

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

POLICY

SUBJECT:	<b><i>Public Engagement Policy</i></b>	POLICY NO:	<b>A1.23</b>
		CROSS REF.:	
EFFECTIVE DATE:	<b>February 25, 2020</b>	APPROVED BY:	<b>Board</b>
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**A. Purpose**

To establish a framework for public engagement at the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN).

**B. Policy**

The engagement goals of the RDN are:

- That RDN engagement is effectively managed, clear and responsive to the diverse needs of residents.
- The RDN considers the views and interests of residents when developing policies, programs, services and initiatives.

The RDN is committed to improving communication or engagement with residents and stakeholders using a collaborative, transparent and authentic approach. To help build these relationships, an open and meaningful approach will be developed on a case-by-case basis on a variety of plans, projects and initiatives.

**Commitment to Engagement:** The RDN recognizes the value that public engagement provides and recognizes that:

- People desire to participate in decisions that affect them,
- Effective participation facilitates understanding, and
- Effective participation improves decisions.

The RDN supports effective public engagement (also referred to as participation) which is based on three foundations of engagement:

- a) **Values-based:** meaningful participation is focused on talking to people about what matters most to them and what matters most to you.
- b) **Decision-oriented:** outlining the scope of issues under discussion to purposefully come to a conclusion or decision over the course of a process.

- c) **Goal-driven:** outlining the public’s role and potential to influence the issues under discussion with clear objectives of what will be achieved. For example, information is communicated, input or feedback is sought or collaborative development is desired.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors of RDN. Consultation and engagement with First Nations communities occurs independently from the engagement of the broader public and requires a customized approach.

The RDN uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model as the foundation for planning and delivering engagement. IAP2 is an international association whose mission is to advance and extend the practice of public participation through professional development, certification, standards of practice, core values, advocacy and key initiatives with strategic partners around the world. The spectrum below will identify the purpose of engagement and the activities to achieve the engagement goals for each project.

**IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation**

IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.



**Engagement Planning:** Engagement must be done with a purpose and must be organized. Engagement is not required for every project, but elected officials and staff should consider whether it is needed at the commencement of all RDN projects and initiatives. Where engagement is required, an engagement plan should be developed that identifies the level of spectrum that will be used at each phase of the project. This plan provides order, structure, and sets expectations for how input will be used.

Engagement plans will be developed at an early stage in a project and may adopt a multi-phased approach to public engagement that employs different levels of the IAP2 spectrum throughout the process.

All RDN departments will allocate appropriate working time for staff to develop and execute engagement plans and activities.

## Procedure

**Training:** To develop capacity, enhance consistency, and strive for continuous improvement, training in IAP2 and/or engagement tools will be made available to staff. There are various levels and types of training; certain staff may be required to complete deeper training if their jobs entail significant interaction with the public. All RDN departments will allocate appropriate resources and budgets for training.

**Budget:** To ensure adequate resources to implement this policy, an engagement budget line will be considered for all major projects or initiatives.

**Implementation:** This policy will be implemented through a more detailed Engagement Strategy and Toolkit, which outlines best practices to planning, implementing and evaluating effective and meaningful engagement.

## C. RESPONSIBILITIES

RDN Elected Officials:

- Represent residents and connect with them to determine top priorities for engagement.
- Prioritize engagement efforts by working with staff to identify areas where public input can make a meaningful difference to decisions and help set public engagement priorities.
- Help promote engagement initiatives and opportunities in order to ensure a high rate of participation by a wide range of residents.
- Direct residents to the established processes for garnering, monitoring and compiling input, and avoid circumventing these.
- Permit staff to take the lead role in identifying best practices and methods for engaging the public on various issues.
- Consider input gathered from residents and stakeholders when making decisions and clarify the rationale for decisions reached.
- Ensure time and resources are allocated to support successful engagement efforts.

The RDN staff:

- Plan and deliver training opportunities for staff.
- Assist with development of, review and approve all RDN engagement plans.
- Provide engagement advice and support to the organization.
- Consider, for all projects, whether engagement should be conducted.
- Ensure all projects with engagement comply with the Engagement Policy and Workbook.
- Seek advice, support and approval from Corporate Communications as required.
- Allocate staff time and resources for training.
- Work with elected officials to identify where public input can make a meaningful difference to decisions, program development and service delivery.
- Establish channels and processes to clearly identify community priorities for engagement, then ensure that the organization responds.

- Establish and communicate on engagement priorities, then apply a consistent set of policies and procedures in designing and implementing engagement activities.
- Consult with elected officials and consider previous public feedback regarding engagement priorities, process design, framing issues for productive input, effective communications, and increasing engagement over time.
- Ensure timely and respectful communication with all those who engage and show how their input has been used to influence decisions, programs and services.
- Engage in ongoing learning and professional development about public engagement best practices.
- Ensuring that community input is well documented, and that communication efforts are as complete and well-timed as possible.