

[public consultation](#), a process by which the public's input on matters affecting them is sought

Public consultation, or simply **consultation**, is a regulatory process by which the public's input on matters affecting them is sought. Its main goals are in improving the efficiency, transparency^[1] and public involvement in large-scale projects or laws and policies. It usually involves *notification* (to publicise the matter to be consulted on), *consultation* (a two-way flow of information and opinion exchange) as well as *participation* (involving interest groups in the drafting of policy or legislation).^[1]

Depending on the legislation (if applicable legislation exists at all) and the scope of the project, consultation may include all interested parties, or may be restricted to those directly affected by the projects. Whether the legal authorities or project authorities are bound by any of the consultation process is also a matter of local laws.^[citation needed]

The process is typical of [Commonwealth](#) countries such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Canada](#), [New Zealand](#) or [Australia](#),^[citation needed] though most [democratic](#) countries have similar systems (in the [United States](#), for instance, this process is called "[notice and comment](#)"). Some organisations such as the [OECD](#) also use such processes.^[1]

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** (OECD), is an [international organisation](#) of thirty countries, that accept the principles of [representative democracy](#) and a [free market](#) economy.

Canada is a member.

Consultation from <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/consultation-e.html>

. [Current Consultations in the Canada Gazette](#)
Zeroth. [Government of Canada Consultation Portal](#)

Your comments and input play an important part in Canada's regulatory process. Do you have an opinion on the types of controls that should be put in place to safeguard the environment, the foods you eat, or the drugs you buy? These are just some of the many regulations that affect the daily lives of Canadians.

The Regulatory Policy requires that federal departments and agencies demonstrate that Canadians have been consulted and that they have had an opportunity to participate in developing or modifying regulations and regulatory programmes.

Pre-publication in Part I of the *Canada Gazette* gives various interested groups and individuals, as well as Canadians in general, a final opportunity to review and comment on a proposed regulation at the last stages of the regulation-making process, before it is enacted and published in Part II of the *Canada Gazette*.

Pre-publication also gives interested parties, those stakeholders previously consulted at the beginning of the regulatory process, the opportunity to see how the final draft proposal is in keeping with previous consultation drafts.

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file44364.pdf>

Better Regulation Executive Code of Practice on Consultation

Effective consultation is a key part of the policy-making process. People's views can help shape policy developments and set the agenda for better public services. But we also need to make the process of consultation less burdensome and easier for people to engage with.

We have made progress in recent years. In November 2000, I launched the Code of Practice on Written Consultation, which set out principles for departments to follow. This has been effective in raising both the quality and quantity of consultation carried out by government.

We consult more extensively now than ever before. And, in the vast majority of cases, consultation periods are now at least 12 weeks long, enabling more time for responses and more people to be involved.

But there is much more we can do to improve the effectiveness of the way we consult with stakeholders.

This new, revised code will help focus those efforts. It is shorter and clearer, and strengthens the commitment

to providing respondents with feedback and to following better regulation best practice in developing policy options. I encourage all departments and relevant public bodies to use it effectively.

Tony Blair

4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.

4.1 Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed. Do not simply count votes when analysing responses. Particular attention may need to be given to representative bodies, such as business associations, trade unions, voluntary and consumer groups and other organisations representing groups especially affected. In order to ensure that responses are analysed correctly, it is important to understand whom different bodies represent, and the methodology used to gain members' input into the response.

4.2 Particular attention should be paid to:

- possible new approaches to the question consulted on;
- further evidence of the impact of the proposals; and
- strength of feeling among particular groups.

4.3 The consultation document should state the date when, and the web address where, the summary of responses will be published. As far as possible this should be within three months of the closing date of the consultation. Those without web access should be able to request a paper copy of this summary. Feedback should also be available in formats which are appropriate to the audience.

4.4 The summary should give an analysis of the responses to questions asked: for each question there should be a summary of responses to that question and then an explanation of how it is proposed to change the proposal in light of the responses received. There should also be information provided on themes that came out of the consultation which were not covered by the questions.

4.5 Wherever possible the summary of responses should also include a summary of the next steps for the policy, including reasons for decisions taken.

4.6 Explain that information provided in response will be dealt with in accordance with the access to information regimes. These are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Please refer to the accompanying Guidance on the Code of Practice on Consultation

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/index.asp> for more information.

4.7 When providing copies of responses, it is legitimate to make a reasonable charge for copying and postage.

<http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/libraries/templates/community.asp?URN=2542&FolgerID=0>

There are a number of different definitions of consultation that exist, but perhaps the simplest and most straightforward is:

'a process of dialogue that leads to a decision'

The above definition comes from the Audit Commission's [Listen Up! Effective community consultation](#) paper and sums up neatly what consultation should be. The term 'dialogue' means a continual exchange of views and information, and suggests a two-way process of sharing knowledge and opinions and working together. This means that when we consult you, we listen to what you have to say *and* we act upon it.

For a more detailed look at what consultation is, read the council's [consultation strategy](#) by clicking the blue button below: