



**CENTRAL
GOLDFIELDS
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

Engaging Central Goldfields

A Community Engagement Framework



“More inclusive, better outcomes”

Strategy Owner: Governance
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Introduction:

Central Goldfields Shire is made up of many diverse communities in townships as well as rural and semi-rural locations. It is important that Council listen to and understand the aspirations, values and needs of these communities in order to ensure Council can make informed decisions and continue to support these communities into the future. As the Shire grows, the diversity of lifestyles, interests and needs is also increasing and this means that listening to the new voices in the community will also be important.

This Community Engagement Framework reflects Central Goldfields Shire's commitment to engaging with the community, and other local and regional stakeholders, to ensure that all voices are heard, including those that are harder to reach. We believe that fostering transparent, inclusive and meaningful engagement is central to the delivery of high quality services and infrastructure. By working more closely with the community and stakeholders, we aim to facilitate a cultural shift to make decisions that are more informed and reflect the broad views and ideas of the people of Central Goldfields Shire. This will lead to better outcomes for all.



Overview:



What is Community Engagement

Community engagement is a key role of local government - working with communities to make more informed decisions. Community engagement will inform Central Goldfields Shire Council on community views, attitudes, aspirations and concerns.

Community Engagement:

- Assists Council in decision making.
- Covers a wide variety of Council-community connections and interactions, ranging from:
 - Information sharing through community consultation
 - Community development initiatives
 - Active participation in government policy development and its decision-making processes
- Is the process of purposeful and timely information exchange between the Council and the community.
- Relies on active and constructive participation from the community and Council.
- Can use a range of methods – including survey, media releases, meetings, listening posts, social media etc. One method is not better or less than the other.
- Needs to be meaningful and respectful with all community members provided with an opportunity to participate in community consultation.
- Is constantly evolving and changing, and we need to keep pace with these changes. This will enable us to engage with as many residents as possible.
- Can be a statutory requirement in some instances.

Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of the Framework is to:

1

Inform the community about our approach to community engagement and encourage the community to become involved.

2

Improve the nature of decision making and help strengthen the relationship Council has with the community, as well as other stakeholders.

3

Recognise diversity within the community and incorporate this into the planning of engagement activities.

4

Enable a consistent, transparent and high quality approach to the planning and undertaking of community engagement.

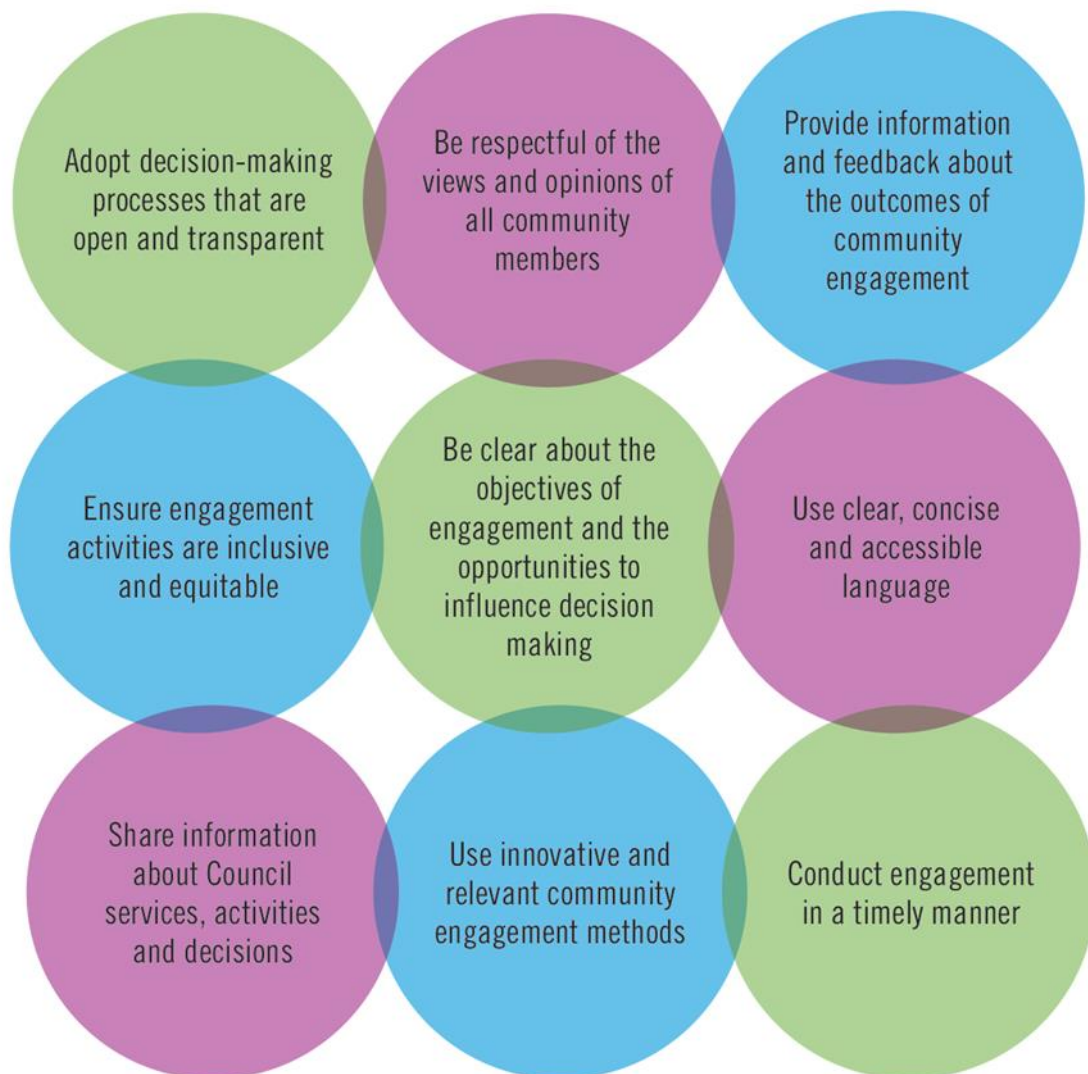
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Provide guidance to officers, Councillors and community on our consultation principles, methods and resources.

Community Engagement Principles

Central Goldfields Shire Council has adopted the following principles to underpin how we engage with the community. These principles will help us to improve service delivery, identify and respond to changing local needs and maintain an ongoing dialogue with our diverse community members.

WE WILL:



Who We Engage

Community: Individuals or groups who may be affected by or who have an interest in Council decision making. The community includes but is not limited to: residents, business owners, rate payers, community groups and clubs, or those who work or participate in leisure activities in the Shire.

Stakeholders: Organised groups and organisations who may be affected by or who have an interest in Council decision making. Stakeholders include but are not limited to: State and Federal governments, businesses, not-for-profit organisations, other local governments and service providers.

Harder to Reach: There are some people and groups who may find it more difficult to participate in engagement activities and are often referred to as 'hard to reach'. For example, those from minority groups or with limited personal resources such as homeless people, teenagers, newly arrived and people with a disability. The circumstances of each individual within these groups will vary and engagement approaches should be adapted accordingly.

When We Engage

Community engagement is considered invaluable in the way it enhances Council's capacity to make well-informed, accepted and sustainable decisions. It does not however, replace the final decision-making power of Councillors or the CEO. The results of community engagement activities will also be balanced against the evidence provided by professional staff.

Council will engage:

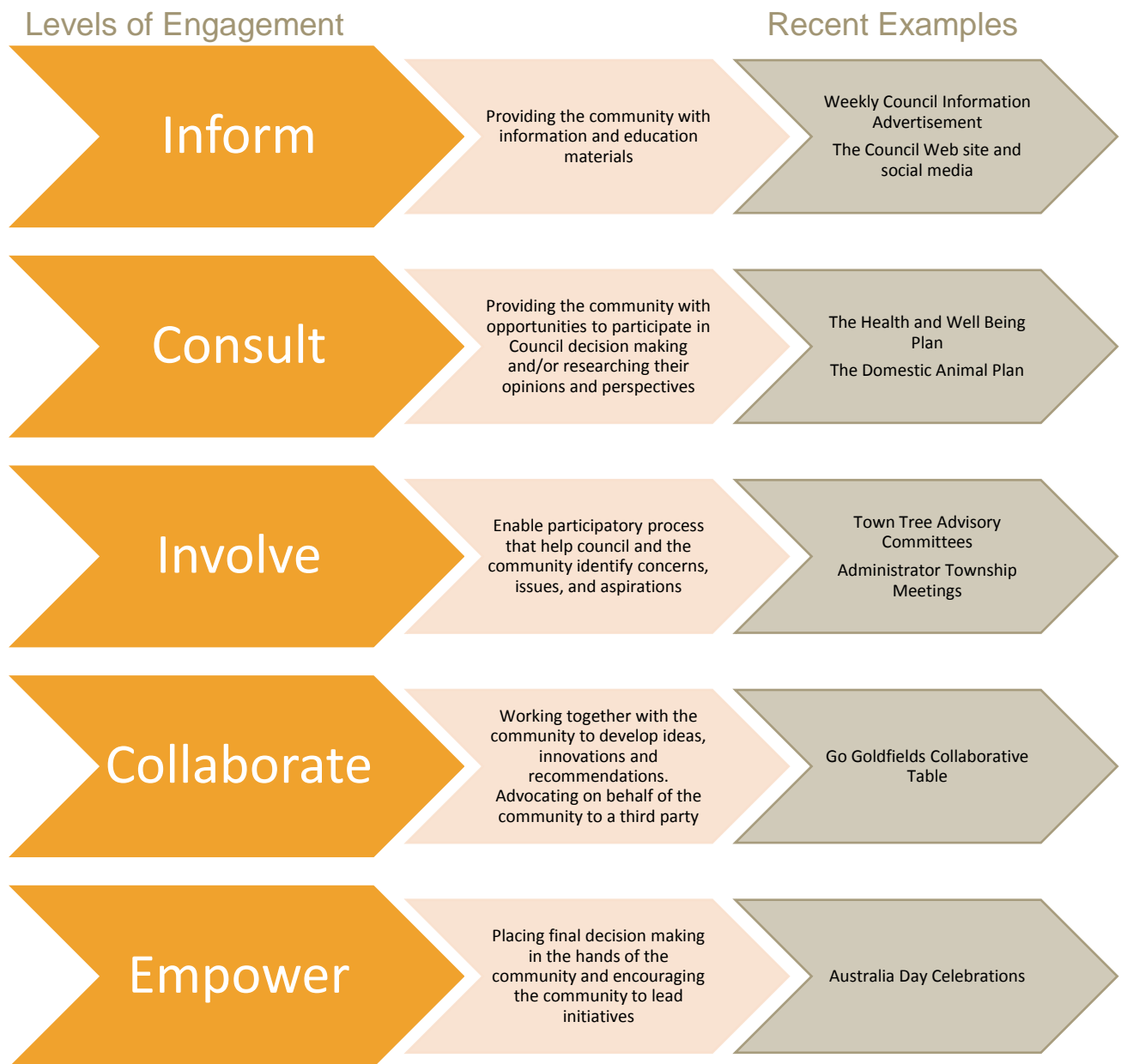
- To help make decisions on current and emerging issues
- On all major Council Plans, Strategies and Policies
- When it is a statutory, legislative or regulatory requirement

Council may not be able to engage widely:

- When timeframes and methodology have been predetermined by other levels of government
- Where other levels of government are leading the consultation. Where possible, Council will support this consultation
- When an immediate response is required, such as in response to an emergency.

Levels of Engagement

Council has adopted the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum which has five levels of engagement. The level of participation defines the public's role in any community engagement program and is determined based on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. The table below demonstrates how we will work and engage with the community at each level and provides some local examples.



Community Engagement Methods

There are a broad range of methods Council can use when engaging with the community and other stakeholders. Some of these will be new methods, such as the use of online forums, and others will have been used for many years already. While not an exhaustive list, the following are some of the methods that can be used:

- Workshops, community meetings and local events.
- Stakeholder meetings and forums.
- Public exhibitions and submissions.
- Central Goldfields Shire website and social media channels.
- A dedicated online forum.
- Community and stakeholder reference groups.
- Advisory Committees and Steering Committees.
- Drop-in sessions.
- School workshops.
- Business forums.
- Surveys - on-line and paper-based.
- Mail-outs and signage.
- Customer service counters.
- Community Liaison Groups.
- Stakeholder interviews.
- Media releases and newspaper advertisements.

Council may choose to use one or several of these techniques when consulting on a project or policy. One method is not better than another but the aim is to choose the method which most effectively engages with the impacted communities.

Community Engagement Resources

The following suite of resources are available to support implementation of the Engaging Central Goldfields Framework:

Community Engagement Principles

The community engagement principles underpin all our engagement work and promote a consistent understanding of our approach to community engagement for staff and the community.

Central Goldfields Shire Website

The Central Goldfields website will provide a central space for the sharing of information about community engagement opportunities across Council; providing updates, a consultation register and key dates.

Community Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit provides practical advice and templates to help Council staff to identify relevant engagement methods and plan and deliver the most appropriate community engagement activities. This is supported by internal training.

On-Line Communications Policy

This policy outlines the responsibilities of Council staff, Councillors and Contractors with regard to on-line media usage in an official capacity.

Central Goldfields Engagement Champions

Internal Community Engagement Champions promote community engagement and support their teams in carrying it out. Central Goldfields Engagement Champions are enthusiastic about improving community engagement practices and are engaged with current social media. These Champions reflect the diversity of Council and assist to promote community engagement across Council activities.

Training is provided for the Central Goldfields Engagement Champions.

Central Goldfields Community Voice Panel

The Community Voice Panel is a database of people with an interest in the decision-making of Central Goldfields Shire Council. They provide Council with insights into community sentiments and support for existing or proposed policies, programs and services.

The Community Voice Panel is regularly invited to complete surveys, and from time to time to participate in face-to-face engagement activities on important issues affecting our community.

The Community Voice Panel will be recruited through an expression of interest process on the Council website and social media. Membership will be representative of the broad Central Goldfields community and include people from a range of ages, household types, geographic locations and cultural backgrounds.

Members will need to declare any real or potential conflicts of interest and may choose to opt out at any time.

Advisory Committees

Advisory Committees consist of representatives from Council, community, government, community groups and other stakeholders. They provide expert advice, feedback and recommendations to Council on specific issues.

Examples of these committees are: The Audit and Risk Advisory Committee, and Township Tree Advisory Committees.

Community Engagement Resource Library

Current and best practice community engagement activities, resources and information is available to all Council staff. This is maintained by the Community Engagement Team.

Note: Council will ensure that information is available in accessible formats. All Central Goldfields Shire Council consultation documents will meet the Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) by June 2019.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Community engagement activities will be monitored for effectiveness through both qualitative and quantitative measures including:

- Number of community engagement activities conducted.
- Participation numbers
- Informal and formal feedback captured from participants.
- Online engagement activity, including number of visitors, demographic information of visitors, document downloads, video views and comments.
- Social media statistics.



Responsibilities

All Central Goldfields Shire Council Officers are responsible for implementing the Community Engagement Framework, however some teams have specific responsibilities:

The Senior Leadership Team has overall responsibility for delivering the Community Engagement Framework.

The Governance Team is responsible for leading and facilitating Council's Community Engagement Framework. They will:

- Maintain the Community Engagement Resource Library
- Support the Internal Central Goldfields Engagement Champions
- Develop and maintain the Community Engagement Toolkit
- Coordinate the Community Voice Panel
- Actively promote community engagement across Central Goldfields Shire
- Support engagement activities
- Providing and supporting ongoing training
- Promoting community engagement as part of Central Goldfields Shire Council's continuous learning commitment, including staff reward systems.

The Communications Department is responsible for:

- Working with departments to formulate clear and effective media strategies to leverage good engagement outcomes
- Providing Content Management System Training and support for a decentralised website management system in partnership with Council's Web Reference Group and consistent with Council's Style Guide
- Developing, maintaining and improving organisational standards with regard to social media usage for engagement purposes
- Facilitating the provision of electronic platforms that assist with embedding community engagement practices in all Council activities