



Regional Board Policy

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Office of Primary Responsibility: Communications Department		
Date Adopted: xx, 2021	Board Resolution Number: "Insert Board Resolution"	Date to be Reviewed: 2026
Manner Issued: Policy will be announced as part of the 2021 launch of the formal RDCO public engagement program		

PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of the Public Engagement Policy is to establish the framework by which public engagement is delivered.
- 1.2 This policy:
 - (a) supports Regional Board decision making by providing information on resident, stakeholder, municipal and indigenous partners' opinions;
 - (b) recognizes that effective engagement creates greater understanding of issues, needs and potential solutions;
 - (c) ensures consistent and clear practices for involvement and / or information sharing;
 - (d) recognizes that people want to participate in decisions that affect them and ensures an appropriate level of engagement based on assessed community impact and benefit; and
 - (e) identifies the parameters and resources available for public engagement.

POLICY:

- 2.1 This policy is intended to establish the framework used to operationalize public engagement and make it applicable to the day-to-day business of the RDCO.

2.2 Definitions:

Public engagement: Public engagement, also referred to as public participation, creates opportunities for the public to contribute to problem-solving or decision-making about RDCO's policies, programs, projects, and services. It is premised on the belief that residents, stakeholders, municipal and indigenous partners should have meaningful opportunities to engage in the decisions that affect their communities. It moves past one-way communication and welcomes participants into the decision-making process by ensuring timely information and awareness of opportunities to provide input before decisions are made.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2): IAP2 is an association of professionals in the field of public participation who seek to advance and extend the practice of public participation through training, certification, standards, values, and advocacy throughout Canada and around the world. The values and principles of IAP2 are at the heart of this policy.

IAP2 Spectrum of Participation: IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation (shown below) is 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 found in public participation plans around the world.

Spectrum of Participation

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

Scope:

3.1 This policy applies to all formal public engagement undertaken for RDCO programs, policies, plans and projects when engagement planning and activities are delivered by:

- RDCO staff;
- Regional Board;
- Contractors working on behalf of the RDCO; and
- Volunteers or partner organizations working on behalf of the RDCO.

Guiding Principles:

4.1 The RDCO will engage with the public based on the following engagement guiding principles:

- **Transparency:** Public engagement opportunities are developed so that participants clearly understand their role, the level of engagement and the decision-making process. Feedback is shared publicly.
- **Consistency:** Engagement opportunities are presented in a predictable and consistent manner to build understanding of participants' roles and how they can be involved.
- **Inclusivity and diversity:** Public engagement processes allow all community members a reasonable opportunity to contribute and share their perspective. Effort will be made to ensure diverse voices are identified and these voices invited to participate.
- **Timeliness:** Public engagement is commenced as early as possible so the community and stakeholders have enough time to learn about the issues and actively participate.
- **Plain language/clear communication:** Information and instructions related to public engagement are provided in clear and simple language and easily understood by the community. Complex ideas will be shared in ways that are easy to grasp and the impact of different decision options will be explained.
- **Suitable process:** Design and implementation of public engagement processes that reflect the size, complexity and community impact of any initiative.
- **Regional perspective:** The RDCO recognizes the unique values and perspectives of its varied and diverse communities and stakeholder groups. Engagement activities are developed to balance the specific needs of individual communities with the region as a whole.

POLICY STATEMENT:

5.1 It is the RDCO's policy that:

- (a) Public engagement is done with purpose. Engagement is specifically done to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower, although some engagement activities may accomplish more than one purpose.
- (b) Public engagement is organized. Public engagement plans are developed by staff or consultants with engagement expertise. Plans provide order, structure and clear expectations to participants, elected officials and RDCO staff.
- (c) Public engagement is genuine. Participants, elected officials and RDCO staff understand the value of engagement and undertake engagement activities in good faith in order to realize the full benefits of engagement.
- (d) Public engagement is participant-centric. The RDCO uses a variety of engagement techniques, channels and opportunities to reach residents, stakeholders, municipal and indigenous partners.
- (e) Public engagement activities are hosted on RDCO channels. Using RDCO channels ensures participants recognize them as RDCO initiatives and builds an ongoing relationship.
- (f) Public engagement is resourced suitably. Adequate time and resources are allocated to support successful engagement efforts.
- (g) The public engagement process is continually improved. Engagement activities are evaluated upon completion. Ongoing training and skills development based on IAP2 best practices are provided to staff who are involved in engagement activities.

- (h) The public engagement process is right-sized. The Community Charter and Local Government Act outline the *minimum* requirements for public engagement. The RDCO may choose to undertake additional engagement activities for complex initiatives or those with significant community impact.

5.2 Responsibilities for the RDCO's delivery of public engagement include:

The Communications Department has the responsibility to:

- Establish and update from time to time the RDCO Public Engagement Policy, Framework and Tool Kit.
- Establish RDCO engagement channels and train staff as needed for their use.
- Coordinate IAP2 training opportunities for engagement skill building within the RDCO.
- Provide engagement advice and support to the organization including approval of all engagement plans to be delivered by staff or consultants.

RDCO staff members have the responsibility to:

- Follow the RDCO Engagement Framework.
- Involve Communications staff in initial stages of planning for projects, programs or initiatives when engagement activities are required.
- Allocate appropriate staff and resources for engagement activities during annual budgeting process.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AGREEMENTS AND/OR BYLAWS:

- RDCO Media Relations Administrative Policy
- RDCO Public Engagement Framework
- RDCO Public Engagement Toolkit
- Community Charter ([Part 4 — Public Participation and Council Accountability](#))
- Local Government Act ([Chapter 1, Part 4 – Assent Voting](#); [Division 2 — Referendums and Petitions for Services](#); [Board may seek regional district opinion](#))

*** END OF POLICY ***

Approved by: _____ Date: _____
Brian Reardon, CAO

<u>Policy No.</u>	<u>Date Adopted</u>	<u>Date Reviewed</u>	<u>Amended (Y/N)</u>	<u>Date Reissued</u>	<u>Authority (Resolution #)</u>