

Community Engagement Review 2019-2020

RMOW Committee of the Whole
September 1, 2020



What we're covering

1. Project overview
2. Findings – review key highlights
3. Recommendations – review select list and feedback
4. Policy – review and feedback
5. Moving forward

Project Overview

Objectives (and key deliverables)

1. Identify and implement improvements and additions to engagement and information channels
 - Findings and recommendations
2. Update and formalize RMOW engagement approach and commitment to the public
 - Council Policy
3. Provide clear expectations and resources to staff to execute
 - Staff Guide

Project Overview

Scope

1. **Required** engagement – required by the Community Charter (e.g. public hearings at Council meetings)
2. **Project-related** engagement – optional activities undertaken to inform project-related decisions (e.g. Parks Master Plan)
3. **Ongoing** engagement – on-demand access to municipal staff, Council and other sources of information (e.g. website, email, front desks)

Project Overview

Phase 1: Engagement Review

Q4 2019 – Q2 2020*

- External scan of trends and best practices
- Internal survey (key staff and Council)
- Community Life Survey (new questions)
- Review of RMOW policies, practices and community participation
- Recommendations

Phase 2: Policy and Guide

- Council policy (high level principles and commitment) (Q2)
- Staff guide/toolkit for engagement design and execution (Q3)

Phase 3: Implementation (Q4>>)

- Recommendations
- Staff training
- Monitoring and reporting

*Some delays as a result of COVID

Review Findings

Quick review

Key Trends

- **Levels of trust are declining**
- **Technology is improving**
 - Improving engagement tools
 - Enabling quick/thin engagement for busy people
 - Replacing traditional forms of engagement (open houses, town halls, phone surveys)
- **Social media for news and information**
 - Overwhelming volume
 - Disinformation
 - Toxic/polarized atmosphere
- **Expectations related to engagement increasing**
 - More engaging, less one-way
 - Ease and convenience

Best Practices

- Formalized systems and resources
 - Policy, toolkit, training, resource team, monitoring, reporting
- Dedicated engagement platforms*
- Task forces/committees
- Pop-up engagement
- Mix of engagement types
- Research panels

Decisions awaiting your influence

The image displays a grid of eight engagement cards, each with a header image, a title, and a description. The cards are arranged in two rows of four. Each card has a blue banner at the bottom with the text 'YOURSAY ENGAGEMENTS'.

- New farm trespassing laws**
Have your say on the proposed changes to the trespassing laws aimed at protecting our state's farmers and food producers.
- Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin Action Plan**
Help shape how we restore and revitalise the Coorong. Have your say on the Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin Action Plan.
- Year 7 to High School in regional SA**
Are you from a regional community? Have your say on how year 7 will move from primary school to high school in regional South Australia.
- Growing food, wine and agribusiness in SA**
We want your feedback on how we can grow South Australia's food, wine and agribusiness sectors.
- Indigenous Art**
A card featuring a vibrant, colorful Indigenous Australian artwork with circular patterns.
- Park Path**
A card showing a person walking on a paved path through a park with trees.
- Coastal Landscape**
A card showing a coastal landscape with a body of water and a cloudy sky.
- Desert Landscape**
A card showing a desert landscape with a sunset or sunrise sky.

Best Practices

- Surveying using texting apps (more conversational)
- Social media polls and text analysis
- Document libraries with searchable content
- Budget engagement tools
- 311 place-based channels*



Recent Successes

- Clear process and promise
- Large number and diverse participants
- Information quality and lead time
- Early and phased engagement
- Influence on decisions
- Reporting back



Community Input

Trust is low and down slightly

- 49% agreed that municipal decision-makers have the best interests of the community in mind when making decisions

Participation levels are ok

- 60% of permanent residents participated to some extent
- 35% didn't participate at all

Barriers are pretty much as expected

- 26% are too busy, no time, not a priority*
- 8% don't trust the process
- 7% are not interested

Satisfaction is stable

- 55% satisfied

Community Input – Preferences

Engagement channels

- 78% online surveys
- 46% events/open houses
- 31% email (down from 50% in 2019)
- 34% social media
- 31% one-on-one conversations
- 19% committee or advisory group*

Communications channels

- 72% social media, mostly Facebook
- 72% Pique
- 62% whistler.ca
- 59% e-news/email

Recommendations

Process

- Review select recommendations
- Gather feedback

Recommendations

- More work needed
 - Finalize lead and assist responsibilities
 - Ensure alignment/compliance with legal requirements
 - Budget for and develop the workplans necessary to deliver them over time
- Categories
 - Relative resources required to implement them
 - Relative priority in terms of their potential to improve RMOW engagement and/or communications
- Implementation leads proposed

General Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead*
1	Establish a single engagement platform/webpage for all community engagement opportunities.	High	High	Comm LS
2	Establish a single, searchable library of all public municipal documents (e.g. reports, plans/strategies, policies, bylaws, staff reports, Council and committee meeting agendas and minutes, etc.) to help community members access the information they need to be more informed about municipal affairs.	High	High	LS Comm
3	Establish a community engagement policy of Council, a staff guide and a staff training program based on the findings and recommendations of this report, clarifying when engagement should occur, and to support staff in scoping, designing and coordinating the processes.	High	High	Comm CAO
4	Make it easier for more people to participate in engagement opportunities, as per these recommendations:			
4.1	Improve the coordination of engagement activities throughout the year, including combining engagement activities where appropriate to use everyone's time more efficiently and increase participation.	High	Low	Comm Various
4.2	Continue to move toward offering more digital options as an extension or enhancement of those introduced during COVID-19 for the required engagement processes (i.e. public hearings, development open houses and committee meetings) to make them more convenient for all community members to participate.	High	Med	Comm LS Plan
4.3	Use multiple engagement tactics (e.g. online and in-person) that require varying levels of time investment within each project whenever possible to better suit and reach more community members and diverse demographic groups (e.g. youth and seasonal employees, seniors, etc.).	Med	Med	Comm Various
4.4	Use more convenient ways to gather input whenever possible, including online surveys, 'pop-up'/on-location opportunities, attending existing events, etc.	Med	Med	Comm Various
5	Use structured input opportunities at in-person events to enable improved quality and quantity of community input.	Low	Med	Comm
6	Improve and formalize procedures for tracking, assessing and benchmarking community engagement and communications channels usage (e.g. number and type of offerings, participants, satisfaction), that will help to inform improvements to subsequent processes.	High	Med	Comm
7	Develop a consistent and efficient approach (including timing, frequency, channels, content, etc.) for (a) reporting back to community members on all initiatives that involve public engagement, including project updates, engagement results/input, and decisions made or not made; and (b) making the engagement results available to all staff to inform other projects.	High	Med	Comm
8	Establish an annual calendar for the corporate planning and community engagement cycle that can be regularly referenced through communications channels to build awareness of the opportunities and ultimately help to increase participation.	High	Low	Comm Fin CAO

General Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead*
1	Establish a single engagement platform/webpage for all community engagement opportunities.	High	High	Comm LS
2	Establish a single, searchable library of all public municipal documents to help community members access the information they need to be more informed about municipal affairs.	High	High	LS Comm
4	Make it easier for more people to participate in engagement opportunities, as per these recommendations:			
4.1	Improve the coordination of engagement activities throughout the year, including <u>combining engagement activities</u> where appropriate to use everyone's time more efficiently and increase participation.	High	Low	Comm Various
4.2	Continue to move toward offering more digital options as an extension or enhancement of those introduced during COVID-19 for the <u>required engagement</u> processes (i.e. public hearings, development open houses and committee meetings) to make them more convenient for all community members to participate.	High	Med	Comm LS Plan

General Communications

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
9	Update communications policies and procedures to address existing gaps and related recommendations in this report, including taking these specific recommendations into consideration:	Med	Med	Comm
9.1	Clarify staff responsibilities related to engagement and communications to help improve accountability.	Med	Med	Comm CAO
9.2	Set minimum and prescriptive communications requirements for all community engagement opportunities, including minimums and consistency with respect to channels, timing, priority placement within channels, etc.	Med	Med	Comm
10	Expand the use of social media (particularly Facebook) as a tool for communicating all types of engagement opportunities more consistently and for conducting some digital engagement, exploring the use of analytics tools to better analyze and consider the input.	High	Low	Comm
11	Improve the content aimed at informing community engagement (e.g. more succinct, less text-heavy, more graphics and then make more detailed information available for reference), while continuing to meet legislative requirements.	High	Low	Comm Various

General Communications

Recommendation		Priority	Resources	Lead
9.2	Set minimum and prescriptive communications requirements for all community engagement opportunities, including minimums and consistency with respect to channels, timing, priority placement within channels, etc.	Med	Med	Comm
10	Expand the use of social media (particularly Facebook) as a tool for communicating all types of engagement opportunities more consistently and for conducting some digital engagement, exploring the use of analytics tools to better analyze and consider the input.	High	Low	Comm

Project-related Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
13	Explore the use of text-based surveying via Facebook Messenger or other app to reach more community members, especially younger audiences and Whistler's high Facebook membership.	Med	Med	Comm ED
14	Explore the use of a research panel of community members to improve the accuracy and validity of online surveys.	Med	Med	Comm ED

Council Meeting Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
15	Make it easier to find, navigate and search Council meeting content, including agendas, package content, presentations, minutes and video recordings.	High	High	LS
16	Update and expand the Council Procedures Bylaw, taking the Council-related recommendations herein into consideration in the Bylaw amendment.	Med	Low	LS
17	Improve communications about Council meetings, including highlighting 'hot topic' agenda items and using more channels to highlight these topics to encourage better attendance and live stream views.	High	Low	Comm LS
18	Provide at least 5 full days to review the content, releasing the content on Thursday 5:30PM before the Tuesday 5:30PM Council meeting.	Med	Low	LS
19	Consider potential improvements to the public engagement opportunities that occur during Council meetings (i.e. public hearings, public question and answer periods, and Council correspondence) that will help to better inform public engagement and improve the structure/flow of the meetings while adhering to required procedures.	Med	Low	LS Plan
20	Amend the Council Procedure Bylaw to formalize the Mayor's involvement in the process of selecting delegations to present to Council (and amend the Council Procedure Bylaw to reflect this change).	Low	Low	LS CAO

Council Meeting Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
15	Make it easier to find, navigate and search Council meeting content, including agendas, package content, presentations, minutes and video recordings.	High	High	LS
17	Improve communications about Council meetings, including highlighting 'hot topic' agenda items and using more channels to highlight these topics to encourage better attendance and live stream views.	High	Low	Comm LS
19	Consider potential improvements to the public engagement opportunities that occur during Council meetings (i.e. public hearings, public question and answer periods, and Council correspondence) that will help to better inform public engagement and improve the structure/flow of the meetings while adhering to required procedures.	Med	Low	LS Plan

Engagement Related to Planning, Land Use and Development Applications

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
21	Clarify and publicly release the criteria used for deciding when project-related and other discretionary community engagement will be conducted.	High	Low	Plan Comm
22	Establish a practice/procedure necessary to review the accuracy and completeness of the information presented by developers at discretionary engagement events.	Med	Med	Plan LS
23	Seek to make required communications and engagement content (i.e. signage and notices) appealing, accessible and readable for community members, while continuing to meet legislative requirements.	Low	Med	Comm Plan
24	Provide easy to understand information about the required engagement and related decision-making processes (including Council meetings, correspondence procedures, public hearings and other planning, land use and development procedures), helping to make them more accessible to community members.	High	Low	LS Comm

Budget & Annual Report Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
25	Increase and improve community engagement related to the draft budget/financial plan by:			
25.1	Utilizing an online engagement tool	High	High	Comm Fin
25.2	Combining the fall budget open house with other municipal events and/or other content or projects as appropriate.	High	Low	Comm Fin CAO

Committee Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
26	Conduct a review of the committees of Council, considering the following: current need/relevance, adherence to terms of reference, and diverse and inclusive composition.	Med	High	GC
27	Update and expand the Council Procedures Bylaw based on the committee review and taking these recommendations into consideration:	Med	Med	Various LS
27.1	Improve access to and consistency of the recruitment process, including the communication channels and the application submission process used.	Low	Low	Various LS
27.2	Improve information shared with the public about committee meetings and ensure it is consistent for all, including: meeting minutes that are more comprehensible for those not in attendance; and broader and more prominent communication of meetings, agenda items and the resulting minutes.	Med	Med	Various LS
27.3	Provide information to committee members 4-5 days in advance of the meetings to better inform their input and to minimize staff presentation time during the meetings.	Med	Low	Various LS

Ongoing Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead
28	Provide a more coordinated customer service experience for the various RMOW online services and interactions.	High	High	IT Comm Various
29	Continue with the design and delivery of the location-based Civic Platform mobile phone application that will allow community members to report and track resolutions to issues they encounter in the community.	High	High	IT Comm Various

Questions or comments?

- Questions?
- Comments/suggestions?

Draft Policy

Process

- Review full policy
- Gather feedback

Purpose

- Clarify when to engage the community
- Guide design and delivery
- Support good governance and decision-making
- Improve mutual understanding and trust
- Support the Vision, OCP and Corporate Plan
 - All reference the need to engage the community in decision-making.

Scope

- Project-related engagement (all)
- Discretionary public engagement related to planning, land use and development applications that is not required by legislation
 - E.g. open house events held in addition to the required public hearing
- Required public process related to the municipal budget and the annual report

Engagement Criteria

Where municipal decisions can occur in public as per the Community Charter, staff will determine whether or not to engage community members and/or stakeholders in decision-making processes based on:

- The existence of current municipal policy that can be relied upon to guide the decision;
- The scale/scope/extent of the affect on community members and/or stakeholders; and
- The degree to which community members and/or stakeholders might be concerned about and/or interested in the decision.

Guiding Principles

We will design and deliver engagement according to these guiding principles:

- Resourced – financial and human resources, including knowledge
- Inclusive – diverse and adequate participation
- Respectful – treatment, time, privacy
- Informed – quality, consistency, timeliness
- Meaningful – appropriate level, worthwhile for participants
- Transparent – clear promise, open process, report back
- Monitored – process evaluation, performance measurement

Questions or comments?

- Questions?
- Comments/suggestions?

Moving Forward

- Findings, Recommendations and Policy (complete Q3)
 - Sept. 15 Council – receive report; consideration/adoption of Policy
- Recommendations - resources, responsibilities, workplans (Q3)
- Staff Guide (Q3)
- Implementation (Q4 onwards)
 - Staff training
 - Ongoing evaluation
 - Ongoing monitoring and reporting

Thank you



Extra slides

Q1: Community Life Survey, Project planning and research

- **Corporate Plan** with 5YFP included
- **Community Life Survey:** Identify most important community issues, and gather indicator data, understand service levels, etc.
- **Project planning and research:** Staff use winter season for more the behind-the-scenes work, minimizing public engagement other than committee meetings as needed

Q2: Community Forum + online engagement

- **Community Forum (May week 1):** Public input to inform Q3 activities and provide space for other project engagement
 - Discuss and rank* community issues/priorities
 - Other projects use this event to engage community members as needed
- **Online Engagement (May week 2-3):** Similar focus/questions as the forum, including priorities and other project engagement if possible**

Q3: Council retreat + initiate budget process

- **Annual Report**
- **Council Retreat (mid-June):** Set priorities based on community input
- **Budget process begins (July):** Staff begin budget process based on community input and Council priorities
- **Audit & Finance Committee budget discussions (September)**

Q4: Budget and Recognition Event

- **Budget workshops with Council (October)**
- **Community Event (Nov. week 1):** The culmination of Q1-Q3 engagement, planning and decision-making that includes:
 - Budget open house, including use of trade-offs tool
 - Other project engagement as needed
 - Recognition event
- **Online engagement (Nov. week 2-3):** Budget trade-off tool and other engagement as needed for other projects

Proposed Annual Planning and Engagement Cycle

Notes

*Depends on whether easy ranking tool can be used

**Depends on complexity of the information)

Staff and Council Input

What are the biggest barriers to successful public engagement?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 28

- Resources are limited – time, money, space, staff (8)
- Uninformed participants – lack understanding of context, content and process (4)
- Public interest and/or capacity to participate is limited (3)
- Diversity of participants is typically low (3)
- Negative disposition of and/or delivery by the participants (2)
- Information and process – not engaging enough
- Overwhelmed – too much information and engagement
- Influence – lack of clarity about the level of engagement taking place and influence on decision-making

Project Overview

Objectives (and key deliverables)

1. Update and formalize RMOW engagement approach and commitment to the public (key deliverable: Council Policy)
2. Provide clear expectations and resources to staff to execute (key deliverable: Guide/toolkit)
3. Identify and implement improvements and additions to engagement and information channels

Scope

1. **Required** engagement – required by the Community Charter (e.g. public hearings at Council meetings)
2. **Project-related** engagement – optional activities undertaken to inform project-related* decisions
3. **Ongoing** engagement – on-demand access to municipal staff, Council and other sources of information (e.g. website, email, front desks)