

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: Youth Engagement Strategy Update

Date Prepared: November 25, 2021

Report To: Committee of the Whole

Councillor and Role: Councillor Maggie Burton, Youth Engagement

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required:

Approve the formation of the Youth Engagement Working Group (YEWG) and direct staff to recruit for it.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

In Oct. 2020 Council approved the [Youth Engagement Strategy](#) prepared by the Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT). YEAT was a short-term task force designed to provide perspectives on how youth currently engage with the City of St. John's, identify barriers to engagement, determine tools for engagement, topics of interest to youth, and determine how the City could improve both how it communicates to youth, and how youth experience public engagement.

A series of recommendations were included in that report including the dismantling of the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) and the creation of an ad hoc working group to review the recommendations and determine next steps.

For the past year, project staff have been working with the ad hoc committee, comprised of former YAC and YEAT members, as well as consulting with other staff internally on how to best action the recommendations.

Currently, it is the recommendation of the ad hoc committee to transition to a formal working group and to recruit for additional members to ensure diversity and inclusion. The Terms of Reference are included. Key differences between this WG and other City WGs are:

- WG will be co-chaired by staff and public member (at least for the first year)
- While there is an option for a two-year extension, additional years will be handled by the each to allow members flexibility.

As well, it should be noted that the membership for this committee is 18-30 years of age, in line with the recommendations of the ad hoc working group. Through this work it has been determined that the City already has many connections and opportunities to engage with school age youth up to 18 years of age.

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Staff have also followed through on several of the recommendations from the Youth Engagement Strategy.

First, a Youth Panel has been created using the City's existing online EngageStJohns.ca platform. Youth within the 18–30-year age range will be able to opt in to the Panel thereby receiving engagement opportunities specific to them. They will also receive notifications about these engagements via text message, a preference expressed by many youth through the research. Promotion for the Panel will begin shortly, and an internal committee has been struck to ensure there are regular and ongoing topics of interest to youth included in the Panel. Panel members will have opportunities to win tokens of appreciation for their participation as well.

Secondly, the city has overhauled its social media channels. This was one of the recommendations of YEAT to ensure young people could follow the topics they were most interested in without having to follow all city channels and news.

Thirdly, preliminary work has been done on the creation of a Youth Ambassador Program. Given the Covid restrictions and challenges with having in-person events, this project was put on pause for now. The newly established WG will revisit this in 2022.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:
Cost to add SMS to EngageStJohns.ca for youth members expected to be less than \$500 annually. Tokens of appreciation to cost between \$200-300 annually. These projects will be funded through existing budget.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:
All organizations connected to youth within the target demographic.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:
Developing and implementing a Youth Engagement Strategy was an action item in the Strategic plan under the direction of creating a Connected City.
4. Legal or Policy Implications:
N/A
5. Privacy Implications:
The collection of information for the purposes of the Panel has been reviewed by the City's Access to Information and Privacy Coordinator. Privacy statements are available on EngageStJohns.ca as well.
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:
Maintaining a focus on engagement with youth is key. A Communications Plan to support youth engagement and the strategy more broadly is in development.

7. Human Resource Implications:

Staff in Organizational Performance and Strategy (OPS) will support the work of the Youth Engagement Working Group.

8. Procurement Implications:

SMS was procured according to city policy.

9. Information Technology Implications:

The addition of SMS and integration with EngageStJohns.ca is managed by OPS staff with the external vendors.

10. Other Implications:

N/A

Recommendation:

That Council approve the creation of the Youth Engagement Working Group and direct staff to undertake the recruitment process.

Prepared by: Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance and Strategy

Approved by: Derek Coffey, Deputy City Manager, Finance and Administration

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Youth Engagement Strategy Update.docx
Attachments:	- FINAL Terms of Reference - Youth Engagement Working Group.docx
Final Approval Date:	Nov 25, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Derek Coffey - Nov 25, 2021 - 10:36 AM