

8.3 Community Engagement Policy

REPORT BY THE MANAGER - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
TO 21 JUNE 2023 ORDINARY MEETING
GOV400103, ECO800001

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. receive the report by the Manager - Economic Development on the Community Engagement Policy;
2. place the Community Engagement Policy on exhibition for 28 days to seek feedback from the community; and
3. adopt the reviewed Community Engagement Policy if no submissions are received during the exhibition period.

Executive summary

The Community Engagement Policy is a new policy for adoption following recommendations from Council's internal review and improvement processes. This policy will be used to guide the planning and delivery of all of Council's community and stakeholder engagements.

Disclosure of Interest

Nil

Detailed report

In November/December 2022 Crowe Australasia completed a Communication and Community Engagement Strategy internal audit for Mid-Western Regional Council. In the final report it was recommended that Council develop a Community Engagement Policy to ensure best practice and consistency in Council's community engagement activities.

In December 2022 the new Community Engagement Strategy was adopted by Council following public exhibition. The attached Community Engagement Policy aligns to this strategy and provides guiding principles, roles and responsibilities when engaging with the community and stakeholders.

These guiding principles reflect Mid-Western Regional Council's commitment to building a transparent, collaborative, and respectful relationship with the community and stakeholders. These are:

- **Respect:** We recognise and respect the diversity of opinions, cultures, and perspectives in the community. We will listen to and consider community feedback in our decision-making processes.
- **Transparency:** We will be transparent in our communication with the community, providing timely and accurate information about our activities, projects, and decisions.

- **Integrity:** We will act with integrity in all our interactions with the community, adhering to ethical and moral principles and ensuring that our actions align with our values and strategic goals.
- **Innovation:** We will seek out innovative and creative approaches to community engagement, exploring new methods and technologies to better connect with the community we serve.
- **Accountability:** We will be accountable to the community we serve, regularly evaluating and reporting on our performance and seeking feedback from the community on how we can improve.
- **Recognition:** We will recognise and value the contributions of community members, organisations, and groups to our work. We will acknowledge and celebrate achievements and contributions to our shared goals.

Roles and responsibilities are further outlined in this policy for councillors, staff and consultants representing Council in community engagement. These are:

- **Councillors:** Responsible for decision-making whilst considering community feedback in conjunction with accompanying information such as technical, financial, legislative requirements. Promote engagement on key strategic plans, participate in the development of Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, and promote partnership between key stakeholders and Council.
- **Council Staff:** Responsible for engaging with the community in a respectful, open, and collaborative manner in their day-to-day work ensuring the following:
 - Council policies and procedures are followed;
 - Community engagement is carried out as per the policies and procedures approved by Council;
 - Council is provided with technical, financial and legislative information and reports to assist Council to make informed decisions;
 - Feedback is analysed from community engagement activities and this information is used to provide informed recommendations to Council;
 - The outcome of decisions made by Council are communicated to the Community;
 - The effectiveness of community engagement activities is evaluated; and
 - Adequate feedback is relayed to stakeholders and participants in engagement activities.
- **Consultants and Contractors:** Deliver engagement activities in line with Council policy and procedures as directed by Council Staff.

Council will review and update this policy as necessary to reflect changes in our organisation and the community we serve.

Community Plan implications

Theme	Good Government
Goal	Good communications and engagement
Strategy	Encourage community access and participation in Council decision making

Strategic implications

Council Strategies

Community Engagement Strategy

Council Policies

Nil

Legislation

Local Government Act 1993, Section 8A

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)

Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act 2017

Financial implications

Nil

Associated Risks

Should this policy not be adopted there is a risk that Council's ongoing engagement with the community and stakeholders may become inconsistent and increase risk of not meeting the requirements of Council under the guiding principles of the Local Government Act 1993 section 8A.

MICHELE MINI
MANAGER - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALINA AZAR
DIRECTOR DEVELOPMENT

1 June 2023

Attachments: 1. Community Engagement Policy.

APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION:

BRAD CAM
GENERAL MANAGER



POLICY

Community Engagement Policy

*A prosperous
and progressive
community*

COUNCIL MEETING MIN	[xx/xx]	VERSION NO	VERSION 1.0
DATE:	21 JUNE 2023	REVIEW DATE	19 MAY 2023
		FILE NUMBER	ECO800001

Objective

The purpose of this policy is to outline Mid-Western Regional Council's approach and commitment in engaging with the community and stakeholders as part of the decision-making process. Council's goal is to create a transparent and collaborative relationship with the community that promotes trust, respect, and understanding.

Legislative requirements

Local Government Act 1993, Section 8A

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)

Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act 2017

Related policies and plans

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Community Participation Plan
- Community Engagement Procedure

Policy

Scope

This policy is relevant across all departments and activities of Council where community consultation or engagement is undertaken as part of the decision-making process. This applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and partners who represent Mid-Western Regional Council when engaging the community and stakeholders.

Policy Statement

Mid-Western Regional Council is committed to engaging with the community to serve in an open, respectful, and transparent manner.

Council's Community Engagement Procedure will be used to guide the planning and delivery of all community and stakeholder engagements.

Council's approach to community engagement is guided by the following principles:

Respect: We recognise and respect the diversity of opinions, cultures, and perspectives in the community. We will listen to and consider community feedback in our decision-making processes.

Transparency: We will be transparent in our communication with the community, providing timely and accurate information about our activities, projects, and decisions.

POLICY: | VERSION 1.0, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Integrity: We will act with integrity in all our interactions with the community, adhering to ethical and moral principles and ensuring that our actions align with our values and strategic goals.

Innovation: We will seek out innovative and creative approaches to community engagement, exploring new methods and technologies to better connect with the community we serve.

Accountability: We will be accountable to the community we serve, regularly evaluating and reporting on our performance and seeking feedback from the community on how we can improve.

Recognition: We will recognise and value the contributions of community members, organisations, and groups to our work. We will acknowledge and celebrate achievements and contributions to our shared goals.

These principles guide Mid-Western Regional Council's approach to community engagement and reflect Council's commitment to building a transparent, collaborative, and respectful relationship with the community and stakeholders.

Roles and Responsibilities

All employees, volunteers, contractors, and partners who represent Mid-Western Regional Council when engaging the community and stakeholders have a responsibility to adhere to this policy and to actively engage with the community in a respectful, open, and collaborative manner.

The following individuals have specific responsibilities related to community engagement:

Councillors: Responsible for decision-making whilst considering community feedback in conjunction with accompanying information such as technical, financial, legislative requirements. As well as:

- Promote engagement on key strategic plans;
- Participate in the development of Integrated Planning and Reporting documents; and
- Promote partnership between key stakeholders and Council.

Council Staff: Responsible for engaging with the community in a respectful, open, and collaborative manner in their day-to-day work ensuring the following:

- Council policies and procedures are followed;
- Community engagement is carried out as per the policies and procedures approved by Council;
- Council is provided with technical, financial and legislative information and reports to assist Council to make informed decisions;
- Feedback is analysed from community engagement activities and this information is used to provide informed recommendations to Council;
- The outcome of decisions made by Council are communicated to the Community;
- The effectiveness of community engagement activities is evaluated; and
- Adequate feedback is relayed to stakeholders and participants in engagement activities.

Consultants and Contractors: Deliver engagement activities in line with Council policy and procedures as directed by Council Staff.

POLICY: | VERSION 1.0, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Evaluation and Review

Mid-Western Regional Council will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and our community engagement efforts to ensure that they align with our values, and strategic goals. Council will review and update this policy as necessary to reflect changes in our organisation and the community we serve.

Conclusion

Community engagement is a vital part of Mid-Western Regional Council's work. Council is committed to creating a transparent and collaborative relationship with the community we serve that promotes trust, respect, and understanding. This policy outlines Council's approach to community engagement and provides guidance to all individuals who represent our organisation in any capacity.