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## REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2026

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**SUBJECT**    Public Engagement Policy and Framework

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

Staff have prepared a Public Engagement Policy and Framework that reflects current Capital Regional District (CRD) Board and organizational commitments for consideration. Once adopted, it would supersede the CRD Public Participation Framework.

### **BACKGROUND**

The CRD Public Participation Framework (Appendix A) has helped guide public engagement activities for various issues and projects since 2014. In 2021, the CRD created an administrative policy to support the implementation of an engagement platform (GetInvolved.crd.bc.ca) and alignment with emerging best practices.

Since 2024, staff have been advancing an initiative to enhance public participation and engagement practices and frameworks to foster trust and understanding, guided by resident input and equity, diversity and inclusion principles (initiative 11b-1 in the CRD 2023-2026 Corporate Plan).

The first phase of the initiative included collaboration with the Regional District of Nanaimo and an external consultant to examine practices used by comparable jurisdictions, along with current research on accessibility and inclusion in public engagement. The International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) best practices have been widely adopted by local government organizations within British Columbia and across Canada and have been incorporated into the proposed materials. The second phase included a review of findings from the CRD Regional Resident Survey and communication with internal staff to identify and address questions. This work has resulted in the following materials ready for consideration:

1. Board Policy (Appendix B): high-level summary of engagement goals and roles/responsibilities; adoption of IAP2 spectrum, values & principles.
2. Public Engagement Framework (Appendix C): outlines the process for delivering public engagement initiatives.

To build internal capacity and support implementation of the updated policy and framework, staff created a Public Engagement Toolkit (Appendix D) with a comprehensive set of checklists, guidelines and templates to promote consistent and efficient implementation of initiatives.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

#### *Alternative 1*

The Governance and First Nations Relations Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the Public Engagement Policy (BRD09) and supporting Framework be adopted.

*Alternative 2*

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

**IMPLICATIONS**

*Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

This work supports Board priority goal 2b) “Foster greater civic participation among diverse community members” and is captured in the Corporate Plan as action 12b-1) “Enhance the public participation and engagement practices and framework to foster trust and understanding, informed by input from residents and equity, diversity and inclusion principles.”.

*Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

This work is also reflected in the Corporate Communications & Engagement Strategic Plan and is connected to two desired outcomes: 1) Fostering meaningful connections with communities and 4) Placing Equity Diversity, inclusion and accessibility at the heart of communications.

*Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Implications*

People, Safety & Culture Division staff reviewed the policy, framework and toolkit to ensure alignment with work underway to create an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

The proposed policy outlines the CRD’s commitment to “improving engagement with diverse community members” and public engagement goals related to inclusion, equity and accessibility.

Under the proposed framework, identification of interested and affected people would be determined early in the planning phase and outreach to underrepresented voices would be scoped according to each initiative’s objectives and impact. The framework includes an evaluation phase where learnings can be captured and shared to help inform future initiatives and support continuous improvement.

The toolkit includes questions and guidance at each phase to further identify and address existing dynamics and barriers to participation, as well as checklists to support accessibility when organizing events. Staff shared materials and an update on this initiative with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on May 19, 2026 and will maintain the Toolkit as a living document.

*Financial Implications*

One-time funding for completion of this work was included in the Corporate Communications & Engagement Division budget following Initiative Business Case approval in 2024. Remaining funds will be used to provide training for staff to support adoption of principles and practices outlined in the policy, framework and toolkit starting in Fall 2026.

*First Nations Implications*

Although the proposed policy does not apply to First Nations engagement, the First Nations Relations Division provided input on the framework and toolkit content to reflect current practices and the importance of prioritizing First Nations engagement as a distinct process with its own requirements and government-to-government dynamics. Information prepared for public engagement initiatives can also assist with First Nations engagement activities; regular check-ins occur between staff when timelines of both processes overlap to ensure alignment.

*Service Delivery Implications*

Adhering to the policy and framework and ultimately reaching underrepresented voices will require additional resources in the form of staff time and hard costs (e.g., venues, equipment, translation). These resources will need to be allocated and managed by program area project leads for each initiative as part of divisional budgets and service planning. Smaller local projects, particularly those in electoral areas, have resource constraints (e.g., staff availability), as well as practical challenges (e.g., accessibility of venues) that will take time and planning to fully address.

*Social Implications*

Public engagement occurs when an organization proactively seeks input from individuals or groups outside of itself to inform decision-making or problem-solving. Typically, those engaged are the people most likely to be affected by the matter under consideration. This process helps strengthen trust and confidence in decisions while promoting transparency and accountability. More than simply sharing information and collecting feedback, it reflects a genuine commitment to listening and being influenced, within clearly defined boundaries. Once adopted, the policy and framework will be posted online for public transparency of the CRD's commitments and process.

**CONCLUSION**

The Public Engagement Policy and Framework have been prepared to reflect and guide the CRD's commitments related to meaningful public engagement as well as accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion. The Public Engagement Toolkit serves as a supporting resource for staff and consultants to support implementation and continuous improvement.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Governance and First Nations Relations Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the Public Engagement Policy (BRD09) and supporting Framework be adopted.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: Public Participation Framework – 2014

Appendix B: Draft Public Engagement Policy

Appendix C: Draft Public Engagement Framework

Appendix D: Public Engagement Toolkit