

# Community Engagement Framework

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North Burnett Regional Council



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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

This Community Engagement Framework has been developed to assist Council in undertaking engagement activities within its diverse community. The framework aims to develop a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered. Specifically, the aims of the framework are to:

- Ensure community views are understood and considered when developing Council plans, strategies, policies and service delivery.
- Ensure the community has the opportunity to participate in inclusive and equitable engagement practices.
- Strengthen community connectedness by creating opportunities for the community to get involved with, and have their say on, matters which are important to them.
- Improve the relationship and level of trust between the community and Council by ensuring the community is informed about and involved in Council activities.
- Enhance the coordination, planning and promotion of Council's community engagement activities.
- Strengthen feedback and communication from Council so the community knows when and how their input has been considered to inform decisions.

*'We encourage an inclusive, involved and engaged community – Valuing and respecting the contributions of all community members, regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, cultural background or length of residency'*

### The integrated elements of the framework

Frameworks, in this context, typically comprise of several related elements working in unison to deliver or manage a particular function within an organisation. This framework has been designed to provide consistency but also facilitate the adaptability that is often required when undertaking community engagement. The integrated elements of the framework consist of:

**A community engagement policy** – providing overarching guidance on engagement activities, when they are likely to occur and outlining some instances where engagement will likely not occur. This document also captures council's expectations and aspirations relating to community engagement.

**An administrative directive** – An internal document providing high level guidance on the steps to undertake when assessing the need for or conducting community engagement at council. This document provides basic guidance on the tools and templates available for use, how these should be applied and how some of these tools may need to be modified to suit different engagement scenarios.

**Tools and templates** – providing structure and guidance for use when assessing the need for or undertaking community engagement activities. These documents are structured to align to and be reflective of the overarching policy and administrative directive, facilitating consistency.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is the process of bring the community into decisions that impact or interest them. It is typically a two-way conversation between council and the community however can present in different formats from time to time. These conversations help to strengthen the relationship Council has with the community, as well as state and federal government agencies.

Council have access to a variety of tools and techniques to engage stakeholders and the community as appropriate. Stakeholder feedback helps Council to understand varied points of view, gather comprehensive information, consider a range of opinions and identify common ground.

Engagement does not replace the final decision-making power of Councillors or the CEO; but is considered invaluable in the way it enhances Council's capacity to make well-informed, acceptable and sustainable decisions.

### Effective community engagement will:

- ensure community needs and expectations are understood and reflected in the decisions and actions of Council
- result in better, more sustainable project and service delivery outcomes
- provide the community with relevant information around complex or difficult decisions, their possible benefits and the implications they may have
- improve the quality of policy and plan development, ensuring the community views are reflected where possible
- build a more resilient and transparent relationship with the community
- provide council with an increased understanding of community issues and local needs to better address complex and emerging issues early
- lead to better, more effective shared partnerships and networks
- provide opportunities for a diversity of voices to be heard.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

The Local Government Act 2009 requires council to uphold the principles of “democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement”. To facilitate this, council is committed to inclusive, transparent and value adding community engagement activities in circumstances where it can influence a decision.

Generally, it will be the responsibility of project managers and the executive team to determine if community engagement is essential, desirable or unnecessary and make recommendations to council when faced with decisions that will impact the community. This will also extend to the level of community engagement that is to be conducted, with consideration given to available resources and the likely impact on the final decision. In some instances, it may be determined that the community can have little or no influence over a decision and in turn, council may choose to inform the community of the outcome or decision.

### Engagement will most likely occur when:

- the matter will have a significant impact on service delivery
- the matter will have a significant impact on the community or a part of the community over the medium to long term
- the issue at hand is complex or controversial
- there is a legal requirement to engage the community, or
- community input has the ability to influence, complement or enhance the decision to be made, or the plan being developed.

## MANDATORY ENGAGEMENT

As a local government, Council is governed by several pieces of legislation with some setting specific community engagement requirements. Examples include the Local Government Act, the Planning Act, the Queensland Health Act, the Commonwealth Native Title Act as well as other various pieces of legislation applicable to council.

When planning specific engagement activities, consideration will be given to the requirements of any overarching legislation. Where specific requirements apply, engagement activities may be adjusted where necessary. While council seeks to exceed the minimum standards, for the avoidance of doubt, legislative requirements will always prevail.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Council acknowledges that community engagement may be council led engagement or community led engagement.

### COUNCIL LED ENGAGEMENT

Council's Executive Leadership Team will decide the matters on which community engagement will be conducted. Several factors are considered when deciding to engage the community but typically engagement will relate to matters of significant proposed changes or community planning, in line with strategic priorities, where community input can influence or enhance the decision that is to be made.

Council led engagement will be initiated by council and the community will be encouraged to get involved.

### LIMITATIONS TO ENGAGEMENT

Council will consider a number of factors when deciding to engage. In some instances, community engagement may not be possible or appropriate. In these circumstances, council may inform the community of our decisions and actions. Examples of where this could occur include (but are not limited to):

- where public health and safety are at risk
- where council is responding to an emergency
- where council must make an immediate decision or time constraints render engagement inappropriate
- where a matter contains confidential or commercial in confidence information
- where council makes operational decisions that do not directly impact the community
- where council makes decisions relating to the development of internal operational policies, procedures or strategies
- where there are statutory limitations relevant to the matter; or
- where decisions relate to everyday council business operations or legislative matters and there is no scope for formal engagement.

### COMMUNITY LED ENGAGEMENT

From time-to-time residents and/or community groups may initiate engagement activities to address issues impacting the community and may look to council to take action. In these instances, council will consider its role in relation to the matter and may engage with the community to determine future direction.

Community led engagement can be initiated by a member of the community or a community group and will usually seek the support of other community members/groups. Council may become involved depending on the matter's relevance to council.

Council will communicate clearly with the community members/groups concerning whether council will become involved.

## OUR ROLE

Council leadership can take many forms. Council can play a role as a:

**Provider** – Delivering services

**Partner** – Forming partnerships and strategic alliances with other parties in the interests of the community

**Regulator** – Regulating some activities through local law or policy

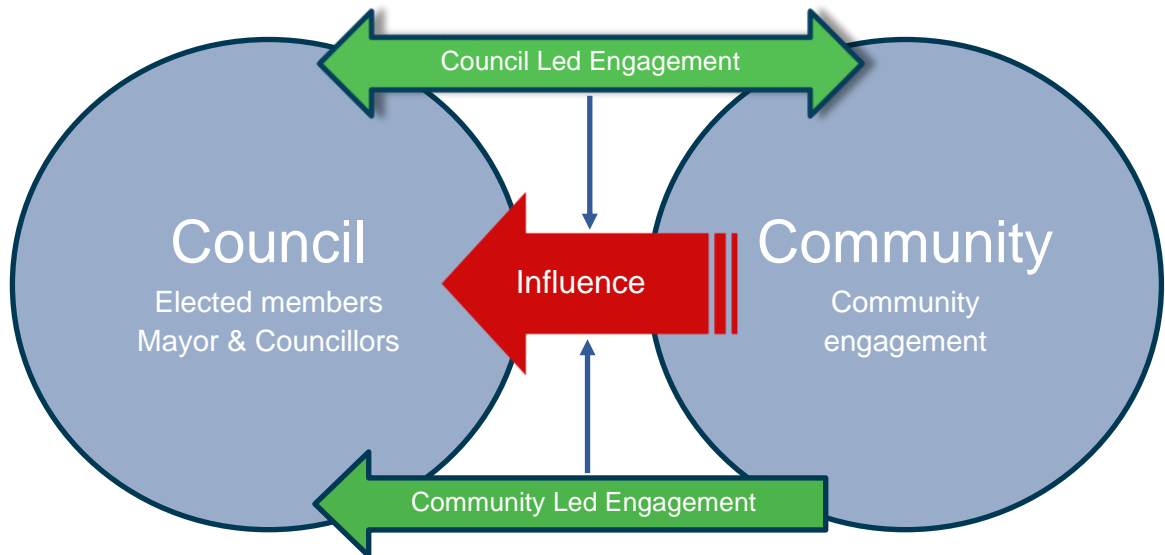
**Funder** – Funding other organisations/entities to deliver services

**Facilitator** – Assisting others to be involved in activities by bringing groups and interested parties together

**Lobbyist** – Promoting the interests of the community to other decision makers and influencers.

## INFLUENCE

In the context of local government, councils make decisions through democratic processes whereby the community is represented by elected members. The community can influence decisions made by elected representatives in several ways including community engagement. Community engagement does not replace council's responsibility to make decisions, it is however an important method for gaining input from the community to support councillors in the decision-making process.



Council makes the final decision based on evidence and community engagement inputs

The community influences the decisions to be made by participation in engagement activities however initiated

## GUIDING PRINCIPALS

Council is committed to inclusive, transparent and value adding community engagement activities and outcomes. It is recognised that engagement activities must be focused and tailored, giving regard to specific projects and the desired outcomes. Council has selected five core principles of community engagement to guide the planning, execution and evaluation of community engagement activities. These are:

Engagement is to be:	How this may be applied;
<b>Inclusive</b>	<p>Stakeholders and engagement activities are selected in an inclusive manner and consideration is given to the type of engagement activities to minimise potential barriers to participation for key stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key stakeholders that may require a different/higher level of engagement.</li> <li>• Advertise engagement activities via appropriate channels for the target stakeholder group(s) and seek a mix of media types where possible (EG. Print, Audio, Internet, Social media, Community notice boards, etc.)</li> <li>• Consider contacting community groups and not-for-profit organisations to discuss and promote engagement participation amongst their members.</li> <li>• Effectively remind community members of engagement opportunities in the leadup to or during engagement activities.</li> <li>• Identify potential barriers and address, where possible, in line with budget constraints.</li> </ul>
<b>Informative</b>	<p>Information shared is clear, honest and provides a relevant overview of the proposal or matter as well as the potential outcomes. To avoid overwhelming participants, every effort should be made to keep extraneous material to a minimum.</p> <p>Information provided should be aligned with the intended audience, be free of technical jargon where possible and be in 'Plain English.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider presenting the information that is relevant and value adding to the engagement objectives, not simply all information available.</li> <li>• Consider bias that may be present in the information due to the method used to prepare it.</li> <li>• When preparing information, give thought to the intended target audience, the language used and their likely comprehension of the language used.</li> </ul>
<b>Appropriate</b>	<p>Engagement activities are appropriately selected in line with the identified IAP2 engagement level having regard for the resources available for engagement.</p> <p>Additionally, engagement is not to be undertaken where a decision has already been made and the engagement feedback can not influence or be reflected in the final outcome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select engagement activities appropriate to the needs of the community and aligned with the scale and complexity of the proposal/matter.</li> <li>• Consider the use of engagement activities that the community is familiar with and has historically engaged with, while also balancing the need for fit for purpose engagement activities.</li> <li>• Ensure engagement is value adding, the communities time is important.</li> </ul>

Engagement is to be:	How this may be applied;
<p><b>Timely</b></p>	<p>Engagement activities should occur when community members and stakeholders have the best chance of influencing outcomes and not so late in the process that it simply confirms decisions already made. Sufficient time should be allocated for the community to consider all information and make an informed contribution to the decision-making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure engagement is undertaken at the appropriate time in the project or proposals lifecycle to maximise community influence and/or gauge sentiment.</li> <li>• Recognise that public engagement is a dynamic, ongoing process that requires flexibility and allocated timeframes should be set accordingly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transparent</b></p>	<p>The final decision about the project or proposal is made in an open and transparent way and is appropriately communicated to the community and individual submitters where appropriate. Communication should include how the groups collective input contributed to the final outcome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the community knows the collective outcomes of engagement and how their input helped shape the final decision.</li> <li>• Where participants have been given the chance to opt in to receive updates (usually via email and related to online surveys), ensure this is actioned. Note: personalised communications are not required, rather a bulk outbound email correspondence to those that have requested such.</li> </ul>




# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (IAP2)

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is the leading organisation in developing, supporting and promoting best practice community engagement around the world. Council acknowledges that the Community Engagement Model and the IAP2 Spectrum underpins this document and council commits to striving towards this internationally recognised standard.

## IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation outlines five levels of community engagement, with the lowest level of engagement being 'Inform', while 'Empower' involves the greatest level of public participation in decision making processes. The table below has been adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum and defines the various levels of engagement.



	<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
<b>Public Participation Goal</b>	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.
<b>Promise to the Public</b>	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 seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	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 work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

While the IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation has been adopted for this framework, within the context of Local Government, the highest level of 'Empower' will rarely be achievable or appropriate. The spectrum notes that the level of 'Empower' places the "final decision-making in the hands of the public". As elected representatives for the community, final decisions will ultimately rest with the elected Councillors.

## HOW WE ENGAGE

### THE FIVE STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT AT COUNCIL



Council follows a five (5) stage process in how we engage. Generally, the stages are:

1. Consider – Decide if engagement is required, value adding and the overall level at which engagement should occur. Determine the next steps and tools that should be used when progressing to the next stages of engagement.
2. Plan – Develop a plan to ensure the engagement exercise targets the correct stakeholders, collates the correct information, and achieves the underlying objectives of the engagement.
3. Implement – Undertake the engagement activities and monitor progress.
4. Analyse – Collate and consider the feedback received, make any appropriate amendments to the underlying proposal/project and report to decision makers on the engagement outcomes. Ensure stakeholders are advised of the findings of engagement and how it contributed to the final decision.
5. Evaluate – Reflect on the engagement exercise holistically and undertake continuous improvement activities, refining tools and skills for future undertakings.

## DRILLING DOWN ON THE STEPS TO ENGAGEMENT

Each of the five (5) stages of engagement comprises of several steps to contribute to successful engagement activities. Typically, these steps will be completed in sequential order and a flowchart has been included (appendix 1) to show the relationship between the various tools of this framework and the steps detailed below.



### Stage 1

#### Consider

- 1. Understand the background and legislative context
- 2. Decide to engage and define level of engagement

### Stage 2

#### Plan

- 3. Define the scope of the engagement
- 4. Determine the objectives of engagement
- 5. Understand who to engage with
- 6. Define stakeholders and their level of influence
- 7. Choose how to engage
- 8. Set a budget, confirm resourcing required and relevant staff duties
- 9. Seek engagement plan approval
- 10. Develop collateral and seek approval

### Stage 3

#### Implement

- 11. Get prepared
- 12. Start the engagement
- 13. Monitor progress

### Stage 4

#### Analyse

- 14. Collate and analyse community outcomes
- 15. Decide if further engagement is required
- 16. Consider changes to the underlying project
- 17. Report on outcomes and plan backchannel communications

### Stage 5

#### Evaluate

- 18. Evaluate the engagement process and outcomes

## THE LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum outlines five (5) levels of engagement with each increment setting forth a progressively higher level of engagement and influence. These levels have been deeply embedded into this framework, enabling adaptability and scalability of both engagement methods and framework tools.

When deciding to engage, council will determine an overall level of engagement, with this overall level to guide the next steps and governance requirements for the engagement exercise. Furthermore, when identifying stakeholders, council will consider the engagement levels of individual groups and their differing needs, giving regard to the below table. Often, some stakeholders will evaluate to a higher level than others with this to be established in the planning stage of engagement.

The table below has been adapted from the IAP2 Spectrum and defines the various levels of engagement while also providing examples of tools at each level based on resource availability.

# Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower

Consultation Spectrum (IAP2)			Example Consultation Options (By Resourcing Levels)		Framework Tools
Level	Councils Goal	Councils Promise to the Community	Limited Resources Available	Medium to High Resources Available	Tools to Use
Inform*	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and or solutions	Council will keep the public informed	Social Media Posts, Media Releases, Flyers, Site Signs, Community Group Emails	Info Sessions, Website, E-Newsletters, Letterbox Drops, Public Notices, Radio Advertising, TV Advertising	Framework tools not usually required. Manage via communication plan or other channels as appropriate.
Consult	To obtain public feedback on relevant issues, alternatives and or decisions to be made.	Council will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge their concerns and aspirations	Feedback Sheets, Displays, Suggestions Boxes	Web Surveys, Ideas Days, Competitions, Forums, Focus Groups, Meetings, Market Stall Attendance	All framework tools optional and dependant on the complexity of engagement.
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Council will work with the public to ensure that their concerns and aspirations / ideas are reflected in the alternatives developed.	Web Surveys, Autonomous Ideas Boards	Site Attendances, Workshops, Project Teams Committees, Festival Submissions, Random Telephone Calls (Sample)	All framework tools recommended. Engagement plan and outcomes report required as a minimum.
Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Council will look to the public for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate their advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Focus Groups, Planning Groups.	Workshops/Planning Groups, Telephone surveys, Deliberative Panels, Forums, Debates	All framework tools mandatory.
Empower**	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.	Council will implement what the public decide.	Advisory committee, E-Voting	Taskforce Reference Group, Citizen Juries, Referendum Voting	All framework tools mandatory.

\*NOTE: When a project or matter evaluates to an inform level, it may not be necessary to continue with the community engagement tool set. It may be possible to simply inform the community and manage these communications via a communication plan. Example consultation options should form part of this plan.

\*\*NOTE: Within the context of Local Government, the highest level of 'Empower' will rarely be achievable or appropriate. The spectrum notes that the level of 'Empower' places the "final decision-making in the hands of the public". As elected representatives for the community, final decisions will ultimately rest with the elected Councillors.

## TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

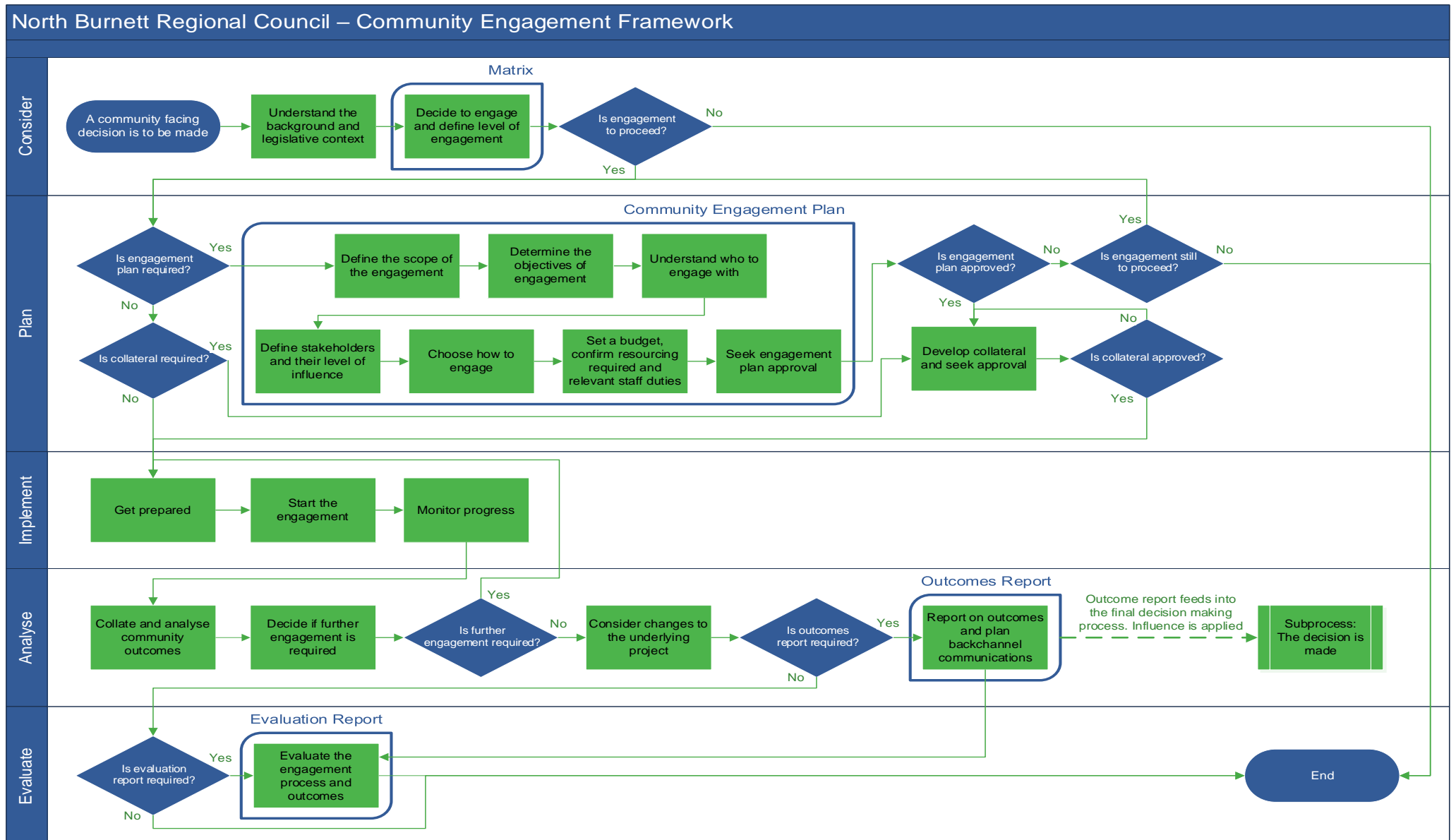
In developing this framework, council has created a suite of templates for use in the engagement process. Each template provides text to guide the completion of the document with the templates being reflective of the various stages in the engagement processes.

While these templates provide a detailed structure, adaptation will be necessary to ensure engagement activities are fit for purpose.

Template	How the template is used?
<b>Engagement Decision Matrix</b>	Completed as part of the “Consider” stage of the engagement process and provides overall guidance on the level of engagement, engagement options for each level and the framework tools necessary for each level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used to consider if engagement is to occur and can be used outside of the framework to assess engagement appetite.</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement Plan</b>	Developed in the “Plan” stage of the engagement process to capture matters related to scope, objectives, stakeholders and other important considerations to guide engagement activity execution.
<b>Outcomes Report</b>	Developed in the “Analyse” stage of the engagement process to present engagement findings to decision makers and plan backchannel communications to ‘close the loop’ with engagement participants. This template will require modification and consideration should be given to both the structure of the engagement feedback and the intended target audience.
<b>Evaluation Report</b>	Developed in the “Evaluate” stage of the engagement process to reflect on the completed engagement exercise and its activities. The focus of this document is to capture feedback and learnings to improve future engagement exercises by way of framework enhancements and staff development.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 – PROCESS FLOWCHART



**NOTE:** This process flow is provided for illustrative purposes only and is subject to change without notice. Dependent on the engagement context, deviation to this process may occur on a case by case basis due to the variability and adaptability required to conduct effective community engagement exercises.

## APPENDIX 2 - THIRD PARTY RESOURCES

Council has collated several third-party resources which may be beneficial to engagement teams during engagement exercises. It is recommended that project teams familiarise themselves with this content to promote better outcomes from engagement exercises.

<b>Resource:</b>	Queensland Government - Community engagement toolkit for planning
<b>Credit:</b>	The State of Queensland, Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning.
<b>Location/Link:</b>	<a href="#">Community engagement toolkit for planning</a>
<b>Reason:</b>	Contains a number of useful resources focused on community engagement related to planning matters. Contains detailed stakeholder analysis and content development guidance that could be interchangeably applied to broader community engagement activities. Helpful guidance/tips on content development, engagement plan development, stakeholder analysis and engaging with different stakeholders.

<b>Resource:</b>	IAP2 - Resource Library
<b>Credit:</b>	International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia
<b>Location/Link:</b>	<a href="#">IAP2 - Resource Library</a>
<b>Reason:</b>	Contains many best practice resources such as templates, toolkits and webinars that may prove useful and/or provide further context to engagement activities.

Note: Council does not warrant the accuracy or fitness for purpose of any information contained in these third-party resources and in no way claims authorship or ownership of the material. Council does not have any control over the content, maintenance or updating of these resources and extends a thanks to the authors/owners for their production and external publication of this information.