

Bulkley Valley Research Centre
**Re-Visioning Valley
Vision Final Report**



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Alison Watson, MPLAN, MCIP, RPP
Liliana Dragowska, MCIP, RPP

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1. Introduction

Background

Valley Vision was a public engagement vehicle started in 2007 by a group of individuals who wanted to connect Bulkley Valley residents with planning processes and relevant information so that residents could contribute to a long-term vision for the valley and make a difference in how planning decisions were made.

With direction from a steering committee and funding from a private sponsor, the valleyvision.ca website was created under contract by local companies. Site content was managed between 2007 and 2011 by a combination of paid and volunteer efforts. Although the project received positive feedback, it was unable to transition to a sustainable operation supported by an entity that could provide the necessary funding and volunteers.

Content on the website has not been updated since early 2012 and needs substantial redesign and review if Valley Vision is going to continue to meet its original intent.

Project Overview

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the original Valley Vision initiative and recommend an online platform to meaningfully engage Bulkley Valley residents in local land-use planning. Key project questions included:

*What is Valley Vision's role in engaging the public in local land-use planning?
 What is the most effective online engagement tool for this?*

The project undertook a process to evaluate Valley Vision and its role in engaging residents of the Bulkley Valley in local planning processes. This process is outlined below:




1. **Background Research:** Summarize online public engagement principles and research web-based engagement platforms.
2. **Stakeholder Interviews.** Complete a focus group interview with the former steering committee to understand past success and challenges. In addition, carry-out direct interviews with local planners and organizations associated in Bulkley Valley land-use planning to explore the role of Valley Vision in the existing land-use planning context.
3. **Recommendation.** Based on findings from the background research and stakeholder interviews, provide a recommendation for Valley Vision.

2. Online Engagement Primer


Defining Public Engagement

“Public participation can be any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision.”¹ The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) defines effective public participation based on three foundations:

1. **Values-based:** Meaningful participation is focused on talking to people about what matters most to them and what matters most to you.
2. **Decision-oriented:** Outlining the scope of issues under discussion to purposefully come to a conclusion or decision over the source of a process.
3. **Goal-oriented:** Outlining the public’s role and potential to influence the issues under discussion with clear objectives of what will be achieved.²

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation 

IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public 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 public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	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 work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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¹ IAP2 International Federation 2016. Foundations in Effective Public Participation, 01 Planning for effective public participation. Page 2.

² Same as above. Page 16.

The IAP2 spectrum is a screening tool to help define the public’s level of participation and role in a process.³ Specifically, the spectrum acts as a checkpoint for all engagement design.

Public participation takes many forms and impacts decision-making in different ways depending on the participation goal and promise to the public from the engaging organization. To guide this, IAP2 has further defined seven core values for the practice of public engagement, as illustrated below.⁴ These core values help public engagement practitioners understand the difference between good and bad public-engagement processes to avoid public “burn out” or “fatigue.” Further, they ensure that trust in the public is established and participants’ time and opinions are respected and heard.



CORE VALUES

IAP2 Federation’s Core Values for Public Participation professionals define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

1 Public participation 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 Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision.

3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.

4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

There are a number of tools and techniques that can be used to engage the public depending on the level of public engagement needed in a particular process. These range from in-person techniques such as meetings, public forums, advisory groups and more to remote tools such as the use of online tool, surveys hotlines, information kiosk and more.

³ IAP2. (2018). Core Values, Ethics, Spectrum – The 3 Pillars of Public Participation. Available online at <http://www.iap2.org/page/pillars>

⁴ IAP2. Retrieved on June 3rd, 2019. Source: <https://www.iap2.org/page/corevalues>.

Online Public Engagement

Public engagement has evolved significantly over the last 15 years with the emergence of online engagement methods to complement traditional in-person methods. It is now common for online engagement, such as surveys, polling, forums and social media, to make up a significant portion of engagement activities. Many organizations have studied benefits of online public engagement that include reaching a more diverse audience, generating more informed participation, inviting a broader range of perspectives, producing concrete data from reporting and evaluation, and setting the stage for successfully sustained participation.⁵

Leaders in online engagement shared some consistent advice:

- Let the public engagement purpose drive the tool, not vice versa
- Understand the staff capacities required for effective implementation
- Be strategic about syncing online and face-to-face public engagement to take advantage of the strengths of each
- Embrace a “continuous learning” attitude about these online tools across agency departments

6

Choosing online engagement platforms and suppliers is a multifaceted process. There are three main considerations. First are technical considerations, including range of tools and features, technical interface, ability to coordinate the administrative function and staff training. The second is design considerations of the actual online engagement experience dependent on engagement goals and capacities. And, finally, cost considerations must ensure sustainability of the platform and any technology maintenance.⁷

While online engagement is increasingly being used, there are many other internet-related issues such as online security, privacy, open internet standards or net neutrality that are increasingly becoming part of the conversation, as well as issues like access to information technology. These issues must be carefully considered, especially if multiple agencies and levels of government are accessing the information.

The IAP2's [Digital Engagement, Social Media & Public Participation](#)⁸ document further serves as a primer on online engagement.

⁵ Clark, Susan. 2014. Broadening Public Participation Using Online Engagement Tools. Institute for Local Government.

⁶ Same as above

⁶ Clark, Susan. 2014. Broadening Public Participation Using Online Engagement Tools. Institute for Local Government.

⁸ https://iap2canada.ca/resources/Documents/Newsletter/2017_social_media_white_paper.pdf

3. Platform Research

This section summarizes results from a scan of online engagement platforms, including how they are used and funded. Representatives from BC universities, local governments, funding agencies, not-for-profit organizations and private industry leaders helped inform the results. This included:

- Fraser Basin Council, Fresh Outlook Foundation, Real Estate Foundation, Pembina Institute and BC Healthy Communities;
- North Coast Regional District, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Central Okanagan Regional District, City of Maple Ridge and Peace River Regional District;
- Selkirk College Rural Development Institute, Vancouver Island University (School of Community Planning), University of Northern British Columbia (School of Planning), UNBC Integrated Watershed Research Group;
- Esri Canada, PlaceSpeak, Bang the Table and MetroQuest.

Appendix A contains a summary of responses received.

Key Findings

Provincially, there is a wide spectrum of online approaches used to engage the public in land-use planning. Approaches can be grouped into three (3) general categories:

APPROACH		DESCRIPTION
1	Civic Engagement Platforms	Civic engagement platforms are web-based platforms designed specifically to engage the public. Platforms can be tailored to project needs and offer many integrations. There are many different platforms available ⁹ that are gaining traction at all levels of government as a means to broaden engagement participation. While engaging a wide range of users, the most collaborative examples found were at the local level (see examples). Funding for these platforms are predominately directly from government budgets.
2	Collaborative Mapping Portals	Mapping portals are map-based information repositories intended to provide a “one-stop” snapshot of research, datasets and values with the goal of better informing land-use decisions across a landscape. Main users of this approach originate from university and research communities. These initiatives tend to be large, multi-year, collaborative projects that are grant-funded.
3	Open Data Community Hubs	Open data and the evolution of using this information as a basis to engage the public is an approach starting to be used by some jurisdictions. This cloud-based software allows specific apps to easily be built and tailored to the local

⁹ Public Voice has summarized 52 tools for online public engagement. This list can be accessed here: <https://www.publicvoice.co.nz/lets-get-digital-52-tools-for-online-public-engagement/>

context. Funding for this is commonly directly from jurisdictional budgets. The transition from open data to acting as a vehicle for public engagement is fairly new and is seeing uptake on a cross section of users.

Examples

Below are examples that highlight the online engagement approaches used:

- A popular geographic-based engagement platform is [PlaceSpeak](#). The Cowichan Valley Regional District and member municipalities all use [PlaceSpeak](#). Use of the platform is a result of CVRD's engagement policy to improve overall civic engagement and local government engagement coordination. Funding is from local government budgets, which is based on population (\$10,000-\$17,000 annually).
- [Bang the Table](#) engagement platforms are widely used in Canada. [Engage Waterloo Region](#) is an example of a regional district that coordinates engagement of member municipalities. Another is the Regional District of Nanaimo with the [Get Involved RDN](#) website, which cross references other jurisdictional engagement opportunities. The City of Kamloops contracts its [Let's Talk](#) website through [Bang the Table](#) at an annual cost of \$18,000.
- The provincial government recently launched [govTogetherBC](#) as its main engagement portal. There were no examples found of provincial engagement platforms that spanned multiple levels of government.
- There are examples, such as in the case of the Peace River Regional District (in-house [Engage!](#) webpage), where they referenced the recent South Mountain Cariboo consultations, due to high public demand.
- Selkirk College's Rural Development Institute developed the Digital Basin Portal (\$250,000+) and upcoming Climate Portal (3-year, \$179,000 project), both examples of large-scale collaborative mapping portals with substantial funding received from the Columbia Basin Trust. Note that the Digital Basin Portal is no longer running due to loss of funding and lack of up-take, however, remains BC's largest example of an information portal intended to influence decision making.
- UNBC's [Nechako Watershed Portal](#) is a project that was initially funded by \$45,000 from a federal grant 10 years ago with funding contributed by its users on an as-needed basis. It was developed as a portal of information driven from the need for improved land management. Currently, some First Nations use the portal as a basis for responding to land referrals; however, their mapping information is not made public.
- The provincial government's [BC's Map Hub](#) provides a large amount of provincial data with the intention for it to be used to explore, engage, innovate and communicate.

- The City of Maple Ridge uses its [Open Government Portal](#) to create multiple apps, including the [What's Happening Around Me](#) app that helps residents and visitors access information. The platform is financed from city budgets. The [Central Okanagan Regional District](#) budgets \$44,000 annually for the Esri Open Data subscription that includes use by member municipalities and West Bank First Nation.

Key Themes

While there is innovation with engagement platforms themselves, the scan illustrates that there are no clear examples of coordinated engagement that transcend local, regional, provincial and First Nation governments in land-use planning processes. However, from the findings several common themes or “lessons learned” emerged which serve to inform this project’s recommendations. These key themes include:

1. Establish **clear purpose, goals, objectives and overall attention** to the experience of the end user. Initiatives that are information heavy, require web exploration or that do not clearly articulate “why participate” and “who’s listening” do not gain traction with engaging the public.
2. Online engagement is **another tool** for public engagement; however, it should not replace all other opportunities for public engagement. Further, all levels of government must still abide by and follow legislative processes, timelines and decision-making protocols.
3. Online tools take **continual financial resources** to fund with the most sustainable form of funding directly from government communications budgets and not contingent on grants for long-term funding.
4. **Staff capacity and engagement skill set** is required to not only understand the role of online engagement in land-use planning, but also for ongoing promotion and updates (both platform itself and content). To guide this, organizations are increasingly developing their own engagement and communication policy to provide guidance on this.

4. Stakeholder Interviews

As part of the research for this report, a focus group interview was conducted with the members of the original Valley Vision Steering Committee in order to understand successes and challenges of Valley Vision.

In addition to the focus group, six phone interviews and two in-person meetings were held over the month of April and May 2019 with a sample of individuals involved in planning initiatives in the Bulkley Valley area. These engagements explored successes/challenges of the original Valley Vision project, existing planning processes and opportunities for meaningful collaborative engagement on modern planning initiatives.

The six phone-interview participants included representatives from the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), District of Houston, Village of Telkwa, Witset First Nation, Office of the Wet’suwet’en and the Ministry of Transportation. The in-person interviews were conducted with the Town of Smithers and provincial government representatives from the Ministry of Forest Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), including a Wildfire Prevention Officer, Forest District Manager, Director of Regional Initiatives, and Communications and Engagement Specialist.

A summary of the meetings and interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Valley Vision Focus Group

Those individuals who participated in the focus group shared a strong passion for the need for better information and public engagement in land-use planning in the Bulkley Valley. Each member, although passionate, recognized that they had invested a significant amount of time into the original Valley Vision project and did not want to be in that position again. Below is a summary of the key successes and challenges identified by the focus group.

SUCCESSIONS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented the complexity of the various levels of planning jurisdictions; • Served as a single portal of information on land-use planning; • Acted as a catalyst for the public to comment on referrals/applications; • Developed an online discussion forum tool, MapChat; • Developed for public user (not government). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of buy-in and use from decision makers and public; • Lack of sustainable financial support; • Time intensive to sort through current planning process /notifications to engage public and link processes to Valley Vision; • Single contractor attempting to update website content and moderate discussion; • Complexity of information (balance being comprehensive and user friendly); • Broad scope; • Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako looked at Valley Vision as a threat to planning process due to perceived environmental bias.

Stakeholder Interview Highlights

There was strong agreement across all participants that effective land-use planning requires robust and effective public engagement. Many participants expressed that, while they know this to be the need, limited resources and capacity to engage a broad spectrum of the public in planning issues is a significant barrier. In addition, due to both the capacity of organizations and the complexity of their different jurisdictions and legislative frameworks, collaborative online engagement on a regional scale would be very complicated and require a very significant resource commitment to establish and sustain.

Participants both saw an opportunity to collaborate on public engagement using a regional online platform and at the same time were hesitant on the concept without knowing who would lead the initiative, the scope and purpose of such an initiative, the tool to be used, and what resources would be required to create and sustain such an initiative. During the interview process, the following benefits and challenges of collaborating on public engagement across jurisdictions were expressed:

POSSIBLE BENEFITS	POSSIBLE CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to collaborate and share resources when engaging the public; • Opportunity to help educate the community through integrated public engagement; • Encouraging broader networking, public education and community discussion on relevant issues; • Standardized processes for engaging the public on land-use planning across the region; • Opportunity to integrate online engagement tools; • If research shows potential benefits for collaborative regional engagement there may be more buy in from local government; • Value neutrality of third party (may empower public to become involved) • Emergency planning hits all levels of government and could be a good place to initiate such an initiative; • Potential to pilot a project / need to be clear on scope; i.e. Wetzin'kwa Wildfire Risk Reduction Plan involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated engagement tool, relevant for all levels of planning, would take a significant commitment on the part of the province and other levels of government; • Defining scope and geographic extent of the initiative; • Staff capacity and expertise to administer an additional resource for engagement; • Complexity of shared resources, keeping relevance, content management and cost of an online engagement tool; • Long-term viability of an online platform to be a sustainable model, not just a one-off project that dies again. Challenge of funding and integration into multiple layers of government; • Cost of effective technology for a project of this size; • Threat of a perceived bias from a third-party to engage residents in local government or project work; • Many different topics and decision-making jurisdictions, can get confusing for participants; • Keeping the public engaged on an ongoing basis – engagement fatigue; • 40% of population does not have good internet access in rural RDBN; • Defining a lead organization for the initiative.

During the interviews, many examples were provided illustrating the complexity of collaborating across jurisdictions on public engagement related to land-use planning. Each agency and level of

government has its own interests, legislation timelines, policies and procedures that it follows in order to service its jurisdiction's decision makers. For example, the province uses multiple online engagement tools to support similar needs. The GovTogetherBC website lists all public-engagement issues for the public to link into, and this is in addition to a new Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development regional pilot project being developed in the Skeena that is looking to engage the public¹⁰. This illustrates that even the province is challenged with developing a single online engagement tool to manage effective integrated public engagement when it comes to land-use planning.

In another example, currently the RDBN offers planning services for municipalities within the district who do not have a planning function. In the instance of Telkwa, the RDBN advises on development applications; Telkwa is then required to engage the public according to their legislated requirements. As discussed in the interviews, any online platform would require consideration for individual jurisdictional requirements and integration into their current websites to ensure staff capacity is considered.

¹⁰ Skeena Online Engagement Tool – to learn more see: <https://youtu.be/EiqZsi3vW2U>

5. Recommendation

While Valley Vision was an admirable initiative, based on IAP2 principles, background research and interview results, there is no meaningful role for Valley Vision in local land-use planning as a third party, online engagement platform. However, there is a valuable role for the BVRC in supporting local decision-making and jurisdictions in working towards improved coordination, as outlined at the end of this section.

Rationale

Three main themes, which are elaborated on below, inform this recommendation: scope and ownership, capacity, and third-party limitations.

Scope & Ownership

The IAP2 principles outlined in this report reinforce that meaningful public engagement must be value-based, decision-focused and goal-oriented. Each of these three principles must be reflected in any process or else the process risks creating public mistrust, being underutilized and confusing the public.

Based on this, for Valley Vision to be in keeping with best-practice engagement standards, it would need to be nested in a broader institutional framework within each government, have a defined scope, have shared values/goals and clearly link engagement to decision-making processes. Prior to moving forward with this, various levels of political buy-in would be required and thought given to integration into public servant procedures.

For example, the original Valley Vision geographic scope was on the Bulkley Valley including the land base between Houston and Witset. RDBN staff expressed preference for a consistent engagement model across their entire jurisdiction to ensure that staff resources are used efficiently. This mismatched geographic area created an inconsistent tool and resource for staff working under different jurisdictional boundaries.

A significant scope challenge is related to the growing role of Indigenous peoples in land use. The incorporation of [UNDRIP and TRC](#) significantly grow the complexity of planning. Public engagement that includes this scope would require a level of strategic integration of multiple layers of government that outstrips current capacity by a wide margin.

Capacity

Project findings revealed that no one jurisdiction is willing to be a champion or take an active role in a future Valley Vision project, partially due to limited capacity. Stakeholder interviews explicitly expressed concerns over committing energy to a new project that will not be maintained in the long run.

Platform research highlights the importance of having personnel capacity and skill set to not only understand the role of online engagement in land-use planning but also for ongoing promotion and updates (both platform itself and content). To further add to the complexity, shared resources, maintaining relevance and ongoing content management requires sustainable financial and human resources.

Local findings identified that individual governments are pursuing their own engagement approach. For example, the RDBN and Witset First Nation just completed a new webpage and the Town of Smithers is contemplating a new webpage as well. In addition, the Province of BC is launching a new FLNRORD Skeena Regional Pilot project for public review and comment. More broadly, the provincial government, through the launch of GovTogetherBC, is increasingly developing its own engagement and communication policies to provide guidance on this.

With governments working to improve their own engagement methodologies, stakeholders were hesitant on the concept of Valley Vision without knowing who would lead the initiative and ‘own’ the management of the engagement platform. It was felt that the level of integration and coordination required between governments dramatically exceeds current capacity.

Third-Party Limitations

Lessons learned from report findings clearly point to the limitations of a third-party contract position for the purpose of updating website content, moderating discussions between jurisdictions and finding sustainable funding sources. Further, it illustrates the challenge of a single information portal to meaningfully engage the public between multiple jurisdictions that lack a single management structure.

The research and interviews confirmed the complexity of integrating public engagement in land-use planning across provincial, Indigenous and local governments, as well as the limited capacity to take on and fund broad integrated engagement initiatives. Differing legislation, organizational mandates, policy, procedures and existing engagement initiatives all make a single engagement platform not able to be a “one size fits all” for Bulkley Valley jurisdictions.

Considering the establishment of a third-party online engagement platform and tool into a complex land-use planning landscape creates a number of obstacles that require collaboration and strong commitments from those participating. However, neither those involved with the former Valley Vision or stakeholders interviewed expressed a desire to be directly involved or take the lead on a coordinated online engagement platform.

Future Opportunities

While there is no clear role for Valley Vision as a third-party engagement platform, there is a valuable role for the BVRC in supporting local decision-making and jurisdictions in working towards improved coordination. This section outlines two opportunities to improve public engagement in land-use planning.

Focus on Emerging Issues

There is value for the BVRC as a neutral third party to play an important role in bringing the jurisdictions together to share information and research that will inform land-use planning processes and decision making. Specifically, the ability of the BVRC to respond in a timely manner to pressing issues and add capacity to governments by sharing information and research and by fostering collaboration is of value. For example, some interviewees cited the success of the recent Wildfire Conference in disseminating timely information and fostering collaborative discussions as extremely useful and informative.

A collaborative online platform may be a strategic choice if a shared need and focus could be identified. It would be key to centre this around an emerging issue that is truly shared across jurisdictions and governments – issues that transcend boundaries and bring planners and decision makers of all governments together to learn, plan and engage the public. By being issues-focused, relevant and with a direct connection to the land-use planning decisions would give meaning and purpose to the platform.

An example of an emerging issue in the coming years is timber supply. As a shared land-use concern, management of such an economic transition requires the public to be engaged and involvement of various levels of planning and governments, including land use, economic, social and environmental. Burns Lake is a regional example of this type of integrated planning work that has the potential to act as an impetus for an online engagement platform.

Advocate for a Regional Network Approach

Moving forward, the BVRC can play an important role in advocating for the need for a more coordinated approach to online public engagement. This approach shifts away from striving to create a single portal for public engagement in the Bulkley Valley to rather looking at how existing government processes can be better linked together. This regional network approach allows each government the ability to operate within their existing structures yet appear unified and consistent from the perspective of the public.

Building a regional engagement network ideally requires the consistent use of a place-based platform like PlaceSpeak, which is highlighted in Appendix A. This way, the public is only required to register once and can become familiar with one tool as the “go-to” for local land-use planning engagement. Because the platform is place-based, a participant can become notified of other engagement opportunities according to geography or interest. Other users are automatically added to the network by “starting a conversation.” Another popular platform in BC is Bang the Table, which also offers its own unique features. Grant funding to pilot a platform is available for local governments and First Nations.

Appendices

Appendix A - Platform Research Summary

Appendix B – What We Heard Summary

Appendix C – Valley Vision Website Content

Appendix A - Platform Research Summary

Organization	Comments
Central Okanagan Regional District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses open data as a result from the need to provide current information, be transparent and decrease the requests for information from the public. • Not used as a proactive engagement tool by planners or set up to be user friendly for public input mapping – this is a limitation of Open Data. • Regional district GIS techs are generally not trained in engagement. • Regional district administers the data for the member municipalities. • Easy to add items; however, in “read-only” format so can’t be tampered with. • Regional district covers the \$44,000 annual subscription (includes member municipalities and West Bank First Nation).
North Coast Regional District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North Coast Regional District won a one-year subscription to PlaceSpeak at UBCM; • Great platform, however resulted in very limited use by the public as it’s still another tool to have to manage – NCRD is very limited in capacity and did not have the resources to dedicate to this; • Platform requires promotion (little capacity to do so) and as such resulted in very little use by the public.
Peace River Regional District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses an in-house created website (Engage!) created by New Harvest Media as a one-stop portal for all opportunities for public involvement / planning processes underway. The website was created in response to PRRD’s adopted Communications Strategy in deliberate efforts to increase overall public awareness and engagement. • Launched in 2015, the Engage! webpage further enhances opportunities for public engagement. It is the source for information about public engagement initiatives at the Peace River Regional District. This digital engagement tool assists the PRRD in broadening its reach and identifying and responding to emerging issues. • Recognizes the rapidly growing expectations for prompt and easily accessible information, and convenient modes of interaction, the Engage! webpage integrates an online service with other traditional engagement methods.
Cowichan Valley Regional District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regional district and member municipalities (City of Duncan, Town of Ladysmith, Town of Lake Cowichan) use PlaceSpeak as an engagement platform. • The platform is an implementation tool after adoption of the regional district’s engagement policy, where it was identified that local governments had to improve ways to engagement the public (as a result of poor meeting attendance.) • Platform offers a secure way to have space-based conversations and allows for customizable verification layers to guarantee location and include educational material. • Allows user to quickly scan what’s happening in areas across jurisdictions and sends push notifications to keep people informed. • Can be used for applications and has flexible settings (public/private settings/open consultations) and allows for “scraping” feedback for themes. • Platform is not currently replacing conventional engagement approaches but has the potential to modernize other engagement media. • Requires extensive activity to promote, reinsure participants it’s a better way than traditional engagement approaches by connecting with “who’s listening.” • Regional district is committed to be “where people are” and address the big issue in dealing with the barrier of basic understanding of the function and value of local government engagement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional district paid for the licence of its member municipalities for the first year as a pilot. Now the regional district pays \$17,000 annually from communications budget and member municipalities pay approx. \$10,000 annually. Fees are based on population.
<p>Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (Selkirk College)</p>	<p><u>Digital Basin Portal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online data portal that included more than 100 community-specific datasets related to economic, cultural, social and environmental topics. Allows users to explore information through maps, tables, charts and reports. Sources of data include national and provincial government agencies, municipalities and regional districts, local non-profit organizations, and researchers located within and outside the region. Developed after two years of research, consultations, partnership building, analysis, software development and testing by the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) and the Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre (SGRC). RDI researchers worked with SGRC spatial analysts and developers and GIS and business students from Selkirk College to construct this online portal which provides detailed information about well-being in the region. Project was one of the most complex web-mapping applications ever attempted in Western Canada in both the range of information layers provided and the ability to view the information in tables, charts, reports and interactive maps. Intended audience for this application included local and regional government planners and decision-makers as well as researchers, students and the general public. Sources of information include national and provincial government agencies, municipalities and regional districts, local non-profit organizations, and researchers located within and outside the region. Idea was that leveraging a spatial database and collaboration system will play a key role in ensuring that these groups can upload their latest research data, analysis results, planning and mitigation measures into a data warehouse that is accessible to the greater research community, stakeholders and the public. This project received (\$250,000+) financial support from the Real Estate Foundation of BC, SIBAC, Community Futures East Kootenay, CBT and Selkirk College. This project is no longer funded due to limited uptake. Insight into why it no longer exists, according to a college representative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Primarily due to inability to continue to fund the project. Much of the data collected needed refreshing every year or two and the platform needed maintenance. Running/supporting web products is more like running a building than authoring a book. Without continued funding from partners or finding a way to monetize the product (which as a college that’s a little strange, we prefer to monetize services and processes), it eventually ran out of steam. “We built a tool that we would use, not one that end user would use; much could have been done in the way of segmenting out our audience and picking a target and sticking to it. There was a lot of ‘let’s add this for these folks’ and some serious push to broaden its audience by the funder to increase uptake/metrics. The tool was not easy for the ‘lay person’ to really dig into, you had to want to do it. But this is something that’s discovered time and time again about interactive web tools/visualizations: most users today just don’t click or explore, they want to consume. “As we move further and further into that kind of mode (as more and more users have joined the web via mobile devices) it becomes increasingly difficult to not drown out your engaged users with consumers—so our expectations of the users need to change. Narrative has to drive the interaction, not leaving it up to the user to tell their own stories from the data, as much as this is an antithesis to academic/scientific exploration/discovery.” <p><u>Climate Portal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded by Columbia Basin Trust (\$179,000 for three-year project) based on the need to predict climate going forward (agriculture, emergency, geographic variabilities) on a microscale, detailed

	<p>data is lacking but lots of broad data. Information is scaled to 10x10km areas. Led by a committee funder with the intent to be used by local government, NGOs, climatologists and colleges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,000 /year is dedicated to be used to develop an extensive communications plan / promotion plan / evaluation strategy (i.e. how we are going to get the word out, promote it, etc.) & evaluation (measure, reflect, change) – going to use on-line metrics, survey. This is something that was not done for the Digital Basin Portal project. <p><u>State of the Basin Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing project (five years) funded by the Columbia Basin Trust (over \$100,000/year) that provides a snapshot and full basin report, monthly e-news, interactive website. Looking at implementing a survey to better obtain analytics (tracking, evaluation). • Used to inform conversations by various stakeholders.
UNBC Integrated Watershed Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Integrated Watershed Research Group at UNBC is part of the Nechako River Basin Research Program, an initial four-year research program funded in part by a \$500,000 grant from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations via the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund in late March 2014, as well as funding from the Real Estate Foundation and Integris Credit Union. • The Nechako Watershed Portal is a web-based, geospatial tool to foster information exchange and hopes to assist in land and water decision-making in the Nechako River Basin. The idea is that since everything valued by communities (social, cultural and economic features) can be expressed in spatial terms and represented on a map, this portal is a tool that has the ability to help round out the description of what is (and what has occurred) in the watershed. • The portal aims to create space for capacity that can expand and adapt the knowledge base through a ‘community library’ with georeferenced information. Sharing and accessibility are key concepts in this project. • Nechako Watershed Portal was developed using GIS as a repository of information. It is broad-base and good for researchers. • Project started as a stewardship portal (initiated by Indigenous communities) to use in land-use management. • It’s an open-source project with mapping front end and customizable forms to load in, specify who can load, share and develop field apps (using GEO Paparazzi to load data). • Currently inputting research (layers, PDF links) and updating system. • Some use as a land-management tool. For example, some First Nations use information as a base for land referrals – however, this is set to private use only. • Initial creation costs \$45,000 paid 10 years ago funded via Geo Connections from NRCAN. Included user needs assessment work upfront. Now, groups will contribute (\$5-\$10,000) depending on their use and need. • Funding injected from those who want to use the portal.
VIU School of Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not aware of any innovative collaborative platforms but interested in seeing the results.
UNBC School of Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before looking at a platform, the question of purpose (“What is the community looking for?”) and focus needs to be established. For example, what are the shared concerns, what is the public interested in? • Have to obtain a “ground swell” of support if a third-party platform is to be successful — if not just another non-partisan organization. • Not everyone is communication savvy and internet can be limited in rural areas. • Opportunity to take a “regional collective approach,” but this requires organizational leadership and focus. • Opportunity to move towards improved collaboration. • Third-party organizations have an opportunity to support decision-makers and add credibility to decisions. For example, in Prince George there is pushback from the public that council has “run amuck” for downtown investments. There is value in neutral, science-based information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of BVRC is to be neutral and provide good information.
Fraser Basin Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved in the Nechako Watershed Roundtable, a collaborative led by core committee, Fraser Basin Council, local government representatives, First Nations, NGOs. Are not involved in online engagement platforms. • Conversations shifting from broad-scale to responding to important issues such as wildfire, wildfire recovery and water levels. • Working on sustainable funding – currently have a three-year agreement with the Real Estate Foundation for some operating funds. Matching funds met by communities. Funding is not certain and budgets tight. • Funding changes and the current funding agencies want measurable, quantifiable results.
The Fraser Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not aware of specific organization or initiative. • There are civil society organizations that span multiple municipalities within the same metro areas—such as YIMBY groups (like the now-defunct San Francisco Bay Area Renters Federation)—but no formal bodies with a mission to engage the greater public come to mind.
Fresh Outlook Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was not aware of any integrated, collaborative platforms being successfully used to engage the public. • Recommended to look at Regional Growth Strategies as models but had no recommendations.
Pembina Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not aware of collaborative approaches.
BC Healthy Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved in regional work that is focused on housing, transportation or food-security projects. • Some of the most successful regional projects we have seen utilize a “coalition” structure to galvanize the non-profit and service-delivery communities and connect them with formal institutional partners. • Work with health authority partners, either through designated staff or through Health Networks on Vancouver Island. Health Networks together people from wide-ranging backgrounds, roles and perspectives to take action on issues that impact health and well-being in their communities. Often this means engaging in more traditional planning work. • Both coalitions and health networks typically have a mandate to operate regionally, or at least to transcend traditional local government service areas. • Examples include Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness and Campbell River and District Coalition to End Homelessness.
PlaceSpeak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC-based company offering geographic citizen engagement software platform. Links consultation to purpose: who’s listening and why. Developed with the support of the National Research Council of Canada. Platform is designed to build a civic network — for example, users sign up once and any organization can “start a conversation.” The platform meets privacy requirements adopted across Canada. • Authentication of participants: PlaceSpeak verifies the location of potential respondents before they participate online. This represents a significant advantage over traditional online tools which, at best, can only verify that only one response is provided from a specific internet (IP) address. PlaceSpeak confirms the location of the participant to ensure that they are relevant to the consultation (i.e. is a resident of Telkwa, of a specific neighbourhood, or within the region of a proposed project), as well as preventing multiple responses from a single user. • Citizen-centred network: Once someone has signed up to participate on PlaceSpeak, they are automatically notified of new opportunities to participate. PlaceSpeak’s civic network allows organizations in the area to instantly leverage a network of engaged citizens, in conjunction with the efforts of other municipalities and levels of government who have or will use PlaceSpeak’s civic network to engage people. By establishing and continuing to grow a base of participants with whom to engage on an ongoing basis, the incremental cost of subsequent consultations is low. • Privacy by Design: Privacy is at the forefront of users’ concerns. PlaceSpeak has been architected with Privacy by Design principles to build trust and confidence in the process. The personal

	<p>information of participants is never shared, sold or otherwise distributed to any third party. This means that decision-makers can be confident that responses are coming from stakeholders who are relevant to the consultation, while mitigating risk and ensuring compliance with privacy legislation and guidelines. This helps build trust with online processes and helps foster a culture of public participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users include Government of Canada (i.e. Zero Plastics), Library Archives Canada, Province of BC’s Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure, Surrey School District, Comox Valley School District, Vancouver School Board, Kamloops/Thompson School District, municipalities, regional districts and First Nations (i.e. City of Fort St. John, Town of Ladysmith, Cowichan Valley, City of Yellowknife, Musqueam Indian Band). • Offer a shared licence for RDBN Electoral Area A including municipalities and Witset First Nation (approx. population 14,945) would be about \$14,999.97/annum.
MetroQuest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visually engaging, fun, quick to use, optimized for mobile devices, data collection. • Unlimited support and translate into paper (for non-tech) and mapping screens. • Provide templates. • Targets populations of 100,000 or more. • No limit to the number of users. Can invoice one entity. • Annual subscription starting at \$21,000 and increases – suitable for large-scale projects. • Smaller communities experience MetroQuest via a consultant (i.e. Urban Systems). • Widely used in the US (i.e. US Department of Transportation and county level).
Bang the Table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest engagement provider in Canada, also in five countries – due to large scale there is wide-support to licensees. Trains team to use platform on general and specific consultations. Trainers are IAP2 certified with extensive support included in the licence fee. BC municipalities and organizations engaging online: Engage Mission; Let’s Talk Kamloops (engagement video); Get Involved RDN; Connect CVRD; ConnectPA; Connect Central Saanich; Talk White Rock; Rupert Talks; West VancouverITE; Shape Your City Penticton; Have Your Say Pitt Meadows; Join in RDKB; Engage East Kootenay; Get Involved Kelowna; Let’s Talk Parksville; Let’s Talk Abbotsford; Let’s Talk Richmond; Engage Translink; Have Your Say Doctors of BC. • Offer full spectrum of tools in one package that can activate as needed. • Ability to tailor registration process (i.e. age, postal code). Registering builds a community of engagement. • 24/7 help desk support and human moderation of all public comments. • Engagement manager available for support throughout the entire contract. Available during regular business hours and can support in person if needed. Custom training, advice, site builds, workshops, webinars, etc. EngagementIQ services. • Over 8 feedback tools that are fun and interactive with your community. • Easier to use backend with reporting and analytics. We chatted about aspects like a newsletter, A-I-E reporting, comment tagging, site and project admins, cross tab analysis, etc. This is a large part of a platform. It helps your staff get their job done easier and quicker. Many platforms are beautiful on the public facing site — but employee struggle with the reporting and analytics. • Possible to create a single portal / hub possible with a one-time registration. • https://www.engagewr.ca is an example of a collaboration that uses a single portal approach. • Licence cost depends on population and includes platform, support and all features. • For Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral “A” plus member municipalities could offer a single licence shared \$10,000 - \$12,000 annually — one shared site and one shared website with different portals that are controlled by individual organization. Can have lots of project administrators.
Esri Canada Open Data Community Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the last year, Esri Canada has evolved its Open Data Hubs to moving into Community Hubs as a shift toward presenting more than data. This feature allows apps to be built off the hub for tailored use (i.e. trails app, snow mobile tracks app, garbage routes). • Multi-jurisdictions can collaborate on projects and link information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hub resides in the cloud, meaning that no software is required. The idea is to inform web communications. • Acknowledge that the public needs a much simpler version. • Acknowledge that the risk of this approach is that it can be information overload and look impressive but can result in little uptake by the end user. • Minimal set-up requirements for EsriGIS users with competitive price range for multiple communities. For example, the RDBN already has an Esri licence for its web-mapping portal – member RDBN municipalities could obtain a licence (\$850 - \$2,000 annual costs) to run off the RDBN system. However, need to think about IT limitations and who is responsible for updates. • Recommended start is for communities to start with open data platform and then evolve to hub function. Need local policy on open data platform first. • Example is Province of BC Map Hub. • There are lots of examples of open data portals: For example, the City of Mississauga recently jumped 25 spots to rank 15th overall in the Public Sector Digest's 2016 Open Cities Index with its Planning Information Hub that allows a citizen to explore the city's planning strategy in an easily understood narrative. Other examples: City of Burnaby's Open Data Portal; City of Campbell River Open Data; West Parry Sound Open Data Portal; West Bank First Nation Open Data; Town of Canmore Open Data; Calgary Region Open Data; Regional District of Central Okanagan; City of Kelowna; City of Waterloo Open Data; Red Sky Metis Independent Nation; Halifax Open Data Catalogue; Ajax Open; Data Portal
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Appendix B – Engagement Summary

As part of the research for this report, Alison and Liliana conducted an in-person roundtable discussion with the members of the original Valley Vision Steering Committee. In addition, six phone interviews and two in-person meetings were held over the months of April and May 2019 with organization planning representatives in the Bulkley Valley area. These interviews and meetings explored successes/challenges of the original Valley Vision project, explored existing planning processes and identified opportunity areas for meaningful collaborative engagement.

The six phone-interview participants included representatives from Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, District of Houston, Village of Telkwa, Witsset First Nation, Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Ministry of Transportation. The in-person interviews were conducted with the Town of Smithers and provincial government representatives from the Ministry of Forest Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), including the BC Wildfire Service, Forest District Manager, Director of Regional Initiatives, and a Communications and Engagement Specialist.

A summary of the meetings and interviews can be found below.

Valley Vision's Past Successes & Challenges

A roundtable discussion with the original Valley Vision Steering Committee highlighted past successes and challenges as follows:

Valley Vision's Past Successes

- Concisely presented the complexity of the various levels of planning jurisdictions;
- Served as a single portal of information – collected and linked plans/processes in one place;
- Acted as a catalyst for the public to comment on referrals/applications;
- Used by the community and interest groups to participate in specific processes i.e. Raspberry Hill;
- Created context maps / values-planning map and MapChat;
- Developed an online discussion forum;
- Developed for public user (not government).

Valley Vision's Past Challenges

- Engaging planners in the region to use Valley Vision in their work;
- Lack of buy-in from decision makers and community member users;
- Lack of sustainable financial support;
- Time intensive to sort through current planning process /notifications to engage public and link processes to Valley Vision;
- Single contractor attempting to update website content and moderate discussion;
- Complexity of information (balance being comprehensive and user friendly);
- Website was informative but was challenging to engage people in the discussions, identifying shared values and a comprehensive vision;
- Present planning information in context of neighbourhoods – full-time job / no funds;

- Broad scope;
- Regional district looked at Valley Vision as a threat to planning process / environmental bias;
- Discussion forum portion of Valley Vision didn't get use or traction (lacked clear message).

Interview Results

Interviews involved local planners and those directly involved in community engagement in the Bulkley Valley. The purpose of these interviews was to:

1. Gather information on current Bulkley Valley planning initiatives and understand current approaches to public engagement;
2. Identify current challenges with public engagement;
3. Explore the potential role and opportunity of a third-party engagement platform in the work you do to engage the public.

Participants were invited to participate in interviews by way of email and follow-up phone calls to schedule a time to talk. A summary of responses to the interview questions is detailed below:

Question 1: Tell us about land-use planning initiatives or plans your organization is responsible for?

The intent of this question was to allow the interviewee to feel comfortable talking a bit about LUP and their organization's jurisdiction in the Bulkley Valley. It allowed us to gather the required information on names of plans, geographic boundary, weblinks for each organization.

The information collected is summarized below:

Organization	Planning Initiatives
FLNRORD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shannon (Wildfire Prevention Officer) – Supports stakeholders (i.e. FN, local governments, licensees) in development of community wildfire plans (local government led), fire management plans (w/resource districts) and increasingly initiatives to reduce risk of interface fires (provincial led). BCWS Prevention - Wildfire Risk Reduction Planning BCWS Preparedness and Response - Fire Management Plans • Jevan (Forest District Manager) – Involved in numerous forestry-related planning processes, such as forest sector plans/approvals, environmental stewardship initiatives/strategy, provincial cumulative effects study, upholds LRMP/SRMP (process/approve amendments). • Ryan Holmes (Director of Regional Initiatives) – Mandate to modernize LUP, potential for LUP changes to include fire and other elements but not opening up the Bulkley LRMP for review (only periodic amendments). LRMP has legal objectives that licensees must follow. Likely ongoing work to update TSAs in the future. Was involved in initial Valley Vision mapping. • Michelle (Communications & Engagement Specialist) – Working to improve provincial engagement. Province operates a one-stop engagement portal: https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/.
MOTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations, maintenance contractors; • Commercial vehicle safety enforcements; • Avalanche program; • Emergency response for flood, fire; • Programming through regional office, PG northern office: replacing bridges, expansion. This is done with a provincial lens as well as regionally; • Development approvals for subdivision and access, service and attraction signs, proponents for mining and logging; this is done on a regional and local level.
District of Houston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCP: https://www.houston.ca/planning_and_development_services • Zoning bylaw • Current development notifications: https://www.houston.ca/notifications_page

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community wildfire protection plan: https://houston.civicweb.net/document/52500 • Parks and Recreation Master Plan https://houston.civicweb.net/document/45920/2017-11-17%20District%20of%20Houston%20Parks%20and%20Recreatio.pdf?handle=A8DCA982676D4719B13C06786550B6DE • CEEP • Downtown Revitalization plan 2018 • Transportation master plan in 2014 • Age friendly plan • Next year: Housing needs assessment
RDBN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDBN keeps the rural area OCPs up to date with a goal of one official community plan a year. Every seven years OCPs are updated. Offers that the regional district can review municipal OCPs at the same time as the rural area OCPs, efficiencies for public engagement, and allows planning issues to be evaluated and addressed in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner. This joint process delays the time it takes to complete an OCP review from one year to one and a half years. Area A OCP was done five years ago. • Planning initiatives and bylaws can be found at https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/planning. • Current development applications are ongoing. Approximately 30% of planning department resources (excluding OCP work) are dedicated to Electoral Area A. The planning department must ensure equal attention to all areas of the RDBN. Advertised on the RDBN website: https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/events-programs. • RDBN may focus on housing issues over the next year. Role of regional district in addressing the region's housing issues is yet to be determined as most housing issues must be addressed primarily in the urban areas. Municipalities will define the role RDBN plays in housing issues and planning. Actions for housing on market and non-market rental housing really do focus on urban areas. • Agricultural Plan update which will include the Electoral Area A. Information will be available here: https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/agriculture. • Environmental Assessment for Telkwa Coal – This is a provincial process that the RDBN planners are involved with. • Recreation planning is under discussion. • Solid Waste Management Plan adopted last year 2018, not part of planning department. The Environmental Services department is responsible.
Village of Telkwa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VOT does not have an in-house planner at this time and uses the services of the regional district and consultants to undertake planning processes. Land-use planning initiatives are undertaken on an as-and-when basis. For this reason, the planning department processes variance requests, building applications, subdivision and rezoning requests, etc. as they are submitted, but does not currently undertake any projects in-house.
Town of Smithers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smithers OCP & Zoning Bylaw- http://www.smithers.ca/municipal-hall/development-services-planning/ocp-zoning • Active Transportation Plan – Current- www.smithers.ca/active • Development applications and current notices to public current projects: http://www.smithers.ca/municipal-hall/departments-services/development-services-planning • Age-friendly planning- http://www.smithers.ca/index.php/news/detail/smithers-age-friendly-assessment-action-plan-2016 • Downtown Landscaping Development Plan – Pg. 25 https://smithers.civicweb.net/document/127494 • Water, Sewer, Storm Management Planning • Sustainability Plan - http://www.smithers.ca/municipal-hall/development-services-planning/sustainability-plans • Bulkley Valley Art Gallery Concept - http://www.smithers.ca/news/detail/new-library-art-gallery-concept-design-business-case-project • Outstanding: Air-quality planning (currently at regional provincial level https://cleanairplan.ca) Central Park Plan • Housing • Airport Land Use Plan
Witset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed the LUP study and formalized it with Eco Plan, currently in book format; website is down, but will be on the website once complete.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New project with BC Housing for a 26-unit apartment building in Witset. • Interest in addition of land to the reserve, Witset community expansion. • Pursuing Land Code – on- and off- reserve voting process. Two to three months before application will be considered. • FN Financial Management Board- financial administration Law and policy development work • Community Emergency Preparedness Planning – 100 % complete – EOC kits for residents being distributed. • Recycling and solid waste collection / management planning underway.
Office of the Wet'sewet'en	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LUP initiatives help develop priority focus for monitoring and restoration on the traditional territory; • All information collected is internal to the OW. (All raw data is confidential, analysis of data can be shared publicly to represent interest values on the ground and in general, but not specific map areas); • OW has developed ecological layers that support FN members to achieve their interests in the land base; • Respond to major project review referrals, micro site reviews for cut block operations and much more. • Responsible to the Wet'sewet'en membership.

Question 2: How does your organization engage the public in these land-use planning initiatives? The intent of this question was to understand what is currently being done to engage the public, including the tools the organizations use. The following engagement tools and techniques are used to engage the public in planning initiatives:

- Social media: Facebook, Twitter
- Organizations' websites
- Engagement meetings with stakeholders
- Open houses
- Going to where people are
- Surveys
- Local media
- Public hearing processes
- Mail outs
- Education and best-practices guidance
- Local area signage
- Community working groups
- APC

Question 3: How does public input impact decisions made by your organization? i.e. permits / approvals. The intent of this question was to understand how public input impacts the organizations' decisions. During interviews, participants confirmed the impacts of public engagement as they related to land-use planning within their organization. The following themes emerged:

- Public input drives individual organizations' programs and services;
- Annual surveys influence direction of public services;
- Strong influence on political decisions when comments are presented back from the community;
- Working groups help shape the process and outcome of planning projects and decisions.
- Being close to a small population and customer base provides for instant feedback loops that inform actions taken by decision makers and planners.

Question 4: Do you feel your organization engages the public well? Why or why not? The intent of this question was to identify key themes of challenges or lessons learned with public engagement. Local, provincial and First Nations governments are all required to engage the public in land-use planning affecting their jurisdiction. Many share similar challenges and limitations with public engagement, as expressed by participants and summarized below:

- Restricted by money, staff and communication resources;
- Participation in surveys and engagement meetings is limited, especially without prizes;

- Each organization has its own engagement model, online engagement tools and reporting requirements;
- Limited to no integration of local, First Nations and provincial government functions and mandate;
- Decision-making processes are not always transparent and trusted by the general public;
- Internet service and users in rural areas are limited;
- Public is defined differently for each organization; some do not have a mandate to engage or share information;
- Province does a good job talking to specific stakeholders; poor job engaging the general public. There are many ministries in the province, making sharing information a challenge.

Question 5: Do you see an opportunity for a third-party platform to effectively engage the BV residents in what you do? If YES: How would this influence or be integrated into your process? If No: Why not?

What is your rationale? The intent of this question was to explore the idea of external engagement in LUP and potentially identify opportunities/challenges with integrating and collaborating on engagement through a regional platform.

Many participants were unsure of how to answer this question without knowing the purpose of such an initiative, the tool to be used and what resources would be required to sustain the initiative. However, as the question was further explored it can be concluded that most planners acknowledged that there would be both possible benefits and challenges with a third-party engagement platform. These benefits and challenges are summarized below:

Possible benefits:

- Opportunity to collaborate and share resources when engaging the public;
- Opportunity to help educate the community at large on what the benefits of public engagement are;
- Encouraging broader networking, public education and community discussion on relevant issues;
- Standardized processes for engaging the public on land-use planning;
- Opportunity to use Facebook as an online engagement tool;
- If research shows potential benefits for collaborative regional engagement there may be more buy-in from local government;
- Value neutrality of third party (may empower public to become involved)
- Emergency planning hits all levels of government;
- Potential to pilot a project / need to be clear on scope; i.e. Wetzin’kwa Wildfire Risk Reduction Plan involvement.

Challenges

- Complexity of shared resources, keeping relevance, content management and cost of an online engagement tool;
- Long-term viability of an online platform to be a sustainable model for development, not just a one-off project that dies again. Challenge of funding and integration into multiple layers of government;
- Cost of effective technology for a project of this size;
- Threat of a perceived bias from a third party to engage residents in local government or project work;

- Many different topics and jurisdictions of engagement, can get confusing for participants;
- Keeping the public engaged on an ongoing basis;
- 40% of population does not have good internet access in rural RDBN;
- Defining scope and geographic extent of the initiative.

Question 6: Do you have any examples of platforms or models you would like to share with us?

Something you might be interested in exploring regionally? The intent of this question was to hear ideas of regional initiatives or examples from stakeholders' professional networks. The following examples were shared during the interviews:

BC on the Move

Third-party consulting company; 10-year transportation plan that asks the public key questions, what they wanted, etc. This planning process looked at funding models and programs on a larger scale. Plan is available on the internet and initially had an interactive component. With change of government implementation has taken a different direction. <https://www.tranbc.ca/tag/bc-on-the-move/>

Water Governance Initiatives

Okanagan water alliance: <https://www.syilx.org> putting priority on water governance. Water issues on Vancouver Island. These initiatives are formalizing relationships with local governments and First Nations on collective and collaborative approaches to mitigate different impacts on water.

Citizen Budget

<https://www.citizenbudget.com> - PG, Smithers. Platform where residents were able to go in and adjust the impacts of budget. Residents didn't need a high-level of literacy. District of Houston is interested in exploring this tool and it seemed to work well and engage residents.

Winnipeg Metropolitan Region

<https://winnipegmetroregion.ca/index.php/about-us-top> They also have a [Facebook page](#). [Johnq](#) is a website that delivers regional services and develop strategic projects in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region in an effort to improve communities.

Provincial government online platforms

Province-wide online platform: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/>

New Public Review and Comment website, Skeena Pilot project <https://youtu.be/EjqZsi3vW2U>

Question 6: Are you interested in being involved in this project moving forward? The intent of this question was to identify if participants would like to be involved in the BVRC project moving forward. Many were hesitant on a large time commitment, but wanted to review the findings, review recommendations and participate in the conversation moving forward. There were no objections to further involvement.

Appendix C – Valley Vision Website Content