



Community Engagement

Policy Statement

The Guelph Public Library welcomes a broad base of input from various sources within the community to fulfill its mission. This policy sets out the requirements for strategic engagement with the community.

The Library engages with community groups, agencies or individuals. Information collected through community engagement is a key component of our strategic planning process and future decision-making on collections, services, and programs.

The Guelph Public Library Community Engagement Policy is modelled after the City of Guelph's Community Engagement Framework which is made up of three documents: the Community Engagement Policy, the Community Engagement Charter, and the Community Engagement Honorarium Policy.

Purpose

This policy ensures that the Library has a consistent, coordinated, and outcomes-centred approach to engaging the community. This means:

- We are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver meaningful and consistent community engagement.
- The community understands the factors that drive Library decision-making, know why their participation is important, and have what they need to participate.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All full-time, part-time, and casual employees responsible for the design and/or delivery of formal and informal community engagement
- Library Board members
- All consultants or external organizations that undertake community engagement on behalf of the Guelph Public Library

1 Policy Guidance

1.1 The Library's community engagement promise

The Library is committed to creating the conditions for meaningful community engagement. The Library will:

- Nurture relationships and build capacity for participation with Library staff and the community
- Ensure meaningful opportunities exist to influence Library decisions
- Continuously evaluate and evolve the engagement process

1.2 When does the Library engage?

In an ongoing way, the Library invests in nurturing relationships in the community and building capacity for participation. These are critical foundations to deeper, more meaningful engagement.

When there are specific matters that affect the community and that the community can meaningfully influence, the Library engages the community directly to:

- Identify community needs and aspirations
- Inform about an existing policy, collection, service, or program
- Evaluate an existing policy, collection, service, or program
- Respond to a community-led request

1.3 The process for engaging the community

When the Library engages the community, it follows an established process.

Stage 1 – Define

The Library will establish the scope of the decision and determine if community engagement makes sense. It will:

- communicate the goal of the project
- assess the affects the project will have on the community
- assess what opportunities exist for meaningful engagement given timelines, resources, and community interest
- assess what community data and insights already exist and may be relevant to the decision
- determine if engagement is appropriate
- set engagement objectives
- identify who needs to be engaged

Stage 2 – Create

The Library will develop community engagement plans that align with the engagement objectives set in stage 1. It will:

- determine the most effective methods for reaching and engaging those it intends to engage
- identify timelines that align with community needs and the project goals
- outline what success looks like

Stage 3 – Deliver

The Library will deliver community engagement as outlined in stage 2. It will:

- promote community engagement over the course of the project using a variety of channels
- host engagement activities in the community and/or online
- collect and carefully analyse all community engagement data
- refine engagement goals, methods, communications, and marketing as needed throughout a project
- evaluate communications and engagement

Stage 4 – Share

If appropriate, the Library will share data or insights from community engagement. It will:

- share data and insights in plain language
- tell the community how community engagement, along with other key considerations, informed a recommendation or decision

2 Principles Governing Community Engagement

The following principles will govern how the Library approaches community engagement and related activities. Not all principles will apply in every case; however, these principles will be used to inform decision making.

In all engagement, the Library strives to:

- Practice inclusive design and address identified barriers to participation
- Focus on the needs and experiences of equity-denied groups
- Engage early and evolve its approach as it goes
- Connect dots
- Meet people where they are
- Deliver diverse engagement opportunities
- Report back

3 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Library Staff

- Design and/or deliver community engagement as directed by Library Management
- Engage community with respect
- Let Library Management know about any observed barriers to equitable participation

3.2 Library Management

- Determines when community engagement is appropriate
- Ensures appropriate resources are in place to deliver meaningful community engagement
- Prepares Requests for Proposals to meet procurement policies and procedures
- Reviews Requests for Proposals to ensure they include appropriate community engagement scope
- Liaise with consultants to ensure consultant-led community engagement aligns with the Library's community engagement promise, process, and design principles
- Liaise with consultants to design and deliver relevant community engagement training for staff
- Takes action to identify and remove barriers to equitable participation
- Makes decisions with an understanding that each decision has an impact on people in the community
- Communicates how community engagement has shaped decision making
- Evaluates and updates the Library's Community Engagement Policy as needed

3.3 Library Board

- Let Library staff know when you become aware of barriers to equitable participation
- Encourage community to participate in community engagement opportunities
- Connect Library staff with relevant community members, organizations, and businesses
- Support realistic timelines and appropriate resources required to deliver meaningful community engagement
- Ensures the Library has an up-to-date Community Engagement Policy

3.4 Community Members

- Recognize the Library strives to listen to many voices and takes all input into consideration
- Remember community engagement is one part of good decision-making and must be held in balance with other considerations including: intergovernmental, socio-cultural, technical, financial, and environmental

- Let staff know if you or someone else experiences barriers to participation that have not been addressed (if you feel comfortable doing so)
- Interact with staff, Board members, and other engagement participants with respect
- Listen and look to understand other viewpoints and perspectives
- Provide input and feedback within project timelines
- Encourage others to participate
- Provide feedback to the Library about their engagement practices

Related documents:

[City of Guelph Community Engagement Policy](#)

[City of Guelph Community Engagement Charter](#)

[City of Guelph Community Engagement Honorarium Policy](#)