

## POL 0042: Community Engagement

### Purpose

Through meaningful engagement, the Shire seeks to build trust, strengthen relationships, improve decision-making, and uphold the principles of local democracy.

This policy ensures the Shire of Esperance and Council engage authentically, consistently, and effectively with the community in developing strategies, plans, policies, and decisions that affect them.

This commitment aligns with Outcome 16 of the Shire of Esperance Council Plan 2022–2032: “A well-informed and engaged community.”

### Scope

This policy applies to all Council Members and Shire staff involved in planning, developing, reviewing, or delivering projects, services, or documents that may impact the community.

It covers all corporate documents and activities except those governed by statutory engagement requirements under the *Planning and Development Act 2005*, *Land Administration Act 1997*, *Town Planning Regulations 1967*, or *Local Planning Scheme No. 24*.

### Definitions

**Community:** People who live, work, own property, or recreate within the Shire of Esperance.

**Community Engagement:** Any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public input to guide outcomes.

**Corporate Documents:** Strategies, policies, procedures, business plans, and associated documents, including guidelines and forms.

**Council Plan:** a governing document which delivers instructions from the community to the Esperance Council and Shire staff.

**Statutory Documents:** Corporate documents whose format and layout is guided by legislative requirements i.e. budgets, town planning schemes, annual reports.

**Strategy / Policy / Procedure / Guide:** Documents that establish direction, set principles, prescribe actions, or provide operational tools for implementation.

### Practice

The Shire and Council are committed to open, inclusive, and accessible engagement that values community input.

Engagement is guided by the Shire of Esperance Communications & Engagement Strategy and the Engagement Institute (formally IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.

## When Engagement Occurs

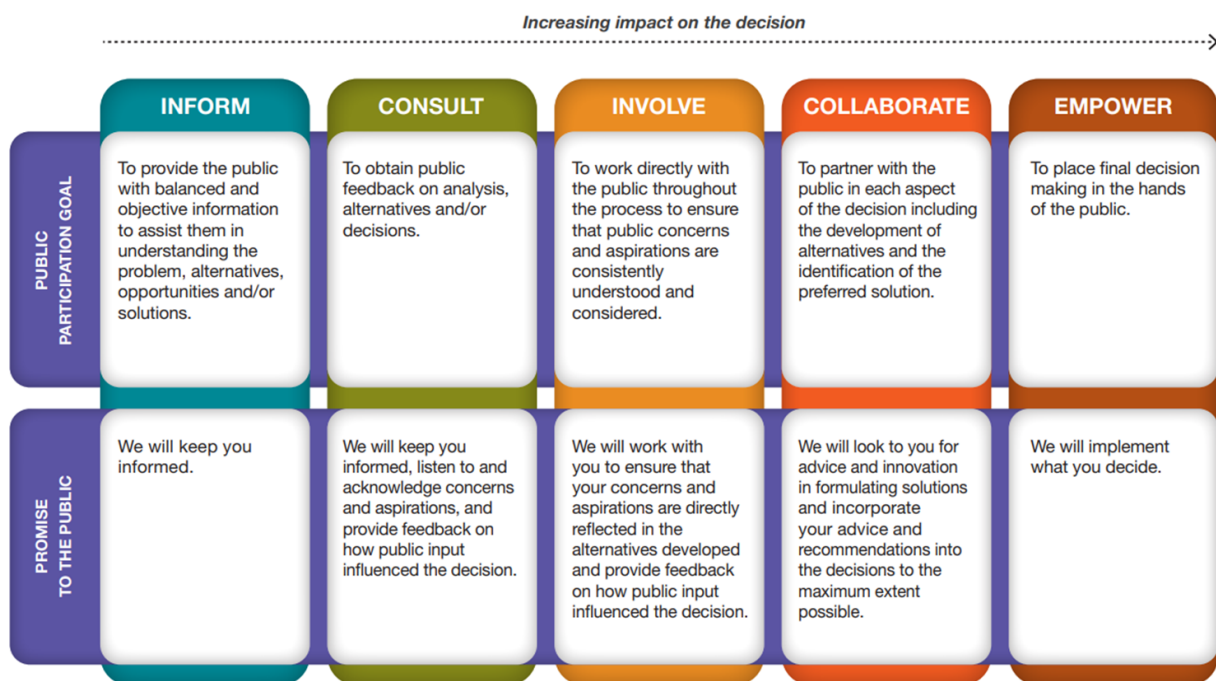
Engagement may be undertaken for (but not limited to) –

- Strategic planning and policy development
- Projects requiring stakeholder or community input
- Major service delivery or by-law changes
- Issues raised by the community with significant public interest
- Impending legislative or statutory changes with major local impact
- Major developments, re-zoning or land-use changes

The Community Engagement Policy provides a broad framework and policy direction for engagement. Shire staff will utilise the Shire of Esperance Community Engagement Guide on when and how community engagement should occur.

The Council and Shire's approach to community engagement is based on the spectrum of engagement activities as advocated by the Engagement Institute (formally IAP2).

Figure 1: Engagement Institute (formally IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum



## Roles and Responsibilities

Council's commitment to community engagement is supported by the *Local Government Act 1995* which outlines the essential role of a councillor.

### 2.10 A Councillor –

- a. represents the interests of electors, ratepayers and residents of the district; and

- b. provides leadership and guidance to the community in the district; and
- c. facilitates communication between the community and the council; and
- d. participates in the local government's decision-making processes at council and committee meetings; and
- e. performs such other functions as are given to a councillor by this Act or any other written law.

**Council:** Makes final decisions, informed by community input.

**Shire Officers:** Plan, deliver, and report on engagement activities, ensuring Councillors are briefed before significant engagements occur.

## Principles of Engagement

The Shire of Esperance's Community Engagement Policy is based on a set of core values adapted from the Engagement Institute (formally IAP2). These principles are used to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of Council and the Shire's engagement process.

Engagement will –

- Be representative and inclusive of all affected groups.
- Seek out and encourage contributions from community members who may be affected by or interested in a decision.
- Encourage participation and active listening.
- Provide relevant, balanced and timely information.
- Clearly communicate how feedback influenced decisions.
- Inform the community about decisions, and how their input was considered.
- Be appropriately planned, resourced and accessible.
- The timing of community activities should take into account key dates (school holidays, special events etc.) to ensure that maximum opportunity is given to encourage community input.
- Align with legislative and strategic requirements.

## Reporting and Evaluation

Community engagement activities will be reviewed quarterly and reported to Council through the Pulse Report or equivalent.

.....End.....

## Document Information

Responsible Position	Manager Marketing and Communications
Risk Rating	High

## Referencing Documents

- *Local Government Act 1995*

- *Communications & Engagement Strategy 2021-2024*
- Shire of Esperance Community Engagement Guide

#### Revision History

Date	Version	CM Reference	Reason for Change	Resolution #	Next Review
Dec 2013	1	D13/10249	New policy	O1213-010	Dec 2015
Mar 2018	2	D16/29035	Updated the reference to the new Strategic Community Plan, identified how we will report to Council and made minor grammar changes	O0318-073	Mar 2020
Nov 2019	3	D16/29035[v2]	Minor wording changes, inclusion of point 2 for developing an engagement strategy, amended responsible officer title.	O1119-248	Nov 2021
Jan 2022	4	D16/29035[v3]	Amend Strategic Community Plan and Pulse references, include communication and engagement strategy information,	O0122-012	Jan 2024
Jan 2024	5	D16/29035[v4]	Adjust reference for Council Plan, add scope and definitions, adjust remove matrix and replace with guide, amend IAP2 table, minor wording amendments.	O0124-004	Jan 2026
Dec 2025	6	D16/29035[v5]	Rewrite purpose and scope sections. Amend definitions for Community, Community Engagement and Strategy. Delete policy, procedure, guide definitions. Rewrite practice section, including insertion of new engagement spectrum.	O1225-098	Dec 2027