



Making a difference...together

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
FRAMEWORK & TOOLKIT**

Building Our Community Together



PART ONE

Public Engagement Framework

Territorial Acknowledgement

The CRD conducts its business within the Territories of many First Nations, including but not limited to BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), paaʔčiidʔatx (Pacheedaht), Spuneʼluxutth (Penelakut), Scʼianew (Beecher Bay), Songhees, SʔÁUTW (Tsawout), TʼSou-ke, WJOLEŁP (Tsartlip), WSIKEM (Tseycum), and xʷsepsum (Kosapsun) Nations, all of whom have a long-standing relationship with the land and waters from time immemorial that continues to this day.



Introduction

Our region's diverse communities are constantly changing, and the needs and expectations of our residents are evolving. How people share information, and the opportunities for involvement in problem-solving and processes that lead to decision-making are changing too.

Meaningful public engagement facilitates better conversations between government and residents so we can be responsive to the needs and wants of the people we serve. We are on a continuous journey to adapt and improve practices to foster mutual understanding, strengthen relationships and create public engagement processes that are inclusive.

What is public engagement?

Public engagement, also commonly referred to as public participation, is any process that involves the public in problem-solving and processes that lead to decision-making. It is premised on the belief that residents should have meaningful opportunities to engage in processes that lead to decisions affecting their communities. It moves past one-way communication and welcomes residents into the decision-making process by ensuring timely information and awareness of opportunities to provide input before decisions are made.

Not all topics require the same level of public engagement. Based on the impact of the decision or change, and the input needed to inform the decision, different tools and techniques are considered in each instance. Meaningful public engagement should consider the diverse needs of those our decisions impact, and government bodies are responsible for removing barriers and encouraging participation from all voices, particularly those that are underrepresented historically.

Why do we engage?

We engage because, although we have skilled technical experts working across our organization, no one knows the community and its nuances better than the people living and working in it every day. When we engage, their input becomes part of the process and helps us make decisions that are responsive to what the community needs and values.

When public engagement is meaningful, everyone gains something valuable. Governments benefit from hearing diverse perspectives and understanding the public's interests, concerns, and priorities, and the public gains a greater understanding of how decisions are made. With effective communication, our accountability to residents is enhanced. With timely access to factual and relevant information, there is less misinformation, and residents feel heard.

What is the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)?

IAP2 is an association of professionals in the field of public participation who seek to advance and extend the practice of public participation through training, certification, standards, values, and advocacy around the world.

The IAP2 developed several tools that have become commonplace among local governments. The Core Values and Spectrum of Public Participation assist in establishing clear expectations and defining the level of participation in any public engagement process.

The IAP2 Code of Ethics provides a set of principles that guide the practice of public participation, enhancing the integrity of the process.

As a regional district, the adoption of the IAP2 tools supports consistent engagement with the community. This includes the responsibility to share feedback with IAP2 and a commitment to continuous learning as models and tools evolve.





IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

← Information enables participation at any level of the spectrum →

Core Values for the Practice of Public Engagement

- > Public engagement is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- > Public engagement includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- > Public engagement promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- > Public engagement seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- > Public engagement seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- > Public engagement provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- > Public engagement communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.



When do we engage?

When developing a new project or considering changes to programs or policies, it is critical to consider whether the public needs to be engaged.

Public engagement may not be required or suitable in every case, but when it is, we want to ensure we are engaging with residents as early as possible. When engagement does not occur or is rushed, there may be negative impacts to the project schedule, costs, and public support. Early dialogue is important in determining when and to what extent public engagement is needed.

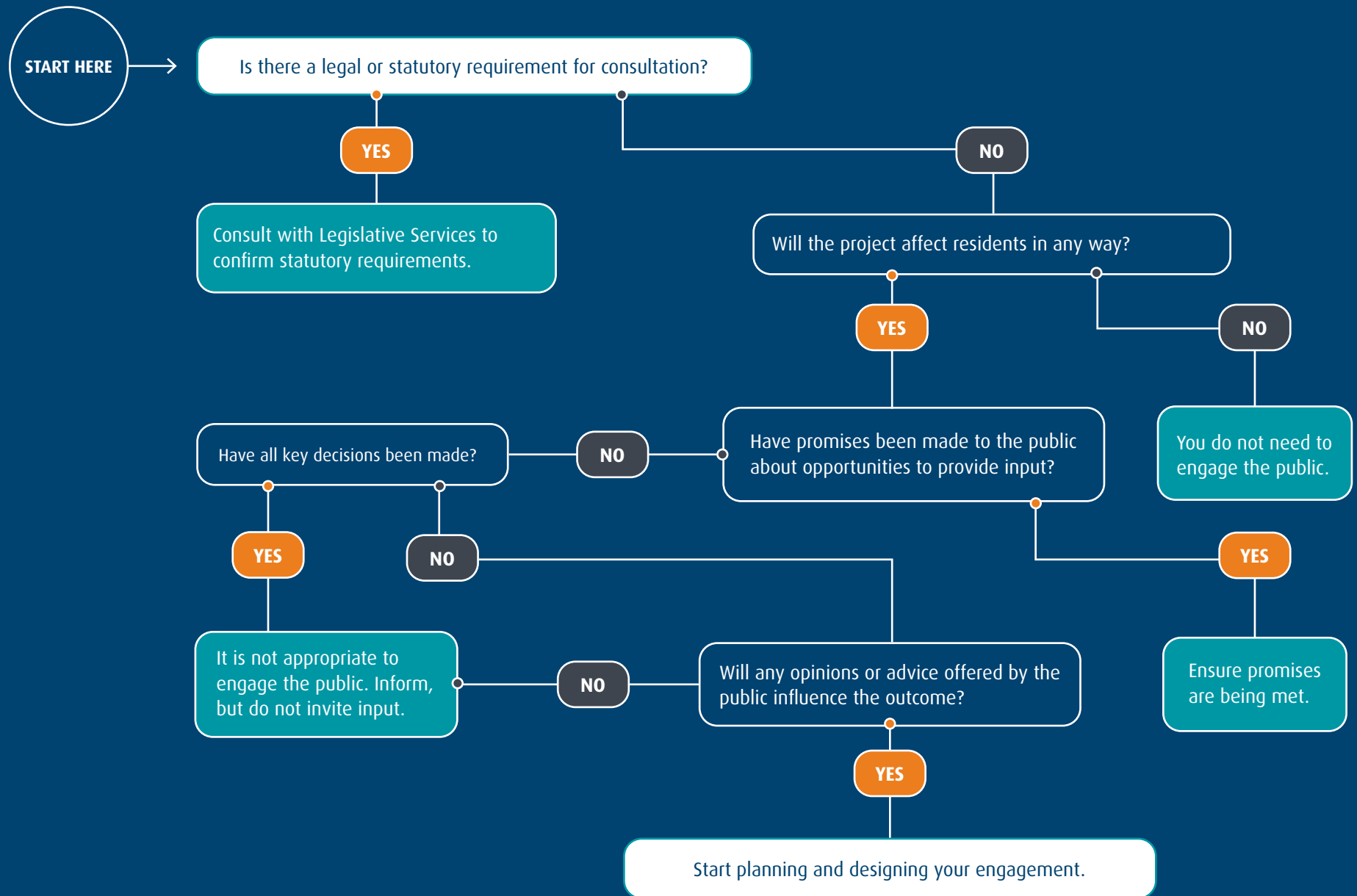
There are situations where a decision has already been made or activities are happening due to factors that are not negotiable. In those situations, public engagement is not appropriate, and it is better to focus on communicating the change.

In British Columbia, the *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act* outline the minimum requirements for when local governments must engage. Generally, these are regarded as the minimum requirements and are often exceeded.



The CRD recognizes local First Nations are important rightsholders with distinct laws, protocols and systems of governance. As such, engagement with First Nations follows a separate and distinct process with support from the First Nations Relations division.

Do I need to engage the public in my project?



How do we engage?



Who we serve

A community snapshot

As stewards for our communities, the more we understand about the people we serve, their experiences and the barriers to participation, the more attuned we will be to meeting their needs and appreciating their perspectives.

SIZE OF CAPITAL REGION
2,338 square kilometres

POPULATION SERVED
415,451

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY
20,195
[5% of regional population]

TOP 3 LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME
English 374,750
Mandarin 4,590
Yue [Cantonese] 2,655

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION
Married 44%
Common Law 12.1%
Single 43.8%

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN
1.6

AVERAGE AGE
45.1 years old

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
\$84,000

OWNERS VS. RENTERS
Owners: 62.9% Renters: 36.9%

EDUCATION LEVEL
• No high school 10.3%
• High school graduation 27.7%
• Post-secondary certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree 28.3%
• Bachelor's degree or higher 33.8%

POVERTY RATE
0-17: 9.5% 18-65: 8.5% 65 plus: 10.5%

3 LARGEST INDUSTRIES
• Health care and social assistance
• Public administration
• Retail trade

RECENT GROWTH
8.4% from 2016 to 2021
4.6% from 2021 to 2023
(Population estimate, not Census)

NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS
77,095 (18.2%)

NUMBER OF REFUGEES
4,050

Roles & Responsibilities: Who does what?

Elected Officials

Elected officials are responsible for making decisions that represent the interests and values of the community. They have an important role as decision-makers and advocates for public engagement and can contribute in the following ways:

- › Represent residents and connect with them to determine top priorities for engagement.
- › Prioritize engagement efforts by working with staff to identify areas where public input can make a meaningful difference in decisions and help set public engagement priorities.
- › Support and promote inclusive and transparent engagement initiatives and opportunities to ensure a high rate of participation by a wide range of residents.
- › Direct residents to the established processes for garnering, monitoring and compiling input, and avoid circumventing these.
- › Allow staff to take the lead role in identifying best practices and methods for engaging the public on various issues.
- › Consider input gathered from residents and interested groups when making decisions and clarify the rationale for decisions reached.
- › Advocate for adequate resourcing of public engagement initiatives where needed.
- › Listen and observe during public engagement events and processes.
- › Avoid making public commitments or statements that could pre-empt decisions or misrepresent the scope of consultation.

CRD Staff & Officers

Staff lead the planning, implementation and reporting from engagement initiatives. Staff are responsible for developing and applying professional expertise to public engagement processes, as well as being technical experts who provide background and advice on decisions being made. Staff responsibilities include the following:

- › Work with elected officials to identify where public input can make a meaningful difference in decisions, program development and service delivery.
- › Use engagement tools and outreach strategies to identify community priorities and what prevents residents from participating. Ensure this input is used to inform service planning, improve accessibility and strengthen future engagement processes.
- › Establish and communicate engagement priorities, then apply a consistent set of policies and procedures in designing and implementing engagement activities.
- › Keep elected officials informed of engagement activities, outcomes, process design, framing issues for productive input, effective communications, and increasing engagement over time.
- › Ensure timely and respectful communication with all those who engage and show how their input has been used to influence decisions, programs and services.
- › Engage in ongoing learning and professional development about public engagement best practices.
- › Ensure that community input is well documented, transparent and that communication efforts are as complete and well-timed as possible.

Residents

Residents contribute to informed decision-making and the quality of life in their community by sharing their ideas, experiences, and concerns constructively and respectfully. Their contributions can include the following:

- › Help identify community needs and priorities.
- › Identify barriers to participation and opportunities for improvement.
- › Make efforts to stay current and learn more about issues within the community.
- › Participate in engagement initiatives and encourage others to participate.
- › Express their point of view and contribute ideas while respecting opposing perspectives.
- › Be willing to listen to and learn from other community members.
- › Vote in local government elections.

First Nations

The CRD recognizes that First Nations are self-determining governments and that engagement with First Nations is separate and distinct from public participation. The CRD is committed to respectful, government-to-government relationships guided by the principles of reconciliation. Engagement with First Nations on matters of mutual interest will be early, meaningful, and will align with the CRD's Statement of Reconciliation.

At the same time, it is important that public engagement methods and the language we use acknowledge and respect the experience of Indigenous individuals who may participate, as well as the long-standing relationship with the land and waters that First Nations have held since time immemorial that continues to this day.

Commissioners, Contractors, Volunteers, Partners










CRD Commissioners, contractors, volunteers, and partners support staff in public participation efforts and provide specialized expertise, community connections, or additional capacity.

Their contributions may include the following:

- › Work with staff to ensure public engagement is considered for all policies, programs, projects, or services;
- › Seek advice, support and approval from staff as required to plan, deliver, and evaluate public participation initiatives;
- › Utilize the Public Engagement Policy, Framework and Toolkit to ensure engagement activities are consistent throughout the organization;
- › Deliver engagement activities in accordance with the scope of work and engagement objectives; and
- › Promote engagement opportunities.

Terms of Engagement

Have a good time and enjoy sharing and hearing ideas!

-  1 Be open to new ideas and opinions
-  2 Respect each other — listen when others are speaking and be aware of your own body language
-  3 Allow everyone a chance to share their perspectives
-  4 Listen actively
-  5 Share your story, experience and point of view
-  6 Respectfully ask questions to gain a better understanding
-  7 Stay on topic
-  8 Respect each other's time. If you would like to discuss the topic more, take the opportunity to stay after the meeting and share your ideas with the staff team
-  9 The goal is not to agree, it is to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and opportunities

Thank you

The Capital Regional District and the Regional District of Nanaimo would like to acknowledge and extend thanks to the many Canadian communities and organizations from which we drew inspiration, ideas, and best practices during the development of this Framework.

Four local governments came together originally in 2019 to develop an engagement framework and toolkit that would establish a common language and approach to engagement efforts and provide practical tools for our respective staff and communities to engage in a meaningful way. We continue to build upon this foundation.

We would also like to thank the many diversity, inclusion, accessibility and equity seeking groups that have shared their experience and knowledge with the world to help us create resources to respond to the diverse and underrepresented needs of our communities. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done as an organization and are committed to continuous learning and improvement. We strive to foster an environment where every individual feels heard, valued, and respected, and we recognize the importance of listening and engaging further to guide our actions and policies.