COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2026

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

Griffith City Council acknowledges the Wiradjuri people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters, and their deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community.

Council further pays respect to the local Wiradjuri Elders, past, present and those emerging, for whom we acknowledge have responsibilities for the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of the local Wiradjuri people.

Foreword

A message from the Mayor

Meaningful communication between Council and the community is essential for our City's continued growth and success.

This two-way process furthers our connection, engagement and ability to drive action based on our community's needs.

Griffith City Council recognises that community members and other stakeholders have a lot to offer through their expertise, skills and experience, and we want to make the most of your knowledge when making Council decisions.

We want our City to be inclusive for all. This means that communication needs to be clear, accessible and delivered to a standard that effectively meets the requirements of our community.

This strategy will help Council maintain an environment where the voice of the community is at the heart of the services and infrastructure that Council provides.

I urge all residents within our diverse community to help by actively participating whenever they can. This will help Council make the best decisions for us all into the future.

Councillor Doug Curran
Mayor, Griffith City Council

Introduction

Background

Council is committed to opening up a dialogue with many of our key audiences so we can better understand what our community wants. Through engagement opportunities such as our Community Opinion Group (COG) Meetings, monthly Council Cafes, community surveys and participation at community events, we have connected with hundreds of community members who have shared their thoughts, experiences and feelings about Griffith.

The feedback we have received has been invaluable and has helped us identify communication and engagement needs, what we are doing well and what we can improve on. It is evident that our community wants to:

•	Have face-to-face communication in informal and relaxed settings with evening or lunch the preferred times for interactions

•	Be heard on projects and issues that are important to them, and be kept up to date with progress

•	Be informed about Council events and news in a variety of ways such as social media, email newsletter, radio, website, print and information sessions

•	Have a mix of Councillors, senior staff and other staff present at information sessions.

We also heard that Council needs to:

•	Be more responsive and explain 'why' we are doing what we do

•	Clarify in simple terms why the community needs to provide input by explaining the impacts

•	Explain how the feedback was considered in the decision-making process and if feedback did not influence the decision, why not?

•	Recognise and acknowledge feedback or input received.

This Strategy will be used to help us create genuine opportunities to connect with our community.

Principles and values guiding engagement

Meaningful engagement helps shape the strategic direction of our city, as well as informing the various policies and plans that support this vision. When Council has the opportunity to control the outcomes of a decision, we are committed to providing best practice engagement.

The development of this Strategy has been guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum principles which are designed to assist with determining the level and type of engagement, the scope of our community's input and the role those engaged will have in the decision-making process.

The five levels of public participation are:

Inform → Consult → Involve → Collaborate → Empower
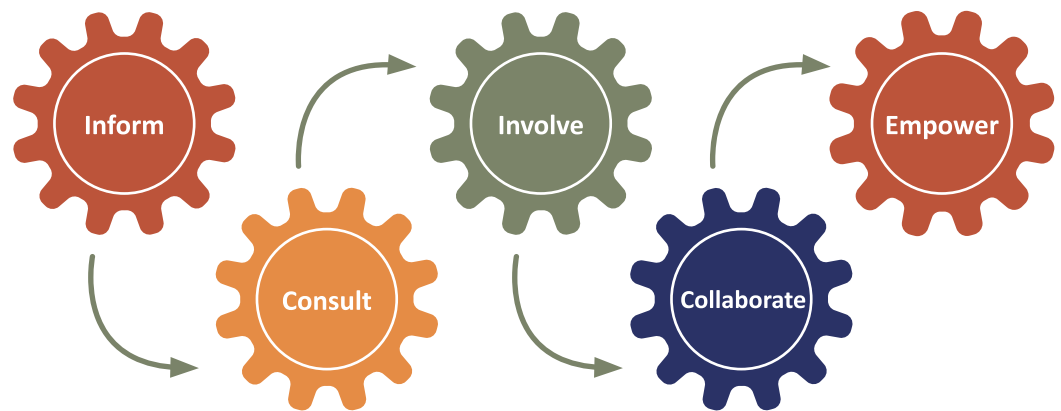
Key objectives

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, Council is required to establish and implement a strategy for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

Council's Community Engagement Strategy (CES) prioritises social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, in an effort to build a more inclusive, democratic and just society.

Some key objectives of Council's CES include enhancing transparency, fostering inclusivity, building trust, promoting collaboration, empowering residents, facilitating informed decision-making, enhancing accountability and supporting community development.

This Strategy is key to guiding Council's review of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Council's overarching plan which sits above all other Council plans and policies in our planning hierarchy.

This Strategy will guide how we plan and undertake engagement. Planning for engagement considers a range of factors including who the project will impact, how much impact the project will have and how interested the community might be in the project.

Why engage?

Community engagement is the basis of good governance. By using best practice community engagement approaches, we seek to involve the community in decision-making.

Community engagement provides a valuable link between Councillors, Council staff and the community by:

• Enabling Council to gain a better understanding of local needs

• Enabling the community to be informed

• Reducing the level of misconception or misinformation

• Ensuring greater community understanding of decision making and outcomes

• Encouraging the community to participate in engagement activities and put forward ideas

• Helping to identify issues that the community feel are important and asking for solutions by those who are most affected

• Acknowledging the basic need for people to be involved in decisions that impact them

• Enabling Council to make informed and sustainable decisions.

It is important to understand that not every decision before Council requires engagement. Councillors are elected by the community to lead the strategic direction of Council on behalf of residents. Therefore, community engagement does not replace the statutory decision-making functions of Council. Rather, it informs and guides it.

Risks

Developing a community engagement strategy involves navigating various risks.

Some of the risks include:

Limited participation

Engagement needs to be broadly promoted so that all members of the community actively participate

Accessibility

Engagement needs to take place in accessible locations across the city and usea range of methods

Failure to engage hard to reach groups

Targeted engagement is needed to reach certain groups such as young people, families and minority groups

Resource & timing contraints

Ensure there are a range of opportunities and suffcient information available to enable a high level of participation

Consultation fatigue

Continuous engagement efforts may lead to fatigue among community members reducing their willingness to participate

Unrealistic expectations

Data collected through community engagement may be unreliable if not gathered properly, leading to inaccurate conclusions and/or decisions

Exclusion

Limited access to technology or low computer literacy may exclude some from the engagement process, widening existing inequalities

Loudest voices

Too much participation from certain individuals or groups may dominate the conversation, marginalising other voices

Opportunities

There are also numerous opportunities.

Some of the opportunities include:

Build trust

Meaningful engagement builds trust between Council and the community, fostering long-term relationships and collaboration

Creative solutions

Community input can spark innovative ideas that may not have been considered otherwise

Better decision making

Effective community engagement can lead to better-informed decision-making, increased buy-in from stakeholders, and ultimately improved project outcomes

Diverse perspectives

Engaging with a wide range of community members allows for the incorporation of diverse perspectives, leading to more robust and inclusive solutions

Involved community

Building community support and involvement can contribute to the long-term sustainability of the project beyond its initial implementation

Transparency

Transparent engagement processes hold Council accountable to the community, ensuring that decisions are made in the public interest and are responsive to community needs and concerns

Increased awareness

Engagement processes provide opportunities to educate the public about the project, its goals, and its potential benefits, increasing awareness and understanding

Roles and responsibilities

In community engagement, the roles of Councillors and Council staff are crucial for the success of the process. Here's how each group typically contributes:

Mayor

The Mayor:

- acts as the spokesperson for Council to promote engagement on key strategic plans including developing the Community Strategic Plan (CSP)
- together with the General Manager, ensures adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between Council and the local community
- promotes partnerships between Council and key stakeholders.

Mayor and Councillors

Elected representatives:

- promote engagement on key strategic plans including supporting and participating in community engagement for the development of the CSP
- participate in the development of Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) component documents, including the CSP
- as members of the elected body, endorse the CSP on behalf of the community and approve the remaining component IP&R documents.

As elected members, the Mayor and Councillors play a crucial role in community engagement. Councillors listen to the views of the community and consider those views when making decisions, setting policy, advocating on behalf of the community and allocating resources. Councillors work together to make decisions about what Council will do to meet the community's needs and how money should be spent in the best interests of the whole community.

Council facilitates a number of opportunities for Councillors to engage with residents.

These include:

- Council meetings
- Council Café (held on the third Thursday of each month)
- Community Opinion Group (COG) Meetings (held quarterly)
- Connect Griffith - online engagement hub

- Youth Advisory Group (YAG)
- Involvement on Council Committees and other Committees external to Council
- Public forums and workshops
- Face-to-face meetings with residents
- Councillor Column in Council Catch Up (Community newsletter)
- Attending Council and non-Council events
- Conferences and networking.

General Manager and Senior staff

The General Manager:

- oversees preparation of the CES and IP&R component documents and endorsement by the elected Council
- ensures that community members are given enough information to participate in the IP&R process in a meaningful way.

The role of senior staff of Council in community engagement is critical for ensuring that engagement efforts are effectively planned, implemented and integrated into the decision-making processes.

Senior staff provide leadership and direction, setting the vision, goals and priorities for engagement activities. They develop policies and guidelines, build capacity of Council employees, maintain relationships with key stakeholders, allocate resources to support community engagement activities and communicate with Councillors and the community about engagement initiatives and outcomes.

Council staff

Council staff:

- work with, and support the General Manager in the development of the strategy and plans to engage the community
- implement the engagement strategy and provide timely advice to the General Manager on community views.

Council staff members plan and coordinate community engagement activities, facilitate engagement sessions, provide technical expertise on project-related matters, collect and analyse data gathered through engagement activities and document engagement activities and outcomes.

Stakeholders

Community engagement is a shared responsibility. We all have a role to play in participatory decision-making that shapes the places where we live, work, play and create.

We want to ensure that the voices of our community are included in our engagement process and that relationships with our constituents are meaningful.

Identification and analysis

A vital component of the community engagement process includes identifying and understanding key stakeholders who will be impacted by, or who have an interest in a decision. Our engagement aims to reach everyone in the community to ensure a range of views are heard. Our stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

Council Committees:

Council has a number of Committees made up of staff, Councillors and external community members and they convene on issues relevant to specific topic areas. These include:

- Community Opinion Group
- Audit Risk & Improvement Committee
- Disability Inclusion & Access Committee
- Floodplain Management Committee
- Local Emergency Management Committee
- Memorial Park Gardens Embellishment Committee
- New Cemetery Masterplan Committee
- Pioneer Park Museum Committee
- Traffic Committee
- Lake Wyangan & Catchment Management Committee
- Scenic Hill User Group
- Youth Advisory Group

The role of Council Committee Members in community engagement is to:

- act as advocates for the interests, concerns and needs of the broader community within the Committee's scope of responsibility
- offer valuable perspectives, insights and feedback based on their knowledge of the community's dynamics, challenges and aspirations
- serve as conduits for communication between the community and the Committee, ensuring that

information flows effectively in both directions

- participate in discussions, deliberations and decision-making processes to contribute to the development of initiatives, policies, or projects that align with community needs and priorities.

External stakeholders/Councils:

The list of external stakeholders is long and varied. Stakeholder groups who may be identified in a community engagement process include:

- Griffith City Council ratepayers
- People who live, work, or visit Griffith
- Investors (existing/new/potential)
- Businesses operating in Griffith
- Active industry groups or associations
- Community, sporting, cultural and environmental groups
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)
- Refugee community
- Young people
- Students
- Children and families
- Retirees/mature aged people
- LGBTQI+ community
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- Not-for-profits and non-government organisations
- Neighbouring and other Councils
- State and Federal Members
- Relevant government agencies (including Department of Planning and Environment, Transport for NSW, Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Health, Office of Local Government, Destination NSW, Create NSW, NSW Office of Sport and Recreation, NSW Department of Education).

Our community

POPULATION OF GRIFFITH
27,132

REGIONAL POPULATION
55,000

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF
31,421
BY 2046

8 ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES
1 POPULARLY ELECTED MAYOR

1,640km²
Covered (Local Government Area)

TOP 3 INDUSTRIES
1. MANUFACTURING
2. AGRICULTURE
3. CONSTRUCTION

3,386 Registered businesses

$1.82B Exported output across 60 countries

$2.24B Gross Regional Product

938M Agricultural output

16,772 Local jobs

LOCAL WORKER QUALIFICATIONS

65% Workforce participation

28% Hold a Diploma or Certificate III

14% Hold a bachelor Higher degree

WIRADJURI
Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of these lands

ANCESTRY
27.6% Australian
39% United Kingdom
24% Italian
4% Indian

$105M COMMERICAL INVESTMENTS IN 2024

$64M RESIDENTIAL INVESTMENTS IN 2024

37 Median age

31% Residents are couples with children

4.9% Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander

22% Overseas born

23% Speak a language other than english at home

31% Households renting

27% Households with mortgages

$1,715 Median weekly household income

$295 Median weekly rent

2,910 Manufacturing industry

477,383 Visitors to the region annually

data source: id consultancy August 2024

Challenges and solutions

Challenges and solutions

Council recognises that views gathered through engagement should be representative of a broad cross-section of our community.

We have identified some specific groups that may be 'harder to reach' as they may have barriers to participation such as experience, language, resource and timing constraints and accessibility.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people

CHALLENGES

Barriers to communicating with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may include:

- **Cultural and Linguistic Differences -** Varied cultural backgrounds, languages, and dialects among different Aboriginal communities may create barriers to effective communication.communication

- **Historical Trauma and Mistrust -** Past experiences may lead to mistrust or skepticism towards outsiders, including communication efforts

- **Limited Access to Communication Tools -** Some Aboriginal communities may have limited access to communication technologies or face challenges with connectivity due to locations or socioeconomic factors

- **Cultural Sensitivity and Respect -** Lack of cultural sensitivity or understanding of Aboriginal customs, protocols, and values can hinder effective communication

- **Communication Style Differences -** Variances in communication styles, including nonverbal cues, storytelling traditions, and oral histories, may lead to misunderstandings for those not familiar with Aboriginal cultural norms

- **Health and Socioeconomic Disparities -** Health issues, socioeconomic challenges, and disparities in access to education and resources can impact communication effectiveness within Aboriginal communities.

SOLUTIONS

- Provide training and cultural competency programs to educate individuals on Aboriginal cultures, histories, and communication protocols

- Foster genuine relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal communities through active engagement, collaboration, and consultation

- Adopt trauma-informed communication practices that prioritise empathy, respect, and acknowledgment of historical traumas and their impact

- Adapt communication styles to align with Aboriginal cultural norms, such as utilising storytelling, visual aids and participatory approaches

- Advocate for and support initiatives that improve access to communication tools, resources, and services within Aboriginal communities.

Culturally diverse communities

CHALLENGES

- **Language barriers** - Differences in language proficiency can hinder effective communication and understanding

- **Cultural differences** - Varied cultural norms, values, and communication styles may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations

- **Lack of trust** - Historical or systemic factors may contribute to mistrust of authority figures or institutions, affecting engagement efforts

- **Socioeconomic disparities** - Socioeconomic factors such as income, education level, and access to resources can influence participation levels

- **Limited access to information** - Some communities may face barriers in accessing information due to technological, literacy, or geographical constraints.

SOLUTIONS

- Providing translated materials, interpretation services, or bilingual staff to ensure information is accessible to diverse linguistic groups

- Equipping staff and volunteers with knowledge and skills to navigate cultural differences sensitively and effectively

- Engaging with community leaders, organisations, and influencers to build relationships, credibility, and mutual understanding

- Developing targeted outreach efforts that consider the unique needs, preferences, and communication channels of diverse communities

- Actively involving community members in decision-making processes to empower them and ensure their voices are heard and valued

- Partnering with local organisations, faith-based groups, or cultural associations to leverage existing networks and reach underserved communities.

People with a disability

CHALLENGES

- **Physical Barriers** - mobility impairments limiting physical movement and communication

- **Sensory Impairments** - deafness or hard of hearing, making verbal communication challenging. Visual impairments hindering the understanding of written or visual communication

- **Cognitive or Intellectual Disabilities** - difficulty processing information or understanding abstract concepts

- **Language and Communication Differences** - speech or language disorders affecting articulation and comprehension

- **Social Stigma and Stereotypes** - discrimination and negative stereotypes impacting communication and social interaction

- **Lack of Accessibility in Communication Tools** - inaccessible websites, mobile applications, or communication platforms

- **Lack of Training and Awareness** - insufficient knowledge or training in effectively communicating with people with disabilities.

SOLUTIONS

- Provide accessible environments and assistive devices like communication boards

- Learn sign language, provide written materials in accessible formats, and use clear verbal descriptions

- Use simple language, break down information, and provide visual aids or concrete examples

- Be patient, use alternative communication methods, and allow individuals to communicate at their own pace

- Foster an inclusive environment, challenge stereotypes, and promote awareness and education

- Design communication tools following accessibility standards and provide alternative formats or assistive technologies

- Offer training programs to educate about different disabilities, communication strategies, and inclusive practices.

Working families

CHALLENGES

- **Time Constraints** - busy schedules and conflicting priorities make it challenging to find time for communication

- **Limited Availability** - irregular working hours or shift work can hinder availability for communication

- **Communication Overload** - information overload from multiple sources, such as work-related communications, school updates, and personal commitments

- **Stress and Fatigue -** high levels of stress and fatigue from balancing work and family responsibilities can affect receptiveness to communication

- **Technology Gaps** - limited access to or proficiency with communication technologies, especially among older generations

- **Privacy Concerns** - reluctance to share personal or family-related information due to concerns about privacy or confidentiality.

SOLUTIONS

- Offer multiple communication channels such as email, phone calls, text messages, and in-person meetings to accommodate varied schedules

- Establish regular communication times that align with the availability of working families, considering factors like evening or weekend availability

- Prioritise essential information and provide clear, concise updates to prevent communication overload

- Recognise the challenges of balancing work and family life, and approach communication with empathy and understanding

- Offer training sessions or resources to improve digital literacy and proficiency with communication technologies

- Assure families that their privacy will be respected and offer options for communication that prioritise confidentiality.

Young people

CHALLENGES

- **Generation Gap** - Differences in values, interests, and communication preferences between older adults and young people may lead to misunderstandings

- **Technology Dependency** - Reliance on digital communication platforms and social media may limit face-to-face interactions and affect the quality of communication

- **Short Attention Spans** - Young people may have shorter attention spans and may be easily distracted, making it challenging to maintain engagement during communication

- **Peer Influence** - peer pressure and influence from friends may impact young people's receptiveness to external communication from adults or authority figures

- **Lack of Trust -** past negative experiences or perceived lack of understanding from adults may lead to mistrust and resistance to communication

- **Language and Jargon** -the use of unfamiliar language, jargon, or technical terms may hinder comprehension and engagement among young people

- **Privacy Concerns** - concerns about privacy and confidentiality in communication, especially in the context of sharing personal information or discussing sensitive topics.

SOLUTIONS

- Listen actively, show empathy, and validate young people's perspectives to build trust and rapport

- Embrace digital communication platforms and social media to reach young people where they are comfortable and active

- Create interactive and visually appealing content that captures young people's attention and maintains engagement

- Involve peers and youth leaders in communication efforts to leverage peer influence and enhance credibility

- Be transparent, honest, and authentic in communication to foster trust and credibility among young people

- Use plain language, avoid jargon, and provide clear explanations to ensure comprehension and engagement

- Respect young people's privacy rights and obtain consent before sharing personal information or discussing sensitive topics.

Older people

CHALLENGES

- **Technological Challenges** - lack of familiarity or comfort with modern communication technologies such as smartphones, computers, or social media platforms

- **Sensory Impairments** - age-related decline in vision or hearing, making it difficult to perceive and understand communication effectively

- **Cognitive Changes** - memory loss, cognitive decline, or conditions like dementia affecting the ability to process and retain information

- **Generational Gap** - differences in communication styles, preferences, and cultural references between older individuals and younger generations

- **Health Concerns** - physical or mental health issues such as fatigue, pain, or depression that can impact engagement in communication

- **Limited Mobility** - mobility issues or disabilities that make it challenging to access communication devices or participate in face-to-face interactions

- **Resistance to Change** - reluctance to adapt to new communication methods or approaches due to a preference for traditional forms of communication.

SOLUTIONS

- Use straightforward and familiar communication tools such as phone calls, letters, or in-person conversations to accommodate technological challenges

- Provide communication materials in large print, high contrast, or audio formats to assist those with sensory impairments

- Repeat key information and use simple language to aid comprehension for individuals experiencing cognitive changes

- Approach communication with patience, empathy, and a willingness to understand the perspective of older individuals

- Ensure comfortable seating arrangements and accessible environments to accommodate mobility issues during face-to-face interactions

- Offer training sessions or individual support to help older individuals learn and navigate new communication technologies at their own pace

- Acknowledge and respect the value of traditional communication methods while gently introducing newer options for those open to change.

Implementation

Identifying engagement opportunities

Engagement can be used to share information, educate, gather views and opinions, develop options, or make decisions. Not every program or project requires engagement; however, we have identified some of the main reasons that would trigger an engagement activity.

These include:

- Council resolutions for example if Council decides to change its services, regulations or initiate a major development, and would like to know the community's view on a matter

- Statutory requirements - this includes planning, budget consultations or similar, which have clearly defined engagement requirements or methodologies. For example the Community Strategic Plan (CSP), the Delivery Program and Operational Plan (Budget)

- Public exhibition for proposals relating to policy changes, development applications and strategic plans that impact our region. These are placed on public exhibition so residents can provide comment and input

- Projects and initiatives of which Council seeks community views and input into plans, strategies, policy, projects and programs

- Ongoing engagement to foster long-term relationships and partnerships and consistent connection through our programs and services

- Community satisfaction to gain an indication of Council's performance in delivery of key services, e.g. customer satisfaction surveys. This ongoing feedback ensures our services meet community needs

- Community interest in response to an issue or proposal where the community or stakeholders have indicated they have significant concerns, interests, or that issues have not been adequately considered.

Council has the responsibility of making decisions for and on behalf of the community, therefore, we are required to ensure that appropriate community input and/or statutory requirements are considered in that process.

How will Council carry out community engagement?

There are a number of ways in which Council may choose to carry out its community engagement process. The preferred method or methods of engagement will be determined by the plan or project and its possible impact on the community. While some plans or projects require simple notification, others may require greater community consultation.

The IAP2 Spectrum is a widely recognised framework for understanding the levels of public participation in decision-making processes. It consists of the following five levels of engagement, ranging from inform to empower:

Inform

Council aims to provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, or solutions.

Consult

Council is required to seek feedback on options or alternatives and take the feedback into account but retains the decision-making authority.

Involve

Council works directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are understood and considered. Council might establish an advisory Committees or Working Groups to collaborate on projects, develop recommendations, and provide ongoing input and oversight.

Collaborate

Council partners with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. Collaboration might involve co-design workshops, joint problem-solving sessions, or participatory budgeting processes where residents actively contribute to decision-making alongside Council members and staff.

Empower

The highest level of engagement empowers the community to make the final decision or implement the solution. Empowerment ensures that community members have the opportunity to shape their own future and take ownership of the outcomes.

Throughout the engagement process, Council should be transparent about the level of participation being offered and ensure that community members have access to the information, resources and support needed to effectively participate.

Level of Participation	Channel of Information	In Practice
Inform	Website, social media and e-newsletters, information sessions.	Provide information via: • Council's website • E-newsletters eg. Catch Up and Evolve. • social media, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn.
	Advertisements, public notices, signs, letters, postcards and newsletters.	This information could include: • inviting the community to participate in engagement • describing the matter, project or issue • outlining how people can find out information • advising how to make a comment or be involved • outlining the timeframe for consultation.
	Customer Service Centre and Griffith City Library	Information may be accessed during public exhibition at both the Customer Service Centre and Griffith City Library.
Consult and Involve	Council website and online feedback.	Council's online engagement platform where the community can provide feedback on community engagement projects via discussion forums, mapping tools, idea walls, surveys, question and answers, polls and submissions.
	Community meetings and workshops.	Meetings (in person, online or hybrid) with community members and stakeholders to provide an opportunity to work through an issue or gather feedback on particular aspects of a project.
	Council meetings	Members of the community can participate in Council's formal meeting process prior to a decision being made, as outlined in Council's Code of Meeting Practice. This can include speaking at a Council Meeting or making a submission during public exhibition.
	Public exhibitions	The exhibition process seeks online or written community and stakeholder feedback on a plan, development application, policy or project.
	Surveys	Using market research software for telephone, online and offline surveys, such as the biennial Community Satisfaction Survey.
	Drop-in sessions and pop-up stalls	Provide a face-to-face opportunity for the community to attend a drop-in session or a pop-up stall to gather information and provide feedback on an issue or project/policy-related decision – Council Café held once a month, Community Opinion Group held quarterly.
Collaborate and Empower	Council committees	To support community engagement, Council may establish committees to assist in achieving objectives under the Community Strategic Plan. Membership can be made up of Councillors, Council staff, external agencies and community members.
	Deliberative processes	Deliberative forums are used for in-depth consideration of an issue by a cross-section of the community to provide well-informed feedback on a particular issue.
	Community and stakeholder reference groups	Groups of community and stakeholders that meet with staff, Councillors, or others to work through an issue, determine a decision for a project, policy or plan and provide advice.

When we engage?

The following table explains how we will engage with our community about plans and strategies, as well as other work we do, so our community knows what to expect from us. Planning-related projects have specific exhibition timeframes that must be met, which are outlined in Council's Community Participation Plan.

Project	Level of	How	What	Exhibition Period
Council's long term plans such as: Community Strategic Plan Delivery Program Resourcing Strategy Community Engagement Strategy	Involve	Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision. Provide a range of opportunities for the community to share their views.	Directly reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan/Council report.	28 days
Council's annual Operational Plan, budget and fees and charges	Consult	Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision. Provide a range of opportunities for the community to share their views.	Directly reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan/Council report.	28 days
Key Council Policies	Consult	Council's website	Acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	28 days or 42 days as specified by legislative requirements or Council resolutions.
New capital works **(skate parks, playgrounds, masterplans)**	Involve	Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision. Provide a range of opportunities/ channels for the community to share their views.	Directly reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan/Council report.	Minimum 21 days.
Reclassification of land	Consult	Council's website, letter, notification, Newsletter	Acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	28 days or as specified by the Gateway Determination. Public hearing 21 days after public exhibition as required.

For all planning matters refer to Council's Community Participation Plan.

Engagement Tools

Engagement tools

Council uses various engagement tools to communicate with and engage with our community. These include:

Engagement Tool	Level of Engagement
Media Releases	To be issued to all print, radio and television contacts across the Griffith area in a timely manner to support engagement.
Rates Notices	Distributed to all Griffith City Council ratepayers quarterly. Council can utilise the distribution of rate notices to provide information to our residents.
Newsletters	Council sends out regular email newsletters to provide updates on Council activities, upcoming events and important announcements. Concil's weekly newsletter, Council CatchUp is distributed electronically via email, online and hard copies are distributed to over 20 locations around the local government area.
Special Publications	Brochures, flyers, notices which can be used in a variety of ways to promote the events or activities of Council.
Advertisements	Use of newspapers, radio and television advertising to inform Council's constituents.
Social Media	Councils maintain active social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) to share updates, announcements and engage with residents. Social media platforms also serve as channels for receiving feedback and answering questions from the community.
Interactive Websites	Council maintains interactive websites where residents can access information, report issues, submit requests, and engage with Council services more conveniently.
Community Meetings/Forums	Council holds Council Café once a month and quarterly Community Opinion Group meetings where residents can voice their opinions, ask questions and interact directly with Council members and officials.
Surveys and Questionnaires	Online or paper surveys and questionnaires are frequently used to gather feedback from the community on specific issues, projects, or policies. These can be distributed through various channels like mail, email, social media, or Council's website.
Community Workshops	Workshops focused on specific topics or projects allow for more in-depth discussions and collaboration between Council members, officials, and residents. These workshops may involve presentations, group discussions, and interactive activities.
Focus Groups	Council may organise focus groups composed of diverse community members to gather in-depth insights on specific topics or initiatives. These groups provide a more intimate setting for discussions and allow for targeted feedback collection.
Informative Letters	Used by Council to communicate important information to residents. These letters are typically sent via postal mail or email and may cover a range of topics such as upcoming events, changes in policies or regulations, community initiatives, and important announcements.
Door knocking	Council may engage in door-to-door outreach efforts to directly engage with residents, especially in areas where there are significant developments, projects, or issues that require community input.
Signage	Council uses signage strategically placed in public areas to notify residents about upcoming events, construction projects, road closures, or any other relevant information.
Council Meetings	These are formal gatherings where elected Council members convene to discuss and make decisions on matters affecting the community. Council meetings are usually open to the public, providing residents with the opportunity to observe proceedings, voice concerns during designated public comment periods, and witness the decision-making process firsthand.
Committee Meetings	Council has specialised Committees that focus on specific areas. Community members can join a Council Committee to learn more about Council functions and to provide input and direction on relevant topics.

By employing a combination of these engagement tools, Council can effectively communicate with our community, gather feedback and foster greater civic participation in local decision-making processes.

Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement and evaluation

When reviewing the ongoing effectiveness of the CES and engagement activities, as well as ongoing community relevance and suitability, Council may consider the following questions:

- Has the community profile changed?

- Does the CES consider all relevant stakeholder groups?

- Are the techniques appropriate to the current community?

- Have we fulfilled the obligations set out in the last CES? Was it a realistic and deliverable strategy?

- What engagement innovations can we include?

- What level of engagement will be undertaken in the review of the CSP, e.g. whether the vision and goals still reflect community aspirations?

Internal effectiveness

When reviewing the effectiveness of the CES within Council, the following questions are to be considered:

- Are staff aware that Council has a CES?

- Do they use the CES to guide their project planning?

- Does the CES clearly explain engagement processes?

- How easy have they found the CES to use and how effective has it been to them in their work?

- Have they used the CES when engaging with the community, or opted not to?

External effectiveness

Council can use its community satisfaction or wellness survey to determine whether the community:

- Is aware how they can have their say on council plans, strategies and policies

- Has been engaged in the past and, if so, effectiveness of the methods used to engage them

- Is satisfied that their input has been considered, even if the outcome was not what they wanted.

Review and evaluation

Griffith City Council will evaluate the effectiveness of community engagement activities by:

- Reviewing results of any surveys, feedback forms and public sessions

- The overall level of outreach achieved by community engagement across the community

- Releasing the results where appropriate through reports, infographics and social media posts or via Council website

- Use the feedback and results to improve future community engagement activities and plans.

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