2026

Community Engagement Framework



SOUTHERN LIMESTONE COAST COUNCIL

Acknowledgement of Country

It is a privilege to be standing on Boandik country.

We acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians to the development of all peoples in the country we live in and share together - Australia.

Contents

Definitions 01

What is Community Engagement? 02

Our Engagement Approach 03

Engagement Framework Content 05

Our Engagement Values 08

Our Engagement Framework 09

- Define 10
- Plan 13
- Do 16
- Review 18

Appendix 1: Charter Engagement Requirements 19

Definitions

Communication
The provision of information to and from the community.

Community
All people who live, work, pay rates, conduct business, visit, utilise services/facilities/public spaces within the Southern Limestone Coast Council.

Consultation
Two-way provision of information by Council to the community that enables them to respond, express concerns and identify issues, so these can be considered before final decision making.

Council
Southern Limestone Coast Council.

Community Engagement Charter (The Charter)
The Community Engagement Charter as published by the Minister for Local Government in the Government Gazette comprising of Section 50A of the Local Government Act 1999.

Community Engagement Policy (The Policy)
Council's internal policy document which aligns to the Community Engagement Charter and lays out the mandatory minimum engagement requirements for a range of prescribed activities and projects.

IAP2
International Association for Public Participation.

Stakeholder
Individuals, a group of individuals, organisations or political entities directly affected or involved with the outcome of a decision or the impact of a strategy/project/proposition.

Submission
A formal response to an engagement or consultation activity, such as a feedback form, survey answer, or direct letter.



What is Community Engagement?

Community Engagement describes the range of activities aimed at increasing community awareness and participation. It means our community getting involved in Council decisions that are important to them and sits at the heart of democratic processes in local government.

Council recognises that people have a right to be informed and have a say on projects and activities that are important to them, or which have an impact on their daily lives.

Council's vision, mission and strategies as outlined in the Southern Limestone Coast Council Strategic Plan 2024-2034 (the Plan) are underpinned by community engagement. The value of community engagement is further reinforced through the Plan's strategic goal - Community - a connected, inclusive, resilient and engaged community.

Community engagement is mutually beneficial for Council and the community as it assists to:

- Increase understanding and improved project and service outcomes through sharing information, meaningful feedback and partnerships;
- Increase trust and community confidence in decision making; and
- Enhance accountability and transparency through open and genuine communication.

Council Members are elected to represent their community's interests and it is their responsibility to make decisions. Input from the community is pivotal in this process as feedback provides Council with key information that can support or influence decisions.



Our Engagement Approach

Council is committed to proactively engaging community on important issues and opportunities. We want to strengthen relationships to build a greater understanding of community needs and views, which will assist us to make informed and transparent decisions.

In order to achieve this, we have developed this Community Engagement Framework (the Framework), which demonstrates the Southern Limestone Coast Council's commitment to:

- A consistent community engagement approach;
- Improving awareness and understanding of community engagement processes;
- Establishing the principles and definitions for engagement; and
- Providing guidelines and a toolkit for planning and delivering community engagement activities.

The flowchart below shows the proposed general process for starting engagement and how decision making works within Council.



- Community request or Council motion;
- Council business planning;
- A legislated obligation; or
- An operational need to engage.

- The need/opportunity is investigated; and
- A report is presented at an Ordinary Council Meeting, where Council determines direction for the project/proposal

- A Community Engagement Plan is developed and implemented; and
- Collation and analysis of engagement feedback into a report

- Presentation of report including findings and recommendations for Council's consideration; and
- Council makes decision on the proposed project/proposal

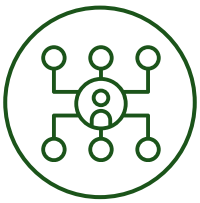
- The outcome of Council's decision is reported back to stakeholders and the community.

Our Engagement Approach

Southern Limestone Coast Council recognises the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum as the international standard for effective community engagement. The spectrum helps us determine the level of engagement and the extent to which community members and stakeholders may influence a decision. Generally, the more complex a decision is, the higher the level of engagement required.

Inform → **Involve** → **Empower**

Low level community engagement — *Medium level community engagement* — *High level community engagement*

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
					
Goal	One way communication to provide balanced and objective information to increase understanding about a topic	Two way communication process for gaining feedback, ideas and alternatives to inform decision making	Working directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and ideas are consistently understood and considered	Partnering with the public at every stage of decision making to develop alternatives and identify preferred solutions.	Building the capacity of the community to lead their own plans for change and have final decision making power.
Role of participants	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Lead
Examples of appopriate uses	In the event of an emergency or when service disruptions are occurring (road closures etc.)	Undertaking a survey about a park upgrade.	Hosting workshops to develop a strategic plan.	Establish a working group to co-design a project.	Provide event management training and funding for community to plan and deliver an event.
Possible methods	• Newsletters • Social Media • Public Notices • Council's Website • Fact Sheets • Drop-in Sessions • Club & Organisation Meetings	• Surveys • Polls • Public Exhibitions • Focus Groups • Drop-in Sessions • Township Meetings	• Workshops • Advisory Groups • Township Meetings	• Working Groups • Advisory Committees	• Training events • Facilitation of networks

Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum

Engagement Framework Context

Legislative Requirements

Section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) requires Council to adopt a Community Engagement Policy in line with the State Community Engagement Charter, which outlines minimum consultation standards for Councils in relation to various sections of the Act. Council will always engage with the community where there is a legislated requirement to do so and aims to genuinely engage exceeding the requirements in the Act.

Council endorsed its Community Engagement Policy (GOVPOL 15) (the Policy) at the Ordinary Council meeting of 20 July 2026, the same meeting this Framework was endorsed.

The Policy provides the foundation and minimum standards for engagement, while this Framework, where applicable, will be applied to enrich Council's engagement practices.

Charter Categories

The Charter establishes five categories which assign different mandatory engagement requirements to a project, depending on the level of impact the decision is likely to have on the community.

The level, methods and duration of engagement are proportionate to the relevant Charter category and consistent with the mandatory consultation requirements prescribed under the Charter.

Where more than one activity is specified for a Charter requirement, Council is not required to utilise all of them but may determine the most appropriate activities based on the nature, scope and impact of the project or decision.

Significant - Annual Business Plan & Rating Policy

- Adopting an Annual Business Plan
- Changes to basis of rating, declaring differential rates, imposing a separate rate, service rate or service charge, or changing the basis on which land is valued for the purpose of rating

Significant

- Representation reviews
- Development and review of Strategic Management Plans
- Changes to use of differential rating
- Revocation of classification of land as community land
- Adoption or significant amendments to Community Land Management Plans
- Alienation of community land by lease or license

Standard

- Substantial changes to the opening hours and place of Council's Principal Office
- Amendments to the Community Engagement Policy
- Amendments to Council behavioural support policies
- Changes to access to meetings and documents
- Power to make orders

Local

- Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for more than 48 hours (with a detour in place) or where no detour will be available
- Proposed planting of vegetation on a road that will have significant impact

Inform

- Minor changes to the opening hours and place of Council's Principal Office
- Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for less than 48 hours and the Council ensures that a detour is in place
- Election information (Section 13A (2) of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*)



Engagement Framework Context

Strategic Documents

Council's Strategic Plan 2024-2034 outlines the vision, mission and strategies for our district and communities over the next 10 years. It is the primary reference point from which Council's functions, actions and priorities will be developed, and our budget and resources allocated.

Since the adoption of the Community Engagement Framework in 2022, Council has adopted many more strategies and plans with the Framework's process used to engage with our community.

Community Feedback

Our community primarily wants to know the latest news about current and upcoming projects and activities, what is going on across the community, and our recreation and open spaces. Council will need to implement a number of different engagement methods, particularly township meetings, and to keep promoting its Your Say site.

Therefore, when Council is planning community engagement it is important to consider our communities' expectations and ensure we are encouraging participation across multiple areas of Council that are not only legislatively important but of interest to our community.

Elected Member Community Engagement

Elected Members are presented with a Community Engagement Report at Council's monthly meeting to keep them informed of engagement reach through media, events, and consultation activities.

At an Elected Member Briefing in February 2025, Elected Members committed to the following community engagement opportunities:

Meeting Type	Purpose	Schedule
Township	Provide a setting for community to receive formal updates, with an emphasis on Council's strategy and direction, and submit requests and questions to Elected Members and Senior Managers. Information received to be collated and used in the Annual Business Plan and Budget process for the upcoming financial year.	Halfway through Council term in October and November. To be held at: • Principal Council Office • Mount Gambier & District Saleyards • Mount Gambier Regional Airport • Port MacDonnell Community Complex
Drop-In	To provide casual outreach opportunities for Mayor and CEO to interact with community at different places of natural gathering. Elected Members to be invited.	Determined by Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.
Club Check-In	For Council staff to meet with community and sporting clubs to gain understanding of issues and opportunities.	Club request to Chief Executive Officer.
Business Forum	Outreach opportunities for Council staff to meet with local businesses to gain understanding of issues and opportunities.	Staff to be determined by Chief Executive Officer, businesses can make request to Council.
Progress Associations	To provide outreach opportunity for Chief Executive Officer and relevant staff to meet with Progress Associations across the District.	One per Council Term, open to all Elected Members.

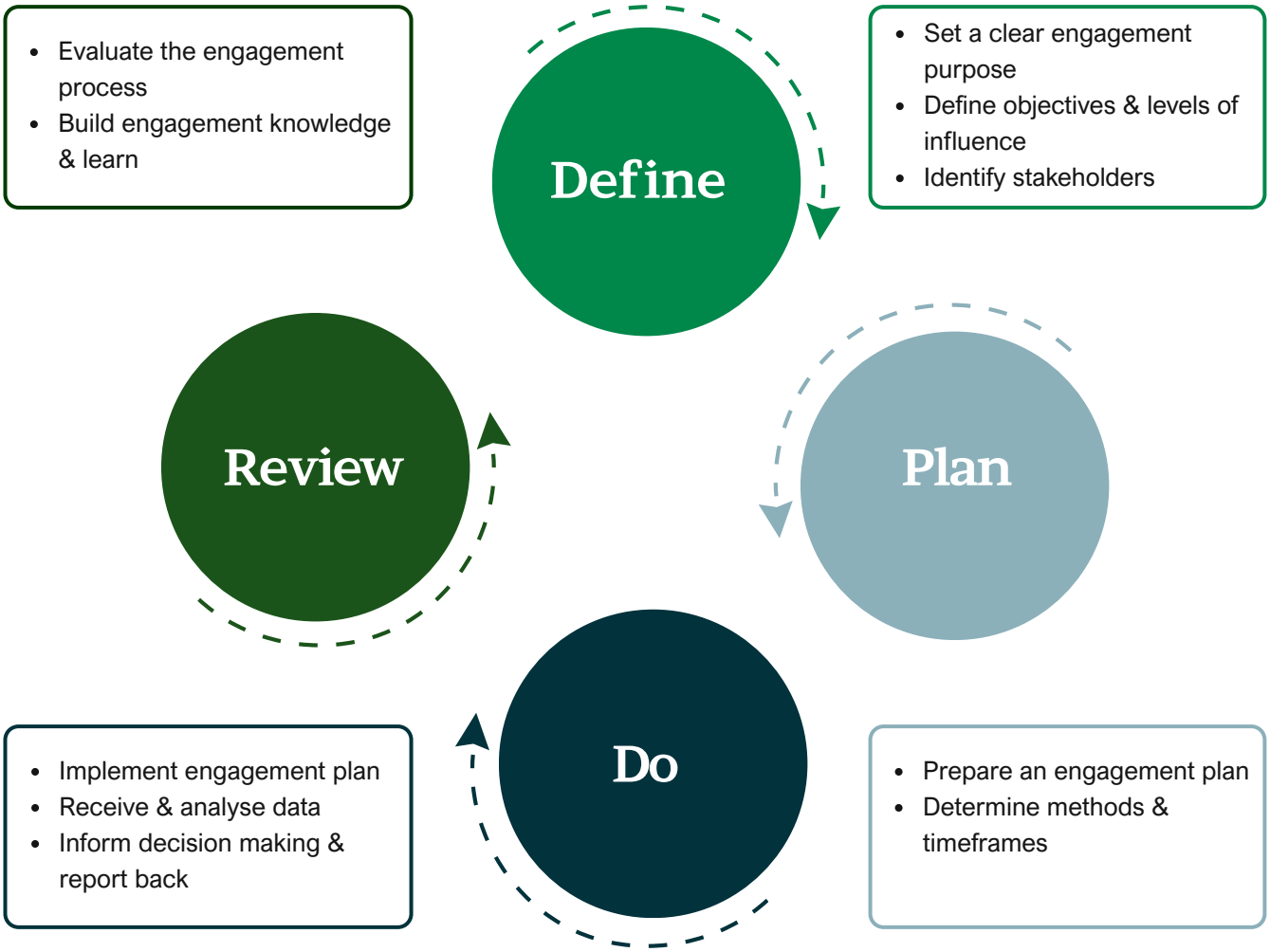
Our Engagement Values

The engagement values underpinning this Framework provide the foundation for community participation that is coordinated, consistent and best practice.

The values are the standards by which Council will undertake engagement and outline what the community can expect from Council in relation to our community engagement practices.

Strong relationships		We will act in an honest, open and respectful manner through active listening and acknowledgment of the diverse experiences and knowledge of our community.
Transparency		We will share information openly to promote informed decision making by the community, Council and staff.
Clear communication		We will define our engagement objective, explain the process, seek feedback and report back. The communication methods we use will be effective and accessible.
Accessibility		We will enable community to participate in engagement opportunities by using appropriate methods and tools. Relevant information will be provided in a timely and accessible way.
Inclusivity		We will make sure participation in our engagement activities is representative and uphold our stakeholders' right to be involved in decisions that affect them.
Meaningful opportunities		We will provide valuable opportunities for the community to influence decision making and incorporate feedback gained during engagement processes. The community will also be given feedback on how their input has been considered.
Continuous improvement		We will reflect on our engagement practices to refine them in future and identify barriers to engagement so that we can implement measures to remove/reduce these.

Our Engagement Framework



Step 1: Define

This is the first stage of the community engagement process. It is where the need to engage is determined along with an understanding of the context in which the engagement will occur. The purpose for engaging is clarified, the community engagement objectives and the level of influence are established, and key stakeholders are identified.

Council will

- Have a clearly defined community engagement purpose;
- Decide when to engage by considering community impact and interest;
- Determine the level of participation and influence;
- Always engage where legally required; and
- Provide anyone affected or interested with the opportunity to participate.

Deciding to Engage

There may be decisions, activities or processes Council undertakes for which the Act, Charter and Policy do not prescribe community engagement requirements. In such cases, it is at Council's discretion and that of any delegates to determine whether there is a need or benefit to engage the community.

This determination is critical to avoid wasting Council resources and the community's time by participating in a process that will not influence an outcome or decision.

The following table provides prompts when to engage, if more information is required prior to engaging, or if informing the community is sufficient.

If it is still unclear whether to engage, consult with the Executive Assistant for clarity.

Questions	Answer	Decision to engage
Has the decision already been made?	Yes	Inform the community
	No	Engage
Is there any legislative requirement to engage?	Yes	Engage
	No	Check Engagement Policy
Has there already been a community engagement process on this activity/ project?	Yes	Engage or Inform the community
	No	Engage
Will community involvement influence/enhance the outcome of the project/ activity?	Yes	Engage
	No	Inform the community
Are there benefits to the community for participating?	Yes	Engage
	No	Inform the community
Does internal engagement need to occur?	Yes	Engage
	No	Inform relevant staff

Setting a Clear Engagement Purpose

It is critical to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the engagement before deciding on specific activities that will occur, as this will help define the objectives and the stakeholders. To begin, ask:

- What do we want to know?
- How will the result be used?
- What does success look like for the project?

Some common engagement purposes including wanting to solve or understand a problem, generate support, share information with the community, build relationships, and comply with the law.

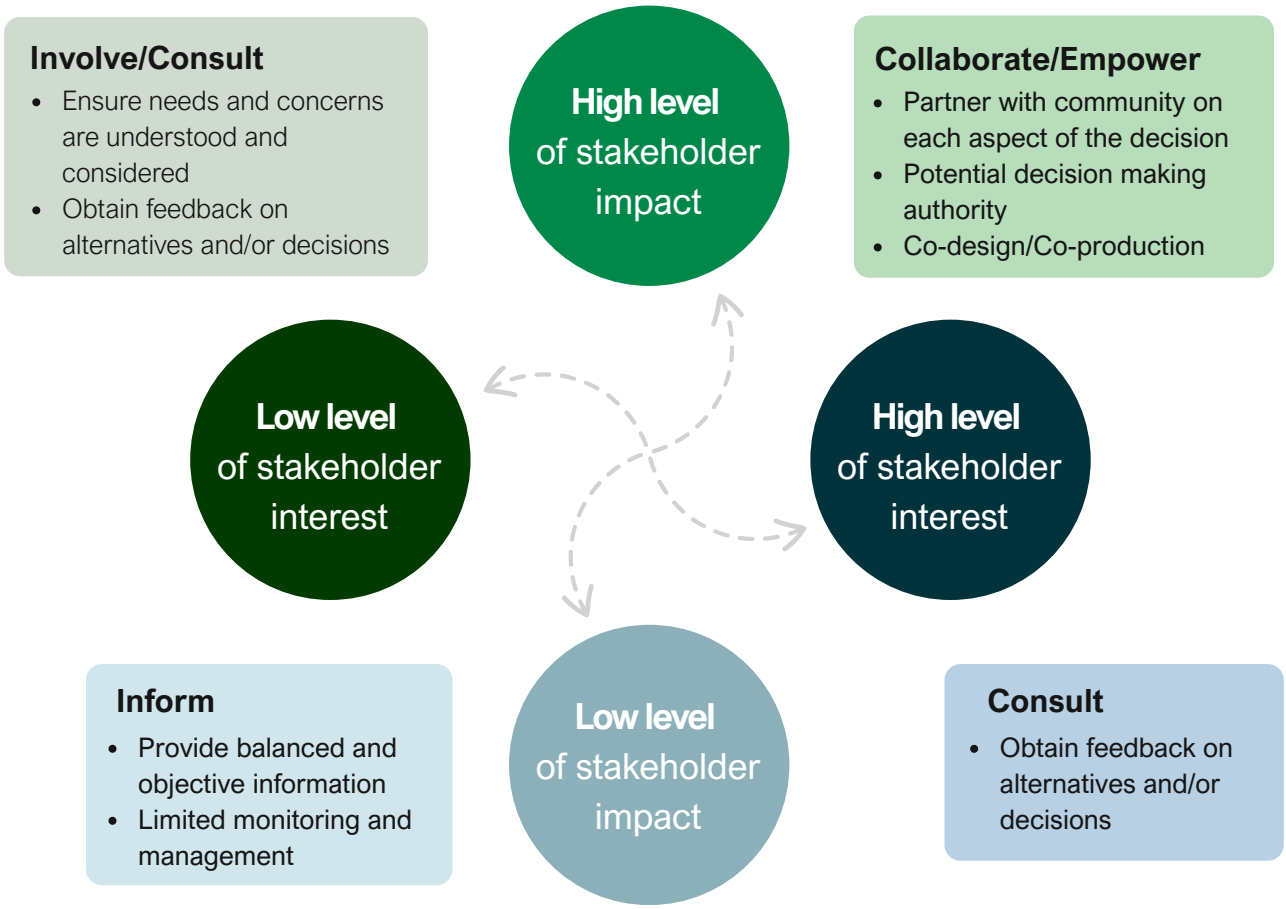
Defining Objectives and Level of Influence

- Explain what we want to achieve from the engagement;
- Clarify what elements can be influenced and those which cannot (negotiables and non-negotiables);
- Define who will be involved, what is being asked of them, and how their input will be captured;
- Determine how much decision-making power we are willing and able to hand over to our community stakeholders; and
- Define the measurables so we can know if the engagement has been a success.

Stakeholders

Anyone who is likely to be affected by or has an interest in a decision or outcome will have the opportunity to participate. Council will identify potential stakeholders and the influence they may have on the engagement outcome using our internal Community Engagement Planning Tool (the Planning Tool).

The below diagram illustrates the level of engagement required for different types of stakeholders depending on their level of interest and impact on the activity/project.



Step 1: Define

Identify risk

As with most projects and activities delivered across Council there is an element of risk with stakeholder engagement. Identifying and managing any potential risks early in engagement planning will make for a more effective process and decrease the likelihood of issues arising later on and negatively impacting the engagement process or project outcome(s).

This table highlights common engagement risks and possible ways to minimise the impact on the project/activity, though each project will carry separate specific risks depending on its scope and impact on the community.

Common Risks	Management Strategies
Stakeholders not understanding the engagement objectives or expectations about level of influence.	• Establishing the level of influence and engagement objectives at the start of the project/activity. • Ensuring stakeholders understand their level of influence and the engagement objectives.
Negative public feedback due to stakeholders having insufficient time or information to participate.	• Plan for early engagement, including communicating how and when stakeholders can participate. • Close the engagement loop so that stakeholders knowhow their feedback has influenced the project/activity.
Stakeholders feeling excluded from the engagement process eg. due to disability, language barriers or geographic isolation.	• Ensure that engagement methods and times are accessible and targeted for stakeholders eg. Easy Read documents, diverse ways to participate (online or in person), and culturally appropriate methods.
Receiving feedback which significantly impacts the project / activity late in the delivery phase, which leads to time delays and resource implications.	• Engage at the start of a project/activity eg. focus groups with key stakeholders to influence the development of the project/activity. • Be clear on the level of influence at each project stage. • Close the communication loop by informing the stakeholder how their feedback has influenced the project/activity.
Failure to engage with diverse or hard to reach members of the community.	• Set up project control groups and/or consult with other members of staff and key stakeholders to ensure that those that are affected by the decision are included in the engagement activity. • If the project/activity has concluded without consultation, then hard to reach stakeholders should be informed and included in any future relevant engagement activities.
Engaging the community due to legislative requirement but feedback being out of Council's scope to action.	• Be clear on what Council can action or change, versus what Council can advocate for on behalf of the community.

Step 2: Plan

In this stage Council determines how to implement the engagement process. With a clear understanding of the engagement purpose and key stakeholders gained during the 'Define' stage, the levels and methods of engagement are determined during 'Plan' using the IAP2 Spectrum.

Council will

- Set clear expectations about what is negotiable and the level of influence on decision making that the community can expect to have;
- Customise the engagement methods to ensure accessibility and inclusion; and
- Develop an engagement plan which includes evaluation processes.

Prepare an Engagement Plan

Prior to implementing any engagement activities an Engagement Plan needs to be developed to ensure a coordinated and adequately resourced process. The Planning Tool will be used across Council for consistent, targeted and organised engagement.

Council's Community Engagement Plans will include the following information:

- Engagement purpose and objectives;
- Stakeholders;
- Methods and timeframes;
- Resource requirements; and
- Monitoring & evaluation processes.



Methods

Depending on the community engagement audience, legislative requirements under the relevant Charter category, and desired project outcome, the methods, resources and timeframes for engagement will vary.

A mixture of engagement methods ensures that the engagement is accessible to different stakeholders and is relative to the participation level required.

For all engagements and consultations, Your Say DCG should be used as the primary platform for providing information to the community and collecting data. Participation opportunities will also need to be provided for stakeholders not online, for example town meetings, drop-in sessions or letter drops as well as hardcopy consultation materials.

The following diagram provides examples of the different engagement methods across the participation spectrum.

A breakdown of minimum required methods and legislated timeframes for each Charter category are found in Appendix 1.

Delegation

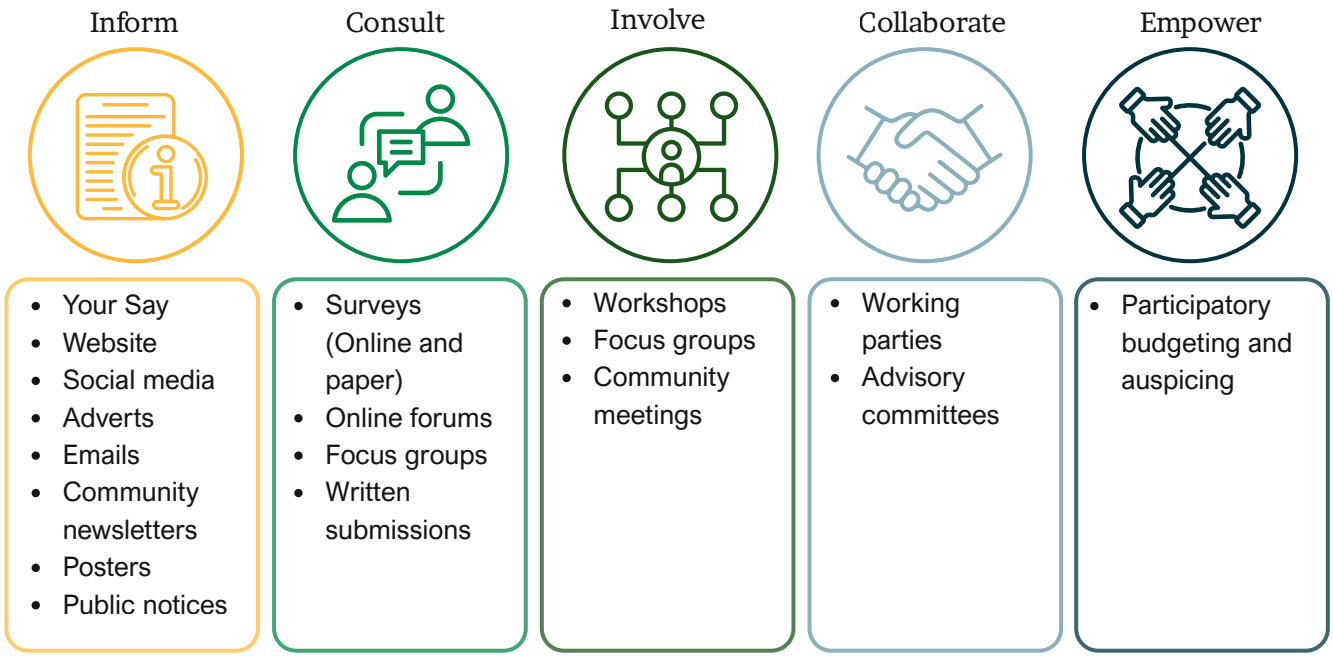
The specific engagement activities to be undertaken are determined on a case-by-case basis by:

- Council, by resolution;
- The Chief Executive Officer;
- A delegate authorised to undertake community engagement under the Act, the Charter, or the Policy;
- A delegate authorised to make the relevant decision or undertake the relevant activity or process.

Council, the CEO or any delegates are not required to undertake additional engagement activities beyond those stipulated in the Charter or Policy, but may determine it is appropriate at their discretion.

Timeframes

Engagement timeframes will be clearly communicated to the community as part of each engagement process.





Step 2: Plan

Monitoring and evaluation

Best practice evaluation occurs throughout a project, from the planning stages through to reporting. There should be opportunities to reflect on the process and refine it to ensure effectiveness.

Generally community engagement effectiveness is measured by:

- Reach (number of people participating);
- Representation of the community (who is participating);
- The quality of the engagement process (are we meeting our objectives and managing risk);
- The strength of the relationships built throughout the process and into the future (developing trust with the community);
- Insights gained through the engagement process (influence of feedback on project/activity); and
- Level of satisfaction with the outcome.

Collecting this information throughout engagement allows for continuous improvement and to ensure that Council is meeting its engagement objectives as outlined in the ‘Plan” stage.

Monitoring and evaluating does not add to the workload when incorporated into the engagement planning at the beginning of a project. By doing so early it ensures that the required information is captured throughout the engagement process.

The Planning Tool defines evaluation details for the process, engagement and outcomes. Council can monitor what is working well, what can be improved and how the engagement impacted the project/activity.

Step 3: Do

Once the Planning Tool is complete, it's time to implement in the 'Do' stage. This includes encouraging stakeholders to participate and collecting their feedback to inform our decision making.

Council will

- Promote engagement activities to ensure the community is aware of participation opportunities;
- Actively listen and record feedback;
- Report back on the findings and decisions in a timely and accessible way; and
- Use the findings to inform decisions or advocate for change on issues outside of Council's scope.

Promote Engagement Opportunities

As part of planning the engagement process, consideration needs to be given to how the engagement opportunity will be promoted to stakeholders and the community. This will be determined as part of the engagement plan and delivered at this stage.

Examples of engagement promotion include:

- Social media posts;
- Community newsletters;
- Targeted letter drops;
- Public notices and media releases; or
- Additional methods as appropriate.

Receive and analyse data

Depending on the level of engagement and methods outlined in the engagement plan, the collection of data may take a number of different forms. As mentioned above, Your Say DCG is the primary platform for collecting and analysing data.

If feedback is provided through other avenues such as written submissions via direct email or letter, this data will be recorded and presented alongside the Your Say DCG submissions.

Comments on Council social media posts promoting community consultation opportunities are not considered feedback, however Council staff will endeavour to respond to comments by referring the commenter to the appropriate engagement and validation process.





Public Meetings

Where required under the Policy, Council will hold a public meeting (either as part of a Council meeting or as a separate event) at which the community is invited to make written and/or verbal submissions on the project or activity.

Where required under the Policy, Council will invite anyone who has made a written submission to attend a Council meeting and speak to their submission prior to a decision being made on the matter.

Council will ensure reasonable notice is provided for any public meeting and that engagement material clearly explains how submissions and community feedback will inform Council's decision-making.

Privacy

When engagement data is presented to Elected Members as part of an Engagement Feedback Report to Council, data is always de-identified according to Council's Privacy Policy.

Inform decision making and report back (closing the loop)

Engagement includes the commitment that the community's contribution will be considered and that they will be informed about how their contribution was used. All views collected during Council engagement processes will be considered and assessed in context of other relevant data, legislation, or information.

To ensure transparency in decision making, Council will:

- Consider the results compiled in the Engagement Feedback Report;
- Refer back to the purpose and objectives of the engagement process; and
- Demonstrate how the engagement results have been used to inform the final decision and outcome.

The way in which Council reports the results and consultation outcomes to the community may vary depending on the engagement purpose and levels. However, it must be timely and accessible while protecting confidentiality of the participants.

Step 4: Review

This is the final stage of the engagement process and ensures that Council is continuously improving our engagement practices and increasing our understanding of the community. We also want to assess the value of our engagement processes so that we can continue to enrich our services and increase community satisfaction.

Council will

- Evaluate our engagement processes;
- Build our knowledge and learnings; and
- Maximise the impact of community input by sharing insights internally.

Evaluate the engagement

Council will review and evaluate the methods implemented and the outcome(s) achieved.

Primarily what needs to be considered during the evaluation is:

- Were the engagement objectives achieved?
- What worked well?
- What could be improved or done differently?
- How have the engagement results impacted the outcome of the project or activity?
- Where will the data be stored and how will staff know where to access it if required?

Build knowledge and learnings

Continuous improvement is one of Council's engagement values, reflecting and refining our community engagement practices and processes will ensure that we are always improving our engagement. Learning from what worked well or not in previous engagement processes will increase our understanding and assist us to build and grow the skills and knowledge to better meet our community's needs.



Appendix 1

State Government Community Engagement Charter Requirements

The below table is reproduced from Council's Community Engagement Policy (GOVPOL15), referring to the mandatory minimum requirements for community engagement prescribed for each Charter category. This Framework should always be read in conjunction with the complete Policy and Charter when seeking clarification on the legislative and policy requirements of community engagement.

	Charter Category				
Minimum Mandatory Requirement	**Significant - Annual Business Plan & Rating Policy**	**Significant**	**Standard**	**Local**	**Inform**
Consult with whole community	*	*	*		
Inform whole community (or loca/affected community as appropriate)		×			*
Consult with local community (consider best way to reach affected community)				*	
Website	*	*	*	*	*
News publication - Print (if available, not Council)	*	*			
Summary provided in rates notice	× (Final Annual Business Plan)				
Invite submissions (include how to make submissions)	*	*			
Seek feedback (consider best way to get feedback, how it will be used and appropriate timeframe)			*	*	
Explain decision making process (what is proposed, why is it proposed, and what is trying to be achieved)	*	*	×		
Summary of feedback considered by Council (before a decision is made)	*	*	×		
Minimum engagement period of 42 days		×			
Minimum engagement period of 21 days	*	*			
Minimum engagement period of 14 days			✓		
Hold a Public Meeting (as part of Council meeting or separate)	*				
Invite to present at a Public Meeting (as part of Council meeting or separate)		*			

*Legislated requirement | ✓ Council Policy only | × Refer to Council Policy for further details



Address: 324 Commercial Street West, Mount Gambier

Post: PO Box 724, Mount Gambier SA 5290

Phone: (08) 8721 0444

Email: info@slcc.sa.gov.au

Website: www.slcc.sa.gov.au