Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR731

Title: **VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS**

Adopted: January 29, 2021
Effected: January 29, 2021
Revised: N/A
Reviewed: N/A
Authorization: Executive Council

1. RATIONALE

The Virtual Consultations Procedure (the "Procedure") upholds the Board's commitment to parent and community engagement in decision-making at the TDSB. The Procedure supports implementation of the Parent and Community Involvement Policy (P023) and the Community Engagement Policy (P078).

2. OBJECTIVE

To outline the process for organizing and implementing virtual public consultations at the TDSB.

3. DEFINITIONS

Board is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "TDSB".

Communication Platform is the TDSB licenced software used as the primary communication tool for public consultations (e.g., Zoom Meeting, Zoom Webinar).

Consultation is gathering public input, advice and feedback on alternatives and/or directions in order to inform decision-making.

TDSB is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "Board".

TDSB Information Technology (IT) Resources include but are not limited to computers, phones, tablets, cellular/mobile technology, computer applications, email, servers, networks, internet services, internet access including access to external websites, data and any other electronic or communication technology provided by the TDSB (regardless of the user's physical location) that exist today or may be developed in the future regardless of whether or not it may be used as a stand-alone device.

Virtual Consultation is consultation conducted via electronic means of communication.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

Associate Director, Business Operations and Service Excellence

5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Procedure applies to TDSB staff involved in organizing, managing and supporting virtual public consultations at the TDSB.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. General Requirements

Virtual public consultations will be conducted in accordance with applicable governing policies and procedures.

Staff will use the TDSB Information Technology (IT) Resources (defined in section 3 above) to organize, manage and support virtual public consultations.

Virtual consultations, consistent with the in-person consultations, may include:

- public meetings
- facilitated focus groups
- calls for public delegations to a standing committee of the Board of Trustees
- expert panel discussions
- surveying/polling
- posting materials on the TDSB website with a comment tool to solicit feedback
- emailing materials and using school messaging system to solicit feedback

6.2. Equity and Accessibility Considerations

To accommodate participants without media devices and/or access to internet, TDSB staff will use communication platforms that include telephone access capabilities.

TDSB staff where and when feasible will provide language and communication supports, e.g., interpretation, translation, sign language, closed captioning, etc., for participants, as required, when conducting virtual public consultations.

Interpretation and translation services can be requested by TDSB staff through accessing the internal website (http://tdsbweb.tdsb.on.ca/principals_site/Parent-and-Community-Engagement/Interpretation-Translation). The internal link details the steps to take when booking an interpreter and/or translator at the TDSB. It is

recommended that requests are made 5 business days in advance of the meeting in order to find a suitable translator and/or interpreter. For further information and assistance regarding translation and interpretation services, TDSB staff may contact the Parent and Community Engagement Office.

Staff will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports, as required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and will, upon request, provide or arrange for provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities.
In accordance with the TDSB Days of Significance Calendar, staff will take religious holidays and days of cultural significance into consideration when scheduling virtual public consultations to promote inclusion.

For meetings with limited capacity for participants, the TDSB will enhance accessibility for all participants by streaming meetings, e.g., YouTube Live.

6.3. Communication Platforms

Depending on the selected methods for consultations and expected number of participants, TDSB staff will use licensed communication platforms (e.g., Zoom Meeting or Zoom Webinar) to conduct virtual consultations. For Zoom Meeting and Zoom Webinar, the following capacity is permitted when conducting virtual consultations:

- Zoom Meeting – for consultations with up to 300 participants
- Zoom Webinar – for consultations with up to 1000 participants

To book a Zoom Webinar, please visit ServiceIT (https://serviceit.tdsb.on.ca), search for "Webinar" in 'How can we help?'. Select "Zoom Webinar Booking" from the list of results.

To supplement the main virtual communication platforms, staff will provide a dial-in teleconference option and may stream the meetings through YouTube Live.

When conducting online surveys/polls or engaging in discussion forums, staff will have access to approved platforms such as Google Forms, Qualtrics or Thought Exchange.

6.4. Staffing Requirements

When conducting virtual public consultations, individual departments will determine staffing requirements based on their consultation needs. It is recommended that large-scale consultations include: a moderator/facilitator, staff responsible for managing questions through chat function, and a staff member to take notes.

The IT department will provide technical support for large-scale public consultations involving licensed communication platforms (e.g., Zoom Webinar)

6.5. Security and Protection of Privacy

To ensure confidentiality, security and protection of privacy of participants, the TDSB will require pre-registration for all participants prior to conducting virtual public consultations. Meeting details will be shared only with pre-registered participants.

Settings on communication platforms such as Zoom Meeting or Zoom Webinar will be preconfigured by the IT department to protect the security and privacy of participants and their personal information.

With the exception of presenters and moderators, video cameras of participants will be disabled by default, unless participants have agreed to enable their cameras.

The in-meeting chat feature will be preconfigured by default when conducting virtual public consultations to allow participants communicate with staff and submit questions and comments during Question and Answer session.

By default, all participants will be placed in the virtual waiting room prior to the commencement of the virtual public consultation.

By default, participants who are not speaking, commenting, or presenting during virtual public consultations will be muted.

Consultation sessions may be recorded for dissemination to participants who were not able to attend the meeting. In the meeting invitation, TDSB staff must notify participants of any planned audio and video recordings prior to any public consultations and advise that all recordings are subject to legislative restrictions (e.g., Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act) and related TDSB policies (i.e., Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy (P094), Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy (P088).

6.6. Code of Conduct

All participants of the virtual public consultations are expected to maintain meeting decorum and abide by the requirements of the Board Code of Conduct (PR585) and the Code of Online Conduct (PR571).

Discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated. Participants exhibiting inappropriate conduct will be removed from the virtual public consultation by TDSB staff.

6.7. Invitations, Information Sharing and Feedback

Public consultation invitations will be provided in advance of the scheduled meetings.

In advance of the meeting, TDSB staff will provide information related to virtual public consultations, including the purpose of the consultation, instructions on using TDSB licensed communication platforms, guidance documents/slide shows for discussion, and relevant TDSB contact information.

The invitations must include a notice of the collection of personal information if the consultation session is expected to be audio or video recorded.

Following consultations, TDSB staff will, in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy (P078), provide stakeholders with updates on how their input has influenced decisions.

6.8. Training Related to Virtual Consultations

The TDSB Information Technology/Information Management department will provide IT training and support for staff on the use of communication platform(s) for virtual consultations as well as the software access required.

The TDSB Information Technology/Information Management department will determine the training format related to IT support for virtual consultations.

The TDSB Information Technology/Information Management department will have instructions for participants on the use of the virtual communication platform(s) that will be distributed in advance of or during the virtual consultation meetings.

7. EVALUATION

This Procedure will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every four (4) years after the effective date.

8. APPENDICES

- N/A

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*
- *Education Act*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*

Policies

- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy (P088)
- Accessibility Policy (P069)
- Community Engagement Policy (P078)
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy (P094)
- Parent and Community Involvement Policy (P023)

Procedures

- Board Code of Conduct (PR585)
- Code of Online Conduct (PR571)
- Community Engagement Procedure (PR704)
- Parent and Community Involvement Procedure (PR558)

Other Related Documents

- TDSB Days of Significance Calendar (https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/docs/DaysOfSignificance.pdf)