

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Directorate:	Community Wellbeing
Responsible Manager:	Manager Community Engagement
Review Due:	Month Year
Adoption:	Council
Date Adopted:	23 April 2024

## Acknowledgement

---

Central Goldfields Shire Council acknowledges and extends appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners of the land that we are on.

We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture, and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung People.

## 1. Purpose

---

The Central Goldfields community is diverse and engaged, rich with experience and expertise and whose participation is valued.

By involving the community in planning and decision-making we can promote greater trust, build stronger relationships, and deliver better outcomes.

This purpose of this Policy is to guide the organisation in meeting the engagement obligations as outlined in section 55 and section 56 of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020.

It establishes a clear standard of engagement, having regard to the significance, complexity and anticipated level of impact associated with major projects, policies, strategies, service planning, local laws, and capital works.

This Policy is Council's commitment that:

- community engagement activities will have a clearly defined objective and scope.
- participants will be representative of the persons and groups affected. (as much as is practicable).
- participants will have access to relevant and timely information to inform their participation.

- participants will be provided with reasonable support to enable genuine and meaningful engagement.
- participants will be informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.

## Objectives

The objectives of the policy are to outline:

- the principles and commitments that underpin Council’s approach to community engagement
- improve understanding of community and stakeholder engagement
- how community engagement is integrated into Council activities (major projects, policies, strategies, service planning, local laws, and capital works) to support decision making and strengthen relationships and partnerships

## 2. Application and Scope

---

This Policy applies to the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of community engagement activities as directed by Council, recommended by staff, or legislated by the Section 56 of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020; The Community Engagement Principles.

Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams, and employees.

It also applies to Councillors, contractors, consultants, external providers, and volunteers undertaking work on behalf of Council.

The following engagements are outside the scope of this Policy:

- those relating to planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments governed by the Planning and Environment Act 1987
- legislated engagements governed under other Acts.
- other Council processes such as service requests or complaints

## 3. Definitions

---

For the purposes of this Policy, Council adopts the following definitions:

Term	Definition
Community	Refers to the people who have a stake and interest in the Central Goldfields Shire and includes people who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live, work, study or conduct business or are involved in local community groups or organisations in the municipality.</li> <li>• Visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the municipality</li> </ul>

Community engagement	Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them
Committees	A delegated committee, jointly delegated committee, or community asset committee under section 63, 64 and 65 of the Act, respectively
Consultation	The activity of seeking input on a matter
Council	The Central Goldfields Shire Council including Councillors and its Delegated Committees
Deliberation	Deliberation is an approach to decision-making in which citizens consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, converse with one another to think critically about options before them and enlarge their perspectives, opinions, and understandings
Deliberative engagement	Deliberative engagement is a process of engagement that brings participants closer to the decision makers than other forms of engagement; where participants are provided with a clear task or question, have access to appropriate resources and information, and are given the time and space required to deliberate and reach their consensus
Participatory engagement	Participatory engagement involves information exchange either from Council to community or community to Council. Participatory engagement typically occurs when feedback is invited on ideas, alternatives, or draft documents
Process	A relationship between key steps, activities, tasks, policies and / or resources
Public participation	A term used by IAP2 meaning the involvement of those affected (interested or impacted) by a decision in the decision-making process. We use the term interchangeably with Community Engagement, Stakeholder Engagement or Consultation
Stakeholder	An individual or group with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and are directly impacted by their outcomes

## 4. General Provisions

### 4.1 Council's commitment to the community

Council adopts the following principles and commitments which will inform all community engagement processes. These principles are set out in Section 56 of the Local Government Act 2020. Council has built on these principles to describe our commitment which reflects the values and expectations of the Central Goldfields community.

Principle	Our commitment
The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will develop community engagement plans in accordance with this Policy.</li> <li>We will identify and communicate the purpose of the engagement and the benefits sought.</li> <li>We will allocate appropriate resources to engagement planning and implementation</li> </ul>

<p>Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure the community has the information necessary to participate meaningfully in the engagement activities.</li> <li>• We will endeavour to provide information that is objective, relevant, timely and easy to understand</li> </ul>
<p>Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will endeavour to identify stakeholders at the commencement of all relevant projects and determine the level to which different groups may be affected by decisions.</li> <li>• We will encourage and support the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives and ensure the consideration of all relevant interests including minority groups such as people with diverse gender identities and those belonging to socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities.</li> <li>• We will encourage and support the inclusion of First Nations stakeholders and organisations within Central Goldfields Shire and our sphere of influence.</li> <li>• We will select communication methods which ensure relevant parties are informed about engagement activities and opportunities to influence Council decisions</li> </ul>
<p>Participants in community engagement, are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will reduce physical, social, and cultural barriers to participation.</li> <li>• We will practice cultural safety with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.</li> <li>• We will consider the needs and perspectives of all groups that may want to be involved in the process.</li> <li>• We will seek to obtain the views of a broad cross section of the community, especially when there is a quiet majority.</li> <li>• We will allow sufficient time for reviewing information and participation in varied engagement activities.</li> <li>• We will endeavour to produce accessible content for those who need it</li> </ul>
<p>Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recognise the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as the international standard for effective community engagement.</li> <li>• We will identify the appropriate level of engagement according to the IAP2 framework.</li> <li>• We will inform participants of the level of influence they will have and identify the negotiable and non-negotiable elements of any community engagement process.</li> <li>• We will articulate how community perspectives will be incorporated into decision making and the nature of decisions to be made.</li> <li>• Share what has been learnt and what actions or decisions have resulted from an engagement process</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Level of Community Involvement and Influence

Council will call for different levels of engagement, having regard to the significance, complexity, and anticipated level of impact of what is being proposed, and the stakeholders who need to be targeted.

This Policy adopts the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum to guide the range and extent of participation at each of the five levels. The five levels of engagement on the IAP2 spectrum will be utilised in every instance to meet our commitment to the community:

**Inform:** To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions

**Consult:** To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and / or decisions

**Involve:** To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered

**Collaborate:** To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution

**Empower:** To place final decision making in the hands of the public

However, the level of community engagement will be identified at the planning stage of engagement and will have regard to the legislative requirements, the project type, the anticipated level of impact and the needs of the affected communities (see Appendix A).

## 4.3 Requirements of Engagement

Some elements of community engagement are directed by statutory requirements. Under the Victorian Local Government Act 2020 Council has a statutory obligation to develop a long-term Community Vision, Financial Plan and Asset Plan, and a four-year Council Plan using deliberative engagement approaches (see Appendix 2).

Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Council also has a statutory requirement to develop a four- year Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

This Policy also provides clear direction on the level of community engagement that is required for major projects, policies, strategies, service planning, local laws and capital works projects which sit outside of the scope of statutory obligations. The table below sets our statutory and non-statutory obligations regarding the minimum levels of engagement:

Matter	Engagement approach	Level of engagement
Community vision	Deliberative engagement	Involve, Collaborate, Empower
Council Plan	Deliberative engagement	Involve, Collaborate, Empower
Long Term Financial Plan	Deliberative engagement	Involve, Collaborate, Empower

Asset Plan	Deliberative engagement	Involve, Collaborate, Empower
Budget	Participatory engagement	Consult, Involve
Making of a local law	Participatory engagement	Consult, Involve
Acquiring or selling land	Participatory engagement	Consult, Involve
Capital works and infrastructure projects	Community engagement	The level depends on: The extent of impact and the level of community interest The complexity and associated risks of the issue/project/topic The available resources
Other non-statutory plans, strategies or policies and service planning	Community Engagement	The level depends on: The extent of impact and the level of community interest The complexity and associated risks of the issue/project/topic Available Resources

### Submissions process

On matters where the only form of community participation is an invitation to make submissions, and engagement on the matter was formerly governed by under section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989.

## 4.4 Community Engagement Planning, Implementation and Evaluation

To ensure effective community engagement, Council implements the following eight steps to design, deliver and evaluate community engagement.

### 1. Clearly define the purpose and scope of the community engagement:

- 1.1. Document the project purpose, scope, engagement objectives, timelines, budget, and the decision to be made. Identify any risks.
- 1.2. Take into account relevant legislation in framing the community engagement.
- 1.3. Determine initial expectation of the level of engagement on the IAP2 spectrum (Appendix A)

### 2. Understand stakeholder and community interests:

- 2.1. Identify the stakeholders who are affected by, interested in, or who can influence or inform the decision.
- 2.2. Understand how stakeholders are affected, the nature and intensity of their interest, and capacity and willingness to participate.
- 2.3. Consider if there are barriers to participation that need to be removed to ensure an appropriate balance of views.

- 2.4. Identify the preferred methods for engagement.
- 2.5. Ensure that participants understand their role and level of influence on the decision-making process.

### 3. Design an appropriate community engagement process:

- 3.1. Identify the stages of the engagement process and any negotiable or non-negotiable aspects.
- 3.2. Plan inclusive and accessible communications and methods to support the engagement.
- 3.3. Identify data requirements that are relevant and measurable, and how it will be analysed.
- 3.4. Plan how the data collected will be managed and ensure compliance with Council's Public Transparency Policy
- 3.5. Identify the skills and resources needed to ensure an effective community engagement.
- 3.6. Document the approach and obtain authorisation.

### 4. Deliver genuine and respectful engagement:

- 4.1. Ensure all activities are inclusive and accessible.
- 4.2. Ensure all activities are informed by principles of cultural safety.
- 4.3. Be clear about the purpose and level of engagement.

### 5. Review and interpret the engagement data:

- 5.1. Collate and review the data from each engagement activity.
- 5.2. Identify any limitations to the appropriate balance of information.
- 5.3. Analyse the data to identify themes, priorities, and preferences.

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

- 6.1. Prepare a report for Council applying the outcomes of the community engagement to inform the decision.
- 6.2. Where appropriate, provide further opportunity for community input, for example to comment on a draft document.

### 7. Evaluate the community engagement process for improvement:

- 7.1. Assess whether community engagement objectives were achieved.
- 7.2. Document and apply the lessons.

### 8. Close the loop on the community engagement:

- 8.1. Where possible, report feedback back to participants to ensure correct understanding.
- 8.2. Acknowledge participants' contributions to the engagement process.
- 8.3. Share the outcomes of the engagement with the community including how it contributed to the decision.
- 8.4. Communicate the next steps of the project.
- 8.5. Publish updates on the project on Council's website, engagement portal and other channels.

## 4.5 Informing the community of outcomes

We are responsible for, and committed to reporting back the following information to the community:

- what was learnt (the data, information and insights collected during the engagement process)
- how this has influenced the decisions, plans, and activities of Council.

In determining the best ways to report this information back, we consider the people and groups involved and the level of interest to the wider community.

Methods for reporting back could include, but are not limited to:

- updates on the Council website
- updates on the engagement portal
- post on social media.
- ‘Kitchen table’ style meetups in the townships
- drop-in sessions.
- public notices and newspaper advertisements
- direct communications with the people involved.

## 4.6 Responsibilities

Responsibilities for implementing this policy are shared as follows:

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt the Community Engagement Policy and oversee its implementation.</li> <li>• Champion the commitment and principles for community engagement through leadership and decision making</li> </ul>
Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champion behaviours that foster good engagement practice and drive the principles through policy, process, and leadership.</li> <li>• Implement and ensure compliance with this Policy</li> </ul>
Community Engagement Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of responsibility to ensure community engagement is consistent with this Policy.</li> <li>• Provide community engagement tools to support planning, implementation, and evaluation.</li> <li>• Oversee all deliberative engagement activities.</li> <li>• Build capacity in deliberative engagement.</li> <li>• Conduct periodic review and drive continuous improvement</li> </ul>
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake to make community engagement activities consistent with this Policy in consultation with the Community Engagement Team</li> </ul>



## 4.7 Monitoring and Reporting

Council commits to monitoring processes, information sharing and decision making to understand the overall level of success in the Policy's implementation. Key evaluation measures of success over each 12-month period will include:

- community satisfaction with community consultation and engagement (annual survey)
- number of engagements
- number of participants
- percentage of deliberative and participatory engagements It may also include measures such as:
  - diversity of engagement methods
  - information delivery modes
  - representation - adequate and diverse representation across target groups
  - timeliness of reporting back to the community (closing the loop)

## 5. Review

6. This Policy must be reviewed a minimum of once every four years.

## 7. Human Rights Statement

---

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006). Central Goldfields Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees.

## 8. Relevant Legislation and Council Policies

---

CGSC Public Transparency Policy

CGSC Customer Service Charter

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Planning and Environment Act 2007

Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Equal Opportunity Act 2010 Local Government Act 2020

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014

Internal Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation

Mosaic Lab's principles of Deliberative Engagement

CGSC Draft Communications and engagement strategy 2021

Community Engagement: A guide to community engagement in rural and regional Victoria 2020

**APPENDIX ONE**

IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation which affects a community’s ability to affect public decisions. The spectrum is used internationally and is found in public participation plans around the world.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	Provide news and information to the community to help them understand	Ask for feedback on a matter	Invite participation towards an outcome predetermined by Council	Work together with the community toward a jointly agreed outcome	Place final decision making in the hands of the public and build their capacity to deliver change
Promise to the community	Council will keep you informed	Council will listen to and acknowledge your contribution	Council will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are considered in the decision making	Council will look to the community for advice and innovation, incorporating into decisions where possible	Council will help you implement our mutual goals
Role of the community	Receive information	Contribute ideas and opinions	Participate in making plans and decisions	Actively partner for an agreed outcome	Carry out a community-led initiative
Examples of activities	Information sessions Provide information via media Social media posts On site signage Direct mail	Surveys Focus groups Drop in sessions Opinion polls Submission processes Public meetings	Working groups Reference groups Advisory groups Workshops Deliberate polling Advocacy groups	Participatory decision making Design teams Co-design Deliberative processes Citizen advisory committees Community ownership	Citizen juries Self determination of First Nations people Deliberative processes Ballots Community asset committees
	Project updates Public meetings			project governance	Community led planning

## **APPENDIX TWO**

### **About deliberative engagement**

Deliberative engagement refers to engagement processes that enable community representatives to reach conclusions based on in-depth consideration of relevant facts from multiple points of view, conversations with others and critical thinking about alternative perspectives, opinions, understandings, and trade-offs (adapted from Mosaic Lab).

Council will undertake deliberative engagement in the following circumstances:

1. where it has a legislated obligation (including Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan); or
2. where it resolves that it wants its decision-making on a matter or initiative to be informed by this model of community engagement

There is no single design for deliberative public engagement; therefore, Council's deliberative engagement practices will be tailored in accordance with this Policy. Once designed, the deliberative engagement elements will be documented in a community engagement plan, in accordance with this Policy. Where Council is undertaking deliberative engagement, the community engagement plan will be available on Council's website and engagement portal.

As part of Council's commitment to effective deliberative engagement practices, Council will:

- provide a clear remit to the deliberative group/s.
- ensure participants have access to neutral, balanced information from a range of different sources.
- to allow in-depth conversation and understanding of these issues involved
- ensure the process is representative.
- allow the time needed to deliberate on complex information.
- allow the time needed to weigh up options and ideas.
- give the deliberative group a high level of influence over outcomes or decisions.