



## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

Applicability: All CVRD staff, volunteers, contractors and Board members

Effective Date: March 13, 2019

### **PURPOSE:**

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is committed to building relationships and earning trust through open and meaningful interaction with residents and stakeholders on a variety of its plans, projects and initiatives. This policy establishes a formal approach for the CVRD to develop and execute engagement plans on a case-by-case basis.

### **SCOPE:**


This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors and elected officials of the CVRD. This policy does not apply to the CVRD's engagement with Indigenous groups, which constitute another level of government.

Public participation (also referred to as "engagement") refers to any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make sustainable decisions. Public participation is a spectrum that ranges from informing the public about decisions that affect them to empowering them to make decisions themselves.

### **POLICY:**

#### **Commitment to Participation**

1. The CVRD has adopted the best practices and models of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as a foundation for approaching community engagement. Effective public participation is based on three guiding principles that determine the level of participation to be applied to a project or initiative:
  - a. **Values-based** - meaningful participation is focused on talking to people about what matters most to them and what matters most to the other affected parties.
  - b. **Decision-oriented** - outlining the scope of issues under discussion to purposefully come to a conclusion or decision over the course of a process.
  - c. **Goal-driven** - outlining the public's role and potential to influence the issues under discussion with clear objectives of what will be achieved. For example, information is communicated, input or feedback is sought, or collaborative development is desired.
2. IAP2's Participation Spectrum is an internationally recognized model that local governments across North America apply to engagement and public participation. IAP2's five-level spectrum was designed to assist with selecting the level of participation and defining the public's role in any public participation process.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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### Planning and Oversight

3. Engagement with the public will be carried out with purpose and will be organized. Public participation is not required for every project, but elected officials and staff will consider whether it is needed at the commencement of all CVRD projects and initiatives. Where public participation is required, an engagement plan will be developed that identifies the level of the IAP2 Participation Spectrum that will be adopted and provides order, structure and sets expectations for how input will be used in the decision-making process.
4. Engagement plans will be developed at an early stage in a project, and may adopt a multi-phased approach to public participation that employs different levels of the IAP2 Participation Spectrum throughout the process. CVRD staff will have the appropriate work time to effectively develop and execute all aspects of an effective engagement plan and associated activities. The CVRD’s Communications & Engagement Manager or designate(s) must be involved in the development of all engagement plans and approve all plans before they are taken to senior staff and/or the Board of Directors.

### Training

5. To develop capacity, ensure consistency and strive for continuous improvement, elected officials and applicable staff will receive annual community engagement training and an introduction to IAP2 principles. This may be internal training led by the Communications & Engagement Manager or designate(s), or external training delivered by public participation

practitioners. All CVRD departments and divisions will, when required, allocate appropriate resources and budgets to provide applicable staff with training opportunities.

## **Budget**

6. To ensure adequate resources to implement this policy, a Communications & Engagement line item must be included in all major projects or initiatives with appropriate funds budgeted. These budgets must be reviewed and approved by the Communications & Engagement Manager, or designate(s), to ensure they are adequate to meet the needs of the associated engagement plan.

## **Roles**

7. Directors will:
  - a. Provide high-level guidance on decisions or issues for which they would like public input, the scope of the decision or issue for which input is sought and how they would like input conveyed back to them; and
  - b. Consider input that is received and communicate to the public their reasons for decisions.
8. The Communications & Engagement Manager, or designate(s), will:
  - a. Develop and maintain a Public Engagement Guide and Workbook to support this policy;
  - b. Plan and deliver training opportunities for elected officials and staff;
  - c. Develop and review engagement plans; and
  - d. Provide advice and support to the organization.
9. All other CVRD staff will:
  - a. Consider, for all projects, whether engagement should be conducted;
  - b. Seek advice and support from the Communications & Engagement Manager or designate(s);
  - c. Develop engagement plans and associated budgets; and
  - d. Allocate staff time for training.

## **Implementation**

10. Implementation of this policy will be supported by the more detailed *Engagement Workbook*, which outlines best practice approaches to planning, delivering and evaluating meaningful and effective community engagement.

Approved by: CVRD Board Approval date: March 13, 2019
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*Public Engagement Policy*