

City of Monash

Draft Community
Engagement Framework

2020

Cover image

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The Value of Community Engagement

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

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

Monash Council is committed to providing opportunities for our community to influence the decisions, policies and plans of Council by their participation in the community engagement process, lending us their experiences and expertise.

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

What is community engagement?

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

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

Why Engage?

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

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The Framework

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

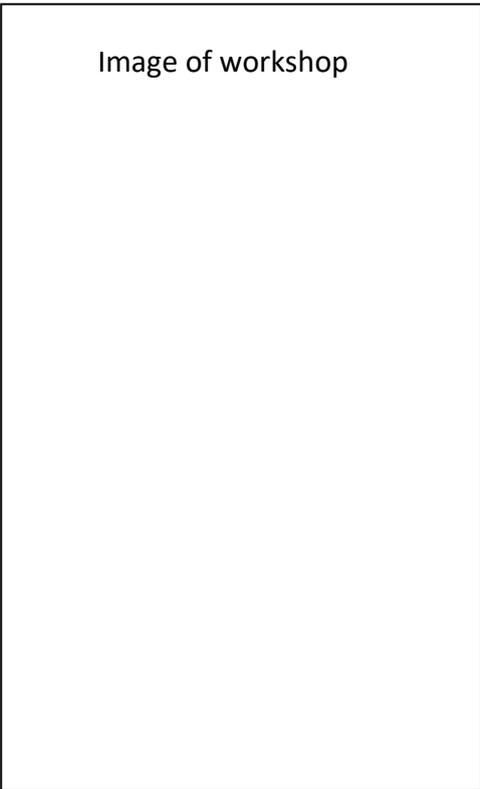
The framework demonstrates Monash Council’s commitment to:

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

How we did this

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

We also consulted widely across the community on preferences for community engagement. We heard from around 750 people and found that one in four residents are willing to participate, and that online methods are preferred.



You are willing to participate in engagement on...

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

You like to participate by...

Survey	Online interactive participation	Informal conversations	Workshops or meetings	Community panel
48%	37%	13%	11%	4.5%

Supporting Council decisions

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

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

[Insert flowchart – Fari to design]

Flow chart text

Need or opportunity - identified through Council business planning or as a result of a request from the community or Councillor

Council meeting - Staff present their plan to determine a recommendation for Council at an ordinary meeting. Depending on how the community may be impacted, the plan may include community engagement activities. The level of involvement will increase with the level of impact. Council is invited to provide direction on the plan.

Business case/technical study/community engagement (interconnected) – how will it impact the community? Is there opportunity for public input? Is there community support for the idea? Is there a strong business case? Is this a legislated project? Can it be accomplished within existing resources or does it need additional funding? What is the background? What data and analysis do we already have? What do we need?

Plans & policy - How does this align with the Community Vision, Council Plan and other strategic or master plans and policies?

Council meeting – Staff present the findings and recommendations to Council at a public meeting. The report includes the findings and outcomes of the engagement program for Council to consider in their decision

Council decision – proceed, revise, refer back to staff, or not proceed.

Who makes the decision?

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

Our principles and promise to you

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

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

Steps in planning community engagement

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

1. Define the purpose and scope of the engagement

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

2. Understand stakeholder and community interests

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

3. Design an appropriate engagement process

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

4. Deliver genuine and respectful engagement

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

5. Review and interpret the engagement data

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

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

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

7. Evaluate the engagement process for improvement

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

8. Close the loop

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

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Lifting the standard

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

What is the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation?

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

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

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution.	To place the final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Tools and techniques	Website Fact sheets Media releases	Surveys, polls Ideas collection Participatory budgeting	Workshops Prioritisation activities Community Panel	Working with advisory groups Online forums Citizen jury	Delegated authority to a committee
Monash Approach	Participatory engagement Feedback is obtained on alternatives, draft documents or implementing decisions. Participation can be very broad, including stakeholders who choose to track the project but offer no direct input.		Deliberative engagement The key features of a deliberative process are to come to a decision by providing information, prioritising and weighing solutions.		

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

Tools and techniques

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

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

Information sessions - we may hold sessions to build understanding and knowledge of a topic. Participants may have the opportunity to ask questions or share feedback.

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

Survey – you may be asked to participate in a survey to help Council understand public opinion on a matter. A survey may be by telephone, door-knocking, or online. A survey uses research methods to obtain answers to questions from a randomly selected sample of the population. The results are considered to reflect the general population.

Questionnaire – this is when interested members of the community answer questions about a specific topic. The results reflect the views of the participants only and not the general population.

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

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

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

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

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

Roles of participants

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

Councillors

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

Staff involved in community engagement

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

Members of the community

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

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Monash Public Transparency Policy

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

Your privacy

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

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

Thank you

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

Monash Council has established a Junior Advisory Group and the Monash Youth Committee giving students and young people the opportunity to be active citizens and engage with Council.

Council's many advisory groups give us grassroots input and advice based on everyday experience in issues such as climate change, housing and ageing or disability.

The groups are made up of community members and from schools, universities, businesses and community organisations.