



The PPF Public Engagement Project: Building Capacity Together

Terms of Reference

February 2010

The Public Policy Forum's (PPF) *Public Engagement Project: Building Capacity Together* is Phase 2 of a multi-stage initiative to help governments work together to build the knowledge and capacity to design and deliver effective public engagement processes. Phase 1 was completed in April, 2009 with the publication of 'Rethinking the Public Policy Process: A Public Engagement Framework.'¹ Phase 2 will extend and build on this earlier work through a national dialogue aimed at providing some 500-750 officials with the knowledge and skills needed to begin using the Framework. The current project thus shifts the PPF's focus from helping officials **understand** the framework, to helping them build the capacity to **apply** it.

OBJECTIVES

The initiative has four main objectives:

1. Produce a state-of-the-art Practitioner's Guide to Public Engagement that will provide Canadian governments with a comprehensive manual for designing and delivering public engagement processes;
2. Provide participants with the learning, networking and training opportunities they need to understand and apply the ideas behind the Framework;
3. Build a Canada-wide community-of-practice, including some 500-750 government practitioners; and
4. Test and refine the use of online tools for enhancing collaboration.

WHO SHOULD JOIN US?

Public engagement affects all aspects of government business, from policy development to service delivery, as well as all levels of activity, from the deputy minister's office to the frontline service counter. We welcome officials from all levels and with a wide variety of backgrounds. By joining the project, you will become part of a new community-of-practice that includes a richly diverse group of public servants from federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments across the country.

JOINING THE ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY

Public engagement is a new way of thinking about how government works together with citizens, communities and stakeholders to achieve a wide range of goals that it cannot achieve alone, such as population health, adjustment to climate change, a highly skilled labour force, or national security.

¹ *Rethinking the Public Policy Process: A Public Engagement Framework* sets out the conceptual foundations of the field, providing a comprehensive answer to questions such as: 'What is public engagement?' and 'Why does it matter?' The paper is available for download at: <http://www.pforum.ca/publications/rethinking-public-policy-process-public-engagement-framework>



Governments and stakeholders around the world are increasingly interested in this new and important field. Through the work of early leaders in the field, such as the [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\)](#), a community-of-practice is evolving. This project helps build the new community.

Through the online dialogue public servants from federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments will connect with and learn from each other, contributing their ideas and experiences to the project through facilitated discussion of key themes and issues. Through participation in a series of local workshops/training sessions, they will form local networks with others from their own government who are also in the project. In joining the project, participants are [joining the engagement community](#).

THE GUIDE

PPF will draw on the dialogue to produce *The Practitioner's Guide to Public Engagement*, a state-of-the-art publication that will provide Canadian governments with a comprehensive manual for designing and delivering public engagement processes.

THE PILOT PROJECTS

To ensure the dialogue is practical and grounded in experience, three or four governments will undertake pilot projects of their own during the life of this project. They will use the national dialogue as a key source of input to help them plan, implement and evaluate their projects. This, in turn, will provide the national dialogue with a kind of laboratory in which to test the ideas we are developing. The pilots will be an important focus of discussion in the dialogue and the lessons learned and best practices identified from them will be incorporated into the Practitioner's Guide.

PARTICIPANTS' COMMITMENT

In joining the project, participants are expected to actively take part in the online dialogue. This means they will regularly visit the site to monitor discussion, engage other members, and contribute ideas or views, as appropriate. We estimate the time required for this at one hour per week. We also expect that participants will attend the two or three one-day workshops/training sessions we will schedule for their city.

EARNING THE CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

On completion of the project, the Public Policy Forum will award participants with a Certificate of Achievement recognizing their status as trained practitioners in this new and important field of government activity. In order to earn this certificate, a participant is expected to log-in and participate in the online dialogue an average of three hours per month over the duration of the initiative, attend the in-person sessions in their city, and perform a series of online tasks.

THE WORKING GROUP

A working group chaired by [Don Lenihan](#), Vice President, Engagement at the PPF will be struck to provide advice and guidance on the project. Participating governments will name two senior officials to the Working Group. The members will act as the principal point of contact between their governments and the project.



THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Our approach was first developed by [Don Lenihan](#) through five pilot projects in the Province of New Brunswick. It has since been refined through work with nine governments, resulting in the PPF's public engagement framework (See Footnote 1 above). Since the fall of 2007, Don has offered some 50 half-day seminars on the framework to over 1000 public servants across Canada. The current project shifts the PPF's focus from helping officials understand the framework, to helping them apply it.

TIMELINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROCESS

The dialogue will unfold in three parts. Part 1 will begin in early February of 2010, soon after we start recruiting community members. Part 2 will begin on March 15th; Part 3 may take place simultaneously with Part 2 or begin later in the process.

Part 1: What is public engagement and why does it matter?

February 8 to March 15, 2010

In-person workshops

To ensure the dialogue is focused and orderly, we will take steps to ensure that participants understand the basic ideas underlying our approach to public engagement. These are set out and discussed in the Framework Paper from Phase 1. Don Lenihan will convene half- to one-day workshops in participating jurisdictions for project participants (and other interested officials). These sessions will provide participants with the theoretical grounding needed for the discussion in Part 2 of the project, which focuses on implementing the framework. The topics to be covered will include:

- Complexity and the new governance vision
- The role of government
- Some examples
- The Engagement framework
- Articulating the public voice

As well, participants will be briefed on the methodology we will follow for the dialogue, will receive a demonstration of the online tool, and will have the opportunity to pose questions regarding the process or the tool.

Part 2: How do we do it?

March 15, 2010 to January 31, 2011

Online facilitated dialogue, in-person workshops

Online dialogue

The online dialogue will be divided into some six sections, each lasting about six weeks. Each section will focus on a key theme or cluster of issues (e.g. setting the terms of reference, communications, and use of online tools) that will be central to the discussion in the final manual. A section will proceed as follows:

1. At the start of each section, the facilitator will describe the theme or issues to be discussed, set the parameters for discussion, and pose key questions to launch the discussion.
2. In the first few weeks of each section, community members will interact, proposing ideas, providing comments and taking part through a variety of online techniques, ranging from simple exchanges to "wiki-storms." The facilitator will guide the discussion, prompting, questioning



and challenging where appropriate, to ensure ideas are fully explored and that dialogue remains focused and within the parameters.

3. In the final two weeks of the section, Don Lenihan will draft a chapter of the final report, based on this discussion. The chapter will be posted online for comment.

Following this, the cycle will be repeated, using the next topic, and so on until we have a full draft of the report. The participants will then have an opportunity to consider and comment on the report as a whole, which will be revised and adjusted accordingly. Likely topics to be covered include:

- Setting objectives
- Selecting participants
- Reframing issues
- Facilitating dialogue
- Communications
- Using online tools
- Developing an action plan
- Intra- and intergovernmental alignment
- Evaluating progress

Online dialogue tool

Community members can access the online dialogue tool through a password protected portal at anytime from a computer with Internet access. Members can create their own profiles and view the profiles of others within the community. They will participate in the dialogue via discussion forums, and as well, be able to learn and comment about one or more ongoing engagement processes that will be detailed on the site. A blog, maintained by Don Lenihan, will provide an overview of the dialogue. Importantly, the tool allows members to opt into email functionality, allowing them to receive updates and contribute to dialogue through their personal email.

In-person sessions

Throughout the process, in-person sessions will be used as workshops to present and discuss key findings from the dialogue, as they emerge. The exact number of in-person sessions will vary across jurisdictions, but we hope to hold a minimum of two in each jurisdiction.

Part 3: How will this affect traditional government and governance?

May or may not run simultaneously with Part 2

On-line facilitated discussion

In this section, community members will discuss important overarching issues raised by the new approach to public engagement. They will gain practical arguments and conceptual tools that will help explain to a Minister what public engagement means and the benefits it brings.

- Governance and the impact on democratic institutions
- Getting political buy-in and leadership