

Public Participation Framework



Call to Family, Community and Participation:

We believe people have a right and a duty
to participate in society, seeking together
the common good and well-being of all.

“Therefore encourage one another and build
up each other, as indeed you are doing.”

Thessalonians 5.11



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Definitions

Communicate

To share or exchange information — a mutual dialogue and two-way communication.

Decision-maker

The person or group of individuals who is responsible for making strategically important decisions.

ECSD families

Parents, guardians, and students that attend ECSD schools.

ECSD or the Division

Edmonton Catholic School Division

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

An international organization advancing the practice of public participation and promoting and improving the best practices associated with successful and meaningful public engagement in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.

Participant

A person involved in an activity or event related to public participation activities such as ECSD families, a community resident, Division employee, or Trustee.

Public engagement

The process by which participants are informed on, or given the opportunity to be involved in, Division decisions that impact them.

Public participation

The process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public input to make sustainable decisions.

Public participation techniques

A range of methods used to encourage participants to share ideas and opinions with the Division that will assist with making decisions that impact them.

Stakeholder

A person with interest or concern in the public participation process.





Introduction

Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD) has a renewed focus on connecting, promoting, and advocating for our families, learners, staff, and community. We believe that the messages we send and receive do far more than just share information. Our work shapes attitudes, builds relationships, and plays a role in ensuring the future of Catholic education.

Public participation and stakeholder feedback are key parts of this renewed focus. ECSD has designed and developed this Public Participation Framework in accordance with Board Policy and Division Administrative Procedures. Public engagement activities in Edmonton Catholic Schools are designed based on the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#). Our goal is to have a framework that is well understood and accepted by community members. The roadmap will give our community a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, help people understand how their contributions may influence decisions within ECSD, reflect best practices, and be applied consistently and effectively across future decision-making. We are committed to monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting our framework to meet the Division's needs over time.

Expectations

ECSD is committed to successful public participation, which includes sharing information and letting stakeholder voices be heard, with the commitment that stakeholder feedback will be considered before a final decision is made. Each opinion, idea, and voice is valued through this process. Our engagements will be inclusive, transparent, and honest. Our goal is to ensure that our communication with our stakeholders throughout this process is clear, meaningful, and timely.

ECSD will determine the level of public participation proportionate to the impact of the issue or decision and will clearly communicate the level of public participation required to its stakeholders. Additionally, ECSD will conduct public participation in the most sustainable and inclusive way with available resources and reasonable costs. Finally, ECSD will communicate decisions and results driven by public participation to the public in a timely manner and in accordance with approved communications practices.

ECSD will balance stakeholder input, fiscal responsibility and Division priorities when using public participation feedback in making decisions. ECSD will ensure that information gathered through the public participation process is recorded and provided to Trustees and Senior Administration for consideration. The final recommendations will not include each viewpoint expressed, and decisions must uphold the Trustees' fiduciary responsibility in the Division.

The role of the Board of Trustees is to represent Catholic electors and to advocate to preserve, protect, and defend publicly funded Catholic education. The Board provides direction and leadership to the Edmonton Catholic School Division and the Chief Superintendent.



What is Public Participation

Public participation is any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public input to make sustainable decisions. It should be based on the following criteria:

- That all public participation serves a purpose and that any engagements that gather feedback will be used by the Division to make better decisions about Edmonton Catholic Schools.
- That trust and credibility with the participants for the public participation process are built by ECSD.
- That ECSD will support the practice of public participation, educate the decision-makers as to the value and use of the process, and ensure that all commitments made to the public are made in good faith.

Public participation is characterized by mutual information exchange between the Division and ECSD families and participants. Information can flow:

- from ECSD families and participants to the Division/the Board of Trustees;
- from the Division/the Board of Trustees to ECSD families and participants; and
- in both directions in a mutual exchange.

The goal of these exchanges is to generate benefits for all. ECSD makes better decisions when engaging in public participation while ECSD families' needs are better reflected in the policies and programs of the Division.



Key Principles

1. **Inclusivity and Fairness:**

The public participation process will include all Division stakeholders, as appropriate, ensuring that those affected by the decision have a voice and opportunity to share their perspectives. Organizers will use a range of public participation techniques to engage Division stakeholders, if required.

2. **Early Involvement and Timely Communication:**

Accurate information will be communicated as early as possible in the public participation process to assist the Division and its stakeholders in their planning, preparation, and participation.

3. **Respect:**

All participants must be respectful of diverse views, values, and interests. The process must also respect decision-making protocols within ECSD and the Board of Trustees.

4. **Clear and Coordinated Approach (Transparency):**

The process will demonstrate a commitment to efficient and effective use of Division dollars and ensure both the process and its outcome are transparent. Throughout the engagement process, plain language and a variety of communication channels and engagement techniques will be used to optimize participant input because people learn and engage in different ways.

5. **Continuous Growth/Improvement:**

The process will address participants' concerns, provide timely feedback, and communicate with participants on how their feedback impacted the decision.



Guidelines for Participation

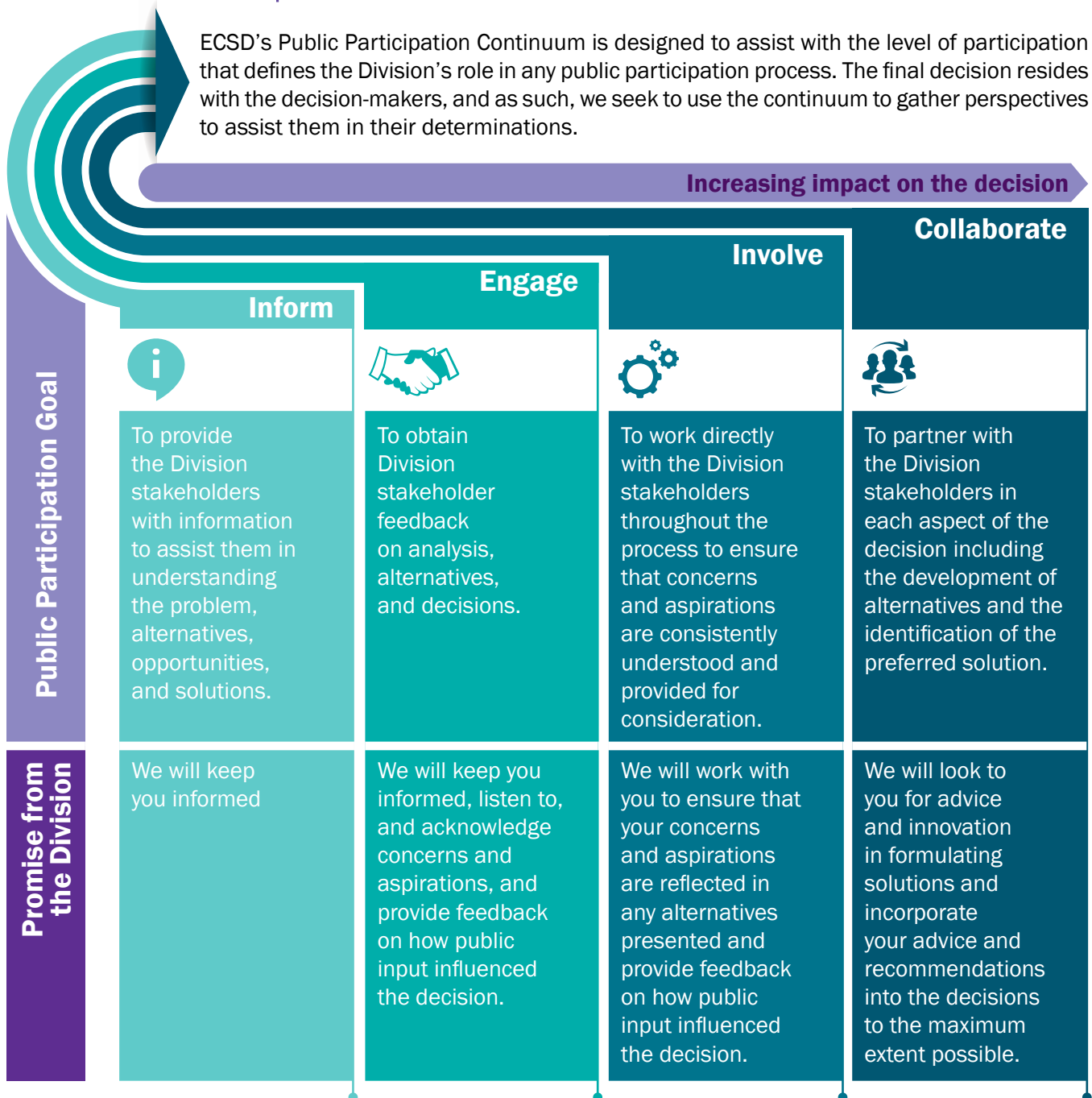
All participants need to be aware of, and agree to, the following guidelines at the beginning of any public participation process:

- Everyone has something to offer
- Share your story, experience, and view - we need everyone's input
- Be open to new ideas and opinions
- Respect each other – including when others are speaking
- Listen actively
- Think about what others are saying
- Ask each other questions – the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the issues
- Turn cell phones off/mute.

Guidelines for participation will be visible where appropriate at public participation sessions. ECSD is committed to providing a respectful environment for all participants that will enable them to express their perspectives on topics freely.

ECSD Public Participation Continuum

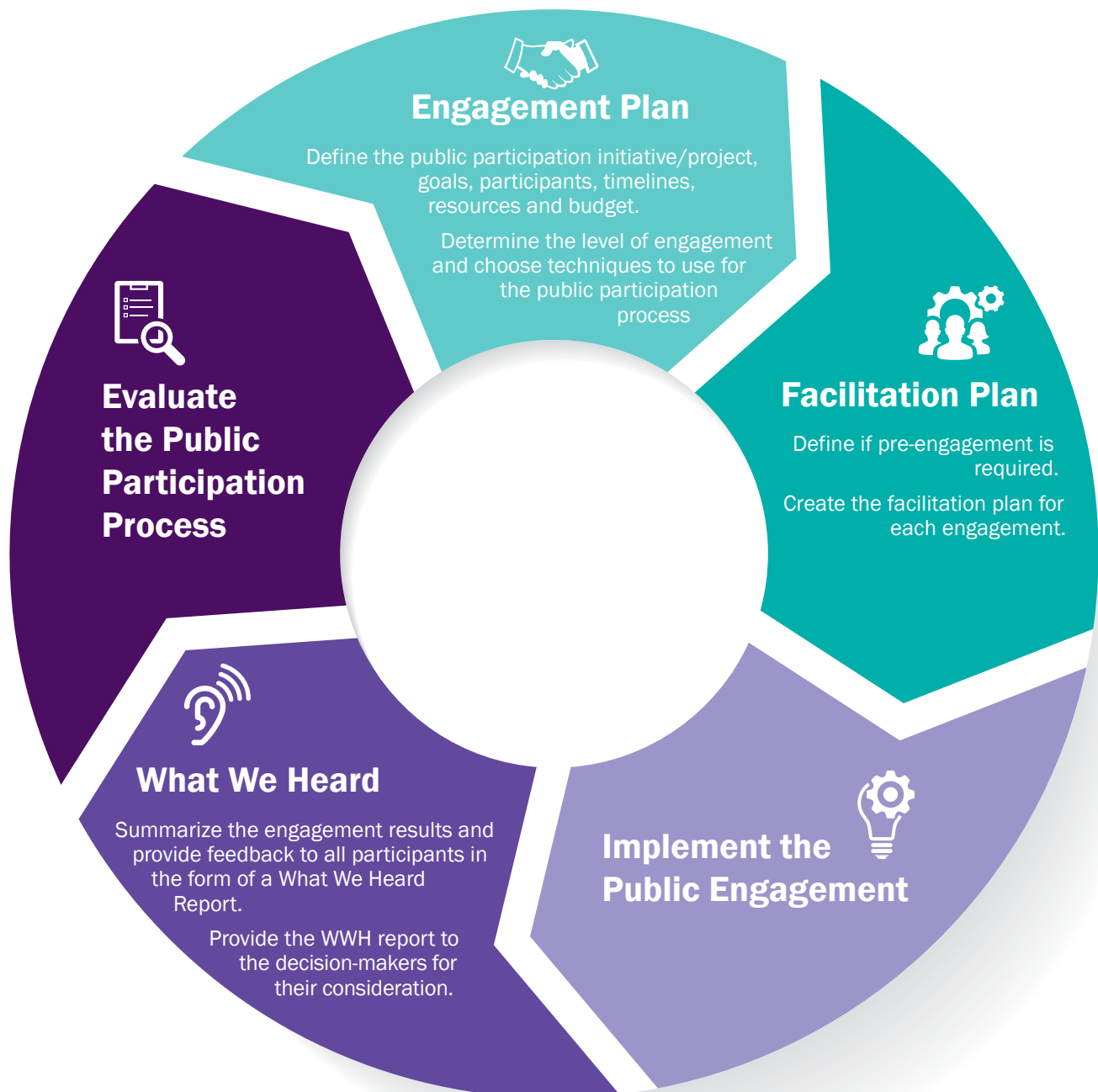
ECSD's Public Participation Continuum is designed to assist with the level of participation that defines the Division's role in any public participation process. The final decision resides with the decision-makers, and as such, we seek to use the continuum to gather perspectives to assist them in their determinations.



The content above has been adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

The different levels of engagement should not be considered in isolation from the others. Not all projects and initiatives require the same level of engagement. This framework will help guide which level of public participation and which techniques will be used. These can be amended based on Division stakeholder feedback.

Planning Stages for Public Participation



The Engagement Specialist will work collaboratively with Division departments, as part of the Continuous Improvement Cycle, to develop engagement timelines and plans, facilitation plans, and manage and implement the public participation process and provide feedback to the Division stakeholders in the form of a 'What We Heard' report.

When to Engage in Public Participation

ECSD is committed to engaging with ECSD families, Division staff, stakeholders and/or the public in the following situations:

- To inform a decision or action through public input.
- To help identify ECSD families' needs and perspectives.
- When there is a high risk of a matter impacting ECSD families.
- When required by the Education Act, provincial regulation, ECSD Board Policy, or Division Administration Procedures.

In the public participation planning process, consideration is given to the complexity of the decision and the time needed for people to respond. The Division commits to ensuring that public participation requirements for Board Decisions are always met and that for some specific public engagements, each public participation process

is considered on its individual basis and merit. To ensure a successful engagement, careful consideration is given to the appropriate tools and timing for the project or decision. Public participation does not replace the fiduciary responsibility of the decision-makers but is invaluable in the way it enhances their capacity to make well-informed decisions on behalf of the Division.

Examples of what ECSD or ECSD schools may engage on are:

- School attendance boundary decisions
- New programming decisions
- School closures
- To better understand the needs of ECSD families
- Individual school goals and vision
- Division priorities, annual budget, and assurance survey
- To engage with individual School Councils

Key Performance Indicators

ECSD is committed to measuring the success of our public participation activities. Following each engagement, we will request that participants complete an evaluation survey. In this way, we can continually find ways to improve our public participation processes and approach. It will help ECSD stay accountable and transparent to our stakeholders.

To assist with evaluating our Framework, the following items will act as Key Performance Indicators:

- The Public Participation Framework will be continually reviewed and updated to ensure relevance and increase effectiveness.
- A 'What We Heard' report will be provided to participants and decision-makers following a public participation process that summarizes the feedback gathered.
- Upon completion of a public participation process, outcomes from the process, will be communicated – closing the loop.



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