



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Corporate Civic Engagement Strategy – Divisional and Program Engagement Supports

Date:	June 30, 2011
To:	City Council
From:	City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report informs Council on resources and strategies that support the City's corporate and divisional civic engagement objectives. Members of the public regularly provide advice, input, recommendations and feedback to Council and its Standing Committees on City reports, services, issues and policies. City Divisions regularly engage the public in their planning and decision-making about services and programs, and through the legislative process. The City Manager's Office has implemented a civic engagement strategy that supports divisional engagement activities, undertakes research, and develops participatory models of engagement and corporate best practices on city-wide issues.

Because there is no single approach to civic engagement, each engagement strategy must reflect legislative, Council, ward and jurisdictional requirements and considerations, public and stakeholder outreach and communication needs, and the availability of budget, resources, and time. The City Manager's Office and divisional engagement staff test and pilot new approaches and methodologies and evaluate efforts to ensure ongoing continuous improvement in the delivery of quality civic engagement.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

DECISION HISTORY

Executive Committee Report EX5.3, recommendation 5, adopted by Council, May 17, 2011 requested:

"the City Manager to report directly to the July 12, 2011 City Council meeting on the need for program advice and civic engagement in each program area, and to recommend an appropriate format and mechanism to meet those advisory or engagement needs."

Building on the City's strong history of public participation, community development, consultation and involvement, the City's Civic Engagement strategy was launched by the City Manager in 2006 to support:

- An informed public that will help shape the City and its neighbourhoods and communities.
- Decision-making informed by reliable data.
- The City's goal to make its priorities, services and programs relevant to Torontonians of all backgrounds, now and in the future.
- The building of trust through transparency, accountability and reliability.

A report on the City Manager's civic engagement strategy was submitted to Council in December 2008 and is available online at <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/au/bgrd/backgroundfile-16459.pdf>. See Attachment 1 for examples of civic engagement activities.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto continuously engages the public in a diversity of ways. Although often considered to be public consultation, civic engagement activities are much broader and range from informative and educational, to discursive and deliberative, to partnerships and shared decision-making. City engagement staff seek the participation of the public in issues both through formal or legislated engagement (e.g. elections, polling, deputations, Council public advisory bodies) and informal or adaptable methods (e.g. town hall sessions, planning charettes or community workshops).

Civic engagement is an active, intentional, purposeful relationship between the public in all its forms and the City. Civic engagement at the City is about working with the public to assist their understanding of and access to City services, programs, and opportunities to participate. It is about ensuring Torontonians play a meaningful role in the life and governance of the City. Public participation contributes to Council's decision-making process by identifying new and emerging issues, providing feedback and recommending improvements to existing City services, programs and policies, participating in visioning, developing, implementing and monitoring City plans and strategies.

Civic Engagement Strategy

The City's Civic Engagement function is housed in the Strategic & Corporate Policy Division of the City Manager's Office. The function has three key components:

- developing participatory models of engagement to promote purposeful dialogue, civic literacy, and to inform decision-making;
- enhancing outreach and inclusion activities to ensure a diversity of opinion, perspectives and experiences; and
- providing strategic coordination and advice within the Toronto Public Service to improve coordination across City divisions, issues, neighbourhoods and communities.

Divisions support public engagement throughout the City organization. This includes staff in elections, communications, community development, outreach, access and diversity, policy and frontline functions in a range of service areas including public health, recreation, parks, housing, social assistance, economic development, employment, water, transportation, planning, solid waste, environmental, long-term care, children's services, buildings and City Clerks. In addition the Toronto Public Library, Fire Services, EMS, Police Services, as well as the City's corporations and agencies engage the public through their governing boards, volunteer opportunities and programs.

Strategic and Corporate Policy (S&CP) staff:

1. Provide advice and support to engagement staff throughout the organization as they plan, develop, deliver and evaluate public engagement for their divisions. Advice to divisions includes both public and staff engagement planning, communications, methodologies, data analysis and evaluation. Recent projects included: Tower Renewal, Recreation Services, Elections, Toronto Employment and Social Services, Open Data initiative, Web ReBrand, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Food Strategy, City Advisory Committees, Culture and Museums, Fort York, Nuit Blanche.
2. Support corporate capacity building. All City staff and elected officials have access to an internal online resource portal, newsletter (circulation 600+), blog, training and engagement research. S&CP regularly meets with and advises divisions and City agencies on engagement methodologies, data management, outreach, research, evaluation, best practices and communication to ensure that the City's engagement practices are accessible, inclusive, timely, purposeful and effective. See Attachment 2 for screenshots from the City's internal engagement resource portal.
3. Deliver city-wide engagement on complex, multi-faceted or multi-jurisdictional issues on behalf of Council and the corporation such as strategic planning, city budgets, governance and, most recently, the City's Core Service Review.
4. Support civic literacy and access and inclusion to the City's decision-making process and engagement initiatives. For example:
 - a) The public Civic Engagement website (www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement) with introductory guides to the City and how it works; a centralized list and map of City consultations, workshops and public meetings (searchable by location, date and keyword); resources on local engagement and links to information about City services including videos, the City's open data site and public notices and

- appointments; and, links to City social media sites including Twitter and Facebook feeds. See Attachment 3 for screenshot of the public civic engagement website.
- b) [Toronto Civics 101](#) - a six part learning series in 2009 for 175 Torontonians (from 950 applicants) to learn about decision-making, finances, planning and elections. Comprehensive outreach ensured geographic representation and a wide range of ages, length of residency, diversity and experience, as well a web portal with video highlights and presentations, links to background material and learning exercises allowed the general public to follow along online.
 - c) Supporting corporate projects such as the City Manager's Highrise Outreach initiative for voter registration for the 2010 election, elections training for engagement practitioners, and multilingual translation and interpretation for the Core Service Review.

COMMENTS

Because there is no single approach to civic engagement, each engagement strategy must reflect legislative, Council, ward and jurisdictional requirements and considerations, public and stakeholder outreach and communication needs, and the availability of budget, resources, and time.

For each engagement, staff examine the issue or topic at hand, stakeholder and community capacity and demographics, potential barriers to participation, previous or related engagements, and existing data. Staff then select the most appropriate methodology(ies). For example an issue in its infancy might require a different strategy than one that is nearing implementation; a very localized or focussed issue might involve a limited number of stakeholders, bound by geographic location or sector and a different approach than a more complex topic or one with participation from across the city or across diverse populations. In some cases the objectives or framework for the engagement is set through regulation, policy or legislation – a formal environmental assessment for example. In other situations participants will be instrumental in shaping the goals and processes for the engagement – a community needs assessment and visioning session for example.

What is important is that the engagement is appropriate, purposeful, timely, meaningful and transparent. Engagement is most effective if both the public and the City understand the context, objectives, process, each other's roles and what will happen to any information or input that is collected. The City Manager's Office and divisional engagement staff work to ensure that these objectives are met. Staff test and pilot new approaches and methodologies and evaluate efforts to ensure ongoing continuous improvement in the delivery of quality civic engagement.

The City Manager's Office, Strategic and Corporate Policy will continue to deliver the City's civic engagement strategy including:

- Supporting the City's engagement practitioners across the organization through ongoing updates to the online network with resources, toolkits and discussion forums, and training for City staff
- Developing a civic engagement protocol for City staff
- Launching an online engagement and consultation platforms with Web2.0 and social media functions
- Building a Civic Engagement Database to record, track, monitor and report on City and divisional consultations

CONTACT

Rosanna Scotti, Director,
Strategic and Corporate Policy Division, City Manager's Office,
Email: rscotti@toronto.ca; tel.: 416-392-8637

SIGNATURE

Joseph P. Pennachetti
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Examples of Civic Engagement Activities 1999-2011
2. Screenshot internal engagement resource portal for City staff and Members of Council
3. Screenshots from public Civic Engagement Web portal


Attachment 1

Examples of Civic Engagement Activities 1999-2011




Date	Activity
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework for Citizen Participation in the City of Toronto report from The Special Committee to Review the Final Report of the Transition Team
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement intranet site launched "Coming Together Online"
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the New Toronto: Reflections on Civic Engagement http://tinyurl.com/3hjztd
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Workbook launched (annual until 2006)
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to Toronto (January) • Listening to Toronto/2 (November)
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Resources for ward budget meetings • Strong Toronto Strong Ontario http://www.toronto.ca/david_miller/torontoact.htm#3 • Governance review http://www.toronto.ca/governingtoronto/pdf/transcript_nov15.pdf • Practitioners Workshop on Models of Engagement Practices
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance review http://www.toronto.ca/governingtoronto/pdf/publicinput_allsessions.pdf
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement • Engagement Practitioners Intranet Resource and Research site launched • First edition Engagement Practitioners quarterly • Training Courses for practitioners start
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Civics 101 www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement/civics101
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All candidate meeting calendar and factsheet
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Service Review Public Consultation www.torontoservicereview.ca

Attachment 2


Screenshot internal engagement resource portal for City staff and Members of Council

 Search this site


Civic Engagement Network

-  News and information
-  Can we talk
-  Need to know
-  Sites to visit
-  Commonly asked questions
-  Bird's eye view

- [Edition 10 - new format - Blog Newsletter](#)
- [Ninth Edition - Practitioners Newsletter November 2010](#)
- [Need to know](#)
Resources and materials
- [Can we talk?](#)
Workgroup Discussion
- [Sites to visit](#)
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 **Welcome**

A website for City of Toronto staff working to engage and build relationships with the public. Brought to you by Strategic & Corporate Policy, City Manager's Office.

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Attachment 3

Screenshots from public Civic Engagement Web portal

www.toronto.ca/civic-engagement
Homepage

Current engagement listings page

Title	Location	Category
Changes to Front Street at Union Station	City-wide	Transportation
Creative Communities Public Consultations	City-wide	Arts & Culture
Doors Open Toronto Volunteers	City-wide	Volunteering
Dufferin Street Bridges Environmental Assessment	Wards 14, 19	Transportation
Hogg's Hollow Road Reconstruction	Ward 25	Transportation/ Water
Improvements to Gardiner Expressway between Kipling Avenue and Park Lawn Road	Wards 5 & 6	Transportation
John Street Corridor Improvements	Ward 20	Transportation
King Liberty Pedestrian/Cyclist Link Municipal Class Environmental Assessment	Wards 14, 18, 19	Transportation
Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Community Forum	Ward 15	Planning