

RECBC

REAL ESTATE COUNCIL
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Real Estate Council of British Columbia

March 2019

Introduction

The Real Estate Council of BC (RECBC) protects the public interest by promoting the integrity of real estate licensees and protecting consumers. RECBC is committed to fair, transparent, and accountable regulation, and to building and maintaining consumer trust and confidence in real estate licensees and the regulation of the real estate industry.

Effective and ongoing stakeholder engagement is a key element of the regulatory role. As part of our decision-making process, RECBC is committed to engaging in transparent and meaningful dialogue with individuals, firms, and organizations affected by our actions as we carry out our regulatory mandate. This includes, but is not limited to: implementation of new regulatory standards; planning priorities; and consumer initiatives.

Stakeholder engagement is vital to our ability to uphold consumer protection, and to demonstrate fairness, transparency, and accountability. We recognize that our stakeholders need to have confidence that their input will be valued and that their needs and interests will be meaningfully considered. This Stakeholder Engagement Framework articulates our commitment to methods of engagement that allow stakeholders' needs and interests to be consistently, transparently and meaningfully considered in our activities.

The goals of this Stakeholder Engagement Framework are to:

- Increase the transparency of RECBC's regulatory activities and processes.
- Increase stakeholder participation in these activities and processes.
- Facilitate our ability to understand stakeholder concerns and interests and incorporate them into our processes and activities.
- Enhance the clarity, accessibility, relevance and timeliness of our communications with stakeholders throughout our engagement processes.
- Build stakeholders' trust and confidence in RECBC and its regulatory processes, decisions and activities
- Contribute to the achievement of RECBC's mission and vision.

About RECBC

Our vision is: *Public trust in ethical and competent real estate professionals.*

Our mission is: *RECBC protects the public interest by promoting professional standards, enhancing competency, and regulating the conduct of licensed real estate professionals in BC.*

In pursuing our mission and vision, we work in accordance with these core values:

- We are dedicated to public service.
- We are principled, fair and accountable for our decisions.
- We are open and transparent; we collaborate and seek diverse perspectives.
- We are proactive and take appropriate action.
- We value ongoing learning and innovation.

RECBC is a crown agency, and annually publishes a three-year Service Plan. Strengthening our commitment to stakeholder engagement is a key element in achieving the goals articulated in our Service Plan.

About Stakeholder Engagement

RECBC defines stakeholder engagement as meaningful communication with individuals and organizations affected by our actions and/or prospective actions.

Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Framework

This Framework provides the context in which we will plan and implement stakeholder engagement for identified projects, or strategies.

It sets out:

1. The principles we will follow when we plan and carry out our engagement activities to ensure the views and interests of our stakeholders are appropriately considered.
2. The benefits of engagement for RECBC and our stakeholders.
3. The scope of our engagement activities—who we will engage with, the kinds of issues we will engage with stakeholders on, and the methods we will use.
4. The levels of engagement we will use to engage with our stakeholders, recognizing that different levels of engagement are required for different purposes.

1. Engagement principles

Principle 1— Purposeful

Our engagement activities will be purposeful and the purpose will be clearly communicated to stakeholders.

We will:

- Begin every engagement with a clear understanding of what we want to achieve.
- Conduct engagement that supports the achievement of our strategic priorities and goals.
- Be aware of our stakeholders' objectives and expertise.
- Manage the expectations of stakeholders by clearly communicating the purpose of the engagement.

Principle 2—Accessible and inclusive

We will seek out stakeholders potentially affected by, or interested in, our activity or decision and provide them with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

We will:

- Identify the relevant stakeholders that may be interested in, or affected by, an issue, project or initiative of RECBC.
- Identify the most effective way to engage with these stakeholders and the communication channels and engagement tools that may be most effective.
- Assist stakeholders to engage with us by communicating early on to increase stakeholders' knowledge and ability to participate.
- Take steps to give all stakeholders opportunities to be heard.

Principle 3—Transparency

We will clearly identify and explain the engagement process, the role of stakeholders in the engagement process, and communicate how their input was considered and how it informed the decision or project.

We will:

- Communicate to stakeholders the purpose of the engagement and our objectives.
- Explain the processes for engagement in the decision, activity or process.
- Communicate the decision-making processes.
- Provide feedback to stakeholders about their input, including how it was considered and how it informed the outcome of the decision or process.
- Update stakeholders on the progress of specific issues or questions raised through engagement.

- Provide information on any changes to the decision making process, engagement process or our objectives.
- Report publicly on the outcomes of engagement activities on our website and in our annual report.

Principle 4—Clear, accurate and timely communication

We will provide information that is clear, accurate, relevant and timely, recognising the different communication needs and preferences of different stakeholders and that effective communication involves listening and talking.

We will:

- Provide plain-language information.
- Use a range of methods and mediums to communicate, as appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions.
- Seek stakeholder views as early in the process as possible.
- Establish clear and realistic timeframes for stakeholder input.
 - Maintain engagement throughout the life of the project, process or activity (from planning, through implementation, to review).

Principle 5—Measurable

Evaluating our engagement activities allows us to understand what is effective, and improve the quality of our stakeholder engagement over time.

We will:

- As part of the planning process, establish measurable criteria to assess our engagement activities
- Use a range of methods to evaluate the effectiveness of engagement, such as
 - quantitative data such as number of participants; number of submissions received; number of meetings, forums and workshops held
 - qualitative feedback from those who participated in our engagement activities to determine stakeholder satisfaction with the engagement
- Use this information to refine and improve future engagement activities.

2. Benefits of Stakeholder Engagement

Benefits of stakeholder engagement for RECBC include:

- Understanding the views of stakeholders.
- Identifying emerging trends, risks and issues.
- Accessing expert knowledge.
- Increasing collaboration and cooperation.
- Strengthening relationships.

Benefits of engagement for stakeholders include:

- Contributing as experts.
- Having key issues heard.
- Improving understanding of RECBC processes and policies.

3. Scope of Engagement

We need to engage constructively with a range of stakeholders affected by our activities and decisions.

The principles and practices set out in this document are intended to cover (but are not limited to) our public engagement with the following groups.

- **Real estate consumers** – including bodies advocating on behalf of real estate consumers
- **Real estate licensees** -- including representatives, managing brokers, and brokerages licensed for trading services, strata management, and rental property management
- **Industry associations and membership groups**
- **Governments and other regulatory agencies**
- **Educational institutions and academics/thought leaders**

This Framework covers a wide range of public engagement activities, including:

- **Sharing information** designed to educate and to communicate information about RECBC and its processes
- **Regulatory issues**, such as:
 - Development of industry guidelines.
 - RECBC participation in regulatory change processes.
- **Strategic issues**, such as:
 - Our compliance and enforcement priorities.
 - Changes to our processes and policies that have an impact on stakeholders.
 - Consumer capacity building and our education and outreach activities.
 - Other specific projects that have the potential to impact on our stakeholders.

This framework applies to the full range of engagement activities RECBC undertakes with stakeholders, including:

- **Digital Communications** – eblasts to licensees, RECBC website, Report from Council newsletters, social media
- **Public Presentations** – industry educational events, conferences, and meetings
- **Relationship Management** – meetings with stakeholders
- **Advice Services** – RECBC’s Professional Standards Advisors respond to questions from licensees with practical, timely information, guidance and advisory services that support them in their responsibilities and duties on a confidential basis. The Professional Standards Advisors also respond to questions from consumers with information on the services to expect from licensed real estate professionals. The Advisors regularly deliver presentations to brokerages and industry stakeholder organizations on industry best practices and regulatory issues.
- **Consumer and Licensee Surveys** – RECBC conducts surveys and engages third-party market research companies to carry out surveys on its behalf with real estate licensees and consumers.
- **Advisory Groups and Formal Consultation Processes** – RECBC’s Advisory Groups ensure cooperation, communication, and an exchange of information between RECBC and particular industry sectors. Advisory groups may explore specific issues and report their findings to RECBC, identify and advise RECBC on trends and issues affecting the industry and consumers, and make recommendations to RECBC with respect to emerging risks or other issues. Each group meets several times per year.

Current Advisory Groups include:

- Trading Services Advisory Group
- Strata Management Services Advisory Group
- Education Advisory Group

Information about the Advisory Groups, including Terms of Reference and group members, is available on RECBC’s website.

4. Levels of Stakeholder Engagement

The Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum (see Table 1 below) illustrates the levels of engagement we may use depending on the particular project or activity, and the different engagement methods at each level.

Different levels of stakeholder engagement are appropriate depending on the objective, desired outcomes, timeframes, resources and levels of concern or interest in the project. The spectrum provides a methodology for us to determine what level of engagement is appropriate.

In some cases we may determine that engagement simply means ensuring stakeholders are well informed about our processes and outcomes. For other issues we may seek more direct stakeholder input. The level of engagement we use will be determined by our role and responsibilities, the issue being considered, and what we are trying to achieve.

Given our role as a regulator, we expect the majority of our engagement activities will occur at the levels of 'Inform', 'Consult' and 'Involve'. In much of what we do, we cannot share or delegate decision making. However, we have included the higher level of 'Collaborate' in the spectrum as there may be occasions or activities where engaging at this level will help us achieve our objectives.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Characteristics	<i>One-way engagement</i>	<i>Limited two-way engagement: we ask questions, stakeholders respond</i>	<i>Two-way or multi-way engagement: learning on all sides, stakeholders and RECBC act independently, RECBC is decision maker</i>	<i>Two-way or multi-way engagement: joint decision making and actions</i>
Stakeholder participation goal	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to help them understand the process, problems, proposed solutions and outcomes.	To obtain stakeholder input on analysis, proposed solutions and outcomes.	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with stakeholders in the process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Our promise to stakeholders	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.	We will work with you so that your concerns and issues can be directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Examples of engagement tools	Factsheets Email bulletins Media releases Dedicated web pages on the RECBC website Written reports Corporate documents (annual report, Strategic Plan, Service Plan)	Focus groups Surveys Public meetings Meetings with selected stakeholders Webinars and other online forums	Workshops Consultative committees (e.g. RECBC Advisory Groups) Other advisory committees or groups (such as the Standard Forms Committee)	Consensus building Participatory decision making Partnerships

Reviewing this Framework

We are committed to improving the effectiveness of our engagement with stakeholders over time.

A key element of this improvement will be evaluating our performance under this Framework and, if necessary, amending and adding to this document.

Informal monitoring of the effectiveness of the Framework will be ongoing. In particular, the evaluation phase at the end of each engagement process will provide opportunities for the Council members and staff to consider how the Framework is working in practice, and suggest changes. Feedback from stakeholders will inform this assessment.

Additionally, in the longer term it will be important to determine whether the Framework is operating effectively and meeting our expectations and those of our stakeholders.

In this context, we will review this Framework after the first year of operation, in part by seeking the views of stakeholders about the scope and principles of the Framework and, importantly, about how effectively we have demonstrated these in our engagement activities.

We will publicly report on our findings.