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## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

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REFERENCE: COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

APPROVED: Council, June 19, 2018

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### POLICY STATEMENT:

This Public Participation Policy has been developed to allow residents to have a voice in the decision making process, and to give our Council more information to make informed decisions. The Public Participation Policy will help guide Administration and Council on appropriate times to formally engage the public and make the process of public engagement more transparent.

### General Policy Principles

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging in Public Participation by:

- Creating opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to influence decisions which may affect them;
- Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various stakeholder interests;
- Providing residents and stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and
- Recognizing that, while councillors are elected to consider the interests of the Town as a whole, engaging in Public Participation can enrich the decision making process.

### Council Responsibilities

Council shall:

- Review this policy to ensure it complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of Public Participation;
- Consider input obtained through Public Participation; and
- Promote and support Public Participation processes without bias.

## Administration Responsibilities

Administration shall:

- Develop Public Participation plans for projects that fall within the scope of this Policy, or as directed by Council;
- Implement Public Participation;
- Report findings from Public Participation to Council and back to the public; and
- Assess this policy and make recommendations to Council regarding Public Participation effectiveness and resources.

## General Considerations for Public Engagement

Triggers for Public Participation may include any of the following:

- Changes in process / service level;
- Reviewing existing programs and services;
- Large scale projects with major budget implications;
- Budget process;
- Strategic priorities;
- Direction from Council

## Policy Expectations / Standards

All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with the Municipal Government Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Municipal Policies and any other applicable legislation. This Policy shall also be available for public inspection.

The Town of Edson is committed to achieving the following standards with our Public Participation:

- **Transparency** – To be clear and open about the public process, purpose, and how the information will be used.
- **Authentic Intent** – To gather public views and ideas to help shape decisions, rather than persuade members of the public to accept a decision that has already been made.
- **Informed Participation** – Ensure participants have the information and/or access to expertise in relation to the issue at hand.
- **Accessible Participation** – To ensure our Public Participation is broadly accessible in terms of time, location, and available to all that wish to participate.
- **Feedback to Participants** – Results of Public Engagement will be reported back to Council and the public in a timely manner, along with how the results are being considered.



## Engagement Levels/Tools

There are generally four levels of engagement that would have different public involvement and tools. This is reflected in the attached Public Engagement Spectrum and outlined below in order of increasing public influence.

**Consult** – The Town of Edson seeks feedback from stakeholders to be presented to Council for additional consideration in decision making. Tools may include, but are not limited to, a simple survey, asking for general feedback on social media and other forums. Example – Would you support a new project?

**Deliberate** – The Town of Edson involves stakeholders, explores differences, considers concerns, and involves the public in alternative solutions. Tools may include, but are not limited to, multi question or open-ended survey, open houses, feedback requests through social media or advertising campaign. Example – We are starting a new project. What would you like to see in the project, what are the potential issues/concerns?

**Collaborate** – Deliberation as well as working directly with stakeholders to come up with solutions and alleviate concerns. Includes community initiated engagement. Tools may include, but are not limited to, Open houses and/or workshops, meetings with specific stakeholders, direct presentations to Council. Example – working on a community revitalization project, developing a community space/facility, community approaches municipality to assist on a specific project.

**Empower** – Citizen-led decision making. Citizens make the final decisions on behalf of the Town of Edson through plebiscite or other means. Tools may include, but are not limited to, plebiscite, direct interaction with council, binding surveys. Example – Directly asking residents if they support a large-scale project/service with the intent of taking results as the final decision.

