Generica Government

Policy Consultation Guide

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Considerations:
• Outcome of the consultation
• Timing of the consultation
• Proposed participants
• Available Resources
• Feedback and analysis

This guide provides step-by-step, practical advice to plan and implement policy consultation.

STAGE 1: PREPARATION

• Assess both the internal and external environments before deciding whether and how to engage the public in a particular issue.

• Clarify the purpose of the consultation. Develop clear objectives and desired outcomes.

• At the beginning of the process, establish performance indicators for evaluating the success of both the consultation process and outcome.

• Identify the best methodology (eg small group, public meeting, inquiry, workshop, survey). This will depend on the nature of the policy issue (eg. single issue), the nature of the community, timeframes and the amount of resources available.

STAGE 2: DESIGN

• Ensure inclusive and representative participation by actively seeking the involvement of all parties who are directly affected by the issue.

• Engage participants early in the process by providing meaningful opportunities for them to influence decisions before they are made.

• Develop the time frame. Allow adequate time for meaningful participation, based on the complexity of the issue and the nature of the process. Build flexibility into the schedule.

• Tailor the choice of approach, tools, participants and resources to the context.

• Consider using a variety of public involvement techniques, especially where the issues at stake are complex, multi faceted or national in scope.

• Develop timely, accurate, objective and accessible information to support the process. Use clear language that is factual and sensitive to the needs of participants.

• Distribute consultation materials well in advance to allow participant to familiarize themselves with the issues at hand.
• Specify feedback processes and mechanisms; how participants' views will be considered, by whom and when they can expect feedback.

• Document participants’ input and share this information with participants to show that their views have been registered and considered.

• Consider participants with special needs (people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with disabilities and remote communities).

• Ensure that adequate human and financial resources are available.

• Communicate the stages and outcome of the process, clearly linking the process to any decisions that are made.

STAGE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

• Implement the process based on the work done in the Preparation and Design stages. Refer back to the objectives and desired outcomes to ensure the process is on track, and adapt if required.

• Consider providing resources to groups and individuals to enable their participation, particularly if they might otherwise be under-represented.

• From the outset, be clear with participants about their role, the timeframe for public involvement, the decision-making process and the time commitment they are being asked to make.

STAGE 4: FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP

• Specify clearly how participants' views will be considered, by whom and when they can expect feedback. Give feedback on: what was heard; what was done with what was heard; and what decisions were made and why.

• Provide participants with the consultation report to show how their views were documented and considered.

• Follow up with timely thank you letters as a sign of respect and accountability.

STAGE 5: EVALUATION

• Evaluate both the process and outcomes using the criteria and performance indicators established at the outset.

• Involve participants in the evaluation and assessment stage; distribute the evaluation results to promote continuous learning.

• Document and share best practices and lessons learned to preserve this knowledge within departments and across the government.