



Welland Public Engagement Guide

Public Engagement Guide for the City of Welland

The City of Welland is committed to engaging its residents, businesses, and participants in meaningful conversations to build a thriving, inclusive community. This guide provides an overview of Welland's public engagement process, rooted in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The IAP2 spectrum outlines five levels of engagement, each with a specific purpose and promise to the public:



Inform

- ▶ **Purpose:** Provide balanced and objective information to support public understanding of issues, alternatives, opportunities, and solutions.
- ▶ **Promise to the public:** "We will keep you informed."
- ▶ **Techniques:**
 - Press releases
 - Social media updates
 - Newsletters
 - Website postings



Consult

- ▶ **Purpose:** Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions.
- ▶ **Promise to the public:** "We will listen to and acknowledge your input."
- ▶ **Techniques:**
 - Surveys and polls
 - Public meetings
 - Feedback forms



Involve

- ▶ **Purpose:** Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently considered and understood.
- ▶ **Promise to the public:** "We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the decisions made."
- ▶ **Techniques:**
 - Workshops
 - Advisory committees
 - Focus groups





Collaborate

- ▶ **Purpose:** Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including developing alternatives and identifying the preferred solution.
- ▶ **Promise to the public:** “We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate your recommendations as much as possible.”
- ▶ **Techniques:**
 - Community task forces
 - Participatory decision-making
 - Co-design sessions



Empower

- ▶ **Purpose:** Place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
- ▶ **Promise to the public:** “We will implement what you decide.”
- ▶ **Techniques:**
 - Delegated decisions
 - Ballots or referenda

Steps in Welland's public engagement process

1

Define the purpose and scope

Clearly articulate the issue or project and its objectives. Identify the participants and communities impacted.

3

Develop an engagement plan

Key components:

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Participants
- ▶ Communication methods
- ▶ Timeline
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Success metrics

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Report back

Share the results of the engagement process with participants and the community, detailing how their input influenced decisions.

2

Determine the level of engagement

Use the IAP2 spectrum to decide on the appropriate level of engagement, depending on the project's complexity and the impact on participants.

4

Implement engagement activities

Roll out the planned activities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all participants.

5

Collect and analyze feedback

Document public input and analyze it for themes, trends, and actionable insights.

7

Evaluate and reflect

Assess the effectiveness of the engagement activities and identify areas for improvement in future initiatives.

Engagement Principles

The City of Welland adheres to the following principles for public engagement:

Transparency: Provide clear and accessible information.

Inclusivity: Ensure diverse voices are heard.

Accountability: Demonstrate how public input informs decisions.

Respect: Value and consider all perspectives.

Continuous improvement: Learn from each engagement process.

Engagement tools and channels

Welland uses a variety of tools to connect with residents:

- ▶ **Online platforms:** Website, social media, surveys
- ▶ **In-person events:** Town halls, workshops, open houses
- ▶ **Print materials:** Flyers, mailers, newsletters
- ▶ **Community partnerships:** Collaborating with local organizations

Benefits of public engagement:

Why public engagement is important to the City of Welland

Public engagement enhances the quality and sustainability of decisions by fostering collaboration, addressing public concerns early, and building trust. It ensures decisions reflect public priorities while strengthening democratic processes and reducing conflicts. Key benefits include:

- ▶ Facilitating the development of better policies.
- ▶ Enabling better-informed, higher-quality, and more sustainable decisions.
- ▶ Gaining greater public support and acceptance, and minimizing conflicts.
- ▶ Increasing understanding of public interests, concerns, and priorities.
- ▶ Facilitating informed officials, politicians, and residents.
- ▶ Strengthening democratic institutions and reducing cynicism.
- ▶ Building co-operative relationships and mutual understanding.
- ▶ Focusing attention on important issues.
- ▶ Obtaining valuable insights into the public environment and potential impacts.
- ▶ Creating a positive foundation for working with interested parties.
- ▶ Enhancing transparency, accountability, and communication.
- ▶ Avoiding or minimizing adverse effects or unintended consequences.
- ▶ Correcting misinformation or rumours.
- ▶ Aligning project designs with public priorities and managing expectations early.
- ▶ Increasing credibility of decisions and decision-makers.

Engaging the public ensures decisions are not only informed by specialized knowledge and local insights but also shaped by the values and lived experiences of residents, resulting in stronger and more widely accepted outcomes.

Residents vs. interested parties in public engagement

Public engagement in Welland involves both residents and interested parties, who bring distinct perspectives and motivations to the process:

Residents represent individuals within the community who have an interest in a topic or decision. Their input often reflects **value knowledge**—how a proposed change or policy may impact their daily lives, community, or well-being.

Interested parties are individuals or representatives of organizations with a vested interest in the outcome of a decision. They typically contribute **technical knowledge** related to their expertise, sector, or organizational priorities.

Both groups are crucial to meaningful public engagement:

Residents ensure decisions align with community values and lived experiences.

Interested parties provide informed, technical perspectives.

Principles of public engagement in alignment with IAP2

To ensure inclusivity and meaningful participation, Welland's public engagement efforts should adhere to these key principles:

1. **Inclusivity:** Engage those impacted by or interested in the decision.
2. **Transparency:** Clearly communicate the purpose, process, and how input will be used.
3. **Informed participation:** Provide participants with accessible, comprehensible information.
4. **Influence:** Ensure public input can genuinely inform decisions.
5. **Sustainability:** Foster decisions that consider diverse perspectives, ensuring long-term success.
6. **Flexibility:** Allow participants to choose their level of involvement.
7. **Feedback:** Communicate how public contributions were considered in the final decision.

Key elements for meaningful engagement

To differentiate meaningful engagement from mere consultation, Welland must ensure:

Timely notification:

Provide sufficient advance notice about engagement opportunities.

Accessibility:

Share clear, accessible information about the process and decisions.

Reasonable timelines:

Allow adequate time for public participation, avoiding perceptions of pre-determined outcomes.

Sensitivity:

Understand and respect community and interested parties values.

Adaptability:

Tailor engagement methods to meet the needs of participants.

Transparency:

Share results and decisions openly to build trust.

When to use public engagement in Welland

Public engagement should begin early in a project or program to ensure participants feel heard and can meaningfully influence outcomes. Before initiating engagement, consider:

- ▶ Is there a clearly defined issue or concern?
- ▶ Are interested residents and interested parties identifiable?
- ▶ Is the public interested and ready to participate?
- ▶ Are sufficient resources available to ensure meaningful engagement?
- ▶ Could engagement efforts foster tensions between groups with differing values?

By valuing contributions from both **residents** and **interested parties** and applying these principles, Welland can foster trust, collaboration, and decisions that reflect the needs and values of its community.



Planning public engagement

To meaningfully involve the public in decision-making, follow these steps when planning public engagement:

1. Establish goals and expectations

Define what you aim to achieve.

Clarify whether you're seeking tangible results (for example, solutions) or intangible outcomes (for example, fostering cooperation or positive attitudes).

Assess if you have adequate resources (financial, human, and time) to meet your goals.

2. Develop an engagement strategy

Identify your participants: Who are the interested parties, residents, or other groups involved?

Determine the appropriate level of engagement for each group.

Select tools and methods suited to the engagement goals and audience.

3. Communicate your plan

Share your intentions with the public and interested parties.

Clearly articulate your goals and strategy to staff.

4. Implement your plan

Outline and follow the necessary steps to execute the engagement strategy.

Be prepared to monitor progress and adapt to changing circumstances.

5. Reporting and follow-up

Acknowledge participants' contributions and provide feedback.

Share a record of the engagement process to demonstrate participants were heard.

Outline next steps and explain how input will influence decisions.

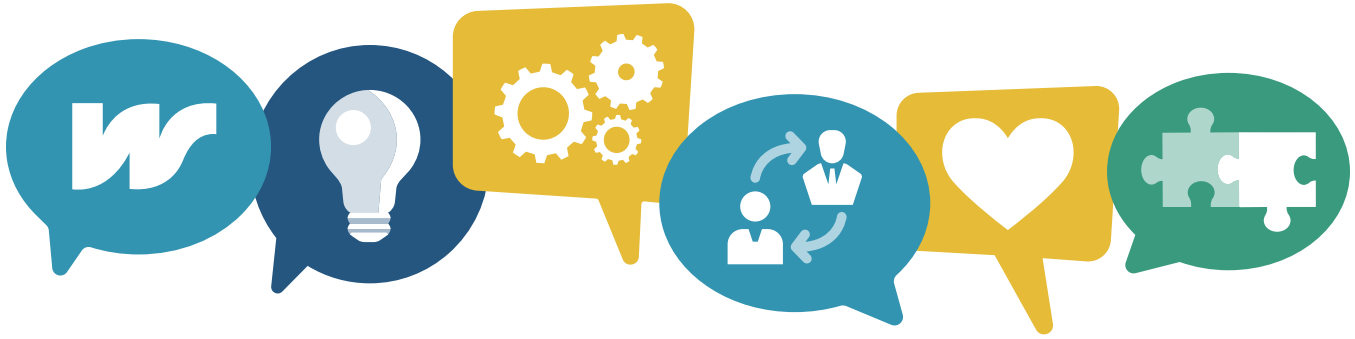
6. Evaluation

Select evaluation techniques (for example, interviews, surveys, or forms).

Establish criteria to measure the effectiveness of the engagement.

This structured approach ensures public engagement is purposeful, inclusive, and transparent, aligning with both municipal goals and community expectations.





Communicating the results

Effective communication of public engagement results is essential for transparency and trust. Sharing outcomes ensures participants understand how their input was acknowledged, appreciated, and utilized. Key information to communicate includes:

- ▶ Summaries of discussions
- ▶ Possible solutions considered
- ▶ Areas of divergence or convergence in opinions
- ▶ How decision-makers incorporated the input

Communication should be ongoing, not limited to the end of the process. Updates should be shared at predetermined milestones, ensuring participants are informed and recognized for their contributions. Providing a clear timeline for decisions further fosters transparency and engagement.

Evaluating the process

Evaluation is critical to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and learning outcomes of public engagement. Key considerations include:

- ▶ Did the engagement activities achieve their intended goals?
- ▶ Were the desired results observable and measurable?
- ▶ Were evaluation criteria established at the outset of the planning process?
- ▶ Was the information gathered effectively used to inform discussions or influence public policy?

By integrating ongoing communication and thorough evaluation, public engagement efforts can be refined and reinforced, ensuring they meet the needs of both the community and decision-makers.

Conclusion

Public engagement is a cornerstone of effective governance, fostering trust, collaboration, and transparency between the City of Welland and its residents. By actively involving the public in decision-making processes, the City can ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, resulting in more informed, sustainable, and widely accepted outcomes. Clear communication, thoughtful planning, and regular evaluation are essential to maintaining meaningful engagement and demonstrating the value of public contributions.

By prioritizing public engagement, the City strengthens its democratic institutions, builds stronger relationships with residents, and ensures that decisions reflect the community's needs and priorities. This commitment not only enhances the credibility of decisions but also fosters a culture of inclusivity and mutual understanding, paving the way for a thriving and resilient Welland.



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