

Public Engagement Employee Guide

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Government of
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Contents

Introduction 1
 Using this Guide..... 1

What is Public Engagement?..... 3
 Defining Public Engagement..... 3
 Why Engage?..... 4
 GNWT Public Engagement Guiding Principles 5

International Association of Public Participation Model..... 6

Public Engagement Planning Steps 8
 Step 1: Define the decision..... 8
 Step 2: Identify partners and stakeholders..... 9
 Step 3: Craft an issue statement 11
 Step 4: Identify the decision-making steps 11
 Step 5: Assess engagement expectations 12
 Step 6: Identify step-specific public engagement objectives 12

Creating a Public Engagement Plan 14
 Section 1: Project Summary and Context..... 14
 Section 2: Public Engagement Objectives 15
 Section 3: Information and Data Gathering Techniques 15
 Section 4: Information and Data Management, Analysis and Results Reporting..... 15
 Section 5: Evaluation 17
 Section 6: Supporting Documents..... 17

Final Thoughts..... 19

Worksheet A – Defining the Issue 20

Worksheet B -- Identifying Partners/Stakeholders and Issues..... 22

Worksheet C -- Identifying Steps in the Decision-Making Process..... 23

Worksheet D – Assessment of Engagement Expectations..... 24

Worksheet E – Identifying the Public Engagement Objectives for Each Step 26

Worksheet F – Public Engagement Plan Template 28

Worksheet G – Technique Selection Assessment..... 29

Worksheet H – Information and Data Management, Analysis and Reporting..... 31

Worksheet I – Public Engagement Evaluation 32

Introduction

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) values the opinions and experiences of Northwest Territories (NWT) residents and recognizes the need for meaningful opportunities for public input. Our people are our greatest resource. Leveraging the voices of our people will help build a collaborative, trusted government and improve territory-wide government decision-making.

In March 2018, the GNWT established the [Open Government Policy](#), which commits the GNWT to establishing Open Dialogue guidelines aimed at making our public engagement practices more coordinated and consistent. The *Government of the Northwest Territories Public Engagement Employee Guide* (the Employee Guide) establishes these guidelines by providing a common approach and resources to support public engagement planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation.

Using this Guide

Sharing knowledge and experience across the GNWT helps us to advance and improve the way we do public engagement. All GNWT employees are encouraged to review the Employee Guide and supporting resources, and to consider how the principles and practices of public engagement relate to and impact your work.

Strengthening the GNWT's approach to public engagement requires that we build employee capacity in program areas responsible for the public engagement and also within corporate services divisions – specifically policy and communications. Building capacity at the corporate level to provide support to program areas helps ensure public engagement practices are consistent within and across departments and are in line with the GNWT-wide approach. As such, program area staff that frequently conduct public engagement, and those that provide corporate support for these program areas, are encouraged to take specialized and in-depth training on public engagement planning and techniques, in addition to regularly reviewing the Employee Guide and related resources.

This Employee Guide reflects the [International Association of Public Participation](#) (IAP2) model, which includes in-depth training courses, resources and certification opportunities to better understand the model and how to apply it. GNWT employees who are involved in public engagement planning and implementation are encouraged to use the IAP2 resources. In cases where public engagements are highly complex and/or contentious, the IAP2 organization also provides information on public engagement consultant services to assist with some or all aspects of the engagement.

The Employee Guide and supporting resources provide high-level guidance, best practices, and processes for interdepartmental collaboration and consistency in public engagement. These are complementary resources and do not replace IAP2 resources and training. Public engagement is more art than science. The approach outlined in the Employee Guide and supporting resources is intended to adapt to specific circumstances and needs of GNWT employees. GNWT departments

and agencies remain accountable for making decisions, developing capacity, contracting services as needed, and ensuring their public engagement practices are as effective and meaningful as possible.

Strengthening and fine-tuning the GNWT's approach to public engagement is an evolving process. The creation of the Employee Guide and supporting resources is a significant step in our transition to greater coordination and consistency of GNWT public engagement practices. We will continue to build on, review and amend our public engagement approach, and will make additional tools, templates and training resources available to support GNWT employees.

If you have any feedback or inquiries regarding this document or the GNWT's overall approach to public engagement, you can provide them to engagement@gov.nt.ca. For further information about the GNWT's approach to Open Government, please visit the [Open Government SharePoint site](#) and the public [Open Government website](#).

What is Public Engagement?

Public engagement, in a general sense, is based on the belief that residents should have, and want to have, a say in the decisions that affect their lives. But what do we mean by “public engagement” and how does this fit within the political context of the NWT?

Defining Public Engagement

The Employee Guide uses the term “public” in reference to “public engagement” to capture the full range of participants that an engagement may cover. The “public” used in this context can refer not only to the public at large (the entire NWT population), but also to specific targeted demographic or regional groups, the users of a specific government program or service, Indigenous and community government partners, non-government organizations (NGOs), and businesses and industry associations. The use of the word “public” throughout this document is intended to capture any or all of the above groups, unless otherwise specified.

The word “engagement” is understood in a number of ways as well. Under the [Intergovernmental Relations Policy](#), our Premier and Ministers foster our government-to-government relationships through “political engagement” with other levels of government, including Indigenous, federal, provincial, territorial and international.¹ GNWT departments and agencies “engage” with community and Indigenous government organizations, NGOs, businesses, industry, and community partners through ongoing activity, initiatives, programs, and services collaborations. The GNWT also “engages” and collects valuable information through client satisfaction surveys, and interacts with NWT residents every day through regular communication channels such as news releases, social media, and individual interactions and inquiries for assistance or information.

While all of the above forms of engagement are essential for good governance, it is important to distinguish these forms of engagement from the definition of “public engagement” used in the context of this guide. For the purposes of the Employee Guide, “public engagement” refers to activities that are:

- Related to and driven by a specific government decision, action, initiative, project, program or service, outside of the government’s day-to-day business.²
- Time-bound in nature, where there is a finite engagement period, after which a decision will be made.

¹ Regarding the GNWT’s relationships with community governments, the Intergovernmental Relations Policy specifies these will be managed “in accordance with established legislation and policies, including, but not limited to, the Municipal and Community Affairs Establishment Policy (21.00).”

² For simplicity, the Employee Guide will use the word “decision” throughout the document to refer to all types of government action that may require public engagement (e.g. developing a new piece of legislation or policy, or amending a piece of legislation or policy; developing strategic frameworks and action or implementation plans; creating a new initiative, program or service, or making changes to an existing initiative, program or service; decisions regarding a major infrastructure project).

- Relevant and open to the overall NWT public, or a specific segment of it, at the territorial, regional and/or community level. Specific partners and stakeholders may also be included, but these are in addition to the public.

The Employee Guide is not intended to provide direction regarding the day-to-day engagement and relationships between the GNWT and its partners or the public. It is recognized, however, that not all situations will fit this definition perfectly. In such cases, GNWT employees are welcome and encouraged to use the approach and supporting resources to the extent that they find them useful for their engagement activities, but are not required to do so.

Public Engagement vs. Aboriginal Consultation

“Public engagement” as defined in the Employee Guide is different than the GNWT’s constitutional or legal duty to consult Indigenous governments and organizations when a proposed GNWT decision or action has the potential to adversely impact an asserted or established Aboriginal and/or Treaty right. While Aboriginal consultation (and, where appropriate, accommodation) and public engagement activities may be similar and/or occur simultaneously, it is essential to maintain the distinction between these two processes. Aboriginal consultation is both a common law and constitutional obligation: 1) the common law (or judge-made) duty arises from “the honour of the Crown” and 2) the constitutional duty arises from section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights. Public engagement is a good governance practice.

General Differences between Public Engagement and Aboriginal Consultation

	Public Engagement	Aboriginal Consultation
Type of obligation	Politically advisable (optional)	Common law and constitutional duty (mandatory)
Who can do it	Anyone or any group	Government
Who is the audience	Public (partners and stakeholders)	Indigenous governments and organizations
Focus of discussions	General impacts	Aboriginal and/or Treaty rights
Accommodation	Not required	Where appropriate
Goal	Good governance	Reconciliation

Contact Executive and Indigenous Affairs:

The Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs will help assess a consultation plan to determine if the proposed GNWT decision or action triggers the GNWT’s legal duty to consult, and will provide guidance to ensure the GNWT’s legal requirements for Aboriginal consultation are met.

Why Engage?

The GNWT recognizes the importance of engaging residents on a wide range of important public policy issues, and values the potential of collaborative decision making. The public is more connected, educated and informed than ever before, and expect to participate in the decision-

making process. When the public is engaged, government can use their expertise to make better decisions with the confidence of NWT residents.

Public engagement also plays a key role in the democratic process, by reinvigorating current practices and democratic institutions, bringing meaning to people’s participation, and fostering a two-way dialogue between the public and the government. Through a well-structured dialogue and deliberation process, parties who disagree may come to understand why others hold the position they do, which greatly helps in the long journey towards common ground or compromise.

GNWT Public Engagement Guiding Principles

The GNWT is committed to public engagement practices that support effective and authentic decision-making and reflect the principles of the GNWT’s Open Government Policy.

These principles reflect that commitment and the expectation that all GNWT employees approach public engagement in a way that promotes departmental consistency, strengthens relationships, demonstrates respect, builds trust and models the principles of openness, transparency and accountability.

GNWT Guiding Principles for Public Engagement

Principle 1: Authentic Impact
The GNWT will genuinely listen to all input given during public engagement and consider its potential to impact government decisions and the people of the NWT.
Principle 2: Respect
The GNWT will conduct public engagement in a way that fosters respect, builds trust and strengthens relationships with our partners and all NWT residents.
Principle 3: Open and Timely Communication
The GNWT will provide information on public engagement activities in an open and timely manner so that residents have meaningful opportunities to participate.
Principle 4: Inclusivity and Accessibility
The GNWT will encourage diverse perspectives and promote the inclusion of all viewpoints by taking measures to reduce physical, economic, social, linguistic, cultural, technological and geographical barriers to participation in public engagement activities.
Principle 5: Coordination and Continuous Improvement
The GNWT will work toward achieving greater coordination and consistency in our engagement practices, and will strive for continuous improvement through evaluation of our overall approach and activities.
Principle 6: Transparency and Accountability
The GNWT’s public engagement activities and their resulting decisions will support and strengthen its commitment to greater openness, transparency and accountability.

International Association of Public Participation Model

There is no “one-size-fits-all” in public engagement; nor does every government decision require public engagement. Each decision process requires a tailored approach and resources to address the unique needs and circumstances associated with that process.

The GNWT’s public engagement approach is based on the foundations developed by the [International Association of Public Participation \(IAP2\)](#). The IAP2 is an international association of public engagement practitioners (who use the term “public participation”) with the intent to promote and improve the practice of public engagement throughout the world. The IAP2 model is built on a set of [Core Values](#) and identifies engagement levels on a Public Participation Spectrum which aims to help practitioners identify public participation objectives.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum



	Inform	Seek input³	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them with 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 the 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.

©International Association of Public Participation www.IAP2.org

³ The IAP2 model uses the word “Consult” for this level on the spectrum. To avoid confusion around the GNWT’s more common use of the word “consult” in the context of the government’s legal duty to consult on matters that have the potential to have an adverse impact on asserted or established Aboriginal and/or treaty rights, the Employee Guide replaces the word “Consult” on the IAP2 spectrum with “Seek Input”.

The IAP2 Spectrum is designed to help select the participation level that defines the public's role and to formulate the public engagement objectives that drive the step-by-step and overall process. Each level of public engagement and the accompanying objective suggests that a commitment is being made to the public, and the GNWT promises to take action to achieve it. This work is part of the pre-planning process required to prepare for public engagement, which is covered in the next section.

Public Engagement Planning Steps

Public engagement planning is included from the outset of any government decision-making process. The earlier it is determined whether and how public engagement should be undertaken, the more likely such activities will be successful. Deciding whether or not public engagement is appropriate, and if it is, how it should be undertaken, requires a number of pre-planning steps:

- Step 1:** Define the decision
- Step 2:** Define partners and stakeholders
- Step 3:** Craft an issue statement
- Step 4:** Identify the decision-making steps
- Step 5:** Assess engagement expectations
- Step 6:** Identify step-specific public engagement objectives

This section outlines a practical step-by-step approach GNWT employees can use to identify and examine the necessary considerations in deciding whether and how to engage the public on a decision.

Step 1: Define the decision

In deciding whether or not to conduct public engagement, it is important to first establish a clear understanding of the decision to be made. [Worksheet A](#) provides a list of questions to help define the decision to be made. Once the decision to be made is defined, the GNWT must consider whether to undertake public engagement to inform that decision.

The most important question in deciding to conduct public engagement is determining *whether or not* there is truly a willingness and opportunity to learn from and respond to ideas generated by the public to impact the decision. In cases where a decision has already been made and public input will not influence the decision, undertaking public engagement may be viewed as being “in bad faith” and counterproductive. Participants may feel their contribution was ignored or pointless, which does more to erode the public’s trust in government than not doing public engagement at all. The public then becomes wary of the process and refuses to participate in future public engagement activities.

If there is an opportunity for public engagement to inform a decision, the next step is to establish a decision statement. A decision statement is usually a single sentence about the decision the GNWT is preparing to make, and has a specific structure so that it can inform the steps that follow in the engagement planning process. The decision statement should answer three questions:

1. What is the decision about?
2. Who will make the final decision?
3. What is the timeline, or deadline, for the decision?

For example, a decision statement about the development of the Open Government Policy could be:

By March 2018, the GNWT will establish an Open Government Policy to guide efforts by departments and agencies to increase government openness, transparency and accountability.

By clearly articulating what will be decided, by whom, and when, the GNWT can identify who the decision results will impact or interest, and determine the appropriate timeline for public engagement opportunities and objectives.

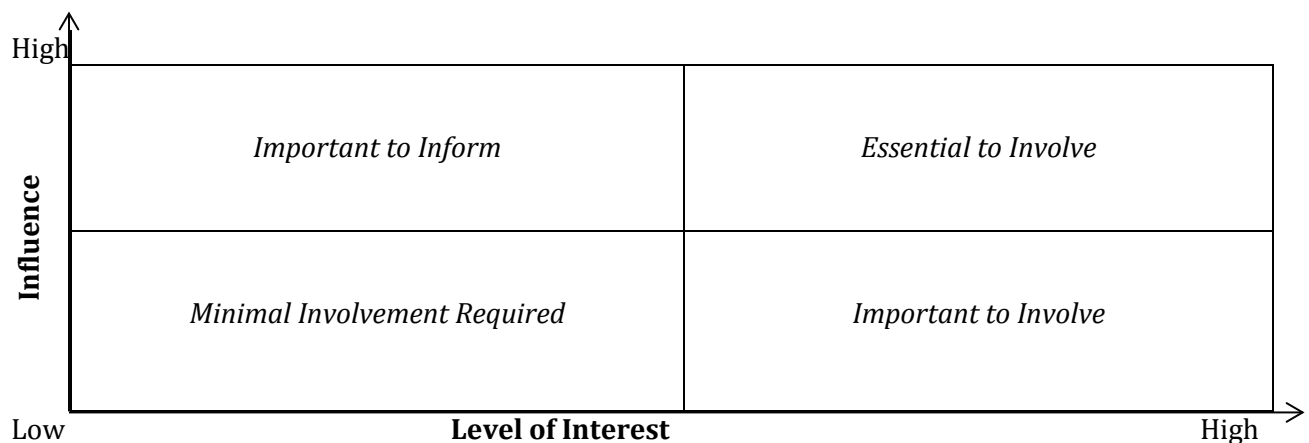
Step 2: Identify partners and stakeholders

When the government considers a decision, it is important to hear from those who may be impacted, or perceive they may be impacted, or who have expertise, experience, or interest in the subject.

As discussed above, the Employee Guide uses the term “public” to represent the general NWT population of individuals, groups, governments and organizations. In this step, we narrow down this definition to individuals and groups that may be affected by or wish to provide input through engagement as “partners and stakeholders”. We include in this definition any individual or group that may:

- Be directly or indirectly affected by the decision;
- Have an interest in the decision;
- Have a role in or influence over some aspect of the decision;
- Have something to offer the decision; and/or
- Impact the GNWT’s ability to carry out the decision.

Identifying who should take part in public engagement activities is a key aspect of preparing for a public engagement process. Partner and stakeholder mapping – a process by which organizations, groups and individuals who have an interest in the decision to be made are accounted for – can be used to guide public engagement process design efforts. Partners and stakeholders can be mapped according to their level of influence and level of interest, as noted in the figure below⁴:



Using the word “stakeholder” to refer to Indigenous governments, particularly in the context of Aboriginal consultation, can be problematic as it diminishes the nature of these groups as rights-holders and their important role in government decision-making in the NWT. We have already

⁴ Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Office of Public Engagement, *Public Engagement Guide*, https://ope.gov.nl.ca/publications/pdf/OPE_PEGuide.pdf

specified public engagement is distinct from Aboriginal consultation, but for the purposes of the Employee Guide, we will use the term “partners and stakeholders” with the intention of being respectful and inclusive of all potential groups or individuals who may have an interest in a public engagement opportunity, regardless of their role. Partners and stakeholders can include Indigenous and community governments, NGOs, individual businesses and industry associations, the general public, or any subset of the public.

As part of the pre-planning process for public engagement, use [Worksheet B](#) to conduct your own preliminary assessment of potential partners and stakeholders, their anticipated issues of interest or concern, and the anticipated level of interest or concern on each issue. Additional considerations that will affect the way partners and stakeholders are engaged may include:

- Understanding the state of the GNWT’s current relationship and/or previous experience with these partners and stakeholders on this issue or in general;
- Anticipating any divergence in the interests of these partners and stakeholders, along geographical, socio-economic, cultural, political, gender or gender identity, age, occupation, or other lines;
- Identifying the influential groups and individuals in the community, and the groups or individuals already involved in similar issues;
- Identifying potentially affected partners and stakeholders who may not be represented by an existing group.

Gaining an understanding of who your partners and stakeholders are and their potential concerns can be accomplished by reaching out to your existing contacts and networks for preliminary discussions on the planned engagement, and by leveraging these relationships to reach out to new potential partners and stakeholders. To build trust and obtain “buy-in”, start building relationships and seeking feedback from partners and stakeholders early in the process.

By identifying partners and stakeholders, and analyzing their interests and concerns, you can deduce the underlying values that drive them. It is also useful to examine the values that drive the GNWT’s issues and concerns, and where there is commonality and divergence in these values.

Examples of values may include:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Community | • Cultural respect | • Individual rights |
| • Fiscal responsibility | • Due process | • Fairness |
| • Openness and transparency | • Environmental sustainability | • Economic growth and development |
| • Accountability | • Aesthetic quality | • Equity |
| • Self-determination | • Integrity | • Health and safety |

Identifying the underlying values of different partners and stakeholders and the GNWT helps move from positions (surface statements of where we stand) to interests (the underlying reasons or motivations that explain why we take a certain position). In doing so, you can begin to understand

where different parties come from and find creative solutions that balance the interests of all parties.

Step 3: Craft an issue statement

Once public engagement is identified as appropriate and a preliminary analysis of potential partners and stakeholders and their anticipated issues, concerns and values has been conducted, the next step is to craft an issue statement that summarizes the decision to be made, and the values to be taken into account. The issue statement includes one or two sentences that express the problem clearly with as few words as possible. It does not state a solution.

The issue statement frames the topic and the scope of the decision in a way that considers the needs of all parties – partners, stakeholders, and the GNWT – and the decision process that will be undertaken, as appropriate for the topic. The issue statement should:

- Provide a clear statement of the problem to be solved or the issue to be explored that will result in a decision;
- Articulate the challenge/opportunity (e.g. how do we do ‘x’ while maintaining ‘y’);
- Outline the givens and constraints of the decision;
- Reflect the values/interests of partners, stakeholders and the GNWT to the greatest extent possible.

For example, an issue statement for the development of the Open Government Policy could be:

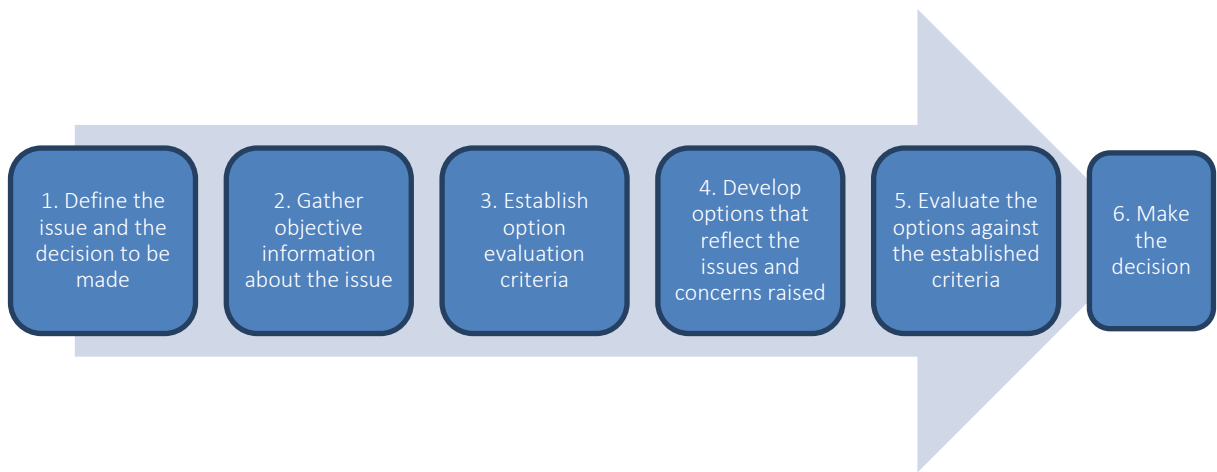
Given the need to increase the GNWT’s openness, transparency and accountability, what are the issues an Open Government Policy and approach should include, while upholding necessary protections against releasing protected data and information?

The combination of the decision statement in Step 1 and the issue statement in this step will form the basis of your communications messaging for public engagement on the decision to be made.

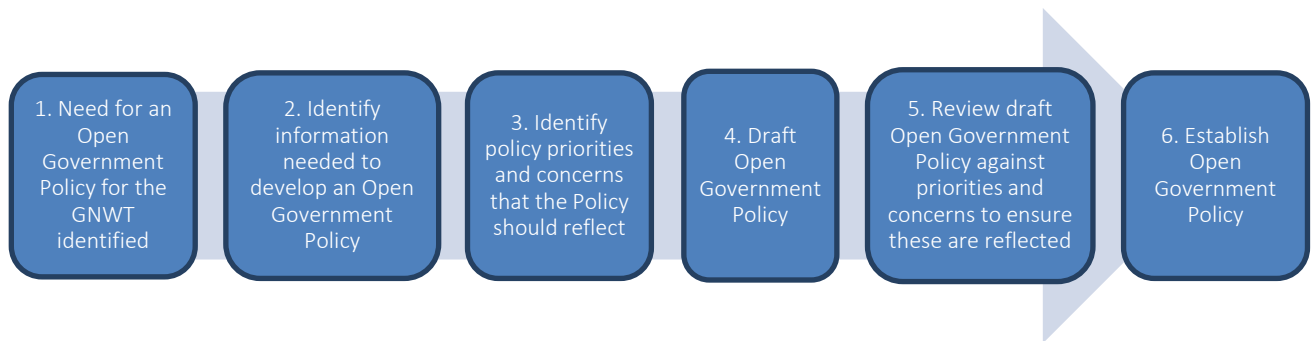
Step 4: Identify the decision-making steps

Effective public engagement follows a logical and transparent process that allows participants to understand how and why the decision was made. The best way to achieve this is to integrate public engagement into the decision-making process itself. This requires first identifying the steps in the decision-making process specific to your decision.

While all decisions and the processes by which they are made are unique, in general, decision-making processes follow a fundamental series of steps:



GNWT employees can use this general model to identify the steps to arrive at their decision. For example, the steps for the development of the Open Government Policy would be as follows:



[Worksheet C](#) helps GNWT departments and agencies identify decision-making steps specific to their decision, including timelines, processes, and authorities.

Step 5: Assess engagement expectations

Once the public input decisions are identified, a preliminary list of partners, stakeholders, and their interests has been developed, and the decision-making process steps are identified, the next step is to determine the overall public engagement level on the IAP2 Spectrum, based on public and GNWT expectations.

[Worksheet D](#) provides an Engagement Assessment with questions to assess the expected engagement level. The assessment of public engagement expectations on government decisions can be used to identify appropriate engagement levels on the IAP2 Spectrum, keeping in mind the greater the anticipated expectations, the greater the level of recommended public involvement.

Step 6: Identify step-specific public engagement objectives

Using the decision-making steps identified above, we can integrate public engagement objectives into the decision-making process. This involves identifying the public engagement objective(s) at each step of the decision-making process by assessing the steps that benefit from public input,

which partners and stakeholders should be involved at each step, and at what level (based on the IAP2 Spectrum) they should be engaged.

There is an opportunity, hypothetically, to involve partners and stakeholders at each step in the decision-making process. This does not mean, however, that this would be appropriate or advisable. Seeking intensive public participation throughout the entire process would likely not be appropriate or feasible in most cases, would cause “engagement fatigue” for partners and stakeholders, and would lead to frustration, a loss of trust and reluctance to participate in future engagements. In practice, the most appropriate role for partners and stakeholders should be determined as part of each decision step, likely leading the GNWT to engage on a select few of the decision steps.

[Worksheet E](#) provides questions to help identify the public engagement objectives, as well as generic wording for objectives at each step and level of the IAP2 Spectrum that can be customized to your engagement.

Creating a Public Engagement Plan

Once the pre-planning steps are complete, the public engagement plan can be developed. A public engagement plan is a useful tool that serves as a roadmap for the overall process. The Employee Guide provides a brief description of the section content, as well as tips for a more effective public engagement, for each of the following sections of a public engagement plan:

- **Section 1:** Project Summary and Context (background, decision statement, potential stakeholders, decision-making process)
- **Section 2:** Public Engagement Objectives (overall and specific to each decision step)
- **Section 3:** Information and Data-Gathering Techniques
- **Section 4:** Information and Data Collection, Analysis and Results Reporting
- **Section 5:** Evaluation
- **Section 6:** Supporting Documents (budget, timelines, dates, roles and responsibilities, and other important requirements)

[Worksheet F](#) is a public engagement plan template.

Section 1: Project Summary and Context

Using the information from *Step 1: Define the decision to be made* draft a brief summary of the decision to be made (decision statement), why it requires public engagement, and how public input will influence the decision.

Background

This section outlines baseline data, background, and context information related to the public engagement topic and ultimately answers the question: what is driving the need for the decision? The problem statement should include:

- The context/situation/events leading to the need for a decision to be made;
- The constraints of the situation, including financial, political, legal/regulatory, public expectations;
- The opportunities the decision may present.

Partners and Stakeholders

This section includes the preliminary assessment of partners and stakeholders and their anticipated interests and concerns from *Step 2: Identify partners and stakeholders, their issues of interest and concern, and their values*.

Project Decision Process Overview

This section outlines the steps taken to make the decision, including timelines, approval processes, and who makes the final decision as outlined in *Step 4: Identify the steps in the decision-making process*.

Section 2: Public Engagement Objectives

Overall Level of Engagement

This section describes the overall level of public engagement on the IAP2 spectrum to make the decision identified in *Step 5: Assess engagement expectations and identify an overall level of engagement*.

Public Engagement Objectives for each step the Decision-Making Process

This section outlines public engagement objectives for each step of the decision-making process, based on specific public engagement levels on the IAP2 Spectrum with various partners and stakeholders as identified in *Step 6: Identify specific public engagement objectives at each step of the decision-making process*.

Section 3: Information and Data Gathering Techniques

Based on the specific public engagement objectives at each step of the decision-making process, this section outlines the information-gathering tools and techniques that could be used. IAP2's Public Participation Techniques fall into three formats:

- Sharing Information (e.g. news releases, fact sheets, non-interactive website)
- Collecting and Compiling Input (e.g. comment summaries, surveys, voting)
- Bringing People Together (e.g. public meetings, open houses, focus groups, advisory groups)

Techniques can be used in different formats and at different levels on the IAP2 Spectrum. The level on the IAP2 Spectrum where a technique is being used determines how it is implemented. While using a certain technique may achieve more than one objective at a time, most decision steps require multiple techniques to meet all objectives.

[Worksheet G](#) provides a list of engagement technique examples from the IAP2 Public Participation Toolbox. The techniques list serves as a guide or suggestion, not a classification.

Section 4: Information and Data Management, Analysis and Results Reporting

This section of your public engagement plan outlines the processes for managing, analyzing and reporting public engagement activities results. To allow decision-makers to use the information and data obtained through public engagement, an effective content management and analysis system with three main components is required:

- **Comment management:** manage the various comments submitted, regardless of the format;
- **Content analysis:** assess what the comments actually say; and
- **Comment responses:** determine responses to comments.

Information and Data Management and Analysis

Public engagement planning should incorporate comment management and analysis processes based on understanding how and when the information will be used. Questions to consider include:

- What information is needed to make the decision?
- In what format should the information be captured?
- Where will the information be stored and how will it be managed in compliance with the GNWT's [Recorded Information Management Policy](#) and the [Management of Electronic Information Policy](#)?
- What type of reports and summaries will need to be produced?
- What type of linkages will need to be made, e.g. which partners and stakeholders care about which issues?
- How will input be responded to and how will we “close the loop” with partners and stakeholders?

Collecting irrelevant information or input that can't or won't be used in the decision-making process adds to the engagement cost, and can undermine the process. GNWT employees need to work with records management and privacy officials to ensure they are following applicable legislation and policies regarding the collection, use, storage, sharing, retention and disposal of personal information and other records.

TIPS:

- A good comment management system should include the following characteristics:
 - Be easy to search;
 - Categorize partner and stakeholder issues;
 - Easily produce necessary reports; and
 - Quantify input received.
- To simplify the data entry process, first establish the comment management process and the appropriate fields for categorizing the information gathered.

There are many different techniques and approaches for analyzing the input received through public engagement, and they vary according to the amount and complexity of input received. The goal of this analysis is to provide decision-makers with an accurate reflection of public comment and, in doing so, to help make the best possible evaluation of those comments.

Reporting Results

Communicating public engagement results back to participants is a fundamental principle of engagement. Communicating results back to the public ensures those who contributed understand how their input was acknowledged and understood, how it was or was not used to impact the decision, and why. Ideally, where possible, information should be shared with the public (and particularly with participants) on an ongoing basis during a public engagement process, rather than as a one-time event at the end of the process.

The appropriate way to respond to participants will depend on what is deemed appropriate for each public engagement; while direct responses may be appropriate for some individuals or groups,

a public “What We Heard” document – or a combination of both – may work better for others. Shared information could include:

- Summary of discussions and/or input received;
- Possible solutions considered;
- Areas where opinions diverged and/or converged; and
- How input was considered and how it did or did not influence the decision.

[Worksheet H](#) provides a table for tracking information and data collection, management, storage, responses and reporting.

Section 5: Evaluation

Evaluating a public engagement is a critical yet often overlooked step. Understanding what worked well and what needs improvement will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of future engagement activities. This section of your public engagement plan outlines the evaluation of the public engagement process and activities to ensure resources have been used in an efficient and effective manner, and that continuous improvement occurs in GNWT public engagement practices.

Some elements to keep in mind when planning an evaluation of your public engagement activities are:

- Consider your engagement goal and how you will determine if you achieved it;
- Ensure the results are observable and measurable;
- Determine if the information gathered was used to inform the discussion and/or implementation of public policy.

[Worksheet I](#) provides a table of potential evaluation questions for your public engagement. Departments are encouraged to seek guidance on their evaluation from their departmental evaluation staff (where available) or the Program Review Office, Department of Finance.

Section 6: Supporting Documents

Detailed supporting documents are essential to the success of a public engagement plan. Include at minimum the following supporting documents:

- Project Schedule
- Budget
- Personnel roles and responsibilities
- Logistics Plan (including venues, catering, etc.)
- Communications Plan

Examples of these documents will be available in the supporting resources on the GNWT’s [Open Government SharePoint site](#). Your department’s Communications Team will develop the Communications Plan. GNWT employees are encouraged to tailor these documents or develop their own to meet the needs of their public engagement.

General tips for effective public engagement:

- Make public engagement planning an early component of your project planning.
- Involve partners and stakeholders in the public engagement plan development. This will help mitigate challenges related to:
 - Preventing scheduling conflicts with other community events to avoid “engagement fatigue”;
 - Demonstrating respect for cultural norms and practices;
 - Addressing participation barriers to ensure all interested partners and stakeholders can participate in a meaningful way; and
 - Improving efficient use of time and resources.
- Ensure that your project planning includes an adequate amount of time and collaboration with the following internal GNWT divisions and to ensure a smooth process:
 - Cabinet Secretariat (EIA), to help establish timelines for review the relevant by Deputy Minister Committee, Committee-of-Cabinet, and Cabinet, as applicable
 - Aboriginal Consultation and Relations (EIA), to ensure Aboriginal consultation needs are identified and met, as applicable
 - Francophone Affairs Secretariat (ECE) to ensure French language requirements are met
- Strive for openness, transparency and accountability throughout the process. Remember: The public may not always agree with your decision, but they should be clear about how you got there.
- Make use of available supporting resources and training opportunities to build capacity – particularly within corporate services divisions.

IAP2 Words of Wisdom:

- “Do it right or do it over”
- “Bring them on the journey”
- “Facts + Values = Sustainable Decisions”
- “The question is the key”
- “Go slow to go fast”
- “Good plans make good decisions”
- “Nothing about us without us”
- “The government grants permits – the community grants permission”
- “If you are not assessing you are guessing”

Final Thoughts

Public engagement can be unpredictable, contentious, and often emotionally charged. It can be stressful, and at times, messy. Although the goal of a project is to reach public, partner, and stakeholder satisfaction, this is not always achieved. The purpose of engagement is not to make everyone happy, it is to ensure all voices are heard and considered when the GNWT is making decisions that impact the public.

The GNWT is committed to building capacity and creating processes to improve the consistency, coordination and effectiveness of our public engagement practices. Recognizing, valuing and leveraging public knowledge through engagement and applying it to government decision-making will ultimately lead to better policies and decisions, reduced conflict, enhanced civic participation and a strengthened political system.

We invite you to send feedback or inquiries regarding this document or the GNWT's overall public engagement approach to engagement@gov.nt.ca. For further information about the GNWT's approach to Open Government, please visit the [Open Government SharePoint site](#) and the public [Open Government website](#).

Worksheet A – Defining the Issue

What is the topic and planned outcome/objective of the decision? (i.e. new policy or legislation, amendment to existing policy or legislation, a new strategy, changes to a program or service, etc.)

What is the current context/situation, and what is driving the need for the decision?

Who is the lead department? Which other departments are involved (if applicable)?

What approval processes are required? Who makes the final decision, and through what process?

Are other internal and external bodies involved in the decision-making process and if so, what is their role?

Has an assessment been done to determine if the proposed decision or action triggers the GNWT's legal duty to consult?

- If there is a duty to consult, GNWT employees must work with the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to ensure the GNWT's legal requirements are met for Aboriginal consultation and, as required, accommodation.

What is the timeline for the decision?

What aspects of the decision have already been decided?

Are there aspects of the decision that could be open to public input? If yes, what are they?

- If decisions are not open to input, engagement is not appropriate for your project.

Worksheet B — Identifying Partners/Stakeholders and Issues

Issue	GNWT's Assessed Level of Impact <i>N=None</i> <i>L=Low</i> <i>M=Moderate</i> <i>H=High</i> <i>U=Unknown</i>	Partners/Stakeholders Assessment of Impact			
		Partner or Stakeholder Group	Potential impact on group (actual or perceived)	Anticipated Level of concern <i>N=None</i> <i>L=Low</i> <i>M=Moderate</i> <i>H=High</i> <i>U=Unknown</i>	Anticipated Partner or Stakeholder Values and/or Interests ⁵

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⁵ Examples of potential partner or stakeholder values and/or interests may include:

- Community
- Fiscal responsibility
- Openness and transparency
- Accountability
- Self-determination
- Cultural respect
- Due process
- Environmental sustainability
- Aesthetic quality
- Integrity
- Individual rights
- Fairness
- Economic growth and development
- Equity
- Health and safety

Worksheet C — Identifying Steps in the Decision-Making Process

Step in the Decision-Making Process	Description of Activity	Approval Process / Authority	Timeline
Define the problem/ opportunity and decision to be made			
Gather information			
Establish criteria for decision			
Develop options/ alternatives			
Evaluate options/ alternatives against criteria			
Make decision			

Worksheet D – Assessment of Engagement Expectations

ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS – Assessment Questions	Check the box that applies:				
	Very low	Low	Mod	High	Very high
1. Is there legislation or regulation requiring engagement with the public or specific partners or stakeholders for the decision?					
2. What level of promises been made to partners and stakeholders by one or more political leaders about their ability to give input into the decision?					
3. What level of impact (real or perceived) would the proposed decision have on the public?					
4. How important are the potential impacts of the decision to the public?					
5. What is the level of public interest in the proposed decision?					
6. To what extent does the GNWT believe the public could help improve the outcome of the decision?					
7. What is the potential for the public to influence the decision-making process?					
8. What is the level of difficulty and complexity in making the decision?					
9. What is the anticipated level of public controversy?					
10. What is the anticipated level of media interest?					
11. Are there adequate capacity and financial resources available to conduct meaningful public engagement?					
12. Is there adequate time available to conduct meaningful public engagement?					
Scoring: Total the number of checks in each column					
Multiply the total of checks in each column by the weighting in each column	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5
Enter the result for each column					
Add all the column scores together and enter the result					
Divide the result by the number of questions	/12				
Enter the result. This is the average score .					

Score Range	Interpretation	Generally recommended level of public engagement for this project
1 – 2	Very low to low	Work with key stakeholders to identify a comprehensive stakeholder information program at the <i>Inform</i> level to satisfy public concerns.
2 – 3	Moderate	Public engagement is probably a good idea. Consider how the <i>Seek Input</i> level will work with the issues and interests of stakeholders.
3 - 4	Moderate to high	Consider participation at least at the <i>Seek Input</i> level and probably at the <i>Involve</i> level.
4 – 5	High to very high	Evaluate how stakeholder issues, interests, and internal considerations can be accommodated best at the <i>Involve</i> level or at the <i>Collaborate</i> or <i>Empower</i> levels, depending on other circumstances.

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Worksheet E – Identifying the Public Engagement Objectives for Each Step

In developing public engagement objectives for each step of the decision-making process, consider:

- What the engagement process is trying to achieve;
- What the GNWT hopes to gain from engaging partners and stakeholders to influence decision-making;
- What the public expects or needs from the engagement;
- Partners and stakeholders' perceptions and their level of interest;
- Potential key issues and challenges;
- Expectations resulting from past engagement processes;
- Implications for any future public engagement processes that will follow this project.

The table below contains sample public engagement objectives that staff can adjust to specify the relevant engagement partners and stakeholders (where applicable), the corresponding IAP2 Spectrum level of engagement, and the specific details of the decision to be made.

Increasing Impact on the Decision

DECISION STEP	INFORM	SEEK INPUT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	GOAL: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solutions.	GOAL: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions	GOAL: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	GOAL: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	GOAL: To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Define Problem/ Opportunity and Decision to be Made	By (date), communicate to the public about the scope of the decision to be made.	By (date), obtain public input on the problem to ensure the scope is clearly stated and public values are reflected.	By (date), work with key stakeholders to develop a clear problem statement that reflects the decision scope and relevant public values.	By (date), partner with key stakeholders to create a clear problem statement that reflects the decision scope and relevant public values to be considered.	By (date), facilitate a process for key stakeholders to create a clearly defined statement of the decision that reflects the decision scope and relevant public values.
Gather Information	By (date), identify the type of information that will be collected and how it will be used and share it with the public.	Collect public input by (date) to identify issues and technical info relevant to the decision. Communicate to the public what was heard and what info was collected.	By (date), work directly with the public to identify what information is needed to allow stakeholders to participate in a meaningful way, how it will be collected, and timelines.	Partner with key stakeholders by (date) to identify what information is needed to allow stakeholders to participate in a meaningful way, how it will be collected, and timelines.	By (date), facilitate a process for key stakeholders to identify what information is needed to allow stakeholders to participate in the decision, how it will be collected, and timelines.
Establish Decision Criteria	By (date), identify and communicate the decision criteria that will be used to generate and evaluate options.	By (date), obtain public input regarding possible decision criteria for generating and evaluating options that reflect public and stakeholder values.	By (date), work with key stakeholders to identify decision criteria, reflecting public values, to be considered in generating options.	Gain agreement with key stakeholders by (date) on a set of decision criteria that reflect public values, to be used to generate and evaluate options.	Facilitate a process by (date) for key stakeholders to determine the decision criteria, reflecting public values, to be used to generate and evaluate options.
Develop Options/ Alternatives	By (date), provide information to the public that clearly and completely describes the options and rationale for each.	By (date), gather and review public input to help to identify options that meet the stated criteria and provide the rationale for each.	Work with key stakeholder to identify options that meet the stated criteria and provide the rationale for each.	By (date), partner with key stakeholders to develop a list of options that reflect the identified criteria and stakeholder interests to the greatest extent possible.	By (date), facilitate a process for key stakeholders to develop options that reflect the identified criteria and stakeholder interests and perspectives.
Evaluate Options/ Alternatives against Criteria	By (date), describe how the options have been evaluated, and how well each met the stated decision criteria.	By (date), provide the public with a comparison of how the options met the stated decision criteria and obtain feedback on the process and results.	By (date), work directly with stakeholders to evaluate each of the options against stated decision criteria and consider the input in the final assessment.	Partner with key stakeholders to evaluate the options based on stated decision criteria and use the input to the greatest extent possible.	Develop and facilitate a process for key stakeholders to evaluate options by (date), and provide a clearly stated rationale regarding the assessment of each option.
Make Decision	By (date), share information with the public regarding the decision made, the process and rationale for the decision and how it meets the stated decision criteria.	Seek public input on the decision by (date) and consider the input in making the final decision. Provide a clear description of the rationale and how public input was used.	Work with key stakeholders to make the decision. Announce the decision, providing a clear description of the rationale and how public input was used.	In partnership with key stakeholders, make a decision on the best option. Announce the decision, providing a clear description of the rationale and how public input was used.	Facilitate a process for stakeholders to choose an option and adopt their decision. Announce the decision, providing a clear description of the rationale.

Worksheet F – Public Engagement Plan Template

[Title of Initiative]

Public Engagement Plan

[Date] (draft version [x])

1. Project Summary and Context

Background

Partners and Stakeholders

Project Decision Process Overview

2. Public Engagement Objectives

Overall level of engagement

Public Engagement Objectives for each step of the Decision Process

3. Information and Data Collection Techniques

4. Information and Data Management, Analysis and Reporting

5. Evaluation

6. Supporting Documents

Attach the following supporting documents to the public engagement plan:

- Project Schedule
- Budget
- Staff roles and responsibilities
- Logistical details (e.g. venues, catering, etc. for in-person events)
- Communications Plan

Worksheet G – Technique Selection Assessment

Examples of Tools and Techniques for Public Engagement

Format Options	Technique Examples
<p>Share Information</p>	<p>Awareness Campaigns: Telephone Hotlines, Info Kiosks, Fairs and Events</p>
	<p>Information/Education Programs: Field Offices, Information Repositories, Briefings, Websites, Social Media</p>
	<p>Feedback Mechanisms: Response Summaries, Progress Reports, Newsletters, Direct Mail</p>
<p>Collect and Compile Input</p>	<p>Individual Inquiries: Comment Forms, Resident Feedback Registers, Interviews, Social Media</p>
	<p>Social Science Research: Scientific Surveys and Questionnaires</p>
	<p>Voting</p>
<p>Bring People Together</p>	<p>Open Public Forums: Public Meetings, Open Houses, Symposia, Tours and Field Trips, Revolving Conversations, Fishbowl Processes, Card Storming, Nominal Group Processes, Computer-Assisted Meetings and Workshops</p>
	<p>Specialized Processes: Charrettes, Study Circles, Future Search Conferences, Focused Conversations, World Cafés, Open Space, Appreciative Inquiry Process, Dialogue Techniques, Deliberative Forums</p>
	<p>Representative Participation: Deliberative Polling Processes, Focus Groups, Citizen Juries</p>
	<p>Advisory Groups</p>

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Use the assessment worksheet below to analyze different options for techniques to determine the best technique for your engagement objective. Insert additional columns for each additional technique to provide a comparison.

IAP2 Spectrum level:

- Inform
- Seek Input
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

Decision Step:

- Define decision scope
- Gather Information
- Establish decision criteria
- Develop options
- Evaluate options
- Make decision

Evaluation Criteria	Technique A :	Technique B :
How will it meet the objectives?		
What will it cost and do we have adequate resources to pay for this technique?		
Will this technique reach the right audience?		
Do we have access to the tools and personnel to implement this technique?		
Do we have the expertise to successfully implement this technique or do we need outside support?		
Is there sufficient time to successfully implement the technique?		
Does the technique have a proven track record of success in similar situations or with similar audiences?		
Does the technique coincide with how the public wants to be involved?		
Will it meet all legal requirements?		
Are there any special circumstances that might impact the use of this technique?		

Worksheet H – Information and Data Management, Analysis and Reporting

Public Engagement Objective (from Worksheet E)	Information/Data Collection Technique (from Worksheet G)	How will information/data be managed/stored?	How will information/data be analyzed?	How will we respond to feedback?	How will input be reported?

Worksheet I – Public Engagement Evaluation

Evaluation Question	Performance Indicators (How can we measure it?)	Comments/Analysis
Did you satisfy the goals identified at the outset of the planning process?		
Did your engagement activity adhere to the GNWT’s Principles of Public Engagement set out in this guide?		
Did you effectively map all critical partners and stakeholders and their anticipated interests and concerns?		
Did you include critical partners and stakeholders in the design of your engagement activity?		
Were the tools you chose most appropriate given your unique circumstances and constraints?		

Evaluation Question	Performance Indicators (How can we measure it?)	Comments/Analysis
Were partners and stakeholders given adequate opportunity to participate in all aspects of the process?		
Were the accessibility needs of partners and stakeholders considered?		
Were critical partners and stakeholders provided with adequate information in a timely manner to support their participation?		
Was the received input relevant and valuable?		
Were you able to use it in any way? How?		

Evaluation Question	Performance Indicators (How can we measure it?)	Comments/Analysis
Were all critical issues addressed?		
Was your data and information collection, management and analysis effective?		
Did you allocate sufficient resources (time, human and financial)?		
Was the activity completed within your budget?		
Were participants and/or the public provided with feedback regarding how input was/will be used?		

Evaluation Question	Performance Indicators (How can we measure it?)	Comments/Analysis
Were participants generally satisfied with the activity?		
What worked especially well? How so?		
What did not work very well? How so?		

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