



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

1

Title	Public Engagement Policy
Departments	All
Policy Category	Administration/Communications
Effective Date	November 2023
Approved by	Board of Directors

1. Policy Statement

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) is committed to engaging residents and community members across the region, creating a culture that values open, two-way communication, active listening, and sharing of accurate information. It seeks to establish effective communication loops that share how feedback received influenced or was incorporated into the projects and tasks we undertake.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the public engagement policy is to establish a formal public engagement approach for ACRD projects and operations.

Building strong engagement will establish relationships and build understanding and earn trust with residents and community members on the projects, initiatives, and plans brought forward by the ACRD. This policy will establish an approach for the ACRD for engagement.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all formal public engagement undertaken for ACRD programs, policies, plans, projects, and activities that are delivered by:

- **ACRD staff**
- **Elected Officials/Committee Members**
- **Contractors working on behalf of the ACRD; and**
- **Volunteers or partner organizations working on behalf of the ACRD**



4. Policy

- The ACRD follows the best practices and models laid out by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) when addressing public engagement. Effective public participation is based on three guiding principles that determine the level of participation to be applied to a project or initiative:
 - Values-based** - meaningful participation is focused on talking to people about what matters most to them and what matters most to the other affected parties.
 - Decision-oriented** - outlining the scope of issues under discussion to purposefully conclude or decision over the course of a process.
 - Goal-driven** - outlining the public's role and potential to influence the issues under discussion with clear objectives of what will be achieved. For example, information is communicated, input or feedback is sought, or collaborative development is desired.
- The ACRD will use the IAP2 Participation Spectrum ([Home IAP2 Canada EN](#)) to guide engagement and public participation. IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process (see diagram).





Guiding Principles:

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

- **Transparency:** Public engagement opportunities are developed so that participants clearly understand their impact, 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:** Engagement must be carried out in a meaningful way, that is respectful, culturally appropriate, timely, and accessible to all people.
- **Timeliness:** Public engagement is commenced as early as possible, so the community and interested parties 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. Dialogue will prioritize being two-way, and residents and community members should be informed throughout the process.
- **Suitable process:** Design and implementation of public engagement processes that reflect the size, complexity, and community impact of any initiative.
- **Regional perspective:** The ACRD recognizes the unique values and perspectives of its varied and diverse communities and interested community groups. Engagement activities are developed to balance the specific needs of individual communities throughout the region.

NOTE: The following procedures manual is designed to aid the ACRD administration staff and make engagement planning timely, accurate, and effective.

- **Appendix A** – Procedures manual - an overview of best practices and offers a guide to communicating effectively.
- **Appendix B** – Request forms – request forms designed to make the process more efficient when communications support is needed. These forms should be emailed to communications@acrd.bc.ca
 - Event plan
 - Request for communication support template
 - Request for social media support template
 - Website changes request form
 -



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

4

- **Appendix C** – Materials for engagement – tools to be used at engagement meetings
 - Respectful behaviour notice
 - Photo release form
 - Film and Photo notice
 - Sign-in sheet
 - Post event feedback form
 - Public Outreach Safety Plan Template (in progress)

For more information or questions, please contact:

ACRD Communications department: communications@acrd.bc.ca



Public Engagement Policy Appendix A - Procedures Manual

Communications Procedures

- According to the *Local Government Act*, “regional districts may (and sometimes must) engage with citizens in a variety of informal and formal ways on various matters. Informal engagement includes open houses and advisory bodies, while formal engagement includes legislatively required local government consent or elector approval. Locally elected officials are charged with making decisions that affect the daily lives of residents, families, the business community, and many others. Public participation in local decision-making is an important aspect of the local government system in B.C. Citizens can become engaged and involved in local government decision-making through several informal and formal processes. More information on this is available at: [Local government public engagement - Province of British Columbia](#)
- The *BC Community Charter* and *Local Government Act* outlines the legal requirements for engagement. They can be found at the following links [Community Charter \(gov.bc.ca\)](#) and [Local Government Act](#)
- Whether the public needs to be engaged in a decision should be a critical consideration when developing any new project, initiative, or considering changes to a service or program. Public engagement may not be required or suitable in every case, but when it is, the ACRD will ensure it engages with residents as early as possible and through various methods of communication.

These can include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Email – via Mailchimp or specific email addresses – must develop emailing lists
- ✓ Social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter)
- ✓ Mailouts – printed materials
- ✓ One-on-one meetings – when requested or when reaching out to influencers or interested parties
- ✓ Organized events (examples listed below)
- ✓ Surveys/questionnaires
- ✓ Media releases
- ✓ Website posts
- ✓ Sandwich boards
- ✓ Advertising via the media – must fulfil legal requirements at minimum
- ✓ Briefing the Board of Directors – allowing them to communicate the correct message in accordance with engagement plans and the code of conduct.



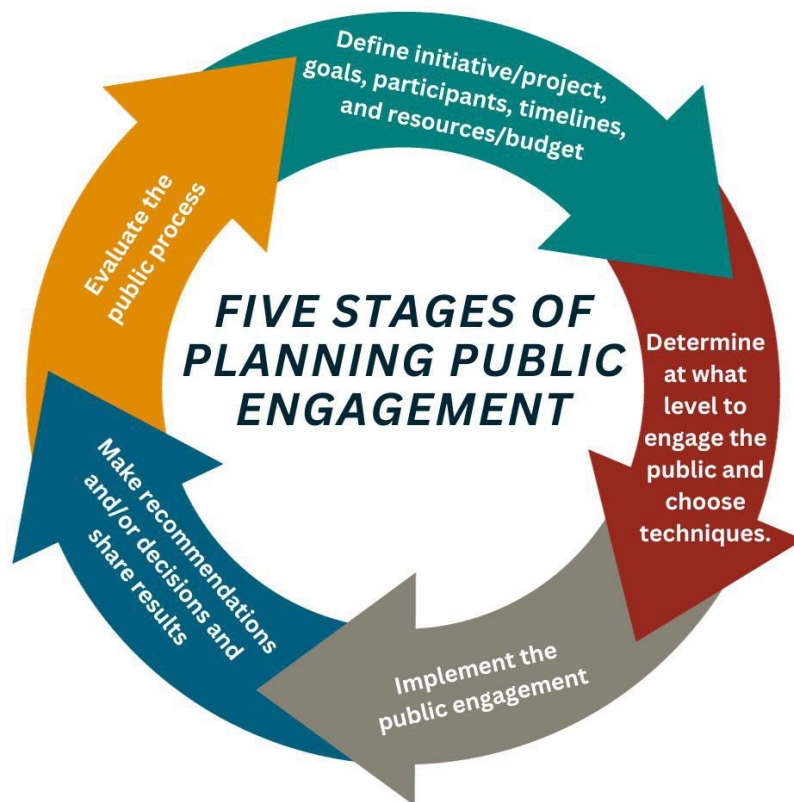
ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

6

- ✓ Telephone – when requested

NOTE: In addition to offering ways to communicate, as listed above, there must be a way for the public or stakeholders to provide written or verbal feedback.

- Determining what engagement should take place must happen in the beginning of any project or initiative. This decision hinges on to what level, if at all, the decision being made will impact residents and/or community members.
 - ✓ **Flow chart of decision making and planning** – This is designed to be a guide to planning your engagement. If you come to the evaluation stage (yellow), you may decide to repeat some or all steps.





ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

7

- Types of meetings/engagement opportunities can include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - ✓ Public Hearings – often legally required
 - ✓ Open houses
 - ✓ Salons
 - ✓ Booths or tradeshow/fair displays
 - ✓ Facilitated meetings – many options exist for styles including world café, Circle Way, Open Space (group brainstorming), appreciative inquiry (problem solving), ice breakers, hot topics, mind-mapping
 - ✓ When relevant, games and exercises to engage youth, or other targeted demographics (e.g. seniors, user groups)
 - ✓ Recreational gatherings such as public barbecues or pancake breakfasts

NOTE: Each of these should include a process of reporting back, which further engages people.

Engagement Procedures

- Engagement will be conducted in a way that respects the belief that residents and community members have a right to be involved in the decision-making process that could potentially have an impact on them.
- Input gathered during the engagement process must be reviewed and considered when a decision is discussed.
- The ACRD can seek out input and feedback from residents and community members on decisions related to them.
- Extensive engagement may not be required for all projects, but this should be determined at the commencement of the project or initiative.
- If required, engagement and communication plans will be developed in the early stages of a project or initiative. They should adopt a multi-phased approach to engagement and will follow the IAP2 Spectrum on public participation.
 - The ACRD Communications Coordinator and Department leads must be involved in the development of these plans. Plans must be approved by senior staff (manager or general manager) before it is taken to the Board of Directors.
- As a form of best practice, the ACRD will consider going beyond the minimal requirements to inform residents and community members of public engagement opportunities, such as those listed in the procedures.