

Public Participation and Community Engagement: Local Government Sector

Findings from previous audits

Type of findings	Number of audits
Insufficient public participation	11
Lack of a strategy or plan	7
Insufficient information provided to stakeholders	5
Insufficient analysis of stakeholder needs	3
Insufficient evaluation or monitoring	3
Lack of coordination	2

Focus of this audit

Examined:

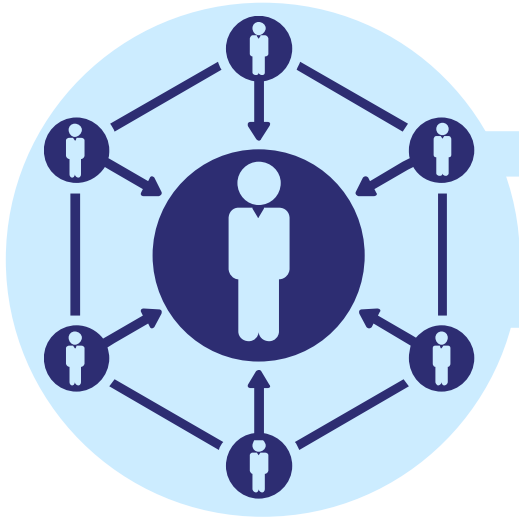
- Effectiveness of community engagement and participation at the local government level
- Participation processes for significant activities

Audit scope

- LGV, within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and six councils



Overview



Well-managed public participation can help to better inform local government

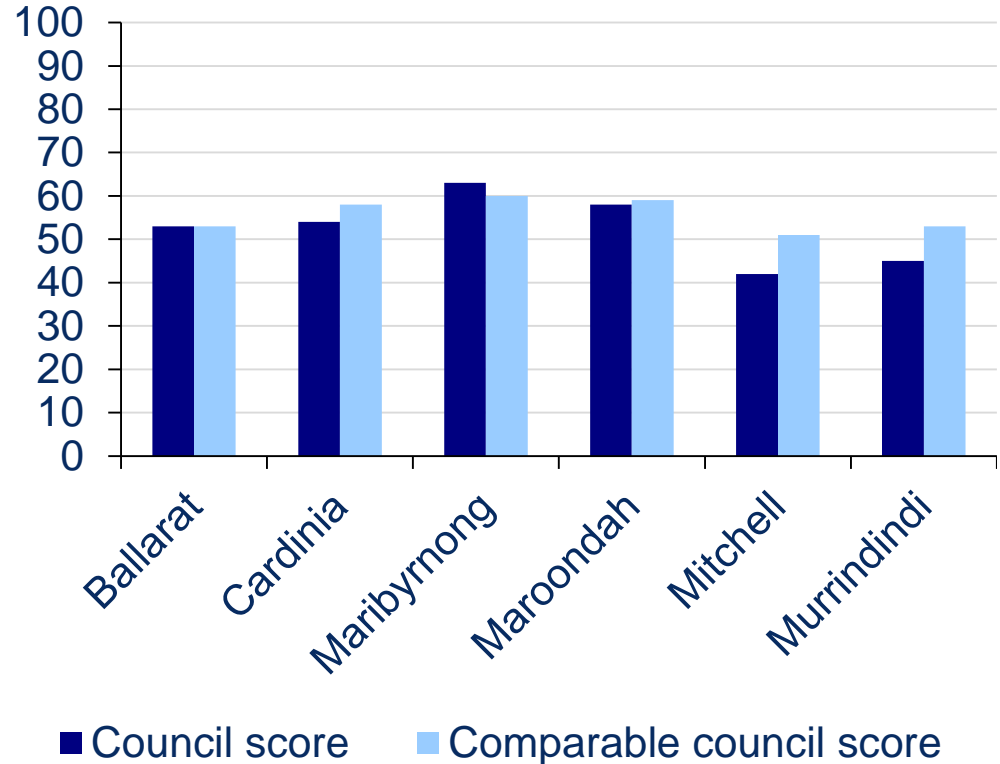
We found:

- Strong participation frameworks but not routinely applied
- Local Government Victoria (LGV) does not sufficiently support councils

LGV

- LGV—responsible for demonstrating and promoting better practice
 - Data collection—Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey
- Support and promote better practice

Satisfaction score (out of 100)

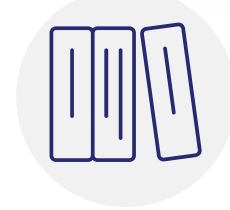


Public participation policies and frameworks



6 Councils have a public participation policy or framework

5 Informed by IAP2 model of public participation



5 Councils also have a staff guide or handbook

- But**
- Content and quality varies considerably
 - Missing elements



Assess and update public participation policies and resources

Implementation framework

Maroondah plan for the 'Maroondah housing strategy ticked six key elements of better practice for public participation plans

Monitoring and evaluation



- Typically evaluate using quantitative measures
- Few activities evaluated using qualitative information
- Insufficient guidance

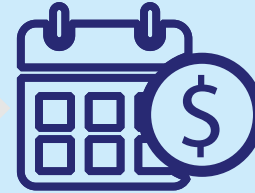
→ Councils unable to measure value of activities

Council budget and council plans



Statutory obligations

- Compliance rather than meaningful participation
- **All** councils fulfilled their statutory obligations
- Three better practice examples



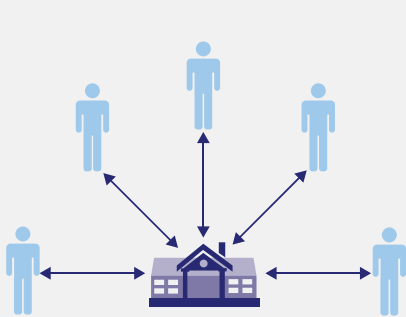
Increase public participation in council budgets and plans

Other activities

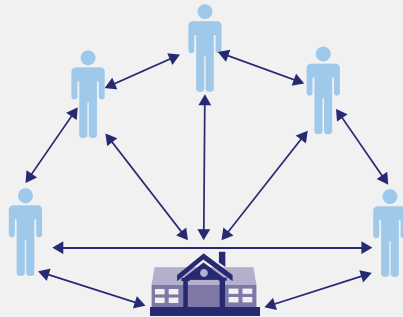


Evidence of public participation in a wide range of community projects and activities

Majority of examples:

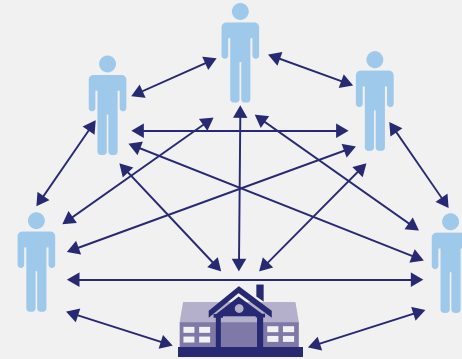


Involve



Collaborate

One example of empowering



Recommendations

3 recommendations for councils

- Assess, update and promote their public participation policies
- Build monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities into public participation exercises
- Develop and document comprehensive public participation plans and their outcomes

1 recommendation for DELWP

- Analyse public participation data and promulgate better practice public participation case studies, guidance and training

Overall message

Councils typically have strong public participation frameworks in place, however, councils do not routinely apply these to public participation activities.

Councils should build monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities into their public participation exercises.