

Engagement and Consultation Plan
[Title of Engagement Project]
[Department/Agency Name]

Issue Statement

- This section should clearly define the issue that is prompting the consultation and engagement process. The issue statement should be conveyed in one sentence.

Objective(s)

- This section is intended to outline the objective(s) of the engagement process and answer the following three questions:
 1. What are the key questions that this consultation process is intended to answer?
 2. What does the lead department/public body hope to achieve through the consultation process?
 3. Why is this consultation being undertaken at this time?
- This section should also outline any political direction given regarding this engagement, and any public commitments, as set out in a mandate letter, strategic document, Budget, Speech from the Throne, media interview or public speech.

TIP: The following are examples of general engagement objectives that may apply:

- To offer an opportunity for the public to help define a public issue and its causes;
- To determine whether there is consensus among stakeholders on a specific issue;
- To inform stakeholders of a planned change in policy and provide an opportunity for input before a final decision is made;
- To seek information and input on a particular issue to inform the decision making process; and/or
- To gather feedback on a program or service.

Target Audiences

- This section should clearly define the intended audience(s) for the engagement process. Specific attention is required to those individuals or groups, including all genders and underrepresented groups, whose input is most relevant and/or who are most likely to be impacted by a public action or decision. The Office of Women and Gender Equality recommends that Gender Based Analysis + be applied at this stage to ensure differential impacts are considered when identifying the impacted groups of a policy action or decision. This section should include both external and internal audiences.

External Audiences

- External audiences should be clearly defined. However, departments may wish to cite “the general public” in addition to other specific stakeholders or groups.

- Effort should be made to identify specific categories of stakeholders (e.g., industry associations, community sector organizations) as well as defined groups of the population that are being targeted (e.g., parents of school-aged children, seniors).
- Target audiences may also be defined by demographic considerations such as age, occupation and geography.
- Effort should also be made to identify and select an engagement approach that has greater potential to reach traditionally “unheard voices.” “Unheard voices” are defined as individuals or groups who may face barriers to participate in traditional engagement activities, such as individuals whose first language is not English, newcomers, persons with disabilities, single parents, people with other unpaid care responsibilities or those with precarious employment or shift work.

Internal Audiences

- It may also be important to inform, or seek input from, target audiences within the Provincial Government (including perspectives from government agencies, boards or commissions). If input from other departments or the public sector in general is sought, these audiences should also be clearly identified.

TIP: Stakeholder mapping should occur to identify the target audiences for an engagement. Stakeholders refer to any person or group who have or feel they have an interest in an issue or decision, or who can affect or be affected by an issue or decision. To generate the target audience list for any given consultation, the following table may be helpful. The Public Engagement and Planning Division can also support departments in completing a stakeholder map.

Categories	List of Stakeholders
Groups that may be affected by an issue	
Groups that may care or have concerns about an issue	
Groups that have expertise that would be helpful to inform an issue	
Advocates of an issue	
Adversaries of an issue	
Groups who have a needed perspective on an issue, but who may be challenging to reach through typical engagement methods	

TIP: From the beginning of the planning process, engagements should be designed to ensure all people impacted by an issue are included. Departments should consider the following:

- Have you taken measures to ensure the consultation is inclusive for women, non-binary or trans individuals, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups? Measures may include one or more of the following: providing child/senior care, transportation allowance and/or a stipend; language needs; online alternatives; flexible timing/scheduling of events; accessible location; gender-neutral washrooms; and/or offering the services of interpreters (oral or sign language).

In adherence with best practice, some audiences may require a unique method to meaningfully seek their input. For example, the use of an online, mobile-friendly questionnaire to reach a younger demographic versus an open town hall style dialogue session to reach a more general audience in a specific community. These considerations should be detailed in the “Approach” section of this plan. Further, consideration should be given to ensuring a diversity of perspectives is gathered.

Public Environment Scan and Background

- This section should outline public commentary on the issue, including an overview of previous comments by stakeholders, the general public, media, government, opposition parties and independent Members of the House of Assembly.
- This section should also clearly indicate the level of media coverage generated about the issue, including whether this is a common topic of discussion on social media or in letters to the editor. Quotes should also be provided of comments made in the media and hyperlinks to news articles and Minister Mandate Letters should be included. This section is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather is included to capture the spirit of the public commentary. This may include detail on: public opinion polls conducted on the issue, news releases issued by stakeholder groups, prominent public reports on the topic, meetings or other events held by stakeholder groups on the matter, and whether this subject has been included in the Budget or Speech from the Throne. This section should also note whether any other consultations are occurring on this same topic, or a similar topic, by other departments, the federal government, or community or private sector organizations.
- This section should include a diversity of perspectives of groups including women-led organizations, such as women’s centres, and organizations that provide services to, or advocate for, marginalized or underrepresented populations including persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, immigrants, 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, and others.
- This section may also include any other background deemed necessary to explain the rationale and public context for the engagement activities.

Strategic Considerations and Analysis

- This section is critical to providing a complete understanding of any factors that may impact how the issue will be communicated and received in the engagement. This section should answer the following questions, at a minimum:
 - Will the issue, or the provincial government's direction or decision outlined in the consultation process, generate negative, neutral or positive feedback? Will this response vary by stakeholder group?
 - Who will be affected by the decision/policy/issue? Does this decision/policy/issue have a disproportionate impact on marginalized or underrepresented people such as women, 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, or other populations?
 - Is this engagement expected to be able to reach the affected stakeholders? What efforts will be taken to ensure hard-to-reach stakeholders are informed?
 - Is the engagement likely to address topics that are sensitive or likely to be emotional (i.e., violence)? Have additional measures been put in place to support participants and ensure they are not facing additional risk by participating in the process?
 - What considerations should be kept in mind – do we know how target audiences consume media or messages?
 - Has engagement on this topic in the past led to action that was received positively or negatively by stakeholders?

Key Messages

- This section should include key messages that are directly related to the issue/topic and the associated engagement process, including why this consultation process is happening, the scope and nature of the engagement approach being used, and how the input will be used. Consideration should be given to ensuring the communications approach considers diverse audiences. Language should be gender neutral and not include gender bias.

TIP: Key messages should be authentic and relate to the target audience. The word count for messages should be a **maximum** of 25-30 words. Where appropriate, messages should not be transactional but show empathy, emotion and personal experiences.

Develop messages you want your target audience to hear and to believe. Write down each message in a simple, specific statement. Messages should be tight and easily referred to by the minister or spokesperson. Effort should be taken to make sure the language is common and simple, with memorable phrases.

Keep in mind, to motivate people, you must show them that you will help meet their needs. A clear description of the benefits to your audiences will help ensure that your message is received, understood and acted upon.

Well-developed messages can be and should be carried over to media interviews, news releases, speaking engagements and House of Assembly. Consistent messages will support the minister's ability to clearly communicate and create an understanding of an issue.

Approach

- This section should outline the engagement activities that will be undertaken, including the methodology that will be used for each activity. This section should be completed in consultation with the Public Engagement and Planning Division, and should generally describe the tactics being used/considered and identify the specific target audience(s) for each (where applicable). It is important to consider alternate approaches. A single approach is often not appropriate for all stakeholders in an audience. Public bodies may wish to use a combination of approaches depending on the target audience(s).
 - Examples of the broad types of engagement approaches include: (1) in-person sessions (public and/or stakeholder); (2) virtual sessions; (3) online questionnaire posted on engageNL; (4) engageNL landing page; (5) written submissions; and, (6) teleconference/videoconference.
 - All provincial government engagements/consultations are recommended to have a landing page on engageNL outlining ways to participate.
- This section should clearly outline the rationale for the approach chosen. The Public Engagement and Planning Division can support public bodies in conducting this analysis.
- This section should also consider whether a series of engagement activities, or a phased approach to engagement is required to meet the consultation objectives.
 - For example, if an issue with significant policy implications is in the preliminary stages of development, the department may want to return to stakeholders for input several times throughout a comprehensive process using different methods.
 - Further, it is best practice to communicate to the target audience what was heard through the process, and how the public input has been considered in taking a final decision. This section should outline how the target audience will be kept informed throughout the policy development process.
 - To ensure your engagement is appropriate for target audiences, Departments are encouraged to consult with Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's:
 - Disability Policy Office
 - Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation
 - Office of Women and Gender Equality

TIP: It is important to ensure that the overall approach is consistent with government's [Inclusive Public Engagement Policy](#). This policy provides instructive guidance to ensure public engagement processes are accessible to and inclusive of everyone, including persons with disabilities. It is a resource for preparing, planning, and holding public or targeted engagement sessions that are barrier-free. The policy applies to all departments of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Reaching a diversity of perspectives is important. Public bodies are encouraged to identify civil society partners, such as community organizations, to facilitate broad engagement to gather alternative perspectives and valuable knowledge.

Role of the Public Engagement and Planning Division

- Public bodies are encouraged to contact the Public Engagement and Planning Division in advance of the preparation of an engagement and consultation plan to seek their guidance and to ensure the proposed approach is consistent with sound public engagement practices for the Government of Newfoundland Labrador. The Division provides support to departments in the planning of public engagement activities, even if divisional staff are not required to support the facilitation aspects of the process.
- This section should describe the role that the Public Engagement and Planning Division played in the development of the engagement and consultation plan, and the role the division is requested to play in the engagement process. The following questions should be considered:
 - Was the division involved from the concept stage?
 - Will the division be directly involved in the delivery of the activities?
 - Does the division support the methods/approach outlined in the plan?

Engagement Resources and Materials

- This section should indicate what resources, if any, may be required to implement the consultation. Public bodies are encouraged to review the venue for the engagement in advance to determine basic logistical requirements, such as lighting, set up, and technology requirements. The requirements will depend on the engagement approach chosen. Categories of additional resources include:
 - Accessibility – sign language, plain language or oral interpreters, captioning, hearing assistive technology, microphones;
 - Facilitators and notetakers – tablets for notetaking, flip charts, post it notes; and
 - Technology – Zoom/Webex for virtual sessions, projectors, keypads for polling.
- The Public Engagement and Planning Division is able to advise on the resources required for an engagement and provide assistance and resources, if appropriate. Regarding accessibility, departments are encouraged to engage the Disability Policy Office to ensure an inclusive consultation process. The Office of Women and Gender Equality is available to provide guidance and support on Gender Based Analysis +. This includes assisting with reflecting a multitude of perspectives in the process, as well as ensuring that engagements are inclusive to women and all people across the gender spectrum.
- This section should also outline whether a discussion document, questionnaire, presentation or other written materials are planned for the engagement. If so, samples of these documents should be appended to this plan, and any online versions referenced with a web address. If those documents are not available at the time of submission of the plan, they may be required to be reviewed and approved by the CPEB (including the Public Engagement and Planning Division) in advance of the launch of the engagement activities. The following questions should be considered:

- Are these documents appropriate for all stakeholders that will be consulted? Or do different audiences require different materials?
 - Has consideration been given to ensuring the language used in engagement materials is inclusive and does not make assumptions about participants?
 - Have all materials have been reviewed for accessibility by the Disability Policy Office and been confirmed to be consistent with the [Inclusive Public Engagement Policy](#)? Has consideration been given to offering them in alternate formats (e.g., large print, electronic text formats, audio format, braille)?
 - Have all materials been prepared in accordance with the [Accessible Communications Policy](#)?
- Departments are encouraged to contact CPEB's Marketing and Brand Management Division for any marketing and branding requirements.

Privacy Policy

- A [Preliminary Privacy Impact Assessment](#) (PPIA) is required to be completed for every engagement project. This section should indicate if a PPIA has been completed and should outline any recommendations from the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Office regarding this engagement.

TIP: A clear policy on how personal information will be captured and used should be developed and clearly communicated to participants. Please contact the ATIPP Office or the departmental ATIPP Coordinator to provide assistance.

Schedule

- This section should answer the following questions:
 - Where will the engagements take place?
 - Have potential venues been identified?
 - What are the anticipated dates and times?
 Depending on the level of detail, it may be appropriate to provide an appendix with this information.
- **NOTE: If final schedules are not available at the time of submitting this plan, please note that the dates and times for each location will need to be reviewed by CPEB (including the Public Engagement and Planning Division) before being publically announced.**
- For projects in partnership with the Public Engagement and Planning Division, scheduling will need to be confirmed with the Division to ensure engagement planner availability, prior to advancing for final approvals.

TIPS: Accessibility: The accessibility of all venues should be reviewed prior to confirming their suitability for a provincial government public consultation. An on-site visit is the best way to confirm accessibility of the venue. When determining if a location is accessible, please consider:

- Building and meeting room accessibility, including entrance, ramps, elevators, clear lighting, accessible washrooms, visual alarms, audio systems, signage (clear, descriptive, Braille), accessible parking and barrier-free route to building entrance.
- Transportation accessibility, including whether the route is accessible via public transit where sessions are being held in St. John's, Mount Pearl or Corner Brook, and whether people will be expected to drive after dark at the end of a session (particularly in rural areas where highway driving may be required during the winter months).

Appendix B of the [Inclusive Public Engagement Guide](#) outlines 12 accessibility basics for public engagement, which should be referenced.

Timelines for Engagement: Sufficient public notice should be given that an engagement activity is occurring (e.g., provide participants with at least two weeks' notice for in person sessions, and post an online questionnaire for at least three weeks). Further, Public Engagement and Planning Division encourages departments and agencies to avoid consultations during holiday periods. Finally, public bodies are encouraged to consider whether the time of day for the engagement creates a barrier for participation. This includes consideration for parents with children and specifically, how timing may conflict with school hours or other related responsibilities.

Communication/Marketing

- This section should indicate how information about the engagement process will be communicated to the public and stakeholders. For example, will interested participants learn about this opportunity through a personal invitation, a posting on engageNL, a news release, government advertising, government social media, a hot button link on the government website or correspondence from a community partner? Public Engagement and Planning Division notes that a combination of methods may be appropriate.
- This section should cover communications activities planned to occur in advance of, during and following the engagement activities, including how participants and the public will be informed of the outcomes of the consultations and any resulting decisions or actions.
 - Post engagement communications activities may include news releases, what we heard documents/flash sheets or infographics, and/or letters to stakeholders thanking them for their output. Public Engagement and Planning Division notes that a combination of methods may be appropriate.

- In situations where the post-engagement communications activities cannot be reasonably anticipated at this stage, a communications synopsis or plan should be prepared before any announcement is made and it should be noted in this section that “a communications plan to be prepared prior to final announcement.”
- Departments should consider reaching out to CPEB’s Marketing and Brand Management Division for any marketing and branding requirements.

Minister/MHA Involvement

- This section should answer the following questions:
 - Will the minister or parliamentary secretary responsible have any involvement in the consultation process (e.g., emceeding or attending sessions, launching the consultations with a press conference, speaking to media about the process)?
 - Will government or opposition MHAs be invited to attend or participate in the consultation process, particularly at regional locations?
 - If planned to attend in person sessions, what role will government MHAs play in the activities?
 - What briefing materials will be provided by the department to support a Minister of government and/or MHA’s participation for an in person consultation session?

Recording, Reporting and Reflection of Stakeholder Input

- This section should outline how the input received through the consultations will be captured and used to support provincial government decision-making. This section should answer the following questions:
 - How will the public body record and track input throughout the process?
 - Possible data collection methods include: video or audio recording of proceedings; a dedicated note taker to capture summary comments; capturing of individual comments from small group discussions; and online or paper-based survey tools.

Note: Public Engagement and Planning does not record virtual sessions to protect the privacy of participants, and while the division cannot control what is shared by participants following sessions, participants are asked to not screenshot or share any part of the discussion.
 - How will the engagement data be shared with participants, the public and other government departments and in what format?
 - This may include publishing a public what we heard document, summary document or infographic, or posting the raw data online.
 - Public Engagement and Planning Division notes that posting the raw data from an engagement online is a best practice.
 - Documents prepared that outline the findings of a consultation, or the raw data, where applicable, from an engagement are recommended to be posted to the project’s engageNL landing page.
 - How is it anticipated that the input received from participants will be used?
 - Examples of the ways the input may be used include: (1) to inform the creation of a final strategy document, a new or revised program or policy, new or amended legislation; and/or (2) to provide Cabinet with insights on public reaction to a government program, service, policy or decision.

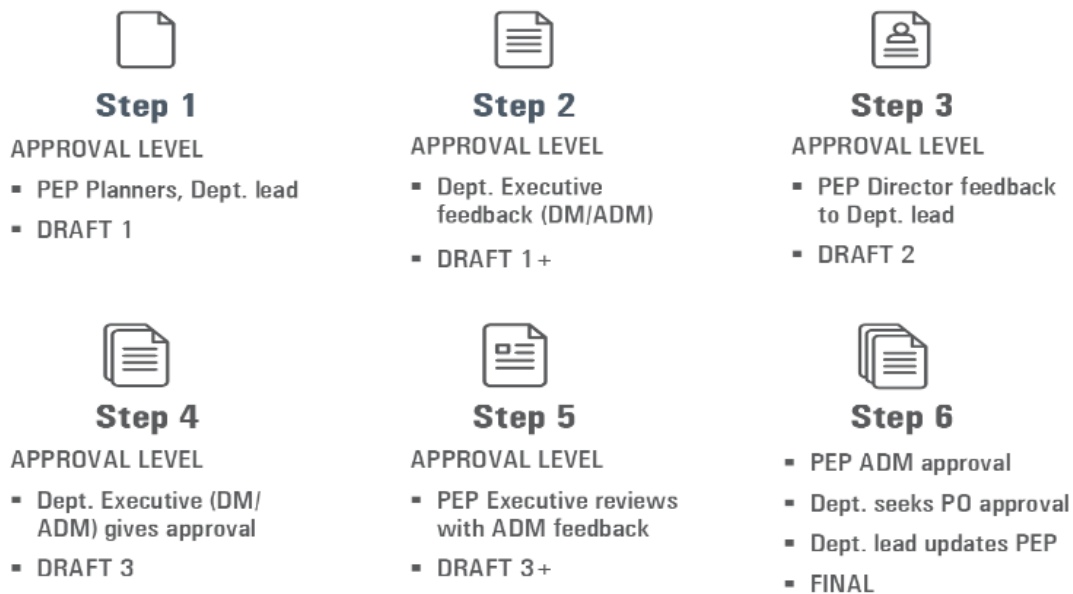
Media Policy

- This section should answer the following questions:
 - Will the media be notified of the schedule for engagement activities?
 - If the engagement is not an open public event, what policy will be used regarding media coverage of stakeholder or in-person meetings?
 - Has consideration been given to media engagement by stakeholder groups?

TIP: Every effort should be made to allow media access to sessions, unless sensitive/personal information is being shared. CPEB's Communications Division can advise how best to accommodate media based on the needs of the individual process. If media show up at an engagement event, the organizers may wish to arrange for a photo opportunity and short media availability for the Minister or other leader hosting the session once the event has concluded.

Approval Process

- Multiple drafts of the plan may be necessary beyond those indicated in the graphic below. There is no restriction on the number of draft versions of the plan.



Prepared:
Date:
Reviewed:
Date:
Approved:
Date: