



Equitable Engagement for Implementation

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

This resource supports leaders in considering who to engage throughout the implementation of the Equity Action Plan (EAP). After reviewing this resource, leaders will have a better understanding of what equitable engagement is and ideas they can apply to their unit, department, or faculty¹ level planning.

Overview

Equity, diversity and inclusion are not only desired outcomes of the [Equity Action Plan](#) but also principles that should be carried throughout every stage of its implementation.

Strategic equity initiatives are most effective when guided by a group of individuals with diverse perspectives, expertise, and influence. This tool provides the following for your unit's consideration:

- a way of identifying different groups who should be engaged in your unit-level implementation,
- explanation of the different levels of engagement, and
- general tips as you start to build your engagement plan.

As you move through the phases of the [Implementation Framework](#), you may decide to re-task a current committee to support various aspects of the EAP related work. We strongly encourage you to think about the contents of this resource even if your unit has an existing equity or EDI committee.

Why equitable engagement is important

To understand how equity relates to the topic of engagement, we can look within the EAP description of equity.

“The EAP will use creative solutions to redistribute power and eliminate intentional and unintentional barriers experienced by members of systemically and historically marginalized groups.”

Increasing equity requires paying attention to power. In the context of implementation think about who has the power to shape your unit's EAP related work through decision making.

Creative solutions require challenging the conventions of how we work. By expanding who is engaged in setting priorities, designing new initiatives, and determining success we can redistribute power. As you approach each implementation phase, think critically about who should be engaged and how you can end any barriers to meaningful engagement that emerge.

Equitable engagement will be crucial to your implementation of the EAP and can:

- bring together a valuable range of skills, knowledge, and expertise,
- help to break down organizational silos, and
- help maintain intentionality and accountability for EAP initiatives.

Who should be engaged

Review who makes up the various groups that are involved in implementation to identify gaps in engagement. Typically, within a project, people fit into one or more of the following categories:

- **Decision makers:** those who make major decisions, approve projects and the allocation of resources (financial and labour). This category often includes unit leaders, directors, chairs, deans, etc.
- **Actors:** Those responsible for carrying out the work involved in a project. This category often includes employees within a unit tasked with a project.
- **Impacted community members:** Anyone who is impacted by the project outcomes. This includes employees who are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day work that will be impacted by these outcomes. This category often includes students, staff, faculty, etc.

Conventional strategic and project planning often centres around decision makers and actors who are part of a planning team. Alternatively, increasing equity in processes and outcomes requires increased engagement with impacted community members. To redistribute power, we can change who is included in actor and decision maker roles. For example, units can work to create the conditions for impacted community members to participate on planning committees or working groups. In academic units this might look like leveraging existing EDI committee structures while also engaging sessional instructors, teaching assistants and students.

Ensure diversity

Encouraging engagement with those typically left out of decision-making roles includes engagement with members of systemically and historically marginalized communities. Without this targeted engagement initiatives may fail to break down the barriers to equity they seek to address and may create new ones. To do this, you will need to dedicate time and resources to reducing barriers to participation.

Avoiding tokenism

Increasing diversity in a planning committee or through other forms of engagement without sharing power is tokenism. Tokenism occurs when members of systemically and historically marginalized communities are included only to appear more equitable but are not meaningfully listened to. Participating in tokenism sustains inequities by centring the voices of those who already hold power. Similarly, wider engagement is always necessary as individuals should not be expected to represent or speak for everyone who shares a similar identity.

Conditions for equitable engagement

Here is a list of tips drawn from “Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement”:ⁱⁱ

- Engagement should not have pre-determined outcomes but instead be responsive to what is shared.
- Set realistic expectations by clarifying the degree of influence that participants can have on decisions.
- Prioritize relationship building and foster trust by follow through on commitments and communicating transparently.
- Create mutually beneficial and accessible engagement processes.
- Anticipate and address potential barriers to participation.
- Commit to ongoing reflection, learning, improvement and evaluation.

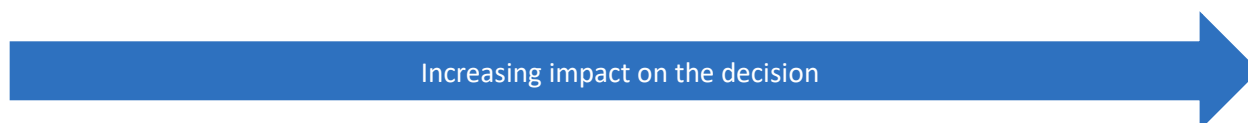
Spectrum of engagement

Engagement can take many forms. Your unit will likely want to use a variety of engagement practices during various phases of implementation. Who you are seeking to engage should inform what practices you choose. Your engagement practices might include:

- developing a robust working group
- sharing updates by email
- hosting information sessions
- gathering input through surveys
- conducting focus groups
- distributing project plans for feedback

As you think about what practices to use, consider how much influence participants will have on decision making. This decision, in turn, will inform what you promise the university community. The table below, based on the International Association for Public Participation’s Spectrum of Public Participation, highlights different levels of engagement.ⁱⁱⁱ

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Participation goal	To provide the UVic community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solution.	To obtain the UVic community’s feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the UVic community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the UVic community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the UVic community.
Promise	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.



Communication

Informing the university community about your unit’s progress in advancing the EAP is the base level of engagement you should be planning for.

- Develop a communication strategy. Decide what you will share within your unit and to the wider university community at each stage of the Implementation Framework.
- Consider what communication tools your unit already has (e.g., newsletter, email lists, social media, website). Start here as you think about how to share information about your EAP progress.
- Share your progress on the EAP website’s [UVic Community Actions page](#). This page features projects across UVic that advance equity, inclusion and/or diversity, and the 5 goals of the EAP.

Next steps

After reviewing this resource, you should have ideas for bringing equitable engagement into your unit-level planning. The first step is to begin the Get Started phase of the Implementation Framework by using the [Your Unit in the Equity Action Plan tool](#). Consider equitable engagement as you determine how your unit will work to advance the EAP. Make sure to revisit this resource as you determine your EAP activities and work through the various phases of implementation.

Questions?

Find the Implementation Framework and full list of tools on the [Equity Action Plan website](#). If you get stuck or are not sure what the next step is for your unit, help is available. The Equity Action Team can assist with coaching and troubleshooting. Email us at equityaction@uvic.ca

Additional resources

- [Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement](#)
- [Creating and Working Well with Diverse Committees](#)
- [Overcoming Barriers to Participation](#)

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ⁱ For the rest of this document, we use “unit” as the generic term for units, departments, faculties, and divisions, and other relevant UVic groups.

ⁱⁱ Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue (2020). Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement. Accessed at: <https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/dialogue/ImagesAndFiles/ProgramsPage/EDI/BeyondInclusion/Beyond%20Inclusion%20-%20Equity%20in%20Public%20Engagement.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ International Association for Public Participation. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. Accessed at: <https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars>