Community Engagement > Communication Guidelines

Purpose
To improve the communications efforts for all community engagement projects.

These guidelines are designed to be read once and kept as a resource for all engagement activities. They aim to ensure that aspects such as our language, tone, formatting (etc) are consistent across all communications. The onus is on everyone to get the basics right. The Marketing and Communications Officer (MCO) can assist if required.

The City's engagement language
- Our overall tone should be friendly and approachable – but remember we are a local government authority
- Language should be professional but not bureaucratic – proficient but not technical
- Where applicable, make it interesting and engaging – this will garner a better response (this doesn't suit all consultation, eg: simple planning apps or road closures). Make it fluent in the least.
- You can refer to the organisation as 'the City' – but feel free to also use 'we' or 'our' to convey approachability/friendliness, eg: "We're introducing new landscaping in this area..."
- Refer to the various departments as a 'team', eg: contact the City's Strategic Planning team or Planning Services team – much more approachable and personable
- Use your job title, not your full name, eg: Contact our TravelSmart Officer on 9273 6000...
- Use the main Vincent switch number (as opposed to direct lines) so that a team member can pick up if you are not there, or take a message for you if you are busy.
- You may also wish to use the main Vincent email address (mail@vincent.wa.gov.au), or a generic one you have created for your department (eg: travelsmart@vincent.wa.gov.au) – up to you

Overall communication guidelines
Have you...?

- Thought about what info you need to communicate
- Made it clear, put thought into it, allowed time to write the information
- Catered to today's (usually) time-poor audience – you have a few seconds to engage someone
- Written it as if the audience knows nothing about the project (to cater for/reach a wide audience)
- Put the important information at the start (front page), then flowed nicely into the pertinent points Included all the relevant info – do people have everything they *need* to make a comment? What else would they *appreciate* knowing? Put yourself in their shoes
- Provided various methods for them to access the full details (website, foyer, library, etc)
- Written it in Word first - and spell and grammar checked it (before it goes on the website too) Had it checked and proofread *thoroughly* by a team member – or two (for serious/complex matters)
- Given Marketing a heads-up about items that are high-profile/interesting/newsworthy/contentious (for further promotion via media, e-news or social media)

Key engagement essentials not to be missed
Have you...?

- Clarified with your superiors whether or not you need to actually consult the public on the item
- Allowed yourself and the public enough time to garner a good response
- Used the standard letter and form templates (and hence followed the City's overall style/branding)
- Included any relevant Council Policies (the title) – and explained briefly what it means to people
- Incorporated clear headings for nice, digestible chunks of information
- Refrained from using long, cumbersome sentences
- Refrained from using bureaucratic language (unless a statutory requirement)
- Tailored the info to that specific item, rather than a cut and paste job
- Used bullet points/lists where applicable (for clarity)
- Clearly outlined the closing date for submissions, who to address comments to (CEO) and if they should include a reference number, etc.

*In addition to the above, have you also done this for the **website** (onscreen reading must be treated differently to reading off paper – onscreen is harder, must be clearer and more digestible):*

- Not just cut and pasted the info from a letter or advertisement (eg) – ensure that it suits the web context (eg: many put "plans can be accessed at our website"- on the actual web page!)
- Used clean hyperlinks (to docs/ web pages) on the website by hiding ugly/long URLs
- Used white space to separate/arrange information clearly
- Used the templates available (see IT or Marketing)
- Clearly convey what documents are available for download – and why we have provided them
- Are the maps and plans you have included readable, labelled, clear, logical, quick to download
- Ensured all documents are presented professionally and are clear (no low-resolution images, scribbled on pages, old/skewed/pixelated logos, etc)
- IT or Marketing can assist you

Accessibility and information for all
- Always ensure you offer a *variety of methods* for people to both *access* the information and also *submit* their feedback
- Always provide a contact at the City for further information
- Always include the language/translation information (on letter templates in Policy) below. Displayed is the word 'translate' in our five most spoken (non-English) languages. The blue symbol is an internationally recognised symbol for translation, so please include this text/image below and ensure it is big enough to read:

Please note:
This document is available in other formats and languages.

Traduzione | Dịch | 翻译 | μετάφραση | Превод

www.vincent.wa.gov.au/translate

Post-consultation communication

- After consultation is over, the Responsible Officer must ensure that respondents are contacted with the results and thanked for their contribution
- For high-profile or significant matters (especially those with a great deal of community interest or impact), the results are to be also published on the City's website (usually under the 'News & Public Notices' section).
- This link can then be (depending on the nature of the project – ask your Manager and Marketing) published to social media, sent to the media, all staff, community stakeholders, and so on. Reporting the results is important.

Keeping a record of your efforts

- Record keeping should be kept for significant, high-profile or extensive consultation projects – as deemed by a Director (or above) by using Appendix 3 - Community Engagement Action Plan template. This can then be used for reporting (if required) to the Mayor, Council, CEO, Director, the public and so on.

Community Consultation > Engagement Action Plan template

* To be filled out for all high-profile or extensive consultation projects – as deemed by your Director (or above).

1.   Who is responsible?

Contact person

2.   Outline the project you wish to communicate/consult on

Project/initiative, plan, etc

3.   What level of consultation is required?

Low – inform only (one-way), *Medium* - consult (two-way) OR *High* - collaborate (two-way)?

4.   Identify target audiences / stakeholders
   You could outline this as your 'primary', 'secondary' and even 'tertiary' audience if you wish.
   Remember: if everyone is your target audience, then nobody is.

Target audience(s)

5.   Identify your key engagement objectives
   Stick to 2-3 key goals - stay focused. Ensure they are SMART: (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely).
   State these now – and stay focused during the project. Make sure you know what you want to get out of consultation.
   MCO (Marketing & Communications Officer) can assist you with this if you need. Some examples below.

Project objective 1: *EG Get at least 30 responses to the letter*
Results (did this occur? fill this in after project is complete):

Project objective 2: *EG Positive feedback for the project from a wide range of sources, including experts in this field*
Results (did this occur? fill this in after project is complete):

Project objective 3 *EG Gain at least one local newspaper story. A radio interview featuring the Mayor would also be a major plus*
Results (did this occur? Fill this in after project is complete):

Project objective 4: *EG Ensure the consultation packs are hand delivered to key streets surrounding the site*
Results (did this occur? fill this in after project is complete):

6.   Record your efforts on the below Engagement Action Plan
   Identify communications activities and channels you'll utilise to achieve your engagement objectives.

   Forge a way to reach your audience and spend your budget well. Plan this now and get organised/schedule everything, using Outlook calendar reminders. Add the dates/activity as you action them throughout your project. Leave any tables blank if your project doesn't require that activity. Ensure you have enough budget/time to reach your engagement objectives.

Paid Marketing – everything you *pay* for

Activity	Details	Cost	Dates
Advertising *(newspaper or otherwise)*			
Promotional material *(flyer, poster, brochure, banner etc)*			

Unpaid Marketing – 'unpaid' activities

Take full advantage of our 'free' / low-cost communication channels. Leave any tables blank if your project doesn't require that activity. Schedule Outlook reminders when planning your campaign so you don't miss opportunities, eg: facebook posts, booking newspaper adverts, request MCO to include in e-news, or write a media release, etc. If MCO is responsible for any of the below, please highlight in red *and send this plan so activity can be scheduled.*

Activity	Details (EG size, publication, type, etc)	Date completed and initials
Media *(EG official release, simple media alert via MCO, photo shoot, etc)*		
Web page *(EG Maybe also add to home page 'slider' or promo panel, etc)*		
Facebook *(EG Create a facebook event, post to our wall, post to other pages' wall to spread the word, schedule in posts to update your audience on when it starts/ends, ask MCO to boost post, pin to top of page, etc)*		
Twitter (*EG alert MCO and ask MCO to Tweet at different stages, ie: consultation open, now closed, thank you, etc)*		
e-News item *(EG main COV e-news only or also youth, green?*		
Promotion at COV venues *(EG Beatty Park – brochures/posters; Library display or brochures; COV foyer TV, etc)*		
Internal communications *(EG working group meeting, email, poster on staff noticeboard, etc)*		
Other activities *(EG email to local service suppliers, Mayor's speech at an event, add image to your email signature, hold a public meeting, display info at our festival stall, display at local market or shops, etc)*		
Post-project engagement activities *(EG email to service suppliers, post-event online survey, thank you post on facebook/Twitter /e-news, report to Council, etc)*		

7.   Implement your above Action Plan

Follow the relevant processes and procedures (eg Ad Request Form, Graphic Design Brief, Media Release Policy and Procedure, etc) to bring your Action Plan to life. *** Note:* If the MCO is a Responsible Officer for any of the above, then email this to the MCO now (for scheduling activity/Outlook reminders, etc).

*** This section below is to be completed after the project is finished ***

8.   Results and evaluation

Did you achieve your engagement objectives, as per point 5 above? Has your consultation been successful?

If so, why?

If not, why not?

What should be done better for next time?

Responsible Officer's evaluation:

Please send this completed Action Plan document to your Manager for evaluation.

Manager's evaluation:

9.   Marketing and Communications Officer evaluation

After all of the above steps are completed, please send to MCO for evaluation who will suggest possible improvements for future consultation projects.