

Development of the Public Engagement Framework, September 2011-2012

Memorial set out to develop a framework to guide its public engagement in an engaging way – including many voices from inside and outside the university and through a variety of platforms. Approximately 900 people participated in the process and contributed insights and guidance. We consulted more than 550 people internal to Memorial and more than 300 people from the public. The development was guided by a Steering Committee comprised equally of members from Memorial and the public, and by an Expert Working Group with representatives from inside and outside the university. The Steering Committee provided oversight and stewardship of the framework development process, while the Expert Working Group contributed insight into challenges and best practices in public engagement.

What we heard

In September 2011, the process began by receiving input from deans and directors of academic units about their expectations and vision for Memorial's Public Engagement Framework. They identified a range of engagement activities in the areas of teaching and learning; research, scholarship and creative activity; and service, outreach and institutional engagement. They identified areas they felt important for the framework to emphasize, including:

- clarity on the meaning and scope of "engagement" activities;
- clarity on Memorial's strategic priority on engagement;
- institution-wide supports for engagement;
- accountability and rigour in engagement activities;
- acknowledgement and reward for engagement activities;
- growth of engagement in teaching;
- growth of engagement in research;
- growth of engagement in service and outreach;
- community participation;
- and, the identification of opportunities and needs.

Memorial publicly launched the process in early November with ads in every newspaper in Newfoundland and Labrador, inviting people and organizations to tell us about their engagement experiences and expectations. As a result, the Office of Engagement had more than 20 meetings across the province, ranging from the Labrador Straits and Stephenville, to Grand Falls–Windsor and Twillingate. To further spread the word about the framework's development, and solicit further input, the Office of Engagement also created an online presence with:

- a website (www.mun.ca/engagement/engagementframework),
- a blog (www.mun.ca/engagement/blog),
- a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Officeofengagement), and
- a Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/EngageMemorial).

In November 2011, further input was solicited from member units of Memorial's Senior Academic and Administrators Group. Input was received from academic and administrative units about their engagement programs and projects and successes and challenges. An online survey, with similar questions, was made available to people inside and outside Memorial on the Office of Engagement's website between January and February.

A meeting between Memorial and the College of the North Atlantic was convened in December 2011 to advance partnerships between the two institutions in supporting public engagement activity throughout the province's public post-secondary system.

The input generated through the process drew attention to key issues and areas around engagement that warranted further investigation. With the guidance of the Steering Committee and Expert Working Group, we identified 15 themes and hosted sessions to explore the unique strengths, challenges and opportunities for each. (Theme session reports are available on the Office of Engagement website). In total, 20 theme sessions were held in various locations across the province (see *Table of Theme Sessions*, below). In most sessions the representation was quite balanced between representatives from the university and representatives from the public. More than 475 people attended the theme sessions (with attendance in most sessions ranging between 15-30 and in some, such as the St. John's session on "Engaging with Aboriginal Communities", as high as 45).

Table of Theme Sessions		
Theme session	Location	Date
Civic Engagement	St. John's	Feb. 20
Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning	St. John's	Feb. 13
Engagement Relating to Memorial's Strategic Research Themes	St. John's	Feb. 20
Engaging in Creative Arts and Culture	St. John's	Feb. 6
	Corner Brook	Feb. 14
Engaging in Economic Development	St. John's	Feb. 29
Engaging in Labrador	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	Feb. 15
Engaging in Rural Areas	St. Anthony	Feb. 21
Engaging on Social Issues	St. John's	Feb. 1
	Corner Brook	Feb. 14
Engaging with Aboriginal Communities	Corner Brook	Jan. 16
	St. John's	Jan. 23
	Happy Valley – Goose Bay	Feb. 22
Experiential and Service Learning	St. John's	March 1
International Engagement	St. John's	Feb. 3
Leveraging Memorial's Off-Campus Facilities to Advance Engagement	St. John's	Feb. 2
Scholarship of Engagement	St. John's	Jan. 23
Technologies / Media for Engagement	St. John's	Feb. 6
Town & Gown: How Memorial Engages With Its Host Communities	Corner Brook	Jan. 16
	St. John's	Feb. 29

The focused nature of the theme sessions generated in-depth and passionate discussion amongst individuals and organizations. The involvement of very diverse stakeholders speaks to the passion and commitment that people bring to engagement and their strong desire for Memorial to make engagement an institutional priority. These stakeholders included Memorial students, faculty and staff; government representatives (federal, provincial, Aboriginal, municipal governments); non-government organizations; businesses and sectoral associations; and individuals. Key issues that emerged across the theme sessions included:

- providing institutional priority and leadership,
- valuing and providing incentives for engagement,
- supports for engagement,
- faculty members and students as key engagement champions,
- the characteristics of good engagement partnerships,
- engagement challenges faced by partners,
- key partners for Memorial.

Crafting the framework

To begin drafting the framework, we began by hosting a vision and values session, facilitated by the provincial Rural Secretariat. On March 2, 2012, 40 people from inside and outside Memorial gathered to discuss high level concepts and statements that could provide the basis for the framework's vision and values. Participants included members of the Steering Committee and Expert Working Group, as well as theme session attendees and others who had previously been involved in the development process. On March 5, 2012, a sub-committee made up of five Expert Working Group members reviewed the discussions from the session and drafted the initial vision and values for the framework. The draft goals and objectives were simultaneously developed by the Office of Engagement based on the inputs received throughout the process outlined above.

The resulting draft framework (consisting of vision, values, goals and objectives) was reviewed and revised by the Steering Committee and then taken into an extensive round of consultations. Consultations were held with:

- Memorial groups (faculties and schools, Marine Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial Student Union, Graduate Student Union, open session)
- Public (Clareville, Corner Brook, Gander, St. John's)*
- Targeted stakeholders (St. John's Board of Trade, Strategic Partnership, non-government organizations, Provincial Government)
- External expert reviewers in Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom.
- The Expert Working Group
- Blog comments

Following the consultations, the Steering Committee met twice more to review the consultation inputs and revise the draft. The Steering Committee (along with input from the Expert Working Group) also advised that the framework should be titled the "Public Engagement Framework".

The Draft Public Engagement Framework was endorsed by Memorial's Senate on September 25th, and will go to the Board of Regents for final approval.

* A session was scheduled in Happy Valley – Goose Bay for March 22nd, but was cancelled for lack of registration. However, the two theme sessions held in Happy Valley – Goose Bay and other previous stakeholder consultations garnered a lot of interest and were very well attended.