



POLICY

POLICY NO:	118	APPROVAL DATE:	January 21, 2013
TITLE:	Citizen Engagement (<i>activateGP</i>)	REVISION DATE:	
SECTION:	Administration	PAGE 1 OF 3	
DEPARTMENT:	Marketing and Communications		

POLICY STATEMENT

City Council and Administration recognize that decisions are improved by engaging citizens and other stakeholder groups, where appropriate. We are committed to transparent and inclusive processes that are responsive, accountable, and within the capacity of the municipality to achieve.

REASON FOR POLICY

The Citizen Engagement Policy directs the development of engagement processes for stakeholders, both internal and external.

Developing a Citizen Engagement Framework was identified in Council's 2012-2014 Strategic Business Plan, to improve the effectiveness of the City's efforts to encourage resident involvement. Our Citizen Engagement initiative is branded as ***activateGP***.

A review of international best practices in stakeholder engagement was completed. As well, City Administration has met with numerous stakeholder groups and undertook a four-month survey to gather feedback about why people become involved in their community while identifying barriers to participation.

DEFINITIONS

Citizen Engagement: The process of involving the public in decisions and initiatives that affect them, including policies, plans, strategies, programs and services. The goal is to ensure outcomes are more informed and reflective of stakeholder concerns and values.

Public: The most general and inclusive term for participants of public processes in the municipal context. This term includes individuals, not-for-profit, community and corporate organizations.

Involvement: The term used to cover the continuum of phases for engaging the public in municipal issues. The continuum includes Informing, Consulting, Involving, Collaborating and Empowering as the different stages of involvement.

ActivateGP: The name given to the City of Grande Prairie's Citizen Engagement program that seeks to create a more positive relationship between the public and the City of Grande Prairie by strengthening communication, identifying and overcoming challenges and barriers to participation and creating more impactful ways for involvement.

The [activateGP guide to citizen engagement](#) outlines the many ways residents can involve themselves with the City of Grande Prairie. It uses the Citizen Engagement Spectrum to organize the opportunities into an easy to read inventory.

Citizen Engagement Spectrum: Five strategic levels of involvement and associated promises related to reaching and involving citizens and other stakeholders, in specific engagement initiatives regarding planning, policy and projects.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The City of Grande Prairie places a high priority on appropriately informing and involving citizens and other stakeholders early on and throughout the process, where the decisions affect their lives.

Council and Administration will accept and abide by the Core Values and Promises to the Public, incorporating them into everyday business planning and practices.

Core Values for Meaningful Citizen Engagement:

1. We should involve citizens who will be affected.
2. The public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Sustainable decisions are made by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Decision makers seek out and involve people affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Decision makers ask participants how they would like to participate.
6. Participants are given information they need to participate.
7. Decision makers communicate to participants how their input affected the decision.

Promises to the Public:

1. Have reliable information that is readily available to the residents of Grande Prairie.
2. Ensure processes are well designed, open, inclusive and respectful.
3. Exchange views, and through discussion, create learning opportunities for ourselves and our residents.
4. Operate in an accountable and transparent manner.
5. Listen to and respect the voice of citizens and ensure each concern receives a response.
6. Guarantee there is a real opportunity to influence policy outcome.
7. Provide our staff with the necessary training and tools to host considered, informative and responsive citizen engagement activities.

The Citizen Engagement Spectrum will be used by the organization to determine the most feasible level of involvement prior to making a commitment to achieving any level of engagement on a project or initiative.

In some cases citizen engagement requires a higher level of planning, participation and feedback. In others, sharing information may fulfil the needs of the public and the City.

Staff will ensure, to their best knowledge and ability, that each engagement initiative is organized in a way that meets the needs of both the public and the organization.

Administration is committed to an on going and long-term obligation of increasing the organizational capacity for citizen engagement. This includes partnerships with local school systems and other organizations to develop a stronger understanding of local government. Training programs for staff are a key component of ensuring citizen engagement becomes a meaningful commitment from the City of Grande Prairie.

City Administration is encouraged to use this 10-step process:

1. Evaluate the purpose of the engagement.
2. Define the objectives and identify the level of engagement.
3. Identify those with a stake in the process.
4. Select the scope, size, and sample.
5. Review the time and cost factors.
6. Select the appropriate engagement tools.
7. Promote.
8. Implement the initiative.
9. Analyze the results.
10. Respond to the participants.

The Citizen Engagement Spectrum¹:

	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 identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

¹ Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum: www.iap2.com