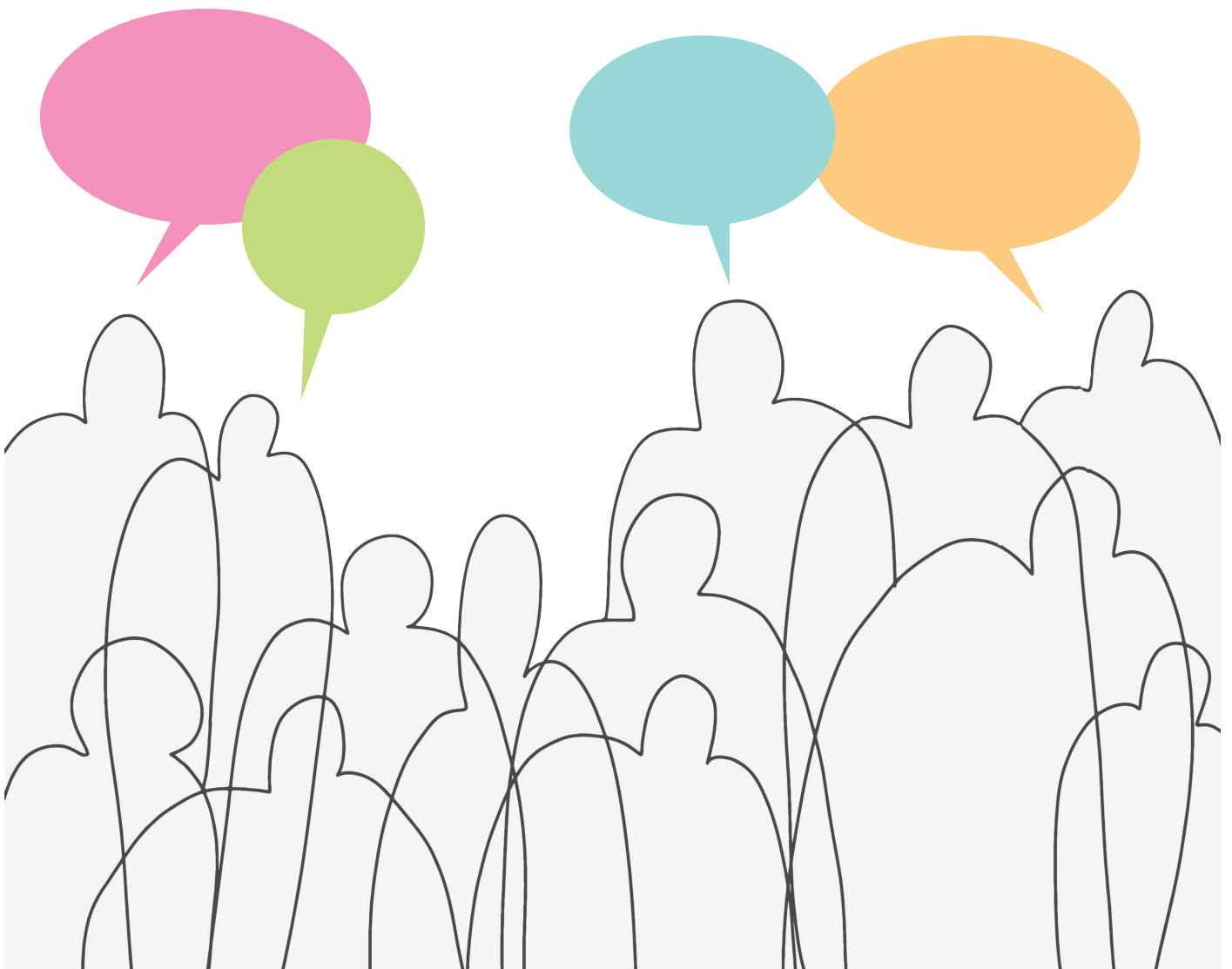




Community Engagement Strategy



**We are.
Ruapehu.**





Contents

THE RUAPEHU DISTRICT COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	2
Overview	2
Engagement Principles.....	2
Objectives	3
Approach.....	3
What We Engage On.....	4
Modes of Engagement.....	6
Key Stakeholders.....	6
Māori.....	6
Businesses.....	7
Non-Resident Ratepayers	7
Seasonal Workforce	7
Rural and Isolated Communities.....	7
Youth.....	8
Accessibility challenged	8
Evaluation	8



THE RUAPEHU DISTRICT COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Overview

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) identifies the purpose of Local Government as:

- (a) *To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and*
- (b) *To promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.*

Council aims to accurately represent the wants and needs of our diverse communities, with all communities engaged, informed and empowered in shaping the future of our district.

The Ruapehu District Council Engagement Strategy will sit alongside and support the Significance and Engagement Policy.

It will act as a high level strategy to provide a cohesive, flexible and adaptive approach and understanding of engagement across Council.

Engagement Principles

As outlined in Section 14 10A-E of the LGA Council are required to adhere to the following principles:

In performing its role, a local authority must act in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) *A local authority should—*
 - (i) *Conduct its business in an open, transparent, and democratically accountable manner; and*
 - (ii) *Give effect to its identified priorities and desired outcomes in an efficient and effective manner:*
- (b) *A local authority should make itself aware of, and should have regard to, the views of all of its communities; and*
- (c) *When making a decision, a local authority should take account of—*
 - (i) *the diversity of the community, and the community's interests, within its district or region; and*
 - (ii) *the interests of future as well as current communities; and*
 - (iii) *the likely impact of any decision on each aspect of well-being*
- (d) *A local authority should provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes:*
- (e) *A local authority should actively seek to collaborate and co-operate with other local authorities and bodies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which it achieves its identified priorities and desired outcomes.*

These LGA principles will inform the broader structure of all Council engagements ensuring they are:

- Inclusive, appropriate and accessible to all of our communities and gives appropriate, timely, information and resources.
- Reflective of the demographic make-up of our communities and how they engage with Council business and works
- Develops and build on meaningful relationships and channels within communities
- Clear on Council reasoning, advice, processes, limitations and priorities.
- Maintains engagement and communication throughout the decision making process.
- Is open minded, receptive of the perspectives, opinions and suggestions
- Effectively identifies and seek the views of interested and affected people, including those who are typically disengaged.



Objectives

Council engagement objectives are in alignment with Council MARK's Local Government Excellence Programme framework to assist our decision making to be best practice, representative, and reflective of our communities in all their diversity and to ensure their well-being.

- Elected members and staff meet with community groups according to current and emerging needs and issues.
- Community consultation is substantive (not merely validating committed decisions).
- Consultation documents are readily available in a variety of formats
- Key information is presented in a straightforward and balanced manner.
- Council provides tangible opportunities for participation in decision-making.
- Engagement is translated into tangible action on matters of importance to the business community.
- Service quality and value for money is prominently addressed in council communications.
- Complex and/or detailed information is summarised, with effective use of visual aids as required.

Approach

While the Ruapehu District is home to fewer than 13,000 people, 43.4 percent is Maori, with a significant seasonal and tourist population and a proportion of our ratepayers being non-resident. Our communities are both geographically and demographically diverse. We also engage with regional and national government and non-government bodies.

For effective engagement that is inclusive of all stakeholders who reside, work or invest in our district, it is vital that our engagement strategic approaches are:

- Cohesive
- Flexible according to specific communities' needs
- Clear and strategic
- Clarifies community engagement (CE) expectations for Council staff and the community
- Based on trust and mutual understanding
- Continuous, on-going and reciprocal
- Engages with ALL our communities and interacts as best suited to cultural and engagement requirements



What We Engage On

Council is responsible for a wide range of services and development across the district. Different acts of Council have different levels of significance for our communities. The level of engagement is dependent on its significance.

Section 5.1 of the RDC Significance and Engagement Policy outlines the approach Council uses to determine significance, in line with the legislative requirements outlined in the LGA; Section 76AA, 78, 81, 82, 82A and 83 Special Consultative Procedure (SPC).

- **Section 83 Special Consultative Procedure**
- (1) *Where this Act or any other enactment requires a local authority to use or adopt the special consultative procedure, that local authority must –*
- (a) *Prepare and adopt -*
 - (i) *A statement of proposal; and*
 - (ii) *If the local authority considers on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to enable public understanding of the proposal, a summary of the information contained in the statement of proposal (which summary must comply with [section 83AA](#)); and*
 - (b) *Ensure that the following is publicly available:*
 - (i) *The statement of proposal; and*
 - (ii) *A description of how the local authority will provide persons interested in the proposal with an opportunity to present their views to the local authority in accordance with [section 82\(1\)\(d\)](#); and*
 - (iii) *A statement of the period within which views on the proposal may be provided to the local authority (the period being not less than 1 month from the date the statement is issued); and*
 - (c) *Make the summary of the information contained in the statement of proposal prepared in accordance with paragraph (a)(ii) (or the statement of proposal, if a summary is not prepared) as widely available as is reasonably practicable as a basis for consultation; and*
 - (d) *Provide an opportunity for persons to present their views to the local authority in a manner that enables spoken (or New Zealand sign language) interaction between the person and the local authority, or any representatives to whom an appropriate delegation has been made in accordance with Schedule 7; and*
 - (e) *Ensure that any person who wishes to present his or her views to the local authority or its representatives as described in paragraph (d)—*
 - (i) *Is given a reasonable opportunity to do so; and*
 - (ii) *Is informed about how and when he or she may take up that opportunity.*
- (2) *For the purpose of, but without limiting, subsection (1)(d), a local authority may allow any person to present his or her views to the local authority by way of audio link or audio visual link.*
- (3) *This section does not prevent a local authority from requesting or considering, before making a decision, comment or advice from an officer of the local authority or any other person in respect of the proposal or any views on the proposal, or both.*

As a legally required document, Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is a guide to the legislative minimums for consultations.

There is a legal obligation to adhere to these, but should be treated as the bare minimum levels.



Council aims to listen to its communities on what is significant to them, and communicate Council decision making even if it falls outside of what is deemed significant in the policy.

Significance and Engagement Policy table (P.6) indicates our methods of engagement on issues of varying significance.

In addition to what is outlined within the table social media will be used at all levels of engagement.

Schedule 4: Significance and Engagement Guide

Significance Rating	Level of Engagement	What does it involve?	Examples	Engagement - Tools and Timing	More time More resources
High	Collaborate	Working together to develop understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions.	Town Renewal.	External working groups (involving community experts). Expressions of interest Document. Council would generally involve the community at the start to scope the issue, again after information has been collected and again when options are being considered.	
High	Involve	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making.	LTP Annual Plan District Plan	Surveys. Radio. Website. Facebook. Existing community meetings (Elected member briefings). Specific community meetings where feasible. Submissions and hearings. Council would generally provide the community with a greater lead in time to allow them time to be involved in the process.	
Medium	Consult	Two-way communications designed to obtain public feedback about ideas on rationale, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.	Local Alcohol Policy Bylaw reviews Dog Control Policy	Radio. Website. Existing community meetings. Submissions and hearings. Council would advise the community once a draft decision is made and would generally provide the community with up to four weeks to participate and respond.	
Low	Inform	One-way communication providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened.	Water restrictions Annual Report Legislative changes.	Radio. Website. Council would generally advise the community once a decision is made.	
					Less time Less resources



Modes of Engagement

The active engagement approach will depend on the degree of significance an issue has to a community as above and will utilize various modes of engagement as necessary to engage successfully with any given issue, community and demographic. The following are our key modes of engagement:

- Social Media Channels
- Website
- Information and displays at the information centers, i-Sites and libraries
- Targeted community newsletters & email lists e.g non -resident ratepayer
- Information and displays in local social hubs
- Informational flyers or letters sent through mail
- Mail and phone surveys
- Community hui & meetings
- Council and Community Board meetings
- Stakeholder/target community meetings/workshops
- Operational meetings
- Open chat spaces
- Community working & action groups
- Informal meetings

There are legislative minimums outlined in the Significance and Engagement policy concerning consultation timeframes and public information. However, Council understands that different communities will need additional time and communication. How we engage, and the resourcing of each engagement, is heavily dependent on who we are engaging with and which communities we are needing to inform and hear from.

Key Stakeholders

The different demographics consulted will have different engagement expectations and requirements in order to ensure meaningful and easily accessible engagement with Council can occur. Effective engagement will look different with different communities.

Engagement campaigns and tactics will be developed and flexible in nature, in alignment with Council's Engagement principles, objectives and approach to meet the needs of each stakeholder group.

Māori

The LGA outlines the statutory obligations for local authorities in regards to Māori and also includes the principle obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi.

- *Section 4 LGA- Treaty of Waitangi*
In order to recognise and respect the Crown's responsibility to take appropriate account of the principles of the [Treaty of Waitangi](#) and to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes, [Parts 2](#) and [6](#) provide principles and requirements for local authorities that are intended to facilitate participation by Māori in local authority decision-making processes.
- *Section 81 Contributions to decision-making processes by Māori*
 - (1) *A local authority must—*
 - (a) *Establish and maintain processes to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority; and*
 - (b) *Consider ways in which it may foster the development of Māori capacity to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority; and*
 - (c) *Provide relevant information to Māori for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b).*



Notwithstanding, the ability to engage in a meaningful and effective way with local iwi and hapū across the Ruapehu district is significant for Council. However, Council's ability to achieve this is challenged by the time constraints and pressures imposed by the legislative procedures, as these fail to align with the way Māori have a preference to engage.

Building relationships with Māori is an evolving process and Council acknowledges the need to engage on matters that are significant to Māori in a way that is meaningful and effective. A way of achieving this is to acknowledge engagement processes need to give consideration, allowing more time for consultation with iwi and hapū by way of extending the 'normal' consultation periods by mutual agreement. This will also acknowledge the dynamics that iwi and hapū structures are governed by, and is an important aspect for Council in terms of improving and strengthening these relationships.

Businesses

Committing to effective engagement and consultation with local businesses is vital to the economic success and development of our District. Engagement with business is collaborative and sector driven.

Council will work with all appropriate business groups as required per township, demographic and issue.

Non-Resident Ratepayers

As a popular tourism destination for New Zealanders, Ruapehu is home to a growing number of holiday home owners and investors. Non-resident ratepayers have significant interest in the economic success of our district.

Council aims to have all important information and consultation avenues accessible to people who live out of the district, allowing non-resident ratepayers participate on all issues that are of interest.

Seasonal Workforce

Ruapehu is a temporary home to many workers who follow the seasonal employment opportunities our district. These workers play a significant part in the economic prosperity and sustainability of the District.

Many people also return to work season after season, the categorization as transient can be an inaccurate reflection of their residence.

These groups have the ability to be overlooked when it comes to engagement and consultation and therefore all engagements will be developed with an awareness of this stakeholder group.

Council aims to have all important information and engagement avenues accessible to seasonal workforce communities.

Rural and Isolated Communities

Technological and geographical isolation are the reality for many communities in our district. Despite significant efforts through connectivity initiatives and general expansion of internet, tech and cell connectivity, the district still has significant connectivity "black spots".

Different modes and channels of engagement are necessary to compensate for this, in addition to Council's Three Valley's meetings. These modes and means will be developed per engagement campaign.



Youth

We have a responsibility to engage with youth and youth focused organizations on all matters that will impact rangatahi in the Ruapehu District. Having youth engaged in Council works not only leads to successful outcomes that provide benefits to our youth, but also empower our young people in the decision making regarding the future of the district through avenues such as the Youth Council, and through increasing our interactions with schools in a business as usual approach with regular interactions, updates in addition to specific campaigns.

Accessibility challenged

One in four people in New Zealand live with disabilities or a long term illness that can affect their ability to participate or access Council's various forms of community engagement.

Accessibility issues include but are not limited to; mental health, physical disability, vision impairment/ blindness and hearing impairment/ deafness. In alignment with our obligations under the Human Rights Act of 1993 and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 Council will endeavour to have equitable participation in all our engagements.

Evaluation

To build upon, quantify effectiveness and to improve engagement across our communities, evaluations of all key engagements will be integrated into the completion of each campaign. This will enable us to ascertain what engagement modes and tactics are working – where, within what communities and how effectively. This will initially take the form of surveys to gauge level of engagement (LOE) demographics, key stakeholder groups and other communities and their level of participation. In addition to this we will also develop a metric measuring our success in communicating outcomes back to the community. This will also include an internal engagement process with assets and activities feeding back actions of issues raised back to community engagement so we have a clear follow up process.