



P O L I C Y

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Policy Title Public Participation Policy	Date April 6, 2018	Resolution No.

Policy Statement

Lacombe County believes that its success lies with the people and businesses that it serves. We see the value in engaging the public through a variety of mediums and are committed to open, accountable and responsive decision making, including different levels of engagement with the public as outlined in this policy. Lacombe County believes that meaningful public participation on different levels is crucial to communications between the municipality and its stakeholders, as well as the success of the County as a whole.

This policy speaks to the level of public participation and engagement opportunities coming from Lacombe County around the issues of proposed applications, plans, bylaws, projects, studies, arising issues, and other initiatives that may have an impact on ratepayers in the County.

Purpose

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) requires every municipality to have a public participation policy in place, which must identify:

- The types or categories of approaches the municipality will use to engage municipal stakeholders
- The types or categories of circumstances in which the municipality will engage municipal stakeholders

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Lacombe County employees and Council when they engage the public, whether to inform, consult or engage the public regarding application plans, bylaws, projects, studies, arising issues, and other initiatives proposed by Lacombe County.

This policy also applies to consultants working on behalf of Lacombe County, as well as any boards, committees, and other quasi-judicial bodies as appointed by Lacombe County Council through a bylaw, policy or other legislation.

The following elements of the **County's Strategic Plan** are relevant to this policy:

Communications: To maintain & enhance an open and effective system of communicating with the public, our staff, and our stakeholders.

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Definitions

Stakeholders means the residents of the municipality, as well as other individual, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Municipality.

Public means anyone (including groups and individuals) who may have an interest in a specific topic or issue under discussion. The public may, or may not, be directly impacted by a decision on the issue.

Municipality means Lacombe County.

Lacombe County refers to all staff, representatives and consultants working for or hired by the municipality.

Public Participation includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the Municipality.

Roles and Responsibilities

Lacombe County:

- Will inform, consult, and engage the public about decisions that affect them, and will provide public participation opportunities that are open and transparent.
- Will give consideration to the public's input gathered in public participation processes.
- Is committed to working together with the public to continuously improve its public participation processes.
- Supports County staff to build their skills and knowledge to engage the public in a meaningful way.
- Supports the belief that involving the public and stakeholders in public participation leads to better, more informed decisions

The public and stakeholders of Lacombe County:

- Are encouraged to meaningfully engage so their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps to build a strong community
- Have the right to be heard, but also to listen and be open to different ideas and opposing views.
- Are encouraged to increase their understanding and knowledge about local issues, as well as their role in Lacombe County's decision-making process so that they can participate in a meaningful way.

Guidelines/Procedures

- This policy applies to the scope of services of Lacombe County:
 - Planning, policy, and project initiatives;
 - Mandated processes involving public participation (ie. Bylaws);
 - Community Development;
 - Internal Relations;
 - Customer Service;
 - Emerging issues.
- All County staff responsible for projects or initiatives will be accountable for following the Public Participation Policy

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- All participation initiatives will follow the Levels of Engagement table (at the end of the policy). Not all projects require the same extensive stakeholder consultation, but the appropriate approach should be selected on a project-to-project basis.
- All participation activities will occur within approved plans and funding and any requests outside of these approved plans must be referred to Council.
- County staff will support Council, staff, partners, and the public to build participation capacity within Lacombe County. Over time, implementation of the standards will be supported with training, tools, and templates.
- Lacombe County will promote and communicate opportunities for public participation in a matter they feel is appropriate. This can include a combination of the following:
 - County News
 - Website
 - Social Media (Facebook / Twitter)
 - Radio
 - Direct Mail / flyers
 - Local newspaper advertising

Goals for the Future

- Include Public Participation section with staff recommendations in Council Agenda items
- Public Input / Engagement surveys for stakeholders (how they like to be included; why they like to participate; what prevents them from participating; how do they like to be communicated to)
- Public Participation Guide for Lacombe County Staff
- School information project on municipal government

Evaluation

An evaluation is necessary to assess how effectively the Public Participation Policy requirements and commitments were met. The level of stakeholders influence in discussions and an assessment of whether the information was timely, balanced, accurate, accessible, etc. can be completed. In addition to the impact of the participation / engagement on decisions, and stakeholders can be asked to express their level of satisfaction with the process and resolution of issues.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

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Levels of Engagement



Type of Decision

Directive Consultative Deliberative Participatory Citizen-Led

Level of Engagement

Inform To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Consult To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Involve To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Collaborate To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Empower To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
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Commitment to Stakeholders

We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.	We will work together, seek your advice and innovation in formulating solutions and we will incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
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Engagement Tools

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Websites • Open Houses • Media • Face-to-face meetings • Reports • Social Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Surveys • Feedback forms • Online and personal comments • Public meetings • Social Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making • Workshops | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballots • Plebiscites • Delegated decisions |
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