

Your Say  
Adelaide

# Community Engagement Strategy

**More Inclusive. Better Outcomes.**

This Engagement Strategy acknowledges the desire of Council to share information and experiences to develop a shared vision for our city's future. It has been developed following a broad consultation with our community and stakeholders to support working relationships.

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# Joint Introductory Statement by the Lord Mayor and CEO

“**Small government, big community**” is a vision we share for the City of Adelaide.

Our goal is to work in partnership with the community to co-create a world-class capital city, a great place to live, work, study and visit.

We believe involving the community in Council’s decision-making processes is crucial to achieving this goal. It requires a robust, strategic approach – which is why we’ve developed the Engagement Strategy.

Community input to Council decisions not only promotes strong working relationships between Council and its stakeholders, it maximises the knowledge and experience upon which decisions are based, and leads to better outcomes for all.

Thank you for your interest in Council’s Engagement Strategy. We trust it proves a useful document that not only helps you understand how Council engages its community, but encourages you to get involved yourselves.



Stephen Yarwood  
**LORD MAYOR**



Peter Smith  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

# Introduction

Adelaide City Council believes in open and accountable governance.

We are passionate about the future of the City; harmonising the needs of the community, stakeholders, policy directions from State and Commonwealth Governments is key to achieving balanced decision making.

This Strategy acknowledges the desire of Council to share information and experiences to develop a shared vision for our city's future. It has been developed following a broad consultation with our community and stakeholders to support working relationships.

By working closer with the community and stakeholders, we foster a significant cultural shift to make decisions that are evidence-based and reflect the views and ideas of the people of Adelaide.

# What is Community Engagement

Our definition has been adapted from the International Association of Public Participation model (IAP2) through our community engagement process:

Engagement is about  
involving the community  
in a decision making process.

It helps to strengthen the relationship Council has with the community, as well as local, state and federal government. It helps communicate with the community what they can expect to influence.

Our engagement process recognises diversity within the community and incorporates it into the planning process. Different techniques may be adopted to reach a wide range of community groups and stakeholders.

We have a variety of tools and techniques to engage stakeholders and the community. Their feedback helps us to understand varied points of view, gather comprehensive information, consider a range of opinions and identify common ground.

Engagement does not replace the final decision-making power of Councillors or the CEO; but is considered invaluable in the way it enhances Council's capacity to make well-informed, acceptable and sustainable decisions.

# Aim of the Engagement Strategy

The Strategy aims to provide a best practice approach in all community engagement activities.

The Engagement Strategy ensures both stakeholders and the community have the opportunity to provide feedback and inform the decisions made by Council.

Objectives of the Engagement Strategy include:

- To ensure a commitment by Council Members and Council staff (including external contractors and consultants) to engage with the community in a meaningful and appropriate way about decisions that affect them
- To provide a consistent and flexible process for staff to guide the selection of the most appropriate method and level of engagement for any project or decision to be made
- To develop a high level of trust and confidence with our community and stakeholders to engender a long term sustainable relationship and commitment to a shared vision for Adelaide
- To utilise online communication and engagement techniques, complementing traditional engagement techniques, that maximises social media and generates an increased buzz, participation and creation of an online Adelaide City Council community of interest
- To create an environment where existing and new communities of interest build productive relationships that assist effective engagement
- To complement, interact with and enhance all Council initiatives that are working towards community and stakeholder partnerships and the co-creation of Adelaide's vision.

**An overview of the Strategy can be viewed in the Appendix on page 13.**

# Community Engagement Principles

Adelaide City Council's Engagement Strategy is built on a set of core values adapted from the IAP2.

A number of organisations, both nationally and internationally, have successfully adopted the IAP2 core values to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of their engagement process.

**When engaging the Community in a decision-making process, Council promises to:**

- Seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected by or interested in a decision
- Provide relevant, timely and balanced information so people can contribute in a meaningful way
- Provide a variety of appropriate and accessible ways for people to have their say and to speak honestly
- Actively listen so that people's ideas and input assist in making the final decision
- Consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process
- Tell the community about the final decision, and how their input was considered
- Collaborate with peak bodies and other levels of Government to achieve common goals for the City of Adelaide.

# Why We Engage

Community and stakeholder engagement fosters a sense of belonging and community ownership of project outcomes. It engages a higher level of responsibility around creating a people-centred city.

Local Councillors are elected to oversee the everyday running of the Council. In order to help them do this, they ask for views of the community to help them make sustainable decisions and better understand local issues and needs.

Stakeholder and community input improves the quality of policy - at the time it is being developed - ensuring the end result is relevant to the needs of the community.

Well planned engagement provides ideas and an opportunity for a diverse range of voices to be heard on any issue, promotes a higher standard of customer service, a better understanding of the 'decisions to be made,' and more opportunity for meaningful feedback.

# Who We Engage

Adelaide City Council engages a broad range of people who make up the capital city and who have unique interests and a role to play in the co-creation of the city's future.

**Stakeholders** are recognised as organised groups who use the capital city; who have an interest in Council's decision-making and who are affected by Council's decisions.

Businesses, retail outlets, State and Federal Governments, community groups, Local Government and not for profit organisations are considered stakeholders. Stakeholders may also be groups or organisations who have a role to play in policy development, program or service delivery.

The **community** includes individuals or groups who use the capital city; who have an interest in Council's decision-making and who are affected by Council's decisions.

These individuals or groups may be identified as residents and voters, ratepayers, business owners, Adelaide City Council customers, contractors or suppliers, community interest groups, agencies and hard to reach groups.



# When We Engage

Community engagement can take place at any time of the year (excluding the Christmas period) and is dependent on Council's program of work.

Each time there is a project to be developed or a decision to be made there is an opportunity for a community engagement process. Early notice of emerging issues puts Council in a better position to respond in a proactive way.

In the engagement planning process, consideration is given to the complexity of the decision and the optimal time needed for people to respond. Whilst the *Local Government Act 1999* sets out minimum requirements for some specific consultations, each engagement process is considered on its individual basis and merit. To ensure a successful consultation, careful consideration is given to the appropriate tools and timing for the project or decision.

# How We Engage

In any decision-making process, the level of engagement will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the project or decision.

Consideration is given to things like community and stakeholder interest, political sensitivity, opportunities for partnerships, the level of social, economic and environmental impact, legislative requirements, time, resource and monetary constraints.

Quality engagement is well planned and executed, inclusive and accessible to a cross-section of the community.

At times Council will engage the community on issues that are of importance or interest to a specific part of the community and engagement will be targeted towards this group.

The Adelaide City Council engagement process outlines **three stages** to ensure we deliver a consistent and robust approach to engagement activities. This includes a process of planning (developing a plan), doing (preparing and engaging) and reporting (providing feedback) on the engagement.

To enable Council to determine the best approach, five levels of engagement are defined to assist in selecting the most appropriate level of engagement.

# Levels of Engagement

The table below shows five levels of engagement and clearly outlines the amount of involvement from both the Council and community within each level. The process of engagement is a dynamic one; there is likely to be movement back and forth through the different levels as the engagement is implemented.

While the final decision rests with Adelaide City Council, open and responsible governance is based on a belief that those impacted by a decision have important contributions to make in the decision-making process.

Before beginning any engagement process it is important for decision makers to establish how much influence they will give to the community.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	One way communication to provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has already happened.	Two way communications designed to obtain feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform our decision making.	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to our decision making.	Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions for joint decision making.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the community.
Council's Approach	We will share information about a decision or direction.	We will explore options, gain feedback and an understanding of your concerns and preferences.	We will involve you in the process so your ideas, concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed or the final decision.	We will collaborate with you so your advice, innovation and recommendations are included in the final decision that we make together.	We will implement what you decide.
Role of Stakeholder/Community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Decide

## Inform

There are situations when stakeholders and the community need to receive information to gain a better understanding of an issue or understand why a decision has been made. *Inform* is the appropriate level of engagement when the aim is to provide information about a decision or outcome, who it was made by and what the consequential impact on stakeholders and the community will be. For example, a fact sheet or letter is sent to stakeholders and the community.

## Consult

*Consult* is the appropriate level of engagement when input, views or feedback is sought from the community to better inform a decision-making process, or to help inform the direction of a proposed plan or project. *Consult* is selected when Council asks and listens to the community about ideas to improve something, to obtain views on a particular proposal, understand what would happen if Council made a certain decision, or when a number of possible options are provided and which option is preferred. For example, a local community are invited to provide feedback on a draft plan to upgrade a nearby park.

## Involve

*Involve* is the appropriate level of engagement when local input is required to identify issues early and inform Council's planning process. This level of engagement is selected when Council wants to include the community early in the planning process to ensure all concerns and aspirations are both heard and understood. For example, local residents, businesses and cyclists are engaged to help identify issues and possible solutions to introducing a new bike lane. Their initial input and local knowledge is used to inform the development of a draft Bike Lane Plan, which is then given back to the wider Adelaide community for further feedback and comments before being finalised.

## Collaborate

*Collaborate* is the appropriate level of engagement when Council or staff mutually share the decision-making with various levels of government, community groups, key stakeholders or members of the public. *Collaborate* is usually selected where issues and solutions are unclear and Council works with equal power and partnership to find solutions that lead to an agreed outcome. For example, Council works closely with and supports a local 'precinct group' to identify local safety issues. We work together to gather local knowledge, evidence and statistics to better understand the issues and together develop an Action Plan to address our shared responsibility for local safety.

## Empower

*Empower* is Council's promise is to 'implement what you decide'. *Empower* is selected when our community and stakeholders are provided with the skills, information, authority and resources in order to make the final decision. Under the *Local Government Act 1999*, the only decision-making power which is entirely placed in the hands of the public is that of electing Council Members every four years.

# Community Engagement Resources

Council's Engagement Strategy is a holistic view that provides Council with an organisational approach to improve engagement activities (refer to the Appendix for an overview).

The Engagement Strategy is supported by the following Council resources:

- The **Public Consultation Policy** outlines Council's legislative responsibility to effectively communicate and consult with stakeholders and engage consultation that is appropriate to each specific circumstance.
- The **Staff Guide - How to develop an Engagement Strategy** provides guidance and direction to staff in designing, managing and evaluating successful engagement activities.
- The **Community Engagement Toolkit** provides step-by-step practical advice for staff on how to select and use the most appropriate tools for an Adelaide City Council engagement.
- Ongoing **training** is provided to staff to increase knowledge of our engagement process and to build internal capacity to deliver robust engagement activities across Council. Additional training is provided to 'Program Champions' who will provide advice and support within their teams.
- **Engagement planning calendar** will assist in planning engagement activities to avoid duplication of engagement processes and identify areas where combined community engagements can be carried out to reduce 'consultation fatigue.'
- **'Your Say Adelaide'** is a one-stop engagement website which provides a range of online engagement tools allowing our community and stakeholders to provide feedback and contribute online to Council's decision-making processes. The website increases the transparency of our engagement processes by providing information on the final outcome of each project or decision.
- **A consultation brand** has been developed to provide a consistent look and feel across all promotional and communication material inviting our community to participate in Council's engagement activities.

The Engagement Strategy is a holistic view of five key components and supporting elements. It provides Council with an organisational approach to improved engagement activities.

## Key Components

### Governance

### Capability & Support

### Engagement Methodology

### Central Portal (ACC website)

### Continuous Improvement

## Supporting Elements

- Definitions and terminology
- Engagement principles
- Levels of engagement
- Policy (legislative engagement requirements)

- Internal engagement planning calendar
- Staff training & peer support program
- Engagement process
- Staff support materials (templates, guides)
- Engagement toolkit (tools & techniques)
- External contractor list

- Engagement process
  - Two entry points for engagement methodology:
    1. Staff Guide for planning and implementation
    2. Project Management Suite

- Project specific information (for engagement)
- Public engagement calendar
- Online engagement tools
- Stakeholder register / online communities of interest
- Policy, principles and levels of engagement

- Policy review
- ACC case studies & examples of leading practice
- Capture staff learnings (via project evaluation)
- Participant feedback
- Research
- Ongoing evaluation of Strategy