



CITY OF
MONASH

Community **ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**





Community engagement describes the range of activities aimed at increasing *community awareness* and participation. It means getting involved in Council decisions that are most important to you.

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The Value of *Community Engagement*

The City of Monash is a culturally diverse and engaged community, rich with experience and expertise.

Community participation in the democratic process is important. An empowered community is one that contributes to and actively participates in decisions that affect their lives.

Monash Council is committed to providing opportunities for our community to influence the

decisions, policies and plans of Council by their participation in the community engagement process, lending us their experiences and expertise.

We commit to engaging with transparency and accountability, in partnership with the Monash community, to ensure good governance and leadership.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement describes the range of activities aimed at increasing community awareness and participation. It means getting involved in Council decisions that are most important to you.

Community engagement is defined as a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them.



Why Engage?

- Conversations with the community support Council decision-making
- Enables more input from diverse stakeholders
- Increases sense of civic participation
- Learning from others.

The Framework

This framework builds on Council's present community engagement practices and outlines the approach Monash Council has taken to shape community engagement in our municipality. Every project is different, but we use our guiding principles and our best practice planning and engagement tools to guide our efforts. When members of the Monash community are consulted they can see how their contributions make a difference to the outcomes in their local neighbourhoods and wider municipality.

The framework demonstrates Monash Council's commitment to:

- A consistent community engagement approach for the City of Monash
- Improving awareness and understanding of community engagement
- Establishing the principles and definitions for engagement
- Providing guidelines and a toolkit for planning and delivering community engagement.

The framework applies to the projects and decisions you find on Council's Have Your Say webpage and is guided by the Monash Community Engagement Policy and section 55 of the Local Government Act 2020. It does not apply to community engagement processes that are prescribed by other Victorian legislation such as land-use planning applications or other Council processes such as service requests or complaints.

How we did this

Community engagement practitioners across Council collaborated to advise on the content of the framework, providing significant guidance and feedback on what mattered to them. Members of Council's advisory groups deliberated over the principles of the community engagement policy to advise on how we should put them into practice.

We also consulted widely across the community on preferences for community engagement. We heard from 800 respondents and found that one in six (16%) residents had previously participated in a consultation and almost one in two of those respondents (49%) were willing to participate in future engagements.

You are willing to participate in engagement on...

Decisions about the physical environment	26%
Council plans and policies	20%
Community wellbeing services	20%
Research and evaluation	15%
Council regulations	12%

» You like to participate by...

48%
Survey

37%
Online
interactive
participation

13%
Informal
conversations

11%
Workshops
or meetings

4.5%
Community
panel

Supporting *Council Decisions*

The main objective of community engagement is to ensure the views of the community are taken into account on decisions that affect them.

The flowchart shows how understanding the impact of a decision on a community is taken into account in a typical Council process.

Who makes the decision?

Your Council is elected to represent your interests and it is their responsibility to make decisions. The input from the community is critical, providing Council with valuable information and feedback to support and influence the decision.



Need or opportunity for a project

The need or opportunity requiring a decision by Council is identified through Council business planning; or as a result of a request from the community or Councillor; or a result of prior community engagement.

Council meeting

Officers present their proposal for how they will form their recommendation to Council on a project. The proposal includes the level of community engagement they intend to conduct. The level of community involvement will increase with the level of impact. Council is invited to provide direction on the proposal.

Community engagement

Community engagement is designed and implemented to determine the views of the community impacted by or interested in the decision. The consultation may consist of multiple stages.

Council meeting

Officers present their findings and draft policy or strategy to Council. The report includes the results of community engagement for Council to consider in their decision. Typically there will be a recommendation to place the draft document on public exhibition for a set period of time to invite community feedback.

Public exhibition of documents

Stakeholder groups or the wider community are invited to comment on draft documents.

Council decision

Feedback and submissions are collated and the draft document updated. Officers present the outcomes of public exhibition and updated document for Council decision.

Our principles *and promise to you*

The Community Engagement Policy provides direction to staff on how to carry out meaningful community engagement. Here are the principles and commitments included in the policy.

Principle	Our promise
 <p>The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All community engagement is planned by clearly identifying the purpose, scope and objectives of the community's participation, in the community engagement plan. We will communicate the reasons for engagement with participants.
 <p>Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure the community has the information necessary to participate meaningfully in the engagement activities. We will endeavour to provide information that is objective, relevant, timely and easy to understand.
 <p>Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will identify the people, communities and stakeholders who are affected by and interested in the topic of engagement. We will reach out to our community to involve and hear from participants that represent the affected and interested groups.
 <p>Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will reduce physical, social and cultural barriers to participation. We will consider the needs and perspectives of all groups that may want to be involved in the process. We will seek to obtain the views of a broad cross section of the community, especially when there is a quiet majority. We will allow sufficient time for review of information and participation in varied engagement activities.
 <p>Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as the international standard for effective community engagement. We will be guided by IAP2 recommendations. We will inform participants of the level of influence they will have, as described in the IAP2 spectrum's promise to the public, and we will ensure they know the outcomes of any decisions made.



**The Community
Engagement
Policy provides**

*direction
to staff*

**on how to carry
out meaningful
community
engagement.**





Steps in planning *community engagement*

Lifting the standard

Some elements of community engagement are directed by statutory requirements. Under the *Local Government Act 2020* Council has an obligation to develop a long-term Community Vision, Financial Plan and Asset Plan, as well as a four-year Council Plan. Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* Council has a statutory requirement to develop a four-year Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. Council will meet its statutory obligations by ensuring the community will have an opportunity to participate in deliberative engagement practices in the development of these plans.

When the need or opportunity for community engagement is identified by the Council process, by a community member, or as a result of a request from a Councillor, these are the steps we follow which use the principles to determine how to give community members a voice on the issues that matter to them.

01

Define the purpose and scope of the engagement

Once the objectives of engagement are established, the corresponding key goal in the IAP2 spectrum identifies which level is needed. The engagement plan is clear about the extent that participants will be able to influence the decision being made, to avoid incorrect perceptions.

02

Understand stakeholder and community interests

The next step is to identify the segment of the community and stakeholders that are impacted by or have an interest in the matter; and any barriers that need to be addressed. This creates a solid foundation for capturing and understanding the issues of importance to the community that are relevant to the decision.

03

Design an appropriate engagement process

The engagement methods and tools to facilitate participation are appropriately matched to participants' needs and the information that is needed. Plenty of time is allowed for engagement which takes place early in the process. A mix of different engagement approaches may offer more options to suit different stakeholders.

04

Deliver genuine and respectful engagement

The next step is to deliver engagement that is genuine and respectful so that it builds and maintains trust in the engagement process. Activities are inclusive and accessible. The engagement is clear about the purpose and level of influence, listens to understand and closes the feedback loop.





05

Review and interpret the engagement data

Once the engagement activities are completed, the information gathered is reviewed and interpreted. Where possible, the findings are fed back to participants to check understanding.

06

Apply the outcomes of the engagement to inform the decision-making process

At this stage, a report is prepared for Council applying the outcomes of the community engagement to inform the decision or draft document. An opportunity for further feedback may be provided.

07

Evaluate the engagement process for improvement

Evaluation of the process is undertaken and lessons learned are applied to future projects.

08

Report back to the community

Outcomes and updates on the engagement are communicated throughout the process and can be found on the Monash website Have Your Say engagement platform. Depending on the impact of the activity, information will also be communicated through our email newsletter, Monash Bulletin publication and social media.



Generally the
more complex
a decision, the
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of engagement.



What is the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation?

Monash Council recognises the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum as the international standard for effective community engagement.

The spectrum helps us determine the level of engagement and the extent to which community and stakeholders may influence a decision. Generally the more complex a decision, the higher the level of engagement.

Community engagement may include multiple levels of public participation, both at different stages of the process and because different stakeholders will choose to engage at different levels.

	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 concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution.	To place the 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 decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Tools and techniques	Website Fact sheets Media releases	Surveys, polls Ideas collection	Workshops Prioritisation activities Community Panel	Working with advisory groups Online forums Citizen jury	Delegated authority to a committee
Monash Approach	Participatory engagement Feedback is obtained on alternatives, draft documents or implementing decisions. Participation can be very broad, including stakeholders who choose to track the project but offer no direct input.		Deliberative engagement The key features of a deliberative process are to come to a decision by providing information, prioritising and weighing solutions.		



Tools *and techniques*

Some the tools and techniques we use to involve the community at Monash Council are:

Listening posts

We come to a location near you to provide space for community ideas and issues. We may also do this to check how things are in your neighbourhood, get your opinions on something or to hear your thoughts on implementing a plan.

Information sessions

We may hold sessions to build understanding and knowledge of a topic, or to advise on or familiarise the community with the outcome of a decision. Participants may have the opportunity to ask questions or share feedback.

Have Your Say

The Monash Council website Have Your Say pages provide information on all the projects Monash is seeking involvement in. The information is available to all interested community members although registration may be required for some online activities. These pages are where you can find our online surveys.

Survey

You may be asked to participate in a survey to help Council understand community opinion on a matter. A survey may be by telephone, door-knocking, or online. There are two approaches to surveying that we may use, one would typically be to a random sample of residents which we would assume reflects the general population's views or to a targeted group where we want to understand the diversity of views and/or the majority preference on options.

Online community panel

Anyone with a connection to the City of Monash can register to join the online community panel. This allows us to use random survey methods or ask you to participate on issues that are important to you.

Workshops

During these events, participants have a hands-on role in identifying and developing solutions. There is usually a level of consensus sought in workshops. Because specialist skills in deliberative and democratic techniques are often needed, they may be facilitated by expert consultants.

What is deliberative engagement?

Deliberation is an approach to decision-making in which citizens consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, converse with one another to think critically about options before them and enlarge their perspectives, opinions, and understandings.

Advisory committees and existing networks

Council's advisory committees and community networks have experience or special knowledge on particular topics and are well-placed to provide recommendations on projects that would benefit from their expertise.

Citizen jury

This is a formal process where a jury or panel is formed from the community to spend time hearing all aspects of an important issue in order to provide recommendations to Council.

Social media

Council's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide a platform for the community to share their views on a particular project, campaign or process. It's also a place for the community to raise issues and concerns.

»

Some the tools and techniques we use to *involve* the community at Monash Council.

Roles of *participants*



Council, staff and community all have a role in implementing the Community Engagement Policy and supporting the success of the programs. Here are the ways everyone can do their part.

Councillors

- Support the implementation of the policy and framework
- Uphold the principles of the policy
- Help to identify issues that would benefit from community engagement
- Review and comment on community engagement plans
- Promote participation in engagement activities
- Review the findings of engagement programs
- Consider the results in forming opinions and making decisions.

Staff involved in community engagement

- Consult communications and engagement staff about the need for engagement before initiating work
- Partner with communications and engagement staff to design a genuine and meaningful process
- Allow enough time to properly develop and implement the program
- Ensure sufficient time for participants to learn about and participate in engagement activities
- Ensure participants have the information they need to participate effectively
- Encourage discussion and understanding of all viewpoints, and try to be as objective as possible
- Execute community engagement as transparently and effectively as possible
- Document and report findings to Council and the community
- Fully consider findings of the engagement program and report they are reflected in the recommendations
- Evaluate projects and continuously build skills
- Uphold the principles of the policy.



Members of the community

- Become informed about community engagement
- Review materials of engagement programs you participate in
- Be open to all ideas and respectful of all participants
- Adhere to the process and time frame
- Understand that the outcomes may not be as you hoped.



Ways to get involved in Council decision-making

- Join the Online Community Panel
- Visit our Have Your Say web page to see what we are engaging on
- Give your feedback and subscribe to projects that interest you
- Join an Advisory Committee. Monash has a number of advisory committees that are an important link between Council and community interest groups. They provide feedback on local projects and a way for Council to engage with the local community
- Attend public Council meetings or watch them live online
- Ask questions at Council's Public Question Time. Residents and ratepayers can submit questions in writing for Council to answer at its monthly meetings
- Children can get involved too – encourage children and schools to participate in projects that are important to them
- Subscribe to Council's social media channels and sign up for newsletters.

Monash Public *Transparency Policy*

Council's decision-making processes under the Monash Public Transparency Policy are transparent and open to the community. Council undertakes for decision-making to be informed by the views of members of the community whose rights and interests will be directly affected by a decision, and any responses to the community engagement process in respect of the decision.



Your privacy

Transparency and openness are core components of community engagement. When you participate in person at workshops or events or in forums on Have Your Say or Shape Monash, your contributions and identity are considered public. The same applies if you make submissions unless you request anonymity when we publish submissions. When you participate in surveys, questionnaires, and feedback forms, your comments may be published but your identity, if known, will remain anonymous. When we ask for your contact information, it will be kept secure and separate from any other data you provide.

Council will only collect what personal information it requires from you in order to carry out its statutory and legal responsibilities and to deliver its services. Council complies with the requirements of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 in carrying out these responsibilities.






Thank you

We wish to acknowledge and express our gratitude to all the members of the community who have participated in our engagement activities to help inform the draft Community Engagement Policy and framework. We would also like to thank the many government agencies and Councils whose community engagement documents provided insights for the content of our policy and framework.





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