

Community Advisory Committee Guideline

VERSION 1.0

APRIL 23, 2020



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EAO

Environmental
Assessment Office

Version Control History

Version #	Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	Modification
Version 1.0	2020-04-23	n/a

This document provides guidance to help environmental assessment participants and the public better understand British Columbia's environmental assessment process. It is not advice and does not replace requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act*, 2018 or its regulations, or bind any decision-maker.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	4
WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE?	4
FORMING THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE.....	4
ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE	5
ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OFFICE.....	6
REMUNERATION	7
APPENDIX: COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE.....	8

INTRODUCTION

This document provides a summary of the purpose and role of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and includes the standard terms of reference for CACs that will be used for all projects. The terms of reference outline the purpose, objectives, guiding principles and key roles and responsibilities of the CAC.

Primary users of this guideline are Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) staff and CAC members, however other Environmental Assessment (EA) participants may also use this guideline to understand the roles, responsibilities and functioning of the CAC in an EA.

This guideline is intended to be read and interpreted in conjunction with the [Environmental Assessment Act](#) (2018) (the Act). The key section of the Act referenced is [Section 22](#).

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE?

As described in [Section 22](#) of the Act, the Chief Executive Assessment Officer (CEAO) must establish one or more CACs for an assessment if there is sufficient community interest in a project. The purpose of a CAC is to advise the CEAO on the potential effects of the proposed project on the community. CACs provide a venue for interested members of the public who have information that would assist in providing advice on the effects of a project on a community to stay up to date on the progress of the EA and to be informed of opportunities to provide their input and advice. CAC members can provide local knowledge of the community, the environment and the use of the proposed project area.

The format and structure of a CAC will depend on the potential effects of a project and community interest in a project, amongst other considerations. The starting point for the CAC in every EA will be a digital subscription service established by the EAO for each project where there is sufficient community interest, which will likely be the majority of EAs.

During the EA, the EAO will send CAC members information on the process and the project, including updates on the progress of the EA, when and where key documents are posted, information on public comment periods and any other engagement opportunities. At a minimum, CAC members will be invited to provide their input through four Public Comment Periods throughout the EA and informed of local open house opportunities.

Depending on the level of community interest, the EAO may directly seek the advice of CAC members and may also establish other engagement opportunities, such as surveys, virtual CAC meetings or a small community-based CAC (select CAC). See the section [Role of the Community Advisory Committee](#) below for further information on how and when CACs are engaged.

The goals of a CAC are to:

- Support information sharing with community members and other stakeholders;
- Foster community learning about the EA process and the proposed project; and
- Support interested community members and interested organizations in providing advice on the effects of the project on the community and potential mitigation or enhancement measures.

FORMING THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The EAO will establish a CAC once it has been decided that a project will proceed to an EA. Interested members of the public, local governments, members of Indigenous nations and interested organizations who are able to advise the EAO on the potential effects of the project may choose to subscribe as members of a CAC through the project page on the EAO's Project Information Centre (EPIC). The subscription service is available beginning in the Early Engagement phase of the EA and until the end of the public comment period in Process Planning.

To subscribe, an individual will provide the EAO with their name, email address, location and interest in the project through an automated service on EPIC. This information is collected by the EAO for the purpose of sending CAC members project and EA information and updates and may be used to identify members for a select CAC, discussed below. This information will not be shared publicly, except in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Any interested person that has information that would enable them to provide advice on the effects of the project on the community and who subscribes to the CAC, will be included in the membership.

During Early Engagement the EAO seeks to understand how the public wants to be engaged throughout the EA process to determine an engagement approach tailored to the potential effects of the proposed project and the level of public interest. See the [Early Engagement Policy](#) for further information on the engagement and activities conducted during this phase. It is important to note that a CAC is only one of a variety of ways public engagement can occur during an EA; the EAO will design engagement based on the context of the proposed project in consultation with EA participants and stakeholders.

During the Process Planning phase, the CEAO may determine that it would be useful to form a select CAC, consisting of a small group of community representatives, with membership nomination and selection consisting of a combination of recruitment from subscribed CAC members and members identified by the EAO based on the information received during Early Engagement. A detailed Terms of Reference will be created for any select CAC.

In the Process Planning phase, the EAO develops a Process Order that formalizes how the EA will be carried out for a project and establishes how the CAC will be engaged. An Assessment Plan is included with the Process Order which specifies the procedures for the assessment as well as engagement details and timelines and the roles and responsibilities of each of the EA participants, including the CAC, for each subsequent phase of the EA.

The EAO holds a public comment period on the draft Process Order and issues the Process Order at the end of the Process Planning phase. Comments received from the CAC will help inform the extent and type of engagement activities undertaken throughout the remaining EA process, to be determined on a project-specific basis, based on the level of interest and potential effects of the proposed project. CACs may take a variety of forms and the EAO expects to tailor the role of the CAC to the circumstances of the project, the EA and the community. Based on the community setting, the EAO also selects appropriate public engagement tools, such as virtual meetings, workshops, community events, advertisements and open houses. See the [Process Planning Policy](#) for more information on the Process Planning phase.

The CEAO will establish CACs for post-certificate amendment assessments, if he or she considers there is sufficient community interest. The EAO may also decide to hold a public comment period on an amendment application (see the [Amendment Policy](#)) on consideration of public and community interest. For all amendments where the CEAO considers there is sufficient community interest, and it is warranted by the nature of the amendment under consideration, the EAO will hold a public comment period.

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The role of the CAC is to review the information and documents related to the EA and to engage in the process by providing advice and input during the public comment periods and any other engagement opportunities that may be established.

For each project, there are at least four phases during which the EAO will conduct a public comment period, each for a minimum of 30 days. Public comment periods will be held on:

- The Initial Project Description;
- The draft Process Order;
- The Application; and
- Drafts of the Assessment Report and EA Certificate, with proposed conditions and project description.

See [Figure 1](#) for an overview of the EA process and where in the process the public comment periods are held. The EAO may conduct additional public comment periods and carry out other engagement activities in relation to the project. The CAC will be informed of any additional ways the CAC may be engaged and opportunities to provide input.

Input received during the public comment periods, and through other engagement means with the CAC, will be posted to EPIC. See the [Public Comment Policy](#) for details on the consideration and posting of public comments.

Environmental Assessment Process

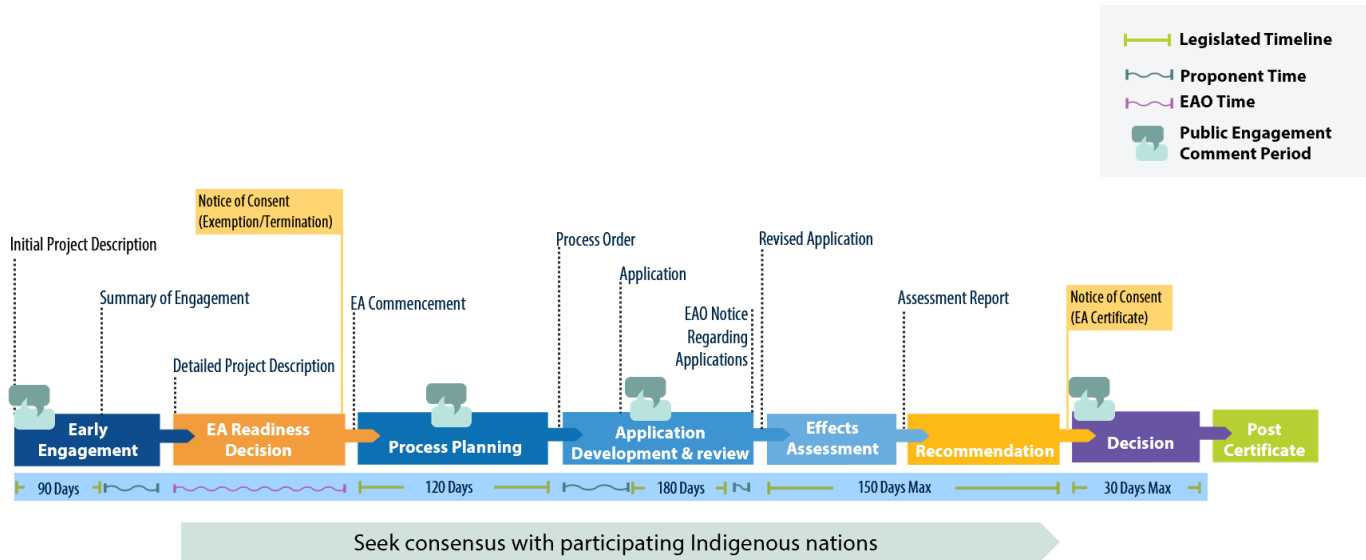


Figure 1. Overview of the EA process and identification of the public comment periods within the process

ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OFFICE

By forming a CAC to share information with and receive advice from interested members of the public and other stakeholders, the EAO seeks to provide individuals with better tools to engage in an EA and to submit meaningful input and advice on the potential effects of the proposed project on the community.

The EAO tailors engagement opportunities and methods with the project’s CAC in response to feedback and community interest in the project. The EAO is responsible for conducting the EA in accordance with the requirements of the Act, its regulations and the EAO’s policies and practices.

The EAO organizes and facilitates engagement with the CAC. In engaging with the CAC, the EAO:

- Describes the EA process and keeps the CAC informed of milestones and engagement opportunities, providing updates as required;
- Supplies documents and supporting information, in an accessible format;
- Provides timely access to EA process and technical information;

- Keeps the proponent and Technical Advisory Committee¹ (TAC) apprised of CAC input and key issues that arise;
- Provides information on the role, activities and membership of the TAC and may, in some cases, provide information from TAC members regarding specific issues of concern being raised by CAC members.

The EAO will reflect how and where CAC and other public input was used in the EAO's assessment of the effects of the project in the Assessment Report, to ensure that the issues, concerns and knowledge provided are considered by decision makers when making their decision on whether to issue an EA certificate.

REMUNERATION

As described in [Section 22\(2\)](#) of the Act, an individual appointed to a CAC may be paid reasonable and necessary travelling and out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out duties of the committee. Subject to prior arrangements and approval by the EAO, members appointed to a select CAC may be eligible for reimbursement for travel, accommodation and meal costs incurred as a result of participation in the select CAC. Generally, those who are members of a CAC as a result of the digital subscription process described above will not be entitled to remuneration as there is no expectation for travel or incurring out of pocket expenses.

¹ The Technical Advisory Committee is established by the EAO to provide technical advice throughout the EA of a proposed project. The Technical Advisory Committee is chaired by the EAO and made up of representatives with the mandates and technical expertise relevant to the assessment of a project, including appropriately qualified provincial and federal experts and regulators, Indigenous nations and experts from local governments. For more information see the [Technical Advisory Committee Guideline](#).

APPENDIX: COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

The purpose of a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is to advise the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) on the potential effects of the proposed project on the community.

Goals

The goals of a CAC are to:

- Support information sharing with interested community members and other stakeholders;
- Foster community learning about the environmental assessment (EA) process and the proposed project; and
- Support interested community members and interested organizations in providing advice on the effects of the project on the community and potential mitigation or enhancement measures.

Guiding Principles

Respectful Communication: CAC members engage in respectful communication and seek to provide informed input in a constructive manner. CAC members are responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with the public comment and moderation guidelines as described in the [Public Comment Policy](#) and contributing constructively during public comment periods and any other established engagement activities to meet the stated objectives.

Issues-based Participation: To support mutual learning and constructive engagement, the EAO provides the CAC with information on the EA process and the proposed project. CAC members provide input that identifies issues or concerns or otherwise contributes to a better understanding of the potential effects of the proposed project on the community. CAC members avoid providing comments that only adopt a position for or against the project; rather CAC member comments should focus on clearly articulating any interests or concerns about the project.

Transparent and timely sharing of information: The EAO informs the CAC early and regularly about the proposed project, the EA process and engagement activities. CAC comments and proponent and EAO responses will be clearly documented and accessible on the EAO's Project Information Centre (EPIC) and will be directly shared whenever possible.

Inclusivity: The CAC is open to interested individuals who have information that enables them to provide the EAO with advice on the effects of the project on the community. This will allow the EAO to capture a diverse range of knowledge and perspectives on the potential effects of the proposed project on the community. The CAC is intended to complement, not displace, other public engagement opportunities occurring throughout the EA of the project.

Opportunities for Community Advisory Committee Members

At a minimum, CAC members will be invited to:

- Review and familiarize themselves with the information provided to them by the EAO on the project and the EA process;
- Provide input on the draft Process Order, Application, draft Assessment Report and the draft EA certificate, including proposed conditions and project description; and
- Participate in any other engagement opportunities that may be established.

Additional opportunities and the role of the CAC will be described in the Assessment Plan for each project (see [Process Planning Policy](#)).