



Engaging with persons with disabilities

WORKBOOK



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This workbook goes along with the Engaging with Persons with Disabilities webinar. The webinar and this workbook were both developed by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.

The purpose of the webinar and workbook is to increase your confidence in how to meet with, work with, and talk with people who have disabilities in a respectful, meaningful, and effective way.

The webinar and workbook have four sections:

1. **What is public engagement?**
2. **Why is accessible engagement important?**
3. **What are the five principles of accessible engagement?**
4. **How can you put the principles into action?**

Each section in the workbook gives you a video timing point so you will know when each section starts. This way, if you choose to work on one section at a time, you will know where you stopped in the webinar and where to start again.

You can also complete the webinar in one session (approximately two hours with completion of reflection exercises).

As you watch the webinar, follow along in this workbook to reflect on your past experiences and what you are learning now.

TIMING: 0000

Section 1: What is public engagement?

Your engagement experience

Think about a time when you were engaged in a process about a decision that affected your life. (For example, your employer is planning on moving to a new office location.)

As a citizen, an employee, or a member of a particular group, how did it feel to be given the chance to provide input and feedback on the decision?

How does it feel when you are NOT involved in decisions that affect you, or when you face barriers to being able to participate?

What are barriers to engagement?

What stood out from this video?

What barriers did you notice in these stories?

- Information Communication Barriers
- Attitudinal Barriers (when people have false assumptions)
- Physical Space Barriers
- Systemic Barriers (policies, practices, or processes in an organization/government)
- Intersectional Barriers (barriers compounded by someone's race, gender, disability, and other characteristics)

What barriers have you witnessed or experienced in your community, organization, or work place?

- Information Communication Barriers
- Attitudinal Barriers
- Physical Space Barriers
- Systemic Barriers
- Intersectional Barriers

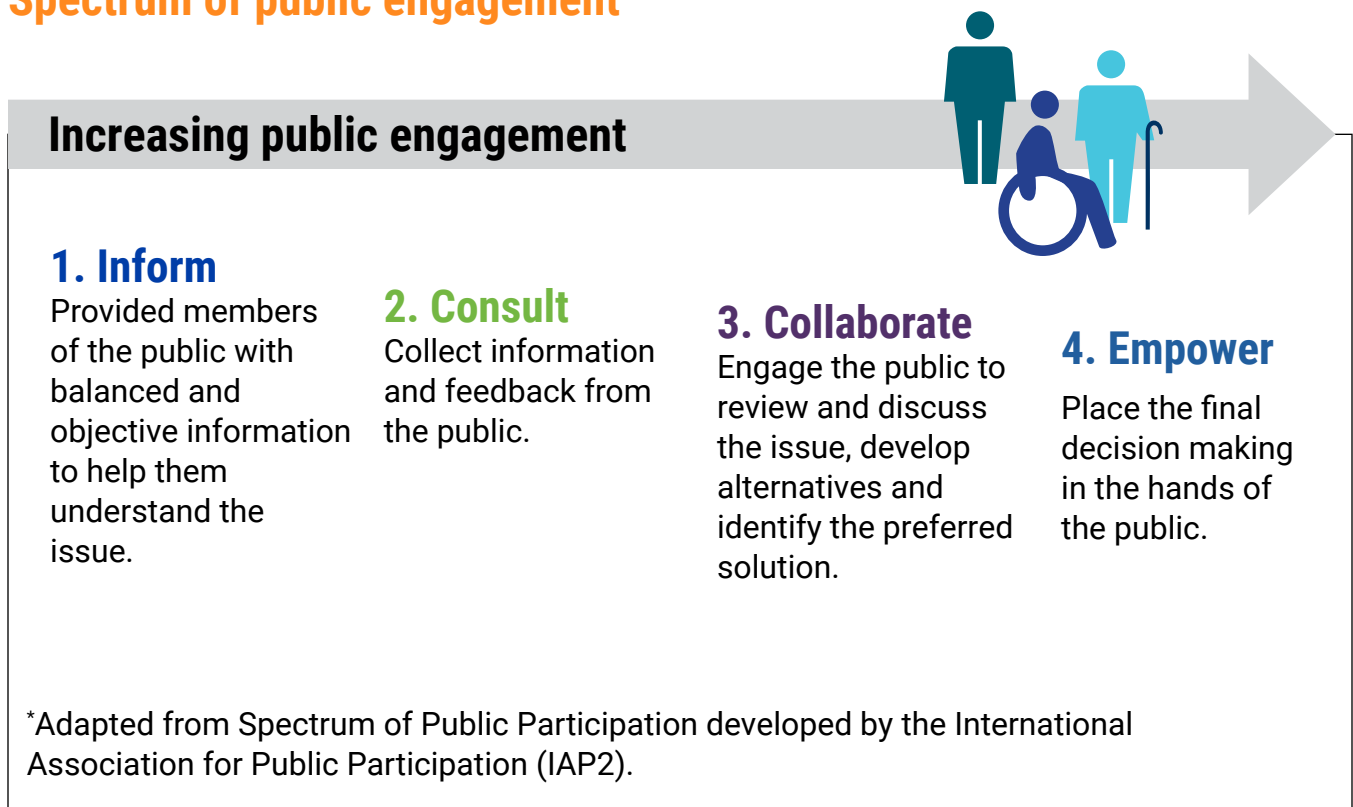
How public engagement increases over time

Public engagement is a continuum—that means it’s a path where each step results in an increasing level of public participation.

Public engagement can range from a one-way flow where you provide information to the public, through to collaborative process where you invite people to get more involved and share their feedback and solutions with you.

A public engagement process can incorporate one or more of the levels of engagement you’ll see on this Spectrum of Public Engagement, which was developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)*.

Spectrum of public engagement



At the start of this workbook we asked you to think about a time when you were engaged in a process about a decision that affected your life. Think about that process now. Where did it fall on the spectrum of engagement?

- Inform
- Consult
- Collaborate
- Empower

TIMING: 0000

Section 2:

Why is accessible engagement important?

Promising practices

Perhaps you're at the beginning of your accessible engagement journey. Or maybe you have been including persons with disabilities in some of your public engagement or as part of your accessibility work for some time.

What promising practices have you experienced or incorporated into your community, organization, or workplace?

Participants from prescribed public sector bodies shared these responses in the pilot sessions we held to develop this webinar.

- Remember: no decision about us without us
- Ask people what they need, don't make assumptions
- Use employee resource groups to provide advice or input on activities or initiatives
- Be aware of how often you or other organizations ask people with disabilities to engage on issues, as burnout can be an issue
- In-depth interviews are good for understanding barriers
- Pay an honorarium for participating in committee work
- Communication materials should be accessible by design

TIMING: 0000

Section 3:

What are the five principles of accessible engagement?

As you consider the promising practices listed in section 2, how confident do you feel engaging persons with disabilities either online, in person, through surveys, etc.?



Reflect: Where (if anywhere) are you lacking confidence?

What do you feel confident about?

The five accessible engagement principles

1. Be authentic and accountable.

- Show true interest in participants' ideas and input.
- Be clear about how much influence participants have on decisions.
- Be open to all the results and follow through on commitments.

2. Build relationships with communities

- Build trusting and respectful relationships by setting aside time and resources to engage with communities. You may have to reach out multiple times.
- Share power with communities; work together to make sure the public engagement benefits everyone.

3. Account for differences within communities.

You could have six people in a room who need ASL interpretation, but that doesn't mean their experiences are identical. Some members of the group might be racialized, and some might have mental health disabilities, for example.

4. Plan early and actively.

- Plan for accessibility from the beginning.
- Think about the visible, invisible, and unexpected barriers, and be adaptable to new needs.
- Make sure people can easily participate without having to ask for assistance.

5. Learn and improve.

Making public engagement accessible to everyone is a process, not a destination. There will always be ways we can improve access as we learn more about diversity and inclusion, and about meeting a full range of human needs.

The impact of accessible engagement

What stood out from these stories?

TIMING: 0000

Section 4:

How can you put the principles into action?

Accessible engagement scenarios

1. **Your organization is making renovations to a building. How do you get public input on accessibility considerations for the new space?**

Ask yourself these questions:

- What are standards, best practices, and features you've seen elsewhere? Where would you start looking for this information?
- What engagement strategies can you use? What accessible online engagement platforms are available?
- How can you receive feedback from persons with disabilities?
- As the project moves forward, how can you communicate about the accessibility features and continue receiving feedback from users?
- How can you use the five principles of accessible engagement to encourage more public input?

2. Your organization is developing a new program for youth. How do you get input from youth with disabilities?

Ask yourself these questions:

- What existing relationships does your organization have with youth?
- How can you co-create programs with persons with disabilities?
- Think about intersectionality: If youth are not currently engaged with your organization, and also are living with a disability, how can they see themselves in your organization?
- How can you use the five principles of accessible engagement to get youth with disabilities involved?

3. Your organization wants to improve the accessibility of your website. How do you engage persons with disabilities in this process?

Ask yourself these questions:

- If you are using a website designer, do they have lived experience? Or do they employ any persons with disabilities who could test accessibility?
- Can accessibility features be shared and tested virtually by persons with disabilities in your organization/community?
- Are there ways you can continue to receive feedback about the website after it goes live so you can continue to improve accessibility?
- How can you use the five principles of accessible engagement to get more feedback?

4. Your organization is looking to fill two spaces on a committee or board. How do you engage persons with disabilities who have not been previously involved with your organization?

Ask yourself these questions:

- What creative ways can you engage people?
- Is the committee commitment clear and accessible?
- How can you engage with new people through existing committee members or through disability organizations?
- How can you use the five principles of accessible engagement to expand your search?

5. You've recently gone out to your stakeholders/community for feedback on an upcoming initiative. You heard from a very small number of persons with disabilities. How can you be sure you've heard from enough people to have a true first voice perspective?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Can you engage with disability organizations?
- What other organizations can you connect with that may have feedback from their community/stakeholders?
- How can you check to ensure what you heard applies to a broader audience?
- How can you use the five principles of accessible engagement to ensure you've got a true first voice perspective?

Opportunities to improve

What are some ways you can improve your practices, mindset, and approaches when engaging with persons with disabilities?

Final reflection

One thing I'm taking away from this webinar is...

Something I want to try is...

Thank you

for joining us as part of the Engaging with Persons with Disabilities webinar! We hope this workshop has increased your confidence to further engage persons with disabilities.

If you would like to share your feedback on this workshop, or let the Accessibility Directorate know other resources that would be useful to you, please contact us at accessibility@novascotia.ca.

