



Citizen Engagement in Alberta

Current Practices and Improving Resources Available to Municipalities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Municipalities in Alberta are increasingly using citizen engagement beyond legislated requirements to facilitate greater citizen participation in local government. To support municipalities increasing interest and usage, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties co-developed the Citizen Engagement Toolkit in 2007 as a resource to provide a customizable engagement plan. This report reviews and provides recommendations to identify opportunities to improve this resource and assess opportunities for AUMA to better support members.

To inform the recommendations, the methodology consisted of four components – a literature review, a jurisdictional scan, interviews with municipal practitioners and a survey distributed to AUMA members. The literature review and jurisdictional scan provided an indication of the emerging and best practices in the field of citizen engagement. The literature indicated an increasing adoption of the work of international professional organizations, most notably the work of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), to develop typologies that categorize engagement into different levels of citizen involvement, and developing core values and principles for engagement. When considering best practices to conduct citizen engagement, the literature review emphasized the majority of time is spent planning for an engagement activity. Emerging practices in the literature included evaluation as well as new and innovative methods for engagement, such as online and social media.

A number of resources have been developed for and by municipalities to assist with citizen engagement. The jurisdictional scan first assessed resources developed by both municipal affairs and advocacy organizations in Canadian provinces/territories and Australia states/territories. Only New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories have developed resources for citizen engagement. For ministries or organizations that have developed resources, the scope and content are nowhere near as comprehensive as the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. Australia, on the other hand, is considered a leader in municipal citizen engagement. Resources developed by municipal advocacy organization and state ministries were comparable (with an emphasis on developing an engagement plan) if not more comprehensive when compared to the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. The Engaging Queenslander series, however, was notable for its diversity of resources to assist municipalities.

The jurisdictional scan also reviewed formalized citizen engagement frameworks and policies of over twenty municipalities across Alberta, Canada and internationally. A large proportion of municipalities reviewed have adopted the work of the IAP2 as the basis for frameworks or municipal citizen engagement policies. Municipalities reviewed have also developed a number of resources as part of citizen engagement framework, such as an evaluation template or questions to assess if engagement is necessary and/or beneficial, to assist staff planning and conducting engagement.

Interviews and surveys were conducted to engage with practitioners to better understand current citizen engagement practices, particularly in Alberta. Interviews with citizen engagement practitioners focused on common challenges and issues, lessons learned as well as tools and resources. Interview participants indicated that citizen engagement was increasingly top-of-mind for senior management and council. The interviews also indicated that municipalities face common issues and challenges regardless of size or jurisdiction. The two most common identified related to recruiting participants and the planning process. A lesson learned, common to all participants, is that building an appreciative culture for citizen engagement takes time for both within the municipality and with citizens. To assist with citizen engagement, practitioners indicated leveraging tools, practices and experiences from other

municipalities and those developed by IAP2 most frequently. Moreover, interview participants were well aware of best and emerging practices, such as evaluation and risk management, and regularly incorporated these elements in some form during citizen engagement activities.

Surveys were carried out to provide a more representative sample of AUMA member municipalities. The majority of survey respondents indicated that current citizen engagement practices exceed legislative requirements and in a number of diverse yet common areas, such as budgeting and environmental issues. When considering resources available to assist municipalities, there was a high awareness of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit but little actual usage. Few responses were also provided in response to suggestions to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit but participants identified a number of common challenges, including resourcing, engagement fatigue and recruiting participants.

The findings from the various components of the methodology are summarized in the discussion section and analyzed in terms of the considerations for AUMA and implications for the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. The discussion section also indicated the needs for AUMA to undertake a new approach and structure to support members.

As a commitment of this project, proposed modifications and content to be added to the desktop-based planning tool was developed. These modifications ranged from strengthening the current emphasis on evaluation to adding an initial assessment if citizen engagement is beneficial. Incorporation of these modifications will benefit users to assist with developing a more comprehensive engagement plan that reflects best and emerging practices. Based on the findings of the report, three new handbooks were also developed for the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to address the most notable gaps or needs:

- To assist municipalities with a process to evaluate citizen engagement based on best practices and current resources developed by different levels of government;
- To provide detailed information and strategies for municipalities to address the common challenge of attracting participants; and
- A resource to assist municipalities considering formalizing citizen engagement (through developing a framework and/or policy).

The report stressed the need a new structure and approach is necessary to better support members. The following four options were presented and evaluated against criterion based on impact to the content and implementation feasibility:

- The status quo with AUMA and AAMDC staff manage content as time permits;
- A self-access portal for all AUMA resources and address current accessibility issues with the toolkit;
- A merger of the Citizen Engagement and Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkits; and
- A community of practice to provide more regular and timely information on various citizen engagement topics to members.

Based on the evaluation, a combined approach was recommended to merge the Citizen Engagement and Public Toolkits, and establish a community of practice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade there has continued to be growing interest in citizen engagement by scholars and practitioners. Spurred by the availability of new methods to engage, such as social media, and shifting expectations of citizens, the non-profit and private sectors as well as all levels of governments are increasing citizen engagement not only in terms of the amount but also the complexity of participant involvement. Municipalities have traditionally been at the fore of citizen engagement based on the impact of decisions made at this level of government on the everyday lives of residents.

Citizen engagement in Alberta, as elsewhere in Canada, has long been a legislated requirement for particular areas of municipal responsibilities. However, elected and senior officials are demonstrating an increasing interest and, in many instances, incorporating citizen engagement as a regular defining facet of municipal governance. Simultaneously, citizens increasingly expect to be more involved in the decisions about services and decision by municipalities which impact their lives.

Responding to demands and the usage of citizen engagement has differed yet gradually increased in municipalities across Alberta. The sheer diversity of municipalities across the province – from among Canada’s largest and fastest growing to those challenged with long-term sustainability – results in some advancing ambitious and world leading programs while others are focused on fulfilling current legislated requirements. Alberta is unique among Canadian provinces and territories for the overall attention directed to citizen engagement. This has resulted in the creation of a resource developed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and a second resource resulting from a partnership between the two largest municipal advocacy organizations (the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association [AUMA] and Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Clerks [AAMDC]).

Unlike the Public Input Toolkit developed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit co-developed by AUMA and AAMDC, has not undergone a significant review since its creation in 2007. The objective of this project is to review the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to develop resources to improve the toolkit and recommendations for the organization to better support member municipalities with citizen engagement activities. Options and recommendations will be informed by a methodology combining elements of best and emerging practices within the citizen engagement field as well as better understanding current practices and needs of municipalities.

The main research question to be answered by the project is:

- *What opportunities exist and in what ways can the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association improve its resources and support to member municipalities conducting citizen engagement activities?*

Sub-questions to be answered include:

- *What gaps exist in the current suite of resources based on findings in citizen engagement literature and examples from Canadian and Australian jurisdictions?*
- *Do resources reflect all aspects and stages of a citizen engagement event (e.g., plan, conduct and evaluate)? If not, what resources can be developed to support member municipalities?*
- *Is there alignment of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit (CET) with internationally accepted frameworks for citizen engagement (refer below to section 2.2)?*
- *What is the extent of citizen engagement approaches/techniques utilized in municipalities across Alberta? Generally, does it merely meet or exceed legislative requirements (of the Municipal Government Act)? How does citizen engagement differ across municipalities in terms of*

demographic diversity (i.e., population, language and cultural background), geographic location as well as classification of municipality (i.e., city versus town)?

- *Beyond providing the CET, what other opportunities exist for AUMA to support citizen engagement in member municipalities?*

The remainder of the report is organized into nine sections. Section 2 provides background information on citizen engagement, an overview of legislated requirements in Alberta, and the resources developed by AUMA and Alberta Municipal Affairs. This section concludes with an analytical framework to guide the report. Section 3 outlines the methods and methodology to achieve the objectives of the report which includes a literature review, jurisdictional scan, interviews and a survey.

Section 4 presents emerging practices and challenges based on a review of the literature. The jurisdictional is divided across two sections. The first part (in section 5) reviews resources developed by Canadian provincial and territorial and Australian states to support municipalities with citizen engagement. The second (in section 6) focuses on current citizen engagement practices by conducting a scan and review of resources from municipalities considered leaders in the field, and the analysis of interview findings with practitioners responsible for citizen engagement in both Alberta and abroad. Section 7 focuses specifically on Alberta by analysing the results of a survey made available to AUMA members to deepen the understanding of current practices and resources needs by municipalities in Alberta.

Section 8 draws together and assesses these findings, considering strategic questions that drive the planning and conducting of citizen engagement, and considerations for AUMA to improve the toolkit and supports for member municipalities. This section concludes by reviewing the analytical framework incorporating findings of the report. Section 9 proposes options and recommendations for AUMA to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit and how the organization can better support members, including an implementation plan, while Section 10 provides concluding remarks and identifies an agenda for future research.

2. BACKGROUND

To review and complete the project objective it is important to understand the current context of municipal citizen engagement. This section presents such information by defining citizen engagement and the increasing interest by citizens and government, the legislated requirements, and an overview of resources developed and made available to municipalities in Alberta.

2.1. What is citizen engagement?

Citizen engagement is one of many broad yet related terms (e.g., civic engagement, community engagement or public engagement) that, at its elementary level, refers to the ability of citizens to participate (more) directly in the decision-making process in order to inform, influence or alter a decision (McGee, 2009; International Association for Public Participation [IAP2], 2007; Sheedy, 2008). Citizen engagement is a process that can be used at all levels of government but is often viewed to be most effective at the municipal level (Herriman, 2011; Philips, 2010). It is at the municipal level of government that decisions are made with the highest degree of visibility or effect to the daily lives of citizens, such as decisions regarding parks and recreation as well as waste. The municipal level of government is also generally the most accessible level of government and where the impact of citizen engagement and/or lobbying (e.g., petitions or citizen delegations) has the highest likelihood to inform or alter a recommendation or decision (Nabatchi, 2012a).

Citizen engagement can be initiated by citizens (e.g., protest or petitions and actively seek opportunities to assist in solving issues) or government (e.g., fulfill legislated requirements or actively seeking citizen input into policy-making and/or decision-making) (Wyman, Shulman & Ham, n.d.). However, a general consensus exists in the literature that citizen engagement is best served to supplement voting and representative democracy, not replace it (Holmes, 2011). All levels of government in Canada are now more frequently initiating citizen engagement due to a number of social, economic and civic motives.

In Canada, the growth of interest around municipal citizen engagement is the result and attempt to address two major social trends affecting declining voter participation rates, also referred to as the growing “democratic deficit.” The first consists of the decline of family and religious institutions, which empirical research suggest those with stronger connections to such institutions are more likely to vote and volunteer in the community (McGee, 2009). The second element is the perceived decline of municipalities ability to meet the needs of increasingly diverse communities, which results in an increasing feeling of or actual isolation and declining trust, involvement and confidence in government (McGee; 2009). As a result of these social trends, citizen engagement is viewed as an alternative approach to engage citizens in the decision-making process, including involvement of prior inactive or underrepresented groups (Kagan, 2008; Chand, 2013).

Citizen engagement provides several benefits to the municipality and citizens but a commitment should be informed by several considerations (see Table 1 next page). For the municipality, citizen engagement facilitates a greater rapport and transparency to the public and an opportunity for decisions to be more reflective of citizens’ preferences. Citizens, on the other hand, have opportunities to engage beyond elections, involve individuals not as likely to participate in voting as well as foster a closer relationship to the municipality and the decisions being made that impact their lives. Municipalities planning citizen engagement must take into account a number of considerations, such as if engagement is appropriate or adds value, the resources required to plan and conduct engagement as well as recruiting participants

and managing expectations. The planning phase of citizen engagement, therefore, is the optimal time to assess the considerations and propose mitigation strategies to any identified risks.

Table 1: Benefits and considerations for citizen engagement

Benefits to Municipalities	Benefits to Citizens	Considerations and Pre-Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater rapport and information sharing; ▪ The ability to combat declining voter apathy and a general mistrust of elected officials. ▪ Enhanced decision-making that is more reflective of the concerns of those which may be impacted by changes. ▪ Allow more and a diverse range of citizens to influence and participate in the decision-making process. ▪ Community development through the creation, support of and empowerment of networks. ▪ Fostering a greater sense of connection to government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Ability to inform, influence or take charge of decisions that will have an impact on the participants community as well as ensure decisions are reflective of the concerns and opinions of participants. ▪ Facilitate opportunities to include a wider audience in civic participation. ▪ To obtain greater information related to the activities, issues and policies being considered by the municipality and elected officials. ▪ Create alternative mechanisms (beyond voting) to participate in the political process as well as build capacity among participants and community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen engagement may not be appropriate or of valuable for all issues or decisions ▪ The process to plan and conduct citizen engagement requires substantive time and resources. ▪ Generally, those directly affected by the issue are more likely to participate or dominated by a small yet vocal group. This may result in feedback not being truly reflective of the community. ▪ Planning requires clarity on the needs of staff and decision-makers. ▪ Citizen engagement should be clear to citizens throughout in order to manage expectations. Following the engagement, municipalities should report on how information was used.

Source: Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012; Kagan, 2008; McGee, 2009; Bracht & Tsouro, 1990; Tamarack Institute of Community Engagement, n.d.; Lehnan, 2013; and Holmes, 2011.

2.2. Legislative Requirements and Citizen Engagement Practices

The *Municipal Government Act* provides the legislative framework for municipal government in Alberta. In addition to voting, it outlines the minimum requirements for citizen engagement (see Table 2 next page). Legislated areas of citizen engagement include things such as development and long-term developed plans as well as article pertaining to the notification of citizen engagement activities.

The expectations around citizen engagement vary across municipalities in Alberta. For some citizen engagement still consists of fulfilling legislative requirements, while other municipalities have increased citizen engagement due to interest variously from senior officials, elected representatives, or citizen demands. Nevertheless, the general trend is to increase citizen engagement opportunities. Some municipalities in Alberta have long established citizen engagement bylaws and practices (e.g., Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, City of Calgary and City of Edmonton) while others are more recently approaching citizen engagement from new angles beyond legislated requirements (e.g., City of Wetaskiwin), to developing an overall framework, or approach, to guide more complex and interactive citizen engagement (e.g., City of Fort Saskatchewan, City of Red Deer and City of Grande Prairie; see section 6 for more information).

Table 2: Legislated citizen engagement requirements, Municipal Government Act

Section of Act	Direction Provided
197	Councils and Council committees must conduct meetings in public, unless section 2 or 2.1 applies.
227	If Council calls a meeting with the public, notice of it must be advertised and everyone is entitled to attend.
230	Describes when Council is required to hold a public hearing before second reading of the bylaw, or before Council votes on the resolution.
251 (3)	A borrowing bylaw must be advertised.
606	Describes the requirements for public advertising. Notice must be advertised at least once a week for two consecutive weeks or delivered to every residence in the area affected. Describes what a notice must contain.
636	Describes notification and public input requirements related to preparation of a statutory plan.
640(2)(d)	Land use bylaw must provide for how and to whom notice of the issuance of a development permit is given.
692	Council must hold a public hearing (section 230) and give notice (section 606) before giving second reading to adopt or amend a land use bylaw or statutory plan, i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. an inter-municipal development plan, b. a municipal development plan, c. an area structure plan, or d. an area redevelopment plan.

Source: *Municipal Government Act 2000* (Alberta); Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012.

2.3. Resources to Support Citizen Engagement in Albertan Municipalities: Alberta Municipal Affairs, AUMA and AAMDC

Realizing the growing trend of citizen engagement practice, initial interest in developing the Citizen Engagement Toolkit was initiated through an environmental scan co-prepared by staff from AUMA and the Alberta Association of Municipalities Districts and Counties (AAMDC). The main finding of the environmental scan concluded that municipalities could better engage with citizens. As part of this research, a survey with 800 Albertans noted that nearly 50 per cent indicated barriers prevented greater engagement with the municipality (Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties [AAMDC], 2007). Interviews with public servants and elected officials of 21 municipalities identified that:

- Municipalities see a need to better engage citizens;
- Citizen engagement is often reactive to issues rather than proactive;
- Higher citizen engagement already exists in smaller communities;
- When facilitating engagement, the same citizens are continuously involved; and
- Citizen engagement is influenced by the time required for preparation, conducting and participating as well as the particular issue and the level of influence that citizens have in the process (AAMDC, 2007).

AUMA and AAMDC’s Citizen Engagement Toolkit (CET) was developed in 2006-7 with a Collaborative Governance Initiative grant from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The services of Acton Consulting Ltd. were retained to develop the CET, which consists of three components to support municipalities (primarily) in planning citizen engagement activities:

- A **desktop-based planning tool** which gathers information related to a particular citizen engagement activity (e.g., logistics, performance measures, target audience, etc.) and

recommends tools to use as well as prospective budget that can be automatically converted into a citizen engagement plan in Microsoft Word;

- Information sheets on various citizen engagement **tools** a municipality could use to engage citizens categorized; and
- A listing of **best practices** that identify how other municipalities across Alberta, Canada and internationally have used tools to engage citizens (AUMA, n.d.).

The Citizen Engagement Toolkit organizes tools and best practices using the Citizen Engagement Matrix for Tools and Best Practices (refer to [Appendix A](#)). AUMA's matrix categorizes tools and methods to engage citizens based on the recognition that decision-making requires different levels of engagement based on the type of decision. The six identified levels of engagement include receiving information, voting, providing input, engaging in two-way dialogue, participating in decision-making and involved in local government. The particular level of engagement can support one of four types of decisions being made – issues and initiation, program delivery, program development, and strategic.

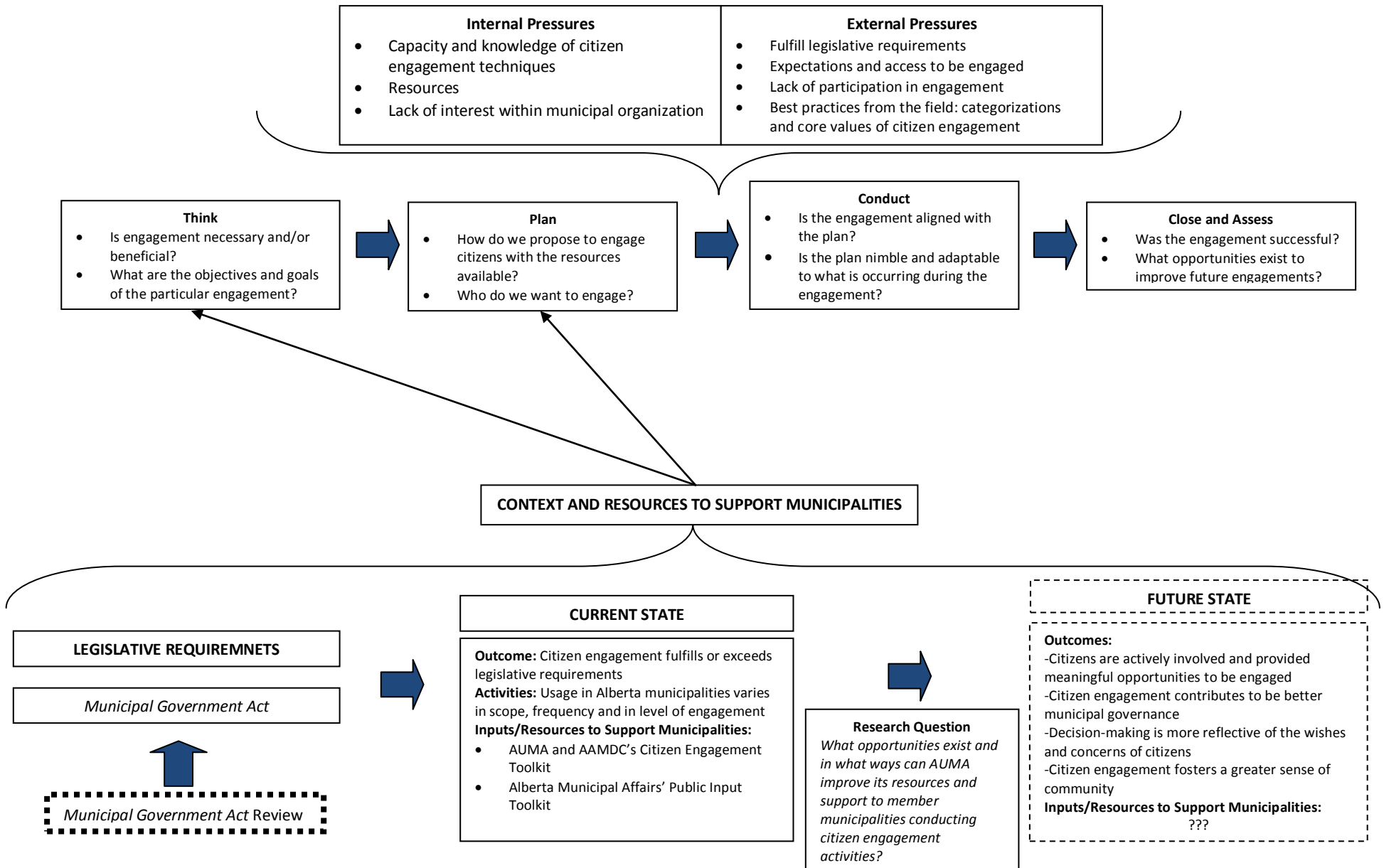
The Ministry of Municipal Affairs also developed its Public Input Toolkit for municipalities in 2007. This toolkit provides detailed information to municipalities in planning and preparing for citizen engagement activities through guidance of the process to identify, plan, conduct, follow up and evaluate citizen engagement. Following a review in 2011, the toolkit was revised to include citizen engagement content related to the usage of social media (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012).

2.4. Conclusion: Guiding Analytic Framework

This section provided a definition and overview of citizen engagement as well as information on the environment in which municipalities undertake engagement. Generally, citizen engagement continues to grow both in its usage and complexity by municipalities across Alberta. This growth has emerged variously in response to demands from citizens, interest or initiatives by a municipality, or fulfilling legislated requirements under the *Municipal Government Act*.

The analytical framework identifies the context of current municipal citizen engagement in Alberta – acknowledging internal and external pressures, and the current and a desired future state of practice. The centre of the framework includes the main stages and key elements of a citizen engagement with arrows identifying which stages existing resources support municipalities. Moreover, the framework acknowledges the current principle-based review of the *Municipal Government Act* in progress.

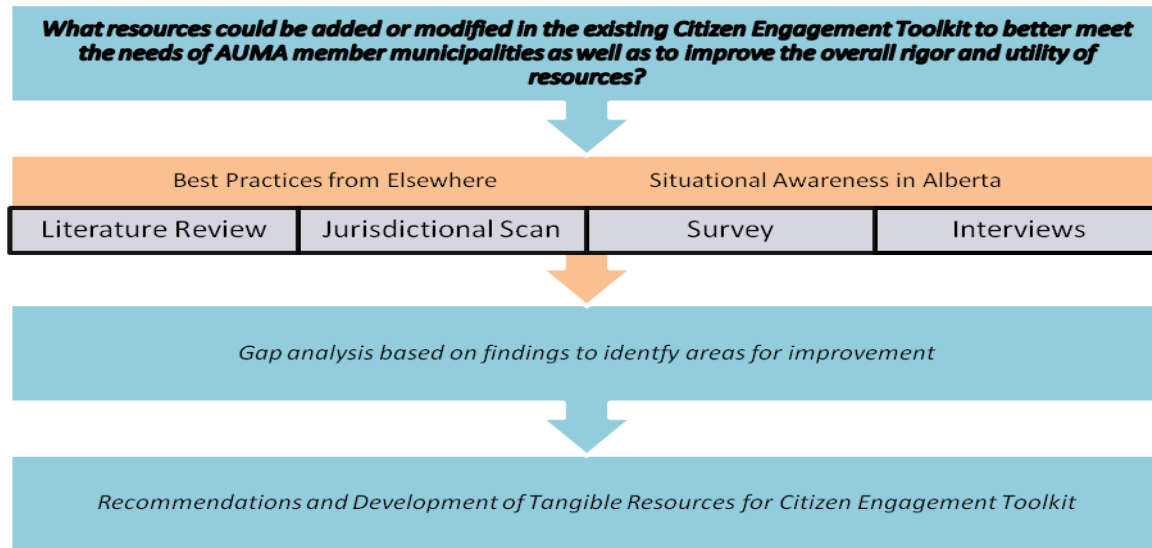
Figure 1: Analytical framework



3. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This section reviews the approach and methods used to gather the information necessary to provide AUMA with an understanding of current practices, needs and resources of municipalities to support citizen engagement as well as advice for improving them.

Figure 2: Methods and methodology



The methodology, as visually displayed above in Figure 2, balanced best practices from the field and other jurisdictions, primarily resources developed to support citizen engagement, as well as gaining a more in-depth understanding of current practices through a mixed methods approach. In total four methods were used – a literature review, jurisdictional and promising practices scan, survey and interviews. These lines of evidence will inform options and recommendations of this report.

Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review was to understand best and emerging practices in the field as well as common challenges to municipal citizen engagement. The literature review uses various books, academic journals and reports published by research institutes and centres related to citizen engagement. To assist with locating resources, the following Boolean search queries were used: “citizen engagement/participation,” “public engagement/participation,” “civic engagement/participation,” “local government,” “municipalities,” “citizen involvement.” To further refine the sources list, Google Scholar is used for citation counts of various articles, books and authors to include literature frequently cited. Research related to citizen engagement at the municipal level was used as a search parameter to focus the literature review.

Jurisdictional and Promising Practices Scan

The jurisdictional scan sought to compare and identify opportunities to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. The scan focused on municipal advocacy organizations and ministries with responsibilities similar to Alberta’s Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The scan surveyed Canadian provinces and territories, and Australia states and territories, and broadly reviewed resources developed to support municipal citizen engagement.

The scan of promising practices reviewed citizen engagement frameworks and resources from various municipalities both within Alberta, across Canada, and internationally considered leaders in the field (see McGee, 2009; Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2011; Chuong, Walton, Marini, & Maksimowski, 2012). It reviews how municipalities define, use and categorize levels of engagement; values and principles for engagement; and planning and resources to assist and support engagement activities.

Interviews

To gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges, context and how municipalities have achieved success with citizen engagement activities, semi-structured interviews were conducted June 2014 with nine municipalities inside and outside Alberta that recently (i.e., last 2-3 years) conducted a notable citizen engagement activity or developed a framework for a municipality. The interviews averaged 30-40 minutes based on a common set of questions – though tailored to the specific municipality – provided in advance to participants (see [Appendix D](#) for the interview questions). Over 50 requests for an interview were distributed to staff responsible for citizen engagement in municipalities across Alberta, Canada and Australia in May and June 2014, with nine participating in an interview.

Survey

AUMA regularly conducts surveys for feedback on resources. The survey assesses citizen engagement resources for municipalities and current practices and challenges (see [Appendix D](#)). The survey was available for AUMA members to respond for five weeks in June and July 2014. A total of 20 responses were received and, due to self-selection and no probability sampling, it is not possible to provide an accurate indication of how reflective responses received are of current municipal citizen engagement practices in Alberta.

Strengths and Limitations of Methodology

The limitations of the methodology revolve around time and resources. The project was designed to be completed in eight months with no funding or resources other than those available to the researcher. This meant that a fulsome review of the extensive and growing literature on citizen engagement could not be undertaken, although the usage of Google Scholar's citation count lent confidence that the most cited literature was found and analysed. Time limitations meant that the researcher only interviewed municipalities in Alberta that achieved success in developing a framework or notable engagement event, which leads to selection bias. Additionally the project was completed during a systematic review of Alberta's *Municipal Government Act*, which may have impacted the interest or ability of municipalities to complete a survey or participate in an interview.

The strengths of the methodology derive from the use of different methods and sources which allowed for triangulating findings to inform options and recommendations. The methodology was designed to lever and analyze lessons learned and best practices from other jurisdictions while still gathering and analysing information to ensure findings are reflective of the needs and realities of municipalities in Alberta, and to surmount the limited literature on Alberta. Additionally, interviews complemented to frameworks and theories from the literature, providing in-depth information on how particular Albertan municipalities approached, planned, conducted and evaluated citizen engagement activities or developed their frameworks for engagement.

4. VALUES, LEVELS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND EMERGING PRACTICES

The literature review incorporates best and emerging practices from the field of citizen engagement. Since 2005, international professional organizations and associations have sought to develop resources and typologies to support citizen engagement. Elements of these resources have been incorporated into municipal frameworks and policies inside and outside Alberta. There has also been a renaissance in the field spurred by new technology, methods and increasing expectations of citizens to be engaged. This section first discusses the work of two widely recognized international associations: the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD). This is followed by a targeted literature review of new and emerging practices, and a synthesis of research regarding common challenges.


4.1 Categorizing and Defining Levels of Engagement: Efforts Internationally and in Alberta

Early attempts to categorize citizen engagement were focused on defining levels of involvement (see Arnstein, 1969; Connor, 1988; Wiedemann & Femers, 1993; Rocha, 1997; Creighton, 2005; Cooper, Bryer & Meek 2006; and Fung, 2006). More recently, attempts to categorize citizen engagement shifted to an organizational perspective. Figure 3 shows the two most common categorizations in addition to the current categorizations defined in the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits. The first is the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum for Public Participation, which is widely used and cited because it identifies levels of engagement from an organizational perspective, (IAP2, 2007b). As shown in [Appendix B](#), the framework offers a continuum of citizen engagement based on five process-oriented categories. The second framework is the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation's¹ (NCDD) Engagement Streams Framework. It also approaches citizen engagement from an organizational perspective identifying four categories based on the intent or purpose to engage citizens.

Both the Public Input and Citizen Engagement toolkits, developed for Alberta municipalities, feature spectrums categorizing levels of citizen engagement (see Table 4). The Public Input Toolkit categorizes engagement based on two considerations: (1) distinguishing the type of decision being made based on the identified type of decision; and (2) the extent which engagement proceeds through person-to-person contact, moderate public input (where stakeholders have been identified and there may be a legal requirement to engage), or a full public input process (consisting of multiple events that requires a centralized plan, budget and dedicated municipal resources)(Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012). AUMA and AAMDC's Citizen Engagement Toolkit spectrum identifies six levels of involvement from a citizen-centered perspective. Both toolkits typologies do not align with the IAP2 and NCDD (see Figure 3). The typology of the Public Input Toolkit, for example, does not recognize the empower category of the IAP spectrum. The Citizen Engagement Toolkit does but considers empowerment for citizens to be formal involvement with the municipality.

¹ An American non-profit organization advocating for citizen engagement and comprised of 2,000 members from the public and non-profit sector across the United States.

Figure 3: Defining levels of engagement

Increasing the involvement of citizen engagement 					
IAP2 - Spectrum of Public Engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
	Inform refers to the provision of balanced and objective information that provides the background, opportunities and risks related to an issue, project or policy	Consult with citizens to receive feedback and analysis	Involve citizens directly to ensure public concerns or support is adequately reflected	Collaborate with citizens throughout the decision-making process to co-design solutions that reflect public concern or support	Empower citizens to take the lead and hold final decision-making power (IAP2, 2007).
NCDD - Engagement Stream Framework	Exploration		Conflict Transformation	Decision-Making	Collaborative Action
	Exploration to encourage citizens to gain a better understanding of an issue and potentially frame solutions		Conflict Transformation to address the root causes of differences and the viewpoints of others	Decision-making which comprises of raising awareness of the issues to the public, including presenting differing viewpoints	Collaborative Action among citizens with differing viewpoints to collectively work towards a solution
AUMA - Citizen Engagement Toolkit	Information	Voting and Providing Input	Discussion and Consultative Dialogue	Engage in Decision-Making	Involvement in Local Government
	The citizen receives information, from a range of sources, from the local government on different initiatives, services or activities.	<p>Citizens provide input, when asked, to their local government, through a number of different activities and vehicles. This does not involve a decision making role.</p> <p>The citizen participates in voting during municipal elections or special referendum when they occur. While voting can be considered a specific type of input, it is added as a specific type of engagement.</p>	Citizens engage in discussions and consultative dialogues with members of local government, including both elected officials and public servants.	Citizens engage in decision making activities, around specific issues or functions. Decision making may be related to planning, resourcing or delivery of services, or all of these processes.	Involvement in local government, as an elected or appointed official (e.g., Police Commission, Development Appeal Board) is viewed as the level of engagement that requires the highest level of commitment and personal investment.
Alberta Mun Affairs - Public Input Toolkit	Directive Decisions	Consultative Decisions		Collaborative Decisions	
	Decisions made by those with the legal authority to do so in a given situation (e.g., mayor responding to a disaster) and does not necessarily require an engagement process. Citizens generally informed about decision	Decisions that are necessary due to legal requirements, have an associated risk or where council feels it necessary to engage due to the potential consequences		Decisions where municipal staff and decision makers work together with citizens and community organizations to address an issue or for long-terms planning	

Sources: IAP2, 2007; Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012; National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD), 2013; AUMA Citizen Engagement Toolkit; obtained from Levi Bjork, personal communication, December 2013.

4.2 Core values and principles of citizen engagement

Scholars have identified several key values and principles for citizen engagement (e.g., Graham & Philips, 1998; Herriman, 2011). Yet, those established by international citizen engagement organizations are the most recognized and used in practice. What follows describes these values and principles.

Table 3: Values and principles of citizen engagement

IAP2 Core Values	
1.	Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2.	Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3.	Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4.	Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5.	Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6.	Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7.	Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.
NCDD Core Principles	
1.	CAREFUL PLANNING AND PREPARATION: Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.
2.	INCLUSION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY: Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.
3.	COLLABORATION AND SHARED PURPOSE: Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.
4.	OPENNESS AND LEARNING: Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.
5.	TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST: Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.
6.	IMPACT AND ACTION: Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.
7.	SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE: Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

Sources: IAP2, 2007a; and NCDD, 2009.

The two most widely recognized set of core values and principles were developed by IAP2 and NCDD (see Table 3 above). IAP2's Core Values of Public Engagement identifies seven statements that define citizen engagement values internationally irrespective of national cultural or political differences, and reflects the concerns of citizens involved in engagement that may be affected by the decision. Another widely accepted set of principles to define citizen engagement were promulgated in 2009 by the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation in the US. In response to President Barack Obama's memorandum on open government, the NCDD worked with leading practitioners to define common principles for citizen engagement. The proposed statements are similar to those of IAP2 – to involve those affected by facilitating a safe and non-judgemental environment for participants.

4.3 The New and Old: Emerging Practices and Common Challenges Identified in the Literature

While typologies and core values for citizen engagement are foundational for municipal resources, frameworks and policies, the literature indicates that practice continues to evolve rapidly in certain areas, such as evaluation, while long-standing challenges remain to public organizations considering engagement, such as attracting participants and selecting appropriate methods for engagement.

Figure 4: Key considerations when planning and conducting citizen engagement

Amount of Time as Part of Total Process for Citizen Engagement		
Planning (80%)	Conducting (10%)	Follow-up (10%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider the level of involvement by participants ● Resources available to conduct citizen engagement ● Identifying stakeholders and participants for citizen engagement ● Process to recruit participants ● Selecting a method or methods for citizen engagement ● Creating measures or indicators to assess success of citizen engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement plan ● Collect data for evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluate engagement ● Report back on usage of information

Figure 4 indicates that municipalities must acknowledge the truism that planning is the most important aspect of citizen engagement. The planning phase provides an opportunity to incorporate emerging practices and address, or mitigate the impact of common challenges. Recognizing this, an overview of the literature of common challenges and emerging practices are discussed below. This includes an overview of the common challenge to attract participants and best practices. Emerging practices noted in the literature include risk management, categories of new methods increasingly being used for citizen engagement and the practices of evaluation. With more municipalities formalizing citizen engagement (with frameworks and policies), a review of the literature on organizational considerations concludes this section.

Attracting Participants: The Challenge and the Solution of Targeted Recruitment

Recruitment is a common challenge for any municipality conducting citizen engagement. A major concern in the literature is that engagement can attract the “usual suspects” – citizens frequently active in engagement and other political activities (Herriman, 2011). A number of considerations and potential solutions to attract a broader or more representative pool of participants, or to target specific audience or stakeholder groups, continues to feature in citizen engagement research (Ryfe & Stralsburg, 2012; Herriman, 2011).

Citizen engagement for under-represented or marginalized groups is influenced by several factors (see Table 4). For certain groups, barriers are attributed to historical factors, such as the relationship of Aboriginal bands and different levels of government as well as Aboriginals not acquiring the right to vote until 1960, and property ownership requirements to vote in municipal elections which led to reduced participation of citizens with lower incomes. In other cases, such as persons with disabilities, access may have been reduced due to physical barriers (Sheedy, 2008).

To avoid participation of the “usual suspects”, there is consensus that practitioners must proactively plan and recruit a more diverse groups or target specific under-represented groups (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2012). One commonly cited solution to attract more or a diverse range of participants is using multiple methods (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2012). While other research and practices recommend targeted citizen engagement. This generally entails going to where the desired target population is and/or meets. Attracting Immigrant participants, for example, may prove more effective if reaching it to community organizations or centres. Another example for youth citizen engagement is to integrate activities within the school curriculum (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2012).

Table 4: Barriers and solutions to common recruiting challenges

Categories of Exclusion	Barrier	Potential Solution(s)
Common to all groups	Sense of worth: People living in poverty or with disabilities, women, sexual minorities, and people from ethno-cultural communities have been stigmatized, belittled and marginalized, for some, much of their lives.	<p>Reinforce in multiple ways that input is valuable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire facilitators and staff who are sensitive and skilled at drawing people into the process. Alternatively, sensitize facilitators and staff through adequate training. • Hold special pre-sessions for people from these groups to start to voice their opinions in smaller, safer environment. • Create “speakers’ lists” to be kept by person sitting beside the facilitator, keeping track of how many men and women, white and non-white people speak. If dominant groups outweigh others, priority should be given to those of non-dominant groups who wish to speak.
Economic: Poverty is by far, the most pervasive and cross cutting issue that excludes people from society.	Time: Working three jobs to support a family makes participating in an event almost out of the question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with target population about event times that work for them. • Respect end-times. • Provide food and childcare. • Hold event near work, homes or places of easy access (e.g., near public transit centers) of population.
	Social and cultural access: People from different classes inhabit different spaces in society and those with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to have experienced civic participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a space for the event that is inhabited by the target population(s). • Work with trusted community partners (i.e. non-profit organizations). They may be able to arrange a pre-meeting space so that participants can arrive in a group. • Hold event on main public transit line with regular services at times of the event or provide transportation services.
	Economic access: This is perhaps the easiest to overcome from the standpoint of an organizer of citizen engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide remuneration for lost work time, childcare, transportation, etc. • Provide food and/or childcare at the event. • Provide an honorarium.
Ethno-cultural and newly arrived Canadians: Many of the barriers mentioned in the economic category also apply to these groups as they are generally more at risk of living in poverty.	Citizenship: By virtue of the phrase “citizen engagement” members of communities who are not yet full citizens are excluded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use alternative words to “citizen engagement” in outreach material (e.g. people, the public, community members) or clarify what is meant by citizen engagement.
	Language: English (or French) may not be the first language of ethno-cultural and newly arrived Canadians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate written material into appropriate languages. • There are many options for event-based translation: whisper translation (one-to-one); group translation on the side; or official translation may be necessary for large groups.
	Social and cultural barriers: People of different cultural backgrounds inhabit their own unique space in communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the social spaces, places of worship, newspapers, and other places of gathering and communication and use them to host events and perform outreach.
Stereotyping age: Youth are idolized, and yet those who are too young or too old are discredited.	Legitimacy: Youth are stigmatized as being naïve and the elderly as being out of touch with contemporary times. Thus both of these groups are often excluded from discussions and decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define concepts and frame the problem in ways youth can understand and relate to. • Adapt process in ways that youth will not be intimidated to speak up (e.g. small group discussions and reporting back in large plenary).
Ability: The needs of people living with disabilities are often overlooked, which consequently excludes them.	Ability: The needs of people living with disabilities are often overlooked, which consequently excludes them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that event space is accessible and advertise it as such. • Set up the event space to accommodate those in wheelchairs (i.e. table height).
	Transportation: Getting to and from events poses unique challenges to people living with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give sufficient notice of event for people to plan their adapted transport or provide adapted transportation for them.
	Communication: Depending on the person’s disability, they may need assistance communicating with a group of people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On registration forms, ask people with special needs to specify what they will need to participate, using respectful language. • Provide translation into Braille and sign language services (determining need before event).
Gender: While 50% of the population is female, women are still underrepresented in positions of power, and policies do not necessary reflect their needs. Gender also considers lesbians, gays, trans/bi-sexual, and others.	Parenting: While times are slowly changing, women still carry a disproportionate responsibility for childcare and parent care, placing a greater burden on their time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide childcare or elder care money to participating parents. • Or provide childcare (and even elder care) at the event (ask people to register ahead of time).
	Legitimacy: People who do not fit the dominant model of “male” or “female” may experience stigmatization.	

Source: Copied and adapted from Sheedy, 2008, pp. 15-6.

Identifying risks and mitigating potential impacts

Challenges of attracting participant can potentially be mitigated through risk management. Risk management refers to the effects of uncertainty that could hinder achievement of an objective. This process includes identification, assessment and prioritization of risks, and developing mitigation strategies to eliminate or deter the impact of a risk (International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 31000, 2009).

Figure 5: Bow tie risk assessment



One effective approach for municipalities is a Bow Tie Risks Assessment tailored for citizen engagement (a visual is shown in Figure 5 below; ISO, 31010, 2009). Bow Tie Risk Assessments place the top event, or risk, in the centre with threats (i.e., causes or hazards) placed on the left side and the consequences, also referred to as loss of control for the risk, on the right side. In between, a number of controls are indicated to prevent or mitigate the cause/hazard or consequence to the top event (ISO, 31010, 2009). For a citizen engagement purpose, the top event is the actual engagement occurring while the threats would identify possible actions, influences or activities that may impact the engagement. The consequences side would focus on actions, influences or activities occurring during the engagement that could potentially affect the desired outcome. For each of these aspects a municipality would be able to identify potential mitigation strategies to resolve or deter the risk.

How to properly engage citizens: Methods and approaches

Diverse methods are available to engage citizens. They range from those with well established processes and familiarity to the public (e.g., surveys) to ad hoc, fairly new methods (e.g., online interactive webinars). Choosing the right number and mix of methods depends on which are most effective and efficient for particular audiences, the size and nature of the audience, legislative requirements, and the amount of resources available (Herriman, 2011; and McKinlay & von Tonzulemann, 2012).

Research related to citizen engagement methods indicates a shift to employ creative methods for targeted audiences by government. Traditional methods for citizen engagement have been designed to enable wide engagement on issues. Although still used, these methods are considered not to be as effective for meaningful engagement due to overrepresentation of citizens that typically engage (Sheedy, 2008; Herriman, 2011).

Instead, current practices of engagement increasingly focus on targeted approaches to engagement and more creative methods to involve citizens (Herriman, 2011). Three categories of more creative methods for citizen engagement include deliberative methods to build a consensus among participants; “futures” and appreciative inquiry studies and methods, which focus on more long-term, future issues or

visioning; and social media and online methods. Characteristics, potential usages and examples of types of methods included for each of these categories are described below.

Deliberative Methods

These are designed to facilitate open dialogue and debate of differing opinions and viewpoints on an issue, and possible to generate consensus among participants. These methods are generally more associated with the collaboration and empowerment levels of engagement. They require more time for discussion. Unlike other methods focused on one-way communication, deliberative methods consist of two-way communication between participants and the facilitator and among participants. With the intent to allow for dialogue of differing opinions, deliberative methods are also considered to be effective in educating and informing citizens of different views. Several methods are considered to be deliberative: examples include citizens' juries and parliaments, consensus conferences, planning cells, deliberative polling and deliberative forums (Herriman, 2011).

"Futures" and Appreciative Inquiry Studies and Methods

Citizen engagement is often informing the development of long-term visions and strategic plans for communities. "Futures" studies and methods represent a broad number of ways to engage or consult citizens on potential or desirable future scenarios or states. There are several "futures" studies or methods that can be used to support strategic planning and defining a community vision, including environmental scanning; scenario planning; Delphi method; cross-impact analysis; trend analysis; simulation and modelling; visioning; futures workshops; causal layered analysis; back-view mirror analysis; futures biographies; monitoring; content analysis; back casting; Relevance Tree; morphological analysis; and futures wheel (Herriman, 2011).

Appreciative Inquiry aims to engage citizens in a positive, forward-looking manner with a focus on assessing what residents enjoy about the current situation as a basis for long-term planning and community visioning. Primarily used in international and community development projects, municipalities (particularly in Australia) have used this method to develop strategic plans and address land use planning issues. Often conducted through workshops and public meetings, appreciative inquiry is a four step process characterized by the 4D model: discover the best of what is; dream what might be; design what should be; and create a destiny based on what will be (Herriman, 2011).

Social Media and Online Methods

Collectively referred to as Web 2.0 technology, the internet and social media are cited as mostly a compliment to face-to-face, in-person engagement methods; attract broader and more diverse participation; and enhance group decision-making by viewing different viewpoints of participants in real time (Davies & Chandler, 2012). Despite this perception to attract a diverse and larger number of citizens to engagement activities, practitioners also contest that social media and online engagement would still primarily attract participants with a vested interest in the outcome. Nevertheless, social media is transforming how municipalities both inform and interact with citizens (Herriman, 2011).

A number of constraints and considerations are often overlooked by municipalities conducting online engagement. First, the usage of social media and online methods to inform citizens does not fulfill current legislated requirements outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2012). Second, legal issues and definitions regarding privacy and protection of information remain unclear and may impact the ability of the municipality to fully leverage online publically accessible information (Treleaven, 2014). Third, evaluation of online engagement is an area requiring further development with current practices limited primarily to counts of online presence. Fourth, is that a

number of municipal staff lack adequate skills to fully leverage and verify online content, such as the ability to geolocate comments. Fifth, municipalities may be exposed to organizational reputation risks as a result of failing to develop and enforce rules to regulate online comments as well as resources to monitor online presence and discussion (Treleaven, 2014). Finally, while online citizen engagement may attract a diverse and larger audience, certain citizens have barriers to participate (Bryer, 2011).

Measuring Success: Evaluating Citizen Engagement

Of increasing interest in the literature as well as in practice is the evaluation of citizen engagement (see Barnes, 1999; Lindquist 2005). Evaluation broadly refers to a systematic approach to collect and analyze data (that is either quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods) to assess or answer questions relating to the performance or outcomes of a program, service or process (Rossi & Freeman, 1993; Owen, 2007). Evaluation in citizen engagement practices are generally used to assess the process undertaken, the achievement of intended objectives and outcomes (or impacts) as well as identify lessons learned and considerations for engagements (Nabatchi, 2010; and Lehnan, 2012).

In approaching evaluation, scholars have proposed different frameworks, approaches and concepts. When examining environmental citizen engagement, Beierle (1999) identified five social goals for such evaluation: educating the public, incorporating public values, increasing the quality of decisions, fostering trust in institutions, reducing conflict and making decisions cost effectively (p. 81). Rowe and Frewer (2005) stressed two concepts when considering how to evaluate the effectiveness of citizen engagement: public perception of fairness (e.g., equitable, transparent, inclusive, acceptable); and competence/efficiency (e.g., the appropriateness of methods and tools to gather views and opinions efficiently). Nabatchi (2010) distinguishes two types of evaluation of engagement: process (i.e., program management, administration and implementation) and impact (i.e., objectives and the results).

Consensus exists that a best practice citizen engagement evaluation is to ensure it occurs throughout – from planning to completion (Nabatchi, 2010a; Motsi, 2009; Lehnan, 2012; and Rowe & Frewer, 2005). This involves both a formative (i.e., data collection, analysis and assessment throughout the process) and summative (i.e., an assessment of the entire citizen engagement upon completion) evaluations (Owen, 2007). Scholars (see Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Barr & Hashagen, 2000; and Nabatchi, 2010) also agree that an evaluation designed properly is an extension of the citizen engagement process providing another avenue for citizens to provide input.

Organizational Considerations to Formalize Citizen Engagement

With the increased interest and usage and demands of citizens to be engaged, more municipalities are moving towards formalizing citizen engagement. Philips (2010) associates the increasing usage and institutionalization of citizen engagement also contributes to advancing one of two agendas – city-building or community-building. The city-building agenda is associated with strengthening the responsibilities, powers and institutions of local government in order to increase accountability and responsive to citizens (Philips, 2010). The community-building agenda has a focus on activities and development of communities or neighbourhoods (Philips, 2010). Both agendas are associated with creating more opportunities for citizens to shape and being engaged in decision-making (Philips, 2010).

Aucoin and Turnbull (2006) characterized four criteria necessary for formalizing citizen engagement processes. First, that citizen engagement is considered a core element and occurs through policy development. Second, information from citizen engagement should influence the research and eventual implementation or addressing of an issue. Third, citizen engagement is adopted across all entities within

the organization based on common principles and practices. Finally, formalizing citizen engagement requires action and involvement from both municipal staff and elected officials in serving different but complimentary roles (Aucoin & Turnbull, 2006). For elected officials, citizen engagement allows for more frequent engagement with constituents as well as greater awareness and understanding of issues and concerns (Philips, 2010).

An alternative to fulfilling criteria is the concept of defining a theory of change for the municipality. A theory of change is a process whereby an entity identifies a desired outcome and works backwards to identify the necessary building blocks or components to achieve the desired outcome. Incorporating a theory of change approach requires collaboration across a municipality to ensure and foster a common understanding, principles and articulation of a citizen engagement policy (Morris & Cowan, 2012).

4.4. Conclusion

Defining levels and core values of citizen engagement has shifted in recent years to an organizational-based and, particularly, to a common international understanding. The two most widely recognized and defined levels and values are those developed by IAP2 and the NCDD. While resources in Alberta have also sought to define similar levels of engagement, the language is often bureaucratic and does not as clearly distinguish different levels of engagement. Moreover, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit and Public Input Toolkit also include a noticeable gap in not providing a coherent set of underlying values for citizen engagement. While defining a level and core values are often a foundation, municipalities must consider and address a number of challenges, such as attracting participants and considering the most effective method(s), and emerging practices, such as evaluation, as they plan for an engagement. The following section incorporates the findings of this literature review as part of the jurisdictional scan of resources developed in Canada and Australia to assist and support municipal citizen engagement.

5. SCAN OF PROMISING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES IN CANADA AND AUSTRALIA

Assessing how other provinces, states and territories support municipal citizen engagement indicates potential opportunities to enhance the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. This section reviews resources to assist and support municipal citizen engagement in Canadian provinces and territories and Australian states and territories. Throughout the scan references are made to the usage of typologies and core values (see section 4) and to the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits to compare resources from other jurisdictions to those developed in Alberta.

5.1 Canadian Provinces/Territories: Citizen Engagement Resources

The jurisdictional scan of Canadian provinces and territories included ministries with responsibility for municipal affairs and municipal advocacy organizations (see [Appendix C](#) for the list of organizations). The scan assessed whether provincial and territorial legislation related to municipal governance included citizen engagement requirements and the online availability of resources developed by ministries and advocacy organizations to support municipalities. The findings are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Citizen engagement resources by Canadian province or territory

Province/Territory	Resources Developed by Municipal Advocacy Organization	Resources Developed by Provincial Ministry/Department	Mandated Requirements for Citizen Engagement in Legislation
Newfoundland and Labrador	No	No	Yes
Prince Edward Island	No	No	Yes
Nova Scotia	No	No	Yes
New Brunswick	No	Yes	Yes
Quebec	No	No	Yes
Ontario	No	No	Yes
Manitoba	No	No	Yes
Saskatchewan	No	Yes	Yes
Alberta	Yes	Yes	Yes
British Columbia	No	No	Yes
Nunavut	No	No	Yes
Northwest Territories	Yes**	No	Yes
Yukon	No	No	Yes

** citizen engagement included as element of strategic planning toolkit

Table 5 shows that all provincial and territorial legislation contains citizen engagement requirements,² yet resources to support municipalities with citizen engagement vary. Despite few resources specific to citizen engagement, all ministries and municipal advocacy organizations have developed a number of other resources to assist municipalities in fulfilling various legislated requirements, such as strategic planning or budgeting. Those jurisdictions that developed citizen engagement resources, however, lack the same scope, rigor and utility when compared to the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits. An analysis of citizen engagement resources designed to support municipalities in Canada are analyzed followed by the considerations for AUMA.

² Legislated citizen engagement requirements in provincial and territorial jurisdictions are generally similar to those in Alberta, such as defining requirements for public notification and engagement requirements particularly for development and land use planning.

New Brunswick: Receiving Citizen Delegations

The Local Government Resource Manual, developed by the Department of the Environment and Local Government (n.d.), contains information related to different functions, powers and topics of interest to municipalities (e.g., procurement, legal issues, elections, etc.). A chapter on citizen engagement provides high level and basic information on best practices, including a discussion on handling citizen delegations, difficult citizens and the media (New Brunswick Environment and Local Government, n.d.). The current Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits does not include this information. However, the information is too basic for inclusion.

Saskatchewan: Do's and Don'ts of Public Meetings

The Ministry of Government Relations prepared a guideline providing advice and best practices for municipalities conducting public meetings. The guideline identifies a number of typical “do’s” and “don’ts” for public meetings, such as hiring an independent facilitator and avoiding a lengthy agenda that is likely unachievable. The guideline identifies and describes three phases for public meetings:

1. A planning phase to define the purpose and outcomes of the meeting as well as preparing the logistics for the meeting;
2. The meeting itself with the recommendation to ensure it is lively and interactive for citizens; and
3. A follow-up phase to conduct a post-meeting evaluation, the public distribution of minutes as well as identifying and progressing on action items arising from the meeting (Saskatchewan Ministry of Government Relations, n.d.)

These three phases present a typical process for a citizen engagement but neglects pre-planning to assess if engagement would be beneficial, needed or feasible. As an overall basic resource, the guideline is best suited for those unfamiliar with citizen engagement or to distribute to participants.

Northwest Territories: Assist Municipalities with Citizen Engagement Requirements

The 2006 Federal Gas Tax Agreement requires Northwest Territories municipalities to develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs), which must include a citizen engagement plan. To assist municipalities, the Northwest Territories Association of Communities developed four informational sheets on different citizen engagement topics. The first, “Enhancing your public engagement,” provides examples of recent engagement in communities across the Northwest Territories and tips to attract participants (Northwest Territories Association of Communities [NWTAC], n.d.a). The second, “Informed and engaged communities,” provides tips to increase awareness and participation in engagement activities (NWTAC, n.d.b). “Involving youth” emphasizes the importance of youth involvement and how to recruit participants (NWTAC, n.d.c). The final sheet, “Transparency and public engagement,” contains similar information as the “Informed and engagement community” sheet (NWTAC, n.d.d). Although these resources cover a range of topics, including challenges associated with attracting participants, information provided is fairly generic.

Canadian Provincial and Territorial Approaches: Considerations for AUMA

The three Canadian jurisdictions that developed resources provide basic information with little practical guidance on various citizen engagement topics. These resources and the scan of Canadian jurisdictions present little insight into opportunities to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit.

5.2. Australian States and Territories Citizen Engagement Resources

Australian state and territorial ministries with municipal affairs responsibilities and municipal advocacy organizations were also scanned for citizen engagement resources. Australia was selected as an

international jurisdiction for a host of reasons. First, despite no reference to municipalities in the Australian constitution, they are similar to Canadian municipalities as being creatures of the respective state or territory. Second, as a result of increased functions, responsibilities and citizen expectations, states and territories have placed greater importance and developed resources to support municipalities with citizen engagement (Reddel, 2005; Aulich, 2010; and Aulich, 2009). Finally, interviews with practitioners frequently cited current practices and resources for municipalities as world leading.

Municipal governance reform over the past two decades has placed greater onus on citizen engagement. Nearly all Australian states and the Northern Territory completed municipal governance reform in the 1990s and 2000s. These reforms resulted in increased requirements for citizen engagement and, in certain jurisdictions, for municipalities to develop citizen engagement policies and plans (Reddel, 2005; and Aulich, 2010).

Rationale for increased requirements for municipal citizen engagement intended to address a number of factors. First, citizen engagement is viewed as a means to solve complex issues and policy problems through greater input of those affected by a decision (Geddes, 2005). Second and similar to the Canadian context, demands for and increased interest in citizen engagement is in part to address the perceived democratic deficit, collaboration to solve or receive input for decisions, and greater demands from a better educated and articulate citizenry (Aulich, 2009; Aulich, 2010; and Reddel, 2005).

Recognizing this, a number of municipal advocacy organizations and state government ministries have developed resources to assist and support municipal citizen engagement (see [Appendix C](#) for the list of organizations included in the scan). The scan focuses on legislated requirements, and resources developed to assist and support municipal citizen engagement in the following states: Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

Victoria: “Best Value Principles” and Engagement Resources

Beyond similar legislated requirements as Alberta, municipalities in Victoria are required to develop a plan and report on citizen engagement based on fulfilling the “Best Value Principles” outlined in the *Local Government Act* (see Victoria Local Government Act, 2000, s. 208B & 208C). The “Best Value Principles” are to facilitate continuous improvement and assessment of services delivered by municipalities with citizen input.

To support municipalities, the Victoria Local Governance Association developed a number of resources. The first resource, the Best Value Victoria Community Consultation Resource Guide, was developed in 2001 following the introduction of the new legislated citizen engagement requirements. This was the first resource developed specifically for municipalities in Australia with a focus on how to plan citizen engagement. Embedded throughout are a number of checklists identifying best practices for different aspects and considerations for planning, such as defining the outcome or the target participant group(s). The resource guide recommended and described eleven methods or techniques to engage citizens. These methods are categorized in a matrix that maps the appropriateness of each to particular activities where citizen engagement is sought, such as land use planning, strategic planning or policy formation.

In 2007, the Best Value Victoria guide was incorporated into the more comprehensive Let’s Talk – A Consultation Framework (VLGA, 2007). This framework provides municipalities a process, best practices and considerations for a citizen engagement. The framework is based on an annotated version of the IAP2 spectrum with four categories of increasing involvement – inform, consult, participate and empower – and the following principles:

1. A process based on trust and integrity;
2. A clear understanding of the focus of the process and what it seeks to achieve;
3. All affected parties must be consulted and have equal access to participate;
4. Appropriate information is provided to allow for informed comment and input;
5. The consultation is planned to allow for meaningful participation and to influence the decision;
6. The process should be open and transparent, and inform participants how information gathered was used;
7. An evaluation should occur following the citizen engagement activity or process; and
8. Adequate resources are provided to allow the process to achieve its objective (VLGA, 2007).

The framework is also unique for its inclusion of high level information on common challenges and evaluating citizen engagement. Despite the framework providing limited details on selecting a method, the framework makes reference to thirty-four potential methods or techniques to engage citizens, including the advantages and pitfalls of each method.

South Australia: A Model Framework for Citizen Engagement

Beyond similar citizen engagement requirements in Alberta, South Australia municipal legislation has the most prescriptive requirements for citizen engagement of any Australian state or territory (Herrimann 2011). All municipalities are required to develop a community consultation policy outlining how the municipality intends to engage citizens and certain areas of responsibility require citizen engagement prior to council making a decision (Herrimann, 2011; South Australia *Local Government Act* [LGA], 1999, s. 50). Legislation also requires the development of other strategic plans informed by citizen engagement, including an annual business plan, four year management plans, and ten year financial, infrastructure and asset management plans (LGA, 1999, s. 122 & 123).

To assist and support municipalities, the South Australian Local Government Association (SALGA) and Department of Communities and Social Inclusion in 2008 co-developed the Community Engagement Handbook. The handbook provides a model framework for citizen engagement activities – providing similar information as included in the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits (SALGA, 2008). In terms of quality, the information is generic but comprehensive to include all aspects from planning, conducting, reporting and evaluating for a citizen engagement.

The handbook includes a number of templates for specific aspects of citizen engagement. These templates, however, provide no additional explanation on how it is to be used or links to other resources for more information. Other notable aspects of the handbook include its emphasis for wide use by municipalities in South Australia to ensure consistency and alignment for citizen engagements, and adopting the IAP2 spectrum and core values (SALGA, 2008). The one exception to the spectrum is the exclusion of the “empower” category as the *Local Government Act* only authorizes council with decision-making powers (SALGA, 2008).

Western Australia: Involving Citizens and Stakeholders in Decision-Making

Legislative citizen engagement requirements for municipalities seek to facilitate opportunities for citizen input for decision-making (Herrimann, 2011). All council meetings, for example, must allow time for public questions on issue (Western Australia Local Government Act [WALGA], 1995, s. 5.24). In 2012, new municipal government regulations prescribed requirements for the preparation of ten year strategic and annual management plans informed by citizen engagement (Herriman, 2011; Tan & Artist, 2013).

Rather than the ministry or municipal advocacy organization, resources to assist and support citizen engagement were developed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DP&C) for all public sector organizations as part of the Consulting Citizens series. Two resources are particularly beneficial for municipalities. The first, *Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians*, provides information on considerations, historical context and best practices to attract and engage Aboriginals. The overall intent is to build awareness and culture competence prior to and during citizen engagement (Western Australia Department of the Premier and Cabinet [WADP&C], 2005).

The second, *Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making* (WADP&C, 2006), assists organizations through a recommended process to plan and conduct citizen engagement. Like others, the foundation of this resource is the IAP2 spectrum and core values. Content related to planning the engagement process, including evaluation and selecting an appropriate method or methods, contains similar content as the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits. When implementing a citizen engagement plan, the resource includes valuable information on common challenges that could impact a process, such as stakeholder fatigue, and suggestions to mitigate the impact, such as risk management (WADP&C, 2006). Finally, content on evaluation is comprehensive when compared to most other resources in Australia and Canada, and draws heavily upon academic literature (e.g., Beierle, 1999; Rowe & Frewer, 2005; and Rowe & Frewer, 2000).

Queensland: The Engaging Queenslanders Series

Municipal governance legislation in Queensland moves beyond those of other Australian states and Alberta. Like South Australia, municipalities in Queensland municipalities are required to develop a citizen engagement policy to ensure “transparent and effective processes and decision-making in the public interest” (Queensland Local Government Act [QLGA], 2009, s. 4). In terms of municipal planning, Queensland municipalities are also required to develop a five year corporate plan informed by citizen engagement (QLGA, 2009, s. 104).

Of all Australian states, Queensland has developed the most comprehensive suite of resources as part of the Engaging Queenslanders series. The series is not specifically designed for municipalities but rather all public sector organizations in the state. All resources include similar information categorizing levels of engagement, planning, selecting appropriate methods, reporting and evaluation. The Engaging Queenslanders series adopts the following levels of engagement defined by the OECD:

- **Information** with one-way communication of government informing citizens;
- **Consultation** a two-way engagement for citizens to provide feedback on issues, policies and options prepared by government;
- **Active participation** to involved citizens and government in two-way communication that facilitates a greater role for citizens to shape policy with final decision-making power left to government (Queensland Department of Communities, 2011a).

The series covers a number of common topics but also others not seen in similar citizen engagement resources. The following list identifies the current resources included in the Engaging Queenslanders series; resources of interest are further described below:

- An introduction to community engagement;
- Community engagement methods and techniques;
- Improving community engagement across the Queensland public sector;
- Community engagement in the business of government;
- Community engaging capacity building toolkit for rural and regional communities;

- Engaging people with disabilities;
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- An information kit for CALD communities; and
- Evaluating community engagement (Queensland Government, 2013).

The Community Engagement Methods and Techniques handbook (Queensland Department of Communities, 2011a) is specific to assist with selecting a method and content that mirrors the Public Input Toolkit. The handbook makes reference to fifty methods or techniques for citizen engagement categorizing usage based on the engagement levels identified above (Queensland Department of Communities, 2011a).

The Evaluating Citizen Engagement handbook provides a process to evaluate citizen engagement. The process is based on a logic model framework – a common approach to evaluation based on developing measures and indicators related to inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of a citizen engagement (Queensland Department of Communities, 2011b). The evaluation handbook stresses that, like the decision to conduct citizen engagement, an evaluation may not be appropriate for all engagements and, if opting to proceed, should be a participatory activity with citizens involved at all stages (Queensland Department of Communities, 2011b). Relative to other citizen engagement resources scanned, an entire citizen engagement evaluation handbook is a notable and beneficial resource for municipalities.

The Engaging Queenslander series is also unique for its emphasis on engaging persons with a disability, Aboriginals and immigrants (Queensland Government, 2013). Resources focused on engaging these common underrepresented groups provides considerations, best practices and effective methods well beyond current content of the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits. Attracting participants, however, is not discussed in detail throughout the series.

Australian State and Territorial Approaches: Considerations for AUMA

Resources developed in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland are similar or exceed the quality of those developed in Alberta. Common to most is providing a process and best practices for a citizen engagement. The Community Engagement Handbook from South Australia combines a process with a framework and recommendation for a common approach to citizen engagement across the state. The Engaging Queenslanders series also is unique for its scope and diversity of resources to assist municipalities, such as handbooks focused on evaluation and attracting underrepresented groups. However, both South Australia and Queensland legislated require the development of citizen engagement policies to be developed.

For AUMA, citizen engagement resources from Australia provide more potential to identify opportunities to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit compared to those developed in Canada. Common to all was the adoption of the IAP2 spectrum and core values. This poses a consideration for AUMA as it is evidently recognized and familiar to practitioners in Australia. The Engaging Queenslanders series in particular is beneficial. The diversity of topics includes many things that could be adapted to fill gaps of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit.

5.3. Conclusion

A jurisdictional scan of the legislated requirements and municipal citizen engagement resources developed by Canada provinces and territories as well as Australia states and territories provided an opportunity to identify potential improvement to the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. Despite all Canadian provinces and territories having legislated municipal citizen engagement requirements, few have developed citizen engagement resources specifically for municipalities.

Similar to Canada, Australian states and territories also have legislated citizen engagement requirements and, for a few states, are more prescriptive than those currently in Alberta. As a result, more state ministries and organizations have developed resources to assist and support municipal engagement. Overall, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit is comparable to Australian resources with certain states having a more comprehensive suite of resources on various topics.

Many municipalities have developed resources tailored to their needs and practices independently, beyond or in absence of those from provinces, states or territories. A scan of these resources is also beneficial to understand current practices and what resources are considered useful for municipal practitioners. As such, the next section is a jurisdictional scan and interview findings of citizen engagement resources and practices of various municipalities in Alberta, Canada and internationally.

6. CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS AND POLICIES: EXAMINING MUNICIPAL PRACTICES

Assessing how municipalities of various sizes and in different jurisdictions have approached citizen engagement promised to indicate current practices and insight into potential opportunities to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. This section shifts the focus from resources developed at the provincial/state and territorial level to citizen engagement *practices* in municipalities. What follows reports on the results of a scan of promising practices and interview findings by analysing core values, typologies, resources and elements of current practices.

The scan approaches an assessment of citizen engagement practices from an organizational perspective. That is, the focus is on assessing how a municipality structures citizen engagement practices via frameworks and policies. The municipalities included in the scan are based on those frequently cited in literature reviews as leaders in citizen engagement or, for certain municipalities in Alberta, have recently or are currently in the process of formalizing engagement (i.e., developing a framework or policy; see McGee, 2009; Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2011; Chuong, Walton, Marini, & Maksimowski, 2012). These municipalities are:

- **Alberta:** City of Calgary, City of Edmonton, City of Red Deer, City of Grande Prairie, City of Fort Saskatchewan
- **Canada:** City of Victoria, City of Kamloops, City of Saskatoon, City of Waterloo and Regional Municipality of Halifax
- **United States:** City of Portland, City of Seattle, City of Santa Rosa, CA
- **Australia:** City of Melbourne, City of Onkaparinga, SA and City of Freemantle, WA
- **United Kingdom:** City of Thurrock, City of Manchester and Town of North Somerset

To compliment the review of frameworks and policies, more targeted conversations with practitioners is beneficial to understand practices in municipalities of different jurisdictions, classifications and sizes, including those without frameworks and policies. Participants were asked common interview questions (see [Appendix D](#)) based on three categories: organizational motives and culture toward citizen engagement; common challenges; and tools and resources to assist municipalities. Over 50 invitations were sent to municipal staff inside and outside of Alberta with participants from the following nine municipalities participating in an interview:

- **Alberta:** City of Lethbridge, Strathcona County, City of Edmonton, and Town of Cochrane;
- **Canada:** Town of Oakville, Ontario and City of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador; and
- **Australia:** Adelaide City Council, City of Melbourne and City of Onkaparinga, SA.

6.1. A Scan of Municipal Frameworks and Policies

Municipal citizen engagement frameworks and policies act as a foundation by defining core values, commitments, roles and responsibilities and a process for practices. They ensure consistency across all engagements and articulate a commitment from the municipality to citizens. In addition to foundational content, frameworks often contain tools for various departments to independently plan and conduct a citizen engagement.

Defining and Use of Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement serves common yet distinct usages for municipalities. All municipalities reviewed define citizen engagement as a means to facilitate more or structured opportunities to allow citizens views and concerns to be considered or reflected in decision-making. A few municipalities positioned their framework or policy to more participatory levels of citizen engagement (e.g., City of Freemantle, 2010), towards a model of collaborative governance between the municipality and citizens (e.g., City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2012b), or to foster a greater organizational appreciation for citizen input and involvement in decision-making processes (e.g., City of Victoria, 2010; and City of Waterloo, 2010).

At its most basic level, frameworks and policies seek to fulfill legislated requirements (e.g., City of Onkaparinga, 2010 required by South Australia legislation to develop policy). Others are to improve decision-making processes to allow for greater citizen-informed or empowered policy, and allow decision-makers to better understand the views of constituents (e.g., City of Edmonton, 2008; City of Calgary, 2003; City of Freemantle, 2010; City of Victoria, 2010; City of Waterloo, 2010). In terms of functional or areas of responsibility, most municipalities view engagement as appropriate for all issues while some municipalities make specific reference to service delivery improvement or strategic planning (e.g., City of Melbourne, Chuong, Walton, & Marini, 2012; City of Thurrock, 2012; City of Manchester, 2011; City of North Somerset, 2010; City of Freemantle, 2010). Moving beyond the focus on municipal governance or service delivery, some policies and frameworks seek to foster greater community spirit (e.g., City of Santa Rosa, 2011; City of Grande Prairie, 2012).

Categorizing Citizen Engagement

All municipalities use a typology to categorize levels of citizen engagement. Some municipalities use the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (e.g., City of Grande Prairie, 2013; City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2013; City of Victoria, 2012; City of Melbourne, as cited in Chuong, Walton, & Marini, 2012; City of Red Deer; City of Kamloops, 2013; City of Freemantle, 2010). Others have adopted some of the levels, such as the City of Saskatoon (2004) – which used the inform, involve and consult categories – while the City of Onkaparinga (2011) used all but the empower category due to South Australian legislative restrictions (refer above). The City of Calgary (2003), and later the City of Waterloo (2010), adopted a similar framework to the IAP2 Spectrum with five categories – inform, listen and learn, consult (with two-way communication), collaborate and empower. The City of North Somerset (2010) uses a modified IAP2 typology with five categories – informing, consulting, involving, participating and empowering. The Cities of Halifax and Edmonton have categorized citizen engagement into three broad categories:

- **Information sharing** to raise awareness of an issue to citizens;
- **Consultation** to involve citizens in providing input into an issue and proposed options, to develop solutions collaboratively (between municipality, citizens, groups and organizations); and
- **Active participation** to share or delegate ownership of an issue and decision-making with citizens (City of Edmonton, 2008; and Halifax Regional Municipality, 2008).

In the United States and the United Kingdom (U.K.), municipal citizen engagement levels are adopted from those developed by organizations and researchers. U.S. municipalities reviewed have adopted the NCDD's Engagement Streams Framework (City of Seattle, 2009; City of Santa Rose, 2011; and City of Portland, 2005). In the UK, citizen engagement policies form part of Local Strategic Partnerships as required by the *Local Government Act*. These partnerships seek to improve municipal service delivery by facilitating inclusive participation of municipal staff and elected officials, business representatives, volunteer organizations and citizens. Common to all U.K. municipalities considered (City of Thurrock, 2012; City of Manchester, 2011; City of Newcastle, n.d.) is the adoption of the ladder of participation –

similar to the IAP2 spectrum categories of inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower – developed by Wilcox (1994) in the *Guide to Effective Participation*, which included the following levels:

1. Providing information;
2. Consulting on a number of options;
3. Participants are deciding together on the option or proposing a new option;
4. Acting together to form a partnership on selecting or developing a mutually beneficial option; and
5. Supporting independent community initiatives to take ownership to develop and recommend an option (Wilcox, 1994).

The Cities Thurrock (2012) has adopted the five principles as is whereas the City Manchester (2011) has two additional categories – research to identify best practice and opportunities to improve service delivery, and facilitate community action on issues through services or grants.

Values and Principles Guiding Engagement Policy or Activities

The values and principles of citizen engagement policies or framework articulate a common set of concepts that underscore activities and processes. For certain municipalities, the values are reflective of those developed by IAP2 (e.g., City of Grande Prairie, 2013) or slightly modified (e.g., Halifax Regional Municipality, 2008). However, most municipalities adopt process-oriented principles that reflect a municipalities approach and what citizens can expect as a result of citizen engagement. Common process-oriented principles reflected in municipal policies and frameworks, include:

- **A clear and consistent approach** for all engagement activities based on the levels of engagement (City of Edmonton, 2008);
- **Communication and information sharing** to prepare citizens, and facilitate meaningful and informed citizen input (City of Seattle, 2009);
- **A co-ordinated approach** to avoid stakeholder fatigue or excessive citizen engagement and with a common understanding of other engagement activities or processes occurring simultaneously (City of Freemantle; 2010; City of Seattle, 2009; City of Victoria, 2010; City of Manchester, n.d.);
- Demonstrate **accountability** that the decision to engage is an effective use of resources and citizens involvement does adds value to the decision-making process (City of Waterloo, 2010; City of Calgary, 2003; City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2012b);
- Creating a **respectful and welcoming environment** that is appreciative of participation but also adheres to decision-making protocols and legislative requirements (City of Waterloo, 2010; and City of Calgary, 2003);
- An **inclusive environment** that allows all citizens to participate in a non-discriminatory environment and where the municipality makes an effort to attract a diverse range of participants to adequately reflect the community (City of Freemantle, 2010; City of Onkaparinga, 2010; and City of Grande Prairie, 2012);
- **Transparent and responsive** engagement to demonstrate how citizen input was used and influenced the final decision as well as facilitating citizen accessibility to hear and address concerns (City of Freemantle, 2010; City of Waterloo, 2010; City of Calgary, 2003);
- The use of **evaluation for continuous improvement** of citizen engagement (City of Onkaparinga, 2010; City of Saskatoon, 2004).

The process-oriented principles identified by municipalities reflect best practices when planning and conducting citizen engagement. Establishing these values helps to inform that citizen engagement principles are applied and adopted consistently.

Resources for Planning and Conducting Engagement

All municipalities articulated an overall process or framework to guide the planning, conducting and reporting of citizen engagement. A common acknowledgement is that conducting citizen engagement requires a certain flexibility and adaptation to the particular events (e.g., City of Saskatoon, 2004; City of Edmonton, 2008; Halifax Regional Municipality, 2008; and City of Santa Rosa, 2011). An area that is often unclear or not mandatory is the usage of evaluation during and following the process. This may be the result of the emerging interest of evaluation within the literature (Nabatchi, 2010). Some municipalities have provided greater guidance on the usage of evaluation (e.g., City of Waterloo, 2010; City of Onkaparinga, 2010; and City of Victoria, 2010) and also stress evaluation as an extension of the engagement process (e.g., City of Edmonton, 2008; and City of Saskatoon, 2004).

Municipal frameworks generally included resources to assist when considering and planning for citizen engagement. Those developed by the Cities of Kamloops (2013) and Edmonton (2008) are a typical example. Each of these resources assists municipal staff to develop an engagement plan through a workbook. With more difficult aspects, such as establishing objectives or parameters to the project, a number of general examples are provided to assist staff. These workbooks are also similar to the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to assist in developing a plan by providing prompts and guidance to key considerations.

Other municipalities developed specific resources or an extensive checklist for an entire citizen engagement process. For example, the Cities of Onkaparinga (2010), Fort Saskatchewan (2013) and Waterloo (2010) have resources to assist municipalities to assess if citizen engagement is appropriate for the issue and to select a recommended level of engagement. The City of Fort Saskatchewan's (2012b) assessment is the most comprehensive considering aspects such as scope, resources, organizational culture and the potential outcome of a decision to generate a numerical score that translates to a recommended level of engagement. Another resource developed by some municipalities relates to the evaluation of a citizen engagement activity. The Cities of Fort Saskatchewan (2012b) and Waterloo (2010) both have developed evaluation resources. Fort Saskatchewan's is qualitative and focused on process evaluation whereas Waterloo's is quantitative for both process and impact evaluation with questions categorized based on the guiding citizen engagement principles.

Three of the municipalities considered – Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Prairie and Red Deer – have developed within the past two years or are working towards developing a formalized citizen engagement policy. As part of the City of Fort Saskatchewan's *Public Involvement Framework*, the Praxis Group – the consultant retained to assist in its development – also included a detailed list of implementation considerations for the municipality to adopt a citizen engagement policy. This resource identified various elements to increase organizational capacity for the municipality to engage citizens, greater usage of citizen engagement in activities, develop an evaluation framework and enhancing communications and awareness of citizen engagement activities (City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2012a). Red Deer and Grande Prairie have developed a workbook to gauge and allows citizens to share interests and expectations of engagement to inform the ongoing refinement (for Grande Prairie) or development (for Red Deer).

The resources provided are generally a reflection of the organization of citizen engagement within the municipality. Some of the municipalities view staff allocated for citizen engagement as capacity builders and experts-on-call throughout the organization (e.g., City of Edmonton, 2008; Halifax Regional Municipality, 2008; and City of Calgary, 2003). Other municipalities use citizen engagement resources to lead and coordinate activities across the organization (e.g., City of Onkaparinga, 2010; and City of

Victoria, 2010). In some instances, staff allocated to citizen engagement may be one of many duties held (e.g., City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2012b; City of Red Deer, 2013; and City of Grande Prairie, 2012).

Summary

While terminology differs a bit, most municipalities adopt internationally recognized typologies to categorize engagement as well as best practices to guide planning. For categorizing citizen engagement, the majority of municipalities reviewed, especially those that recently formalized citizen engagement, have selected the IAP2 spectrum or, in the case of US and UK municipalities, a typology more common to the specific county.

6.2 Understanding Current Practices and Structures: Interview Findings

Interviews with nine municipalities provide a more in-depth perspective on current citizen engagement practices. Participants were selected based on recently (i.e., last 2-3 years) conducted a notable citizen engagement activity or developed a citizen engagement framework or policy. Interview findings analyze the organizational structure and dedicated resources, processes, resources and tools considered beneficial or currently used; and common challenges to citizen engagement.

Citizen Engagement Frameworks, Policies and Dedicated Resources

The majority of municipalities interviewed had a framework and/or a policy for citizen engagement. At the time of the interview, the City of St. John's was finalizing a citizen engagement framework and policy based on the work of a task force. Although making previous attempts to formalize citizen engagement prior to 2010, the City of Lethbridge was the only municipality interviewed that currently does not have a citizen engagement framework or policy.

Dedicated resources solely for citizen engagement are also vital to the success for a municipality. The three Australian municipalities and the City of Edmonton had a dedicated office and a range two to five full-time staff allocated to citizen engagement. Strathcona County had one full-time staff allocated to citizen engagement within the corporate planning and intergovernmental relations department. The Towns of Oakville, Cochrane and Hinton each had communications staff with responsibility for citizen engagement. While Lethbridge and St. John's had staff responsible for citizen engagement located within the office of the city manager and the office of strategy and engagement, respectively.

Roles, Responsibilities and Culture of Staff for Engagement

Staff allocated or holding responsibility play different roles to support citizen engagement. Only in the City of Onkaprainga and Adelaide City Council are staff fully responsible for all citizen engagements in the municipality. For other municipalities, staff support citizen engagement to review plans, scheduling, conduct training and capacity building, act as a internal consultant, develop resources and toolkits, act as facilitators and, in certain cases, manage a citizen engagement. Most interview participants indicated their role depends on the particular issue, its complexity, and the capacity of the department initiating engagement.

The culture towards citizen engagement varied among participants. Participants from Strathcona County and the City of Lethbridge acknowledge acceptance and appreciation among staff varies. This may result from engagement being viewed as a simple required exercise, or hesitation by certain staff due to the potential outcome of the engagement, where non-technical experts can influence decisions related to planning or public works. However, all participants identified citizen engagement as being increasingly

top of mind with council. Participants noted council often question and incorporate findings of a citizen engagement into decisions.

Emerging and Best Practices: Evaluation and Risk Management

Two questions were specific to usage of evaluation and risk management for citizen engagement. The evaluation question recognizes the increasing usage to inform continuous improvement of practices. All interview participants indicated usage of process evaluations, primarily through debriefs, to identify what worked well and improvements for future engagements.

Other municipalities indicated slight differences in usage evaluations to support citizen engagement. The Town of Cochrane and the City of Onkaparinga periodically conduct a survey to assess communications from the municipality and feedback on citizen engagement. Strathcona County conducts additional evaluations of facilitators – often staff are provided opportunities to facilitate – and a six month follow-up survey with participants to determine if the outcomes of engagement were achieved. The City of Lethbridge, on the other hand, indicated increasing emphasis and efforts to clearly defining outcomes for engagements and usage of anecdotal evidence to assess achievement of outcomes. All Australian municipalities interviewed used an evaluation tool to assess the process. St. John's plans to develop a process-oriented evaluation resource in a future framework. Finally, Adelaide City Council and Strathcona County indicated the development of performance metrics to assess the long-term impact of citizen engagement.

The adoption of a risk management approach was seen by the principal investigator as a beneficial tool to initially consider and potentially mitigate common risks of citizen engagement (e.g., failing to attract the desired or targeted participants, dominance by a particular group, etc.). All participants indicated risk management is used informally to plan an engagement. Generally, this involved a discussion that identifies risks to engaging or not engaging, potential risks during and following an event, and mitigation strategies. Strathcona County also uses an informal process but categorizes risks into four categories: insignificant risk, if it is unlikely to occur; standard risks that are frequent but impact is low and manageable; show stoppers where a risk could halt the engagement process and requires mitigation strategies; and black swans that rarely occur but could halt an engagement and should be prevented or, if not possible, mitigated.

Other municipalities, such as the Cities of Edmonton and Lethbridge and the Town of Cochrane, indicated risk management for citizen engagement is primarily reflected in the overall project plan. The City of Melbourne was the only municipality that required risk assessment in each citizen engagement plan. St. John's indicated a risk management resource is likely to be developed as part of a citizen engagement toolkit. This would assist when considering engagement and potential risks during and following an event.

Tools and Resources for Engagement

Practitioners are fortunate to have access to a growing number of citizen engagement tools and resources. Questions specific to tools and resources assess, first, those most cited by practitioners and, second, any gaps with current resources. Participants indicated drawing upon a number of resources. All participants referred to resources of other municipalities. Among Canadian participants, the resources of the following municipalities were frequently referenced: Edmonton, Calgary, Oakville, Kelowna, Vancouver, Halifax and Waterloo. In reviewing other municipalities, often efforts were made to refer to

those with similar characteristics. St. John's, for example, referred to the citizen engagement resources from Aberdeen, Scotland due to a similar energy-based economy.

IAP2 was also identified by a majority of participants – more specifically, case studies, articles and, in particular, an overview of citizen engagement methods. The City of St. John's noted IAP2 resources lack information on evaluating citizen engagement. Strathcona County, Adelaide City Council and the City of Melbourne referenced the IAP2 Canada and Australia Facebook pages as an excellent resource due to practitioners requesting and sharing resources and lessons learned.

Participants from Alberta have access to multiple Alberta-specific resources with the Citizen Engagement and Public Input toolkits. The Town of Cochrane was the only municipal to identify the Public Input Toolkit with this resource identified as the basis for the municipal consultation policy. The City of Edmonton and Strathcona County both mentioned consultation of the Centre for Public Involvement's website – a research centre co-funded by the University of Alberta and City of Edmonton. The centre's website was beneficial for research and resources related to emerging practices.

Emerging practices in particular emerged by participants when considering gaps in the availability of current resources. The Cities Edmonton and Onkaparinga cited evaluation resources considering the growth of interest in the field. Strathcona County noted its large rural population and indicated existing resources do not adequately address the challenges of rural citizen engagement. The Town of Oakville indicated a review of the growing number of online citizen engagement products and services, such as those for budget consultations, would be beneficial. The City of Lethbridge indicated a similar thought with simply having more staff dedicated to citizen engagement would allow for a greater understanding of research and leading practices in the field. The City of St. John's acknowledged a general lack of information, best practices or tips for municipalities in the process of formalizing citizen engagement. The diversity of suggestions indicate different resources are beneficial beyond the general focus on process and providing best practices on various aspects of engagement.

Issues, Challenges, Lessons Learned

Interview participants identified similar issues and challenges. The most common related to identifying stakeholders and recruiting participants beyond those directly affected. This included indentifying all stakeholders; addressing issues were a small vocal group dominates an engagement; and making engagement accessible for stakeholders. Related to accessibility was the emphasis from Strathcona County for all communications to be in plain language. Many municipalities also indicated cynicism from participants that engagement is merely a formality with a final decision already pre-determined.

Municipalities also indicated challenges when planning citizen engagement. Aspects included unclear outcomes for citizen engagement; not understanding the needs of decision-makers; poor evaluation planning or being an afterthought; neglecting to report back to participants and not developing a comprehensive budget, including staff dedicated staff time. Interview participants indicated struggling to determine an appropriate level of engagement with resources available and methods for the particular project.

Lessons learned tended to be strategic with a more long-term focus. A common observation was an effective citizen engagement takes time to build a recognizable "brand." Often municipalities turn to formalizing citizen engagement to improve awareness and involvement over time. For governments considering formalizing citizen engagement, interview participants acknowledged it involves a shift in

organizational culture. Even if practices improve over time, not all municipal staff may appreciate citizen engagement.

Summary

Interviews with municipalities provided further insight into current citizen engagement practices. Regardless of the jurisdiction or size, all participants identified a culture where engagement is increasingly top of mind for council. To plan citizen engagement, multiple resources were identified – from resources of other municipalities to social media pages from professional organizations. When conducting citizen engagement, common challenges included attracting participants and the process to plan citizen engagement. While lessons learned indicated time is necessary to build an effective citizen engagement program and greater appreciation by both staff and citizens.

6.3 Conclusion

The scan and interviews findings allowed for an understanding of current practices and how municipalities, as an organization, structure and approach citizen engagement. Frameworks and policies provide a foundation for citizen engagement practices. Most municipalities incorporated, or modified, the IAP2 spectrum and core values. Frameworks also commonly included tools and resources to assist departments independently plan a citizen engagement. Common resources included an assessment if citizen engagement is beneficial, checklists and evaluating the process. Interview participants provided a detailed overview of practices and resources beneficial to support citizen engagement. Resources suggested by interview participants included citizen engagement evaluation, reviewing the growing number of online engagement services, a resource with best practices for rural citizen engagement and, among others, best practices and considerations for municipalities developing a framework or policy to formalize engagement.

Considering municipalities included in the scan had dedicated resources and, for the most part, formalized engagement, the next section analyses the results of a survey available to AUMA members to gain the perceptive input of a representative sample of municipalities across the province.

7. CURRENT MUNICIPAL CITIZEN PRACTICES: EXAMING THE NEEDS OF MUNICIPALITIES IN ALBERTA

A survey made available to AUMA members sought to better understand current practices and resource needs of a wider representation of municipalities in Alberta. All survey respondents were asked a common set of questions included in [Appendix D](#). The survey was accessible to participants through the AUMA website initially for three weeks in June and July 2014 but was extended an additional two weeks to increase the number of responses. Table 6 breaks down the 20 responses received based on municipal classification and population. The survey was based on self-selection by respondents with no probability sampling completed by AUMA or the principal investigator. As such, it is not possible to provide an indication of the accuracy of the results as a reflection of current municipal citizen engagement practices in Alberta. In other words, responses are only accurate based on those provided by survey respondents. Responses for each question are included in [Appendix E](#).

Table 6 Respondents profiles by classification of municipality and population³

	City	Town	Other (Regional Municipality)
Under 2,500	1	3	0
2,500-10,000	0	4	0
10,000+	5	4	1
Other (over 1 million)	1	0	0
TOTAL	7	11	1

7.1. Areas of Citizen Engagement and Indicators of Success

The majority of respondents indicated current practices exceed legislated requirements. Additionally, a slight majority indicated the municipality has formalized citizen engagement through a framework or policy. Recent citizen engagements indicate usage for a wide range of issues (see Table 7).

Table 7: Percentage indicating citizen engagement for different areas within the past three years

	City (%)	Town (%)	Other (Reg. Municipality,%)
Finances, budgeting or taxation	100	89	100
Libraries, parks and recreation	100	68	100
Land use planning and development	75	68	100
Sustainability and the environment	100	78	100
Disaster and emergency measures	0	44	0
First responders and protective services (fire, police, ambulance)	25	11	0
Bylaws and/or bylaw enforcement	25	68	100
Solid waste management, recycling and composting	50	56	100
Roads and streets	75	68	0
Public transportation	100	44	0
Utilities (including water and wastewater management)	25	68	100
Skipped question	3	2	0

Among the different areas and issues that included citizen engagement, the most common categories included finance and budgeting; libraries, parks and recreation; land use planning and development; roads and streets; and sustainability and the environment. High responses for engagement related to

³ One response was received by a specialized municipality. However, responses were only provided for demographic questions with all other questions being skipped.

roads and streets, and land use planning and development is likely due to existing legislated engagement requirements. However, the diversity of areas of engagement affirms respondents are moving beyond legislative requirements.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to a number of statements related to citizen engagement with the results shown in Table 8. A high number of respondents indicated agreement with statements pertaining to the perceived importance to staff and council and the need for future engagement. Despite this, a lower proportion of respondents agreed that municipal staff has the adequate training and capacity. The lack of training indicates one of several challenges and issues raised in survey responses. Specifically, the preparedness and resources necessary for anticipated increased future citizen engagement. Table 8 indicates that cities and towns indicated fewer responses agreeing with council satisfaction of current engagement practices.

Table 8: Level of agreement for citizen engagement statement by classification of municipality

	City		Town		Other (Reg. Municipality)	
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree
Residents of our municipality are actively engaged and aware of current issues in our municipality	0	4	2	4	0	0
There is a satisfactory level of participation when our municipality conducts citizen engagement activities	1	0	1	3	0	0
As municipal staff, we recognize and value the importance of citizen engagement	4	0	7	1	0	1
Staff in my municipality has the adequate capacity, knowledge or skills to conduct citizen engagement	1	2	2	5	0	1
Council recognizes and values the importance of citizen engagement	3	1	5	4	0	1
Council is satisfied with the results of citizen engagement events/activities	1	1	0	4	0	0
In the future, our municipality will need to increase our citizen engagement activities	1	2	4	3	1	0
Skipped question	3		2		0	

Participation was commonly identified when asked to characterize the success and challenges of citizen engagement. Respondents indicated traditional methods, based on attracting as many participants as possible, are ineffective. Rather, municipalities indicated greater success with usage of methods for targeted participant groups. Despite this, attracting participants was considered difficult unless a citizen is directly affected by the issue. For example, engagement was high for one community following the 2013 Southern Alberta flood due to the number of citizens affected.

7.2. Improving the Citizen Engagement Toolkit; Obstacles to Engagement

Survey responses indicate that although there is a high awareness of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit, as shown in Table 9, few actually use this resource. One respondent stated the toolkit was basic. Although a fair comment considering the primary focus to assist with planning an engagement and perhaps provided by a municipality with more well-developed practices, respondents were also asked to identify potential improvements as well as obstacles to current citizen engagement practices.

Table 9: Awareness and usage of citizen engagement resources by classification of municipality

Awareness	<i>City</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Other (Regional Municipality)</i>
Citizen Engagement Toolkit	3	7	1
Public Input Toolkit	3	8	0
Alberta Emergency Alert	4	8	1
Usage	<i>City</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Other (Regional Municipality)</i>
Citizen Engagement Toolkit	0	0	0
Public Input Toolkit	0	2	0
Both toolkits	1	3	0
None	2	3	1
Unsure	1	1	0
Skipped questions	3	2	0

Only one identified a suggestion to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. The suggestion focused on the inclusion of resources speaking to social media but indicated this has now been addressed. It is possible that this response may have confused the Citizen Engagement Toolkit with the Public Input Toolkit, which added social media and online engagement content following a review in 2011. While few provided suggestions to improve the toolkit, all indicated engagement challenges.

Participants stated relatively common citizen engagement challenges. Respondents indicated, as noted above, greater success with targeted recruitment but still experienced challenges with attracting participants unless directly affected. One distinguished the challenge more prominent for proactive (i.e., a positive focus, such as a community visioning) relative to reactive (i.e., mismanagement or public outrage) engagement. Municipalities also stressed the challenge to balance the timing of engagement with using the right mix of methods to avoid stakeholder fatigue. Complicating the matter was common acknowledgement of the lack of resources for successful and meaningful citizen engagement.

7.3. Conclusion and Considerations for AUMA

The survey provides an snapshot of current citizen engagement practices, the awareness and usage of resources developed in Alberta, and challenges and obstacle. Overall, current practices generally exceed legislative requirements in a number of diverse areas. A common challenge underscoring citizen engagement is related to attracting participants. Through councils and staff recognize the importance, survey responses indicate a disconnect due to a higher number of responses pointing to council dissatisfaction. Few suggestions were provided to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit but responses identified others resources that would be beneficial.

8. DISCUSSION

The findings indicated various approaches, resources to support and best practices to assist members and improve current practices. Moving forward, AUMA must balance the varied needs of municipalities; modifications based on best and emerging practices; additions that will add the greatest value; and revisit its structure and approach to support members. The following section discusses these considerations based on the findings of the report.

8.1 Summary of Findings

The project balanced a review of best and emerging practices through a literature review and scans as well as understanding municipal practices and needs through interviews and a survey. The main findings of the various sections of the report are summarized in Table 10 (see next page).

All elements emphasized the need for a typology of engagement and defining the core values for citizen engagement. The IAP2's Spectrum of Engagement and Core Values are the most recognized and widely adopted for resources by municipalities in Alberta and abroad. AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit defines five levels of engagement. The levels are defined from an organizational perspective but may have limited use in public documents due to its bureaucratic definitions and potential for overlap among certain levels. The IAP2 Spectrum, on the other hand, clearly defines and distinguishes levels of engagement using plain language.

Interview participants and the literature review noted that planning encompasses the majority (approximately 80 per cent) of time for any engagement. Planning encompasses not only logistics but also: defining objectives and how to measure "success"; identifying stakeholders; developing targeted recruitment approaches; developing and acknowledging the barriers of different stakeholders; and, among other items, define and mitigate potential risks. Recognizing the time dedicated, the majority of resources focus on best practices and considerations to plan citizen engagement. However, in light of and to address the challenges identified by interview and survey participants, expanding the scope of the toolkit would be worthwhile.

8.2 Citizen Engagement Needs of Municipalities Vary

Improvements to the Citizen Engagement Toolkit must recognize the context of current practices. Current citizen engagement practices range from municipalities that have well established but informal practices, such as smaller municipalities that conduct engagement with no official plan, to those focused solely on fulfilling legislative requirements and others that arguably could be considered leading examples in the field, most notably the Cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Despite the differences, the general trend is increasing citizen engagement activities and a growing trend to formalize practices. In terms of methods, municipalities are also moving beyond traditional methods designed to attract maximum participation to citizen engagements more targeted to stakeholder groups while simultaneously increasing usage of online methods.

AUMA must strive to revise the toolkit and support members at various stages of practice. Municipalities with well established citizen engagement practices, for example, have more complex needs and will likely not make great use of the toolkit. However, they play a vital role in sharing experiences, best practices and, where possible, resources to assist other municipalities improve

Table 10: Summary of findings

Main Findings	
Literature Review (Section 5)	<p>Typologies of Citizen Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement: most widely recognized based on five levels – inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower • NCDD Engagement Streams Framework: exploration, conflict transformation, decision-making and collaborative action • AUMA Citizen Engagement Toolkit: information, voting and providing information, discussion and consultative dialogue, engage in decision-making, involvement in local government • Municipal Affairs Public Input Toolkit: directive decision, consultative decisions, collaborative decision <p>Core Values and Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAP2 core values most recognized based on an inclusive process to seek out and involve those affected but providing meaningful information and ensuring input will inform the decision <p>Emerging Practices and Common Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning comprises nearly 80% of any citizen engagement • Emerging practices: more municipalities conducting process (i.e., assessing what we did) and moving towards impact evaluations (i.e., assessing whether our engagement achieved objectives); new categories of methods emerging in the field • Common challenges: usage of targeted recruitment and attracting participants; organizational considerations to formalize citizen engagement practices
Canada and Australia Scan (Section 6)	<p>Canada:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All provincial and territorial legislation contains municipal citizen engagement requirements; most ministries and municipal advocacy organizations have developed resources but few specific to citizen engagement • Resources for municipal citizen engagement are basic • Alberta is unique among provinces and territories for direction and resources developed for engagement <p>Australia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most resources have similar focus to Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits with planning citizen engagement • Generally, legislated municipal citizen engagement requirements exceed those in Alberta; South Australia and Queensland requires development of citizen engagement policies; Victoria requires reporting on engagement • South Australia developed a resource that emphasize a similar process and approach for consistency in practice across all municipalities • The Engaging Queenslanders series is by far the most comprehensive with handbooks on diverse topics
Municipalities Scan and Interviews (Section 7)	<p>Municipal Frameworks and Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen engagement is defined for different usage but framework and/or policy represents renewed commitment to facilitate greater opportunities for citizen input into decision-making process • Many anchored by core values and a typology; the IAP2 spectrum and derived values were the most common; US and UK municipalities used a typology and values more common in their countries • Frameworks often incorporates resources to assist with key aspects of citizen engagement, such as recommending methods or a process evaluation <p>Interviews with Practitioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for citizen engagement: some dedicated while others partially dedicated • Evaluation commonly used but more focused on the process undertaken; few practitioners identified efforts for impact, or outcome, evaluation • Risk management generally conducted as part of the larger project management for the initiative or issue • Resources needs identified: more on evaluation; simply more staff to keep aware of trends and practices; review online citizen engagement resources; formalizing citizen engagement • Issues and challenges: ensuring non-technical, plain language for materials sent out; attracting participants and cynicism that engagement is not intentional; various aspects of the planning process (e.g., defining outcomes, managing expectation, budgeting for costs) • Lessons learned: improving citizen engagement practices takes time and ensure report back to participants on use of information
Survey (Section 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelming majority move beyond legislated citizen engagement and engage in a number of areas of municipal powers and functions • Participation improved when not using traditional methods; attracting participants is a common challenge • Attracting participants more difficult for proactive engagement (e.g., visioning) vs. reactive engagement (e.g., public outrage or mismanagement) • Participants indicated lack of resources to improve or expand current practices and higher levels of dissatisfaction by council • Majority indicated awareness of citizen engagement resources but few actual use Citizen Engagement Toolkit

practices. Smaller municipalities with excellent informal practices, on the other hand, may use the toolkit to plan for larger engagements, such as development of a strategic plan, and would benefit considering the likelihood of limited resources to assist with planning. Other municipalities may regularly use the toolkit to develop engagement plans or to inform resources being developed and tailored for their municipality. If the scope of the toolkit expands to recognize trends to formalize citizen engagement, for example, municipalities may simply access this information to research best practices.

8.3 Strategic Considerations of Any Citizen Engagement Indicates Potential Improvements

Several strategic questions and considerations for any citizen engagement arose from the literature review, jurisdictional and promising municipal practices scan, interviews and survey. The questions represent all major steps of citizen engagement – from initial consideration to completing all requirements to close out and evaluate the process. Each answer incorporates the findings, best practices and considerations for AUMA, specifically comparing findings to the existing toolkit.

How do we initially assess if engagement is necessary?

An initial assessment is beneficial to assess whether citizen engagement is necessary. This assessment will provide an indication of whether to proceed before too many resources have been dedicated or, if proceeding, areas requiring additional clarification before proceeding. Items to consider include, among other factors, legislative requirements, whether information is beneficial to decision-makers, resources and capacity to undertake engagement, and other events that may conflict with potential involvement.

The municipal frameworks of Halifax, Fort Saskatchewan and Waterloo provide examples of these assessments. They incorporate both an indication of whether to proceed or clarifications and resources necessary prior to proceeding. Currently, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit includes no such assessment.

What is the issue that seeks engagement and at what point is engagement occurring?

Defining the issue considers the purpose, objective and context. The purpose of the citizen engagement event should clearly clarify what the municipality seeks to acquire as a result of the engagement. For example, a municipality may engage citizens to provide information related to a project or collaborate with citizens to address an issue. The objective(s) of citizen engagement refers to the more general forward-looking benefits (Sheedy, 2008; and Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006). For example, objectives may consist of: facilitating opportunities to inform citizens or participate in the decision-making process; improve decision-making to better reflect the views and concerns of citizens; or build capacity for greater citizen involvement in decision-making. The context for citizen engagement may provide information related to prior engagements, if any, but also raise potential considerations. These considerations include identifying the views and concerns of citizens, risk tolerance of the municipality to engage and the opportunity cost, or potential risks if engagement does not occur (Sheedy, 2008).

Defining the issue is also linked to the particular stage at which engagement occurs. If at the initial stage, the purpose of engagement may be used to explore ideas, considerations, and potential options or understand different views on an issue. Engagement at a later stage, or to fulfill legislated requirements, may involve validating or receiving feedback on options for the particular issue, or co-designing the policy (see Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2010; Sheedy, 2008; and Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006).

Like all resources, AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit requires users to define the issue. This includes an assessment of the purpose and objective but nothing related to the context of the engagement, such as past efforts or risks to acknowledge. Additionally, no examples are provided to assist in defining either the purpose or objective.

What resources are often overlooked when planning citizen engagement?

The current Citizen Engagement Toolkit recognizes that any citizen engagement event requires resources for transportation, reservations, facilitators, information materials, advertising, etc. Users are required to identify costs for these items. However, other resources to plan citizen engagement require greater consideration or are often under budgeted.

1. First, practitioners indicated citizen engagement should be allocated sufficient time to ensure success. A rushed engagement may be negatively interpreted as not valuing citizen input and may not attract a desired or necessitated level of participation. Timing also considers *when* engagement is scheduled. For example, citizen engagement during the day may impede the ability of citizens to participate due to work commitments or the need to arrange for childcare (Sheedy, 2008).
2. Second, depending on the location and participants, citizen engagement may occur in buildings or offices from the municipality or at an external location. Regardless of the location, the space should be accessible to all participants physically, socially, culturally and economically. Engagement related to a controversial or contentious issue should occur in a "neutral" space (Sheedy, 2008).
3. Finally, facilitators play a key role to maintain the focus of an engagement. Impartial or external facilitators are often cited as ideal for citizen engagement to ensure the process is meaningful and input is perceived by participants as being valued. If hiring an external facilitator is not possible, the municipality should ensure the facilitator is not associated with the particular issue (Sheedy, 2008).

The current Citizen Engagement Toolkit requires users to budget for these items. However, additional information clarifying the importance of these resources to citizen engagement would be beneficial.

Who are the stakeholders and how do we attract participants?

Attracting participants was noted as a challenge in the literature and by practitioners. Targeted recruitment was noted to be more effective by defining stakeholder groups. Stakeholder groups refer to those that have an interest in the outcome or affected by the decision. For example, a citizen engagement for a park may identify local sports organizations, neighbourhood residents and youth as stakeholder groups.

The Citizen Engagement Toolkit currently allows users to develop "profiles" of stakeholder groups based on common characteristics. These characteristics include a number of socio-economic factors, computer literacy, demographics, work location and past involvement, among other factors. Beyond the development of "profiles" no additional information is provided.

Once identified municipalities must attract participants. Attracting participants (beyond the "usual suspects" and those directly affected by the issue) was acknowledged as a challenge throughout the report. Targeted recruitment was cited as important but requires awareness of considerations and best practices for different stakeholder groups (see Table 4 for an overview).

A dedicated resource related to attract participants and recruiting stakeholders would be help. This could provide general best practices and those for particular groups, such as people with a disability.

What methods are to be used for the citizen engagement?

Selecting a certain level of involvement raises considerations for the method and resources to engage citizens. To assist with selection of methods, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit and a number of municipalities (e.g., Fort Saskatchewan, Waterloo and Edmonton) have developed similar questions to refine a list of methods (generally) based on the level of involvement. The toolkit's current set of questions contains a narrower scope primarily focused on the concerns and outcomes of the engagement. Similar tools in other municipal frameworks include a wider range of questions to consider the scope, complexity and resources available for the proposed engagement.

The inclusion of additional factors strengthens the recommended level of engagement and particular methods. For example, fewer resources for an input level of engagement may opt to recommend a survey instead of a workshop.

What are the risks and how can these be mitigated?

Identifying risks and mitigation strategies is an important yet neglected aspect of planning. When planning, challenges can be assessed and solutions proposed in an environment that does not pose a risk or alter the engagement process to achieve the objectives.

All resources reviewed in the scans did not consider risk management and most practitioners indicated conducting this process as part of project management for the larger initiative. Likewise, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit has nothing pertaining to risk identification and developing mitigation strategies.

Did citizen engagement achieve its objectives?

The literature review indicated evaluation is an emerging practice. Evaluation provides beneficial information to ensure citizen engagement aligns to previously defined outcomes, known as an impact evaluation, and/or assess the process to identify lessons learned to improve future engagements.

Nabatchi (2010a) and the Engaging Queenslanders' (Queensland Department of Communities, 2011b) series handbooks represent the most comprehensive current resources specific to evaluating citizen engagement. These resources provide a high level process for an evaluation similar to planning citizen engagement. The Citizen Engagement Toolkit only includes evaluation for one aspect – attracting participants. This merely allows users to develop output performance measures based on numbers that participated. Interviews and surveys also indicated the need for more evaluation resources. Current evaluation components are best to be expanded to assist municipalities with evaluating the process or impact of citizen engagements.

How to assess information received from the engagement process?

Recognizing challenges and pitfalls of engagement processes (e.g., poor facilitation, groupthink or dominance by particular individual or group), an organization may receive a wide range of quality feedback. Practitioners identified assessing information as a common challenge. Literature, resources, frameworks and the Citizen Engagement Toolkit provide little insight into strategies or best practices to effectively assess information. Rather, there is simply an acknowledgement of the issue, noting the best practice to report back to participants or recommended usage of a deliberative method to reach a consensus decision. Practitioners also indicated evaluating feedback occurs on a case-by-case basis with

no defined approach. The lack of best practices and information in resources and frameworks highlights a notable gap for both research and resources.

8.4 Where to Focus Improvements: Top Three Areas

Although generally reflecting most best and emerging practices, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit can be improved. Modifications can be made throughout the desktop-based planning tool to include elements common in resources or municipal frameworks. Adding these resources will benefit users to develop a more comprehensive citizen engagement plan that reflects best practices. Based on the findings of the report, the top three areas to focus for new resources are evaluation, attracting participants and formalizing practices.

First, current evaluation components are best to be expanded in recognition that a municipality immensely benefits from both a process and impact evaluation for any citizen engagement. Including a common set of process evaluation questions can assist municipalities as they implement and conduct citizen engagement to identify and emphasize continuous improvement. Resources for an impact evaluation would provide municipalities with an overall assessment of what resulted from the engagement and whether it had achieved its objective. Beneficial resources include how to identify data sources to support the evaluation at different stages of the engagement, common evaluation questions and examples of data collection methods, such as surveys.

Second, attracting participants was a common challenge throughout the report and an identified need. The existing toolkit merely allows users to build “profiles” of stakeholder groups. This allows users the ability to define stakeholder groups by developing profiles of common characteristics but lacks in providing best practices to attract particular groups. Resources from Western Australia (2005) and Queensland (2013) provided examples of resources tailored to best practices for particular groups. A similar resource for common underrepresented groups in Alberta (i.e., youth, immigrants, Aboriginals, young families, persons with a disability and low income citizens; see Table 4) could be beneficial for municipalities. This resource could include considerations, effective approaches and best practices in general and for common underrepresented groups.

Finally, citizen engagement itself continues to be an emerging practice and common facet of municipal governance. A number of municipalities across Alberta have or are in the process of formalizing engagement. While municipalities can draw upon examples of finished products, interviews and survey noted the lack of resources focused on the process. A handbook on this topic could provide an overall approach and provide examples of how other municipalities have undertaken the process, specifically any staff and citizen engagement used to inform the framework and/or policy.

8.5 An Improved Structure and Approach is Necessary

Unlike the Citizen Engagement Toolkit, other resources reviewed were easily accessible from a single location. For the toolkit, AUMA members must first make a request by email and, once downloaded, content is then divided between a desktop-based application tool and information online (hosted by an external server) which is no longer accessible. This online content includes increasingly dated examples of citizen engagements conducted by municipalities and links to further resources with notable gaps, such as IAP2 resources. Updating content of the citizen engagement toolkit is currently managed by AUMA and AAMDC staff as time permits.

This current structure and approach raises two issues: accessibility of the toolkit, and providing new and maintaining existing content. First, accessibility of the toolkit is paramount to its success. Users not having simple access to the resource will consult other resources. This, in turn, poses a reputational risk for AUMA (due to a perceived inaccessibility of the toolkit and potentially for other resources) and undervalues the resources invested to develop the toolkit. Second, adding new or maintaining existing content requires dedicated staff and be continuously informed by members' needs and interests. This ensures best and emerging practices of the field are reflected while fulfilling the needs and interests of members. Undertaking this is a significant amount of work and can easily be neglected due to shifting priorities. Considering these two juxtapositions, a more collaborative approach between staff and members is ideal. If a proper venue is created, a more collaborative approach can facilitate greater sharing of practices among members and develop more timely resources to be regularly shared.

Finally, the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits are similar and complimentary. The Public Input Toolkit outlines a process for engagement emphasizing positive relationships while the Citizen Engagement Toolkit is practical allowing users to develop an engagement plan. However, similar content and focus to assist with planning suggests a lack of effort to date to merge both resources. Merging the resources would provide a single, comprehensive toolkit for municipalities in Alberta to draw upon.

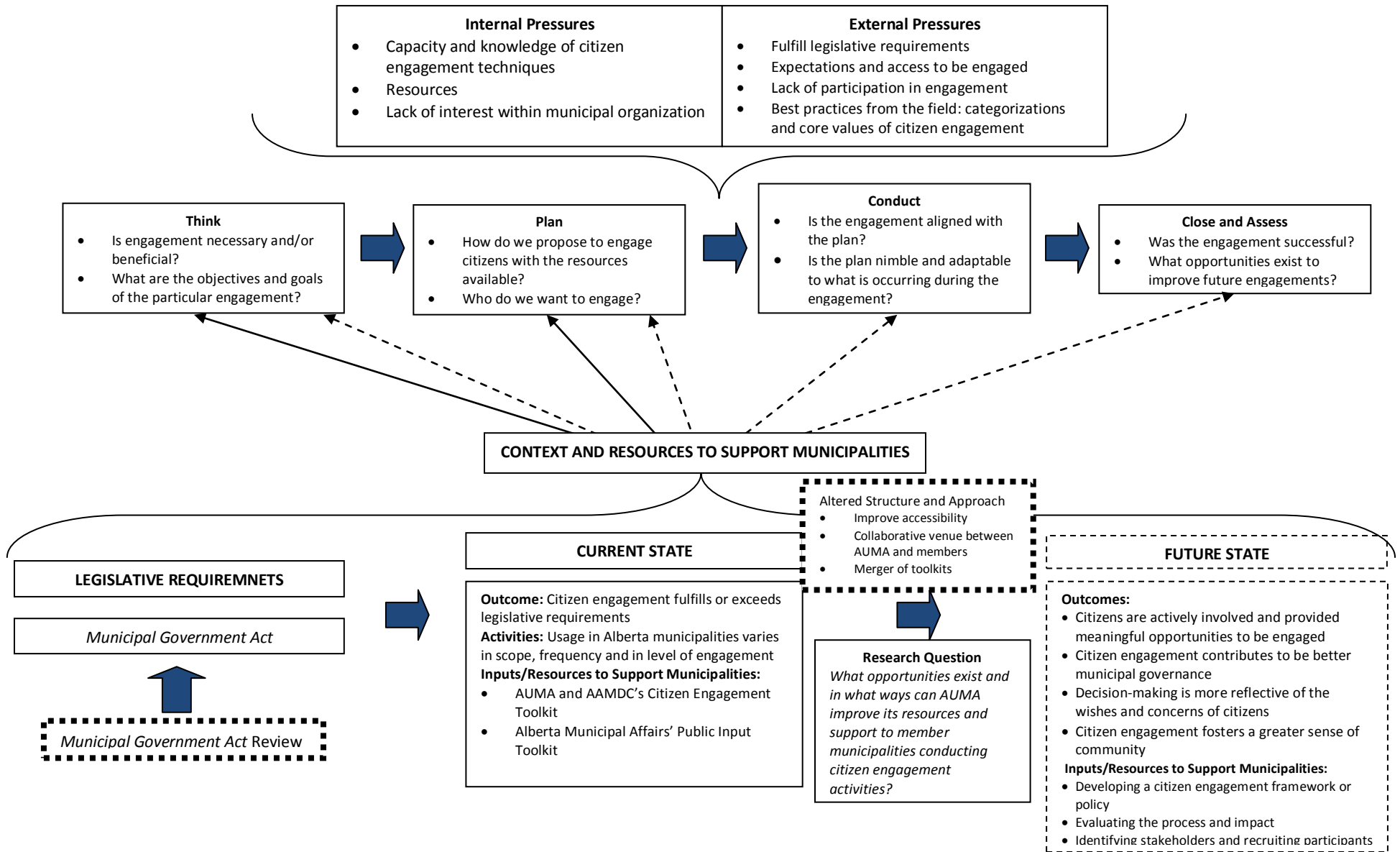
8.6 Pulling it All Together: Implications for Moving Forward

To improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit, AUMA requires, first, modification and addition of resources and, second, address its current structure and approach. For the existing toolkit, modifications should consider those that are widely recognized by practitioners allowing users to develop a more robust engagement plan. A more robust plan would incorporate aspects typically seen in other resources, such as assessments and checklists, reviewed for this report or recommended by practitioners. To address common challenges or emerging practices in the field, new resources on evaluation, attracting participants and formalizing citizen engagement expands the toolkit's scope to better support members. This additional support to members will increase the utility of the toolkit for varying municipalities.

Moving forward, AUMA should alter its current structure and approach to support members. This must balance two key considerations: accessibility and maintaining content. Accessibility of the toolkit is necessary if AUMA is to support members. Related is a modified structure to provide more regular, relevant and timely information to members while also maintaining existing content. Finally, a new structure suggests another consideration to merge the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits.

Figure 6 incorporates findings into a revised analytical framework. Based on the findings, modifications and additions to the toolkit provide an opportunity to expand the scope and address all major stages of citizen engagement from the initial thinking to closing out and assessment phases. Modifications to the existing toolkit primarily relate to the think and plan phase yet could incorporate new content that reflect best practices. Three notable gaps emerged from the report – evaluation, attracting participants, and formalizing citizen engagement. Incorporating such additional resources expands the scope of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to provide support to member for the conduct, and close out and assessment phases. AUMA should alter its structure and approach to better support members. The analytical framework identifies three approaches beyond the status quo – improve accessibility, a more collaborative venue between AUMA and members and merging existing toolkits. The next section identifies and sequences recommended modifications and resources already developed for AUMA to add to the current Citizen Engagement Toolkit. Options are also presented and assessed based on different approaches for AUMA to improve its structure and approach to support members.

Figure 6: Analytical framework re-visited



9. IMPROVING THE TOOLKIT: OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this project was to undertake a review of the toolkit by researching best practices and engaging with practitioners, and then, on the basis of the findings and issues which arose, propose modifications and resources to be included in the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. The findings of the report also stressed the need for AUMA to alter its current structure and approach to support members.

The following section, first, identifies recommendations to modify and include additional handbooks in the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. Recommendations are divided between modifications within the next twelve months and those beyond twelve months. This section then presents four options to improve AUMA's structure and approach to support engagement that are evaluated against criteria to provide a recommendation to move forward. The section concludes with a high-level implementation plan.

9.1 Actions to Modify and Add New Resources to the Toolkit

Based on the findings and primary objective of the report, content to be modified and resources to be added to the toolkit has been pre-developed for AUMA in [Appendix F](#) and [Appendix G](#). The necessary changes are first identified below in chronological order based on short-term (within the twelve months) and future actions. This is followed by a discussion for each action category providing the rationale and any considerations or risks AUMA should acknowledge.

Short-term Actions

- *Modify the existing desktop-based planning tool to reflect best practices.* Nearly every existing tab of the desktop-based planning tool is to be modified with the addition of new tabs, related to an initial preparedness assessment and evaluation.
- *Incorporate new handbooks into toolkit that focus on evaluation, attracting participants and formalizing citizen engagement.* These handbooks support emerging practices and challenges identified in the discussion. Inclusion of additional handbooks also expands the scope of the citizen engagement toolkit beyond the current focus on planning.

Future Actions

- *Conduct in-depth regular reviews of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit and modify based on best and emerging practices.* This review should balance findings from the literature and engaging members to identify citizen engagement needs.

Options for Consideration**

- *Correct issues with online content so they are accessible.* Accessibility of all aspects of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit is paramount to its usability.
- *Adopt the IAP2 Spectrum for Engagement as the typology to categorize levels of engagement for the toolkit.* This typology is increasingly utilized in the field and more clearly distinguishes levels of engagement using plain language. The IAP2 Spectrum is also better suited for governments, unlike the NCDD Engagement Streams Framework that is primarily focused to the non-profit sector.

***dependent on whether AUMA proceeds with the recommended approach and structure below*

Short Term Actions

Short term actions primarily focus on the project objective to identify improvements, and develop tools and handbooks to ensure the toolkit reflects best and emerging practices. Modifications to the existing toolkit, based on the findings of the report, include:

- An initial assessment on preparedness to proceed or indication if citizen engagement is beneficial;
- Adding a box to the current “Background” tab focused on gathering context for the citizen engagement;
- Including a best practice of project management for users to identify an executive sponsor;
- Expand the current scope of questions used to recommend a particular level of engagement and potential methods;
- Incorporate risk management by requiring users to consider risks and mitigation strategies for steps to be implemented in conducting citizen engagement; and
- Add an evaluation tab for users to develop a process or impact based evaluation.

Content for the modifications has been pre-developed and located in [Appendix F](#). All modifications arose from gaps identified based on strategic questions common to any citizen engagement included in the discussion section. New or modified content particularly drew upon tools included in municipal frameworks and resources developed by other jurisdictions scan. Modifications to the desktop-based planning tool will add rigour for users to develop a more comprehensive engagement plan that reflects best and emerging practices.

New handbooks to be incorporated (see [Appendix G](#)) were based on the top three focus areas for AUMA – evaluation, attracting participants and formalizing citizen engagement. First, evaluating citizen engagement is an emerging trend. As municipal citizen engagement continues to grow, evaluation allows for continuous improvement and informs senior management and council on the impact of activities. Some municipalities have but all could expand evaluation practices to deliver better quality citizen engagement.

Second, attracting participants was a common challenge throughout the report. Targeted recruitment is noted as a more effective approach to recognize and intentionally attract identified stakeholders. Yet for common underrepresented groups in engagement in Alberta (i.e., youth, young families or professionals, persons with a disability, immigrants and Aboriginals), municipalities may not be fully aware of barriers and best practices to attract participation. This handbook provides general best practices and those specific to underrepresented groups.

Finally, a number of municipalities in Alberta are or have recently formalized citizen engagement through a framework and/or policy. This has contributed to improved internal practices, such as consistency, and commitment to improve opportunities for citizen engagement. For other municipalities, council or citizens may advocate to developing a similar framework or policy. Yet no resources exist to provide a recommended process and best practices for municipalities undertaking such a project. Inclusion of this handbook will expand the toolkits current scope and add value to support a potential continuing trend of municipalities formalizing citizen engagement.

Future Actions

Regular reviews of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit are to be completed every three or four years. Reviews of the toolkit ensure that content reflects best and emerging practices of a field rapidly

evolving. It is recommended that a working group be formed to conduct the review. Membership is to include representatives from AUMA, AAMDC, Municipal Affairs as well as current practitioners and elected officials active in citizen engagement. A comprehensive reviews could take anywhere between 6-12 months, and involve research and engagement with municipalities to identify resource needs. Working group members should be selected based on ability to commit for the duration of the review.

Options for Consideration to Improve AUMA's Structure and Approach to Support Engagement

Dependant on AUMA proceeding with the recommendation of an altered structure and approach (see below), two options are presented for consideration – addressing accessibility and adoption of the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement. For accessibility, AUMA should address current issues with online content no longer being accessible. However, if AUMA proceeds with the recommendation below, addressing accessibility may not be worth staff effort.

Adoption of the IAP2 spectrum as the typology for the Citizen Engagement Toolkit is also dependent on the recommendation below. Unlike the current typology used for the toolkit, the IAP2 spectrum provides a more clear distinction between levels of engagement without overlap and avoids bureaucratic language. The spectrum is widely recognized by practitioners and current serves as the typology in numerous municipal citizen engagement frameworks and resources.

9.2 Options for AUMA to Better Support Members with Citizen Engagement

A review of the resource identified the need for AUMA to alter its current structure and approach. Four potential options are presented below. Implementation of either option below is based on AUMA implementing modifications to the content identified above.

- **Option 1: Status Quo** – This option maintains the current total AUMA and AAMDC management of the toolkit. Municipalities interested in using this resource must send an AUMA staff member an email for the desktop-based planning tool. Content is maintained and updated, as time permits, by AUMA and AAMDC staff with difficulty to notify users of any updates, and online content hosted on an external server.
- **Option 2: Self-Access Portal for all AUMA resources** – This option maintains the current content management structure but improves accessibility of all AUMA resources through an online, self-access portal. Including all content online in a single location will remove anything hosted on external website and inconsistent ways to access resources. Any updates can easily be tracked and notifications sent out to users. Users can also be engaged through discussion forums or sharing resources.
- **Option 3: Merger of Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits** – This option focuses on combining the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits into a single resource. It recognizes that both toolkits are similar and complimentary to support municipalities with citizen engagement – one resource being more narrative and the other a practical tool to for planning.
- **Options 4: Community of Practice to Share Experiences, Best Practices and Promote Citizen Engagement** – This option establishes a community of practices to share experiences, best practices, develop resources and regularly distribute information related to citizen engagement. Additionally, webinars, interviews and simulations are other activities that can regularly be scheduled to share best practice on various citizen engagement topics.

The above options are evaluated against the following criteria below that considers the impact to the content of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit and implementation feasibility. Each criteria was scored based on a three point scale with one being the lowest and three the highest score.

Criterion that evaluates the options based on content of the toolkit include:

- **Timeliness** – the option ensures the content of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit is reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects best practices and any emerging trends or practices;
- **Effectiveness** – the option ensures content is easily updated and information regarding any modification or additions can be easily disseminated among users; and
- **Relevancy** – the option allows for flexibility and quality assurance that the content meets the needs of municipalities of different classification, population, location and maturity of citizen engagement practices.

Criterion that evaluates the options based on implementation include:

- **Readiness** – the option can be implemented based on the existing capacity in AUMA, and member municipalities are ready and able to provide support;
- **Resources** – the option can be implemented based on resources from within the organization or acquire external resources; and
- **Return** – if implemented successfully, the positive benefits obtained for AUMA and member municipalities.

Table 11 contains a summary of the evaluation of each option. A detailed analysis of each option follows.

Table 11: Assessment of options

	Content			Implementation		
	Timeliness	Effectiveness	Relevancy	Readiness	Resources	Return
1: Status Quo	1	1	1	3	3	1
2: Self-Access Portal	1	1	1	2	1	3
3: Merger of Toolkits	2	2	2	2	2	3
4: Community of Practice	3	3	3	2	2	3

Analysis of Option 1: Status Quo

Evaluation scores:

Content			Implementation		
Timeliness	Effectiveness	Relevancy	Readiness	Resources	Return
1	1	1	3	3	1

This option maintains the status quo with AUMA and AAMDC managing the content of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit as time permits. Conflicting priorities and resources may warrant this option to be the most effective currently for AUMA and AAMDC. Implementation of this option would be relatively easy requiring no change in current practices but would result in a poor return.

The poor return for implementation is related to the current issues not adequately being addressed or neglected. These issues relate to dividing the content between a downloadable the desktop-based planning tool and online resources that are no longer accessible, existing staff not being able to research and update dated content, and no clearly defined schedule to regularly review the resource.

Analysis of Option 2: Self-Access Portal

Evaluation scores:

Content			Implementation		
Timeliness	Effectiveness	Relevancy	Readiness	Resources	Return
1	1	1	2	2	3

The creation of a self-access portal addresses issues associated with accessibility. The current process to request the desktop-based planning tool and online content that is no longer acceptable decreases the usability. Moreover, online content should ideally be hosted on the AUMA website.

Implementation of this option would provide benefits to AUMA for all its current resources. Currently, there is no consistent way to access resources. Some can be accessed entirely from the AUMA website while others link to other websites. Creation of an online self-access portal would allow members to access all resources from a single location. This would allow members to become aware and more likely use other AUMA resources. Depending on the software used to build the portal, it could also be built with a component that allows for membership engagement and feedback of resources. However, this option has limitations to address content considerations. It is designed to solely address accessibility.

AUMA would require additional resources to implement this option. Although existing IT staff could be used to design the portal, a dedicated staff member is ideal and can be hired for a short-term contract lasting six months. In addition to building the portal, the contracted staff would also provide training to AUMA staff expected to manage the portal once completed.

AUMA has a number of options to build this self-access portal. It is recommended that SharePoint be used due to its relative familiarity and simplicity to manage for AUMA staff. SharePoint also has the ability to create forums and polls, which can be used to engage users of the portal to gather feedback on resource needs for citizen engagement. However, as costs are based on users, implementation of the option should create a function to ensure non-active accounts are removed.

Analysis of Option 3: Merger of Toolkits

Evaluation scores:

Content			Implementation		
Timeliness	Effectiveness	Relevancy	Readiness	Resources	Return
2	2	2	2	2	3

This option recognizes that the Citizen Engagement and Public Input Toolkits are more effective if combined. It would require AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs to collaborate to combine content into a single resource. This could either be a desktop-based planning tool or document, or a hybrid between the two current resources. This option would provide consistency between the resources, especially in content and providing a single typology.

Implementation of this option is contingent upon commitment among AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs. A likely challenge to overcome is conflicting priorities between the three organizations. To overcome this, AUMA should develop a business case to provide reasoning and justification to proceed with the merger. Once agreement is made, a working group is to be established with representation from the three organizations but also citizen engagement practitioners and elected officials. Recruiting

participants should be feasible using a similar process to appoint members for current AUMA committees. As an opportunity to review the content, the working group should engage municipalities to gather input on needs. This can consist of surveys, using AUMA’s existing Survey Monkey account, and focus groups. Ideally existing resources dedicated to maintaining the citizen engagement resources could be pooled to maintain the toolkit. However, this may be difficult to reach an agreement among the three partners.

Once the initial review is completed, an agreement should be reached between the three parties related to costs and maintaining content. AUMA and AAMDC are best positioned to maintain content in order to represent the interest of members. Municipal Affairs, however, could provide a small grant to cover any costs related to hosting on a server or hosting costs for meetings to review the toolkits content.

AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs representatives should continue to meet quarterly to discuss citizen engagement issues and trends. Regular, on-going discussions ensures citizen engagement and resources remain top of mind. Finally, regular future reviews of the new toolkit should be conducted (at least every three to four years) to incorporate best and emerging practices.

Analysis of Option 4: Community of Practice

Evaluation scores:

Content			Implementation		
Timeliness	Effectiveness	Relevancy	Readiness	Resources	Return
3	3	3	2	2	3

This option seeks to improve accessibility and sharing of municipal citizen engagement practices by establishing a community of practice. A community of practice would seek collaboration among practitioners and elected officials from across Alberta. It would provide a forum to collaborate on producing resources related to examples of engagement, best and emerging practices, common challenges, and lessons learned, among other possibilities.

Through a community of practice more regularly and timely information related to citizen engagement could be shared. Information would also address the current lack of Alberta-specific citizen engagement information. Though providing information, communities of practices may be limited by conflicting priorities of members, setting unrealistic goals to accomplish and losing momentums on projects. Recognizing this, AUMA should strive to ensure the community remains active by producing regularly, ideally once a month, articles on various topics. Additional events, such as webinars or workshops at the AUMA Annual General Meeting are other opportunities a community of practice could undertake.

Implementation is relatively feasible. Establishing the community of practice would involve a similar recruiting process and support AUMA provides to existing committees. Few additional resources are necessary for recruitment. However, there are added costs for hosting in-person meetings, technology for webinars or other events, potentially contracting of a facilitator for the first meeting (see below) and a part-time staff dedicated to support on-going functions.

Implementation would require AUMA to recruit and establish members for a steering committee to oversee and provide strategic guidance to the community of practice. Criteria to be recruit members should focus on experience and knowledge of citizen engagement, and representation based on a cross-section of municipalities (i.e., classification, population and location). The steering committee should

include representation from AUMA, AAMDC, Municipal Affairs, municipal practitioners and elected officials. AUMA is likely to act as the secretariat to provide logistical support and hosting costs for any in-person meetings. Once appointed, the steering committee should have a facilitated meeting to define mission and goals, governance, roles and responsibilities, any necessary working groups for specific activities, activities and resources to be developed. AUMA staff could be made available to facilitate the meeting or a facilitator could be contracted.

When the community of practice is operationalized, a page on the AUMA website should be developed to provide information, post materials and links for further resources. For resources or products developed, AUMA can disseminate these materials using existing means, such as the Weekly Digest.

Recommendation to Improve Organizational Support to Members

A combined option of **Option 3 – Merger of Toolkits** and **Option 4 – Community of Practices** is recommended. Implementation should be sequenced by first implementing Option 3 prior to Option 4.

When combined Options 3 and 4 provide the greatest long-term benefit to both AUMA and users of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. Option 3 and the outcome of a single toolkit will, depending on the end product, balance information needs with a practical tool. The final product may also inadvertently address current accessibility issues if online is incorporated into the new toolkit. Once operational, Option 4 and the community of practice extend the usability of the new toolkit. Producing regular content will provide municipalities with emerging practices, examples of trends and engagement conducted in Alberta, and interactive activities, such as webinars, on various citizen engagement topics.

Both options can readily be implemented. Each option does not require additional resources for AUMA. Additionally, resources currently dedicated to citizen engagement in AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs can be pooled for more effective usage, such as to cover costs to sustain the community of practice. Finally, quarterly meetings between AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs will ensure citizen engagement resources remain top of mind.

9.3 Implementation Strategy

Item/Major Milestone	Timeline
PHASE 1 – Strategic Discussion and Moving Forward	
Organize meeting internally and with AAMDC to discuss the findings of this report and next steps	January 2015
Confirm and define next steps and approach	February
PHASE 2 – Changes to the CET	
Incorporate modifications and new content included into CET	February-March
Communicate updates to CET members	April
PHASE 3 – Merger of Toolkits**	
<i>**remainder of implementation based on proceeding with recommendations for approach and structure</i>	
Development of business case	February-March
Meeting between AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs to commit to merger of toolkits	April
Recruitment of practitioners and elected officials to assist with review	May-June
Work to merge toolkit, including engaging with municipalities	July-December
Release of new toolkit	January 2016
PHASE 3 – Implementing Community of Practice	
Develop criteria to recruit steering committee	December
Recruitment of steering committee members	January-February 2016
Facilitated first meeting of steering committee	March
Refinement based on facilitated meeting, develop any necessary working groups	April-May
Citizen Engagement Community of Practice produces resources and advice to AUMA members	Ongoing after June
Review of revised toolkit	Tentatively scheduled for 2019

10. CONCLUSION

Municipalities across Alberta increasingly engage citizens beyond legislated requirements. This growth in citizen engagement is attributed to a host of factors, including greater appreciation by municipal staff and elected officials, demands and expectations of citizens to be involved in decision-making, and growth of the field, among other factors. As the interest and actual practices continue to grow, a number of municipalities and provincial level organizations have developed resources to outline best practices to plan and conduct citizen engagement.

Among Canadian provinces and territories, Alberta is unique in developing multiple resources (by Municipal Affairs, and another co-developed by AUMA and AAMDC) specifically for citizen engagement. Despite being an excellent resource when compared to others developed in Canada, AUMA requested the completion of a report to examine the Citizen Engagement Toolkit for modifications or resources to be included and best practices and how the organization can best support AUMA members. To inform the recommendations, the methodology consisted of a literature review, jurisdictional scan, interviews and a survey.

Modifications to the existing toolkit identified opportunities to improve nearly every aspect and additional items to be included for the toolkit to reflect best practices. When considering new resources for the toolkit, three major needs or emerging practices were identified:

1. Evaluating citizen engagement;
2. Resources to support municipalities considering to formalize citizen engagement; and
3. Addressing the common issue associated with recruiting participants.

A resource addressing each gap has been developed for inclusion into the Citizen Engagement Toolkit.

The main recommendations for additional opportunities to support member municipalities included:

1. Collaboration between AUMA, AAMDC and Municipal Affairs to merge the Public Input and Citizen Engagement Toolkits; and
2. Fostering a community of practice whereby AUMA member municipalities can share experiences and provide assistance to other municipalities with citizen engagement.

The modifications, resources and recommendations achieve the projects objective to recommend opportunities and develop resources to improve the Citizen Engagement Toolkit.

Beyond this report a number of opportunities exist for further research. One major area relates to citizen engagement practices specifically within Alberta. This would assist both practitioners and academics to better understand emerging practices but perhaps the reasoning for the attention directed to citizen engagement in the province. Another area of research relates to attracting participants. While research and practitioners largely identified this as a major issue with some best practices, further research on the effectiveness of various approaches and strategies would be welcomed.

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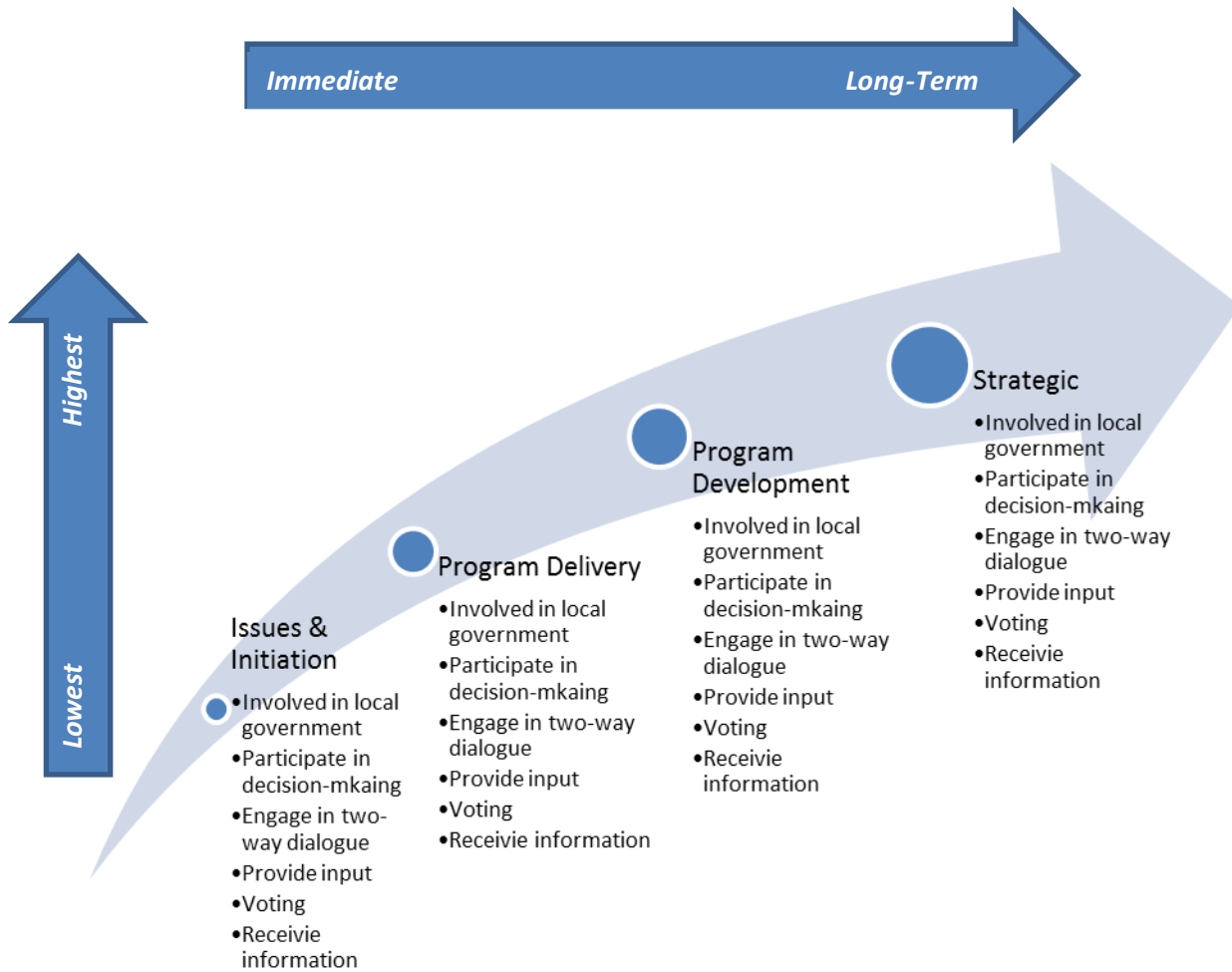
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APPENDICES


Appendix A: Citizen Engagement Toolkit Matrix for Tools and Best Practices



Citizen Engagement Toolkit – Best Practice Matrix with Methods

	Strategic	Program Development	Program Delivery	Issues and Initiatives
Involved in Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Groups Support Candidates 2. Round table/Working Groups 3. Election Candidate Guide 4. Citizen Task Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Designated Authority 6. Board of Directors Fact Sheet 7. Public Involvement in Pollution Control Programs 8. Neighbourhood Council 9. Torrens Valley Youth Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Program Delivery by Businesses 11. Vancouver Police Board 12. Public Fundraising 13. Community Development Council 14. Advisory Committees/Boards/Commissions Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Citizen Jury 16. Stewardship Group
Participate in Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Workshops 18. 21st Century Town Meeting 19. Task Force/Consultation 20. Citizen Task Forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Neighbourhood Budgeting 22. Consultative Program Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Participation Guide 24. Grant Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25. Citizen Advisory Groups 26. Expert Panel 27. Advisory Committees
Engage in 2-way Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28. Citizen Task Force 29. Citizen Steering Committee 30. Community Association Presidents' Forum 31. Youth Summit 32. Open Space Forum 33. Online Discussion Forum 34. Public Meetings 35. Workshops/Public Forum 36. Focus Groups 37. Town Halls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38. Participative Budget 39. Stakeholder Analysis 40. On-site Community Consultation 41. Drug Strategy Consultation 42. Focus Groups, Open Houses, etc. for leisure center 43. Community Engagement Manual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 44. Open House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45. Individual Contact 46. Government Blog 47. Small Cities and Towns Webchat 48. Public Issues Forum 49. Study Circles
Provide Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50. Surveys/Visioning Session 51. Survey/Community Meetings 52. Policy Feedback Surveys 53. Public Outreach 54. Design Charette 55. Survey 56. Participatory Television 57. Open Space Visioning 58. Meeting in a box 59. Coffee Hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60. Small-scale 21st Century Town Meetings 61. On-site Community Consultation 62. Random Sample Face-to-face Interviews 63. Grant Money for Community Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64. Reference Centre 65. Video Feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 66. Youth Citizen Juries
Voting			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67. Plebiscite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 68. Electronic Voting 69. Workshops/Voting 70. City Referendum 71. Newspaper Insert
Receive Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72. Resource Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 73. Participation Guide for City Processes 74. Brochure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75. Information Line 76. Council Meeting Webcast 77. Newspaper Insert 78. Building Codes Change Notices 79. Digital Sign Information 80. Community Event Signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81. Information Line 82. Coffee Shop Newsletters 83. Civic Journalism

Appendix B: IAP2's 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.
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.
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fact sheets ■ Web sites ■ Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public comment ■ Focus groups ■ Surveys ■ Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshops ■ Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen advisory Committees ■ Consensus-building ■ Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen juries ■ Ballots ■ Delegated decision

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Appendix C: Municipal Advocacy Organizations and Ministries Reviewed

Canadian municipal affairs ministries, advocacy organizations and legislated requirements

Province/Territory	Municipal Advocacy Organization	Provincial Ministry/Department	Mandated Requirements for Citizen Engagement in Legislation
Newfoundland and Labrador	Municipalities of Newfoundland and Labrador	Municipal Affairs	Yes
Prince Edward Island	Federation of PEI Municipalities	Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs	Yes
Nova Scotia	Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities	Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations	Yes
New Brunswick	Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick	Environment and Local Government	Yes
Quebec	Union de municipalités du Québec AND Fédérations québécoise de municipalités	Affaires municipales, régions et de l'occupation du territoire	Yes
Ontario	Association of Municipalities of Ontario	Municipal Affairs and Housing	Yes
Manitoba	Association of Manitoba Municipalities	Municipal Government	Yes
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association AND	Government Relations	Yes
<i>Alberta</i>	<i>Alberta Urban Municipalities Association</i>	<i>Municipal Affairs</i>	Yes
British Columbia	Union of British Columbia Municipalities	Community, Sport and Cultural Development	Yes
Nunavut	Nunavut Association of Communities	Community and Government Services	Yes
Northwest Territories	Northwest Territories Association of Communities	Municipal and Community Affairs	Yes
Yukon	Association of Yukon Communities	Community Services	Yes

±ministry and AMO sponsor research and best practice sharing through Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network

Australian municipal affairs ministries, advocacy organizations and legislated requirements

State/Territory	Municipal Advocacy Organization	Provincial Ministry/Department	Mandated Requirements for Citizen Engagement in Legislation
Western Australia	Western Australia Local Government Association	Department for Local Government and Communities	Yes
South Australia	Local Government Association of South Australia	Department of Communities and Social Inclusion	Yes
Tasmania	Local Government Association of Tasmania	Department of Premier and Cabinet (Local Government Division)	Yes
Victoria	Victorian Local Governance Association	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (Local Government Branch)	Yes
New South Wales	Local Government NSW	Department of Premier and Cabinet (Local Government Division)	Yes
Queensland	Local Government Association of Queensland	Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience	Yes
Australian Capital Territory ¹	N/A	N/A	Yes±
Northern Territory	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory	Department of Local Government and Regions	Yes

¹ The Australian Capital Territory is comprised of the City of Canberra, the national capital of Australia.

± There is no applicable Act pertaining to local government engagement but the Australian Capital Territory facilitates opportunities for engagement.

Appendix D: Interview and Survey Questions

Interview Questions

This section asks questions related to the development and usage of the [particular citizen engagement framework or policy].

Could you please describe the context that influenced the development of [the citizen engagement framework or policy]?

- Was this initially driven by elected officials, county staff, citizens or legislated requirements?
- What were some of the motives?
- Were public engagement activities (beyond legislated requirements) common prior to the development of the framework?

This section asks questions related to planning and conducting public engagement activities.

Do you use any tools or resources when planning public engagement activities? If so, what resources are the most helpful?

Is there an evaluation process or component for public engagement activities? If so, could you describe what is involved?

When planning for public engagement, is there a risk management process to identify potential risks and develop mitigation strategies? If so, could you describe this process?

What are five problems or issues that you routinely encounter in public engagement activities?

This section asks questions related to lessons learned, gaps in the availability of resources as well as the culture of public engagement within the municipality.

What are some of the lessons learned in using public engagement?

Are there any tools or resources that do not currently exist that would assist in planning or conducting public engagement activities? If so, could you describe some of these resources and the needs it would fulfill?

What is the role of staff allocated to public engagement? For example, do they serve to build capacity within the organization or play a lead role to plan and conduct public engagement activities?

Finally, how would you describe the culture and acceptance of public engagement by municipal staff and decision-makers?

Survey Questions

1. I am a:

- Mayor
- Councillor
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Other (please provide)

2. I represent a:

- City
- Town
- Village
- Summer Village
- Specialized Municipality
- Other (please provide)

3. I represent a population of:

- Under 2,500
- 2,501-10,000
- Over 10,000
- Other (please provide)

4. In the past three years, has your municipality conducted citizen engagement in any of the following areas?

Select all that apply.

- Have not conducted any citizen engagement activities in past three years.
- Finances, budgeting or taxation
- Libraries, parks and recreation
- Land use planning and development
- Sustainability and the environment
- Disaster and emergency measures
- First responders and protective services (Fire, Police and Ambulance)
- Bylaws and/or bylaw enforcement
- Solid waste management, recycling and composting
- Roads and streets
- Public transportation
- Utilities (including water and wastewater management)

5. How would you characterize the success of these citizen engagement activities?

[Insert response]

6. For each of the following statements, select your level of agreement using the five point scale

	1 <i>(Strongly Disagree)</i>	2 <i>(Somewhat Disagree)</i>	3 <i>(Neutral)</i>	4 <i>(Somewhat Agree)</i>	5 <i>(Strongly Agree)</i>
Residents of our municipality are actively engaged and aware of current issues in our municipality					
There is a satisfactory level of participation when our municipality conducts citizen engagement activities					
As municipal staff, we recognize and value the importance of citizen engagement					
Staff in my municipality has the adequate capacity, knowledge or skills to conduct citizen engagement					
Council recognizes and values the					

importance of citizen engagement					
Council is satisfied with the results of citizen engagement events/activities					
In the future, our municipality will need to increase our citizen engagement activities					

7. To the best of your knowledge, what is the current full-time equivalent (FTE) of staff dedicated to citizen engagement activities (e.g., 0.5 or 1.0)?

[Insert value]

8. Which of the following best describes current citizen engagement activities in your municipality?

- a) Current citizen engagement activities **do not** fulfill the requirement of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- b) Current citizen engagement activities fulfill the requirement of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- c) Current citizen engagement activities fulfill and move beyond the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*.

9. Does your municipality have a bylaw, framework, or other document that articulates an overarching approach or set of values that guides citizen engagement activities?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not sure

10. Are you aware of the following citizen engagement resources?

	Yes	No
AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit		
Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit		
Alberta Emergency Management Agency's Alberta Emergency Alert		

11. Have you used either AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit or Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit in the past three years?

- Yes, AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit
- Yes, Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit. [IF SELECT THIS, MOVE TO QUESTION 11]
- Yes, both of these resources.
- No, none of them. [IF SELECT THIS, MOVE TO QUESTION 11]
- Not sure. [IF SELECT THIS, MOVE TO QUESTION 11]

12. If you have used AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit, did the resources meet your municipality's needs? What could be improved in the toolkit? Please explain.

[Insert response]

13. What could improve AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit?

[Insert response]

14. What are the biggest challenges or obstacles in your municipality to sustain or increase citizen engagement activities?

[Insert response]

12. What types of resources would be of most use to further citizen engagement activities in your municipality?

[Insert response]

16. What is lacking in the currently available citizen engagement resources?

[Insert response]

17. Do you have any final comments?

[Insert response]

Appendix E: Survey Responses

Question 1:

I am a:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Mayor	5.0%	1
Councillor	30.0%	6
Chief Administrative Officer	15.0%	3
Other (responses provided are below)	50.0%	10
DCAO		
Executive Assistant		
Administration		
CD worker		
Legislative Services Manager		
Communications Officer		
Communications staff		
Communications manager		
General Manager		
Coordinator of Strategic Affairs		
	<i>answered question</i>	20
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

Question 2:

I represent: (check one)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
City	35.0%	7
Town	55.0%	11
Village	0.0%	0
Summer Village	0.0%	0
Specialized Municipality	5.0%	1
Other (responses provided are below)	5.0%	1
Regional Municipality		
	<i>answered question</i>	20
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

Question 3

I represent a population:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 2,500	20.0%	4
2,501 to 10,000	20.0%	4
Over 10,000	55.0%	11
Other (responses provided are below)	5.0%	1
Over 1 million		
	<i>answered question</i>	20
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

Question 4:

In the past three years, has your municipality conducted citizen engagement in any of the following areas? (check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Have not conducted any citizen engagement activities in past three years	0.0%	0
Finances, budgeting or taxation	92.9%	13
Libraries, parks and recreation	78.6%	11
Land use planning and development	71.4%	10
Sustainability and the environment	85.7%	12
Disaster and emergency measures	28.6%	4
First responders and protective services (fire, police, ambulance)	14.3%	2
Bylaws and/or bylaw enforcement	57.1%	8
Solid waste management, recycling and composting	57.1%	8
Roads and streets	64.3%	9
Public transportation	57.1%	8
Utilities (including water and wastewater management)	57.1%	8
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		6

Question 5:

How would you characterize the success of your citizen engagement activities?	
Answer Options	Response Count
<p>Difficult to get people out to engage, beside the special interest groups</p> <p>We try our best, but most open houses are poorly attended as one example. We keep moving ahead, but unless it is something negative, then the people come out.</p> <p>meh</p> <p>Good success</p> <p>we have a policy regarding citizen engagement</p> <p>minimally successful - participation is often lower than desired, often we end up "off topic" due to residents hijacking the session, and likely an unclear goal for the event(s) other than to share information with the public - that's usually the primary goal of our "open house" style event. Development events are usually more structured, and attendance may or may not be as good as hoped for, depending on the event in question.</p> <p>We've gone away from old fashioned town hall meeting "bitch" sessions to a new style of citizen engagement and it has been much more successful.</p> <p>mixed</p> <p>Since the flood it has been impressive. 300 + people have attended flood mitigation information sessions, 600 attended the emergency expo and an average of 200+ have completed various surveys online.</p> <p>Limited. Hard to reach a representative sample of citizens.</p> <p>Success is the increase and understanding by the citizens that they have a voice in the future of their community. Success is also as a result of the engagement process itself. We have moved towards organizational learning and utilize many different tools for engagement vs. traditional methods. The amount of data that is collected in a shorter time frame with these tools is invaluable.</p> <p>Somewhat successful.</p>	12
<i>answered question</i>	
12	
<i>skipped question</i>	
8	

Question 6:

For each of the following statements, select your level of agreement.						
Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
Residents of our municipality are actively engaged and aware of current issues in our municipality	2	8	2	2	0	14
There is a satisfactory level of participation when our municipality conducts citizen engagement activities	2	3	4	2	2	13
As municipal staff, we recognize and value the importance of citizen engagement	11	2	0	1	0	14
Staff in my municipality has the adequate capacity, knowledge or skills to conduct citizen engagement	3	8	0	2	1	14
Council recognizes and values the importance of citizen engagement	8	6	0	0	0	14
Council is satisfied with the results of citizen engagement events/activities	1	5	4	4	0	14
In the future, our municipality will need to increase our citizen engagement activities	6	5	3	0	0	14
					<i>answered question</i>	14
					<i>skipped question</i>	6

Question 7:

To the best of your knowledge, what is the current full-time equivalent (FTE) of staff dedicated to citizen engagement activities (e.g., 0.5 or 1.0)?			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Insert value	2.18	24	11
			<i>answered question</i>
			11
			<i>skipped question</i>
			9

Question 8:

Which of the following best describes current citizen engagement activities in your municipality?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Current citizen engagement activities do not fulfill the requirements of the Municipal Government Act.	0.0%	0
Current citizen engagement activities fulfill the requirements of the Municipal Government Act.	7.1%	1
Current citizen engagement activities fulfill and move beyond the requirements of the Municipal Government Act.	92.9%	13
		<i>answered question</i>
		14
		<i>skipped question</i>
		6

Question 9:

Does your municipality have a bylaw, framework, or other document that articulates an overarching approach or set of values that guides citizen engagement activities?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.1%	8
No	35.7%	5
Unsure	7.1%	1
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		6

Question 10:

Are you aware of the following citizen engagement resources?			
Answer Options	Yes	No	Response Count
AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit	11	3	14
Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit	11	3	14
Alberta Emergency Management Agency's Alberta Emergency Alert	13	1	14
<i>answered question</i>			14
<i>skipped question</i>			6

Question 11:

Have you used either AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit or Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit in the past three years?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
YES, AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit	0.0%	0
YES, Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit	14.3%	2
YES, used both of these resources	28.6%	4
NO, none of them	42.9%	6
UNSURE	14.3%	2
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		6

Question 12:

If you have used AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit, did the resources meet your municipality's needs? What could be improved in the toolkit? Please explain.	
Answer Options	Response Count
Except for Social Media...but that has now been addressed very basic toolkit; good to start the process but limited value beyond that	2
<i>answered question</i>	2
<i>skipped question</i>	18

Question 13:

What could improve AUMA's Citizen Engagement Toolkit?	
Answer Options	Response Count
New methodologies out there with other Municipality's	1
<i>answered question</i>	1
<i>skipped question</i>	19

Question 14:

What are the biggest challenges or obstacles in your municipality to sustain or increase citizen engagement activities?	
Answer Options	Response Count
Getting people out when there is something positive happening, rather than the negative. Dollars Getting residents to be informed - we provide the information in various ways, but they don't see it and so are not participating. biggest challenge we hear about is that the citizens are so busy with work, kids, activities, etc, that they don't have the time to participate overcoming perceived "engagement fatigue" The flood has increased the public's interest and participation in all public engagement activities. The biggest potential obstacle is citizen burn-out as there are so many activities happening at the same time. Council support for staffing increases, cost of implementing an appropriate engagement model, time it takes to do engagement delays projects, ensuring representative participation. Citizen's time to participate. Staff and Financially.	9
<i>answered question</i>	9
<i>skipped question</i>	11

Question 15:

What types of resources would be of most use to further citizen engagement activities in your municipality?	
Answer Options	Response Count
largely money and people related How to make people WANT to be involved online tools and resources More variety in public venues affordable tools Facilitator and practitioner training.	6
<i>answered question</i>	6
<i>skipped question</i>	14

Question 16:

What is lacking in the currently available citizen engagement resources?	
Answer Options	Response Count
time and resources I think we can make improvements to electronic resources such as the website, social media, electronic voting (Province needs to get on board with electronic voting), etc online tools and resources	3
<i>answered question</i> 3	
<i>skipped question</i> 17	

Question 17:

Do you have any final comments?	
Answer Options	Response Count
Keep going on this initiative. I know that "you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink", but what I don't always know is how to actually get the horse to the water. We advertise information/events in at least 3 different ways every time and we still have to deal with the "I didn't know about it" crowd. This is quite normal for us, and we struggle to find ways to get information to people in ways that they want to get their information, keeping in mind that as a small municipality, we don't have a "communications" staff devoted to performing communications solely. We are finding that people are more likely to complain / react to decisions than to share ideas up front. Question 7 says I had to insert a positive value; I would have put 0.25	4
<i>answered question</i> 4	
<i>skipped question</i> 16	

Appendix F: Modifications to Citizen Engagement Toolkit

Overview of Recommended Changes (by tab)

“Description” Tab

Certain pieces are currently missing that would enhance the usability of this tab. First, a notable absence from the Citizen Engagement Toolkit is an assessment as to whether citizen engagement is necessary or beneficial. Including this is an important reference to identify aspects that may or may not require added emphasis or attention, such as an unclear initial understanding of stakeholders. A proposed assessment to be included in the toolkit is accessible by [clicking here](#).

Second, understanding the problem/opportunity should also outline the context for citizen engagement. Defining the context may identify potential issues a municipality must acknowledge while implementing the plan, past engagements and risks to be aware of going forward as the municipality conducts engagement. It is recommended AUMA include a context box on the description tab and proposed text to assist users is accessible by [clicking here](#).

Third, an executive sponsor (e.g., department head, senior manager or elected official) is beneficial to ensure the success and indentify accountability of any citizen engagement. It is recommended AUMA include a box where a user identifies an executive sponsor for the engagement. Proposed text to assist users is accessible by [clicking here](#).

“Research” Tab

The research tab links to separate internet pages to identify over 50 citizen engagement methods, examples of best practices from municipalities within Alberta and abroad, and a list of resource on different aspects of citizen engagement. As of May 2014, these resources are no longer accessible due to server issues on the website where these resources are hosted (<http://www.shirwin.com>).

“Strategies” Tab

The inclusion of an assessment to recommend methods for citizen engagement is a positive aspect. However, the current set of questions to recommend methods focuses primarily on the concerns and outcomes. It is recommended AUMA expand the scope of questions to include those relating to scope, complexity and concerns of the proposed engagement. Additionally, it is recommended AUMA also require responses to answer the question on a 1 to 5 scale of agreement to more broadly recommend methods based on the IAP2 Spectrum (e.g., a selection of 1 would refer to the Inform category). The proposed questions are accessible by [clicking here](#).

“Action” Tab

Risk assessment was particularly identified as being beneficial during the planning stage to identify and mitigate potential risks. The current action tab does not include risk assessment as users plan the individual activities for each aspect of citizen engagement. It is recommended AUMA add a “risks” and “mitigation strategies” column to the action tab. Proposed text to assist can be found by [clicking here](#).

Add “Evaluation” Tab

Evaluation is a growing facet of citizen engagement to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness, and facilitate continuous improvement, among other usages. Inclusion of an evaluation tab will encourage greater usage by municipalities to indentify, collect and report quantitative and qualitative

data to support citizen engagements. It is recommended AUMA include an evaluation tab based on the proposed content identified by [clicking here](#).

Assessment for Readiness for Citizen Engagement

For each of the following, please select the appropriate response based on your current readiness using the scale below. If a majority of responses are in the “yes,” or green, category, indicate citizen engagement will likely be meaningful, effective and successful.

Red means “no,” or you have not address all the concerns and/or the information is current not available

Yellow means “maybe,” or you can progress with caution and/or some information is currently available

Green means “yes,” or you have addressed all the concerns and/or you have all the necessary information

<i>Should we engage?</i>			
Is the issue and/or question triggering citizen engagement clearly defined?			
Is there a decision to be made?			
Is the decision or discussion relevant to citizens?			
Will there be tangible outcomes as a result of the decision process?			
Can citizens contribute in a meaningful and substantive way?			
<i>Is the municipality ready to engage with the public?</i>			
Any legal requirements for citizen engagement have been considered			
The potential risks and benefits of involvement have been identified			
The anticipated level of patient/public involvement has been assessed			
There is an internal commitment to meaningful citizen engagement			
The expectations of council for citizen engagement are clearly defined			
Council is likely to consider citizen input in their decision			
There are adequate resources to support citizen engagement activities			
The level of controversy surrounding the decision has been assessed			
A project/engagement lead has been identified			
The engagement process has been coordinated with the other municipal processes			
<i>Are citizens ready to engage?</i>			
Citizens/stakeholders are well enough informed for citizen engagement			
We have assessed the level of complexity/difficulty from the citizens or stakeholders perspective			
The potential for outrage has been assessed			
There are significant impacts on patients/families and/or the public			
We have assessed interest in the decision by major stakeholders (e.g. community organizations)			
The public expect to be involved in the decision			

Context for Citizen Engagement

A box is to be created to allow users of the desktop-based planning tool of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to provide contextual information. To assist users, it is suggested to include the following text:

When planning for citizen engagement, it is important to document any contextual information. Bearing this in mind, document any prior citizen engagement, including the

results or outcomes of these engagement activities, as well as past issues, events or council decisions that relate to the proposed engagement.

Identify an Executive Sponsor

A box is to be created to allow users of the desktop-based planning tool of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to identify an executive sponsor. To assist users, it is suggested to include the following text:

An executive sponsor refers to the champion or supporter of the citizen engagement.
 This executive sponsor could be a member of senior management or an elected official.
 Where citizen engagement is part of a larger project, identify the project leader/manager.

Questions to Narrow and Recommend Particular Methods

To assist with narrowing the particular level of engagement, as a team indicate your level of agreement to each question below using a 5 point scale, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. One completed calculate the score at the bottom.

****red text denotes new questions recommended to be added****

Question: The proposed citizen engagement for the project or issue:

Scope	1	2	3	4	5
Has a size or complexity that can be considered significant?					
Could potentially impact a large number of citizens?					
Could potentially impact people located in a number of different areas within the municipality?					
Will affect a wide range of stakeholder groups?					
Complexity					
Can be considered unique and challenging?					
Will require a number of stages and/or components?					
Will see citizens and stakeholder groups have a number of strong and differing opinions for the project or issue?					
Concern					
May be connected to any significant past issues or poor relationships with stakeholder communities?					
May create or increase any health or safety risk?					
Result in an unfair advantage (i.e. create “winners”)?					
Could be an emotional or moral “hot button”?					
In past engagements has resulted in tension and controversy?					
May have an impact on taxes or fees collected by the municipality?					
Impact					
Will decrease property values or increase taxation levels or fees?					
Will create undesirable aesthetic changes (e.g. view, odour, noise)?					
Will interfere with daily lifestyle and habitual patterns of people (i.e. loss of access, congestion, restriction of activity)?					
Will Interfere with rights or entitlements for certain community members?					
<i>Step 1 – Count the number of checkmarks in each column</i>					
<i>Step 2 – Multiply the number of checkmarks by weight for each column</i>	X 1	X 2	X 3	X 4	X 5
<i>Step 3 – Include the result from step for each column</i>					
<i>Step 4 – Add the total of the weighted scores</i>					

Step 5 – Divide by 17 to determine the average score	
AVERAGE SCORE	

AUMA may also find it beneficial to include the following scale to provide an indication to users of how the score relates to a particular level of engagement.

Inform Score: 1.0-1.9	Consult Score: 2.0-2.9	Involve Score: 3.0-3.9	Collaborate Score: 4.0-5.0	Empower Score: Generally above 4.0 and recommended to attain approval of council
Inform refers to the provision of balanced and objective information that provides the background, opportunities and risks related to an issue, project or policy	Consult with citizens to receive feedback and analysis	Involve citizens directly to ensure public concerns or support is adequately reflected	Collaborate with citizens throughout the decision-making process to co-design solutions that reflect public concern or support	Empower citizens to take the lead and hold final decision-making power

Identify any Risks and Mitigation Strategies for an Engagement Technique

Two columns are proposed to be added to the action tab – risks and mitigation strategies. To assist users, it is suggested to include the following text:

Risks: Any factors that may affect each step of your chosen technique, including during the planning stage or the engagement itself.

Mitigation Strategies: Identify any actions to be taken to eliminate or limit the impact of the identified risk(s).

Identify the Objective(s) for the Evaluation and Audience

Two dropdown menus are to be created to allow users of the desktop-based planning tool of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to identify the purpose and audience(s) for the evaluation. To assist users, it is suggested to include the following text:

Purpose: The purpose of the evaluation should closely link to the problem/opportunity identified in the “Background” tab and indicates what the evaluation is seeking to assess. Included in the options are common purposes to evaluate citizen engagement. For more information, refer to the Citizen Engagement Evaluation resource.

Audience: The audience for the evaluation identifies for who or whom the evaluation is being completed. In certain cases, there may be different types of evaluations for different audiences.

Options to include:

Objective(s) of the Evaluation:

- To evaluate the process to plan and conduct citizen engagement to identify opportunities for continuous improvement;
- To identify if citizen engagement was conducted based on the planned approach;
- To evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of a process to target and recruit specific participants;
- To evaluate the outcomes of citizen engagement based on the efficient and effective usage of resources;
- To demonstrate to council the benefits and value-added contribution of citizen engagement to decision-making;
- To evaluate if citizen engagement is a worthwhile endeavour based on the efficient and effective usage of resources as well as the outcomes;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of a particular method to inform or engage citizens about an issue;

- To evaluate how information from the citizen engagement influenced, informed or altered the final decision;
- To evaluate if the outcome of citizen engagement varied across groups;
- To evaluate if engagement was conducted in accordance with the principles of the municipal citizen engagement policy/framework; and
- Other

Audience(s): Program/Department Management, Senior Management, Council and Other (users provide response)

Identify Evaluation Questions

A box is to be created to allow users of the desktop-based planning tool of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to identify evaluation questions. To assist users, it is suggested to include the following text:

Once the objective has been identified, identify the evaluation questions. Evaluation questions should articulate what aspects are of interest to support the objectives of the evaluation as well as the needs of the audience(s). Four key questions are essential and provide a starting point when considering those to be included in an evaluation:

- What happened?
- What can we do better?
- What have we learned?
- Was the citizen engagement a success?

Identify Data Collection Methods and Tools

A box is to be created to allow users of the desktop-based planning tool of the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to identify data collection methods and tools. To assist users, it is suggested to include the following text:

Based on the purpose and the evaluation questions, identify data collection methods and tools, such as a survey or interviews, based on available or potential data sources. These methods and tools will provide the information necessary to answer the evaluation questions.

Development of Evaluation Workplan

Similar to the “Action” tab, a table is to be included to allow users to develop a workplan for the evaluation with the following columns and text to assist users:

- **Estimated Cost:** Provide an estimate of the expected financial costs related to each step.
- **Staff (days):** The number of days it will take staff to develop, complete or implement a step or data collection method or tool.
- **Start and End Date:** The start date to begin complete a task and the end date when all activities are to be completed.
- **Duration (days):** The number of days it will take to complete an identified task.
- **Notes:** Provide any additional information necessary for each step.

Appendix G: New Resources to Include in the Citizen Engagement Toolkit

Each of the resources are hyperlinked to the first page for ease of navigation:

- [Evaluating Citizen Engagement Handbook](#) (15 pages)
- [Attracting Participants to Citizen Engagement Handbook](#) (14 pages)
- [Formalizing Citizen Engagement Handbook](#) (18 pages)

Evaluating Citizen Engagement Handbook

Context

While municipalities are increasing citizen engagement, there are also rising expectations of senior management and council to demonstrate continuous improvement of the process and the results of an engagement. Recognizing the growing emphasis and interest in evaluation, this resource supplements the Citizen Engagement Toolkit to assist municipalities with evaluating citizen engagement.

Purpose

The *Citizen Engagement Evaluation Handbook* provides a recommended process, resources and identifies best practices to assist municipalities evaluate citizen engagement based on best practices.

Categorizing Levels of Citizen Engagement

This evaluation resource is based on the six levels of engagement defined in the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. These levels, ascending in the level of involvement, include:

- The citizen **receives information**, from a range of sources, from the local government on different initiatives, services or activities.
- The citizen **participates in voting** during municipal elections or special referendum when they occur. While voting can be considered a specific type of input, it is added as a specific type of engagement.
- Citizens **provide input**, when asked, to their local government, through a number of different activities and vehicles. This does not involve a decision making role.
- **Citizens engage in discussions and consultative dialogues** with members of local government, including both elected officials and public servants.
- **Citizens engage in decision making activities**, around specific issues or functions. Decision making may be related to planning, resourcing or delivery of services, or all of these processes.
- **Involvement in local government**, as an elected or appointed official (e.g., Police Commission, Development Appeal Board) is viewed as the level of engagement that requires the highest level of commitment and personal investment.

Defining Evaluation and Benefits to Citizen Engagement

Evaluation is a systematic approach to collect, analyze and interpret information to understand how a program, service, activity or particular thing that is being evaluated works and/or the impact to the municipality, stakeholder or citizens. Evaluating citizen engagement is generally categorized into two approaches:

- Process evaluation, often referred in the literature as formative evaluation; reviews how citizen engagement is conducted based on its plan and whether it is achieving its objectives with a focus on assessing the inputs, activities and outputs of an activity. A process evaluation is focused on answering the question, “Based on our citizen engagement activity/activities, what can we do better?”
- Impact evaluation, often referred in the literature as summative evaluation, looks at the outcomes and effects of citizen engagement and whether or the extent it achieved its objectives. An impact evaluation is focused on answering the question, “Did the citizen engagement activity/activities achieve its objective”

This handbook includes a recommended process, resources and tips for both a process and impact evaluation. Depending on the scale, scope and resources for citizen engagement, a municipality can

tailor an evaluation to meet specific needs. Evaluating citizen engagement provides a number of benefits to municipalities, including:

- Identifying opportunities and developing organizational capacity to facilitate continuous improvement;
- Demonstrate efficient and effective use of resources as well as accountability to demonstrate if citizen engagement achieved its objectives;
- Facilitating additional opportunities to engage citizens; and
- Build awareness and organizational recognition by providing evidence of the effectiveness of citizen engagement.

What steps are involved in evaluating citizen engagement?

Evaluating citizen engagement involves the following steps and general requirement, which are described in detail through the remainder of the toolkit:

Step 1: Citizen engagement and evaluation planning and preparation

- ✓ Define the context, purpose, objectives and outcomes for the citizen engagement activity/activities
- ✓ Define the objectives and audience for the evaluation
- ✓ Identify who will or how the evaluation will be conducted
- ✓ Identify the potential audience(s) for the evaluation
- ✓ Develop an initial workplan and budget

Step 2: Identifying evaluation questions and data sources

- ✓ Define the focus of the evaluation
- ✓ Develop and validate evaluation questions
- ✓ Identify data source(s) or data collection methods
- ✓ Develop performance indicators for each question
- ✓ Finalize workplan and budget

Step 3: Evaluation implementation, analysis and reporting of results

- ✓ Commence data collection
- ✓ Conduct analysis of data and interpret results based on the objectives of the evaluation
- ✓ Decide how and which results need to be communicated and prepare report
- ✓ Share results of evaluation to audience

Evaluation Best Practices

The following reflect best practices for evaluating citizen engagement:

1. Evaluation for citizen engagement should be integrated into the planning process

Defining the evaluation process should occur alongside the process to plan for citizen engagement. Many of the elements defined in the planning process (e.g., defining the objectives and outcomes as well as the context surrounding the citizen engagement activity) will drive and influence the types of questions and data collection to be used for the evaluation. Like planning for citizen engagement, evaluation is a structured and systematically planned process to ensure clarity on objectives, purpose, process and define deliverables.

2. Evaluation should serve as an extension of citizen engagement and be a participatory activity

Evaluating citizen engagement should be a participatory and collaborative activity that identifies roles and responsibilities for those participating, municipal staff and other interested stakeholders. Participants, municipal staff and stakeholders all play a key role and act as sources for collecting data to evaluate whether citizen engagement achieved its objectives.

3. The evaluation process should adapt to the scale, scope and complexity of the citizen engagement activity

Citizen engagement activities may vary in scale, scope and complexity. These activities may occur on a single date or over months – perhaps years – using multiple methods. With this in mind, municipalities should conduct an evaluation that is tailored and meets the needs of the municipalities, as defined by the objectives and outcomes of citizen engagement.

Step 1: Citizen engagement and evaluation planning and preparation

The first major step when planning to evaluate citizen engagement is to establish the basis for the activities. In establishing this basis to evaluate citizen engagement a municipality must clarify the context, objective and approach to engagement; what the evaluation intends to achieve and for whom; the evaluator(s) and the major milestones for the evaluation and costs and resources required.

Define the description of the project, decision type and problem/opportunity and reason for public involvement

Developing an evaluation plan follows a clearly defined description of the project, articulating the decision type and the problem/opportunity. The Citizen Engagement Toolkit provides guidance on each component. As a reference, the description of the project is described as a high level outline of the main goals and objectives of your engagement project that is used to explain what you wish to achieve and a basic framework for accomplishing your goals. The framework for accomplishing your project is influenced by the type of decision citizen engagement contributes towards. In defining the decision type, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit includes four types of decisions, which includes vision, strategy and policy decisions; program and services development; operations (of programs and services) and issue or initiatives.

The Citizen Engagement Toolkit defines the problem/opportunity section is to articulate the problem you are trying to solve or the opportunity you may take advantage of by implementing your citizen engagement project.

Tip: *A key consideration to evaluate citizen engagement is to understand the context or background to the issue. This may identify considerations to participation in the engagement and impact it would have on the evaluation results, how to involve citizens in the evaluation process, and potential risks associated with an evaluation approach or the types of questions being asked.*

Define the objective(s) of the evaluation

When evaluating citizen engagement, it is important to begin the planning process by defining the objective(s). The objective(s) for the evaluation should link to the overall problem/opportunity that citizen engagement seeks to address.

Tip: *Defining the objective for the final evaluation process is an important step that will guide the scope and questions to be developed in Step 2.*

Defining the objective(s) for the evaluation should ensure it is:

- **Specific** – the objective is clearly defined;
- **Measurable** – there is a way to establish criteria to assess the objective;
- **Achievable** – the objective is realistic considering the resources and time available;
- **Relevant** – ensures the objective is worthwhile and results-oriented to the outcome of the activity; and
- **Timely** – there is a defined timeframe that indicates an end date for the objective.

The evaluation may have a diverse range of objectives. Examples of typical objectives include:

- To evaluate the process to plan and conduct citizen engagement to identify opportunities for continuous improvement;
- To identify if citizen engagement was conducted based on the planned approach;
- To evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of a process to target and recruit specific participants;
- To evaluate the outcomes of citizen engagement based on the efficient and effective usage of resources;
- To demonstrate to council the benefits and value-added contribution of citizen engagement to decision-making;
- To evaluate if citizen engagement is a worthwhile endeavour based on the efficient and effective usage of resources as well as the outcomes;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of a particular method to inform or engage citizens about an issue;
- To evaluate how information from the citizen engagement influenced, informed or altered the final decision;
- To evaluate if the outcome of citizen engagement varied across groups;
- To evaluate if engagement was conducted in accordance with the principles of the municipal citizen engagement policy/framework.

Define the audience for the evaluation

When planning an evaluation for citizen engagement it is important to consider the audience – or the end user of the information from the evaluation. In many instances there may be more than one audience for an evaluation with each have different informational needs or interests. Table 1 provides a list of potential audience for a citizen engagement evaluation and potential informational needs or interests categorized by the type of evaluation.

Table 1: Audiences when evaluating citizen engagement

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Evaluation Type</i>	<i>Informational Needs or Interests</i>
Elected officials	Process	Ensure that engagement was an effective and efficient use of resources, understand how engagement is used
	Impact	Evidence that engagement is a valuable activity
Program Managers	Process	Assess how engagement was approached, any lessons learned for future engagements and the costs
	Impact	Build a business case on the effectiveness of engagement or assess whether the engagement achieved its objectives

Participants	Process	Understand how municipalities engaged participants and how a municipality presented the information to decision-makers
	Impact	Understand how participation and information was used
Citizens	Process	Understand how municipalities approach engagement and the costs for activities
	Impact	Understand how engagement impacted the final decision or issue
Academics and Researchers	Process	Study the effectiveness of citizen engagement methods, lessons learned and how municipalities approach engagement
	Impact	Study the outcomes of engagement, lessons learned and how engagement informed the decision-making process

Select an evaluator

Once the objectives and audiences for the evaluation are defined, there should be a decision regarding indentifying the evaluator(s). This decision is based on a number of factors, including:

- The context and profile of the issue or decision as the basis for citizen engagement;
- The objectives and extent (i.e., number of event, length of process, etc.) of citizen engagement;
- The objectives and audience for the evaluation;
- The potential resources, both financial and human, available for evaluation as well as staff competencies and familiarity with evaluation; and
- The time available to conduct the evaluation.

Municipalities have a number of options when selecting an evaluator. Table 2 lists a number of potential evaluators, and the strengths and weaknesses of each option.

Tip: When selecting an evaluator, it may be beneficial to establish an evaluator selector committee to discuss potential issues as well as manage a selection process if a municipality is interested in hiring an external evaluator.

Table 2: Potential options for an evaluator

Evaluator	Strengths	Weaknesses
External evaluator (consultant, research institution, think tank, graduate student, non-profit or community organization)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure impartiality and objectivity for evaluation - Expertise in evaluation - Ability to complete evaluation with tight timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential lack of familiarity of issue or context for engagement - Cost for services
Internal evaluator not linked to issue or decision (individual or committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More cost effective - Develop or leverage internal capacity for evaluation - Likely impartial and objective - Likely familiar with issue or context of engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May lack expertise in evaluation - Perceived as biased
Internal evaluator linked to issue or decision (individual or committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highly cost effective - Familiarity with issue or context of engagement - Develop or leverage internal capacity for evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biased and potential for lack of impartiality and objectivity - May lack expertise in evaluation - Ability to complete evaluation when already invested in engagement process

Evaluation committee with both internal and external representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential for higher cost - Balances impartiality and objectivity between internal and external committee members - Involves both evaluation experts and develop skills for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time consuming and ability to complete evaluation - Potential for conflicting interests
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Develop an initial workplan and budget

Once the objectives, evaluator and audiences have been determined, it is beneficial to develop an initial workplan and budget. The initial workplan will identify the dates and key milestones for the citizen engagement, including the start and end date for the engagement, when engagement events are to be held, and reports to councils, among other items. Once identified aspects and activities for the evaluation could also be added, such as dates for data collection and analysis, briefing senior management or council and when to have a final report prepared.

Similarly, an initial budget can also be prepared to identify potential resources available as well as the expected cost of the evaluation. Costs for the evaluation may include printing and supplies for data collection methods as well as hiring temporary staff or an external evaluator. At this point it is also beneficial to identify the hours available of staff that are assisting with the evaluation and an estimation of time required for certain activities identified in the workplan, such as preparing an evaluation report.

As a preliminary workplan and budget, it provides an indication of the potential scope for an evaluation as well as potential changes to the citizen engagement process to facilitate an evaluation that will achieve the desired objectives.

Step 2: Identifying evaluation questions and data sources

Establishing the foundation in Step 1 informs the activities in Step 2 to define the scope of the evaluation, the questions, data source(s) and/or the data collection method(s) as well as a revised plan to implement the evaluation process. Following the process outline below ensures the evaluation achieve its objectives using the available resources.

Define the focus of the evaluation

The objectives for the evaluation provide an indication of the focus of the evaluation. The focus considers two broad categories of evaluation – process and impact.

A process evaluation focuses on how citizen engagement is conducted to asses if it followed the planned process, the effectiveness of the process and identifying areas for improvement. The overarching question for a process evaluation is answering the question “what” and looking at the inputs and outputs of citizen engagement. Process evaluation is a preferred option where a municipality is interested in identifying lessons learned or continuous improvement for future citizen engagements and where the audiences are primarily internal to the municipality.

An impact evaluation focuses on the outcomes and effects of citizen engagement and whether the engagement achieved, or to what extent it achieved, its objectives. The overarching question for an impact evaluation is “so what,” and looks at the outcomes and results of the citizen engagement. Impact evaluations are preferred to assess the effect of citizen engagement; how the engagement process impacted different groups; to demonstrate the benefits and value-added of engagement; and long-term studies to evaluate engagement over time. The audience for an impact evaluation is likely to be much larger with interest from both external and internal individuals/groups.

In certain instances a municipality may be interested in a mixed evaluation focus – combining elements of both a process and impact evaluation. A mixed approach may be preferred for a municipality conducting citizen engagement (beyond legislated requirements) for one of the first time or to gather evidence for to inform a policy/framework. In this case the evaluation seeks to identify potential opportunities to improve engagement and to build a business case on the benefits and value-added results of citizen engagement.

Develop a list of evaluation questions

The next step is to begin developing the questions to be used for the evaluation. Often developing a list of question is simpler after going a through a process to identify all the parts of the citizen engagement based on answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and how.

Four key questions are essential and a start when considering those to be included in an evaluation:

- What happened?
- What can we do better?
- What have we learned?
- Was the citizen engagement a success?

Assess appropriateness and validity of proposed questions

A number of potential questions may be thought of during the brainstorming and drafting phase. Recognising issues of time, resources as well as the cost-benefit of each answer relative to the purpose and objective of the evaluation, each question should be selected based on appropriateness and the validity of each proposed question. Table X proposes a number of considerations to assist municipalities in refining the suite of proposed evaluation questions.

Table 3: Appropriateness and validity criteria for proposed questions

Criteria	Maybe/Unsure	Maybe/Unsure	Maybe/Unsure
Would somebody not involved in the evaluation process being to understand the question?			
Do I know why this question is important to the evaluation?			
Is this question of interest to one or more audiences of the evaluation?			
Will I use the data that is collected for this question?			
Am I able to gather data for the question recognizing the resources available?			
Is the question worth the time and resources that will be required to collected the data?			

Identify data source(s) or data collection methods

The appropriateness and validation criteria assisted in refining the questions to be used for the evaluation. The next step is to identify the data source(s) or collection methods for each question. Table X provides an example that could be used by municipalities to identify data sources and/or collection methods. Several examples of data sources and collection methods are provided as a reference.

Table 4: Evaluation question and identifying data source or collection method

Evaluation Question	Data Source(s)	Data Collection Method

<i>Did our engagement attract the desired participants?</i>	<i>Counts by staff at engagement events</i>	
<i>How did our engagement better inform citizens on the issue?</i>		<i>Survey distributed before and after the engagement</i>
<i>How much time was required by staff to: develop promotional material and distribute material</i>	<i>Average time required by staff to develop resources (hours)</i>	
<i>Did the agency involve participants at each stage of the decision-making process?</i>		<i>Checklist</i>
<i>Was the engagement activity perceived to be of value to participants?</i>		<i>Survey distributed to participants</i>

Develop performance indicators for each question

Performance indicators identify a key, often quantitative, value or piece of information that relates to the evaluation question. Each evaluation question requires one or more associated performance indicator. For example, a performance indicator related to a question regarding recruitment of participants may be a count of participants representing each target group.

Appendix A contain a number of example data collection instruments used in citizen engagement frameworks for both process and impact evaluations.

Tip: *If evaluating a citizen engagement with a large number of participants (e.g., 100 +), quantitative data (number based) collection tools may be the preferred option if limited resources are available. For smaller engagements, both qualitative and quantitative data may be beneficial to allow for a more fulsome understanding of the particular question.*

Finalize workplan and budget

The initial workplan and budget provided an overview of the major milestones for the citizen engagement and the evaluation as well as available resources. With the evaluation questions and data sources or collection methods now determined, a finalized workplan and budget establishes the timelines for evaluation activities and the budget which identifies the resources available.

Step 3: Evaluation implementation, analysis and reporting of results

The final major step consists of the activities to implement the evaluation, collect data, analyse the collected and develop a report of findings. It is important to regularly monitor the evaluation as data collection commence to identify any issue with the plan and to address any issue that may impact the ability of the evaluation to achieve its objectives.

Commence data collection

As the data collection process begins, it is important to monitor what is being collected. Two important consideration to monitor the data collect is whether the data is reliable and valid. A reliable data collection tool or method means that the collection should yield the same results overtime. For example, a survey is able to gather what citizens know about a particular issue if conducted multiple times. Generally, the reliability of a data collection tool or method is low for something not familiar to individuals. For example, a survey question asking citizens whether they prefer a hair-pin or salient curve can have a low reliability as citizens may select a response without be familiar with the different. Reliability, for a larger and long-term evaluation, refers to a data collection tool or method generating consistent, or similar, results. For example, a survey used to assess ten citizen engagements That is the

reliability of a data collection tool or method allows for data from different citizen engagements or points in time are consistent.

A valid data collection tool or method, on the other hand, means it accurately measures what it is intended to measure. For example, a survey on participants’ satisfaction with citizen engagement does not collect information related to their preferred option to an issue. For a larger or longer evaluation, a valid data collection tool or method will generate comparable results. Comparable results means that a survey from the first and last citizen engagement process over two years can be compared to assess the data.

Conduct analysis of data and interpret results based on the objectives of the evaluation

The analysis of the data may vary based on the amount collected, the data collection tool or method, the needs and interest of each audience and the amount of time to complete the evaluation. The analysis may also range in complexity from assessing comments and feedback provided by participants to statistical calculations.

When analysing qualitative data, it may be beneficial for municipalities to categorize similar responses or feedback provided by participants. Taking this approach provides an opportunity to analyze the common responses or feedback as well as the number of participants for each categorized response or feedback. For surveys with quantitative information, municipalities should calculate the confidence interval. The confidence interval provides an indication of how accurate the results are of those who responded, or the sample, compared to the larger population. A confidence interval is not necessary if a census survey was used; meaning everybody of a particular population of interest (e.g., youth) is provided the survey.

Tip: A beneficial way to conduct the analysis would be to form an evaluation team to provide feedback on or conduct the analysis. This group ensures the analysis is not biased or limited to the viewpoint of the individual(s) conducting the analysis.

Tip: The analysis of information received from an engagement itself or evaluations is a challenge for municipalities. Usage of qualitative research techniques are a useful approach to categorize and analyse information received. Municipalities may find it beneficial to develop a plan or process to categorize and analyse information received and involving participants may be beneficial to increase transparency. Table 5 provides questions and tips on how to approach the analysis of information received.

Table 5: Considerations and tips to analyzing information received

Questions to Consider	Tips
How will data from the engagement process be sorted and analyzed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review your roles and responsibilities during the planning. Consider having participants sort and theme information they are providing as part of the engagement activities.
What is the process to identify themes, key priorities, etc?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the technique chosen, extracting the necessary data will not be the same for each. Consider involving participants.
How will you handle issues outside the scope of the decision question but which may have relevance or importance for participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be sensitive to the opinions and thoughts of all participants but reinforce the goals and objectives of the engagement.
How will you report the summary of the data back to participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An important component of this communication is establishing a time frame for the decision and how the data will be used in the decision process.
How does the data inform the decision?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a plan, stick to it!

How will decision-makers receive the data?	• Have this planned out before the session begins.
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Source: Capital Health Nova Scotia, Guide to Effective Engagement. <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/system/files/sites/317/documents/guide-effective-engagement.pdf>.

Decide how and which results need to be communicated and prepare report

The decision regarding what need to be communicated is driven by the objectives and audiences of the evaluation. It is possible that all of the data collected and analyzed may be included at a high-level, or as a summary, and certain findings may be left for the report. A question to consider when preparing the report is, “What are the different needs and interests of each audience identified?” The needs and interests of a participant of citizen engagement could differ from that of an elected councillor.

For a report to be released to the public, it should be written in clear and plain language, and should avoid any technical terminology. A general rule of practice is for the report to be written at a Grade 8 reading level to ensure the public can easily understand the findings. To ensure this, communication staff should review a draft report prior to public release.

Share results of evaluation to audience

The evaluation report is to be shared to the audience as identified earlier in the planning process. Engaging with communications staff is recommended to determine how best to share the report. A municipality has a number of options to release the evaluation report or findings, including:

- Government reporting mechanisms (e.g., news and press releases);
- Research reports and publications;
- Academic or professional publications and/or events (e.g., conferences);
- Internal capacity building activities (e.g., case studies.
- The media; and
- Presentations, workshops or seminars.

Additional Resources

Additional resources that may assist when developing a process to evaluate citizen engagement include:

Nabatchi, T. (2010). A manager’s guide to evaluating citizen participation. *IBM Center for the Business of Democracy*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/report/manager%E2%80%99s-guide-evaluating-citizen-participation>.

Queensland Department of Communities. (2011). Engaging Queenslanders: Evaluating citizen engagement. *Queensland Government*. Retrieved from <https://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/guides-factsheets/evaluating/index.html>.

Appendix A: Example of Process and Outcome Evaluation Score Sheets

City of Waterloo – Principles Evaluation Score Sheet

The following evaluation score sheet assess a citizen engagement activity based on satisfying best practices based on the value identified in the City of Waterloo’s (2010) Public Involvement guidelines.

Source: http://www.waterloo.ca/en/contentresources/resources/government/public_engagement_guidelines.pdf.

Circle the corresponding number the best reflects each of the following best practices based on the scale below.

1 = Unsatisfactory 2 = Less than satisfactory 3 = Satisfactory 4 = More than satisfactory 5 = Outstanding

1. Accountability

The promises made to stakeholders about their involvement were kept.	1	2	3	4	5
The expected outcomes of the process were achieved.	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to evaluate the process were provided.	1	2	3	4	5
Used resources responsibly.	1	2	3	4	5
The design and implementation of the process were effective.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Inclusiveness

Every effort was made to accommodate diverse needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Affected stakeholders were reached or involved.	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to create shared outcomes were provided.	1	2	3	4	5

3. Transparency

The purpose of and promise about engaging stakeholders was made clear.	1	2	3	4	5
Roles and responsibilities were communicated clearly, understood and accepted.	1	2	3	4	5
Information provided was timely, accurate, balanced, objective, accessible and easily understood.	1	2	3	4	5
Feedback was provided on how stakeholder input influenced outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5

4. Respect

Appropriate resources used according to budget.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff were trained and capable of supporting effective involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
Stakeholders’ time and resources were respected and used effectively as defined in the agreement.	1	2	3	4	5

5. Responsiveness

Affected groups and communities were kept up-to-date of issues.	1	2	3	4	5
Decision-makers were prepared for, and responsive to, stakeholders’ views.	1	2	3	4	5

Cities of Waterloo, Kamloops and Fort Saskatchewan – Process Evaluation

The following process evaluation is based on questions identified in similar evaluation tools developed by the Cities of Waterloo, Kamloops and Fort Saskatchewan.

Sources: <http://www.footsask.ca/home/showdocument?id=762>

<http://www.kamloops.ca/pdfs/publications/PublicEngagementHandbook.pdf>.

http://www.waterloo.ca/en/contentresources/resources/government/public_engagement_guidelines.pdf

Please select a single response that best reflects the citizen engagement event.

Criteria	Yes (3)	Partially (2)	No (1)	Notes
The citizen engagement process followed the plan or, if applicable, the policy/framework of the municipality				
The issue/question was clearly defined before starting.				
An objective was clearly defined before the engagement				
The capabilities and skills of staff were assessed and considered				
Constraints were assessed and dealt with appropriately.				
The level of engagement was applied effectively.				
The outcomes of the engagement fulfilled the objectives satisfactorily.				
If applicable, the citizen engagement event reflected the principles identified in the municipality's policy/framework				
A citizen engagement lead for the process was identified early.				
Support from colleagues was evident throughout.				
Targeted participants and appropriate				

stakeholders both internal and external to the municipality were identified.				
Attempts were made to reach out to targeted participants and stakeholders				
Council and external stakeholders were cooperative throughout the process				
A variety of techniques were considered to reach and involve targeted participants and stakeholders.				
Identified participants and stakeholders participated.				
The public involvement was appropriate to the issue and added value.				
An evaluation process was developed and administered.				
Project results were communicated to participants and stakeholders.				
The time spent by staff to prepare, conduct and follow up was used effectively				
The estimated hours for staff to prepare, conduct and follow up were budgeted in the plan				
The costs and resources spent to prepare, conduct and follow up on the engagement activity represent good value				
The cost and resources for the engagement were budgeted in the plan				
TOTAL				

Calculate the average and check it against the performance ranges below.

From 1.0 – 1.5 Poor

From 1.6 – 2.0 Fair

From 2.1 – 2.5 Good

From 2.6 – 3.0 Excellent

Capital Health Nova Scotia Guide for Effective Citizen Engagement (2011)– Participant Outcome Evaluation

A citizen engagement guide for effective engagement includes examples of follow up questions for participants.

Source: <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/system/files/sites/317/documents/guide-effective-engagement.pdf>.

Overall, how satisfied are you that your opinions were heard and understood? Very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, don't know/no opinion

Overall, how confident are you that your opinions will influence the final decision/outcome? Very confident, confident, doubtful, very doubtful, don't know/no opinion

How satisfied were you with the decision or outcome? Very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, don't know/no opinion

How satisfied were you with the communication of the decision or outcome? Very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, don't know/no opinion

IBM Centre for Government A Manager's Guide to Evaluation Citizen Participation – Participant Satisfaction Survey

Source: <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/report/manager%E2%80%99s-guide-evaluating-citizen-participation>.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Process: How satisfied are you with...					
The fairness of the participatory process?					
Your opportunity to participate in the process?					
The issues addressed in the process?					
The appropriateness/usefulness of the process to address the issue?					
The diversity of people in the process?					
The diversity of views and opinions in the process?					
Outcomes: How satisfied are you with...					
The fairness of the outcomes?					
Your level of input on the outcomes?					
Your level of influence over the outcomes?					
The degree to which the outcomes represent broader community interests?					
Facilitation: How satisfied are you with...					
The performance of the facilitator?					
The neutrality [objectivity] of the facilitator?					
The fairness of the facilitator?					
The way you were treated by the facilitator?					
The way others were treated by the facilitator?					
Information Provided: How satisfied are you with...					
The information you were provided about the process?					
The degree to which the provided information helped you understand the process?					
The degree to which the provided information prepared you to participate effectively in the process?					
The degree to which the provided information prepared others to participate effectively in the process?					
Discussions: How satisfied are you with...					
The quality of the discussions?					
The civility of the discussions?					
The way you were treated during the discussions?					
The degree to which people were respectful of differing viewpoints?					
The degree to which the discussions were open, honest, and understandable?					

Attracting Participants to Citizen Engagement Handbook

Context

Citizens have demonstrated increasing expectations to be engaged and municipalities have responded with citizen engagement becoming an increasing facet of governance. With increased expectations and municipalities investing in engagement, citizens also hold a responsibility to become involved. Despite this, attracting participants is one of the most common challenges and issues of municipal citizen engagements. Traditional methods of engagement, such as Town Halls, were designed to attract as many participants as possible. More recently, however, municipalities have approached citizen engagement through the usage of multiple methods and to employ targeted recruitments of participant groups with more success.

Purpose

The *Attracting Participants to Citizen Engagement Handbook* provides information and best practices to attract participants with a particular focus on considerations when engaging commonly underrepresented groups.

Note: *The guide is not exhaustive or provides detailed information on specific citizen engagement methods. Rather it identifies best practices and acknowledges a municipality understands best its engagement needs for to target and attract desired participant groups.*

Categorizing Levels of Citizen Engagement

This handbook is based on the six levels of engagement defined in the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. These levels, ascending in the level of involvement, include:

- The citizen **receives information**, from a range of sources, from the local government on different initiatives, services or activities.
- The citizen **participates in voting** during municipal elections or special referendum when they occur. While voting can be considered a specific type of input, it is added as a specific type of engagement.
- Citizens **provide input**, when asked, to their local government, through a number of different activities and vehicles. This does not involve a decision making role.
- **Citizens engage in discussions and consultative dialogues** with members of local government, including both elected officials and public servants.
- **Citizens engage in decision making activities**, around specific issues or functions. Decision making may be related to planning, resourcing or delivery of services, or all of these processes.
- **Involvement in local government**, as an elected or appointed official (e.g., Police Commission, Development Appeal Board) is viewed as the level of engagement that requires the highest level of commitment and personal investment.

Defining Targeted Recruitment and Benefits to Citizen Engagement

Targeted recruitment refers to the process of defining stakeholders and developing strategies or tailoring specific methods in order to attract participation for a particular citizen engagement.

Attracting participants through targeted recruitment provides a number of benefits to municipalities, including:

- Encouraging stakeholders with a direct interest or most likely to be impacted an opportunity to have their views and concerns considered in the decision-making process;

- Raise awareness and allow for better understanding among municipal staff of the needs and of particular stakeholder groups; and
- Increasing participation of citizens that may not or are ineligible to vote in municipal elections.

Best Practices

The following list reflects best practices for recruiting participants to citizen engagements:

1. Acknowledging the importance of underlying core values for any citizen engagement

Best practices for recruiting participants are best summarized by the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) Core Values for Public Engagement. The IAP2 Core Values were developed to identify aspect of citizen engagement that are common around the globe with a number speaking directly to recruiting participants. The IAP2 Core Values are:

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

2. Define your desired participant groups and use target recruitment

Traditionally, citizen engagement has sought to encourage maximum participation. Targeted citizen engagement is far more effective. To implement targeted citizen engagement a municipality must consider those with an interest or be impacted by the decision and define characteristics of these participant groups. Once defined, a municipality can tailor its participant recruitment strategies for each particular group.

3. Understand the contexts and unique characteristics of participant groups

In addition to incorporating targeted recruitment, a municipality must acknowledge and seek to understand common characteristics of desired participant groups. When acknowledging common underrepresented groups, the factors that may influence participation, or lack thereof, may result from historical factors, barriers or methods to engage not suited to particular needs. Once understood, municipalities should make efforts to remove or address barriers that influence participation.

4. Report back to participants on usage of information

A best practice often neglected in citizen engagement is to report back on how the information collected was used. Many participant groups are attracted to citizen engagement due to the feeling they are contributing to a final decision more reflective of issues and needs. Not reporting back carries the risk of certain groups not as willing to participate in future engagements.

Considering when Identifying Desired Participant Groups

Citizen engagement will be more successful by identifying and using targeted recruitment of participants. The identification of participant groups occurs in the planning stage and should consider:

- Those affected or that could affect the outcome (e.g., users of a facility); and
- Those with an interest in the outcome (e.g., neighbourhood organizations).

Once loosely identified, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit assists municipalities in building a better profile of targeted participant groups. This profile considers socio-economic factors, type of employment, availability and community involvement, among other factors. Based on the information provided for each target participants group, the Citizen Engagement Toolkit recommends particular methods that are best suited for the particular group.

While the Citizen Engagement Toolkit recommends particular methods, recruiting various participant groups requires strategies to address and remove potential barriers. The next section defines general best practices to attract participants. This is followed by a section with considerations and resources specific to groups commonly identified as difficult to attract to a citizen engagement.

General Considerations to Attract Participants

Regardless of the targeted participant group, there are general considerations all municipalities should acknowledge and address for any citizen engagement. These general considerations recognize common to all groups are the need to provide accessible information, remove barriers, make accommodations, create incentives to attract participants to citizen engagement. For the municipality, maintaining a contact list is another consideration to attract participants for future citizen engagements. The following list identifies and defines common considerations for municipalities.

- **Making information accessible:** Providing accessible information for a citizen engagement encompasses many aspects. First and foremost is that information is written in plain language. Accessible information also relates to the issue of the citizen engagement. Not being provided information to allow for meaningful engagement will deter participation.
- **Remove barriers:** All citizens face potential barriers to participating in citizen engagement – from balancing other commitments to mobility issues, hard of hearing or low vision.
- **Making accommodations:** Municipalities should be prepared to make accommodations to attract participants. Accommodations can include a number of things from simply ensuring the location of the engagement is accessible to persons with limited mobility to the need to rent specific equipment. Accommodations may also include different requests for participants to have engagements for specific groups or alternative ways to participate, such as online versus in-person. Any information related to citizen engagement should identify how accommodations can be requested. Municipalities fulfilling accommodations should acknowledge the added costs but also maintain lists of any assistive technologies or services, such as screen readers or interpreters.
- **Provide incentives:** Many participants are attracted to citizen engagement due to being directly affected by the issues. Citizens not directly affected by the issue are more difficult to attract. Providing incentives will make it more likely
- **Maintain a contact list of participants:** Maintaining a contact list of those providing consent to be contacted for future citizen engagements provides a supplementary list to draw upon. When developing the list, a municipality should gather additional information, such as gender, issues of interest and age, to contact participants for an engagement that might be of interest.
- **Develop volunteer program:** Offer opportunities for participants to volunteer for municipal citizen engagement. As volunteers, municipalities should provide training, such as for facilitation. Developing a volunteer program allows for skills development and assists a municipality to undertake additional citizen engagements.

Considerations and Best Practices for Citizen Engagement with Generally Underrepresented Groups

Recruitment is a common cited challenge for citizen engagement. One of the major criticisms associated with citizen engagement relates to a common issue of attracting the “usual suspects” – citizens that are frequently active in citizen engagement. Consensus exists that in order to avoid participation of the “usual suspects” practitioners must be proactive in planning and considering recruiting a diverse range or targeted participant group

Citizen engagement for common underrepresented group is influenced by a number of factors and barriers. Table 1 identifies several of these common factors. For certain groups, barriers to citizen engagement are attributed to historical factors, such as the relationship of Aboriginal bands and different levels of government as well as Aboriginals not acquiring the right to vote until 1960 and common prior property ownership requirements to vote in municipal elections which, by result, excluded participation of citizens with lower incomes. In other instances, citizen engagement may have difficulty recruiting participants due to physical barriers, such as people with a disability.

In addition to the chart providing an overview, this section includes considerations and best practices when seeking to specifically engage the following common underrepresented groups:

- Low income;
- Young families;
- Youth;
- Persons with a disability;
- Immigrants; and
- Aboriginals

Table 1: Barriers and solutions to common recruiting challenges

Categories of Exclusion	Barrier	Potential Solution(s)
Common to all groups	Sense of worth: People living in poverty or with disabilities, women, sexual minorities, and people from ethno-cultural communities have been stigmatized, belittled and marginalized, for some, much of their lives.	<p>Reinforce in multiple ways that input is valuable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire facilitators and staff who are sensitive and skilled at drawing people into the process. Alternatively, sensitize facilitators and staff through adequate training. • Hold special pre-sessions for people from these groups to start to voice their opinions in smaller, safer environment. • Create “speakers’ lists” to be kept by person sitting beside the facilitator, keeping track of how many men and women, white and non-white people speak. If dominant groups outweigh others, priority should be given to those of non-dominant groups who wish to speak.
Economic: Poverty is by far, the most pervasive and cross cutting issue that excludes people from society.	Time: Working three jobs to support a family makes participating in an event almost out of the question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with target population about event times that work for them. • Respect end-times. • Provide food and childcare. • Hold event near work, homes or places of easy access (e.g., near public transit centers) of population.
	Social and cultural access: People from different classes inhabit different spaces in society and those with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to have experienced civic participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a space for the event that is inhabited by the target population(s). • Work with trusted community partners (i.e. non-profit organizations). They may be able to arrange a pre-meeting space so that participants can arrive in a group. • Hold event on main public transit line with regular services at times of the event or provide transportation services.
	Economic access: This is perhaps the easiest to overcome from the standpoint of an organizer of citizen engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide remuneration for lost work time, childcare, transportation, etc. • Provide food and/or childcare at the event. • Provide an honorarium.
Ethno-cultural and newly arrived Canadians: Many of the barriers mentioned in the economic category also apply to these groups as they are generally more at risk of living in poverty.	Citizenship: By virtue of the phrase “citizen engagement” members of communities who are not yet full citizens are excluded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use alternative words to “citizen engagement” in outreach material (e.g. people, the public, community members) or clarify what is meant by citizen engagement.
	Language: English (or French) may not be the first language of ethno-cultural and newly arrived Canadians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate written material into appropriate languages. • There are many options for event-based translation: whisper translation (one-to-one); group translation on the side; or official translation may be necessary for large groups.
	Social and cultural barriers: People of different cultural backgrounds inhabit their own unique space in communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the social spaces, places of worship, newspapers, and other places of gathering and communication and use them to host events and perform outreach.
Stereotyping age: Youth are idolized, and yet those who are too young or too old are discredited.	Legitimacy: Youth are stigmatized as being naïve and the elderly as being out of touch with contemporary times. Thus both of these groups are often excluded from discussions and decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define concepts and frame the problem in ways youth can understand and relate to. • Adapt process in ways that youth will not be intimidated to speak up (e.g. small group discussions and reporting back in large plenary).
Ability: The needs of people living with disabilities are often overlooked, which consequently excludes them.	Ability: The needs of people living with disabilities are often overlooked, which consequently excludes them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that event space is accessible and advertise it as such. • Set up the event space to accommodate those in wheelchairs (i.e. table height).
	Transportation: Getting to and from events poses unique challenges to people living with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give sufficient notice of event for people to plan their adapted transport or provide adapted transportation for them.
	Communication: Depending on the person’s disability, they may need assistance communicating with a group of people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On registration forms, ask people with special needs to specify what they will need to participate, using respectful language. • Provide translation into Braille and sign language services (determining need before event).
Young Families and Gender: Young families with children often have competing priorities between leisure, career and family. While 50% of the population is female, women are still underrepresented in positions of power, and policies do not necessary reflect their needs. Gender also considers lesbians, gays, trans/bi-sexual, and others.	Parenting: While times are slowly changing, women still carry a disproportionate responsibility for childcare and parent care, placing a greater burden on their time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide childcare or elder care money to participating parents. • Or provide childcare (and even elder care) at the event (ask people to register ahead of time).
	Legitimacy: People who do not fit the dominant model of “male” or “female” may experience stigmatization.	

Source: Copied and adapted from Sheedy, 2008, pp. 15-6.

Engaging Low Income Citizens

Unless directly impacted by the issue, citizen engagement generally attracts participants that are educated and have a higher income. In a historical context, the right to vote in municipal elections was based on property ownership excluding many citizens that can be considered low income. These two factors, in addition to others, highlight reasons that result in lower participation by citizens with low income.

A citizen's economic situation is a cross-cutting barrier to citizen engagement. These economic considerations create barriers to potential participation. Barriers for citizens with low income include timing of the event, as many citizens may be balancing multiple part-time jobs; transportation to the location; costs for day-care or balancing commitment between family and participation for those with young children; and for some, access to computers with internet

To address these, a municipality should strive to remove barriers or make accommodations to make participation possible. Removing barriers and making accommodations (identified in the bulleted list below) does result in added costs.

For citizens with low income, a municipality in particular must ensure engagement is meaningful. In certain cases, stigmatization and a sense of opinions not feeling valued has deterred participation in citizen engagement. Meaningful engagement makes participation worthwhile and should create a space where input is sought after and valued. As a result, facilitators should be experienced and trained. Citizen engagement should also be marketed for its benefits, such as providing input on issues, networking, developing public speaking skills or providing information related to municipal and community services.

Additional considerations to attract immigrants to participate in citizen engagement are provided below.

- Develop advertisements and resources in plain language. Reach out to community organizations and public facilities, such as libraries, to promote the citizen engagement.
- Identify and cover the costs associated with barriers or incentives to participate, such as day-care, remuneration for lost wages or for participating, reimbursing transportation costs, and providing catering at the event. A municipality should identify and budget these extra costs when developing a citizen engagement plan.
- For those interested in participating, contact them to ask how they prefer to receive background information for the citizen engagement, such as by mail, in-person or an information session. This develops a rapport with participants but also indicates their participation is valued as municipalities seek to ensure familiarity with the issue(s).
- Reach out to community organizations to learn what barriers may prevent participation in citizen engagement and potential solutions.
- Do not plan particular citizen engagements where this target group are the only participants. Doing so contributes to the stigmatization and a sense of skepticism that input is not valued.
- For planning future citizen engagements, appoint representatives from community organizations or past participants as advisors to the planning team. Building relationships with organizations and individuals will assist with recruiting participants by acting as champions of citizen engagement.

Additional Resources:

Community Development Halton – Honouring the Voices of Marginalized Communities: a report that presents the findings of a research project and best practices in order to improve citizen engagement of citizens with low income

<http://www.cdhalton.ca/pdf/Engaging-Marginalized-Communities-FINAL.pdf>

Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families – Recruitment and Engagement of Low Income Populations: Service Provider and Researcher Perspective: handbook on recruiting low income participants

<http://www.cup.ualberta.ca/new-report-recruitment-and-engagement-of-low-income-populations>

Persons with a Disability

Attracting persons with a disability is a well-acknowledged challenge for citizen engagement. Often this acknowledgement is primarily related to persons with a physical disability and, occasionally, to those hard of hearing or low vision. This neglects, however, considerations on how to attract persons with cognitive disabilities or speech impairments. Thus, during the planning phase municipalities need to be more specific in defining the target population in order to properly remove barriers and accommodate this target group.

Accessibility is key to attract persons with a disability to participate. Accessibility considers facilitating opportunities to fully participate in the citizen engagement. For a municipality, it requires planning to identify potential barriers and make accommodations. In many instances, it does require added costs to a citizen engagement budget.

Common methods of providing information, such as informational posters, as well as citizen engagement methods are not effective and potentially require adaptation. Providing information to those hard of hearing, for example, may require setting up a Text Telephone number (or more commonly known as a TTY number). As a method for engagement, a survey may not be effective for those with low vision. Recognizing the potential limitations for persons with different disabilities, municipalities should reach out to community organizations on how best to reach particular participants. Finally, municipalities during the planning stage should identify – and acknowledge the potential added costs – any additional resources necessary, locate where they could be acquired and include in the budget.

Persons with a disability may also have mobility barriers to participate in citizen engagement. Mobility barriers may be related to transportation and the facilities themselves. Municipalities must consider the location of the engagement in relation to transit access or be willing to provide transportation. Facilities should also be assessed in advance for appropriate facilities, such as ramps and washrooms, and develop a layout with adequate space to allow participants to freely move.

Additional considerations to attract persons with a disability to participate in citizen engagement are provided below.

- For planning future citizen engagements, appoint representatives from community organizations or past participants as advisors to the planning team. Building relationships with organizations and individuals will assist with recruiting participants by acting as champions of citizen engagement.

- Ensure all communications are made accessible to accommodate persons with different disabilities. Distribute communications to those involved with planning and organizations in the community.
- Provide contact information for accommodations. If accommodation requests impact each other, discuss with participants to find a common solution.
- Offer to conduct citizen engagement at community organizations. This allows users who visit the organization and access its services regularly to participate without additional effort to attend.
- Proactively plan to identify additional resources, such as interpreters, or necessary equipment and budget in the citizen engagement.
- Properly research the facility for accessibility, appropriate washroom facilities and a layout that provides adequate space for participants to freely move around.
- Do not plan particular citizen engagements where this target group are the only participants. Doing so contributes to the stigmatization and a sense of skepticism that input is not valued.
- Allow for participants to provide feedback in citizen engagement in multiple formats – in person, over the phone, in writing, etc.

Additional Resources:

Accessible Digital Office Document Project – Accessibility of Office Documents and Office Applications: a website with tip on enhancing the accessibility of documents with a number of software programs
<http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/>

AChecker – Website Accessibility Checker: a tool the allows municipalities to assess whether website content is accessible to persons with a disability
<http://achecker.ca/checker/index.php>

Canadian National Institute for the Blind – Clear Print Guidelines: a resource that identifies best practices and ways to ensure information is accessible to persons with low vision
<http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/resources/clearprint/pages/default.aspx>

Disabled World – Disability Etiquette and Communication Information: a webpage that provides best practices on effective communication approaches and considerations (based on different disabilities) for persons with a disability
<http://www.disabled-world.com/communication/>

Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments – Tip Sheet for Creating Accessible Presentations: a resource that identifies best practices and considerations to ensure PowerPoint presentations are accessible to persons with a disability
<http://www.gaates.org/documents/ICT/TipSheet-Presentations.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Clear Writing Fact Sheet: a webpage with best practices and consideration to ensure documents are in plain language
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/facts/07-049.htm>

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association – Guide to Conducting Accessible Meeting: a handbook listing best practices specific to ensuring a citizen engagement removes barriers and accommodates persons with a disability

<http://omssa.com/accessible-community-engagement/omssa-guides/view-the-guides/>

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association – Guide to Accessible Public Engagement: a handbook that provides best practices and an overall approach for a citizen engagement targeted towards persons with a disability

<http://omssa.com/accessible-community-engagement/omssa-guides/view-the-guides/>

Immigrants

Attracting immigrants to participate in citizen engagement is often a challenge for municipalities. In certain instances language barriers may exist or immigrants rather have formed close links with their ethnic communities than the municipality. For many new immigrants, integration into the municipality, such as finding housing and work, is a primary focus leaving little time for additional commitments.

In many instances immigrants may originate from countries with different customs exist. Volunteering, for example, may be limited to involvement with religious organizations and not a municipality. Past interaction or perception of governments of one's country of origin may also deter participation.

Despite these customs, immigrants are also often eager to commit to citizen engagement. Citizen engagement offers opportunities to learn more about their municipality, including how it functions and services that are available, but also to network and improve language skills. Often immigrants seek out involvement to activities with more long-term regular commitments.

An effective approach to recruit immigrant participations is through collaboration with community cultural organizations. Collaborating with community cultural organizations is best to begin in the planning stage. Representatives from these organizations can act as advisors to the citizen engagement project team by providing information and considerations to attract participants as well as potentially assisting as interpreters or translators. Municipalities should also think beyond particular citizen engagements to facilitate opportunities to make the municipality a more welcome and inclusive place.

Additional considerations to attract immigrants to participate in citizen engagement are provided below.

- For new immigrants to the municipality, develop, and translate into the languages of large ethnic communities within the municipality, a resource that provides basic information and an orientation to the municipality, including services available and how a municipality functions. To meet new people, create a network where immigrants are able to introduced to locals
- Develop and include cultural community events calendar on municipal website. Municipal efforts to attract immigrants to citizen engagement should be reciprocal to share cultural events and traditions with long-time residents. A community events calendar can share information on different celebrations or events occurring in the municipality.
- Though language barriers may exist, it is best to encourage activities that also involve opportunities to network and engage with locals.
- Develop a working group comprised of representatives of various community cultural organizations, other community organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce) and municipal staff. Functioning of working group is to collaborate and determine how a municipality can better approach citizen engagement and resources beneficial to support newcomers.

- Make resources accessible to participants. Translate information into languages and have interpreters at citizen engagements. Provide access to interpreters for municipal information phone lines (e.g., 3-1-1). Also provide opportunities to provide input and feedback online.
- Develop municipal diversity or cultural framework or plan. A framework or policy provides a strategic approach to articulate how a municipality is to facilitate an inclusive environment. The framework or plan would involve various elements from sharing of information to how immigrants can be active in informing decisions or initiatives.

Tip: Another resource that may be of interest is AUMA's Welcome and Inclusive Communities Toolkit. This toolkit provides municipalities with a number of best practices and considerations for welcome and inclusive initiatives, and can be accessed here: <http://wic.auma.ca/>

Additional Resources:

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association – Civic Engagement for Immigrant Women: informational resource that describes functions of different levels of government and how to become involved in citizen engagement

http://www.atosl.ca/sites/default/files/resources/CIWA_Civic_Engagement_for_Immigrant_Women.pdf

National League of Cities – Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities: handbook focused on best practices and considerations to plan for targeted citizen engagement with immigrants

<http://www.nlc.org/documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/Research%20Innovation/Governance-Civic/discussion-guide-civic-engagement-immigrants-gid-jun10-pdf.pdf>

Peel New comer Strategy Group – Immigrant Civic Engagement: Resources and Best Practices Tool for Institutions and Organizations: a non-profit group in the Region of Peel, ON has developed a list of resources and best practices related to immigrant civic engagement

http://www.peelnewcomer.org/site/peel_newcomer_strategy_group/assets/pdf/resource-tool-for-institutions.pdf

Youth

Often neglected in citizen engagement, youth (15-24 years old) provide unique perspectives on issues and policies that affect their lives. With appropriate planning, attracting youth to participate can be quite successful.

While often not holding family responsibilities and generally more available to participate, youth often are balancing a number of commitments – from school to work and leisure. Youth are willing to participate if invited but an important aspect to note is a tendency to over commit or not being able to commit to long-term projects.

Youth often are attracted to participate in order to see an improvement in their community. Thus, engaging youth should be intentional and report back to participants. Participation in citizen engagement also allows for those not eligible to vote and further opportunities for those eligible to vote to become involved in issues of interest.

A municipality can approach youth citizen engagement from a variety of strategies. For those in high school, citizen engagement is best accomplished through planned activities with schools or community

organizations. Reaching out to schools, for example, can be both an opportunity for citizen engagement but also integrated with curriculum related to municipal government. A more strategic opportunity is to form an advisory committee to provide input and represent youth interests to council.

Additional considerations to attract youth to participate in citizen engagement are provided below.

- Reach out to local schools to identify opportunities where citizen engagement activities can be integrated into the existing curriculum and any opportunities where participation can count towards school credits or requirements.
- Ensure citizen engagement recognizes and remove barriers as well as provide incentives to youth. Barriers faced by youth to participate in citizen engagement include scheduling of events to balance school and work commitments and transportation. Youth could also not be as familiar with the option so providing information well in advance removes a barrier of being intimidate due to lack of knowledge. Potential incentives include reminders of events to avoid forgetting, covering transit costs or providing food or another incentive.
- Reach out to students to participate. One of the main resources youth are unwilling to participate is simply not being invited. Simply reaching it is effective to attract youth. Youth citizen engagement may also be more effective for events only involving youth or keep the ratio of youth to adults low.
- Recognize and leverage skills of youth in the municipality. Beyond looking at youth as participants, municipalities should recognize skills that could benefit citizen engagement practices, such as usage of technology. Municipalities should facilitate opportunities for students to share and showcase various skills.
- Recruit and appoint a youth advisory committee. A committee ensures on-going engagement, and representation of youth perspectives on various issues and services while providing those involved the opportunity to gain various skills.
- Develop a youth citizen engagement strategy. A long-term strategy to youth citizen engagement will result in a better understanding and defining a number of approaches to improve practices.

Additional Resources:

Center for the Study of Social Policy – Promoting Youth Civic Engagement: provides context on the benefits of and strategies to promote youth civic engagement

<http://www.cssp.org/policy/papers/Promoting-Youth-Civic-Engagement.pdf>

Edmonton NextGen - website: an initiative created by the City of Edmonton the promotes youth citizen engagement and community activism

<http://www.edmontonnextgen.ca/>

National League of Cities – Authentic Youth Civic Engagement: A Guide for Municipal Leaders: handbook that provides best practices and resources to assist municipalities related to youth citizen engagement

<http://www.nlc.org/documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/IYEF/Youth%20Civic%20Engagement/authentic-youth-engagement-gid-jul10.pdf>

National Youth Council of Ireland – Young Voices: provides best practices, considerations and resources for organizations to improve and greater efforts towards youth citizen engagement

http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/31267_Young_Voices_.pdf

Young Families

Young families often have various pressing demands of balancing career, leisure and parenting. While adults of young families hold expectations to be engaged for issues that affect them, they tend to prefer accessible ways to be engaged. Accessible engagement considers both usage of online, interactive methods as well as providing assistance to cover the costs of typical barriers preventing participation, such as day care or babysitting costs, or other incentives to participate.

In many instances young families may be new to the municipality. Citizen engagement is attractive for young families to plant roots by becoming more involved in the community. Participation also allows for networking and to meet other young families.

Considerations to attract young families to participate in citizen engagement are provided below.

- Provide a financial or in-kind incentive to participate in citizen engagement. With pressing demands, a municipality should provide some compensation in return to make it worth their time to participate, such as gift certificates or free admission passes for municipal facilities.
- Cover the costs of barriers that might prevent attendance at citizen engagements. For young families, this primarily includes day care and babysitting costs but would also include transit and parking costs.
- Include a balance of in-person and online, interactive citizen engagement. For this particular group a balanced approach of both would be beneficial. Usage of online engagement methods, such as short surveys, Twitter or Facebook conversations, focus, or interactive budget consultations, are best to be balanced with in-person methods. For in-person methods, they are best to be held in the evening outside of work hours with multiple options to accommodate different schedules. The engagement should be targeted specifically to this group, as open invites may discourage participation. In-person events should also be casual and to allow participants to network.

Additional Resources:

FOCUS St. Louis –website: a leadership organization that targets a range of participants from high school students to senior business executives with the intent to provide training and facilitate greater citizen engagement

<http://www.focus-stl.org/>

Aboriginals

Aboriginals (First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status Aboriginal Peoples) are increasingly becoming an urban population and many municipalities continue to strive for engagement to ensure services meet the needs of Aboriginal people. However, Aboriginal engagement is more appropriately approached from a strategic, long-term approach by building relationships based on shared values of honesty, respect, mutual sharing and contribution. Otherwise, seeking Aboriginal participation for a one time engagement may prove difficult, if not offensive for poorly organized or rushed activities.

With the above in mind, the following considerations and potential approaches to citizen engagement of Aboriginals may be of assistance:

- For citizen engagement activities, reaching out to Aboriginal or community organizations that provide services and supports to Aboriginals, such as welcoming centres, is a good first step. However, efforts should be made to engage with influential members of the community, such as elders.

- When planning citizen engagement, involve elders from the community. Elders are respected individuals in the community. Actively involving them during planning contributes to attracting more participants.
- At the beginning of a citizen engagements activity, provide acknowledgement to the traditional Aboriginal landowners. Doing so acknowledges the long Aboriginal history where the present municipality exists as well as the complex ownership and land stewardship systems that have existed for thousands of years. Sample text to provide is included in Box 1.

Box 1: Paying respect to traditional Aboriginal landowners

If you are clear about who the Traditional Owners of an area are, you should say:

"Our citizen engagement is being held on the traditional lands of the [Traditional Owner group's name] people and I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today."

If you are uncertain about who the Traditional Owners of an area are, you should say:

"I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land [or country] on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today."

- Conduct citizen engagement incorporating traditional elements of Aboriginal culture. A citizen engagement could, for example, begin with a smudging ceremony or use traditional Aboriginal engagement methods, such as a talking circle; both are described further below.
 - A smudging ceremony involves burning dried herbs and letting the smoke float around the space. A smudging is meant to cleanse bad feelings and negative spirits.

Tip: Be sure to assess the space for smoke alarms and ventilation prior to conducting the ceremony.
 - A talking circle has traditionally been used for problem-solving while allowing all to participate by sharing their views or concerns about a particular topic. A stick, feather or other token is passed around allowing each participant to speak.
- Conduct research to better understand the Aboriginal community within the municipality. This will provide the municipality better information and provides an opportunity to engage with the Aboriginal community to share their knowledge and needs.
- Build relationships with Aboriginal organizations and communities. These relationships will provide information on the community but also build familiarity with municipal staff involved with citizen engagement. Ideally, these relationships are built prior to a citizen engagement.
- Improve information sharing and awareness of the Aboriginal community. Building off of this research, the municipality should make efforts to share information on the municipal website or a permanent exhibit in a municipal building, such as a library. To build relationships, a municipality may also collaborate with the Aboriginal community to organize traditional events, such as a powwow.
- Establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee. This committee represents a long-term commitment to represents and influence the interests and needs of the Aboriginal community by regularly engaging with council. Membership on the committee can be from representatives of the community, elders and organizations that provide service or regular engage with the

Aboriginal community. Usage of an Aboriginal Advisory Committee is common in municipalities in Alberta, such as the Cities of Edmonton and Calgary.

- Prepare and announce a Declaration or an Accord with the Aboriginal community. Either of these documents are used to set a foundation (generally as part of a long-term commitment) of mutually respectful relationship.

Additional Resources:

City of Calgary – Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee: information on committee and projects
<http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/First-Nations-Metis-and-Inuit-Peoples/Calgary-Aboriginal-Urban-Affairs-Committee/Calgary-Aboriginal-Urban-Affairs-Committee.aspx>

City of Edmonton – Aboriginals Urban Affairs Committee: information on committee and projects
<http://www.aboriginal-edmonton.com/index.html>

Government of Queensland – Engaging Queenslanders: Introduction to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: handbook on Aboriginal engagement
<http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/guides-factsheets/atsi-communities/index.html>

Government of Western Australia – Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians: handbook on Aboriginal engagement
<http://www.daa.wa.gov.au/documents/reportspublications/consultingcitizenssept2005.pdf>

Turtle Island Native Network – Alberta: information on Aboriginal organizations across Alberta
<http://www.turtleisland.org/communities/communities-organizations-alberta.htm>

Formalizing Citizen Engagement Handbook

Context

Citizen engagement is a central and growing facet of municipal governance. Whereas citizens are increasingly seeking greater involvement, municipalities too are increasingly using citizen engagement to receive input or involve citizens in the decision-making process for a wide range of issues.

Purpose

The Formalizing Citizen Engagement Handbook assists municipalities developing a citizen engagement framework and/or policy by identifying best practices, considerations as well as a process

Categorizing Levels of Citizen Engagement

This resource is based on the six levels of engagement defined in the Citizen Engagement Toolkit. These levels, ascending in the level of involvement, include:

- The citizen **receives information**, from a range of sources, from the local government on different initiatives, services or activities.
- The citizen **participates in voting** during municipal elections or special referendum when they occur. While voting can be considered a specific type of input, it is added as a specific type of engagement.
- Citizens **provide input**, when asked, to their local government, through a number of different activities and vehicles. This does not involve a decision making role.
- **Citizens engage in discussions and consultative dialogues** with members of local government, including both elected officials and public servants.
- **Citizens engage in decision making activities**, around specific issues or functions. Decision making may be related to planning, resourcing or delivery of services, or all of these processes.
- **Involvement in local government**, as an elected or appointed official (e.g., Police Commission, Development Appeal Board) is viewed as the level of engagement that requires the highest level of commitment and personal investment.

Defining Formalization and Benefits of Developing a Citizen Engagement Framework and/or Policy

Formalizing citizen engagement refers to the processes undertaken by a municipality to either develop a framework or policy that results in a renewed commitment to citizens to improve existing practices and facilitate more meaningful engagement. A framework or policy articulates the values of this commitment and facilitates a common organizational-wide foundation for citizen engagement.

This handbook includes a recommended process, tools and resources to assist with various aspects, and tips for developing a framework or policy. Depending on the intent and resources, a municipality can tailor information provided in this handbook to meet specific needs. Formalizing citizen engagement provides a number of benefits to municipalities, including:

- Providing a common understanding and approach to citizen engagement that facilitates consistent and more cost effective processes and procedures;
- Improving coordination of engagement activities and avoiding stakeholder fatigue or over engagement;
- Making citizen engagement more top-of-mind with staff, council and citizens;
- Facilitating more opportunities for citizens to contribute to decision-making or be better informed by activities or initiatives within the municipality;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of staff and council related to citizen engagement; and
- Building organizational capacity and facilitation skills.

Best Practices and Considerations

The following reflect best practices when developing a citizen engagement framework or policy:

1. Development of a framework and/or policy requires citizen engagement

A framework and/or policy represents a renewed commitment for meaningful citizen engagement. To ensure this commitment reflects that wishes and desires of citizens and community stakeholders, engagement are essential to the development of a framework and/or policy.

2. An executive sponsor is to be identified for the project

Undertaking the development of a citizen engagement framework or policy is a significant project. As such, identifying an executive sponsor ensures the project receives greater awareness and enhances accountability across the organization. Though depending on how the municipality is approach the development of the policy and/or framework, the executive sponsor is generally from the administration but could also be elected official.

3. Formalizing citizen engagement should actively involve staff from across the municipality

To ensure maximum value receive buy-in for the end product, formalizing citizen engagement should actively involve and collaborate with staff across the municipality. Doing so ensures an understanding and to potentially address issues with current practices but also articulate a future vision and renewed commitment to citizen engagement that incorporates the values of staff.

4. Formalizing citizen engagement should seek to build capacity in both the municipality but especially for citizens

A renewed commitment for meaningful citizen engagement requires capacity building for staff but should also be offered to citizens. Providing similar capacity builder opportunities for citizens will develop a number of engagement ambassadors in the municipality. These ambassadors provide a number of benefit, including sharing their experiences, facilitating mentorship and knowledge.

5. Formalizing citizen engagement is a significant undertaking

Considering the best practices of engagement internally and with citizens, developing a framework or policy is a significant undertaking for any municipality. The process can take well over year and require additional resources or leveraging existing expertise within the municipality. Strategically, formalizing citizen engagement is a significant undertaking in the sense of delivering a renewed promise and increasing opportunities to allow for meaningful engagement and a greater role for citizens in decision-making processes.

Considerations to Develop a Citizen Engagement Framework or Policy

The following yes/no questions provide an initial indication of considerations that may deem a citizen engagement framework or policy beneficial to the municipality. The higher the number of responses to no, the more valuable development of a citizen engagement framework and/or policy is to the municipality.

Red means “no,” or it is an issue that is potentially impacting the outcomes of citizen engagement
Yellow means “maybe,” it is potentially or more information is necessary to determine if it is an issue
Green means “yes,” or this is currently not an issue to citizen engagement activities

Is council or senior management satisfied with current citizen engagement practices?			
Are citizens satisfied with current citizen engagement practices?			
Does council have information on the views and concerns of citizens when considering or making decisions?			
Are there a common set of values or principles guiding citizen engagement activities?			
Is the process to plan and conduct citizen engagement consistent?			
Is there a process to coordinate all citizen engagement activities?			
Is there a process to review all citizen engagement activities for quality assurance and to ensure a certain level of consistency?			
Are a number of methods and approaches being used for citizen engagement?			
Are citizens provided enough information to ensure engagement is meaningful?			
Is there a process to review information to ensure it is plain language?			
Are citizen engagements successful in identifying and recruiting participants or stakeholders that are to be affected or interested in the outcome of an issue?			
Are there multiple citizen engagements targeting similar audiences at or near the same time?			
Is it clear that decisions acknowledge and reflect the concerns or viewpoints of citizens?			

What is typically included in a citizen engagement policy?

A citizen engagement policy, generally in the form of a by-law passed by council, articulates a high-level commitment, philosophy and approach to citizen engagement for the municipality. Though much shorter, the content commonly included in a citizen engagement policy is similar to that included in a framework document.

The following section identifies and describes the common elements included in a citizen engagement policy. To provide municipalities with a better sense of how others have developed citizen engagement policies, a number of examples from municipalities in Alberta follow.

Tip: *The content included in the policy should reflect the input received during staff and citizen engagement.*

Policy Statement: The policy statement indicates how a municipality intends to conduct citizen engagement. This section may detail the reasoning for a citizen engagement policy and/or make a reference to how or what documents will drive the practices of citizen engagement (e.g., a framework or adopting a recommended process, such as Alberta Municipal Affairs’ Public Input Toolkit).

Reason for Policy: Beyond stating at a high level how a municipality intends to conduct citizen engagement, a number of reasons are also provided for the policy. Examples of items that can be included are the reasoning for the municipality to develop the policy, what a citizen engagement policy

seeks to address (e.g., decisions informed by citizen input, improve the quality of decisions being made, etc.), or the intent of the citizen engagement policy (e.g., usage to support a long-term vision, or increasing or formalizing the role of citizen input into municipal governance).

Guiding Principles or Core Values of Citizen Engagement: This section identifies the overarching Municipalities tend to use different titles for this content. Regardless of the term, the section commonly describes the overarching set of principles/values that guides how a municipality conducts citizen engagement.

Roles and Responsibilities: Roles and responsibilities provide a high level distinction between different entities of the municipality and elected officials, can be prescriptive to identify a lead for citizen engagement as well as what a municipality expects of citizens. This information re-affirms the commitment and provides accountability by distinguishing the roles of staff, councillors and citizens.

Process for Citizen Engagement: A number of municipalities include a high level overview of the process to plan, conduct, analyse and report on citizen engagement. By providing a set of steps or milestones, a municipality identified how and when it will involve citizens, and ensures a consistent process is used for citizen engagement.

Spectrum or Continuum of Citizen Engagement: A pillar of any citizen engagement policy is the inclusion of a spectrum or continuum of engagement. A spectrum or continuum is a visual that displays different levels of citizen engagement – ranging from being informed of an issue to be empowered by council for a decision – in terms of active involvement of citizen in decision-making. Inclusion of such a visual is strategic to indicate how a municipality will engage and the commitment to citizens. Many municipalities adopt a frameworks developed by other organizations, such as the International Association of Public Participation’s Spectrum of Engagement.

Definitions: Key terms related to the citizen engagement policy are often defined, such as citizen engagement or stakeholder. Doing so avoids confusion and a common understanding of key terms for all staff and elected officials.

Examples of Citizen Engagement Policies:

City of Calgary: <http://www.calgary.ca/CA/city-clerks/Documents/Council-policy-library/CS009-engage.pdf>

City of Edmonton: http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/C513.pdf

City of Grande Prairie: www.cityofgp.com/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=6164

Town of Cochrane: <https://www.cochrane.ca/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/76>

Strathcona County: http://www.strathcona.ca/files/files/at-lls-mph-gov-002-025-public_engagement.pdf

What is typically included in a citizen engagement framework?

Similarly to a citizen engagement policy, a framework includes details regarding the commitment, philosophy and approach to citizen engagement. Likewise to a citizen engagement policy, similar content that provides a foundation for activities in the municipality are similar. A framework, however, moves beyond a policy to explain in-depth the commitment and the role of staff in citizen engagement. To support staff frameworks typically include resources and tools for staff to assist with citizen engagement in accordance with the policy.

The following section identifies what is typically included in a citizen engagement framework, including description of common resources that might be beneficial to include in a resource. Similarly to the citizen engagement policy, a number of example frameworks are provided.

Background Context to Understand Citizen Engagement: Considering the intent to serve a wider audience as a resource, most citizen engagement frameworks incorporate background contextual information and an overview of citizen engagement. Background information generally includes the reasoning, purpose and process used to develop the citizen engagement framework. Information to provide an overview of citizen engagement, on the other hand, generally incorporates definitions to define citizen engagement, how citizen engagement can support decision-making or different types of decision, what constitutes meaningful engagement and the role of the municipality in facilitating citizen engagement.

Guiding Principles or Core Values of Citizen Engagement: This section identifies the overarching Municipalities tend to use different titles for this content. Regardless of the term, the section commonly describes the overarching set of principles/values that guides how a municipality conducts citizen engagement.

Spectrum or Continuum of Citizen Engagement: A pillar of any citizen engagement policy is the inclusion of a spectrum or continuum of engagement. A spectrum or continuum is a visual that displays different levels of citizen engagement – ranging from being informed of an issue to be empowered by council for a decision – in terms of active involvement of citizen in decision-making. Inclusion of such a visual is strategic to indicate how a municipality will engage and the commitment to citizens. Many municipalities adopt a frameworks developed by other organizations, such as the International Association of Public Participation’s Spectrum of Engagement.

Process for Citizen Engagement: Frameworks include a detailed overview of each step of the process for citizen engagement – planning, conducting, analysing, and reporting and evaluating. Some frameworks have additionally incorporated visuals to identify the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders at each step of the process.

Resources and Tools: Often integrated into the detailed explanation of the process for citizen engagement are resources and tools. These resources and tools are designed for users with particular challenging aspects of citizen engagement, such as assessing whether engagement is beneficial or selecting a level of engagement and methods, or provide templates for common reporting, such as a template to brief council. Presented below are a list of resources and tools often included in citizen engagement frameworks:

- A checklist related to completion of tasks and major milestones in planning for engagement;
- An initial assessment of whether citizen engagement is necessary or beneficial;
- A detailed template to provide a project definition and engagement considerations;

- Business case templates to justify citizen engagement;
- A template to identify stakeholders;
- An assessment for the appropriate level and recommend a number of associated methods of engagement based on complexity, outcomes and profile for the specific issue or initiative;
- Information pertaining to a number of citizen engagement methods primarily organized by level of engagement and considering the benefits and limitation of each method;
- Budget templates to record and consider the costs associated with completing the citizen engagement;
- Project plan templates that provide an overview of the intended citizen engagement plan;
- An assessment if the plan reflects best practices or facilitates meaningful engagement;
- Reporting template to provide council with information on the proposed engagement plan;
- An evaluation template to assess the process used for the citizen engagement and identify any potential lessons learned or areas for improvement; and
- Links to other resources and tools.

Examples of Citizen Engagement Frameworks:

City of Calgary (*draft*):

http://www.calgary.ca/engage/Documents/engage_Framework_ONLINE_July.pdf

City of Edmonton: http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/Involving_Edmonton_2008.pdf

City of Fort Saskatchewan: <http://www.fortsask.ca/home/showdocument?id=762>

City of Waterloo, ON:

http://www.waterloo.ca/en/contentresources/resources/government/public_engagement_guidelines.pdf

Strathcona County: <http://www.strathcona.ca/files/files/at-cpia-pe-framework.pdf>

What is the process to develop a citizen engagement framework and/or policy?

There are a number of approaches and methods available to a municipality to plan, research, engage citizens, draft and present a finalized citizen engagement framework and/or policy. The manner in which a municipality undertakes the process is dependent on the resources available, the intent of the framework/policy, the desired level of engagement and capacity within the municipality. The suggested approach presented below is principally based on a project management approach and is similar to the process to conduct citizen engagement though on a larger scale.

AUMA's and AAMCDC's Citizen Engagement Toolkit and Alberta Municipal Affairs' Public Input Toolkit are two resources available to municipalities to initially assess resources required and develop a potential plan for the engagement aspect of developing a framework. This section also provides considerations and major steps to embark on the development of a citizen engagement framework and/or policy with a particular focus on the engagement necessary to inform the document.

Overview of Process to Formalize Engagement

Project Initiation: Starting the Project

- ✓ Assess whether formalizing citizen engagement is beneficial
- ✓ Develop business case to formalize citizen engagement and identify executive sponsor
- ✓ Develop project scoping document
- ✓ Assemble steering committee and/or working groups

Project Plan: Organising the Project

- ✓ Identify and define information to be collected to inform framework and/or policy
- ✓ Develop evaluation process
- ✓ Develop workplans and process to monitor progress

Project Execution and Monitoring: Carrying Out the Work

- ✓ Implement action items and analysis of findings
- ✓ Report back to staff and citizens
- ✓ Prepare deliverables
- ✓ Approval by senior management and council

Project Close-Out: Administration and Evaluation

- ✓ Complete administrative closeout
- ✓ Conduct evaluation of process

Project Initiation: Starting the Project

Project initiation sets the foundation for the process by collecting information to define and scope out the proposed process to formalize citizen engagement. The end product of this stage will include approvals to proceed, identifying an executive sponsor and a project scoping document.

Assess whether formalizing citizen engagement is beneficial

A first step is to assess (using the tool above) whether formalizing citizen engagement is beneficial. Although more applicable to municipalities seeking to formalize engagement from a bottom up approach, an initial assessment provides a municipality with a sense of areas where more information is necessary or attention is required.

Develop business to formalize citizen engagement and identify executive sponsor

A business case allows for the justification to undertake the process to formalize citizen engagement in an organized and thought out document. Developing a business case ensures there is a common understanding of the reasoning for the project, benefits, context and resources necessary. Once completed, the business case should then receive approval by management as well as council to formally commence the process.

Alongside the approvals for the business case to proceed, an executive sponsors should also be identified at this stage. Considering the size and scope of the project, an executive sponsors is recommended to provide accountability and strategic advice.

Develop project scoping document

Once the business case is approved and an executive sponsor has been identified, a project scoping document is to be prepared by the steering committee. A project scoping document builds off the

business case to further refine key aspects, such as the outcomes, clarifying the scope key milestones or critical success factors, identify deliverables, assessing risks or project constraints, any assumption for the project and resources available.

Assemble steering committee and/or working groups

A steering committee and any accompanying working groups should be established in the project initiation phase. A recommended approach is to have a small steering committee, ideally chaired by the executive sponsor, to strategically guide the process and working groups to focus on specific tasks or pieces associated with the project, such as an engagement and change management working groups. Once formed, initial focus is to develop terms of references.

Project Plan: Organising the Project

Project planning takes the result of the project initiation steps as a starting point. The series of steps outlined below identifies and defines the activities associate with the project as well as developing workplans and identifying the resource needs to complete the project.

Identify and define information to be collected to inform framework and/or policy

Central to formalizing citizen engagement is indentifying what is to inform a framework and/or policy. Generally this information involves three separate processes as identified in Table 1. The first is a jurisdictional and promising practices scan. This allows a municipality to assess best and emerging practices in the field and how other municipality (with similar characteristics) have approached citizen engagement. The second component is staff engagement to assess current practices (i.e., what is and is not working well), challenges and considerations and how they see a municipality improving citizen engagement. Finally, and perhaps the most important component is citizen engagement. Citizen engagement ensures a municipality develops a framework and policy that recognizes the issues, interests and considerations to facilitate more opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process.

Examples of questions to include as part of each process are identified in Appendices A-C. For examples of citizen engagement approaches used by two municipalities, refer to Appendix D.

Tip: Although these different focus areas can occur concurrently, the jurisdictional and promising practices scan not only requires the shortest amount of time to complete but findings will also likely incorporate findings into the staff and citizen engagement activities. If possible, the scan should be completed prior to staff and citizen engagements.

Table 1: Activities to inform framework and/or policy

	Jurisdictional and Promising Practices Scan	Staff Engagement	Citizen Engagement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review citizen engagement practices in other municipalities Review resources developed to support citizen engagement Literature review of best and emerging practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with staff to understand current practices and future state through a variety of engagement methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with citizens to understand current practices and future state through a variety of engagement methods

Intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand, and leverage best and emerging practices • Identify resources or tools that could be adapted to needs of municipality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and identify issues with current practices • Facilitate opportunities for staff input into process • Raise awareness of citizen engagement and capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand identify issues with current practices • Facilitate opportunities to ensure end product reflects needs and wishes of citizens • Raise awareness of citizen engagement
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Develop evaluation process

For a project of this scope and reach across the organization, evaluating the process provides a municipality with a number of opportunities to leverage lessons learned for future project and more effectively demonstrate the outcomes of the process. As such, development of an evaluation process is highly recommended to be incorporated into the process and identified as an integrated activity of the process. An evaluation process requires considerations of what to assess, opportunities for data collection and development of instruments (e.g., surveys). For more information and assistance with evaluation, refer to the Citizen Engagement Evaluation Handbook.

Develop workplans, budget and process to monitor progress

Once the action items to acquire the information to support the deliverables are identified, the workplans, budgets and processes to monitor the progress is to be developed. The workplan will identify the dates and key milestones for all activities of the steering committee and working groups.

Tip: For a municipality using multiple working groups, the action items to be undertaken will identify contingencies in work among the various groups. For example, a change management plan may be necessary before staff engagement activities commence. As such, workplans should be developed in consultation among each group and the steering committee to effectively make use of resources.

Similarly, the budget for each working group should be prepared to identify any resources necessary to achieve the workplan for the steering committee and working group. At this point it is also beneficial to identify the hours budgeted for staff to complete each task. In instances where the budget available exceeds the workplans of the various groups, the steering committee, in consultation with working groups should identify where costs could be reduced or tasks eliminated.

Finally, the workplans and budget are to include processes to monitor progress. This may simply include a status tracker to indicate if projects are completed, on time or deferred and continuously assessing and tracking budget costs. The monitoring process should contain an indication of the frequency of monitoring and the audiences, such as the steering committee or other working groups.

Project Execution and Monitoring: Carrying Out the Work

The bulk of the process to formalize citizen engagement relates to the activities to collect and analyse data to inform as well as developing the final deliverables. It is important to regularly monitor the activities in the process to identify any issue with the plan and rectify that might compromise the achievement of the objectives for the process.

Implement action items and analysis of findings

Of the entire process, implementing the action items where information will be collected to inform the deliverables is the most lengthy and resource intensive process. Regular monitoring and briefings to the steering committee allows for the assessment of progress and address any issues which may arise.

Report back to staff and citizens

Often neglected and overlooked is reporting the findings back to engagement participants. Once information is analyzed, it is best to report back on the findings of the information, how it will be used and next steps to be taken by the municipality.

Prepare deliverables

Preparation of the framework and/or policy should reflect the findings and input received from the engagement. When preparing the framework and/or policy, municipalities may consider another round of engagement with a small group of advisors. This group should consist of staff and citizens. The group enhances transparency by reviewing and ensuring the policy or framework reflects input received from the engagement.

Approvals by senior management and council

Once finalized, the framework and/or policy acquires the necessary approvals for senior management and council. The approvals process may vary from municipality to municipality based on structure, practices and levels of necessary approval.

Project Close-Out: Administration and Evaluation

Project close-out is an important but often overlooked part of any project, including efforts to formalize citizen engagement. Most of these tasks ensure tying any loose administrative pieces as well as conducting the evaluation of the process.

Complete Administrative Close-Out

Administrative close-out tasks may vary depending on the process used by municipalities. Common tasks, however, including ensuring payment for any contracted services, returning of resources and confirming all deliverables have been completed. A key aspect of administrative close-out is collecting and storing all documentations related to the process to keep a historical record.

Conduct evaluation of process

A final step of formalizing citizen engagement is to reflect on the process. Considering the anticipated involvement of staff across the municipality and citizens, the findings of the evaluation could be of interest to assess lessons learned for a project involving many stakeholders. The evaluation process is to be completed against the plan derived above. Once completed, a report is to be prepared for the executive sponsor and should be shared with those who participated and there may also be interest to share to all employees across the organizations.

Implementation Considerations

While development and approval of the citizen engagement framework and/or policy marks a major milestone for any municipality, additional implementation considerations must be addressed in order to operationalize processes and procedures for enhanced and consistent engagement.

A Common and Consistent Approach to Citizen Engagement: Organizational Processes and Procedures

- Identify Engagement Champions and/or Implement Internal Steering Committee: A steering committee – of either representatives or citizen engagement champions – with representation from all departments of the municipality will ensure the on-going commitment to improve

practices, coordinate various engagements, and support the strategic direction of citizen engagement in the municipality.

- **Community of Practice:** A more practice-oriented version of the steering committee, a community of practice is to involve those actively involved with citizen engagement within and external to the municipality. The community of practice would share experiences, best practices and can support capacity building or citizen engagement training needs for the municipality.
- **Citizen Engagement and Project Management:** Large projects frequently include citizen engagement but may not necessarily be incorporated into project management planning. Moreover, it is important to recognize that projects within a municipality may be managed internally or by private contractors. Processes and procedures should seek to ensure citizen engagement is identified as a component of large projects in charters and terms of reference, and identified in project management tracking.
- **Measuring and Evaluating Citizen Engagement:** To assess current practices to contribute to continuous improve municipalities should develop performance measures to gauge the success of the engagement program. These measures could be focused on outputs, such as number of engagements or participants; changes to behaviour towards citizen engagement, such as media coverage or assessing questions raised by citizens via email; and/or the outcomes of engagement, such as participant satisfaction or the overall improvement of citizen engagement practices in the municipality. If such a document is produced, quarterly or annual reports should include performance measure results and objective information to inform citizens on the successes and areas of improvement for citizen engagement.

Fostering the Know-How in the Municipality: Human Resources and Capacity Building

- **Create New Citizen Engagement Officers or Develop Expertise in 1-3 Individuals:** If possible, a dedicate staff member should be hired to coordinate activities and to build capacity for citizen engagement across the municipality. If not possible, 1-3 staff members should be trained to serve as citizen engagement experts for the departments across the municipality. Training should involve members to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and completing a number of courses, such as those offered by the University of Alberta, IAP2 and Alberta Municipal Affairs.
- **Incorporate Awareness of Citizen Engagement in Orientation Materials for New Employees:** Providing information on citizen engagement to new employees is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness and its importance to the business of the municipality. Information can simply consist of resources to training videos or indicating the requirement to complete a particular workshop.
- **Incorporate Citizen Engagement in Job Descriptions and Performance Assessments:** To increase the organizational awareness and competencies of staff, positions anticipated to be involved in citizen engagement should identify responsibilities in the job description. Moreover, performance assessments should include categories and competencies staff involved with engagement.
- **Develop Citizen Engagement Training Resources and Workshops:** A number of resources should be developed to provide information and act as a resource for staff when planning or conducting citizen engagement. All information is best to be contained in a single location on the municipality's intranet that easily accessible. Resources and workshops should also be tailored to specific audiences, such as orientations for new members of council.
- **Develop Conflict Resolution Training Resources and Workshops:** Conflict is an inherent part of citizen engagement and may arise due to differing opinions among staff when planning for or during engagements between citizens. Training resources and workshops should be easily

accessible on the municipality's intranet page. Over time these resources will ensure that conflict will be handled in a similar, effective and efficient manner.

- Case Studies to Improve Practices: Case studies of challenges and considerations of various types of citizen engagement can serve as training or capacity building resources. Case studies can be developed based on engagements from the municipality or others, or based in fictitious events. If based on engagements activities within the municipality, it also builds capacity in staff to evaluate engagement to identify lessons learned for continuous improvement.

Better Inform Citizens on Opportunities to Become Involved: Communications and Public Relations

- Create Official Social Media Accounts: If these do not exist, the municipality should create official Facebook and Twitter accounts. Both are excellent resources to promote citizen engagement and other activities of the municipality. To more easily manage the content of both accounts, the municipality should also create a Hootsuite account. Hootsuite can assist municipalities manage social media accounts with a common platform to pre-develop and schedule the release of content.
- Develop Citizen Engagement Webpage: A webpage on the municipality's website to contain electronic copies of the framework/policy and content that includes an overview, dates and times of engagements and frequently asked questions. A municipality may also seek to use this webpage as a platform to engage citizens with polls on various topics.
- Increase Opportunities for Engagement with Councillors and Municipal Staff: Improving citizen engagement should also increase the number of opportunities for engagement with staff and elected officials. These opportunities can occur at major community events as well as online through online conversations.
- Develop Mailing List for those Interested in Citizen Engagement: A mailing list is one method to better reach out to prospective participants. At citizen engagements, on the website and at various municipal buildings, advertise the distribution list and allow for people to sign up if interested. This distribution list should gather names, contact info, where they reside within the municipality, and issues or areas of interest.
- Require all Citizen Engagements to Report Back to Citizens: Often neglected is a report back to citizens on the findings and usage of feedback. Processes should be developed to clearly outline the need to inform participants and post the report on the municipality's website.

Appendix A: Common Questions of Inquiry for Jurisdictional and Promising Practices Scan

Conducting a jurisdictional and promising practices scan provides a municipality with a good sense of how others have approached formalizing citizen engagement as well as the leading and emerging practices in the field. Lists of common questions to consider when completing the scan are organized below for different aspects of a proposed scan.

Feedback from Engagement and Understanding the Municipality: Initial Questions

- Did staff or citizens identify any notable examples of municipalities with initiatives for citizen engagement?
- What are some unique characteristics of our municipality? Are there any other municipalities with similar characteristics that could be reviewed to assess their citizen engagement practices?

Citizen Engagement Resources Developed by Provinces and Municipal Advocacy Organizations

- What are the legislated citizen engagement requirements for municipalities? Are these different from those in Alberta?
- What is included in these resources? Is there anything beneficial that could be adapted for our municipality?
- Are they identifying common core values/principles and ways to categorize levels of engagement?

Citizen Engagement in Other Municipal Jurisdictions

- What are the legislated requirements for citizen engagement? Are these different from those in Alberta?
- Are municipalities identifying common core values/principles and ways to categorize levels of citizen engagement?
- What structure, processes or procedures are used by the municipality? Are there dedicated resources for citizen engagement?
- What methods are municipalities using to engage citizens and in what areas?
- Are municipalities measuring the success of their engagement? Are municipalities successful with citizen engagement practices?
- What information is made available to the public on their website? What information is provided online for future or feedback for prior engagements?
- What online tools do they use for citizen engagement? For what issues (e.g., budget) are they using online engagement methods?
- How are councillors involved in citizen engagement?
- What common challenges are identified? How are municipalities addressing these challenges?

Promising Practices Scan

- What are the emerging practices in the field of citizen engagement? What considerations does this pose for our municipality? How can we address these emerging practices?
- What are innovative methods are being used to engage citizens?
- What citizen engagement organizations, either professional or research-based, exist? What resources have they developed? In these resources, what could be adapted to meet the needs of our municipality?
- What are widely regarded core values/principles, ways to categorize engagement and practices emerging in the field?
- What common challenges are identified? How can these be addressed?

Appendix B: Common Thematic Topics and Questions during Staff Engagement

Staff engagement contributes to an understanding of current practices and challenges as well as considerations and supports needed to staff as a result of developing a citizen engagement framework or policy. Lists of common questions that could be used for staff engagement are organized below for different areas of discussion. In many instances engagement methods will discuss various themes or have particular methods to discuss different topics.

Current Citizen Engagement Practices

- When you think of our municipality and citizen engagement, what thoughts come to mind? How would you characterize current citizen engagement practices in our municipality?
- Have you been involved in an engagement activity within the past two years? Could you provide an example? How would you characterize the success of this engagement? What challenges or issues arose during the process and how were they mitigated?
- Are you aware of citizen engagements of other departments in the municipality? If so, how do you acquire this information? What could be improved about this information sharing?
- How would you describe the support, resources and tools available to assist with citizen engagement? Are these adequate? What improvements are necessary?
- Generally speaking, what reasons or barriers might prevent citizens from participating in citizen engagement?
- What reasons or barriers might exist that prevent the municipality from further or improve its citizen engagements?
- In the short term, what is one area our municipality should focus on to improve citizen engagement?

Defining a Future State of Engagement

- When you think of the future of our municipality and citizen engagement, what thoughts come to mind? What tools and resources are needed to support staff to achieve your vision?
- What risks do you foresee to the future of citizen engagement in our municipality?
- In terms of methods, what do you feel are the most effective for your business and past experience with citizen engagement?
- What core values/principles come to mind when thinking of an ideal future state for citizen engagement?
- A number of demographic groups generally are not as active in engagement, such as new residents, single parents or families with young children, residents under 30, and persons living with a disability, among others. What methods, strategies or approaches do you feel would be beneficial to increase these groups engagement?
- What role do you see elected officials playing in citizen engagement?

Supporting the Scan and Citizen Engagement

- Part of the process will involve a jurisdictional and promising practices scan. Are there other municipalities with unique characteristics, such as economic, social, geographical or environmental, that come to mind? Are you aware of any municipalities with innovative or notable citizen engagement practices? Are you aware of any citizen engagement organizations?
- Part of the process will involve citizen engagement. Would you be willing to assist with any of the citizen engagements?

Appendix C: Common Thematic Topics and Questions during Citizen Engagement

Municipalities often employ multiple methods when engaging citizens to inform the development of a framework and policy. Despite the different methods employed, often common topics and questions are used to anchor the engagement. These common thematic topics and associated questions are presented below. In many instances engagement methods will discuss various themes or have particular methods to discuss different topics.

Tip: For a number of methods, such as surveys and focus groups, the inclusion of demographic questions is valuable to provide different means to analyse input received. Typical demographic questions include gender, age, size of householder (i.e., total residents), and length of time living in municipality,

Current Citizen Engagement Practices

- When you think of our municipality and citizen engagement, what thoughts come to mind? How would you characterize current citizen engagement practices in our municipality?
- Are you aware of citizen engagement within our municipality? If so, do you feel well enough informed to participate?
- What is our municipality currently doing well with citizen engagement? Please provide examples
- What is our municipality not currently doing well with citizen engagement? Please provide examples
- Have you participated in citizen engagement activities within the past two years?
 - If so, please describe the particular engagement. How did you provide your input? Did you feel your participation was beneficial? Did you feel valued for your participation? Were you informed on how the information collected was used?
 - If not, why have you not participated in citizen engagement?
- Generally speaking, what reasons or barriers might prevent you from participating in citizen engagement?
- In the short term, what is one area our municipality should focus on to improve citizen engagement?

Best Practices and Practices from Other Jurisdictions

- Are you aware of other citizen engagement initiatives in other municipalities? If you do what worked well and did not work well?
- When thinking of current citizen engagement practices, do the activities in a particular municipality come to mind? If so, what can be learned and adapted for our municipality? Please provide examples.
- For committees or task forces, reviewing resources and documents developed by citizen engagement organizations or provincial/municipal governments could be a component of the engagement. If used, the following questions are beneficial to consider:
 - When reviewing the values/principles (i.e., ideas the underscore the practice of citizen engagement), did these feel appropriate or similar to what you would propose for our municipality? Was there anything missing? Please provide examples.
 - Based on the review, what resources do you feel are beneficial for citizen engagement in our municipality? Is there anything you feel is missing? Please provide examples.
 - Is there anything unique about our municipality that is not reflected in the resources/documents reviewed? If so, please provide examples.

Defining a Future State of Engagement

- When you think of the future of our municipality and citizen engagement, what thoughts come to mind?
- In terms of methods, how do you prefer to be engaged?
- How would you prefer to be notified for engagement?
 - Would email lists be preferable or a personalized invitation?
 - How far in advance is adequate notice?
 - How far in advance do you require background information to prepare?
 - Would you be more likely to participate if a community organization or residents facilitated the engagement?
- A number of demographic groups generally are not as active in engagement, such as new residents, single parents or families with young children, residents under 30, and persons living with a disability, among others. What methods, strategies or approaches do you feel would be beneficial to increase these groups engagement?
- As a citizen/stakeholder, what do you feel is necessary to make citizen engagement more worthwhile of your time? What resources are necessary to achieve this?
- What would motivate you to participate in citizen engagement?
- For issues where there is no direct personal impact, what would attract you to participate?
- What core values/principles come to mind when thinking of an ideal future state for citizen engagement?
- In your opinion, what are the desired outcomes of citizen engagement in our municipality? (Provide example outcomes, such as facilitate greater rapport between council and citizens.)
- How important is it for elected officials to provide support for engagement? Why?
- How would you like to be thanked or be shown appreciation for your participation in citizen engagement?

Appendix D: Examples of Formalizing Municipal Citizen Engagement

Outlined below are overviews of two approaches recently undertaken by the Cities of Grande Prairie, AB and St. John's, NL to formalize citizen engagement. Each example indicates separate approaches to inform the development of a framework and/or policy. The City of Grande Prairie used common methods – surveys and focus groups that primarily involved citizen input on current practices as well as barriers and reasons for not being involved in engagements. The City of St. John's approached citizen engagement through a task force that collaborate with the municipality via five structured workshops.

City of Grande Prairie – Activate GP (2012-13)

Activate GP originated from the 2012-14 Council Strategic Plan where council recognized the importance to create opportunities for a more engaged and active community. The process to formalize citizen engagement stretched two years from 2012 and resulted in the approval of a citizen engagement policy in January 2013. Additionally, the process resulted in the creation of an activate GP booklet that provides information on citizen engagement and its importance to Grande Prairie, self-guided exercises to discuss citizen engagement opportunities and identifying opportunities for citizens to become more involved in engagement and the community.

Citizen engagement to inform the policy included:

- A Citizen Involvement survey that received 530 responses collected information of why and why not people participate in citizen engagement;
- Focus groups for youth and students, 25-35 years old, seniors, Aboriginals, and organizations providing services to persons with a disability and newcomers with over 100 participants that discussed citizen engagement and considerations related; and
- A launch event with nearly 100 participants discussing sense of community and citizen engagement based on the activate GP booklet as well as advertised opportunities to become involved in municipal boards and committees.

For more information on activate GP visit these links:

activate GP website, including links to the activate GP booklet, report of findings back to the community and citizen engagement policy: <http://www.cityofgp.com/index.aspx?page=1561>

activate GP Launch Event – YouTube Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9NjrUrnCic>

City of St. John's, NL – Engage! St. John's (2013-Present *In progress*)

The Engage! St. John's initiative emerged as a result of an organizational restructuring and the creation of the Office of Strategy and Engagement. The mandate of this new office included improving citizen engagement practices. Following a jurisdictional scan and internal review of practices, recruitment began for a 25 member taskforce to collaborate with the city. The taskforce sought a cross-section of the city in terms of wards represents but also demographics and community organizations and institutions. The mandate of the taskforce included:

- review materials to better understand the public engagement process and best practices;
- develop a proposed public engagement policy document with guiding principles;
- identify effective engagement tools and approaches; and
- present draft and final recommendations throughout an existing municipal committee.

Taskforce members participated in a series of five workshops over 1.5 months in spring 2014. The topics covered in the workshop were:

1. Introductory meeting to meet fellow taskforce members; review existing work of municipal staff; seek to define citizen engagement – what it is and is not; and organize research of municipal practices
2. Taskforce members present research findings of municipal practices; discuss findings to assess commonalities; discuss best practices and if applicable to citizen engagement in St. John's
3. Identify and define citizen engagement principles; draft document outlining principles
4. Discussion of citizen engagement policy document; discussion of how it needs to be structured; elements to be included; and citizen engagement policy drafted
5. Discuss several themes that emerged throughout process; prepare recommendations based on discussions to city

The Engage! St. John's initiative remains in progress with councils approval of the final report of the taskforce in October 2014. Future activities include the development of the citizen engagement policy and resources.

For more information on Engage! St. John's, including the terms of reference and final report for the taskforce, visit the website: <http://www.stjohns.ca/living-st-johns/city-services/engagement>