The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To:	Council	**File No.:**	1470-00
From:	Director of Corporate Services	**Date:**	April 23, 2025
Subject:	**City of Courtenay Engagement Framework**		

PURPOSE: To seek Council approval of the City of Courtenay Engagement Framework.

BACKGROUND:
Under the Good Governance banner of the 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities, Council directed staff to undertake the following activities to increase community engagement for all segments of the community:

- Communication Strategy (complete)
- Community Survey (2023 and 2024 surveys complete)
- Community Engagement Strategy

DISCUSSION:
The Engagement Framework aims to enhance resident participation in City decision-making by removing barriers, improving engagement practices, and providing opportunities for involvement that truly resonate with our community, ensuring all voices are heard and represented. The framework builds on the Communication Strategy adopted in January 2024 which provides guidance on outgoing communication to streamline and enhance clarity and accessibility in messaging from the City.

The Engagement Framework charts a course toward a significantly enhanced level of service by articulating both our current engagement practices and our ambitious future objectives. Grounded in inclusive engagement principles and recognizing the power of genuine collaboration, the framework promotes meaningful and equitable practices. It aims to harness the collective wisdom of our community, reflecting the City's unwavering commitment to improving life in Courtenay.

Guiding principles of the Engagement Framework:

- We listen to learn.
- We are guided by equity.
- We commit to transparency.
- We are flexible and adaptive.
- We value relationships and reconciliation.

The Engagement Framework outlines typical roles and responsibilities, the engagement planning process, a process for mapping community interest-holders, recommended engagement methods, feedback and reporting, and guidance for Indigenous engagement with a focus on urban Indigenous community. Formal government-to-government relations between the City and First Nations rights holders will be guided by a separate Reconciliation Framework.

Next Steps – Creating the Plan for Implementation
Taking a strategic approach to implementation, the City will complete a comprehensive Implementation Strategy *before* initiating the rollout of the Engagement Framework. Without a well-defined plan, implementation faces significant risks, including inefficient use of limited resources, inconsistent messaging, and ultimately, failure to achieve the framework's objectives. This measured approach will also allow for effective communication with those who helped shape the plan, ensuring they understand that while the framework has been adopted, successful implementation is contingent upon available resources.

To successfully implement the plan, capacity must first be developed or resourced, both within the Communications Division, which will play a central role in execution, and across all other City departments whose participation and support are essential for successful implementation. This includes providing departments with the necessary training, tools, and resources to effectively integrate the new engagement practices into their operations. Developing a robust Implementation Strategy first will allow the City to approach the rollout of both the Communications Strategy and Engagement Framework in a deliberate, sustainable, and impactful manner.

The Implementation Strategy will identify the operational requirements for successfully implementing both the Communication Strategy and Engagement Framework. This includes assessing and securing the necessary resources and capacity within the Communications Division and across all participating City departments. The strategy will carefully balance service needs with resource availability, outlining a multi-year rollout process that allows the City to achieve the Framework's objectives incrementally. This phased approach ensures sustainable, high-quality engagement with residents on a wide range of important issues and supports the full realization of both strategies over time. The Implementation Strategy will also include the development of templates and resources designed to optimize internal efficiencies and promote consistent practices across all City departments. These resources, along with the supporting guidelines from the framework, will also be provided to external consulting firms engaged in City work related to communications and engagement, ensuring alignment with established standards and creating consistency in practice.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:
Costs associated with the implementation of the Engagement Framework will be brought forward through annual budget approval processes for Council's consideration.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:
Support for and involvement in the development of the Engagement Framework was part of the 2024 Corporate Services annual work plan, further informed by a variety of City departments. The Communications Division will commence implementation of the plan in 2025, subject to Council approval.

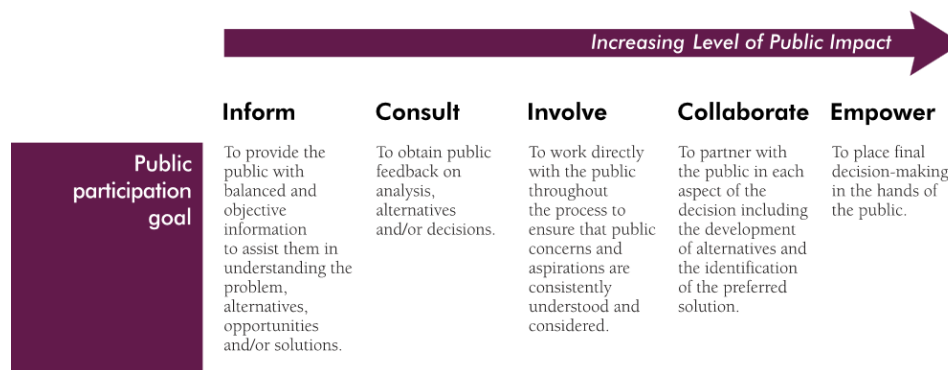**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**
This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Good Governance - Increase community engagement for all segments of the community: complete communication strategy, community survey, and community engagement strategy

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:
Staff would inform, consult, involve and collaborate with the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:

Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

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OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council approve the City of Courtenay Engagement Framework.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Engagement Framework
2. Engagement Framework Presentation

Prepared by: Anne Guillo, Manager of Communications
                   Kate O'Connell, Director of Corporate Services

Reviewed by: Kate O'Connell, Director of Corporate Services
Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)