

engage NB

STRATEGIC PROGRAM REVIEW

A guide to hosting your own dialogue session

Introduction

The government of New Brunswick is sponsoring a public engagement initiative as part of the government's commitment to undertake a strategic program review.

It will not come as a surprise to New Brunswickers that our provincial government has been spending beyond its means and that we face a serious fiscal challenge. In *Moving New Brunswick Forward*, government pledged to improve the government's financial position.

Government made commitments to strategic investments which are critical to ensuring the ongoing growth of New Brunswick's economy and the sustainability of our social programs. New money must be found for these priority investments so we can help create jobs and make our province more affordable for families.

And it is critical that we do this soon. Our province's debt has doubled in the past eight years and this cannot continue.

Government is asking for your help in looking for opportunities to eliminate waste and opportunities to do things better and more efficiently. This will require reducing services and increasing revenues.

Through this engagement process, government will be listening to New Brunswickers, civil servants, outside experts and our partners in public sector unions for creative solutions.

The challenges we face affect all New Brunswickers. Tough decisions will have to be made to allow us to have the strong foundation we need to invest in the future. Government is committed to making those tough decisions with the support and ideas of New Brunswickers. This is your opportunity to be part of the process to move New Brunswick forward and to work together to find innovative solutions.

This guide has been prepared to assist you in hosting a public engagement dialogue session. Feel free to modify the format of your session to fit the needs of the participants.

What is public engagement dialogue all about?

It's about...

Talking and listening

Public engagement is an opportunity for participants to talk to each other to share personal opinions, stories and experiences. It is an opportunity to listen to and learn about other points of view.

It's about...

Being involved in decision-making

Public Engagement is a way to involve the public in helping to find solutions to address societal issues that affect their lives.

Hosting a Dialogue Session

Before the meeting

3 weeks before:

- Set a date and time for the session.
- Book a place to hold the session. The room does not have to be big or fancy. It should be wheelchair accessible. It should be comfortable for the number of participants to be invited.
- Make sure that the group will not be disturbed during the session.
- Review the agenda (see page 4).
- Ensure you have supplies: flip chart, note pad, pens, markers.
- Ensure you are familiar with the dialogue questions.

2 weeks before:

- Invite participants by way of phone, mail or email.
- Invite 10 to 15 people (not everyone will show up). An ideal number of participants to have at the dialogue session is between 5 to 10.

1 week before:

- Contact participants to confirm that they are still planning to attend.
- Confirm all arrangements for session.
- Order refreshments (optional).

Day of session:

- Set up the room so that it is ready for participants when they arrive.
- Set up flipchart and markers to capture the dialogue in bullet form.
- Set up a few extra spaces for participants who were not expected.
- *Optional:* If you have a computer you can access the Dialogue Opener video on the website. If not, skip this and tell participants they can go on the website to view the video if they have computer access: www.gnb.ca/SPR

During the meeting

Welcome:

- Introduce yourself and welcome everyone.
- Get participants to introduce themselves.
- Explain how the session will proceed.
- Let everyone know the meeting will be 1 ½ hours in length.
- Ensure everyone knows where the washrooms and exits are.
- If you have refreshments available, invite participants to help themselves.
- Handout the agenda.
- Explain the purpose of the session and go over the agenda.

Dialogue:

- Ask if there are any questions about the process.
- Review the dialogue ground rules.
- Start the dialogue and get the participants to answer the questions on the Agenda. This will require participants to have an open discussion, sharing viewpoints, sharing experiences and stories.
- Make sure that everyone has equal opportunity to talk.
- Try to keep to the times on the agenda.
- Keep the dialogue flowing – keep everyone involved.
- Remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Remind participants that they don't have to agree but don't allow participants to get into a debate on issues. Agree to disagree.
- Capture the key points from the dialogue on a flipchart or note pad.

After the meeting

Wrap-up:

- Thank the participants for attending and for their participation in the open and honest dialogue.
- Tell participants that the information they provided will be sent to the Strategic Program Review Secretariat in Fredericton.
- Assure participants that no names will be used to protect their identity.
- Explain to participants that the Secretariat will be preparing a "What Was Said" report once all of the public input has been received.
- Tell participants that the "What Was Said" report will be available at www.gnb.ca/SPR for those who have a computer and access to the internet.
- Those who are unable to access the website may receive a copy in the mail if they leave their name and address with you (you can send this information to the Secretariat who will distribute reports when they are available).

Send input:

- Collect all input (flipchart pages, notes) to send to the Strategic Program Review Secretariat.
- You can choose to type up the information you received at your session and provide online at www.gnb.ca/SPR or by email at SPR@gnb.ca. Or you can mail all of your input sheets to:
Strategic Program Review Secretariat
Executive Council Office
Government of New Brunswick
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1

Checklist for the Meeting Host

Before the Meeting – Planning for the session

- Determine when to hold your session (date and time).
- Find a location for your session.
- Remember to find a convenient, comfortable, wheel-chair accessible location within your community.
- Invite participants to attend a 1 1/2 hour dialogue session.

- Order refreshments (coffee, tea, cold drinks, muffins).
- Photo copy Agenda and any background documents.
- Set up your meeting room (including a flipchart, notepad, markers and pens.)
- Take time to review the background documents.
- Remind participants of the session.

During the Meeting –

Participants share their views

- Share *Dialogue Ground Rules*.
- Share the *Agenda* and work through the dialogue questions with the participants.
- Make sure that everyone has an opportunity to talk.
- Capture the key points from the dialogue on a flipchart or notepad.

After the Meeting –

Send input to the Secretariat

- Gather flipchart and/or notepad pages with input from the dialogue and send to the Strategic Program Review Secretariat.

Tips for the Host

How to keep the dialogue flowing and on track:

- Use humour when you can.
- Don't take sides.
- Try not to let the dialogue stray from the issue.
- Try to involve all participants in the dialogue.
- Encourage participants to talk about their personal experiences and opinions and to share their stories.
- Remind participants that they don't have to agree with everyone's point of view but they do have to respect it.
- Ask participants to explain why they don't agree with someone else's point of view.
- Remind participants that there is no right and wrong ideas, just different perspectives.

What If?

If...

someone becomes upset with a point of view.

You can say...

"Even though you don't agree with that statement, can you see why some people would agree with it?"

If...

someone insists that only one view is "right".

You can say...

"How would that choice affect other people?"

"Let's hear from someone who has a different point of view on this."

"Why do you feel so strongly about this?"

If...

someone has been monopolizing the conversation.

You can say...

"You have been very clear about that. Let's make sure everyone has a chance to tell us what they think."

Dialogue Ground Rules

- All ideas are valid.
- Listen actively to each other.
- Let everyone have a chance to express their point of view.
- Respect each other's point of view.

Agenda – Public Dialogue Session

OPENING	
Welcome and Introductions	5 minutes
Ground Rules for Dialogue	5 minutes
Video # 1	10 minutes
THE CONVERSATIONS	
Question #1: What does a thriving New Brunswick look like to you 10 years from now?	10 minutes
Question #2: Thinking of all of the things government spends money on to provide the residents of New Brunswick with services, what are three things that you think government could stop doing to save money?	25 minutes
Question #3: With all of the financial challenges facing our province, what three things do you think government could do to raise money?	25 minutes
CLOSING THE CONVERSATIONS	
Identify three key points talked about throughout the dialogue (one from each question).	10 minutes