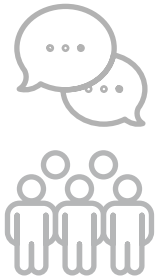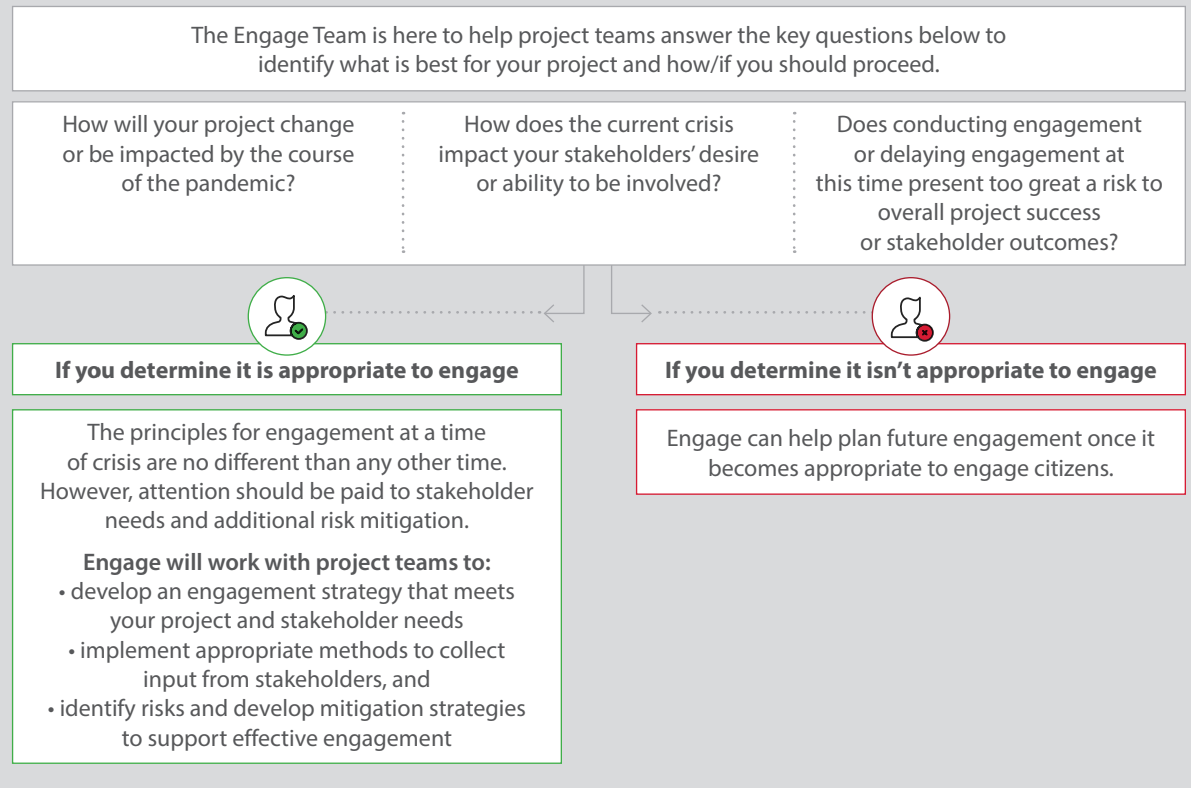# Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis Response

After careful review of risks, needs, and best practices The City believes that stakeholder engagement on ongoing City projects and decisions can and should continue where appropriate.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting physical distancing measures have changed how The City connects and conducts engagement with stakeholders. To ensure you stay connected with your stakeholders and get the information that you need, The City's experienced Engage team is here to work with project teams to identify an engagement strategy that meets your needs. We have access to a suite of online and physically distanced techniques that will meet the varied needs of projects and stakeholders.

How do we determine if engagement is appropriate for our project?

Determining whether it is appropriate to engage on a project will happen on a case-by-case basis.

The Engage Team is here to help project teams answer the key questions below to identify what is best for your project and how/if you should proceed.

| How will your project change or be impacted by the course of the pandemic? | How does the current crisis impact your stakeholders' desire or ability to be involved? | Does conducting engagement or delaying engagement at this time present too great a risk to overall project success or stakeholder outcomes? |

If you determine it is appropriate to engage

The principles for engagement at a time of crisis are no different than any other time. However, attention should be paid to stakeholder needs and additional risk mitigation.

Engage will work with project teams to:
• develop an engagement strategy that meets your project and stakeholder needs
• implement appropriate methods to collect input from stakeholders, and
• identify risks and develop mitigation strategies to support effective engagement

If you determine it isn't appropriate to engage

Engage can help plan future engagement once it becomes appropriate to engage citizens.

Do citizens want to engage with us right now?

- Research and polling conducted nationally (March 2020) suggests that there is still a strong citizen desire for governments to conduct engagement on both issues related to and issues unrelated to the current pandemic crisis.
- Current research suggests that trust and a lack of understanding how feedback collected is being used by decision-makers is a greater barrier for stakeholders than technology.
- All citizens and stakeholder are unique, and we need to consider our potential engagement plans in the larger context of your community or stakeholder group. This is why The City is currently looking at a range of feedback from citizens and stakeholders on this question, as well as conducting polling, as this may change as the current situation unfolds.

If you have questions about how your stakeholders want, or are able to, be engaged at this time, the best thing to do is to ask them. Engage can help you with that.

Online tools have the potential to connect us with a higher number of stakeholders than many traditional in-person techniques. Engage is continuously reviewing and evaluating online tools to ensure your project needs are met and to maintain the quality of input collected through in-person workshops, meetings, and face-to-face interactions. Engage will work with you to develop a thoughtful approach that ensures that you stay connected with your stakeholders, get the information you need, maintain relationships and build trust utilizing the below tools that are available to us.

The Engage Portal – The City's engagement platform

The City's Engage Portal is a tested world-class platform, for online and distanced engagement and this proven platform remains at the core of our service.

Through this platform we offer …

- Collection Tools – The simplest and often most effective way to collect feedback from a large group of stakeholders, feedback collection with these tools is only to the project team and can include simple or sophisticated surveys or document submission.

- Sharing Tools – These tools make individual submissions visible to all site users and replicate the shared feedback methods we have come to expect at in-person sessions. Tools within this category include: post-it note displays, feedback through map pins, image markup and document or image sharing.

- Dialogue Tools – These text based discussion and conversation tools allow stakeholders and City staff have multi-way conversations and explore issues or ideas in more detail.

Additional Resources

We are able to leverage additional corporate tools to add functionality to the Engage portal and to increase accessibility to all citizens and stakeholders. This includes tools such as: 311 System, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Whiteboard, Stormboard, Mural, QuestionPro and Sounding Boards.

Engage is also part of a cross-corporate team looking at additional ideation tools, and is also continually researching and testing the combination of tools available to us, to continually improve our engagement offerings.

Live Events & Flexible Activities

Engagement activities can be planned as *time-independent* – where stakeholders provide feedback or take part in activities at a time suits their schedules, or as *time-specific* – where the current suite of rich feedback tools are coupled with an additional video-conferencing or shared media platform to allow for real-time collaboration and connection.

In-Person to Online Approach Comparison

In-Person Approach	Online Tool Equivalents
Open House	Engage Portal Page, Streaming Video, Real-time chat, Real-time submissions, 311 System
Workshop	Engage Portal Page, Streaming Video, Microsoft Teams
Meeting	Engage Portal Page, Phone Conference Calls, Microsoft Teams
Info Session	Engage Portal Page
Pop-Up	Sounding board