



All Our Voices

Engagement Framework

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People.

REFLECTIONS ON ENGAGEMENT AND RECONCILIATION

Our work to advance inclusive, equitable engagement will, in part, be informed by the City's ongoing decolonization efforts and actions for meaningful reconciliation with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. It starts with acknowledging the history and impact of colonialism and systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples. It's about honouring the Indigenous homelands on which we live and work and being aware of our roles in these efforts.

The City has a deep, long-term commitment to reconciliation. Together with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the Urban Indigenous community, the City will continue to build reciprocal relationships to find new and culturally respectful ways of engaging and building trust.



The Engagement Framework guides our work with community. There is a parallel process for our government-to-government relations with the Songhees Nation and Esquimalt Nation.

Our engagement work will continue to be informed by, and evolve through, our work on decolonization and reconciliation.

Introduction

WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

Public engagement is a process that allows the City to deliver its services and policies in a way that reflects the community's vision and needs by involving you in the decision-making process. It includes a range of activities that enable the City to directly connect, speak with and listen to you, on issues that impact or interest you.

HOW DOES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORK?

We listen to the community's ideas and feedback to understand if we're focusing on the right priorities and taking the most effective actions. Sometimes, these are City-led engagements. At other times, we work collaboratively with community to co-design and co-host engagement efforts. We share what we hear from you, along with technical analysis and direction from existing plans and policies, with City staff and Council so that they can integrate it in their thinking and decision making. We believe that hearing from diverse voices will result in better services, programs or policies to serve our community.

We believe that public engagement creates opportunities to:

- Bring together individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences to share ideas, listen to and learn from each other.
- Work together to explore solutions to shared problems or shared issues of importance.
- Help the City better understand the current and future needs of residents.
- Create an inclusive city that is welcoming to people of different backgrounds and lived experiences.
- Strengthen relationships and trust between community members and City Hall.

Done well, public engagement helps build stronger, connected communities and supports better decisions for everyone.

ABOUT THE *ALL OUR VOICES* ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The *All Our Voices* Engagement Framework outlines the City of Victoria's approach to equitable public engagement.

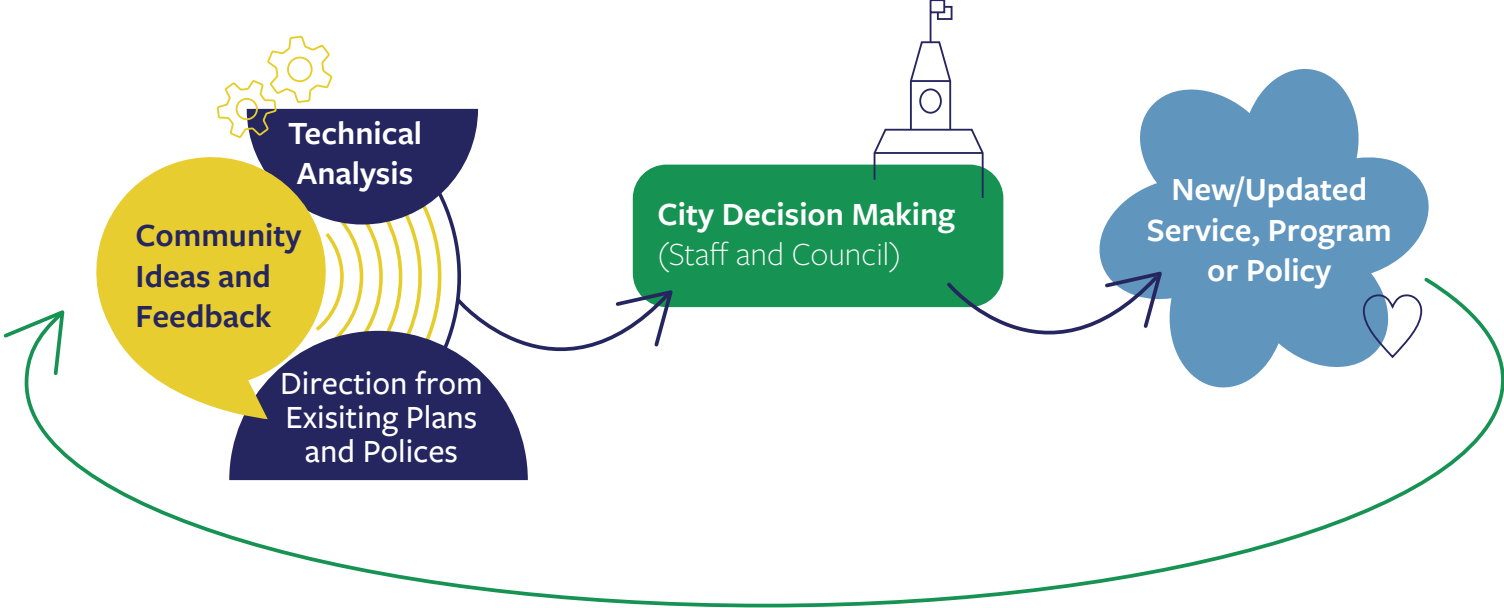
This document is the result of several years of thinking and collaboration. In 2011, the City of Victoria adopted the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) core values and started to develop our engagement best practices. Victoria was recognized for its leadership in engaging community in 2015 with the IAP2 Organization of the Year Award. Between 2017 and 2018, Victoria co-created its Engagement Framework in collaboration with communities through two phases of engagement. We were one of the first municipalities in Canada to develop such an Engagement Framework.

We have now updated the Engagement Framework to align with the City's new Equity Framework which reflects our commitment to embed equity in everything the City does.

ALL OUR VOICES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2021 and 2022, the City hosted a series of engagement opportunities with community groups and residents, called *All Our Voices*. We listened to ideas from community, especially diverse communities whose voices have traditionally not been heard. We asked how the City could plan engagement opportunities that are welcoming, safe and easy to participate in. We also listened to what would make people feel heard.

This *All Our Voices* Engagement Framework is a response to what we heard from our community. The updated framework outlines how the City is redefining its approach to public engagement to centre equity-related concerns and needs. It sets out a vision for how the City speaks with and listens to the community of Victoria, and how we can welcome all voices and honour different ways of knowing, learning and sharing.



This Engagement Framework is intended as a living document – it will evolve as the conversation on equity and our own learning evolves – and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Why We Engage

Central to public engagement is the belief that everyone has the right to be engaged in decisions that impact them. No one knows their community better than the people who live, work and play in Victoria's diverse neighbourhoods. Your voice and your story matter.

Creating opportunities for public participation that includes all voices is an important part of good governance. Everyone should have a voice in City Hall and opportunities to help shape the future of the city. We believe that including all voices leads to:



NEW CANADIANS ENJOYING LION DANCING AT WELCOME DAY

OUR COMMITMENT AS A CITY IS TO:

1. Pay particular attention to the voices of those who are most impacted by a decision.
2. Clearly communicate what opportunities for participation exist.
3. Listen actively and report back to you on what we heard.
4. Update you on how community input was used in decision making.

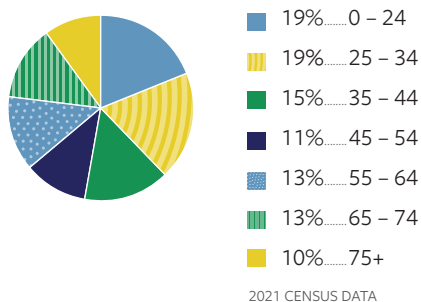
SNAPSHOT OF THE CITY OF VICTORIA

Victoria is a diverse city and to create engagement opportunities that are inclusive, we need to understand what our communities look like. The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People.

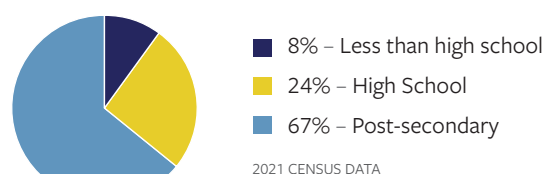
It is home to a population of approximately 94,000 people and includes 12 neighbourhoods. Victoria and 13 other municipalities make up the Capital Regional District with a combined population of almost 400,000.

AMONG PEOPLE LIVING IN VICTORIA

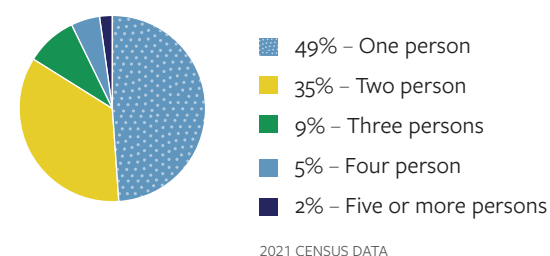
AGE



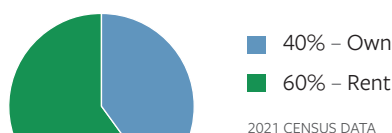
EDUCATION



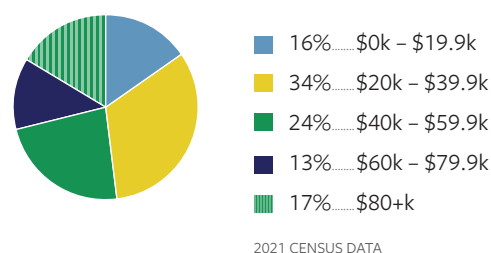
HOUSEHOLD MAKEUP (couples with children etc.)



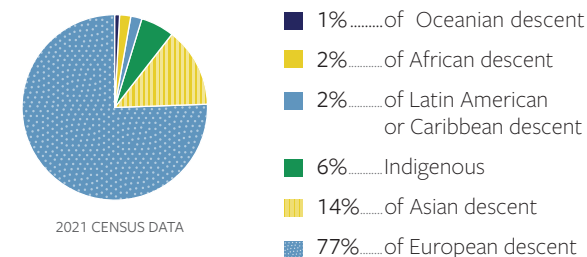
OWNER/RENTER



INCOME BRACKET



ETHNICITY



19% Immigrants as a percentage of the population

2021 CENSUS DATA.

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS WHO SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME



16% of the population said they speak a language other than English at home. Of these, the most frequently spoken languages were French, Cantonese, Spanish, Mandarin, Punjabi, Tagalog, German and Arabic.

2021 CENSUS DATA.

DISABILITY

Approximately **1 in 5** Victorians experience at least one disability.

CITY OF VICTORIA ACCESSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

The Role For Equity In Engagement

The updated *All Our Voices* Engagement Framework aims to put inclusion and equity at the heart of City engagement processes. It aligns with the City's broader work on equity, including its Equity Framework, which is grounded in the concepts of decolonization, anti-racism, disability justice, gender diversity and dignity.

WHAT IS INCLUSION IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

Inclusion in public engagement means involving people who reflect the diversity of the communities that may be impacted by any given decision. Inclusive public engagement nurtures a sense of welcome, belonging, recognition and safety for all people and values diverse perspectives and ways of life.

Inclusion, by itself though, doesn't mean that all voices will equally influence action. This is due to differences in power, resources and privilege among groups.

WHAT IS EQUITY IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

Equity in engagement requires going beyond inclusion so that communities and individuals can equally participate in, contribute to and influence engagement opportunities and outcomes.

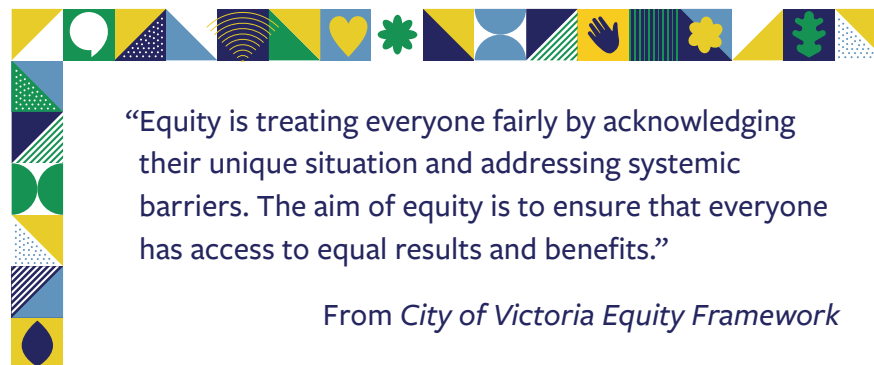
Thinking about equity means thinking about differences in opportunities, power and influence that exist between different groups and institutions

as well as subtle and explicit forms of discrimination. Engagement is equitable when resources and opportunities for participation are distributed in a manner that responds to historic and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized groups.

Creating engagement processes that are equitable requires us to identify and address barriers to participation for certain individuals or groups. Barriers to participation can be physical, economic, geographical, social or can include language constraints.

HOW IS EQUITY DIFFERENT THAN EQUALITY?

It is important to underline the difference between equity (giving individuals what they need to participate fully) and equality (treating everyone the same). Equality is only fair if everyone faces the same barriers, which is very rarely the case. Some people face greater barriers to participation than others based on their identities and systemic social inequities.



Pillars of Equitable Engagement

Reflecting on what we heard through our community engagement process, we aim to build on how we have been engaging with our communities to ensure that no voices are missing as we make decisions as a City. We will centre equity in our planning, hosting and evaluation of public engagements by:

- 1. Building reciprocal relationships:** We will dedicate time and resources to developing mutually respectful and reciprocal relationships. When appropriate (for example, when a decision will have a significant impact on a community) there may be opportunities to plan or host the engagement collaboratively and/or to use available engagement resources in a way that most aligns with the needs of the community.
- 2. Building capacity:** We will provide communities with the knowledge, tools and resources needed to participate meaningfully in engagements. Materials will be provided in plain language and in a timely way so that communities can prepare for the event in advance. City staff will receive training on equity, inclusion and engagement to help build their skills and understanding.
- 3. Building trust:** We will communicate clearly about what level of participation we are offering and what decisions have already been made. We will report back on what we heard from communities during the engagement, check in if we heard correctly and provide information on how community input was used to inform the recommendations going to Council. We will also provide an update on the final decision or outcome.
- 4. Considering who is missing:** We will seek out and elevate the voices of people who have been traditionally excluded and under-represented in engagement processes, especially when they are most impacted by potential decisions or changes. We understand that everyone's identities are made up of multiple factors, which intersect with one another – you are not just a youth, a woman, a newcomer. We will apply an intersectional approach to our engagement and be mindful of the internal diversity that exists within communities. Where possible, we will strive to meet the community where they are at and to create a sense of belonging and confidence in our engagement processes.
- 5. Addressing barriers to participation:** We will work with communities to identify and address barriers to participation in engagement processes. Barriers can include physical, financial, technical or language limitations. Other barriers may relate to the timing, date or venue of the engagement or a lack of consideration for cultural safety or gender inclusivity. Addressing barriers could include providing translation services, support for childcare or elder care, in-person or online opportunities for feedback, or support for transportation costs etc. We will strive to provide adequate compensation for engagements that require a high level of commitment or lived expertise.
- 6. Using evidence-based decision making:** We will make decisions that are informed by an in-depth understanding of challenges and opportunities. This includes the gathering and analysis of research and data but also drawing on local knowledge and lived experiences shared by our communities. We will be open to different ways of knowing, sharing and recording that knowledge.
- 7. Redefining success:** In engagement processes, success is typically measured by the number of people reached. Instead of only focusing on this, we will measure the quality of the relationships that we build, the quality of the information shared and the depth of the understanding developed.

Principles for Engagement

The principles below guide our engagement practice. They are based on best practices from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) along with what we have heard from our communities during the *All Our Voices* engagements.

Guiding Principle	Commitment to the Community
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will work with communities to identify and address barriers to your participation in engagement• We will consider which voices are missing• We will provide you with the information and resources you need to participate meaningfully alongside us in our engagements• Where possible, we will provide various channels for providing input
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will strive to inform and engage all communities who are impacted by changes or decisions being considered• Where possible (when a specific community is highly impacted by a potential decision) the City will involve the community in the design of the engagement through outreach and/or working groups
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will take guidance from the Accessible Meeting and Event Toolkit and work with community members to make our engagements more accessible
Welcoming/Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will work to create engagement spaces where everyone feels that they belong• We will create safe(r), welcoming and respectful engagement spaces and processes where everyone feels comfortable sharing feedback• We will establish clear guidelines for respectful conduct

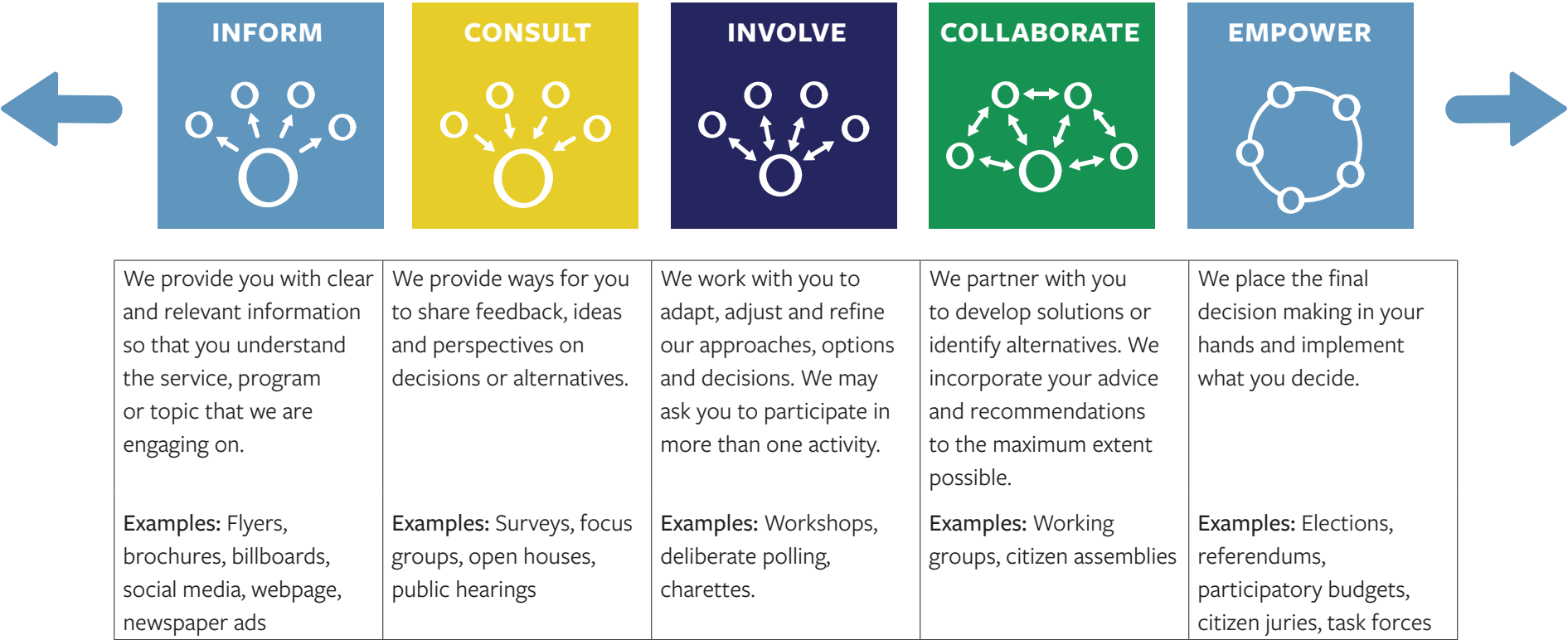
Guiding Principle	Commitment to the Community
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will set and manage expectations by telling you what level of participation you can expect, what decisions have already been made and what's on/off the table for discussion • We will share clear and concise summaries of what we heard from communities and check that all feedback was accurately captured • We will inform you of how your inputs were used to inform decisions
Timely and Clear Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim to provide you with notice of engagement processes as early as possible so that you have time to learn about the issue and actively participate • We will provide materials for review in advance where relevant • We will strive to use plain and accessible language in our communications and present you with balanced and relevant information • In many cases, we will provide two levels of information – a brief summary as well as more technical information for those who want more detail
Continuous learning and improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will incorporate the lessons we learned into future engagement processes • We will seek your feedback on how we are doing • We will engage with you to update or refresh this Engagement Framework so that we integrate new learnings and practices

How We Engage

Not every engagement will look and feel the same. Some engagements will require more participation from community than others, based on project and stakeholder needs. At times, the City may be informing communities about a policy or initiative. At other times, we may be seeking active feedback to refine content or ideas or looking to partner with you to develop content and solutions. We will always keep in mind that engagement should build respectful relationships with our community.

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN ENGAGEMENT

The International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation provides a range of options for public participation, from processes that inform the public about an issue to processes that place the final decision in the public’s hands.



Which Level of Participation is used?

- Different engagements may require different levels of public input and influence. Depending on the issue the engagement addresses, we may ask you to commit more time or to be involved in the process more than once.
- For each engagement process, we choose an appropriate level of participation based on the specific initiative and what inputs we are looking for from the community.
- All levels of participation are important. Each level above describes how you might be involved and the level of influence you might have on the final decision. In some engagement processes we may use several of these levels.
- We will always communicate transparently about what level of engagement we require for a process.



When is a more participatory process needed?

The level of participation in an engagement will depend on the context, including the topic, who will be impacted and how, and histories of the impacted communities. Generally, engagement processes will be more participatory and collaborative when:

- A decision will have a significant impact on a community
- The impacted communities have faced historic or ongoing marginalization, discrimination or oppression
- There exists a significant imbalance in power and equity leading to communities being excluded from decision making and leadership

The Steps We Take to Engage with Community

We assess if opportunities exist for residents to participate in engagement and then develop a tailored engagement strategy through seven key steps.



THE ROLE OF EVALUATION AND ONGOING LEARNING

We value the community's time and feedback to help City Council make well-informed decisions that reflect community needs, values and visions. At the end of each engagement project we will evaluate the process using the seven Guiding Principles. We will also ask for community feedback on the process.

The feedback and evaluation process allows us to track how well objectives were met, discuss lessons learned and share recommendations for future processes. As this work evolves, we are committed to ensuring that all of your voices continue to guide how we engage.

A LIVING DOCUMENT

The *All Our Voices* Engagement Framework is designed to be a living document that will change and adapt as relationships with communities grow. We will continue our conversation with you about how we can advance this framework. We are grateful for the opportunities that our community engagements give us to learn and improve.

Appendix

Worksheet to Identify and Address Barriers

Examples of Barriers	Considerations
Physical Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will people with disabilities travel to the venue? • Choose venues that are accessible and safe. • Provide advance notice about the venue's accessibility. • Ask participants in advance what accommodations they will require.
Geographical Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the distance to the venue reasonable? Is the commute simple and safe? • Can we choose venues near main public transit lines, offer complementary transportation? • Can we host multiple engagements at different locations or online?
Financial Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What costs may participants face if they attend? (e.g., transportation, meals, childcare, taking time off work) • Compensation can enhance public participation by helping to remove participation barriers (and in doing so, increasing diversity of participation). We may offer compensation in a range of ways depending on needs and the context of the engagement (honorarium, gift card, meal, transportation such as bus tickets).
Lack of Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does our engagement (venue, approach) feel welcoming and inclusive? • What level of formality is appropriate for this engagement? • Are our communication materials accessible, inclusive and welcoming? • Can we meet communities where they are - at their community centres, or in a place that is comfortable for them?
Date and Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host multiple engagements at different dates and times, or offer alternative channels for participation (online, surveys). • How might work, caregiving or other responsibilities impact when and for how long participants are available? • Have cultural or religious dates been considered when choosing a date or time? • Consult community members and partners about event dates and times. • Respect start and end times.

Examples of Barriers	Considerations
Cultural Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are we acknowledging and accounting for historical harms and discrimination? • How will we respond to biases and discrimination if they occur? • What are we doing to ensure equity, dignity and safety for all participants? • How are we developing our knowledge of different cultural protocols, practices and ways of knowing and ways of sharing knowledge? • Does this engagement work to further build sustainable and reciprocal relationships? • Does this engagement value the strengths and assets of engaged communities?
Gender Inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are our spaces, activities, language and visuals inclusive and respectful for people of diverse gender identities and expressions? • Offer gender-inclusive options on registrations forms and surveys. • Choose venues with at least one gender-neutral washroom or affix signage stating that washrooms are gender-neutral (everyone is welcome).
Language Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we need translation services? • Are there community organizations that are willing to assist with interpretation or translation of materials? • Are materials presented in plain language? • Use large, accessible fonts and visuals to communicate where possible.



MEMBERS OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY AND CITY STAFF AT *ALL OUR VOICES* EVENT

CASE STUDY – CO-HOSTING WITH THE CHINESE COMMUNITY

The City of Victoria and the Chinese Community Services Centre (CCSC) co-planned and co-hosted an *All Our Voices* roundtable event. This was an important conversation and during early engagement it was clear that the community thought a small roundtable would be most welcoming.

The City brought the engagement questions to the table and a small budget. CCSC offered their community centre as a location, set a date and time and decided how best to use the budget to create a culturally-appropriate and welcoming event. They chose live translation into Mandarin and Cantonese. Instead of offering gift cards as honorarium for participation, they decided on a simple and delicious dim sum lunch

to follow the dialogue. The CCSC extended the invitation to community leaders and filled the room with 14 organizations all keen to participate. They facilitated the event and two City staff attended to listen, take notes and answer many questions. New information, new ideas and hard questions were balanced with laughs over lunch.

To ensure we were building a reciprocal relationship, City staff followed up by connecting City resources and staff to this community in areas that were most important to them. This relationship has also opened the door to future engagement opportunities that will serve both the City and members of the Chinese community.

Guidelines For Respectful Participation

These guidelines are for use during engagement activities:

1. Be respectful of each other – in words, tone and behavior.
2. Listen to understand. Be open to new ideas and opinions.
We don't always need to agree.
3. Ask thoughtful questions to gain a better understanding.
4. Remember to leave time for others to speak without interruption.
5. Speak personally – share your story, experience and views, rather than generalizing.
6. Have a good time. Enjoy sharing and hearing ideas!

List of Terms and Concepts

Accessibility in public engagement exists when all members of the communities impacted by a decision can access and fully participate in the engagement space and processes.

Anti-Racism is the work of actively opposing discrimination based on race by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life. Ibram X. Kendi in his 2019 book *How to Be an Antiracist* said the following of anti-racism: “The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it – and then dismantle it.”

Decolonization is the removal or undoing of colonial elements. In Canada, decolonization is usually discussed in terms of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and particularly with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report and Calls to Action.

Dignity reminds us to honour the way people see themselves, how they want to feel and be, and what respect looks like. People define dignity for themselves, which can help us understand how to show up and stand up for people and communities.

Disability justice means identifying and challenging ableism. We will work with people with disabilities and elevate their expertise and lived experience to create a more accessible and inclusive city.

Gender diversity is a term that recognizes the full spectrum of gender that exists outside of the binary view (woman or man) that is limiting for many people.

Marginalized is a term used to describe groups of people who face historic and/or ongoing barriers to participating in civic life due to socioeconomic inequities, lack of political rights or recognition, or other forms of oppression, discrimination or persecution.

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country. For that to happen, there has to be an awareness of the past, acknowledgements of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes and action to change behaviour.