

# **Community Engagement Review**

## **Findings & Recommendations Report 2019-2020**



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# Introduction

Whistler has a long history of inclusive and meaningful engagement with the community, along with the belief that consultation and participation are the cornerstones of modern democracy, and that municipalities have a unique and critical role and responsibility in creating these opportunities.

The Community Engagement Review project was an opportunity to review the RMOW's practices, identify improvements, and provide the guidance to the organization for engagement processes moving forward. There were three specific objectives of the review project, each resulting in specific deliverables as listed:

1. Identify and implement improvements and additions to engagement and information channels  
Deliverable: Community Engagement Review Findings and Recommendations Report (this report)
2. Update and formalize RMOW engagement approach and commitment to the public  
Deliverable: Community Engagement Policy (separate document)
3. Provide clear expectations and resources to staff to execute  
Deliverable: Staff guide/toolkit (in progress)

The project was initiated and guided by the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) Governance & Ethics Committee of Council, overseen by the RMOW Communications Manager, and delivered by WCS Engagement + Planning (formerly the Whistler Centre for Sustainability).

## Community Engagement 101

### What is community engagement?

Community engagement (or public participation) is an *umbrella term that describes the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues.*<sup>1</sup> It includes the communications activities intended to inform the engagement process and decision-making.

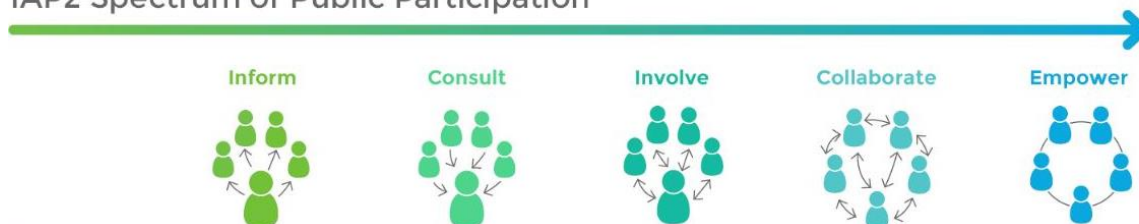
Like most Canadian municipalities, the RMOW is using the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2's) framework for public participation, including the public participation spectrum below.

Communications activities are considered as part of 'inform' within the spectrum. As such, they have been included within the scope of this project.

*The traditional view of citizens as voters, volunteers, and writers of letters to the editor is no longer accurate or sufficient.*

*Infogagement: Citizenship and Democracy in the Age of Connection,  
Matt Leighninger*

### IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



<sup>1</sup> Tina Nabatchi & Matt Leighninger

## Why is it important?

There are many reasons to engage people in the decisions and actions that affect them. Key amongst these reasons is that doing so: helps to build mutual understanding and trust; is part of any good governance<sup>2</sup> system, which extends well beyond elections; and leads to better decision-making and ultimately more successful outcomes since community priorities and needs are directly embedded and there is alignment with community members.

## What is successful engagement?

A successful engagement process should be evaluated from the perspective of participants and from the perspective of decision-makers. The principles below provide guidance for a successful process from both perspectives. It was informed by the IAP2 core values, general principles of good governance, as well as the engagement principles from a number of other Canadian cities.

- **Resourced**
  - The financial and human resources allocated to each community engagement process are adequate and proportionate to the significance/scope of the decision-making process and the level of public engagement required, enabling the process to achieve the necessary objectives and to employ appropriate techniques.
  - Key staff have the capacity and/or can access the external assistance needed to design and deliver successful engagement processes.
- **Inclusive**
  - The diversity of those affected by a decision are able and facilitated to engage in the decision-making process.
  - Efforts are made to include under-represented and hard-to-reach groups, and barriers to access, such as physical, economic, language and logistical constraints, are mitigated as much as possible.
  - Enough people are involved such that the input can be relied upon, where *enough*<sup>3</sup> depends on the decision being made and the stakeholders impacted.
- **Respectful**
  - Participants are treated respectfully, their time is used efficiently and effectively, and the process builds mutual understanding and trust.
  - Privacy is respected and, in cases where public feedback is received in confidence, personal information and verbatim responses are securely stored and only aggregated information is released publicly.

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<sup>2</sup> Governance, as defined by The United Nations Development Programme, is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Governance includes the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. The term does not imply the nature of the system as being either positive or negative, which is why the concept of 'good governance' is used.

<sup>3</sup> In some circumstances it could mean 30 people, and in other cases it could mean 300 or even 3000 people. For example, the use of a well-informed group (i.e. task force, advisory group) that includes members who represent the breadth and diversity of the stakeholders affected by a decision might well be the best approach for a project and, in this case, the 'critical mass' criteria might not be relevant.

- **Informed**
  - The community receives clear and broad-reaching communications about engagement opportunities through consistent channels.
  - The information provided to enable informed participation in the process is easy to access, timely, clear, concise, complete, accurate, objective and jargon-free as much as possible.
- **Transparent**
  - The promise to the public about the level of engagement and the roles in the process are clear from the outset, including what is open for input, how the input will be used, and who has decision-making authority.
  - The decision-making process occurs through an open process whenever possible.
  - Process milestones and outcomes – including what decisions were made and why, and how public input affected the decision or why it didn't – are communicated to participants and the general public.
- **Meaningful**
  - Engagement processes are worthwhile for participants, utilize the appropriate level of engagement for the initiative being undertaken, and use techniques that achieve the promised level of engagement.
  - The results of the process represent stakeholder input as clearly and accurately as possible, are relatively easy to use in decision-making, and are carefully considered through the decision-making process.
- **Monitored**
  - Project-related engagement includes opportunities for participants to not only provide input on the content of the process, but also on the process itself to help inform future improvements.
  - Overall community engagement performance, preferences, levels of trust in decision-making, and other indicators related to community engagement are regularly measured to inform process improvements.

## What about successful digital engagement?

Online or digital engagement has been increasing in importance as have the tools available to deliver it. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated the expanded and enhanced use of the tools for a wider range of engagement activities. The same core principles for successful engagement (listed above) apply to digital engagement, and in addition, the principles below also apply.

- Digital tools are accessible for the majority of users, and alternatives are provided if not.
- Digital tools minimize risk (e.g. reputational risk) to users and to hosts.

## Project Scope

The project was scoped to include all of the RMOW's community engagement activities and communications, which is 'inform' on the IAP2 engagement spectrum. To provide structure to the engagement and communities initiatives, three categories were developed; they are listed and described below.

## Project-related Engagement

Project-related engagement covers the activities that are undertaken to inform project-related decisions, where projects include planning, capital and policy development projects. This type of engagement is not required by the Community Charter; however, done right, this type of engagement: provides useful and necessary information to project leads and to Council; opens the door to the organization, helping to build relationships and trust between staff/Council and the community; and while it might require more up-front planning and resources, it ultimately supports the success of the project in the longer-term.

## Required Engagement

The required engagement category includes the community engagement activities that are required of municipalities by the Community Charter or the Local Government Act. These activities include:

- Council meeting procedures, including: Council packages, public question and answer period, public hearings, presentations and delegations, meeting minutes, and Council correspondence (letters to Council and their inclusion in Council packages and meetings).
- Statutory requirements for various planning, land use and development applications (e.g. public notices, bylaw readings and public hearings).
- A public process related to the municipal budget and annual report.
- Committees of Council, including associated: meeting agendas, meeting minutes, terms of reference, composition, and the recruitment and the selection/appointment process.

## Ongoing Engagement

This category covers the engagement (and communications) channels that provide community members with ongoing, continual, on-demand access to municipal staff, Council and other sources of information. These channels include:

- Whistler.ca, including information, some online services, reporting to/contacting the organization
- Email notices, including Whistler Today and news releases
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Access to staff in-person at various locations, including Municipal Hall (front desk and building, planning and engineering departments), Meadow Park Sports Centre, Library
- Access to departments via email and phone
- Access to Council via email, letters and phone
- After-hours emergency channels

# External Scan

An external scan was conducted that included a review of the key trends (or external factors) at play that are affecting and will affect our engagement efforts, and the best practices being carried out by other communities and organizations that should be considered moving forward. Trends were gathered by reviewing credible sources online and then citing only those that were either supported by multiple sources or by defensible data. Best practices were drawn from project team knowledge, the staff survey and from a scan of the IAP2 (Canada) Core Values Award winners from the past few years. The awards focus on new engagement approaches and innovative ways of executing existing ones.

## Trends

It is useful to understand the trends that relate to community engagement so we can more strategically improve current engagement activities and plan for their evolution moving forward. The intent of this element of the external scan was to better understand what's happening in society (including technology and the economy) that is affecting or will affect how we engage with community members and stakeholders, and what's happening in the field of public engagement.

A number of references were used to inform the summary of relevant trends below. Reputable survey, polling and public participation organizations were found, references from these sources were gathered, and common trends between them were identified and summarized below.

## Societal Trends

The trends listed below represent – at a high level and in general terms – what is happening in North America. A number of the references used in gathering these findings were American, but the trends are generally applicable to what's happening north of the border as well. They are worth having on our radar to inform our engagement approaches moving forward.

**Demographics are changing**, including a growing proportion of seniors and increasing cultural and language diversity. While Whistler's demographics may not be typical of other communities, we still need to make sure diverse groups can access and understand the information and can participate in the process in a way that is meaningful to them.

**Community members are dramatically more educated** than they were a century ago, but they are more skeptical; they have more capacity, but many are dedicating less time to participate in community processes; they want institutions and officials to treat them like adults, rather than children. We need to make engagement more meaningful and convenient, and the information more accessible and bite-sized, yet still informative.

**Levels of trust are declining** in most developing countries – and in Whistler. Previously, good economic conditions have meant rising levels of trust, yet in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the era of strong economic performance and nearly full employment enjoyed no such result. Trust has become decoupled from economic growth because people feel they are not getting their fair share of growing prosperity, and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. National income inequality is now the more important factor in

*Research demonstrates that declining levels of public trust are eroding the capacity for productive public dialogue and debate within democracies like Canada's. The research also suggests that a primary obstacle to rebuilding social cohesion and repairing public trust is neither the population nor the issues, but the process. While people can be united through effective public engagement processes, poor or non-existent public engagement creates divisions among citizens and may even polarize or paralyze public discourse.*

*Institute on Governance: Rebuilding Cohesion and Trust: Why Government Needs Civil Society (2019)*



institutional trust. In markets with high income inequality, the gap between trust in business and trust in government is much wider (12 points) than the gap in low inequality markets (four points).

**Reconciliation has come to the fore** and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (recently passed by the Province of British Columbia) states that Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters that affect them and their rights – through representation and procedures they choose. In June 2020, the RMOW signed a Framework Agreement with the Lil'wat Nation and Squamish Nation that furthers reconciliation, shared goals and a collaborative working relationship with these governments and communities.

**Technology and social media are enabling huge webs of personal, political, and place-based relationships**, and mobilization can happen at an unprecedented speed and scale. A much higher proportion of people can now share their opinions and experiences than before social media, although some groups are not as comfortable doing so.

**Increasing use of social media for news and information** is having a demotivating and polarizing impact on the nature of public discourse.

- The sheer volume of content may be overwhelming and demotivating to many, especially when the origins are unclear and citizens cannot determine if they are receiving information from a fellow citizen or even a fellow human.
- Uncertainties related to the accuracy and authenticity of online information and even intentionally released disinformation may also be having a demotivating effect on rational and reasonable public engagement. Disinformation (i.e. fake news and false rumors), which often uses more emotional language, tends to have more reach, penetrates deeper into social networks, and spreads much faster than accurate information and stories. This is enabled because it is generally human nature to prefer novel and emotional content that aligns with our pre-existing worldviews and shared beliefs. Because of the scepticism related to information on social media, mainstream media (both in traditional and newer digital settings) has been surprisingly resilient.
- The anonymity of social media and other online forums can result in a toxic online atmosphere where extreme opinions, vitriolic comments, or harassing comments are shared in real time. And while this toxic climate is turning some away from engaging online, others are being persuaded, reaffirmed, mobilized and further polarized by it. At particular risk of being turned off digital engagement are those who represent diverse and minority populations – the groups that are more likely to be the targets of the online vitriol.

*While the duty to consult with Indigenous Peoples rests with provincial and federal governments in Canada, strong relationships between local governments and First Nations communities is important for many reasons, so community to community engagement should be part of municipal engagement activities where interests overlap and synergies exist.*

*With the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) recently passed by the Province of British Columbia as the framework for reconciliation, provincial laws (including the Local Government Act) will be aligned with the Declaration over time in collaboration with stakeholders.*

*In June 2020, the RMOW signed a Framework Agreement with the Lil'wat Nation and Squamish Nation that furthers reconciliation, shared goals and a collaborative working relationship with these governments and communities.*



# Engagement Trends

Having a sense of trends occurring within and related to the field of public engagement will allow us to develop an engagement policy and staff resource that address them and better position our community for successful processes.

**Government must work harder to engage the public** and to earn and keep trust. We need to be clear about what we're engaging on – what's on the table and what's not. Then, we need to consider the input, reflect the input in the work where possible, and report back transparently as to why the input did or didn't influence the decisions.

**Traditional forms of engagement are in decline.** It's harder to get people to attend events in person and it's harder (and more expensive) to reach them by phone. Scientific accuracy through random selection surveying is still possible, but costs more due to the need to call many more households to achieve the response rates.

**It's no longer enough to say, "They were invited."** We have to make it easy for community members to participate; we need to offer a mix of in-person, on-location and digital opportunities whenever possible. The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated the widespread use of digital tools, and in-person meetings have been largely replaced by digital face to face interactions.

**Engagement is becoming more engaging.** Say good-bye to the traditional open house format that merely provides one-way information. Community engagement events need to be more interactive and gather information that is more structured and useful for decision-makers.

**Social media has increased "thin" engagement** and is useful since people are already gathered around these platforms. With a click, people can sign e-petitions, "like" a cause on Facebook, retweet an opinion, or donate money. Harnessing social media to engage community members is critical, but the challenge is in tracking, moderating and analyzing the input – and not forgetting about those who aren't accessing these channels.

**Technology is increasing and improving digital engagement tools**, making "thicker" engagement possible online. Unfortunately, the world of online information and engagement has not yet become a more equitable place for marginalized groups. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for and adoption of digital tools, and in some cases made them more available and equitable.

**People have become more mobile-dependent**, especially youth, one of the hard-to-reach demographics. In the U.S., smartphone-only users exceeded desktop-only users in 2015. While desktops won't likely phase out anytime soon, ensuring public engagement is easily accessible on mobile devices is key.

*Civic engagement has changed radically over the last twenty years, spooling out into thick and thin strands of participation. "Thick" engagement happens mainly in groups, either face-to-face, online, or both, and features various forms of dialogue, deliberation, and action planning; "thin" engagement happens mainly online, and is easier, faster, and potentially more viral – it is done by individuals, who are often motivated by feeling a part of some larger movement or cause.*

*Infogagement: Citizenship and Democracy in the Age of Connection*

## Best Practices

A scan of best practices was conducted as part of the Community Engagement Review project. Sources for the best practices scan included IAP2 award winners over recent years, communities and cities known for leading engagement practices, and information gathered through the staff and Council survey. The information gathered is presented in the Current Practice section for easier reference related to each engagement tactic.

# Internal Review

The internal review element of the project involved a survey of staff and Council, and collection of information and data related to current policies, practices and performance. Best practice information gathered through the external scan phase of the project is also included in this section for ease of reference, specific to each engagement activity.

## Current Policies and Procedures

This section provides an overview of the documents that currently guide the municipality's community engagement and communications activities.

### Whistler's Vision and Official Community Plan

The Community Engagement Review project is consistent with and helps to achieve Whistler's Vision and Official Community Plan (OCP), both of which reference the need to engage the community in decision-making.

Whilst effective engagement touches many areas of moving toward our shared community vision in some way, the characteristics of the vision most pertinent to the engagement work are the following:

- **Conduct:** Everyone is treated with fairness, respect and care, and as a result we enjoy high levels of mutual trust and safety.
- **Participation:** We are able to meaningfully participate in community decisions, collaborating to achieve our Community Vision.
- **Partnerships:** We have established strong partnerships with the Squamish Nation, Lil'wat Nation, other levels of government and community stakeholders based on open dialogue, honesty, respect and collaboration, resulting in the achievement of mutual goals and shared benefits.

Further, the Health, Safety and Well-being chapter of the OCP (chapter 8) focuses on ensuring Whistler has strong community connections and social fabric—that Whistler is inclusive and affordable, and we enjoy high levels of trust, community engagement and good governance. The following OCP goal, objective and policies provide direction related to community engagement:

- **Goal:** Provide and support meaningful opportunities for community engagement.
- **Objective:** Encourage community engagement at all levels, from volunteerism to participation in municipal initiatives.
- **Policy:** Provide appropriate and meaningful opportunities for community and partner engagement in policy-making and other decisions where relevant and appropriate.
- **Policy:** Encourage greater diversity in municipally-led engagement initiatives, considering a variety of ways to engage diverse community stakeholders.

### RMOW Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan also includes a commitment to community engagement as articulated by the following statement, which is one of six corporate goals: A high level of accountability, transparency and community engagement is maintained.

# Governance Manual

Developed in 2005, the Council Governance Manual guides Council with respect to roles and responsibilities, as well as principles, policies and processes. Guidance related to community engagement is shown in the figure below. The Manual is anticipated to be reviewed and updated in 2021 under the guidance of the RMOW Governance and Ethics Committee.

## CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Consultation and participation are the cornerstone of modern democracy. The views and aspiration of the diverse range of interests within our community must be considered as we identify, plan for and respond to important issues.

It is important that citizens feel that they can have their concerns and opinions heard and considered by their local government representatives. Citizen satisfaction in this area indicates a healthy democratic process at work.

The Municipality will:

- Create mechanisms for citizen's participation in decision-making and policy development;
- Encourage the participation of people in decisions affecting their lives;
- Seek and use feedback from customers to improve customer satisfaction;
- Practice the most effective communication methods for the initiative or program;
- Make available on line relevant Municipal services;
- Provide consultation guides, including a citizens guide; and
- Provide e-consultation capacity.

Figure 1: Policies for Consultation and Participation (Source: RMOW Governance Manual, 2005)

## Council Procedures Bylaw

The Council Procedure Bylaw (Bylaw 2207, 2018) governs the meetings of Council and its committees, and provides specific direction related to a number of the required engagement tactics namely: public notices for Council meetings, public access to Council agendas and meeting minutes, and the process for delegations to be permitted to appear before Council. Specific direction provided by the Bylaw in relation to these tactics is summarized in the Required Engagement section below. The Bylaw does not articulate specific procedures related to Council packages, public question and answer periods, and public hearings, beyond the high-level requirements in the Community Charter.

## Corporate Communications Policy

The Corporate Communications Policy (Council Policy A-15, 2003) governs all communication functions, including communication with staff, residents, taxpayers, partners, business owners, visitors and other stakeholders. It articulates a set of objectives, guiding principles and best practices, including: that communication with stakeholders should be open and two-way; that information should be released in a timely and consistent manner; and that it be factual, accurate and complete. It extends to community engagement, stating that opportunities to inform and involve the public in policy development and decision-making will be sought and be based on open, two-way communication.

# Corporate Communications Administrative Procedure

This Corporate Communications Administrative Procedure (A6, 2013) is broad and sets out requirements to staff for all communications activities (e.g. print and electronic communications, advertising, corporate identity, freedom of information requests, media relations, the website, and social media). It also extends to provide some basic requirements for activities more typically considered to be engagement tactics, namely non-statutory public meetings and surveys.

While it articulates that public meetings should be promoted through municipal channels, it does not set minimum requirements for the channels, frequency and quality of communications related to community engagement to ensure consistency. The procedure is being reviewed and updated in 2020, and a number of quick guides are being developed that will help to clarify roles, responsibilities and procedures related to communications, as well as help to build staff capacity for delivering communications.

## Social Media Community Guidelines and Conditions of Use

The guidelines and terms of use are currently published on the RMOW social media platforms. A Social Media Policy is being developed in 2020 and will ultimately include the social media terms of use. To supplement the policy, a Social Media Administrative Procedure is also anticipated to provide guidance to staff on the more expanded and complex social media program. Previously this was handled in a small section of the Corporate Communications Administrative Procedure.

Comments and discussions are welcome on RMOW social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) so long as they are respectful and courteous. The guidelines and conditions of use provide clarity for what is not permitted, and this information is posted on the platforms and on whistler.ca. Staff are directed to respond to social media as follows:

- Civil and relevant comments and questions are responded to;
- Inappropriate comments (as defined in the terms of use guidelines) are removed;
- Rants or jokes are monitored for escalation.

## Current Practice

For each of the three areas of engagement and the tactics within each, this section describes RMOW practice, provides available participation data<sup>4</sup> and, where known, includes best practice information.

## Project-related Engagement

As stated in the Project Scope section, project-related engagement covers activities that are undertaken to inform project-related decisions (projects include planning, capital and policy development projects).

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<sup>4</sup> Participation and other engagement data is not consistently and centrally tracked and benchmarked to other communities, but an effort has been made by project staff and the communications team to gather and report data related to projects as much as possible.

## Frequently Used Engagement Tactics

Tactic	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
<b>Community forum</b> Larger public events, typically held in the Conference Centre atrium or a large hotel ballroom. Over the past few years, four forums have been held, one general forum, one focusing on transportation, housing and two on the Vision/Official Community Plan (OCP) update.	<p>The forums have provided structured opportunity for community members to provide input (beyond just conversations with staff and Council), either on posters, worksheets or at table discussions. All have included presentations by partners, staff and/or Council, child minding and food. The Vision/OCP event included smartphone voting. As part of the general forum, community members selected the forum topics when they registered.</p> <p>Requirements for public meetings are included in the Corporate Communications Admin Procedure (2013).</p>	<p>Attendance (size and diversity) depends on a number of factors, including: the subject matter (i.e. how relevant it is to the public); the date, time and location; and the extent of promotions.</p> <p>Vision/OCP Forum March 2018: 150</p> <p>Vision/OCP Forum June 2018: 130 participants</p> <p>Community Forum, November 2017: 175 participants</p> <p>Transportation &amp; Housing Forum, January 2017: 200 participants and 1,200 live stream views on the night of the event.</p>	<p>Online meeting platforms enable 'virtual town hall' events, facilitating remote participation to either broaden in-person participation or replace it completely, as employed by some communities during the COVID-19 public health emergency.</p> <p>Live streaming in-person events allows more people to observe the events as they unfold, but doesn't allow participation.</p>
<b>Open house</b> These are smaller public events typically focused on gathering feedback on a particular project or proposal.	<p>Requirements for public meetings are included in the Corporate Communications Admin Procedure (2013).</p> <p>Some open houses only include poster information and conversations with staff and Council. Increasingly, they are providing structured opportunity for community members to provide input, either on posters or worksheets. Some include presentations by staff or Council. Effort is made to host them at convenient times and locations.</p>	<p>As above, attendance (size and diversity) depends on a number of factors.</p> <p>Outside Voice 2019: 50</p> <p>E-bike 2019: 80</p> <p>Budget process 2019: 25</p>	<p>A mix of times, locations and engagement elements that are well structured to gather meaningful and measurable input is best practice, as is presenting digestible and engaging information – and ideally releasing it beforehand so participants can review and prepare for the event.</p> <p>'On-location' or 'pop-up' engagement at existing gatherings and at key community locations can be more convenient than dedicated open houses.</p>
<b>Online survey</b> Online surveys are convenient for community members and relatively easy for staff to develop compared to an event. Respondents self-select to take the surveys, so the results are not statistically	<p>Survey requirements are listed in the Corporate Communications Admin Procedure (2013), including that the results be reported back to respondents.</p> <p>Survey Monkey is used for online surveying. Staff</p>	<p>Transportation survey 2020: 734</p> <p>Outside Voice 2019: 600</p> <p>E-bike 2019: 585</p> <p>Vision/OCP: 250</p>	<p>Research panels are a set of respondents who agree to take repeated surveys over time and can be used to achieve results that are more representative of the community – closer to the accuracy of a telephone survey without the cost.</p>

Tactic	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
representative of the community.	build their own surveys for each project.	Community Life Survey online version 2020: 603 respondents  Housing 2017: 1519 respondents	Texting apps for short surveys are more conversational and allow participants to answer questions over a period of time when they have time.  Text analysis and analytics can be used to more quickly code open ended survey input.
<b>Telephone survey</b>  Telephone surveys provide a statistically accurate measure of community sentiment. Community members are randomly selected to participate and the respondents represent the diversity of the community.	The Community Life Survey (CLS) has been done annually since 2006. It has provided invaluable information focusing on community satisfaction and other topics as needed.  A telephone survey on housing was conducted in 2017 to inform the work of the Mayor's Task Force on Resident Housing.	<b>Community Life Survey 2020</b>  Participants: 307 permanent residents and 200 second home-owners; 200 part-time residents surveyed in 2019  Accuracy: +/- 5.59% at the 95% confidence level for permanent residents <sup>5</sup>	The RMOW CLS is best practice. Not many other communities our size have been tracking community sentiment via telephone survey for so many years.
<b>Task force, committee, advisory group</b>  These groups are an effective way to gather more informed input for decision-making. They are typically involved from the start of the project to the end, and they engage stakeholder representatives, those who represent the groups most directly affected by the project, issue or topic.	The RMOW has a long history of using these groups to provide detailed and informed input into projects.  There is no consistent recruitment and selection process used, though effort is made to ensure key stakeholders are represented.	In 2020, there are 14 active committees, with some samples below and composition information.  Housing Task Force: 12 members, including 2 citizens at large, and 6 members representing RMOW staff and Council.  Transportation Advisory Group: 8 members, including 4 citizens at large, supported by 7 non-voting staff/experts.  Economic Partnership Initiative: 11 members, including 4 RMOW staff and 2 members of Council.	There is nothing complicated about best practices for this form of engagement. The basic principles of inclusion, diversity, well-informed process, reporting back to members, Council and the public are all important.
<b>Focus groups, meetings</b>  These are one-time group meetings to gather input or gauge opinion on a	These are used as needed. They were used during the OCP/Vision update to fill gaps where OCP chapter topics did not	OCP/Vision: 5 groups held with 8-10 participants at each, covering 9 OCP topics.	Clarity of objectives, consistency of questions, objective note-taking and ideally a neutral or independent interviewer

<sup>5</sup> The margin of error for a simple random sample of 300 interviews among permanent residents is +/- 5.59% at the 95% confidence level, or 19 times out of 20, if the study were to be repeated. The margin of error among part-time residents (second home owners) cannot be calculated due to the unknown population of this group.



Tactic	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
specific topic or project. The group is not involved in the entire project; this reduces staff admin time, but also means the group may be less informed.	have a formal/ongoing committee or task force providing the needed input.		are all important, as is providing the interviewee with subject matter content beforehand so they can prepare in advance.
<b>Interviews</b> Typically held with just one or two stakeholder or organization representatives at a time, these provide an opportunity to explore issues and concerns without the audience present at larger group meetings.	Used mainly on an ad hoc basis by staff as projects unfold. They were used more intentionally in the e-bike and tourist accommodation projects to understand stakeholder issues and concerns at the start of the project to inform project planning and objectives.	E-bike: 17 interviews with key stakeholders were used to inform policy objectives early in the process and helped guide the engagement process in the subsequent phases.  Tourist Accommodation Review: 20 interviews were conducted with stakeholders to learn more about the current situation, including key challenges, changes and trends occurring, and suggestions/potential solutions.	As above
<b>Whistler.ca content</b> This is the primary and predominant online presence for the RMOW, and provides a key source of information for community members.	Project information is typically posted on specific whistler.ca webpages, which are then referenced in communications. Staff do their best to update the content as the project unfolds, but sometimes these updates fall behind due to staff time constraints and their focus on the project itself.  Specific procedures for sharing project-related information on whistler.ca is not included in the Corporate Communications Administrative Procedure.	Whistler.ca was ranked third by community members in 2020 as their preferred source for information; 62% of online survey respondents stated that it was the best way to share public information.  There are currently 23 project pages on whistler.ca, and 16 of them include up to date information, whereas 7 do not reflect the current status of the project.	Dedicated engagement platforms or webpages that offer one-stop-shop for all current engagement opportunities and tools make it easier for community members to find ways to engage.  Posting engagement opportunities directly on the homepage is also good practice.  Video helps to make engagement processes and project information more accessible to more people.  Access to all municipal documents in one library or location is also best practice so community members can easily become informed and better able to engage.
<b>Corporate Communications</b> Beyond whistler.ca, which houses project information	The Corporate Communications Administrative Procedure does not set minimum	See relevant performance data in the Ongoing Engagement section below.	A consistent approach to promoting engagement is critical, and ensuring promotions are



Tactic	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
(and sometimes the engagement opportunity itself), other channels are used to promote that source for information and the project-related engagement. These channels include news releases, newspaper or radio ads, Whistler Today e-newsletters, Mayor's Reports, Council reports and social media.	<p>requirements for the channels, frequency and quality of communications related to community engagement.</p> <p>Typically, a mix of channels (selected on a case by case basis for each initiative) are used to promote project-related engagement including: news releases, Whistler Today e-newsletter, Mayor's Report, social media, Council reports newspaper or radio ads.</p> <p>Some projects receive high profile positions in the channels (e.g. at top of Whistler Today, colour ads in the newspaper) while others do not.</p>		prominently placed and highlighted is done by many communities.

## Additional Project-related Best Practices

In addition to the project-related engagement best practices included in the table above for each of the tactics, below are some best practices that relate to this type of engagement more generally.

- Establishing formalized engagement standards, systems and resources, including a Council policy, staff toolkit and training, a knowledgeable resource team, and monitoring and reporting.
- Building capacity and buy-in amongst the senior management team such that they are champions for meaningful public involvement in decision-making.
- Providing multiple and simultaneous channels for community members to participate in different ways that suit their style, schedule and preference.

## Required Engagement

As presented in the Project Scope section, the required engagement category includes the community engagement activities that are required of municipalities by the Community Charter or the Local Government Act. For some of the required engagement activities, further direction is established through the RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw (Bylaw 2207, 2018), the Land Use Procedures and Fees Bylaw (Bylaw 2019, 2012), and the Council Correspondence Policy (A-29, 2006).

### Council meeting procedures

Procedures	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
<b>Notice of Council meetings</b>	The Charter requires that a) a schedule of the date, time and place of regular Council meetings be made	The annual meeting schedule is posted for two consecutive weeks in the	When notifying the public about Council meetings, some communities

Procedures	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
	<p>available once a year; b) the public be notified of the schedule; and c) that the procedures for providing advanced notice of the dates, times and locations of regular Council meetings be established through a municipal bylaw. The Charter requires that notice of special meetings be given 24 hours in advance and posted at the Public Notice Posting Place and the meeting location.</p> <p>The Council Procedure Bylaw requires that at least three days' notice be given by: posting the agenda for the meeting at the Public Notice Posting Places<sup>6</sup> and leaving copies at the Municipal Hall reception counter. It also requires that the annual schedule with the meeting dates, times and locations be established by January 1 and made available to the public via the Public Notice Posting Places and newspaper.</p>	<p>newspaper, and is permanently posted on the whistler.ca Council and events pages, and noticeboards at municipal hall. Notice of special meetings are not posted at the meeting location, but are posted to the website and noticeboards.</p> <p>Beyond the required procedures, notice is also given by posting the package and agenda on the website and releasing a general post on social media channels. Thursday is the targeted release date, but the online commitment is Friday in the event that delays related to the package occur.</p>	<p>highlight topics of interest to community members to encourage attendance.</p>
<b>Council packages</b>	<p>There is nothing in the Council Procedure Bylaw that establishes the timing of and delivery channel for the information package to Council and the public.</p>	<p>Online release of the package and agenda is planned for the end of the day Thursday prior to the Tuesday Council meeting, but the stated commitment is Friday in case delays occur.</p> <p>The packages are compiled PDF documents containing all Council meeting material.</p>	<p>Some communities release the agenda and package content in a combined, online, searchable format, making it easier to find and review specific content.<sup>7</sup> The City of Vancouver presents the agenda and separate documents in easily accessible web form.</p> <p>Some communities have committed to a longer required time period between the posting of a Council package and the meeting (five days or one week) providing more time for review.</p>
<b>Regular Council meetings</b>	<p>As a general rule, the Community Charter requires that meetings of Council be open to the public (except in specific cases where the Charter permits that they may be closed to</p>	<p>The RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw sets out the schedule, times and other procedures related to regular meetings. They are</p>	<p>Live-streaming meetings, currently done by the RMOW, is best practice that enables broader access and reduced</p>

<sup>6</sup> "Public Notice Posting Places" means the external bulletin boards at the east and south entrances to municipal hall, and on the Municipality's website unless, having made reasonable efforts, the Corporate Officer is unable to affect such posting to the website.

<sup>7</sup> Escribe software is being implemented by the RMOW to accomplish the above.

Procedures	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
	the public) and that meetings occur 'regularly' in accordance with the applicable municipal procedure bylaw.	scheduled for the first and third Tuesday of each month, unless a Tuesday follows a Monday statutory holiday, in which case meetings are moved to the second and fourth Tuesday of that month. They are held at 5:30 p.m. at the Maury Young Arts Centre. Meetings are live-streamed and video recordings are archived online to enable the public to watch remotely.	travel. Making the archived video content easier to access (e.g. within the list of meetings, agendas and packages) and searchable by agenda item would be even better.  The City of Vancouver makes the voting record of Council available online.
<b>Public question and answer periods</b>	Procedures are up to each municipality; there is no direction provided by the Charter.  The RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw includes the public question and answer period in the items listed within the Order of Business at Council Meetings (section 4.6), but it does not specify how these periods are to take place.		Some communities (e.g. District of West Vancouver) allow questions during the agenda item itself, <i>after</i> the staff presentation and <i>before</i> Council start deliberating – the staff report enables the public participant to be more informed and the public input directly beforehand may benefit Council.
<b>Public hearings</b>	<i>See the next table - Select Statutory Requirements for Land Use and Zoning Bylaws</i>		
<b>Presentations and delegations</b>	Procedures are up to each municipality; there is no direction provided by the Charter.  This provides the opportunity for any person or organization to present an issue to Council at a regular Council meeting.	The RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw sets out the process by which delegations may appear before Council, including: that they be permitted on a first come first served basis subject to the CAO who may deem a delegation priority over another, and who may reject a delegation application; that a maximum of five delegations may appear at each meeting; that the maximum time for each delegation is five minutes; and that Council may refer the delegation's issue to staff or a committee, but may not respond to delegation questions or engage in debate.	None identified

Procedures	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
<b>Meeting minutes</b>	<p>The Charter requires that minutes must be taken in accordance with the rules established in the Council procedure bylaw.</p> <p>The RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw sets out what the minutes should include and that they should be made available to the public at municipal hall.</p>	RMOW practice extends beyond the bylaw, where the minutes are also shared online and video recordings of the full content of all past meetings are also available online for public viewing anytime.	Beyond meeting minutes, making video archives of all past meetings available for public viewing anytime is best practice, and done by the RMOW since 2010. Further, making the voting record of Council available online and searchable is best practice.
<b>Correspondence to Council</b>	<p>Procedures are up to each municipality; there is no direction provided by the Charter.</p> <p>The RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw sets out the deadline and required content of correspondence to Mayor and Council. The Council Correspondence Policy clarifies whether correspondence that will be placed on the Regular Council Agenda or instead emailed to Council and senior staff.</p>	Letters and emails are accepted.	None identified

## Select Statutory Requirements for Land Use and Zoning Bylaws

Please note that the table below is a summary of select engagement touchpoints and is not intended to reflect complete legislative requirements or their interpretations.

Tactic	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
<b>OCP bylaw public consultation</b>	In the case of OCP bylaws, in addition to the requirement for a public hearing, public consultation is now required during the development of the OCP.	Details of the 2018 Vision/OCP process are included in the Recent Successes section.	Offering multiple engagement tactics that are aimed at gathering input from diverse community members with information that is relevant to them and in a reasonable volume is generally good practice.
<b>Notice of public hearing</b>	Notice must be released in notice locations (e.g. official notice boards) and a local newspaper once each week for 2 consecutive weeks, the last publication to appear not less than 3 days and not more than 10 days before the hearing. The notice must include the date, time and location of the hearing, the purpose of the bylaw in general terms, the subject land(s) and where and	Notices are released in the paper as required, and are also posted on municipal notice boards and released via the Whistler Today email channel; however, the notices are included at the bottom of the email in the events section and they are not highlighted in the subject of the email to call attention to them.	<p>For newspaper notices, using colour, attractive graphic design and plain language is best practice.</p> <p>For email notices, releasing public hearing and other engagement opportunities as separate emails or highlighting the content</p>

Tactic	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
	when copies of the bylaw may be reviewed. For changes to property use, density or land use contracts, notice must be delivered to owners and tenants of the property at least 10 days before the hearing.	Notices often contain dense text and are not presented in plain language making the content less accessible. Notices must be reviewed with legal counsel and some more detailed language may be required.	in the subject or at the top of the email is good practice.
<b>Public hearing</b>  These allow the public to voice their concerns or support for planning and land use bylaws being considered by Council.	<p>Public hearings must be held when a local government is creating or amending a bylaw for an official community plan, zoning, phased development agreement or to terminate a land use contract. They must be held after first reading of the bylaw and before third reading. Everyone who believes their interest in property is affected must be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard or to present a written submission. A written summary of each public hearing, containing the nature of the representations respecting the bylaw that were made at the hearing, must be prepared and maintained as a public record.</p> <p>The Council Procedure Bylaw states that a public hearing occurs at 6:00 p.m. during a Council meeting if a public hearing is necessary. The chair of the hearing may establish procedural rules for the conduct of the hearing. Questions may be asked by the public and may be responded to by Council.</p>	<p>Material to inform the public hearing is included in the public hearing Council package, and also available at municipal hall at the time the notice of public hearing is released. During the pandemic, materials were also made available on whistler.ca.)</p> <p>If representations are received through the public hearing process, staff summarize the input, articulate their response to it and recommend whether to proceed as previously recommended or make changes. This information is included in a staff report before third reading is considered.</p> <p>The RMOW holds additional engagement opportunities when it is expected that the subject of the proposed bylaw will attract community interest. There is currently no formal, written process for this decision-making.<sup>8</sup></p>	<p>Holding an open house or some other input opportunity before the public hearing enables the public to engage more meaningfully and staff to better understand and address public issues before the proposal goes to Council.</p> <p>During COVID-19, the RMOW began holding virtual public hearings, providing a solution when in-person meetings are not possible, but also providing access to those not in Whistler, such as part time residents and out of town owners.</p>
<b>Notification/signs</b>	The Land Use Procedures and Fees Bylaw (Bylaw 2019, 2012) articulates the requirements for notification and signage.	Land owners are responsible for the design and maintenance of the signs according to the Bylaw, and the RMOW ensures that the requirements are adhered to.	As with newspaper notices, using colour, attractive graphic design and plain language on signs is best practice.

## Public process related to the municipal budget and annual report

Preparation of the municipal budget (called the Five-year Financial Plan) is done in alignment with the RMOW Corporate Plan and other municipal guiding documents, and is led by staff and overseen by the Audit and Finance Committee. The RMOW's Annual Reports include audited financial statements from the previous year, as well as an overview of municipal services and operations, a progress report on municipal objectives and a list of property tax exemptions. Annual Reports are contained in the Corporate Plan

<sup>8</sup> A community engagement policy of Council is currently underway as a result of this project and finding.

documents. There is no municipal policy or procedure document that articulates how community members are to be engaged in the budget process and annual report.

Tactic	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
<b>Budget open house and digital input</b>	The Community Charter requires that a council must undertake a process of public consultation regarding the proposed financial plan before it is adopted. It does not specify the type of public consultation that must be undertaken.	The RMOW has consistently held a budget open house to enable public review and input.  Input from the community is provided throughout the year by committees of Council, and then feedback from the community on the draft budget can occur via letters to Council and discussions, and is primarily directed to the budget open house event that occurs each fall.	<b>Budget process 2019</b>  Attendance: 25  Advance release of the budget to the public: released on Nov. 7 for Nov. 12 event.  Number of persons providing input by email/letter: 4	Engaging community members in identifying budget priorities before the budget process begins to inform the development of the draft budget is a best practice.  Providing a more structured way for open house attendees to provide input and voice their opinion on the budget.  Increasingly, budget engagement tools are being used to build community understanding of and have them weigh in on budget trade-offs.
<b>Annual Report release and public meeting</b>  This gives the public an opportunity to review the performance, progress and future plan for the municipal organization.	The Charter requires that an annual report <sup>9</sup> be released publicly by June 30 each year and that at minimum 14 days later an open council meeting or other public meeting be held (with required notice given), allowing submissions and questions from the public related to the report.	Each year, the RMOW produces an annual report that is presented to Council in a regular meeting and then posted online and at municipal hall for 14 days for public review. The report is brought back to a regular meeting for Council adoption and submitted to the Province.	<b>Annual Report 2019</b>  No public feedback received during the comment period.	Good practice is an engaging, easy to read report that is easily accessible to the public online and on paper.

## Committees of Council

The RMOW has 14 select committees of Council and three standing committees. According to the Community Charter, *a Mayor must establish standing committees for matters the mayor considers would be better dealt with by committee and must appoint persons to those committees. Further, a council may establish and appoint a select committee to consider or inquire into any matter and to report its findings*

<sup>9</sup> The annual report must include audited financial statements, progress related to the previous year's objectives, a statement of the next year's objectives, and other reporting requirements



and opinion to the council. Beyond this, specific requirements focus only on composition and meeting minutes. Other elements related to committees are included in the table below regardless.

*Note: A full review of RMOW committees, including their terms of reference, effectiveness and committee member satisfaction was not conducted as part of this Community Engagement Review project.*

Committee Element	Legal Requirement	RMOW Practice	Best Practice
<b>Composition</b>	<p>Select Committees: At least one member of a select committee must be a council member.</p> <p>Standing Committees: At least half of the members of a standing committee must be council members. Those who are not council members may be appointed.</p> <p>Those who are not council members may be appointed.</p>	<p><b>Select Committees:</b></p> <p>Mayor's Task Force on Resident Housing: 12 members, including 2 citizens at large, plus another 6 members representing RMOW staff and Council.</p> <p>Transportation Advisory Group: 8 members, including 4 citizens at large, supported by 7 non-voting staff/experts.</p> <p>Economic Partnership Initiative: 11 members, including 4 RMOW staff and 2 members of Council.</p> <p><b>Standing Committee:</b></p> <p>Governance and Ethics Committee: 3 members of Council and 5 staff (including the recording secretary), which does not meet the composition requirement that half of the members should be from Council.</p>	
<b>Recruitment and the selection/appointment process</b>	The Mayor has the authority to appoint and rescind Standing committee members; Council has the authority to appoint and rescind Select committee members.		
<b>Terms of reference</b>	No specific requirement		
<b>Meeting agendas</b>	No specific requirement		
<b>Meeting minutes and reporting</b>	<p>The Charter requires that minutes must be taken in accordance with the rules established in the Council procedure bylaw.</p> <p>The RMOW Council Procedure Bylaw sets out what the minutes should include and that they should be made available to the public at municipal hall.</p>	RMOW practice includes sharing the adopted minutes with Council and the public via the Council package, and then posting the minutes to the committee pages on whistler.ca.	



# Ongoing Engagement

As presented in the Project Scope section, this engagement category covers the tactics and channels that provide community members with ongoing, on-demand access to municipal staff, Council and other sources of information.

Tactics/Channels	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
<b>Whistler.ca</b>	<p>The Corporate Communications Administration Procedure includes requirements for the website, including that it be the primary source for information and that other communications channels refer to it for more information.</p> <p>Whistler.ca includes information, some online services, and ways to contact the organization.</p> <p>The “Get Involved” section of the website includes basic lists of and links to communications channels, staff and Council contact information, ways to connect with Council, the link to existing committees, and career and volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>The “Report a Concern” page includes a list of frequent issues reported by community members and the ways of reporting them.</p> <p>The ability for customers to register and pay for municipal programs online is inconsistent and, in some cases, not available. Each program area requires a new account with the RMOW as the systems are not integrated with one another.</p>	<p>Whistler.ca is ranked third by community members as their preferred source for information (after social media and the newspaper).</p>	<p>Specific engagement portal or page that includes an ongoing opportunity to provide input, as well as containing all current and recently completed public engagement opportunities – a one-stop-shop for community members to be able have their say.</p> <p>Place-based 311 reporting apps allow community members to provide input 24/7 about specific locations and issues, helping identify community infrastructure and assets that might need attention. NOTE: The RMOW is the process of establishing this kind of GPS-based system for easier reporting by community members.</p> <p>Customer integrated accounts for various municipal program areas, and digital sign up, payment and record management should be available for all programs and services.</p>
<b>Email news and information</b>  Includes Whistler Today, media releases and other email notices	<p>Whistler Today is released weekly, featuring community news and events. Media releases go out as needed. Members of the public can sign up online to receive these email notices.</p> <p>For Whistler Today emails, there is no set requirement or guidance for what information is profiled at the top or simply listed at the bottom.</p> <p>Other email lists to community members include committee members and partner contacts.</p>	<p>Email lists: 3455</p> <p>Whistler Today open rate: 31.8%</p> <p>Media releases in 2019: 84</p>	<p>Consistently and prominently profiling all community engagement opportunities regardless of the scale/scope in the content is best practice.</p>
<b>Facebook</b>	<p>Used for: community updates, news releases, emergency information. Community members are welcome</p>	<p>2019 statistics: 566 posts</p>	<p>Survey Monkey (SM) has a feature whereby people can take an online survey directly in Facebook</p>

Tactics/Channels	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
	<p>to post on the RMOW page, so long as comments are appropriate as defined by the conditions of use posted on the platform.</p> <p>There is guidance* on how staff and Council are to engage on social media platforms. A formal Social Media Policy is currently in development.</p> <p>Facebook has seldomly been used to ask questions and gather specific community input directly within the platform, but it is used to communicate community engagement opportunities.</p>	<p>2.6 million views (“impressions”)</p> <p>100,000 engagements</p> <p>7,000 followers (as of February 2020)</p>	<p>Messenger. People chat with the SM bot to answer the survey and the responses are recorded in SM. This allow people to respond to questions all at once or one by one when they have time. The downside is that the survey questions must be fairly simple (e.g. no matrices).</p> <p>Facebook also has a simple voting/polling function within posts.</p> <p>Text analysis and analytics can be used to better harness social media input.</p>
<b>Twitter</b>	<p>This is the main emergency channel. It is also used for community updates and news releases, as is Facebook.</p> <p>There is guidance* on how staff and Council are to engage on social media platforms. A formal Social Media Policy is currently in development.</p>	<p>276 Tweets</p> <p>200,000 views</p> <p>3,700 followers</p>	<p>As above, text analysis and analytics can be used to better harness social media input.</p>
<b>Instagram</b>	<p>Used to share photo-rich content that promotes Whistler, Whistler Presents and recreation.</p> <p>There is guidance* on how staff and Council are to engage on social media platforms. A formal Social Media Policy is currently in development.</p>	<p>170 posts</p> <p>3,000 engagements</p> <p>1,700 followers</p>	
<b>Access to staff in-person at various locations</b>	<p>Municipal hall has been reconfigured to better serve the public with better access points, waiting areas and service counters. Service counters are located at municipal hall (front desk and building, planning and engineering departments), Meadow Park Sports Centre, the Whistler Public Library and the RCMP detachment.</p>	<p>Not consistently tracked</p>	<p>Some municipalities do track customer service numbers, including in-person, phone calls and emails.</p>
<b>Access to staff/ departments via email and phone</b>	<p>Department phone numbers and email addresses are online. Staff names, email addresses and phone numbers are not.</p>	<p>Not tracked</p>	
<b>Access to Council via email,</b>	<p>Council email addresses and phone numbers are online.</p>	<p>Not tracked</p>	

Tactics/Channels	RMOW Practice	Participation	Best Practice
<b>letters and phone</b>	Council members attend many community events and generally make themselves available.		
<b>After-hours emergency channels</b>	A list of phone numbers is provided on whistler.ca for after-hours emergencies.		Place-based 311 reporting apps allow community members to provide helpful input 24/7 about specific issues and locations. NOTE: The RMOW is the process of establishing this kind of GPS-based system for easier reporting by community members.

\*Civil and relevant comments and questions are responded to; inappropriate comments (as defined in the terms of use guidelines) are removed; rants or jokes are monitored for escalation.

## Recent Successes

When asked about recent projects that have included successful engagement processes, staff and Council cited these three projects most frequently: the Outside Voice Parks Master Plan project, the E-bike and E-Mobility Device Policy development project, and the development of the Vision and Official Community Plan (OCP) in 2018.



	What was done	Participation	What worked well
<b>OCP/Vision Update</b> (2018)	<p>The first phase focused on informing the development of Whistler's Community Vision and gathering public input related to the 'Our Shared Future' elements of the OCP. Engagement activities included a community forum, ideabook, an online survey, social media and postcards to the future.</p> <p>The second phase of community engagement occurred through June and July and focused on gathering input on the draft updated Vision and OCP chapters. Another community forum was held on June 25th and there was a digital tool that enabled community members to easily review the Vision and OCP chapters and provide feedback.</p>	<p><b>Phase 1</b></p> <p>Forum: approx. 150</p> <p>Online survey: 250</p> <p>Postcards: 520</p> <p>Social media: 155</p> <p>Detailed workbooks: 30</p> <p>Total submissions: 1105</p> <p><b>Phase 2</b></p> <p>Forum: approx. 130 attendees</p> <p>Online tool: 60 respondents</p>	<p>As above, resources for community engagement were secured for the project and reporting back to the community on input and decisions was done after each phase.</p> <p>Multiple engagement tactics, including digital and 'pop-up' opportunities, were used, giving participants a variety of and convenient ways to participate.</p>

	<p>In addition to the broader community engagement, committees, task forces and partner organization representatives were also engaged through a variety of meetings at various points in the process.</p> <p>Public input summaries were released online after each phase.</p>		
<b>Outside Voice Parks Master Planning</b> (2018-2020)	<p>Phase 1 (Assessing) included a park inventory open house and online survey focusing on developing a better understanding of the existing state of municipal parks. Phase 2 (Imagining) included another online survey to gather input on the refined high-level concepts (bubble diagrams) for seven of Whistler's parks. Phase 3 (Designing) is currently underway.</p> <p>A summary of the community input gathered through phase 1 and 2a was released publicly.</p>	<p><b>Phase 1</b></p> <p>Open house: 50 attendees</p> <p>Online survey: 600 respondents</p> <p><b>Phase 2</b></p> <p>Online survey: 550 respondents</p>	<p>Adequate resources to plan and execute the engagement process were secured and allocated to the project from the beginning.</p> <p>Community input and project outcomes at the end of each phase were reported back to the public.</p> <p>In-person and digital opportunities helped to reach more community members.</p>
<b>E-bike Policy Development</b> (2018-2019)	<p>In phase 1, draft project objectives were reviewed by relevant committees of Council and through interviews with close to 20 key stakeholders<sup>10</sup> to ensure engagement and focused input.</p> <p>In phase 2, draft policy directions were developed and made available for public review and comment through a community open house and an online survey. The topic was again presented to relevant committees of Council.</p> <p>An engagement report was released publicly to summarize the input gathered in phase 2 for transparency and accountability.</p>	<p><b>Phase 1</b></p> <p>Stakeholder interviews: approx. 16</p> <p><b>Phase 2</b></p> <p>Open house: 80 attendees</p> <p>Online survey: 580 respondents</p> <p>Committees of Council: 2</p>	<p>Given the strong and varied opinions regarding e-bikes in Whistler, considerable stakeholder and community engagement was planned and undertaken. To facilitate this, a project planning phase was undertaken to design the engagement approach, and external support was secured to execute the engagement and assist staff throughout the project.</p> <p>Community input and project outcomes at the end of each phase was reported back to the public.</p> <p>In-person and online opportunities helped to reach more community members.</p>

## What made them successful?

As part of the internal survey, staff and Council were asked for input on what worked well related to the recent engagement successes, including the three successes reviewed above and any others they may have had on their radar. Their responses (with duplicates removed) are presented below according to the

<sup>10</sup> Interviews were conducted with these key stakeholders: Whistler Off Road Cycling Association (WORCA), Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE), Tourism Whistler, Whistler Blackcomb, Whistler Adaptive Sports, Trials 99, Whistler Search and Rescue, Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC), BC Parks, local businesses, and the Mature Action Community. Subsequent meetings were again held with WORCA and RSTBC to ensure detailed alignment.

guiding principles for successful engagement listed in the ‘What is successful engagement?’ section of the report.

Guiding Principle	Internal Survey Responses What worked well related to recent engagement successes?
<b>Resourced</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human and financial resources - engagement and communications aspects of the project were well resourced, planned and coordinated; also had adequate resources to receive and respond to input</li> <li>Staff roles were clear</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracted diverse participants</li> <li>Communication is important - significant promotions are needed to notify and attract citizens</li> <li>Engaging topics result in more engagement</li> <li>Need to engage beyond the usual suspects</li> <li>Online input likely engaged more people</li> <li>Location – hosted engagement where people were already gathered</li> </ul>
<b>Respectful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficient use of participants' time</li> <li>It combined project engagement opportunities and used public time wisely to get more people out</li> <li>Timing was adequate; process was not rushed</li> </ul>
<b>Informed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The public was well informed</li> <li>Information - good quality; posters were well done</li> <li>Information provided to participants with enough lead time - enough to review and provide informed input</li> <li>Participants and decision-makers were connected and communicating</li> </ul>
<b>Transparent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The process was clear</li> <li>The promise to the public about the input was clear - in relation to other input and the decision-making process; set realistic expectations for their input</li> <li>Accountability - input was responded to</li> <li>There was regular reporting back to the public</li> <li>Staff roles were clear</li> </ul>
<b>Meaningful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement early in the process informed the project design and delivery</li> <li>Influence – decision-makers were open to being influenced by the input provided</li> <li>The process was phased, with time to consider input before determining next steps</li> <li>Open house was interactive/engaging</li> <li>A variety of engagement techniques/tools were used</li> </ul>
<b>Monitored</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountability - input was responded to</li> <li>There was regular reporting back to the public</li> </ul>



## Barriers to delivering successful engagement

Designing, coordinating, communicating, delivering and summarizing community engagement takes time. Done well, it can take significant time (and should be proportional to the size of the project and the potential impact on stakeholders). But not done well (or not done at all) can cost a project more in time and resources further down the road.

When staff and Council were asked about the barriers to successful engagement, the most frequent response was limited human and financial resources to carry it out. They also pointed out that successful engagement requires a critical mass and diversity of attendees –requiring community members to allocate their time and energy to prepare for and participate in the engagement activities; something that is not easy to do given busy lives, information overload, and engagement that isn't always that engaging.

## Community Input

This section presents community member input related to municipal engagement practices, including satisfaction and participation levels, preferences and barriers. The input was gathered through the 2020 Community Life Survey (CLS) and historical benchmarks are presented where possible.

## Trust in Decision-making

Whistler has been tracking community member 'trust in decision-making' for about 13 years by asking whether respondents agree that municipal decision-makers have the best interests of the resort community of Whistler in mind when making decisions all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never. Just shy of half (49%) of permanent residents who took the CLS in 2020 responded favourably (i.e. responded "all" or "most" of the time); this result is the same as reported in 2019, but is lower than the median (52%) and average (57%) results from the past 13 years the question has been asked in the telephone survey. In 2015, this question was benchmarked to other communities, and their average favourable score of 53% is in line with Whistler's median score over the 13 years, and slightly lower than Whistler's average score.

*It is important to go to the community but not too often. It is also best to coordinate community engagements especially when they are directly related. The public only has a limited amount of time that they are willing and able to give. We need to use their time wisely as a precious resource.*

– Internal survey respondent

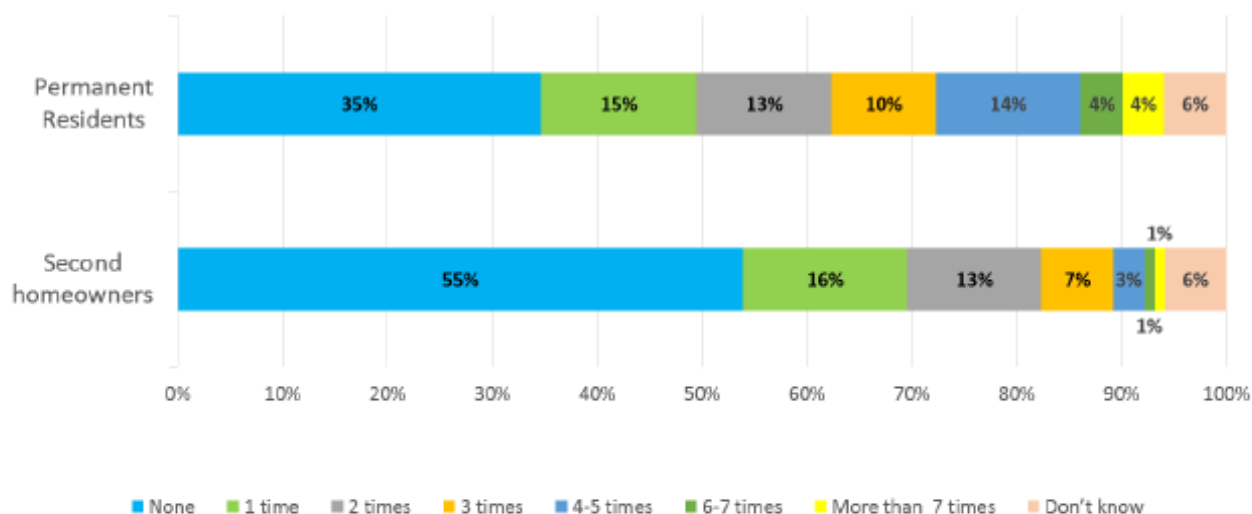


Vision/OCP Forum #2, June 2018

# Participation in Decision-making

## Frequency

The CLS telephone survey asked respondents to indicate the number of times they participated in a municipal planning or decision process in the past year through activities such as taking a survey, emailing Council, or attending an open house, committee meeting or Council meeting. About 60% of permanent residents participated to some extent, and 35% didn't participate at all. Second homeowners were split nearly in half in terms of participating to some extent versus not at all.



Looking at participation frequency in more detail, younger permanent residents (those 35 years or younger) are more likely to *not* participate at all (44%), compared to 25% of those who are 35-54 years of age and 29% of those who are over 55. Further, participation is generally less frequent the less time residents have lived in Whistler (i.e., participation generally increases with increasing length of time living in Whistler).

Length of time in Whistler	No participation in the past year
0-1 year	50%
1-2 years	51%
3-5 years	36%
6-10 years	26%
11-20 years	40%
20+ years	23%



## Barriers to engaging

Permanent residents who had participated in a municipal planning or decision process fewer than 2 times in the past year were asked for the reasons they hadn't engage more often. The most common reason provided was lack of time or priority (26%), followed by distrust in the process (8%) and no interest in participating (7%).

	Telephone Survey		Online Survey*
	Permanent Resident	Second home-owner	
Too busy/no time/not a priority	26%	16%	27%
Lack of trust: I don't trust the process/decision-makers/decisions are already made; don't want to waste my time/my input won't make a difference/my input won't influence the decision	8%	1%	8%
Inconvenient times: events are held during inconvenient times during the day or week/during work/during evenings	5%	4%	8%
I'm not informed: I feel that others are more informed and will provide the input needed	4%	8%	3%
Not interested/don't care: I'm not really interested/only interested when the issue/topic is closely connected to me/my property	7%	9%	2%
Trust direction/decision-makers: I trust that decision-makers will make the best decision on behalf of the community/I feel that Whistler is in good hands/ don't need my input	4%	2%	2%
Inconvenient locations: events are held at inconvenient locations/hard for me to get to	2%	22%	1%
Information: too much/too confusing/I don't have time/capacity to read it all	0%	0%	1%
Quality of engagement: opportunities aren't engaging enough/boring	1%	9%	1%
Other	21%**	27%***	38%****
Don't know/no opinion	27%	7%	23%

\*Online survey respondents consisted of 556 permanent residents, 36 for second homeowners and only 11 seasonal residents.

\*\*Eight of the 30 responding 'other' stated in some way that they didn't know about the opportunities.

\*\*\*Most stated that they didn't engage because Whistler isn't their primary place of residence.

\*\*\*\*Twenty of the 50 responding 'other' stated in some way that they 'didn't know' about the opportunities.

## Satisfaction with Engagement

When asked about their satisfaction with existing opportunities to provide input into municipal decision making, 55% of permanent residents responded either very (17%) or somewhat (38%) satisfied. While maybe not as strong a result as desired, it is exactly equivalent to the median satisfaction rating (55%) and close to the average result (57%) over the past 13 times the question has been asked in the CLS telephone survey. In 2015, this question was benchmarked to other communities and the result was an average favourable score of 53%, which is slightly lower than Whistler's median and average satisfaction scores over the past 13 years. Second homeowner satisfaction (47%) in 2020 was slightly lower than that of permanent residents.

The online survey provided additional detail, including that families are significantly more likely to be satisfied (55%) with the opportunities to provide input into municipal decision-making compared with singles (40%), as are homeowners (59%) compared with renters (36%). Satisfaction increases among those 55 years of age or older compared with those under 54 years of age (60% compared to 44%).

When asked about satisfaction with access to municipal information via the website (whistler.ca), 72% of permanent residents said they were satisfied (very/somewhat). While this result represents a significant drop from 81% satisfied (very/somewhat) in 2019, it is fairly consistent with the average satisfaction score (75%) over the ten years the data has been collected.

## Engagement Preferences

### Input

Online surveys are the clear winner when online survey respondents were asked about their preferred channels for providing input to the municipality, followed by events/open houses that include structured ways to give input. Comparing the 2019 and 2020 survey results, email is down (50% to 39%) as a preferred way to provide input, and social media is up (25% to 34%) as a preferred channel.

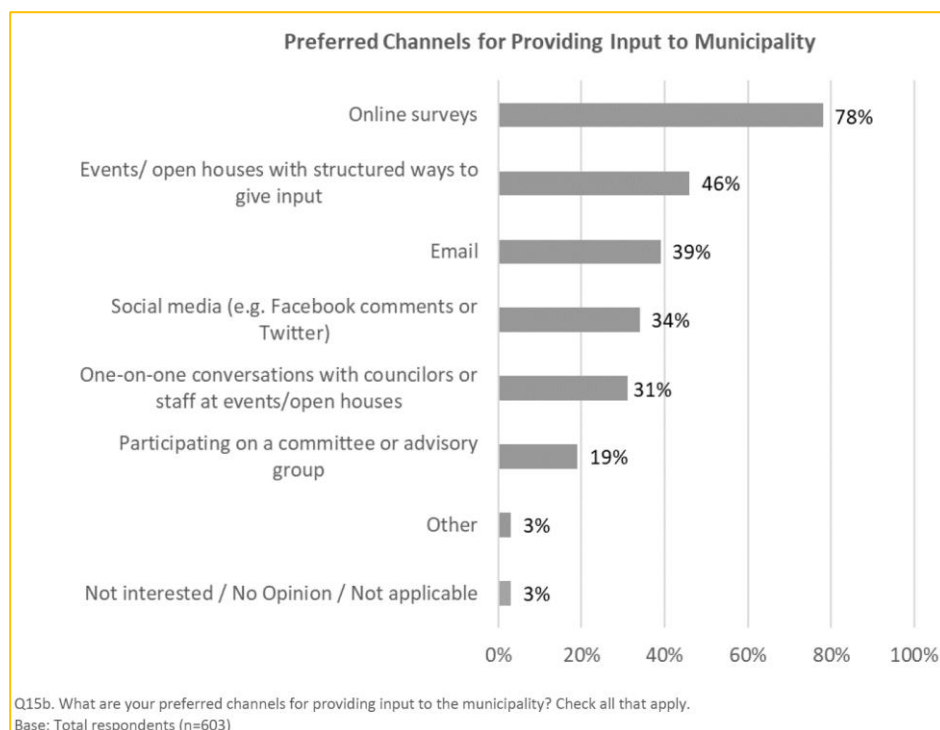


Figure 2: Preferred channels for providing input (Source: Community Life Survey 2020)

Looking in more detail at the results for the question related to preferences for providing input, distinctions in the data can be drawn related to open houses, social media and one-on-one conversation as follows:

- **Open houses:** Older adults (58% of those 55+ years) and homeowners (52%) are significantly more likely to favour open houses when compared with younger respondents (under 35) (37%) and renters (40%).
- **Social media:** Female respondents were more likely to favour social media than males (37% compared with 28%), as were those under 54 years compared with those 55 years of age or older (33% versus 24%).
- **One-on-one conversations** with councillors/staff were more favoured among the unemployed compared with the employed (42% versus 29%) and among older respondents rather than those younger than 54 years of age (45% versus 22%).

## Information

Tied at 72%, social media and The Pique are the top two ways online survey respondents prefer to receive information from the municipality, followed by the whistler.ca website and e-newsletters/e-mail. Within the social media channels, Facebook is by far the preferred platform.

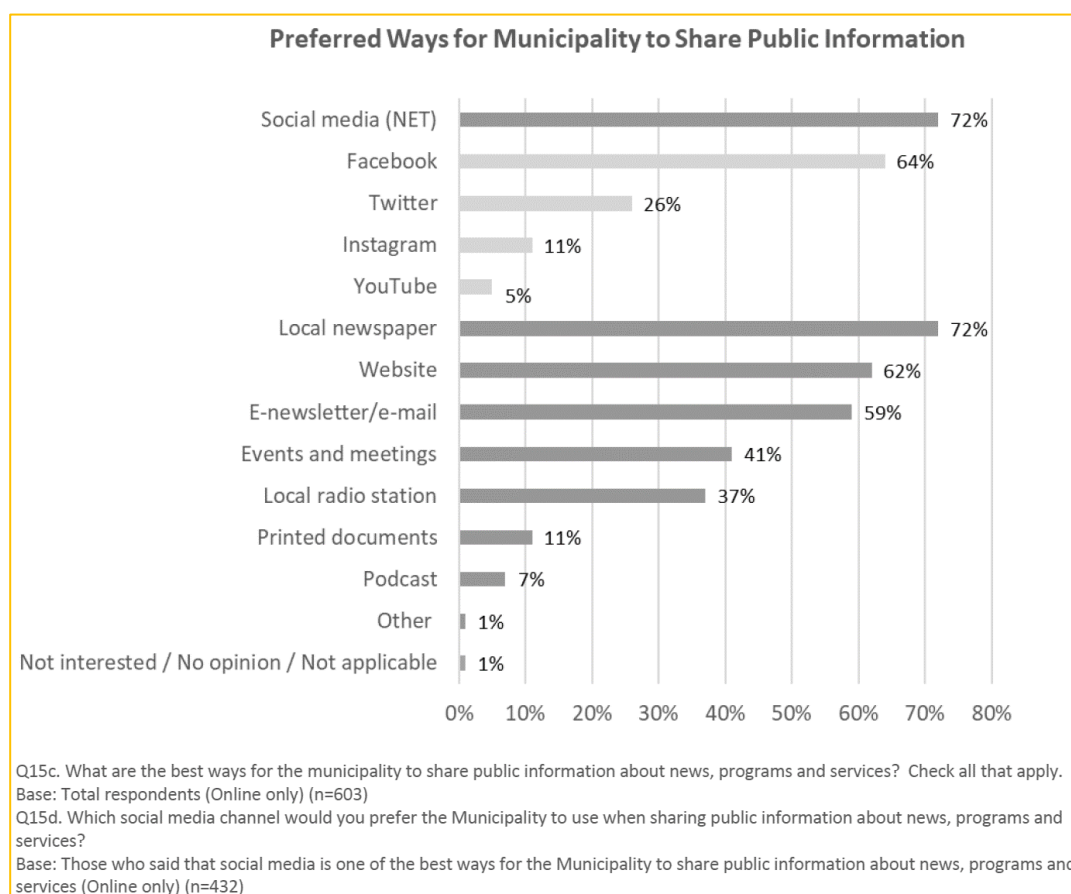


Figure 3: Preferred ways to share municipal information (Source: Community Life Survey 2020)

Looking in more detail at the results for the question related to information sharing preferences, the following conclusions and distinctions can be drawn:

- **Newspaper:** Couples with no children (79%), and those 55+ (78%) were significantly more likely to prefer receiving information via the newspaper when compared with families (67%) and those under 35 (66%).
- **Electronic news:** Second homeowners were significantly more likely to prefer e-newsletter/email (83%) communications when compared with permanent residents (59%).
- **Social media:** By contrast, permanent residents were significantly more likely to prefer social media compared with second homeowners (73% compared with 42%).

# Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Community Engagement Review and with input from staff and Council, a number of recommendations were identified. They are categorized here according to the relative resources required to implement them and according to relative priority in terms of their potential to improve RMOW engagement and/or communications. Implementation leads<sup>11</sup> are also proposed for each recommendation.

The recommendations will be pursued as resources permit and opportunities arise, and more work will be needed to finalize lead and assist responsibilities, ensure alignment/compliance with legal requirements, and budget for and develop the work plans necessary to deliver them over time. The organization's COVID-19 response work and recovery planning have impacted the priorities and work plans for many departments; ongoing uncertainty and impacts as a result of COVID-19 will need to be considered in the initiation and delivery of these recommendations.

## General Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
1	Establish a single engagement platform/webpage for all community engagement opportunities.	High	High	Comm LS	Q2 2021
2	Establish a single, searchable library of key public municipal documents (e.g. reports, plans/strategies, policies, bylaws, staff reports, Council and committee meeting agendas and minutes, correspondence etc.) to help community members access the information they need to be more informed about municipal affairs.	High	High	LS IT Comm	Q2 2021
3	Establish foundational engagement tools based on the findings and recommendations of this report, clarifying when engagement should occur, and to support staff in scoping, designing and coordinating the processes:	High	High	Comm CAO	Q4 2020
3.1	A Community Engagement Policy of Council	High	Med	CAO	Q2 2020
3.2	A staff guide	High	High	CAO	Q3 2020

<sup>11</sup> The lead column suggests the departments that would be most likely to lead the initiative and will require further planning regarding resourcing and implementation. Comm – Communications Department, CAO – Chief Administrative Officer Department, ED – Economic Development Department, Fin – Finance Department, GC – Governance Committee, IT – Information Technology Department, LS – Legislative Services Department, Plan – Planning Department, Various – indicates initiatives that require many departments to participate.

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
3.3	A training program with modules for staff and Council	High	Med	CAO	Q1 2021
4	Make it easier for a greater number and diversity of community members to participate in engagement opportunities:				
4.1	Improve the coordination of engagement activities throughout the year, including combining engagement activities where appropriate to use everyone's time more efficiently and increase participation.	High	Low	Comm Various	Q1 2021
4.2	Provide multiple engagement options (e.g. online, in-person, high level, more detailed, special events, on-location) whenever possible, providing an online option in most cases given community member engagement preferences and barriers, and extending and enhancing the online options to required engagement processes (i.e. public hearings, development open houses and committee meetings) as done through the initial stages of COVID-19.	High	Med	Comm Plan LS Various	Q3 2020
5	Use structured input opportunities at in-person events to enable improved quality and quantity of community input.	Low	Med	Comm Various	Post COVID
6	Improve and formalize procedures for tracking, assessing and benchmarking community engagement and communications channels usage (e.g. number and type of offerings, participants, satisfaction), that will help to inform improvements to subsequent processes.	High	Med	CAO Comm	Q1 2021
7	Develop a consistent and efficient approach (including timing, frequency, channels, content, etc.) for (a) reporting back to community members on all initiatives that involve public engagement, including project updates, engagement results/input, and decisions made or not made; and (b) making the engagement results available to all staff to inform other projects.	High	Med	CAO Comm	Q2 2021
8	Establish an annual calendar for the corporate planning and community engagement cycle that can be regularly referenced through communications channels to build awareness of the opportunities and ultimately help to increase participation.	High	Low	Comm Fin CAO	Q4 2020

## General Communications

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
9	<p>Review and update communications and engagement policies and procedures to address existing gaps and related recommendations in this report, including taking these specific recommendations into consideration:</p> <p>Clarify staff responsibilities related to engagement and communications to help improve accountability.</p> <p>Set minimum and prescriptive communications requirements for all community engagement opportunities, including minimums and consistency with respect to channels, timing, priority placement within channels, etc.</p>	Med	Med	Comm CAO	Q42020
10	Explore opportunities to expand the use of social media (particularly Facebook) and media (e.g. Pique) as a tool for communicating all types of engagement opportunities more consistently and for conducting some digital engagement.	High	Low	Comm	Q1 2021
11	Improve the content (event presentations, posters, documents) aimed at informing community engagement (e.g. more succinct, less text-heavy, more graphics and then make more detailed information available for reference), while continuing to meet legislative requirements.	High	Low	Comm Various	Q1 2021

## Project-related Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
12	Ensure adequate resources (financial and human) are allocated to projects, matching the scale/scope of the process to the scale/scope of the project or decision being made.	High	N/A	Various	Q1 2021
13	Explore the use of text-based surveying via Facebook Messenger or other app to reach more community members, especially younger audiences and Whistler's high Facebook membership.	Med	Med	Comm ED	Q1 2021
14	Explore the use of a research panel of community members to improve the accuracy and validity of online surveys.	Med	Med	Comm ED	Q2 2021



## Council Meeting Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
15	Make it easier to find, navigate and search Council meeting content, including agendas, package content, presentations, minutes and video recordings.	High	High	LS	Q1 2021
16	Update and expand the Council Procedures Bylaw, taking the Council-related and Committee recommendations in this report into consideration in the Bylaw amendment and specifically amending the bylaw to formalize the Mayor's involvement in the process of selecting delegations to present to Council.	Med	Low	LS CAO	Q3 2021
17	Improve communications about Council meetings, including highlighting 'hot topic' agenda items and using more channels to highlight these topics to encourage better attendance and live stream views.	High	Low	LS Comm	Q1 2021
18	Consider potential improvements to the public engagement opportunities that occur during Council meetings (i.e. public hearings, public question and answer periods, and Council correspondence) that will help to better inform public engagement and improve the structure/flow of the meetings while adhering to required procedures.	Med	Low	LS Plan	Q1 2021

## Engagement Related to Planning, Land Use and Development Applications

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
19	Clarify and publicly release through the Community Engagement Policy the criteria used for deciding when project-related and other discretionary community engagement will be conducted.	High	Low	CAO Plan	Q1 2021
20	Establish a practice/procedure to review the consistency, accuracy and completeness of the information presented by developers at discretionary engagement events.	Med	Med	Plan	Q2 2021
21	Seek to make required communications and engagement content (i.e. signage and notices) appealing, accessible and readable for community members, while continuing to meet legislative requirements.	Low	Med	Comm Plan	Q1 2021
22	Provide easy to understand information about the required engagement and related decision-making processes (including Council meetings, correspondence procedures, public hearings and other planning, land use and development procedures), helping to make them more accessible to community members.	High	Low	LS Plan Comm	Q1 2021

## Budget & Annual Report Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
23	Increase and improve community engagement related to the draft budget/financial plan by:				
23.1	Utilizing an online engagement tool	High	High	Comm Fin	Q2 2021
23.2	Combining the fall budget open house with other municipal events and/or other content or projects as appropriate.	High	Low	Comm Fin CAO	Q4 2020/ Post COVID

## Committee Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
24	Conduct a review of the committees of Council, considering the following: current need/relevance, adherence to terms of reference, and diverse and inclusive composition.	Med	High	GC CAO	Q2 2021
25	Update and expand the Council Procedures Bylaw based on the committee review and taking these recommendations into consideration:	Med	Med	Various LS	Q2 2021
25.1	Improve access to and consistency of the recruitment process for committee appointees, including the communication channels and the application submission process used.	Low	Low	Various LS	Q2 2021
25.2	Improve information shared with the public about committee meetings and ensure it is consistent for all, including: meeting minutes that are more comprehensible for those not in attendance; and broader and more prominent communication of meetings, agenda items and the resulting minutes.	Med	Med	Various LS	Q2 2021
25.3	Provide information to committee members 4-5 days in advance of the meetings to better inform their input and to minimize staff presentation time during the meetings.	Med	Low	Various LS	Q2 2021

## Ongoing Engagement

	Recommendation	Priority	Resources	Lead	Initiate
26	Provide a more coordinated customer service experience for the various RMOW online services and interactions.	High	High	IT Comm Various	Q4 2021
27	Design and deliver public facing location-based Civic Platform mobile phone application that will allow community members to report and track resolutions to issues they encounter in the community.	High	High	IT Comm Various	Q4 2021

# Moving Forward

In addition to implementing the recommendations from the previous section as resources allow and opportunities arise, the next steps in the project include finalizing the Community Engagement Policy and developing the staff guide/ toolkit that will help staff deliver engagement processes aligned with the policy. The organization's COVID-19 response work and recovery planning have impacted the priorities and work plans for many departments; ongoing uncertainty and impacts as a result of COVID-19 will need to be considered in the initiation and delivery of some recommendations.

This 2019-2020 Community Engagement Review is the first of its kind for the RMOW. It establishes a comprehensive baseline from which to improve engagement activities and monitor associated progress and performance. Ongoing tracking of existing engagement-related indicators will continue, including those related to trust in decision-making, satisfaction with engagement opportunities, and engagement and communications channel preferences. In addition to these ongoing community-wide indicators, monitoring community participation in and satisfaction with specific engagement opportunities as they are conducted will also be important moving forward; as such, it has been included in the recommendations section of this report.

All outward facing activities of an organization can either – depending on how they are conducted – help or hinder community participation, satisfaction with engagement, and trust. While Whistler has had a long history of inclusive and meaningful engagement with the community, this Community Engagement Review project and the successful implementation of the recommendations over time will enhance the consistency, accessibility and inclusion of organizational engagement practices with the aim of moving the dial further on levels of community participation, satisfaction with engagement, and trust.