



EVIDENCE NOTE · ASPC-EN-009

# Stakeholder Participation and Meaningful Consultation

How can institutions distinguish meaningful consultation from ceremonial participation?

EVIDENCE-INFORMED ASPC ANALYSIS

Supporting publication to ASPC-SF-001

August 2026 · 6-page edition

# Status, question and scope

ASPC RESEARCH SYNTHESIS.

## Research question

How can institutions distinguish meaningful consultation from ceremonial participation?

## Scope

Participation has institutional value when relevant perspectives arrive early enough to affect the problem definition, design, risk assessment and review.

Evidence cutoff: August 21, 2026. Government findings, agency-reported information and ASPC analysis are distinguished throughout.

# ASPC application and limitations

## Proposed application

- Identify affected, responsible and expert stakeholders before selecting an option.
- Publish the question, constraints, participation terms and how input will be used.
- Maintain a response record showing accepted, modified and unresolved issues.

## Limitations

- Consultation does not transfer legal authority and should not be represented as endorsement.

These applications are proposed by ASPC. Citation does not imply endorsement by any source institution.

# Documented findings

## Relevant participation is an operating requirement

GAO-23-105520 includes participants among its leading collaboration practices. Collaborating entities should identify who has the relevant authority, expertise, resources or affected interests and establish how participants contribute to shared outcomes. Open and frequent communication and written agreements reinforce participation by making expectations visible.

MCC describes country ownership as countries identifying their own priorities and taking responsibility for program development and implementation. That model shows why consultation should connect stakeholder input to actual priority setting and decisions rather than treating attendance as evidence of influence.

## Limits of consultation

Consultation cannot transfer lawful authority or guarantee consensus. It can improve problem definition, expose implementation constraints and create a record showing what was heard, what changed and why some proposals were not adopted.

MCC material describes its operating model. ASPC cites it as institutional practice, not external evidence that a particular consultation produced impact.

# Consultation design notes

## Minimum consultation record

- Decision in scope, decision owner and constraints that cannot be changed.
- Stakeholder map covering authority, expertise, affected groups and excluded voices.
- Accessible background material and questions issued with adequate notice.
- Participation method, accommodations, conflict disclosures and consent rules.
- Structured record of submissions, themes, decisions and reasons.
- Published response explaining material changes and unresolved disagreement.

## Quality indicators

ASPC should report representation gaps, timing, response rates, recurring themes and the share of material recommendations accepted, modified or declined. Participant counts should never stand alone as the measure of meaningful engagement.

Where safety, political pressure or commercial dependency could suppress views, confidential channels and neutral facilitation may be required. The resulting record should protect participants while preserving an auditable account of the process.



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## ASPC RELEVANCE

This research supports constructive American–international partnership and practical cooperation where stronger institutions can advance shared interests with the United States.

**GAO-23-105520**

[Official source →](#)

**MCC Country Ownership**

[Official source →](#)

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