

Wellesley Select Board Policy Subcommittee
Public Engagement Template
March 2025

A good public engagement strategy brings citizens, community service organizations, businesses, and government bodies together to solve problems that affect people's lives.

When done correctly, public engagement is an inclusive way to deal with the complex problems that affect people and communities. After all, if everyone in a community is affected by a problem, shouldn't everyone have an opportunity to play a part in finding solutions to that problem?

<https://thoughtexchange.com/blog/effective-community-engagement-strategy/#:~:text=A%20good%20public%20engagement%20strategy.that%20affect%20people%20and%20communities.>

Steps of public engagement



<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/health-canada-public-health-agency-canada-guidelines-public-engagement/public-engagement-process-guide.html>

I. Planning

A. The Issue

- What is/are the key issue(s)?
- What decision needs to be made or what action(s) need to be taken?
- What are the purposes of engagement - is it to inform, consult, collaborate, or empower? To have citizens contribute to government priorities? To foster information exchange, share knowledge or build relationships?
- What and how much does the public currently know?
- What potential risks and impacts are associated with the issue?
- Where are the potential sources of conflict?

B. The Purpose

- What are the purposes of engagement? Set specific goals: to gather feedback, build consensus, define action plan, create/deepen relationships?

- What specific outcomes do you wish to achieve? (realistic, linked to purpose, appropriate to the issue)
- What changes are anticipated as a result of the engagement?
- What information and feedback do you need, and why?
- How will feedback be analyzed and considered in the decision-making process?
- Can input be gathered in a “scientific” way?

C. Budget and Resources

- What financial resources will be needed? (development of engagement resources, consultants, translations, facilitation, web tools, AV resources, printing, materials, hospitality. Include staff and volunteer time.)
- How will the process be funded?

D. Identify Stakeholders

- Consider all groups affected by or interested in the issue (both potential positive and negative impacts socially, economically or otherwise) – residents, businesses, governmental departments, schools.
- Are there specific demographic factors which are especially important in this issue and how do you maximize a potentially affected group’s participation?
- Adhere to overall town goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion in representation of participants and process to gather feedback reflecting a broad range of perspectives and experiences.
- Include individuals known to have an interest in the issues as well as those who could potentially influence the outcome or decision directly or indirectly

E. Establish timelines

- What important timelines need to be considered?
- Communicate clearly start and end dates as well as important deadlines throughout the planned process
- Allow sufficient time for participant preparation, input, and consultation (how much time will be needed for board/resident/interboard communication and deliberation?), development and finalizing of materials?
- What is the appropriate amount of time to allow for participant input?
- How long will it take to receive, analyze, and report results internally and externally?

F. Choose engagement approaches

- Choose engagement methods such as presentation, charette, survey, online forum, social media, civil discourse dialogue, webinar, questionnaire, discussion forum, focus groups (combine in-person, hybrid, and online options) – what will the most appropriate and productive methods be?
- Monitor feedback – may receive less than anticipated or may not receive information specifically sought; engagement methods may need to be adapted to maximize participation, ensure objectives are met, and enable effective analysis.
- Assemble a team of facilitators, subject-matter experts, community liaisons
- Build trust – model and foster respectful, inclusive atmosphere
- Actively engage participants
- Record discussions, questions and suggestions accurately

Common Approaches to Public Engagement (Canada website)

Approach	Description	Benefits	Challenges
In-person discussion session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants attend a group session involving presentations and discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for open dialogue among participants and decision-makers. Effective for gathering input on preliminary options or ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More costly and time-consuming than alternatives. Subject to availability of participants at a specific time and location.
Virtual discussion session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants attend a group session involving presentations and discussions via videoconference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for open dialogue among participants and decision-makers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More difficult to build relationships with/between participants than with in-person sessions. May be less effective than in-person

Common Approaches to Public Engagement (Canada website)

Approach	Description	Benefits	Challenges
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective for gathering input on preliminary options or ideas. • Opportunity to gain perspectives from participants from regional or remote areas. • Minimizes resource requirements and costs. 	alternatives in situations where there is not a positive relationship with the audience.
Online interactive platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants join an online discussion forum to discuss issues and share their views with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to gain perspectives from participants from regional or remote areas at their convenience. • Flexible approach which can be designed and adapted based on objectives and adjusted throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming to design, implement, moderate, and monitor. • Requires planning and resources to summarize and analyze feedback.

Common Approaches to Public Engagement (Canada website)

Approach	Description	Benefits	Challenges
Online questionnaire	<p>the engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to participate is posted online or emailed to targeted participants with a link to the questionnaire. Participants complete the questionnaire and submit it directly online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to gain perspectives from participants from regional or remote areas at their convenience. Flexible approach which can be designed and adapted based on objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming to design, deliver and monitor. Participants cannot benefit from hearing the different perspectives of others. Requires planning and resources to summarize and analyze feedback collected.
Request for feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A draft document or proposal is posted online or emailed to target audience, and participants are asked to provide general feedback by email. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost-effective way to receive detailed, meaningful feedback on drafts or proposals. Specific information can be obtained in a controlled manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants cannot benefit from hearing the different perspectives of others. Requires planning and resources to summarize and analyze feedback.

Common Approaches to Public Engagement (Canada website)

Approach	Description	Benefits	Challenges
Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of in- person, online, and virtual approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the widest variety of engagement options for stakeholders, fostering diversity, inclusion and broad participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most time consuming and resource intensive as planning and execution will be required for in- person, online and virtual events/approaches.

G. Plan Logistics (see section on budget for considerations)

H. Develop plan for analysis, reporting and evaluating

- What resources will be needed to conduct analysis?
- Should report be posted online? Distributed by email? Both?
- What information will be needed to explain how feedback received was considered in decision-making?
- When will report be shared?
- What exactly will be evaluated?

II. Developing the Products (meeting agendas, activities, discussion guides, etc.)

A. Engagement Documents

- Do they clearly outline the objectives, approach and timelines of the activity?
- Do they present a complete and clear picture of the issue(s) to maximize participant contributions? And what issues are and are not part of the scope of the activities?
- Lay out decisions that have been made to date
- Are they available to participants in easy-to-access formats?
- Are they in accessible format and in plain and inclusive language? Translated? Use plain and neutral language and avoid jargon

B. Develop Communication Plan and documents

- Explain the process, goals, and how input will be used
- Promote: social media, email, local media, maps, pictures, flyers, etc. to inform and invite participation
- Ensure materials and events are accessible to all
- What methods will maximize the level of transparency?

III. Implementing: Launching the Initiative

- A. Distribute communications materials
- B. Implement activities
- C. Communicate clearly with participants
- D. Monitor the activity(ies) and adjust as necessary

IV. Analyzing and Reporting

- A. Document all details on engagement activities (locations, approaches, number of participants)
- B. Document feedback and consider how to analyze it
- C. Develop plan to inform decision-makers about the results
- D. Develop plan for sharing the report with participants and the public
- E. Synthesize and Analyze Input
 - Summarize feedback in a concise manner
 - Identify what was heard, themes that emerged, similarities or differences in feedback among different (types of) participants and reflect the importance placed on various issues or ideas by participants
 - identify key take-aways and next steps
- F. Report to decision-makers with objective and accurate assessment of engagement activity(ies)
 - Include most important participant concerns and positions
 - Include underlying themes, trends, and highlights
 - Include contentious issues
- G. Report back to participants and the public
 - Provide report in a timely manner

- Tailor extent of report proportionately to size, complexity, and potential impact of engagement activities
- Include brief overview of the process, summary of input received, how input was/will be considered in decision-making, and outline of next steps

H. Document, organize and archive all information shared or collected during engagement activities

V. Evaluating the Process

A. Evaluate process (how well did Steps 1-4 work?)

- What worked and what didn't work? Why?
- Was each engagement activity planned effectively?
- Was the information clearly communicated?
- Were resources allocated efficiently?
- Were participants able to effectively provide input?
- How was input considered in decision-making?
- Were timelines adequate?
- Was a reporting-back process put into place?

B. Evaluate the outcomes

- Were objectives met? Use metrics including participation rates, diversity, stakeholder satisfaction
- Identify areas for improvement

Example: Community Celebrations/Observances/Decorations

Stakeholders

All Town Boards and committees; all Wellesley merchants, retailers, businesses, restaurants; all residents

Objectives

BIG QUESTION: Who are we as a community, and what do we want to observe, celebrate, acknowledge, display, and remember?

Questions to Answer

- What are our shared values?
- What are the demographics and diverse characteristics of our Town?
- What cultural traditions, milestones, historical events have shaped our community?
- How has the community changed since these historical events or traditions began?
- How can we demonstrate caring for all members of the community?
- What celebrations will resonate with our current community (while honoring the past, if desired)?
- What themes will unite, as opposed to divide, us?
- Will planned themes/celebrations help economic development?
- Do we want seasonal decorations? Holiday decorations throughout the year?
- Where do we want to place decorations?

Considerations

- Would our choices be sustainable over time? Timeless?
- What budgetary resources do we need?
- Where will non-seasonal items be stored?
- What logistical issues need to be addressed?
- What person-power will be required? Town staff? Volunteers?
- What financial resources will be required?
- What, if any, infrastructure improvements will be needed?
- How many events should be piloted the 1st year? Each successive year?

[https://wellesleyma-my.sharepoint.com/personal/mfreiman_wellesleyma_gov/Documents/Policy
Subcommittee/Public Engagement and Community Observance](https://wellesleyma-my.sharepoint.com/personal/mfreiman_wellesleyma_gov/Documents/Policy%20Subcommittee/Public%20Engagement%20and%20Community%20Observance)

2/10/2025 8:40 AM