



**ALICE SPRINGS
TOWN COUNCIL**

Community Engagement Guideline & Toolkit

April 2025



Table of Contents

PART 1 - ENGAGEMENT APPROACH	3
Executive Summary	3
Overview	4
Purpose of Guideline and Toolkit	5
Guideline Objectives	5
Engagement Vision	6
Vision Themes	6
Engagement Values	7
Alignment to Strategy	8
Levels of Engagement	9
Strengths	10
Challenges	11-12
Opportunities	13
Roles and Responsibilities	14-15
PART 2 - GUIDELINE & TOOLKIT	16
1-Plan your Engagement	17-26
2-Engagement Plan Approval	27
3-Implementation	28
4-Evaluation and Reporting	29-30
APPENDIX	
1-Methods Matrix	31

Executive Summary

The Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC) Community Engagement Guideline and Toolkit provide a clear and practical framework to support meaningful and inclusive engagement with the community. This Guideline aligns with ASTC's vision of fostering a vibrant and growing community that celebrates its diverse cultural heritage, unique identity, and desert/outback living environment.

Through this Guideline, ASTC aims to strengthen transparency, collaboration, and trust between the Council and the community. It outlines a structured approach to engagement, ensuring that community voices are heard, valued, and integrated into decision-making processes. The Guideline is built on the five strategic pillars of liveability, safety, environment, economy, and governance, guiding ASTC in delivering initiatives that enhance community well-being and sustainability.

The engagement approach is informed by best practices from comparable Councils and is tailored to the unique needs of the Alice Springs community. By prioritising inclusivity, respect, accountability, and continuous improvement, the Guideline sets a strong foundation for effective engagement that contributes to a connected, resilient, and empowered community.

The toolkit within the Guideline provides ASTC staff with practical resources and methodologies to select and implement the most effective engagement strategies for each project. It supports a consistent and adaptable approach, ensuring that engagement is dynamic, measurable, and impactful.

Ultimately, the Community Engagement Guideline and Toolkit are designed to help ASTC lead through innovation, advocate for community needs, and enhance the quality of life for all residents of Alice Springs.



Overview

ASTC, as the heart of Central Australia, serves a diverse community that includes a significant Indigenous population alongside non-Indigenous residents. The Council's Strategic Plan envisions Alice Springs as a place that connects and empowers its residents. This project aims to bring the residents of Alice Springs together to collaborate and advocate for various initiatives that enhance the livability of the town. By fostering meaningful engagement, the Council seeks to ensure that all voices are heard and that community-driven solutions contribute to a vibrant and inclusive future.

Effective community engagement is integral to ensuring equitable participation, cultural respect, and collective progress. Drawing insights from comparable Councils and guided by ASTC's strategic objectives, this guideline sets a benchmark for dynamic and impactful engagement practices tailored to the unique context of Alice Springs.

The Guideline is supported by a benchmarking and analysis report that demonstrates:

- How other Councils of similar size, demographic, and geographic location approach engagement.
- What formal engagement frameworks, guidelines or policies exist for other Councils.
- Challenges, opportunities and benefits of engagement for Councils.
- How Councils are implementing their engagement, including methodologies and best practice.
- What ASTC is doing effectively, and how it might apply the experience of other Councils to improve its own practices.
- ASTC vision for engagement.

Purpose of Guideline & Toolkit

The purpose of the guideline and toolkit is to provide a clear and structured framework for effective consultation and collaboration with community:

- Provide clear guidelines and tools for ASTC staff and stakeholders to engage effectively with the community.
- Establish consistent engagement practices across various projects and initiatives.
- Support ASTC staff to understand what type of engagement approach to adopt.
- Foster transparency, inclusivity, and trust between ASTC and the community.
- Equip ASTC with a comprehensive methods matrix for tailored engagement strategies.
- Ensure alignment with ASTC's mission to lead through innovation and community advocacy.
- Acknowledge and respect the rights of community and stakeholders to be informed, consulted and involved in decisions that affect them.
- Ensure that all ideas and comments from the community are heard and considered in the decision-making process.

Guideline Objectives

The following objectives have been established through an engagement process with key ASTC staff and Councillors:

- Foster an inclusive and collaborative environment for community participation and reach underrepresented parts of the community.
- Enhance decision-making processes through informed and meaningful engagement.
- Respect and integrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.
- Strengthen trust and accountability between ASTC and its stakeholders, and align priorities.
- Support continuous improvement through evaluation and adaptation, and allow for a feedback loop to keep people informed.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities.

Engagement Vision

Councillors and the executive and management team were asked to provide their vision for engagement for ASTC, with key outputs summarised below:

- 1** A community-centred approach that fosters continuous improvement, consistent engagement policies, and scalable solutions, empowering Councillors and Officers to make informed decisions that represent all voices and drive meaningful impact.
- 2** To build a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative framework that ensures effective public engagement, provides clear decision-making support, and fosters accountability through measurable feedback and continuous progress.
- 3** A simple, integrity-driven approach to engagement that is inclusive, measurable, and meaningful — providing clear, actionable feedback with a straightforward pass mark to guide decision-making.
- 4** A trusted, transparent, and inclusive approach to community engagement — where integrity is embedded in our culture, feedback loops are closed, and we deliver on our commitments with measurable impact.
- 5** A structured yet adaptable engagement framework that ensures timely, meaningful, and transparent communication, empowering our community with a voice that is heard, valued, and acted upon

Vision Themes

Vision themes are highlighted below and have been incorporated throughout the Guideline to support Council's engagement commitment to serve its communities and provide innovative and effective community engagement opportunities:

- Brings empowerment to Council and community
- Community-centred and inclusive
- Integrity-based, meaningful, trusted and transparent
- Consistent and scalable
- Measurable and fosters accountability



Engagement Values

Councillor and staff engagement informed the development of the following engagement values:



Inclusiveness

Engage all community members, ensuring equitable participation opportunities, and facilitate involvement.



Openness

Communicate openly about decision-making processes and outcomes and provide participants with the information they need to participate.



Respect

Honour the cultural heritage, diversity, and values of all stakeholders and respect their right to be involved in a decision.



Accountability

Deliver on commitments and demonstrate responsiveness to community feedback. Engage participants at the earliest possible stage of a project.



Adaptability

Employ flexible engagement methods tailored to varying needs and contexts.



Improvement

Continuously improve engagement through review, monitoring and community feedback – establish a clear feedback loop.

Alignment to Strategy

The Alice Springs Town Council's Community Engagement Guideline and Toolkit is intricately aligned with the "Alice Springs Liveability and Sustainability 2030" strategic plan, serving as a foundational tool to actualise the plan's vision and objectives. Anchored by **five key pillars**: Liveability, Safety, Environment, Economy, Governance and Civic — the Council commits to being responsive to the needs, interests, and aspirations of the community through its multifaceted roles as a provider, funder, regulator, partner, facilitator, and advocate.



Pillar 1 ~~~~~ Liveability

Objective: Enhance the quality of life for all residents by fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich community.

Alignment: The guideline promotes inclusivity and respect, ensuring that diverse community voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. By facilitating active participation, it contributes to creating a community that reflects the aspirations and needs of its residents.



Pillar 2 ~~~~~ Safety

Objective: Ensure a safe and secure environment for all community members.

Alignment: Through proactive engagement, the Guideline enables the community to voice safety concerns and collaborate on solutions. This participatory approach leads to more effective safety initiatives and fosters a shared responsibility for community well-being.



Pillar 3 ~~~~~ Environment

Objective: Protect and enhance the natural environment, promoting sustainability and resilience.

Alignment: The Guideline encourages community involvement in environmental initiatives, allowing residents to contribute ideas and feedback on sustainability projects. This collaborative effort supports ASTC's commitment to environmental management and sustainable development.



Pillar 4 ~~~~~ Economy

Objective: Support economic growth and diversification, creating opportunities for all.

Alignment: By engaging with local businesses and industry stakeholders, the Guideline ensures that economic development strategies are informed by community insights. This inclusive approach helps tailor initiatives to local needs, fostering economic resilience and growth.



Pillar 5 ~~~~~ Governance & Civic

Objective: Demonstrate transparent, accountable, and responsive governance.

Alignment: The Guideline embodies ASTC's dedication to open communication and accountability. By establishing clear engagement processes and feedback mechanisms, it enhances trust between the Council and the community, ensuring that governance is participatory and reflective of public interests.

Note: Engagement compliance requirements outlined in LGA2019.

Levels of Engagement

By identifying and engaging the right stakeholders at each level, ASTC ensures that its engagement processes are inclusive, transparent, and aligned with community needs and expectations.

Engagement Level	Description	Key Stakeholders
INFORM	Crosses all levels of engagement by providing information to keep stakeholders up-to-date on decisions, services, or changes at the Inform, Involve, Collaborate or Empower levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General public ● Residents and ratepayers ● Local businesses ● Community groups ● Media outlets ● Government agencies
INVOLVE	Consult with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered. Gain feedback, input and opinions on specific projects or proposals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All Community groups & organisations ● Advisory committees ● Local business representatives ● Schools and education providers ● Traditional Owners, Indigenous leaders and Aboriginal Corporations ● Specific demographic groups (e.g., youth, seniors)
COLLABORATE	Partner with stakeholders in decision-making processes, including developing options and identifying preferred solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project partners and co-design participants ● Traditional Owners, Indigenous leaders and Aboriginal Corporations ● Local business alliances ● Environmental and sustainability groups ● Government agencies /NFP and social service organisations
EMPOWER	Give stakeholders the final decision-making authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community panels and local resident juries ● Referendum or voting groups ● Traditional Owners, Indigenous leaders and Aboriginal Corporations ● Self-governing committees for specific projects ● Participants in community-led initiatives

Strengths

The following strengths of engagement were identified through engagement with ASTC staff and Councillors. These have been categorised into themes:

Theme	Strengths
COMMUNITY FIRST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Build relationships with the community to encourage feedback.● Strong relationships with Indigenous Elders, Traditional Owners, and community leaders to ensure diverse input.● Commitment to cultural heritage and integration of local traditions.● Genuine commitment to engagement.
DEFINE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop a formalised, adaptable guideline for consistent engagement which clearly outlines roles and responsibilities● Design a guideline with a shared language that everyone can understand
ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Harness local knowledge in the community to enhance engagement outputs● Incorporate more focus groups to more deeply understand feedback● Access underrepresented parts of community
DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Work in consultation and co-design with other local organisations● Ensure Council staff are trained and educated in engagement processes and cultural competency● Define negotiables / non negotiables● Evaluate the effectiveness of engagement to determine engagement methods● Adopt digital engagement methods to increase accessibility and reach.

Challenges

The following challenges and risks for engagement were identified through engagement with ASTC staff and Councillors. These have been categorised into themes, including how Council will address them:

Theme	Challenges
NO ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● This guideline and toolkit has been developed to support Council to effectively engage with community around identified scenarios
REACHING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND LEADERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Work with Indigenous community leaders to deep dive into their concerns, aspirations, ideas, and needs● Grow trust with Indigenous communities by inviting them to take part in engagement – apply culturally appropriate methods and protocols
NOT BEING CLEAR ON NEGOTIABLES AND NON-NEGOTIABLES IN DECISION MAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use the engagement plan template provided to clearly define what negotiables and non-negotiables are involved
UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS IN ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● This guideline and toolkit will support ASTC staff to better understand the role of Councillors in engagement, and be able to inform the community as required
RESOURCING – IN PARTICULAR BUDGETING FOR ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● This guideline will support Council staff to assess budget for engagement, and what level of engagement is required
LACK OF CLARITY AROUND WHICH PROJECTS NEED ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● This guideline and toolkit has been developed to support Council to understand various scenarios Council is likely to encounter, and what level of engagement is required
STAFF TURNOVER – OR OVER-RELIANCE ON CORPORATE KNOWLEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● This guideline will support staff (including those new to Council) to understand how Council approaches engagement, types of scenarios Council faces, decision-making requirements, and how to implement engagement (at the basic level up to more complex engagement)

Challenges

Theme

Challenges

ENGAGEMENT FATIGUE

- Employ best practice and evidence based engagement and incorporate a range of innovative methods to provide simple and engaging information that is easy to understand
- Be inclusive of all community sectors including First Nations people, young, elderly, people with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Ensure communication is jargon free and focused on the community's perspective. Encourage buy-in from the beginning of the project

COMMUNITY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND COUNCIL'S ROLE

- Provide clear communication, especially in relation to the decision-making capacity of Council and what negotiables and non-negotiables are involved

POLITICAL INFLUENCES AND COMMUNITY SENTIMENT CAN BE NEGATIVE OR INFLUENCE OUTCOMES

- Provide clear timeframes on the project and decision-making process
- Be clear on negotiables and non-negotiables
- Monitor community sentiment through media, feedback touch points, and through conversations with community
- Manage expectations by applying this Guideline to plan for and deliver engagement and close the feedback loop

LENGTHY PROJECT TIME-FRAMES CAN IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

- Use this guideline and toolkit to clearly define timeframes and communicate these to the community
- Set engagement goals to meet community expectations
- Ensure consistent engagement so that the community understands when they are likely to be engaged on decisions

BUILDING ENGAGEMENT INTO THE PROJECT

- Support additional resourcing internally, build on current corporate knowledge, build engagement skills, implement training, encourage cross-departmental collaboration

Opportunities

The following challenges and risks for engagement were identified through engagement with ASTC staff and Councillors. These have been categorised into themes, including how Council will address them:

Theme	Opportunities
CLOSE THE LOOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Manage expectations by providing feedback and closing the loop● Monitor and evaluate engagement● Capture common themes of engagement to improve knowledge● Provide more transparency● Promote public question time so the community has another avenue for feedback
DEFINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop a formalised, adaptable guideline and toolkit for consistent engagement which clearly outlines roles and responsibilities● Design a guideline and toolkit with a shared language that everyone can understand
ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Harness local knowledge in the community to enhance engagement outputs● Incorporate more focus groups to more deeply understand feedback● Access underrepresented parts of community
DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Work in consultation and co-design with other local organisations● Ensure Council staff are trained and educated in engagement processes and cultural competency● Define negotiables / non negotiables● Evaluate the effectiveness of engagement to determine engagement methods● Enhance digital engagement methods to increase accessibility and reach.



Roles & Responsibilities

ASTC engagement is predominantly driven by the project team with support from the Community Development division and Communications and Media team.

It is recommended that ASTC review its current resourcing and consider the potential to employ a dedicated resource to support engagement and communications activities. This will promote a more consistent approach to engagement, ensure cross-collaboration, drive community involvement, and build trust among Council and community.

The following table highlights each group and their responsibilities within Council. Approval pathways have been highlighted in Section 2 of the Toolkit and Template.

Role	Responsible for
ASTC PROJECT TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Leading the project and associated processes, procedures, resources and relationships● Reporting and other internal requirements● Developing, coordinating and providing engagement materials including the engagement plan● Engaging with Councillors, Executive Leadership Team, government agencies and other key stakeholders● Engaging with and providing support to local businesses● Developing communication and marketing resources● Engaging and advocating on behalf of the region● Stakeholder register management
ASTC EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Approving project outputs to present to Councillors including the strategic assessment and options analysis● Encouraging community participation● Supporting the project team in delivery of the project● Building momentum internally and with key stakeholder groups● Providing governance leadership
COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Inviting community and stakeholder feedback● Sharing information relating to the project● Endorsing key recommendations

Roles & Responsibilities

Role

Responsible for

CONSULTING TEAM

- Delivering engagement activities in partnership with Council
- Developing communications materials to support engagement
- Managing the strategic assessment reports and options analysis process to inform engagement and provide final reports to Council
- Engagement reporting
- Stakeholder register management

LOCAL MEDIA

- Providing information to the community
- Promoting engagement activities



Guideline application in four steps

Key steps to using this guideline are as follows:

- 1 Plan your Engagement
- 2 Engagement Plan Approval
- 3 Implementation
- 4 Evaluation and Reporting

1 Plan your Engagement

Use **Engagement Plan Template** provided to begin this process.

When completing the engagement plan template, follow the low, medium or high prompts in each section. Your results from Section 1 in the Template will determine which prompts to select for the remainder of the engagement plan.

For example, for a low ranked project you only need to complete the sections 1&2, which state 'low'. Where as for a Medium or High you need to complete all 4 sections.

L = Low **M** = Medium **H** = High

Before you begin, refer to reference table 1 on the following page, which highlights similarities and differences between low, medium and high engagement to better understand the levels, and to help ensure you've selected the correct level.

Reference tables 1-7 will assist in completing the engagement plan, providing practical application examples.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

SECTION 1 - DEVELOP ENGAGEMENT PLAN

1.1 - IDENTIFY PROJECT AND DETERMINE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

1.2 - BUILD THE CONTEXT

1.3 - PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

1.4 - NEGOTIABLES & NON-NEGOTIABLES

1.5 - STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

SECTION 2 - ENGAGEMENT PLAN APPROVAL

SECTION 3 - IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 4 - EVALUATION & REPORTING

Levels of engagement

	Low	Medium	High
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer methods may be used (1-2) • May be focused on communicating information more than seeking feedback on a project or decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to involve more methods than a low level engagement (2-4) • May involve more consultative methods such as focus groups or pop ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to involve multiple different methods and incorporate face-to-face and digital to ensure a higher reach of participants. (3-5) • Methods likely to change across project phases • May involve developing a 'Have Your Say' website and engaging third party products/services
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will likely be able to manage within normal Council budget • Can be managed by project team internally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will likely be able to manage within normal Council budget or project budget • May need a dedicated internal resource to support engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need to engage a third party to support engagement planning and implementation • Budget may need to come from Council assigned budget • Will likely need a dedicated internal resource to support project team and any external party
Data collation and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will likely be minimal requirement for data collation or analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require some data collation and analysis using existing Council resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require more in-depth data collation and analysis, and require additional resources to deliver
Engagement Timeframe	1-2 weeks	2-3 weeks	3-4 weeks
Risk to Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to be minor risk to Council and can be managed internally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could pose moderate risk to Council, will need to be monitored and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher possibility of major risk to Council, but can be offset by employing third parties to support engagement delivery
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will need to manage and monitor situation but evaluation won't be complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require more complex evaluation to determine whether engagement is on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to need a higher level of evaluation, and this will support reporting and feedback to participants
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to need formal reporting process other than with project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional reporting may be required, especially to internal project team, Exec team and CEO • Data collation, analysis and evaluation will support reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to need more extensive reporting throughout project phases, including to CEO and Councillors • Data collation, analysis and evaluation will support reporting • Likely to need to communicate updates / project completion via Council website or social media
Feedback Loop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to need to communicate updates / project completion via Council website or social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback to participants recommended • Feedback should include decision making process and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback essential throughout the project phases, including providing timelines and regular updates • Feedback should include decision making process and outcomes

Table 1 - Low, medium and high engagement levels

1.1 Identify your project scenario

Alice Springs Town Council has five key scenarios for projects that may require engagement which been identified through engagement with Council staff.

Use the quick reference guide, Table 2 below to identify which scenario your project fits into, and then complete the template Section 1: 1.1 Identify your project scenario.

Scenario	Description	Project Examples
1 – Small Capital Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered as business as usual • Often built to a prescribed standard with limited scope for change (non-negotiables) • Usually affects a small catchment • Core business relating to maintenance or upkeep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpath upgrade • Local park upgrade/renewal • Road rehabilitation • Tree Planting
2 - Large Capital Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be non-core or standard delivery • Design may be influenced (negotiables) • Affects larger sections of LGA • Broad community impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Library • Major storm water upgrade • Significant road upgrade • District skate park • Public art installation • Public realm upgrade
3 - Service delivery / operational delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to service delivery • Could impact rates • Challenges expectations of Council's role • Requires behaviour change in community • Local Law changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike riding in mall • Domestic recycling implementation • Implementing new library services • Holiday program • Verge maintenance handover
4 - Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council policy development • Can impact specific stakeholder groups and residents • Can include legislative requirements (e.g. Municipal Plan) • Can be a long-term process and may be updated iteratively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation Action Plan • Corporate Plan • Tourism Strategy • Environmental Sustainability Policy • Public Art Policy • Municipal Plan
5 - Internal / staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts the work of staff • May require a change to working arrangements • Internal policy consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary library – staff accommodation • Council restructure • Elmo and Resolve (software roll out) • Council policy updates (e.g. social media, whistleblowers)

Table 2 - Reference guide to select your project scenario

1.1.2 Understand the criteria

Now that you've identified your project scenario you need to score the project to work out whether it will be a low, medium or high level engagement. This ranking will determine the level of engagement you should apply to the project based on several criteria outlined below in reference Table 3.

Criteria	Description	Project Example
Significance to Council	<p>Council provides essential services that support the local community's well-being and development. Effective governance and decision-making is guided by transparency, community engagement, and financial sustainability, balancing immediate needs with long-term growth objectives.</p> <p>Consider how significant this initiative is to enabling Council to achieve these priorities. Rating Low, Medium or High</p>	A new library will have high significance to Council, given the nature of a local library as an essential service likely to be used by a high percentage of the population.
Community Impact	<p>Consider what impact this initiative has on the community and how it affects the engagement approach. It is essential to evaluate how decisions and projects affect the local community's social, economic, and environmental aspects.</p> <p>Evaluate whether the project involves cultural sensitivities, protocols, or heritage values that may influence how engagement must be approached.</p> <p>This involves identifying which stakeholders are most affected by Council actions, ensuring their voices are heard, and addressing their concerns. Rating Low, Medium, or High</p>	A new neighbourhood footpath reconstruction will have low impact to community as it will likely impact only a small section of the community with minimal disruptions to daily life.
Community Sentiment	<p>Consider the feelings, opinions, and attitudes of the local population towards Council initiatives. By factoring in community sentiment, the Council can ensure its actions resonate positively with residents, addressing their needs and concerns while fostering goodwill.</p>	A new RAP will likely have high community sentiment as it's a topic of high interest to large sections of the community, with many stakeholders likely to want to have their say.
Political Risk	<p>Consider potential political challenges that may arise from Council decisions and actions. This includes assessing how stakeholder interests align with current political climate and identifying any political pressures or conflicts that might influence decision-making processes.</p> <p>By understanding political risk, the Council can anticipate opposition, mitigate adverse impacts, and navigate complex political landscapes more effectively.</p>	A change to a local policy could have medium-high political risk (depending on the issue) as there may be multiple groups in the community with differing opinions, which can become a topic of interest in the media.
Project Budget	<p>Consider financial implications of stakeholder engagement activities to establish a project budget, if required.</p> <p>By carefully managing the project budget, Council can ensure resources are allocated efficiently, allowing for broad and meaningful stakeholder participation.</p>	A garden bed renewal might have a relatively low project budget compared to a large-scale infrastructure development.

Table 3 - Reference guide to understand project criteria

1.1.3 Understand levels of engagement

Now understand how you will score your project based on the selected criteria specified above. This has been sorted into low, medium and high risk projects, indicating the level of engagement you can apply.

Table 4 below shows the foundation for the scoring process.

Engagement Categorisation and score	Total scoring for all criteria	Description	Implementation
Low Score recorded is 0 or 1	0-5	<p>Low risk project with minimal engagement requirements.</p> <p>Engagement may be over a short timeframe, is likely to be easy to implement and is unlikely to need additional resources or budget. There is minimal risk to Council, and low impact and sentiment in community.</p>	Follow the low engagement plan options in the Template: Section 1: 1.1.2
Medium Score recorded is 2	6-10	<p>Medium risk project with medium engagement requirements.</p> <p>Engagement may be over a longer timeframe and may need to be implemented in phases and is likely to need some additional resources or budget to support the project team. There is a higher risk to Council, and a medium impact and sentiment in community.</p>	Follow the medium engagement plan options in the Template: Section 1: 1.1.2
High Score recorded is 3	11-15	<p>High risk project with high engagement requirements.</p> <p>Engagement is likely to be over a longer timeframe across multiple phases and is likely to need extensive resources and budget from Council. Council may need dedicated resources, or may need to engage a third party to support engagement as there is a high risk to Council if not implemented effectively. Community is likely to have a high interest and the impacts more widely felt.</p>	Follow the high engagement plan options in the Template: Section 1: 1.1.2

Table 4 - Reference guide to understand scoring process



1.1.4 Score your project

Use Section 1: 1.1.2 of the template to determine the level of engagement to score your project. Give each criteria a score from 0-3 based on low (0/1), medium (2) or high (3). Add up the total to see how it ranks.

See table 5 examples of how the template could possibly look.

Project Scenario	Significance to Council	Community Sentiment	Community impact	Risk	Project Budget	Total
Scenario 1- Small Capital Works eg. Neighbourhood footpath reconstruction	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	
SCORE	1	0	1	0	1	3
This project has scored a total of 3 which equates to ' Low 0-5 ', meaning this is a low risk project with minimal engagement requirements. You would therefore select the Low engagement plan options in the template.						

Project Scenario	Significance to Council	Community Sentiment	Community impact	Risk	Project Budget	Total
Scenario 2- Large Capital Works eg. New civic library	High	High	High	High	High	
SCORE	3	3	3	3	3	15
This project has scored a total of 15 which equates to ' High 10-15 ', meaning this is a high risk project with high engagement requirements. You would therefore select the High engagement plan options in the template.						

Project Scenario	Significance to Council	Community Sentiment	Community impact	Risk	Project Budget	Total
Scenario 3 – Service delivery / operational delivery eg. New local bike law (mall)	Low	High	Medium	High	Low	
SCORE	1	3	2	3	1	10
This project has scored a total of 10 which equates to ' High 10-15 ', meaning this is a high risk project with high engagement requirements. You would therefore select the High engagement plan options in the template.						

Project Scenario	Significance to Council	Community Sentiment	Community impact	Risk	Project Budget	Total
Scenario 4 – Strategic Planning eg. Reconciliation Action Plan	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low	
SCORE	3	1	1	2	1	9
This project has scored a total of 9 which equates to ' Medium 5-10 ', meaning this is a medium risk project with medium engagement requirements. You would therefore select the Medium engagement plan options in the template.						

Project Scenario	Significance to Council	Community Sentiment	Community impact	Risk	Project Budget	Total
Scenario 5 – Internal / staff engagement eg. Restructure	High	High (staff)	High (staff)	Medium	Low	
SCORE	3	3	3	2	1	11
This project has scored a total of 11 which equates to ' High 10-15 ', meaning this is a high risk project with high engagement requirements. You would therefore select the High engagement plan options in the template.						

Table 4 - Examples of how to complete score card

1.1.5 Determine engagement level

Using Section 1: 1.1.2 of the template the engagement level score will guide the appropriate level of community engagement needed for the project - Low (0-5), Medium (6-10) or High (11-15).

The following symbols will guide which sections to complete in the template

L = Low **M** = Medium **H** = High

Section 1 & 2 to be completed by all levels = Low, Medium & High
Section 3 & 4 to be completed by 2 Levels only = Medium & High

1.2 Build the Context

You've now scored your project as low, medium or high. Complete Section 1: 1.2 in the template to build the context for your project including:

1. Engagement lead
2. Key stakeholders
3. Engagement budget source and other resources
4. Approvals

See reference table 6 examples for each scenario.

Project Scenario/Name	Engagement Lead	Target Stakeholders	Budget/Resources	Approvals
Scenario 1 - Small Capital Works eg. Neighbourhood footpath reconstruction	Project manager	Residents in the street Local Councillor	Project budget	Project coordinator Director
Scenario 2 - Large Capital Works eg. New civic library	Council communications team	All residents All businesses Councillors NTG Peak bodies Interest groups	Project budget	Director CEO
Scenario 3 - Service Delivery / Operational Delivery eg. New local law	Council communications team	All residents All businesses Councillors NTG Peak bodies Interest groups	Operational budget	Director CEO
Scenario 4 - Strategic Planning eg. Reconciliation Action Plan	Project lead	Councillors NTG Peak bodies Interest groups	Project budget	Project lead Director
Scenario 5 - Internal / Staff engagement eg. Restructure	Project lead	Staff	Project budget	Project lead CEO

Table 6 - Examples of how to complete building context

1.3 Purpose of Engagement

Engagement is about making a decision – led by Council (e.g. Park upgrade) or the community. The purpose is the reason you would involve stakeholders and community in the decision making.

- Grow relationships and strengthen ties
- Call for action or change
- Seek clarification on something
- Get people to act
- Build capacity in the community
- Confirm community views on initiative

1.3.2 Values

In your engagement plan, this question helps you consider your community's core values so your approach is respectful, inclusive, and culturally appropriate.

Eg. Park upgrade in a residential area that is home to a mix of long-term residents, young families and Aboriginal community members, some examples of community or stakeholder values that might influence how you engage might be:

Value 1: Respect (in a culturally appropriate way)

Value 2: Collaboration (community members who have historically had a voice for change)

Value 3: Accessibility and Inclusion (for minority members of the community such as people with disabilities)

Value 4: Transparency (Community expects open and honest communication)

1.3.3 Engagement Objectives

These are specific, measurable outcomes that your engagement is aiming to achieve.

E.g Park Upgrade

Objective 1: Reach and engage at least 300 local residents

Objective 2: Achieve a minimum 75% satisfaction rate

Objective 3: Ensure representation from key community groups

Objective 4: Incorporate at least three community-driven ideas

1.4 Negotiables & Non-negotiables

Identifying and clearly communicating negotiables and non-negotiables is a critical part of a transparent and effective community engagement process. This distinction helps to set clear expectations for all stakeholders involved — ensuring that community members understand where their input can influence outcomes and where constraints limit flexibility.

Negotiables are parts of a project where community input can shape decisions, building trust and shared ownership.

Non-negotiables are fixed due to legal, financial, or safety reasons. Being clear about these upfront avoids confusion and maintains trust.

Negotiables	Non-Negotiables
eg. Types of play equipment	eg. Budget Allocation
eg. Inclusion of additional park features, BBQ, seating etc	eg. Safety and accessibility standards
eg. Landscaping and planting choices	eg. Project timeline & delivery deadline
eg. Park name or theme	eg. Location of Park

Table 7 - Examples of how to complete negotiable / non-negotiable section, based on a park upgrade

1.5 Stakeholder Analysis

Using the identified stakeholders from build the context complete the stakeholder analysis in the provided Engagement Plan Template, Section 1: 1.5

See reference table 8 for an example stakeholder analysis for park upgrade.

Stakeholder	Impact Level	Influence Level	Engagement Level	Challenges & Risks	Mitigation Strategies	Key Messaging
eg. Local Residents (adjacent to park)	eg. High	eg. Medium	eg. Involve	eg. Mistrust of Council processes; Apathy. Noise concerns, increased traffic	eg. Early involvement, transparent updates, respond to feedback	eg. "Your voice shapes the future of your neighbourhood"
eg. Youth Groups	eg. Medium	eg. Low	eg. Collaborate	eg. Low engagement levels. Access barriers	eg. Use schools and online platforms to reach them	eg. "Help us build youth-friendly spaces in Alice Springs"
eg. Traditional Owners / Aboriginal Land Councils	eg. High	eg. High	eg. Collaborate	eg. Cultural protocols, not followed, engagement not meaningful	eg. Ensure culturally appropriate and early engagement, respect for country	eg. "We're here to walk with and listen to you first"
eg. Broader Alice Springs Community	eg. Low	eg. Low	eg. Inform	eg. Low awareness of project benefits	eg. Use social media, local media, and signage to promote info	eg. "Find out what's happening at your local park"
eg. Community Steering Committee	eg. High	eg. High	eg. Collaborate	eg. Risk of unbalanced representation	eg. Clear Terms of Reference, rotating membership	eg. "Together, we lead this project for our community"
eg. Council Staff	eg. Medium	eg. Medium	eg. Collaborate	eg. Change fatigue, misaligned expectations	eg. Internal briefings, phased rollout, feedback loops	eg. "You're essential in making this plan a success"

Table 8 - Examples of how to complete the stakeholder analysis

Instructions for Use:




- 1 Stakeholder:** Group or individual with interest or influence in the project.
- 2 Impact Level:** How affected they are by the project.
- 3 Influence Level:** How much influence they have over the project outcome.
- 4 Engagement Level:** At what level they will be engaged - inform, involve, collaborate and empower
- 5 Challenges & Risks:** Known issues that may arise during engagement.
- 6 Mitigation Strategies:** Actions to minimise risks and improve engagement.
- 7 Key Messaging:** Tailored communication that resonates with the stakeholder group.

2 Engagement Plan Approval

Once you have developed your engagement plan it is time to seek approval. You may have already started the approval process for a high level project as this type of project would usually require you to work with the Executive team and CEO to:

- Gain approval to deliver the project
- Seek additional engagement budget and resources
- Agree on an engagement approach
- Review the project timeline and phases

Approval processes will differ across each scenario (and project), however based on ASTC's current processes they can be summarised as follows

	Low Requires approval from your line Manager
	Medium Requires approval from the Director
	High Requires approval from the Director/CEO

Consideration can be given to seeking approval at the CEO and Council level for projects of high significance.



3 Implementation

Once you have sought approval, you can implement your engagement plan. This is the practical phase of your engagement and is constantly evolving. You will need to monitor and adapt your plan depending on what's happening with your project and the feedback you receive.

For low level engagement projects you are unlikely to need a separate implementation plan, however for medium or high category projects you should build out a separate plan. Consider this to be a project plan.

For larger or high-impact projects, engagement implementation can be conducted in phases to ensure clear communication, community readiness, and meaningful participation at every step. A phased approach allows ASTC to build momentum, manage resources effectively, and adapt to community feedback along the way. Use Table 9 to build out your implementation plan in Section 3 of the template - Implement your plan. You can use the same template for each phase of your engagement.

Section 2 of Engagement Plan - IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT X (eg. Park Upgrade)

Engagement Activity/ Methods	Timeline / Date	Targeted Audience / Stakeholders	Level of engagement	Objective of Activity	Delivery Responsibility
eg. Online Survey	eg. 01/04 - 15/4 2025	eg. Residents aged 18-35	eg. Involve	eg. Collect feedback on proposed park upgrade	eg. Communications Team
eg. Set up 'have your say' website page	eg. Launch by 30 April 2025	eg. General Public	eg. Inform	eg. Provide access to project updates and information	eg. Communications Team
eg. Stakeholder workshop	eg. 10 May 2025	eg. Local Businesses, community groups	eg. Collaborate	eg. Co-design elements of the town park upgrade project	eg. Project manager and engagement officer
eg. Establish steering committee	eg. May - Aug 2025	eg. Community Leaders, Elders, Youth reps	eg. Collaborate	eg. Guide project decisions through regular input	eg. Council Governance Officer

Table 9 - Examples of how to complete section 2, Implementation

Instructions for Use:

- 1 Engagement Activity/Method:** What action will be taken? (e.g., survey, info session, committee).
- 2 Timeline:** When will this happen? Specify dates or phases.
- 3 Stakeholders:** Who is this activity targeting?
- 4 Level of Engagement:** At what level they will be engaged - inform, involve, collaborate and empower.
- 5 Objective of the Activity:** What is the aim or expected outcome?
- 6 Delivery Responsibility:** Who is in charge of making this happen?

4

Evaluation and Reporting

Now that you've developed your engagement plan (and implementation plan if required), you will need to evaluate and report on your engagement. For low level projects this may be a simple verbal or written report back to the project team.

For medium or high level projects, you will need to establish how you will evaluate and report on your engagement.

4.1 Data collation and analysis

It's important to establish early in engagement planning what data you need to collect, how you will collect it, and how you will analyse and report the feedback.

For example, a high level project may require you to analysis hundreds or even thousands of pieces of feedback. Decide what method of data collation you will use, and who is responsible for analysing. If you use a 'Have your say' page with a survey, you will receive data via the survey platform.

If you deliver face to face methods such as focus groups or workshops, you'll need to record information from these sessions. If you chat to the community at an event or pop up, decide how will you record the information.

When analysing data, it's important to highlight key themes that are emerging from your engagement, and back this up with evidence based data such as people's comments.

4.2 Evaluation

Evaluation is critical to the success of engagement as it helps you to:

- Measure engagement effectiveness using feedback forms, surveys, and participation metrics
- Assess outcomes against strategic objectives and community expectations
- Adapt engagement practices based on lessons learned
- Conduct annual reviews of the guideline and toolkit to ensure ongoing relevance and alignment with ASTC's strategic goals
- Understand how Council is performing overall with its engagement projects

This stage of the engagement plan should not be completed right at the end, in fact you need to evaluate your engagement throughout the whole project. Establish when the best time to do this might be, for example at the end of each phase or milestone of your implementation plan.

Evaluation tells you who is being engaged, when and how they've been engaged, how many participants you have, and whether you need to reach a more diverse or widespread group of people.

4.3 Reporting

This stage of your engagement plan is important, as it provides Council with the information it needs to deliver a project or make a decision. You may need to provide regular reports depending on the project and level of engagement. Generally your reporting will identify how your engagement is progressing and involve:

- Project description
- Engagement phases and how you are tracking
- Results of engagement (e.g. what people are saying)
- Updates to your engagement based on evaluation
- Recommendations to Council

Section 3 of Engagement Plan - EVALUATION & REPORTING PROJECT X (eg. Park Upgrade)

Engagement Activity/ Methods	Intended Outcome	Actual Outcome	Community Feedback Summary	Data Collected	What worked well	What could be improved / Lessons Learned	Responsible Officer
eg. Online Survey	eg. Gather input on park upgrades	eg. 132 responses received, 75% support proposed upgrades	eg. Positive overall, some concerns about safety and lighting	eg. Survey analytics, written comments	eg. High participation, ease of access	eg. Clarify timeline in future comms	eg. Engagement Officer
eg. Set up 'have your say' web page	eg. Provide info and collect feedback	eg. Page visited 580 times, 24 comments received	eg. Helpful for staying informed, but some didn't know it existed	eg. Web analytics, comment log	eg. Centralised info / data hub	eg. Promote more widely	eg. Communications team
eg. Stakeholder workshop	eg. Co-design beautification project elements	eg. Strong collaboration. 5 ideas shortlisted	eg. Appreciation for involvement, request for more followup	eg. Notes from facilitated sessions	eg. Valuable input and diverse perspectives	eg. Allow more time for discussions	eg. Project Manager / engagement officer/comms team
eg. Establish steering committee	eg. Ensure community led oversight	eg. Committee met 3 times, provided feedback on 4 key decisions	eg. Positive - Members felt heard	eg. Meeting minutes, member feedback	eg. Strong ownership of process	eg. More clarity of roles at start	eg. Project Manager / engagement officer

Table 10 - Examples of how to complete section 3, Evaluation and Reporting

Instructions for Use:

- 1 Engagement Activity/Method:** Same as in the implementation plan.
- 2 Intended Outcome:** What you aimed to achieve.
- 3 Actual Outcome:** What actually happened.
- 4 Community Feedback:** Summary of the community's sentiment and experience.
- 5 Data Collected:** Quantitative or qualitative data used to assess the activity.
- 6 What Worked Well:** Strengths of the engagement method.
- 7 What Could Be Improved:** Opportunities for refinement.
- 8 Responsible Officer:** Person accountable for delivery and evaluation.

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Methods Matrix

	Small Capital Works (eg. Footpath, park, road, tree planting upgrade/renewal)				Large Capital Works (eg. Library, significant road, storm water, skate park, art installation upgrade/renewal / installation)				Service /operational delivery (eg. Bike riding in mall, domestic recycling, new library services, holiday program, Verge maintenance handover, Australia Day ceremony)				Strategic Planning (eg. RAP, Corporate Plan, Tourism Strategy, Environmental Sust. Policy, Public Art Policy, Municipal Plan)				Internal / Staff engagement (eg. Temporary Library – staff Accom., council restructure, ELMO & resolve software rollout. Council policy updates, whistleblower & Social media.			
	Inform	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Inform	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Inform	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Inform	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Inform	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Letters (hard copy letters often sent to property owners, residents and business operators)	●				●				●				●							
Media releases (an announcement presented for news media to highlight a process, event, opportunity, action etc.)	●				●				●				●							
Email/EDM (an announcement presented for news media to highlight a process, event, opportunity, action etc.)	●				●				●				●				●			
Website or internal Council intranet (webpage with information on projects / initiatives, timelines, engagement processes and potential outcomes)	●				●				●				●				●			
Social media (ability to target stakeholders through social media channels based on geography, interest etc. – used to build awareness in engagement initiatives)	●				●				●				●							
Public stalls/Pop ups (used to provide in person engagement opportunity at a specified location)					●	●			●	●			●	●						
Posters/fact sheets (generic opportunity to build awareness of an initiative which can be used in hard copy or online)	●				●				●				●				●			
Videos (able to be shared online and often used as a vehicle to build knowledge or a call to action)	●				●				●				●				●			
Surveys (developed to understand community views and implemented online, via hard copy or through the use of a participant avatar to increase engagement)		●				●				●				●				●		
Live polling (often used during engagement events or forums to confirm real time, anonymised participant views – software examples include Mentimeter)						●	●			●	●			●	●					
Online discussion forum/Wikis (implemented through online purpose-built platforms or custom built – often used for long term engagement initiatives)						●	●							●	●					
Digital interactive (interactive activities often used for community education and to understand the trigger points for change)		●				●				●				●						
Creative strategy (processes using creativity as a vehicle for engagement – often used in youth, CALD engagement and includes film, photography, events etc)					●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●					
Newsletters/bulletins (generic opportunity to build awareness of an initiative which can be used in hard copy or online – often used to engage on a staged process)	●				●				●				●				●			
Presentations/Forums (delivered in person or virtually – provides an opportunity to provide technical advice – can be recorded and made available online)	●	●			●	●			●	●			●	●			●	●		
Workshops (delivered in person or virtually - opportunity to gain feedback on key issues from a variety of stakeholders)		●	●			●	●			●	●			●	●			●	●	
Enquiry by Design (process delivered with pen in hand – seeking to co-design solutions in a collaborative manner – ideal for accelerating complex issues)			●				●								●					
3D modelling/Digital Twin (a 3D virtual model of a street, suburb, city etc. used to convey actual spatial representation – ideal for demonstrating forecasted change)	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●									
Augmented reality (presents an alternative experience through the use of a device such as a smart phone or tablet – ideal for use at location of development)	●	●			●	●														
Virtual reality (immersive, simulated experience that replaces real life environment – can be experienced remotely with headset – ideal for broadening engagement)	●	●			●	●														
Community Reference Groups (often used to gain deeper insight into community activities and expectations or within a defined location such as a neighbourhood)						●	●	●						●	●	●				
ASTC Have Your Say (online community engagement tool to enable the community to have their say on projects, initiatives and new ideas)		●	●			●	●			●	●			●	●					
Collaborative mapping (platform for community to spatially identify issues or ideas onto an online map example include Story Maps or Drop a Pin)		●	●			●	●			●	●									



Alice Springs Town Council
93 Todd Street, Alice Springs
(08) 8950 0500

astc@astc.nt.gov.au



alicesprings.nt.gov.au



**ALICE SPRINGS
TOWN COUNCIL**