GENERAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:

• CPI’s work to date has included a scan of major English-speaking Canadian cities (based on mayors’ membership in the Big Cities Mayors’ Caucus), some smaller Canadian cities (Victoria, Guelph and Fort Saskatchewan) and some international cities (Sydney, Melbourne and Hobson Bay, Australia).

• Public engagement frameworks are currently a patchwork in Canada. Additionally, they are not always referred to as “frameworks.” As such, some translation is necessary to identify similar documents under the titles of frameworks, strategies, policies, etc. To date, this research has focused on all documents that share similarities with a framework.

• There is a high degree of variability between frameworks. Some, like Calgary’s, are very detailed. Such frameworks often include “high level” aspirational components such as visions and principles as well as practical components such as concrete steps to take in engagement processes. Others provide only those high level components with little in the way of a “toolkit” to operationalize those components.

• As such, efforts to develop a framework should include deliberation over the level of “abstraction” the framework takes. Should a framework simply identify those values and principles by which more specific guidance can be developed, or should it include more detailed instructions? If more instructions are given, at what level of detail? Calgary, for example, includes specific “sub-steps” for each step in the engagement process, with clear guidance for each. Others, such as Ottawa’s, include far less detail.

• The process to develop frameworks has proven to be potentially contentious. In Hamilton, for example, the city’s first attempt to adopt an engagement framework involved contracting with a Public Relations firm with little involvement from
the public. The result was frustration with the process and a lack of buy-in for the framework. In the last two years, Hamilton has restarted the process with a committee of community members.

- Other organizations that have developed and implemented engagement frameworks include regional health authorities, school boards and universities. Health authorities in particular have adopted frameworks in an effort to better engage with their populations to help determine what health resources are needed in particular communities.

SPECIFIC COMPONENTS:

VISIONS

- Many cities with engagement frameworks do not include visions in them. Cities often skip the vision and mission component and include only the principles of public engagement.

- Of the cities that do have visions, there is range. Some keep their vision short and high level, Hamilton’s “a city where everyone is valued and engaged,” for example. Others, such as Ottawa’s “A city where public engagement is valued as an important part of the decision making process and is inclusive, meaningful, accountable, and responsive to the public’s perspectives and needs” include the values and principles of the framework.

MISSION STATEMENTS

- Mission statements are even less common in city engagement frameworks than are vision. Generally speaking, few cities have included mission statements. The ones that do exist are declarative statements of how the city intends on implementing its vision practically. London’s “Effectively inform, educate and engage citizens in a transparent and collaborative manner that promotes greater participation in municipal government” is a standard example.

PRINCIPLES

- Principles are the most common component of cities’ public engagement frameworks. Cities use the principles to communicate the values by which public engagement will be conducted in projects and programs.

- Though the principles cities use are varied, there are a number of themes that appear across frameworks:
  - **Inclusiveness:** Every Canadian city engagement framework has a principle that is either titled or refers to inclusivity or inclusiveness. Cities typically refer to ensuring that all groups, including the marginalized, are included in engagement and avoiding only engaging with narrow samples of citizens.
  - **Evaluation/Continuous improvement:** It is common for frameworks to include a principle espousing the importance of evaluation, quality improvement, or continuous improvement. Such principles reflect the ongoing nature of engagement, in that evaluating the engagement’s outcomes should continue on after the engagement process has concluded.
  - **Respect:** A number of frameworks refer to ensuring that the relationship between stakeholders is one characterized by mutual respect.
  - **Transparency:** Often, frameworks refer to transparency or openness in their principles. These principles typically refer to the process including open lines of clear communication between participants.
  - **Accountability:** Most frameworks refer to accountability in their principles, suggesting that stakeholders – particularly city staff – are accountable for ensuring that engagement is taken seriously and conducted in accordance with the framework.
  - **Resources:** Various frameworks make reference to ensuring that engagement is properly resourced.
OTHER COMPONENTS

• Cities with more complete and detailed frameworks for public engagement often include “guidance” for conducting public engagement processes. Such guidance ranges from broadly-defined steps (e.g., “make a plan”) to more detailed instructions. The potential exists for appendices to be used in which “toolkits” could include detailed instructions, templates, surveys, etc to operationalize more abstract or aspirational components of frameworks.

• Some frameworks include not only their definition of public engagement, but also glossaries of dictionaries with definitions for concepts such as citizen, stakeholder, etc.

• Some frameworks include “roles and responsibilities” statements that delineate the roles and responsibilities for participants – both staff and public. Because the “principles” section of most frameworks sets out the expectations for staff, these sections seem to be more focused on the roles and responsibilities of the public.

FUTURE RESEARCH

• Future research can include:
  o Increased attention to international cities (e.g., in the US, Australia and UK) and non-city jurisdictions (e.g., universities and health authorities).
  o Follow up surveys or questions for individuals within cities/organizations with public engagement frameworks. Such follow-up work could examine what lessons those jurisdictions learned in the development of their framework, what they would change, etc. This research can help illuminate the extent to which robust frameworks actually lead to better engagement.