

Public Engagement Strategy Template
DRAFT

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About this template

The purpose of this template is to help you to write a public engagement strategy. Capturing your strategy on paper will help you to consider who else should be involved, your capacity to deliver, and who has expertise or advice to offer. It will help with a shared understanding of goals and anticipated outcomes between various people and organizations involved in your project, along with briefings and securing necessary approvals.

It is a best practice of public engagement to involve your stakeholders or target participants in how they want to be engaged. So, consider involving them as you develop your strategy.

This template borrows heavily from the work of departments who have published their own tools and templates for public engagement planning. Here are some other (GC) resources that can help you scope out your public engagement initiative:

- Government of Canada Principles for public engagement
<http://open.canada.ca/en/content/principles-and-guidelines>
- Tools and resources for consultations in GCPedia
[http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/Consultations COP - Reference Material](http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/Consultations_COP_-_Reference_Material)
- Department guides available on GCConnex
<https://gcconnex.gc.ca/file/group/5043713/all#13902884>
- Join the Public Engagement Community of Practice (CoP) active on GCCollab []

Choose one or two good planning toolkits used by CoP e.g.:

- A Strategic Framework for Public Engagement. Six considerations for sponsoring your next public engagement initiative. SFU Centre for Dialogue.
https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/centre-for-dialogue/Civic%20Engage/Methods/SFU_CivicEngage_StrategicFrameworkforPublicEngagement_20170306.pdf
- Involve UK's People and Participation guide: <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/People-and-Participation.pdf>
- Dialogue by Design: A handbook in public and stakeholder engagement:
<http://www.msppguide.org/resource/dialogue-design-handbook-public-and-stakeholder-engagement>
- [Discuss. Decide. Do. The value of engagement as a decision support tool](#) Nicole Swerhun and Vanessa AvRuskin, Swerhun Facilitation
- <http://archive.codeforamerica.org/practices/engagement/> "We're publishing a set of guides, tools and resources to help governments implement the five key elements of effective 21st century community engagement".

[Public Engagement Strategy for XXX]**Background**

Explain the context and rationale for public engagement, the nature of the issue, problem or decision to be made by who and how it links to government and departmental priorities, including open and transparent government, results, etc. Consider the historical context.

Purpose

- Situate: what is the issue and stage of decision-making? Does the broader initiative involve priority setting, policy development, program review or changes, service delivery, or another type of decision-making? And how will this engagement inform those things?
- Why do you want to engage, and how will you use what you hear? What do you need to know and from whom in order to understand the current state of this issue, or move forward?
 - For example, do you need the public or stakeholders to provide information or exchange information and perspectives; answer questions or generate questions or ideas; discuss issues and trade-offs; come to an agreement; converge around topics or actions...?
 - Is this an issue where you need to bring diverse perspectives together, at this point or in the future? Or do you need to target particular perspectives or demographics?
- What is the role of government and your department in the decision to be made? What will the role of public servants be in the engagement process (e.g. convenor or host, decision-maker, etc.)?

Scope

- At which stages of the overall initiative (e.g. policy or program development, implementation) will engagement take place? What is the scope? What limitations exist?
- Is the project local, regional, or otherwise targeted and why?
- How does this particular engagement fit with your ongoing stakeholder relationships and engagement?
- How does this initiative fit with a whole-of-government approach? Consider the relevance to partner departments and their mandates or areas of action.

Strategic Considerations

- Is there a requirement to engage on this project? (Mandatory “triggers” for public input include *Duty to Consult*, *User Fees Act*, regulatory change).
- Are there mandatory considerations (legal, constitutional), special obligations (e.g. nation-to-nation) or sensitivities such as privacy, security or confidentiality when engaging in this area?
- Have you carried out Gender-Based Analysis Plus for your broader initiative? How will applying a GBA+ lens affect how you engage?
- Consider the public and stakeholder environment. What evidence do you have now about stakeholders’ position on this issue or decision to be made? Who would be affected? Who is invested in the status quo? Consider:
 - Relevant Public Opinion Research, stakeholder analysis, media and social media scans.
 - Previous consultations and what was learnt – including by other GC organizations engaging on related issues or with similar stakeholders.
 - Existing partnerships in this area, and whether there are opportunities for cross departmental, intergovernmental, regional or sector collaboration. Are others already leading engagement in this area? Consider partner and stakeholder fora, and community-led engagement.
 - Whether there are interested or affected groups or individuals that have been underrepresented or absent from the discussion to this point.
- What opportunities are created by engaging on this issue? (e.g., early-stage identification of issues, reducing/eliminating misinformation, obtaining feedback to make a decision). What would be the impact of not engaging?

Target Participants

Identify the target participants by considering individuals, groups or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the issue or decision (see previous section). “Target participants” refer to the public and/or stakeholders you intend to reach, or “target” with the engagement activity. These are the people who should be considered to make a meaningful contribution to the engagement activity.

Think beyond those who are already vocal and active, and consider those who may have faced barriers to providing meaningful input in the past. Consider:

- Who is interested in or affected by the issue or decision to be made, whether economically, socially or otherwise?
- Whose input or involvement is needed? Consider who needs to be involved vs. aware of the initiative.
- Are these individuals, groups or organizations that represent them already engaging with government? Who has communicated with government, politicians, relevant parliamentary committees on this or related issues in the past? What are their issues and interests?
- Are there factors such as age, gender, geography, sector, ethnicity, or language, which are especially important in this issue? Consider what you know from your Gender-Based Analysis Plus.
- How will you promote and support inclusive participation from a broad range of perspectives?
- What are the potential barriers to participation and how can they be addressed or reduced? What information might you need to provide?
- What are the preferred approaches of these stakeholders or sub-populations to being engaged by government? How do we know? What do we know about where they discuss or are active on this issue now (on and off-line)?

Objectives

Considering the previous sections, including your overall purpose in engaging the public in this initiative, your target stakeholders and participants, and related strategic considerations, set out your objectives for engaging *in this area at this time, with these people*, and anticipated outcomes. (There will be unanticipated outcomes, too).

Consider:

- What do you expect to learn by consulting and listening to these stakeholders, groups, or individuals?
- What are the anticipated outcomes – for government decision-makers, for participants, others?
- How will know whether you have met your objectives?

- What information or data will you collect along the way and from where/who, that will help you measure results or gauge success? Can you involve your stakeholders in evaluating this engagement, or your broader initiative?

Engagement approach

Describe your engagement approach. Designing the engagement experience relies on having a clear understanding of your objectives and target participants (per previous sections).

Rationale

Considerations

- Have you considered a variety of channels to maximize uptake, reach, and impact? Do you know whether your target participants use these channels? Consider how to go where people are, and remember that the environment may be changing as you plan out your initiative.
- What design methods and tools have you considered that could help you achieve your objectives and reach target participants?
- When organizing in-person meetings, consider the various engagement methods available as well as the extent of facilitation required.
- Using digital to expand scale and reach – Will/how will the project use social media? E.g. to push participants to engagement channels or as an engagement channel itself, etc.
- Evidence from User Experience design, usability testing? Has a pilot or prototype been tested (or can it be) prior to launch of the full consultation?
- Are there accessibility or technical limitations that would prevent Canadians from participating in a consultation in the method or channel of their choice?
- Communications and outreach – how will you promote the engagement to your target participants and raise awareness amongst the general public, depending on your goals?
- Learning and adjusting as you go – how will you know when you have enough feedback/input from the right people? (hard timelines vs. consideration to extend, etc.). Will there be opportunities during the engagement initiative to share what you are learning or adjust the process?

Demonstrate how you have considered/designed for

How will you meet public avail of info of consultations per 6.2 of the Communications Directive....

Important considerations

- Accessibility – ensure all accessibility standards are followed. But beyond the rules, what can be done to reduce participation barriers?
- Privacy and security
- Add details to the Consultations registry (PCO requirement to support planning and reporting. Until December 2018, add to Consulting with Canadians administration portal. Use Canada.ca templates for profile pages for consultation ()
- Registering with Canada Gazette (part 1), where this is a requirement (for regulations)
- Relevant communications products and approvals
- Other...

Analysis and reporting

Plan for analysis and reporting from the beginning. The following questions can help determine your approach to analysis and reporting the input you receive through your engagement.

1. Answer 6 key questions:

- a. What is the stage of decision-making and what is the purpose of engagement?
- b. What type of engagement activity is being used? Whose views will the input or involvement reflect? Determine parameters of what will be analysed based on the process design, channels. Remember that not all engagement can be reduced to numbers or aggregate preferences of individuals. Dependent on engagement method being used – noting deliberative-analytical etc.
- c. Who are the end users of the consultations input?
 - i. Who will need the results internally and externally, and in what format?
 - ii. What will analysts and decision-makers need to integrate public input into the decision-making process?
- d. What levels of attribution are required in summary reports? Make sure consent processes allow for this.
 - i. As well as summary reports, consider releasing consultations input as open data.
- e. What human resources are available for analysis?

2. **Plan to capture the input, including identify the substantive questions:**
 - a. Identify the substantive questions
 - b. Categorize participants – choose unit of analysis
 - c. Choose tools for capturing input

3. **Translate the information (an intermediate step before analysis and reporting)**
 - a. Tools – desktop tools such as Excel.
 - b. Confirm and revise key issues
 - c. Tabulation options
 - d. Cross-checking

4. **Analyse and report**
 - a. See the big picture
 - b. Be careful when using numerical results in reporting
 - c. Define qualifying terminology
 - d. Consider confidentiality and representation when using quotations
 - e. What to include in the report
 - f. Align analysis output with expected uses
 - g. Cross-check (against...)

Consider:

- **Replicability of methodology used for analysis.** For instance, if a vendor will be analysing qualitative input, agree on the methodology and analytical framework up front.

- **Timing.** How will you report back on both consultations results and outcomes, and when? How do you intend to use what you gather? Does it make sense to shorten the feedback loop with participants, for instance share what you are learning along the way, to iterate on the input received?

- **Engagement as an ongoing process, an open channel of communication.** How will this engagement inform further engagement?

- **Refer to next steps** – beyond “what we heard” – in Ministerial announcements and speeches; through social media; and when moving forward on policy options, decisions.

Roles and responsibilities

Consider the resources required to plan, implement and report on your engagement. Are these found inside or outside your team, department, etc.?

- Project lead/team
- Method lead(s)
- Theme lead – e.g., enabler, expert
- Project Communications team
- Departmental engagement lead(s)
- Partners
- External skills or resources?

Will there be a dedicated engagement lead to work closely with or coordinate between the lead policy or program team, communications, other departments or areas with a stake in the engagement initiative, and any contracted resources?

Budget/Resources

Consider the time available for engagement within your overall initiative, the resources required and available, and how the processes will be documented.

- Is there a budget for this project?
- Meeting preparation (e.g., interpretation, venue bookings, travel). Is honoraria being provided for any of the participants?.
- Will you use contracted resources for aspects of planning and design, implementation and logistics, and analysis and reporting, or fund partners and stakeholders to support engagement efforts?
 - Remember the Departmental Individual Standing Offer for Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement and Consultations Activities is available for contracts up to \$300K, and can be an efficient way of contracting pre-qualified expertise and resources.
 - If engaging external resources, consider bringing them in early in the process to maximise the usefulness of the contract, if looking for help in planning and design. And if so, consider incorporating advice on design and process as part of the vendor's deliverables, for a purpose-driven strategy.

Measuring and evaluation

How will you evaluate or measure the success of your engagement initiative? This should be considered up front in planning engagement as it will affect the data you collect along the way.

- Consider evaluating both the public engagement process and contribution of engagement to outcomes, within the broader policy/program context.
- How will the information you collect contribute to our learning about open government? Our efforts to measure meaningful engagement with a more open government context.
- Collect information on who you are hearing from (individuals and representatives of organizations or associations? Demographics?), not just what you are hearing. This will be an important part of the picture in presenting your input and engagement results.
- [to add –pointers from recent course material, scalable evaluation framework and plan]
- Pre- and post- standardized questions available to gauge participant satisfaction, mapped to public engagement principles. These can be integrated with your efforts to measure the success of your engagement process and contribute to learning.