

Citizen Public Engagement Policy

C-2A.024

Section: 2.0 General Government and Administrative Services  
- A. Governance

Authority: Council

Administering Department: Chief Administrative Officer

Statement

The Municipal District of Bonnyville (M.D.) ~~Council and administration recognize~~ acknowledges that decisions are improved by engaging ~~citizens our ratepayers~~ and other stakeholders ~~s groups~~, where appropriate. ~~The M.D. Council~~ is committed to transparent and inclusive processes that are responsive, accountable, and within the capacity of the municipality to achieve.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the foundation for the M.D.'s principles, responsibilities, expectations, and practices for public engagement to support strengthening communication, identifying and overcoming challenges and barriers to participation, and creating more impactful ways for involvement.

- ~~(1) The Citizen Engagement Policy directs the development of engagement processes for stakeholders, both internal and external.~~
- ~~(2) Developing a Citizen Engagement Framework to improve the effectiveness of the M.D.'s efforts to encourage resident involvement.~~

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- ~~(1) "M.D." means the Municipal District of Bonnyville;~~
- (2) "Chief Administrative Officer" (CAO) means the Chief Administrative Officer of the M.D. appointed by Council, or their authorized delegate;
- (3) "Council" means the duly elected Council of the M.D.;
- (4) "Citizen Engagement" ~~is~~ means the process of involving the public in decisions and initiatives that affect them, ~~where appropriate, including policies, plans, strategies, programs and services. The goal is~~ to ensure outcomes are more informed and reflective of stakeholder concerns and values;
- (5) "Public and Stakeholder" means ~~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 an individual or group who has a specific interest or is impacted by a topic or issue, and may include residents, non-residents, groups, organizations, individuals, representatives and/or municipal staff, depending on the issue;~~

- (6) "Involvement" ~~is means the term used to cover~~ the continuum of phases for engaging the public in municipal issues ~~such as. The continuum includes~~ informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering ~~as the different stages of involvement~~;
- ~~(7) The M.D. Citizen Engagement Program seeks to create a more positive relationship between the public and the municipality by strengthening communication, identifying and overcoming challenges and barriers to participation and creating more impactful ways for involvement.~~
- ~~(8) The citizen engagement outlines the many ways residents can involve themselves with the M.D. It uses the Citizen Engagement Chart to organize the opportunities into an easy to read inventory.~~
- ~~(9) "Citizen Engagement Chart" means the 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 Policy

- (1) The M.D. places a high priority on appropriately informing and involving **citizens the public** and other stakeholders ~~early on and throughout the process~~, where the decisions create **an impact to their lives and/or business affect their lives**.
- (2) Council and Administration will accept and abide by the **following Core Values** and **Promises** to the **Public**, incorporating them into everyday business planning and practices.
  - (a) **Core Values for meaningful Citizen public Engagement**
    - (i) **The M.D. We should** involves **citizens stakeholders** who will be **impacted affected, whenever appropriate**.
    - (ii) The public's contribution will **always be considered in the process of making a influence the** decision.
    - (iii) Sustainable decisions are made by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers **and the municipality as a whole**.
    - (iv) Decision makers seek out and involve **people stakeholders** affected by or interested in a decision.
    - (v) Decision makers ask **participants stakeholders** how they would like to participate **to maximize engagement**.
    - (vi) **Participants Stakeholders** are given information they need to **effectively** participate.
    - (vii) Decision makers communicate to **participants stakeholders** how their input affected **the a** decision, **when applicable**.
  - (b) Promises to the **Public**
    - (i) **The M.D. will Have** reliable information that is readily available to **the public and other stakeholders residents of the M.D.**

- (ii) **The M.D. will E**nsure processes are well designed, open, inclusive and respectful.
  - (iii) **The M.D. will E**xchange views, and through discussion, create learning opportunities for **Council and M.D. staff as well as the public, when possible ourselves and our residents.**
  - (iv) **The M.D. will O**perate in an accountable and transparent manner.
  - (v) **The M.D. will L**isten to, and respect, the voice of **citizens the public** and ensure each concern **is considered receives a response.**
  - (vi) **The M.D. will G**uarantee **that the engagement process remains a genuine there is a real** opportunity to influence policy outcomes.
  - (vii) **The M.D. will P**rovide M.D. staff with the necessary training and tools to host **inclusive considered,** informative and responsive **citizen public** engagement activities.
- (c) **The M.D. 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 municipality.**

~~The Citizen Engagement Chart 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 fulfill the needs of the public and the M.D.~~

~~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 ongoing 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 M.D.~~

## Guiding Principles

- (1) **The M.D. recognizes that stakeholder input plays a critical role in good governance and to ensure effectual engagement in support of the decision-making process, the following guiding principles will be applied:**
  - (a) **Citizen Focused: The M.D. respects that people have knowledge and insight and should be engaged in the decisions that affect them.**
  - (b) **Transparent and Accountable: The M.D. will communicate clearly and openly about public engagement opportunities and the associated process and provide factual and evidence-based information as well as share the outcomes of public engagement, where appropriate, including how the information was used in the decision-making process in relation to the best interests of the community as a whole.**

- (c) **Credible:** Public engagement will be initiated a reasonable stage of the decision-making process to ensure fair opportunity for stakeholders to provide input that may influence, inform, or impact decisions. Additionally, to allow timely review and evaluation of all stakeholder input, engagement will be done as early as reasonably possible with follow-up engagement as necessary throughout the process.
  - (d) **Diverse and Inclusive:** Stakeholders are provided with a reasonable opportunity to contribute with the endeavour to reach all pertinent groups in relevant public engagement opportunities, striving for representative input enabling an inclusive and balanced perspective to ensure a fulsome picture of stakeholder input. Public engagement employs a range of methods to engage various audiences to encourage and maximize participation to improve the quality of feedback and ensure participants feel heard and know their input is valued.
  - (e) **Responsive and Ongoing:** Public engagement provides an ongoing focus on relationship building, active listening and two-way dialogue to increase understanding. This helps ensure stakeholders, Administration and Council are better equipped and more responsive to future public engagement opportunities.
  - (f) **Clear and Focused:** Council, Administration and stakeholders understand their respective roles in a public engagement process, including the level of involvement and how input will be used to inform decisions. Engagement will be conducted with an identified purpose and desired engagement outcomes.
  - (g) **Added Value:** Public engagement for matters beyond those where public input is required by law is good practice and improves decision making.
  - (h) **Evaluation and Continual Improvement:** Public engagement is a dynamic process that needs continual evaluation and adjustment to improve and address the changing needs of the community. Further embracing new and better engagement processes, tactics, as deemed appropriate and relevant, will produce better outcomes.
- (2) **Along with Guiding Principles,** Administration is encouraged to use **the following ~~this 10-step~~ process:**
- (a) Evaluate the purpose of the engagement.
  - (b) Define the objectives and identify the level of engagement.
  - (c) Identify those with a stake in the process.
  - (d) Select the scope, size, and sample.
  - (e) Review the time and cost factors.
  - (f) Select the appropriate engagement tools.
  - (g) Promote.
  - (h) Implement the initiative.
  - (i) Analyze the results.
  - (j) Respond to the participants.

***Note: In some cases, citizen engagement may require a higher level of planning, participation and feedback. In others, sharing information may fulfill the needs of the public and the M.D.***

**Public Engagement Opportunities**

- (1) The M.D. is committed to having an intentional approach to build an understanding of when and why public engagement shall occur, and as such:
  - (a) Shall offer public engagement opportunities when:
    - (i) required by federal, provincial, or municipal legislation;
    - (ii) required to meet the expectations of grant funding agreements.
  - (b) May offer public engagement opportunities when:
    - (i) establishing new programs, services or service levels;
    - (ii) reviewing existing programs, services, and associated service levels;
    - (iii) upon the request of Council;
    - (iv) as deemed necessary or beneficial by Administration.

**Citizen Engagement Chart**

|                                  | <b>Inform</b>   | <b>Consult</b>   | <b>Involve</b>   | <b>Collaborate</b>  | <b>Empower</b>   |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Public Participation Goal</b> | 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. |

|                                     |  |  |   |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Promise to the Public</b></p> | <p><b>We will keep you informed.</b></p> | <p><b>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</b></p> | <p><b>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.</b></p> | <p><b>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.</b></p> | <p><b>We will implement what you decide.</b></p> |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|

### Review Period

Within **five (5) four (4)** years from date adopted / amended / reviewed.

### For administrative use only:

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <p><b>Previous Policy Number:</b><br/>(prior to July 24, 2019)</p>                   | <p>10.12.43</p> |
| <p><b>Related Documentation:</b><br/>(plans, bylaws, policies, procedures, etc.)</p> |                 |