

# Overview of the APT Guideline on Good Practices for Public Consultation

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APT WEB DIALOGUE: PUBLIC CONSULTATION – BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE  
AND EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

11 JUNE 2025



# Summary of work

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- Rapporteur Group established by APT PRF-23 (June 2023) to develop an APT Guideline on “Good practices for Public Consultations”.
- The Rapporteur Group progressed its work through one virtual meeting, sharing inputs from members to shape the Guideline, and the circulation of the draft Guideline for review (three consultations in total) between 2023 and 2024.
- 20 APT members took part in the Rapporteur Group, with inputs received from 10 APT members (incl. APT Members and Affiliate Members).
- The **APT Guideline on Good practices for Public Consultations** was agreed at PRF-24 in July 2024, and published on the APT website: <https://apt.int/apt/PRF-Reports>

# Overview of Guideline



## APT GUIDELINE ON

### GOOD PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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# Overview of Guideline: Purpose

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**The purpose of public consultation** is to:

- Gather information to facilitate the drafting of higher quality policies, legislation and regulation.
- Understand the potential impacts of proposed measures across communities.
- Ensure that those impacted by policies are able to provide their input to decision-making processes.

The consultation process **should not be a formality**. It should allow for discourse in terms of the range and quality of input collected – from the form, language, duration, audience and documentation of consultation. The output of the consultation and how the responses are taken into account in the final decisions are important components of the process.

# Overview of Guideline: Contents

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The Guideline provides the following information to support this purpose:

- Definitions of public consultation and objectives.
- A summary of good practices for undertaking public consultations, separated into three stages: (1) pre-consultation stage, (2) consultation stage, and (3) post-consultation stage.
  - *This is summarised into a diagram for ease of reference.*
- A summary of general good practices for engaging stakeholders and on communications and feedback mechanism.
- Six case studies.

# Overview of Guideline: Definitions

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## 1.1 DEFINITIONS

<b>Public consultation:</b>	A consultation process that provides the public (all stakeholders) with the opportunity to provide input and feedback on decisions and matters (e.g. policies, programs, legislation, etc.) that impact them.
<b>Pre-consultation stage:</b>	The period before the main consultation (e.g. before feedback is requested to a particular process/policy via submission, survey, etc.), where preparatory efforts are undertaken to facilitate the consultation.
<b>Consultation stage:</b>	The period during consultation where feedback has been requested, and main consultation efforts are underway. Activities such as written submissions, public hearings, working groups and focus groups usually take place during this period.
<b>Post-consultation stage:</b>	The period after the main consultation (i.e. after feedback has been received by participants to a particular process/policy via submission, survey, etc.), where next steps following the consultation are undertaken.

# Overview of Guideline: Good practices

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Good practices contained in the report are then summarised thus:

- Separated into three stages: (1) pre-consultation stage, (2) consultation stage, and (3) post-consultation stage.
- Each section contains a summary of what the stage involves, followed by a list of good practices.

In this way, the Guidelines can be used as a tool to review or help develop a public consultation process.



# Overview of Guideline: Good practices

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## 3.1 PRE-CONSULTATION STAGE

Pre-consultation involves the first steps of the public consultation process. This includes preparations for the main consultation, such as determining your audience and undertaking preliminary engagement with stakeholders to ensure a smoother consultation process.

At this stage, it is important to consider the following:

- **What to consult on:** There should be clarity on what is necessary to be consulted on – this may be defined in law or clearly outlined by Authorities.
  - Typically, all matters, especially with a significant impact or of significant interests to the sector or to the public, should be consulted on.
  - If proposed legislation/regulation/policy is being consulted on, the main issues for consultation should be specifically identified.
  - In some cases where there are a range of topics to be considered, it may be useful to have an open discussion with stakeholders to define the scope of the consultation.
- **Define the purpose and objectives of consultation:** The specific issues, policies, or projects that will be the focus of the consultation need to be identified, and clear and measurable objectives should be set for what you aim to achieve through consultation.
- **Who should be consulted and the form of consultation:** Consider who needs to be consulted to ensure that the consultation captures the diversity of stakeholders affected by a proposal, and how to identify relevant stakeholders. The appropriate form of consultation will depend on the issues under consideration, the nature of the group/s being consulted, the time available, the feedback required and confidentiality requirements. Advice on best practices for engaging stakeholders, as well as communications and feedback mechanisms, are summarised under section 3.4 and 3.5.
- **Allocate resources:** Determine the budget required for the consultation, considering expenses required (e.g. outreach, materials, facilitation, transport, etc.) and allocate resources and secure funding, if necessary, to support the consultation process.
- **Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to consultation:** Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach, which enables individuals and organisations from different sectors to share ideas and develop consensus-based strategies and policies.
  - Ensure that those driving the consultation process have a common understanding of the multi-stakeholder approach and apply a holistic approach to consultation (i.e. examine the entire ecosystem).
  - Develop and present a value proposition to ensure that the multi-stakeholder process is productive by outlining to stakeholders why they should participate and what they would gain from being part of the policymaking process.
  - Factor in additional costs for implementing a multi-stakeholder approach in budget plans, such as advocacy campaigns and more regional consultations.
- **Undertake continuous and early engagement:** Consultation with key stakeholders should be continuous and start as early as possible to promote transparent and comprehensive participation.
  - Informal consultation may take place prior to the main consultation to ensure that stakeholders are engaged early, have a better understanding of the proposal, and can assist in defining the scope and focus of the main consultation.
  - When consulting on issues such as policy, consultation should continue through all stages of the policy development cycle.
- **Conduct a pilot test of the consultation:** It is crucial to conduct a pilot or test phase of the consultation to identify any logistical, technical, or operational issues that need to be addressed before the official launch.



# Overview of Guideline: Good practices

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## 3.2 CONSULTATION STAGE

The consultation stage involves actively seeking the opinions of interested and affected groups. This includes activities as part of the main consultation, such as making the consultation exercise known to relevant stakeholders, clearly articulating expectations, providing information papers and templates to enable feedback, and developing submission deadlines. This stage can include, though is not limited to, the following good practices:

- **Publicise the public consultation widely:** Wide publication across relevant avenues will assist in promoting the opportunity for consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure an effective consultation process.
  - Avenues for publicising the consultation should take account for the nature of the groups being consulted.
  - Avenues for publicising consultations include but are not limited to: Authority websites, e-bulletins, social media, press/newspaper advertisements, emails, post, public hearings, community consultations and other public domains.
  - Corresponding announcements on any updates to the public consultation should also be shared widely.
  - Automatic notifications to stakeholders in areas where they have registered an interest through websites may also be a cost-effective way of alerting stakeholders to consultations.
- **Be transparent and clearly communicate expectations:** The objectives of the consultation and its context should be as open as possible to allow for widest discourse and deliberation and clearly explained, including when and how a final decision will be made.
  - To avoid creating unrealistic expectations, clearly state what specifically views are being sought on and any aspects of the proposal that have already been finalised and will not be subject to change.
  - Informal consultation, community consultations or public hearings may take place to ensure that stakeholders have a better understanding of the proposal.
- **Provide public consultation papers:** When seeking feedback on an issue, draft papers and information documents should be provided to explain the relevant issues and provide stakeholders with an opportunity to comment directly on draft text.
  - A public consultation paper should outline the preliminary viewpoints of the Authority concerning the subject matter and scope under consideration, and serve as an invitation for input and feedback from stakeholders.
  - The publication of a public consultation paper also serves to reinforce transparency and predictability within the Authority's regulatory procedures.
- **Implement submission deadlines that are not burdensome:** Consultation documents should be published in good time to allow adequate time for respondents to submit well considered responses and seek any necessary clarifications. Be aware of the effort required from people and businesses to participate in consultations, and implement realistic timeframes for responses. Be mindful of other consultation processes planned or underway to limit the impost on stakeholders.
  - Prepare a consultation plan with adequate timelines to allow stakeholders sufficient time to provide informed and considered responses - 8 to 12 weeks is recommended by the World Bank.
  - Timelines may differ depending on relevant needs and requirements.
    - Where stakeholders are being asked to consider the whole proposal and there has been little previous consultation, a longer round is appropriate.
    - Similarly, a longer round is appropriate where those with limited resources, such as individuals and small businesses, are being consulted.
    - Authorities may extend consultation timeframes when necessary, and all interested stakeholders should be notified of such extensions and the reasons for doing so.
  - Unreasonable submission deadlines during the consultation process should be avoided - many people who may require consultation have full-time jobs or business commitments, or may already take part in frequent consultation efforts.
- **Expect consultation plans to go off track:** The consultation process may not work as expected (e.g. timelines not met, difficult to contact relevant stakeholders). Consultation team members should accept this likelihood and apply the following: flexibility and adaptability; understanding; patience always; and expect the unexpected.

# Overview of Guideline: Good practices

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## 3.3 POST CONSULTATION STAGE

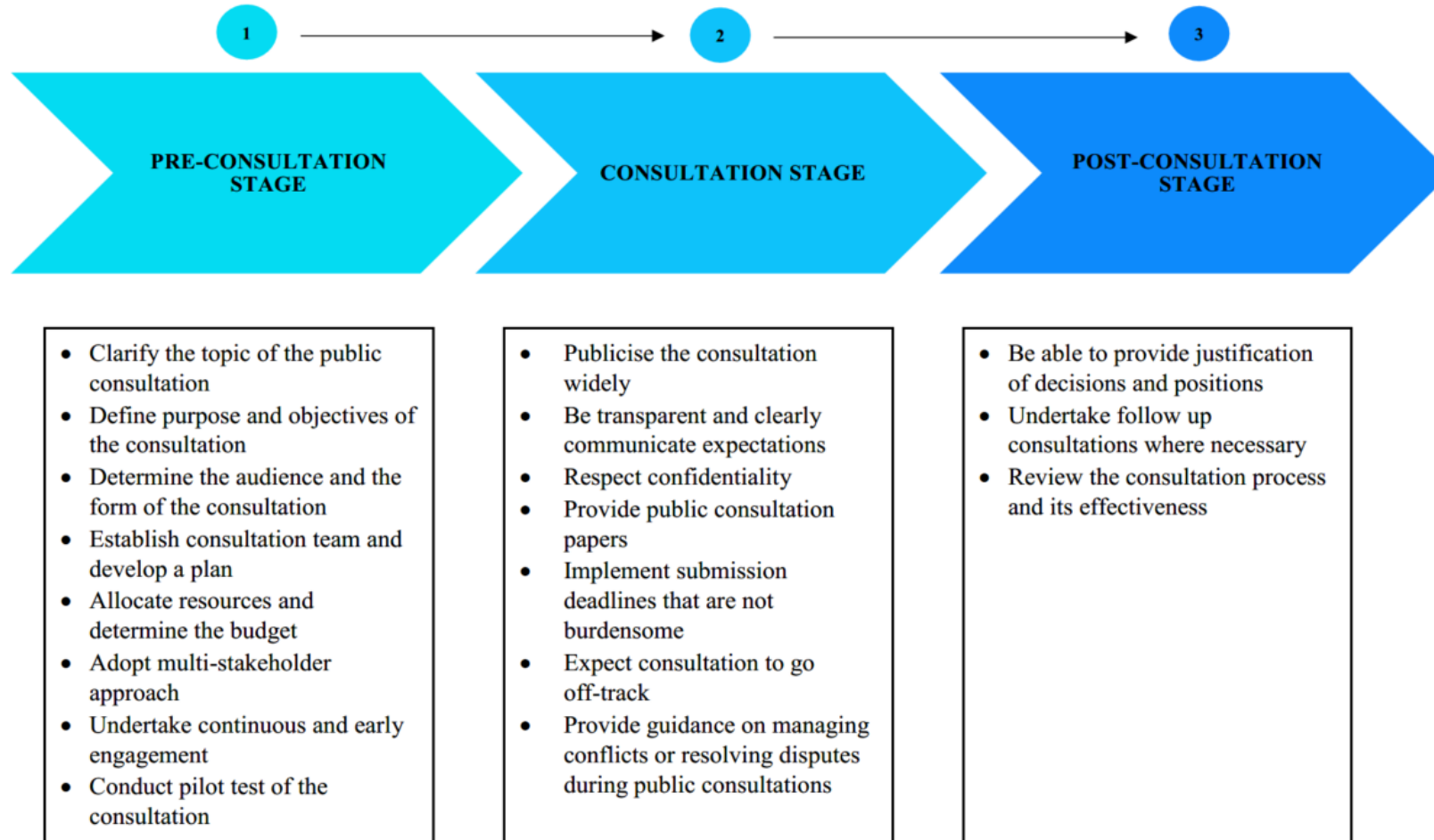
Post consultation processes follow the conclusion of the main consultation, and close the loop on main consultation activities. It often includes the summary of the results of the consultation process, providing answers to pending questions from stakeholders, and explaining how the feedback collected will be taken into account to formulate positions/decisions.

To assist in this process, comments/feedback received through post consultation is generally made publicly available. This is not necessarily the final step in the consultation process - post consultation discussions to discuss outcomes with stakeholders and additional consultation should be undertaken wherever needed.

This stage can include, though is not limited to, the following good practices:

- **Be able to provide justification of decisions and positions:** An Authority should duly consider all contributions in a consultation and be able to clearly explain how the results of the consultation will be taken into account in formulating its position or decision.
  - Authorities should be able to demonstrate to stakeholders how consultation responses have been taken into consideration and welcome feedback and respond to it, even if it is not adopted.
  - Consider the role of public feedback in shaping the final decision-making process. This may involve showcasing examples of how public input has influenced policy decisions and legislative outcomes, highlighting the impact of meaningful consultation.
  - A public consultation report or summary of input received can be provided to stakeholders, offering an overview of the consultation process outcomes, how inputs received will refine draft proposals, and encapsulating the stance adopted by the Authority on the topic of consultation.
    - Such a report or summary should be easily accessible to the public through official channels, such as the Authority's official website.
- **Undertake follow-up consultations where necessary:** In cases where further input is required or a second draft document is developed, a second round of consultation should be undertaken.
  - It is encouraged for Authorities to set up meetings and/or working groups to further discuss all the contributions submitted.
- **Review the consultation process and its effectiveness:** There is value in continued testing of existing approaches to ensure they remain fit for purpose and best meet the goals of information gathering and transparency, while remaining alert to the consultation load on stakeholders.

# Overview of Guidelines: Good practices



# Overview of Guidelines: Case studies

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Case studies on public consultation efforts by APT members are also provided:

- **Australia:** Australian Communications and Media Authority; Case study of public consultation of the ACMA's Five-Year Spectrum Outlook; Case study of the public consultation of the ACMA's consumer vulnerability statement of expectations for the telecommunications industry
- **Bangladesh:** Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission
- **Kiribati:** Stages for public consultation
- **Malaysia:** Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
- **Papua New Guinea:** National Information and Communications Technology Authority
- **Philippines:** Case study of public consultation of the National ICT Ecosystem Framework

# Closing

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The consultation process **should not be a formality**.

It should allow for discourse in terms of the range and quality of input collected – from the form, language, duration, audience and documentation of consultation. The output of the consultation and how the responses are taken into account in the final decisions are important components of the process.

A genuine consultation process ensures that the real-world impact of policy options have been considered. This is likely to lead to better outcomes and greater understanding of the outcomes sought and options considered.