



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Designing Public Engagement Experiences

HANDBOOK

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Designing Public Engagement Experiences

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Outline

This guide aims to take participants through the early phases of planning a public engagement process. Through hands-on activities, participants will learn about the realities of the public and key stakeholders. This will help them to conduct public engagement processes that recognize the deeper social context in which policies are developed.

After completing the activities, participants will be better able to design for their people, context, and goals. They will have a greater understanding of the relationships between policy, communications and public engagement. This is an opportunity to collaborate and provide feedback on an evolving approach to designing engagement plans for the federal government.

The toolkit contains four activities:

Activity 1 – People

Activity 2 – Context

Activity 3 – Goals

Activity 4 – Methods

Each activity includes a purpose statement, a set of instructions, guiding questions, and an example. You can work from the Fictional Scenario provided or use your own consultation example.

Make copies for different projects or for different members of your team. This toolkit can be run as a workshop with a team. You may also invite the people you intend to engage with to participate in this workshop with you to co-create your engagement plan.

Fictional Scenario

You are an employee of the Fictitious Engagement Department (FED). In the last five years, health studies have revealed potential damaging effects of sugary drinks on human development. This has led lobbying groups to put pressure on the federal government to place a ban on sugary drinks. Based on your minister's mandate, your team has been asked to propose government intervention on sugary soft drinks to address these health concerns. This may include legislative options.

Public Opinion Research suggests that Canadians hold strong opinions on both the benefits and disadvantages of continuing to sell sugary soft drinks. Media analysis reveals strong interest in Central Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta, with 14 related editorials written this year. Recommendations for any new legislation must be tabled within eighteen months.

Activity 1: People

Purpose

Activity 1 helps to identify the People who have a stake in the issue at hand. Consider who has influence and who is affected by the issue. This exercise is similar to an activity known as stakeholder mapping, although we encourage you to think beyond stakeholders to potential partners, rights holders, influencers and people who may not have been consulted in the past.

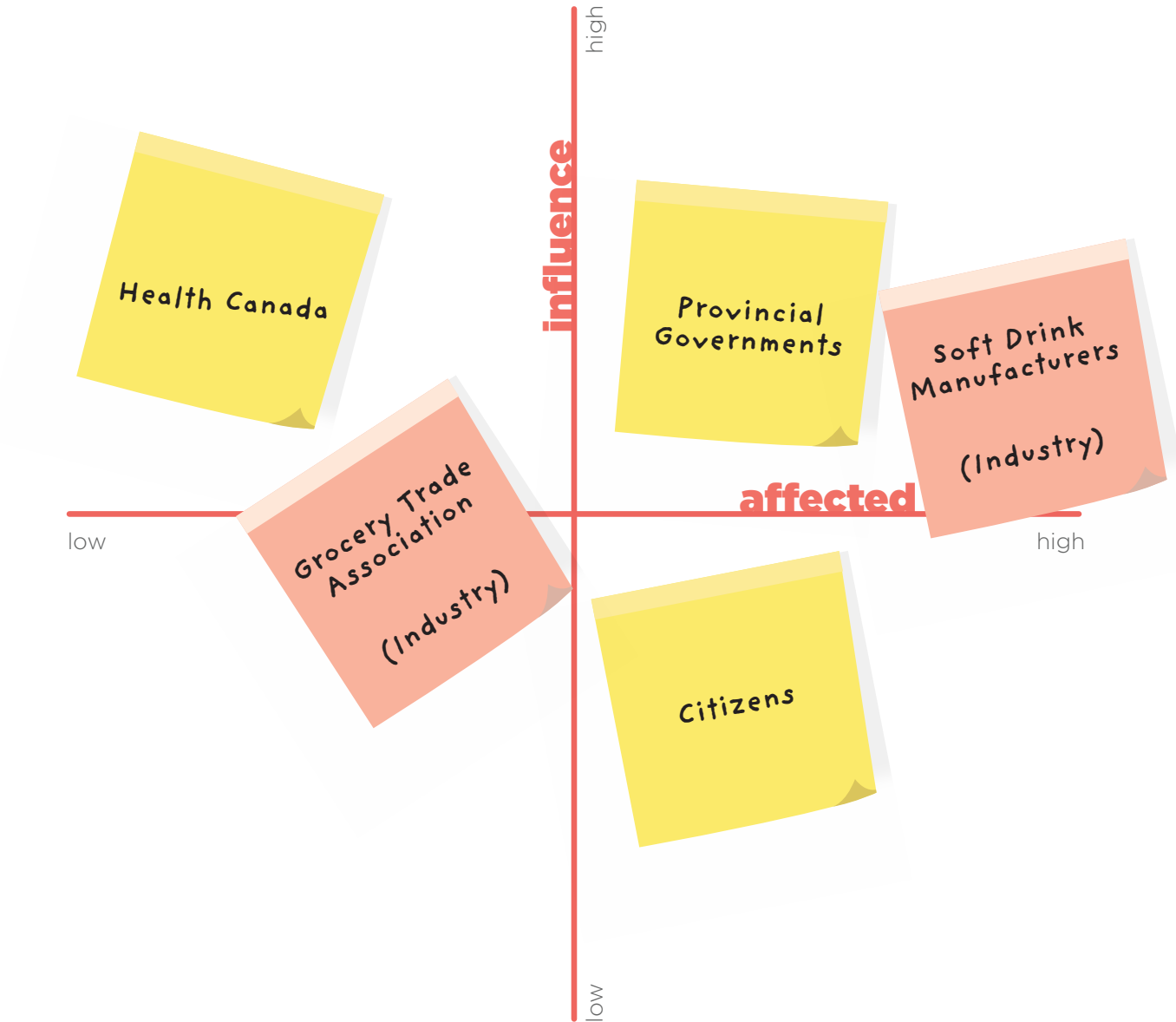
Instructions

First, make a list of all the people (partners, influencers, affected) who are involved in the issue about which you are engaging.

Next, use the activity sheet to place each one on two axes: influence and affectedness.

Questions to consider:

- Who will you have to engage on this issue?
- Who can you empower? (e.g. those who may be highly affected but of low influence)
- With whom might you partner to expand your network?
- Where would the people you are considering place themselves?
- Where does your team or organization lie on this axis?



Activity 2: Context

Purpose

Activity 2 helps you define the Context in which your engagement will take place. For each of the People defined in Activity 1, consider:

- the person or group's awareness of the issue
- their relationship with government
- their confidence in the government to address their issue

Instructions

Assign each person or group identified in Activity 1 a symbol (e.g. star, spiral, square) and place it next to their name on the space provided. Use the prompts to discuss where each chosen person or group falls on the continuum of left (low, negative, poor) to right (high, positive, good) and then mark each with their chosen symbol. Use past engagements or research such as surveys, interviews or published position papers to inform your ratings. If you cannot answer these questions for all People involved, you may wish to do research before moving forward.

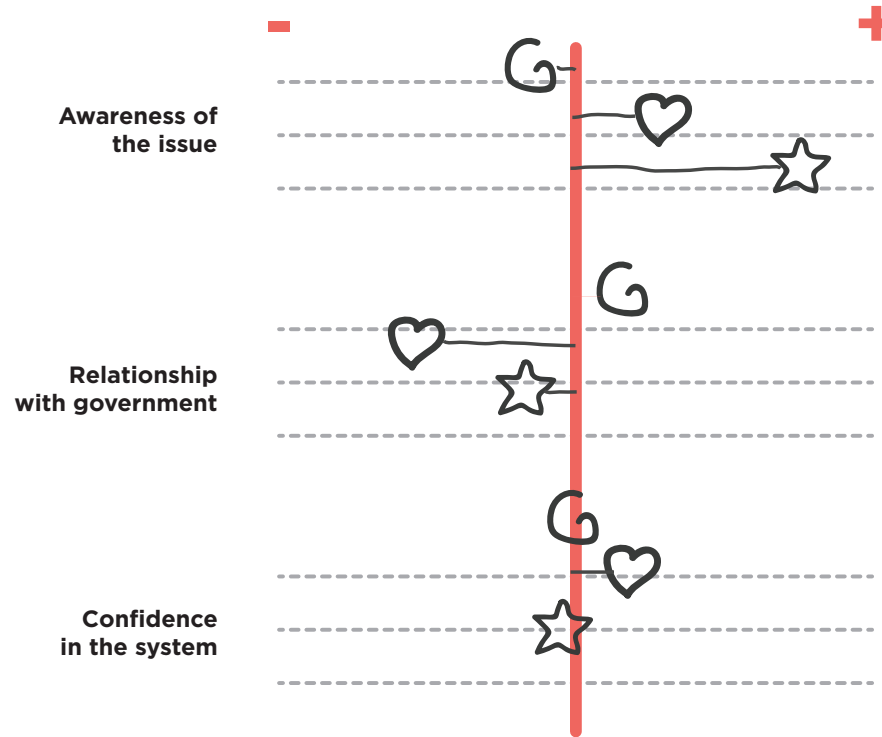
Questions to consider:

- How might these factors affect my project?
- Will these factors need to change to achieve success?
- What will success look like?

People

Affected	Citizens	G
Influencer	Soft Drink Manufacturers	Heart
Partner	Provincial Governments	Star

Place a symbol along the dotted line to rate each person or group's.....



Can you answer these questions? If not, you may need to gather more information

Activity 3: Goals

Purpose

Activity 3 helps you identify and prioritize your Goals with consideration for the People and the Context you have just outlined. Identifying clear engagement goals helps to ensure that those involved (the engagement team, decision-makers, and participants) have shared expectations. Clear goals also allow you to define and measure your intended impact.

Step 1: Your goals




Examine the context considerations discussed in the previous activity (Awareness, Relationship, Confidence) and take note of which areas show the most negative (leftward positions) or polarized (combinations of leftward and rightward positions) ratings. The realities of your context should inform which engagement goals you choose.

For Step 1, select your goals from the table. For Step 2, write them in the diagram in the section for “My Team’s Goals”.

Questions to consider:

- Which Goal might help address challenges and barriers identified in this group’s Context?

Step 1: Your goals

Context Consideration	Team goals	Check box
<p>Awareness of the issue</p> 	Expose trade-offs and constraints surrounding an issue	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hear diverse perspectives and understand values	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Identify / enhance understanding of public problems	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Relationship with government</p> 	Transform a conflict or narrative on a specific issue	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Develop relationships for ongoing collaboration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Confidence in the system</p> 	Develop consensus	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ensure public policies reflect public values	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Enhance citizen trust in government	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Increase support for decisions and implementation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Others?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Activity 3: Goals

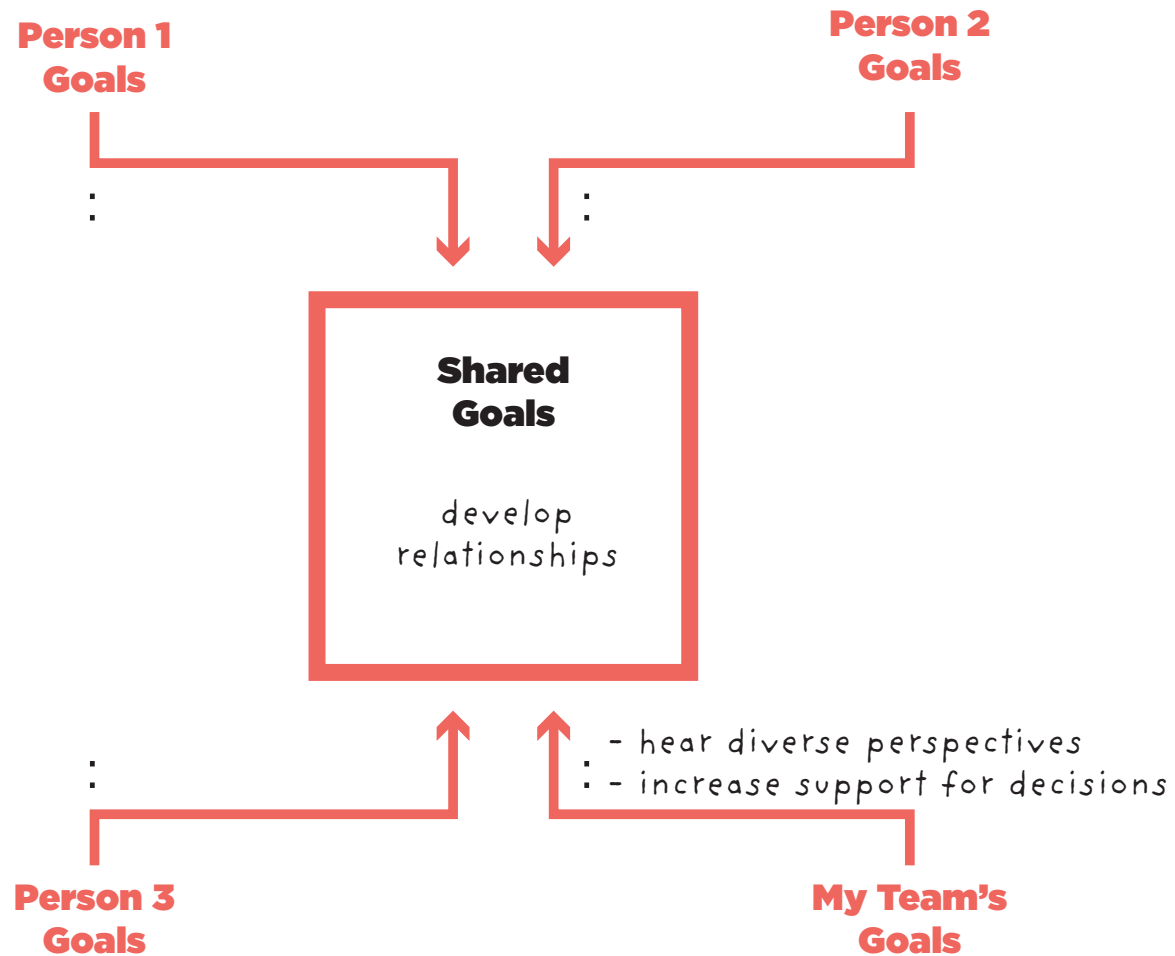
Step 2: People's goals

Discuss with your team what is motivating the People's (from Activity 2) participation in your engagement process. Write down your assumptions in the chart below.

Questions to consider:

- What are the Peoples' goals' for engaging with me/us?
- What are our shared goals?
- What outcomes might they expect from this process?

Step 2: People's goals



Activity 4: Methods

Purpose

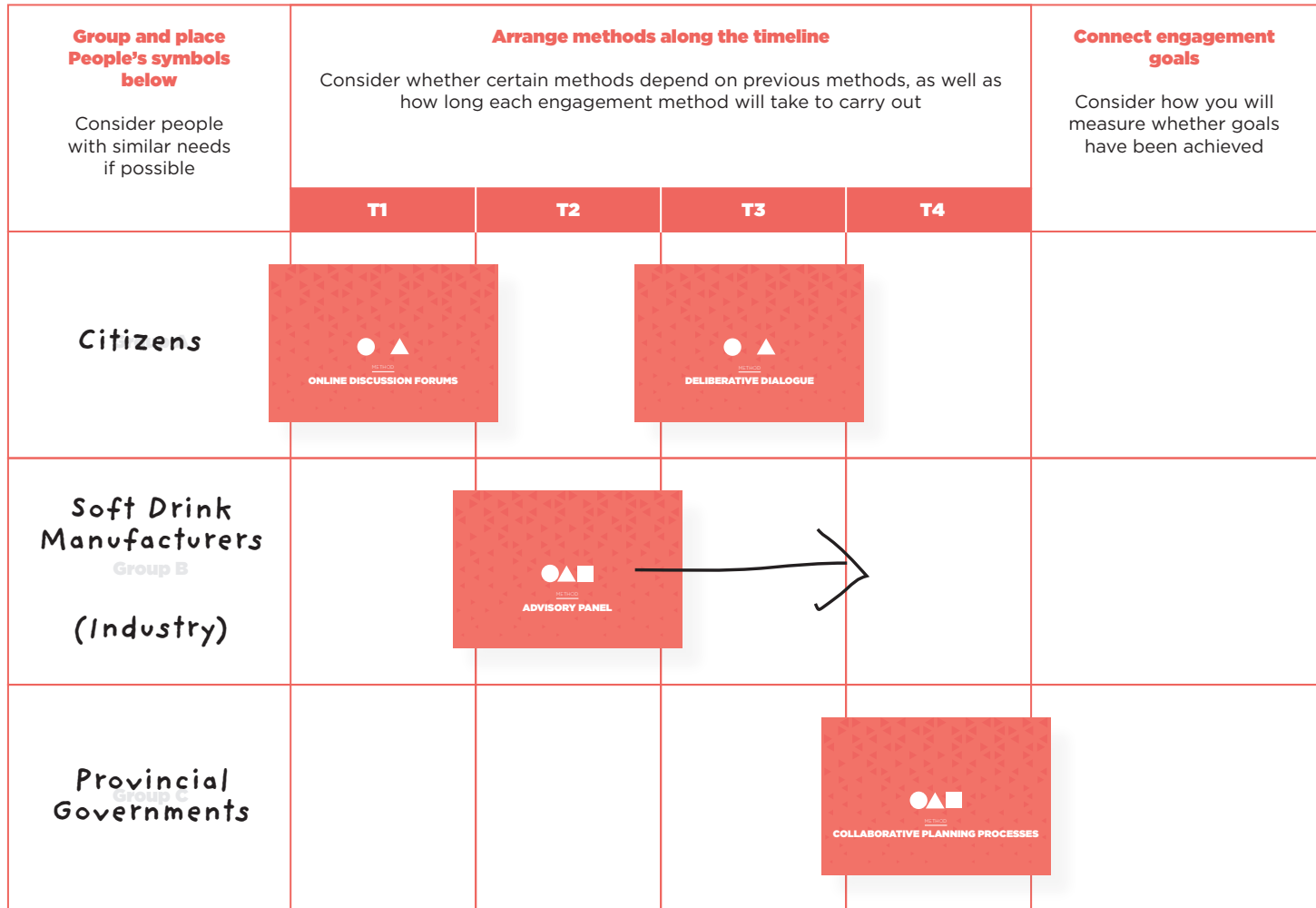
Activity 4 helps you determine the Methods that will correspond with your identified Goals. This activity is paired with the Method Cards.

Instructions

Examine the list of methods. Consider matches between your chosen Goals and possible Methods. The Goals and Methods are grouped into themes with corresponding symbols to help with this task (see white geometric icons). Select any number of methods you think can be used to achieve your chosen goals. Write down your chosen methods. Decide what People will be engaged through each method. Arrange your methods along the timeline to build your engagement strategy. You can combine People who will benefit from similar engagement methods into a single group.

Questions to consider:

- Are certain methods better suited to certain People?
- Which Methods will help you meet a Goal?
- Are there conditions that require certain goals to be met before others? (ie. transforming a conflict before developing consensus)
- What protocols, procedures or practices might I have to follow or learn to engage with this person or group?



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