

# Preparing a Project Description

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## INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidelines for proponents preparing a Project Description for projects that are or will likely be reviewable under the British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act* (Act). In most cases, the Project Description is the first document the proponent provides to the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) at the beginning of an environmental assessment (EA).

### PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the Project Description is to provide information about the project and assist EAO in making a determination whether a “reviewable project” requires an environmental assessment. A reviewable project is prescribed in the [Reviewable Projects Regulation](#) or designated under s. 6 or s. 7 of the Act.

Following review and acceptance of the Project Description, EAO will usually issue an order under s. 10(1)(c) directing that the reviewable project requires an EA certificate and an assessment.

The Executive Director can also determine that a project can proceed without an assessment and be exempt from the requirement for a certificate under 10(1)(b) of the Act. See General Considerations in Preparing and Project Description below and [Requesting a Certificate Exemption Under Section 10\(1\)\(b\)](#) for more details.

Secondary purposes of the Project Description include:

- Assisting EAO in establishing the scope of the EA (required under Section 11 or 14 of the Act), including the scoping of Aboriginal consultation and public consultation requirements;
- Communicating information about the project to the public, First Nations and government agencies and, in some cases, forming the basis of public consultation on the project;
- Initiating thinking with respect to the valued components (VCs) to be included in the EA; and
- Informing the development of Application Information Requirements, which specify the matters that must be studied and the information that must be included in an application for an EA certificate.

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PREPARING A PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Proponents are encouraged to contact the [EAO Sector Lead](http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/contact_us.htm) ([http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/contact\\_us.htm](http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/contact_us.htm)) at an early stage, before developing the Project Description, to determine the specific information requirements for the project.
- The Project Description is a key document for communicating information about the project to the public, First Nations and government agencies. As such, it should be written in plain language whenever possible. As the document will be made public, it should not disclose personal information that may be protected under the *Personal Information Privacy Act* and/or the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
- If proponents are of the view that the proposed project should be exempted from the requirement of obtaining an EA certificate, they should review the Environmental Assessment Certificate Exemption Guide for further guidance at <http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/guidance.html>.
- If the proposed project may trigger a federal EA under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*, proponents are encouraged to develop a single Project Description that satisfies the requirements of both EAO and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency ( [link to Agency requirements](#)). In most cases, a Project Description that satisfies the federal requirements will also satisfy EAO.
- Examples of previous Project Descriptions submitted to EAO may be used for reference when preparing a new Project Description. These are available on EAO's Project Information Centre here: [http://a100.gov.bc.ca/appsdata/epic/html/deploy/epic\\_home.html](http://a100.gov.bc.ca/appsdata/epic/html/deploy/epic_home.html). Note: older Project Descriptions on this site may not meet EAO's current Project Description requirements. Contact the EAO Sector Lead for advice.
- Project Descriptions must meet the formatting requirements for electronic documentation that EAO has specified in its [Guidance to Proponents for Submitting Electronic Files](#).
- When numerous abbreviations and acronyms are used in the Project Description, proponents should consider providing a list. They should also provide a glossary of terms.

## CONTENTS OF A PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONTACT(S)

- The name of the proposed project and a two-to-three paragraph description of its nature and general location.
- A list of government ministries, Aboriginal groups, and other parties, including the public, that were consulted prior to the preparation of the Project Description.
- Proponent contact information, including name, mailing address, phone and fax numbers, email address, and website URL. Include the name of a contact person for the EA.
- Corporate information, including particulars of company incorporation, whether the company is private or publicly traded, and partners' names (if applicable).
- The names of other projects or facilities owned or operated by the proponent (or its parent, subsidiary, or affiliated company) in BC, including any other projects in respect of which an EA certificate has been applied for or issued.
- A description of corporate policies regarding environment, health, safety, sustainability, local hiring and procurement, and/or Aboriginal and stakeholder engagement, if any.
- The names, qualifications, and summary of relevant experience of qualified persons responsible for preparing the information provided in the Project Description.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

- A description of the project purpose and rationale.
- The size, dimensions, and capacity of the proposed project and its components.
- A description of the major components and ancillary activities associated with all phases of the proposed project, including construction, operation, and decommissioning and reclamation, if applicable. Include the purpose of each component and options if the final site layout and design/route selections are not yet made.
- A description of utilities and infrastructure requirements, including any new facilities or modifications to existing facilities that are required in order for the proposed project to proceed. Identify the owners/developers of those other facilities, if other than the proponent.
- A description of activities related to transportation and shipping of materials to or from the site, in the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the project. Include loading

locations, the use of existing or new transportation corridors and frequency and timing of shipping.

- Number of construction jobs and operating jobs (in person years or full time equivalents), and a description of any proposed workforce accommodation.
- Estimated cost for construction and decommissioning of the project, as well as projected annual operating costs.
- Project schedule, including the anticipated date of application for an EA certificate if one is determined to be required, anticipated<sup>1</sup> construction start date and duration, timing and duration of main activities, duration of commissioning, if applicable, operational in-service date, expected life of the project, and timing of eventual decommissioning and reclamation, if applicable.
- Indication of the current stage of project design (e.g., conceptual, feasibility, preliminary, detailed) and an identification of any major technical, economic, or other data gaps pertinent to design.

## **EMISSIONS, DISCHARGES, WASTE**

- A description of expected emissions, effluents, discharges, wastes, and other disturbances associated with all phases of the project, including potential accidents and malfunctions, their sources and locations.

## **CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, DECOMMISSIONING AND ABANDONMENT<sup>2</sup> PHASES AND SCHEDULING**

- If proponents are planning to proceed in stages they should provide a description of all proposed stages, including the approximate timing of proposed expansion or modifications and the components and activities associated with each stage.

## **PROJECT LOCATION, LAND AND WATER USE**

- Provide the latitude and longitude (degrees, minutes, seconds) of the Project and maps<sup>3</sup> at an appropriate scale showing the proposed project's location in relation to neighboring communities, Indian Reserves, established or asserted traditional territories of Aboriginal

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<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that that date is not completely within the proponent's control given that reviewable projects cannot proceed until an EA certificate has been issued.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the Reviewable Project Regulation specifically exempts dismantling and abandonment phases for some projects (e.g. transmission pipelines).

<sup>3</sup> EAO may request the maps be provided in digital formats to facilitate review of the project.

groups, major natural and anthropogenic landscape features, and environmentally sensitive areas.

- A description of the land required for the proposed project, including whether the project is located in whole or in part on private lands, provincial or federal Crown lands, or Indian Reserve lands. Include as well the applicable zoning, Agriculture Land Reserve designation, land and resource management plans, and other land use designations (e.g. parks and protected areas) and the legal land descriptions and/or tenure numbers of those lands, if known.
- A description of past uses of the land required for the proposed project, including whether the site has been previously developed.
- A description of water requirements for the project, if applicable, and the proposed source of water.

## REGULATORY CONTEXT

- The type and size of the proposed project, with specific reference to the thresholds set out in the [Reviewable Projects Regulation](#).
- Whether the provisions of the federal [Regulations Designating Physical Activities](#) apply. Materials supporting those conclusions, including any correspondence received from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (Agency), can be included as an appendix. If a determination from the Agency has not yet been received but it is felt that the project will not be federally designated, please provide the rationale for that conclusion.
- If the proposed project is located in an area subject to a treaty or related agreement between BC and a First Nation, whether there are other EA or regulatory requirements pursuant to the treaty or agreement that are expected to apply.
- A list of other required provincial, federal, or municipal approvals, permits, licences, tenures, or other authorizations and their status if any have been applied for.

## POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, HERITAGE AND HEALTH EFFECTS

- Identification of any sensitive or vulnerable environmental, economic, social, heritage, or health values that may be affected by the project.
- A list of existing data, including monitoring reports, previous EAs, regional studies, and/or other sources of information that support the understanding of the existing conditions and potential effects of the proposed project.
- A summary of key conclusions of any feasibility studies undertaken that may be pertinent to understanding the potential effects of the proposed project, if applicable.
- A brief description of the potential environmental, economic, social, heritage, and adverse health effects that may result from the project.
- A preliminary assessment of any anticipated cumulative effects.
- A preliminary assessment of any anticipated trans-BC-boundary effects.
- Initial measures or practical means to prevent or reduce the potential effects to an acceptable level. Include measures that could be integrated into project design, compliance with applicable regulations, standards, codes of practice, or Best Management Practices, corporate management systems, and/or project-specific measures that will be implemented.
- A brief description of proposed monitoring programs that will be implemented to confirm the effects of the project and the effectiveness of mitigation, if known.

## ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL GROUPS

- A list of Aboriginal groups including treaty nations whose established or asserted traditional territories overlap with or may be affected by the project and its components or activities, and if known, a summary of information regarding established or asserted Aboriginal rights, title, and other interests, including current use for traditional purposes, that may be affected by the project.
- For each Aboriginal group identified above, a summary of engagement activities that have been carried out, a description of issues that have been raised with respect to the project, and an explanation of how those issues have been or will be addressed by the proponent.
- A preliminary assessment of potential impacts on established or asserted Aboriginal rights, title, and other interests.



## ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH GOVERNMENTS, THE PUBLIC AND OTHER PARTIES

- A summary of consultation activities that have been carried out with provincial and federal agencies and local governments.
- A summary of consultation activities that have been carried out with landowners, other commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational land users, as well as the public. Provide a table identifying the issues that have been raised by those parties with respect to the project, and an explanation of how those issues have been or will be addressed by the proponent.

## HOW TO SUBMIT A PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Descriptions should be submitted to the EAO Sector Lead appropriate for the project. Contact information for Sector Leads can be found at [http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/contact\\_us.html](http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/contact_us.html)