



November 15, 2017

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Public Engagement Standards Policy

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the “Public Engagement Standards Policy”, as outlined in this report and attached as Appendix A, to guide the planning and implementation of public engagement for any civic initiative that involves facilities, services, or properties under the jurisdiction of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.

BOARD AUTHORITY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

As per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over park land use in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within parks.

The [Park Board Strategic Framework](#) includes four strategic directions:

- **Parks and Recreation for All:** *Accessible, diverse and quality amenities and services that encourage participation and meet current and future needs.*
- **Leader in Greening:** *Through our actions we demonstrate leading green and horticultural practices and preserve, protect and create green space.*
- **Engaging People:** *Working openly together to understand and achieve goals and strengthen relationships.*
- **Excellence in Resource Management:** *Use existing resources effectively and efficiently, and be innovative in developing additional resources to deliver best value for money and meet community needs.*

On November 16, 2015, the Park Board unanimously passed the motion titled [Vancouver Park Board Public Consultation Standards Policy](#), which directed staff to first present the current public engagement practices to the Board for input, and then to report back with a new comprehensive and inclusive policy for Board consideration.

BACKGROUND

As directed in the November 2015 motion, staff presented the [Park Board Public Consultation - Current Practices](#) to the Commissioners at the April 18, 2016 Committee meeting. Staff outlined existing approaches to consultation, including formats, notification periods, best practices, and examples. The following five areas were identified as opportunities for improvement:

1. Incorporate the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum into the forthcoming Park Board Public Engagement Standards Policy;

2. Develop specific strategies for engaging underrepresented groups;
3. Provide increased resources for staff facilitation skills and face-to-face engagement;
4. Optimize use of Park Board facilities, parks, and events for public engagement;
5. Develop desired participation metrics at the start of any project

Due to the number of significant initiatives underway that exceeded staff capacity, on December 16, 2016, a memo was sent to the Board providing an update on the policy development progress to date, as well as a revised delivery timeline.

DISCUSSION

As outlined in the April 2016 presentation on [current consultation practices](#), the Park Board uses a wide variety of public engagement formats and tools, coupled with a comprehensive notification process, to encourage broad public input on all Park Board projects and initiatives. The [Board motion](#) directing staff to develop a Park Board Public Consultation Standards Policy provided an excellent opportunity for staff to standardize these existing engagement guidelines, while also incorporating the new strategies identified to strengthen the process.

The Board also requested that the new policy help to delineate, clarify, and communicate expectations of public consultation processes and the contributions that residents can make to those processes, and that it be inclusive of any civic initiatives that involve facilities, services and properties under the jurisdiction of the Park Board, regardless of whether the Park Board or a partner organization coordinates the initiatives and consultation processes. A well-defined consultation policy supports the Park Board's commitment to providing formalized, meaningful, and transparent public engagement practices.

As directed, Park Board staff reviewed existing public engagement and consultation practices and developed the proposed Park Board Public Engagement Standards Policy (Appendix A). The Public Engagement Standards Policy demonstrates how residents can participate in park and recreation-related issues that they care about, and clarifies how and when the Park Board involves the public and stakeholders in projects and initiatives. This policy will help Park Board staff develop open and transparent public engagement strategies that reach their target audiences.

The proposed new policy clearly lays out the elements of a satisfactory public consultation process, publicly documented in advance of all new public consultation processes, in order to improve consistency, transparency, and operational efficiency. Satisfactory public consultation processes include community outreach that responds to the growing cultural diversity of Vancouver and acknowledges the need to reach beyond traditional print media, social networks, and community posters.

Similar to other jurisdictions like the City of Toronto and the City of Victoria, the Park Board Public Engagement Standards Policy is closely aligned with the guidance provided by the [International Association for Public Participation](#) (IAP2), recognizing the Public Participation Spectrum and aligning with the Association's Core Values.

The policy proposes a set of principles to help achieve successful public engagement that results in recommendations reflecting the public's best interests. The nine principals fall under the following themes:

- Accountability
- Inclusiveness
- Territorial Considerations
- Transparency
- Commitment
- Clarity
- Communication
- Timeliness
- Resourcing

Additionally, the policy describes the general process for engagement and provides examples of the types of approaches and tactics for various types of projects. This approach provides flexibility in developing creative and relevant engagement plans for individual projects. The guidance includes general direction on timelines, phasing, and keeping the Board up-to-date on progress.

Implementation of the policy will continue to rely on many internal engagement support tools that help guide and coordinate public engagement projects, from new technology and web tools, to checklists, plans, and support for translating content and using various social media platforms. The policy also commits to ongoing staff training, to ensure that staff are knowledgeable and capable of leading effective, and well planned and resourced consultation processes.

SUMMARY

When an important decision affecting parks and recreation lands, programs or facilities is required, the Vancouver Park Board aims to effectively inform, educate, and engage residents in a transparent and collaborative way that promotes greater participation from those affected and have key interests. The new Park Board Public Engagement Standards Policy provides a framework for what the public can expect, and what the Park Board will strive for in all public engagement processes in the future.

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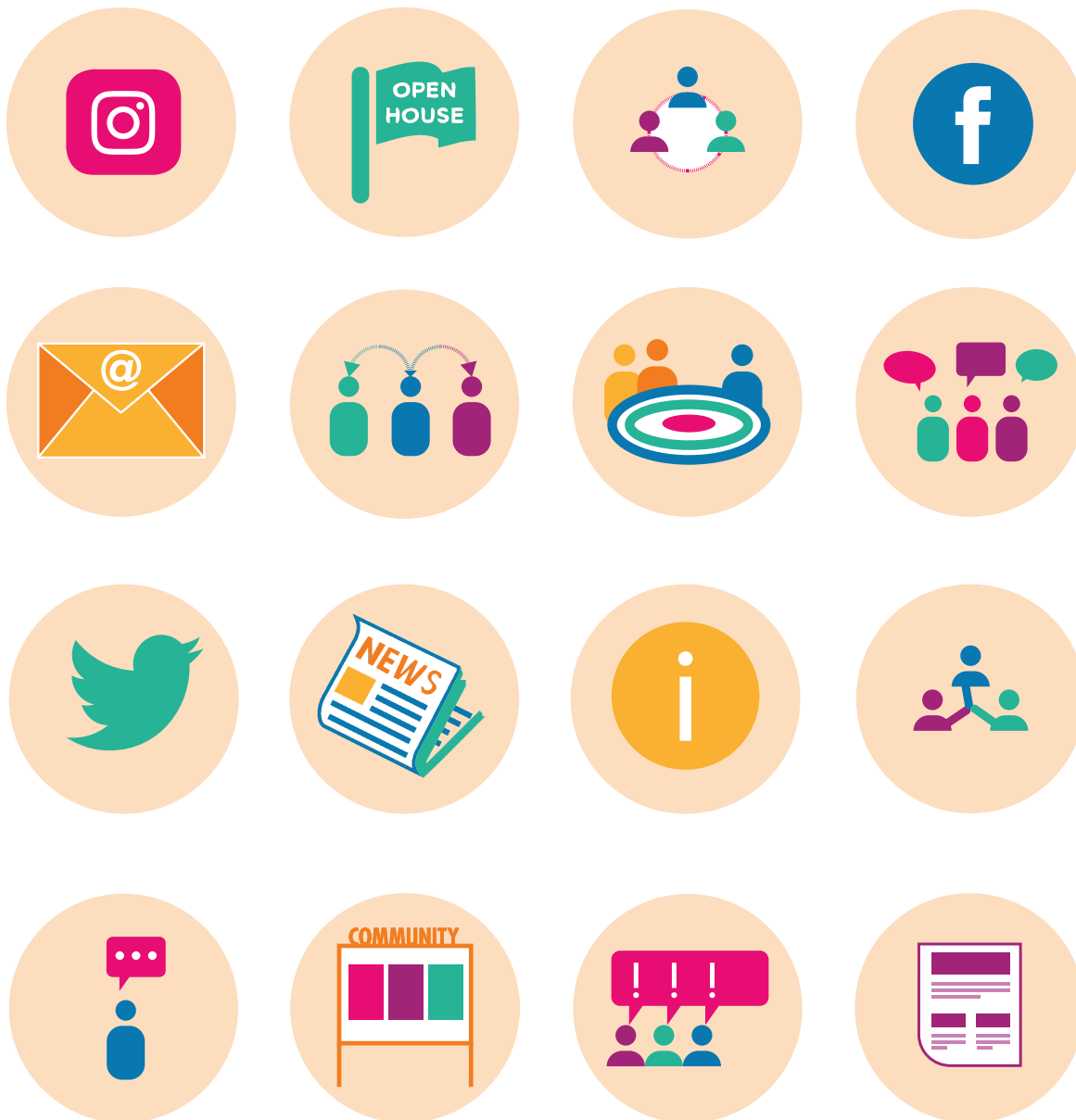
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Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation Public Engagement Standards Policy - Proposed

NOVEMBER 20 2017



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A. WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

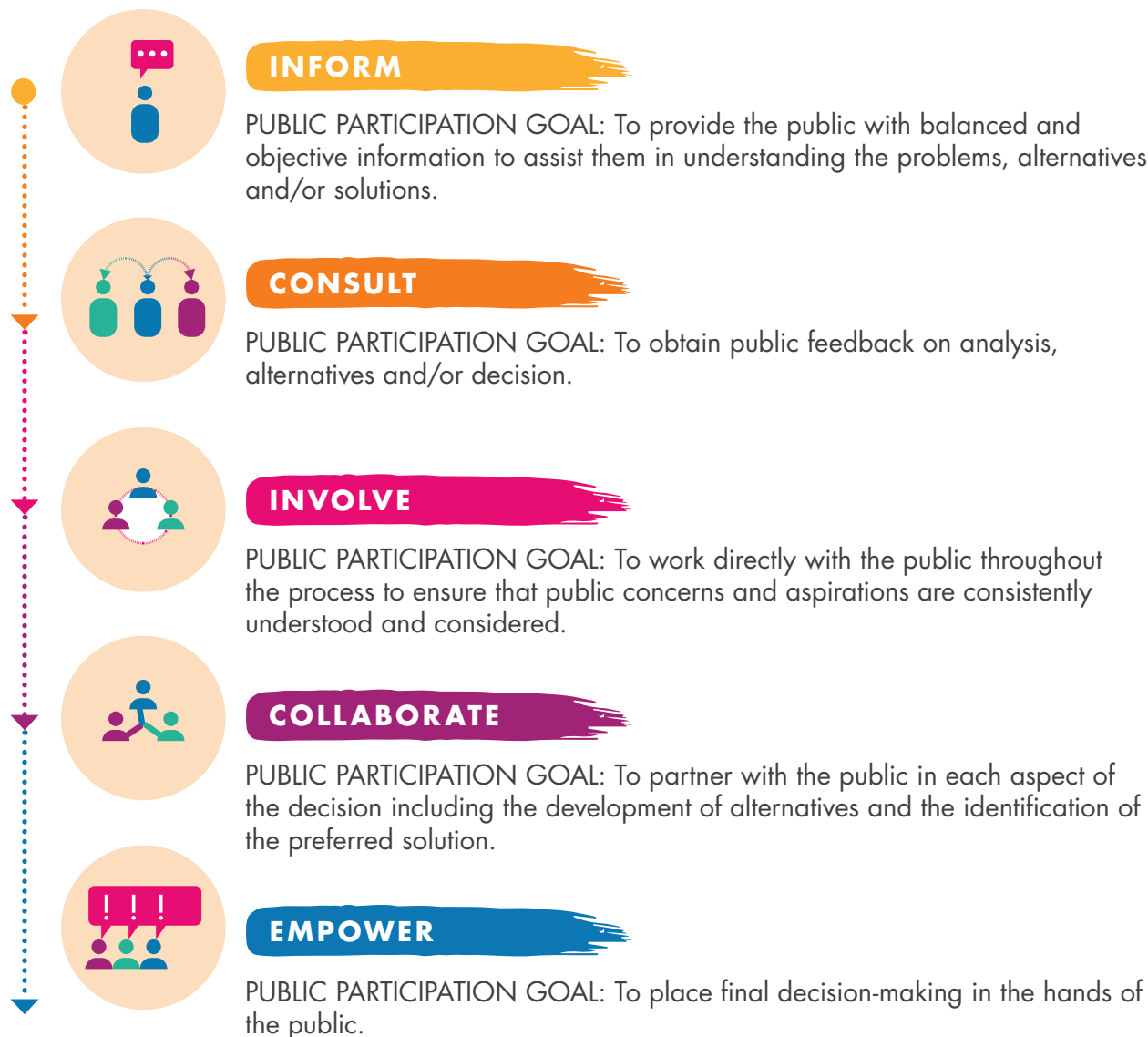
When decision makers bring together residents and stakeholders to develop or respond to ideas or issues that directly or indirectly affect them, that is public engagement.

When an important decision affecting parks or recreation is required, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (Park Board) aims to effectively inform, educate and engage residents in a transparent and collaborative way that promotes greater participation from those affected and those with key interests.

People often describe community engagement as a continuum, with different levels of engagement. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed a Public Participation Spectrum identifying five levels of engaging the public based on increasing level of public impact.

These include: **INFORM**, **CONSULT**, **INVOLVE**, **COLLABORATE** & **EMPOWER**.

Considering these various levels helps all participants properly prepare for, participate in and learn from the outcomes of an engagement process.

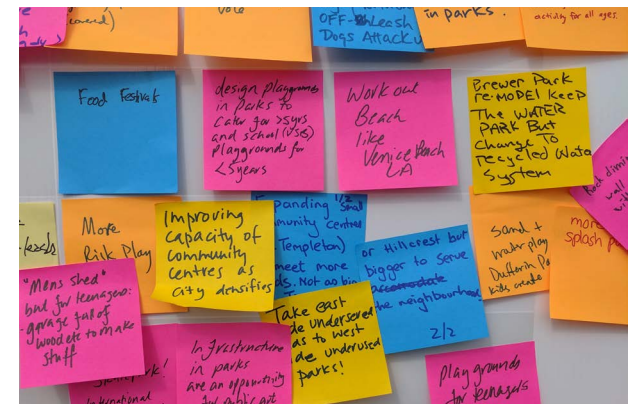


B. PURPOSE



Vancouver’s parks and recreation system is very well used and cherished by the public. Residents feel connected to the city through their parks and recreation facilities and feel invested and passionate about what happens in them. Many people understand their city best through their public spaces. For this reason, the Vancouver Park Board makes engagement a priority in allowing the public help shape the places that mean the most to them.

The purpose of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Engagement Standards Policy is to demonstrate how residents can participate in park and recreation-related issues that they care about. This policy also helps Park Board staff develop open and transparent public engagement strategies that reach their target audiences. This Public Engagement Standards Policy is inclusive of any civic initiative that involves Park Board facilities, programs or properties under the jurisdiction of the Park Board.



C. CORE VALUES

The Vancouver Park Board is aligned with other Canadian and international organizations by recognizing and following the IAP2 values when designing public engagement processes.

These are:

1. We believe that people who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. We promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. We promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
4. We seek out and facilitate the involvement of people potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. We seek input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. We provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. We communicate to participants how their input affected the decision.



D. PRINCIPLES

Successful public engagement results in recommendations that reflect the public's best interest. The Park Board strives to meet the following principles based on the IAP2 guidelines:

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Park Board is accountable for acting on the commitments it makes to stakeholders. Staff track input and commitments and report back on how input shapes activities and recommendations.

INCLUSIVENESS

The Park Board makes its best efforts to reach, involve and hear from all residents who are affected directly and indirectly. Including accommodating diverse needs, backgrounds, and challenges. Staff provides opportunities to create shared visions embraced by diverse interests. Park Board's commitment to inclusiveness includes Urban Aboriginal First Nations involvement, language, ethnicity, and access for persons with disabilities.

TERRITORIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Where the Musqueam, Squamish, and/or Tsleil-Waututh Nations express concerns or interest about the activity or project proposed, the Parks Board engages those Nations in a separate process.

TRANSPARENCY

Processes provide participants with timely access to all relevant information in an understandable and user-friendly way. The participants receive feedback on how their input influenced decisions, including summarized data from the engagement process.

COMMITMENT

The Park Board, within its ability and work plans, allocates available resources for effective engagement. Resources are applied appropriately to help residents understand Park Board's key issues. Trained staff are capable of supporting effective engagement.

CLARITY

Staff is committed to presenting information in a way that is easy to understand and providing various means of providing feedback.

COMMUNICATION

The Park Board is responsive, accessible and aims to understand resident and other stakeholders' concerns. Staff communicates about the process and its progress to participants and the community-at-large using appropriate methods and technologies.

TIMELINESS

The Park Board provides information to the public in a timely and regular manner. Legislated time frames may influence timing as well as, urgency (e.g., public safety), and the degree of potential impact. The Park Board commits to meeting, and where possible exceeding, notice requirements established in legislation or municipal policy. If there are no specific requirements, the Park Board aims to notify the public approximately two weeks in advance of planned consultation events.

RESOURCING

The Park Board allocates adequate resources within project budgets to develop and implement engagement processes appropriate for the size, scale and potential impact of the project or decisions.

E. PROCESS

New projects and engagement efforts start with an internal meeting with the project manager, internal communications staff, and the project team to develop an Engagement Strategy. The Strategy addresses who to engage, the level of engagement, the key messages, questions for the public, and how staff will use and share the feedback. For each project, the process is customized with a suite of approaches and tactics, depending on scope, budget and timeline. Below is a sample table outlining the range of tactics for different types of projects.

Staff utilize many engagement support tools to help guide and coordinate public engagement projects. Including topics such as:

- Hosting accessible public events
- Managing and writing for social media
- Engagement outreach plans
- Feedback forms and survey design
Process for translating surveys into other languages

Park Board Commissioners are consulted/updated at various stages of engagement for comment and approval. Commissioners may be included before, during and after the process when it is a citywide strategy, or just once for smaller localized projects.

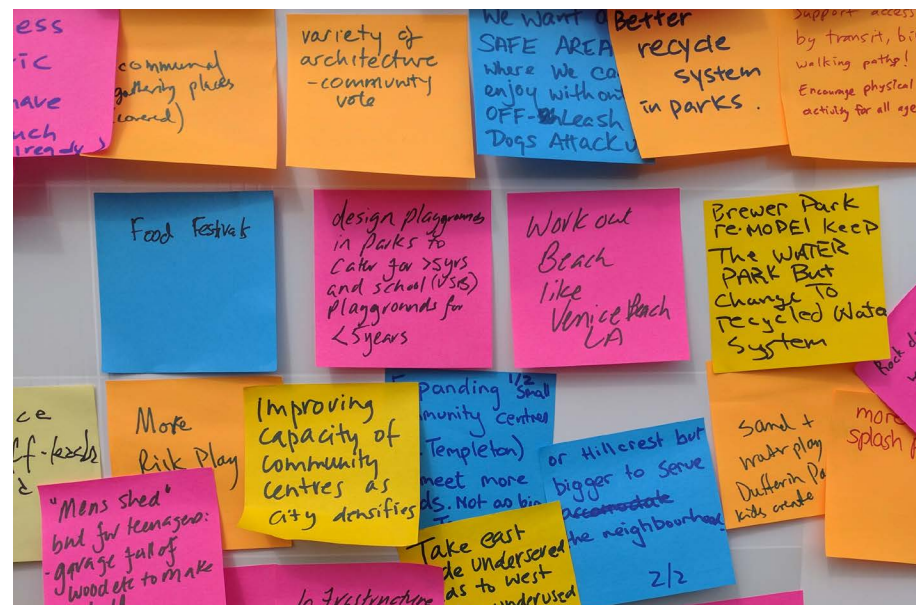
SAMPLE TACTICS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	Email Notification	Stakeholder/ Advisory Group Meetings	Focus Groups	Social Media Posts	Newspaper Advertising	Open House(s)	Flyer Deliveries	Site Signage	Community Centre Posters
Neighbourhood Park Upgrade	●			●		●	●	●	●
New Downtown Park	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Prominent Park Naming Process		●		●		●	●	●	●
City-wide Strategy	●	●	●	●	●	●			●

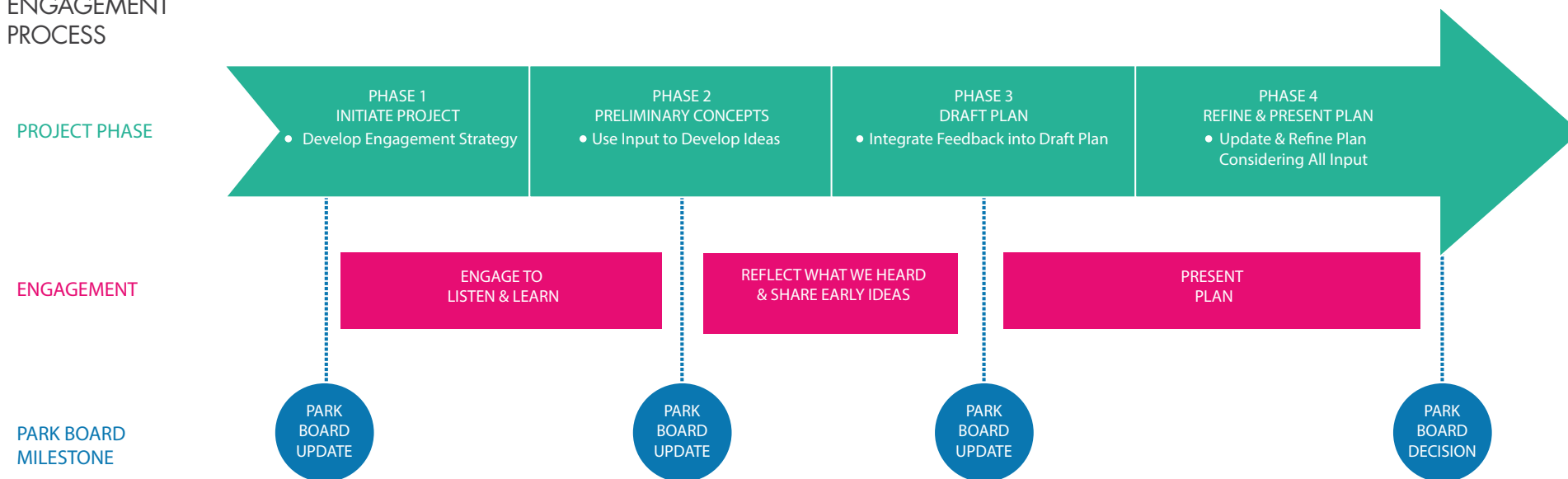
F. CAPACITY BUILDING

To successfully achieve the goals of the policy, Park Board staff is committed to building capacity within project teams. Staff, supported through IAP2 training, set realistic and manageable timelines, with adequate resources. Staff stay current with new technologies and creative and effective means of reaching the public, through ongoing training.

All levels of senior management and the Board are made aware of required timing to design effective engagement processes. Staffing and related costs required to execute a successful process are carefully considered and tailored to the size and scope of each project and budgeted for in the earliest stages of the project. Following all engagement processes, staff review and debrief the process to evaluate strategies and tactics learning from experience.



SAMPLE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



G. KEEPING CURRENT

Park Board staff will use the Public Engagement Standards Policy to both guide and evaluate future engagement. Reporting back to the Park Board and the Public will illustrate the link between policy and action. Staff will regularly review the policy against emerging best practices and lessons from practical experience, and suggest proposed policy updates and refinements to the Park Board as appropriate.



