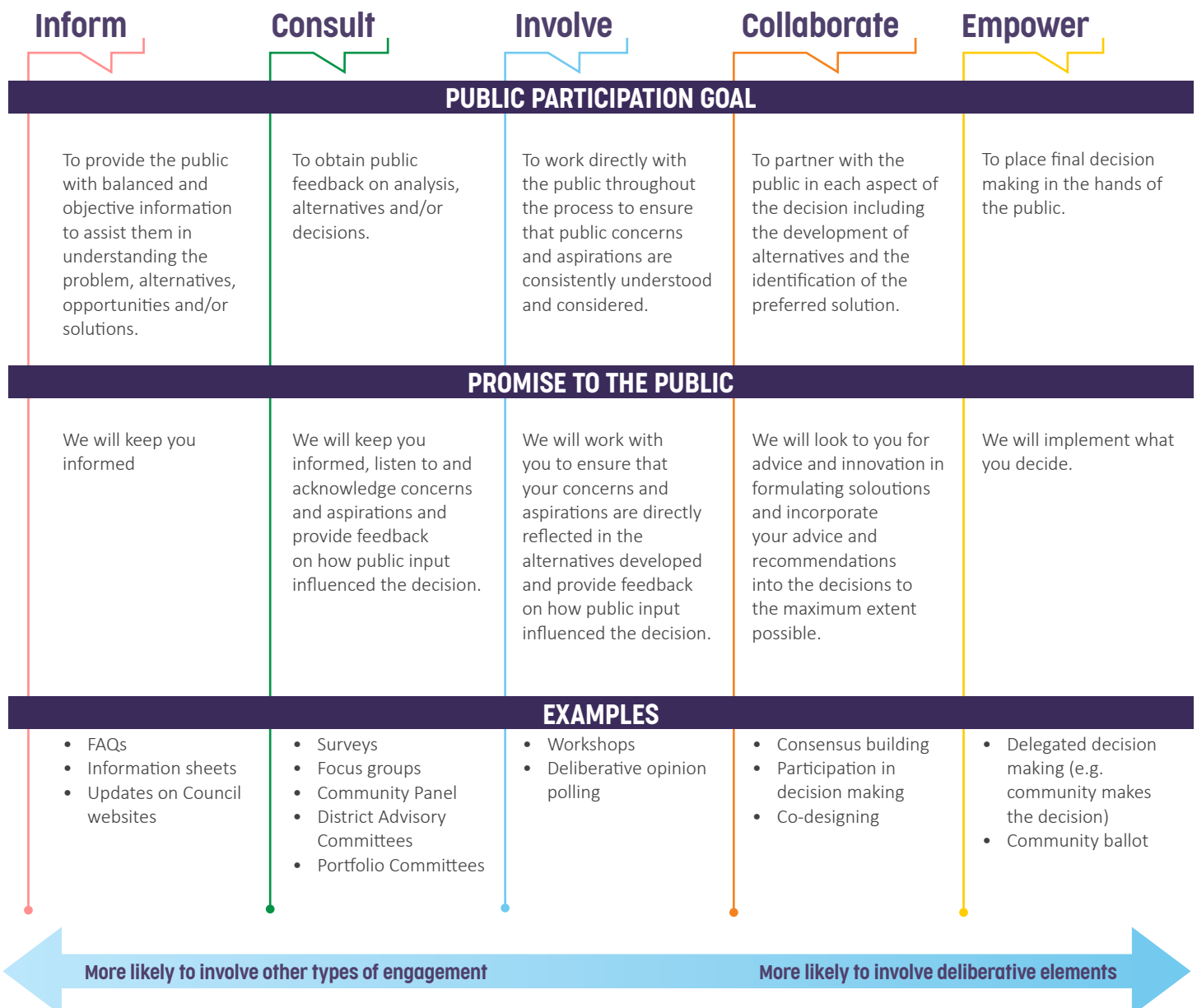
There are different levels and types of community engagement. To ensure that we are providing best value to our community we will engage in varying ways. This will depend on:

- what decision is to be made
- the ability of the community to shape the decision
- the significance and complexity of the matter
- the level of resourcing required, and
- legislative requirements.

IAP2 spectrum

Our engagement is guided by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum of Engagement, which describes five levels of engagement from inform through to empower.

A demonstration of how we are guided by the IAP2 spectrum is included below, including examples of possible engagement methods and our representation of where the five levels might fit on the deliberative scale.



¹ (c) International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.

Deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement practices align with the “involve”, “collaborate” and “empower” levels of influence on the IAP2 spectrum.

For Wyndham City, the key elements of deliberation are :

- There is a complex problem or issue to be solved.
- A deliberating group is selected using a random and stratified recruitment method.
- Information from diverse sources and covering different sides of the issue, such as background reports and expert speakers, is provided.
- The group is given 4-6 full days of time to deliberate.
- The process is designed and facilitated by independent skilled facilitators.
- The group considers information, identifies options, comes to judgement, writes their own recommendations/report, and presents it to the elected council.

Each of these elements have been guided by Mosaiclab’s guide to deliberative engagement for Victorian Councils and are linked to the principles of engagement.

Scaling of deliberative engagement is important, as not all deliberative engagement processes must include all elements as described. The more deliberative practices that are included, the more deliberative it will become. We will decide where a process fits on to the scale of deliberation, having regard to the significance and complexity of the decision to be made.

The Act requires that deliberative engagement practices must, at a minimum, be used in the development of the following:

- community vision
- council plan
- financial plan
- asset plan.

Other types of community engagement

Not all types of community engagement meet the requirements of deliberative engagement. Community engagement processes within “inform” or “consult” on the IAP2 spectrum do not fall within deliberative engagement. Sometimes, elements of deliberative principles might be included in a community engagement process that is not itself a full deliberative process.

Participants in these processes are self-selected, and not recruited through an independent process. This type of community engagement usually occurs where feedback is invited on ideas, different alternatives or draft documents. These types of community engagement are more likely to be appropriate where:

- we have already asked our community about the topic/issue or we have existing service/customer data
- there are simpler and less complex issues for consideration
- there is less time for consideration of issues compared with deliberative processes, or
- there is less opportunity for community to impact a decision.



² See Mosaiclab, 2020, “A short guide to Deliberative Engagement for Victorian Councils”, p.5.

What happens when there is limited opportunity for engagement?

The opportunity for community engagement may sometimes be limited. This might include where we aren't the leading agency, or where we are required to take immediate action as in an emergency response. If a project or decision will impact you but there is no opportunity for community input then, wherever possible, we will make sure that you are given timely information about it.

Legislative Context

In some instances, Council is legislatively and/or legally required to engage with the community. In these cases, we will treat the legally required level of community engagement as the minimum standard. This policy is designed to complement and support these existing requirements.

In addition to the *Local Government Act 2020*, other relevant legislation and guiding documents includes, but is not limited to:

- Road Management Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Disability Act 2006

Submissions process

On matters where submissions processes were previously governed by the *Local Government Act 1989*, section 223, Council will tailor an appropriate engagement approach based on legislative requirements and applying the Community Engagement Policy and Practice Framework 2021-25.



Determining the right type of engagement

While legislation requires deliberative engagement practices for key processes, many other Wyndham City processes would benefit from considering the use of deliberative engagement. However, not all projects are suitable for this.

The below table sets out a guide for the minimum requirement of community engagement to be implemented for different processes.

Policy or Process	Minimum level of engagement
Wyndham 2040 Vision	Deliberative engagement
Council Plan	Deliberative engagement
Financial Plan	Deliberative engagement
Asset Plan	Deliberative engagement
Annual Plan and Budget	Other types of community engagement
Making of a local law	Other types of community engagement
Acquiring or selling land	Other types of community engagement
Other plans (including the Revenue and Rating Plan), strategies or policies, capital works projects, services and day to day business	Determine level based on the decision being made, the ability of the community to shape it, legislative requirements, significance and complexity and level of resourcing required.
Processes where there is no or limited opportunity for community input	Determine level based on the decision being made, the ability of the community to shape it, legislative requirements, significance and complexity and level of resourcing required or/inform. Wherever possible, we will make sure that impacted community members are given timely information about the process or decision.

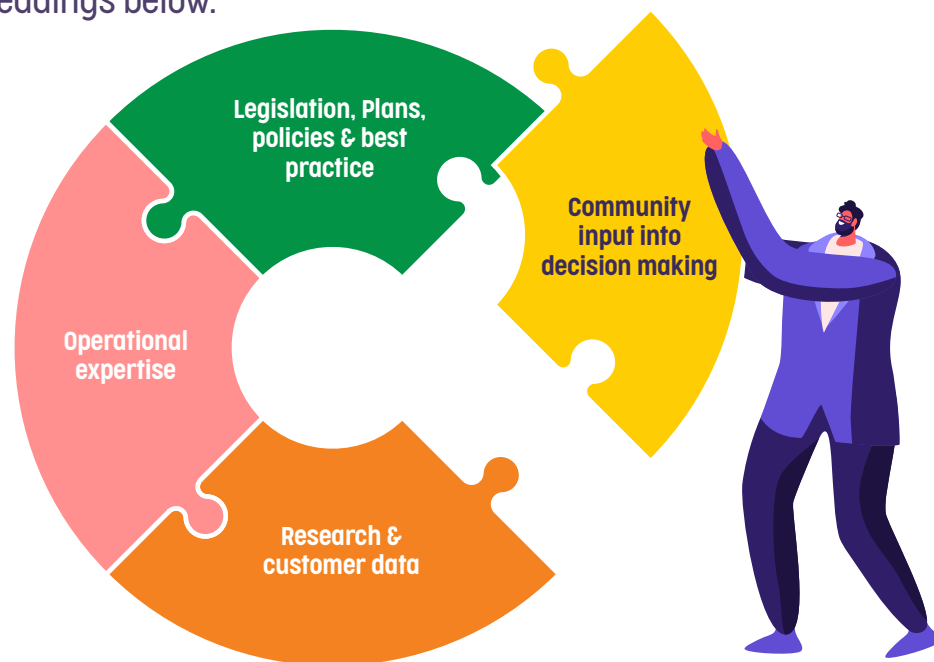
Interaction with Community Governance model

Wyndham City works with advisory committees who provide us feedback to assist our decision making. Our advisory committees provide local area “lived experience” knowledge to assist our decision-making, including on how to best engage local communities on issues that impact them. This knowledge and feedback will also be used to assist us in determining the appropriate type of engagement.



How community input informs our approach to decision making

Community engagement is a crucial input into good decision making. We combine community feedback with other evidence (research/customer data), expert knowledge and our strategic policies and guiding legislation to come to an informed decision. This is outlined by the diagram and headings below.



Community input into decision making

Community input, as guided by this policy and our Community Engagement Practice Framework, is a crucial input for good decision making at Wyndham City.

service delivery is valuable in informing that engagement. It provides a platform for understanding and meaningful engagement.

We also gather information and use relevant research about key aspects of Wyndham City to inform our approach to decision making.

Research and customer data

Wyndham City has daily contact with thousands of community members who access Council services. These interactions provide the opportunity to learn about community needs and what we can do to help people live the lives they choose to live in Wyndham. This ongoing community engagement is rich in detail about problems the community would like Council's help to solve, and what matters to them about how that help is provided. It makes clear the daily concerns of community members and what they value about our services.

In setting out to engage with the Wyndham community on any specific matter, the learnings from daily community engagement through

Legislation, plans, policies and best practice

Wyndham City considers and applies:

- all principles within the *Local Government Act 2020*, where relevant. For example, financial management, public transparency, strategic planning and service performance principles.
- other legislative requirements
- existing policies and plans
- best practice approaches.

Operational expertise

Wyndham City staff will apply their operational expertise and utilise expert knowledge and advice to provide recommendations.

Informing the community of engagement outcomes

We will report back to community on outcomes and updates of engagement, through both our online platform “The Loop” and directly to those who have asked to be kept informed and provided contact details.

Evaluation and Performance

Effort is required to measure the effectiveness of community engagement practices. Council commits to monitoring processes, performance measurement and evaluation to understand the overall level of success of the policy. An annual report will be presented to Council evaluating the Council’s community engagement performance.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented through staff training and guidelines for community engagement. Tools and training will be provided to support staff to undertake effective community engagement relevant to their role.

As part of the implementation of this document, several internal tools and guidelines will be developed under a Community Engagement Practice Framework to ensure compliance with the policy. These include:

- An engagement planning, implementation and evaluation guide, which will:
 - Detail our process for designing, delivering and completing community engagement
 - Provide detail on when to use different types of engagement, including deliberative processes.
- A guide detailing how our community likes to be engaged and outlining engagement methods, including methods designed to enable Council to be proactive and open to new and innovative ways of engaging.
- A process for embedding good internal engagement across the organisation, including the sharing of customer data, research and community engagement outcomes.
- Further details on the submission process as formerly governed by section 223 of the *Local Government Act 1989*.



Appendix

Responsibilities for implementing this policy are shared as follows:

Whom	Roles and responsibilities
Councillors	• Ensure that matters under consideration are informed by the appropriate level of community engagement. • Balance the range of views and concerns on an issue when making a decision.
Executive Leadership Team	• Ensure that matters under consideration are informed by the appropriate level of community engagement. • Champion better practice community engagement through policy, process and leaderships. • Monitor implementation and compliance with the policy.
Managers	• Manage areas of responsibility to ensure community engagement is consistent with this policy.
Staff	• Undertake community engagement activities consistent with this policy.

References

- IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) Published resources – Public Participation Spectrum, Core Values, Quality Assurance Standard, <https://www.iap2.org.au/resources/iap2-published-resources/>.
- Mosaiclab, A short guide to Deliberative Engagement for Victorian Councils, 2020 <https://www.mosaiclab.com.au/deliberation-victorian-councils>.
- Victoria Auditor General's Office, Public Participation in Government Decision Making – Better practice guide, 2015, <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG.pdf>.
- Local Government Victoria, Co-design – Community engagement, <https://engage.vic.gov.au/local-government-act-2020/community-engagement-workshop-feedback-themes>.
- Local Government Act 2020

