



WHISTLER HOUSING AUTHORITY

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COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Enhancing Understanding and Building Trust for the
Employee Housing Program

April 2022

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Definitions

1. Community engagement: The activities by which community members' or stakeholders' needs, interests, concerns and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues.
2. Communications: In the context of the Communications and Engagement Strategy, communications refers to the one-way information released to stakeholders. Communications activities are part of the "inform" level within the IAP2 spectrum of public participation.
3. Community member: Permanent, part-time and seasonal residents.
4. Stakeholder: Those who are affected by, are likely to influence, or have an interest in a decision or course of action.
5. Decision(s): The determination or conclusion arrived at through a decision-making process related to any WHA municipal activities, including setting general direction; taking specific action; developing plans, policies and infrastructure; budgeting; staffing; etc.
6. Decision-making process: The series of activities involved in arriving at a decision or decisions, including the information and community or stakeholder input gathered to inform the decision(s).
7. Levels of engagement: There are five levels of community engagement (or public participation) as defined by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) that should be used to design and clarify the nature of the engagement process.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Whistler Housing Authority's (WHA) Employee Housing Program (EHP) consists of over 2,000 units of employee-restricted ownership and rental housing. It is regulated through complex legal housing agreements and employee housing policies, which have evolved over time. The complexity and diversity of these agreements and policies has resulted in misunderstandings and confusions about the EHP within the community.

Objective

The objective of this strategy is to improve overall community and stakeholder understanding of and trust in the WHA and EHP.

To achieve the objective, staff will need to focus on these three general areas/activities:

1. Provide clear, concise, complete, easy-to-understand information about the EHP and WHA.
2. Gather feedback on a regular or ongoing basis about the EHP and WHA (including understanding of, satisfaction with and trust in both).
3. Engage the community, stakeholders and partners in decision-making related to changes to the EHP in a meaningful and timely manner.

Scope

This strategy focuses on the first two items above. Item 3 will require a specific engagement strategy and activities depending on the EHP changes being considered, the specific engagement objectives, and the stakeholders affected by the changes. For guidance on item 3, staff can refer to the following:

- the general guidance for engagement related to EHP changes (see text box);
- the draft strategy developed in September 2021 to engage community members and stakeholders about recommended EHP changes; and
- the Guiding Principles for all WHA communications and engagement activities, which follow in the next section.

General guidance for engagement related to EHP changes

- Clarify roles and responsibilities for decision-making, communication and engagement activities with the RMOW early in the process.
 - Develop a clear communications and engagement strategy for the decision-making process.
 - Engage stakeholders early in the review/decision-making process so they are brought along in the evolution of the changes.
 - Identify the appropriate IAP2 level of engagement depending on the degree of potential impact to the community and opportunities for input to influence decision-making.
 - Allocate the necessary resources to implement the strategy.
 - Communicate and engage the community, stakeholders and partners as early as possible.
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Key Audiences

This strategy was informed a stakeholder issue mapping exercise to identify the key interests and concerns of the

WHA's key audiences or stakeholders related to the WHA and EHP. Key audiences for this strategy include the following:

- Owners
- Renters
- Waitlist members - ownership
- Waitlist members - rental
- Other employees seeking housing, including new seasonal employees
- Employers engaged in the EHP (e.g., Home Run)
- Landlords (market housing)
- Other taxpayers - not engaged in EHP (e.g., other employers, employees, second homeowners, etc.)
- Local media
- Seniors (not currently engaged in the EHP)
- WHA Board
- RMOW Council and staff

Indicators of Success

Objective	Indicator
Improve understanding/ clarity of the EHP and WHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of requests for clarification about the EHP ● Number of complaints about or incidences of non-compliance ● Per cent responding correctly to questions about key EHP elements ● Per cent responding favourably to questions about quality of information about the WHA and EHP
Improve trust in the EHP and WHA	<p>Per cent responding favourably to questions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decision-making by the WHA (benchmarked to the same questions for RMOW decision-making¹) ● Being engaged meaningfully in changes to the EHP ● Opportunities to provide feedback about their WHA housing situation and their EHP experience (including waitlists)

Level of Engagement

Based on the objective of this strategy, which is to build understanding of and trust in the WHA and EHP (rather than engaging stakeholders in decisions or changes related to the EHP), the activities for this strategy will occur predominantly at the **inform level** (i.e., communicating clear, accessible information about the WHA and EHP). Some activities will occur at the **consult level**, and focus on asking questions to gauge the effectiveness of the 'inform'/communications activities.

¹ The RMOW measures trust in decision-making using two Community Life Survey questions: [1\) level of trust that municipal leaders have the best interests of the community in mind when making decisions](#) and [2\) satisfaction levels with opportunities to provide input into decision-making](#).

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles for WHA engagement and communications activities were used in the development of this strategy. Detailed statements are provided in Appendix A.

- Resourced
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Informed
- Open and transparent
- Meaningful
- Professional
- Monitored

STRATEGY-AT-A-GLANCE

This table provides an overview of this communications and engagement strategy aimed at improving overall understanding of and trust in the WHA and EHP.

Technique/Channel Recommendations - Key content	Frequency, timeline
Website - Comprehensive information focused on users - Main point of contact and service centre	Site restructure and re-write (2022) Ongoing news/updates
E-newsletter - WHA updates re: projects, waitlist numbers and wait times, sales, new tenants, market trends, enforcement activities, etc. (to show movement/progress, and reasons if none/not much) - Focus on storytelling (data with stories)	Bi-annually
Targeted email - Repurpose the newsletter content, customizing it for each specific audience (owners, renters, waitlist, etc.)	Quarterly and as needed
Social media - WHA news, events and feedback opportunities - General housing news and events - Whistler community news, events, successes, issues and accolades	Regular posts scheduled in advance. Responses, as needed
Council meetings - Newsletter content repurposed into presentation format - Speaking notes for WHA Council rep to share during Mayor's Report/ Council updates	Quarterly As needed for updates about key decisions or initiatives
Media relations - Briefing notes for media requests, community meetings and events - News releases and media spokespeople available for questions	As needed
Surveys - Test understanding of key elements of the EHP and gauge satisfaction and trust	Annually
Stakeholder meetings/focus groups - Dive deeper into survey results, e.g., areas of dissatisfaction, misunderstanding, etc.	As needed based on survey results
Public information sessions - Including general information meetings, new property open houses or meetings with individuals	Annually Project openings As needed
Partner opportunities - Utilize partner events and outreach to deliver information and key messages (e.g., RMOW Community Forum, MAC AGM, etc.)	Based on schedule of key events