



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Briefing Note

To: Council

File No.: 1470 - 00

From: Director of Corporate Services

Date: May 8, 2024

Subject: City of Courtenay Engagement Strategy – Project Launch

PURPOSE: To provide information to Council on the City of Courtenay's Engagement Strategy as the project is now underway.

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:

- Complete Communication Strategy (Complete)
- Complete a Community Survey (Complete)
- Complete a Community Engagement Strategy (Launched)

To facilitate the development of the Engagement Strategy, the City has once again engaged Spur Communication, a strategic communication consultancy with significant experience in enhancing local government communications. Spur was selected for the Engagement Strategy project based on their deep familiarity with our organization, existing resources and community, as well as their relevant experience with other jurisdictions and organizations. This project builds on the outcomes of the Communication Strategy, and Spur will efficiently and seamlessly coordinate the new Engagement Strategy with existing tools, guidelines and templates.

The Engagement Strategy process will include consultation with organizations serving equity-deserving communities. There will be specific and targeted engagement with organizations that support Indigenous peoples.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Courtenay is embarking on a new project to develop an Engagement Strategy that aims to enhance relationships with the community and improve engagement processes. The project will involve research, interviews with council members, staff engagement, public and interest holder engagement, framework drafting, and template development.

Engagement with residents is critical for local governments as it plays a vital role in democratic processes and decision-making. When residents are actively involved in the decision-making process, it ensures that policies and initiatives reflect the needs, concerns, and priorities of the community. Engaging residents in decision-making fosters transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance. It also helps build trust between the government and the community, leading to a stronger and more harmonious relationship.

Conversely, when residents are not engaged, there are negative impacts on the local government. Decisions made without community input may not accurately address the needs of residents, leading to ineffective

policies and increased dissatisfaction among the community. Lack of engagement can result in mistrust towards the government, decreased civic participation, and increase the potential for misinformation or misunderstandings. In essence, meaningful engagement is essential for local governments to make informed decisions that benefit the entire community and uphold democratic principles.

Engaging Equity Deserving Groups

In addition to engaging with the broader community, it is crucial for local governments to consult with equity-deserving groups and organizations during the development of the Engagement Strategy. Consulting with equity-deserving groups builds trust, fosters collaboration, and strengthens relationships between the government and underrepresented communities, leading to more effective and impactful decision-making processes. By actively involving equity-deserving groups, local governments can address systemic inequalities, decrease barriers to participation, promote diversity and inclusion, and work towards creating a more equitable society.

Engaging Indigenous and First Nation Support Organizations

As part of the Engagement Strategy Project, it is important to note that organizations representing or supporting Indigenous or First Nations peoples will be engaged in addition to, and separate from, the equity-deserving groups. This distinction is crucial because Indigenous communities have unique histories and cultures that require specific attention and recognition. Consultations with Indigenous organizations are essential to ensure that their voices, perspectives, and priorities are effectively incorporated into decision-making processes. By engaging with Indigenous organizations separately, local governments can demonstrate respect for Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and self-determination, as well as work towards reconciliation and meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities.

The City has engaged an indigenous engagement specialist, Ginger Gosnell-Myers, who will provide advice and guidance on culturally appropriate and meaningful engagement approaches through the Engagement Strategy Project.

First Nations Government Engagement

In the development of the Engagement Strategy Project, it is imperative to acknowledge the distinction between engaging organizations that support and work with First Nations or Indigenous peoples, and engaging with First Nations governments directly. Organizations that support and work with Indigenous communities play a vital role in advocating for the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples, and their input is essential in ensuring inclusive and culturally sensitive engagement practices. However, engaging with First Nations governments directly recognizes and respects their unique status as sovereign entities with distinct governance structures and responsibilities. The importance of reconciliation is paramount in these engagements, as it is essential to build trust, understanding, and meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities based on mutual respect and recognition of rights. The City of Courtenay is committed to creating a specific First Nations Engagement Strategy to effectively address the complexities and nuances of engaging with First Nations governments, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation and forging collaborative partnerships.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Engagement Strategy Project is funded under “Special Projects”. The anticipated costs to develop the Strategy is \$75,000.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Work undertaken in support of the development of the Engagement Strategy is incorporated into the Corporate Services Department, and Communications Division’s annual work plan. Members of Council, senior leadership, and representatives from each department will be engaged to inform the development of the plan.

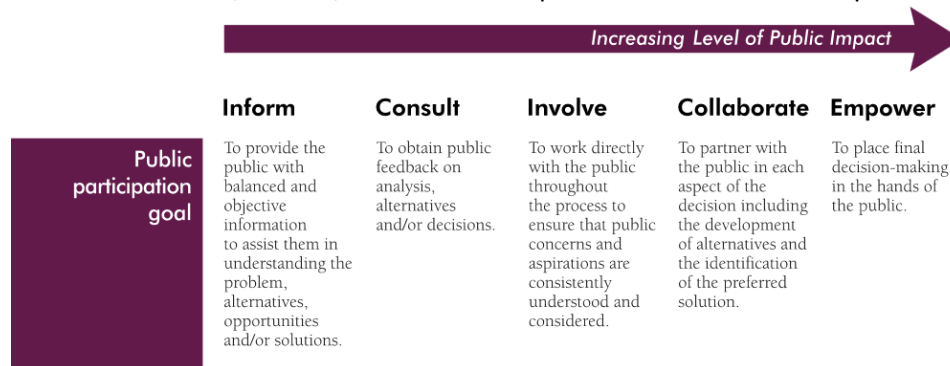
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

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, and involve the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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RECOMMENDATION: THAT Council receive the “City of Courtenay Engagement Strategy Project Launch” briefing note.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. City of Courtenay Communication Strategy
2. Engagemnt Strategy Presentation

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