

Frequently Asked Questions about Participation Requests

What is 'Community Participation'?

Community Participation is about:

- Our local communities influencing the way public services are planned, developed and delivered to ensure that they respond to community need.
- Ensuring that everyone across East Ayrshire can get involved in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Community Planning Partner agencies and communities working together and sharing their skills, talents, knowledge and experience for the benefit of all.

Who can make a Participation Request?

The Community Empowerment Act stipulates that Participation Requests can only be made by a 'community participation body'. This does not have to be a legally constituted group, but it must be a community-led group, meaning that those who make up the group are from the community they seek to represent. Membership must be open to the whole community and the work of the group (including any profits generated by the group or organisation) must be for the benefit of the community. Community Councils are included within this definition. Individuals are not eligible to make Participation Requests.

What is a 'Public Service Authority'?

The Community Empowerment includes a list of public service authorities for the purposes of the Act which includes:

- Local Authorities
- Health Boards
- Further Education Colleges
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Regional Transport Partnerships

Within East Ayrshire, Participation Requests to any of the following Community Planning Partners can be made via this website:

- Ayrshire College
- East Ayrshire Council
- East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

What do you mean by 'Community'?

Communities can be defined in different ways. '**Communities of place**' are defined by a geographic location with a physical boundary such as a village, town, neighbourhood or locality. '**Communities of interest**', refers to a group of people who share a particular interest or experience. '**Communities of identity**' are defined by those who identify themselves with, for example young people, older people, faith groups or equality groups.

These definitions recognise that people may identify themselves with more than one community. Community engagement needs to be flexible, responsive to local circumstances and sensitive to how people identify themselves, to ensure that everyone, particularly those who are hardest to reach, are able to contribute.

What are the eligibility criteria for participation requests?

- We can only consider Participation requests which come from community groups which meet the Scottish Government criteria for a 'community participation body' www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/ParticipationRequests so you must be able to show that your group represents your community. This can be a geographic area or it can be a 'community of interest'.
- We will not consider your request if:
 - it is the same as, or very similar to, a previous Participation Request made within the previous 2 years;
 - it relates to an existing Statutory Process, such as Planning; or
 - where a more appropriate process already exists eg Asset Transfer Requests would be signposted to the Asset Transfer Process.
- Participation Requests may not be used to make a complaint about an existing service.

How long does the participation request process take?

Once you submit a participation request, we will do an initial check to make sure that we have all the information needed to assess your request – if we need more information we will contact you.

As soon as we have all of the information required, we will acknowledge receipt of your application with a 'validation notice'.

From this date we have **30 working days** to assess your application (45 days if more than one public authority is involved) and let you know if your request has been successful.

If your participation request is successful, then the outcome improvement process must begin within **90 calendar days** of the 'validation notice' date.

What are 'outcomes' and why do they matter?

- Before you make a Participation Request, your community group has to be clear about the 'outcome' of the request – this means what you want to achieve at the end of the process.

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Examples of Outcomes:

Example 1: Your group wishes to see a local park developed for community use.

Q. "So, what difference will this make to our local community?"

A. "There will be an improved environment, and there will be an increase in physical activity levels" (*these are your outcomes*)

Example 2: A tenant's organisation wishes to be involved in the decisions in relation to how decisions are made with regard to community safety in their area.

Q. "So, what difference will this make to our local community?"

A. there will be increased awareness and improved community safety for the community (*these are your outcomes*)

What is an outcome improvement process?

If a participation request is successful, the community group will be invited to begin the outcome improvement process – this is when you actively start to work with relevant public service bodies.

What this process will look like will depend on the nature of the request but might include:

- A discussion with the lead public authority (and other appropriate partners) about what steps need to be taken to achieve your outcome and how you will work together.
- Agreeing a plan which clearly identifies responsibilities of all partners involved, including your group, timescales, feedback and reporting mechanisms.
- Working through the agreed the outcome improvement process with regular feedback from partners (including your group) on how things are going.
- Final reporting and review – an opportunity for all partners (including your group) to reflect on progress made, targets not met or still to be achieved, and any further actions needed.