Toolkit for Decision-Makers

The **Montgomery College participatory governance system** provides all members of the college community with the opportunity to express their opinions and make recommendations about how the institution should function to fulfill its mission. It also provides structures through which these opinions and recommendations will be given due consideration when important decisions are made.

How can decision makers work effectively with governance to support decision-making?

Status	Purpose of Working with Governance	Strategy
Preparing to make a decision	• Build trust • Improve effectiveness of the decision by gathering representative input	Engage
Already made decision	• Notify stakeholders of decision • Identify and address relevant questions or concerns that may arise	Inform

Strategy Close-Up: Engage

- **The level of engagement on an issue depends on how much influence on the decision or action leadership is willing to provide to the college community through governance**
  - **Consult** – Leadership asks for input relevant to a pending decision at one point in the decision-making process. The promise is to consider input.
  - **Involve** – Leadership involves one or more governance councils with multiple opportunities for input. The promise is to consider input and representative perspectives to a larger degree than consult.
  - **Collaborate** – Leadership engages in all key aspects of designing a solution. Consensus is not required, but promise is to weigh governance recommendations heavily in the final decision.
  - **Empower** – Leadership empowers councils to decide among possible choices and provides resources to make an informed decision. The promise is to implement the recommendation as much as feasible.

Increasing Participation

Levels of Engagement: Consult

- **Consult** – Consider input.
- Time:
  - 0-2 meetings
- Process:
  1. Contact council chair and provide the following information:
     - Define problem/opportunity, decision options, timeline for decision, and decision criteria
     - Note: You can provide this information via electronic briefing or request time on an agenda to present to the council
  2. Gather input
     - Sample opportunities for input can include:
       - Clarifying the problem/opportunity
       - Perspectives (needs, interests, or questions) on options
  3. Make decision
  4. Communicate decision and how input was considered

Levels of Engagement: Involve

- **Involve** – Consider input and take into account representative perspectives.
- Time:
  - 0-2 meetings
- Process:
  1. Contact council chair and provide the following information:
     - Define problem/opportunity, decision options, timeline for decision, and decision criteria
     - Note: You can provide this information via electronic briefing or request time on an agenda to present to the council
  2. Gather input
     - Sample opportunities for input can include:
       - Clarifying the problem/opportunity
       - Perspectives (needs, interests, or questions) on options or decision criteria.
  3. Use input to establish decision criteria the reflects representative constituent values.
  4. Make decision
  5. Communicate decision and how input was considered

Levels of Engagement: Collaborate

- **Collaborate** – recommendations weigh heavily in final decision.
- Time:
  - 2-3 meetings
- Process:
  1. Contact council chair and provide the following information:
     - Define problem/opportunity, decision options, timeline for decision, and decision criteria
     - Provide additional resources the council may need to constructively understand the situation
     - Note: You can provide this information via electronic briefing and/or request time on an agenda to present to the council
  2. Gather input
     - Sample opportunities for input can include:
       - Clarifying the problem/opportunity
       - Perspectives (needs, interests, or questions) on options or decision criteria.
       - Providing feasible options/alternatives.
  3. Use input to ensure that definition of problem/opportunity and decision criteria reflect constituent's values, and work with council to identify feasible options/alternatives.
  4. Make decision
  5. Communicate decision and how input was considered

Levels of Engagement: Empower

- **Empower** – Implement recommendation as much as feasible.
- Time:
  - 2-3 meetings
- Process:
  1. Contact council chair and provide the following information:
     - Define problem/opportunity, decision options, timeline for decision, and decision criteria
     - Provide additional resources the council may need to constructively understand the situation
     - Note: You can provide this information via electronic briefing and/or request time on an agenda to present to the council
  2. Gather input
     - Sample opportunities for input can include:
       - Clarifying the problem/opportunity
       - Perspectives (needs, interests, or questions) on options or decision criteria.
       - Providing feasible options/alternatives.
  3. Use input to ensure that definition of problem/opportunity and decision criteria reflect constituent's values, and work with council to identify feasible options/alternatives.
  4. Make decision that reflects maximum plausible input
  5. Communicate decision and how input was considered

Strategy Close-Up: Inform

- **Inform** – goal and promise is to keep stakeholders informed so they can understand what is taking place. Minimal to no involvement desired in the decision. <u>Informational Only.</u>
  - Primarily one-way communication.
  - Think of this as doing public relations.
  - Best for low risk decisions.
  - Note: It is possible to move to an engage: consult strategy by getting feedback on a decision you have already made, but only do this if you are amenable to adjusting some aspect of your decision and are willing to communicate how input was used. Otherwise, trust erodes when you ask for feedback but do not consider it or communicate such consideration.

Consideration # 1: What level of participation in the decision process is most appropriate?

- How do stakeholders perceive the issue? (Your best guess, or you can look to sample interviews or quick polls)

- How do you perceive potential impacts?

- How much variation is there in how stakeholders in different roles and locations view this issue?

- Consider additional factors – history of mistrust, equity concerns, apathy, competing priorities

- Higher levels of engagement are best for higher risks and longer timelines.

Consideration # 2: Which council/s should engaged or informed?

- Impacts single College role: **Constituent council**

- Impacts a campus or location: **Campus council**

- Impacts one area of service: **Functional council**

- Impacts more than one of these: Multiple councils

- Impacts (almost) everyone: **College Council**

Effective Governance

Hallmarks	Decision Maker's Role
There is inclusive opportunity to share perspectives	Select an appropriate strategy and work with relevant council/councils
Leadership communicates how input informed decisions	Communicate how input informed decisions
Councils demonstrate responsiveness to constituents, but not seen as primarily a "help desk"	N/A
Council efforts are directed at clarifying and sharing representative perspectives to to inform decisions and inspire problem solving	Select an appropriate strategy
Participation in governance leads to expanded understanding of and appreciation for diverse perspective	Seek opportunities to listen and incorporate learning into decisions to build trust and improve decision support
Pathways for participation are clear for community, councils, and leadership	Select an appropriate strategy and work with relevant council/s