

### Public Participation Policy

**216.1(1)** Every council of a municipality must establish a public participation policy for the municipality.

**(2)** A council may amend its public participation policy from time to time.

**(3)** The Minister may make regulations

- (a) respecting the contents of public participation policies;
- (b) respecting the considerations to be taken into account by a council in establishing its public participation policy;
- (c) setting a date by which every municipality must have its first public participation policy in place;
- (d) respecting requirements for a council to review its public participation policy periodically and consider whether any amendments should be made;
- (e) respecting requirements to make publicly available a public participation policy and any amendments made to it.

**(4)** Nothing in a public participation policy established under this section affects any right or obligation that a municipal authority or any person has under any other provision of this Act.

**(5)** No resolution or bylaw of a council may be challenged on the ground that it was made without complying with a public participation policy established by a resolution of the council.

The *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* supports public awareness through council meeting attendance and public notice requirements, and sets out specific requirements for public participation in specific circumstances. This section requires municipalities to promote public awareness and enable the public to provide input in the local government decision-making process.

Alberta Regulation requires the policy to:

- identify how the municipality will engage their citizens
- identify the circumstances when they will be engaged
- the policy must be accessible and available to the public
- council must evaluate the policy at least once every 4 years.
- the policy must be in place by July 23, 2018.

It should be noted that this policy doesn't have to be a large comprehensive plan. A municipality may wish to include the process for residents to be heard at council meetings or establish an annual schedule of open house events that receive and convey information on possible items of interest like the annual assessment, the audit report or the budget.



An effective participation policy is essential for any municipality to get important information out and provide a forum for resident feedback. This policy will look different in every municipality. The way people get their information varies from traditional forms of media, to word of mouth, to social media and other online sources.

Some things to consider in developing your policy:

- Engage citizens early
- Communicate openly, honestly and proactively
- Provide clear, relevant information
- Keep citizens informed and provide notice of change
- Be responsive and ensure follow up
- Celebrate successes but be honest about failures

Inform through:

- Newsletters
- Websites
- Open houses with opportunities for dialogue
- Surveys
- Public meetings

What does the public need to know:

- Municipality's role and responsibilities
- Local government processes
- Budget process
- Upcoming events
- New programs
- Sustainability initiatives
- Important updates
- Successes
- changes in leadership

A growing number of residents use the municipal website to find information. Because of this, a municipality should make sure the website addresses the needs of the community and is easy to navigate and stays current.

Ask your residents how they prefer to send and receive information. Find out what works for them – social media, print advertisements, news stories, website, direct mail, newsletters, utility bills, etc.

For information on public input, view the [Public Input Toolkit](#) or [Citizen Engagement Toolkit](#) or [Social Media Resource Guide](#).