



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

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Related definitions

Term	Definition
City or Corporation	The Corporation of the City of Kingston.
Communicate	To share or exchange information – two-way communication.
Data	Facts represented as text, numbers, graphics, images, sound or video – the raw material used to represent information, or from which information can be derived.
Discrimination	Any form of unequal treatment based on grounds that result in disadvantage by imposing extra burdens or by denying benefits. It may be intentional or unintentional. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, practices or procedures that appear neutral, but have the effect of disadvantaging certain groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may occur in very subtle ways.
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an association of professionals in the field of public participation (P2) whose members seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in Canada and around the world.
Inclusivity	The fact or policy of not excluding participants on the grounds of age, creed, gender, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, ability, race, ancestry, record or offences.
Inform	One-way communication to provide information. The initial step in all public engagement.
Open data	Data that is made public in a machine-readable format, unless it is exempt for legal, privacy, security, confidentiality or commercially-sensitive reasons.
Open government	A government guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, participation and innovation.
Participant	A person involved in an activity or event related to public engagement activities such as a resident, City employee or councillor.
Public engagement	The process by which residents are informed on, or given the opportunity to be involved in, City decisions that impact all or part of the community.
Public engagement charter	A commitment between council and residents for public engagement.
Public engagement techniques	A range of methods used to encourage residents to share ideas and opinions with the City that will assist with making decisions that impact all or part of the community.
Resident	Any person residing or owning property within the boundaries of Kingston.

Why a public engagement framework?

The City is committed to engaging residents on matters that affect their quality-of-life and their city. Public engagement encourages participation, action, personal responsibility and democracy. The goal is to facilitate more informed and inclusive municipal decision-making.

The City of Kingston's core values are Teamwork, Respect, Integrity and Pride. The City is committed to being open, transparent and accountable, and to engage and empower residents to participate in meaningful discussions and innovative solutions. Kingston residents have the right to access information and proceedings to allow for effective public engagement and oversight of City affairs.

The City's open government framework is an essential requirement of a smart city. The four key components of open government are: open data, open governance, open programs and services, and open engagement.

The City recognizes that there are three ways for change to be brought forward through public engagement:



Resident-driven



Council/councillor-driven



City employee-driven

Although this public engagement framework focuses on the City employee-driven approach, it also captures a number of approaches for resident-driven and council-driven change.



Setting realistic expectations

The framework does not replace any existing laws, but supports City employees in meeting and, where appropriate, exceeding legal requirements. Expectations include:

- identifying timelines for the whole project;
- making all background information available as early as possible in the process; and
- identifying how input will be received and used to make a recommendation and/or decision.

Please note:

- The City will inform the public when it performs maintenance activities at various public locations for health and safety reasons.
- Planning and heritage applications have their own prescribed and separate legislative processes with specific time frames outlined in the *Planning Act* and the *Ontario Heritage Act*; therefore, they are not subject to this framework. However, all planning and heritage projects that are not legislated are subject to this framework.

While the City will endeavour to ensure that all residents' feedback is taken into consideration through public engagement, it is not possible to satisfy the opinion of every participant in final recommendations and/or decisions.

What is public engagement?

Public engagement identifies ways that residents, councillors and City employees can be involved and participate collaboratively in problem-solving and decision-making processes. It should be based on the following criteria:

- Clarity of purpose: Participants must be clear on the role they play in the process.
- Reflective of diverse populations and opinions: Efforts will be made to engage the community's demographic diversity to the greatest extent possible.
- Purpose: Raise awareness with residents and ensure that all participants' perspectives are heard, taken into consideration and help to inform decision-making.
- Based on accurate information: Ensure information about the major elements of any issue or initiative is accurate so that participants can refine their perspectives, voice their points of view and better understand those of others.
- Organized and well-facilitated: Processes should be facilitated by someone who will encourage participation that is respectful and equitable so that discussions stay focused and sufficient time is given to the most important issues.
- Communication of results: Results will be shared with residents. This includes reporting back after individual sessions and offering explanations of how input from participants informed final recommendations and/or decisions.



Key principles

1. **Inclusivity:** Organizers will try to ensure an accurate representation of the community is reflected by using a range of techniques to engage residents.
2. **Early involvement and timely communication:** Accurate information will be communicated as early as possible in the public engagement process to assist residents in their planning, preparation and participation.
3. **Respect:** All participants must be respectful of diverse views, values and interests. The process must also respect decision-making protocols and jurisdictions at the municipal and provincial levels.
4. **Transparent and accountable:** The process will demonstrate a commitment to efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars and ensure both the process and its outcome are transparent.
5. **Clear and coordinated approach:** Throughout the engagement process, plain language and a variety of communication channels will be used to optimize residents' input, because people learn and engage in different ways. Public engagement activities will be coordinated and/or combined where possible to help find efficiencies.
6. **Continuous improvement:** Public engagement activities will be regularly evaluated and improved.

Guidelines for participation

All participants need to be aware of, and agree to, the following guidelines at the beginning of any public engagement process:

Participants agree to:

- Be respectful of all participants;
- Be open to all ideas;
- Adhere to the established process and time frame;
- Change process during a session only by group decision, if necessary;
- Allow everyone the opportunity to speak;
- Allow people to speak without interruption;
- Try to include everyone; and
- Turn cell phones off/mute.

Guidelines for participation will be visible where appropriate at public engagement sessions.

The City is committed to providing a respectful environment for all participants that will enable them to express their perspectives on topics freely without fear of intimidation or reprisal. To maintain a respectful environment, a participant may be asked to remove himself/herself from a public engagement activity if he/she has:

- Refused to follow the guidelines for participation. This may involve ignoring time restrictions for speaking.
- Displayed disrespectful behaviour or made disrespectful comments when others expressed a point of view.
- Made disrespectful personal comments or attacked other participants.



Roles to initiate change

Resident roles:

- Actively implement the principles of the public engagement charter;
- Initiate change by bringing forward ideas and thoughts that may help the City and the community find creative solutions to challenges through various means, including an online public engagement platform;
- Participate by offering ideas, suggestions and alternative solutions;
- Work collaboratively with fellow participants, the facilitator, council and City employees to find solutions; and
- Identify concerns and issues early and throughout the process, and request alternative ways of participating if required.



Council roles:

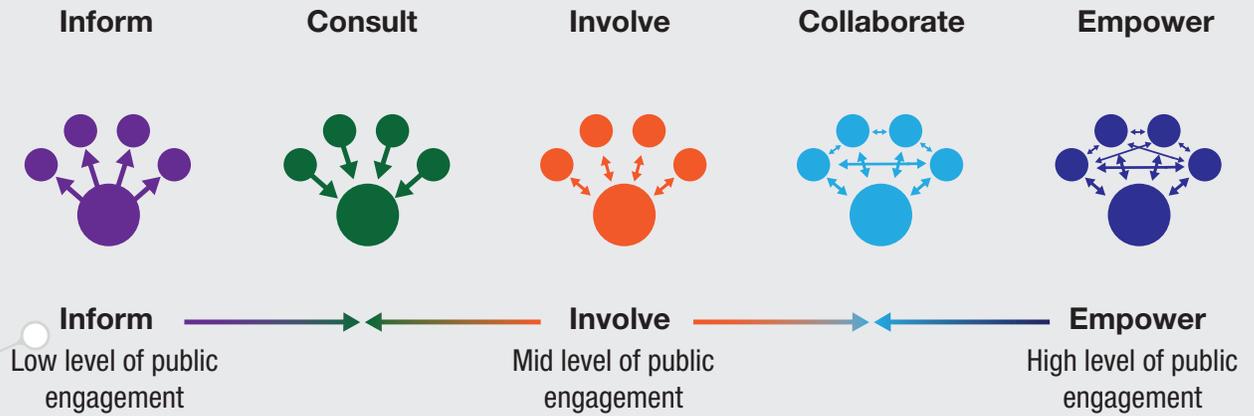
- Endorse the public engagement charter and ensure it is embedded in the culture;
- Review any information gathered prior to making decisions;
- Make sure that the City employee proposals, individual concerns and overall public benefit are all considered;
- Work collaboratively with residents and City employees to find solutions;
- Debate and approve various motions, with direction, to initiate change; and
- Attend or be involved in public engagement activities when feasible.



City employee roles:

- Actively implement the principles of the public engagement charter;
- Provide access to tools, such as an online public engagement platform, to ensure that residents can initiate change;
- Work collaboratively with residents and council to find innovative solutions;
- Ensure the public engagement process is inclusive, that all information is available as early as possible and is clear, simple and informative;
- Ensure the final reporting identifies resident feedback and explains how this feedback will be considered in the final recommendations and/or decisions; and
- Ensure that consultants and facilitators undertaking public engagement activities on behalf of the City comply with the public engagement framework.

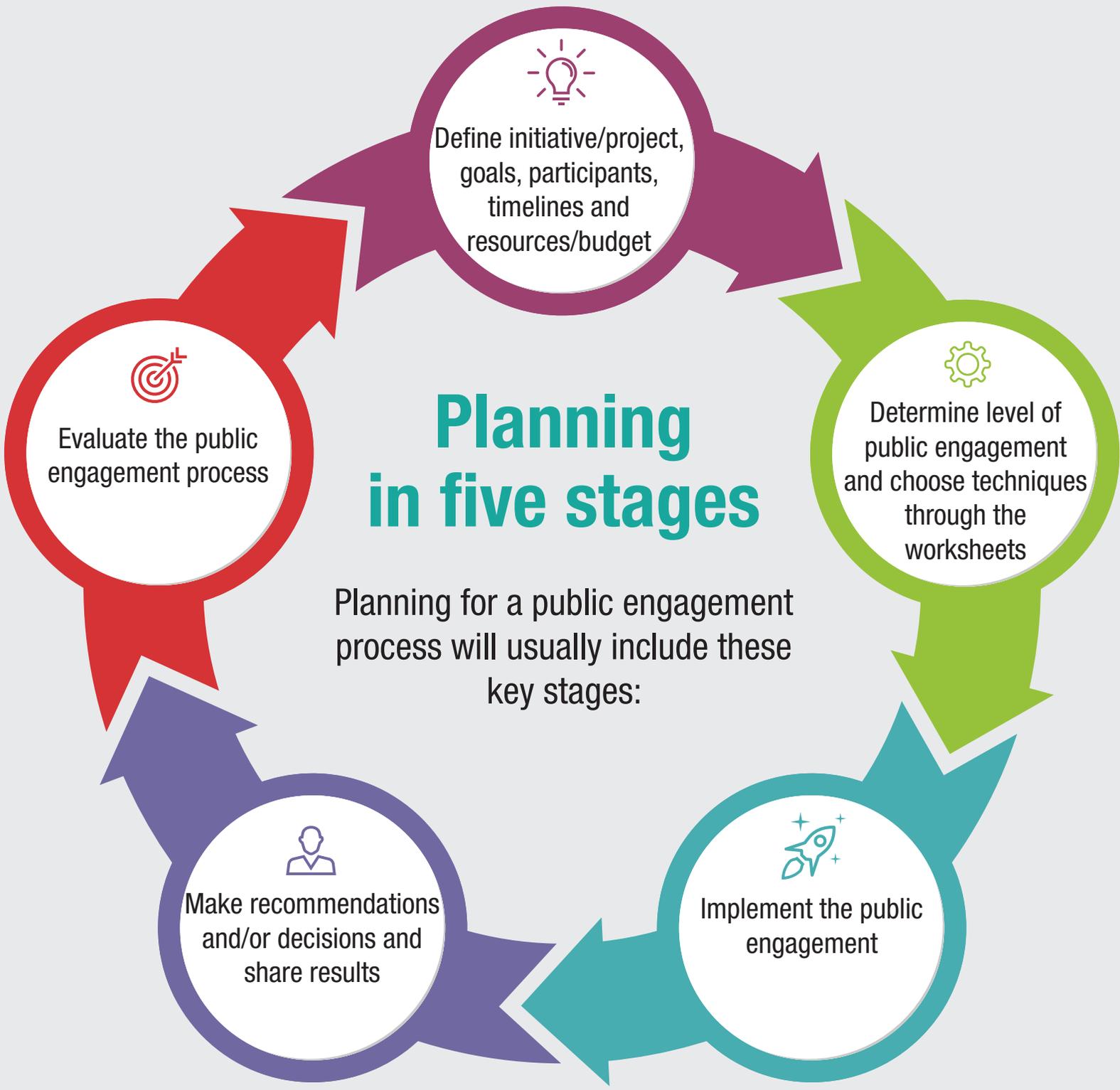
Public engagement continuum – level of engagement



The various levels of engagement should not be considered in isolation of the others. Not all projects and initiatives require the same level of engagement. This framework and the worksheets help guide which level of engagement and which techniques will be used. These can be amended based on resident feedback.

Level of Engagement	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Who	City-employee initiated	Predominantly City employee-initiated	Residents, council and City employees	Residents, council and City employees	This will usually be driven by council.
What	The first step for all public engagement.	Effective when the direction of an issue is constrained by time, budget, technical and/or statutory requirements, but there is an opportunity for residents to influence details.	Requires a more open timeframe.	Requires more time and/or resources/ budget allocated.	This will usually be driven by council.
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 and alternatives.	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 considered and evaluated and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and look to incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The content above has been adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)





1 - Define the initiative/project, goals, participants, timelines and resources/budget

Determine the objectives and level of engagement

The goals should be defined to help determine the level(s) of public engagement. The following examples can help identify the objectives of engagement:

- Obtain feedback from residents – including innovative ideas;
- Build cooperative relationships;
- Hear interests and concerns early in the process;
- Gather a wide range of options for solving problems or improving services;
- Reduce likelihood of delays in implementing new initiatives; and
- Develop better solutions.

Who should be involved?

Consider how residents will be involved. Not all residents will be impacted in the same way or have the same level of interest in a project. The list below offers some examples:

- General public
- Landowners, residents and resident associations
- Community and neighbourhood organizations/associations/steering committees/working groups
- Businesses and business associations
- Professional associations
- Charities and service clubs
- Agencies, boards, commissions
- Other levels of government
- School boards and local schools
- Student organizations
- Not-for-profit organizations and groups
- Indigenous peoples
- Labour organizations
- Other participants

Timelines and resources

Timelines and resources have an impact on public engagement. Some times may not work for everyone wishing to participate and this is one of the reasons why more than one technique should be used. City employees have to identify both the human and financial resources required to implement the public engagement program.



2 - Determine the level of public engagement and techniques

The level of engagement depends on the project/initiative, timelines and resources and could change depending on public input. The techniques are outlined in the worksheets.

Depending on the scope of the project, the goals, budget, timelines and level of engagement, City employees will select a number of techniques to engage residents. The selection of a technique is at the discretion of City employees and will consider resident input.



3 - Implementation

Communicating and encouraging participation

A communication plan — separate from the public engagement plan — will be established to ensure residents are provided with information and made aware of public engagement opportunities. City employees will select accessible locations for engagement. If the engagement activity takes place online, background material will be readily accessible at CityofKingston.ca.



4 - Make recommendations and/or decisions and share results

Reporting back on decision-making will vary depending on the complexity of the issues. Decision-making that requires council approval will include a section in the council report that will summarize activities and how the feedback was considered in the recommendations and/or decisions.

When it is up to City employees to make a final decision, information on decision-making will be provided on the City website along with a summary of the engagement, comments and rationale for the decisions reached.



5 - Evaluation

Evaluation closes the loop by measuring the effectiveness of the public engagement and identifying opportunities for improvement. Evaluation techniques can include: informal discussions, interviews, and a participant evaluation form.

The following are key questions that should be asked during the evaluation:

- Did the engagement reach interested people and ask the right questions?
- Did you as a participant feel you were heard?
- Did the chosen engagement levels and techniques accommodate the needs of participants?
- Did the input provide information that had an impact on the recommendations and/or decisions?