

Public Engagement Pilot Program

Initial Event Feedback Analysis

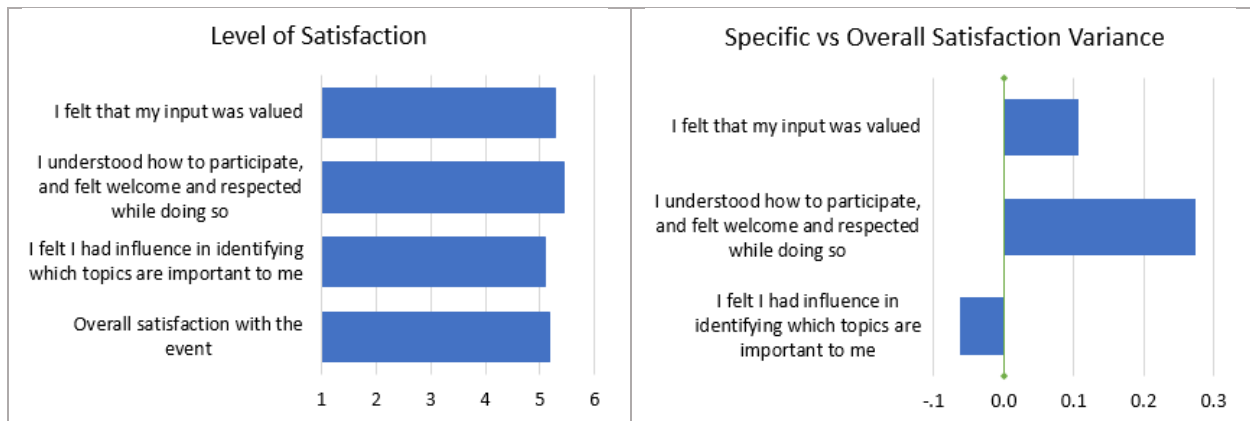
Executive Summary

This report focuses on analyzing the feedback supplied by participants at the initial event to assist the Community Engagement Task Force in their ongoing work towards the pilot program.

The initial event held at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre was well received by the community and highly indicative that the path of this pilot program is on track with community expectations and the Council supported motion from which the task force was created and has based the foundation of its work upon.

Utilizing an Open Space format for this event resulted in a significantly higher than average level of satisfaction towards key performance indicators.

The two charts displayed below are based on the four satisfaction ratings requested from attendees at the event which ranged from 1-6. The “Specific vs Overall Satisfaction Variance” chart displays contrast through variance by using the overall satisfaction as a baseline to apply against each key performance indicator. The variance chart shows that the area of topic implementation in particular could benefit from further attention amongst the other program enhancements to be considered.



The level of satisfaction and overall feedback provided at this event correlates strongly with the feedback provided by citizens in July and August of 2017 that was directly applied towards helping shape this event.

Of those that attended the event, 77% identified that they live in an area that is within a five-kilometer radius from the Vancouver Island Conference Centre where the event was held, and out of all the attendees, a total of 71% were 50+ years old.

The inherent feedback loop that has been introduced for the purpose of continually applying feedback towards the program’s implementation during the task force’s work is highly advantageous towards helping empower the program to reach its full potential.

Further incorporating elements that address the feedback provided by attendees at this initial event, during the July and August 2017 consultations, and at the community engagement table of the event, could significantly enhance the events themselves as well as enhance downstream leveragability towards decision making processes.

In consideration of the predominantly positive response and feedback provided at this initial event, the overall results indicate that the potential for exploration of a hybrid model utilizing Open Space as a base format has significant merit for the task force to consider and explore.

Task Force Background



Council Motion

The original motion from which the task force was created and bases the foundation of its work upon is as follows:

“It was moved and seconded that Council direct Staff to prepare a report pertaining to starting and hosting informal community engagement and public conversation sessions, which must meet all procedural requirements, with the intent to further community engagement and public conversation by the accommodation of a regularly scheduled, open topic, facilitated dialog in a setting distinct from Council’s formal business meetings with the following parameters:

- *An ad hoc committee of Staff, Council, and the public be struck to develop the format, schedule and launch of the initiative;*
- *First session to be held in January 2017;*
- *Sessions will be held on a three-month schedule; and,*
- *After four sessions a review will take place with the intent to evaluate the successes, participation and accomplishments of the engagements.”*

Mission Statement

During initial task force meetings, the task force identified the importance of formulating a mission statement to move forward with. The elements applied to the mission statement were derived from the City Council supported motion which specifies the desired nature of the work to be completed towards this endeavor:

1. Informal community engagement and public conversation sessions
2. Regularly scheduled open topic discussions
3. Facilitated dialog in a setting distinct from Council’s formal business meetings

In addition, the task force defined key performance indicators to assist towards the monitoring of ongoing progress and help towards end evaluation of the success, participation, and accomplishments of the engagements.

After determining that the mission statement was well suited towards the Council motion and the nature of work Council has directed the task force to complete, the task force sought feedback on the mission statement at the remaining open house consultations in August 2017 to gauge whether the mission statement was in-line with general expectations of those participating in the consultations, to which the mission statement received broad support. Council received the mission statement as part of the minutes from the September 29, 2017 Community Engagement Task Force meeting where the mission statement was adopted.

Due to the nature of work that is being undertaken by the task force as per its mandate, it was important to ensure that the community's expressed needs in regards to engagement were well addressed, and just as importantly, for Council to also have the ability to provide feedback and/or further direction towards the task force's mission statement if so desired. It is critical that both the community and leadership have their engagement needs sufficiently met for this worthwhile initiative that Council has embarked upon to achieve success.

The task force's mission statement is as follows:

Our mission is to work alongside fellow residents, City Council and staff to design, implement and refine a community engagement pilot program which provides a clear and accessible means for citizens to discuss their thoughts and ideas with the community and its leaders.

Our goals and indicators of success are:

- *Residents feel that they have influence in identifying which topics are important to them;*
- *Residents understand how to participate, and feel welcome and able to do so; and*
- *Residents feel that their input is valued.*

Initial Event Highlights

Setting the stage through a briefing at the beginning of the event established ground rules, set expectations, and was advantageous towards creating a wholesome environment of constructive conversation and collaboration.

Facilitation which resulted in ample opportunities to speak in the informal environment, helped to deliver a friendly atmosphere where attendees were able to converse with each other as equals. Citizens enjoyed the collaborative communication and felt like their opinions mattered.

Providing the opportunity for everyone to listen to others views and speak towards specific topic focuses, spurred quality dialogue and allowed conversations to naturally flow further through a rich interchange of ideas and views.

The democratic decision-making process around what the event topics would be primarily focused upon was well received. This process was designed to address the desire for open topic discussions which was expressed at the meeting where the motion originated from, and in the motion that the task force

operates under. Topical focuses at tables were current and relevant, with participants having diverse interests and belonging to varied communities within Nanaimo.

Overall, the event generated an insightful exchange of ideas and resulted in high quality discussion content that aligned with the City's Strategic Priorities and Strategic Plan Values. Problem solving was frequently at the core of conversations, which remained productive through active participation.

Areas of Improvement

From the feedback provided at this initial event, there are a variety of areas of improvement which can be explored further to enhance future events of this pilot program.

Many of the areas of improvement identified at this event correlate with feedback provided at the July and August 2017 consultation sessions. Continuing to apply past and current feedback towards the program's implementation and nurturing the feedback loop should be considered integral towards the program reaching its full potential. The following considerations detail on the areas of improvement that were identified at this event:

1. Further define facilitation requirements and processes
 - a. Better equalize conversational time available per participant
 - b. Balance discussions of policy focuses versus specific project focuses
 - c. Refresh conversational focus upon initiation of focus sessions after break intervals
 - d. Develop ways to improve the conversational experience through addressing the dynamics of when staff or council are present and participating
 - e. Enhance the reporting process to better capture input provided by all
 - f. Address the handling of complex subjects to accommodate cross-event discussions that can leverage input from prior events
 - g. Improve the ability for segments of interest to receive sufficient focus; encourage conversations to focus in on subjects contained within broad topics
 - h. Lead into solution building when identifying problem factors
 - i. Refine process to enhance diversity of input with steps that further encourage participants to engage in multiple session focuses within the event
2. Increase value of input
 - a. Construct a reporting mechanism which better encompasses the conversations that take place, encourages a natural feedback loop, and leads further towards assisting decision making
 - b. Provide keynote speakers and relevant information at tables when topic focuses that can be planned for in advance to enhance discussions
 - c. Provide supplemental materials around topics which are known in advance
3. Improve time constraint factors
 - a. Consider increasing the overall amount of time allotted for events
 - b. Consider increasing the amount of time available for each focus session
4. Increase attendance/participation
 - a. Rotate event locations throughout the city

- b. Grow the areas of outreach and improve promotional efforts to increase attendance through increasing awareness and understanding of the event
- c. Develop processes to integrate events with online interaction in order to further increase community involvement from a broader spectrum
- d. Involve participants that are currently unable to attend due addressable factors such as accessibility, family/life schedule logistics, and introverted personalities
- e. Increase the attractiveness of event for citizens in general, leadership as a whole, and younger generations
- f. Engage other rightsholders and stakeholders to become involved such as First Nations, non-profit entities, neighborhood associations, and other community organizations

Miscellaneous Attendee Statistics

