



2015 CORE VALUES AWARDS

Application Cover Sheet

Please attach completed form to each entry

Name of Submission	Foundations for Success	
Sponsoring Organization	City of Victoria	
Contact Person	Katie Hamilton	
Name of Relevant Manager	Julie Potter	
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Award Category: National Awards and Project Awards		Please check relevant category or categories:
	Canadian Organization of the Year	X
	Canadian Research Award	
	Creativity, Contribution and Innovation in the Field	
	Indigenous Engagement	
	Respect for Diversity, Inclusion and Culture	
	P2 for the Greater Good	

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(Insert name of contact person):

Julie Potter

on behalf of *(insert name of organization or individual):*

City of Victoria

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Signed: 

Name: Julie Potter

Date: May 4, 2015

Application Checklist

Please attach completed form to each entry

ORGANIZATION NAME: City of Victoria

CONTACT PERSON: Katie Hamilton

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DATE: May 4, 2015

ITEM	COMMENTS	PLEASE CHECK
Application addresses the criteria for each category		X
Application has taken the Style Guide into consideration.		X
Application Cover Sheet		X
Consent Form to Reproduce Material		X
Application is no longer than 10 typed pages in length		X
Application is under 5MB in size.		X
Additional creative/interactive materials		X
Application Fee		X

Foundations for Success

**Title:**

Foundations for Success

Category

Organization of the Year

Nominee

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IAP2 Members Involved

Katie Hamilton
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Case Study Summary

Title	Budget and Strategic Plan Engagement: Your Priorities. Your Budget. Your City
Organizing Group	City of Victoria
Location	Victoria, British Columbia
Key Question / Problem	How does a local government move from no engagement policy or values, limited understanding and real lessons learned in terms engagement practice, to a diversified team of engagement experts and advocates not only within the department but throughout the organization?
Sample Methods	Open houses, town halls, focus groups, surveys, pop-up events, sounding boards, internal “Great Ideas sessions”, plain-language communication tools, citizen-led events, surveys.
Results	In less than 10 years, citizen engagement has become part of the organizational culture, and the evolution has inspired new conversations within the Region about citizen engagement and its value. It challenges the way the City and its citizens think, it has empowered the public and created a greater sense of community in shaping the city together.
Impact Level	City-wide
Timeframe	Adoption of IAP2 principles in 2010, with ongoing commitment to citizen engagement
People Engaged	City-wide: residents, businesses, community organizations, staff, elected officials
Web Links	www.victoria.ca

Background

Like many governments around the world, the City of Victoria recognizes that effective engagement with citizens is an integral part of good governance, and that the quality of such engagement affects the quality of life of residents and businesses alike. Citizen engagement improves governance by giving policy makers better information to support their decision making, program development and service delivery, while meeting the rising expectations from citizens of government transparency and responsiveness.

Recognizing the potential that could come from greater public involvement and better understanding internally of the value, in 2010 the City of Victoria adopted a strategy to improve engagement based on IAP2 principles, and since then strives to advance the practice of public participation throughout the organization, and the community.

Prior to its implementation, engagement throughout the organization was uncoordinated, under resourced and neither its value nor need was properly understood. [Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria](#) was endorsed by Victoria City Council in 2010, making Victoria one of the first municipalities in the Province of British Columbia to develop a municipal engagement strategy. The IAP2 Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation are the foundation and are guiding improved engagement and customer service across the

Impact

Engagement planning begins internally, bringing together a cross-departmental team, building on their knowledge of the information that is required from the public and how best to engage with those impacted by decisions. Stakeholder mapping is used to identify those who are impacted by the decisions and to guide in the development of customized tools and techniques. The strategy for each stakeholder group helps to ensure everyone

organization.

The City's commitment to engagement is constantly evolving. In the past when engagement was not properly understood, there were processes where citizen input was not reflected in the decisions made, creating public mistrust. The organization has had to overcome this and rebuild its relationships with the community to re-install faith in the organization and in the public process. Accountability on input received, and how it has shaped decisions made, has become a key component of City engagement processes. The desire for continuous improvement allowed the City to build on past successes and failures, learn from mistakes, and rebuild trust.

Today, the City is building a stronger track record for engagement. The City brings citizens into the process as early as possible in the project or policy development cycle. Clear, concise information is provided, and citizens are aware of what input they are asked to provide and how it will be used. Transparency and accountability are the foundation for all engagement activities and processes.

The recently adopted Strategic Plan states "Engage and Empower the Community" as one of Council's key priorities for the next four years. Having key decision makers establish engagement as a priority provides the organization with the support and direction needed to meaningfully engage members of the community.

is aware of the opportunity to provide input and that feedback is convenient and easy to submit.

Those affected have a right to be involved. The development of a new Official Community Plan, budget and Strategic Plan consultation, and engagement on active transportation are all examples of projects that gave the community a voice in decisions that would

have real impacts on their quality of life. The City has developed strong relationships with the community which enables us to work closely on the design of engagement to ensure their effectiveness and overall success. Once an approach is mapped out, the City reaches out to members of the community to share and receive feedback on the strategy so that it reflects the community's needs and interests. The City has begun to advance this concept even further and is working with community groups to co-design engagement strategies, empowering the community to create their own process which is supported by the City.

Recently, public participation at the City of Victoria has reached inspiring new potential. The 2014 election saw a resurgence in voter turnout with 39 per cent of citizens casting ballots, up from 26 per cent. Community consultation took new form and energy as giant leaps forward were made on initiatives such as updating the City's cycling network. New benchmarks were set in terms of realizing new potential for engagement, the largest of them being the recent Financial and Strategic Plans.

Having decision-makers, both elected and administration, that value public participation is essential to growing internal and external participation. Starting conversations internally centred on the IAP2 Core Values facilitates engagement early, and assists in building an internal culture of citizen engagement.

Public engagement is a component in all the work the City does. When there is a temporary road closure due to a repaving project, the community is notified not only of the closure but how it impacts them. When the City is replacing aging playground equipment in one of our 70 parks, strategies are developed to engage children in the discussion who will soon get to use the new equipment. When the City is considering a new cycling network we ask the community to first map out their desired routes and reasons why. In order to allow time to introduce new

infrastructure or any changes, leaders in the organization encourage staff to include time for engagement in the design and planning of their project. More and more areas of the organization are allocating more time for engagement to ensure they do it right. It is no longer something to just "check off" but a valued part of the decision making process. In fact, it has changed how we plan and measure projects and when done effectively, we see greater results in terms of value to the taxpayer.

In the past, internal engagement for the organization has been a challenge. The organization has long been traditional in the way it operates, with many "silos" between departments, in large part due to physical locations across the City. Recognizing that our staff are one of our greatest resources and impacted by many of the decisions the City makes, last year the City undertook its largest ever internal engagement initiative. Called "Great Ideas" sessions, staff were asked a simple question: "If you could do anything differently, what would it be?" The goal was to solicit ideas from staff on how we could improve, change or adapt our processes. Participants were encouraged to set aside "Because that's how we have always done it" and think about how we could do things better. During a two month period, the City hosted 12 "Great Ideas" sessions engaging 280 staff from across the organization in a discussion around making positive changes, both big and small.



Over 600 ideas were collected. Each department Director was provided a list of the ideas that related to their area and has been addressing each idea individually. Small working groups have been established in certain areas to more rigorously address the feasibility of proposed ideas and to report back to the larger group. Great Ideas updates are posted on the employee intranet whenever a new idea is implemented to keep staff in the

Evaluation Against Core Values

In order to ensure that the input the City collects from the community will influence the decisions being made, each project or decision facing Council must outline the engagement approach. This helps ensure that the types of questions the City is asking will solicit the input Council needs to inform their decisions. By verifying the strategy with Council, it allows the City to promise that the public's contribution will inform and influence the decision being made.

Once approved, the City begins to further develop tools and materials past the concept stage. Based on stakeholder identification, we often reach out to the community to ensure their views of success are reflected in the strategy, the tools and techniques being developed are tailored to how they like to provide feedback and that the material being developed is clear, providing the information needed in order to submit informed input. Each engagement strategy is unique and early engagement with the community is based on which groups will be impacted by the decisions being made.

One of our harder to reach stakeholder groups has traditionally been youth. Prior to every consultation, we consult with the City of Victoria Youth Council to ensure the material created will engage youth and that the ways to provide input are convenient and accessible. We have recently aligned the Youth Council with the Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning Department to make it as easy as possible for the Youth Council to engage on all

loop on progress being made. The ideas are real, meaningful, and have started to foster a culture that welcomes ideas and encourages staff involvement in making the organization better.

projects, and in turn, the City support them in engaging youth through their efforts.

All of the feedback that is collected is shared with City Council and the community. It is available verbatim to demonstrate transparency and so citizens can see exactly where their input made it to the decision-maker. An engagement summary report outlining what the City heard is posted on the online engagement portal haveyoursayvictoria.com and stakeholders who request to remain updated on the process are sent an email with a summary report and link to the site. When the project is complete, information is shared with the community outlining how their feedback helped shape the decisions being made.

This year, staff are creating a strategy around how to communicate and engage on capital projects starting with work planned around transportation. There is a great deal of work to be done ranging from minor street calming initiatives to repaving projects to high interest updates to the cycling network. For the City, this means looking at how to engage the community right across the spectrum, from Inform to Empower. Staff are working to ensure that people are aware of what is happening in their neighbourhood and city and how they can get involved. Instead of simply communicating neighbourhood impacts of work, the City is moving to a communication approach that ensures those who pay for the work are aware of the investment being made in their community, demonstrating value for

their tax dollars.

The Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning department was recently created to build capacity for engagement ensure that the City is responsive daily, and long term, to the needs of the community. In just eight months, it has fostered a greater, more genuine two-way process, moving from a more traditional communications approach, to one premised by citizen engagement. Vesting the strategic planning function in the same department better enables the organization to ensure the input received daily, and through formal process, is guiding the priorities and reporting within the organization. Improved monitoring and reporting on progress made towards achieving organizational objectives, as well as the challenges, creates a “closing of the loop” that didn’t exist before, and provides on-going opportunities for public input and customer feedback into City priority-setting.



The City has recently adopted an internal mantra of “Better is possible”. This philosophy permeates every area of the organization, including engagement techniques and tools. After each engagement process the City debriefs and identifies lessons learned which is applied to the next process. And within each new engagement process, the City strives to introduce and test at least one new tool or engagement technique. This fosters a culture of best practice and continuous improvement, and it encourages innovation and creativity on the part of staff.

Recent examples of new tools include advertisements placed on the back of buses last year, used to reach out to motorists as they sat in traffic. To create greater awareness around the last election, and recognizing that those who vote at their first opportunity, will continue to vote, the City encouraged opportunities for children to come to the polls. A “Future Voter” sticker was created for children who accompanied their parents to the polling station. Each “future voter” also received a colouring poster for a contest, with the winner becoming the first “Mayor for a Day”. This was an opportunity allowing children and their parents to engage with the City in a new way and discover what their municipality does for them.

In 2014, the City also began a new approach to the financial planning process, moving away from expense-based budgeting and towards budgeting by priorities, outlining services and capital projects including the costs, revenues and benefits of each. The new format also enabled the City to better demonstrate the value residents and businesses receive for their tax dollars. The City’s new approach to financial planning also provided an opportune time to more actively engage the public. The improved information assisted the City in generating greater understanding around the budget and will increase involvement in future budget development. In addition to improved information, part of the City’s new approach to financial planning included more actively engaging the public in the process, and earlier on.



A recent playground engagement project included a “sounding board” in a park to collect people’s ideas as they visit the playground, which will supplement the feedback gathered at an open house. Recognizing that citizens are busy and want alternatives to formal process at times, the City is trying to foster opportunities to engage them conveniently: where they are, on their terms, without having to “decide” to participate.

This year, our focus will be on identifying opportunities for truly participatory and citizen-led processes, including place-making. Later this spring we will be supporting our first citizen-led events around placemaking and local area planning. Our philosophy has become to embrace adaptability and try something new. Trying new techniques and tools has further developed our community outreach and public participation. It is something staff look forward to as they plan the next opportunity for community engagement.

The City continues to work with our community to find new, different and meaningful ways to engage. We continue to ask questions of our citizens to ensure we are constantly improving how we connect with them: When was the

last time you attended a meeting at City Hall? What motivated you to do so? What would encourage you to be more involved in your community, and City decision-making? And are there ways you would like to hear from us that the City hasn’t yet explored?

In less than 10 years, the City has evolved from an organization with no engagement policy or values, limited understanding and real lessons learned in terms engagement practice, to a diversified team of engagement experts and advocates not only within the department but throughout the organization. Citizen engagement has become part of the organizational culture, and the evolution has inspired new conversations within the Region about citizen engagement and its value. It challenges the way the City and its citizens think, it has empowered the public and created a greater sense of community in shaping the city together.

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