



Public Engagement Framework



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INTRODUCTION

As Yellowknife continues to grow and evolve, so too must the ways the City connects with its residents. Community expectations are changing: people want greater transparency, clearer information, and more meaningful opportunities to contribute to shaping their city. This Public Engagement Framework responds to that need by setting out how the City will engage with the public in a consistent, deliberate, and accessible way.



Public engagement has always been part of how the City plans and delivers services. What is changing is the intention behind it. This Framework marks a shift toward being more strategic and purposeful in how we engage, grounding our efforts in best practices, clear processes, and a commitment to follow-through. With a dedicated Community Engagement Advisor in place, the City is strengthening its capacity to ensure engagement is not just present, but meaningful, inclusive, and built into the way we work.

This framework reflects best practices adopted in municipalities across Canada, where structured frameworks define roles, center accessibility and inclusion, and apply the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement to guide decision-making. Yellowknife's Framework builds on these models, but is tailored to our northern context, community size, and available resources. It is designed to be practical, clear, and realistic, while ensuring that every opportunity for engagement adds value for both residents and the City.

By adopting this Framework, the City affirms that public engagement is a core way the City serves its residents and strengthens trust in local government.



WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is how the City of Yellowknife involves people in decisions that affect them. It includes a wide range of activities, from sharing timely information to creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, all to make better, more inclusive decisions.

It is the formal process of inviting people to share their ideas, perspectives, and experiences to inform City decisions, plans, and policies. Engagement opportunities may take many forms, such as surveys, open houses, workshops, roundtables, online platforms, and community events. What they all have in common is providing space for meaningful input and showing how that input shapes outcomes.

TYPES OF INITIATIVES

Different types of City initiatives require different levels of public engagement, depending on factors such as priority, scope, budget, and the potential to influence decisions. Not every project will involve the same level of community input, and engagement is tailored to ensure it is meaningful and effective.

Types of Initiatives:

- City-wide plans and policies (e.g., community plans, strategic plans)
- Neighborhood plans and policies (e.g., local planning, zoning updates)
- Facility capital planning (e.g., recreation facilities, libraries)
- Infrastructure projects (e.g., roads, utilities, parks)
- Legally required engagement (e.g., financial planning, land use bylaws)

GOALS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The goals of public engagement guide how staff plan, deliver, and follow up on engagement activities. They ensure engagement is meaningful, inclusive, and aligned with the City's priorities:

- Provide equal opportunities: Ensure all residents and stakeholders can contribute meaningfully.
- Build trust: Engage sincerely and consistently to enhance public confidence in City decisions and processes.
- Communicate clearly: Share accurate, accessible information about projects, decisions, and next steps.
- Leverage community knowledge: Use local insights to inform policies, programs, and services that address real community needs.
- Acknowledge input: Demonstrate how feedback has been considered and incorporated so residents feel heard and valued.
- Maintain ongoing presence: Participate in community spaces, listen attentively, and build relationships beyond formal engagement initiatives.
- Be responsive: Address community concerns thoughtfully, guiding and supporting residents where possible within the City's capacity.

WHEN WE WILL ENGAGE

Public engagement is used when the community has a genuine opportunity to influence or inform a decision. These opportunities are most suitable for:

- Shaping decisions that affect residents, such as planning, policies, or service improvements.
- Projects with multiple options or potential outcomes, where public values and trade-offs are important.
- Issues affecting specific neighbourhoods, communities, or groups, where local knowledge matters.
- Legislative or regulatory requirements that require public involvement.
- High-impact or high-interest projects, where early involvement can build trust, reduce resistance, and improve outcomes.
- Emerging issues or community concerns where prompt listening can prevent larger problems.

WHEN WE WON'T ENGAGE

Sometimes, engagement is not appropriate or necessary. In these cases, the City may share information directly without asking for input. Examples include:

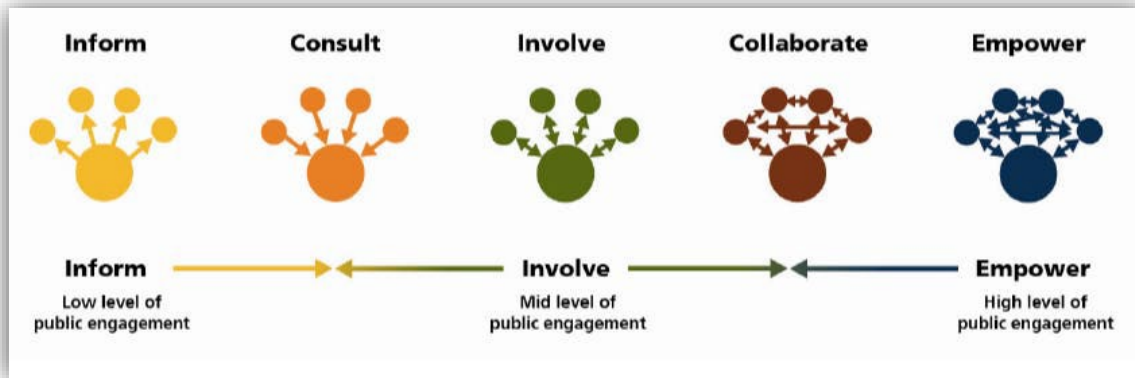
- When laws or regulations already determine the outcome.
- For routine tasks that do not impact residents.

Public Engagement Framework

- During emergencies that require quick action.
- If public input will not change the decision.
- When the community was recently surveyed on the same topic.
- If involving the public would delay urgent work.
- Even when engagement is not used, the City is committed to clear and timely communication to keep residents informed.

IAP2 SPECTRUM

The City of Yellowknife utilizes the [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\)](#) to inform its approach to community engagement in decision-making. IAP2 is a global leader in public engagement, providing standards that promote transparent, inclusive, and effective practices in government and public service.



One of IAP2's key tools is the Spectrum of Public Engagement, which outlines different levels of involvement — from simply providing information to empowering residents to play an active role in decision-making. These levels help City staff determine the appropriate level of public participation for each project or initiative, based on the scope of impact, the decision being made, and the aspects open to public input.

By following this internationally recognized framework, the City ensures engagement is consistent, ethical, and meets the community's expectations. At the same time, Yellowknife tailors its approach to local context, capacity, and community needs, so that residents can meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them.

Level	Definition	Promise to the Public	Sample City Project
Inform	Providing clear and balanced information to help the community understand city initiatives, opportunities, and decisions is essential. This level would be mandatory for all engagement initiatives.	We will keep you informed.	Construction Projects such as road work, transit detours, Annual Traffic Light Maintenance Program, etc.
Consult	At this level, participants provide feedback by sharing their preferences, concerns, or values. Engagement is typically straightforward and structured, allowing for a timely and convenient exchange of information between the City and community members.	We will listen to your input, consider it, and share how it influenced the decision.	Let's Talk YK 2050 – Phase 1
Involve	The City dedicates time and space for meaningful dialogue with relevant stakeholders. This ongoing exchange ensures that concerns and aspirations are fully understood through dialogue, fostering mutual understanding throughout the decision-making process.	We will work with you to ensure your views are understood and considered.	Climate Action Plan 2026-2036 Roundtables (Phase 1) Q1 2025.
Collaborate	At a higher level on the spectrum is collaboration, where the community co-develops solutions and shares decision-making power. Collaboration fosters mutual respect and shared responsibility, aligning with Yellowknife's vision for a thriving, resilient community.	We will look to you for advice and innovation, and include your input as much as possible.	Business Owners Safety Initiative (Jun 2025)
Empower	At the highest level of engagement, the City allows the community to make final decisions on specific matters. Empowerment involves granting decision-making authority to the public, with the City supporting and implementing the outcomes.	We will support you in making the final decision.	Referendum, such as the Aquatic Centre Borrowing.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

Public engagement is a shared effort that involves the City, residents, and partners. Key participants include:

- City Staff and Project Leads: Plan and carry out engagement activities, coordinate with the Community Engagement Advisor, and ensure community input informs decisions.
- Elected Officials: Support engagement efforts, participate in key activities, and consider public perspectives when making decisions.
- Community Engagement Advisor: Leads engagement strategy, provides guidance and resources, coordinates city-wide efforts, and helps build relationships with the community.
- Consultants and External Partners: Support engagement in alignment with City policies and frameworks, ensuring transparent and unbiased reporting.
- Residents, Stakeholders, and Community Members: Share feedback, perspectives, and experiences to help shape City decisions.

KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Grounded in Yellowknife’s 2023–2026 Strategic Plan — “Our people matter. Our resources matter. Our future, for generations to come, matters.” this Framework sets out the principles that guide meaningful, inclusive, and transparent public engagement.

The City values diverse perspectives and seeks input that informs decisions, supports collaboration, and contributes to sustainable choices for current and future generations.

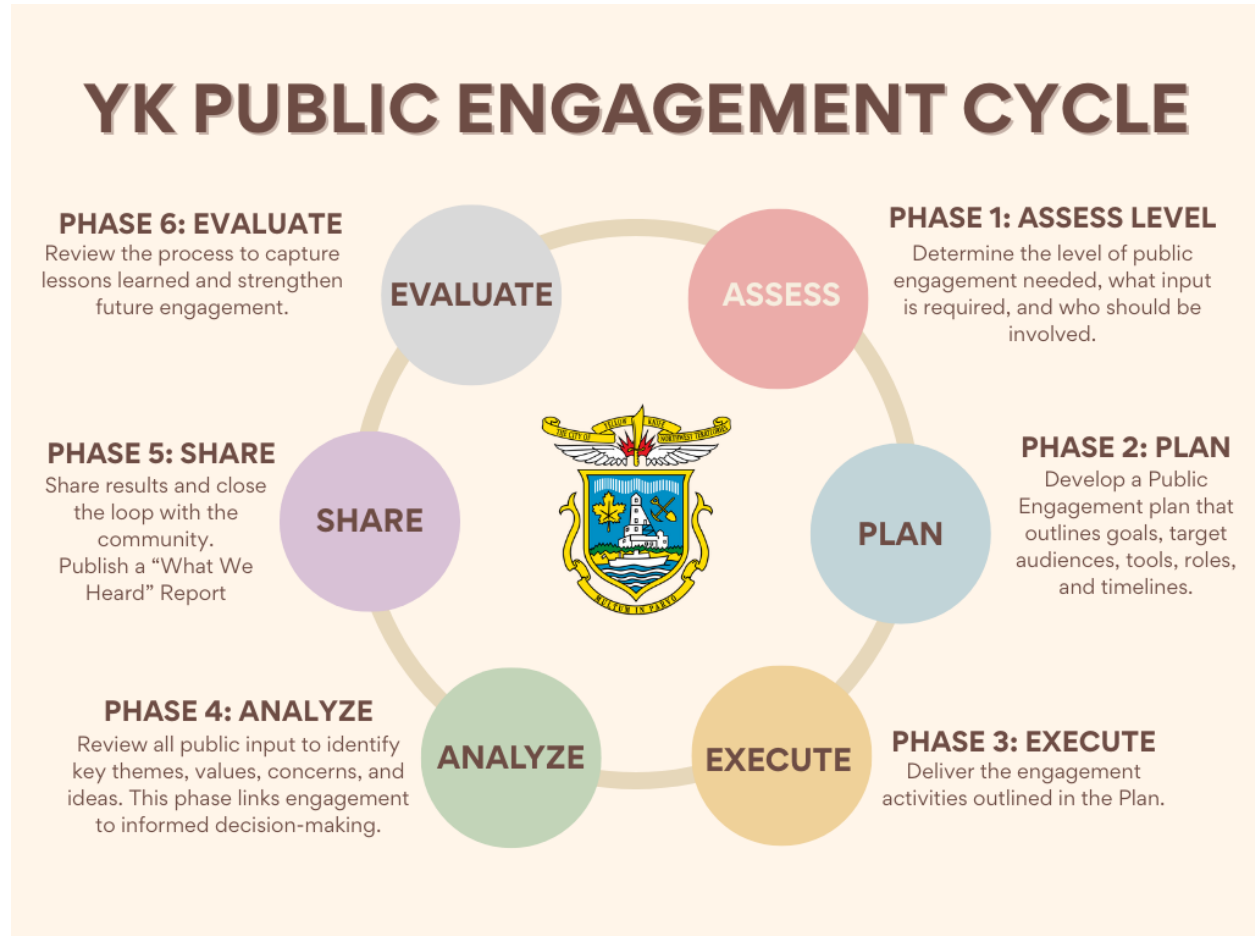
Public engagement will be:

- Inclusive: Welcoming all voices and making it easy for everyone to participate.
- Clear: Sharing information openly and explaining how input is considered.
- Respectful: Listening to everyone and encouraging honest, constructive dialogue.
- Responsible: Showing how feedback influences decisions.
- Purposeful: Planning engagement with clear goals, methods, and outcomes.

The City is committed to ensuring consistent and coordinated engagement across departments and projects. Council, staff, and administration all share responsibility for embedding public engagement into how the City works.

HOW IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CARRIED OUT?

The City of Yellowknife follows a clear six-phase Public Engagement Cycle to plan and deliver activities that are meaningful, inclusive, and effective. This process ensures that community input is respected and thoughtfully integrated into decision-making.



Phase 1: Assess

The City first determines the level of public engagement required, identifies helpful input, and determines who should be involved in the process. This ensures engagement is focused on projects where community input can make a difference.

Phase 2: Plan

A plan is created to guide the engagement, including clear goals, methods, and timelines. Planning ensures that participation is accessible, inclusive, and meaningful.

Phase 3: Execute

Engagement activities are carried out. Residents may be invited to participate through surveys, workshops, meetings, online platforms, or community events. The City provides clear information and creates space for open dialogue.

Phase 4: Analyze

All feedback is reviewed to identify key themes, priorities, and concerns. This helps the City understand community input and use it to inform decisions.

Phase 5: Share

The City shares what was heard and explains how community input influenced decisions. Reports are easy to read, may include visuals, and are shared online, in public spaces, and through other communication channels.

Phase 6: Evaluate

The City reflects on the engagement process to understand what worked well and what could be improved. Lessons learned are documented and shared internally so future engagements are more effective, inclusive, and aligned with community needs.

This process ensures that public engagement is not just an event, but a meaningful part of how the City makes decisions that affect residents.



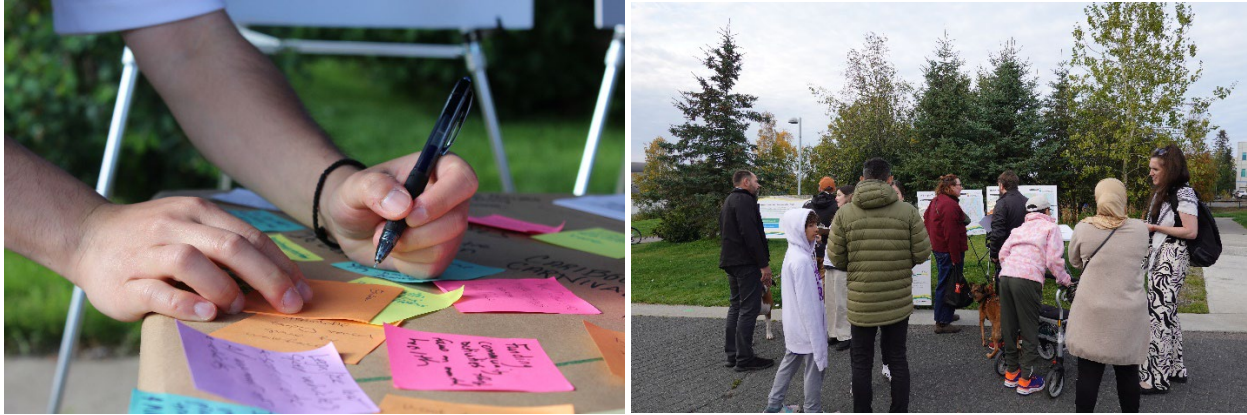
WAYS TO ENGAGE

Residents can participate in public engagement in many ways, depending on the initiative and their preferences:

- **Attend or watch Council meetings:** Participate in person or online. Council meetings are held every other Monday, and recordings are available afterward.
- **Follow City social media channels:** Stay informed about City news, upcoming projects, and engagement opportunities.
- **Follow projects on the website:** Receive updates, provide input, and track project progress.
- **Participate in focus groups or workshops:** Share ideas and feedback in structured discussions about specific initiatives.
- **Complete surveys or online feedback tools:** Provide input conveniently from home or on mobile devices.
- **Provide feedback directly to City staff:** Contact relevant departments or project leads via email or phone.
- **Community events or pop-up engagement:** Speak with City representatives at local events or gatherings.

Conclusion

Yellowknife is our home, and how it grows and changes affects all of us. Public engagement is your chance to share what matters to you, help shape City decisions, and make a difference in our community.



We invite everyone to participate in engagement opportunities such as attend a workshop, share feedback online, join a conversation, or follow a project to stay informed. Every voice matters, and your input helps create a Yellowknife that reflects its residents.

Together, we can create a city that works for everyone, one where your ideas, experiences, and care shape the future of our community.

APPENDIX E: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Accessibility	The degree to which engagement activities, materials, and communications are usable and inclusive for people of all abilities, including those with disabilities.
Community Engagement Advisor	City staff responsible for providing guidance, tools, and oversight to ensure public engagement is inclusive, consistent, and aligned with City standards.
Engagement Channel	The medium used to reach and interact with the public, including in-person meetings, surveys, social media, websites, and PlaceSpeak.
Equity-Deserving Groups	Communities or individuals who experience systemic barriers to participation due to social, economic, or demographic factors.
Inclusion	Ensuring participation opportunities are accessible and welcoming to diverse voices and perspectives.
IAP2 Spectrum	An internationally recognized framework defining levels of public participation: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower.
Public Engagement	The process of actively involving the community in City decisions, planning, and service delivery.
Public Engagement Plan	A documented plan outlining the objectives, scope, methods, timelines, and responsibilities for a specific engagement initiative.
RACI Model	A tool to clarify roles and responsibilities: Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed.
Stakeholder	An individual, group, or organization affected by, or with an interest in, a project or decision.
Transparency	The practice of openly communicating information, decisions, and rationale to the public.