

REPORT

Finance

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: July 8, 2024

From: Shehzad Somji
Chief Financial Officer
File:

Item #: 2024-406

Subject: Budget 2025 Public Engagement Methodology

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council provide feedback on the 2025 budget public engagement methodology; and

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the 2025 budget public engagement incorporating Council's feedback.

BACKGROUND

Input from the residents of the City of New Westminster is an important first step in the development of the budget and reflects Council's Community Belonging and Connecting strategic priority. The 2024 budget included a service enhancement of \$35,000 to engage a public opinion research firm to complete the 2025 budget engagement.

DISCUSSION

Staff are recommending using Ipsos to complete the engagement as their services have been used by other municipalities to complete similar surveys and most recently, the New Westminster Police Department utilized their services to complete a survey to understand residents' opinions of the New Westminster Police Department and the services it provides.

Ipsos is recommending to mail an online survey invitation to both residential and business addresses. A random sample of 10,000 New Westminster residential

addresses, approximately 28% or the total residential households, will be selected and the invitation will include a survey link and a unique identifier to ensure that residents use to answer the survey securely and anonymously.

A survey invitation will be mailed to all available business addresses in the City of New Westminster with the survey link and unique identifier, estimated to be 1,735. The letter to businesses will request the survey to be completed by the person responsible for the overall management and direction of the company at that location.

For those residents who were not randomly selected, the survey will be available on the City's budget page and will have the option of being translated into other languages for ease of completion. For those residents with limited technology, paper surveys will be available at various City facilities that will be compiled with the online survey responses.

It is difficult to predict the final sample size for this survey as it is dependent on the response rate. In Ipsos's experience, the typical response rate for residential surveys of this type is 5% - 15%, so an expected sample size range of 500 – 1,500. For reference, the online survey for the 2024 budget had 470 responses. The final sample for resident responses will be weighted based on the most recent Census data to ensure that the demographics of the sample match those of the actual New Westminster population according to gender/age. There will be no weighting applied to the business results.

To engage residents and businesses, and to maximize the response rate, Ipsos suggests the City provide both pre-survey and reminder communication to residents and businesses informing them about the research, encourage their participation, and provide an incentive for completing the survey, for example entry into a draw for gift cards.

The engagement process, once approval is given, will take approximately three (3) months at which time Ipsos will present the survey results to Council.

The 2024 budget included a service enhancement of \$35,000 for public engagement. The cost to conduct the 2025 Budget Engagement is \$47,500 plus taxes. The difference will be funded by savings in other areas.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Select departments were requested to provide responses.

OPTIONS

There are three options for Council's consideration. They are:

Option 1 – THAT Council provide feedback on the 2025 budget public engagement methodology.

Option 2 – THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the 2025 budget public engagement incorporating Council's feedback.

Option 3 – THAT Council provide different direction to staff.

Staff recommend Options 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Ipsos Quote for the City of New Westminster

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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This report was reviewed by:
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This report was approved by:
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