



LEDUC
COUNTY

Framework
Public participation

Last updated: Fall 2020

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Introduction

Leduc County is committed to accessible, accountable government and effective communication. While the ability to make decision rests with duly elected council, Leduc County acknowledges that an engaged public and effective public participation can improve the quality of municipal decision making.

Purpose of the framework

This public participation framework provides an overview of public participation at Leduc County and establish the foundation for effective and meaningful public participation processes.

Who should use this framework

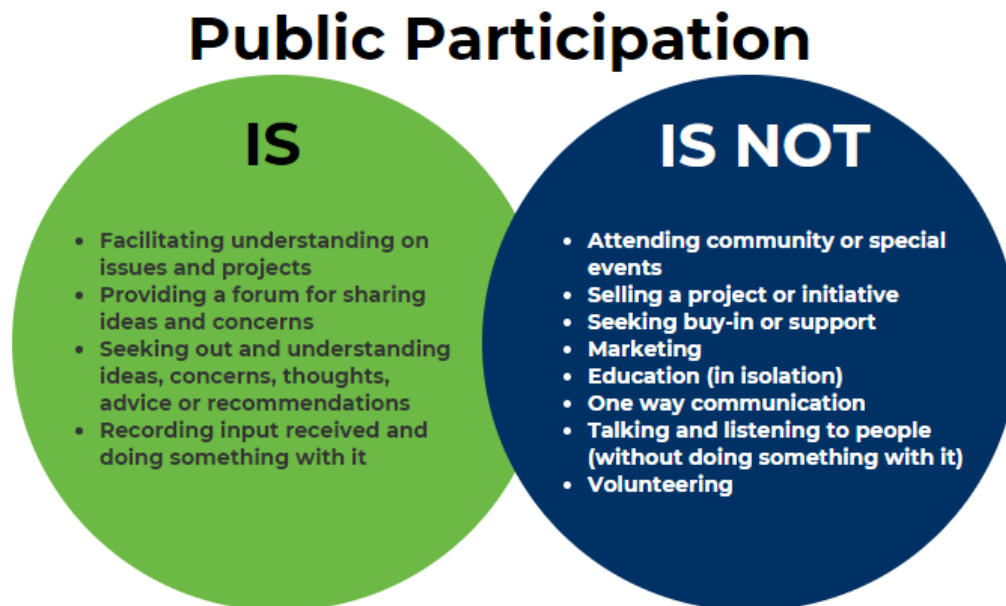
This framework should be used by anyone interested in learning more about public participation at Leduc County.

Understanding public participation

Defining public participation

While there are many different terms for public participation that are used interchangeably – including community engagement, public engagement, P2 and public consultation – they all mean the same thing. At Leduc County, we use the term “public participation.” Public participation is any process that involves participants – external participants such as residents, business owners and community groups and/or internal participants such as staff – in problem solving or decision making and uses their input to make decisions.¹

Public participation is not limited to a single action or event, such as an open house. Rather, it is often a series of events that build trust and help foster increased understanding, while improving our ability to make decisions that reflect the needs, interests and thoughts of participants.



Source: Dialogue Partners

¹ International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Communication versus public participation

Communication and public participation are two different, yet complimentary disciplines.

Communication mainly serves to inform the public of important topics, issues, projects and public participation initiatives that may interest or impact them. It is a key component of effective public participation, and must take place throughout the duration of the project and before, during and after public participation initiatives. Communication looks like:

Purpose	Techniques
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To inform or to educate on issues, opportunities, programs or services• To raise awareness or to promote	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• News release• Website• Speech or presentation• Brochure• Advertisement• Direct-mailed letters

Source: Dialogue Partners

Public participation involves actively connecting with others to listen, learn and gain an understanding of their thoughts, opinions and positions while providing them an opportunity to influence or make decisions. Public participation looks like:

Purpose	Techniques
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To gather input related to community values and vision• To collect feedback on the changes to recreational programming• To generate a community-wide conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open house• Community meeting• Citizen Jury

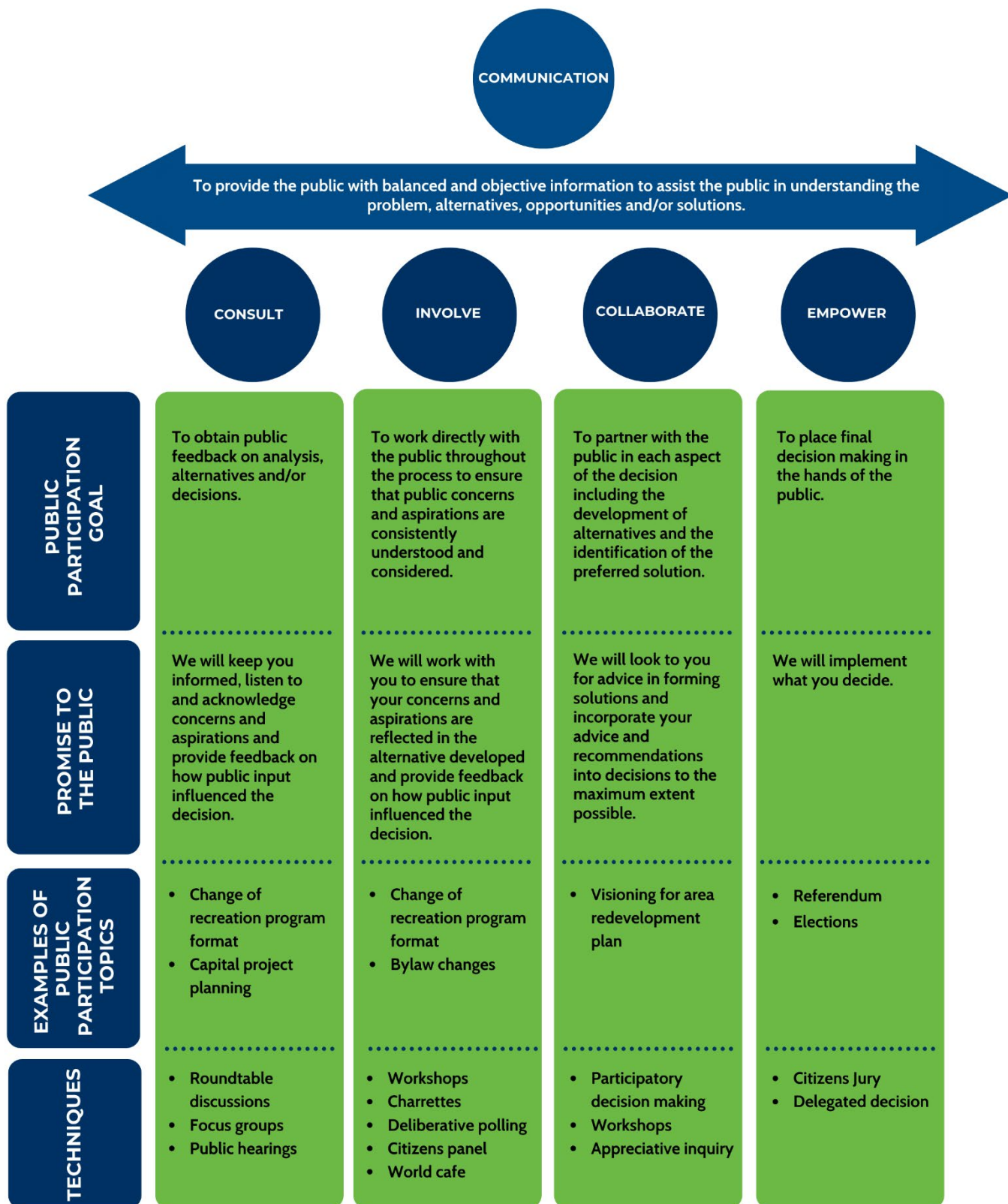
Source: Dialogue Partners

Together, communication and public participation help facilitate effective public participation processes.

Public participation spectrum

Public participation is dynamic; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The spectrum on the next page shows the varying levels of participation that can shape our approaches to public participation initiatives. This spectrum is adapted from the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) *Public Participation Spectrum*.

If you are familiar with IAP2's spectrum, you will notice that ours looks a bit different. Traditionally, there is a level of engagement called INFORM. We consider INFORM to be consistent with the discipline of communications instead of public participation and have removed INFORM as a level of public participation. Instead we have COMMUNICATION embedded throughout the project. Communication must take place throughout the duration of the project, including before, during and after public participation initiatives at all levels (CONSULT, INVOLVE, COLLABORATE and/or EMPOWER).



Adapted from the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation

Roles and responsibilities

There are several different groups that play a role in planning, implementing and evaluating public participation initiatives undertaken in Leduc County.

Council

- Help identify issues that may need public participation.
- Consider input obtained through public participation in decision making.
- Promote and support public participation.

Executive leadership and senior management

- Help identify issues that may need public participation.
- Ensure the Public Participation Policy is adhered to and this framework and supporting documents are used by staff and consultants undertaking work on behalf of Leduc County.
- Ensure public participation is considered for all projects and that a public participation and communications plan is created when public participation is required.
- Ensure adequate time and resources are dedicated to planning, implementing and evaluating public participation initiatives, both internally and externally.
- Consider input obtained through public participation in decision making.
- Promote and support public participation.

Project manager

- Adhere to the Public Participation Policy and use this framework and supporting documents for all projects. If working with consultants, ensure they adhered to the policy and supporting documents.
- Work with communications to create a public participation and communications plan when public participation is required.
- Ensure adequate time and resources are dedicated to planning, implementing and evaluating public participation.
- Consider input obtained through public participation in decision making, including recommendations to council.
- Report the public participation findings to council.
- Work with communications to report the public participation findings and outcomes of decisions to participants and the public.

Consultants

- Adhere to the Public Participation Policy and use this framework and supporting documents when undertaking work on behalf of Leduc County.
- Consider input obtained through public participation in decision making, including recommendations to project manager.
- Report the public participation findings to project manager.

Communications staff

- Help identify issues that may need public participation.
- Promote and support public participation.
- Adhere to the Public Participation Policy and use this framework and supporting documents for all projects. If working with consultants, ensure they adhered to the policy and supporting documents.
- Assist project managers with assessing public participation needs for their projects and create a public participation and communications plan when public participation is required.
- Ensure adequate time and resources are dedicated to planning, implementing and evaluating public participation.
- Communicate public participation initiatives.
- Report the public participation findings to participants and the public.
- Communicate the outcomes of decisions to participants and the public.
- Review the Public Participation Policy and this framework and supporting documents, and recommend updates when needed.

Why we engage

Commitment to public participation

Leduc County is committed to accessible, accountable government and effective communication. While the ability to make decisions rests with duly elected council, we acknowledge that an engaged public and effective public participation can improve the quality of municipal decision making. We are committed to planning and implementing meaningful public participation, and to continually improving our public participation processes.

Leduc County supports the IAP2's core values for public participation, which include

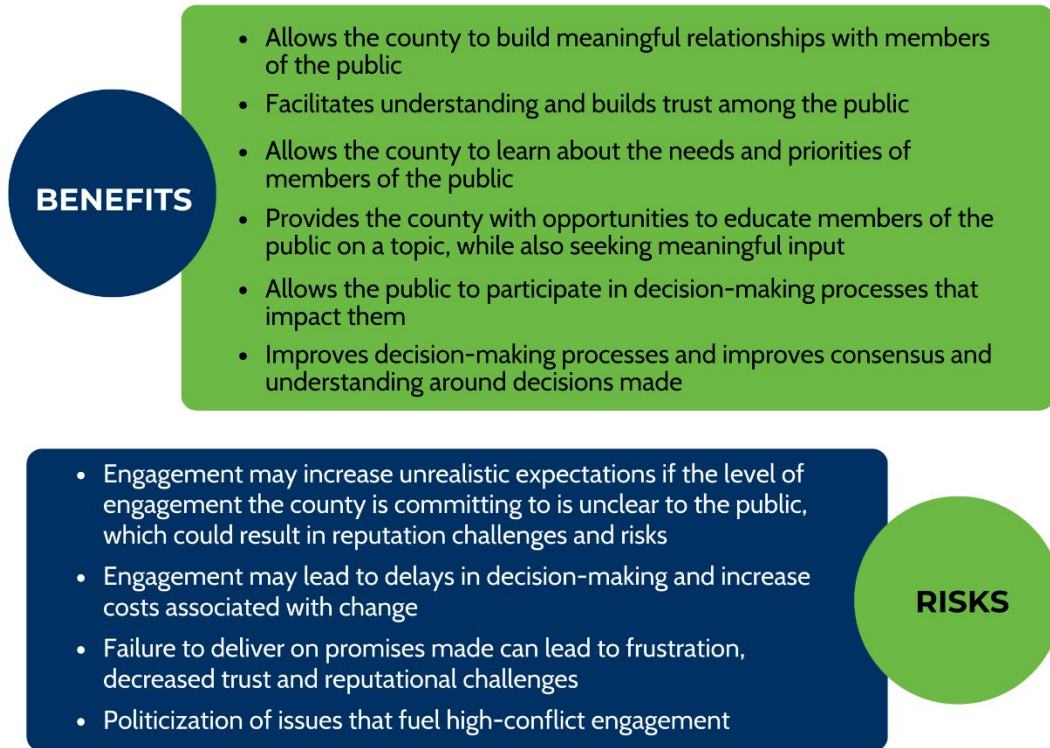
1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.²

To learn more about our commitment to public participation, view our public participation policy in **Appendix A**.

² IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation <https://www.iap2.org/page/corevalues>

Benefits and risks of public participation

There are both benefits and risks associated with conducting public participation initiatives; it is important to consider both when designing your approach. Some examples of benefits and risks to consider include:



There are also risks associated with not proceeding with public participation when it is required. If public participation is not conducted and should have been, it can contribute to a lack of understanding, lack of trust in the county, missed opportunities and/or a decrease in the county's credibility.

Appendix A: Government Services: CC01 – Public Participation Policy

LEDUC COUNTY MUNICIPAL POLICY

Department: Government Services	Section: Council
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CC-01 Public Participation

Policy statement

Leduc County is committed to accessible, accountable government and effective communication. While the ability to make decisions rests with duly elected council, Leduc County acknowledges that an engaged public and effective public engagement can improve the quality of municipal decision-making.

Policy CC-01 Public Participation establishes a framework for consistent and effective public engagement, and outlines expectations for public engagement so the public has a clear understanding of when and how it can influence municipal decisions.

Definitions

- *Consultative decisions* are those that may require Leduc County to solicit public participation.
- *Informative decisions* are those that require Leduc County to inform the public of decisions made.
- *Public Participation* includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the municipality.
- *Public Participation Plan* is a plan that identifies which public participation tools should be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.
- *Public Participation Tools* means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination to create public participation opportunities including, but not limited to:
 - (a) in-person;
 - (b) digital participation;
 - (c) written participation; and
 - (d) representative participation.
- *Stakeholder* means a resident of Leduc County, as well as any other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by Leduc County.

Policy authority

Legislative and policy implications

- (a) All public participation will be undertaken in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and any other applicable legislation. This Policy is in addition to, and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the *Municipal Government Act*.
- (b) Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act* requires all municipalities in Alberta to adopt a public participation policy.
- (c) All public participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies.
- (d) This policy shall be available for public inspection and will be posted on Leduc County's website.

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101-1101 5 St., Nisku, AB T9E 2X3
phone: 780-955-3555 **fax:** 780-955-3444
leduc-county.com