



Islands Trust

Community Engagement Framework for Land Use Planning Projects



Contents

- Land Acknowledgment.....3
- Reflections on Reconciliation and Engagement.....3
- Purpose Statement.....4
- What is community engagement?.....4
- Why we engage.....4
- How do we engage.....5
- Ways to engage.....5
- When do local trust committees engage on projects?.....6
- How decisions are made by local trust committees.....5
- Appendix.....7

Land Acknowledgment

Islands Trust and Islands Trust Conservancy respectfully acknowledge that the lands and waters that encompass the Islands Trust Area have been home to Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. We are committed to reconciliation and to working together to preserve and protect this ecologically, culturally, and spiritually significant region in the Salish Sea. The Islands Trust Area is located within the treaty lands and territories of the BOKÉĆEN, Cowichan Tribes, K'ómoks, Lyackson, MÁLEXEŁ, Qualicum, scəwáθən, sə́ilwətał, SEMYOME, shíshálh, Skwxwú7mesh, Snaw-naw-as, Snuneymuxw, Songhees, Spune'luxutth, STÁUTW, Stz'uminus, ʔaʔəmen, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Wei Wai Kum, We Wai Kai, W JOŁEŁP, W SIKEM, Xeláltxw, Xwémalhkwu, Xwsepsum, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm First Nations.

Reflections on Reconciliation and Engagement

In 2019, Islands Trust Council passed a Reconciliation Declaration that commits the organization to “establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Islands Trust states a commitment to Reconciliation with the understanding that this commitment is a long term relationship-building and healing process.”

Islands Trust bodies can advance this declaration by acknowledging the history and impacts of colonialism and systemic racism against Indigenous Peoples during engagement processes. This may include honouring the Indigenous homelands on which Islands Trust resides and operates, while being mindful of our roles in these endeavors.

Islands Trust bodies can strive to forge new relationships and explore culturally respectful methods of engagement and trust-building. This can include ongoing efforts to foster meaningful connections and to promote understanding with First Nation governments and Indigenous peoples.

It is a best practice to establish two distant yet interconnected streams for engagement. Efforts made with First Nations governments and/or Indigenous peoples may not always be visible to the public, but this does not imply a lack of activity behind the scenes. Islands Trust bodies may also engage with First Nations early to seek input on public engagement process design and content. This document focuses on engagement with the public.

Purpose Statement

This is a document to guide staff with a framework that outlines principles and processes for community engagement within the context of local trust committee projects for the public. It describes some of the approaches to community engagement that local trust committees can employ and the commitments they make to community-informed decision-making. By making these processes clear, Islands Trust staff can develop engagement processes that build trust and show transparency.

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement, also referred to as public engagement or public participation, refers to the active involvement of the general public or a specific community in planning or policy decision-making processes related to a particular project or initiative. Community engagement involves dialogue and collaboration between the community and Islands Trust on a project or initiative. Community engagement is typically done through methods such as community information meetings, town hall meetings, workshops, in-person and online open houses, in-person and online surveys or forums.

The goals of community engagement are to:

- Ensure that perspectives and concerns are considered
- Inform the public on planning processes, the nature of a project, and the role of the public
- Contribute to decisions and policies that better meet the needs and values of the community
- Work with the community in a variety of ways
- Maintain transparency in decision-making
- Ensure consideration of community needs and concerns
- Advance equitable and accessible public participation opportunities

Why we engage

Each local trust committee makes decisions that affect people. Community engagement helps foster greater understanding of roles, responsibilities, and requirements of local trust committees as well as of staff and local trustees. When local trust committees take the time to invite the insights, ideas and aspirations of community members, it can ensure local trust committee decision-making reflects consideration of a variety of community opinions and perspectives within the context of the preserve and protect mandate.

This can help build credibility and trust and foster confidence. Meaningful engagement can produce a deeper understanding of the issues leading to the definition and refinement of project goals and objectives. This can include ground-truthing assumptions and technical information that informs decision making.

How do we engage?

Most local trust committee engagement is based on the best practices and standards of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), which lays out frameworks to implement effective community and public participation processes. IAP2 methods offer guidance and resources to planners to ensure transparent, inclusive, and effective engagement with communities in the planning and decision-making processes.

Different initiatives may require different levels of input from communities. Islands Trust uses the first three IAP2 levels to engage with community:

- **Inform:** informing the community is a requirement of all levels of engagement and occurs throughout the process including following a decision to ensure the community is:
 - Aware of and knowledgeable about the project
 - Able to provide informed input
 - Aware that a decision has been made
- **Consult:** the local trust committee will list and acknowledge community feedback. The community will share their feedback and perspectives.
- **Involve:** the local trust committee will work with the community to understand and consider their feedback. The community's feedback will be reflected in the decision.

Ways to Engage

Engaging the community on initiatives is vital for fostering collaboration and ensuring decisions reflect the diverse needs of the community. There are various effective methods to facilitate engagement, from traditional approaches like public meetings and surveys to modern tools such as online platforms and social media. The efficacy of various engagement efforts depends on the community and resources – communities have different preferences with regards to engagement methods. Usually a combination of methods and activities results in higher levels of engagement.

There are many options for the community to get stay up-to-date and get involved in projects.

Community members can stay informed and get involved by:

- Joining a volunteer group, such as a planning advisory commission or housing advisory committee
- Contacting locally elected Trustees
- Contacting one of three regional offices and speaking to planning staff
- Attending a local trust committee regular business meeting online or in-person
- Appearing as a delegation, or speaking during the public comment sessions in business meeting agendas
- Attending in-person or virtual open house, forums, or community information meetings
- Subscribing to the local trust committees email list to receive updates
- Following Islands Trust on social media
- Participating in surveys

By employing a combination of methods, a local trust committee can create inclusive, accessible and equitable community engagement processes where many voices can be heard and valued; ultimately leading to more informed decision-making processes.

When do local trust committees engage on projects?

Engagement varies based on project needs and resources. Local trust committees may wish to inform communities, or seek active feedback to refine content or ideas to develop land use plans, official community plans, policies and special projects.

When do local trust committees seek input?

- When there are decisions to be made that the communities or interested parties can affect
- When information from the community or interested parties is needed to make decisions

When do local trust committees share information?

- When major decisions about a project have already been made (such as budget, legislation, community needs, external drivers, technical constraints, etc.)
- When a local trust committee reports back on decisions that have been made with what it heard from a community engagement process and what it decided.

How decisions are made by local trust committees

As a requirement of the *Islands Trust Act*, local trust committee bylaws must not be contrary to or at variance with the Islands Trust Policy Statement. That said, many decisions of Islands Trust involve engaging with island communities, community groups and interested parties. Community engagement involves local trust committees actively listening to community needs and ideas.

The goal of engagement is to inform decisions, identify gaps and develop more informed policy by building greater understanding of the issues. Community engagement is one input among many that a local trust committee considers.

A local trust committee may weigh feedback from the community alongside factors such as:

- Budget constraints
- Existing policies (e.g. Official Community Plans, Islands Trust Policy Statement)
- Evolving planning practices
- Considerations of other government partners
- Considerations of interested and affected groups or parties
- Considerations of Indigenous Peoples
- First Nation governments interests
- Legislated requirements
- Externally driven initiatives (e.g. Federal, Provincial, Ministerial initiatives)
- Operational and technical considerations
- Staff expertise

Local trust committees can develop better policies and regulations by welcoming feedback from diverse community members and combining it with a variety of other factors. The process helps everyone understand different views, manage disagreements, and helps to build trust. Overall, engagement processes lead to stronger communities and better decisions.



Appendix

Definitions:

Accessible: Accessibility in public engagement exists when all members of the communities impacted by a decision can access and fully participate in the engagement space and processes. *(Credit: Wosk Centre for Dialogue)*

Community engagement: is a strategic process to directly involve island populations in decision making, policy development and planning processes.

Equity: Equity in public engagement exists when resources and opportunities for participation are distributed in a manner that responds to historic and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized groups. Equitable public engagement provides mutually beneficial opportunities for people to contribute and is mindful of power and privilege within engagement processes, institutions and broader systems. *(Credit: Wosk Centre for Dialogue)*

Interested and affected parties: a way to describe those people who have a concern about a development, project, policy or action and who need to be engaged during the process of decision making. Islands Trust encourages all staff and contractors not to use the term 'stakeholders'. This term is not in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and can be misinterpreted. We always encourage the use of terms such as "interested and affected parties", "community partners", or listing those involved in the decision making process or engagement by name or category. The characterization of First Nations as interested and affected parties or stakeholders should never occur.

General Public: refers to the broader population of residents who are affected by or have an interest in a particular issue, project, or initiative.

Goals: identify, in broad terms outcomes that local trust committees aim to achieve over the long term. They focus on a result but do not identify how to get there. Engagement processes can help to define and refine the goals.

Inclusion: in public engagement means to involve people who reflect the demographic, attitudinal and experiential diversity of the communities that may be impacted by a decision. Inclusive public engagement nurtures a sense of welcome, belonging, recognition and safety for all people, where diverse perspectives and ways of life are valued and respected. *(Credit: Wosk Centre for Dialogue)*

Objective: Objectives identify steps that are needed to reach goals. They are specific and measurable actions that can be taken in a short time frame to help to achieve longer-term goals. They need to be realistic. Engagement processes can help to define and refine objectives.



[Subscribe](#) for updates from Islands Trust



Islands Trust