

**YOUR
THOUGHTS**

2024 public engagement framework

 Let's Talk
Cochrane



INTRODUCTION

For the Town of Cochrane, public engagement is about creating opportunities for the public to contribute to decision-making about our policies, programs, projects and services.

Public engagement supports informed decision-making. It is part of a comprehensive approach that considers legal requirements, financial constraints, expert knowledge, and other factors to ensure decisions align with the our goals and priorities.



CONTENTS

2 | INTRODUCTION

3 | PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

4 | VISION

4 | PRINCIPLES

5 | PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

6 | PLANNING FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

To support the Public Engagement policy (No. 1106-04), Cochrane established this Public Engagement Framework.

The Framework defines the vision, principles and planning considerations for public engagement. It creates an intentional, consistent and transparent approach that can be applied to all municipal public engagement activities.

To ensure that public engagement is considered in the decision-making process, Cochrane has established a Public Engagement policy (No. 1106-04). The policy outlines how and when Cochrane will engage with members of the public and interested parties.

Public engagement shall be considered when:

- it fulfills a legislated or regulatory requirement
- requested by Council or Administration

Public engagement may be considered when:

- a new policy, program, project or service is being designed or implemented
- there is evaluation, change and/or elimination of an existing policy, program, project or service
- there is a public-initiated request



Public: Residents and/or interested parties of Cochrane.

Interested Parties: Anyone (person, group, and/or organization) who has a specialized interest in, or is affected by, an outcome.

VISION

Cochrane strives for open, inclusive engagement where people feel their input matters, they have access to information to effectively participate and they understand how their input contributes to the decision-making process.

PRINCIPLES

Cochrane has committed to integrating the following public engagement principles:

Citizen-focused and welcoming: Respecting the perspectives, experiences and insights from the public and interested parties and creating an environment where people feel safe and welcome to contribute their input.

Accessibility and inclusion: Offering equitable, convenient and flexible opportunities for participation and making a concerted effort to reach and involve those who are impacted directly or indirectly by a decision.

Communication and awareness: Providing clear, timely and easily accessible information on the decision, how to participate, what is being considered and how input will be used.

Accountability and transparency: Focusing engagement efforts on key community decisions and sharing how input has been considered in the decision-making process.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

The public engagement spectrum determines how involved the public will be in the decision-making process. The greater the citizen influence, the higher the level of engagement and the more ownership they have over the process and decision¹.

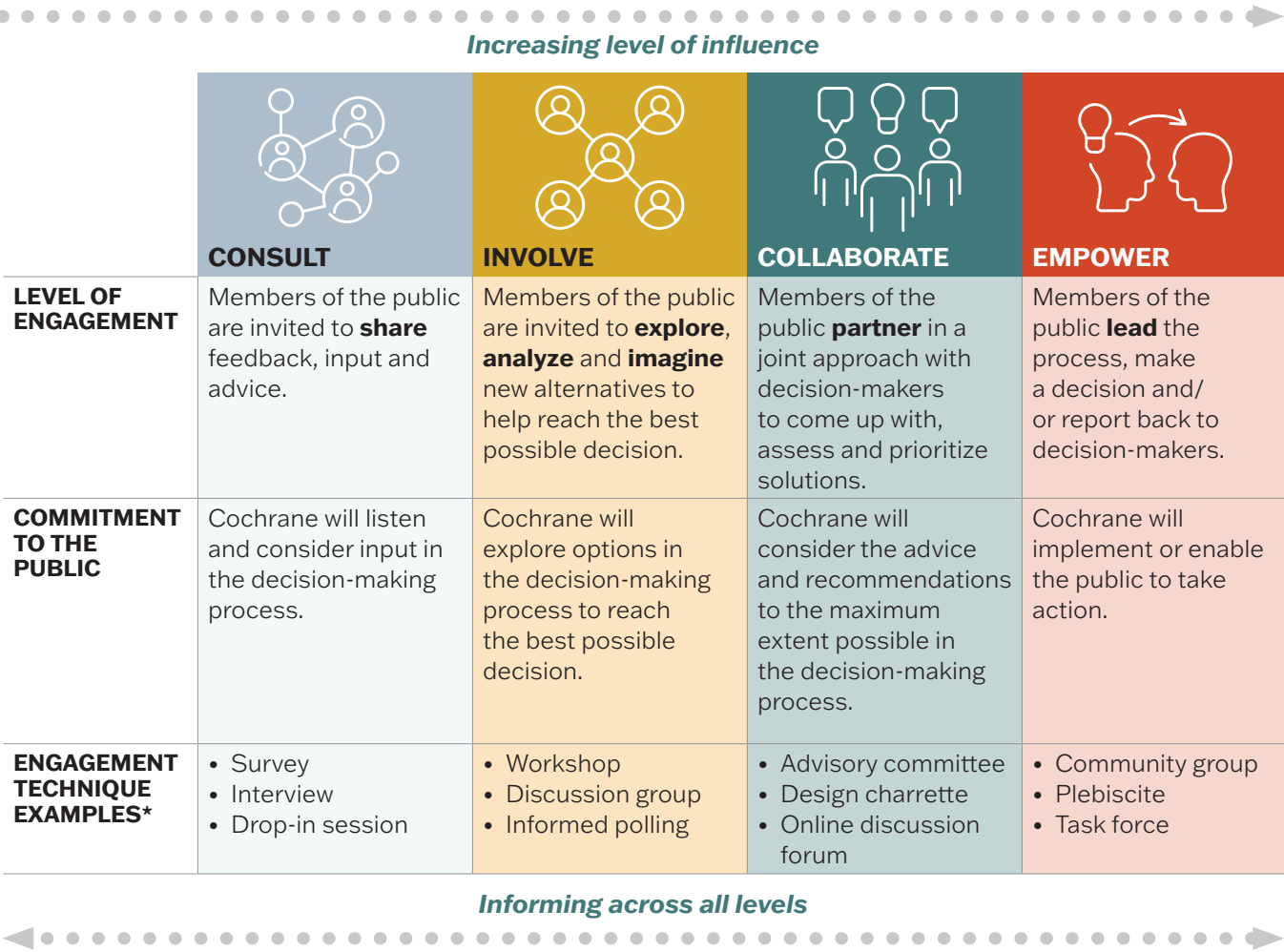
The spectrum features various participation levels, and the selection depends on factors such as goals, time frame, resources, and the importance of the decision being considered.

Information sharing is an important element that should be applied across all levels of the spectrum, and is used to communicate about the engagement activity, how participants can be involved and how their input will be used to support decision-making.

Engaging: Inviting input on decisions and considering that input when making decisions.

Informing: Communicating to members of the public:

- about engagement opportunities
- when a decision has been made
- to provide important updates about policies, programs, projects and services.



*These engagement techniques serve as examples. Many different techniques can be applied during public engagement and should be customized to best support desired outcomes. Some decisions may require multiple techniques to meet all the identified outcomes.

1 Adapted from: IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement. https://cdnymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

PLANNING FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Clear and thoughtful planning instills confidence among participants, demonstrating Cochrane's commitment to purposeful public engagement. It enhances transparency, minimizes uncertainties, and establishes a solid framework for successful interaction between the public, interested parties and decision-makers.

Planning for effective public engagement includes consideration of the following elements:

- purpose and scope
- level of engagement and techniques
- roles and responsibilities
- implementation
- reporting
- evaluation

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Clearly outlining what public engagement is hoping to achieve and how it aligns with an overall project objective, is critical to design meaningful and effective engagement. To help articulate the purpose of the engagement, consider:

- why this work is important to Cochrane
- what decision(s) will the public engagement help inform
- what value the public engagement will offer to the decision-making process

Planning for public engagement should also consider the scope of engagement required. To help identify the scope of work, consider:

- the decision points and timelines for making decisions, including any legal, legislative or fiscal deadlines
- financial and human resource requirements to plan, implement, report on and evaluate the engagement
- what other projects and/or decisions might align with or impact the engagement
- who should be engaged (e.g., members of the public and/or interested parties)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective public engagement often includes cross-functional teams. It is important to consider early on, the roles and responsibilities needed to support an engagement activity. This includes identifying who is responsible for:

- considering the input as part of the decision making process
- providing oversight of the project
- developing an approach or plan to the engagement
- coordinating and collaborating across the organization and/or with project team members
- providing subject matter expertise, data or other important information
- communicating with members of the public and/or interested parties
- implementing and/or facilitating public engagement activities
- recording input
- reviewing, analyzing and reporting on input
- evaluating engagement outcomes

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT AND TECHNIQUES

Members of the public will be invited to participate based on the level of engagement required to support the engagement purpose as described in Cochrane's Public Engagement Spectrum. Participants may be engaged at different levels depending on the public engagement purpose and scope.

Engagement techniques are the ways in which input is gathered such as surveys, online discussion forums, workshops or focus groups. Specific techniques will be selected based on the level of engagement and alignment with the engagement purpose and scope.

Techniques should seek to maximize participation and reduce barriers. A combination of techniques can be applied to accommodate varying levels of engagement and participant needs. Selected techniques also need to support the Framework vision and principles.

IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of public engagement relies on careful preparation and planning that meets the engagement purpose and scope. Planning for public engagement includes identifying requirements to support implementation, such as:

- logistics (e.g., venue, invitations, catering, online tools, etc.)
- background information that can be shared about the context of a decision, including complexities, constraints and considerations involved
- input collection, management and storage
- communication before, during and following the engagement
- risk assessment and mitigation strategies



REPORTING

Reporting provides a clear and transparent account of how public input has been considered in decision making processes. When the public or interested parties see that their input has been genuinely heard and incorporated, it enhances trust in Cochrane's commitment to its principle of accountability and transparency. By sharing insights into the decision making rationale and the community's contributions, Cochrane can also better plan future engagements to address community needs and concerns, promoting ongoing and meaningful participation. Planning for public engagement includes identifying considerations to support reporting such as:

- how the engagement and rationale for decision(s) will be summarized (e.g., What We Heard and/or Decided Report)
- what information will be included (e.g., who was engaged, what was asked, what was heard, what was decided, how engagement will influence decisions)
- who will prepare, review and distribute reporting
- how reporting will be made available in a timely manner following the engagement to the public



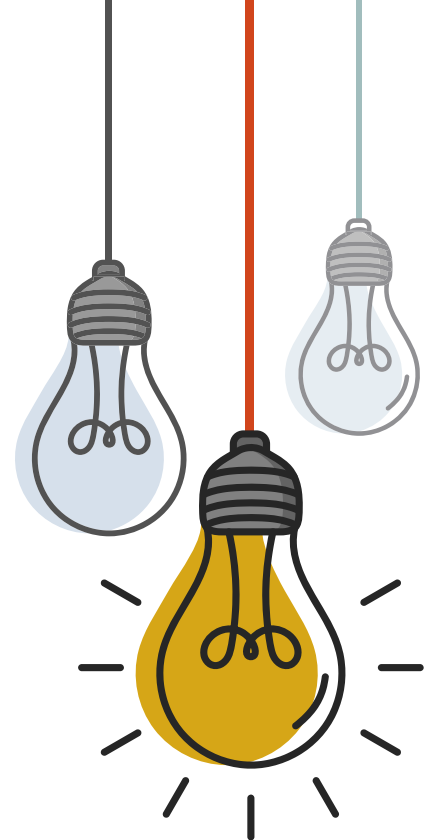
EVALUATION

Evaluating public engagement is essential for ongoing learning, accountability and responsiveness to community needs. It is also a way to assess how well Cochrane is working towards its public engagement vision and demonstrating its principles.

Evaluation provides insights into whether the engagement purpose was met and if the engagement methods were effective in eliciting meaningful participation and feedback. By understanding what worked well and areas that need improvement, Cochrane can make informed adjustments and enhance the effectiveness of future engagement initiatives.

Planning for public engagement includes identifying the ways the engagement will be monitored to determine how well it:

- achieved the framework vision and principles
- adhered to the engagement purpose and level of engagement
- enabled participation and met participant expectations
- applied engagement technique(s) to support the engagement purpose and scope
- influenced the decision



WORKING WITH US

This framework provides clarity on the engagement process and how we can collaborate together to make your engagement successful.

How can we support you?

- **Create engagement strategies:** We can help develop comprehensive engagement plans and execute engagement activities such as focus groups, surveys and interviews.
- **Evaluate engagement readiness:** We can help determine whether your project is ready for engagement, define outcomes and measure results.
- **Determine methodology and public involvement:** We can assist in determining the right methodology and the level of public involvement.
- **Promotion:** We help spread the word and encourage community participation.

Ready to get to work?

Reach out to the Public Engagement Advisor so we can start the conversation. Done well, public engagement can take anywhere from two to four months to plan, promote, execute, evaluate and report on.

Let's plan ahead, together.