	<h1>Town of Cochrane Policy</h1>
<b>Policy No.:</b> <b>Policy Title:</b> <b>Approval Date</b> <b>Revision Date:</b> <b>Division:</b>	<b>1106-02</b> <b>Public Engagement Policy</b> <b>June 12, 2006</b> <b>September 8, 2014</b> <b>Human Resources and Communications</b>

**Policy Statement:**

The Town of Cochrane and the Cochrane community recognize that public input can improve municipal decision-making. In order to gather public input, the Town of Cochrane is committed to:

- providing information to assist community members and stakeholders in understanding issues and opportunities;
- providing fair and equitable opportunities for positive contributions from community members and stakeholders;
- making every reasonable effort to reach, involve and hear from community members and stakeholders; and
- reporting public engagement results and Town of Cochrane decisions to community members and stakeholders.

Improving involvement through public engagement will result in a better-informed community, a greater sense of ownership in decision-making and more public satisfaction with municipal programs, services and long-term plans.

The Town of Cochrane acknowledges that while public engagement can be encouraged to gather input on specific issues and opportunities, every interaction a member of Town of Cochrane Council or staff has with a community member or stakeholder is also public engagement. Whether formal or informal, public engagement is a valuable contribution to Town of Cochrane decisions and operations.

Town of Cochrane Communications considers public engagement opportunities when developing communications and marketing activities for Town initiatives, programs and events as part of the general communications strategy and planning process.

Late in 2003 Cochrane Town Council first addressed the need for a formal citizen engagement policy. In 2005, the Citizen Consultation/Communication Working Group was established through Council to develop a citizen engagement policy. In 2011, Town of Cochrane Communications began using social media to engage the public, and Town staff formally contributed to the update to the Public Input Toolkit produced by Alberta Municipal Affairs.

A wide variety of perspectives are shared through public engagement. However, it is important to understand that public engagement does not replace formal decision-making by the Town of Cochrane. The engagement process is one tool, along with research, Council policies, legislation, expert advice and input from partner organizations that aid in the decision making process.

## **1. Reason for Policy** [changed the order of these]

- 1.1 To ensure a well-informed community.
- 1.2 To create an environment that encourages community participation.
- 1.3 To improve the quality of decisions being made.
- 1.4 To enhance the legitimacy of decisions.
- 1.5 To forge a bond of trust and accountability between the Town of Cochrane and the community.

## **2. Related Information**

- 2.1 Alberta Municipal Affairs, "Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities."

## **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 Town of Cochrane – Council and/or Town Administration.
- 3.2 Public engagement – the process of informing, gathering information from, consulting with, involving and/or partnering with the community.
- 3.3 Legislation – pieces of law that govern the operations of the Town of Cochrane.
- 3.4 Community – any citizen, group of citizens or customers with an interest in the welfare of Cochrane.

## **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 Town Council to:
  - 4.1.1 Approve by resolution this policy and any amendments.
  - 4.1.2 Consider the allocation of resources for successful implementation of this policy in the annual budget process.
  - 4.1.3 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
  - 4.1.4 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
  - 4.1.5 Be guided by the policy when determining the level of public engagement required prior to making a decision.
  - 4.1.6 Ensure resources are adequate to facilitate staff's role in conducting the appropriate process.

- 4.2 Chief Administrative Officer to:
  - 4.2.1 Implement this policy; approve procedures.
  - 4.2.2 Ensure policy and procedure reviews occur and verify the implementation of policies and procedures.
  - 4.2.3 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
  - 4.2.4 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
  - 4.2.5 Recommend to Council necessary policy amendment.
  - 4.2.6 Provide guidance to Council, ensuring that sufficient public engagement has occurred.
- 4.3 Senior Manager of the Division to:
  - 4.3.1 Ensure implementation of this policy and procedure.
  - 4.3.2 Ensure that this policy and procedure is reviewed every three years.
  - 4.3.3 Make recommendations to the Chief Administrative Officer of necessary policy or procedure amendments.
  - 4.3.4 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
  - 4.3.5 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.
  - 4.3.6 Ensure implementation of this policy and related procedures.
  - 4.3.7 Ensure section staff is trained in related procedures.
  - 4.3.8 Ensure that all projects are reviewed in order to determine the appropriate level of public engagement.
- 4.4 Supervisor to:
  - 4.4.1 Understand, and adhere to this policy and procedure
  - 4.4.2 Ensure employees are aware of this policy and procedure.
- 4.5 All Employees to:
  - 4.5.1 Understand and adhere to this policy and procedure.
  - 4.5.2 Recognize the benefits of public engagement.
  - 4.5.3 Serve as an advocate for public engagement.

- 4.5.4 Obtain public engagement training, as appropriate.
- 4.5.5 Make every effort to identify and involve as many affected or interested individuals as possible by designing a process that reaches out to the public.
- 4.5.6 Evaluate the effectiveness of each public engagement campaign.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Town of Cochrane is committed to the following guiding principles that set the tone for how we will act when considering and/or implementing public engagement initiatives. Each guiding principle is followed by a set of points that articulate the intent of the principle. These guiding principles are aligned with the Town's corporate values and are an indication of our desire to work together with the community to achieve the common goal of engaging the community.

We commit to:

- **Accessibility:** providing fair and equitable opportunities to make a positive contribution.
  - Provide timely and accessible information to all who are interested in learning more about the matter at hand.
  - Follow a flexible process.
- **Accountability:** evaluating processes, communicating results, and measuring outcomes.
  - Disclose decisions and related impacts of and rationale for decision making.
  - Share how engagement influenced the decision.
  - Ensure facilitation is conducted by neutral parties when appropriate.
  - Provide all relevant information to Town Council for their consideration, with Council having the final decision-making authority.
- **Communication:** providing opportunities for two-way dialogue in a fair, respectful and open process.
  - Clarify roles and responsibilities.
  - Provide sufficient background information.
  - Clearly explain the process.
  - Explain what is negotiable, what is not, and why.
- **Continuous Improvement:** continuous evaluation and improvement of the engagement process.
  - Continuously evaluate and improve the engagement process as a result of participant experiences.
  - Remain current with best practices and tools for public engagement.
- **Participation:** make every reasonable effort to reach, involve, and hear from the community.
  - Actively seek out those who are not typically heard from.

- Make reasonable effort to provide childcare at public engagement events.
- Use a variety of communication methods to inform the community of public engagement opportunities.

## **5. End of Policy**

	<h1>Town of Cochrane Procedure</h1>
<b>Policy No.:</b> <b>Policy Title:</b> <b>Department:</b>	<b>1106-02</b> <b>Public Engagement Policy</b> <b>Municipal Services</b>

**1. Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities**

1.1. The Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities will be used by Administration in the planning of all Public engagement.

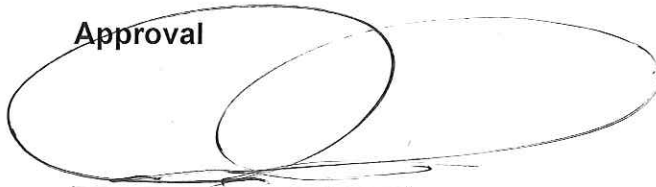
**2. Council notification:**

2.1. Consider and include public engagement strategies when reporting to Council.

**3. Appendix - Attached – Public Input Toolkit For Municipalities**

**4. End of Procedure**

**Approval**



Julian deCocq, C.A.O

*September 10, 2014*  
Date