

# Consultation Policy

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to regulatory consultations. The size, scope and length of a consultation depends on a number of factors. The amount of time required for a consultation depends on the complexity of the issue, the number of options the decision maker needs to evaluate, size of the stakeholder groups and their relative interest in the process, and the chosen consultation methods. It is easy to underestimate how long it will take to plan, implement, and evaluate a consultation process.

The Real Estate Council of Alberta has adopted the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) core values for public participation as the core values of its consultation policy. These core values will shape RECA's approach to consultation regardless of size, complexity, and/or number of stakeholder groups. The IAP2 core values refer to "public participation" and the "public." RECA has modified them to refer to "consultation" and "stakeholders."



1. consultation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
2. consultation includes the promise that the stakeholders' contribution will influence the decision
3. consultation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
4. consultation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
5. consultation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
6. consultation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
7. consultation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision

**In each case, RECA will prepare a consultation plan that frames the boundaries of the process. It needs to:**

- contain existing baseline data/ background
- identify the decision maker
- identify or define the decision to be made
- identify the stakeholders and issues
- determine where the consultation fits on the consultation spectrum

- identify the consultation techniques
- set out timelines and a process to extend the timelines if applicable
- commit to communicate how consultation affects the decision

**When RECA designs a consultation process, it will consider the following factors:**

- where it falls on the consultation spectrum
- the number and type of stakeholders affected
- complexity of the issue
- whether the consultation is related to regulatory changes
- resources available for the consultation and implementation process
- mechanisms for input
- stakeholder interest
- authority to make changes
- knowledge levels of stakeholders on the issue
- consumer protection

Understanding which stakeholders will be the most affected by the potential changes is key to tailoring the consultation process, while taking into account available resources and the complexity of the issue.

The process must be open and transparent to allow all stakeholders to express their views. The consultation process, decision-making, and choices about how the input is used are important, and publishing the input received offers stakeholders transparency and accountability. An open process contributes to a higher level of trust; RECA acknowledges that it is possible to lose trust at any stage of a consultation process. RECA will post to its website all input it receives and identify the person or organization providing the input.

**RECA will select tools for its consultations that reflect where the consultation falls on the consultation spectrum (inform, consult, involve, etc.), the consultation goal, and the promise to stakeholders. These tools include, but are not limited, to:**

- consultation papers
- RECA News sent to appropriate stakeholders requesting feedback
- direct communication to industry associations
- provide clarification by administration
- Use of Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to create interest in consultation paper
- town hall meetings

- advisory committee meetings including Consumer Advisory Committee
- presentations at 20/20 and broker groups
- brokerage and board presentations
- survey monkey by RECA
- consumer focus groups
- consumer and industry member surveys
- input from other regulators where appropriate

**Consultation Checklist**

1. define the decision to be made, issues, and objectives of the consultation
2. conduct an internal and external environmental scan
3. develop realistic timelines for consultation, decision making, and potential implementation
4. identify consultations on similar topics
5. select most effective and appropriate consultation tools
6. identify stakeholders, the extent of their interest, and relate stakeholders to issues
7. determine the sources of information and mechanism for reporting
8. select participants/stakeholders
9. determine budget and other resources
10. develop neutral, relevant, and timely communication plan including results of the consultation process
11. evaluate throughout the process, & document consultations
12. evaluate at the end of the process the success, impact, and results of the consultation
13. draft a final report identifying what was heard and how it is used
14. post all consultation input and results to RECA's website

