

CReport to Council



Date: June 24, 2019

File: 0115-10

To: Council

From: City Manager

Subject: IABC Gold Quill Award of Merit for Pick your Path to Kelowna 2040 public engagement communications

Report co-prepared by: Kelly Kay, Community Engagement Advisor & Alix Matthews-Mahé, Community Engagement Advisor

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report dated June 24, 2019, with respect to the International Association of British Columbia Gold Quill Award of Merit in the Communication Skills Division for Special and Experiential events.

Purpose:

To inform Council of the IABC Gold Quill Award of Merit for Pick your Path to Kelowna 2040 public engagement.

Background:

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Gold Quill Award honours the best of the best communication and marketing practices from around the world. It is the only program of its kind that recognizes the strength of research-based, strategy driven work on an international scale. Each entry is rigorously reviewed by multiple experienced communicators from across the globe who are trained in applying IABC's Global Standard of the Communication Profession.

Pick your Path to Kelowna 2040 was selected as one of 202 winners this year, out of more than 600 entries. Winners come from all over the world, with 10 countries represented in the award winners list, and includes a cross section of public and private sector organizations, both large and small. Kelowna was the only local government to be successful in their category.

IABC is a global network of communication professionals committed to improving organizational effectiveness through strategic communication. It serves more than 14,000 members in 70 countries.

Innovative Approach:

The Pick your Path to 2040 exhibit and storybook went beyond the typical public engagement formats used at the City by focusing on storytelling, plain language and first-person decision making.

To help residents relate long-term community growth goals and complex trade-offs to their everyday experience of living in Kelowna, and how that daily routine impacts community development patterns and needs, the Pick your Path to 2040 exhibit and online, interactive storybook, was modelled after a “Choose Your Own Adventure” style book.

Long-term planning often involves abstract concepts and growth projections that are challenging for individuals to imagine. The physical immersion of being required to make a choice and walk through the decisions by following an arrow on the ground enhanced the understanding and differences between scenarios. This experience helped make long-term planning more tangible for participants.

Individual choices were then scaled to illustrate the effect on the community if much of the population made the same decisions. End scenarios ranged from increasing suburban growth to densification of urban centres.

Since youth will be adults as the growth scenarios are realized, those in Grades 10 to 12 were specifically targeted. Student involvement was encouraged by locating one of the exhibits within a post-secondary institution and inviting two near-by high-schools to send higher grade classes to participate.

Results:

The use of plain language and immersive engagement are key to encouraging more public participation. Removing jargon means more than just explaining technical language. Having people experience the impacts themselves allows them to understand more of the nuanced variables and ultimately the decision-making process.

This was evidenced through the Pick your Path exhibits, which saw an increase in participation over previous engagement events. Open house formats for long-term plans do not consistently generate high attendance rates with an average of 66 people attending each event in 2018. By comparison, a total of 344 residents and 222 high school students attended the five, in-person Pick your Path exhibits, 58 per cent higher than the average event attendance for the year.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was designed to gauge the participant’s experience and to measure the effectiveness of the unique format. This exercise provided valuable insight into the type of content that resonates with residents with 94 per cent finding the information presented clear and understandable and 82 per cent saying they found it to be a valuable experience.

Including questions about the individual’s experience of the exhibit provides the City with valuable information measuring the success of the approach and that can be used in designing future engagement events to ensure opportunities for improvement.

This Gold Quill Award will be displayed in the Communications Department for a period of one year. This award will be communicated to the public through Council Highlights, digital media channels and the 2019 Annual Report.

Internal Circulation:

Submitted by:

K. O'Rourke, Community Communications Manager

Approved for inclusion:

CW

(e department director initials here)