

The 5 Principles of Democratic Engagement

1 Build capacity to participate

Programs, strategies, and interventions should grow the capacity of governments and citizens to engage and participate.

Do people learn and practice skills that help them be a part of decision-making processes or create change?

2 Foster commitment to democratic values

We must intentionally share our commitment to democratic values and feelings of ownership over our democratic system.

What are our shared democratic values? Why do they matter?

3 Deepen relationships and social connection

We should consciously work to deepen relationships, increase social connection, and create a sense of connected networks.

Are people building relationships, creating shared narratives, and increasing bridges between groups?

4 Be inclusive and accessible

We must create opportunities for all citizens, including equity-seeking, underserved, and marginalized communities.

Do people from different backgrounds feel like they can safely participate? Do our actions meet their needs?

5 Establish accountability

Our processes seek to earn trust by being responsive and accountable to peoples' needs and expectations.

Do our actions meet citizens' expectations, and are we responsive to the needs of those who attend?

Development of the Principles

The Five Principles were developed as part of a national workshop with 15 practitioners and researchers from the *Centre for Dialogue* and the *Institut de Nouveau Monde*. During this collaboration, participants thought about ways to guide, measure and evaluate the impact of democratic initiatives and programming.

Guide to the Evaluations Process

Democracy is a complex topic with many elements and moving parts and it can be difficult to measure the impact of a strategy or intervention. To make it easier, we use principles to identify and measure objectives. Instead of only asking questions about the topic of democracy, a principles-focused evaluation guides us to ask questions about specific components and elements that support a resilient democratic culture. These can be applied to specific interventions or more general plans and actions.

In conjunction with our upcoming Evaluations Toolkit, these five principles of democratic engagement are meant to guide intentions and evaluative processes. By working with these tools, and continually reflecting on relevant questions about outcomes, it is possible to understand and evaluate how your work strengthens or weakens Canadian democracy.

What We Do

The Simon Fraser University Morris J. Wosk *Strengthening Canadian Democracy Initiative* is a catalyst for creating a more resilient democratic culture across all communities in Canada. The Centre is researching what is driving views of democracy and what is shaping our democratic culture for better or for worse. We develop collaborations with institutions, practitioners, and citizens. We then evaluate the results of these collaborations to identify what works, when, and how to improve democracy. For more, find us at: democracydialogue.ca.

The *Institut de Nouveau Monde* is an independent organization whose mission is to increase citizen participation in democratic life. The INM's actions have the effect of encouraging citizen participation and contributing to the development of civic skills, the strengthening of social ties, and the enhancement of democratic institutions. For more, visit: inm.qc.ca