


# POLICY MANUAL

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## PURPOSE:

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) requires every municipality to have a public participation policy in place, which must identify the types or categories of approaches the municipality will use to engage municipal stakeholders and the types or categories of circumstances in which the municipality will engage municipal stakeholders. This policy will be used to inform staff and the public about what to expect in terms of consultation on major projects, programs, plans and policies.

### 1.0 Application

All staff, council, and consultants hired by Starland County when they engage with the public regarding all circumstances that require public participation such as new issues, projects, policies, initiatives and bylaws being proposed by Starland County. This policy also applies to all sub-committees or other appointed bodies of Starland County.

### 2.0 Definitions

1. “Municipal Stakeholders” The residents of Starland County, as well as other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected, by, a decision made by Starland County.
2. “Public Participation” A defined and interactive process designed to gather information and inform the public and municipal stakeholders about current and planned municipal operations with goal of better municipal decision making.

### 3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

#### Starland County Council

- Provide direction to staff by setting the budget and other resources required to support the implementation of this policy.
- Participate in the Public Participation process when able to do so.
- Give consideration to the public’s input gathered through the public participation process.



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### Starland County Employees

- Must use this Public Participation Policy to plan and define the level of public consultation for every project in which public involvement is expected.
- Ensure adequate time and resources are dedicated to planning, coordinating and conducting consultation processes.

### Public and Municipal Stakeholders

- Should participate in the public participation process as defined and communicated by Starland County.
- Must participate in a meaningful and constructive way by contributing their voices but also listening and being open to opposing points of view.

### 4.0 Procedures

Implementation of the proper public engagement tools must be based on the type of Municipal Decision being made. Where new issues, projects, policies, initiatives and bylaws being proposed by Starland County require engagement on municipal decisions, engagement should follow from the type of decision listed below:

1. **Directive** - Directive decisions are most common when a municipality has a high-level of confidence that its choice of action aligns with citizen values, meets an existing, pressing or urgent need, or is a requirement under municipal legislation.

#### Type of Participation

To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

#### Participation Tools

Facts sheets, web sites, open houses, media, face-to-face meetings, reports, social media.

2. **Consultive** - Consultive decisions are most common when a municipality has accountability for the effect of a decision on citizens and it recognizes that the decision has the potential to have a significant impact on one or more sub-segments of its citizenry

#### Type of Participation

To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.



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#### **Participation Tools**

Focus groups, surveys, feedback forms, online and personal comments, public meetings, social media.

3. **Deliberative** - Deliberative decisions are most common when there is a challenging or complex question on the table and the answer involves value trade-offs for citizens in the municipality.

#### **Type of Participation**

To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

#### **Participation Tools**

Workshops, deliberate polling.

4. **Participatory** - Participatory decisions are most common when citizens have a high stake and vested interest in the outcome of a challenging or complex question where the answer involves value trade-offs. With participatory decisions, a municipality retains the authority to prescribe the decision but citizens are vested in the decision-making process and decision itself.

#### **Type of Participation**

To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.

#### **Participation Tools**

Citizen advisory committees, consensus-building, participatory decision-making, workshops.

5. **Citizen-Led** - Citizen-led decisions are most common when citizens see themselves as having a high stake and vested interest in a community outcome and the ability to take action to make a difference. With citizen-led decisions, a municipality empowers citizens to bring forward a decision that it will implement.

#### **Type of Participation**

To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

#### **Participation Tools**

Ballots, plebiscites, delegated decisions.

Source: 2015, AUMA-AAMDC *Citizen Engagement Toolkit*.



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#### **5.0 Occasions for Public Participation May Include:**

Where there is a defined need as determined by Starland County Council, one of the five types of public consultation listed above will be used for the below operations:

- a. Budget Consultation
- b. Legislative Changes impacting Starland County
- c. Large scale or unusual developments
- d. Large scale or unusual programs and projects.

#### **6.0 Review**

This policy must be reviewed and approved by Council once every four years.

#### **Policy Amendments:**

**December 16, 2020:** (C20-258): Addition of Item 5.0 Occasions for Public Participation May Include ..... (As recommended by Municipal Affairs MAP Review)