



**City of Kingston
Information Report to Council
Report Number 21-064**

To:	Mayor and Members of Council
From:	Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Corporate Services
Resource Staff:	JC Kenny, Director, Communications and Customer Experience
Date of Meeting:	February 16, 2021
Subject:	Public Engagement Annual Update and Updated Implementation Plan

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: Corporate business

Goal: See above

Executive Summary:

The City of Kingston's consistent approach to public engagement is founded in the Public Engagement Framework and the Public Engagement Charter. The Framework and Charter were approved by Council in October 2017 and earned the City of Kingston Organization of the Year honours from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Canada in 2019.

The Public Engagement Implementation Plan complements the Framework and Charter. The initial Implementation Plan was successfully completed in 2019 and another Implementation Plan was shared with Council for 2020-2022 in December 2019. This ambitious workplan consists of action items to ensure continuous improvement, timely communication and transparency in public engagement. In 2020, staff reviewed the implementation plan through a COVID-19 lens and have provided an updated Implementation Plan for 2020-2022. Some items within the Implementation Plan are in progress, some have been added and some put on pause to be re-evaluated when Public Health guidelines allow these to be considered.

Recommendation:

This report is for information only.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Brad Joyce, Commissioner,
Corporate Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects	Not required
Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required
Sheila Kidd, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works	Not required

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Options/Discussion:

The Public Engagement Implementation Plan for 2020-2022 was reviewed and updated in the late fall of 2020 through the COVID-19 lens. There are some items that have been added to the Implementation Plan based on the need for virtual engagement and an increased focus on the online platform. Other areas in the plan have been progressing or put on pause and will be re-evaluated when Public Health guidelines allow for these initiatives. The updated Implementation Plan 2020-2022 with timelines are listed in Exhibit A.

Public engagement highlights

Guided by the implementation plan, Council strategic priorities and current capital projects, City staff launched more than two dozen new public engagement initiatives and continued receiving feedback on several ongoing projects in 2020.

Below are some highlights of public engagement across the Corporation from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. Table 1 also provides statistics from 2019 which has data for in-person only engagement. The pandemic did pause public engagement in the spring of 2020 and subsequently created new online opportunities which obviously makes it more difficult to compare the real or true change in engagement numbers from 2019 to 2020.

Table 1: 2020 Public Engagement statistics

Measurable	Total (2020)	Total (2019)
Total public engagement initiatives	33	74
New public engagement initiatives	25	46
Public engagement initiatives supporting Council strategic priorities	13	22
In-person engagement opportunities (prior to March 2020)	7	153
Virtual engagement sessions	9	N/A
Attendees at virtual sessions	183	N/A
YouTube video views of recorded virtual engagement sessions	928	N/A
Staff trained in virtual public engagement	17	N/A
Staff trained in IAP2 Foundations to date. (There was no training in 2020).	N/A	104

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Public engagement Implementation Plan 2020-2022 highlights

The initial Public Engagement Implementation Plan was provided to Council for information on October 3, 2017 alongside the Public Engagement Framework. The initial Implementation Plan was completed in 2019. To ensure a consistent approach to public engagement, staff report back to Council with Implementation Plan highlights on an annual basis from the previous year.

This update reflects some work that is suspended due to COVID-19 as a result of public health guidelines prohibiting in-person gatherings. It is important to note nearly half of the total 60 action items on the ambitious implementation plan are ongoing. This encourages the continued development of training, awareness and growth of public engagement opportunities for the Corporation.

Table 2: Implementation plan statistics

Action items ongoing	Action items completed	Action items to be completed in 2021	Timing to be determined (due to COVID-19 impacts)
42%	18.5%	21%	18.5%

Highlights of completed and ongoing action items include:

- Raising awareness of engagement opportunities to residents, the community engagement network and staff
- Development of an online platform training schedule for staff through Bang the Table, the company that provides the Engagement HQ platform for Get Involved Kingston.
- Review and update public engagement resources for staff
- Implementation of internal project evaluations
- Development and execution of virtual engagement sessions

Action items to be completed in 2021:

- Development of an e-Learning module for staff for awareness of public engagement and Get Involved Kingston
- Update and maintain a roster of external facilitators
- Development of materials to provide to adults at in-person sessions
- Development of a standard package for consultants to ensure they are aware of the public engagement framework, accessibility standards and reporting out expectations

Action items suspended due to COVID-19:

- Development of an internal public engagement community of practice. A space that staff can share and expand best practices, lessons learned and share knowledge with other staff.
- Development of a video campaign featuring residents who have participated in engagement opportunities

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- Execution and evaluation of a pilot project trade show for in-person public engagement events

Encouraging public engagement during COVID-19

In March 2020, the City stopped hosting in-person public engagement sessions based on restrictions due to COVID-19. In May 2020, staff conducted an online survey on Get Involved Kingston to assess resident sentiment toward resuming engagement on City initiatives and projects. The result of that work was included in Report COU 20-135 and the introduction of virtual engagement sessions using the Zoom platform, surveys completed over the phone with a Customer Service agent and mail-in surveys. Council's approval of COU 20-135 ensured residents could continue to offer input on City initiatives and Council and staff could continue to work toward fulfilling Council strategic priorities. The addition of Action Item 6.0 Virtual Engagement is reflected in the updated Implementation Plan. Resources and training for virtual engagement were initiated in Q2 2020.

To help staff understand the participant experience during a virtual engagement session, a standardized poll is conducted at the end of each session. Results are shared with City project teams and the Communications and Public Engagement division to consider the comments and explore opportunities to improve the virtual engagement experience. Of all poll respondents, 95% rated their experience with the Zoom platform as Excellent or Good and 45% used Zoom's Q&A or raise hand tool to provide input on City projects during the engagement session.

To date there has been one survey completed over the phone and three surveys have been mailed out to residents. The mailing list to receive surveys is available for residents to add their name. Currently there are no names on this mailing list.

As directed by Council, staff continue to review opportunities - subject to health and safety considerations - for one-on-one and small group meetings and continue to evaluate for consideration any additional tools and technologies that improves public participation. Staff will consult with KFL&A Public Health as plans for in-person public engagement are developed.

Get Involved Kingston highlights

Get Involved Kingston remains the online hub for public engagement opportunities. There are eight different tools available for use that offer different types of engagement based on the project's specific engagement needs. Bang the Table continues to enhance the tools and platform and offer training opportunities to improve the engagement experience. The implementation plan lists action items specific to Get Involved Kingston which focus on consistency, communications and ongoing staff training with a vision of growing the number of activated participants and diverse use of the various tools available on the platform.

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On November 27, 2020, Get Involved Kingston surpassed 10,000 activated participants.

As of December 31, 2020, based on population size, Kingston leads Canadian municipalities of the same size with the highest number of activated participants using the Bang the Table, Engagement HQ, online engagement platform (source: Bang The Table internal client report). There are only three Canadian municipalities that have higher registration numbers than Kingston but they have populations over 750,000. Kingston's registration in 2020 is higher than the overall average. Registrations, participation rates and aware, informed and engaged numbers for Get Involved Kingston are among the top performing sites in Canada.

These terms will be used in this information report to describe how a resident engages online with a project.

- Aware – received information about the project, for example visiting a project page
- Informed – made themselves aware of the project, for example clicking on something on a project page – key date, document, link, image)
- Engaged – provided input on a project, policy or initiative, for example engaging on a project – survey, places, ideas etc.

Table 3: Get Involved Kingston statistics (January 1-December 31, 2020)

Measurable	Total
Get Involved Kingston total activated participants	10,647
Get Involved Kingston e-newsletter subscribers	9,168
Visits to Get Involved Kingston engagement platform	30,500
Engaged participants	4,196
Informed participants	11,757
Aware participants	20,870

Below is the Get Involved Kingston engagement tool summary for all projects. This summary includes external and internal working groups for the period October 4, 2017 to December 31, 2020:

- 131 surveys with 18,527 responses
- 31 ideas tools with 5,324 contributions
- 23 places tools with 1,922 pins placed
- 25 forum topics with 1,498 contributions

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- 29 Q&A tools with 493 submitted questions
- 17 quick polls with 387 responses
- 119 stories tools with 134 story submissions
- 22 guestbooks with 38 entries

SurveyMonkey is also used on occasion for surveys and linked through the Get Involved Kingston site. 24 surveys with 4,677 responses.

Get Involved Kingston projects with the highest levels of engagement from residents for the year 2020 are:

- Fluoride and water fluoridation (3,697 aware, 2,736 informed, 1,434 engaged)
- Animal Control Bylaw Review (3,641 aware, 3,004 informed, 1,205 engaged)
- Proposed Open Air Fires Bylaw (2,576 aware, 1,765 informed, 494 engaged)
- Reducing Plastic Bag and Polystyrene Container Use (1,980 aware, 1,509 informed, 944 engaged)
- 2021 City Budget (1,920 aware, 935 informed, 504 engaged)

Primary online traffic sources to Get Involved Kingston:

- Direct to Get Involved Kingston (13,267 aware, 7,074 informed, 3,377 engaged)
- Get Involved Kingston newsletter (3,853 aware, 3,744 informed, 1,868 engaged)
- Facebook (3,441 aware, 2,031 informed, 367 engaged)
- Google search (2,722 aware, 972 informed, 185 engaged)
- Twitter (1,715 aware, 687 informed, 180 engaged)
- City of Kingston website (1,628 aware, 991 informed, 259 engaged)

Existing Policy/By-Law:

Public Engagement Framework

Notice Provisions:

None

Accessibility Considerations:

None

Financial Considerations:

None

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Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Julie Fossitt, Manager, Marketing and Public Engagement

Jen Pinarski, Communications Officer, Communications and Public Engagement

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A – Public Engagement Implementation Plan 2020-2022



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2020-2022





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Introduction

Public Engagement was identified as a Council Priority in 2015. The Public Engagement Framework was developed in consultation with residents, Council and employees. The Public Engagement Framework was approved at Council on October 3, 2017. In September 2019, the City of Kingston accepted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Canada Organization of the Year, 2019 award in recognition of the work in developing the Public Engagement Framework and the implementation plan.

The Public Engagement Framework is championed by the Communications and Public Engagement Division of the Communications & Customer Experience Department. All City departments have a responsibility to ensure the effective implementation and use of the Public Engagement Framework for new projects, policies and initiatives. Communications officers will work closely with project or program managers to assist and support departments in the development of an engagement plan that will be supported by a communication plan.

The intention of this Public Engagement Implementation Plan 2020-2022 is to keep the forward momentum going with a consistent approach to public engagement across the corporation and the community. The implementation objectives and priorities have been identified as follows;

- 1. Collaboration and outreach**
- 2. Training and awareness**
- 3. Communication and events**
- 4. Resources**
- 5. Evaluations and status reports**
- 6. Virtual Engagement**



1. Collaboration and outreach

1.1 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Action item - Continue to raise awareness for the community engagement network to encourage more members of the community to participate.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place.

Action item - Continue to provide presentations to groups and organizations about Public Engagement.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - No updates at this time.

Action item - Develop a standard introduction that will be delivered at in-person public engagement sessions.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - Complete, Q2, 2020. The standard introduction is currently being used for the virtual public engagement sessions. It will be introduced to in-person public engagement sessions when they resume.

1.2 INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT GROUP

Action item - Review the employees that are part of the Internal Engagement Group and update if required.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Annual

Update - Complete, Q1, 2020, Currently reviewing for 2021.

Action item - Continue the Internal Engagement Group meetings on a quarterly basis with the existing terms of reference for the group.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Quarterly

Update - Internal Engagement Group meetings did not take place in 2020. They are scheduled for 2021.

Action item - Develop an email newsletter to be circulated following the internal engagement group meetings.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Quarterly beginning in Q1, 2020

Updated Timing - Q1, 2021

Update - This was delayed.

1.3 ACTIVITY BAGS

Action item - Activity bags will continue to be available at public engagement sessions. The activity bags are provided with items from departments.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - Complete, Q4, 2019. The bags have not been used as in-person engagement is currently not taking place.

Action item - Update the bags on an annual basis.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q4 – Annual

Update - Complete, Q4, 2019. The bags will be reviewed and updated if necessary, once in-person engagement is able to take place based on public health guidelines.

Action item - NEW - Update the handouts at in-person engagement sessions to include materials or information for adults.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q4, 2021

2. Training and awareness

2.1 CITY EMPLOYEES, COUNCIL AND SENIOR LEADERS

Action item - Continue with IAP2, Planning and Techniques (Foundations) training for employees.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Bi-Annual

Update - The communications portion is currently in the 2021 budget. Training will be established once public health guidelines allow.

Action item - Develop an eLearning module for all City of Kingston staff for awareness of the Public Engagement Framework and Get Involved Kingston.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience and Human Resources & Organization Development

Timing - Q1, 2020

Updated Timing - Q1, 2021

Update - This has been initiated and part of the eLearning module built.


Action item - Training to support City employees as they continue to build their capacity and skill set for delivering public engagement.

Department leading - Human Resources & Organization Development and Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - 2020 and ongoing

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - Facilitation training was planned for 2020 for City employees. The training was not delivered during 2020. This will be re-evaluated in the future and included in future budgets.



Action item - Develop an annual training schedule for Get Involved Kingston with Bang the Table for staff training. The training is part of the service agreement with Bang the Table.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - Complete, Q3, 2020. This has been developed with Bang the Table based on need and is ongoing.

Action item - Develop a public engagement community of practice for staff who have completed the IAP2 Foundations training. This includes ongoing connections for staff to learn from each other and build capacity.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q1, 2021

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - This will be re-evaluated in the future.

Action item - Council and City employee training – IAP2, Decision Makers training

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience and City Clerk's department

Timing - Ongoing as required

Update - As required.

2.2 RESIDENTS

Action item - Review and refresh the awareness message for public engagement.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience and City Clerk's department

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place.

Action item - Develop videos that include residents who have participated in a project so they can share their message about being involved.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - This will be re-evaluated in the future.

2.3 CONSULTANTS

Action item - Update and maintain a roster of external facilitators.

Departments leading - Communications & Customer Experience and Finance.

Timing - Q2, 2020

Updated Timing - Q3, 2021

Update - This was delayed.

Action item - Ensure consultants hired by the City of Kingston are aware of the following;

- Public Engagement Framework.
- Get Involved Kingston.
- Reporting out expectations.
- Accessibility standards for web content.
- Communication process and techniques.

Departments leading - All departments

Timing - Q2, 2020

Updated Timing - Q3, 2021

Update - The development of the standard package for this was delayed.

Action item - Develop options for standard language for public engagement that can be included in various procurement documents.

Departments leading - Communications & Customer Experience and Finance.

Timing - Q4, 2020

Updated Timing - Q3, 2021

Update - This was delayed.

3. Communications and events

3.1 COMMUNICATION

Action item - Continue to utilize various methods of communication for public engagement to raise awareness with all audiences.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place.

Action item - Continue to raise awareness and grow the number of activated participants for Get Involved Kingston. This will utilize various forms of communication.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place. In November 2020 Get Involved Kingston reached 10,000 activated participants.

3.2 EVENTS

Action item - Develop a plan for a pilot project trade show style public engagement event/s to be coordinated together rather all sessions being than done as one off events.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q1, 2020

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - This will be re-evaluated in the future.

Action item - Execute the pilot project plan and evaluate the success.

Evaluation will be based on;

- The number of projects that participated.
- Total number of residents that attended.
- Did new members from the community participate?
- Did we get new members on Get Involved Kingston?
- How many comments were received overall?
- How much time did the event take to plan and execute?
- Feedback from staff.
- Feedback from residents.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q2/Q3, 2020

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - This will be re-evaluated in the future.

Action item – Evaluate the pilot project trade show style public engagement event/s.

Report back to Council with a recommendation.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q3, 2020

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - This will be re-evaluated in the future.

4. Resources

4.1 GET INVOLVED KINGSTON – ONLINE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Action item – Review the best practices document on an annual basis and make updates as required.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Annual

Update - Complete, Q1, 2020

Action item – Raise awareness for the internal use of Get Involved Kingston.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place.

Action item – Ensure the budget for maintaining an online platform is included in the IS&T budget.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience and IS&T

Timing - 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

Update - This continues to take place.



4.2 RESOURCES

Action item – Continue to review and update resources.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place.

Action item – Review the available template resources and make updates when needed.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Ongoing

Update - This continues to take place. There have been several resource templates added for virtual engagement.

Action item – Review the facilities list and update as required.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Annual

Update - This continues to take place.

Action item – Review accessible options for tools that can be used at public engagement sessions. Provide recommendations for the appropriate tools.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience and IS&T

Timing - Q1, 2020

Updated Timing - TBD

Update - This will be re-evaluated in the future as in-person engagement sessions are able to take place.

Action item – Engagement Sessions, accessibility considerations

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience and IS&T

Timing - Q2, 2020

Update - At the July 7, 2020 Council meeting, the report – Public Engagement during COVID-19 was approved at Council. As the virtual engagement options were developed, accessibility options were considered. All virtual engagement sessions are live streamed, live close captioned, recorded and posted to the City's YouTube channel. As the City developed the Engagement Report during COVID-19 report the following options were also included;

- Call in to complete a survey over the phone with a CX agent.
- Call in to a CX agent to request a paper copy of a survey be mailed to you, with a postage paid return address envelope.
- Call in to be added to a mailing list to automatically receive paper copies of surveys in the mail, with a postage paid return address envelope.



5. Evaluation And Status Report

5.1 EVALUATION

Action item - Update and continue to implement engagement status evaluations for City employees to use across the corporation. These will be collected and compiled in Communications and Public Engagement for reporting out to Council.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q1, 2020 and Ongoing

Updated Timing - Q2, 2021 & Ongoing

Update - The existing engagement status evaluations are in place for departments to complete. Next steps - The engagement status evaluations will be reviewed, updated and shared with City employees for continued use across the Corporation. As part of this update, they will be collected and compiled in Communications and Public Engagement for reporting out.

Action item - Review and continue to implement internal project evaluations for City employees to use across the Corporation. These will be collected and compiled in Communications and Public Engagement for reporting out.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q1, 2020 and Ongoing

Updated Timing - Q2, 2021 & Ongoing

Update - The existing evaluations are in place as a resource for departments.

Next steps - The internal project evaluations will be reviewed, updated and shared with City employees for use across the Corporation. As part of this update, they will be collected and compiled in Communications and Public Engagement for reporting out.

Action item - Review and implement a consistent resident evaluation for use across the Corporation. These will be collected and compiled in Communications and Public Engagement for reporting out. These will receive feedback on the engagement experience, not the specific project being consulted on.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q1, 2020 and Ongoing

Update - Updated Q3, 2020. The virtual engagement sessions include a Poll at the end of each Zoom session. These results are being collected and are included in the report to Council.

5.2 STATUS REPORT

Action item - Provide a public engagement status report to Council on an annual basis.

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience

Timing - Q4, Annually

Updating Timing - Q1, Annually

Update - Updated this item to be presented in Q1 of the following year to be able to provide a full report annually.



6. Virtual Engagement - Addition to the Implementation Plan

Action item - NEW - Virtual Public Engagement Sessions

Department leading - Communications & Customer Experience & IS&T

Timing - Q2, 2020

Update - In 2020, Virtual Public Engagement sessions were added as an additional item in the 2020-2022 Public Engagement Implementation Plan, due to the Public Health restrictions as a result of COVID-19. The tools were determined, a process was developed for all aspects of the virtual sessions and training for staff took place.