HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Item No. 10.2
Halifax Regional Council
April 23, 2024
May 7, 2024

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

                  Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 26, 2024

SUBJECT: **Community Engagement Strategy 2024**

ORIGIN

November 25, 2008 Committee of the Whole motion (Item No. 3):

MOVED BY Councillor Sloane, seconded by Councillor Wile

THAT that Halifax Regional Council adopt the Draft Community Engagement Strategy in Appendix One of the report dated September 24, 2008.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 38

s. 2   The purpose of this Act is to
          (a)   give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
          (b)   enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
          (c)   recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to
                   (i) provide good government,
                   (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
                   (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

s. 34(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the revised Community Engagement Strategy and all appendices, as set out in the attachments, to provide a corporate framework for employees for the effective delivery of community engagement efforts.

2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out the actions contained in the Community Engagement Strategy as part of the multi-year budgeting and business planning process

BACKGROUND

The Halifax Regional Municipality regularly conducts community engagement to ensure its programs and services are reflective of the needs of its vibrant and diverse communities.

The community engagement landscape has changed significantly since the municipality's previous Community Engagement Strategy was developed in 2008. The Halifax region has experienced unprecedented growth over the last 16 years, largely due to an increase in immigration, and is expected to reach a population of one million residents by 2050. The municipality's approach to community engagement has evolved and matured over the past decade, drawing from increased expertise among employees working within many business units and an expanded suite of tools and channels to garner input from residents. This ranges from interactive in-person sessions (e.g. pop-ups and engagement storefronts) to leveraging advancements in digital platforms including social media and an online engagement portal.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 also forced many public and private entities to rethink their approaches to in-person engagement and shift to new digital formats. In response to these and other factors, a revised strategy, including corporate guidelines for community engagement, was identified as a deliverable in the municipality's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan.

The development of this strategy was a collaborative process, facilitated by Corporate Communications, that was informed by industry standards, foundational diversity and inclusion work previously conducted by the municipality and the insights of many internal stakeholders.

The strategy was prepared by the Community Engagement Working Group (WG), with representatives from the Chief Administrative Office (including Corporate Communications, Government Relations & External Affairs and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office), Community Safety, Halifax Transit, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development, Property, Fleet & Environment and Public Works. The WG also had representation from two partner agencies, Halifax Public Libraries and Halifax Water. Receiving input and experience in the field of community engagement from these partner agencies added value to the development of a strategy that provides the opportunity for our organizations to align approaches wherever possible (such as potential cost efficiencies through shared resources/tools).

To help ensure the strategy is meaningful, relevant and inclusive of BU needs, the WG conducted a two-pronged internal engagement approach. Throughout the summer and fall of 2023, feedback was collected from employees, as well as the Mayor and Regional Councillors, through online surveys. The WG also conducted interviews with approximately 70 senior leaders from BUs and the two partner agencies. These leaders were asked to share their vision and expectations for a revised Community Engagement Strategy.

DISCUSSION

The Community Engagement Strategy (CES – Attachment 1) provides a corporate framework for the effective delivery of community engagement efforts while enhancing the municipality's diversity and

inclusion goals, reflecting industry standards and establishing a process that ensures consistent adoption to address the rapidly changing environment of community engagement. The CES also supports the municipality's priority of being community focused by encouraging residents to be engaged in the development of public policies and plans.

The CES is supplemented by a *Community Engagement Playbook* (Appendix A), a detailed, step-by-step resource, as well as *Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement* (Appendix B) to guide the development and delivery of community engagement activities.

The CES, as well as the playbook and corporate guidelines are intended to be used together and have been informed by:

- internal engagement with employees, Mayor and Regional Council and 70 municipal senior leaders, summarized in a *What We Heard Report* (Appendix C);
- a jurisdictional scan of seven Canadian municipalities (Appendix D);
- the municipality's previous Community Engagement Strategy (2008);
- the 2023 Planning & Development Public Engagement Guidebook; and
- the Diversity & Inclusion Framework and supporting corporate strategies, frameworks and action plans that provide guidance on engaging with diverse communities.

With the goal of building a culture of community engagement within our organization, the strategy implementation is divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Build on existing community engagement practices and establish consistent standards

Phase 1 focuses on maintaining community engagement capacity and establishing a Community Engagement Advisory Group that will be leveraged to ensure alignment with the Community Engagement Strategy (CES) and associated tools/resources. Corporate Communications will act as the initial contact during Phase 1 implementation for accessing: (a) resource documents associated with the strategy; and (b) staff expertise through the Community Engagement Advisory Group.

Phase 2: Implement centralized community engagement model

Phase 2 focuses on building the municipality's community engagement capacity through a fully centralized model. This centralized model would allow structural adjustments to leverage existing employees to better coordinate community engagement efforts.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for Phase 1 implementation, as the costs associated with deliverables (e.g. public engagement to validate the CES) will be supported by existing budgets.

As this phased approach is adopted, the municipality will assess the need for incremental resources and training, which may have budgetary implications for future fiscal years. Additionally, some elements of Phase 2 (e.g. development of community profiles) may be able to be implemented during Phase 1 pending existing resource and funding availability.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations were identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Aside from the internal engagement noted, no public community engagement was completed.

As part of Phase 2 implementation, public engagement will be conducted to verify the CES with residents. However, Phase 1 implementation can proceed in tandem to establish the CES internally.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council could choose not to approve the revised Community Engagement Strategy

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Community Engagement Strategy
Appendix A: Community Engagement Playbook
Appendix B: Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement
Appendix C: Internal Engagement: What We Heard Report
Appendix D: Jurisdictional scan

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Maggie-Jane Spray/Manager, Internal Communications/Corporate Communications 902.476.6464

Community Engagement Strategy

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY 2024

Prepared by:
Community Engagement Strategy Working Group

Last reviewed and updated by:
Lauren Wilkie and Maggie-Jane Spray
March 2024

HALIFAX

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the Halifax Regional Municipality is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We honor their enduring connection to this land, rooted in rich histories, cultures, and invaluable contributions to this region. The Halifax Regional Municipality also acknowledges the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed in this Territory and recognizes that we are all Treaty People.

The municipality's commitment to improved community engagement is fundamental in the pursuit of reconciliation. By fostering open dialogue and inclusivity, we aim to honor the past, acknowledge the deep impacts of colonialism, and work towards a future where diverse voices are heard and valued. Through this engagement strategy, we strive to build bridges, grow connections and collectively shape a more equitable and harmonious community.

Planning for the future presents an opportunity to embrace Etuaptmumk – Two-Eyed Seeing, in which we learn to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing. In doing so, we learn to use both perspectives for the benefit of all.

AFFIRMATION

We acknowledge that Nova Scotia is the birthplace of the African presence in Canada.

African Nova Scotians are a distinct founding people in our community who have contributed to and have been a key part of Nova Scotian culture and history for over 400 years.

We acknowledge that African teachings, strength and perseverance continue to challenge and inspire our community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a local government representing approximately half a million residents, the Halifax Regional Municipality regularly conducts community engagement to ensure its programs and services are reflective of the needs of its vibrant and diverse communities. Community engagement is also the basis for building safer, more involved and inclusive communities.

The community engagement landscape has changed significantly since the municipality's previous Community Engagement Strategy was developed in 2008. The Halifax region has experienced unprecedented growth over the last 16 years, largely due to an increase in immigration, and is expected to reach a population of one million residents by 2050. The municipality's approach to community engagement has evolved and matured over the past decade, drawing from increased expertise among employees working within many business units and an expanded suite of tools and channels to garner input from residents. This ranges from interactive in-person sessions (e.g. pop-ups and engagement storefronts) to leveraging advancements in digital platforms including social media and an online engagement portal.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 also forced many public and private entities to rethink their approaches to in-person engagement and shift to new digital formats. In response to these and other factors, a revised strategy, including corporate guidelines for community engagement, was identified as a deliverable in the municipality's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan.

This Community Engagement Strategy (CES) provides a corporate framework for the effective delivery of community engagement efforts while enhancing the municipality's diversity and inclusion goals, reflecting industry standards and establishing a process that ensures consistent adoption to address the rapidly changing environment of community engagement. The CES also supports the municipality's priority of being community focused by encouraging residents to be engaged in the development of public policies and plans.

For the purpose of this document, "community engagement" is defined as activities led by the municipality to inform, consult with or seek feedback from residents and key partners to guide municipal policies, initiatives, developments or strategies.

The CES is supplemented by a *Community Engagement Playbook* (Appendix A), a detailed, step-by-step resource, as well as *Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement* (Appendix B) to guide the development and delivery of community engagement activities.

The CES, as well as the playbook and corporate guidelines are intended to be used together and have been informed by:

- internal engagement with employees, Mayor and Regional Council and 70 municipal senior leaders, summarized in a *What We Heard Report* (Appendix C);

- a jurisdictional scan of seven Canadian municipalities (Appendix D);

- the municipality's previous Community Engagement Strategy (2008);

- the 2023 Planning & Development Public Engagement Guidebook; and

- the Diversity & Inclusion Framework and supporting corporate strategies, frameworks and action plans that provide guidance on engaging with diverse communities (outlined on page 14).

The CES builds on municipal and community strengths to map out the current processes for community engagement, while also addressing key areas in need of improvement. The strategic actions outlined in the CES aim to:

- establish consistent practices and standards across municipal business units by introducing guidelines and tools;

- streamline and centralize engagement information (e.g. opportunities, findings) through an organizational engagement calendar/repository tool;

- provide clear and practical tools, resources, guides and training for employees who regularly participate in the delivery of community engagement;

- enhance transparency and residents' trust in the municipality's engagement efforts;

- establish specific processes for equitable and inclusive engagement with diverse and underrepresented groups, supported by the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (D&I/ANSAIO).

This strategy is a living document that will be reviewed and updated bi-annually to ensure it is reflective of the current regional profile and community engagement landscape.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Why we engage

The Halifax Regional Municipality defines "community engagement" as activities led by the municipality to inform, consult with or seek feedback from residents and key partners to guide municipal policies, initiatives, developments or strategies.

Meaningful engagement can help to strengthen relationships between the municipal government and its many diverse communities. Community engagement helps promote a culture of co-creation and transparency by providing equitable opportunities for community members to participate in policies, decisions and programs that impact them. The municipality seeks to build authentic relationships with communities to foster trust, respect and collaboration by addressing barriers as they arise, and being open and honest about the degree to which engagement results will impact a project. By actively listening to different perspectives, the municipality can continue to grow and evolve with the communities it serves.

Vision:

- A Halifax region where community engagement effectively captures and reflects the diverse needs, voices and perspectives of a municipality growing to more than 1 million residents by 2050.

- A municipality constantly striving to enhance its diversity and inclusion goals and foster trusting, authentic and collaborative relationships with the many communities that make the Halifax region vibrant and diverse.

- An organization with an established community engagement framework and clear processes, reflecting industry standards, that are consistently applied to effectively address the rapidly changing environment of public engagement.

Approach and methodology

A revised Community Engagement Strategy, including corporate guidelines for all community engagement, was identified as a deliverable in the municipality's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan. The development of this strategy was a collaborative process that benefited from industry standards, foundational diversity and inclusion work previously conducted by the municipality and the experience and wisdom of many collaborators including the Mayor, Regional Council and all municipal business units (BUs).

Community Engagement Strategy Working Group and Steering Committee

The Community Engagement Working Group (WG) led the development of this strategy and supporting deliverables, facilitated and supported by two members of Corporate Communications who served as project managers. The WG was comprised of representatives from seven BUs across the organization who regularly facilitate or contribute to community engagement efforts, including those with competencies or experience in community engagement. These BUs include:

- Chief Administrative Office, including Corporate Communications, Government Relations & External Affairs (GREA) and D&I/ANSAIO

- Community Safety

- Halifax Transit

- Parks & Recreation

- Planning & Development

- Property, Fleet & Environment

- Public Works

The WG also had representation from two partner agencies, Halifax Public Libraries and Halifax Water. At key milestones throughout the project, the WG engaged municipal and partner agency employees and contributors to help shape the strategy. NATIONAL Public Relations was contracted, with expertise in community engagement and strategy development, to complete a contemporary jurisdictional scan, compile the work completed by the WG and refine a draft of the strategy.

The WG reported to a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the senior leadership team, including the Executive Director of Planning & Development, the Managing Director of D&I/ANSAIO and the Managing Director of Corporate Communications. The Steering Committee, Chief Administrative Officer and Chief of Staff were kept apprised of the WG's progress through bi-monthly progress reports from the project managers and provided guidance and endorsement throughout the strategy development process.

Industry standards

This strategy builds upon the municipality's 2008 Community Engagement Strategy and other foundational work completed by Planning & Development in 2023, that resulted in a new guidebook for community engagement specific to the planning sector. Every effort was taken to ensure that this strategy builds on that guidebook and embodies the same principles of accessibility, diversity and inclusion that drove that work.

The Diversity & Inclusion Framework and supporting corporate strategies, frameworks and action plans outlined in Section 2 are also foundational to this strategy. Since the Office of Diversity & Inclusion was established in 2015, significant community engagement has been undertaken to inform how the municipality engages with underrepresented communities. This strategy reflects the actions and insights learned from this previous work as part of an evolving body of knowledge.

This strategy is also informed by both industry standards for similar municipal endeavours and the unique needs of the Halifax Regional Municipality. A jurisdictional scan was conducted to ensure alignment with similar approaches and the extensive internal engagement efforts helped tailor the approach to the organization's unique needs. A detailed summary of the jurisdictional scan and internal engagement can be found below.

Internal engagement: What we heard
See Appendix C: Internal Engagement: What We Heard Report

To help ensure the strategy is meaningful, relevant and inclusive of BU needs, the WG conducted a two-pronged internal engagement approach. Throughout the summer and fall of 2023, feedback was collected from employees, as well as the Mayor and Regional Councillors, through two online surveys. The WG also conducted interviews with approximately 70 senior leaders from BUs and two partner agencies, Halifax Water and Halifax Public Libraries. These leaders were asked to share their vision and expectations for a revised Community Engagement Strategy.

Feedback from internal engagement efforts can be grouped in the following themes:

- **Consistent guidelines and practices:** A need for clear direction and standards for how and when community engagement occurs (e.g. timelines for engagement processes, minimum standards, protocols for the role of elected officials, etc.).

- **Dedicated, trained engagement staff:** A more coordinated and integrated approach to engagement across the organization could be achieved with trained staff dedicated to the planning and delivery of public engagement. The specialized engagement staff would increase collaboration across BUs and help to minimize engagement fatigue among residents.

- **Organizational engagement calendar and repository of data:** Maintaining a schedule of planned engagements could help enhance visibility of engagement efforts across the municipality and reduce engagement fatigue. This schedule should be accessible to all BUs to enhance planning and collaboration and ease access to data gleaned from previous engagement efforts.

- **Transparency and trust:** To help build trust, the municipality must be transparent about how feedback will be used and also report back on how it was incorporated. Engagement must be authentic and not a "check in the box."

- **Online vs. in-person sessions:** Additional clarity on optimal engagement formats for varying audiences is needed. Online formats have challenges with accessibility, while in-person sessions are often poorly attended.

- **Strategies for equitable and inclusive engagement:** Additional guidance and resources are needed for how to engage equitably and inclusively with diverse communities (e.g. processes for providing honorariums, offering childcare options, travel reimbursement for participants, accessibility requirements, etc.).

- **Community partnerships:** The importance of building relationships with the community and having D&I/ANSAIO facilitate these connections was a key theme. Partnering with Halifax Public Libraries has also been successful, and capacity exists for library employees to further support municipal engagement efforts.

Jurisdictional scan: Key themes

See Appendix D: Jurisdictional scan

The WG commissioned a jurisdictional scan that compares and contrasts public engagement practices from seven other Canadian municipalities: **Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, Ottawa, the Region of Waterloo and St. John's**. These jurisdictions were selected due to their similarities to the Halifax Regional Municipality in one or more of the following categories: population, demographics, landform, Council priorities and/or municipal operating budget. Information was collected through a variety of sources, including government websites, Statistics Canada and direct communications with current or former employees of the aforementioned municipalities.

The following summarizes common themes found across all seven jurisdictions:

- All municipalities have either an engagement strategy or framework to ensure consistent practices are used across the organization. Each of the strategic documents list guiding principles for public engagement. Most include at least one related to diversity and inclusion.

- With the exception of Edmonton and the Region of Waterloo, most municipalities provide implementation tools to support employees in conducting engagement. Calgary has published a detailed process chart on their website, which includes approximately 10 tools for employees, such as an engagement assessment and a facilitation guide. Victoria includes an employee tool as an appendix to their framework, while Vancouver leverages tools, charts and checklists found in a third-party resource. Ottawa has a , in addition to their strategy, which includes numerous worksheets, charts and fillable decision matrices to support employees in conducting engagement.

- All but two municipalities have centralized engagement functions within their organization, which rest in the same department as the corporate communications function. Ottawa and the Region of Waterloo are the exceptions. Ottawa relies on a corporate public engagement strategy, staff training, a toolkit and an inter-departmental public engagement sub-committee. The Region of Waterloo relies on a public engagement strategy that does not specify whether public engagement is carried out by a designated centralized function or all municipal employees across different teams.

- All municipalities use a version of International Association for Public Participation 2 (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement, and list a promise/commitment associated with each level.
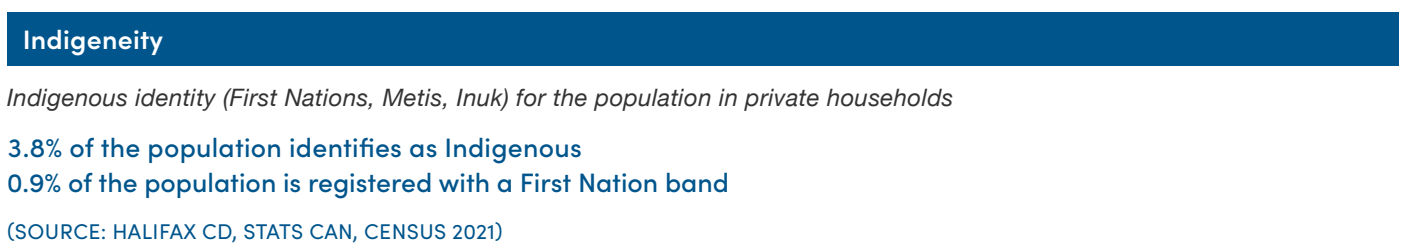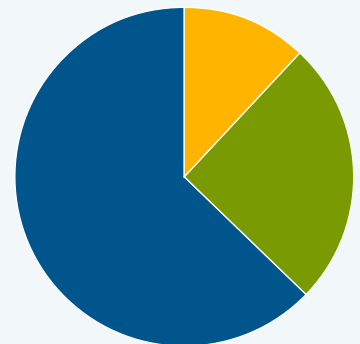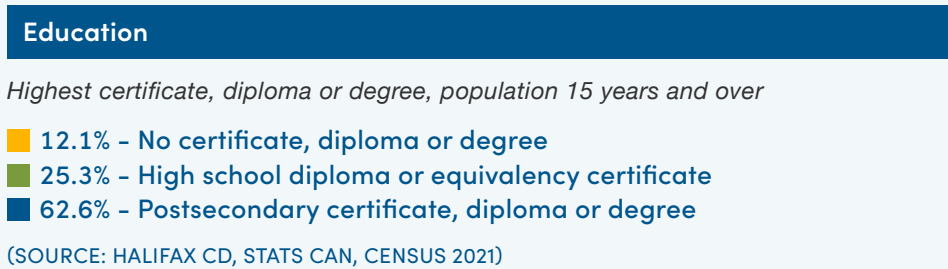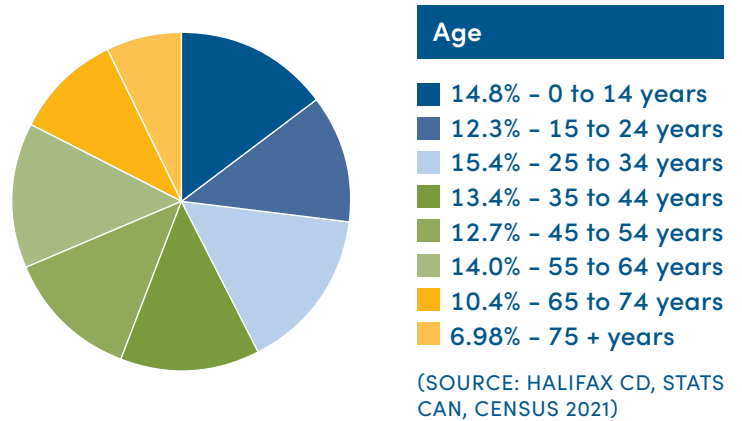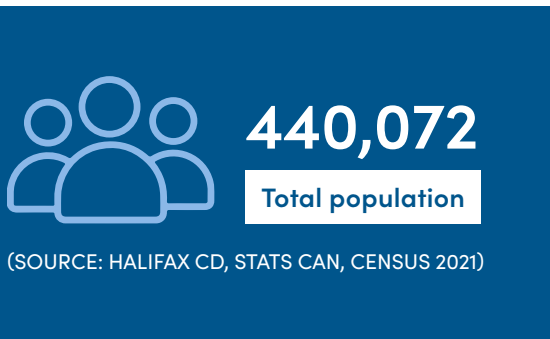
- All seven of the engagement strategies name "inclusion" as a guiding principle, and three are specifically rooted in diversity and inclusion. In particular, Victoria's engagement model was developed with diversity and inclusion at the core, rather than D&I simply being a lens that is applied to public engagement after-the-fact.

- All municipalities share a common definition of public engagement as a means of gathering information and input from communities affected by a project or decision. Municipalities place more or less emphasis on the active involvement of the community. Those that place the most emphasis on active involvement frame public engagement as a "connection" and "purposeful dialogue."

- Several municipalities emphasize continuous learning and improvement as a core value for their strategy and produce after-action reports or other documentation to reflect on successes and areas for improvement. Sharing timely and clear information about a project and the associated engagement efforts is also a key value of several public engagement strategies.

- All municipalities leverage an online engagement platform, similar to Shape Your City Halifax. Most offer mailing lists and list all engagement opportunities in one space. Five of the seven jurisdictions have a comprehensive central repository or library of previous engagements and/or learnings that can be referenced by residents. An analysis of traffic to these sites is included as an appendix to this document.

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE UNIQUE CONTEXT OF THE HALIFAX REGION FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Snapshot of the Halifax Regional Municipality from Statistics Canada

Residents across the municipality are diverse in all elements of identity and experience. The following graphs provide a snapshot of the demographics in the Halifax region.

These statistics provide one avenue for understanding the municipality's residents. Knowing the different elements of residents' identities can better inform community engagement approaches to ensure all residents can be meaningfully involved and see themselves represented in the decision-making process.

440,072

Total population

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Age

- 14.8% – 0 to 14 years
- 12.3% – 15 to 24 years
- 15.4% – 25 to 34 years
- 13.4% – 35 to 44 years
- 12.7% – 45 to 54 years
- 14.0% – 55 to 64 years
- 10.4% – 65 to 74 years
- 6.98% – 75 + years

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Education

Highest certificate, diploma or degree, population 15 years and over

- 12.1% – No certificate, diploma or degree
- 25.3% – High school diploma or equivalency certificate
- 62.6% – Postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Indigeneity

Indigenous identity (First Nations, Metis, Inuk) for the population in private households

3.8% of the population identifies as Indigenous
0.9% of the population is registered with a First Nation band

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Visible minority

Note: "Visible minority" is the census term used by Statistics Canada, defined by the Employment Equity Act. In contrast, the municipality uses the term "racialized population".

16.7% – Total population identifying as a visible minority
4.7% – Black
3.8% – South Asian
2.2% – Chinese
2.2% – Arab
1.0% – Filipino
0.5% – Multiple visible minority identities
0.5% – Latin American
0.4% – Southeast Asian
0.4% – West Asian
0.5% – Korean
0.2% – Japanese

There are 11 historic African Nova Scotian communities within the Halifax Regional Municipality: Beechville, Upper Hammonds Plains, Africville, Lucasville, Cobequid Road, Halifax, Dartmouth, Lake Loon, Cherrybrook, North Preston and East Preston.

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

11.6%
Immigration

11.6% of the total population are immigrants. Of residents who recently immigrated to the Halifax region, the highest number were born in Nigeria, China, India, Philippines and Syria. *Note: "Recently immigrated" means obtained landed immigrant or permanent resident status between Jan. 1, 2016 and May 11, 2021).*
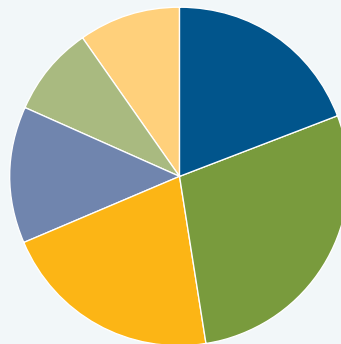
(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

28.5%
Disability

28.5% of residents identify as having a disability.
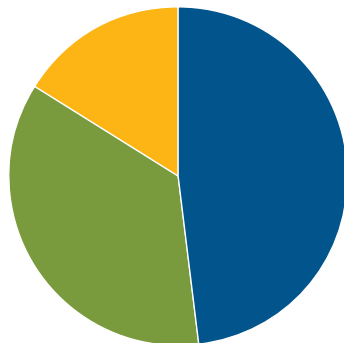
(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Income

Individual income of population 15 years and over in 2020 in private households.

- 19.2% $0–$19,999
- 28.5% $20,000–$39,999
- 21% $40,000–$59,999
- 13.2% $60,000–$79,999
- 8.6% $80,000–$99,999
- 9.6% $100,000 and over

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Housing

Does not include dwellings provided by First Nation bands.

- 57.5% of households own their dwelling
- 42.5% of households rent their dwelling
- 19.1% of households in the municipality spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs *(shelter that costs 30% or more of income is considered unaffordable)*

According to the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, as of February 2024, 1,123 people reported being homeless in the Halifax region.

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Language

- 84.6% of residents' first language is English.
- 2.3% of residents' first language is French.
- 10.5% of residents speak a first language other than English and French.
  Of these, the most common first languages are: Arabic (1.6%), Mandarin (1.4%), Punjabi (0.7%), Spanish (0.5%), Korean (0.5%) and Tagalog (0.5%). 0.6% of residents do not speak English or French (are not able to have a conversation in either language).
- 2.7% residents reported multiple first languages.
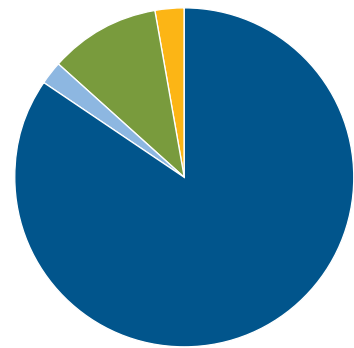
The *Mi'kmaw Language Act* (enacted in October 2022) recognizes Mi'kmaw as the original language of Nova Scotia.

(SOURCE: HALIFAX CD, STATS CAN, CENSUS 2021)

Rooting community engagement in equity, diversity and inclusion

Inclusive, meaningful and equitable community engagement is, at its core, a necessary avenue to ensure municipal decisions, programs and services respond to and serve the municipality's diverse residents.

Rooting our approach to community engagement in values of equity, diversity and inclusion means ensuring *all* residents have the opportunity to participate in engagements. But it also means much more than this.

It means considering issues of power and equity when deciding how and when communities can influence a decision. It means taking seriously our commitment to engage meaningfully with Indigenous People during decision-making processes regarding projects, policies or developments that may impact their rights, lands or resources. Sometimes, it means working alongside communities as co-creators in situations where we may have only ever engaged superficially in the past.

To approach community engagement through the values of equity, diversity and inclusion means considering issues of equity, diversity and inclusion at all stages and in all elements of community engagement and relationship building.

It means being aware that the who, what, when, where and why of engagements can have serious implications for communities if we don't consider and respond to their diverse and unique needs and contexts.

It also means engaging in ways that acknowledge, respond to and seek to repair injustices and harms the municipality has caused communities through inadequate or inequitable engagement and, in the particular context of African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities, the deliberate and discriminatory exclusion from decisions that have had devastating impacts for generations of residents, their families and communities.

Since the establishment of the municipality's 2008 Community Engagement Strategy, many municipal employees, residents and community partners have worked together to establish strategies, frameworks and action plans to guide how the municipality and diverse communities work together to build equitable, just, sustainable, safe and healthy communities and shift municipal services, programs, and approaches to reflect these same values.

This updated Community Engagement Strategy seeks to honour and respond to the findings of this robust body of work and lay out approaches and actions that reflect the insights communities across the municipality have provided regarding how we engage and work together.

The principles, approaches and recommended actions from the following municipal strategies and frameworks are integrated into this updated strategy. Further, it is critical that any future work connected to this strategy also integrates these insights and approaches.

- Diversity & Inclusion Framework (2018)

- Anti-Black Racism Strategy & Action Plan Community Engagements – What We Heard Report (2022) and forthcoming Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan (to be completed in 2024)

- Report of the Task Force on the Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History (2020)

- Sharing our Stories: The Halifax Regional Municipality's Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan (2022)

- Accessibility Strategy (2021)

- Gender-Based Analysis+ Toolkit (2021)

- Women & Gender Equity Strategy (to be completed in 2026)

- Immigration Strategy 2022-2026

- Planning & Development Public Engagement Guidebook (2023)

- Public Safety Strategy (2023-2026)

- A Framework to Address Homelessness in the Halifax Regional Municipality (2023)

- Rural Recreation Strategy (2023) and forthcoming Rural Plan (to be completed in early 2025)

SECTION 3: HOW WE ENGAGE

Guiding principles

The following five principles guide the municipality's engagement practices. The principles describe the municipality's commitment to communities when designing and delivering community engagement and are based on:

- the municipality's previous Community Engagement Strategy (2008)

- an understanding of existing municipal engagement practices

- a jurisdictional scan of seven Canadian municipalities and alignment with best practices

- the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

Guiding principle	Commitment to the community
Transparency	The municipality will commit to **transparency** in the design and delivery of engagement processes to ensure participants know what to expect and how their input will be used. Residents can expect the municipality to clearly communicate: • purpose and timelines of the engagement • the level of engagement participants should expect and how their contributions will be used both overall and if relevant in different phases of the project • what decisions have already been made and what residents will or will not have the opportunity to provide input on or discuss • concise summaries of "what we heard" following engagement
Accessibility and inclusion	The municipality will work to identify and address barriers to participation and create space for diverse voices to ensure **accessible and inclusive** engagement processes. The municipality will: • strive to inform and engage all communities who are impacted by changes or decisions being considered • ensure engagement is broadly accessible and all individuals are given every reasonable opportunity to participate • consider and address the diverse needs of participants
Trust and respect	The municipality will strive to build **trust and respect** through meaningful relationship-building with individuals and communities. The municipality will: • engage proactively before key decisions have been made and continue engaging throughout a project • work to identify and respond to community context to create tailored community engagement plans • be clear about the degree and manner in which community members can influence projects or decisions • create safe, welcoming spaces where participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas • welcome diverse views, values and interests

Guiding principle	Commitment to the community
Timely and clear communication	The municipality will strive for **timely and clear communication** to ensure individuals are aware of, invited to and kept informed of engagement opportunities. The municipality will: • provide notice for upcoming engagement opportunities as early as possible and adjust project timelines as needed to provide sufficient notice • communicate using plain, accessible language while providing the information individuals need to participate effectively • make information easily accessible and tailor it to the needs of individuals and communities (e.g. translated materials or interpretation services in alignment with the municipality's Multilingual Policy)
Continuous learning	The municipality is committed to **continuous learning** by seeking feedback and incorporating lessons learned to improve future engagement processes. The municipality will: • seek feedback from participants on how they feel about municipal engagement processes • evaluate engagement activities • identify opportunities, challenges and lessons learned for future engagements • consider adjusting engagement approaches and activities based on feedback

Spectrum of engagement

The municipality has adopted the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)'s Spectrum of Public Participation, which is designed to classify the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process.

Every project is different and has unique engagement needs. Some projects may have multiple phases and decisions that allow for various levels of influence.

This strategy aims to ensure that every project:

• provides the appropriate level of engagement based on factors like design, engineering, budget, Regional Council requirements and legal obligations; and

• sets clear and realistic objectives that outline the level of participation so residents understand the influence they can have on the project.

Wherever possible, the municipality strives toward a more involved, collaborative and empowering approach to 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 and/ or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/ or decision.	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.

Source: International Association of Public Participation (IAPs)'s Spectrum of Public Participation

Spectrum of engagement promising practices

The spectrum of engagement is a helpful way of categorizing engagement types but must be used thoughtfully and always with an intersectional equity lens. At each level of engagement, the municipality will seek to identify and address barriers to participation to ensure an inclusive and representative engagement of residents. Determining how and when the municipality engages with communities on a particular initiative or issue might, in and of itself, need to be a decision made collaboratively with community. The context of an initiative or project, unique histories of involved communities, past harms and issues of equity are all factors that inform how and when community is involved in decision making.

In the development of strategies, frameworks and complex initiatives, working with community to determine which actions should be implemented with consultation versus co-creation is a emerging practice. For example, during the development of *Sharing our Stories: the Halifax Regional Municipality's Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan*, the municipality facilitated a process whereby municipal employees and communities worked together to determine how and when community should be involved and engaged in actions arising from the plan.

Steps for community engagement

Every initiative at the municipality is different and has unique engagement needs. The playbook provides key steps and considerations for community engagement efforts to ensure they are effective, accessible, inclusive, consistent with industry standards and aligned with the municipality's goals and obligations. If it is unclear whether community engagement should be undertaken for a policy, program, project or service, employees must be provided direction by their supervisor and/or Executive Director.

The Community Engagement Playbook (Appendix A) further elaborates on the following key steps and considerations for all types of engagements to ensure they are effective, accessible and inclusive.

1. Assess the need for and purpose of community engagement
A series of impact assessments are completed based on legislative requirements, Regional Council direction and more. These assessments help determine if there is an opportunity for engagement and help to inform engagement objectives. The appropriate level of engagement on the Spectrum of Engagement is determined based on the impact a project may have and the potential influence the community can hold on a project's outcome.

2. Identify who is impacted and familiarize yourself with the communities
Working with D&I/ANSAIO and internal subject matter experts, insights are gathered about the communities that are impacted by the project to help inform engagement. Considerations include community demographics, resources and broad representative participation. As many communities have been historically underrepresented in, and excluded from, participation, engagement strategies aim to centre the voices, interests, values and experiences of underrepresented identities and cultural groups.

3. Design a tailored engagement plan
Engagement plans consider the messaging, goals, audience, methods, timing and resources required for robust public participation.

4. Identify and address barriers to participation
Identifying and addressing barriers to participation is achieved by considering the communities who may be impacted. Barriers to participation may be physical, informational, attitudinal, technological, cultural, etc. and include anything that prevents a resident from fully participating in an engagement opportunity. Anticipating and addressing barriers to participation means asking critical questions to understand how and why persons are excluded and what steps can be taken to foster more inclusive and accessible engagement.

5. Design engagement activities
Working with Corporate Communications, digital and traditional channels are leveraged to reach the right audiences. Communication is clear, timely, accessible and in plain language.

6. Deliver engagement
The effectiveness of engagements is continuously monitored and key partners are communicated with regularly to build and foster authentic relationships. Careful consideration is placed on building trust and centring marginalized voices during engagement to ensure feedback is reflective of the community's needs. This includes offering a welcoming environment and providing adequate resources when facilitating meetings. Project updates are made available to residents indicating project status and timelines, how feedback was or will be incorporated into the decision-making process, what will happen next and how residents can continue to participate.

7. Review, analyze and report feedback
Organized records of all engagement activities are maintained to ensure all feedback is considered. A summary of the feedback is shared with participants and the community.

8. Evaluate engagement
By evaluating engagement activities, issues are identified and addressed to inform future municipal engagements. Learning about what went well and what didn't helps to design future engagements that are more effective, equitable, inclusive and responsive to the needs of communities. The following are examples of how to evaluate if the engagement objectives were achieved: attendance numbers, demographics, quantity and quality of input gathered, feedback on and response to engagement, etc.

SECTION 4: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

This strategy presents a refreshed framework for community engagement, informed by the increasingly diverse make-up of the municipality and the need for more consistent practices grounded in equity and inclusion, while maintaining an ability to tailor engagement to the needs of specific communities and the type and scale of the initiative.

With the ultimate goal of building a culture of community engagement within the municipality, the strategy implementation can be divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Build on existing community engagement practices and establish consistent standards

Phase 1 focuses on maintaining community engagement capacity and establishing a Community Engagement Advisory Group that will be leveraged to ensure alignment with the Community Engagement Strategy (CES) and associated tools/resources. To help centralize support for employees initiating community engagement efforts, Corporate Communications will act as the initial contact during Phase 1 implementation for accessing: (a) resource documents associated with the strategy; and (b) staff expertise through the Community Engagement Advisory Group.

Phase 2: Implement centralized community engagement model

Phase 2 focuses on building the municipality's community engagement capacity through a fully centralized model. This centralized model would allow structural adjustments to leverage existing employees to better coordinate community engagement efforts.

As this phased approach is adopted, the municipality will assess resource requirements and training, which may have budgetary implications for future fiscal years. Additionally, some elements of Phase 2 (e.g. development of community profiles) may be able to be implemented during Phase 1 pending existing resource and funding availability.

Phase 1: Build on existing community engagement practices and establish consistent standards

Corporate Communications will be the contact for employees during the Phase 1 implementation. Inquiries from business unit clients will be facilitated by their designated Client Strategist. Since Corporate Communications does not have the expertise or capacity to provide community engagement services or advice, the Client Strategists will triage inquiries as follows:

1. for questions that are addressed in the Community Engagement Strategy (and associated tools/resources), the Client Strategist will provide the answer and direct the client to the appropriate documentation for future reference.

2. for questions that require expertise, insights and advice regarding community engagement, the Client Strategist will advise that someone will follow up with them. The Client Strategist will then engage an appropriate member of the Community Engagement Advisory Group, asking that they follow up with the client (and CC the Client Strategist so there's awareness the loop has been closed).

Objectives		Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
1.	Maintain community engagement capacity and establish Community Engagement Advisory Group	a. Develop Terms of Reference and Governance documents for the creation of a Community Engagement Advisory Group.	Corporate Communications	• Establishment of Community Engagement Advisory Group, with agenda requirements for record keeping	Q1 2024/25

Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
1. Maintain community engagement capacity and establish Community Engagement Advisory Group	b. In addition to maintaining community engagement employees and activities that are embedded within business units (BUs), the Community Engagement Advisory Group will be leveraged to ensure alignment with the Community Engagement Strategy (CES) and associated tools/resources. The Advisory Group will track current/upcoming community engagement initiatives and be a resource to provide advice to employees leading engagement activities, as well as provide recommendations for updates to the CES, as needed.	Community Engagement Advisory Group	• Creation of a shared calendar (accessible to employees not the public) for all municipally-led engagement activities is developed to support planning of engagement activities. • Showcase planned engagement events in a publicly-accessible calendar of events • A dedicated online location (via SharePoint) is created to share documents, reports and other resources with key BU partners • Establishment of quarterly meetings for the Community Engagement Advisory Group	Q1 2024/25
	c. Review and update the CES to ensure continued alignment with best practices and organizational needs	Community Engagement Advisory Group	• CES updates are shared with internal audiences on an annual basis going forward, addressing gaps or needs from municipal staff and/or community	Bi-annually
2. Continue to build community trust and partnerships	a. Business units will continue to engage D&I/ANSAIO at the onset of planning for community engagement activities to help broker community connections and advise staff on the history and nuances of specific communities. Guidance gleaned from D&I/ANSAIO team members will be integrated as appropriate into the project plan by the business unit/project manager.	D&I/ANSAIO, Corporate Communications and Community Engagement Advisory Group	• All community engagement plans receive input from D&I/ANSAIO • Consistent input from diverse or marginalized communities through engagement activities	Ongoing
	b. Continue share information with the Councillors' Support Office to enable easy access to engagement information for Regional Council to share with their constituents.	Councillors' Support Office, Corporate Communications and Community Engagement Advisory Group	• Information consistently shared on upcoming community engagement activities	Ongoing

Objectives		Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
2.	Continue to build community trust and partnerships	c. Connect with established municipal programs and business units that have existing relationships in diverse communities to partner and assist on new and existing community engagement initiatives and projects, such as Halifax Public Libraries.	Halifax Public Libraries, Corporate Communications and Community Engagement Advisory Group	• Consistent collaboration on community engagement activities	Ongoing
		d. Adopt consistent terminology around community engagement (e.g. public information meeting vs. public open house) to communicate clearly and consistently about the level of influence the audience has on the engagement.	Community Engagement Advisory Group, staff leading community engagement and Corporate Communications	• Consistent use of terminology across community engagement initiatives, including in communications planning and materials (e.g. webpages, social media, print and digital products)	Reviewed annually
		e. Adopt consistent practices around feedback on, and evaluation of, engagement methods to support enduring trust and partnership with communities.	Community Engagement Advisory Group and staff leading community engagement	• Standardize and collect feedback and evaluation materials for all community engagement initiatives	Ongoing
3.	Refine and implement community engagement tools and resources	a. Establish a centralized intranet page for all community engagement documents and tools.	Corporate Communications	• Number of site visitors at launch and ongoing	Launched Q1 2024/25. Reviewed bi–annually/ as needed
		b. Consistently leverage the CES Playbook and resources as part of the implementation of this strategy to ensure consistency across all business units.	Community Engagement Advisory Group and Corporate Communications	• Click-through on materials at launch and ongoing	Launched Q1 2024/25. Reviewed bi–annually/ as needed
		c. Adopt IAP2 as standard for all community engagement activities	Community Engagement Advisory Group and Corporate Communications	• Adoption of IAP2 for all municipal staff • Opportunities for municipal staff to take IAP2 training (external)	Q1 2024/25

Objectives		Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration

3.	Refine and implement community engagement tools and resources	d. Provide curated list of Learning and Development opportunities that support the implementation and execution of the CES, including:
		
		• Community engagement tools and resources (to be developed as part of strategy roll-out, if required)
		
		• IAP2 training (external)
		
		• D&I and Accessibility Training (including, but not limited to the below):
		
		  ◦ Parlez-vous français? – Understanding Acadian and Francophone Communities and French Services
		
		  ◦ Going from Support to Inclusion: Accessibility Training
		
		  ◦ Diversity and Inclusion: An Overview
		
		  ◦ Reaching Out from Afrocentric Place
		
		  ◦ Indigenous Blanket Exercise
		
		  ◦ GBA+ Toolkit Training
		
		  ◦ Anti-Black Racism training
		
		  ◦ Multilingual Policy (anticipated completion in 2024)
		
		  ◦ Media training (as required).
			Community Engagement Advisory Group and Corporate Communications	• Development and implementation of Community Engagement Tools and Resources training
				
				• All members of the Community Engagement Advisory Group have taken the recommended training
					Q1 2024/25

		e. Ensure continued availability of a digital community engagement platform to allow residents to engage online, learn about new engagement opportunities and to provide status updates on ongoing projects.	Corporate Communications	• Successful procurement of digital community engagement platform (contract with current provider is at end of life)	Procurement process to begin by August 2024

Phase 2: Implement centralized community engagement model

	Objectives	Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
1.	Build organizational community engagement capacity	a. Create a Community Engagement team as a new division in the CAO business unit, to implement, operationalize and provide guidance on the CES and all community engagement activities for the municipality	CAO's Office	• A minimum of two FTE positions are onboarded, including a Community Engagement Specialist and an Engagement Coordinator • The Community Engagement team/office mandate is established to ensure community engagement activities are coordinated across the municipality • A shared municipal contacts database for diverse community partners is developed • Quarterly reporting is established whereby the Community Engagement team/office provides reports on community engagement to the CAO and/or Regional Council	2025/26 – ongoing
2.	Enhance community trust and partnerships	a. Led by the Community Engagement team, shift from a project-based engagement approach to regular relationship building to foster genuine trust and collaboration	Corporate Communications and Community Engagement team	• Develop annual Community Partners networking event(s) with guest speakers from diverse communities, followed by networking to encourage conversations and relationship building. Encourage employees from all levels of the organization to attend. • Steward organization-wide strategies and approaches to ensure the municipality is moving towards meaningful engagement with diverse communities including residents in different geographies (rural/urban and spanning all of the municipality), African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+, women and gender-diverse residents, youth, residents experiencing homelessness and residents with disabilities • Other measures of success to be determined as scope of work and mandate is established	2025/26 – ongoing

Objectives		Strategic Actions	Lead	Success Measures	Duration
3.	Invest in community profiles research	a.Led by the Community Engagement team/office and in collaboration with D&I/ANSAIO, develop comprehensive community profiles to assist in establishing organizational understanding of the diverse communities and individuals in the municipality. • These profiles should include resources to help participants understand equity and inclusion issues and address them in their day-to-day work when engaging with community. • The municipality should partner with community organizations to craft community profiles, as appropriate. • Profiles should be updated when new Statistics Canada data is released to ensure they are kept relevant to changing community needs.	Community Engagement team and Corporate Communications	• Procurement of contract writer for establishing community profiles • Acceptance of community profiles by CAO's Office • Annual reviews of community profiles in-line with the release of new Statistics Canada data	2025/26 – reviewed annually

4.	Tools, resources and training	a. Develop, implement and lead a suite of learning programs for community engagement that includes the following:
		
		• Community Engagement Best Practices (IAP2)
		
		• Community Engagement Tools and Resources (internal and dependent on needed tools for engagement)
		
		• D&I and Accessibility Training to be developed (including those noted in Phase 1):
		  ◦ Protocol training
		  ◦ Event planning
		  ◦ Facilitation training.
			Community Engagement team, Corporate Communications and D&I/ANSAIO	• Standardization of required training for all staff leading Community Engagement
				
				• Creation and implementation of any new trainings, as required
					2025/26

GLOSSARY

Acadian: Acadians are the descendants of the 17th and 18th century French settlers of Acadia (French: Acadie) in the northeastern region of North America comprising parts of what are now the Canadian Maritime Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island), the Gaspé Peninsula and Maine to the Kennebec River.

Accessibility: Planning intentionally for everyone, no matter how they move, think, or receive or process information, to access an environment with ease.

African Nova Scotian: Persons of African ancestry living in Nova Scotia including those from historic/multigenerational Black communities and emerging/recent Black communities.

Co-creation: Co-creation is generally understood as a creative and interactive process which challenges the views of all parties involved and seeks to combine professional and local expertise in new ways. Co-creation in the public sector means involving residents in the production or development of policies, programs and other deliverables. A key element of co-creation is shared decision-making power amongst participants.

Collaborate (Spectrum of engagement): To work with the public in each aspect of the decision-making process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Consult (Spectrum of engagement): To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision. It is important to note that consulting provides the opportunity to provide input but does not guarantee that that input will be reflected in final decision-making.

Community engagement: The Halifax Regional Municipality defines "community engagement" as activities led by the municipality to inform, consult with or seek feedback from residents and key partners to guide municipal policies, initiatives, developments or strategies.

Diversity: A combination of differences and similarities among people. It is more than race, ability, sexual orientation, language, gender or any other descriptive category. Diversity means understanding and utilizing different views, ideas, life experiences, skills and knowledge.

Empower (Spectrum of engagement): To place final decision-making in the hands of the public, where residents have responsibilities to take action.

Engagement with Indigenous Peoples: The municipality engages Indigenous Peoples in a variety of other municipal decisions, policies and programs. Ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities are brokered by the municipality's Indigenous Services team, which works with employees delivering engagement activities to ensure the unique history and nuances of Indigenous communities in the Halifax region are considered.

Engagement fatigue: For the purposes of this strategy, "engagement fatigue" refers to when residents or communities lose interest in community engagement due to the large number of engagement opportunities offered by the municipality and its partners. This can also be affected by the effort required to provide feedback (e.g. answering many survey questions) and a lack of understanding of how or if the feedback provided was heard. Ultimately, engagement fatigue can result in reduced participation in community engagement (e.g. fewer survey responses, attendees at in-person events).

Equity: The achievement of fair treatment and equal opportunities for different people to thrive. Equity is achieved through identifying and removing the barriers that create gaps in the access to resources and giving everyone what they need to succeed.

Equity-deserving individuals: Equity-deserving individuals or groups are those at greater risk of exclusion and include: Indigenous communities, people of African descent, persons with disabilities, women, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender diverse communities, temporary residents, immigrants and refugees, persons with low income, youth, seniors, victims of violence, persons who are homeless or under-housed, residents with increased vulnerability to environmental hazards and development induced displacement.

Francophone: Someone whose first language is French, meaning it is the language they use most often to speak, read, write and think, and the one used most often at home. Being francophone can also simply mean being able to speak the language fluently.

Immigrant: A person who has settled permanently in another country.

Inclusion: Actions that are meant to eliminate barriers so all of members can fully participate and contribute. It means being supported and valued within the community and organization.

Inform (Spectrum of engagement): To provide residents with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.

Involve (Spectrum of engagement): To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered as part of the final decision-making.

Indigenous: "Indigenous" is an umbrella term for First Nations (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit. "Indigenous" refers to all of these groups, either collectively or separately.

Marginalized: To be excluded and pushed to the margins of a society or group. It refers to being part of multiple cultural groups but not being fully accepted into any of them and being partially or completely excluded. Marginalized communities or groups experience social, political and economic discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships with the dominant group.

Newcomer: An immigrant or refugee who has been in the country for a short time, typically less than five years.

Plain language: A writing approach that uses language that the audience knows and understands rather than using language that is unfamiliar or intimidating.

Underrepresented: An underrepresented group or community describes a subset of a population, or minority group, which often has limited representation or voice in society, low participation in government decision-making processes and access to fewer opportunities.

Appendix A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAYBOOK

HALIFAX

Community Engagement
Playbook

How to use:

The Community Engagement Playbook is intended to be used together with the *Community Engagement Strategy* and the *Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement* to guide municipal employees in developing approaches to engagement for policies, programs, projects and services that reflects the needs of the initiative and the community it impacts.

The Community Engagement Strategy provides a corporate framework for employees for the effective delivery of community engagement efforts while enhancing the municipality's diversity and inclusion goals, reflecting best practices and establishing a process that ensures consistent adoption to address the rapidly changing environment of community engagement. The CES also supports the municipality's priority of being community focused by encouraging residents to be engaged in the development of public policies and plans.

Every initiative at the municipality is different and has unique engagement needs. The playbook provides key steps and considerations for community engagement efforts to ensure they are effective, accessible, inclusive, consistent with industry standards and aligned with the municipality's goals and obligations. If it is unclear whether community engagement should be undertaken for a policy, program, project or service, employees must be provided direction by their supervisor and/or Executive Director.

Steps to community engagement:

To begin developing your unique community engagement program or activity, explore the following steps to community engagement. Additional questions, considerations and resources are available in more detail in each section.

1. Assess the need for and purpose of community engagement
2. Identify who is impacted and familiarize yourself with the communities
3. Design a tailored engagement plan
4. Identify and address barriers to participation
5. Design engagement activities
6. Deliver engagement
7. Review, analyze and report feedback
8. Evaluate engagement

Glossary: Select the terms highlighted in blue throughout the playbook to view the definition in the glossary.

STEP ONE: ASSESS THE NEED FOR AND PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is important to ensure engagement for your initiative provides the appropriate level of community engagement, based on legislative requirements, Regional Council direction, the level of impact on the community and the level of influence participants have on the outcome. This allows you to set clear and realistic objectives for your engagement plan.

General information

Name of initiative
What is the decision being made in this policy, program, project or service?
Who will make the final decision? (e.g. Executive Director, CAO, Regional Council, etc.)

What level of engagement is appropriate?

Are there legislative requirements that require public engagment? If yes, describe:
Is there Regional Council direction for public participation? If yes, describe:
What is the level of impact this initiative will have? Use the table below to identify if it is low, medium or high.

Level of Impact	Assessment Criteria	Examples
High	• High impact across the municipality, including significant changes to the built form, natural environment or the general health and safety of all residents • High degree of interest across the Halifax region • High impact on a neighborhood area • Strong possibility of conflicting perspectives on the initiative or issues in question	• Regional Council's Strategic Plan • Municipal Planning Strategy/Land Use By-law • Major zoning change proposals or change to land categorization • Removal of a facility or service that serves the entire Halifax region • Major service change • Major transportation initiative
Medium	• Sufficient degree of interest across the municipality to warrant public engagement • High impact on community group(s) or specific facility or service • Moderate possibility for conflicting perspectives	• Development Agreement application • Relocation of youth centre • Proposed changes to a valued activity or program • Proposed improvements to service that is delivered across the Halifax region, such as library services, snow removal or garbage collection • Proposed improvements to customer services • Provision of a community wide event

Level of Impact	Assessment Criteria	Examples
Low	• Low impact on a neighborhood area, community group(s) or specific facility or service • Small change or improvement	• Local street cleaning • Removal of car parking lot • Certain types of infrastructure improvements • Road closures • Fee increases • Changes in service (e.g. changes to a local youth activity program, such as timing or venue/location) • Emergency information

What is the level of influence participants are likely to have on the outcome?
Use the table below to identify if it is low, medium or high.

		DETERMINING FACTORS				
		Regional Council Direction	**Legislative Requirement**	**Technical Factors**	**Budget**	**Example**
INFLUENCE	High	Council direction or desire to have community define policy or outcome	Strong legislative or Regional Council policy requiring engagement	Not many technical constraints/ strong abilities to affect technical constraints	Budget or programs available to implement change	Secondary Plan Amendment
	Medium	Regional Council policy or requirements cannot be changed, but there is some ability to affect the policy or outcome	Moderate legislative or Regional Council policy requirements for engagement	Some technical constraints that limit outcome options	Some ability to adjust budgets or programs to implement change	• Development Agreement • Bike Lanes • Recreation Centre
	Low	Regional Council direction does not allow for ability to influence the policy or outcomes	No legislative or policy direction to engage	Limited ability to affect outcome due to technical standards or constraints	Minimal or no ability to adjust budgets or programming to influence change	• Site Plan Approval • Driveway Location

What is the appropriate level of public participation for your engagement? The level of public participation also depends on the complexity of the project/initiative, timelines and resources and may change throughout an initiative. Use your results from the previous tables in the matrix below.

IMPACT	High	Inform	Involve/Collaborate	Collaborate/Empower
	Medium	Inform	Consult	Involve/Collaborate
	Low	Inform	Inform/Consult	Inform/Consult
		Low	Medium	High
		INFLUENCE		

Inform: To provide residents with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.
Consult: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision. It is important to note that consulting provides the opportunity to provide input but does not guarantee that that input will be reflected in final decision-making.
Involve: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered as part of the final decision-making.
Collaborate: To work with the public in each aspect of the decision-making process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Empower: To place final decision-making in the hands of the public, where residents have responsibilities to take action.

Objectives of the engagement

Describe the overall goal(s) of this initiative.

Based on the appropriate level of engagement identified above, answer the following questions up to and including your identified level of public participation to determine the objectives of your engagement.	
Inform *Timeline: 1-2 months is recommended to conduct meaningful engagement at this level.*	What is the information you want participants to understand?
	What do participants need to know to make this effort successful?
	What information is missing?
Consult *Timeline: 1-2 months is recommended to conduct meaningful engagement at this level.*	What specific types of information are you seeking from participants? (e.g. input to inform decision-making recommendations or service delivery to a community, Regional Council or municipal business unit; feedback on a proposal; general values related to an issue, etc.)
Involve *Timeline: 2-6 months is recommended to conduct meaningful engagement at this level.*	What decisions can participants influence?
	How will participants' input be incorporated into the decision-making process?
	How will you design your engagement to involve participants?
Collaborate *Timeline: 2-6 months is recommended to conduct meaningful engagement at this level.*	What specific contributions are you seeking from your participants?
	What authority are you willing to relinquish if necessary?
	What engagement elements are you willing to allow participants to lead or share responsibility for?
Empower *Timeline: 6+ months is recommended to conduct meaningful engagement at this level.*	What specifically do you expect participants to do on their own?

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY WHO IS IMPACTED AND FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE COMMUNITIES

To ensure your engagement activities are effective, employees should become familiar with the community that will be impacted by the initiative. This research step will help you to give careful thought to the best methods to engage the diverse representation of individuals and groups in the community with whom you will need to consult.

Community Context

Review the following resources:
- Relevant Statistics Canada data   - Existing plans, staff reports, survey results, What We Heard reports and other internal reports related to the impacted communities   - Active planning applications and projects in the surrounding area   - Key partners and community organizations   - Identified environmental constraints   - Identified heritage resources (e.g. registered heritage properties, heritage conservation districts, cultural landscapes)   - Infrastructure and traffic information   - Women's Safety Assessments (WSA)
Consider the following questions:
Are there any demographics in the area that must be considered when determining appropriate engagement approaches? (e.g. languages spoken, cultural customs, socioeconomic characteristics, environmental challenges or priorities, historical context, access to technology, level of understanding of the issues being considered as part of the engagement, demographic insights from previous surveys/engagement efforts, etc.)
Will translation or interpretation services be required? If you anticipate the need for translation or interpretation services, refer to the municipality's Multilingual Policy and contact Corporate Communications early to discuss. Translation and interpretation can require 4-6 weeks of planning or more.
What are the community resources and assets in the area? (e.g. local associations, clubs and networks, local institutions, physical assets, etc.)
How should you engage with the community to achieve the broadest and most representative participation? (e.g. open houses, public meetings, online engagement, mailouts, etc.)
What locations and times for meetings/activities would be most appropriate for, and preferred by, those you wish to engage? (See step five "Event Scheduling")
If you are unable to answer any of the questions above or would like additional information about the area you are engaging with, reach out to the <u>Office of Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office</u> **(D&I/ANSAIO) and/or the area's** <u>Community Developer</u>.

Community Needs

Consider whether the following conditions will require a more or targeted level of participation
(check all that apply):

☐ The initiative may disproportionately impact historically underrepresented and/or underserved communities.

☐ The initiative or issue could impact spaces, places or objects of cultural heritage significance.

☐ The initiative or issue is unique/challenging (i.e. it is difficult to understand, will likely have social impacts, may be heavily values-based or may be controversial, politically sensitive and/or have significant financial impacts).

☐ A significant number of people or groups have expressed strong interest and/or opposing opinions about the initiative or issue.

☐ The initiative or issue has the potential to impact sensitive government–community relationships as they relate to issues of trust.

If any of the above conditions apply or you are unsure, contact D&I/ANSAIO to review the appropriateness of your anticipated level of engagement.

Engagement Strategies

D&I/ANSAIO has developed strategies to centre the voices, interests, values and experiences of underrepresented identities and cultural groups in the engagement process. These include:

- Mi'kma'ki Allyship Toolkit
- Accessibility Strategy
- French-Language Services Strategy
- Immigration Strategy

Actively and consistently include diverse community members when planning engagement activities. Many communities have been historically underrepresented in, and excluded from, participation.

Pre-engagement

Pre-engagement may be necessary for applications or initiatives that require significant or sensitive engagement approaches. Pre-engagement is an opportunity for informal networking, individual introductions and enhanced communication by bringing together resources like D&I/ANSAIO, Community Developers, municipal employees or other key partners, to clarify any issues and determine the approach to the forthcoming engagement. Pre-engagement allows you to increase trust between communities and the municipality, leverage lived experiences, knowledge, networks and connections for guidance on mapping out community assets and resources and to develop a broad and inclusive outreach process. Key issues to consider during pre-engagement include:

☐ Identifying community demographics and key partners.

☐ Identifying any historically underrepresented communities who are impacted by the initiative and reviewing any dedicated engagement strategies that may exist.

☐ Getting a sense of the tone of the meeting, event or other form of communication. Is it friendly, welcoming and informative or full of jargon and difficult to understand?

☐ Identifying established organizations in the community who should be personally engaged to help encourage people to attend and/or "host" a meeting or event?

☐ Identifying any community sensitivities you should be aware of.

☐ Determining appropriate engagement approaches (how many engagement events are needed, optimal dates/time and platforms/venues to host the events etc.)

☐ Identify what physical barriers might prevent community members from participating in engagement opportunities and how best to address them. This will include thinking about the needs of people with disabilities, the needs of seniors and access to public transit.

☐ Clarifying the key partners' roles and responsibilities in the engagement process.

☐ Ensuring that engagement approaches are as culturally appropriate, comprehensive and accessible as possible.

STEP THREE: DESIGN A TAILORED ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Plans for engagement should consider the messaging, goals, audience, methods, timing and resources required for robust community engagement.

Key Information

Determine your engagement goals and record the key information you want your audience to know about the initiative. Always keep in mind what you have learned about the communities being engaged.

You should be able to answer the five w's – *who, what, when, where and why* – information that can be used to answer key questions about the initiative. Remember to use accessible language that is:

1. Clear – Plain language that is free of jargon and technical language

2. Concise – Use short sentences and paragraphs at all times. Shorter sentences and paragraphs are easier to scan and are better at conveying complex information because it breaks up concepts into manageable soundbites. As a general rule, eliminate any words that don't add meaning for the reader

3. Consistent – Messages must be repeated if they are to sink in

Consider the following questions to help you capture the key information for your initiative (this messaging can be useful for mailouts, public information meetings and other presentations):

How did we get here? *Brief history/evolution of the project to date.*
What is the purpose of the engagement process? *Key goal.*
What is the role of residents in the process?
What are the decisions being made/issues being addressed?
What aspects of the initiative can be modified based on resident input? *What residents can influence.*
What aspects of the initiative cannot be modified based on resident input? *What residents cannot influence.*
What are the phases of the initiative, decision making milestones and associated timeframes? *This will be developed further later in this step.*
How can residents get involved or be heard?
What can residents expect during the engagement? What is the format (e.g. will there be a presentation)?

Corporate Communications

It is important to reach out to the municipality's Corporate Communications team early in the planning stages for all community engagement opportunities. Corporate Communications will work with you to determine if a communications plan is required for the initiative and provide strategic communications and issues management advice. Contacting Corporate Communications early can help prepare the organization for anticipated employee, public or media interest and can also help you leverage the best channels to reach your target audience (e.g. print deadlines for community papers targeting rural audiences can be 4-5 weeks in advance of publishing dates).

Engagement Plan

Milestones Complete using Milestones table below.	Engagement Goal Identify the purpose of the engagement at this stage.	Target Audience Complete using Key partners identified in the Target Audience table below.	Engagement Tools Complete using Engagement Tools table below.	Date Meeting date, online platform launch date, etc.	Resources Required Employees, facilities, AV equipment, print materials, etc.

Milestones

Outline the key decision-making points, significant milestones and process towards decision making points and milestones, and your targeted timing for each.

Milestone	Target Timing

Budget

Outline the budget required to plan and execute the engagement. The available budget may impact the type of engagement, tools and methodologies that are possible. Contact Corporate Communications a minimum of two months before your engagement for advice on a recommended communications budget to achieve your engagement objectives.

Budget category	Line item	Financial coding (GL/CC)
Operational (e.g. venue booking, printing)		
Communications (e.g. mailout, digital/print advertising)		
Other		

Target Audience

Complete the table below as necessary with any identified key partners for your initiative. D&I/ANSAIO and/or Community Developers can assist with identifying relevant key partners in the area.

Key partner Type	Key partners	Representative & Contact Information	Engagement Objectives
General Community (e.g. residents, community members, civic leaders, elected officials, resident associations, elders, etc.)			
Special Interest Groups & Rightsholders (e.g. Indigenous peoples, community groups, environmental organizations, multicultural groups, youth groups, arts/cultural groups, social and health service providers, advocacy groups, sport/recreation groups, etc.)			
Businesses (e.g. developers, business owners, industry groups, chambers of commerce, business associations)			
Government Bodies & Institutions (e.g. Mi'kmaw Bands and First Nations people, Government of Canada, Province of Nova Scotia, municipal business units, YMCAs, public and private schools, colleges and universities, etc.)			
Other			

Elected Officials

Notify the Mayor's Office and members of Regional Council as early as possible about engagement opportunities. Elected officials may be able to share additional considerations about the district they represent to help you further tailor your engagement plan. They may also wish to participate in engagement opportunities and help amplify communications through their channels (e.g. Councillor newsletter). Consult Corporate Communications and the Councillors' Support Office on how and when to communicate with elected officials.

If the project or initiative has received funding from other levels of government, review the Contribution Agreement to understand other participation requirements that may apply.

Engagement Tools

Identifying the appropriate tools for your engagement is important to ensure that your engagement goals are met. All engagement should proceed using appropriate and culturally acceptable methods for each key partner group.

Traditional engagement has generally focused on in-person meetings and activities, mailouts and print advertising. However, social media and formal online engagement platforms have become more common and user friendly. Online engagement allows public participation to take place on an ongoing basis with a broader geographic reach. However, before incorporating online engagement, there are several questions below to consider ensuring the approach is equitable and thoughtful.

Engagement plans should include multiple approaches and tools to ensure residents can participate, regardless of their ability or comfort attending meetings or accessing online engagement platforms.

Select engagement tools based on the identified level of public participation (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate or Empower). The various levels of engagement should not be considered in isolation of the others. Tools from lighter levels of public participation should also be included to support the tools identified for more intense levels of public participation. Additional information regarding specific tools is provided in step five.

*use of tools marked with an asterisk below should be done in consultation with Corporate Communications

Inform

Online Tools:

☐ Application website

☐ Online engagement portal (to house background information, initiative details, documents, videos, etc.)*

☐ Email (leverage community e-bulletins/ neighbourhood email listservs)

☐ Social media*

Traditional Tools:

☐ Mailout

☐ Newspaper ad*

☐ Signage*

☐ Displays*

☐ Information hotlines

☐ Expert panels

☐ Site visits

Consult

Online Tools:

☐ Online engagement portal (options include polls, surveys, scales, dropdown choices, Q&As, comment forums, etc.)*

☐ Social media discussion*

☐ Email commenting

Traditional Tools:

☐ Workshops

☐ Interviews

☐ Phone/mail surveys

☐ Phone/mail commenting

☐ Open Houses

☐ Pop Up engagement

☐ Engagement Storefronts

☐ Key partner meetings

☐ Public Information Meeting

☐ Public Hearing

Involve	
Online Tools:	**Traditional Tools:**
☐ Online engagement portal (options include idea pages, interactive mapping)	☐ Crowdsourcing/ideation
	☐ Mapping
	☐ Design charrettes
	☐ Participatory budgeting

Collaborate	
Online Tools:	**Traditional Tools:**
☐ Document co-creation	☐ Large group meetings
☐ Online communities	☐ Working Groups
	☐ Advisory Committees

Empower	
Online Tools:	**Traditional Tools:**
☐ Online voting	☐ Public Participation Committees

Consider the following questions as you choose your engagement tools:

- Many programs/ projects are built on personal relationships and the trust that comes with being face-to-face. Are employees in a position to recreate that same experience in an online setting? Is there enough trust to effectively bring these relationships and connections online?

- Online only engagement can create a 'digital divide,' an uneven distribution in the access to, use of, or impact of information for many people who do not have access to e-devices and/or the internet. In general, rural areas tend to have less reliable and slower internet connections than urban areas. Be mindful of the Digital Divide 5 'A's of Technology Access:

    1. Availability – To whom is the technology available?

    2. Affordability – To whom is the technology (un)affordable?

    3. Awareness – Who is (un)aware of the technology?

    4. Abilities – Who has the digital literacies to use the technology?

    5. Agency – Who has the capacity to make use of the technology?

- What approaches and outreach will help to ensure all those who need to be engaged can fully participate?

- How can we create opportunities for the people least likely to be heard to participate (e.g. equity-deserving individuals or groups)?

Consistent terminology

Using consistent terminology is critical to clearly communicating with residents about what to expect at a community engagement activity. Before announcing a "public information meeting" or an "open house", review the **Glossary** at the end of the playbook to ensure proper naming. The type, format and tools used during an engagement should align with residents' expectations based on what was communicated to them in advance.

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Before finalizing your engagement, review your plan to ensure any barriers to participation are identified and addressed. Barriers to participation can be physical, structural, procedural and/or emotional.

Barriers to Participation

Barriers to participation include anything that prevents a person from fully participating because of their age, language, ability, etc., and may include a physical barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, cultural barriers, literacy barriers, and/or mistrust with the government, a policy or a practice. Individual residents, as well as whole communities, may have less experience, confidence, or capacity to participate. Anticipating and identifying barriers to participation and asking critical questions allows for a better understanding of how and why individuals or groups are excluded and how to foster more inclusive and accessible engagement.

Consider the following questions to identify any barriers to participation you may have missed:

Are there any barriers or risks that may prevent participation in your engagement process?

Is there a history between the organization and the community that you need to consider?

Social Lens Review

Consider the following questions to ensure your Engagement Plan will allow you to deliver a successful engagement process that achieves your goals and reaches all members of the community:

☐ Does your communication and outreach approach effectively reach all key partner groups and community members, including underrepresented groups?

☐ Engagement is easiest when it builds on networks that are already working. What other established organizations in the community can help encourage people to attend and/or potentially "host" a meeting or event?

☐ Does your engagement approach allow you to provide information to key partner groups and community members in a way that is easy for them to understand?

☐ Have you considered tools that will help you to build a positive relationship with the community, including underrepresented groups?

☐ Have you considered tools that will help key partner groups and community members understand any trade-offs that may be required to achieve the initiative's goals?

☐ Will conversations continue after the initiative concludes?

☐ Are the resources available (budget, employee time, etc.) to effectively deliver the engagement?

STEP FIVE: DESIGN ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

It is important to carefully design your engagement's correspondence, website, online engagement tools and events. Messaging should be clear and welcoming to ensure it is accessible and will help to build trust and relationships

Online Engagement

Note: Information below outlines various functionalities on halifax.ca and the municipalities current online engagement portal (Shape Your City Halifax). Reach out to Corporate Communications to help determine which of these platforms is best-suited to help achieve your goals.

Website content
The municipality's website, halifax.ca, provides information on major initiatives including projects, programs and applications across municipal BUs. Website content is primarily effective when used at the 'Inform' level of public participation and can be used to communicate the key information identified in step three. Website content can provide a summary of the initiative and its goals, an outline of past and upcoming work, links to resources and information on how to participate or obtain additional information. Website content should be written in plain language and updated regularly to reflect developments in the initiative. Share draft content with Corporate Communications, who will provide an editorial review and ensure alignment with the corporate writing and style guide before posting.

Social media engagement
The municipality operates corporate accounts across a number of social media channels (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, etc.). Contact Corporate Communications to explore how social media can be leveraged as part of your overall communications approach.

Online engagement industry standards:
- Conduct pre-engagement, particularly when working with underrepresented groups or communities, to identify the engagement that works best for their needs.
- Include a combination of self-directed and one-to-one engagement to address a wide variety of barriers to participation.
- Provide multiple opportunities to participate and use both online and traditional methods. Larger initiatives can benefit from a wide range of tools, while smaller initiatives may only need one or two. In most instances it will be important to include more traditional methods such as phone and mail to support online tools and ensure access for individuals without computer access.
- When managing large groups, more people resources may be required in supporting the online conversation and dialogue.
- To create community connections with key partners or underrepresented groups, small group formats may help with information sharing and building trust.
- When creating a schedule for online engagement, consider that time is needed for active participation, as well as compiling information, resharing, and allowing time again for participants to validate this material.
- Moderation support is offered on Shape Your City for some tools to hide comments that are not appropriate.
- Online engagement tools often have embedded tools for accessibility, such as voice to text translation and image descriptions.
- Resources for planning accessible online meetings
  - HRM Best Practices for Accessible Online Engagement
  - Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate Department of Justice Guide to Planning Accessible Online Meetings and Events

Online engagement portal (Shape Your City Halifax)

Shape Your City Halifax is the municipality's online engagement website. Shape Your City is a platform that provides a variety of tools to help you achieve your engagement goals. Privacy and moderation settings can be adjusted, based on requirements of the initiative. Tools include:

Quick Polls
Employees can ask a question and allow users to select a single answer to that question. Once answered, the results display in place of the poll.

Surveys
Employees can ask a series of questions with different formats. Questions can be formatted to be open responses, scales (including rankings, priority gauges and emojis), and choices (dropdown lists, multiple choice and checkboxes).

Q&As
Users can submit questions about the initiative for employees to review. Employees can then answer publicly, answer privately or delete the question.

Stories
Employees can create a topic and users submit long-form text responses. Users can then comment on responses that have been posted.

Forums
Employees can pose a question or a series of questions to which users can reply in the form of public comments. Comments can be responded to by other users and responses are posted to create a discussion thread.

Ideas
Employees can pose a question for brainstorming or ideation and users can post their solutions as "post-its". Post-its can be liked or commented on by other users.

Places
Employees can post a map of an area and users can drop pins within the map and post comments.

Shape Your City can be effective for all levels of community engagement; however, communication between the municipality and participants cannot take place in real time. Employees must be sure to respond to feedback and questions through Shape Your City in a timely manner to continue building trust with the community.

To initiate a new Shape Your City page, please contact Corporate Communications.

In-Person Engagement

In-person engagement events can take many forms, including:

- Public information meetings

- Public hearings

- Open houses

- Workshops

- Pop-up engagements

- Engagement storefronts

- Crowdsourcing

- Design charettes

- Working groups

The goal of any in-person engagement is to optimize mutual learning. These events can be effective for all levels of public participation and allow for real time communication between municipal staff and participants.

- Resource for planning accessible engagements:
  - Accessible Events Checklist
  - Special Event Planning Guide (Appendix 2)

Event Scheduling

When scheduling an engagement event, selecting appropriate locations and timing is vital to its success. Consider:

- What is the best location for the event?

☐ Is it well known in the community?

☐ Is it accessible by walking/public transit?

☐ Is it physically accessible?

☐ Is it in an area generally regarded as "safe"?

☐ Are members of your target audience likely to consider this a convenient location?

- What is the best date for the event?

☐ Are there any community events/holidays that might conflict with your engagement and prevent residents from attending?

☐ Is your target audience available on weekdays or weekends?

- What is the best time of day for the event?

☐ Will people with jobs outside of the area be able to attend daytime sessions?

☐ Will caregivers/parents be able to attend sessions in the evening?

☐ Will the timing of the event be convenient for people who rely on transit?

Event Set Up

The way you are planning to interact with event attendees will largely inform how you set up your event space. It is recommended that the event team arrive well in advance of any event to set up and address any technical issues before members of the public begin to arrive. Consider:

- Audience members should have a clear view of any presentation screens.

- Microphones for providing comments should be placed to the side of any space so participants lining up do not disrupt audience views.

- If attendees are intended to cycle through the space, employees should be positioned at each station to greet attendees and explain the process, as well as at key locations in the room to answer any questions. Ensure seating for members of the public is still provided outside of the intended flow of traffic.

- If the meeting room is physically large, make sure an audio system is installed and all participants use the microphones provided.

- Plan the meeting space to ensure there is room for participants who use mobility aids to move around freely.

- Keep in mind the needs of various participants and their service providers, such as seat allocation nearest to the sign language interpreters for people who are hearing impaired.

Presentations

Presentations are a common and effective way to provide information to attendees and establish a base level of understanding of the initiative, prior to beginning conversations. When planning a presentation:

- Use plain language and ensure slides and other materials are clear, to the point and concise.

- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace to make the information easier to understand.

- Begin with introductions of key employees, the goals, agenda, background information and details about the initiative's parameters and limitations.

- Inform participants of the nearest emergency exits and accessible restroom facilities.

- Outline how resident input will be captured and reported back to the community (e.g. "What We Heard" reports).

- Advise participants to minimize interruptions and outline when question and answer periods are scheduled. During question and answer periods, remind people to speak slowly and clearly and state their name before beginning. Thank participants after they finish their remarks and consider summarizing what has been heard from each speaker (verbally, on chart paper, on screen, etc.). Employees can also ask clarifying or follow-up questions to ensure what was heard is accurate.

- Manage the speaking time of participants to ensure fair, respectful and time-conscious opportunities for all who wish to participate.

Barriers to Participation

Events must be physically accessible to ensure all residents are able to participate in engagement. Consider:

- Venues should be fully accessible (e.g. including building entrances, meeting rooms, washrooms, etc.).

- Any materials provided should be high contrast.

- Events should be scent free.

In addition, when necessary, there are many services that can be provided to help remove barriers that may prevent residents from attending, including:

- Child care at the event

- Transportation to the event

- Food and beverages

- Translation/captioning services

- Attendant care workers

In-Person Engagement Industry Standards:

- For longer meetings, include regular health breaks in the agenda and identify when they will be taking place at the beginning of the meeting.

- Provide a feedback mechanism, such as an e-mail address or phone number, to all participants at the start of the meeting or in the meeting materials.

- Ensure that municipal employees are easy to identify at events and are visually distinguishable from applicants, consultants (e.g. using name tags or municipal lanyards).

- Consider the use of a facilitator, who is external to the organization but connected to the community, to help design a group process and manage the meeting. This is especially important if an interactive component is designed to encourage dialogue among attendees, or between municipal employees and residents. Recognize the importance of their contribution as experts and compensate them accordingly.

- Consider community-led collaboration opportunities whereby community representatives are provided the opportunity to both collaborate in the planning process and share in the presenting of components of the strategy, such as information and question/answer sessions, etc. This is especially important for in-person engagement and/or forums where expected levels of impact, participant influence, and participation fall into the medium/high categories under step one.

Committee Engagement

Note that any committees listed below may be subject to change. The Community Engagement Playbook will be updated to reflect any changes to these committees as needed.

Committee Type	Benefits	Drawbacks
Planning Advisory Committee (PACs) Comprised of residents selected by Regional Council to represent their communities who are afforded the opportunity to comment on and provide recommendations directly to Regional Council regarding planning applications and matters. Members are appointed for a select term and meet monthly.	• Community feedback is provided by individuals who are versed in municipal processes and policies. • Members of the public provide comments that are directly referenced in reports and Regional Council discussion. • Councillors who sit on PACs have the opportunity to see projects early in the process and how it does or does not evolve based on community input.	• The addition of another formal meeting further lengthens the planning application process. • Experience in the fields of planning, development or architecture are not required for committee members. As a result, the input provided is as residents, not experts.
Public Participation Committees Comprised of residents and key partners formed to provide input on and guide the development of a specific planning project, policy or application.	• Committees can often create a sense of ownership of the project by the community, increasing buy-in.	• Work done by these committees may duplicate input provided by the public through other engagement tools. • A lack of background in planning and development can result in a steep learning curve for members.
Design Review Committee Comprised of a group of professionals with experience in the development industry who review applications and policies related to Site Plan Approval.	• Employees and Regional Council can draw from the experience of other experts in the development field to add value to planning projects.	• Committee members who work in the private sector may be hesitant to critique the work of other professionals.
Advisory Committees Comprised of residents selected by Regional Council who represent various interests to review and provide advice to staff and Regional Council.	• Employees and Regional Council can draw from the experience of members of the committees who have specific interests impacts by the project, policy or application.	• A lack of background in planning and development can result in a steep learning curve for members. • The addition of another formal meeting further lengthens the planning application process.

STEP SIX: DELIVER ENGAGEMENT

While carrying out the engagement plan, you should continue to be mindful of its effectiveness and make changes if required. It is also important to communicate with key partners on an ongoing basis to develop a successful relationship with the community.
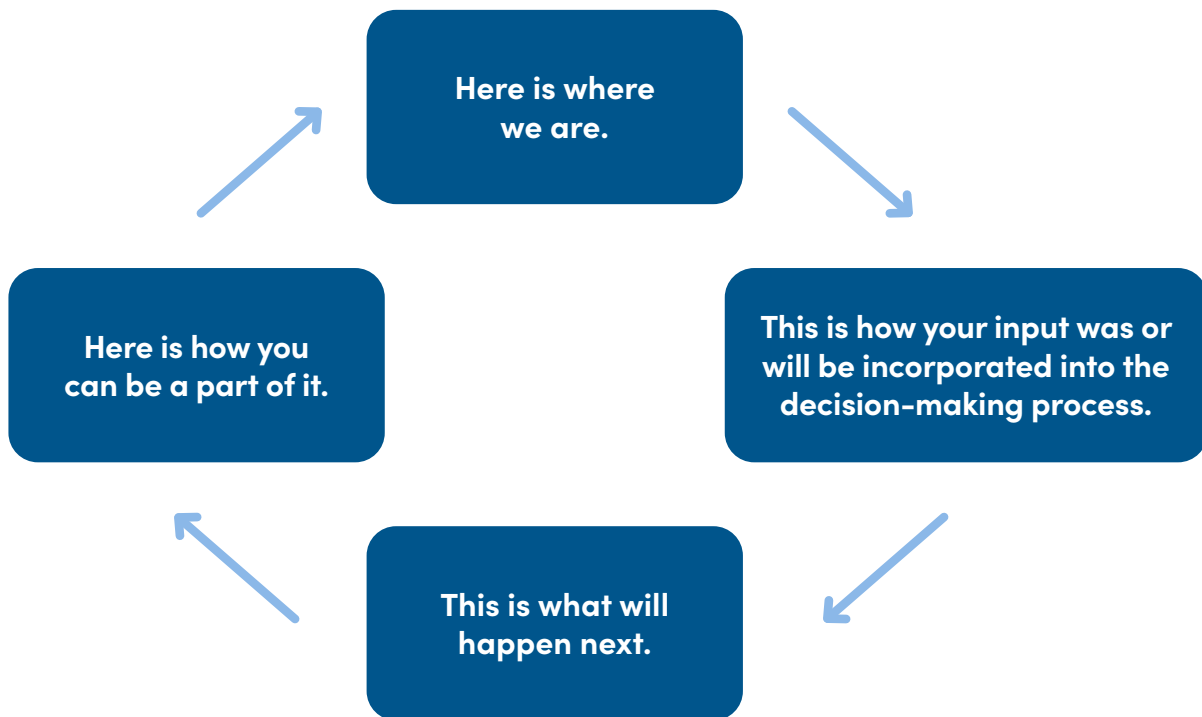
Monitoring Engagement

While completing your engagement consider the following:

- The goal of all engagement activities is to provide participants with a welcoming, accessible and inclusive experience that is effective in its delivery.

- To build trust, centre marginalized voices:
  - Recognize the privileges of people in the organizing group
  - Understand the level of trust with the organizing group
  - Begin with listening to issues of importance to communities you hope to work with
  - Are there existing initiatives led by those communities that you can support, if they want your support?
  - Clearly define and communicate and revisit often the roles and engagement approach
  - Consult with impacted people regarding photos, images, or language used in communications
  - Support volunteer leadership with honorariums
  - Understand and plan for target participants' access to hardware and internet
  - Understand participants level of comfort engaging online (with prevalence of anonymous/bigoted comments)
  - Take the time to invest in relationship-building. Move at the speed of trust.
  - Consider impact of data privacy
  - Find solutions to increase computer/internet access

- Engagement activities should be monitored to ensure they are reflective of the key questions and considerations identified in steps one to five.

- If the scope of the project or level of community impact changes, the engagement plan may need to be reviewed.

- Ensure the environment is welcoming to participants who may be reluctant to share their views.

- Resources for facilitating meetings include:
  - Engaging Questions for Public Engagement
  - Accessibility Guidelines for Organizers and Facilitators
  - Facilitating Public Issues Best Practices
  - Facilitation for Healthy Communities Toolkit
  - Diversity Through Inclusive Practices Toolkit
  - 100 Great Community Engagement Ideas

Project Updates

In order to maintain a relationship with the community, you should keep the community up to date on the process and progress of the initiative's development throughout. Provide information about opportunities for further consultation and participation using a public engagement feedback loop. It is important that these updates are timely. Outline a timeline of next steps that reflect the results from the engagement activities. Participants should also be made aware of how their feedback may influence and direct the future of the initiative. A public engagement feedback loop should include information on the following:

Here is where we are.

This is how your input was or will be incorporated into the decision-making process.

This is what will happen next.

Here is how you can be a part of it.

Depending on their nature, updates can be communicated via:

☐ Website updates (e.g. important dates, amendments to proposals, project materials, engagement materials, decisions at milestones)

☐ Mail/email lists (e.g. important dates, amendments to proposals, project materials, engagement materials, decisions at milestones)

☐ Public meetings (amendments to proposals)

☐ Key partner meetings (amendments to proposals, new information/issues, decisions at milestones)

STEP SEVEN: REVIEW, ANALYZE AND REPORT FEEDBACK

In order to ensure all the feedback from your engagement is considered, it is important to keep organized records of the comments received and how they have been addressed. This helps to ensure your process is transparent and supports stronger relationships with the community.

Comment Management

Logging the public's comments, concerns and requests, including your responses, will allow you to fully consider all feedback you received in the recommendations for the initiative. It also allows you to provide increased transparency related to your decision making by allowing you to demonstrate how each comment was considered and addressed.

The table below includes information to consider gathering over the course of the engagement. The types of information gathered can be altered or expanded, depending on the initiative.

Date	Source	Commenter Name/ Contact Information	Organization Represented	Summary of Comment	Comment Category	Result
Date that the comment was received. This allows you to monitor at what point in the project you received the comments and your response time.	**Engagement event, Shape Your City, email, phone, etc.** This allows you to identify which activities successfully generated public participation.	**Name and contact information of the commenter (if available).** This allows for follow up if required and should follow Access & Privacy requirements.	**Name of the organization or group the commenter is representing (if applicable).** This allows you to group comments from the same source together for consideration.	**Summary of the main points raised and link to full correspondence (if available).** This allows you to consider each of the main comments, concerns and requests being brought forward.	**Any common themes or categories.** This allows you to better organize comments as you evaluate them.	**The impact the comment had on the project, policy or program OR reasons that the comment was not able to be acted on.** This allows you to track your decision making so that it can be defended as the project moves forward.

What We Heard Reports

The creation of a 'What We Heard' report is an effective way to summarize the feedback received through engagement. Furthermore, when these documents are published, the public has an opportunity to review and validate the report's findings or bring forward concerns that may not have been addressed.

While the format of a What We Heard Report can vary, they generally include the following sections:

What We Did	This section provides an overview of the initiative and a summary of the engagement activities that have taken place. This summary should include details like dates, engagement tools, venues, number of participants, etc.
Who Was Involved	This section provides a summary of the participants and key partners that took part in engagement activities and the correspondence received. This section can also serve as an important opportunity to identify any groups that may have been missed by the engagement.
Results/Discussion	This section identifies the topics identified by participants during engagement activities and how they have been or will be addressed. This section may be organized based on the key themes from across the engagement, feedback received during each engagement activity, etc.
Implications	This section summarizes the feedback and outlines next steps for the initiative.

Social Lens Review

Consider the following questions to ensure your findings are reflective of and sensitive to all members of the community:

☐ How will the proposed policy, project or program decision affect underrepresented groups?

☐ Are the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities reflected in the report, recommendations and outcomes?

☐ Does the policy, project or program decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?

☐ Based on the above responses, are revisions needed?

☐ Did you receive any comments or concerns that should be forwarded to other departments for response, consideration/action?

STEP EIGHT: EVALUATE ENGAGEMENT

By evaluating engagement activities, we can identify and address any issues and inform future municipal engagements. Learning about what went well and what didn't helps us design future engagements that are more effective, equitable, inclusive and responsive to the needs of communities. The following are examples of how we evaluate if the engagement objectives were achieved: attendance numbers, demographics, quantity and quality of input gathered, feedback on and response to engagement, etc.

Evaluation Table

Consider the indicators below to assist in the evaluation of your engagement program:		
Principle	**Qualitative Indicators**	**Quantitative Indicators**
Inclusive Participation	☐ All groups affected by the project have been involved in the engagement ☐ There were no barriers to participating in the engagement process ☐ Impact of participant input has been communicated to the public	☐ Number of people participating in each engagement activity ☐ Number of key partner groups participating in engagement ☐ Number of website visits ☐ Number of emails/phone calls received ☐ Observational feedback from project team, attendees and key partners ☐ What We Heard Report
Balanced and Complete Information	☐ The form of engagement and the information provided was reflective of the appropriate level of participation identified in step two ☐ Information provided was balanced and relevant ☐ Project information and criteria used by decision makers is available to the public ☐ Information about how public input was used is available to the public	☐ Surveys regarding public understanding of the project ☐ Observational feedback from project staff and attendees ☐ Count of references to municipal sources in public correspondence ☐ Accurate media coverage of the engagement process ☐ What We Heard Report ☐ Social Media reporting, where applicable (consult Corporate Communications)

Effective Process	☐ Engagement plan used methods that met the established engagement goals	☐ Surveys/participant feedback regarding public access to the engagement
	☐ Engagement plan offered multiple opportunities and venues in which to be heard	☐ Number of people participating in each engagement activity
		☐ Number of key partner groups participating in engagement
		☐ Number of website visits/time spent on site
		☐ Number of emails/phone calls received
		☐ Observational feedback from project staff
		☐ What We Heard Report
Capacity Building	☐ Increase in experience and knowledge regarding the engagement process by residents	☐ Surveys/participant feedback regarding public experience with the engagement process
	☐ Development in the relationship between the community and the municipality	☐ Number of new contacts identified for future engagements
	☐ Identification of lessons learned	☐ Number of follow up meetings/ conversations planned
Resources	☐ Engagement activities has appropriate staffing levels, venue locations, AV support, online tools, budget, etc.	☐ Surveys regarding public access to and experience with the engagement process
		☐ Resources used

You can also conduct a debrief with your project team to reflect on the initiative and lessons learned. Questions to discuss include:

Did we get the participation we had hoped for?

Did the engagement reach interested people and ask the right questions?

Did participants understand the process and their role in it?

Did participants understand the impact their participation had on recommendations and/or decisions?

Was the process timely and effective?

Did the chosen engagement levels and techniques accommodate the needs of participants? Was the process accessible, inclusive and flexible?

Did we get the information we were seeking for the decision makers to make an informed decision?

GLOSSARY

Collaborate (Spectrum of engagement): To work with the public in each aspect of the decision-making process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Consult (Spectrum of engagement): To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision. It is important to note that consulting provides the opportunity to provide input but does not guarantee that that input will be reflected in final decision-making.

Design charette: Similar to a workshop, a design charette is a structured meeting organized into small groups to tackle design issues and collaborate to identify solutions to complex issues.

Empower (Spectrum of engagement): To place final decision-making in the hands of the public, where residents have responsibilities to take action.

Engagement storefront: A temporary location of municipal employees in communities for multiple days or weeks with regular business hours to offer members of the public opportunities for in-depth one-on-one discussions.

Equity-deserving individuals: Equity-deserving individuals or groups are those at greater risk of exclusion and include: Indigenous communities, people of African descent, persons with disabilities, women, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender diverse communities, temporary residents, immigrants and refugees, persons with low income, youth, seniors, victims of violence, persons who are homeless or under-housed, residents with increased vulnerability to environmental hazards and development induced displacement.

Inform (Spectrum of engagement): To provide residents with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.

Involve (Spectrum of engagement): To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered as part of the final decision-making.

Key partner meeting: A meeting with a group of industry or community members with similar interests to discuss and workshop complex issues and explore collaborative solutions. Examples of key partner groups include environmental groups, industrial property owners, Indigenous community leaders, etc.

Pop-up engagement: Public information sessions with displays or stations integrated temporarily into existing community spaces or events. Pop-ups are informal opportunities for members of the public to engage with topics and municipal employees, key partners and community members.

Public hearing: A meeting of Regional Council or Community Council with an opportunity for residents to share their opinions and views on a specific topic. These hearings are required typically to discuss planning and development related matters and new by-laws or changes to existing by-laws.

Public information meeting (PIM): A meeting organized by the municipality, key partners or community with presentations and opportunities to ask questions. This type of meeting is often related to planning changes to a specific property, project, development or site.

Public open houses: A public information session with displays or stations staffed by municipal employees, key partners, experts and community members. An open house is less formal than a public information meeting and offers opportunities for residents to come and go and engage on a one-on-one basis.

Shape Your City Halifax: The municipality's online engagement portal, shapeyourcityhalifax.ca is used to gather residents' thoughts, ideas and feedback on decision-making, planning and policy information.

Social media engagement: The use of virtual platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit and YouTube to communicate engagement opportunities.

Supplier development sessions (SDS): Designed to help build resource capacity in supplier networks, these sessions help generate new capabilities or competencies. They can empower traditionally underrepresented groups that may not have previously had an opportunity to compete based on a variety of factors. SDS primarily focus on communications, training and may include on-site assistance for targeted groups. By developing suppliers, organizations can generate competitive advantage.

Supplier information sessions (SIS): Designed as broader information sessions, where all suppliers are invited to attend. Here they receive consistent, up-to-date information on upcoming contracts, projects, timelines and procurement requirements. These sessions are open and transparent and help level the playing field for the supplier community.

Survey: A series of questions provided virtually and/or by paper to solicit feedback on a particular issue.

Town Hall: A meeting in which participants are asked to engage with decision makers on an important topic related to their community.

Webinar: A virtual seminar, presentation or workshop. Webinars can include a wide range of features such as live video streaming, presentations, voting, commenting or Q&As.

Working groups: A group of key partners and/or community members who are tasked with tackling a complex issue or overseeing the delivery of projects and programs.

Workshop: A structured meeting to explore specific, complex issues where participants work collaboratively in small groups.

Appendix B

CORPORATE GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HALIFAX

Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement

Background

Community engagement is an essential function of municipal government. It enables people to be involved in their community and government, fosters a diversity of voices and opinions and supports the development of thoughtful, inclusive public policy and plans.

The *Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement* is an internal tool that outlines the municipality's **five guiding principles** for public engagement and aligns with the municipality's Community Engagement Strategy (2024) and the 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan.

The *Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement* were developed by the Community Engagement Strategy Working Group composed of representatives from various business units.

How to use

Municipal employees are encouraged to use the *Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement* to inform their public engagement practices alongside the Community Engagement Strategy established by the municipality in 2024.

Guiding principles for community engagement

1. Transparency

The municipality will commit to **transparency** in the design and delivery of engagement processes to ensure participants know what to expect and how their input will be used.

Transparent engagement gives participants the information they need to make informed choices about their participation in and contributions to the engagement process. Transparent engagement creates trust between participants and organizations and enables participants to provide feedback that is relevant and helpful to the project, process and/or policy.

Transparent engagement means clearly communicating:

- purpose and timelines of the engagement and the way that participant contributions will be used;
- way(s) to participate in the engagement process and the extent to which participant feedback can influence the project, process or policy outcome(s);
- realistic time commitment and effort required to participate;
- key partners' involvement in the engagement process;
- how engagement results will be shared with participants;
- information on the project, process and/or policy, including negotiables, non-negotiables and aspects that have already been determined;
- identifying impacts, including costs and benefits;
- providing the contact information for the individual(s) or division leading the engagement

- the extent to which participant feedback will influence the project, process or policy outcome(s); and
- communicating to participants when they will hear from the engagement team again, either at another engagement touchpoint or during the evaluation.

Transparency in action

- Communicate early and often.
- Do not assume that participants know about the project, process or policy. Share information with participants to help them provide informed, helpful feedback.
- Ensure all internal key partners are aware of the engagement plan and gather all necessary approvals.
- Work with other internal divisions to ensure the engagement plan adheres to internal processes, policies and legislation.
- Set clear expectations for participant involvement, including time commitments, deadlines for input, etc.
- Be open and honest with participants about the engagement's purpose, process and desired outcomes.
- Always communicate the engagement results with participants.

2. Accessibility and inclusion

The municipality will work to identify and address barriers to participation and creating space for diverse voices to ensure **accessible and inclusive** engagement processes.

Accessible and inclusive engagement removes barriers to participation by enabling all individuals the opportunity to participate equitably in the engagement process. Accessible and inclusive engagement creates a space for diverse perspectives to be heard, promotes the design of programs and services that are free from barriers and supports the municipality in making decisions that reflect the people and communities it serves.

Accessible and inclusive engagement means:

- making accessibility and inclusion a priority when designing the engagement process;
- ensuring the engagement is broadly accessible to all individuals who are actually or potentially impacted by a project, process or policy are given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the engagement process;
- considering and addressing the diverse needs of participants and committing to continuous improvement in removing barriers to participation;
- engaging experts to provide information on potential barriers to participation and ways to mitigate them;
- providing multiple and culturally appropriate methods of engagement that promote and sustain inclusive participation; and
- respecting the range of values, interests and knowledge of those involved.

Accessibility and inclusion in action

- Review accessibility and inclusion resources made available to the organization on the intranet through the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO.
- Consult the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO early in the planning process when counsel is required on recognizing barriers and developing a barrier-free engagement plan.
- Develop a flexible and responsive process and be open to a re-design if aspects of the engagement process are not accessible or inclusive.
- Provide resources and accommodations to ensure participants have access to the engagement process.
- Ensure physical locations used for in-person engagement and online options for virtual engagement either meet or exceed accessibility standards.
- Seek and incorporate diverse experiences, identities, voices, ideas and information to lay the groundwork for equitable and inclusive project, process or policy outcome(s).

3. **Trust and respect**

The municipality will strive to build **trust and respect** through meaningful relationship-building with individuals and communities.

Demonstrating respect during the engagement process is essential to building trust with participants. Establishing trust and respect is a process developed over time through meaningful relationship-building with individuals and communities. Developing an engagement process based on trust and respect enables honest feedback and increases the likelihood that participants will participate again in the future.

An **engagement built on trust and respect** means:

- recognizing the participants' time, input and effort;
- making space to truthfully address issues and experiences of discrimination and exclusion;
- welcoming - not resisting - diverse views, values and interests;
- understanding that trust is earned through accountability in all municipal interactions;
- recognizing that different engagement approaches may be more appropriate for different communities rather than a 'one size fits all' approach;
- creating a safe, welcoming space where participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas; and
- providing participants with enough advance notice to participate, recognizing that many people have personal and professional obligations that could require several weeks notice to balance.

Trust and respect in action

- Prioritizing building relationships with community members, particularly at the neighbourhood level.

- Working directly with, and take cues from, community leaders and location groups to co-create engagement plans and leverage their ability to reach individuals through their networks.
- Being open to unstructured, culturally appropriate approaches.
- Focusing on the needs and lifestyles of participants and design an engagement plan that makes it easy for them to participate (e.g. location, time of day, available Transit routes, access to technology).
- Following the engagement, communicate the outcome(s) of the project, process or policy with participants, even if it is incongruent with participant feedback.
- Where possible, staying connected to participants to continue the relationship-building process. Find out how the project, process or policy has impacted them and ways to continue supporting their municipal needs.
- Going to, working in and working with the community to sustain reciprocal relationships.
- Recognizing the knowledge and expertise provided by community members through their lived experiences.

4. Timely and clear communication

The municipality will strive for **timely and clear communication** to ensure individuals are aware of, invited to and kept informed of engagement opportunities.

Timely and clear communication helps to ensure individuals are aware of and invited to engagement opportunities, are clear about engagement processes and outcomes and are kept informed throughout the project.

Timely and clear communication means:

- communicating with clarity;
- including public engagement at the start of the project;
- providing participants with the information they need to participate effectively;
- ensuring participants have sufficient notice for upcoming engagement opportunities;
- providing information throughout the engagement process that is timely, accurate and clear;
- engaging individuals before key decisions (that have community impact) have been made;
- promoting engagement opportunities using communications approaches based on evidence rather than assumptions;
- communicating information in ways that best meet the needs of individuals and communities;
- being authentic and open about how participant feedback will be used to shape direction and decisions or being open about the opportunity being focused on (i.e. information distribution, not engagement);
- providing participants with information on how to continue participation in the project, if applicable; and
- ensuring the process is clear by making information easily accessible.

Timely and clear communication in action

- Communicate using plain language – avoid jargon, legalese, acronyms, etc.
- Move project timelines if there is insufficient time to communicate about the engagement. Giving individuals only a small window to participate decreases transparency, trust and respect.
- Place engagement opportunities in a space that is open and accessible.
- Share the results of the engagement through consistent reports and include explanation and analysis outlining how public input was considered and incorporated;
- Share a timeline with participants as to when they will be engaged and when they will receive results. This provides participants with clarity and confidence in the engagement process.
- Leverage spaces and platforms where individuals are already gathering.

5. Continuous learning

The municipality is committed to **continuous learning** by seeking feedback and incorporating lessons learned to improve future engagement processes.

Each engagement must have a plan for continuous improvement. Evaluating an engagement plan helps to identify opportunities and gaps in feedback and process, creates a standard by which to measure future engagements and increases the organization's knowledge about its people, communities and municipal mandate(s).

Continuous learning means:

- ensuring the engagement has a plan for evaluation;
- obtaining evidence-based feedback rather than relying on assumptions;
- evaluating the engagement activities to ensure processes are effective;
- identifying opportunities, challenges and lessons learned for future engagements;
- making changes to engagement approaches and activities based on feedback; and
- continuing to engage individuals if your project goals have not been accomplished.

Continuous learning in action

- Set clear goals and objectives at the beginning of the planning process.
- Establish metrics and benchmarks to measure again.
- Evaluate the engagement using qualitative and quantitative indicators where possible.
- Determine the evaluation plan early and how it aligns with the organization's strategic priorities.
- Conduct a debrief with the project team to reflect on the engagement and lessons learned.
- Track and report engagement on a regular basis.

Appendix C

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Internal Engagement 2023

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Prepared by:

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Date: Fall 2023

HALIFAX

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Executive Summary

The municipality is developing a revised Community Engagement Strategy (CES), inclusive of new Corporate Guidelines for Public Engagement. The revised CES is a deliverable within the municipality's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan and supports the municipality's priority of being community focused by encouraging resident engagement in the development of public policies and plans.

The development of the revised CES is being led by a Working Group (WG) consisting of representatives from seven business units across the organization (i.e. Chief Administrative Office; Community Safety; Halifax Transit; Parks & Recreation; Planning & Development; Property, Fleet & Environment; and Public Works) as well two partner agencies (i.e. Halifax Water and Halifax Public Libraries). To help ensure the CES is meaningful, relevant, and inclusive of business unit (BU) needs, the WG conducted a two-pronged internal engagement approach.

Throughout summer and fall 2023, feedback was solicited from employees, as well as the Mayor and Regional Councillors, through two online surveys. The WG also conducted interviews with more than 70 senior leaders from BUs and the two partner agencies. These leaders were asked to share their vision and expectations for a revised CES

This report summarizes the feedback from these internal engagement efforts. **Note:** The insights in this *What We Heard Report* do not represent recommendations by the Working Group but, rather, reflect the feedback provided by key internal partners and partner agencies. This input will help inform the revised CES along with research that includes jurisdictional scans, best practices and considerations related to organizational capacity (e.g. financial and staffing resources).

Feedback from internal engagement efforts can be grouped in the following themes:

- **Consistent Guidelines and Practices –** A need for clear direction and standards for how and when community engagement occurs (e.g. timelines for engagement processes, minimum standards, protocols for the role of elected officials, etc.).

- **Dedicated, Trained Engagement Staff** – A more coordinated and integrated approach to engagement across the organization could be achieved with trained staff dedicated to the planning and delivery of public engagement. The specialized engagement staff would increase collaboration across BUs and help to minimize engagement fatigue.

- **Organizational Engagement Calendar and Repository of Data** – Maintaining a schedule of planned engagements could help to reduce engagement fatigue. This schedule should be accessible to all BUs to enhance planning, collaboration and data gleaned from previous sessions.

- **Transparency and Trust** – To help build trust, the municipality must be transparent about how feedback will be used, and also report back on how it was incorporated. Engagement must be authentic and not a "check in the box."

- **Online vs. In-Person Sessions** – Additional clarity on optimal engagement format for varying audiences is needed. Online formats have challenges with accessibility, while in-person sessions are often poorly attended.

- **Strategies for Equitable and Inclusive Engagement** – Additional guidance and resources are needed for how to engage equitably and inclusively with the diverse communities (e.g. processes for providing honorariums, offering childcare options, travel reimbursement for participants, accessibility requirements, etc.).

- **Community Partnerships** – The importance of building relationships with community and having D&I/ANSAIO facilitate these connections was a key theme. Partnering with Halifax Public Libraries has also been successful and capacity exists for library staff to further support municipal engagement efforts.

What We Did

Between July and October 2023, the WG connected with BUs, the Mayor's Office and Regional Councillors to help inform a revised CES using a three-pronged internal engagement approach:

1. **Employee survey:** The WG developed an internal online survey seeking feedback from municipal staff within each BU who are involved in the delivery of community engagement. The survey link, along with background on the project, was originally shared with BU Coordinators on July 18 for distribution to employees in their BUs who regularly engage in the delivery of community engagement initiatives. The intent was to reach out in a targeted manner first, asking those most directly involved in community engagement to complete the survey.

   After the initial two-week survey period, the survey was opened to all staff as a way of gathering as much information as possible – reaching anyone who may have insight but was missed in the preliminary targeted approach. The survey deadline was extended to September 21 and the survey was shared on the Employee Hub and mentioned in the Employee Bulletin on multiple occasions. A total of 88 responses were received.

   For reference, see the full survey in *Appendix A: Employee survey questions*.

2. **Mayor and Regional Council survey:** Similar to the employee online survey, a survey was developed to seek feedback the Mayor and Regional Councillors on the development of a revised CES. The survey was shared with the Mayor via the Mayor's Chief of Staff, and with Regional Councillors via the Councillors' Support Office on September 14. The survey closed on September 28 and a total of 11 survey responses were received.

   For reference, see the full survey in *Appendix B: Mayor and Council survey questions*.

3. **Senior leadership interviews:** Between August and October, Working Group members contacted key senior leaders from each BU inviting them to participate in either an in-person or virtual interview to determine their high-level strategic engagement needs for a revised CES. Interviews were offered to all BUs via BU Coordinators, who were asked to help identify senior leaders to participate. Senior leaders from 11 of the 13 BUs participated. Interviews were also conducted with key senior leaders at both Halifax Water and the Halifax Public Libraries. Interviews were conducted with a total of approximately 70 senior leaders across the organization and partner agencies. Each group was asked to share their vision and expectations for a revised CES.

What We Heard

What we heard: Employee survey

For complete survey results, see Appendix C: Employee survey responses.
Note: *Some survey comments have been redacted to protect personal information.*

As mentioned above, a survey was distributed to municipal employees throughout the summer of 2023; a total of 88 responses were received. Below is a summary of the responses for each question.

1. Business unit or organization

Planning & Development (34 per cent) and Parks & Recreation (19 per cent) had the highest response rates. The following list outlines the approximate response rate from the other business units (BUs):

- Public Works (15%)
- Community Safety (8%)
- Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (6%)
- Halifax Transit (5%)
- Finance & Asset Management (5%)
- Property, Fleet & Environment (5%)
- Chief Administrative Office (1%)
- Human Resources (1%)
- Legal & Legislative Services (0%)
- Information Technologies (0%)
- Halifax Regional Police (0%)

2. Role (select most applicable)

Of the responses, 64.37 per cent were employees, 10.34 per cent were supervisors, 18.39 per cent were managers and 6.9 per cent were directors.

3. How often do you deliver public engagement?

With a combined total of 60 per cent, most survey respondents engage with the public every two to six months, while 18 per cent of respondents engage the public on a monthly basis. Engagement is less frequent on an annual basis, with nine per cent engaging the public once per year and 3.5 per cent engaging the public every two to three years.

4. Why do you, your team or business unit undertake public engagement?

At 76 per cent, the most common reason for engaging the public is a desire to inform programs/operations/service delivery. The second two most cited reasons for engaging the public are ethical and professional practice and community requests/concerns. Other common reasons for engaging the public are due to direction from Regional Council and policy requirements. The most frequent types of projects engaged on are infrastructure development,

policy development, site-specific community-based initiatives as well as strategies, frameworks or action plans.

5. What types of projects do you conduct public engagement for?

Policy development, infrastructure/capital planning, Council-directed projects, site-specific initiatives as well as strategies, frameworks or action plans were all top project types for which staff conduct public engagement. The least common types of projects were program development and education about municipal services.

6. Generally, what are the primary goals of your public engagement?

Informing the public, relationship building and receiving feedback were the top three answers for this question, followed closely by influencing decision-making, empowering communities and shared decision-making.

7. What considerations determine the level of engagement necessary?

The following were listed as considerations that determined the level of engagement necessary from most to least common:

1. Community outreach: building relationships with traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized communities (85%)
2. Level of impact on the affected group(s)/communities (79%)
3. Interests or concerns from the public or specific group(s) (77%)
4. Community outreach: consideration based on existing relationships/past engagement experience (68%)
5. How engagement can improve decision-making (61%)
6. Expectations internally or externally (e.g. Regional Council) (57%)
7. Following internal guidelines regarding public engagement (53%)
8. Degree of influence engaged groups have on the project (46%)
9. Legal requirements (33%)
10. Funding requirement (15%)
11. Other (3%)

8. Please select the approaches you typically use for public engagement.

The most common responses were in-person meetings with key partners, in-person presentations with opportunities for feedback and online surveys. The following were all listed as common approaches to public engagement with relatively equal weighting:

- Virtual meetings
- Shape Your City Halifax (online engagement portal)
- Social media
- One-on-one interviews with community
- Virtual presentations
- Video presentations
- Virtual map-based survey
- Printed surveys

- Pop-up events
- Open house forums
- Online contact information and feedback channels
- Partnering with community groups
- Discussion or idea boards (virtual or in-person)

9. Do you use the municipality's online engagement portal, Shape Your City?

59 per cent of respondents use Shape Your City, while 41 per cent do not.

10. If yes, which Shape Your City tools and widgets do you typically use?

Of the respondents who do use Shape Your City, the following tools were mentioned, with 1 being the most used and 4 the least.

1. Documents / FAQs / Surveys
2. Map / Photos / Videos / Important Links / Who's Listening / Key Dates
3. Newsfeed / Forums / Quick Polls / Signup Banner / Lifecycle / Follow Project / Questions
4. Ideas / Stories / Guestbook / Custom / New Categories

11. How often does feedback from public engagement influence your municipal work?

95 per cent of respondents reported that feedback from public engagement influences their work always or sometimes, while 5 per cent said rarely.

12. Do you engage early in the process?

97 per cent of respondents reported that they engage early in the process, while about 3 per cent said they were unsure.

13. Who do you consult for public engagement?

Respondents reported consulting the following for public engagement:

1. Communities, groups and individuals in specific geographic areas that may be impacted (53%)
2. Targeted demographic groups that may be impacted (34%)
3. Community organizations and leaders (e.g. staff, Councillors, community groups) to identify stakeholders and underrepresented groups (49%)
4. All of the above (68%)
5. Other, including general HRM population, random sample of all residents or businesses (10%)

The following is a summary of responses from the following two questions:

- **(Question 14) What measures do you take to engage underrepresented groups, who may be impacted by your project, to ensure that they are heard? Please share**

what supports (e.g. tools, processes, resources, budget) would help you increase these measures.

- **(Question 15) What measures do you take to ensure engagement initiatives are accessible? If the answer is none, please share what supports (e.g. processes, tools, resources, budget) would help you take these measures.**

Municipal staff currently engage with underrepresented, equity deserving groups in a variety of ways. The most successful method for engaging with underrepresented groups is building and maintaining relationships with community members and key partners before, during and after the completion of public engagement. Starting early in the engagement process, community leaders as well as other community organizations are consulted regarding engagement tactics best suited for the community.

The second most commonly cited successful tactic was consultation that involved staff from the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (D&I/ANSAIO). D&I/ANSAIO staff not only have community connections but can also provide input on effective methods to engage with various underrepresented groups. Having advisors representing the various underrepresented groups was noted as an extremely effective way to receive input on how to tailor engagement to be accessible and inclusive.

Tailoring alternative engagement options that are more directed towards specific groups is crucial. Many staff emphasized the importance of aligning with cultural practices, such as specific types of food and culturally appropriate music. It is also crucial to be respectful of various holidays or cultural events. For example, it was noted that some African Nova Scotian communities have midweek evening church commitments so it's important to avoid scheduling conflicting engagement events.

In terms of planning for in-person engagement events, it's important to consider the venue and who may feel included and excluded in that space. For example, one staff noted that groups who have been traditionally marginalized by municipal processes may not appreciate engagement in municipal spaces. For engagement event planning, childcare must be considered when planning public engagement events in the evenings, as many parents cannot participate if they need to feed and put their children to bed.

Another best practice for engaging underrepresented communities is to provide honorariums or to financially compensate community leaders who dedicate their time to the engagement process and even to participants who show up and provide input. Since financial compensation is a proven effective method, having larger budgets for honorariums was noted as a needed support.

When discussing what supports would help increase participation in and accessibility of engagement, the main theme that emerged is more municipal staff support to 1) build and facilitate community connections, and 2) to further tailor engagement to underrepresented groups. One staff noted that a "tips-and-tricks" guide outlining how to request American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation or translation support would be very helpful.

Other cited supports included a standard checklist of considerations, additional budget and additional staffing to run more significant in-person public engagements. This support could include people to help speak directly with community members, provide materials such as information boards/ technical tools (laptops/tablets) to allow people to complete surveys in-person, or to do more extensive community meetings with accessible technologies. Hands-on engagement tactics were also seen to increase inclusivity. One staff member shared a success story: "…we engaged with CNIB and had a physical tactile model built of the design to help communicate with the visually impaired."

16. How is information on next steps or final decisions reported back to the participants and/ or communities?

The most common responses were responding to feedback and questions submitted during or after engagement sessions (72%) and What We Heard reports (69%), followed closely by community engagement information shared within Council reports (64%) and meeting(s). The least common response was through follow-up presentations to stakeholders (43%).

17. How do you measure success?

The following were mentioned as measures of success, with 1 being the most common and 3 the least.

1. The number of participants or levels of attendance / Participants are representative of the communities you are aiming to engage
2. Volume of feedback / Inclusive participation (ensuring all impacted partners are provided with barrier-free participation options)
3. Impact of participant feedback has been communicated to the public / Metrics or analysis on website traffic, social media metrics

18. What community engagement successes would you like to repeat?

Municipal staff reported several successful engagement tactics that are used across BUs. The three top themes that emerged are building strategic relationships with key partners, facilitating meaningful discussions and ensuring equitable inclusion. The biggest emphasis was placed upon strategic relationships with key partners, as the success of engagement depends upon the quality of your relationships within the community. Especially for underrepresented groups, there can be distrust of government based on past inequities and experiences. Having strategic relationships and community partnerships is key to building that required trust.

Furthermore, relationships built with groups like Ummah Masjid Mosque and Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Center are important to help staff incorporate cultural learnings and sensitivities. Staff emphasized the crucial role that D&I/ANSAIO plays in facilitating and building community relationships.

Especially for cultural or artistic projects, it's important for the community to feel ownership. This is best facilitated through the development of trusting relationships. Indeed, staff reported success in working with local artists and other key partners in underrepresented groups to facilitate creative interpretive signage projects which represent the history of their communities. Staff emphasized the importance of celebrating success, as it helps to maintain relationships

beyond the completion of community engagement. One staff noted that it's crucial to "…empower the community to take ownership and pride in achievements", as it builds a sense of pride in the community that something important was achieved in collaboration with the municipality.

Staff also emphasized the importance of having a presence in the community. This included pop-up events in community locations, participating in pre-organized community events and presentations to existing community groups that include food and music to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Meaningful discussions tend to identify solutions rather than problems and are critical to receiving authentic feedback on a project. Tactics to facilitate meaningful discussion included World Cafe style events, where participants with differing perspectives discuss ideas with each other in small, facilitated groups. Targeting interviews to key community members and key partners is another tactic to ensure meaningful discussion.

The following are "key challenges" summarized from responses to the questions below:

- **(Question 19) What challenges do you and/or your business unit face when designing and/or delivering public engagement?**

- **(Question 20) Where are there opportunities for enhancement?**

The key challenges discussed were a lack of staffing and resources, the ability to reach a wide cross section of residents, distrust of municipal government employees and the logistical challenges of engaging widely across a large municipality.

The top challenge facing community engagement was seen to be a lack of staffing and financial resources to adequately support public engagement. For instance, one staff noted that within their business unit, there is very little funding and monetary resources to engage in a meaningful and inclusive way (these may include providing inclusion supports like ASL, caregiving, translation or recognizing residents' time through food or honoraria).

Additionally, the time and effort to prepare and host engagements creates challenges for other work responsibilities staff need to complete. The time required for public engagement was discussed by staff at length, including the details of extra staff support the day-of for transporting, setting up and tearing down materials. It was also noted by many that community engagement itself is a very specific skill set. Many municipal staff are hired based on their expertise in a certain field, but then expected to also know how to meaningfully conduct public engagement without any formal support or training from within the organization.

BUs require the expertise, advice and support of both Corporate Communications and D&I/ANSAIO to deliver community engagement efforts. However, the significant demands placed on these divisions by BU clients across the organization can create challenges with requests for support with community engagement that have a short lead-time.

Another key challenge facing community engagement reported was negative interactions at public meetings derailing the conversation. Many staff reported that the "stand and defend" style public presentations can foster toxic behaviour. In this meeting format, frustrated residents have

a platform to sidetrack the presentation and prohibit the exchange of meaningful and nuanced dialogue.

Opposition to projects was also seen to result from a misunderstanding of the project goals and rationale. Many development and roadway projects are complex with a lot of trade-offs required. It can be difficult to communicate project nuances over internet-based communications material. As a result, residents who show up to public meetings with misperceptions, or share misinformation about the project within their community, are more likely to oppose projects.

Staff also noted that for capital projects, the extensive timelines between public engagement and construction can lead to confusion and community opposition. There can be a three to five-year gaps between consultation and construction. Some residents forget the consultation content while residents new to the area are unaware of the project.

Especially for regional projects, it is challenging to efficiently engage the entire municipality due to geographical limitations. For example, sending staff from the downtown core to rural areas is a full-day commitment even if a public meeting is just a few hours. Additionally, it can be challenging to engage residents in rural areas of all ages where internet access may be unreliable.

Many staff noted the challenge of reaching a wide cross-section of residents including those in rural areas who don't use internet-based platforms. One staff noted that their team relies heavily on social media and Councillor newsletters to "get the word out". But those on social media and who are signed up to receive the newsletter are often not fully representative of the community.

The final challenge discussed by staff is "engagement fatigue" caused by too many projects engaging community members in a short window of time. Often staff report not knowing about engagement projects being undertaken by other BUs. By the time they launch public engagement, residents may not participate because they are tired of filling out surveys, attending public meetings, etc.

The following is a summary of recommendations from respondents, based on the questions below:
- **(Question 21) What additional resources would help your team deliver successful engagement initiatives?**

- **(Question 22) In your opinion, what would help the municipality deliver on community engagement?**

- **(Question 23) Do you have anything else you would like to share to help shape the development of a revised Community Engagement Strategy?**

The top recommendation is more resources allocated for community engagement. As discussed, effective community engagement requires a unique skill set. One survey respondent noted that "…staff are hired because they are experts in their field and then expected to do high quality engagement which isn't fair". Many staff are doing engagement "off the side of their desk" but everyone is stretched thin. Almost every survey respondent indicated that more *skilled* staff are required to support engagement.

In addition to the recommendation for more staff expertise in community engagement, a common theme among respondents was that a more coordinated, integrated approach to public engagement across the organization is needed. Having dedicated staff for the planning and delivery of public engagement in partnership with the project managers/subject matter experts would help to increase coordination across BUs.

Many BUs currently rely on consultants for carrying out community engagement; however, having consulting staff for short windows of time means that institutional knowledge and project history are not retained within the organization. If the municipality had dedicated community engagement staff, these staff could help to apply a more integrated approach where employees are learning from and building on engagement efforts.

Dedicated staff could also help to ensure that engagement efforts within specific communities are not duplicated, minimizing engagement fatigue. These employees could be responsible for fostering and maintaining relationships with influential community members and key partners, which can often include the need to attend community events outside of planned engagement windows.

In addition to staff and financial resources, the need for a comprehensive list of resources, materials, events and contacts was also identified. Staff noted that many municipal projects have inconsistent public-facing engagement and that efforts are commonly duplicated when planning for engagement. The need was identified for a directory of accessible meeting venues, ASL interpreters, translators, etc., so that staff are not duplicating efforts or that the municipality is not paying consultants to duplicate efforts when planning for engagement.

A calendar of engagement events and/or a central dashboard for community engagement by BUs was a top recommended resource. This resource would indicate if other BUs are conducting engagement in the same community, allowing staff to better leverage existing relationships and events and avoid engagement fatigue. A related database or directory would also be a place to see the history of all projects undertaken in the community so that staff are aware of existing relationships and dynamics with the municipality. This recommendation was made by almost every survey respondent and is seen to be a key required resource; currently BUs are not seen to be coordinated or communicating enough with each other around community engagement efforts.

A recommendation was also put forward to have mandatory community engagement training for staff who regularly carry-out engagement. The training could include a list of contacts within the organization (e.g. D&I/ANSAIO staff, community developers) as well as best practices for engaging diverse communities, planning for inclusive and accessible engagement, building relationships with key partners, etc. The training could include successes and lessons learned from existing municipal projects so that the organization builds on its unique successes and challenges.

Survey Themes
Overall, the following is a summary of the key themes and concerns that were raised through by employees in this survey:

1. **Consistent Guidelines and Practices –** A need for clear direction and specific standards for how to plan effective community engagement and when community engagement is needed (e.g. timelines for engagement processes, minimum standards, etc.).

2. **Dedicated Engagement Staff** – A more coordinated, integrated approach to public engagement is needed across the organization. Having dedicated staff for the planning and delivery of public engagement, in partnership with the project managers/subject matter experts, would help to increase coordination across BUs and minimize engagement fatigue. It was mentioned frequently that staff who deliver engagement should be trained with the same tools and resources to enhance consistency.

3. **Budgetary, resource and timeline limitations –** These limitations inhibit staff's ability to conduct effective, authentic and inclusive engagement, which may include providing inclusion supports like ASL, caregiving, translation or recognizing residents' time through food or honoraria. Additionally, BUs require the expertise, advice and support of both Corporate Communications and D&I/ANSAIO to deliver community engagement efforts. However, the significant demands placed on these divisions by BU clients across the organization can create challenges with requests for support with community engagement that have a short lead-time.

4. **Transparency and Trust** – To help build trust, the municipality must be transparent about how feedback will be used, and also report back on how it was incorporated. Engagement must be authentic and not a "check in the box."

5. **Online vs. In-Person Sessions** – Additional guidance on optimal engagement format for varying audiences is needed. Online formats have challenges with accessibility, while in-person sessions are often poorly attended.

6. **Strategies for Equitable and Inclusive Engagement** – Additional information and resources are needed for how to engage equitably and inclusively with the diverse communities of the municipality (e.g. processes for providing honorariums, offering childcare options, travel reimbursement for participants, accessibility requirements, etc.).

7. **Organizational Engagement Calendar and Repository of Data** – Maintaining a schedule of planned engagements could help to reduce engagement fatigue. This schedule should be accessible to all BUs to enhance planning, collaboration and data gleaned from previous sessions.

8. **Community Partnerships** – The importance of building relationships with community and having D&I/ANSAIO facilitate these connections was a key theme. Partnering with Halifax Public Libraries has also been successful and capacity exists for library staff to further support municipal engagement efforts.

What we heard: Mayor and Regional Council survey

For complete survey results, see Appendix D: Mayor and Regional Council survey responses

1. How do you typically learn about public engagement opportunities?

The list below represents how our Mayor and Councillors learn most often about public engagement opportunities. 1 represents the method most often used to learn about public engagement and 4 the least.

    1.   Memo from administration / Direct email from staff (64%)
    2.   Web-based calendars / Municipal social media channels (50%)
    3.   Councillors' support office (48%)
    4.   Halifax.ca project page / Shape Your City project page (32%)

2. How do you promote public engagement opportunities to your constituents?

The list below shows the methods used to promote public engagement by Mayor and Councillors, number 1 represents the method used most often and 5 is the least used.

    1.   Social media (98%)
    2.   Constituent newsletter (82%)
    3.   Word-of-mouth (62%)
    4.   Direct email from staff (58%)
    5.   Community paper (34%)

3. Do you use the municipality's online engagement portal, Shape Your City?

Only half of the members of Regional Council use the Shape Your City portal for public engagement. Five respondents answered that they use the portal and five answered that they don't.

4. Which Shape Your City tools and widgets do you find the most effective?

Of the respondents who do use Shape Your City, the following tools were mentioned, with 1 being the most used and 4 the least.

    1. Documents / FAQs
    2. Maps / Surveys / Photos
    3. Forums / Quick Polls / Videos / Key Dates
    4. Stories / Questions / Important Links / Signup Banner / Follow Project

5. Please share examples of what you considered to be successful public engagement initiatives led by the municipality.

More than one member of Regional Council mentioned the Centre Plan process as one of the more successful engagement initiatives. However, it was noted that, in the future, large projects such as this should happen with a Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) type committee to publicly guide staff. Recent Regional Plan and Suburban Plan engagement was

highlighted, as well as the Central Library project. Respondents also noted that successful engagement has included ample notice to include information in their newsletters and social media targeted to their district by Councillor support staff. Online engagement was also noted as a venue for successful engagement.

6. What do you see as barriers or challenges to your participation in public engagement?

The most common challenge to Council participation has been sufficient notice of engagement as well as notice of any changes to planned events. Respondents noted that our online calendars and resources could be better coordinated and updated with the Councillors' Support Office. As well, Councillors noted that one of the biggest barriers is how full their schedule is.

7. What do you see as barriers or challenges to your constituents' participation in municipal public engagement?

Accessibility is the most mentioned consideration to reduce barriers for participation for constituents. This includes transportation, sufficient notice, appropriate advertising, travel distance considerations, online and in-person options, as well as working hard to get the word out as far and wide as possible. We also need to focus on removing technical language and jargon from our engagement to improve participation.

8. What would help the municipality deliver improved public engagement?

Councillors mentioned the following ideas in their responses to this question:

- More in-person meetings
- More notice to Council
- Use libraries and community centres better
- More and larger mail outs
- Television ads
- Other facilities such as post offices, bus stops, cafes, grocery stores and sports venues for advertising
- Leverage a mix of digital and print media with a focus on posters and mailouts
- Ensure surveys are open-ended and don't have a predetermined outcome
- Mail drop postcards for large mail outs instead of letters addressed to houses

9. Do you have anything else you would like to share to help shape the development of a revised Community Engagement Strategy?

Councillors provided the following additional thoughts and ideas for our consideration:

- Develop postage free paper survey options
- Prioritize reconciliation with First Nations and reparation with African NS communities in CES and engagement generally
- Better engage stakeholder groups and community associations and organizations, treat them as project partners and collaborators
- Meet with local Councillor to brainstorm engagement design

- Do more to monitor social media in the community as a way to gauge community opinion and as a way to reach community

Survey Themes
Overall, the following is a summary of the key themes and concerns that were raised through by employees in this survey:

1. **Community Partnerships** – Survey respondents emphasized the importance of building relationships and collaborating with community associations, key partner groups and organizations. Many suggested further leveraging community venues like the libraries to host and advertise engagement opportunities.

2. **Advanced awareness for Regional Councillors** – Almost unanimously, Regional Councillors want to be involved earlier and have more advanced notice about engagement opportunities. This will help facilitate scheduling and also promotional support, such as Councillor newsletters.

3. **Accessible engagement -** Accessibility was the most mentioned consideration to reduce barriers for participation for constituents. This included transportation, sufficient notice, appropriate advertising, travel distance considerations, online and in-person options, plain language, as well as working hard to get the word out as far and wide as possible.

What we heard: Senior Leader Interviews

Between August and October 2023, members of the WG conducted interviews with the senior leadership teams for each BU, as well as Halifax Water and Halifax Public Libraries. What follows is a summary of the key themes and concerns that were raised through this internal engagement process.

1. **Consistent Practices**
   It was acknowledged across all business units that there is an organizational need for a strategy that provides clear direction and specific standards for how and when community engagement occurs. Consistent elements that were highlighted as being crucial included timelines for engagement processes, minimum standards for engagement, protocols for the role of elected officials/Council in directing the engagement process and legal/legislative requirements for specific processes.

2. **Resources and Training**
   As part of ensuring consistent practices for all municipal staff, it was suggested by many leadership teams that there needs to be more training for staff who are conducting engagement activities (de-escalation training, diversity training, facilitation training) and more resources or "how-to" guides that provide clear, step-by-step strategies for conducting engagement in different contexts and for different scales of projects.

3. **Role of the Diversity and Inclusion / African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office**
   The important role that D&I advisors play in supporting engagement sessions, fostering relationships, and providing information for engaging with diverse communities was a strong focus of all interview sessions. It was frequently acknowledged that D&I does not currently have the capacity to support the current engagement needs of business units and that increasing the capacity of this team or embedding D&I experts within BUs (as is done in Planning & Development) may allow for this important work to continue without overtaxing a small team that is already operating at full capacity.

4. **Transparency and Trust**
   Many of the leaders interviewed addressed the concern that there are communities that distrust the municipality. It was frequently discussed that part of the process for restoring this trust is being open about what the information gained through engagement sessions will be used for, and reporting back to communities about how their input was incorporated. As part of this discussion, it was acknowledged that engagement efforts on projects that are already completed – or that are done as a requirement without honest intent to incorporate results – continue to erode trust. Community engagement must be meaningful, authentic, and not just a "check in the box."

5. **Online vs. In-Person Sessions**
   It was frequently mentioned that online options such as "Shape Your City" are not especially inclusive and rely on digital literacy that not everyone has access to. Youth and seniors were highlighted as groups that are often missed through many of our existing online platforms. At the same time, it was also acknowledged that Public Information Meetings (PIMs) and other face-to-face sessions are frequently poorly attended, which can be discouraging for staff and a waste of resources. It is the hope of the leaders interviewed that there will be strategies shared for overcoming these

challenges and direction given on how best to reach the people that are often missed.

6. **Strategies for Equitable and Inclusive Engagement**
It was consistently raised that any municipal community engagement strategy must include information and resources for how to engage equitably and inclusively with the diverse communities of HRM. Part of this is understood to be outlining processes for providing honorariums, offering childcare options, and allowing for travel reimbursement for participants. Accessibility is an important element here, which includes the reading level used in print media, avoiding the use of jargon, contracting interpreters, and ensuring accessible venues.

7. **Engagement Specialists for Business Units**
One consistent suggestion amongst leadership teams was establishing engagement specialists to support BUs. This was raised as an idea for addressing the lack of capacity of existing staff to conduct engagement sessions as well as the skills deficit that many teams are experiencing. The idea behind this suggestion is that individuals with existing engagement expertise could be hired to guide the process and support the subject matter experts in conducting meaningful engagement sessions.

8. **Organizational Engagement Calendar and Repository of Data**
There was a general sense that engagement fatigue is something that many groups and communities are experiencing and that by maintaining a schedule of planned engagements that can be accessed by all business units, staff will be able to plan and collaborate accordingly. As part of this discussion, it was also suggested that data gleaned from engagement sessions could be provided in a shared location so that it can be accessed by all BUs, potentially optimizing the number of engagement sessions required.

9. **Community Partnerships**
The importance of building relationships with community groups and leaders, both for reaching vulnerable groups and engaging meaningfully with diverse communities, was a common theme amongst all interviews. This connects to the important role of D&I/ANSAIO in brokering these connections and the need for all BUs to have a designated staff person that is able to maintain strong relationships with external partners. It was mentioned by several leadership teams that partnering with Halifax Public Libraries has been very successful and there is capacity for library staff to support further engagement efforts with the municipality.

Appendix A: Employee survey questions

HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

The municipality is developing a revised Community Engagement Strategy (CES), inclusive of new Corporate Guidelines for Public Engagement and evidence-based tools and resources, to support the strategy, its implementation and success. More information about the CES is available at intranet.halifax.ca/CommunityEngagement.

The CES Working Group is seeking feedback from municipal staff within each business unit (BU) who are involved in the delivery of community engagement, with the intention of seeking a better understanding of:

- your business unit's current practices and needs
- community engagement successes and opportunities for improvement
- tools and resources that would help your BU deliver effective community engagement
- overall, what you'd like to see in a revised community engagement strategy

The more voices, the better. Please feel free to share this survey link with any relevant individuals in your BU or the organization.

Please complete the survey by August 8, 2023. The survey should take 20-30 minutes to complete.

Questions

If you have any questions or wish to engage the Working Group directly for a more fulsome discussion, please contact the Working Group's Project Manager:

Lauren Wilkie
Client Strategist, Corporate Communications
lauren.wilkie@halifax.ca, 902.497.2366

In accordance with Section 485 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), any personal information collected in this survey will only be used by municipal staff and, if necessary, individuals and/or organizations under service contract with the Halifax Regional Municipality for purposes relating to processing the Community Engagement Strategy internal survey results.

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HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

1. Business unit or organization

[⬍]

2. Role (select most applicable)

◯ Employee

◯ Supervisor

◯ Manager

◯ Director

3. How often do you deliver public engagement? Please select one.

◯ At least once per week

◯ At least once per month

◯ At least every two to three months

◯ At least every six months

◯ Once per year

◯ Every two to three years

4. Why do you, your team or business unit undertake public engagement? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Legislative requirement
- ☐ Policy requirement
- ☐ Direction from senior management
- ☐ Direction from Regional Council
- ☐ Councillor request
- ☐ Community request/ concern
- ☐ Desire to inform programs/ operations/ service delivery
- ☐ Ethical and professional practice
- ☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

5. What types of projects do you conduct public engagement for?

	1 - Rarely	2	3 - Often	4	5 - Most Often
Policy development	○	○	○	○	○
Program development	○	○	○	○	○
Infrastructure/ capital projects	○	○	○	○	○
Council-directed projects	○	○	○	○	○
Public safety	○	○	○	○	○
Site-specific engagement	○	○	○	○	○
Strategies, frameworks and/ or action plans	○	○	○	○	○
Education about municipal services	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

6. Generally, what are the primary goals of your public engagement? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Inform the public
- [ ] Receive feedback
- [ ] Influence decision making
- [ ] Empower communities
- [ ] Shared decision making
- [ ] Relationship building
- [ ] Other (please specify)

[   ]

7. What considerations determine the level of engagement necessary?

- [ ] Level of impact on the affected group(s)/ communities
- [ ] Community outreach: building relationships with traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized communities
- [ ] Community outreach: considerations based on existing relationships/past engagement experience(s)
- [ ] Degree of influence engaged group(s) have on the project
- [ ] How engagement can improve decision-making
- [ ] Interest or concerns from the public or specific group(s)
- [ ] Expectations internally or externally (e.g. Regional Council)
- [ ] Funding requirement
- [ ] Legal requirement
- [ ] Following internal guidelines regarding public engagement
- [ ] Other (please specify)

[   ]

8. Please select the approaches you typically use for public engagement.

	1 - Rarely	2	3 - Often	4	5 - Most Often
Virtual meetings	○	○	○	○	○
Shape Your City	○	○	○	○	○
Social media	○	○	○	○	○
One-on-one interviews with community	○	○	○	○	○
Virtual presentations	○	○	○	○	○
Video presentations	○	○	○	○	○
Virtual map-based survey	○	○	○	○	○
In-person stakeholder meetings	○	○	○	○	○
In-person presentations with opportunities for feedback	○	○	○	○	○
Online surveys	○	○	○	○	○
Printed surveys	○	○	○	○	○
Pop-up events	○	○	○	○	○
Open house forums	○	○	○	○	○
Online contact information and feedback channels	○	○	○	○	○
Partnering with community groups	○	○	○	○	○
Discussion or idea boards (virtual or in-person)	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. Do you use the municipality's online engagement portal, Shape Your City?

○ Yes

○ No

10. If yes, which Shape Your City tools and widgets do you typically use?

- [ ] Forums
- [ ] Map
- [ ] Ideas
- [ ] Stories
- [ ] Guestbook
- [ ] Questions
- [ ] News Feed
- [ ] Surveys
- [ ] Quick Polls
- [ ] Documents
- [ ] FAQs
- [ ] Important Links
- [ ] Who's Listening
- [ ] Photos
- [ ] Videos
- [ ] Key Dates
- [ ] Signup Banner
- [ ] Lifecycle
- [ ] Custom
- [ ] Follow Project
- [ ] News Categories
- [ ] Related Projects

11. How often does feedback from public engagement influence your municipal work? Please select one.

- ( ) Always
- ( ) Sometimes
- ( ) Rarely
- ( ) Never

If answered "sometimes," "rarely" or "never," please share why.

[   ]

12. Do you engage early in the process?

○ Always

○ Sometimes

○ Never

○ Unsure

If you answered "never" or "unsure," please explain why.

[   ]

13. Who do you consult for public engagement? Select all that apply.

☐ Communities, groups and individuals in specific geographic areas that may be impacted

☐ Targeted demographic groups that may be impacted

☐ Community organizations and leaders (e.g. staff, Councillors, community groups) to identify stakeholders and underrepresented groups

☐ All of the above

☐ None of the above

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

14. What measures do you take to engage underrepresented groups, who may be impacted by your project, to ensure that they are heard? Please share what supports (e.g. tools, processes, resources, budget) would help you increase these measures. Please describe:

Underrepresented groups include but are not limited to: African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, Francophones/Acadians, youth, immigrants, women/gender diverse persons, families with children, the older population, rural areas lacking technological infrastructure, renters vs home-owners, individuals living in congregate settings, etc.

[   ]

15. What measures do you take to ensure engagement initiatives are accessible? If the answer is none, please share what supports (e.g. processes, tools, resources, budget) would help you take these measures. Select all that apply.

☐ Accessible venue

☐ Accessible geographical location (e.g. on/ near a Halifax Transit route)

☐ Timing sessions at various times of the day

☐ Offering both virtual and in-person sessions

☐ Providing information in various formats

☐ Providing materials/ communications in multiple languages

☐ Providing American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation

☐ Online surveys and content that is accessible for individuals with visual impairments

☐ Use of plain language

☐ Providing Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services

☐ None

☐ Other

Supports to ensure accessible engagement initiatives:

_____

16. How is information on next steps or final decisions reported back to the participants and/ or communities? Select all that apply.

☐ What We Heard reports

☐ Follow-up presentations

☐ Meeting(s) with stakeholders

☐ Responding to feedback and questions submitted during or after engagement sessions

☐ Community engagement information shared within Council reports.

☐ Other (please specify)

_____

17. How do you measure success? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Number of participants/ levels of attendance
- [ ] Volume of feedback
- [ ] Inclusive participation (ensuring all impacted stakeholders are provided with barrier-free participation options)
- [ ] Participants are representative of the communities you are aiming to engage
- [ ] Impact of participant feedback has been communicated to the public
- [ ] Metrics/analysis on website traffic, social media metrics
- [ ] Other (please specify)

18. What community engagement successes would you like to repeat? Please describe:

19. What challenges do you and/or your business unit face when designing and/or delivering public engagement? Please describe:

20. Where are there opportunities for enhancement? Please describe:

21. What additional resources would help your team deliver successful engagement initiatives?

- ☐ Staffing resources
- ☐ Planning/ development time
- ☐ Scheduling alignment (e.g. with other municipal events or engagement activities)
- ☐ Training in community engagement/ facilitation
- ☐ Financial resources
- ☐ Awareness of how other business units can collaborate, share resources, inform the process, etc.
- ☐ Support to build community/ stakeholder relationships
- ☐ Communications support
- ☐ Project management support
- ☐ Community engagement subject-matter expertise
- ☐ Centralized supports
- ☐ Results analysis
- ☐ Corporate knowledge/ database of previous engagement

22. In your opinion, what would help the municipality deliver on community engagement? Please describe:

23. Do you have anything else you would like to share to help shape the development of a revised Community Engagement Strategy? Please describe:

Appendix B: Mayor and Council survey questions

HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors

The municipality is developing a revised Community Engagement Strategy (CES), inclusive of new Corporate Guidelines for Public Engagement and evidence-based tools and resources. The strategy will aim to enhance diversity and inclusion goals and reflect approaches that address the rapidly changing environment of public engagement. More information about the CES is available on the intranet.

The CES Working Group is seeking feedback from members of Regional Council to get a better understanding of:

- how you learn about, as well as promote, municipal public engagement opportunities
- municipal public engagement successes
- barriers or challenges to participation in municipal public engagement
- what would help the municipality deliver improved public engagement
- overall, what you'd like to see in a revised Community Engagement Strategy

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. **The deadline for completing the survey is September 28, 2023.**

In addition to your feedback, the Working Group has surveyed employees - including those who regularly engage in the delivery of municipal public engagement initiatives. This input will be used, along with research from jurisdictional scans and best practices, to help inform the development of the revised Community Engagement Strategy.

If you have any questions or wish to provide the Working Group with additional insights, please contact the Working Group's Co-Project Manager:

Maggie-Jane Spray
Manager, Internal Communications
Corporate Communications
spraym@halifax.ca, 902.476.6464

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HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors

1. How do you typically learn about public engagement opportunities?

	1- Rarely	2	3 - Often	4	5 - Most Often
Councillors' Support Office	○	○	○	○	○
Memo from administration	○	○	○	○	○
Direct email from staff	○	○	○	○	○
Halifax.ca project page	○	○	○	○	○
Shape Your City project page	○	○	○	○	○
Web-based calendars	○	○	○	○	○
Municipal social media channels	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

2. How do you promote public engagement opportunities to your constituents?

	1- Rarely	2	3 - Often	4	5 - Most Often
Direct email	○	○	○	○	○
Constituent newsletter	○	○	○	○	○
Community paper	○	○	○	○	○
Social media	○	○	○	○	○
Word-of-mouth	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

3. Do you use the municipality's online engagement portal, Shape Your City?

○ Yes

○ No

HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors

4. Which Shape Your City tools and widgets do you find most effective? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Forums
- [ ] Maps
- [ ] Ideas
- [ ] Stories
- [ ] Guestbook
- [ ] Questions
- [ ] News Feed
- [ ] Surveys
- [ ] Quick Polls
- [ ] Documents
- [ ] FAQs
- [ ] Important Links
- [ ] Who's Listening
- [ ] Photos
- [ ] Videos
- [ ] Key Dates
- [ ] Signup Banner
- [ ] Lifecycle
- [ ] Custom
- [ ] Follow Project
- [ ] News Categories
- [ ] Related Projects

HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors

5. Please share examples of what you considered to be successful public engagement initiatives led by the municipality. Explain why you feel they were successful.

6. What do you see as barriers or challenges to your participation in municipal public engagement?

7. What do you see as barriers or challenges to your constituents' participation in municipal public engagement?

8. What would help the municipality deliver improved public engagement? All ideas welcome.

9. Do you have anything else you would like to share to help shape the development of a revised Community Engagement Strategy?

Appendix C: Employee survey responses

Q1 Business unit or organization

Answered: 85   Skipped: 4
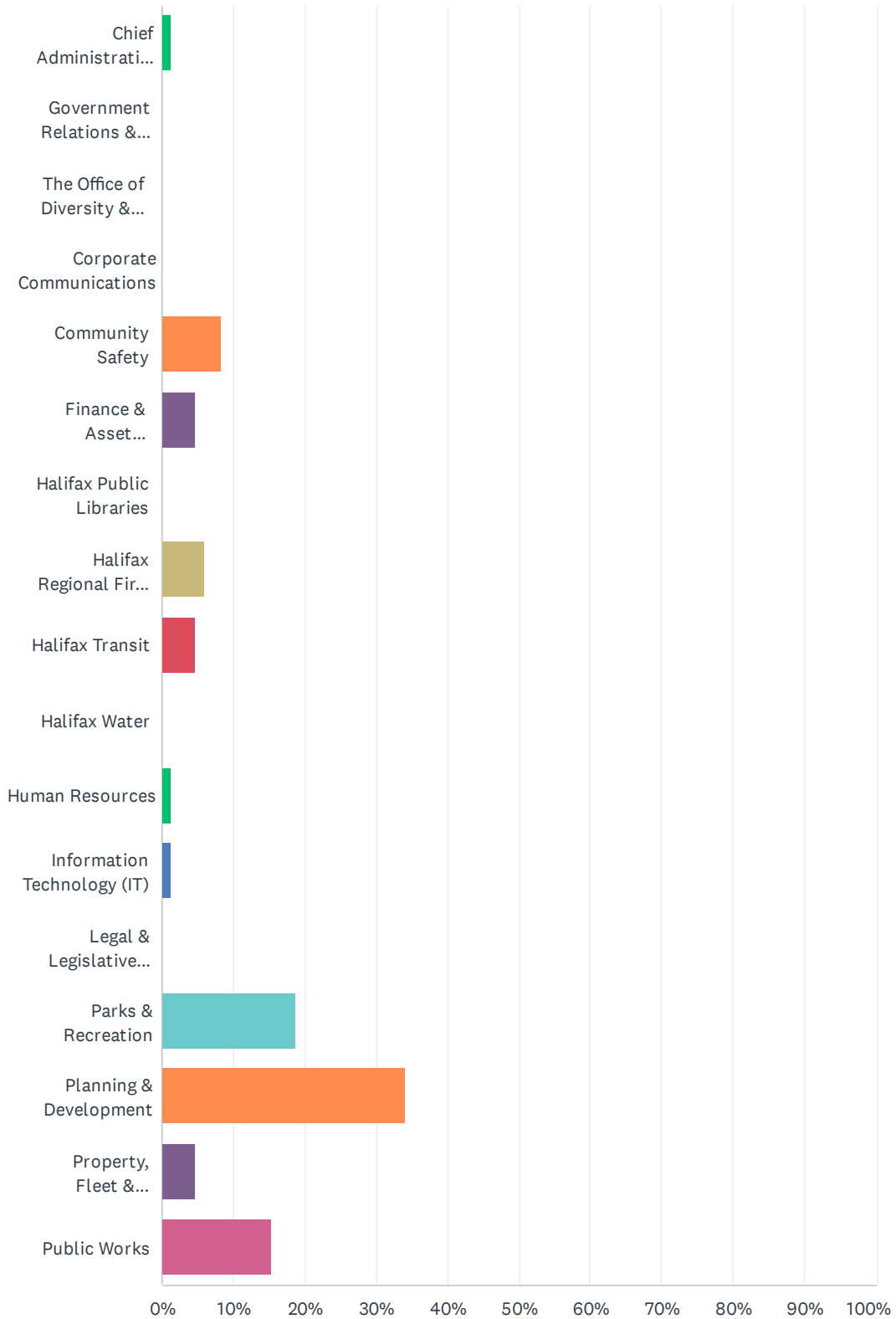
Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Chief Administrative Office	1.18%	1
Government Relations & External Affairs	0.00%	0
The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO	0.00%	0
Corporate Communications	0.00%	0
Community Safety	8.24%	7
Finance & Asset Management	4.71%	4
Halifax Public Libraries	0.00%	0
Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency	5.88%	5
Halifax Transit	4.71%	4
Halifax Water	0.00%	0
Human Resources	1.18%	1
Information Technology (IT)	1.18%	1
Legal & Legislative Services	0.00%	0
Parks & Recreation	18.82%	16
Planning & Development	34.12%	29
Property, Fleet & Environment	4.71%	4
Public Works	15.29%	13
TOTAL		85

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	

Q2 Role (select most applicable)

Answered: 88   Skipped: 1
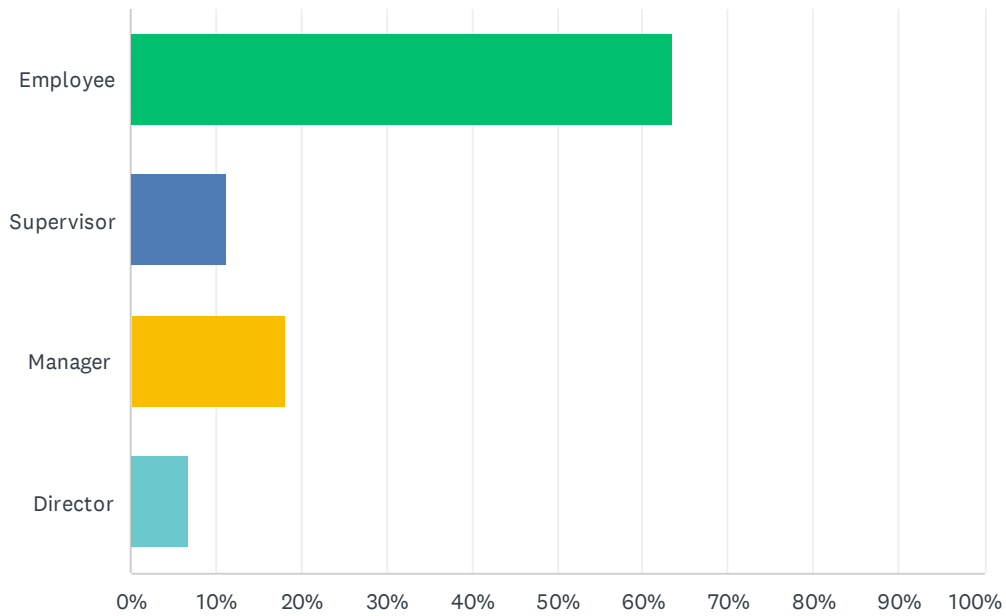
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employee	63.64%	56
Supervisor	11.36%	10
Manager	18.18%	16
Director	6.82%	6
TOTAL		88

Q3 How often do you deliver public engagement? Please select one.

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
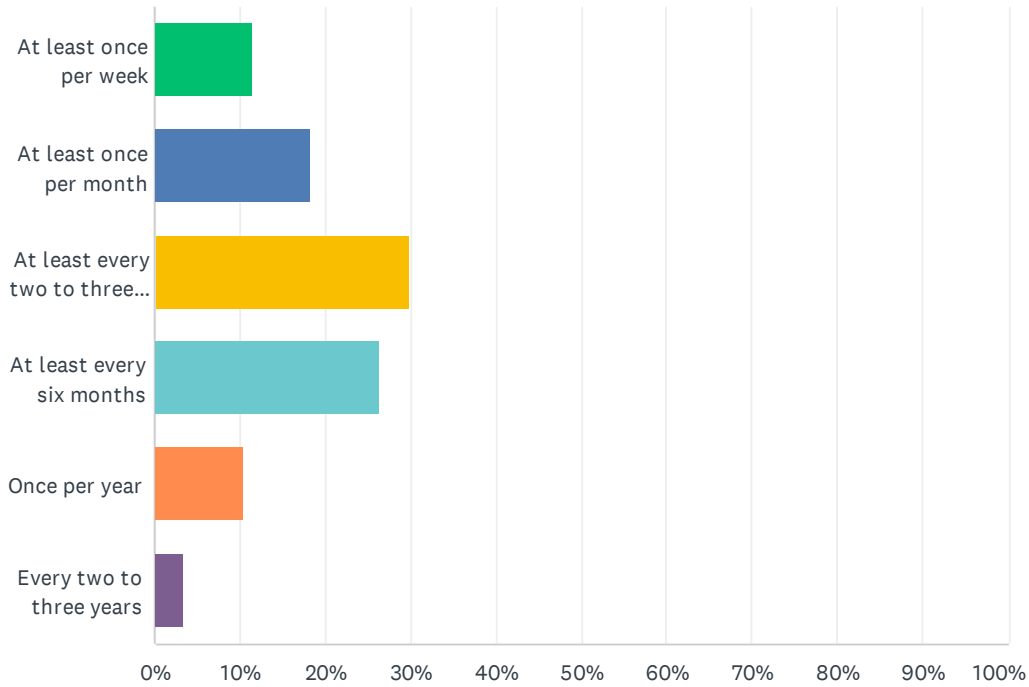
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At least once per week	11.49%	10
At least once per month	18.39%	16
At least every two to three months	29.89%	26
At least every six months	26.44%	23
Once per year	10.34%	9
Every two to three years	3.45%	3
TOTAL		87

Q4 Why do you, your team or business unit undertake public engagement? Select all that apply.

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
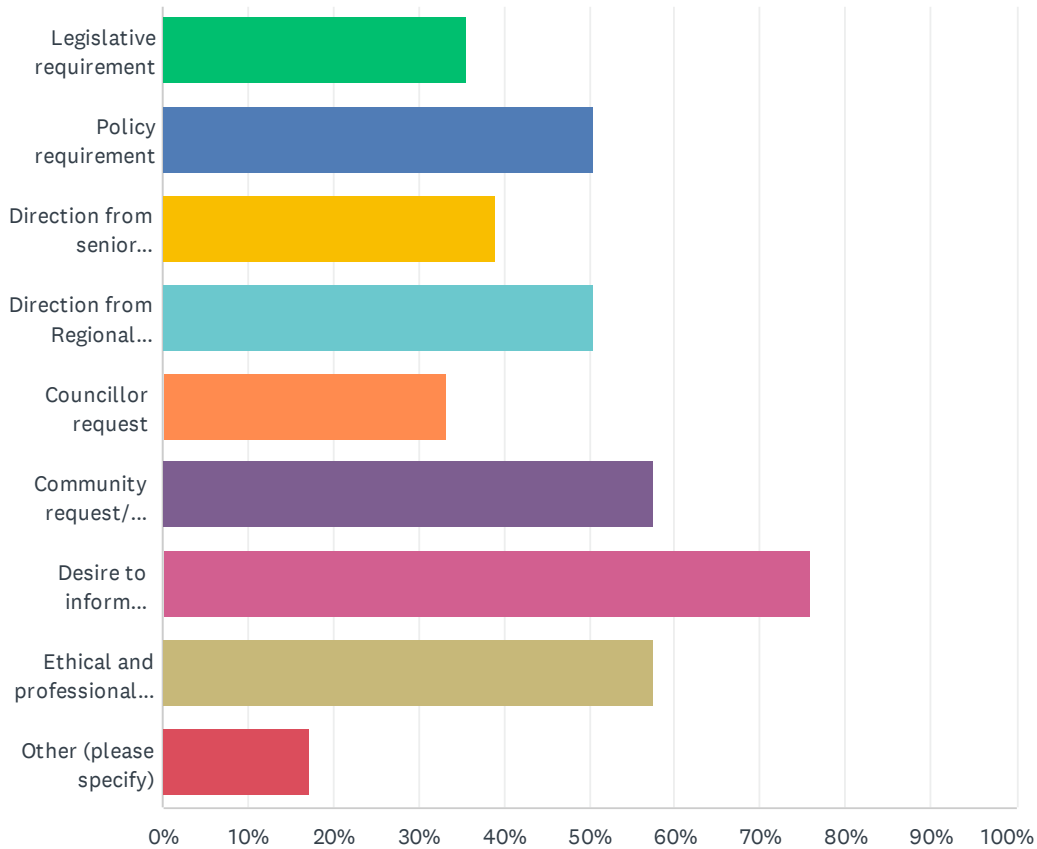
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Legislative requirement	35.63%	31
Policy requirement	50.57%	44
Direction from senior management	39.08%	34
Direction from Regional Council	50.57%	44
Councillor request	33.33%	29
Community request/ concern	57.47%	50
Desire to inform programs/ operations/ service delivery	75.86%	66
Ethical and professional practice	57.47%	50
Other (please specify)	17.24%	15
Total Respondents: 87		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

1	To seek feedback from the public, and because its the right thing to do to inform designs.	11/16/2023 9:05 AM
2	Recruitment	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
3	Desire to inform capital projects (design and program) and park plans.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
4	Provincial Direction	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
5	Our work impacts many adjacent landowners and the types of activities that would take place in their community.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
6	Youth Engagement	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
7	Communication Information about Open Data releases.	9/1/2023 5:32 PM
8	Part of the job	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
9	By-Law O-109, Fire Code	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
10	assist community to create and deliver process	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
11	Give proper information	7/31/2023 9:33 AM
12	Firefighter Recruitment and Outreach to Underrepresented Communities	7/28/2023 8:49 AM
13	Education and exposure to community specific needs and interests	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
14	Daily, Customer Service Work	7/26/2023 9:05 AM
15	Advancing and/or developing strategies and interpretive plans/design.plans.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM

Q5 What types of projects do you conduct public engagement for?

Answered: 86   Skipped: 3
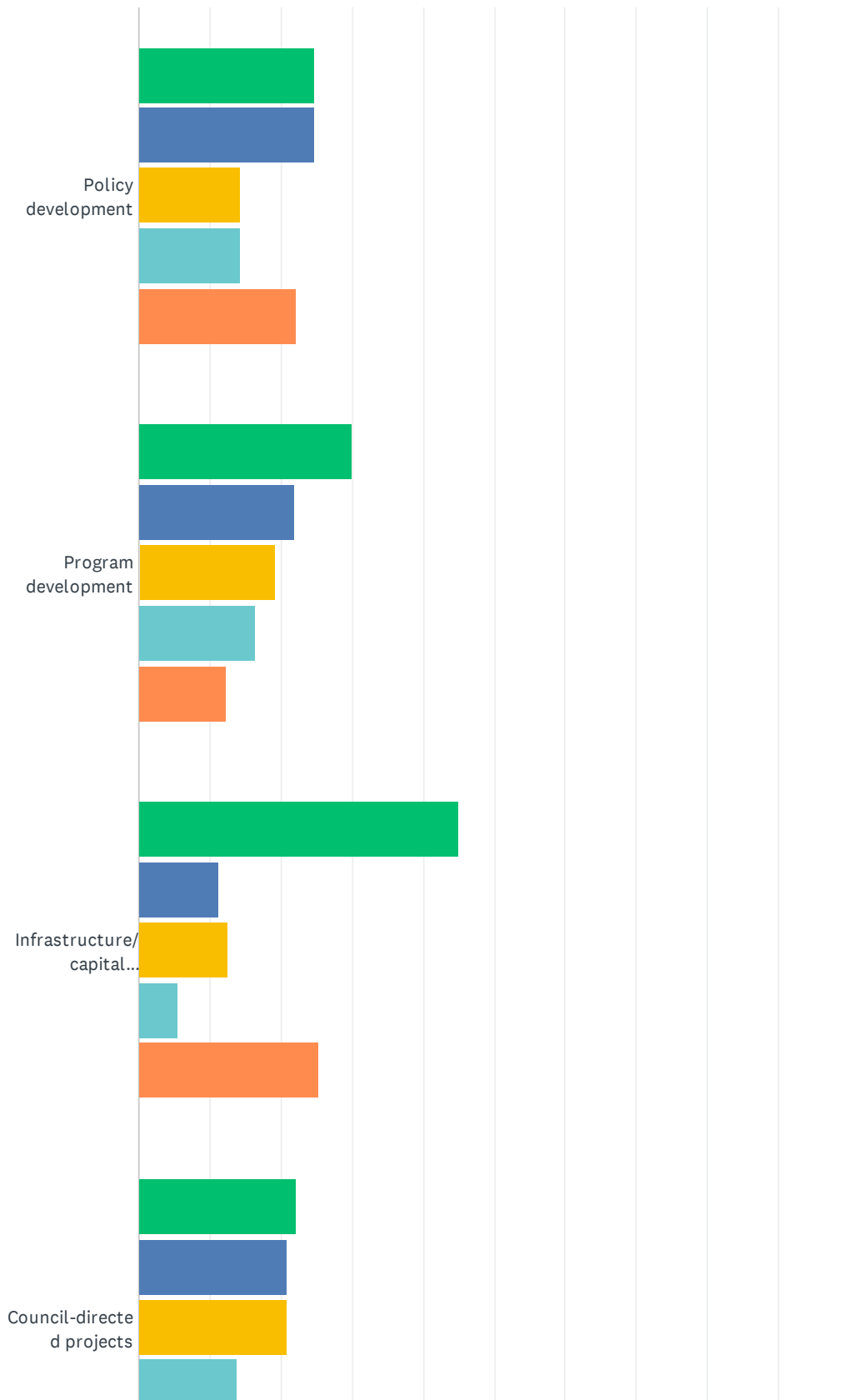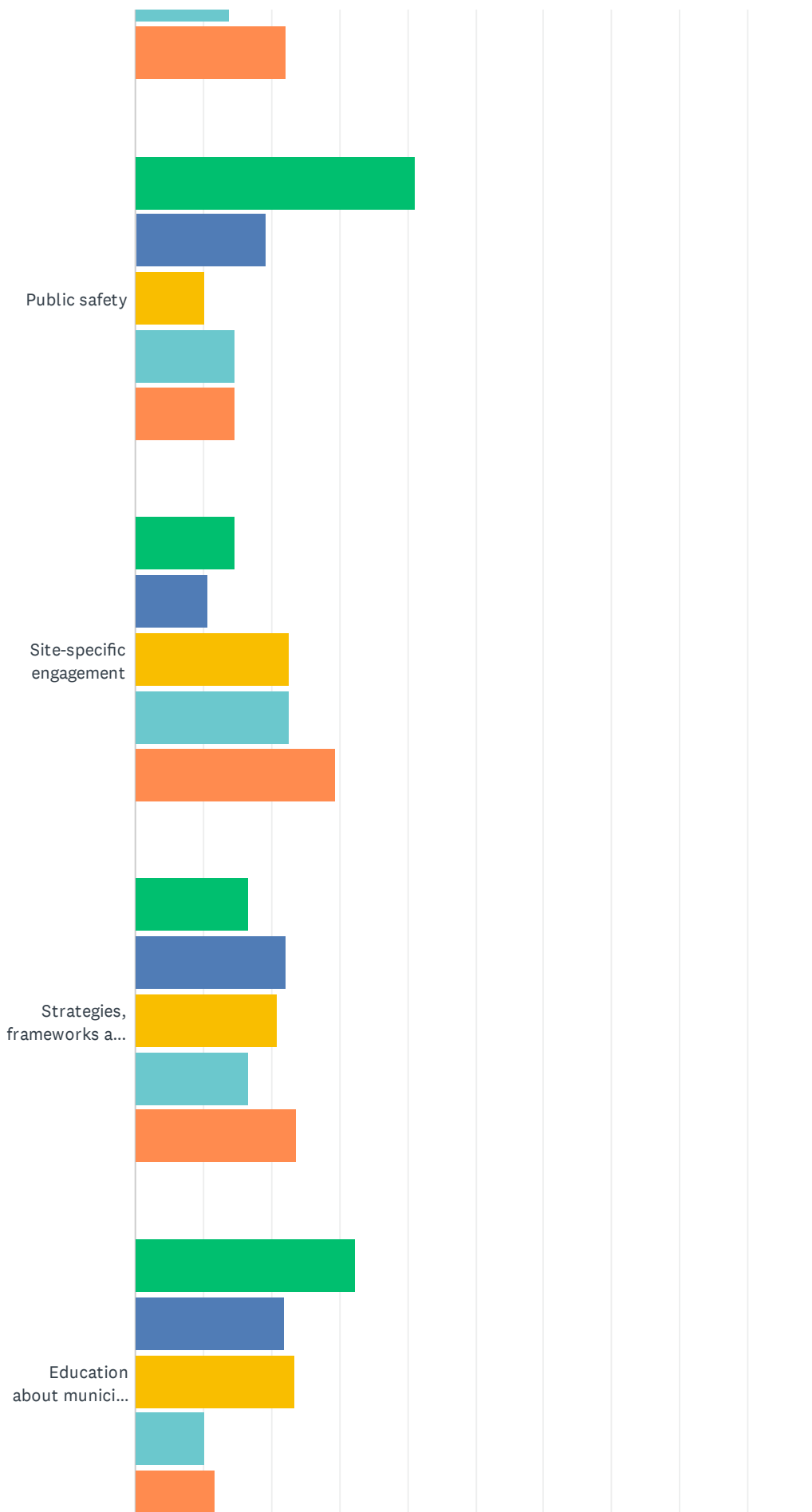
Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

Public safety

Site-specific engagement

Strategies, frameworks a...

Education about munici...

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

■ 1 - Rarely ■ 2 ■ 3 - Often ■ 4
■ 5 - Most Of...
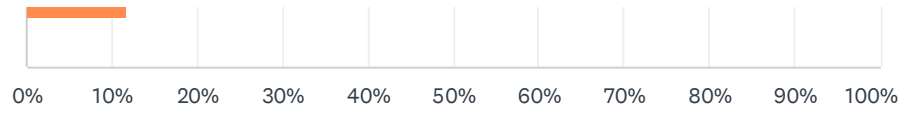
	1 - RARELY	2	3 - OFTEN	4	5 - MOST OFTEN	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Policy development	24.68% 19	24.68% 19	14.29% 11	14.29% 11	22.08% 17	77	2.84
Program development	30.14% 22	21.92% 16	19.18% 14	16.44% 12	12.33% 9	73	2.59
Infrastructure/ capital projects	45.07% 32	11.27% 8	12.68% 9	5.63% 4	25.35% 18	71	2.55
Council-directed projects	22.22% 16	20.83% 15	20.83% 15	13.89% 10	22.22% 16	72	2.93
Public safety	41.18% 28	19.12% 13	10.29% 7	14.71% 10	14.71% 10	68	2.43
Site-specific engagement	14.67% 11	10.67% 8	22.67% 17	22.67% 17	29.33% 22	75	3.41
Strategies, frameworks and/ or action plans	16.67% 12	22.22% 16	20.83% 15	16.67% 12	23.61% 17	72	3.08
Education about municipal services	32.35% 22	22.06% 15	23.53% 16	10.29% 7	11.76% 8	68	2.47

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Recruitment	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
2	Case-specific	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
3	Concept and Detail Design Planning in Active Transportation	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
4	we do Open Data releases 5 to 6 times a year not sure if this is definition of Often but I choose it	9/1/2023 5:32 PM
5	Assisting community group to engage regarding a project of interest in their community such as developing park space	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
6	Cultural event engagement specific to relationship building	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
7	public art and funding juries would perhaps be considered community engagement	7/25/2023 5:01 PM
8	Interpretation.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM

Q6 Generally, what are the primary goals of your public engagement? Select all that apply.

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
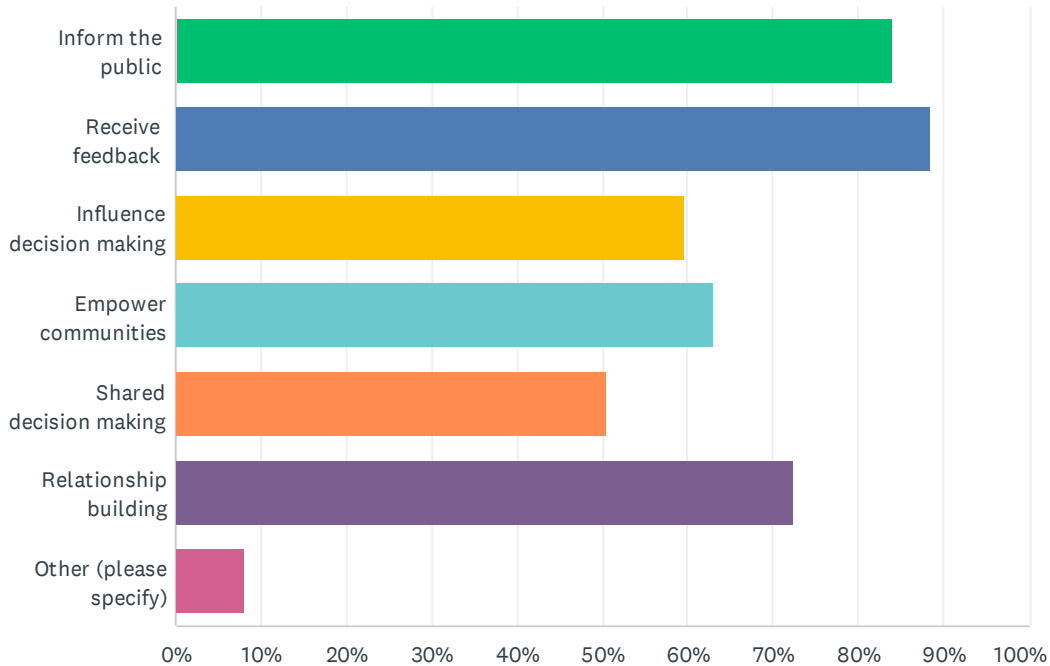
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Inform the public	83.91%	73
Receive feedback	88.51%	77
Influence decision making	59.77%	52
Empower communities	63.22%	55
Shared decision making	50.57%	44
Relationship building	72.41%	63
Other (please specify)	8.05%	7
Total Respondents: 87		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Recruitment	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
2	Understand community issues and priorities - they're the local experts!	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
3	Inter-departmental or inter-governmental programs	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
4	answer questions, display concepts and ideas	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
5	Fire Safety Maintenance Inspections	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
6	many times its not the approach which should be taken, but manager wants an engagement	8/1/2023 7:52 AM

	done to do something without really considering why we are engaging	
7	Encourage community support for projects	7/24/2023 9:33 AM

Q7 What considerations determine the level of engagement necessary?

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
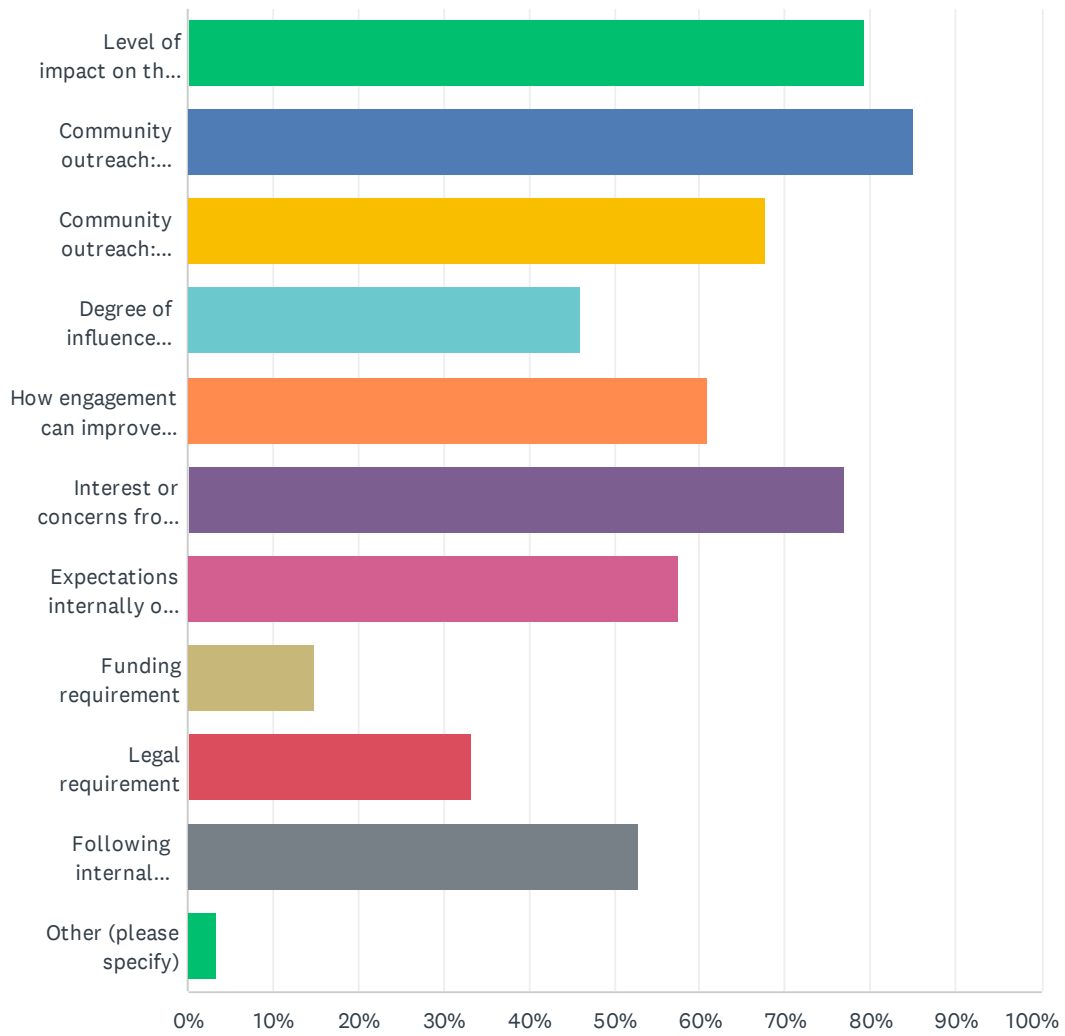
Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Level of impact on the affected group(s)/ communities	79.31%	69
Community outreach: building relationships with traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized communities	85.06%	74
Community outreach: considerations based on existing relationships/past engagement experience(s)	67.82%	59
Degree of influence engaged group(s) have on the project	45.98%	40
How engagement can improve decision-making	60.92%	53
Interest or concerns from the public or specific group(s)	77.01%	67
Expectations internally or externally (e.g. Regional Council)	57.47%	50
Funding requirement	14.94%	13
Legal requirement	33.33%	29
Following internal guidelines regarding public engagement	52.87%	46
Other (please specify)	3.45%	3
Total Respondents: 87		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Respond to case-specific requests	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
2	operational needs, Public and Firefighter safety	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
3	HRM Community Engagement Strategy, policies of Council	8/3/2023 2:44 PM

Q8 Please select the approaches you typically use for public engagement.

Answered: 86   Skipped: 3
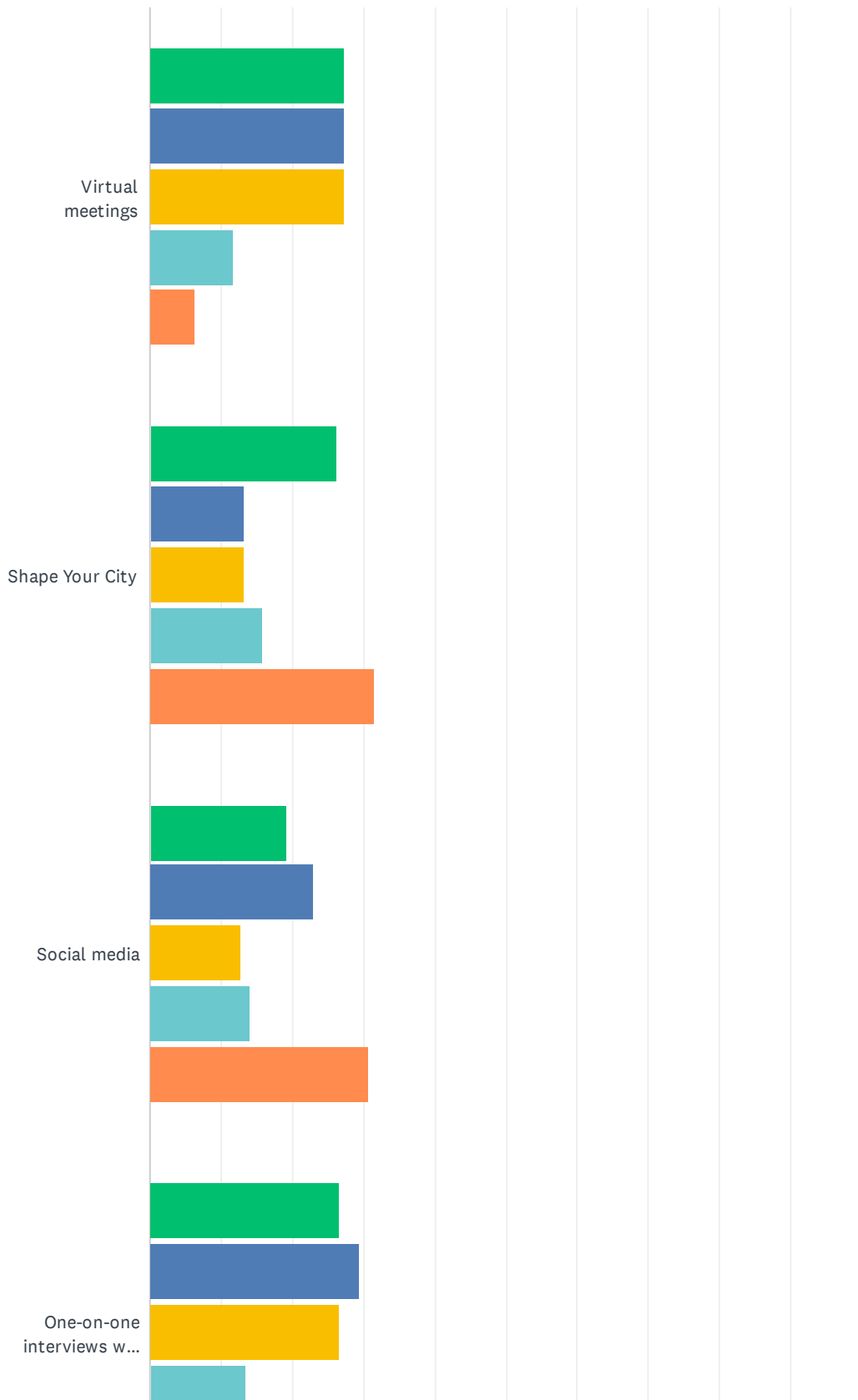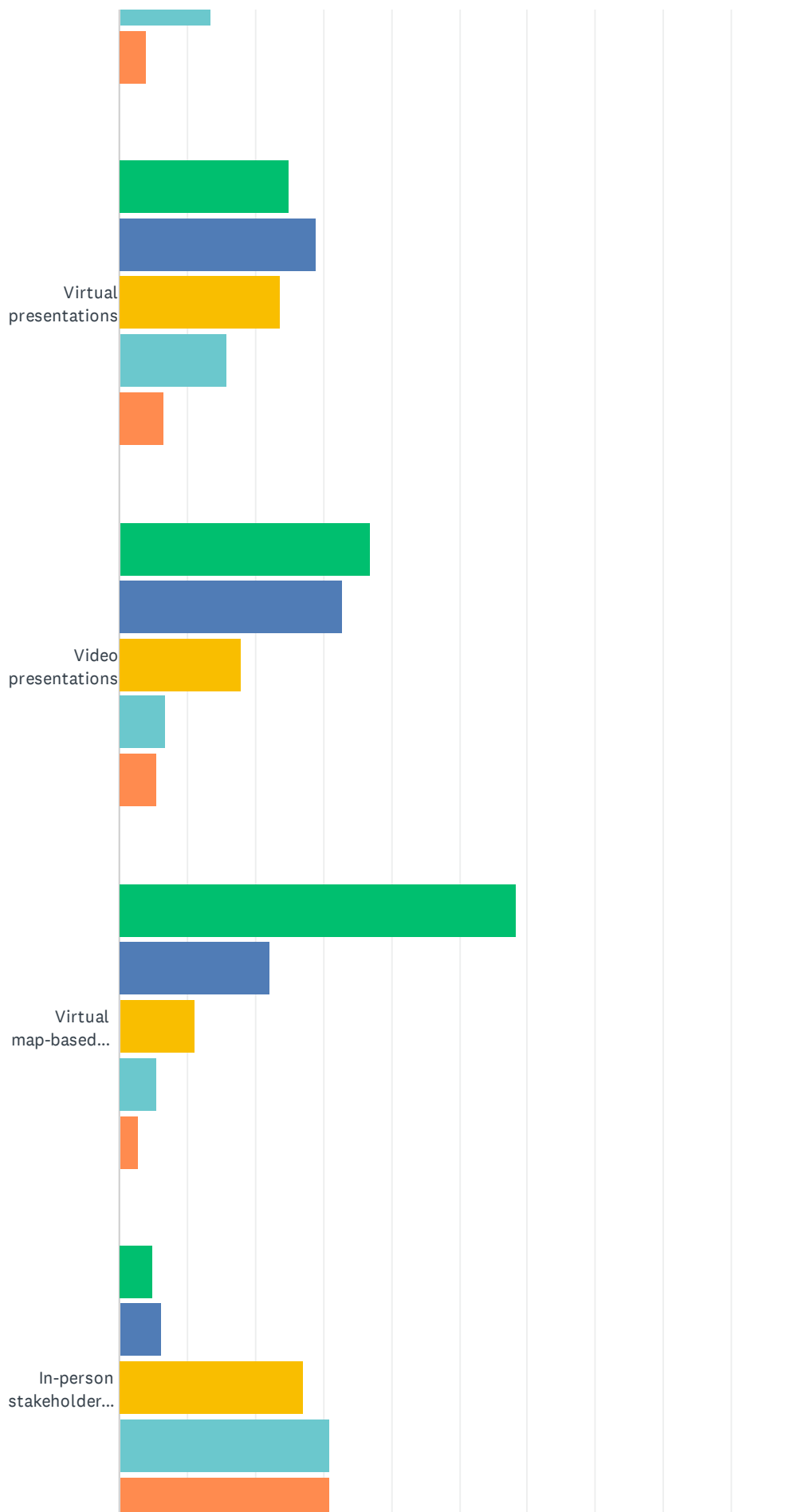
Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

Open house forums

Online contact information ...

Partnering with communi...

Discussion or idea boards...

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%
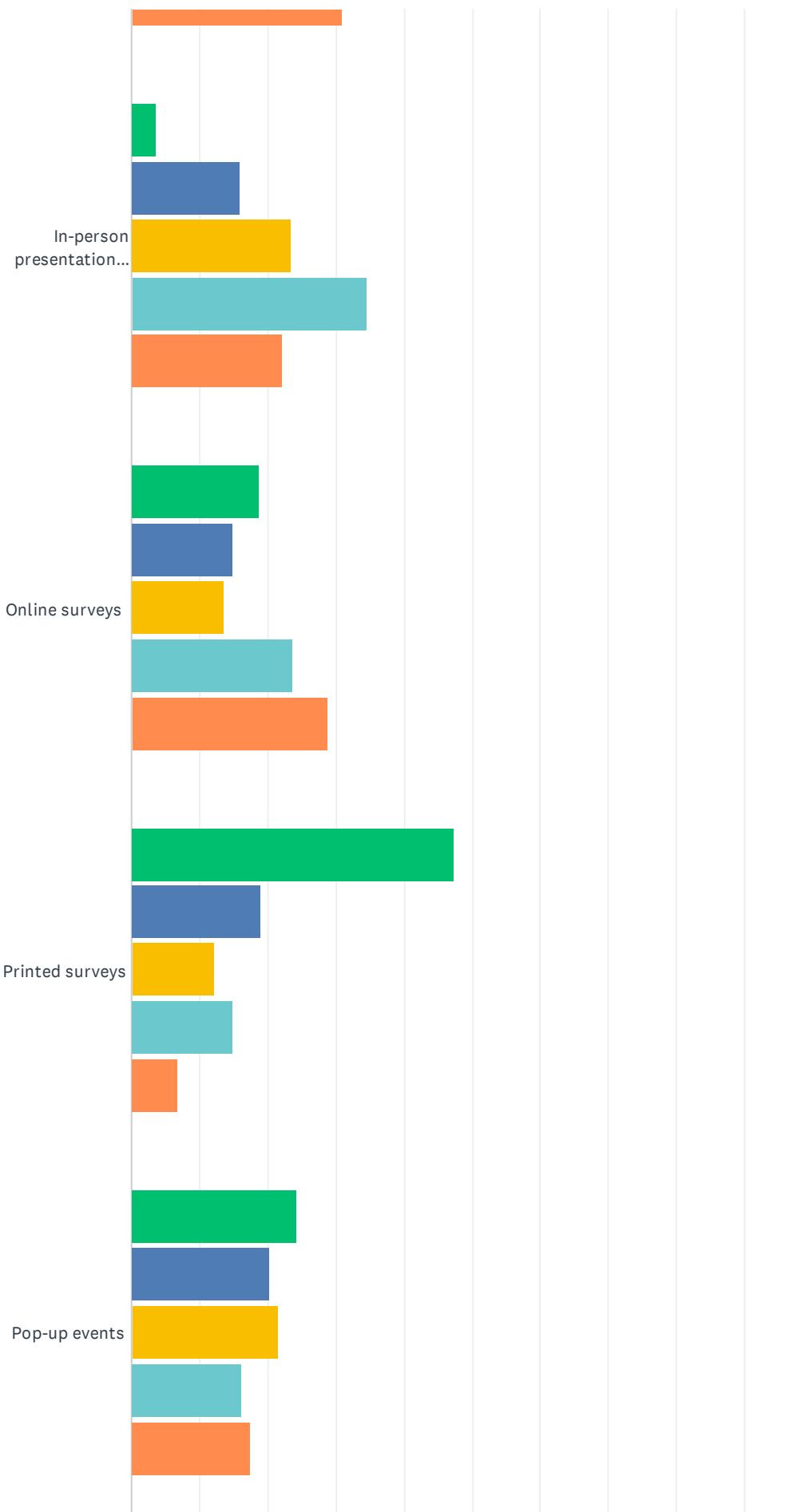
Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey
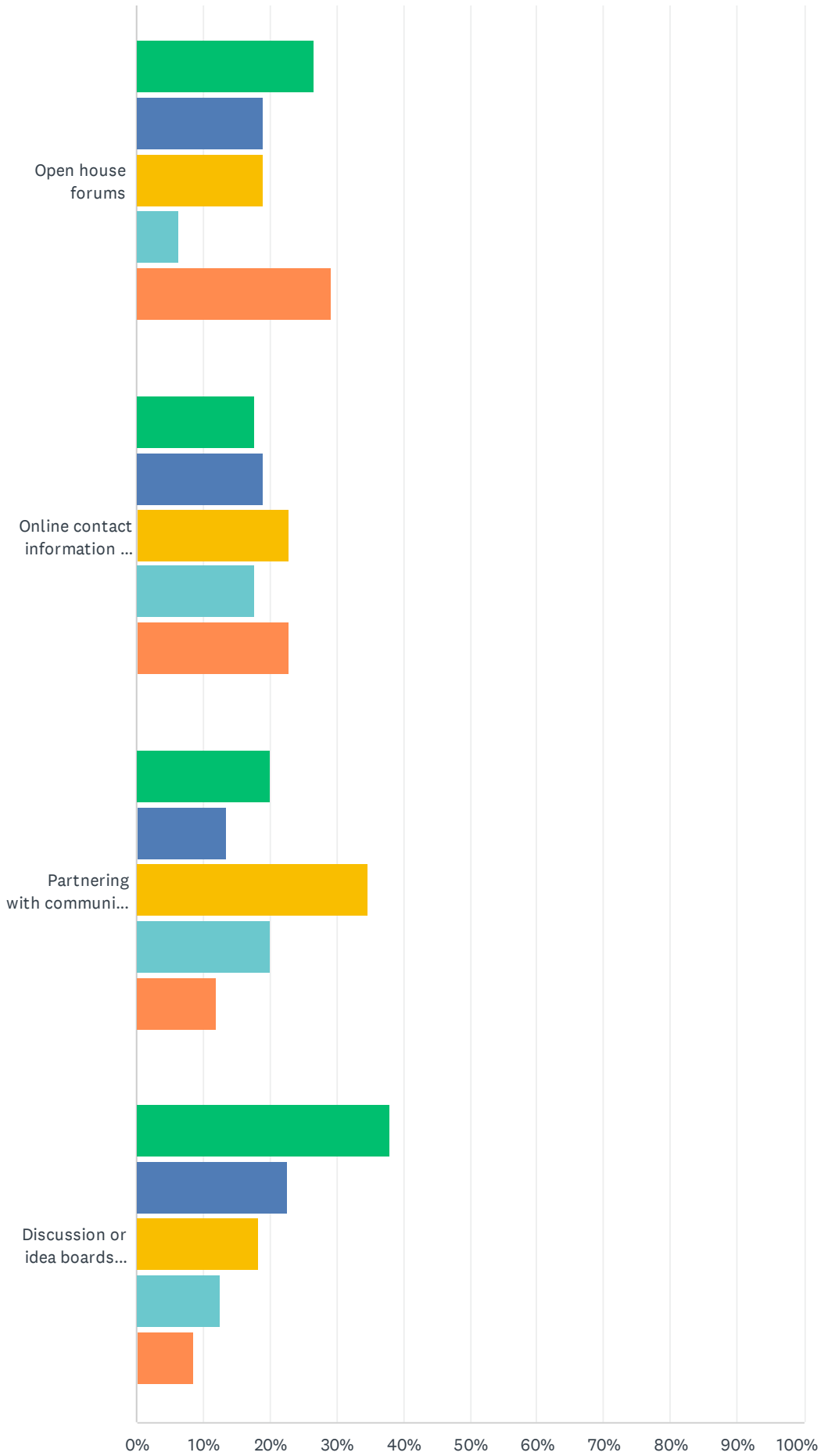
🟩 1 - Rarely   🟦 2   🟨 3 - Often   🟦 4

🟧 5 - Most Of...

	1 - RARELY	2	3 - OFTEN	4	5 - MOST OFTEN	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Virtual meetings	27.27% 21	27.27% 21	27.27% 21	11.69% 9	6.49% 5	77	2.43
Shape Your City	26.32% 20	13.16% 10	13.16% 10	15.79% 12	31.58% 24	76	3.13
Social media	19.23% 15	23.08% 18	12.82% 10	14.10% 11	30.77% 24	78	3.14
One-on-one interviews with community	26.67% 20	29.33% 22	26.67% 20	13.33% 10	4.00% 3	75	2.39
Virtual presentations	25.00% 19	28.95% 22	23.68% 18	15.79% 12	6.58% 5	76	2.50
Video presentations	36.99% 27	32.88% 24	17.81% 13	6.85% 5	5.48% 4	73	2.11
Virtual map-based survey	58.33% 42	22.22% 16	11.11% 8	5.56% 4	2.78% 2	72	1.72
In-person stakeholder meetings	4.94% 4	6.17% 5	27.16% 22	30.86% 25	30.86% 25	81	3.77
In-person presentations with opportunities for feedback	3.70% 3	16.05% 13	23.46% 19	34.57% 28	22.22% 18	81	3.56
Online surveys	18.75% 15	15.00% 12	13.75% 11	23.75% 19	28.75% 23	80	3.29
Printed surveys	47.30% 35	18.92% 14	12.16% 9	14.86% 11	6.76% 5	74	2.15
Pop-up events	24.32% 18	20.27% 15	21.62% 16	16.22% 12	17.57% 13	74	2.82
Open house forums	26.58% 21	18.99% 15	18.99% 15	6.33% 5	29.11% 23	79	2.92
Online contact information and feedback channels	17.72% 14	18.99% 15	22.78% 18	17.72% 14	22.78% 18	79	3.09
Partnering with community groups	20.00% 15	13.33% 10	34.67% 26	20.00% 15	12.00% 9	75	2.91
Discussion or idea boards (virtual or in-person)	38.03% 27	22.54% 16	18.31% 13	12.68% 9	8.45% 6	71	2.31

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Printed letters	9/19/2023 2:20 PM
2	Upon request	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
3	Design charettes and workshops	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
4	less than market value property sales	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
5	Scheduled Meetings	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
6	design charettes, walking tours	8/3/2023 2:44 PM

7	one on one, customer service work	7/26/2023 9:05 AM
8	HRM website - Planning Applications - most often	7/20/2023 8:39 AM

Q9 Do you use the municipality's online engagement portal, Shape Your City?

Answered: 86   Skipped: 3
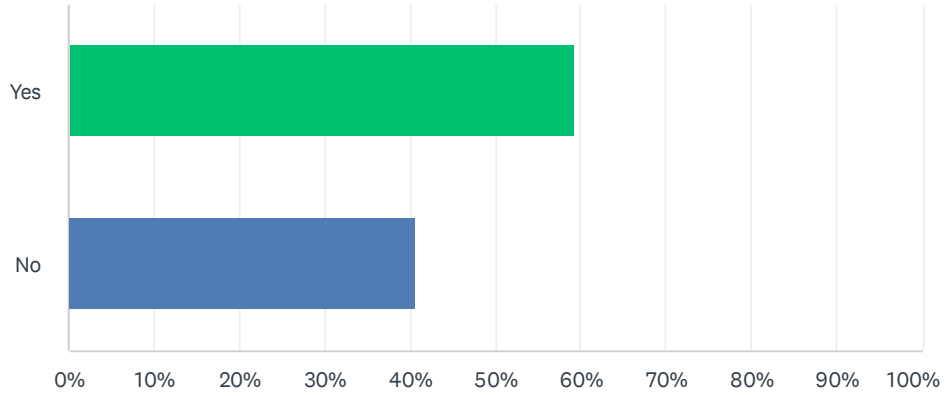
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	59.30%	51
No	40.70%	35
TOTAL		86

Q10 If yes, which Shape Your City tools and widgets do you typically use?

Answered: 49   Skipped: 40
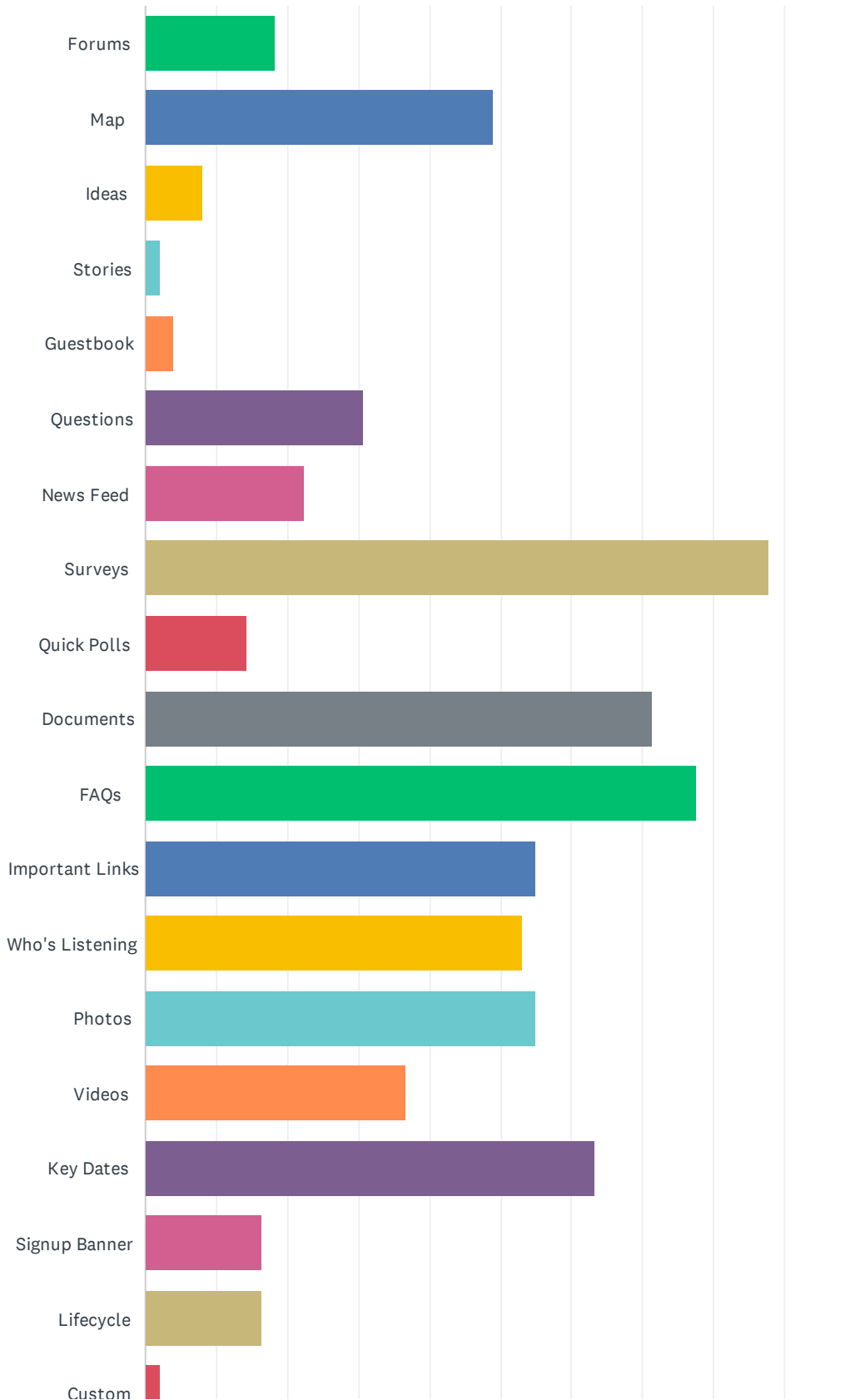
Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey
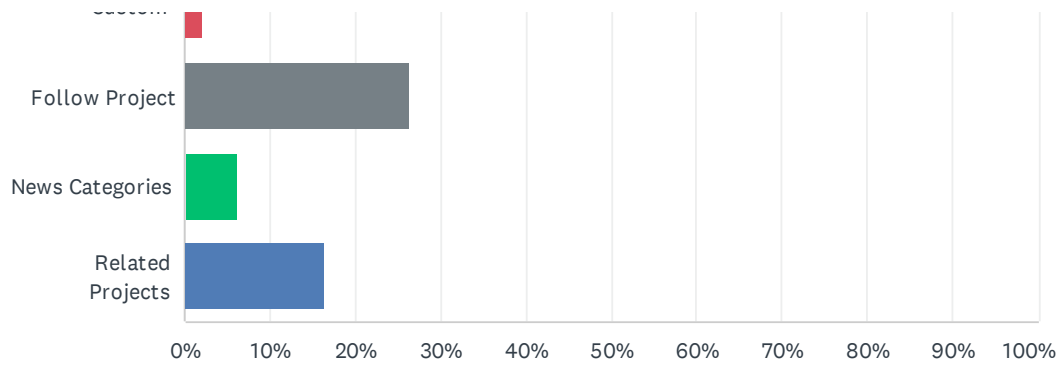
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Forums	18.37%	9
Map	48.98%	24
Ideas	8.16%	4
Stories	2.04%	1
Guestbook	4.08%	2
Questions	30.61%	15
News Feed	22.45%	11
Surveys	87.76%	43
Quick Polls	14.29%	7
Documents	71.43%	35
FAQs	77.55%	38
Important Links	55.10%	27
Who's Listening	53.06%	26
Photos	55.10%	27
Videos	36.73%	18
Key Dates	63.27%	31
Signup Banner	16.33%	8
Lifecycle	16.33%	8
Custom	2.04%	1
Follow Project	26.53%	13
News Categories	6.12%	3
Related Projects	16.33%	8
Total Respondents: 49		

Q11 How often does feedback from public engagement influence your municipal work? Please select one.

Answered: 86   Skipped: 3
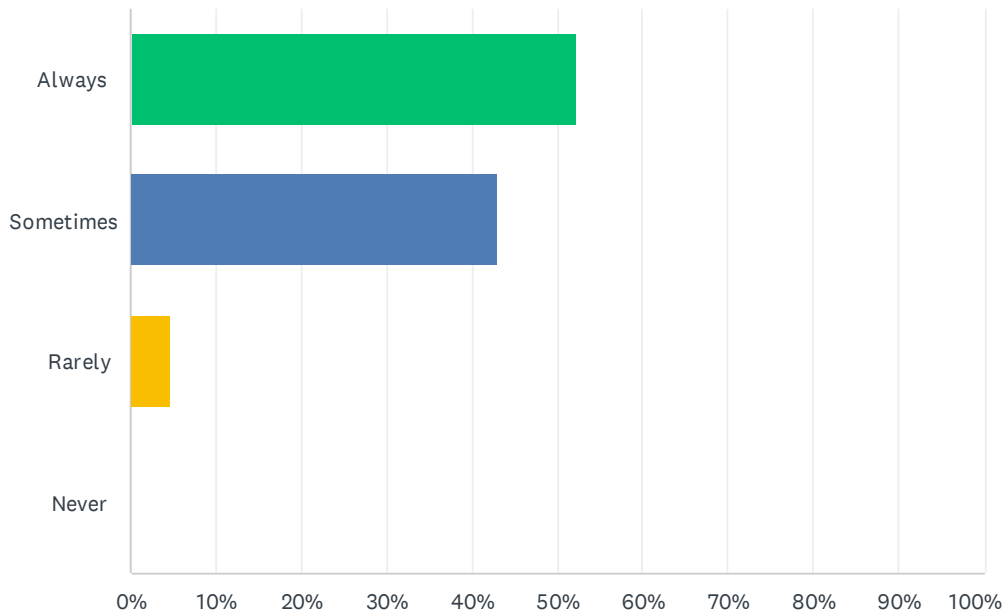
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	52.33%	45
Sometimes	43.02%	37
Rarely	4.65%	4
Never	0.00%	0
TOTAL		86

#	IF ANSWERED "SOMETIMES," "RARELY" OR "NEVER," PLEASE SHARE WHY.	DATE
1	Depending on the concern, it is unlikely to change a street design	9/19/2023 2:20 PM
2	Inability to control for participation rates of vested interests that might not reflect broader public opinion	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
3	Feedback isn't always relevant or something that can be used.	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
4	1) By the time we bring these projects to the public often we do not have alternatives (alternatives may not be feasible under our overarching plans) 2) I don't feel that management places significant stock in public feedback.	9/14/2023 4:38 PM
5	All info is taken into account and used to create best business practices	9/7/2023 1:48 PM
6	we take into consideration citizen feedback on what data they want to see released and work with BU's to achieve	9/1/2023 5:32 PM
7	engagement based on provision of Program information	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
8	sometimes the feedback provided cannot be implemented with the legislative tools that we	8/21/2023 3:31 PM

	have	
9	feedback is often mixed e.g. feedback from one individual or a group might conflict with that from another. Also, feedback from engagement can be biased by those who chose to engage. Engagement does not reflect a 'random' sample of public opinion. We have balance what we hear against professional judgement when advising council about decisions.	8/11/2023 5:36 PM
10	Sometimes strong policy/legislative direction trumps community desires.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
11	I feel that I am still new in my position and am currently working a number of projects that focus on internal engagement, outside of managing our social media account.	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
12	Sometimes we are legally required to notify, but the public has limited ability to influence the decision	8/3/2023 3:36 PM
13	I work in as-of-right development but occasionally work with our other teams in P&D to assist them on their public engagement projects.	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
14	There are parts of my work that involve directly working with community, and others that are more focused on working internally or with other levels of government that require less public engagement.	8/2/2023 12:52 PM
15	Decision makers already know what they are going to do, so any contrary feedback is ignored	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
16	Public can't influence engineering decisions, but can influence project objectives. Often have to weigh trade-offs in project outcomes that public can help influence.	7/24/2023 9:33 AM
17	Feedback is one component considered in developing recommendations.	7/21/2023 4:26 PM
18	We have to make decisions based on the policy and public feedback is not always in response to policy	7/21/2023 1:52 PM
19	Our decisions need to made in line with policy, and sometimes the feedback we receive does not line up with policy.	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
20	For much of my work, public engagement is only in the form of a public hearing at which I have yet to have anyone besides the property owner themselves speak in opposition. On the infrequent occasion that I am holding a public information meeting, the engagement is directly incorporated into my work.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM
21	We receive feedback from engagement sessions and it does influence our work. However, depending on the scale of the subject matter, often times, it seems the final decisions regarding major projects have already been made internally pre-engagement, so at best plans may be slightly tweaked based on engagement feedback, despite what the public or internal Operators actually say they want. Unfortunately sometimes it seems engagement is just another box to be checked off the list, rather than taking the engagement & feedback seriously and altering plans based on engagement feedback/reports	7/19/2023 10:40 AM
22	Depending on the feedback some things may not be possible in the scope of the project.	7/19/2023 10:15 AM

Q12 Do you engage early in the process?

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
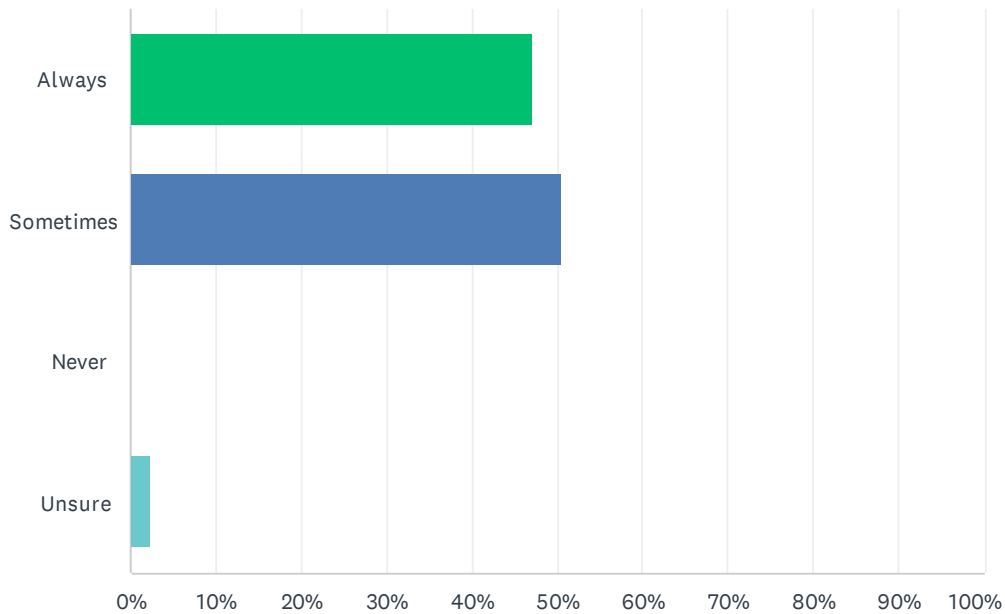
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	47.13%	41
Sometimes	50.57%	44
Never	0.00%	0
Unsure	2.30%	2
TOTAL		87

#	IF YOU ANSWERED "NEVER" OR "UNSURE," PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY.	DATE
1	I feel that I am still new in my position and am currently working a number of projects that focus on internal engagement, outside of managing our social media account.	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
2	with a planning application, we need to ensure the application is complete before we bring it to the public so they're not sharing feedback on something that will change. Therefore, it's not the beginning of the process, but it's early enough to influence decision making if possible.	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
3	The intent is to engage as early in the process as possible. This can be challenging given the speed of municipal delivery and budget timeframes.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
4	Only where policy requires it.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM
5	Unfortunately sometimes it seems the majority of plans or projects/decisions have already been made pre-engagement. Sometimes it feels that engagement is just another thing to check off the to-do list.	7/19/2023 10:40 AM
6	Some projects have more scope for feedback from the community, some are more to share information.	7/19/2023 10:15 AM

Q13 Who do you consult for public engagement? Select all that apply.

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
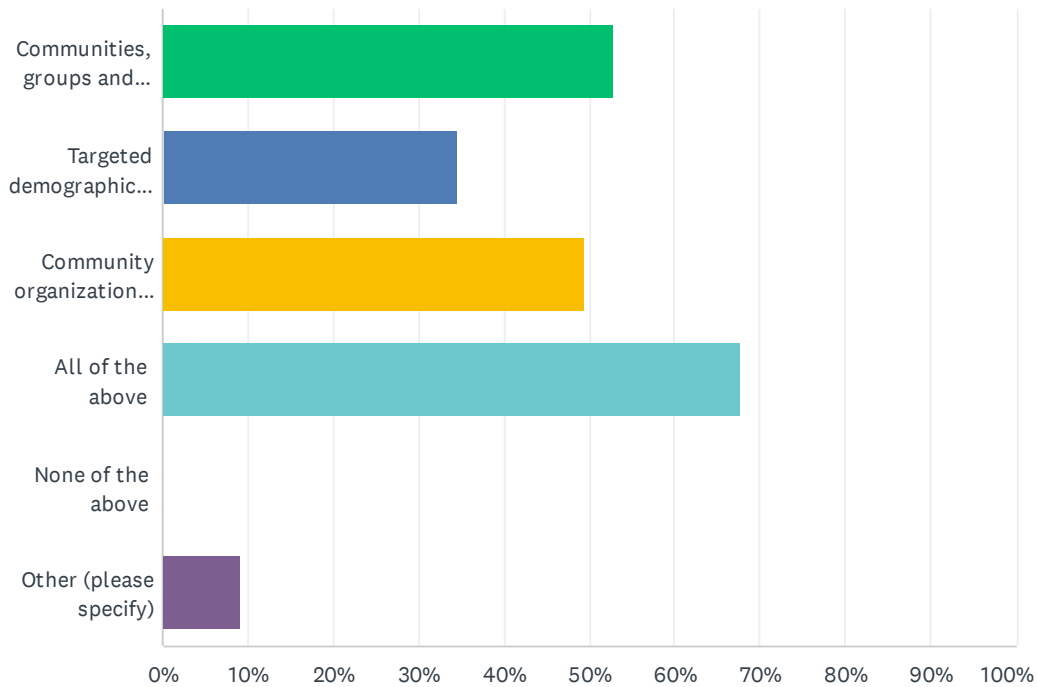
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Communities, groups and individuals in specific geographic areas that may be impacted	52.87%	46
Targeted demographic groups that may be impacted	34.48%	30
Community organizations and leaders (e.g. staff, Councillors, community groups) to identify stakeholders and underrepresented groups	49.43%	43
All of the above	67.82%	59
None of the above	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	9.20%	8
Total Respondents: 87		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Feedback from participants to understand their experience as compared to an opinion/theory	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
2	general population but education, media and application developers are most interested	9/1/2023 5:32 PM
3	Random sample of HRM population. Some targeted engagement to underrepresented groups to increase response rates.	9/1/2023 12:04 PM
4	the general public via social media and ads	8/11/2023 5:36 PM
5	specific business or residential buildings	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
6	As a new employee, I am still figuring out how to best engage on specific projects from a municipal standpoint. I think my colleagues make a good effort to try and reach a wide number	8/4/2023 4:29 PM

	of stakeholders, but there is also always room for improvement.	
7	Diversity and Inclusion are always partners in our engagement.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
8	Internal - Ferry crews and bus Operators	7/19/2023 10:40 AM

Q14 What measures do you take to engage underrepresented groups, who may be impacted by your project, to ensure that they are heard? Please share what supports (e.g. tools, processes, resources, budget) would help you increase these measures. Please describe:Underrepresented groups include but are not limited to: African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, Francophones/Acadians, youth, immigrants, women/gender diverse persons, families with children, the older population, rural areas lacking technological infrastructure, renters vs home-owners, individuals living in congregate settings, etc.

Answered: 65   Skipped: 24

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Lately we have been discussing honourariums for community participation in projects. This would be to cover things like a baby sitter or a taxi in an area without transit. We are worried that child care requirements may prevent some people from attending.	11/16/2023 9:05 AM
2	Signage, mailouts, info sessions, career fairs, community events	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
3	Have Community Officers engage with members of community and community leaders. Attend community events. Work closely with other stakeholders involved with the Community Project.	9/29/2023 1:11 PM
4	I speak with people in person daily.	9/22/2023 1:06 PM
5	Offering engagement through a variety of in-person and online events, reaching out to direct contacts in communities to get their thoughts on the best way to engage, best practices from past engagement experiences, talking to area Councillor. More resources for budget are always helpful as it allows us to offer things like food to engagement participants (especially important for some cultures). Having translation services or interpretation services would be very helpful.	9/20/2023 4:27 PM
6	Host meeting in underrepresented community	9/20/2023 10:47 AM
7	I lean on D&I Staff and I speak with other staff who have connections to stakeholders. I also copy and paste previous communications. Desired supports would include having a well-maintained list of stakeholders and leadership by Corporate Communications to maintain the list. Also, some standardization and supports for communications - for example, what wording we can use in emails to let people know that accommodations for accessibility can be provided.	9/19/2023 3:23 PM
8	Through Community Mobilization Team members, Public Libraries, and external stakeholders such as ISANS potentially.	9/19/2023 12:41 PM
9	Renters can be difficult to engage because they are not listed as property owners so aren't on mailout lists. ANS communitities have midweek evening church commitments we try to avoid conflicting with. Older people may not be comfortable with using computers or the internet. Literacy can be an issue in remote or underprivileged communities. Wheelchair users must be able to read panels, so we put them lower down. Arabic is an important second language, so it would be useful to have Arabic literature when working with some communities. Busy parents of any nationality have little free time for meetings, and must consider child care.	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
10	I usually check in with our Diversity and Engagement support person.	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
11	Speak to D&I staff, and local community group to understand key stakeholders. work with the community to determine way to ensure representation during the engagement.	9/15/2023 3:45 PM

12	Understand Their Challenges. Make sure we've taken the time to understand the unique challenges. Appreciate Their Differences Distribute information about community resources that serve cultural, recreational, academic, health, social and other needs of families and educators. Provide information to the community, including those without school-age children, about school programs, events and needs. Inclusive strategies are those that acknowledge and address the specific needs and challenges of underrepresented groups, such as providing relevant resources, referrals, and support networks, or helping them navigate systemic barriers and biases. Look Into Influencers	9/15/2023 2:23 PM
13	With the exception of community museums, our programs are regional in scope and participation tends to be limited by eligibility requirements, they are multi-sectoral, not sector-specific	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
14	Determine alternative engagement options that are more directed towards those specific groups.	9/15/2023 12:47 PM
15	For underrepresented groups, we do targeted activities with them and work through what they think is the best way to meet.	9/15/2023 11:16 AM
16	Measures used include meetings with service providers, external facilitators. Resources: tools, processes, resources, budget - all of these will help.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
17	Direct engagement when possible.	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
18	A defined or semi-defined process for basically anything would be great.	9/14/2023 4:38 PM
19	Reach out to underrepresented groups directly through email, virtual meetings and site visits. We also create and update a list of stakeholder contacts and ask colleagues for additional contacts.	9/14/2023 4:24 PM
20	reach out directly to advocacy groups who work with marginalized groups to facilitate connections	9/14/2023 3:50 PM
21	learn how they like to be included and consulted, and reach out to them in that way. genuinely ask for feedback, and follow-up to confirm that feedback was heard.	9/14/2023 3:37 PM
22	Our team partnered with a community-based organization to engage with underrepresented groups in Halifax's North End. This approach has great value but requires additional time (potentially a lot of time) and resources to identify the appropriate partner(s) and develop the relationship. It can also require some flexibility in HRM's standard procurement processes. HRM's Office of Diversity and Inclusion are key partners for this approach.	9/8/2023 12:53 PM
23	contact main community group. partner a project with them. have pop-ups within the area or building	9/8/2023 10:06 AM
24	Communication is key so that when you have a final public display or presentation you have already strived to work out every challenge or interest expressed so there are no surprises. Being creative, approachable, food and music to help people want to engage, getting the word out to all - social media, groups, Newsletters, Flyers, work shops, pop up displays at existing events, engagement special interest meetings, to work on special aspects of a project.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
25	By creating material of interest to a wide range of audiences. By listening to specific issues from different groups and trying to work with those groups and their concerns.	9/7/2023 1:48 PM
26	The work I do is primarily focused on supporting underrepresented groups in HRM. Staff work in community and with the community at all times and receive feedback directly. We work with service providers and rely on relationships to gauge our work. Our offices are in the community and we take time to attend community events to help maintain these relationships. Staff typically represent the underrepresented groups we are working with. We partner with other HRM units to collaborate on getting feedback and support data collection through surveys etc through our program. We would like to do more formal sessions moving forward and having HRM staff work as community liaisons would be ideal. Currently we mostly get feedback from groups we are already working with so having an HRM staff we could call on to help set us up in a community who already has the trust and relationships would be ideal. Having a standard practice of accessibility for all of these groups would be very helpful. Almost like a tips and tricks (offer childcare, how to request ASL interpreter, how to offer translation supports, etc.)	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
27	Mail out surveys with stamp envelops for return. Visit schools to get youth input. Meeting with community groups during their regular meetings.	9/5/2023 2:31 PM

28	Specialized contacts with the collaboration of organizations	9/5/2023 10:57 AM
29	Partner with local rec centre where those groups of people already have trusting relationships and/or community groups who directly serve these populations	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
30	nothing specific	9/1/2023 5:32 PM
31	accessibility, well prepared, facilitation skills, community visioning, surveys, capacity building	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
32	Measures taken include direct email messages to community leaders or contacts to raise awareness of the Resident Survey and options to complete it. Offering special access to members of these groups if they do not receive a randomized invitation, to increase representation. Have held pop-ups in areas of the city that are typically inhabited by members of specific communities to increase visibility and opportunities to participate / solicit specific input. Future supports / work would include additional budget or staffing support to run more significant, in-person public engagements. This support could include people to help talk with community members, provide materials such as information boards / technical tools (laptops/tablets) to allow people to complete surveys in person, or to do more extensive community meetings with accessible technologies. These would not be required frequently - perhaps every 4 years during development of new strategic plans, or during longer term visioning engagements.	9/1/2023 12:04 PM
33	Procurement is represented at or initiates "reverse trade show" activities for diverse and small local businesses to inform and educate re HRM processes and policies	9/1/2023 10:54 AM
34	reaching out directly to community leaders early in the process, meeting in a place comfortable for that group, showing respect. Budget for food is important for some communities. we need to show up and provide food in certain cases or people won't participate - won't feel welcome.	8/21/2023 3:31 PM
35	1. make sure engagement time are accommodating for different social-economic groups 2. choose engagement venue that are accessible 3. use various formats to reach different demographic groups	8/21/2023 3:28 PM
36	Case by case. I have not yet dealt with a file that has this level of D&I implications.	8/21/2023 3:07 PM
37	We connect with D&I to see if there are under represented groups who should be engaged with and follow their advise on how best to do that; We sometimes send letters directly to residents (rather than owners) so renters and tenants can be informed; we have one on one meetings with members of underrepresented groups to build trust.	8/11/2023 5:36 PM
38	Work closely with community organizations that serve the underrepresented groups to identify barriers and provide what is needed to remove barriers.	8/8/2023 1:50 PM
39	Consult with HRM Diversity and Inclusion office to reach out to diverse groups if affected by a specific project.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
40	Email or dialogue with management	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
41	Reach out to community groups who represent the target groups. Discuss with them best ways to get quality responses. Host in person engagement sessions with them and/or talk to community leaders who have their finger on the pulse of their community.	8/4/2023 4:34 PM
42	I think our team would benefit from collaborating with D&I and ANSIAO more when talking about service in different communities. It would also be helpful to have training specifically on which resources/supports are already available for us when engaging underrepresented groups and how to access them for newer employees like myself. I am not sure I can best comment on this question, as I do not know what is already out there...	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
43	I try to filter engagement through an accessibility lens and consult our D&I team to run engagement through. I think about how our engagement is designed and then what barriers that presents to underrepresented groups. For example, groups who have been traditionally marginalized by municipal processes may not appreciate engagement in municipal spaces.	8/4/2023 2:14 PM
44	I'm typically not involved in the engagement planning process so I'm not certain.	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
45	contact with community leaders advice from D&I group hiring facilitators from the under presented community paper surveys in addition to online surveys in key community locations check for conflicts stakeholder meetings	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
46	I have found that our D&I group is excellent at helping us identify underrepresented groups that	8/3/2023 2:18 PM

we should be including, and also with identifying contacts for those groups. As D&I staff become more engaged on many projects, more staff might help.

47	Engage resources and input from D&I office.	8/3/2023 8:52 AM
48	Holding information sessions close to where people are located, sharing information on traditional and social media. Public spaces with projectors, etc that are available during the day and in the evening, and support for offering child care at evening meetings would help increase accessibility.	8/2/2023 12:52 PM
49	We take our engagement to the underrepresented communities, instead of assuming that community members will travel to a central location. We also partner with community organizations representing these groups, including One North End representing ANS communities in Halifax.	8/2/2023 10:26 AM
50	Ensure that we are meeting in spaces that make sense to them	8/1/2023 3:45 PM
51	speak to community contacts to discuss how best to reach the people we want to hear from and change our approach to target their feedback	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
52	Training, meeting with leaders in the that community to receive guidance	7/31/2023 9:33 AM
53	For recruitment, we try to engage groups from these communities directly, so they will know about opportunities with HRFE and so that they can leverage supports to help them success in a highly competitive process. All of tools, processes, resources, budget would be helpful. HRFE staff are not highly familiar with best practices in community engagement, so staff training for us would be a good start.	7/28/2023 8:49 AM
54	Participation in community events, information sessions in targeted under-represented communities. Specific contacts (internal and external) who are advisors in how to best support under-represented groups.	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
55	one on one, customer service feedback	7/26/2023 9:05 AM
56	For public art and funding juries we have a roster of jurors that have applied to be on that roster and every time we host a jury we go back to that roster to build the group to prioritize underrepresented communities. We also outreach and encourage new jurors to apply to be on the roster.	7/25/2023 5:01 PM
57	Have done in past: Connecting with D&I team to create a plan for engagement, hiring engagement facilitator from the community, offering alternate ways to connect (one-on-one meetings, phone calls, etc.). Would help in future: connecting through pre-established relationships (through D&I office?), joining with other engagement efforts with same community.	7/24/2023 9:33 AM
58	Engaging with Diversity and Inclusion to identify impacted communities and recommended approaches and being flexible with engagement approaches to meet community needs.	7/21/2023 4:26 PM
59	Ensuring that staff acknowledge power imbalances and distrust with government in the way we engage. giving groups the resources to be the leader in the engagement and share back with staff seems to be an effective way of doing this.	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
60	we reach out to an association who already represents the underrepresented groups.	7/20/2023 4:13 PM
61	Consult D and I in all aspects of planning. Make sure engagement occurs in community. Provide honorariums and meals when possible. Create safe and welcoming spaces. Don't rely on technology and ensure language is clear and transparent. Find opportunities to go to community gatherings when appropriate. Be conscious of pressures of over-engaging community and ensure that the feedback we are asking can be delivered.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
62	we rely on the support and guidance provided by our Diversity and Inclusion staff member. The create of this position in the department has been extremely valuable.	7/20/2023 8:39 AM
63	Consult with HRM Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO; schedule open house events in established residential areas at various hours to ensure broad range of stakeholders, including families with children can attend.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM
64	In projects where underrepresented groups are likely to be impacted, we collaborate with HRM's Diversity and Inclusion team to facilitate community collaboration and engagement.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM

| 65 | Work with D & I, create relationships with Community leaders to engage community, different types of engagement tools etc. | 7/19/2023 10:15 AM |

Q15 What measures do you take to ensure engagement initiatives are accessible? If the answer is none, please share what supports (e.g. processes, tools, resources, budget) would help you take these measures. Select all that apply.

Answered: 86   Skipped: 3
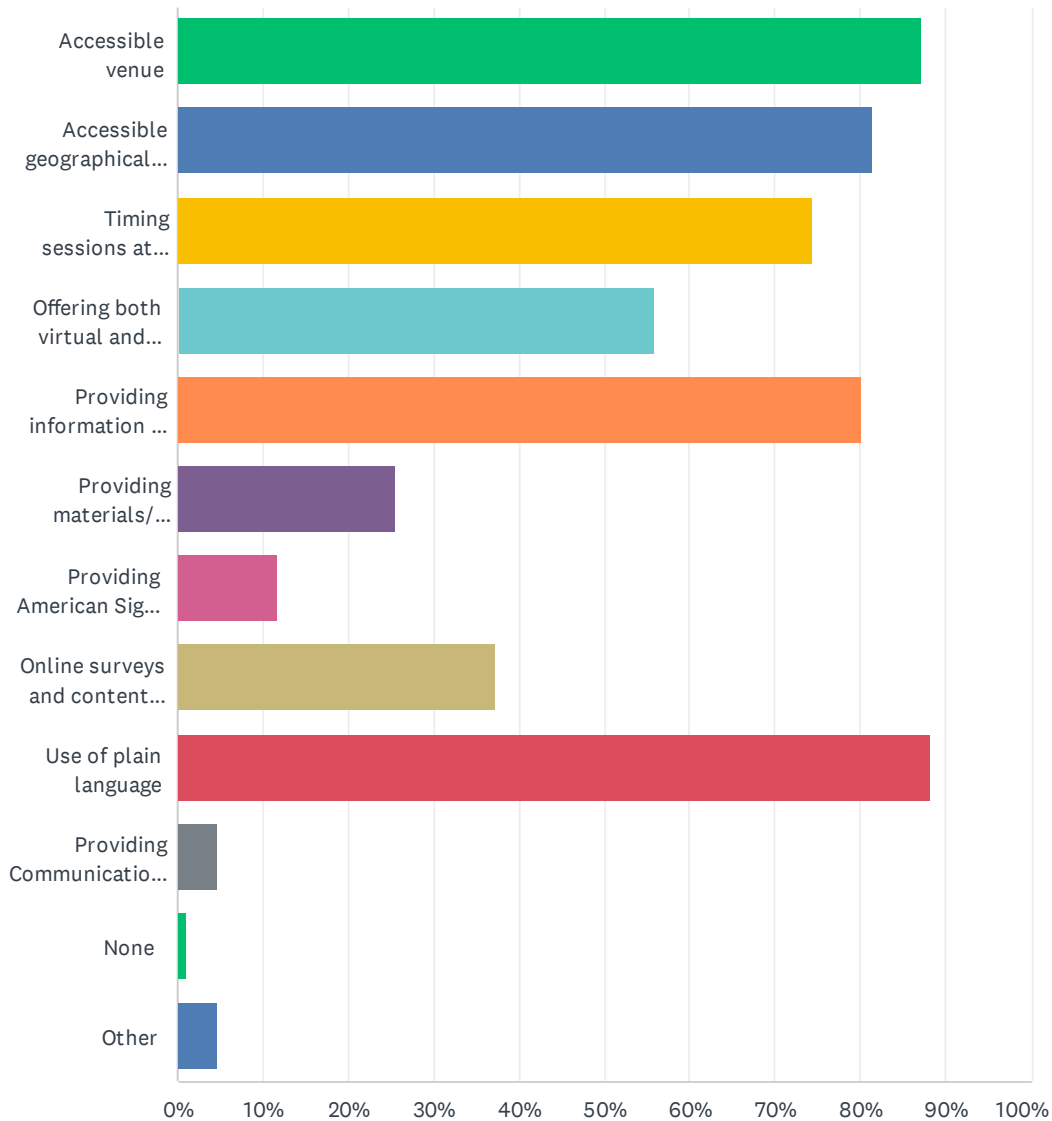
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Accessible venue	87.21%	75
Accessible geographical location (e.g. on/ near a Halifax Transit route)	81.40%	70
Timing sessions at various times of the day	74.42%	64
Offering both virtual and in-person sessions	55.81%	48
Providing information in various formats	80.23%	69
Providing materials/ communications in multiple languages	25.58%	22
Providing American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation	11.63%	10
Online surveys and content that is accessible for individuals with visual impairments	37.21%	32
Use of plain language	88.37%	76
Providing Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services	4.65%	4
None	1.16%	1
Other	4.65%	4
Total Respondents: 86		

#	SUPPORTS TO ENSURE ACCESSIBLE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES:	DATE
1	Recordings for people to access later if they could not attend the live event.	11/16/2023 9:05 AM
2	We provide bus stop and bus line information; we provide informations on whether washrooms are accessible; we provide kids activities	9/19/2023 3:23 PM
3	Varies with topic/purpose but room for improvement	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
4	Depending on the venue, we use different tools. We are engaged with multiple support groups for visually imparied and deaf and hard of hearing etc.	9/15/2023 11:16 AM
5	language translations, support for online content and in person presentations.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
6	Using community spaces so we go to the people we are trying to engage rather than them coming to us, work with existing relationships to build trust so people show up, show up in community when it is positive and not just negative.	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
7	You need a budget to do mail outs properly.	9/5/2023 2:31 PM
8	accessibility coordinator, knowledge/understanding audience	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
9	Funding for language translation	8/4/2023 4:34 PM
10	ASL - recent use; childcare services occasionally or a children's corner at a meeting	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
11	$ and supports are needed to allow us to provide mutiple languages and supports to those with other needs	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
12	14pt legible font with ALT text	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
13	Honorariums if possible. Provide food and beverage using community-based providers when possible.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
14	Providing translators and with various languages might be helpful at open houses.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM
15	Working to expand our accessible options with Corporate Comms and D & I.	7/19/2023 10:15 AM

Q16 How is information on next steps or final decisions reported back to the participants and/ or communities? Select all that apply.

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
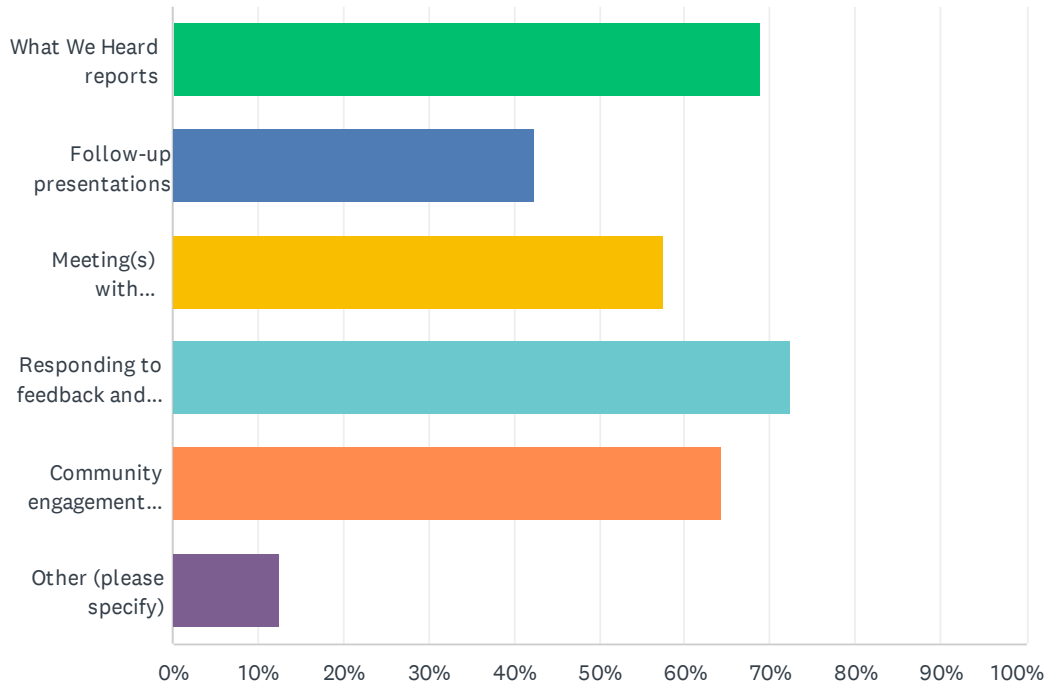
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
What We Heard reports	68.97%	60
Follow-up presentations	42.53%	37
Meeting(s) with stakeholders	57.47%	50
Responding to feedback and questions submitted during or after engagement sessions	72.41%	63
Community engagement information shared within Council reports.	64.37%	56
Other (please specify)	12.64%	11
Total Respondents: 87		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Direct response to inquiries	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
2	Updated Webpages	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
3	Updates to project website, mailouts or pamphlets for those directly impacted by the project.	9/14/2023 4:38 PM
4	Email and letter, newsletter distribution, Council Reports or a Functional Plan Report.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
5	Informally responding to feedback through conversations and updates to the program.	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
6	Annual youth engagement report	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
7	not really applicable here, but we post our release news	9/1/2023 5:32 PM

8	Often we do not report back to community. Management gets the only What We Heard Report.	8/4/2023 4:34 PM
9	information is posted online with HRMinized speak and not in plain language with next actions outlined for residents to understand	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
10	Webpage updates (shape your city and/or Halifax.ca webpages for applications)	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
11	Follow up, even as an informal email update is crucial. And follow up with a thank you to participants after engagement.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM

Q17 How do you measure success? Select all that apply.

Answered: 87   Skipped: 2
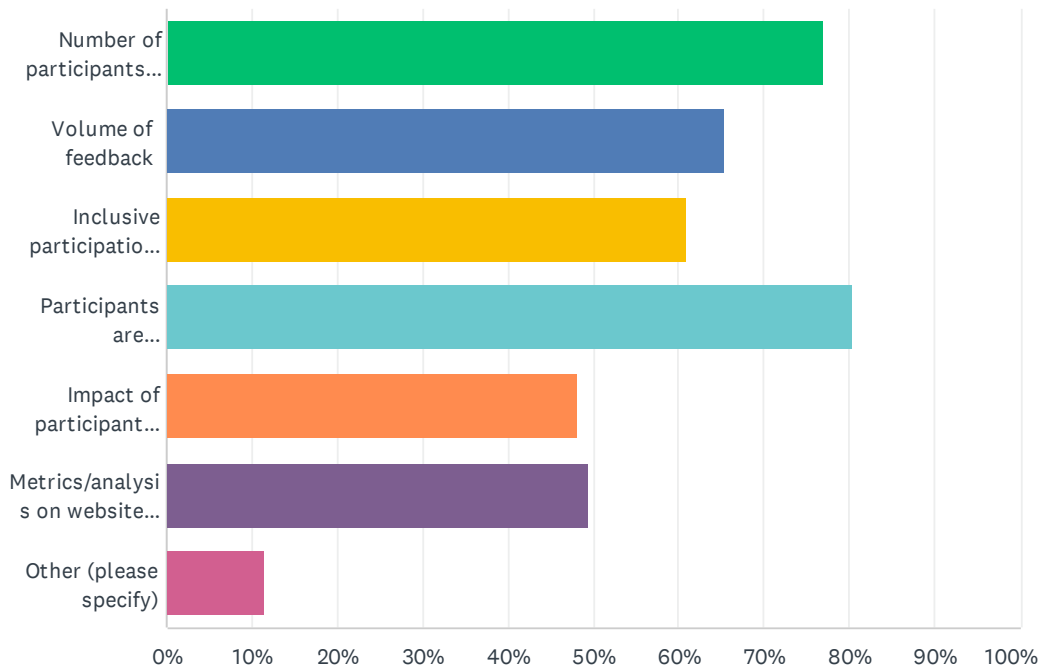
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Number of participants/ levels of attendance	77.01%	67
Volume of feedback	65.52%	57
Inclusive participation (ensuring all impacted stakeholders are provided with barrier-free participation options)	60.92%	53
Participants are representative of the communities you are aiming to engage	80.46%	70
Impact of participant feedback has been communicated to the public	48.28%	42
Metrics/analysis on website traffic, social media metrics	49.43%	43
Other (please specify)	11.49%	10
Total Respondents: 87		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	overall participation	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
2	we don't measure success of community engagement	9/19/2023 2:20 PM
3	Don't current have good measures to track success	9/18/2023 2:59 PM
4	Whether the comments and atmosphere at meetings were constructive	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
5	Metrics if available and credible	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
6	We do not really measure or record level of success in any concrete way	9/14/2023 4:38 PM
7	Volume of engagement in HRM procurement (bid) processes. Success of social value	9/1/2023 10:54 AM

	initiatives in contracts.	
8	A letter of support from some organizations or groups. Sometimes just a lower number of complaints or objections indicates success.	8/3/2023 2:18 PM
9	Strengthens or builds relationships in a meaningful way. And follow up to maintain those relationships, even when further engagement is not required..	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
10	Policy and regulatory outcomes clearly illustrate desires of the communities that were consulted.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM

Q18 What community engagement successes would you like to repeat? Please describe:

Answered: 44   Skipped: 45

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Recruitment success in rural communities.	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
2	Participation in Community fun days/bbq. Presentations at schools and recreation centers. Regular meetings with community leaders and stakeholders.	9/29/2023 1:11 PM
3	Building rapport with the community; and constructive feedback from the community when drafting and delivering the program.	9/19/2023 12:41 PM
4	Main Street Dartmouth Plan Review - an interative process on form-based zoning Integrated Mobility Plan - effective public education and inspiration on alternatives to endless road widening Regional Plan Review pop-ups - an informal opportunity to chat with locals about regional and community issues.and priorities	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
5	Open houses and table discussions and mail out and online surveys	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
6	Community Grants Program targeted survey of program participants; inter-governmental or inter-departmental meetings	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
7	Partnering with Libraries is very helpful and successful.	9/15/2023 11:16 AM
8	For the North Park Roundabouts, we engaged with CNIB and had a physical tactile model built of the design to help communicate with the visually impaired.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
9	Reddit Ask Me Anythings	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
10	sense of empowerment in the community that something important was achieved in collaboration with HRM	9/14/2023 3:37 PM
11	I received positive feedback from participants on the use of a geo-reference online mapping/survey tool called Social Pinpoint. I've also had good experiences with World Cafe style events where participants with differing perspectives have the opportunity to discuss ideas with each other in small, facilitated groups.	9/8/2023 12:53 PM
12	pop-ups in strategic locations open house	9/8/2023 10:06 AM
13	Celebrating success - often times we have worked with individuals on the planning and engagement committees and celebrating their contribution is also important. We had music and food at teh Lucasville Communty Engagemenet meeting which was in partnership with the local community group that was formed.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
14	Attendance from a wide range of community representation. Creating tools and information of interest to different groups.	9/7/2023 1:48 PM
15	I don't necessarily see any of it as a success or a failure but more about the long term relationships that are being built. Even through the mistakes, the transparency and communication demonstrated can be used as a tool to actually further build the relationship rather than break it down.	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
16	Loved doing pop up engagements in busy places in the community..	9/5/2023 2:31 PM
17	Municipal youth services planned- engaged with 1800 youth through in person workshops, online surveys, youth popup events, and establishing a youth team to make sure decisions are youth-led	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
18	world cafe, open space, experienced facilitation, focus groups, opportunities for follow up	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
19	I typically aim for around 10% response rate on resident surveys. Higher than this would be optimal. Successes I would like to repeat would be advertising and information to build	9/1/2023 12:04 PM

awareness and interest in the survey and completing it. We had some success with pop ups, but cannot say if they resulted into conversions in terms of survey completions, or just information to the public, so perhaps increasing the number of pop-ups during public engagement periods.

20	Increased registration for HRM bid activities by diverse suppliers, successful social value initiatives (ie/ Cogswell District Project)	9/1/2023 10:54 AM
21	having multiple meetings per day and getting a diverse turnout	8/21/2023 3:31 PM
22	Positive interactions that identify solutions rather than problems.	8/21/2023 3:07 PM
23	I'm very satisfied with our engagement for Spring Garden Streetscaping.	8/11/2023 5:36 PM
24	Heard from 2500 residents in rural HRM that influenced the Rural Recreation Strategy (planned to go to Council this fall)	8/8/2023 4:07 PM
25	Equitable participation from diverse communities	8/8/2023 1:50 PM
26	Working with a community stakeholder group from beginning to end of a successful project.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
27	Partnership with ISANS for Fire Safety	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
28	As a newer employee, I do not have much experience to draw from at the moment, but I do like that we work to have an ASL Interpreter at our public events every time there is a presentation.	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
29	Making digital engagement available to those without access to technology due to disability or income - we ensured staff were available to help fill out paper versions of survey.	8/4/2023 2:14 PM
30	Following a gather input, present proposal, educate on decision format of meetings.	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
31	Community Visioning process Centre Plan process	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
32	Initial engagement around watershed management at a municipal scale went really well - this started with targeting interviews, and the initial round finished with an in-person engagement session. Being able to have all stakeholders together in one place after the initial consultation was so valuable.	8/2/2023 12:52 PM
33	Partnering with community organizations/NGO's to better engage community members. Some underrepresented groups can be distrustful of government, so having strategic partnerships is key.	8/2/2023 10:26 AM
34	would like the feedback to actually impact the decision making	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
35	I feel content delivered it good and geared to the audience we are working with	7/31/2023 9:33 AM
36	Recruitment demographics have been very good over the past few years. Relationships built with groups like Ummah Masjid Mosque and Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Center have been very good for our cultural learning.	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
37	Bus operator engagement	7/26/2023 9:05 AM
38	Open houses that are well attended and available resources allow for productive conversations.	7/21/2023 4:26 PM
39	creating spaces where people feel comfortable sharing. In some in-person environments, I've experienced times when people were hesitant to share concerns out of fear of others hearing. Creating a space where one-on-one conversations could be had in an open-house setting ensured that people were comfortable, understood the application, and were willing to share.	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
40	Africville interpretive panels. Stakeholder-driven project in which my role as HRM staff was to facilitate the process (logistics, financial, etc.) and provide stakeholders the autonomy to tell their own stories in their own words.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
41	the success we had in Upper Hammonds Plains when we reviewed the zoning in the areas as requested by the community.	7/20/2023 8:39 AM
42	Open house sessions with multiple forms of consultation. In-person meetings with marginalized groups to develop trust and determine barriers to positive outcomes not otherwise experienced elsewhere.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM

| 43 | Working with local artists and other stakeholders in underrepresented groups to facilitate creative implementations of interpretive signage projects which represent the history of their communities. | 7/19/2023 10:52 AM |
| 44 | North Park Street Project engagement. | 7/19/2023 10:15 AM |

Q19 What challenges do you and/or your business unit face when designing and/or delivering public engagement? Please describe:

Answered: 60   Skipped: 29

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Experience with "event planning" on things like engineering projects where staff might not have the experience in holding public events.	11/16/2023 9:05 AM
2	Internet in rural areas and general geography is an issue.	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
3	Overcoming some community members fear/dislike for police so they can engage with police in improving and enjoying their community.	9/29/2023 1:11 PM
4	The public does not like homelessness. It's difficult to explain to folks what it is going on.	9/22/2023 1:06 PM
5	Challenging to efficiently engage the entire municipality due to geographical limitations. e.g. sending staff our to sheet harbour is a full-day commitment even if the meeting is just a few hours.	9/20/2023 4:27 PM
6	More equitable communications - for example, we largely rely on social media and councillor newsletters to get the word out, but those on social media and who are signed up to receive the newsletter are often not fully representative of the community. We end up with a lot of NIMBYism as a result.	9/19/2023 3:23 PM
7	Because we are putting our name and contact information on letters to the public, we can become a source of contact for other issues/future issues a resident have that don't apply to the project in question.	9/19/2023 2:20 PM
8	To examine if the program fits what communities really need the most.	9/19/2023 12:41 PM
9	There is very little funding and monetary resources to engage in a meaningful and inclusive way for example by providing inclusion supports like ASL, caregiving, translation or even recognizing resident's time through food or honoraria.	9/18/2023 2:59 PM
10	Town-hall sytle meetings often don't work - they are vulnerable to grandstanding and verbal bullying. It's important to engage when we need public feedback, not just because of a legal formality. When engagement wouldn't change any staff recommendation, why do it?! I enjoy trying to accommodate people's input as far as possible while upholding professional best practices and the priorities given by Council.	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
11	Personpower. It is difficult to keep track of and keep a hands on approach with so many files	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
12	Blanket Community Communication	9/15/2023 2:23 PM
13	Resources, expertise, time, expectations, controlling for vested interests who may have an advantage (people, experience, money, access to decision-makers or information, relationships, technology etc)	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
14	Attendance and outreach to rural communities	9/15/2023 12:47 PM
15	Attendance challenges and marketing.	9/15/2023 11:16 AM
16	We are a small group, the workload to prepare and host engagements can overwhelm other work responsibilities we need to balance.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
17	Engagement that is required when informing is the task.	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
18	The temporal gulf between the engagement process and construction means that projects can often be constructed 4-5 years or more after engagement takes place. In that time the individual stakeholders and even the fabric of a community can change. Many people impacted by the project will never have had an opportunity for feedback.	9/14/2023 4:38 PM
19	Staffing resources, lack of experience with community engagement, unknown construction	9/14/2023 4:24 PM

timelines to align with engagement deliverables.

20	time and resources to lead engagements	9/14/2023 3:37 PM
21	Challenges include communicating large amounts of complex information (e.g., many options and related impacts for changes to a street) to the public. Also, engaging with underrepresented groups who don't typically participate in conventional engagement events and processes. Also, sometimes a small, but vocal community group will dominate the public discourse around a project, sometimes manipulating media and bending the truth to discredit a project or proposal.	9/8/2023 12:53 PM
22	-duration of project timeline extended and informing the public of why	9/8/2023 10:06 AM
23	Feeling overwhelmed when the time crunch happens - there are a lot of moving parts leading up to a community event. All of a sudden you need staff to help you with loading items, displays, check ins, surveys, materials, presentation, food, venue logistics etc. Not sure who to invite from other HRM Business Units when you dont know what may come up of course. Teams meeting are a challenge with seniors that are not online.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
24	It is very difficult to work with other HRM business units. Everyone has their own playbook for how they see engagement happening and their understanding of it. Either I find that staff see it as a token check mark they have to hit rather than caring about improving a project or we see it as a very strict and forma process to engage the public which also isn't always necessary.	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
25	Internet access and trust in rural communities Getting the word out to people about what we are doing and the lack of trust they have in anything government/	9/5/2023 2:31 PM
26	Reaching the specific population, we are trying to serve (ages 13-14), resources for honorariums/ long process for compensating community groups	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
27	Lack of support staff/resources, preparation,	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
28	Developing relevant questions to inform decision-making. Determining how to increase reach to under-represented communities. Ensuring the survey is accessible to as many residents as possible	9/1/2023 12:04 PM
29	Many of our target groups are apprehensive to "do business" with HRM - they lack trust.	9/1/2023 10:54 AM
30	reaching the communities we are in. no matter how many engagement methods we try, there always seem to be people who don't hear about events.	8/21/2023 3:31 PM
31	1. limited budget 2. shortage of personel/professional	8/21/2023 3:28 PM
32	Matching the format to the volume of people. It is difficult to predict which might files might bring out people in droves, and which may attract only a handful.	8/21/2023 3:07 PM
33	Opposing and sometime misinformed interest groups attracting media attention. Having Deanna Wilmshurst embedded in our department provided us with excellent engagement support. I have not had to do engagement since she moved on and I'm not sure if she's been 'replaced'. Corp Comms has also been incredibly helpful and responsive.	8/11/2023 5:36 PM
34	Lack of funding and human resources to plan inclusive engagement methods	8/8/2023 1:50 PM
35	Finding expedient ways to engage with Mi'kmaw and ANS communities because they often wish for longer engagement timeframes to explore issues.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
36	ensuring all parties are fulfilled and knowledgable	8/8/2023 7:20 AM
37	Too much engagement without enough follow through on changes. Survey fatigue.	8/4/2023 4:34 PM
38	Staff capacity, receiving supporting items (posters, other print materials) from partners on time.	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
39	I feel that our engagement is set up well for privileged residents with the ability to take time out of their day to attend. As an example at most Public Hearings we hear mostly from wealthy individuals who feel comfortable going to city hall, at our short-term rental public hearing we had almost exclusively short-term rental operators attend in person while the other tools were dominated by tenants and those impacted negatively. I believe that the in-person, city hall public hearing is less accessible to those the decisions may impact most, folks nervous to speak up or who don't have the time to go to city hall. However, I believe that Regional Council is most swayed by this engagement, the in-person presence at public hearings. Maybe we could work more to allow virtual attendance and anonymous participation.	8/4/2023 2:14 PM

40	Ability to communicate events to stakeholders without doing a costly mailout.	8/3/2023 3:36 PM
41	Capturing all voices, not just gathering from folks who tend to always show up to engagement sessions.	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
42	Timelines Staff resources Adequate financial resources Staff changes & losing relationships with community Changing priorities Lack of overall community engagement support and strained communications support Different staff understanding and comfort level with doing public engagement (and how much work it takes to do it well! Engagement fatigue Reaching under-represented community Engaging the public on large policy projects that may not have an immediate impact on one's property Reaching younger demographics Having access to information previous related engagement in a given community & key stakeholders (which change)	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
43	As an engineer I struggle with putting things in simple terms for more effective communications with the public. I wish we had more staff who specialized in community engagement that could help.	8/3/2023 2:18 PM
44	Finding the time to plan, and finding community partners in more rural areas of municipality.	8/2/2023 12:52 PM
45	We face issues engaging the disability community and need to work on improving our online materials to be more inclusive to the visually impaired.	8/2/2023 10:26 AM
46	lack of financial support to provide more accessibility issues. need a one stop portal for support in technical services.	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
47	Ensuring engagement/attendence	7/31/2023 9:33 AM
48	Lack of knowledge and limited resources.	7/28/2023 8:49 AM
49	Building true trust with community. Being patient and persist in doing the necessary work to build real relationshipos.	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
50	Ensuring the roster of jurors is diverse and fresh while also understanding the sector.	7/25/2023 5:01 PM
51	Meeting expectations of community and advocacy groups, especially when it comes to defining what they can influence in the project. Often project objectives and trade-offs are driven by funding requirements, Council policy direction, and engineering/safety decisions, and we always seem to face challenges from the public when they don't agree.	7/24/2023 9:33 AM
52	having enough time and resources	7/22/2023 5:40 PM
53	Public trust, attendance, advertising/communications, resources.	7/21/2023 4:26 PM
54	Finding a balance between facilitating conversations, and allowing people to be heard. When many angry people are in a room against a contentious development, it is difficult to maintain control of the space and maintain mutual respect without using tactics to control when & how people speak, which can create frustration.	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
55	My projects tend to be interpretive or artistic in nature. Engaging communities that have not had an opportunity to have an open forum in front of HRM staff means that many other issues beyond the project scope that impact community are voiced. Completely understandable. Also, each community has a different approach to time that may not fit within the fast-paced municipal planning or project structure. We can't force our timelines and processes on communities that do not share our process and expect success.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
56	balancing the need for public engagement and the need to process development application in a timely manner.	7/20/2023 8:39 AM
57	Support for extensive, targeted consultations. Ability to get families with children or seniors. Parents are often working and unable to attend day sessions and in the evenings, time is sacred for afterschool programs, homework, and bedtime routines, especially for parents with young children making it very difficult to attend any sort of 4-8:30 pm consultations. Seniors also have challenges attending evening events due to low-light driving. The result is that most attendees come in the daytime events and consist of retirees, developers, or business owners - a group that does not adequately represent the broad range of public input needed.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM
58	Many of the projects for which we are required to conduct public engagement in the form of a council-held public hearing do not attract the interest of the public.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM

59	Many engagement sessions rely on Corp Comms to produce communications plans and creatives. Often times they are very busy (understandably so) and have a lack of resources to meet our desired timelines/deadlines. This leaves our team missing key engagement opportunities (i.e. during specific times of years, special events etc) as often times we cannot move forward without launching full engagement campaigns. It would be very helpful to have more staff available for those requests.	7/19/2023 10:40 AM
60	Timing, expectations of the public and delivery schedules. Other community concerns not related to the project that need to be addressed at the same time, or in advance of project level discussions.	7/19/2023 10:15 AM

Q20 Where are there opportunities for enhancement? Please describe:

Answered: 43   Skipped: 46

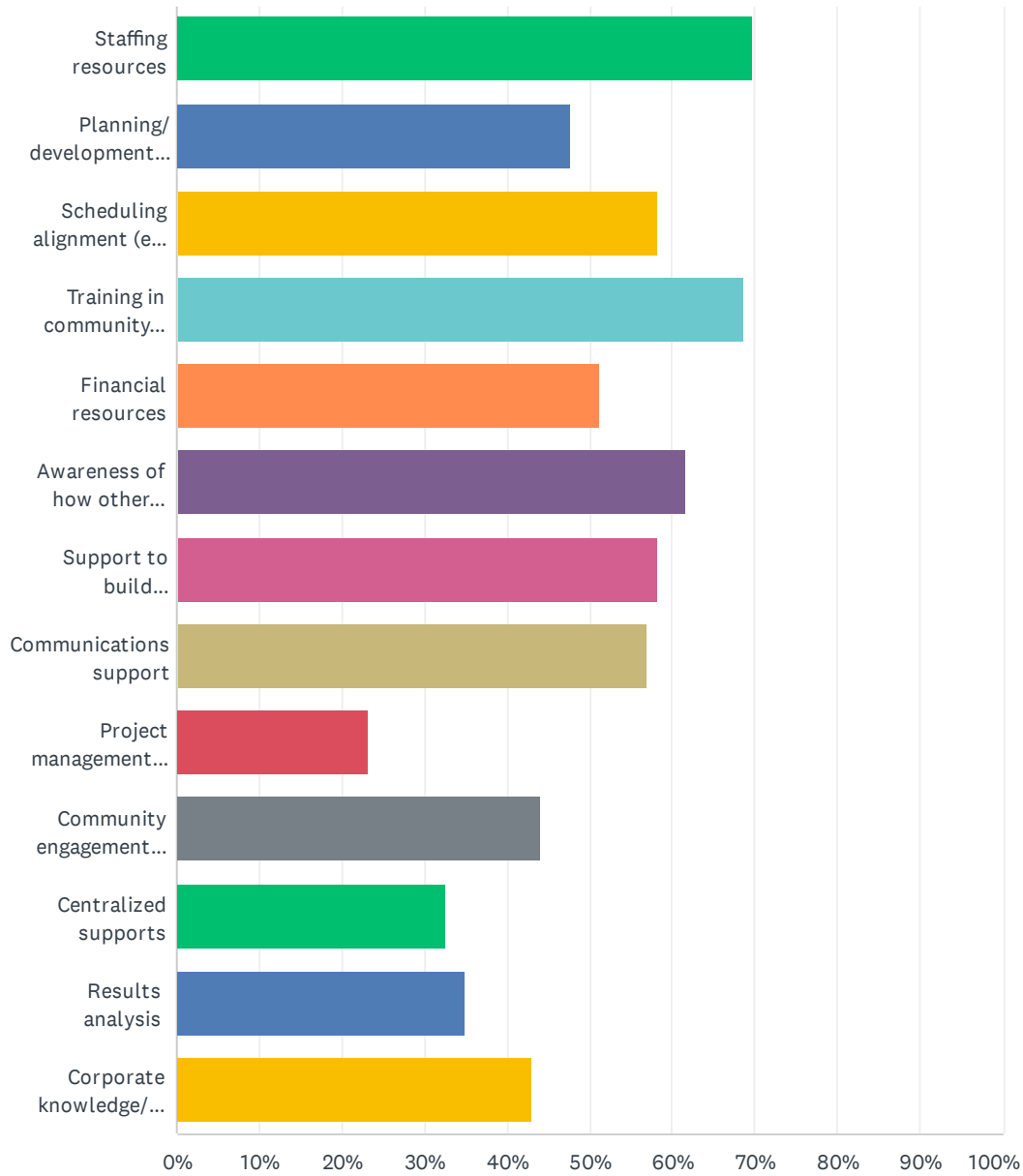| #	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Staff to support public engagement events.	11/16/2023 9:05 AM
2	Improved internet, more resources for outreach. We had an intern.	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
3	Parenting courses in marginalized communities to assist parents in keeping their children on the right path. Funding to ensure all children have access to recreation/sports programs.	9/29/2023 1:11 PM
4	The public needs to know more about homelessness and how they can help in stead of complain.	9/22/2023 1:06 PM
5	More support for tools like interpreters and translators so we could offer some materials in person and online in different languages.	9/20/2023 4:27 PM
6	Better communications with community champions and advocates - rather than passively inviting people to participate we need to have more active and strategic communications. In P&D, it is important to have people who are familiar with both planning work as well as communications. When communicating with under-served communities we need to be a "one stop shop." No matter what our meeting is about, we should be able to help out when people have concerns or questions around the work of other business units.	9/19/2023 3:23 PM
7	designing new programs with the community, not only for the community.	9/19/2023 12:41 PM
8	Avoid town-hall style meetings. Use more open-house formats. Offer more hybrid formats so people can join meetings online if they can't attend in person. Offer snacks at meetings to encourage attendance and ease tensions. Group people with different agendas round the same table so they listen to, and influence, one another. Include simple gaming, dotmocracy and other tools to draw people out, including those who are less talkative. Offer children's activities. Use physical models, Lego, digital 3-D simulations, etc. to explain concepts and explore options. Avoid legalese and "plannerese"! Provide space for side conversations on specific topics and to divert disruptive agendas. Learn/use shorthand or direct type-in to facilitate written recording of every comment. Compile all comments and circulate to relevant staff, including other departments based on topics addressed.	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
9	More variety of opportunities. More open houses instead of town hall presentations	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
10	Expand access to information using community-based groups who can reach target populations, accommodate different learning strategies, literacy levels, use of graphic design/visual, capacity-building for program participants	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
11	rural outreach	9/15/2023 12:47 PM
12	More communication needed with community groups.	9/15/2023 11:16 AM
13	more accessible presentations and virtual meetings/ presentations can reach more people.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
14	Proactive Corporate Communications that better express what HRM is doing outside of Press Releases.	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
15	resources for engagement	9/14/2023 3:37 PM
16	Planning engagement processes so that we hear from a broader range of people who are more representative of the communities where our projects will have an impact. We could also improve on how we report back to communities after an engagement process and maintain relationships post-project completion.	9/8/2023 12:53 PM
17	-shape your city	9/8/2023 10:06 AM
18	Technical and promotional assistance. Graphic displays for viewing is often contracted out to consultants as we dont have time to do it.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM

19	I think we need to start with having all diversity trainings mandatory for all employees so staff at least have a base level of who they can contact and the benefits of having diverse voices heard. Community Developers should be working across all business units to support engagement. Staff are hired because they are experts in their field and then expected to do high quality engagement which isn't fair. Additional training for facilitation for staff.	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
20	The financial compensation to underserved groups participating. They should not have to wait months for HRM To mail them a cheque	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
21	the provision of additional time to prepare	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
22	Shortening the survey to make it easier to complete but focused on key issues. More in-person engagement with residents / stakeholders - although this has its own challenges and limitations (limited participation, potentially biased respondents that do not represent majority, language or communication barriers and associated costs to have on-site accessibility support).	9/1/2023 12:04 PM
23	reaching more community members	8/21/2023 3:31 PM
24	Workshop / engagement programming. For example methods of taking feedback, methods to engage residents to be creative and provide constructive feedback i.e. mapping tools to identify issues.	8/21/2023 3:07 PM
25	Build in the inclusion considerations early on in the design processes. Share what has been done in similar service areas. Do not duplicate and cause engagement fatigue among residents.	8/8/2023 1:50 PM
26	HRM can continue to work with Mi'kmaw and ANS communities to build trust in municipal processes and to ensure that their voices are heard and incorporated into projects.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
27	Director appreciation of the impacts on community when survey has no results and when there is survey fatigue.	8/4/2023 4:34 PM
28	I think our team makes a great effort, but I think we have room for enhancement when it comes to engaging underrepresented groups. As mentioned previously, I think it would be helpful to have some training or an easily accessible (and up-to-date) list of the resources available to us to use. I think finding accessible locations may also be difficult when travelling to certain areas of the municipality, so if it does not already exist, I think a directory of accessible locations available for public engagement across the municipality would be useful.	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
29	In-person public hearings. Accessibility of engagement tools. Having a team who's job it is to review engagement against policy and standards. I think we could also do more to be in the community generally without a specific project in mind. For example, in Vancouver 311 and planning staff will have popups at any public event to bridge the gap between the municipality and residents. I also helped do our first Reddit AMA and it was very succesful, though difficult to get approval for as our responses now exist in perpetuity on Reddit, this is a good thing though.	8/4/2023 2:14 PM
30	More active engagement of seeking out voices not typically captured in public engagment.	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
31	Central engagement support unit at HRM or BU level Staff training Clear policy and minimum expectations but also flexibility to adapt approaches Overall calendar for HRM engagements Financial resources to plan & deliver projects Provide refreshments! Stay connected to communities outside of formal engagements being able to show how feedabck has made a difference	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
32	Coordinating engagement on related projects across business units.	8/2/2023 12:52 PM
33	Technical support to increase accessibility for online engagement. Building stronger relationships (and more of them) with community groups.	8/2/2023 10:26 AM
34	The opportunities are for HRM to better incorporate the feedback received, and be open and transparent on the decision making and what will happen next and who will be making those decisions	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
35	How to better reach and ensure update in marginalized communities.	7/31/2023 9:33 AM
36	Yes. As above, investing in people and building relationships simply takes time. It shouldn't be an "easy fix".	7/27/2023 9:12 AM

37	These efforts for consistent strategies are great; I feel some of the push-back from the public comes from not knowing what to expect, and projects having different levels of engagement.	7/24/2023 9:33 AM
38	A comprehensive list of resources, materials, events, contacts etc. available to support engagement.	7/21/2023 4:26 PM
39	In the engagemnet I do most often, it's mostly the most privileged people that speak the loudest. In development, we see that often through "NIMBYism" where people don't want to see their surroundings near their property changed. The most diverse voices are rarely the ones that speak the loudest.	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
40	Start paying stakeholders for their time. Hire external facilities that work in community to organize engagement. Enhance capacity of D & I to be conduit of all HRM community engagement. Enhance language services for translation and formalize a corporate approach for language requirements. Embed dedicated budgets within projects that are specific to engagement.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
41	We need to incentive a broader range of people to come to consultations by hosting engagement events that are interesting and exciting. This can occur with events that have activities for families, seniors, and other representative groups to make the events comfortable while people are considering what are often significant changes to their neighbourhoods or city. Ideas include mandatory childcare provision with games and events for children; provision of food and refreshments; notetakers and scribes for those with reading/writing challenges or those who just wish to speak and have someone capture it. We can do much more but we often lack staff, time, and support for such measures. Popup events have value, but offer limited time or space to hear people's concerns. They often end up being an advertisement for an upcoming open house. Popups should be more focused. The biggest challenge with popups occurring at other events or locales, such as community markets or shopping malls, is that people are often there to attend the other event or for shopping purposes and are challenged to invest in, or are not in a comfortable enough setting, to provide the level of input they could otherwise offer in a different setting. When they do open up, it can occupy much of the popup engagement window so that staff only speak with a few people are are not able to let many know about upcoming, in-person open houses.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM
42	If there was an integrated system for coordinating public engagement events and the related advertising and notification processes it would really help to streamline an otherwise rather clunky process.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM
43	More accessibility, more technical writing resources, more graphics support, streamlined expectations, etc.	7/19/2023 10:15 AM

Q21 What additional resources would help your team deliver successful engagement initiatives?

Answered: 86   Skipped: 3

Community Engagement Strategy Employee Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Staffing resources	69.77%	60
Planning/ development time	47.67%	41
Scheduling alignment (e.g. with other municipal events or engagement activities)	58.14%	50
Training in community engagement/ facilitation	68.60%	59
Financial resources	51.16%	44
Awareness of how other business units can collaborate, share resources, inform the process, etc.	61.63%	53
Support to build community/ stakeholder relationships	58.14%	50
Communications support	56.98%	49
Project management support	23.26%	20
Community engagement subject-matter expertise	44.19%	38
Centralized supports	32.56%	28
Results analysis	34.88%	30
Corporate knowledge/ database of previous engagement	43.02%	37
Total Respondents: 86		

Q22 In your opinion, what would help the municipality deliver on community engagement? Please describe:

Answered: 53   Skipped: 36

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Having dedicated staff in each department to plan / attend community engagement.	11/16/2023 9:05 AM
2	More comms resources. Everyone is tapped. Fire needs an in house, dedicated resource like HRP.	10/3/2023 5:08 PM
3	Hire more officers to increase police presence in the communities they serve which will increase police engagement and build better rapport and trust.	9/29/2023 1:11 PM
4	More activities for people to participate in that involve education.	9/22/2023 1:06 PM
5	It's hard to figure out if other business units are doing engagement at the same time we are in a certain area. Having a central place to look and understand the recent engagement in an area would be helpful.	9/20/2023 4:27 PM
6	A coordinated calendar of all events to be sure we are not in conflict with the work of other BUs	9/19/2023 3:23 PM
7	Invite more underrepresented community members by sharing news, information, updates, and initiatives through various social media and platforms with plain language, images and videos. Just like how diverse our residents are, the social media that residents are using varies.	9/19/2023 12:41 PM
8	Ask ourselves early in each process, "What do we need to convey, and what do we need to learn, from this engagement, and what will we do with what we learn?"	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
9	Some baseline information - even when project-based communications take place, there needs to be a basic layer of information that is shared (planning 101, charter vs MPS vs LUB, what are the obligations of the municipality when reviewing applications, etc)	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
10	Via investing in infrastructure to support various ways of cross-platform communication and information sharing.	9/15/2023 2:23 PM
11	Within HRM there may not be equitable access to human resources which can create an expectation that other departments or units cannot meet.	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
12	more operational support.	9/15/2023 12:47 PM
13	More collaborative engagement so that we don't saturate, and to leverage existing relationships and events.	9/15/2023 11:16 AM
14	centralized support of engagement experts and training in community engagement.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
15	Proactive Communication outside of engagement that changes the opinions on HRM (begin telling the public about all of the good things that are happening); attempt to change the negative opinion of HRM	9/14/2023 5:37 PM
16	Management placing higher value/respect on public feedback and being more open to progressive design options rather than rigid guidelines which are treated more like standards than guidelines.	9/14/2023 4:38 PM
17	Additional resources, specialization in community engagement and training.	9/14/2023 4:24 PM
18	to have easily accessible knowledge and resources who can support and identify good opportunities	9/14/2023 3:37 PM
19	A more consistent, integrated approach where we are learning from and building on the engagement work of other BU's and departments. I think a dedicated engagement team, perhaps at the BU level, could be very effective.	9/8/2023 12:53 PM
20	-coordination of events and engagement -printing process -education on social media tools	9/8/2023 10:06 AM

21	I am resourced with other staff such as Diversity Coordinator and Community Development staff but additional staff to help with community engagement logistics so that i can work on my own presentation and expertise would help.	9/7/2023 5:23 PM
22	Increased staff that have a specific role to the task. Not work that is done off the "side of a desk" in conjunction with other taskings.	9/7/2023 1:48 PM
23	Clear guidelines and best practice with the staff support to deliver. Ongoing relationship building in communities. Attend events outside of engagements to develop trust and we aren't just showing up when we need something or when things are bad.	9/7/2023 10:38 AM
24	Corporate Communications needs a better understanding of how " rural" works. We are so corporate focused that we sometimes negate Community.	9/5/2023 2:31 PM
25	Consistency and guidelines	9/5/2023 10:57 AM
26	database/sharing of previous engagements so that business units are over engaging communities.	9/5/2023 10:37 AM
27	in general just having more opportunties through all the various methods and approaches noted in survey, not keeping it to one channel . ie just social media as example	9/1/2023 5:32 PM
28	standards / tools / staff teams not always restricted to staff from particular business unit - pending on the type of engagement and desired outcomes (break the silos)	9/1/2023 12:09 PM
29	Increased trust and in-person visibility in community during engagements. If doing in-person meeting, it may be beneficial to have a member of that community as part of the meeting (e.g. if engaging with ANS community, having someone who is Black as part of the engagement team. Likewise for Indigenous community). Gaining advice from different community groups on what type of engagement needs they have / what would work best. Ultimately - acting on the results in a way that shows the community that the municipality heard them and is taking their input into consideration.	9/1/2023 12:04 PM
30	IAP2 training for those involved in the design, delivery and facilitation of public engagement. Consistent shape your city experiences Consistent survey experiences	8/31/2023 5:11 PM
31	already stated	8/21/2023 3:31 PM
32	Senior leadership committment to conducting it. There is some perspectives that we should do the minimum amount possible rather than investing the time in resources needed to have successful outcomes.	8/21/2023 3:07 PM
33	Specific Community engagement training for Community Deveopers	8/8/2023 4:07 PM
34	A standardized process and toolkit. A platform where previous engagement related work and results can be shared among municipal employees.	8/8/2023 1:50 PM
35	Develop trust and relationships with Mi'kmaw, ANS, immigrant individuals and communities and also lower income people living in HRM. And then allow staff to plug in to these networks for engagement purposes.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
36	Better tracking engagements and making them accessible to other staff before starting new engagements. Funds for translation as many newcomers cannot give input without it. Determine a common level of engagement for similar projects (ie Recreation does engagement but Parks does very little)	8/4/2023 4:34 PM
37	I think we need a serious, meaningful commitment to support BUs in their engagement desires and existing practices from upper management teams in each BU, but also from other major stakeholders that are often part of engagement, such as Corporate Communications. I understand that these groups are often inundated with work and requests from BUs, so I would like to see them get more support, so BUs in turn are able to do engagement activities to the best of their ability and are not worried about waiting for different materials. I also think that management teams need to take a critical look at how and why they are (or are not) encouraging their teams to do engagement, as they are also leaders in this organization and can help set the tone. I also think those on the employee level, such as myself, should recognize that there is always more to learn and practice being comfortable having difficult conversations with those we are engaging with.	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
38	Seek updated tools and techniques based on other jurisdictions. Our engagement strategy	8/4/2023 2:14 PM

should be updated consistently as new practices and experiences emerge.

39	Try not to treat engagement as a box to tick, rather an opportunity to gather input and collaborate with the public.	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
40	More opportunities to empower communities & work across business units Use the results of engagement to help inform not only policy but capital budgets and service levels (parks, community facilities, transit)	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
41	Coordination and info sharing among BUs. A common dashboard or database for sharing info on events, projects, and engagement.	8/3/2023 8:52 AM
42	Starting engagement earlier in planning processes.	8/2/2023 12:52 PM
43	More partnerships and focusing on building relationships with key online "influencers" to help shape the online conversations. So much conversation about HRM's projects happens in Twitter, FB, Instagram posts and threads so making sure that we have the ability to inform and shape the public narrative is key.	8/2/2023 10:26 AM
44	technical supports located in one location	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
45	As stated above.	7/28/2023 8:49 AM
46	A diversified workforce, improved professionalism, combining efforts across business units.	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
47	Important to spend time building trust in community	7/22/2023 5:40 PM
48	Greater training / tools on facilitation, particularly in tense rooms or dealing with upset people. As well, a greater inventory of the networks of community groups, community leaders, and a greater sense of interconnectedness both within government (ie who can we connect with who knows who we need to reach out to in the community)	7/21/2023 9:19 AM
49	Having a centralized support for HRM to summarize all past engagements and to create synergy for BU's so community's are not over-engaged. I fell that HRM can better communicate to community that we take engagement seriously and that are proactively implemented what we've heard and can report back on tangible outcomes. It's not enough to engage and then not act and report back on our actions. Another fundamental HRM flaw is that we approach community when we are well into a planning process rather than at the pre-planning stages. As a result, we can come into a project as the 'lead' with the answers, rather than as a facilitator in a community. Empower groups to be an equal partner and decision makers from the beginning. And maybe start with the question, "We want to present an opportunity. Can we discuss if your community is interested in participating as partners with the municipality?" In a nutshell, if we as HRM staff are doing community engagement, we need to have humility and be 100% transparent in the opportunities and constraints for each project.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
50	We need to make a firm decision about the realistic outcomes each type of engagement can achieve and then stick to that approach. From there we can allocate greater resources and staff to those events where the greatest amount of valuable public input can be captured. And we should not repeat recent approaches to open house engagement strategies without making every effort to address the missing voices and lack of attendance that often occurs.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM
51	More centralized, systematized approach to organizing community engagement events, to make the process less time intensive and therefore make community engagement an easy thing to incorporate earlier and more frequently rather than a burden to try and minimize.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM
52	Shape Your City seems quite limited. Having the program "Thought Exchange" available for all business units may be helpful to expand engagement. This program allows participants to input organic ideas and build upon those, rather than responding to constricted already created concepts. Thought exchange also formulates reports in standard and visual/creative ways. The Province of NS and HRCE used this program for their major engagements in the past. Something to look into!	7/19/2023 10:40 AM
53	All of the above, we have come a long way but there are miles to go before we sleep.	7/19/2023 10:15 AM

Q23 Do you have anything else you would like to share to help shape the development of a revised Community Engagement Strategy? Please describe:

Answered: 26   Skipped: 63

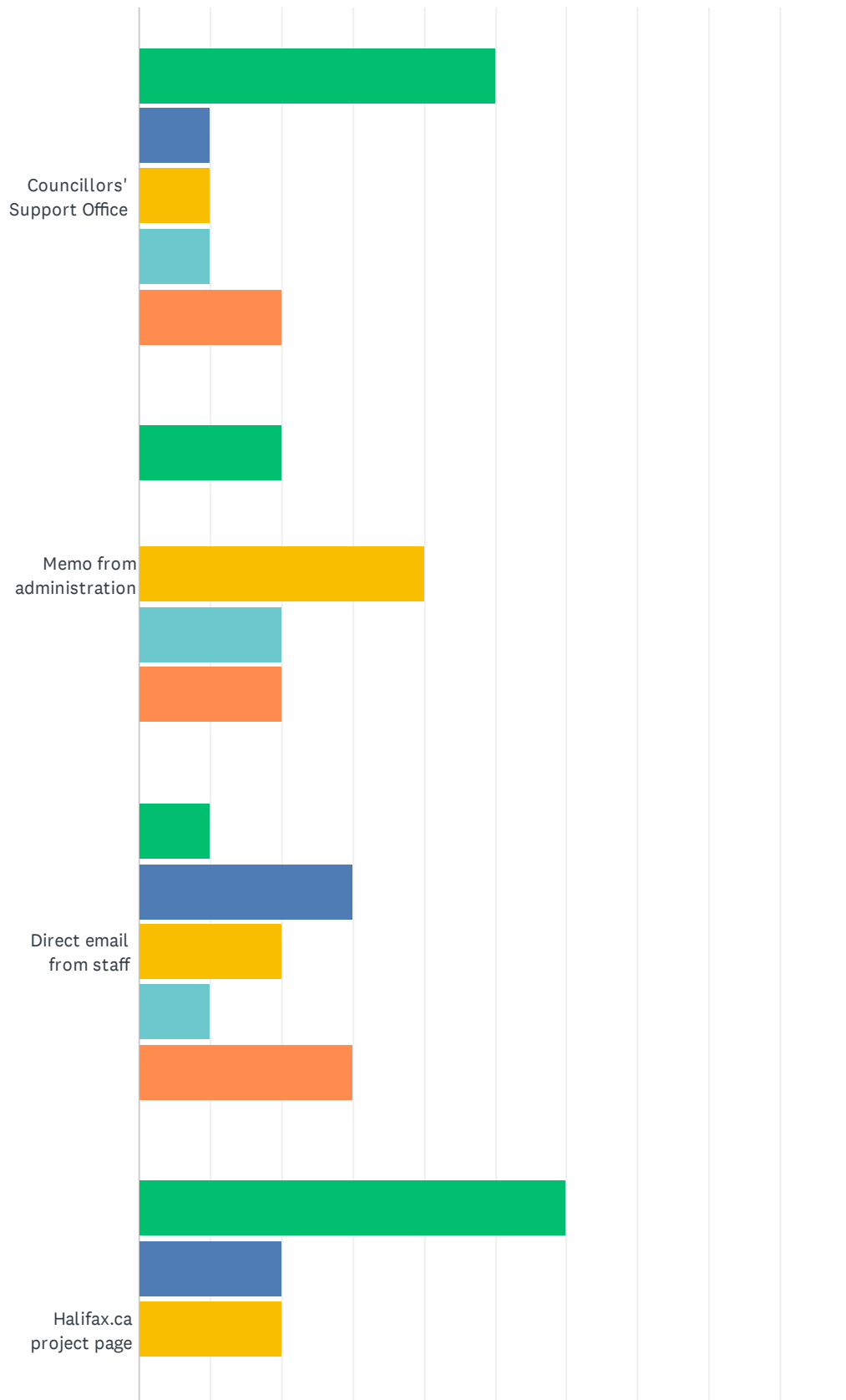| #	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Voice/Representatives from new immigrants and international students.	9/19/2023 12:41 PM
2	Be careful that we don't omit silent majorities or invisible minorities in our efforts to reach Traditionally Under-represented Groups. I find geography is the best criterion to start with. Shared interest in a place tends to draw people together rather than segregate them. It's important to get different interests round the same table around a shared project, rather than perpetuating any "us-versus-them" mindsets.	9/18/2023 10:48 AM
3	Right now our process sheets that are placed on websites all refer to a public information meeting. A PIM is not always necessary or possible but it places an expectation out there. There needs to be a common message. I think there also needs to be some onus on the applicant to engage the community prior to making application.	9/18/2023 10:02 AM
4	*Intentional interactions between communities and public decision makers. *Emphasis on the lived experience of community members taking a front seat and local knowledges inflecting decision-making processes, challenges a top-down approach to public decision making.	9/15/2023 2:23 PM
5	Excellent progress in reaching the public via recorded meetings (Council, committees), virtual meetings, we need to improve both internal and external navigation to enhance access and understanding, some progress on one-stop-shopping (Affordable Access Program), improve reliability of data, control for representation	9/15/2023 12:52 PM
6	The strategy needs to consider a variety of needs and outcomes. Hosting a workshop for the design of a public space is very different from a P & D public hearing meeting.	9/15/2023 9:48 AM
7	Focus on tangible results that are aligned with the community wants as opposed to that of just a few people. Frameworks have to meet and support actual results.	9/7/2023 1:48 PM
8	I would be happy to participate and share my experiences in conducting multiple surveys for the municipality. I have limited experience in in-person engagement, but the experience I have made me realize that what we are asking must line up with what the community wants us to do for them / with them, or to let them do with funding (if that opportunity exists).	9/1/2023 12:04 PM
9	Slightly unrelated but we need a writing style guide and templates for indesign (i.e. fonts, paragraph style, spacing, colours etc.)	8/21/2023 3:07 PM
10	My sense is that we generally do a great job and have been since the precedent set by the Central Library - it was around that time we shift from stand and defend approaches to deeper, story and conversation based engagement. If anything, i think our community is over consulted and worry about them experiencing engagmenet fatigue.	8/11/2023 5:36 PM
11	Try to communicate honestly with people. If a project is more about information sharing, then don't pretend that community feedback will necessarily influence decisions. For example, if there is strong policy support for a development and technical studies support this policy criteria, then public sentiment about a development will have little influence. We need to be honest about this and direct questions toward gaining feedback that can/will influence direction.	8/8/2023 11:48 AM
12	Thank you for looking into this, and I am sorry if my answers are not as fulfilling as they could be! I will hopefully be more helpful in future stages of this project, once I have more time with the municipality under my belt!	8/4/2023 4:29 PM
13	In doing my engagement work, I find the current strategy difficult to use. P&D developed an internal strategy that should be looked it. It includes checklists and this is a good way to	8/4/2023 2:14 PM

move. Instead of each staff committing to the whole strategy we should break it down to make it more useful.

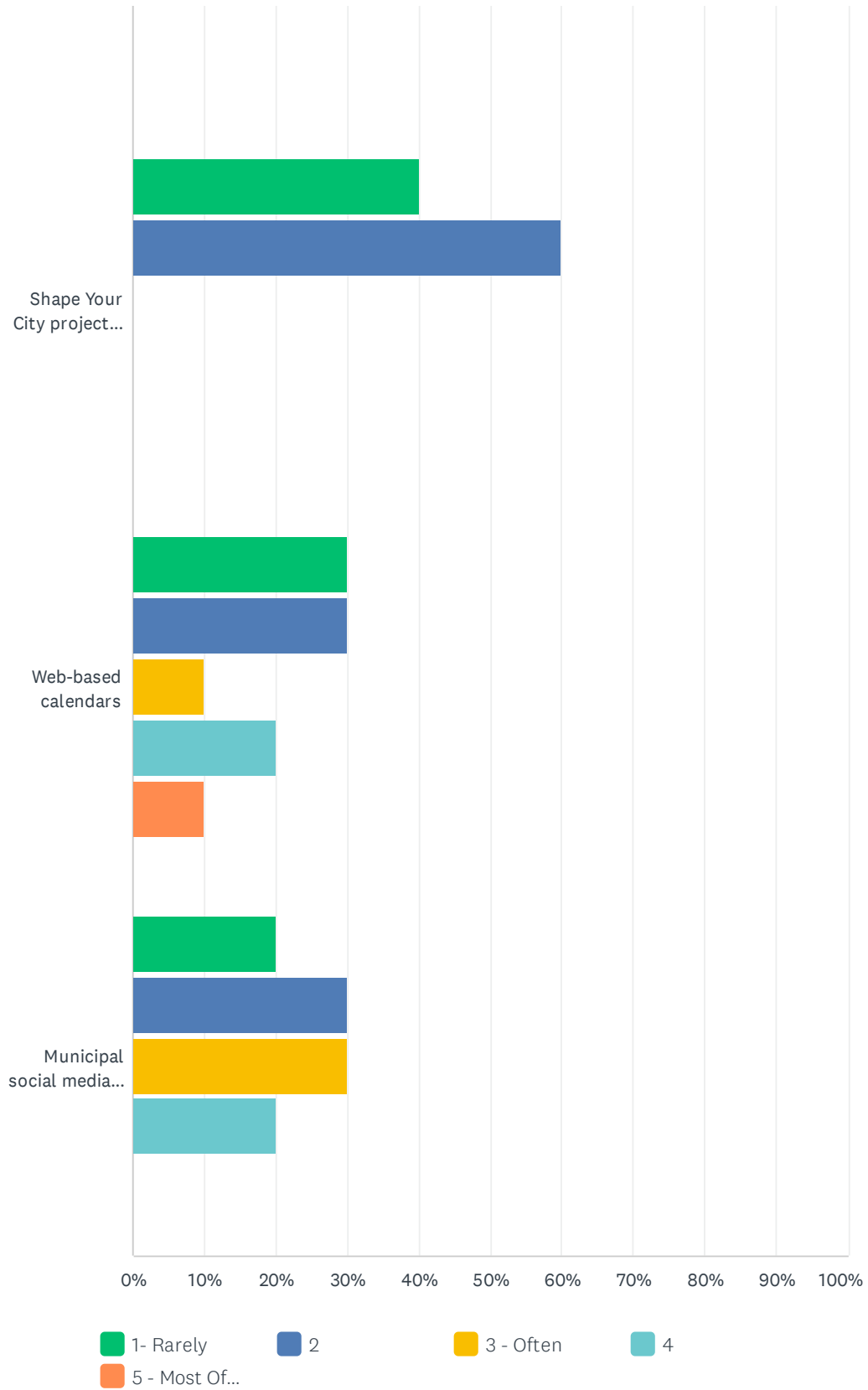| 14	No	8/3/2023 3:03 PM
15	Please use the P&D Engagement Guidebook to help inform the policy. Please make sure there is a clear guidebook for staff on the engagement continuum, key principles and practical planning tools. We are dealing with more complex and urgent matters of public policy and we need stable and experienced support to build trust in the community, including underrepresented groups.	8/3/2023 2:44 PM
16	In my experience, the more we can use art/creative ways to engage communities, the better! Focusing on improving our presence in communities and building key relationships.	8/2/2023 10:26 AM
17	there is real engagement fatigue in community. i believe engagement is very important, but the feedback must be incorporated in a real way which shows residents their thoughts were taken seriously - or the reasoning as to why their feedback wasn't followed is explained. i have attended several planning engagements as a resident where people have very specific concerns about how traffic will be affected by new developments, etc. "we are not there yet", then followed by reports which are very techi-babble, people lose interest over the next year, then all of a sudden, decisons have been made the community is upset as they were waiting for their opportunity to share input on the thing that mattered to them, but weren't aware of when their time for that input happened and their original concerns were ignored	8/1/2023 7:52 AM
18	No	7/31/2023 9:33 AM
19	Thank you.	7/28/2023 8:49 AM
20	Thank you for the opportunity for input.	7/27/2023 9:12 AM
21	A database of all ongoing engagement would be great. There could be many opportunities to collaborate across BUs so we don't have to go out multiple times on different projects to the same community, should go out together.	7/22/2023 5:40 PM
22	Planning and Development have adopted a Community Engagement Guidebook that provides a good approach for developing public engagement.	7/21/2023 4:26 PM
23	The fact that this survey exists indicates a huge shift in the right direction for HRM. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this survey.	7/20/2023 9:55 AM
24	The recently developed HRM Public Engagement Guidebook (https://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/32687/widgets/133965/documents/88584) offers the following: "Consider community-led collaboration opportunities whereby community representatives are provided the opportunity to both collaborate in the planning process and share in the presenting of components of the strategy, such as information and question/answer sessions, etc." This is something that I am afraid will be overlooked in engagement strategies that target entire planning areas, or multiple planning areas, as is being carried out for the Regional Centre Plan and suburban plan process. I know this is a difficult task and we do have a survey launched asking what the important issues are, but I think we need to ask the public in plain language, (1) what ways do you think we should asking your community about issues or council proposed changes (example, example,....) and (2) what questions do you think we should ask the greater public? I do not think we are making our approaches personal enough to show we want to share the creation of the strategy.	7/19/2023 11:41 AM
25	None.	7/19/2023 10:52 AM
26	Training on the importance of engagement (why it's important, why it's crucial to engage early etc.) for all management teams across all business units should be mandatory - this would assist staff in engagements and perhaps make a greater impact on projects/plans when management reviews engagement reports/feedback (with an engagement lens). Thank you!	7/19/2023 10:40 AM

Appendix D: Mayor and Council survey responses

Q1 How do you typically learn about public engagement opportunities?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 1

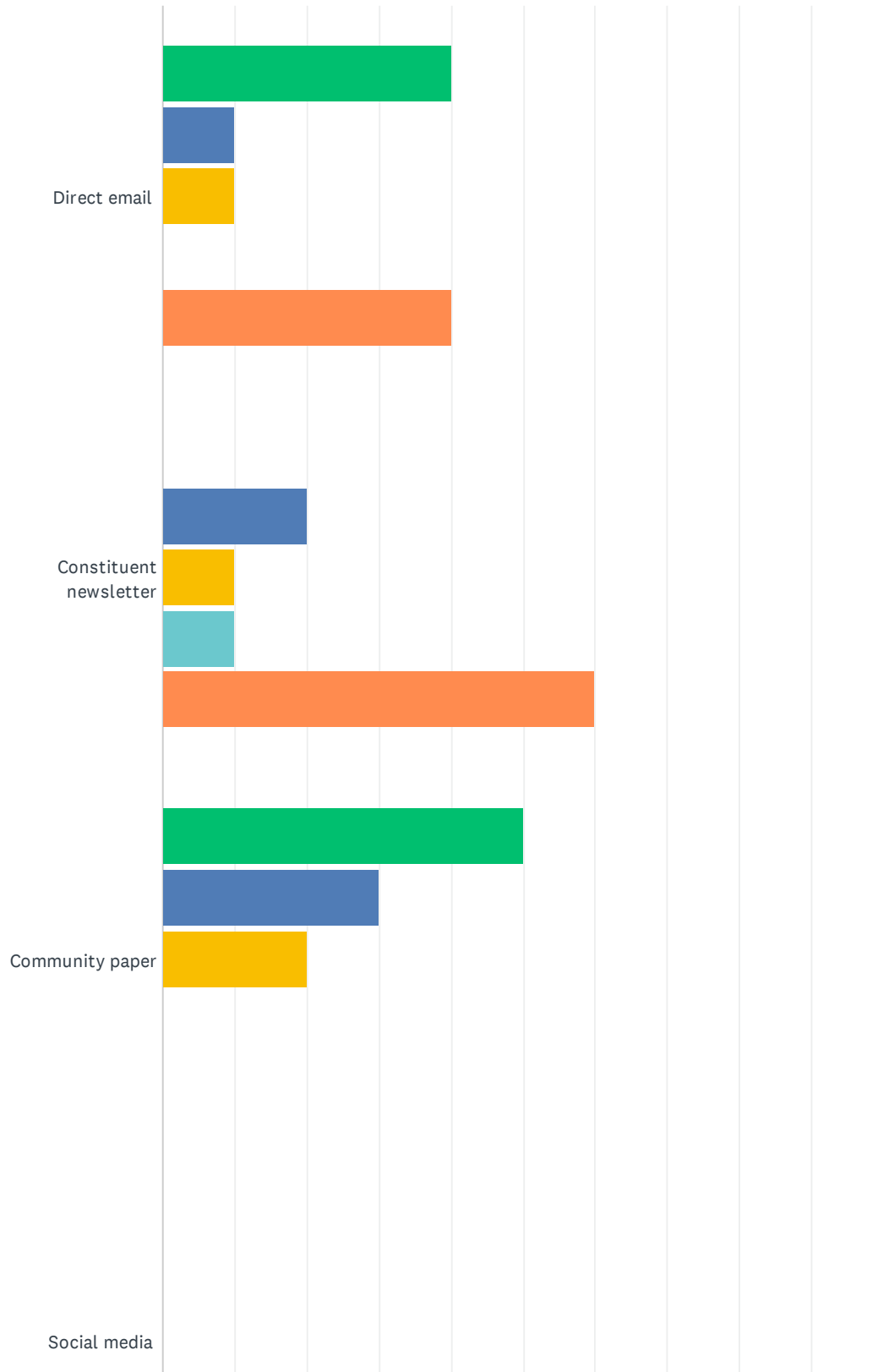# Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors

Legend:
- 1- Rarely
- 2
- 3 - Often
- 4
- 5 - Most Of...

Categories:
- Shape Your City project...
- Web-based calendars
- Municipal social media...

	1- RARELY	2	3 - OFTEN	4	5 - MOST OFTEN	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Councillors' Support Office	50.00% 5	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	20.00% 2	10	2.40
Memo from administration	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	40.00% 4	20.00% 2	20.00% 2	10	3.20
Direct email from staff	10.00% 1	30.00% 3	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	30.00% 3	10	3.20
Halifax.ca project page	60.00% 6	20.00% 2	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.60
Shape Your City project page	40.00% 4	60.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.60
Web-based calendars	30.00% 3	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	10	2.50
Municipal social media channels	20.00% 2	30.00% 3	30.00% 3	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	10	2.50

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	residents facebook	9/16/2023 1:56 PM
2	From residents via an email or phone call	9/14/2023 1:50 PM

Q2 How do you promote public engagement opportunities to your constituents?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 1

Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors
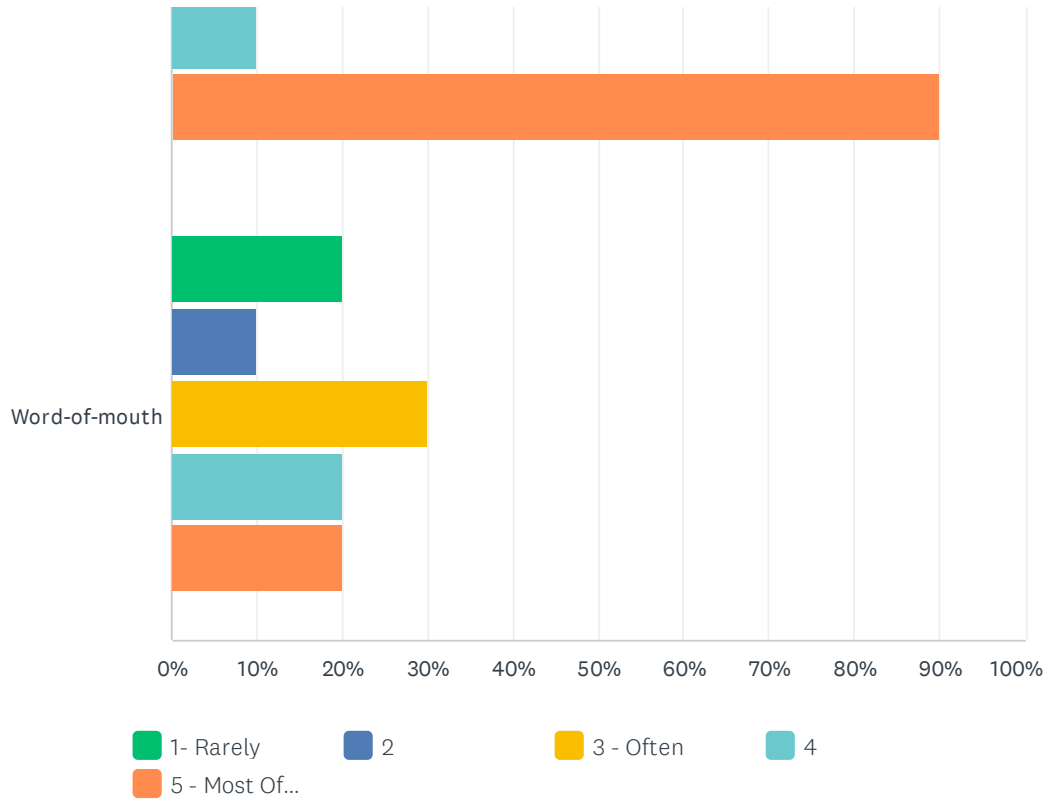
	1- RARELY	2	3 - OFTEN	4	5 - MOST OFTEN	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Direct email	40.00% 4	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	0.00% 0	40.00% 4	10	2.90
Constituent newsletter	0.00% 0	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	60.00% 6	10	4.10
Community paper	50.00% 5	30.00% 3	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10	1.70
Social media	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	90.00% 9	10	4.90
Word-of-mouth	20.00% 2	10.00% 1	30.00% 3	20.00% 2	20.00% 2	10	3.10

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Phone call	9/16/2023 1:56 PM

Q3 Do you use the municipality's online engagement portal, Shape Your City?

Answered: 11   Skipped: 0
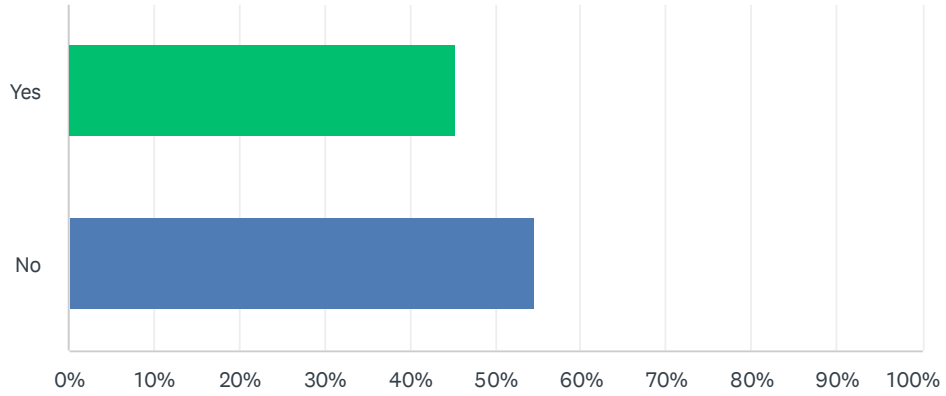
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.45%	5
No	54.55%	6
TOTAL		11

Q4 Which Shape Your City tools and widgets do you find most effective? Select all that apply.

Answered: 5   Skipped: 6
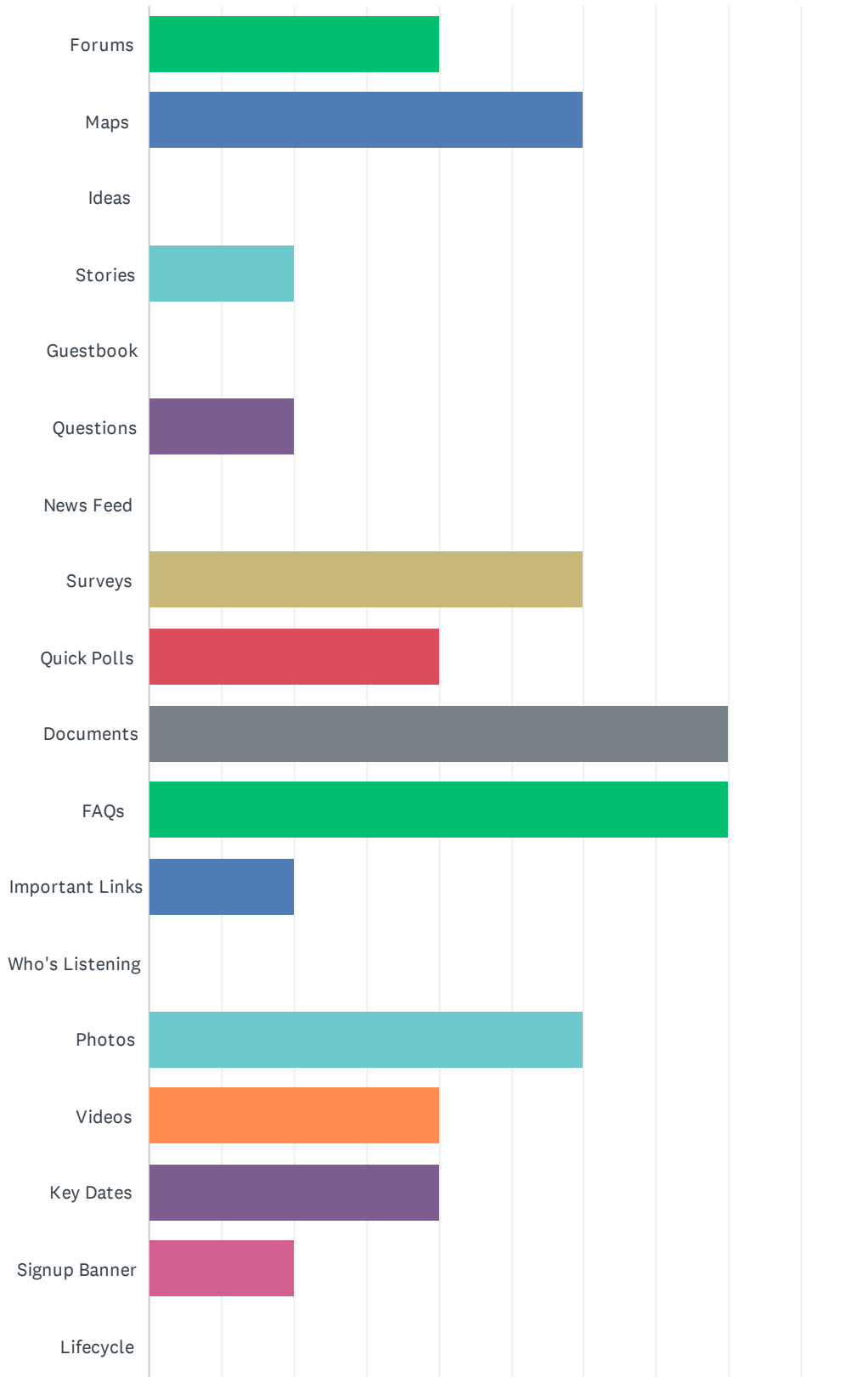
Community Engagement Strategy Survey: Mayor and Regional Councillors
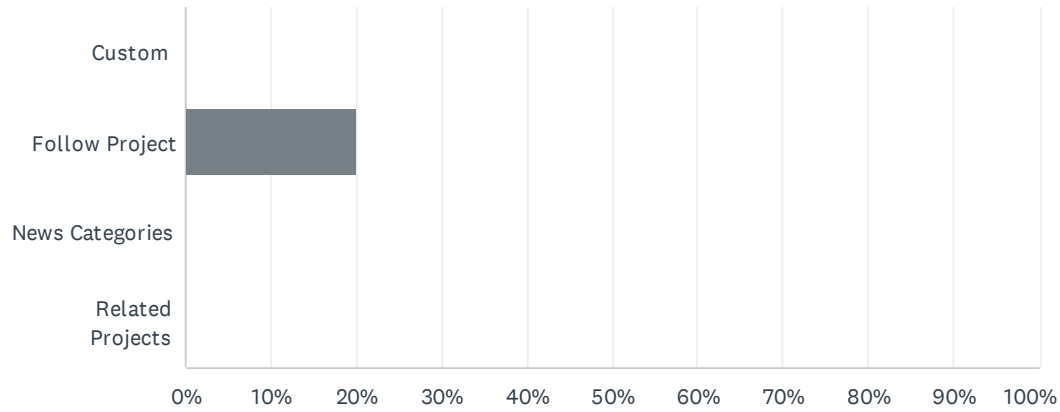
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Forums	40.00%	2
Maps	60.00%	3
Ideas	0.00%	0
Stories	20.00%	1
Guestbook	0.00%	0
Questions	20.00%	1
News Feed	0.00%	0
Surveys	60.00%	3
Quick Polls	40.00%	2
Documents	80.00%	4
FAQs	80.00%	4
Important Links	20.00%	1
Who's Listening	0.00%	0
Photos	60.00%	3
Videos	40.00%	2
Key Dates	40.00%	2
Signup Banner	20.00%	1
Lifecycle	0.00%	0
Custom	0.00%	0
Follow Project	20.00%	1
News Categories	0.00%	0
Related Projects	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 5		

Q5 Please share examples of what you considered to be successful public engagement initiatives led by the municipality. Explain why you feel they were successful.

Answered: 7   Skipped: 4

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Regional / Suburban Plan consultations in Sackville - I had enough of a heads up to include it in my print newsletter.	9/28/2023 11:30 PM
2	Halifax Water do a very good job of public engagement. They use lots of graphics and speak in simple to understand language	9/28/2023 10:41 AM
3	Open Houses, PIMs, project specific web pages, Library drop ins, Councillor enews and print news	9/16/2023 3:14 PM
4	Centre Plan prior to Package A. If we are going to do stuff that large we need sustained and repeated comms, workshops, lots of source material and keep going out showing your work. I also think not having a CDAC style committee running big work (regional plan suburban plan) hurts us. It makes the work behind close doors, instead of staff having to stand and deliver every month in public.	9/15/2023 7:46 PM
5	The Central Library project and Centre Plan.	9/14/2023 3:46 PM
6	Councilors Support Office designed social media posts directed to my district specifically.	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
7	giving Councillors enough notice to put it in online newsletters so it gets to as many residents as possible. Online engagement is also very good	9/14/2023 1:54 PM

Q6 What do you see as barriers or challenges to your participation in municipal public engagement?

Answered: 9   Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	My schedule is too full :)	9/28/2023 11:30 PM
2	I never know about them, unless I am actively engaged or interested in the work. There is a lot that goes on, and we can't be on top of it all. But some we should be made aware of when they are in or affect our districts - by policy or proximity.	9/28/2023 2:27 PM
3	Knowing in advance of the session so I can promote	9/28/2023 10:41 AM
4	Lack of information at Council Support office, HRM online calendar not updated with events,	9/16/2023 3:14 PM
5	The older folks want a mic to yell into, the younger folks won't come to those meetings. Resources to do charette style or influenced community engagements. Lack of resources to turn a visioning (musquodoboit harbour, hubbards, many others) into a plan in a timeframe the public can get excited about. Talk is cheap. We don't deliver fast enough on big stuff. We have major work with 2-3-4 year gaps between engagement and council debate. This is not just a covid thing. Also don't ask people what they think about stuff that we already decided - Almon St bike lane was a bad example. It's not if, it's how we are doing it.	9/15/2023 7:46 PM
6	None.	9/14/2023 3:46 PM
7	Time, impact expected and relevancy.	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
8	Sometimes it is a day of a meeting, and I am unable to attend or location. One time the location and time was announced and I went and staff had changed the date and didn't let me know. I went anticipating the meeting. I had put the info on my newsletter and hoped none of the residents who saw it were as disappointed as I was. Staff did apologize, but that wasn't good for HRM's reputation or mine	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
9	Getting the word out to the public.	9/14/2023 12:36 PM

Q7 What do you see as barriers or challenges to your constituents' participation in municipal public engagement?

Answered: 9   Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	We can't reach them effectively. This is a broad broadcast media problem. If we had dates lined up six months in advance then we could reach every household with them, but that is a very rare occurrence, and we wouldn't then have print newsletter room for anything else.	9/28/2023 11:30 PM
2	Learning about engagement opportunities.	9/28/2023 2:27 PM
3	Not knowing	9/28/2023 10:41 AM
4	Travel time for in-person, lack of public transit to get to event, no high speed internet or computer at homes,	9/16/2023 3:14 PM
5	Knowing what is important, and when to engage. People have trouble understanding "this is the policy" and then "this is the plan, we already did the policy to enable it" People are busy. We use too much technical language, from staff reports to slide shows. The speed issue I mentioned above undermines confidence, it takes so long they don't believe it will ever happen.	9/15/2023 7:46 PM
6	Awareness for those not on social media. We need both in-person and virtual participation.	9/14/2023 3:46 PM
7	Time, lack of internet, poor cell service, location of engagement sessions	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
8	Transportation and Availability, this is why online is so popular. There are no accessibility issues, baby sitting issues or those on shift work.	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
9	Getting the word out to the public	9/14/2023 12:36 PM

Q8 What would help the municipality deliver improved public engagement? All ideas welcome.

Answered: 8   Skipped: 3

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	1) First and foremost: Design surveys that are open ended, not developed with a predisposed outcome. 2) If the coverage area is more broad then send a postcard using a mail drop instead of to houses.	9/28/2023 11:30 PM
2	Posters in community centres, bus stops, sports facilities. Social is good for some but not all. Few read the paper. Local papers are still good, however. Cards at front desks, local cafes, markets, grocery stores etc. Handouts.	9/28/2023 2:27 PM
3	More use of mainstream media and doing larger mailouts	9/28/2023 10:41 AM
4	USE THE LIBRARIES as community hubs to share info. Put a screen up with a community engagement feed programmed to share updates, events, ways to engage.	9/16/2023 3:14 PM
5	Enough resources to do quality engagement where appropriate coupled with enough back end resources so the work gets done fast when engagement wraps. Oh and lawyers need to be on the team, not review the work after it's done. That wastes everyone's time. CAO needs to order them to be at the team meetings and contribute full stop.	9/15/2023 7:46 PM
6	Direct mail, Television ads, pasters at Libraries, Community Centers, Canada Post/Stores etc.	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
7	As said, lots of notice to the Councillors. Posters at Libraries and Community Centres. Maybe notices in the local papers.	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
8	More in person meetings.	9/14/2023 12:36 PM

Q9 Do you have anything else you would like to share to help shape the development of a revised Community Engagement Strategy?

Answered: 6   Skipped: 5

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	We (as a municipality) don't seem to engage on social media. We should monitor Twitter and Facebook and Reddit community groups. That seems to hold a lot of community opinion and engagement, and it doesn't seem that we are participating.	9/28/2023 11:30 PM
2	Better engage stakeholder groups and community associations and organizations. Start seeing stakeholder groups as partners and collaborators. Set up a meeting with local councillors to brainstorm or seek advice.	9/28/2023 2:27 PM
3	Please consider reconciliation with First Nations and reparation with African NS communities.	9/16/2023 3:14 PM
4	You folks do great work, but if we can design the systems so show we say what we do, do what we say, in a quicker time line, the public trust will go up.	9/15/2023 7:46 PM
5	Postage free paper survey responses	9/14/2023 1:54 PM
6	No, not at this time.	9/14/2023 1:54 PM

Appendix D

JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

HALIFAX

Community Engagement Strategy: Jurisdictional Scan
Executive Summary

The municipality is developing a revised Community Engagement Strategy (CES), inclusive of new Corporate Guidelines for Community Engagement.

The revised CES aims to:

- Provide a corporate framework for the effective delivery of public engagement efforts.
- Enhance the municipality's diversity and inclusion goals.
- Reflect industry standards.
- Develop processes to effectively address the rapidly changing environment of public engagement.

The development of the revised CES is led by a Working Group (WG) consisting of diverse representatives from across the organization who have expertise in community engagement.

The WG has completed a jurisdictional scan that compares and contrasts public engagement practices from seven other Canadian municipalities: **Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria Ottawa**, the **Region of Waterloo** and **St. John's.** These cities were selected due to their similarities to the Halifax Regional Municipality in one or more of the following categories: population, demographics, landform, Council priorities and/or municipal operating budget.

Other comparable cities, including Moncton, were considered for inclusion, but not selected as these municipalities did not appear to make their public engagement strategies available online. In the case of Moncton, municipal staff explained that they did not have a document public engagement policy.

Information on the selected municipalities was collected through a variety of sources, including government websites, Statistics Canada, and direct communications with former employees of the aforementioned municipalities.

The following summarizes common themes found across all seven jurisdictions:

- All municipalities have either an engagement strategy or framework to ensure consistent practices are used across the organization. Each of the strategic documents list guiding principles for public engagement. Most include at least one related to diversity and inclusion.

- With the exception of Edmonton and the Region of Waterloo, most municipalities provide implementation tools to support employees in conducting engagement. Calgary has published a detailed process chart on their website, which includes approximately 10 tools for employees, such as an engage assessment and a facilitation guide. Victoria includes an employee tool as an appendix to their framework, while the City of Vancouver leverages tools, charts and checklists found in a third-party resource. Ottawa has a [toolkit](#), in addition to their strategy, which includes numerous worksheets, charts and fillable decision matrices to support employees in conducting engagement.

- All but two municipalities have centralized engagement functions within their organization, which rest in the same department as the corporate communications function. The City of Ottawa and the Region of Waterloo are the exceptions. The City of Ottawa relies on a corporate public engagement strategy, staff training, a toolkit and an inter-departmental public engagement sub-committee. The Region of Waterloo relies on a public engagement strategy that does not specify whether public engagement is carried out by a designated centralized function or all municipal employees across different teams.

- All municipalities use a version of [International Association for Public Participation 2 (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement](#), and list a promise/commitment associated with each level.

- All seven of the engagement strategies name inclusion as a guiding principle, and three are specifically rooted in diversity and inclusion. In particular, the City of Victoria's engagement model was developed with diversity and inclusion at the core, rather than D&I simply being a lens that is applied to public engagement after-the-fact.

- All municipalities share a common definition of public engagement as a means of gathering information and input from communities affected by a project or decision. Municipalities place more or less emphasis on the active involvement of the community. Those that place the most emphasis on active involvement frame public engagement as a "connection" and "purposeful dialogue."

- Several municipalities emphasize continuous learning and improvement as a core value for their strategy and produce after-action reports or other documentation to reflect on successes and areas for improvement. Sharing timely and clear information about a project and the associated engagement efforts is also a key value of several public engagement strategies.

- All municipalities leverage an online engagement platform, similar to Shape Your City Halifax. Most offer mailing lists and list all engagement opportunities in one space. Five of the seven jurisdictions have a comprehensive central repository or library of previous engagements and/or learnings that can be referenced by residents. An analysis of traffic to these sites is included as an appendix to this document.

The Halifax Regional Municipality – current state

The Halifax Regional Municipality serves approximately 500,000 residents and has experienced rapid population growth due to an increase in immigration since 2016. The Regional Plan estimates the municipality's population to grow to more than 1 million by 2050. For this reason, this jurisdictional scan includes data from other cities with populations in the range of 1 million residents.

The municipal operating budget of nearly $1 billion funds services that impact the daily lives of residents, such as transit, parks, recreation, planning, policy and emergency response. The Regional Council Priorities outlined in the municipality's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan guides where and how the budget is spent. The priority areas are:

- Prosperous Economy
- Communities
- Integrated Mobility
- Environment

The revised Corporate Engagement Strategy, complete with Corporate Guidelines for Public Engagement, is also a deliverable in the municipality's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan.

In the municipality's current state (2023), business units are responsible for conducting community engagement to support the initiatives they lead. The most recent document created to guide this work at the corporate level is the 2008 Community Engagement Strategy, which outlines the following strategic approaches:

1: Adopt an HRM Community Engagement Framework

2: Support Improved Community Engagement Practices of Individual Divisions / Business Units

3: Increased Training and Internal Support of HRM Staff

4: Invest in Public Education, Outreach, and Capacity Building

5: Improved Accountability and Promotion of Excellence

The public engagement landscape has changed significantly since this time, particularly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Since the use of in-person forums became limited during the pandemic, much of the municipality's public engagement is done online through the Shape Your City online engagement platform, although this presents limitations for residents with limited digital literacy or internet access. It is worth noting that, according to Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, the average age of residents in the Halifax Regional Municipality is 41.3.

Due to the nature of work in the business unit, Planning & Development staff conduct more public engagement than any other business unit at the municipality. Much of this engagement is mandated by the Regional Council as part of the process to amend planning documents (municipal planning strategies, land use by-laws, etc.). On June 20, 2023, a new Administrative Order on Public Participation was approved by the Regional Council, to include:

- minimum standards for engagement
- requirements for engagement with abutting municipalities
- direction to create a Planning and Development Engagement Guidebook and to use that Guidebook when considering additional standards for public participation

The 2023 Public Engagement Guidebook (found in Appendix A) does not provide direction for all municipal staff; however, offers strategies that could help to inform a revised Corporate Engagement Strategy.

Many municipal staff who plan community engagement have little to no training or resources to guide the delivery of engagement. Staff have access to support from the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (D&I/ANSAIO) in the form of advisors, who can offer guidance on how to engage with underrepresented communities. Business units are also mandated by Council to work with Corporate Communications for any external communication needs, including those related to public engagement. This includes but is not limited to the promotion of public engagement opportunities, proactive and reactive media relations support, issues management, etc.

The City of Edmonton

Profile

The City of Edmonton serves approximately 1.5 million people and has a municipal operating budget of approximately $3.2 billion, according to The City of Edmonton's *Proposed Operating Budget Highlights, 2023 – 2026*. Although significantly larger than Halifax in both respects, Edmonton's robust Public Engagement Framework and processes provide a scalable model that could be replicated for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Many of the Council Priorities laid out in the city's Corporate Business Plan 2023-26 are closely aligned with those of Halifax Regional Council:

- Community Safety and Well-being
- Arts and Culture
- District Planning
- Mobility
- Economic Growth
- Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition

Not unlike Halifax, the City of Edmonton also serves a diverse group of residents. In its 2023 - 2026 Corporate Business Plan the City notes, "about one third of residents were born outside of Canada; Immigration to Edmonton continues to be a key driver of population growth; and four in 10 residents identify as Indigenous or a person of colour."

Overview of engagement strategy

The City of Edmonton defines Public Engagement as "a process that creates opportunities for people to contribute to decision-making by City Council and Administration about the City's policies, programs, projects, and services, and communicates how public input is collected and used."

Public engagement efforts are guided by the following guiding principles:

- Shared responsibility
- Relationship-building and perspective seeking
- Proactive, timely, transparent
- Inclusive and accessible
- Innovative and continuously improving

Process and resources for strategy implementation

Though the City of Edmonton has a Public Engagement Framework and process, they do not reference a Public Engagement Policy or Toolkit.

To ensure consistent practices in the application of their Public Engagement Framework, the City of Edmonton has a Communications & Engagement Department, and specifically an Engagement Branch. Their team of experts manages all public engagement on behalf of the City and also mins a sub-site called "" on edmonton.ca. A phone number and email are also available for the engagement team.

In favour of maintaining trust and transparency around their engagement processes, the website includes an engagement calendar, showing all upcoming engagement opportunities for the next six months. Users can search/filter by month and type of engagement (e.g., digital engagement, in-person engagement and surveys and focus groups). Users can also opt to sign-up for "Engaged Edmonton," the City of Edmonton's official online public engagement space, or to be a part of "The Edmonton Insight Community," an inclusive and accessible online citizen panel for people ages 15 and up, where members complete surveys and participate in discussion forums on a wide range of topics. Members are sent email invitations to complete online surveys, some with questions on one topic, others with questions on multiple topics.

To help streamline the number of surveys shared with residents, The City of Edmonton conducts twelve omnibus mixed topic surveys that are sent to members of the [Edmonton Insight Community](#) as well as being open to the general public. [Results](#) from the previous four years are available on their website.

The framework also outlines a formal six-step public engagement process for transparency and sharing information throughout all steps of the public engagement process:

1) Identification: Public engagement team seeks to understand the project and if engagement is needed. Project request reviewed for alignment with other policies.
2) Strategy: Project team decides whether public engagement is "required." Starting with mapping the decisions that need to be made, project teams develop a clear understanding of how Edmontonians' perspectives and opinions can impact initiatives and projects. If engagement is determined to be required, they make a plan and examine how public engagement can shape the project.
3) Planning & Design: Planning for the engagement approach, techniques and methods.
4) Implementation & Data Collection: Carrying out the public engagement. Evaluating each public engagement activity to learn where approach can be improved.
5) Analysis & Reporting: Data analysis and comparison with other project data (e.g., Council, policies, budget). Information is shared with the public and key partners through reports.
6) Evaluation: Evaluation of entire public engagement process to identify successes and potential areas to improve upon in alignment with the five guiding principles. Creation of a lessons learned document.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

The City of Edmonton team use a modified version of the [International Association for Public Participation 2 (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement made up of the following pillars](#):

- Advise - Public consulted to share feedback
- Refine - Public involved
- Create - Public collaborates, can include community-initiated engagement
- Decide - Public empowered to make decisions

When it comes to the diversity, equity and inclusion lens, there is little mention of it in the City of Edmonton's framework about engaging diverse communities, beyond the guiding principle of inclusive and accessible public engagement: "Engagement planning and delivery is inclusive and accessible to best serve our City by encouraging two-way conversations and strategies that reach diverse communities and ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued." Community partnerships are listed as one of several "supporting elements for public engagement," indicating that the public is to be informed before, during, and after engagement.

Lastly, the Edmonton engagement team has made a commitment to continuous learning and improvement when it comes to public engagement. They seek ongoing evaluation of their public engagement processes by capturing lessons learned, seeking out leading and best practices in public.

The City of Calgary

Profile

The City of Calgary serves approximately 1.5 million residents and, according to the [2023 – 2026 Service Plans and Budget](#), has a municipal operating budget of approximately $4.7 billion. [Calgary Economic Development](#) notes that Calgary is also "the third most diverse major city in Canada, home to over 240 different ethnic origins, and there are 165 languages spoken" there. Many of The City of Calgary's priorities are aligned with those of the Halifax Regional Council. As outlined in their [Council's Strategic Direction](#), focus areas in Calgary for 2023–26 are:

- Downtown revitalization
- Social equity
- Land use and local area planning process review
- Transit
- Hosting and hospitality
- Global positioning and reputation
- Modernizing government

Overview of engagement strategy

The City of Calgary defines community engagement as "purposeful dialogue between The City [of Calgary] and key partners to gather information to influence decision making." Key partners are defined as "anyone (person or group) who can impact or be impacted by the results of a decision made by The City [of Calgary]. Key partners often have knowledge of their communities or information [the municipal government] does not. Key partner concerns go beyond the technical details and are tied to personal beliefs and values. We need to ensure we respect all voices brought forward."

Public engagement efforts are guides by the following guiding principles:

- **Accountability:** The city upholds the commitments it makes to citizens and key partners and demonstrates that results and outcomes are consistent with the approved plans for engagement.
- **Inclusiveness:** The city makes its best efforts to reach, involve, and hear from those who are impacted directly or indirectly.
- **Transparency:** The city provides clear, timely, and complete information, and endeavors to ensure decision processes, procedures, and constraints are understood and followed.
- **Commitment:** The city, within its ability and work plan, allocates sufficient resources for effective engagement.
- **Responsiveness:** The city endeavors to understand citizen and key partner concerns

Process and resources for strategy implementation

The City of Calgary has an "Engage Resource Unit" which is responsible for working with project managers and communicators to develop an engagement strategy and plan for each project. The Engage Resource Unit is a division of the Corporate Communications team and consists of skilled engage experts who serve a variety of departmental and business unit client groups across the organization.

Calgary's public engagement processes are guided by their [Engage Policy,](#) [Engage Framework](#) and [Engage Process.](#) Training on the Framework and associated tools is provided to communicators, project managers and project sponsors on an ongoing basis.

The City's Engage Policy "ensures a standard of excellence and best practices are followed across the corporation when working with citizens and key partners." The City of Calgary's Engagement Framework serves as the guiding philosophy for involving citizens in the decision-making process. This framework provides the overarching vision and commitment to meaningful engagement.

Complementing this framework is the practical implementation through the city's Engagement Process. The Engagement Process translates the principles of the framework into actionable steps, ensuring that the city actively involves its residents in various aspects of governance.

Engage Process:

1) Engage Assessment: This is the first step in the Engage Process and is used to determine whether or not engagement is necessary for the project. This tool is completed by the project manager together with their communicator.

- If it is determined that engagement is required, the project manager submits the completed assessment to the Engage Resource Unit (If engagement is not required, the project manager should still submit the completed assessment to the Engage Resource Unit for tracking).

2) Develop a Plan: The Engage Resource Unit will work with project managers and communicators to develop an engagement strategy and plan Including:

- Engagement goals and objectives
- What you are seeking input on
- Who your key partners are
- Scope, budget, timelines, dates, roles and responsibilities
- At what level on the Spectrum of Strategies and Promises you are engaging your key partners
- Methods used to collect input, report back, etc.
- Decisions that are not open to input

3) Tell the Story: Build key partner knowledge by sharing the details of the project in plain language, including what has been done so far, why engagement is needed, considerations, constraints, and how input is being used.

4) Raise Awareness: Citizens and key partners are unable to provide input if they don't know about the opportunity to do so. The engagement plan should work with the projects communication plan to generate awareness about engagement opportunities.

5) Connect: Connect and work with key partners through the engagement opportunities that have been outlined in the engagement plan and do so in a genuine, open and honest manner.

6) Report Back and Evaluate: When preparing reports backs, the City will tell key partners what was heard, how that input influenced the decision, and if it didn't, why not. By closing this feedback loop key partners will be more inclined to participate in future engagement opportunities.

The Engage Process outlines several specific implementation tools for employees, although the tools themselves are not publicly available. The tools include:

- Engage strategy
- Engage approval form
- Engage budget
- Engage plan
- MyCity/engage
- Engage assessment
- Engage portal/engage board template
- Calgary.ca/engage
- In-person engagement techniques (facilitation guide)

A roles and responsibilities tool also exists to help clarify who is responsible for specific tasks in the engagement process (e.g., project manager, communicator, Engage Resource Unit).

The Spectrum of Strategies and Promises, another modification of the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement, is a tool that helps clarify the level at which each key partner will be involved and the City's promise at each level of the Spectrum. These levels are:

- Listen and Learn
- Consult
- Collaborate
- Empower

To build credibility and trust with citizens, the following information was listed as being imperative to share with key partners: overall engagement timeline, details of engagement activities, who will be reviewing the input and making decisions, and what is expected of them as key partners. Not only does the City share finale engagement results in reports, but all reports are archived in the City's online Research & Engagement Library.

The City of Calgary has an online Engage Portal where users can search/filter by engagements happening in specific geographic areas of the city, by topic (e.g., arts & culture, water & waste) or by project name.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Although a number of blanket statements are made regarding removing barriers to encourage participations from all Calgarians, there is no specific mention on how to engage with diverse communities. The policy does state that "best efforts are made to accommodate diverse needs and backgrounds, including those in accordance with Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy and Welcoming Community Policy."

The City of Victoria

Profile

The City of Victoria (Victoria) serves approximately 95,000 people whose average age is 44.5 (Statistics Canada). According to the City's *Budget 2023 Invests in Quality of Life*, the municipal operating budget is approximately $480.6 million. Although significantly smaller than Halifax in those respects, Victoria's average age profile is similar to that of Halifax (41.3). Like Halifax, Victoria is also a coastal region surrounded by water. This similarity in landform means that the two municipalities face similar issues and have similar priorities, especially as they relate to climate resilience, which is reflected in The City of Victoria's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan priorities:

- Climate action and environmental stewardship
- Housing
- Transportation
- Parks, recreation and gathering spaces
- Community well-being and safety
- Economic health and community vitality
- Truth and reconciliation
- Arts, culture, music, sport and entertainment

It is worth noting that, like Halifax, The City of Victoria serves a diverse population:

- Immigrants represent 19 per cent of the population (2021 Census data).
- Residents who speak a language other than English at home represent 16 per cent of the population (2021 Census data).
- Approximately one in five Victorians experience at least one disability (City of Victoria Accessibility Framework).

Overview of engagement strategy

In recognition of the diverse population it serves, the City identified a need to create a more diverse and inclusive engagement framework. "In 2021 and 2022, the City hosted a series of engagement opportunities with community groups and residents, […] especially diverse communities whose voices have traditionally not been heard. [They] asked how the City could plan engagement opportunities that are welcoming, safe and easy to participate in."

In response, the City developed a revised *All Our Voices Engagement Framework*. The updated framework outlines "how the City is redefining its approach to public engagement to centre equity-related concerns and needs. It sets out a vision for how the City speaks with and listens to the community of Victoria, and how [they] can welcome all voices and honour different ways of knowing, learning and sharing." "The revised framework also aligns with the City's broader "Equity Framework, which is grounded in the concepts of decolonization, anti-racism, disability justice, gender diversity and dignity."

The City also notes that "the All Our Voices Engagement Framework is designed to be a living document that will change and adapt as relationships with communities grow."

Process and resources for strategy implementation

The City of Victoria has an Engage Department that manages the City's public participation and communications activities. This team receives training on equity, inclusion and engagement and is guided by the All Our Voices Engagement Framework, which defines public engagement as "a process that allows the City to deliver its services and policies in a way that reflects the community's vision and needs by involving [them] in the decision-making process. It includes a range of activities that enable the City to directly connect, speak with and listen to [the community], on issues that impact or interest [them.]"

The Guiding principles of engagement outlined in the framework are:

- Equity
- Inclusion
- Accessibility
- Welcoming/belonging
- Transparency
- Timely and clear information
- Continuous learning and improvement

Victoria was also chosen as a jurisdiction to include in this analysis because of its leadership in community engagement. The municipality's All Our Voices Engagement Framework states:

"Victoria was recognized for its leadership in engaging community in 2015 with the IAP2 Organization of the Year Award. Between 2017 and 2018, Victoria co-created its Engagement Framework in collaboration with communities through two phases of engagement. [They] were one of the first municipalities in Canada to develop such an Engagement Framework."

Like many other municipalities, The City of Victoria has adopted the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement, although without any modifications. The unmodified spectrum includes the following:

1) Inform
2) Consult
3) Involve
4) Collaborate
5) Empower

In their Engagement Framework, the City of Victoria clearly defines each level and details that "for each engagement process, [they] choose an appropriate level of participation based on the specific initiative and what inputs [they] are looking for from the community. [...They] will always communicate transparently about what level of engagement [they] require for a process."

When it comes to engagement tools, The City of Victoria's Engagement Department lists one tool as an appendix to the framework, a *Worksheet to Identify and Address Barriers* to participation in public engagement. The worksheet lists examples of barriers that residents may experience (e.g., physical accessibility, cultural safety, language limitations) and lists considerations for organizers to help address the barrier.

Like Halifax, Victoria also has an online engagement platform, operated by Bang the Table, called Have Your Say (victoria.ca). The platform has a similar look-and-feel, functionality and user experience to Shape Your City Halifax. The site hosts a central repository of active, upcoming and past projects.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

As noted above, Victoria created the *All Our Voices Engagement Framework* to address concerns relating to engagement and diversity, equity and inclusion. This is reflected in their guiding principles and will continue to evolve as the framework evolves.

The City of Vancouver

Profile

The third largest municipality in Canada, the City of Vancouver serves a population of 2.7 million and has a municipal operating budget of approximately $1.97 billion, according to the Vancouver 2023 Budget.

Like other municipalities, The City of Vancouver's Council's strategic priorities for 2023–2026 are:

- Vibrant and diverse
- Housing
- Supporting business
- City services and infrastructure
- Safety and security
- Climate emergency
- Healthy, inclusive and equitable
- Reconciliation
- Good government

Overview of engagement strategy

The City of Vancouver has a centralized public engagement function that rests in the Civic Engagement and Communications Department. The team considers any "opportunit[y] to participate in making City decisions that affect or interest [residents]" to be community engagement."

Vancouver plans and evaluates their community engagement processes using the following guiding principles:

- **Mandating the process**

    o The credibility, purpose, and objectives of the public process are clear
    o The roles of participants are defined and communicated
    o The public is involved in making changes to processes in which they are participants

- **Resourcing the process**

    o Process has adequate resources to achieve the stated mandate
    o Community resources and energies are used effectively and efficiently
    o Assigned staff are trained in community engagement processes
    o The relative effectiveness and cost of techniques to achieve objectives informs the selection of resources

- **Process participants**

    o Everyone potentially interested in or impacted by an initiative has an opportunity to become involved
    o The process includes a balance of people who represent others and people who only represent themselves
    o Efforts are made to include under-represented and hard to reach communities
    o Diversity is promoted
    o Barriers to access are recognized and overcome
    o Efforts are made to involve elected representative and all affected city departments in the process

- **Communication strategies**

  - Communications are effective, inclusive, and cover all necessary issues
  - The language of all written communication is clear, concise, objective, and free of technical jargon
  - Materials address relevant existing policy and procedure, history of the issues, alternatives, and their pros/cons
  - The process schedule, milestones, progress to date, and opportunities for involvement are regularly communicated
  - Media is used regularly to provide general information to the public at large
  - Information is regularly distributed to all active participants and sent more broadly at key milestones

- **Involvement strategies**

  - Process is transparent and deals with conflict and imbalances of knowledge to maximize participation
  - Scope and goals of process are repeatedly clarified
  - Tone of the process fosters creativity and encourages mutual respect
  - Processes have a balance of proactive and reactive techniques to ensure input is representative and to involve everyone who wants to be
  - Input is obtained from those impacted both negatively and positively by the initiative
  - Process addresses both agreement regarding the validity of the facts and understanding of varied opinions and values regarding the outcomes

- **Closure**

  - Participants are convinced that a process has achieved its mandate at its completion
  - Process is evaluated to identify successes and shortcomings, and results are communicated to participants
  - Affected communities are informed of process outcomes

Process and resources for strategy implementation

The City's engagement framework is guided by a Spectrum of Public Participation, adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). The Spectrum guides the level of influence the audience has over the engagement and a key promise is associated with each level:

- Inform/Listen and Learn: We are available for your unsolicited comments and respond when possible.
- Consult: We listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations in developing final solutions.
- Involve: We work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the options we develop.
- Collaborate: We get your advice to create solutions and include your recommendations into decisions as much as possible.
- Empower: We implement what you decide.

The City of Vancouver uses a variety of online and in-person tools and programs to engage their residents. Like Halifax, the City of Vancouver uses Shape Your City as the primary online engagement platform. Residents can participate by sharing their views, asking a question, submitting an idea, voting on others' ideas and more. All engagement initiatives from the past four years are available to search by project name, topic (e.g., transportation, water), geographic location, and status.

The City also seeks public input through Talk Vancouver, an online community of "trusted local advisors." Anyone can join Talk Vancouver to receive emails inviting them to take part in surveys on the City's major projects and initiatives.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

According to canadianpopulation.org, when it comes to diversity, "Vancouver is one of the most diverse cities in Canada. Just over half its residents are from a visible minority group, and just under half are neither native English speakers nor native French speakers." The City of Vancouver was a key contributor to the creation of *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*.The guide presents a flexible approach to equity and inclusion and is geared towards municipal staff who seek to establish policies, practices and procedures that reflect the population. Section 5 "Engage communities" shares ways to learn about community issues, how to connect with diverse communities, case studies, strategies for building trust and tools and guides on organizing public consultations.

The City of Vancouver's engagement framework explicitly outlines "equitable inclusion" as a key tenet and ensures resources and opportunities are provided in a way that elevates everyone to the same level of opportunity for participation in public engagement. The approach also leverages the use of intersectionality to understand communities.

The City of Ottawa

Profile

The most eastern of the jurisdictions examined in this scan, the City of Ottawa serves a population of 1.4 million residents and, according to a 2023 CTV News Ottawa article, has a municipal operating budget of approximately $5.5 billion. As outlined in the a July, 2023 staff report to Ottawa City Council, the City is looking to create an Ottawa that:

- Has affordable housing and is more livable for all
- Is more connected with reliable, safe and accessible mobility options
- Is green and resilient
- Has a diversified and prosperous economy

These four priorities are most closely aligned with Halifax Regional Council's Priorities in the 2022–25 Strategic Priorities Plan.

Overview of engagement strategy

The City of Ottawa developed a Public Engagement Strategy and Toolkit in 2013, which defines public engagement as "any two-way communication to inform and/or involve the public in problem solving or decision-making. There are different types of engagement (providing information, consultation, and collaboration) and various engagement activities or techniques (e.g., information kit, in-person meetings, online surveys, advisory groups, etc.)."

It is worth noting that this is the only municipal engagement strategy included in this analysis that has not been made publicly available online.

The guiding principles articulated in the Strategy include:

1) Accountable: Ensure that public engagement is meaningful. Provide residents, key partners and community partners with information on how their public engagement feedback was considered and adopted or why it was not adopted.
2) Inclusive: Plan and implement engagement activities that are accessible and respond to the needs of all residents, key partners and community partners and that remove potential barriers to participation.
3) Open, Informative and Transparent: Provide clear, relevant and complete information, in plain language at the start and throughout the public engagement process and communicate the purpose, expectations and limitations clearly.
4) Timely: Ensure that public engagement is conducted in a well-timed manner, providing sufficient time for soliciting input, and for reporting back on how the input was used.
5) Adaptive: Ensure that the engagement plan is well tailored to the nature of the topic being discussed and flexible enough to modify during the public engagement process as needed.
6) Continuously improving: Evaluate each public engagement initiative by seeking input from participants about the process and the content. Evaluate on an ongoing basis in order to improve the quality of the public engagement process over time.
7) Co-operative: Build and maintain positive, respectful, and co-operative relationships with residents, key partners and community partners in order to increase the effectiveness of public engagement.

The City of Ottawa is the only municipality considered in this analysis that does not have a centralized public engagement function. Instead, the strategy mandates the following five strategic components to ensure consistent application across the organization:

1) Required for use by all staff and providing the overarching framework and approach for staff
2) Tools, resources and training available to support staff success including the use of common terms and definitions
3) Management commitment and interdepartmental collaboration/coordination
4) Online tools
5) Evaluation and continuous improvement.

Other actions outlined in the strategy to help increase collaboration and ensure consistent practices across the organization include:

1) Project approval by the Executive and Senior Management Committee
2) Identify staff for the Interdepartmental Public Engagement Staff Committee
3) Identify the Corporate departmental lead for the ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Public Engagement Strategy

Process and resources for strategy implementation

The City of Ottawa also produced a Public Engagement Toolkit for municipal staff which provides a number of tools, templates, checklists, worksheets and other resources to support staff in conducting public engagement. One of the steps outlined in the toolkit guides staff through a modified version of the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement including the following levels:

- Inform or Educate
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate/ Partner
- Delegate

Diversity, equity and inclusion

In 2015, the City of Ottawa, in partnership with the City for All Women Initiative and in collaboration with other municipalities and organizations, developed the Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities. During the development of the Public Engagement Strategy and Toolkit, "the City consulted with several diverse populations, including Aboriginal and rural residents, the City for All Women Initiative, community associations and businesses. The City of Ottawa Public Engagement Strategy Staff Guidelines and Toolkit and training integrate the Equity and Inclusion Lens, providing specific tips to developing inclusionary public engagement."

The City of Ottawa's website is the only website in this scan that specifically lists the accessibility accommodations available to residents during engagement opportunities, including an email where accommodations can be requested.

Bang the Table/EngagementHQ also hosts the City of Ottawa's online engagement platform, Engage Ottawa. The City's website also has a list of current engagement opportunities listed by:

- Engage Ottawa
- Ongoing engagement opportunities
- Online engagement
- Engagement events

Although some "closed opportunities" are listed, a fulsome record or library on previous engagements or learnings does not appear to be readily available to the public.

The Region of Waterloo

Profile

According to the [Region of Waterloo's Year-End 2022 Population and Household Estimates](#) report, the region serves an estimated population of 647,540. The Region of Waterloo, one of North America's most rapidly expanding areas, uniquely encompasses three cities and four townships. Nestled at the heart of the Grand River waterway, it is home to residents who enjoy a high quality of life and share a wealth of diverse cultures.

Immigration has surged after years of decline, significantly increasing racial diversity. According to [recent census findings](#), Waterloo Region welcomed 27,840 immigrants from 2016 to 2021. This figure is double the number of immigrants received in the preceding five years.

Known for its innovative spirit, the region boasts the second highest density of startup companies in North America, second only to Silicon Valley. Its diverse economy not only supports local jobs but also fosters the development of new technologies and solutions.

The [Region's 2024 budget](#), anchored in the "[Strategic Plan: Growing with Care,](#)" is devised to steer the evolution of the Region of Waterloo. With the expectation of a population increase to one million people in the upcoming decades, this budget will be instrumental in molding the growth of the region.

Their four priority areas include:

- Housing for all
- Climate aligned growth
- Equitable services and opportunities
- Resilient and future ready organization

The Region of Waterloo is dedicated to integrating the principles of equity and inclusion into its operations. This commitment extends to the way the Region does business, delivers services, and provides opportunities.

Overview of engagement strategy

The Region of Waterloo is steadfast in its commitment to principles of transparency, responsiveness, and inclusivity. This commitment is reflected in their [Public Engagement Guidelines](#) and in a dedication to ensuring that the public is actively involved in decision making. Their guiding principles include:

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Respect
- Inclusivity
- Responsiveness

The strategy does not specify whether public engagement strategies are carried out by a designated centralized function or all municipal employees across different teams. Nonetheless, both regional employees and contracted consultants are obligated to conduct public engagement activities in line with the region's core values: service, integrity, respect, innovation, and collaboration.

Process and resources for strategy implementation

The Region of Waterloo's engagement guidelines recognize that although the public engagement process may always be linear, it can be broken into six stages: assess, select, plan, implement, report, and evaluate. Each of these stages includes a driving question or consideration and related activities to undertake.

Step 1 – Assess

Determine why public engagement should be sought by:

- Establishing the purpose or goals and intended outcome of the public engagement process; determine why the public is being engaged
- Assessing the benefits and risks of engaging the public in this process
- Identifying what is needed from the public for this process
- Outlining the timelines for the public engagement undertaking
- Recognizing additional resources that may be required

Step 2 – Select Project Scope

Assess the appropriate level of public engagement based on the information gathered in Step 1 and types of public engagement recognized by the Region of Waterloo, which are inform, consult, involve, and collaborate.

The decision considers the necessity for engagement, available resources, legislative needs, and budget capacity.

Step 3 – Plan the Public Engagement Process

To engage the public, develop a plan that encompasses the subsequent steps:

- Establish the public key partners for engagement; ascertain which citizens, groups, communities, businesses, non-profits, or other impacted parties should be included.
- Determine the information to be distributed or sought from the public.
- Identify suitable tools and techniques for fostering public engagement, including promotion, outreach, and communication. This should also involve consideration of strategies to engage others and groups directly impacted by the issue or decision discussed.
- Establish potential barriers that may prevent public participation and establish measures to overcome these obstacles, ensuring inclusive engagement.
- Produce an evaluation plan for the public engagement process by outlining how success will be measured; identify evaluation questions linked to the goals of the process and establish the indicators, metrics, or benchmarks that will be utilized to assess them.

Step 4 – Implement the Initiative

- Execute the public engagement initiative at the specified level from Step 2, utilizing the chosen tools and techniques from Step 3.
- Align the purpose and objectives of the initiative outlined in Step 1 with the public engagement process to facilitate the achievement of desired outcomes.
- Employ clear language in communications to ensure that the information is accessible to a wide audience.

- Provide participants with access to the [Guidelines for Public Engagement at the Region of Waterloo](#) during the engagement process to clarify the underlying principles of public participation.

Step 5 – Report Back to Key Partners

When engaging the public at the consult, involve, or collaborate level, the Region of Waterloo reports back to the community and seeks to confirm with public key partners that the information collected is accurate and understood. This reporting depends on the level of engagement and could highlight:

- The content of discussions held during public engagement
- Identified solutions
- Areas of agreement and disagreement
- Actions taken as a result of the consultation process
- Extent of the consultation (how many events or discussions and with whom)
- Points of consensus and contention
- Actions implemented as a result of the consultation process

Step 6 – Evaluate the Process

Measure the effectiveness of the public engagement by:

- Addressing the evaluation questions that were established in Step 3
- Measuring the success of the process using the indicators, metrics, or benchmarks identified in Step 3
- Using evaluation information for next in the project, feedback for future activities, and reporting on the effectiveness of the process.

The Region of Waterloo's leverages a modified version of the IAP2 spectrum that includes all levels up until and including "collaborate." The Region of Waterloo's model does not include the "empower" level.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

The Region of Waterloo's public engagement strategy identifies inclusivity as one of it's guiding principles and strives to design engagement processes that include members of the community who are "most impacted by a particular issue or decision." The strategy also requires that public engagement processes "identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation, recognizing that certain groups have unique needs and challenges that impact their ability to fully participate in decision-making processes."

St. John's

Profile

The St. John's metropolitan area is the largest census metropolitan area in Newfoundland and Labrador. According to the 2021 Canadian Census, it has a population of 212,579, up from 2.0 per cent from 2016. In 2021, the St. John's metropolitan area welcomed 13,880 newcomers. Immigrants made up 4.6 per cent of the total area's population, up 16.9 per cent from 2016. Although the City has been adding new residents through immigration, it anticipates that as it moves toward 2036 it will serve a progressively aging population: residents aged 65 and over are expected to show the largest population increase and the age group of 25 to 34 to show the strongest decline.

St. John's municipal operating budget is approximately $343.9 million, part of which is intended to support the City's commitment to sustainability as well as new and improved services. These priorities align with the four strategic directions outlined in Our City Our Future, the City of St. John's strategic direction for the ten years between 2019 and 2029:

- A city that moves
- A connected city
- An effective city
- A sustainable city

The strategic plan is intended to be a living document that is regularly updated in line with the budget cycle to guarantee adequate funding and resources for planned initiatives. Since its adoption in 2019, the plan was reviewed and updated in 2021, resulting in the addition of a new goal under the sustainable city strategic direction and continued endorsement from residents through public engagement of the plan's four strategic directions. The City also tracks real-time progress on the strategic plan's directions and goals in an online dashboard.

Overview of engagement strategy

The City of St. John's, views engagement between itself and its citizens as "an essential component of an effective municipal government," and public engagement as a process that facilitates dialogue. Their vision and approach is flexible, emphasizing the need to use "the right tools at the right time" to engage on important topics.

The City of St. John's has formulated an engagement policy to bolster its efforts, which the City Council passed in October 2014. The policy highlights the goals and principles, in addition to roles and responsibilities and a process for engagement, all of which are detailed in the following section. The policy also refers to a toolkit for staff that supports its spectrum of engagement.

Engagement has been a foundation of developing and evolving the City of St. John's policy. An Engage! Task Force established in April 2014 and made up of 25 organizational and citizen-at-large representatives informed the development of the policy through research and recommendations it summarized in a final report.

Since the Engage! Policy's adoption, the City has also conducted an evaluation of its public engagement intended to identify opportunities, gaps, and challenges. The municipality collected input through public events and online surveys and feedback forms open to the public and City staff and council, among other tactics. The evaluation found that more than half of survey respondents felt that public engagement had improved since 2014, and the exercise resulted in 12 recommendations to further improve the City's public engagement.

St. John's has also made a conscious effort to specifically engage youth in the city. A Youth Engagement Action Team presented recommendations to Council in 2020, which included improving tools to create awareness and provider easier options for youth to engage and building on current city-school interactions. As a result of these recommendations, the City of St. John's engagement platform now features an online space dedicated to resident aged 18 to 30 to "provide feedback on city-related topics in a quick and easy manner."

Process and resources for strategy implementation

The City of St. John's has an Organizational Performance & Strategy division responsible for managing its public engagement framework and supporting projects with a public engagement focus. They are also responsible for evaluation of public engagement activities and frameworks. The Engage! Policy also details that Council is accountable for the City's engagement, senior staff within the organization are responsible for effective implementation of the framework, and all staff are expected to be aware of and understand the role of public engagement in their work.

The municipality's Engage! Policy has both stated goals and principles for its public engagement. Their principles are:

- Commitment
- Accountability
- Clear and timely information
- Inclusiveness

Their goals in conducting public engagement are:

- To improve/inform decision making and programming
- To create space for everyone to feel involved and listened to
- To share information and welcome different points of view
- To generate new ideas and solutions
- To build trust
- To understand the needs and priorities of the community

The City of St. John's engagement spectrum is adapted from the complete IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement, with the exception of "consult." As such the City of St. John's engages to: inform, involve, collaborate, or empower. The policy notes that "the level of engagement increases based on the level of public interest/impact" and references sample tools and techniques to leverage for each level such as factsheets, roundtables, task forces, and citizen juries.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

The City of St. John's is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive community for all. They highlight inclusiveness as one of their key engagement principles and have a goal of "creating space for everyone to feel involved and listened to."

St. John's 2024–2026 Accessibility Plan also specifies that public engagement should take place at accessible locations when happening in person and leverage a variety of tools to ensure feedback can be received in an accessible format. The City of St. John's has an Inclusion Advisory Committee and public engagement efforts are expected to engage with this body for feedback from the perspective of persons with disabilities.

In 2020, St. John's City Council [passed a declaration](#) to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities. Newfoundland and Labrador have Canada's fastest-growing urban Indigenous population and the City is committed to actions like maintaining [membership in First Voice, a coalition for truth and reconciliation.](#)

Appendix A: Analysis of web traffic to engagement platforms

In support of the jurisdictional scan informing the development of a revised CES, the municipality has compiled an analysis of estimated web traffic to the engagement platforms of each of the seven municipalities included in the jurisdictional scan. Data was obtained using Similarweb's website analysis tool.

The aim of this analysis is to identify patterns in traffic to these sites and contextualize and compare these trends. These platforms are a municipality's equivalent to Halifax's Shape Your City site and include:

- Engaged Edmonton

- Engage Calgary

- Shape Your City Vancouver

- Engage Victoria

- Engage Ottawa

- Engage WR

- Engage St. John's

More than two thirds of the sites included in the analysis, including Shape Your City Halifax, see an average of roughly 45,000 to 30,000 visits each month. Shape Your City Vancouver sees the most monthly visits, with an average of 51,800 visits. Smaller municipalities, excluding Halifax, tend to see fewer monthly visits, ranging from over 20,766 for the Waterloo Region to 1,687 for Victoria (Figure 1).

City	Monthly visits
Vancouver	51,800
Ottawa	44,366
St. John's	37,533
Calgary	36,866
Halifax	33,866
Edmonton	30,733
Waterloo Region	20,766
Victoria	1,687

Figure 1: Average of total visits between October and December 2023, ranked from highest to lowest

The high traffic to the Shape Your City Vancouver site is also reflected in the quality of average engagement with the site: users spend more than four minutes on Vancouver's engagement site per visit and see more than two pages in that time (Figure 2).

Other sites see average visits ranging from 1 minute and 18 seconds to just 11 seconds and spanning just over two pages to less. The duration of the average visit to Shape Your City Halifax falls in the middle of this range, with an average visit of 51 seconds. However, during this visit users see a low number of pages (0.53 on average) and 74 per cent of visitors leave without seeing more than one page. This data suggests that there is opportunity for the Halifax Regional Municipality to grow engagement of residents and visitors to its Shape Your City site.

City	Percentage of visitors who leave after visiting one page	Pages per visit	Average visit duration
Vancouver	56%	2.72	4 minutes 18 seconds
Ottawa	53%	2.31	1 minute 18 seconds
Waterloo Region	74%	1.42	23 seconds
Calgary	80%	1.42	58 seconds
Edmonton	82%	1.37	11 seconds
Victoria	100%	1	N/A
Halifax	74%	0.53	51 seconds
St. John's	100%	0.09	N/A

Figure 2: User interactions, ranked from most to least extensive

Halifax is among the municipalities to benefit from the second highest rate of organic search traffic, meaning that visitors are directly searching for the Shape Your City Halifax website. This traffic suggests there is a relatively elevated awareness of and engagement with the Shape Your City platform. Halifax's Shape Your City site also sees the highest level of traffic directed from social media of the eight sites included in this analysis. However, the analysis suggests that Shape Your City Halifax sees no traffic from other referrals, suggesting there may be opportunity to direct traffic to the site from other media, including mail and halifax.ca.

City	Organic Search	Direct	Referrals	Paid Search	Social	Mail	Display
Victoria	73.29%	26.71%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Halifax	62.37%	29.75%	0%	0%	7.88%	0%	0%
St. John's	55.94%	0.66%	43.41%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Edmonton	50.57%	37.72%	9.37%	2.21%	0.12%	0%	0%
Waterloo Region	49.95%	41.88%	7.26%	0%	3.91%	0%	0%
Vancouver	38.04%	55.49%	2.18%	0%	4.29%	0%	0%
Calgary	29.17%	67.47%	0.28%	0%	2.55%	0%	0.53%
Ottawa	28.68%	65.38%	2.80%	0%	0.09%	3.05%	0%

Figure 3: Traffic sources, ranked from highest to lowest proportion of organic search

The top keywords that drive organic search traffic to municipalities' engagement sites show visitor interest in specific projects like the Fort Needham Memorial Park in Halifax and South Shaganappi Local Area Plan in Calgary. In Ottawa, the Lansdowne redevelopment project is featured twice among top keywords leading visitors to the Engage Ottawa site, suggesting even higher interest in this specific project. These top keyword searches also illustrate an interest in specific topics across visitors to the different municipalities' sites, primarily affordable housing and zoning.

City	Keyword	Occurrence
Halifax	halifax zoning by-law	243
	building design guidelines	166
	hrm shape your city	142
	fort needham memorial park	128
	strathearn redevelopment	183
Edmonton	holyrood construction	162
	edmonton city plan	145
	glendale zoning 2023	148
Calgary	greenline phase 1	148
	park survey questions	143
	south shaganappi local area plan	132
	5661 baillie street vancouver	249

Vancouver	shape your city vancouver	153
	jericho lands	153
	victoria missing middle	76
Victoria	city of victoria 2023	14
	feedback to city of victoria	14
Ottawa	lansdowne 2.0	238
	city budget 2024	232
	cleary new orchard	198
	lansdowne study	196
	affordable housing	319
Waterloo Region	65 northfield drive	298
	ontario affordable housing	296
	moncton active transportation	18
St. John's	Churchil square	155
	landlord's in st.john's	132
	Empire ave	130

Figure 4: Top keywords driving organic traffic for each city