



Region of Waterloo

Guidelines for Public Engagement at the Region of Waterloo

Commitment to Public Engagement

The Regional Municipality of Waterloo is committed to transparent, responsive and inclusive processes to ensure the public is engaged in Regional business. This includes promotion of public engagement and creating an environment that fosters public engagement.

Definitions

- 1) **Public:** Any citizen, group, community, business, non-profit, and other stakeholder who may be impacted by or interested in Region of Waterloo issues and decisions
- 2) **Public engagement:** Providing opportunities for the public to have an informed say on the issues and decisions that affect their lives through a dialogue of mutual respect between government and the public
- 3) **Inform:** To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding issues, decision-making, alternatives, opportunities and solutions
- 4) **Consult:** To obtain public input for consideration in issues, analysis, alternatives and decisions
- 5) **Collaborate:** To work with the public in the decision-making process including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions and to ensure that public concerns are consistently understood and considered

Guiding Principles

Regional employees are responsible for engaging the public on issues or decisions that may impact them and to keep them informed of Regional issues.

Regional employees and contracted consultants are responsible for ensuring public engagement is conducted in accordance with the Regional values of service, integrity, respect, innovation and collaboration.

Accountability:

- The Region of Waterloo is responsible for its actions, decisions and policies and may be required to explain them and be answerable for resulting consequences
- Public engagement processes will demonstrate a commitment to being time-sensitive, cost-effective and demonstrate that results and outcomes are consistent with expectations

- Where applicable, the Region of Waterloo will follow decision-making protocols and jurisdictions at the municipal, regional, provincial and federal level

Transparency:

- The Region of Waterloo is open, clear and visible to the citizens it serves when conducting business in order to build trust and confidence in government
- Public engagement processes will demonstrate openness, honesty and clarity of purpose when engaging the public and ensure the same applies when communicating results

Respect:

- Public engagement processes will value and respect citizens.

Inclusivity:

- Public engagement processes will include ways to involve members of the community who are most impacted by a particular issue or decision
- Public engagement processes will identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation, recognizing that certain groups have unique needs and challenges that impact their ability to fully participate in decision-making processes

Responsiveness:

- Public engagement processes will be proactive in addressing public concerns, being flexible in responding to changing needs and conditions

Regional employees acknowledge that public engagement processes built on the principles of accountability, transparency, respect, inclusivity and responsiveness can:

- Include early identification of public issues and concerns
- Increase the involvement of the public in decision-making processes
- Increase civic pride
- Decrease barriers to participation
- Increase understanding about how Regional government works
- Ensure neighbourhood level influence reflects region-wide benefits/interests
- Create better, more informed decisions

Public Engagement Process Steps

The Region of Waterloo follows consistent principles to ensure that public engagement is incorporated into Regional business to maximize customer expectations with policy decisions. The process of public engagement may not always be linear and can be broken into six steps: Assess, Select, Plan, Implement, Report and Evaluate. These steps are defined below.

Step 1 – Assess:

Assess why public engagement should be sought:

- a) Identify the purpose or goals and intended outcome of the public engagement process; determine why you are engaging the public
- b) Identify the benefits and risks of engaging the public in this process
- c) Identify what is needed from the public for this process
- d) Outline the timelines for the public engagement process
- e) Identify additional resources that may be needed

Step 2 – Select Project Scope:

The Region values contributions from the public to support Regional decision-making processes.

- a) Determine the level of public engagement using the assessment information from Step 1:
 - The Region of Waterloo defines the types of public engagement as inform, consult, and collaborate.
 - A given public engagement project may have different types of engagement, but it is reasonable for there to be a primary type that defines the scope of the project. Examples of engagement techniques include fact sheets, open houses, focus groups, surveys, public meetings, citizen advisory committees, consensus-building, and workshops.
 - No two public engagement processes will be the same and the decision regarding the level of engagement, methods and the steps to follow will rest with staff to balance the need for engagement, capacity and legislated requirements, and available budget.

Step 3 – Plan the Public Engagement Process:

Develop a plan to engage the public including the following steps:

- a) Identify who from the public should be engaged in the process; determine what citizen, group, community, business, non-profit or other stakeholder may have interest or may be impacted
- b) Identify information to be shared with or sought from the public

- c) Determine the appropriate tools and techniques to be used to foster public engagement (methods of promotion, outreach and communication), including consideration of methods to engage those impacted by the issue or decision
- d) Identify potential barriers for members of the public to engage and determine tools to address those barriers
- e) Determine how success of the public engagement process will be measured for the purposes of evaluation; develop an evaluation plan, determine what evaluation questions are associated with the goals of the public engagement process and what indicators, metrics or benchmarks will be used to answer them

Step 4 – Implement the Initiative:

- a) Implement the public engagement initiative at the level identified in Step 2 and using the appropriate tools and techniques identified in Step 3
- b) Ensure the purpose and goals of the initiative identified in Step 1 are connected to the public engagement process so that the intended outcomes can be achieved
- c) When communicating with the public, use clear and plain language to help ensure that the information is understood by a broad audience
- d) When conducting public engagement ensure the Guidelines for Public Engagement at the Region of Waterloo document is readily available to the participants so they will clearly understand the principles behind public engagement at the Region of Waterloo

Step 5 – Report Back to Stakeholders:

When engaging the public at the consult, involve or collaborate levels it is part of the public engagement process to report back; depending on the level of engagement this can be done using various methods and at more than one time point.

- a) Report back to public stakeholders using appropriate methods on:
 - content of public engagement discussions
 - identified solutions
 - areas of agreement and disagreement
 - actions taken as a result of consultation process
 - the extent of the consultation; how many events or discussions were held and with whom
 - any other information specifically relevant to an engagement process
- b) Confirm with public stakeholders that the information collected is accurate and

understood

Step 6 – Evaluate Public Engagement:

Measure the effectiveness of the public engagement:

- a) Address each of the evaluation questions identified in Step 3
- b) Measure the success of the public engagement process using the indicators, metrics or benchmarks identified in Step 3
- c) Use evaluation information for next steps in the project, feedback for future activities, and reporting on effectiveness of the process

Note * Evaluation is tied to the process and scope of the public engagement and therefore begins at Step 1 and Step 2 and should continue through the entire public engagement process

Monitoring and Support

Citizen Service shall be responsible for providing support to the guidelines and receiving related concerns or complaints.

Relevant Policies and Legislation:

[Notice Policy \(CL 7-07\)](#)

[Accountability and Transparency Policy \(CL 7-05\)](#)

[Standards for Accessibility Policy \(A 10-03\)](#)

[Municipal Act, 2001 S.O. 2001, c. 25](#)

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act R.S.O. 1990, c.M.56](#)

[Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 S.O. 2004 c.3 Sch. A](#)

[Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13](#)

[Expropriations Act, R.S.O. 1990 c.E.26](#)

[Development Charges Act, 1997 Ont. Reg. 82/98](#)

[Environmental Assessment Act, S.C. 1992, c.37](#)

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 S.O. 2005 c.11](#)

[Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation Ont. Reg 429/07](#)

[Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Ont. Reg 191/11](#)