



ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND GUIDES



Engagement Framework and Guides was written by Erin Howard, Educational Enhancement Team, Lethbridge College. 2016.

This document is based on the IAP2 Foundations in Effective Public Participation Training and Guides as well as the City of Calgary Engage! Framework.

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Introduction

The Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation developed this framework and guides because we recognize that many of the projects we work on and decisions we make are often a collaboration of different internal and external stakeholders and groups. We know that all stakeholder groups deserve to have their voices heard and have input into projects and decisions that affect them. This is why we want to ensure that we are engaging those in the College community and if applicable, other stakeholders that contribute to and are affected by College initiatives.

Engagement is the process of bringing people together to make better decisions. It is working together to identify problems and opportunities, develop alternatives and make decisions based on the collective opinions and values of stakeholders. In this case, stakeholders are defined as anyone from the College community or external community who has an interest or stake in a project, initiative, or decision.

● Why should we engage people?

Engagement is a process of purposeful dialogue that brings people together to problem solve or make better decisions. It is a thoughtful approach to asking for feedback and input from those who will be affected by a decision or issue. People want to be involved in decisions that affect them, and engagement acknowledges this desire to be involved. It brings multiple viewpoints, opinions, and values into consideration and as a result, facilitates understanding through sharing and communication. Engaging those who will be affected by an initiative improves decision making through identifying critical issues early by bringing key stakeholders to the table.

● When should we engage people?

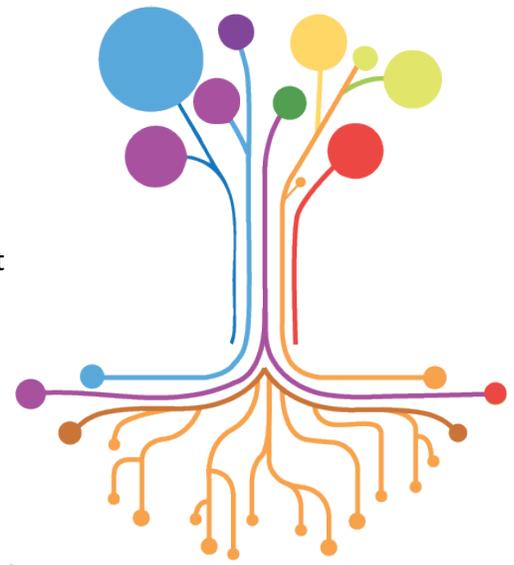
Anytime that there is opportunity for stakeholders from the College community or external community to provide input into a decision, there should be an opportunity for engagement. If there will be significant impact on stakeholders or the complexity of the decision is high, engagement is highly recommended. It is important to hear from those who will be impacted most by the decisions that are made. If decisions have already been made or will be made without input from others, engagement is not needed. In these instances, a communication or information strategy would be more applicable.

● What are the risks of insufficient or ineffective engagement?

There is a risk when decisions are made in isolation without considering the knowledge and perspectives of others that may be pivotal to the project or decision. It is unfortunate when a decision is made without consulting people and hearing all voices. Insufficient or ineffective engagement can lead to project delays or do-overs. We have designed this “Engagement Framework and Guides” with the intention that it can be used anytime that you are engaging people in a project or decision to be made where input is required.

Foundational Principles of Engagement

“The Engagement Framework and Guides” has been built on four foundational principles. These guiding principles ensure we bring our best intentions to the engagement process. Keeping the following principles in mind increases the likelihood of a successful engagement initiative.



Clear and Transparent

- ✓ The decision to be made will be clear and defined.
- ✓ The roles and responsibilities are also clearly defined.
- ✓ We will let people know exactly how their input will be used.
- ✓ We will bring people together in a purposeful way to influence decisions.
- ✓ Background information on the project or initiative is accurate, thorough, and readily available.
- ✓ We share the whole story including the good, the bad, and the accurate.
- ✓ Communications and updates will be shared as soon as details become available or decisions are made.

Inclusive and Accountable

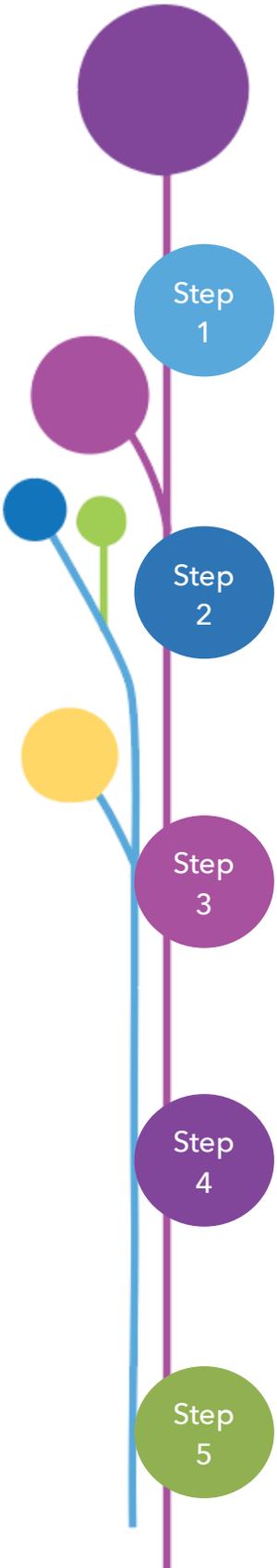
- ✓ We will communicate what we heard, what input was used, and what was not used.
- ✓ We will communicate how input and feedback affected the final decision.
- ✓ We want to ensure that we make an effort to reach those who may have a stake in the decision or outcome.
- ✓ We will work to reach out and include all who may be affected.
- ✓ We will provide information in multiple formats.

Collaborative and Meaningful

- ✓ People’s time is important, so we acknowledge that collaborations and input must be used in a meaningful way.
- ✓ We will involve those who are participating in the design of the process itself by asking how people want to be involved.
- ✓ We encourage ownership, responsibility, and commitment to the process.
- ✓ We will strive to find solutions that are based on common values of stakeholders and decision makers.

Realistic and Accessible

- ✓ We will do our best to arrange meetings and events at a time that works well for the majority of stakeholders.
- ✓ We will provide alternate ways to provide information if someone cannot attend.
- ✓ We will be realistic in acknowledging that decisions aren’t always going to make everyone happy, but instead we promise that people will be heard in the decisions that impact them.



Engagement Framework

The Engagement Framework is based on five steps. Each of the steps have corresponding guides in the appendices that will help walk you through the engagement planning process.

Step 1

LEARN - Internal Commitment & Background Data

- Describe the project
- Identify the decisions to be made (scope, decision makers)
- Brainstorm preliminary stakeholders and possible stakeholder issues
- Describe engagement goals of the project team
- *see Appendix A for guide*

Step 2

LISTEN - Learn from Stakeholders and the Community

- Develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders
- Correlate stakeholders and identify issues
- Review/refine the scope of the decision if necessary
- Assess stakeholder expectations of engagement
- Select the desired level of engagement
- *See Appendices B & C for guides*

Step 3

IDENTIFY - Identify Opportunities for Engagement

- What are the critical points where input is needed?
- What are our engagement objectives?
- How will we ask for input?
- *See Appendix D for guide*

Step 4

PLAN - Design and Implement the Engagement and Communication Plan

- Include background data and stakeholder information (from steps 1 and 2)
- Identify the facilitation and communication techniques that support the objectives
- Identify roles, responsibilities, and support elements for implementation
- *See Appendix E for guide*

Step 5

REFLECT - Reflect upon the Implementation of the Plan

- Plan for evaluation at each step
- Document lessons learned
- *See Appendix F for guide*

Appendix A: LEARN Questionnaire

The following questionnaire will help you describe the project, define related decisions that may require input, and identify who may be affected by these decisions. The following questionnaire will help to define the roles and responsibilities of the decision makers and the objectives for the engagement process.

1. What is the project or initiative? Describe the intended final outcome.
2. What are the decisions that may be made as part of this project?
3. Which decisions have already been made?
4. Which decisions may be made without engaging stakeholders? Explain why.
5. Which may be made with stakeholder input?
6. Are there any constraints (regulatory, political, legal, financial) that may affect the decisions made?
7. Who are the key decision makers?
8. What are the engagement goals of the decision makers?
9. Have any promises been made about involvement or engagement?
10. Who may be affected by this decision/initiative? List all possible stakeholders.
11. What has been the decision maker's previous experiences with engagement initiatives?

Appendix B: LISTEN Questionnaire

This questionnaire will help you identify the stakeholders that may need to be involved in the engagement process and correlate them to any potential issues or concerns they may have. It will assist you in assessing the expectations of the stakeholders and identify whether or not an engagement strategy is appropriate for your project or initiative.

Stakeholder Group	Potential Level of Impact (on Stakeholders) (Low, Med, High, Unknown, N/A)	Stakeholder issues or concerns	Potential Level of Concern (from Stakeholders) (Low, Med, High, Unknown, N/A)	Notes
<i>Ex. faculty</i>		<i>Ex. impact on workload</i>		

Answer **YES** or **NO** to the following:

1. Are there policy or legal requirements to engage stakeholders?
2. Do you believe that input from stakeholders could improve the outcome of this project?
3. Do you feel that stakeholders are highly interested in the outcome of this project?
4. Is there a potential for stakeholders to influence the decision-making process?
5. Do you believe that the decision makers will fully consider input?
6. Do you feel that the outcome of this project may be highly publicized or may be controversial?
7. Is there a high level of complexity in addressing this problem or opportunity?
8. Is there a potential for highly emotional responses from stakeholders on the issues in this project?
9. Will the decisions made have a high level of impact on the stakeholders, College and community?
10. Do the stakeholders care about the decision/opportunity and want to be involved in the process?

*If the answer to any of the above questions is **YES**, then engagement is recommended.*

The higher the score, the higher the level of engagement required (see Engagement Spectrum, Appendix C).

Appendix C: Engagement Spectrum

The engagement spectrum outlines the various levels at which stakeholders may influence the decisions or aspects of a project. Keep in mind that at all levels:

- We will communicate about the project or decisions in a timely, transparent, accessible and objective way.
- We will respond to questions and direct interested people to information sources.
- We clearly define what input we will gather from stakeholders and how that input factored in to any decisions that were made.
- We will also share with stakeholders what input may not have been used and why

The table below describes the goals of the project team and the applicable promise to the stakeholders at each level of engagement.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	Increasing Level of Engagement				
Our Promise	To create a shared understanding of the project and any decisions made through information and communication.	To get feedback from stakeholders at various points in the project or before decisions are made to ensure that issues and concerns are understood and considered.	To work to understand the viewpoints and concerns of the stakeholders through working directly with them.	To partner with stakeholders to analyze issues, develop alternatives, make recommendations, and determine the best solution for a decision.	To empower stakeholders to fully make the decisions.
Our Goal	We will keep you informed about the project and decisions that are made.	We will consult with you to ensure your viewpoint is heard and considered while making decisions. We will communicate how this input and feedback influenced the decisions made.	We will work directly with you to ensure your viewpoints and concerns are reflected in the decisions that are made.	We will partner directly with you throughout the project and decision making process. We will create joint solutions or recommendations.	We will abide by the decision made by you.

Based on the **LEARN** and **LISTEN** questionnaires and the above spectrum, what level of engagement do you feel is appropriate for your project?

Keep in mind that the level of engagement may vary for each decision or various aspects of a project.

Appendix D: IDENTIFY Questionnaire

The following questionnaire will help you establish your objectives for engagement. It will also help you decide how and when you will facilitate these engagement events and how you will collect applicable input.

Identifying your Engagement Objective

Your engagement objective should be a clear statement of what you would like to achieve. Are you collecting input? Working collaboratively to produce something? Communicating out to a group of stakeholders? Identifying your engagement objective helps clarify the purpose for all involved, ensures that time spent engaging stakeholders is meaningful, and helps achieve the desired end result.

Choosing a Facilitation or Communication Strategy

Communication and facilitation strategies are the ways in which you plan to share information, collect input, or bring people together. Some examples may include but are not limited to:

- **Sharing Information:** email communications, websites, media stories, information contacts, forums, etc.
- **Collecting Input:** web surveys, comment forms, interviews, focus groups, etc.
- **Bringing People Together:** appreciative inquiry, charrettes, forums, focused conversations, focus groups, advisory groups, panels, open houses, workshops, etc.

It is helpful to do a comparison of facilitation and communication strategies before you choose the right one to fit your objective. When comparing, consider the following:

- How may this strategy meet the engagement objectives?
- What resources (tools, budget, time, personnel) will you need?
- What audience will this strategy reach?
- What response do you anticipate from participants?
- How does this strategy align with how stakeholders have said they would like to be involved?

WHY?	WHAT?	WHO?	HOW?	WHEN?	
Engagement Objective	Facilitation or Communication Strategy	Stakeholders or audience	Facilitators and resource notes	Date, place and time	Other Notes:
<i>Ex. Ask for input on drafting a new policy</i>	<i>Ex. Focus Group</i>	<i>Ex. Faculty, faculty association, registrar's office</i>	<i>Ex. Karen will facilitate Need flip chart, pens, projector</i>	<i>Ex. March 1, 2016 in TE 3218</i>	<i>Ex. Send out existing policy ahead of time and follow up survey</i>

Evaluation of Engagement Event, Facilitation or Communication Strategy

Each time you share information, collect input, or bring people together it is helpful to reflect on the process. This helps realize what works, what doesn't, and plan accordingly for next time. Use the following questions to reflect after each engagement opportunity:

1. What was your selected strategy?
2. What did you ask stakeholders?
3. How did you gather the data?
4. How will the data be recorded/used?
5. How will you communicate the results back to those involved?
6. What went well?
7. What could be improved for next time?

Appendix E: PLAN Outline

A comprehensive written engagement plan functions as a roadmap for the project team to ensure that the engagement strategy is thought out, intentional, and deliberate. It also helps the project team define their engagement goals, establish the facilitation and communication strategies/techniques, and reflect on the process throughout the project. If the project team is required to produce a written engagement plan or report, the following three-part outline can assist you:

Written Engagement Plan Outline

Part I: Baseline Data

- Background details and project overview and schedule (*Appendix A*)
- Clearly defined decisions, scope and timelines (*Appendix A*)
- Summaries of stakeholders and issues (*Appendix B*)
- Internal and external expectations (*Appendix A & B*)
- Engagement level required for each decision and applicable promise (*Appendix C*)
- A list of roles and responsibilities
- Budget (if applicable)

Part II: Facilitation and Communication Strategies

- A list of decisions/engagement opportunities (*Appendix D*)
- Engagement objectives for each of the above (*Appendix D*)
- Details regarding the facilitation/communication strategies (*Appendix D*)
- Reflection on each of the events, facilitation or communication strategies (*Appendix D*)
- A plan for comment management
- A communication plan

Part III: Evaluation

- A comprehensive evaluation or review of the overall engagement strategy overall completed by the project team. (*Appendix F*)

Appendix F: REFLECT Questionnaire

It is important to evaluate and reflect upon your engagement initiative in order to learn from the experience and improve upon it for the next time. You will want to collect feedback on the engagement process by surveying both the project team and stakeholder groups.

Reflection will:

- Support ongoing improvement for your project and future projects
- Assess your engagement objectives and the objectives of the project as a whole

Here are some possible questions you may consider when reflecting about the overall engagement experience:

1. Did we engage all stakeholder groups?
2. Do stakeholders feel their needs were met?
3. Did we keep our promises to stakeholders?
4. Did we communicate back to all stakeholders?
5. What did we do well?
6. What could we have done better?
7. Did we achieve the engagement objectives that we set?
8. Were the chosen communication and facilitation strategies effective?
9. Was the decision affected?
10. Were better decisions a result from this process?
11. What successes did we experience?
12. Were there any unexpected outcomes?
13. Was there value in this engagement process?
14. What are some lessons learned from this process?

References

IAP2 International Federation. (2014). Planning for Effective Public Participation. International Association for Public Participation.

The City of Calgary. (2014). *Engage! Framework & Tools* [Booklet]. Calgary, AB.