

The background image shows a public meeting or community engagement session. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with long, wavy brown hair is visible. To the left, a person in an orange long-sleeved shirt has their arm raised. To the right, a person in a grey long-sleeved shirt also has their arm raised. In the background, a woman with blonde hair is holding a white paper and looking towards the right. A red sign with white text "Your Plan" is visible in the upper right corner. Below it, a white sign with red text "JOIN THE CONVERSATION" is partially visible.

Participation Policy for the Public

Your County, Your Conversation:
How & Why You Should Get Involved
in the Decision Making Process

APRIL 2018

LACOMBE
COUNTY

Purpose

Lacombe County believes that its success lies with the people and businesses that it serves. Community needs change and to ensure your municipal leaders and Council keep aware of these changing needs the County believes that meaningful public engagement on a variety of levels is crucial to communications and the success of the County as a whole.

Public Participation Principles

The **County's Strategic Plan** identifies communications as a key objective:

“To maintain & enhance an open and effective system of communicating with our citizens, our staff and our stakeholders”.

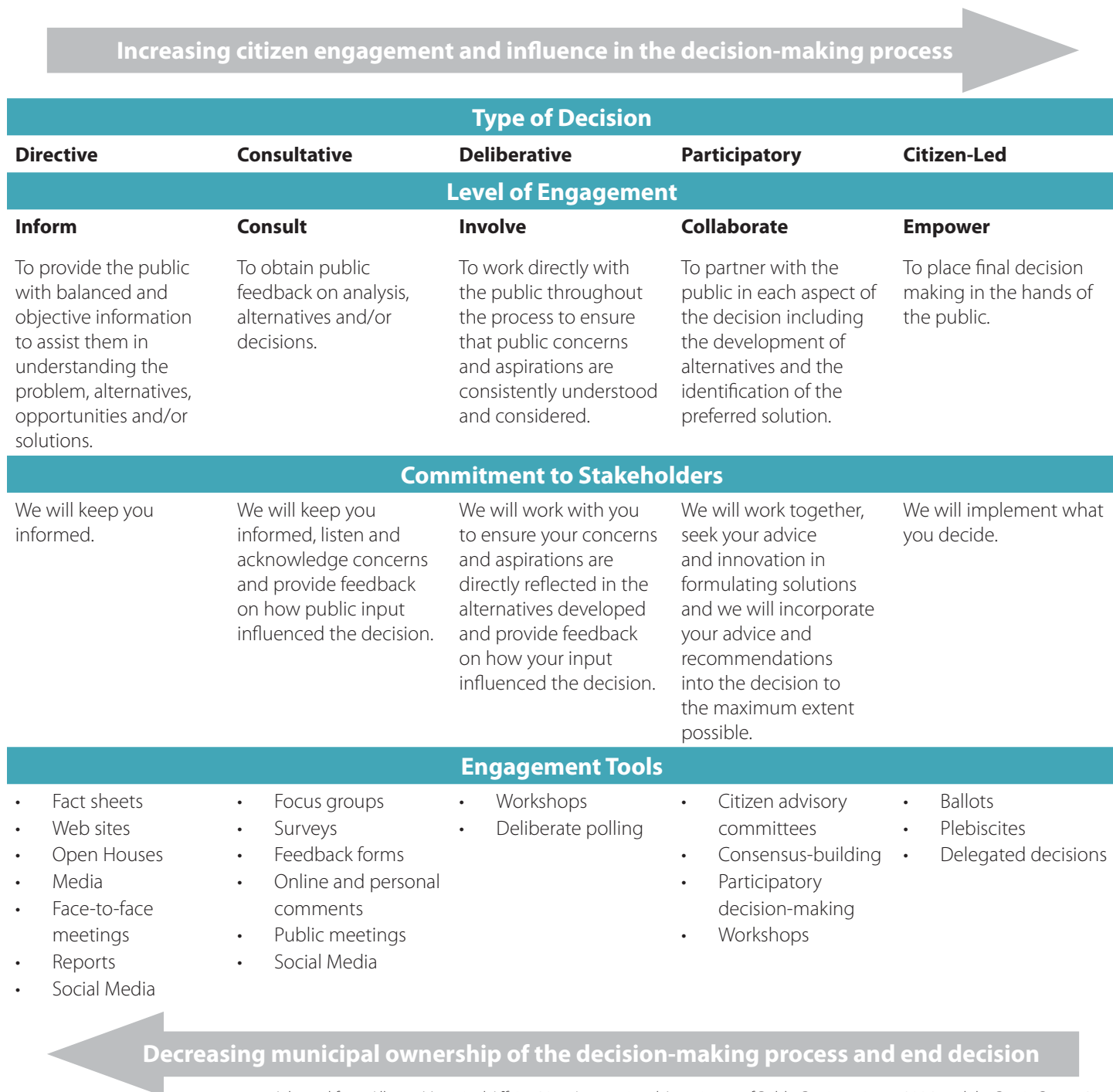
Key Principles

1. Open and easy access to information, municipal representatives and Council.
2. Transparent and accountable decision making for all plans, policies, projects, bylaws and other initiatives proposed by Lacombe County.
3. Responsive decision making that takes into account the viewpoint of various stakeholders, and changing needs of the community.
4. Consistent and continuous dialogue with the public.
5. Provide multiple opportunities and levels of public engagement.



Levels and Types of Engagement

All engagement initiatives will follow the Levels of Engagement table (below). Not all projects require the same extensive stakeholder consultation, but the appropriate approach should be selected on a project-to-project or issue-to-issue basis.



Adopted from Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2011; International Association of Public Participation © 2006; and the Praxis Group, 2012.

Communication

Lacombe County will promote and communicate opportunities for public engagement in a manner they feel most appropriate to the type and level of engagement. This can include a combination of the following:

- County News
- Website
- Social Media (Facebook / Twitter)
- Radio
- Direct Mail / flyers
- Local newspaper advertising
- Surveys

Roles and Responsibilities

Lacombe County:

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

Public and other stakeholders:

- Meaningfully engage with the County so your voice strengthens decisions and recognize your involvement helps to build a strong community.
- You have the right to be heard, but also to listen and be open to different ideas and opposing views.
- Strive to increase your understanding and knowledge about local issues, as well as your role in Lacombe County's decision-making process so that you can participate in a meaningful way.
- Hold municipal administration and Council accountable for a participatory, fair and transparent decision making process.

Legislation and Review

The Public Participation Policy was developed in accordance with the requirements of Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*. The County will review and update its Public Participation Policy every two (2) years. Council may however amend the policy from time to time if it considers necessary.



Definitions

County Manager means the chief administrative officer of the Municipality or their delegate.

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.

The 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.

External Public Engagement means a formal or informal interactive process between the County, the public and other stakeholders, designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

