

COUNCIL POLICY



Document Name: Public Engagement ~~Policy~~
Department Name: Communications and Engagement
Document Number: ~~COM~~PRC-130
Effective Date: May 10, 2022

Next Revision Date: May 10, 2025

STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGE

~~This policy aligns with the Municipality's goal of building a responsible government by enhancing Public Engagement in all areas of Municipal activities.~~

- Strategic Priority 1 – Responsible Government

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

The Municipality is committed to fostering Public understanding of emerging opportunities, issues, and decisions, while creating a trusting, **inclusive**, and transparent environment for ~~Public~~ dialogue to occur between ~~residents~~ **the Public** and the Municipality.

The purpose of this Policy is to develop the basis for a ~~Public Engagement framework~~ **documents and processes** that ~~values~~ **value** meaningful input from the Public and ~~to~~ enhance participation in all areas of Municipal activities, most notably in project and program development led by the Municipality. All Public Engagement will be conducted in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act* and other applicable laws.

The objective of this Policy is to:

- a) build and maintain cooperative working relationships with the Public;
- b) facilitate sharing of information, perspectives, and ideas with the Public;
- ~~c) respond to Public opinion and concerns through formal processes;~~
- d) **provide opportunities for Public Engagement that take into account the diversity of needs, abilities, and backgrounds;**
- e) actively and respectfully engage the Public in decisions about ~~developments~~ **development of**, and changes to, Municipal programs, services, projects, and policies; and
- f) reach balanced decisions on issues of Public interest and concern.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Definitions:

- 1.1. **"Indigenous Community" or "Indigenous Communities" means the following list of First Nation and Métis communities: Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Smith's Landing First Nation, Mikisew Cree First Nation, Fort McKay First Nation, Fort McMurray 468 First Nation, Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, Fort**

McKay Métis Nation Association, Métis Nation of Alberta Association of Fort McMurray Local Council 1935, Willow Lake Métis Association, Conklin Métis Local 193, and the Chard Métis Community Association.

- 1.2. "Municipality" means the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.
- 1.3. "Public" means ~~the~~ residents of the Municipality, as well as stakeholders ~~that may~~ who have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Municipality.
- 1.4. "Public Engagement" means the process of having a purposeful dialogue between the Municipality and the Public to discuss and gain an understanding of emerging opportunities and issues, and to involve the Public by clarifying issues, identifying alternatives, or partnering in decision making.

2. Responsibilities:

2.1. Council to:

- 2.1.1. approve this Policy and all amendments as required;
- 2.1.2. approve any agreements with Indigenous Communities that define the engagement process between the Municipality and an Indigenous Community.

2.2. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to:

- 2.2.1. support the implementation of this Policy; and
- 2.2.2. recommend any amendments to this Policy.
- 2.2.3. ~~Approve any related administrative directives;~~

2.3. ~~Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Executive Directors to:~~

- 2.3.1. ~~Support the implementation of this policy;~~
- 2.3.2. ~~Recommend any amendments to this policy as required.~~

2.4. ~~Directors to:~~

- 2.4.1. ~~Identify opportunities where Public Engagement may benefit decision making or service delivery;~~
- 2.4.2. ~~Coordinate with Communications and Stakeholder Relations to organize Public Engagement activities that are consistent with this policy;~~
- 2.4.3. ~~Plan and preform Public Engagement activities based on budgetary considerations and project, program and service priorities;~~
- 2.4.4. ~~Recognize that this does not replace the need for First Nation and Métis Nation consultation.~~

2.5. ~~Director of Communications and Stakeholder Relations to:~~

- 2.5.1. ~~Ensure implementation and communication of this policy to employees and to the Public;~~
- 2.5.2. ~~Develop and implement formal processes that are consistent with this policy and any related administrative directives;~~
- 2.5.3. ~~Lead other departments in planning and facilitating Public Engagement activities that are consistent with the Policy;~~

~~2.5.4. Recognize the role of Community Services (Rural Community Development branch) in implementing this policy in rural areas of the Municipality.~~

~~2.6. Employees to:~~

~~2.6.1. Assist in Public Engagement activity planning, development, delivery, outcome analysis and reporting as required.~~

3. **General Principles-~~Principles~~ Procedures:**

3.1. **Scope:**

3.1.1. This Policy applies to municipal programs, services, projects, and policies that have an impact on the Public.

3.2. **Public Engagement:**

3.2.1. The Municipality will ~~endeavour to~~ inform, educate, and engage the Public about opportunities, issues, and decisions that have significant impact on the Public, through appropriate Public Engagement principles and activities.

3.2.2. Public Engagement can occur for the following circumstances:

3.2.2.1. establishing new programs, services, projects, or policies;

3.2.2.2. reviewing or changing existing programs, services, projects, or policies;

3.2.2.3. reviewing Municipality's strategic and business plans;

3.2.2.4. as required by legislation; or

3.2.2.5. as deemed necessary by Council.

3.2.3. The Municipality will conduct Public Engagement in the most sustainable and inclusive way with regard to available resources and reasonable costs.

3.2.4. The Municipality will determine the level of Public Engagement proportionate to the impact of the issue or decision and will clearly communicate the level of Public Engagement to the Public.

3.2.5. The Municipality will establish a Public Engagement framework that outlines the approaches that will be taken for Public Engagement. The framework, at minimum, will provide guidance on:

3.2.5.1. determining the level of Public Engagement proportionate to the impact of the issue or decision and clearly communicating that to the Public;

3.2.5.2. providing appropriate information and tools for the Public to engage in meaningful participation; and

3.2.5.3. establishing formal processes to capture and respond to Public opinions and needs.

~~3.2.6. The Municipality will conduct Public Engagement in the most sustainable and inclusive way with regard to available resources and reasonable costs.~~

- 3.2.7. The Municipality will communicate decisions and results driven by Public Engagement to the Public in a timely manner and in accordance with approved communications practices.
- 3.3. **Evaluation and Reporting:**
 - 3.3.1. Information collected through all Public Engagements will be compiled and presented in a Public Engagement annual report to Council and will be available online for the Public.
 - 3.3.2. The annual report will include, at minimum, the following:
 - 3.3.2.1. an overview of all instances of Public Engagement in the previous year;
 - 3.3.2.2. an assessment of the effectiveness and interest of the Public Engagement;
 - 3.3.2.3. a summary of the input received;
 - 3.3.2.4. a summary of how the input informed decisions and direction; and
 - 3.3.2.5. possible recommendations from Administration for future Public Engagement.
- 3.4. **Indigenous and Rural Relations:**
 - 3.4.1. The Municipality recognizes the importance of sharing knowledge and engaging Indigenous Communities outside of the Public Engagement process on issues of mutual interest to support advancing truth and reconciliation.
 - 3.4.2. This Policy does not fulfill or address Indigenous consultation requirements owed by the Provincial or Federal governments.
 - 3.4.3. The Municipality may enter into agreements with Indigenous Communities that define the engagement process between the Municipality and an Indigenous Community.

4. **Rescind and Replace**

This Policy rescinds and replaces Public Engagement Policy COM-130, dated October 18, 2016.

APPROVAL

This Policy was approved by Council. It will be reviewed not later than its next Revision Date to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. It may be assessed before that time as necessary.

Sandy Bowman, Mayor

Jade Brown, Chief Legislative Officer

Date

SUPPORTING REFERENCES AND POSITION RESPONSIBLE

Legal References: Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, RSA 2000, c F-25
 Canada Anti-Spam Legislation (spans Canadian Radio- television and
 Telecommunications Commission Act; Competition Act) SC 2010, c 23
 Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26, section 216.1
 Public Participation Policy Regulation 193/2017
 Records Retention and Disposition Bylaw, No. 19/009

Cross References: Indigenous Communities Capacity Grant Program Policy FIN-250
 Indigenous Communities Capacity Grant Program Administrative
 Procedure FIN-250-P01
 Public Engagement Administrative Procedure PRC-210-P01
 Municipal Brand Standards

Position Responsible: Director, Communications and Engagement

COUNCIL POLICY DETAILS AND REVISION HISTORY

Date	Action	Description
October 18, 2016	Introduction	New Public Engagement Policy COM-130 to replace Public Participation Policy PRL-100.
May 10, 2021	Revision – Substantive	Revisions to the Policy, including a change to the Policy prefix (COM to PRC) additional definitions, revised responsibilities, additional procedures, additional legal references and cross-references, and new Policy format.