Memorial University's Public Engagement Survey: 2017-2019 Faculty and Staff Findings

THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Kristen Dyson

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) administered a survey to faculty and staff members of Memorial to evaluate the newly developed Public Engagement Framework (PEF). To expand on that evaluation, an additional survey was created in 2019 by OPE, with the intent to evaluate the general public of Newfoundland and Labrador. This survey included three streams: the public, students, and faculty and staff. Both surveys were available via online platforms and were analyzed for this report.

The 2017 survey included 304 responses, 89% of which were academic staff, and 11% non-academic staff. The 2019 survey had 602 complete responses, 335 completing the public section, 105 student responses, and 162 responses from faculty and staff. The current report specifically focuses on the survey responses of faculty and staff members.

Demographic characteristics were similar among 2017 and 2019 participants (e.g., geographic location), particularly faculty and school representation, although more than half of the 2019 respondents refrained from identifying their faculty and school.

A majority of 2019 faculty and staff respondents stated they were familiar with the phrase "public engagement" at Memorial however, only some had been in contact with the stewards of public engagement, OPE. Moreover, very few faculty and staff reported partaking in a publicly engaged research project. A common desire among participants was the opportunity to participate in public engagement education, whether for students or for faculty and staff. This suggestion is consistent with the desires of faculty and staff members in 2017.

Memorial's responsibility to engage with the public, as a core element of its mission, was highly agreed upon among faculty and staff in 2017 and 2019. Participants agreed that Memorial was "somewhat" fulfilling their obligation to engage with the public, although there was a slight increase in agreement from 2017 to 2019. The greatest motivation for doing publicly engaged work among faculty and staff was to make contributions to the community, with very few respondents feeling not motivated at all. The most common barrier to engagement was by far time load and work constraints.

Further analysis of faculty and staff opinions (via open-ended question) illustrated three key suggestions: increase communication, increase accessibility, and provide more support for public engagement initiatives. Following these themes, specific suggestions focused on advertisement of public engagement events, social media presence, and catalyzing partnerships among the public and the university. Faculty and staff also reported the need for affordable events, inclusion of diverse groups and communities and the use of more public-friendly language when presenting research, making reports, or presenting information during events that include the public.

This report presents an overall evaluation of Memorial's engagement work from 2017 to 2019 through a reflective lens of faculty and staff members. Acknowledging and recognizing the changes across faculty and staff in publicly engaged work can help mobilize knowledge and improve the mutual partnership among Memorial University and the Newfoundland and Labrador community.

2. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

As its mandate states, Memorial University is a public university serving the public good. As the only university within the province, Memorial holds a significant responsibility to facilitate collaboration and integration amongst the community members of Newfoundland and Labrador. To provide institutional

structure to this obligation, a framework outlining Memorial's core public engagement vision, values and goals was created, the Public Engagement Framework (PEF), which centers public engagement as a core priority of the university, combined with the key tenets of the university's overall mission - teaching and learning, and scholarship, research, and creative activity.

To steward and coordinate the facilitation of the PEF, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) was founded, providing resources for publicly engaged work including monitoring and evaluation. To first determine the efficacy of the PEF, OPE conducted an evaluation of the framework in 2017 (Krajewski, 2017), specifically directed to all academic staff and senior administration of the university. The evaluation consisted of interviews, an online survey, and inclusion of past survey data, documents, reports, and analysis. The ultimate purpose of the assessment was to find 1) the proficiency of the framework, and 2) any barriers in implementation.

While extensive knowledge was gained from faculty and staff opinions, groups outside of Memorial's boundaries (i.e., the public) were not so inclusive. Thus, to fully understand the quality and whole potential of public engagement at Memorial, with all of its collaborative relationships, a public engagement survey was developed for all of the Newfoundland and Labrador community. This new survey was administered in March of 2019, and comprised three streams of respondents – faculty and staff, students, and the general public (including alumni). As the survey was analyzed, it was evident that while all three streams were considered public to the province, each provided custom insight to engagement at Memorial, specifically, the barriers and motivations associated with each. From this, it was decided that the three streams of survey respondents were to be analyzed separately.

Of the three streams surveyed in 2019, faculty and staff were of particular importance – their opinion had been documented twice, once in 2017 and again in 2019. Although assessment of the 2019 survey only (as done in 2017) would be informative and provide guidance for future direction, evaluation of opinions across time would allow greater efficacy, and could guide the evaluation towards informed successes and failures (Policy NL, n.d.). Therefore, it was determined that a comparison report of the 2017 and 2019 surveys combined would be the most effective summative evaluation for faculty and staff opinions on Memorial's public engagement initiatives.

As such, the current report provides an evaluation of the thoughts and beliefs of faculty and staff members across time through a reflective lens. While the 2019 survey findings comprise the majority of the report, reflection of trends from the 2017 survey are integrated throughout, providing comparable insights between the two timelines. It is important to note that while survey comparisons are integrated, they do not represent direct assessments. That is, the 2017 survey and 2019 survey consisted of different questions, contained alternate wording and were targeted at different audiences. For example, the 2019 survey was developed and created for a public audience, containing broad questions and simplified wording, whereas the 2017 survey was intended for faculty and staff only, with questions pertaining to particular Memorial insights (i.e., promotion and tenure). This barrier prevents direct comparisons through the report, but allows reflections of trends seen between 2017 and 2019.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. 2012-2020 Framework Evaluation - 2017

The Framework evaluation utilized a mixed methods design, combining various quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary data sources. The evaluation consisted of two types of primary data sources – key informant interviews and an online survey, in addition to antecedent surveys and reports (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement 2014, MUNFA faculty survey 2016, First Year Experience Surveys 2013, 2015, 2016). Interviews were conducted among MUN vice-presidents, deans and directors of units (10 individuals in total) in July and August of 2017. They were semi-structured and scripted, spanning 30-75 minutes per interview. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. An online survey was also administered during the months of July and August (in 2017), via fluidsurveys.com. The survey was available to all academic and senior administrative staff of Memorial University and its associated campuses (St. John's Campus, Grenfell Campus, the Marine Institute, and the Labrador Institute). The survey was advertised by email invitation, sent by OPE and respective faculties and schools.

Analysis of quantitative data (e.g., Likert scale, demographics) was conducted by IBM SPSS using descriptive statistics. Various statistical tests were used including Independent Samples t-test, Paired Samples t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Chi-Squared tests. Exact t and F values, degrees of freedom, p values, and measures of effect size were calculated (p was set at 0.05 for significance).

Qualitative data (e.g., interviews, open-ended questions) was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis (via NVivo software). Coding was conducted and revised by three independent researchers with 80% agreement among coding schemes.

3.2. Public Engagement Survey – 2019

The public engagement survey was created using a collaborative approach amongst a committee of students and staff at OPE – one PhD student, one Master's student, and two office staff. Although the survey was originally designed for public respondents (i.e., not directly employed/registered with MUN), two sub-surveys were developed for students as well as faculty and staff. This report focuses on the responses of faculty and staff.

After pilot and revision, the survey was administered online from March 4, 2019 to March 19, 2019 through the online platform, Qualtrics. Advertisement and promotion of the survey were delivered via social media sites (e.g., OPE Facebook, OPE Twitter, Memorial media), in addition to individual email invitations (Memorial faculty, staff, students, community partners, former OPE conference attendees, and Memorial alumni). An entry to win an Amazon gift card (value at $100) was used as an incentive to participate.

The survey consisted of both quantitative and qualitative style questions, including Likert scale (Likert, 1932), open-ended, bi-option, and "select all that apply" questions. Quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics (e.g., % of respondents feel _____) and inferential statistics (using IBM SPSS). To compare the responses of faculty and staff from the 2017 evaluation survey to the current survey, various statistical tests were used including Chi-square tests and Independent samples t-tests (p was set at 0.05 for significance). For qualitative analysis (i.e., open-ended questions), inductive thematic analysis was used to determine key themes present in responses. For themes that described broad opinions, further sub-thematic analysis was conducted. Microsoft excel was used for both quantitative and qualitative statistical analysis.

4. FINDINGS

During the active survey period, the 2017 survey had a total of **304 responses**, 89% of which derived from academic staff (e.g., conducting research and/ or teaching). The remaining 11% of respondents identified as non-academic staff (i.e., senior administration, managers, and directors).

The 2019 survey had a total of 602 complete responses. Of these responses, **162 respondents** identified as faculty and staff, and thus completed the faculty/staff section of the general survey (as described previously). The findings presented in this report relate to both OPE surveys (2017 and 2019) streamlined for faculty and staff opinions.

Note that comparisons between 2017 and 2019 surveys are not dependent or exclusively comparable, rather reflect on similar trends, the reason being the surveys were not consistently developed, and include varying topics, language, and questions.

4.1. Demographics

A small portion of the survey included several questions regarding demographic information – current place of residence, age, gender, diverse-group identification, and academic affiliation (role and department). Some of the questions did not require a selected answer, rather participants were offered exclusion if they felt that they could be identified by their responses, or the question

Figure 1. Memorial Affiliation
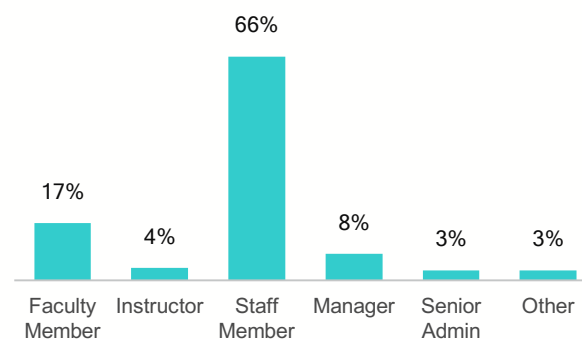Majority respondents are staff members

did not relate to them. In other questions, participants could select multiple answers that they best identified with. As such, some demographics represent the proportion of respondents to a specific question, not the proportion of total responses (i.e., less/greater than 162).

Of the 162 responses, a large majority of participants identified as University staff (i.e., instructors, staff members, managers, and senior administration), forming 80% of the survey. Accordingly, only 17% of respondents identified as faculty members, with the remaining 3% identifying as "other". Figure 1 illustrates the representation of faculty and staff members with their respective subcategories. "Other" responses included participants who identified with 1) multiple categories, or 2) categories not explicitly stated. These included alumni that were current staff members, staff members that were current students, medical residents, and contractors.

There was a diverse range of schools and faculties represented, with responses from almost all departments. Of those that responded, three faculties were largely represented – Faculty of Medicine (10%), Faculty of Science (7%), and Faculty of Humanities and Social

Figure 2. Participants by school/faculty
2017 and 2019 comparison

SCHOOL/FACULTY	2017	2019
Medicine	13%	10%
Science	24%	7%
Humanities and Social Sciences	19%	6%
Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL)	N/A	2%
Social Work	1%	2%
Engineering and Applied Science	7%	2%
Marine Institute	5%	2%
Business Administration	4%	1%
Education	4%	1%
Pharmacy	3%	1%
Graduate Studies	N/A	1%
Music	5%	1%
Nursing	2%	1%
Grenfell Campus	N/A	1%
Human Kinetics and Recreation	2%	0%
Other/ No answer	12%	62%

Figure 3. Geographic distribution of respondents

Majority of respondents reside in St. John's

86%
7%
0%
4%
0%

St. John's Eastern Central Western Labrador

Sciences (6%). Many participants refrained from answering the question (62%), with some responses originating from departments, categorized as "other" (e.g., Student Life, Facilities Management, and Registrar's Office). An important note is the quantity of respondents that chose not to identify their department by the "no response" percentage. This discrepancy alters the reliability of the question, making assumptions difficult. A future survey suggestion would be to make this specific demographic question mandatory. With "other/ no answer" removed, these results reflect similar response trends to the evaluation survey of 2017, with the same three departments representing the largest amount of responses.

Most major regions of Newfoundland and Labrador were represented in the current sample (Figure 3). From the graph it is evident that the majority of respondents currently reside in Eastern Newfoundland (St. John's – 86%, Eastern – 7%), while a small percentage of participants reside in Western Newfoundland (4%), and Labrador (1%). However, this finding is expected considering the faculty and staff population at the St. John's campus in comparison to other campuses across Newfoundland and Labrador. Accordingly, a lack of respondents residing in Central Newfoundland (0%) was reported. These percentages are consistent with the results of the 2017 survey, with St. John's accounting for the majority of respondents (77%).

To determine the reach of public engagement initiatives among diverse groups of people at Memorial University, respondents were asked if they identified as a person with a disability, a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, an Aboriginal/Indigenous person, a racialized person, or a member of a group experiencing "other" diversities. Almost ¼ of faculty and staff respondents identified as a member of a diverse group (see Figure 4), with all (offered) groups being represented in some capacity, including one "other" diverse group – veterans. Additionally, this geographic distribution is similar to the relative regional population estimates from Statistics Canada (2016a).

Respondents were also asked to select an age range that best suited them (as seen in Figure 4). The most common age range was between 35-44 years of age (39%), with 25-34 being the youngest identified age range (12%), and 65-74 being the oldest identified age range (1%). These results are to be expected, considering the median age of University faculty members in Canada is 51 (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Figure 4. Age Range of Respondents (n=156)

The most common age group was 35-44 years old

75+ 0%
65-74 1%
55-64 12%
45-54 35%
35-44 39%
25-34 12%
18-24 0%
17 and younger 0%
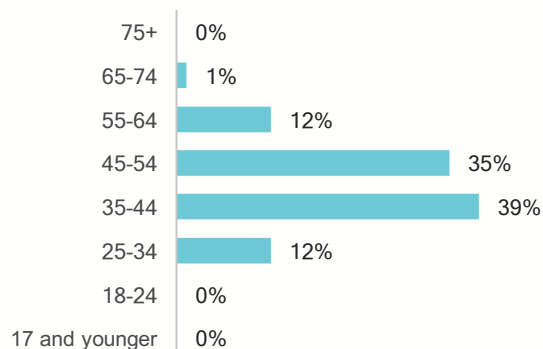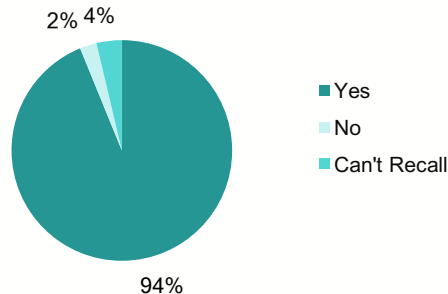
Figure 5. "Have you ever encountered the phrase "public engagement at Memorial?
Many faciuly and staff have encountered the term PE

2% 4%

- Yes
- No
- Can't Recall

94%

4.2. Public Engagement *Knowledge* at Memorial

To determine the level of familiarity with Memorial's public engagement work as a whole, participants were asked whether they had ever encountered the phrase "public engagement" at Memorial. Interestingly, 94% of respondents selected "yes", while only 2% of respondents selected "no" (Figure 5). To further investigate a connection between knowledge of public engagement and the stewards of public engagement, participants were asked if they ever had any contact with the Office of Public Engagement. Although many faculty and staff reported encountering the term "public engagement", only 55% of participants reported having contact with OPE (Figure 6). Few participants (2%) selected "other", responding they were unsure, or had contact with staff of OPE in an informal manner.

Although these percentages may seem significantly different, it is clear that a large majority of faculty and staff members are aware of public engagement, whether this knowledge is connected to OPE or the partnerships OPE supports. This difference may be influenced by faculty and staff's public engagement work apart from OPE, including independent projects and collaborations. However, members may still know that OPE exists and the operations OPE hosts, but are not in need of direct communication with OPE. Where participants were asked about direct contact with OPE rather than OPE awareness, some ambiguity may have been resulted.

Figure 6. "Have you had any contact with the Office of Public Engagement?"
55% of respondents have had contact with OPE

2%

43%

55%

- Yes
- No
- Other
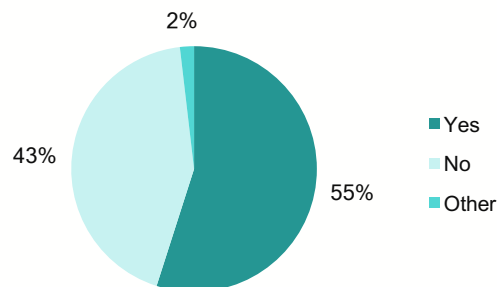
4.3 Past and Potential Participation in Engagement

A key investigation of the 2019 survey was to determine the degree of engagement activity by faculty and staff. Within this overall activity, two main questions were explored: what engagement initiatives have been previously done by faculty and staff, and to what extent members would like to engage in the future. To measure this, participants were issued items that exemplified engagement activities and were asked to identify whether that item was something they "have done", or something they "would like to do" (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. "Please indicate which of the following activities you have done or would like to do"
There were an equal number of desired and accomplished responses

Overall, there was a near equal amount of "have done" responses in comparison to "would like to" responses, with some items demonstrating more experience than interest (and vice versa). Participating in a non-academic, Memorial organized activity that involves working with people outside of the university (i.e., event, workshop, conference) was reported as the highest "have done" item (20%), while designing or leading a publicly engaged research project was the least common "have done" item. Surprisingly, only 7% of faculty and staff reported being involved in a publicly engaged research project, yet 65% of 2019's QuickStart and Accelerator funds were submitted by faculty and staff (Memorial University, 2019). If faculty and staff are submitting publicly engaged projects, why are the survey responses inconsistent? This discrepancy may be due to a lack of public engagement knowledge (e.g., faculty and staff may not thinking their projects publicly are engaged), or the survey audience (those who are not engaged, answered the survey).

Conversely, participating in a public engagement education or training opportunity was reported as the highest desired item (19%) with registering for a course that involves working with people outside the university closely behind (15%). Three items were equally desired the least: learning about public engagement at Memorial, assisting the organization or facilitation of a public activity, and designing or leading publicly engaged research projects. Again, the latter is of particular surprise considering the quantity of faculty and staff who apply for OPE funds. This item being reported as both least desired and minimally accomplished, should be noted, and evaluated further.

A particularly interesting finding of this measure is the limited identification of public engagement undergraduate/graduate education (in terms of courses/modules), as indicated by the minimal 6% of respondents who reported taking a course involving collaboration outside of the university, although 15% of participants would like to. This finding is consistent with the 2017 survey, whereby faculty and staff rated public engagement training and development 3.48 out of 7 – the lowest ranked item on the public engagement specific measure (see Appendix A). This would indicate a gap in public engagement knowledge mobilization, and a desire from faculty and staff to fill this need. Although, current initiatives of OPE involving the scholarship of public engagement, specifically the advancement of public engagement education and training, are in developing stages (prior to this survey).

Faculty & staff engagement survey – 2017-2019

Very few participants responded with their own "have done" engagement activity (indicated by "other"). One response was a school outreach activity, and another response was a collection of engagement programs. There were no desired engagement activities described specifically by respondents.

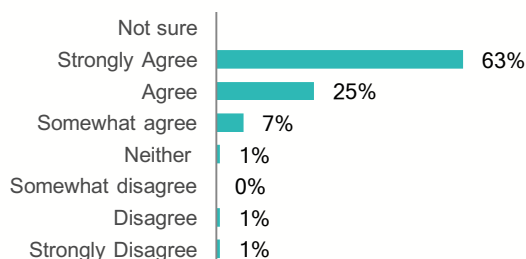## 4.4 Insights to Current Public Engagement at Memorial

Although useful, engagement activities are not the only insight to true understanding and evaluation of public engagement at OPE. In addition to faculty and staff's past and presently engaged work, a key measure of the 2019 survey was the current opinion of engagement at Memorial as a whole. This form of measurement extended from the 2017 survey, and asked respondents to select their agreement level with various statements (scale of 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree). Both survey statements, along with mean ratings of responses, are show in Figure 8A (2019) and B (2017).

4.4.1. Memorial's Commitment to Public Engagement

As evident in Figure 8A, faculty and staff highly agreed with all public engagement statements, with means ranging from 5.17 to 6.42. The highest agreed upon statement was that of Memorial's responsibility to engage with the public (mean = 6.42), in which 89% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that Memorial has an obligation for doing publicly engaged work (Figure 9).
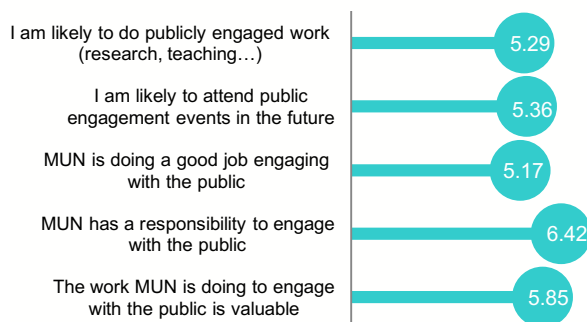
Figure 8A. 2019 "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements"
Respondent ratings ranged from 5.17 to 6.42 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Figure 8B. 2017 Mean ratings of public engagement by specific categories
Average respondent ratings were lower overall in 2017 in comparison to the 2019 survey

Figure 9. "Memorial has a responsibility to engage with the public"
89% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement
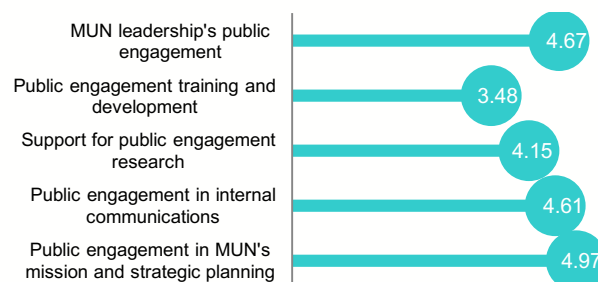
In addition to Memorial's responsibility, Memorial's fulfillment of public engagement was rated and interestingly, highly comparable to the 2017 survey, with some levels of agreement matching exactly (see Figure 10). In fact, 35% of respondents somewhat agreed, in both surveys, that Memorial was fulfilling their obligation to engage with the public. Most notable is the 8% increase in moderate agreement between faculty and staff from 2017 to 2019. This indicates that although not "strongly" agreed upon, Memorial has made improvements towards engaging the public, as recognized by faculty and staff.
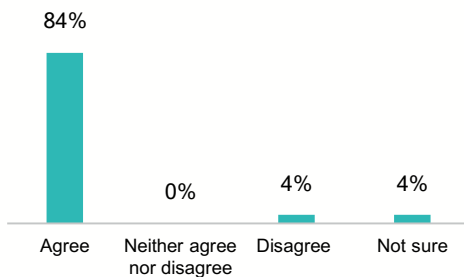
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

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4.4.2. Public Engagement Value

However committed, Memorial's public engagement is not meaningful unless the work is valuable to the public and the university. According to the 2019 survey, 84% of respondents agreed that Memorial's current public engagement initiatives are of high value, averaging a mean score of 5.85 out of 7 (second highest mean rating). Of that 84%, 27% strongly agreed to the statement. This opinion is consistent with responses from faculty and staff in 2017, whereby a large majority (82%) agreed that there is a high need for publi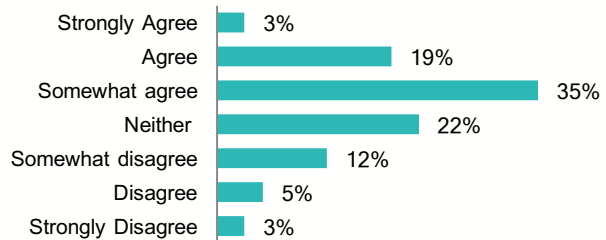c engagement at the university. However, more respondents in the 2017 survey expressed little value in the university's public engagement activities (16%; Figure 11A) compared to the current survey, where only 4% reported it as not valuable (Figure 11B).

Figure 10. "Memorial fulfills its public engagement comittment"
35% somewhat agree with the statement

Figure 11A. 2017 "I see little value in the university's public engagement activities"
2017 faculty and staff place public engagement at high value
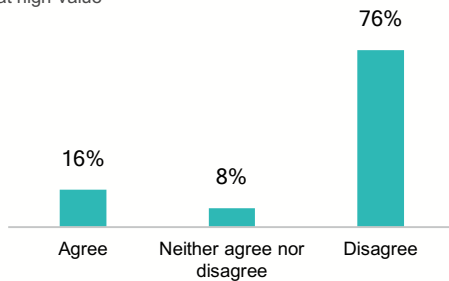
Figure 11B. 2019 "The work MUN is doing to engage with the public is valuable"
2019 faculty and staff agree that engagement work at MUN is valuable

4.5. Motivations for Engagement

To fully grasp public engagement involvement within the university, it is essential to analyze the reasons why people are interested in engaging in the first place. If certain motivations for engagement are common within faculty and staff, specific developments and improvements can be made according to those initial incentives. As such, the 2019 survey asked respondents to select a range of motivations they identified with (Figure 12). The most common motivation among faculty and staff was to make contributions to the community (17%), followed by the motivation to meet new people and network (14%), and to collaborate with the public to help solve problems locally (12%). Although the beneficiaries of each motivation differ, they all form the same outcome – increase connections within and outside of the university.

Among the lowest selected motivations were access to funding opportunities (6%), enhancing the quality and impact of research (7%), and enhancing teaching and learning for students (9%). Only 2% of respondents reported not being motivated at all. Common among these (least selected) motivations is the lack of involvement with the public community outside of academia, opposite to the highly selected motivators. These findings suggest that faculty and staff are in fact motivated by the true definition of public engagement – the mutual benefit of community and university partnerships, and as such, desire to build more of these partnerships in the future (see 4.7 for faculty and staff suggestions).
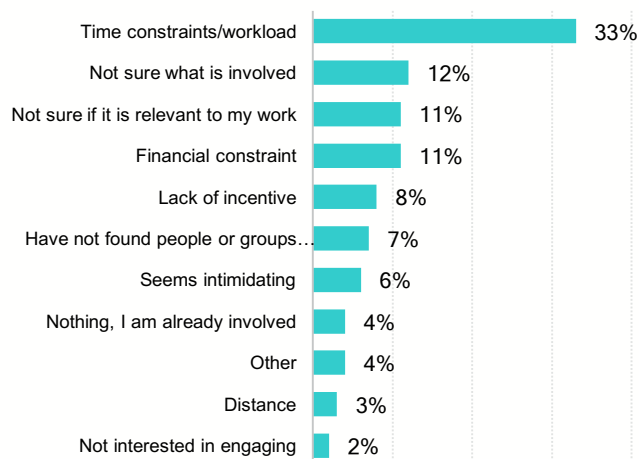
4.6. Barriers to Engagement

While the majority of faculty and staff have been involved in public engagement work to some extent, others may be limited to or prevented from collaborating with the public. Therefore, a key outcome of the 2019 survey was to identify those barriers preventing faculty and staff from involvement in public engagement activities. Figure 13 illustrates these responses. The measure overall had only half the amount of responses as the motivation measure, suggesting that barriers are not identified nearly as often as motivators. Time constraints and workload was reported as the leading barrier to

Figure 12. "What is your motivation for getting involved in publicly engaged activities?"
Contributing to the community was reported as the most common motivation

faculty and staff becoming publicly engaged (33%), 21% higher than the next leading barrier, "not sure what is involved". Notably, "not interested in engaging" was reported as the least common barrier, with only 8 respondents identifying as such (2%). This strengthens the suggestion that faculty and staff are justly motivated and desire to engage with the public, however, they report being prevented to do so by other means.

Lack of incentive was reported as a moderate barrier to faculty and staff, with only 8% of respondents identifying as such. This item in particular had a contrasting outcome compared to 2017 faculty and staff, whereby lack of recognition and incentive (specifically in promotion and tenure) was the most detrimental factor to public engagement.
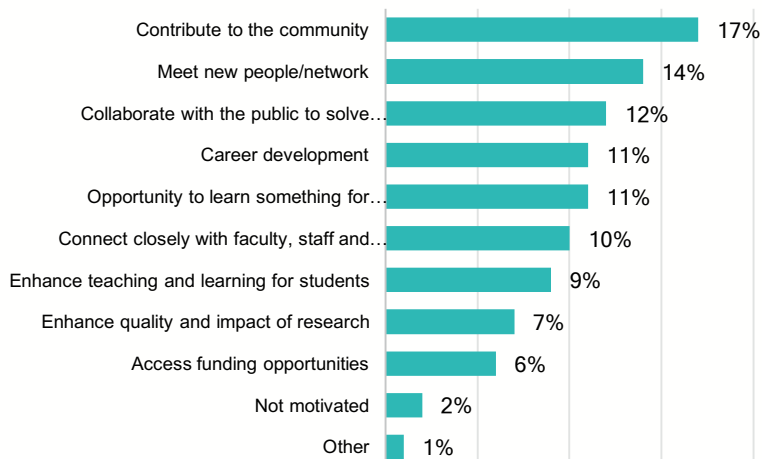
Figure 13. "What is currently preventing you from getting involved in PE activities?"
Time constraint was the leading barrier

Many of those who selected "other" stated that administration and organizational restriction prevent them from doing publicly engaged work. This was reported as the largest barrier in the "other" category. Following administration, lack of awareness of opportunities was reported as a barrier as well. Some participants are restricted do to disability and health related barriers.

From these findings, it is worth noting that some reported barriers can be addressed through Memorial, and improvements can be implemented in the future. However, some barriers are

outside of the university's control and may be more difficult to address, such as health disparities, intimidation, and distance. Accordingly, Memorial's efforts should be targeted at alleviating the maximum amount of barriers possible within university limits.

4.7. Suggestions to improve engagement

To provide an effective and summative evaluation, participants were asked to provide a single, most important, improvement suggestion to Memorial's public engagement efforts. Through series of inductive thematic analysis, 14 main themes emerged from those qualitative responses. Although seemingly numerous, the themes that emerged in the data differed greatly in the direction of improvement and the tools required for each. Therefore, all themes that are listed in Figure 14 were necessary for overall analysis. It should be noted that subtheme percentages reflect the frequency of that subtheme relative to the main theme in which they apply, and therefore, do not reflect total participant percentages. It should also be noted that some suggestions contain more than one theme, and are recorded as such. While the frequency of themes is accurate to the total number of suggestions, it is not accurate to the total number of participants.

Figure 14. "What is the single most important thing Memorial can do to improve how it engages with the public?"
The most common suggestion was to improve communications
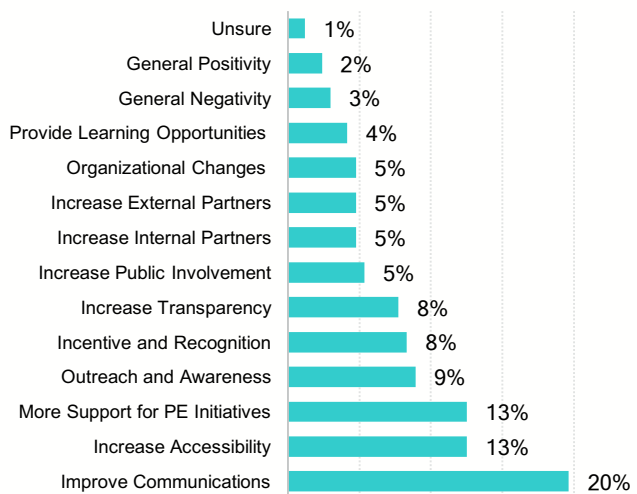
General Comments

"Continue to encourage researchers and students to do community engaged research."

"In a nutshell: go back to the grassroots."

"Finding ways to reach new people, groups, [and] associations. Expand community reach."

"Find a way to reach and educate those who would not come to public events at Memorial. Either because of distance, cost, means, or intimidation."

"Make it relatable to the general population."

"Hold more events [and] get the word out about the events."

"Improve Communications"

"Provide easy, consistent ways for the public to find out about what is happening at the university and how they can get involved."

"Support more opportunities, of all kinds for communication."

"Improve support for public $ investment in the university by better communicating to the public about research (types and outcomes)."

"Continue/ improve to advertise opportunities/ information in a clear and concise way."

"Get their message outside of the direct Memorial community."

4.7.1. Improve Communications

Improving communications amongst members within and outside of the university was the most uniform theme among all faculty and staff responses. This theme consisted of 20% of responses, and included subthemes such as advertisement (33%), social media use (12%), and general increases (55%). Overall, suggestions towards improved communications were centered on current and upcoming events, research and community-partnerships already happening. Figure 15 illustrates the main theme and subthemes, both of which are practical and attainable for the university to improve on.

Figture 15. Breakdown of "Improve Communications"
The most common subtheme was general increase

- Advertise ■ General ■ Social Media
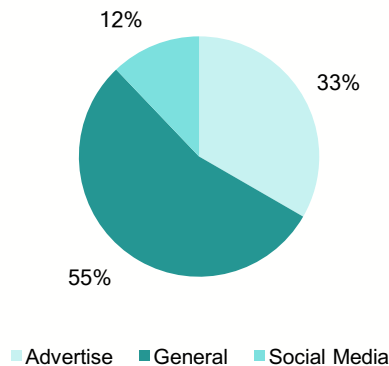
4.7.2. Increase Accessibility

Following improved communications, was the suggestion to increase accessibility for those who wish to do publicly engaged work. 13% of all open-ended responses were directed towards this theme, with multiple and varying subthemes. The leading suggestion related to general accessibility (38%), where many respondents did not provide a specific example. Affordability (29%) was the second most common suggestion, followed by language (14%) and inclusivity of diverse groups (14%). The majority of the suggestions towards increasing accessibility pertained to specific groups of people, most of which were a part of the public. Very few of these suggestions were directed towards increased accessibility for faculty and staff members, other than the subtheme of distance (5%).

"Increase Accessibility"

"Make the opportunities more accessible (as in reach more and different people, cost, physical access etc.)."

"Working inside Memorial I think we often forget that we speak our own language here, like [government] that is full of acronyms and methods that are not familiar [to] the public. Our communication has to consider people who are not familiar with how we do [things] within the university."

"… We have to allow or build in free parking for staff and visitors to the Signal Hill Campus for MUN related events."

"Be aware of accessibility issues and barriers to accessing engagement activities."

"More support for PE initiatives"

"Support staff members who have high academic credentials (i.e. PhDs) but are not in faculty positions, allowing them time to participate in public engagement activities regardless of whether or not the topic/event is directly related to their staff position."

"Empower faculty and students from other places to connect with community partners."

"Support new initiatives. Take risks with community centered [approaches]."

"Provide faculty and staff with adequate resources … [offer] a variety of avenues to get involved with the University through research projects, mentoring, hiring students, offering webinars, training opportunities, etc."

Figure 16. Breakdown of "Increase Accesibility"
Accessibility for the public was more commonly suggested than accessibility for faculty and staff
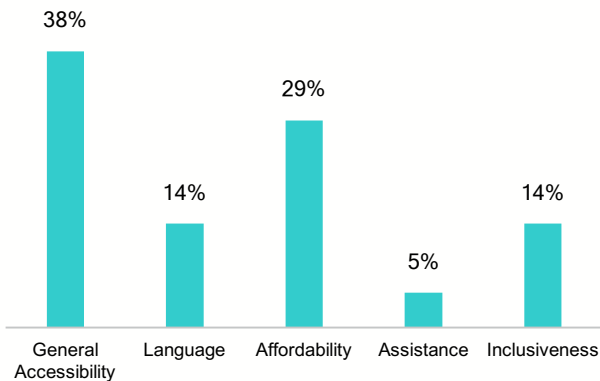
4.7.3. More Support for Public Engagement Initiatives

Another common theme among responses was the need for increased support towards public engagement activities. This theme was mentioned both in broad context and within specific areas. Figure 17 depicts these underlying subthemes. Evident from this figure is the proportion of respondents who identified a need for encouragement in publicly engaged work at Memorial (48%), although the sources of encouragement were not identified. Following this theme was the suggestion to increase events (38%) and broaden events (10%). The least common subtheme was to provide connections among the public and the university, again, without a source for connection identified (5%). years.

Figure 17. Breakdown of "More support for Public Engagement Initiatives"
Respondents suggested more encouragement for public engagement initiatives
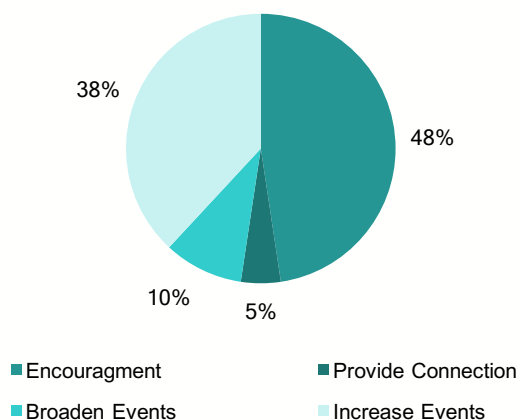
"Outreach and Awareness"

"Increase engagement with individuals and communities all over the province/outside the overpass."

"Build relationships, get more involved in community research and activities and events."

"Get outside of the University buildings. Be where the public is [for example]" community centers, public libraries, the Mall, etc…"

"Do outreach to rural NL in terms of societal and political deficiencies."

"Make public engagement activities fun and engaging and deeper into the community."

"Other Responses"

"Open up learning opportunities and make them available to the public (i.e. open courses; mini med school; micro credentials) for free."

"Provide more workshops and certificate programs like lifelong learning did."

"Keep on facilitating engagement; i.e. have someone from your office in charge of bringing together various stakeholders, take charge of writing grant applications etc."

"Provide personal improvement opportunities to the public through training/ knowledge sharing."

"More surveys like this."
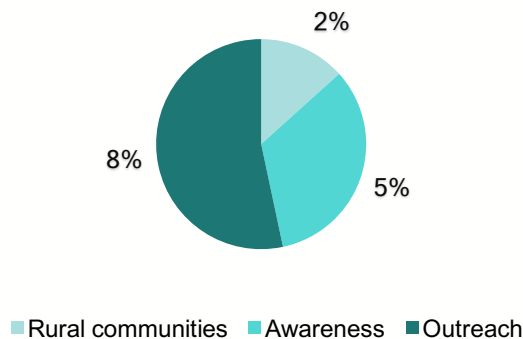
4.7.4. Outreach and Awareness

The fourth most commonly suggested improvement was to increase outreach and awareness among the public and its associated diverse communities (Figure 18). 53% of the suggestions were directed towards outreach initiatives, specifically those of varying communities such as rural Newfoundland and Labrador (13%). The remaining 33% of responses related to increasing awareness, that is, making the public and faculty and staff aware of public engagement opportunities, including OPE funding opportunities, public events, faculty research etc.

4.7.4. Other Responses

Aside from the four most common themes discussed earlier, other themes emerged that were more tailored and specific to certain areas of public engagement (see Figure 14). These subthemes included suggestions for improved incentive and recognition (8%), transparency (8%), public involvement (5%), internal (5%) and external (5%) partners, and organizational changes (5%). Many participants suggested more openness and honesty within the transparency subtheme, mainly directed to the institution as a whole and not just OPE. Some of the less common, but still present subthemes were: to provide more learning opportunities (4%), general negativity (3%), general positivity (2%), and those who were unsure what to suggest (1%). These subthemes were concluded from specific comments, particularly comments that had the respective subtheme titles in them.

Figure 18. Breakdown of "Outreach and Awareness"
Majority of suggestions were directed towards outreach efforts

2%

8%

5%

■ Rural communities ■ Awareness ■ Outreach

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through a reflective lens, the current evaluation report provides insight to the opinions of Memorial's faculty and staff members regarding the initiatives and strategies of public engagement at Memorial. Over a two-year duration, including two evaluation surveys, faculty and staff members reported an array of improvements, some of which include Memorial's responsibility to engage with the public and their fulfillment of that engagement.

Current knowledge of Memorial's public engagement work has proven to be highly regarded with the majority of faculty and staff respondents valuing Memorial's commitment to public engagement. Despite the recognition of Memorial's overarching engagement work, only some faculty and staff recognize the work of the OPE specifically, with even fewer reporting involvement in public engagement research projects. This poses as a two-fold discrepancy – either faculty and staff members are misinformed about their projects being publicly engaged, or the audience of the current survey are those who are not engaged, and thus, should be OPE's target demographic. With a large percentage of faculty and staff applying for OPE funds, it is evident that there is some disconnect between OPE and faculty and staff members, either in communication or knowledge mobilization. Therefore, efforts to disseminate OPE's opportunities and

resources should be considered and directed towards the university's internal community. This could be in terms of easier access to OPE knowledge (e.g., promotion of OPE to departments, designated liaisons of OPE and departments), or more comprehensive descriptions and context of OPE (e.g., "public engagement simulator" on OPE website, re-structure of PEF brochure).

Likewise, many faculty and staff members feel the need for education and training in public engagement at Memorial, and thus desire learning opportunities. Some suggestions include re-introducing life-long learning, creating learning modules and courses for faculty and staff, and integrating public engagement in undergraduate and graduate education. These recommendations, if implemented, would satisfy faculty and staff's desire for learning opportunities and possibly increase the motivation to do publicly engaged work by enhancing teaching and learning for students.

To date, there have been no evaluations comparing survey results across time from OPE, leaving this evaluation the first of its kind. Despite its informative outcome, a key barrier to this evaluation was consistency, particularly consistency among evaluation tools and methodology. As previously mentioned, the two surveys used in the current report were composed of varying context – one developed for faculty and staff exclusively, and the other directed towards a public audience with a faculty and staff stream. Although both targeting faculty and staff, the 2017 and 2019 surveys consisted of different questions and contained alternate wording, allowing only a reflection of trends rather than a direct comparison. In order to evaluate discrete measures (i.e., department membership among faculty and staff) exactly, and with significance, each measure must contain consistency across time and within items. Moreover, yearly evaluation in addition to comparison analyses should be administered through OPE to strengthen the evaluation and provide better recommendations. Reports of individual public engagement projects (e.g., case studies) should be used as a tool for assessment of value and level of publicly engaged work at Memorial, while simultaneously building partnerships among OPE and external members. This would serve as an additional evaluation method, and would provide OPE detailed opinions of internal or external partners through a microscopic lens.

Ultimately, the core missions of public engagement at Memorial have been recognized by faculty and staff have demonstrated improvements since its development in 2012. With the desire for growth, and commitment to serve the public good, Memorial should continue to expand its connection with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador while mobilizing the knowledge of public engagement. Despite the internal process of the PEF and OPE, the opinions of the public and the university offer integral standpoints for improvement, and should therefore continue to be included.

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APPENDIX A:

Figure 1. 2017 mean ratings of public engagement by specific categories

Public engagement in MUN's mission and strategic — 4.97

MUN leadership's public — 4.67

Public engagement in internal — 4.61

Public engagement in — 4.43

Support for public engagement in — 4.15

Public engagement in teaching and — 4.15

Rewards for public engagement — 4.05

Students' public engagement — 3.91

Support for public engagement in teaching and learning — 3.74

Public engagement training and developments — 3.48