

## Public Participation in Impact Assessment Follow-up

## PURPOSE

These international best practice principles for public participation in impact assessment (IA) follow-up are intended to guide development and capacity building amongst practitioners for improving IA processes, practices and outcomes.

## BACKGROUND

The principles for public participation in IA follow-up presented in this document build on existing best practice principles published by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), with complementary (and non-duplicating) content. The principles were developed through literature review and a survey of IAIA members involved in either public participation or IA follow-up<sup>1</sup>.

## HOW TO CITE THIS PUBLICATION

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### Definition

Public participation in impact assessment follow-up refers to:

*Processes and practices for involving stakeholders in follow-up for projects or plans subject to impact assessment.*

## Objective

The primary objective of public participation in IA follow-up is to ensure that relevant stakeholders are appropriately engaged in determining and learning about the outcomes of impact assessment of projects or plans. This includes their involvement in informing ongoing management of that development and is essential for the legitimacy of IA decision-making throughout the development life cycle.

## What is public participation in IA follow-up?

Public participation and follow-up are intrinsic components of best practice impact assessment<sup>2</sup>. IAIA has previously published separate international best practice principles regarding each. In these documents, the following definitions are utilized.

- Public participation is defined as *the involvement of individuals and groups that are positively or negatively affected by, or that are interested in, a proposed project, program, plan or policy that is subject to a decision-making process*<sup>3</sup>.
- Follow-up is defined as *understanding the outcomes of projects or plans subject to impact assessment*<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, IAIA has also published international best practice principles for respecting Indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge in IA practice<sup>5</sup>.

# Public participation in impact assessment follow-up principles

Public participation in IA follow-up should be guided by the twelve best practice principles outlined below.

The twelve best practice principles are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather as a guide to what is possible with respect to public participation in IA follow-up. They roughly mirror the ladder of public participation. Earlier principles in the list represent the minimum position that must be delivered. Principles appearing later in the list correspond with increasing levels of public participation in IA processes and decision making for follow-up. Greater legitimacy is likely to arise from activities further "up the ladder."

## 1. Mandatory public reporting of IA follow-up activity.

Stakeholders should be informed of IA follow-up activities, outcomes realised and the governance arrangements in place. Full public disclosure should be enabled.

## 2. Ease of access to published material.

Published IA follow-up material should be easy to access in physical terms (i.e., ability to retrieve documentation). A central database or repository within a given IA jurisdiction is preferred to scattered sources for each plan or project. Ease of access is also important for enabling tiering between different levels of application of impact assessment (i.e., between policies, plans, programs, and projects).

## 3. Full transparency and ease of comprehension.

IA follow-up materials should be communicated clearly, fully in plain language (i.e., to enable ease of comprehension). Translation into the appropriate language groups of public stakeholders may be necessary.

## 4. Clarity about the IA follow-up process.

A clear account of the IA follow-up process itself, including the governance arrangements for IA follow-up and the processes for public participation should be provided. Such documentation should be amended to accommodate changes in governance responsibilities over time.

## 5. Opportunity for public input to IA follow-up decision-making.

The public should be provided with an opportunity to have input to IA follow-up decision-making over the development life-cycle (i.e., including initial program design, implementation of IA follow-up programs and adaptive management). As a minimum, input via written submissions on follow-up documents should be enabled; however, more active engagement and participation of key stakeholders is desirable.

## 6. Continuous access to IA follow-up activities and outputs.

Continuous access to IA follow-up activities and outputs, including associated opportunity for public feedback or input should be

enabled. Related to the latter, the provision of a complaints register is helpful for monitoring and adaptive management.

## 7. Inclusion of independent verification.

Some form of independent verification of IA follow-up activity should be enabled (e.g., ranging from peer review to follow-up programs or auditing of programs being undertaken by independent bodies). This is important for legitimacy reasons to build or gain the trust of the public.

## 8. Two-way flows of communication between stakeholders.

Two-way flows of communication between stakeholders involved in follow-up are needed to enable active and ongoing dialogue between proponents, regulators and the community. Such communication is necessary if IA follow-up programmes are to be truly responsive and adaptive to the needs of all involved.

## 9. Establishment of partnerships between proponents, regulators and the community.

Partnerships between proponents, regulators and the community involved in IA follow-up should be established where appropriate. Advantages include shared responsibility for learning and management, empowering local people and enhancing sustainability outcomes for development at the community or regional scale.

## 10. Inclusion of Indigenous values, knowledge systems and world-views.

Inclusion of Indigenous values, knowledge systems and worldviews in the design and implementation of IA follow-up programmes is needed where applicable to the specific cultural and societal context. Direct benefits for affected Indigenous peoples, including redress for entrenched inequalities, should be determined and delivered.

## 11. Participatory monitoring.

Participatory monitoring in IA follow-up, in which community members themselves carry out monitoring and other related functions directly themselves, can be useful. Advantages include enhanced trust among parties, support for new development proposals, access to superior knowledge, fostering well-being and empowerment of local communities, as well as enhancing environmental awareness and education.

## 12. Involvement of community in adaptive management.

Involvement of community in adaptive management and decision-making is desirable and can be seen as the highest level of public participation in IA follow-up. Advantages include ease of incorporating changes identified by the public themselves whilst fostering local community development.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Morrison-Saunders, A., J. Arts, J. Pope, A. Bond and F. Retief (2022), Distilling Best Practice Principles for Public Participation in Impact Assessment Follow-Up, *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 41:1, 48-58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2022.2119527>.

<sup>2</sup> IAIA and IEA – International Association for Impact Assessment and Institute for Environmental Assessment UK (1999), *Principles of Environmental Impact Assessment Best Practice*. [www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/principlesEA\\_1.pdf](http://www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/principlesEA_1.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> André, P., B. Enserink, D. Connor and P. Croal (2006), *Public Participation International Best Practice Principles*. Special Publication Series No. 4. Fargo, USA: International Association for Impact Assessment. <http://www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/SP4.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Arts, J. and A. Morrison-Saunders (2022), *Impact Assessment Follow-up: International Best Practice Principles*. Special Publication Series No. 6. Fargo, USA: International Association for Impact Assessment. [https://iaia.org/uploads/pdf/SP6\\_22\\_Follow\\_up\\_converted.pdf](https://iaia.org/uploads/pdf/SP6_22_Follow_up_converted.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Croal, P., C. Tetreault and members of the IAIA IP Section (2012), *Respecting Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Knowledge*. Special Publication Series No. 9. Fargo, USA: International Association for Impact Assessment. [https://www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/SP9\\_Indigenous\\_Peoples\\_Traditional\\_Knowledge.pdf](https://www.iaia.org/uploads/pdf/SP9_Indigenous_Peoples_Traditional_Knowledge.pdf).



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