

National Collaborating Centre
for **Healthy Public Policy**

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How to Collaborate With Municipalities: A Practical Guide for Public Health Actors

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for Healthy Public Policy

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How to Collaborate With Municipalities: A Practical Guide for Public Health Actors

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About the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy

The National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (NCCHPP) seeks to increase the expertise of public health actors across Canada in healthy public policy through the development, sharing and use of knowledge. The NCCHPP is one of six centres financed by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The six centres form a network across Canada, each hosted by a different institution and each focusing on a specific topic linked to public health. The National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy is hosted by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), a leading centre in public health in Canada.

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Introduction

There is no shortage of reasons for public health actors to want to form ties with municipal governments, given the major role played by municipalities in shaping the living environments of their residents and the effects of these living environments on health. The reasons for forming ties with municipal actors can be more or less clearly defined and more or less ambitious: to learn from each other, to better coordinate respective actions, to propose a collaborative project that takes advantage of respective areas of expertise and capacities, or to try to make municipal policies healthier.

This practical guide is intended to support your efforts to establish and maintain relationships with municipalities. The advice presented here is based on interviews with public servants in Canadian municipalities (Morestin, 2019) and on a variety of other resources that explore the municipal world.¹ This guide also presents a selection of particularly interesting resources for further exploration of some of the subjects covered.

To get started, see Table 1 to determine which sections of the guide address your needs.² If you are unfamiliar with the municipal world, see also Box 1 regarding the levels of municipal government and Figure 1, which summarizes the typical structure of a Canadian municipality. This figure is based on the websites and organizational charts of several Canadian municipalities and various other sources (Comité québécois de formation sur les saines habitudes de vie [CQFSHV] & Québec en Forme, 2015a; Ontario Public Health Association [OPHA], Ontario Professional Planners Institute, & Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016a; Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017e; Sancton, 2015; Tindal, Nobes Tindal, Stewart, & Smith, 2016).

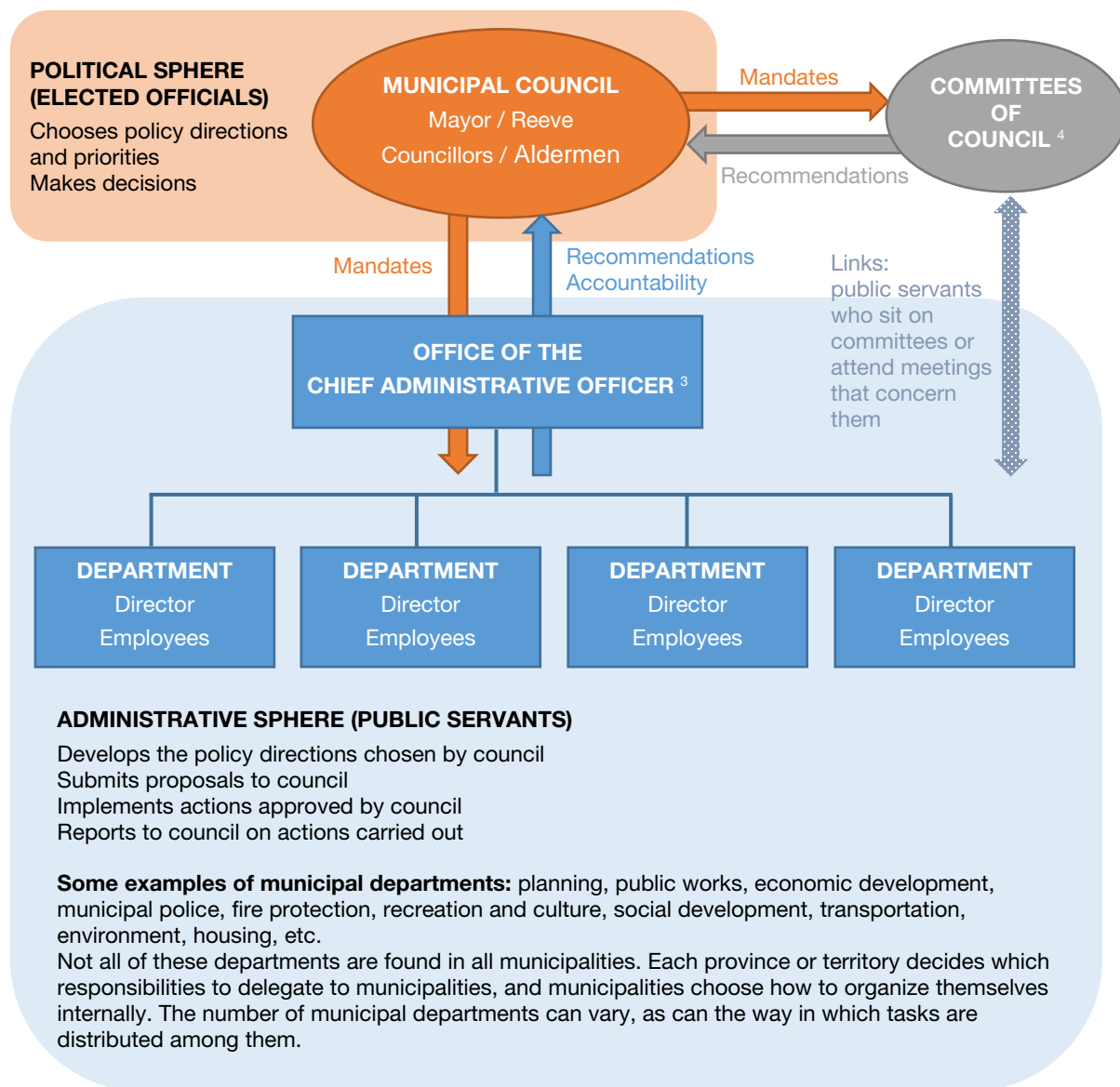
Table 1 **What is your situation?**

<p>Establishing an initial contact with a municipality ⇒ Refer to sections A to F</p> <p>These sections will also be useful if you wish to redirect an existing collaboration (for example, you are already in contact with one municipal department and you wish to approach another).</p>	<p>Sections of the practical guide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. What action is the municipality taking in your field of work? B. Who in the municipality should you approach? C. What do you know about existing contacts between the public health sector and the municipality? D. Who in your organization should be involved? E. How do you formulate your message to be heard? F. How should you initiate contact? G. How do you foster positive interactions? H. How do you maintain collaboration over time?
<p>Maintaining an existing collaboration ⇒ Refer to sections G, A, E and H</p>	

¹ Only these other resources are cited in this guide; in the absence of a citation, it should be understood that the information presented is based on the analysis of interviews published in Morestin (2019).

² In this guide, “you” may refer to you as an individual, or your team, or even your organization, as applicable. When it comes to establishing and maintaining relations with a municipality, some decisions are not made alone.

Figure 1 Typical structure and operations of a municipality (simplified)



In **small municipalities**, elected officials often serve on a part-time basis, and there is a smaller team of public servants. Some municipal departments do not exist, some are entrusted to a single person, and the chief administrative officer tends to be more involved in the details of case files.

³ Most municipalities in Canada have a Chief Administrative Officer (title may vary: City Manager, City Administrator; in French, *directeur général, directeur municipal*). This person is the most senior municipal public servant and acts as an intermediary between the municipal council and the municipal departments, which they oversee (in most municipalities, however, departmental directors also interact with the municipal council).

⁴ Most municipal councils establish committees to address specific issues (for example, a planning committee, an environment committee, an active transportation committee, a committee on aging). Their composition varies from one municipality to another and even from one committee to another; they may include elected municipal officials, municipal public servants, representatives of external organizations (governmental or other), and/or citizens. They provide an arena for public consultations.


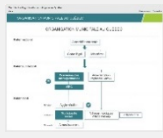
Box 1 – Approaching the municipality, or the municipalities: The various levels of municipal government

In some jurisdictions, there are several levels of municipal government:

- Borough-level administration/central municipality, as in some cities within Québec;
- Lower-tier municipality/upper-tier municipality, such as:
 - a regional municipality,⁵
 - a metropolitan community (for example, those of Montréal or Québec City) that groups together the municipality of a large city and the surrounding municipalities to manage issues of common concern;
- Municipality/planning district, in Manitoba.⁶

When we refer to “the municipality” in this guide, we are referring to the municipal level(s) involved in the case that concerns you.

➤ **Resources for further information:**

Source	Reference	Content
All provinces and territories Available in the official language(s) 	Departmental website that provides information about municipal affairs; can be searched for on the web using the keywords: <i>municipal affairs [name of your province or territory]</i> . The search engine will also provide equivalent results (department of municipal relations, local governments, etc.).	These websites often make available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maps of the municipalities' territories; ▪ explanations of how the municipal administration functions; ▪ where applicable, information on the various levels of municipal government.
Québec Available in French 	Comité québécois de formation sur les saines habitudes de vie & Québec en Forme (2015). <i>Organisation municipale au Québec</i> [Module 1 of the online training course <i>Introduction au milieu municipal</i>]. Available at: https://prendresoindenotremonde.com/2017/01/7-capsules-video-mieux-comprendre-realite-municipale/	Approximate duration 30 minutes. To be consulted if you plan to approach the City of Montréal, the City of Québec or surrounding cities, to better understand the multiple levels of municipal government that govern them (borough-level administration, local municipalities, regional county municipalities and metropolitan communities).

⁵ Regional county municipalities in Québec, regional municipalities or counties in Ontario and regional districts in British Columbia manage regional issues that are beyond the scope of intervention of the lower-tier municipalities within their territory.

The structure of these regional municipalities is similar to that of a municipality (see Figure 1), but the municipal council is replaced by an assembly (*conseil des maires*, regional council, county council or board of directors) made up of elected officials delegated by the municipal councils of member municipalities or persons elected directly by citizens.

Note that the terms regional municipality in Nova Scotia and county in Alberta do *not* refer to upper-tier municipalities.

⁶ Planning districts result from voluntary groupings of several municipalities and are responsible for adopting the district's development plan and for enforcing that plan along with certain planning bylaws of the member municipalities.

A. What action is the municipality taking in your field of work?

This is the first question that should be asked in order to verify the relevance of approaching a municipality, to begin determining more precisely with which actors to communicate, and to prepare to make contact in a strategic and constructive manner. Given the ongoing evolution of municipal work, this question also arises when re-contacting municipal actors or staying up to date in the context of an existing collaboration.

What do you already know about the actions being taken by this municipality in your field of work?

If possible, check with your colleagues to gather as much information as possible.

What do you have to learn?

- Formulate the questions you are asking yourself; if possible involve your colleagues to generate more ideas. These questions will guide your search for information. Box 2 suggests some questions to ask yourself.
- Even if your search for information is guided by a list of questions, you will probably discover aspects that had not occurred to you.
- Conversely, this research will probably not provide answers to all your questions. It is normal that your knowledge of municipal work will develop over time.

How can you inform yourself? Section B suggests ways to find out what action is being taken in the municipality and which actors are involved.

If you find that the municipality is not active in a field where you thought it would be, it may be because that field of action falls under the mandate of provincial/territorial or federal government, or under that of a special-purpose agency: a transit agency, school board, housing corporation, etc. (Lucas, 2013; Tindal et al., 2016).

It is also possible that the municipality only takes action at certain stages of a project: policy development, resource provision (funding, expertise, land or other assets) or implementation (Lucas & Smith, 2019a). For example: the municipality adopts an action plan to address homelessness and lends a building to community organizations to provide services to homeless persons; the municipality implements a provincial subsidy program for the creation of social housing (it processes subsidy applications for its territory).

In areas where responsibility is shared between several levels of government, the choices of municipalities are limited wherever they are obliged to comply with policy directions adopted by higher levels of government. This is the case, for example, in the area of land-use planning (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015b; OPHA et al., 2016a). Some of these policy directions may even run counter to the policy directions advocated by a municipality; for example, it is difficult for a municipality to design a street network that encourages public transit use if, at the same time, the provincial government prioritizes investment in infrastructure that encourages automobile use (Cleveland, 2019).

Depending on your objective, you may therefore need to re-evaluate the appropriateness of approaching a municipality. If necessary, find out what action is being taken by the relevant departments (provincial/territorial or federal) or special-purpose agencies.

Box 2 - Suggested questions to ask about municipal action

- What are the municipalities in the territory served by your organization? Are there different levels of municipal government (see Box 1): Borough-level administrations, lower-tier municipalities, regional municipalities, metropolitan communities, etc.?
- Which municipality/municipalities do you plan to approach? In the case of a multi-level municipal government, which levels are concerned by your area of work?
- Through what means does the targeted municipality take action in your area of work?

Means of action	Examples related to public health topics
Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipal development plan⁷ that aims to limit urban sprawl - Greenhouse gas emission reduction plan - Action plan to address unhealthy housing
Municipal bylaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning bylaw⁸ prohibiting the establishment of fast food outlets near schools - Bylaw governing the use of pesticides - Bylaw requiring retailers of vaping products to apply for a business licence
Municipal policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age-friendly policy - Active transportation policy - Food procurement policy integrating “nutrition” criteria for the food offered in sports facilities
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial assistance for registering for municipal recreational activities - Coordination of a public transit service in surrounding rural areas - Grants for the clean-up of contaminated lands
Direct interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sidewalk greening - Cutting down ragweed on municipal land - Installation of bicycle racks

- By reflecting on the municipality’s actions in your field of work, can you deduce its objectives? You may find that the apparent objectives are not consistent with the official objectives set out in municipal documents, or that the municipality’s actions run contrary to what public health is advocating, or that it is simply not taking action.
- Rarely does a subject require the involvement of a single municipal department. Which departments have an interest in your field of work? Which teams within these departments? Try not to consider only those municipal departments whose mission is most naturally aligned with public health objectives (Paquin, 2018). For example, proposing the creation of supervised injection sites on the municipality’s territory requires collaboration not only with the social development department, but also with the municipal police.
- Are there any committees of council whose mission relates to your area of work? What are they currently working on?

⁷ The municipal development plan (or official plan; in French, *plan d’urbanisme, plan d’aménagement municipal*) sets out the broad policy directions which must guide the municipality’s decisions regarding land-use planning.

⁸ The zoning bylaw divides up the municipal territory into zones and indicates which type of land use (residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, agricultural, etc.) is permitted in each zone.

- If several levels of municipal government or several departments or teams are involved, how are the tasks and roles distributed (planning, decision making, provision of financial or other resources, implementation, etc.)?
- Are the different groups involved pursuing the same objectives? If not, is it possible for one of them to impose its objectives on the others? For example, a higher level of municipal government or a municipal department whose proposals carry more weight with elected officials.
- Are the actions of the different levels, departments or teams involved coordinated – for example, through participation in the activities of a committee of council, or within the context of a working group, or by means of official mechanisms for cooperation between levels of the municipal government?

B. Who in the municipality should you approach?

How can you find out who does what in the municipality in relation to your field of work?

- Study the **municipality's website**, and in particular:
 - available documents: reports, plans, municipal policies and bylaws, information on current programs and projects;
 - if one exists, the section of the website devoted to citizen engagement,⁹ since it describes municipal projects that are being developed;
 - municipal departments' respective missions and, if the information is available, the names and responsibilities of the public servants who work in them;
 - the mandate of the committees of council and the names of their members, in particular the municipal councillors and public servants who sit on them;
 - agendas and minutes of municipal council and committee meetings (to understand the decision-making processes, to keep abreast of the municipality's current concerns, and to identify elected officials and public servants involved in the issue of interest to you);
 - the municipal budget (to find out how spending is distributed and what portion is devoted to the area of interest to you);
 - announcements of events such as consultations or public meetings for sharing information on the municipality's projects.
- Follow the municipality's news by monitoring its own communications (**press releases, social media**) and its coverage in the **media**, including local newspapers.
- Participate in **municipal events** related to your area of work (public meetings, consultation sessions, launches). Note that these events, intended primarily for citizens, often take place outside working hours.
- Attend a **municipal council meeting** if items related to your area of work appear on the agenda. These meetings are usually open to the public and some municipalities webcast them.
- Consult the websites of **professional associations or orders** to which certain types of municipal public servants belong (for example: planners, engineers, municipal administrators). If the members directory is available, you may be able to find the names of public servants in the municipality that interests you.
- **Be guided by someone:**
 - public health colleagues or other work partners who have already interacted with the municipality with regard to a related topic;
 - a municipal public servant with whom you've already established a connection, even informally: regardless of which department this person works in, they may be able to redirect you to the persons involved in the issue of interest to you;

⁹ A few examples: <https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/> (Ville de Québec; in French only); <https://overtoyou.greatersudbury.ca/> (City of Greater Sudbury); <https://www.engagestjohns.ca/> (City of Saint John's); <https://engage.calgary.ca/> (City of Calgary).

- a departmental director, the chief administrative officer or a municipal councillor. These individuals are identified on municipal websites and can redirect you to the public servants working on a particular issue who are not always themselves named on the websites.
- Ask decision makers in your organization to organize an **event to establish contact** with key municipal departments so that employees can meet, learn about each other's work and exchange contact lists.

You increase your chances of understanding what the municipality is doing and identifying relevant contacts by exploring several of these avenues. Municipal actors appreciate your making the effort to inform yourself using the means available to you. Subsequently, most of them are open to answering your questions to refine your understanding of the issues that interest you.

How do you decide who to approach first among those identified?

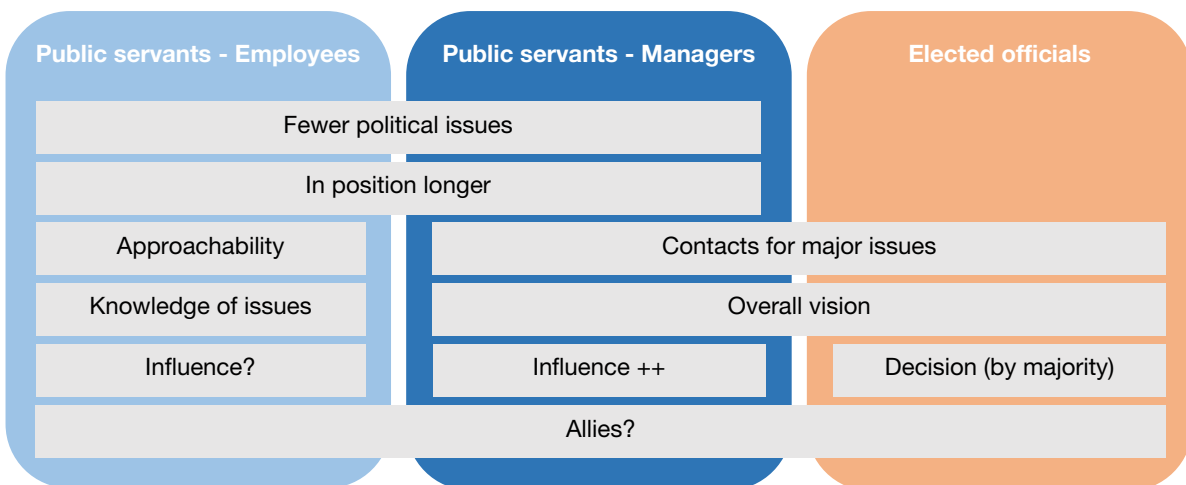
These individuals may include public servants (either employees or managers) or elected officials, contacts from different municipal departments and, in some cases, from different levels of municipal government. A few factors, summarized in Figure 2 (page 11), can help you choose your first contacts; assess which of these factors are most important given your situation:

- **Position with respect to the political sphere:** for science-based organizations, approaching elected officials raises more issues than approaching public servants (Paquin, 2018). What is your organization's position on this issue? Who in the organization is authorized to approach elected municipal officials? If you are so authorized, are you comfortable doing so?
- **Respect for the hierarchical structure:** it may be necessary to approach the political hierarchy (municipal council or mayor) or the administrative hierarchy (departmental directors or even the chief administrative officer) if you wish to discuss major issues or if it seems that municipal employees need to feel authorized to follow up on your attempts to approach them (Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017e).
- **Length of time in the position:** municipal public servants often remain in their positions longer than elected officials, whose position is at stake at the end of their mandate. When will the next municipal elections be held? Considering what you hope to accomplish with the municipality, do you have enough time to work with the elected officials currently in office? Take into account their interest in your area of work, their openness, their willingness to act and the time required for the municipal decision-making process – which should not be underestimated, considering that the administrative sphere will also be called upon to prepare the case file. This analysis could prompt you to quickly take advantage of a favourable political context or, on the contrary, to prepare the ground with public servants while waiting for a window of opportunity to open.
- **Knowledge of issues:** on a day-to-day basis, it is the employees who work to advance municipal case files – although in small municipalities with small teams, managers are also involved (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015a). Elected officials who are members of committees of council also develop a certain degree of specialization (Tindal et al., 2016). On the other hand, it may be strategic to go through the chief administrative officer if the initiative you are proposing requires the collaborative involvement of several municipal departments – for example, to create environments that promote healthy living (Sasseville, 2014). Would you prefer a specialized contact or a contact with an overall vision, such as an elected official or a manager?
- **Approachability and availability:** as in any organization, employees can be expected to be easier to approach and more available than the senior hierarchy. As for elected officials, they must be available to respond to citizens' requests: this is part of their role. However, their schedules are




often very busy, especially in small municipalities where they serve on a part-time basis (Chantier sur l'évolution des pratiques, 2015; Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017c; Sancton, 2015).

- Decision-making power:** municipal public servants have considerable power of influence; their recommendations are often adopted by elected officials (Sancton, 2015; Tindal et al., 2016). Managers are obviously well-placed: they are elected officials' usual contacts; they are the ones who present recommendations. In smaller municipalities, however, even non-managerial public servants have opportunities to interact with elected officials. That said, it is the municipal council that ultimately makes decisions by a majority vote of councillors, and its commitment is necessary to support major initiatives (Sasseville, 2014). In the municipality that you wish to approach, what is the quality of relationships between the public servants involved in your field of work and the elected officials? If several municipal departments are involved, how much influence do they have, respectively, on elected officials? It is difficult to "read" these situations from the outside, but you can stay alert to certain indications; for example, the tenor of exchanges between elected officials and public servants during a public meeting, or hints made by a public servant during a discussion with you. If the subject of interest to you involves several levels of municipal government, consider their power dynamics as well.
- Seeking allies:** with regard to the subject you wish to discuss, do your organization's objectives diverge from those of certain municipal actors? How do you think your organization is perceived by the various municipal actors concerned? And how do you think you are perceived personally (for example, if you have publicly expressed expert opinions that call into question some of the municipality's actions)? You might choose to first approach municipal actors whose positions are more compatible with your own or who appear better disposed toward you (for example, a team of public servants or certain elected officials) and jointly prepare a strategy for approaching the other persons involved (Chantier sur l'évolution des pratiques, 2016; Lemire, 2020).
- Number of contacts:** if your area of work concerns several municipal actors (departments, committees, etc.), do they communicate well with each other? Would it be more appropriate for you to approach all of them or for you to have a single contact who will communicate internally with the others?

Figure 2 Who to approach first: summary of respective advantages



➤ **Resources for further information:**

Source	Reference	Content
<p>Ontario</p> <p>Can search in English or in French</p> 	<p>Search engine of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario</p> <p>https://www.amcto.com/amcto/googlesearchpage.html</p>	<p>Allows simultaneous searching of the websites of all Ontario municipalities or categories of municipalities (small vs. large, regional location).</p> <p>Useful to get a general idea of what different municipalities are doing with respect to a given subject. However, the search lacks precision. Can be used as a first step before conducting more specific searches directly on municipal websites.</p>
<p>Ontario</p> <p>Available in English</p> 	<p>Niedra, N. (2014). <i>Review of Council meeting minutes</i> [section of a presentation organized by Public Health Ontario]. Available at: http://www.ncchpp.ca/docs/BergeronNiedraMunicipalDecisionMakersMarch2014wdisclaimer.pdf</p>	<p>Slides 15 to 30.</p> <p>Presents several tools and tips for analyzing the policy positions and actions of a municipality and its elected officials, in particular by reviewing the minutes of municipal council meetings.</p>
<p>Québec</p> <p>Available in French</p> 	<p>Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde (2017f). <i>Articuler l'influence politique et administrative</i> [Module 6 of the online training course <i>Réalité municipale</i>]. Available at: https://prendresoindenotremonde.com/2017/01/7-capsules-video-mieux-comprendre-realite-municipale/</p>	<p>Duration: About 20 minutes.</p> <p>Video excerpts of interviews with various actors (managers, a non-managerial employee, a mayor) from municipalities of different sizes and a regional county municipality. They talk about the relations between the political sphere and the administrative sphere.</p>

C. What do you know about existing contacts between the public health sector and the municipality?

The contact you wish to establish with the municipality is new for your team, but perhaps not for **other teams in your organization**. There are two important advantages to consulting them before approaching the municipality:

- To take advantage of their experience. These other teams can:
 - inform you about the history of relations between your organization and the municipality and its negative or positive impacts: points of tension between the organizations, lack of interest in collaboration following a less than successful experience or, on the contrary, favourable dispositions (Lemire, 2020);
 - inform you about what action the municipality is taking in your field of work;
 - advise you on strategies for making contact;
 - and perhaps introduce you to some municipal actors.
- To avoid overburdening municipal actors with requests (Sasseville, 2014), or worse, conveying messages that might seem contradictory to them. This requires you to coordinate your respective approaches to the municipality with other teams (timing, contacts, priorities expressed) and even, in some cases, to approach jointly. Working together internally enables you to move beyond the focus of each person's expertise to arrive at a more global view of the issues and develop a discourse that is better aligned with the broader concerns of municipalities, particularly that of promoting quality of life (Sasseville, 2015).

It is also beneficial for **public health organizations at different levels** to engage in such collaborative work, particularly local and regional organizations working in the same territory (Sasseville, 2015).

Finally, it would be useful to identify the **other actors (public or community actors, private foundations)** likely to collaborate with the municipality on the same issue as you, and to try to consult with them – starting with your own partner organizations (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015c; Prendre soin de notre monde, 2016).

D. Who in your organization should be involved?

As indicated in section B, in some situations it is necessary to approach elected officials or municipal managers. In such cases, consider whether a **peer-to-peer contact within the hierarchical structure** would be preferable (for example, between the director of a department in your organization and the director of a municipal department; or between the medical officer of health and the mayor or chief administrative officer). The choice of the person to involve depends on the objective of the process. For example, a public health professional may contact the director of a municipal department to be redirected to the employee on their team who is in charge of a particular issue; on the other hand, to discuss a situation that is a source of considerable tension between the municipality and your organization, it would be essential to involve the senior hierarchy on both sides.

Often, relationships between organizations begin in a more informal way, through contacts between professionals. Nevertheless, ask yourself if you need to get **permission from your senior hierarchy** before approaching the municipality. This may depend on the culture in your organization, the subject being discussed, or the context.

Moreover, the **support of managers** at various levels in your organization is required to maintain a certain level of collaboration with a municipality. They are the ones who can ensure that the required activities are added to your tasks and responsibilities, that some of your time is freed up for them and, in some cases, that you can participate in activities that take place at atypical times or involve going out in the field (Lemire, 2020; Sasseville, 2015). The involvement of the senior hierarchy is also required to endorse collaborative work between different teams in your organization, as recommended in section C.

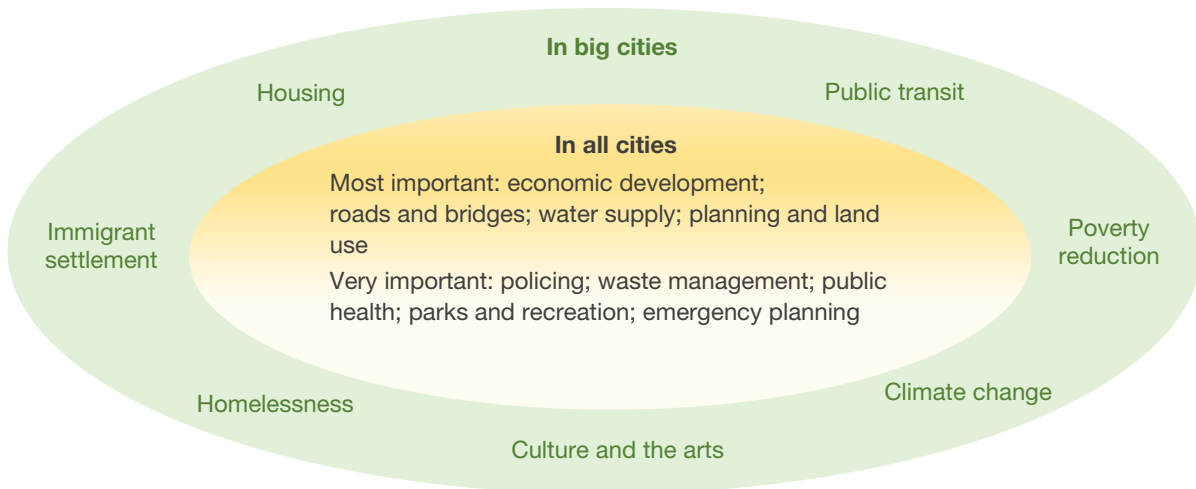
E. How do you formulate your message to be heard?

Underscore how it relates to the concerns of your contacts

Figure 3 shows the fields of action that Canadian elected municipal officials consider important (Lucas & Smith, 2019b). Across the board, a central priority for all municipal actors, elected officials and public servants, is to improve the quality of life of citizens (Chantier sur l'évolution des pratiques, 2015; Léger, 2018). In addition to their priorities, municipal actors have concerns related, for example, to the expansion of municipal responsibilities without a proportional increase in their financial and human resources; the maintenance of aging infrastructure (roads, water systems, etc.); the growing expectations of citizens; the decline of certain rural areas; the increase in requests from other stakeholders (including public health); and the resulting feeling of overload (Chantier sur l'évolution des pratiques, 2015; Lemire, 2017; Marion, Bolduc, Lauzon, & Bernardin, 2018; Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017a; Sancton, 2015; Sasseville, 2014).

Your search for information (as suggested in sections A, B and C) will provide you with more specific information about the issues of concern to the municipality that interests you. You may notice differences between the concerns of elected officials and those of public servants, between those of public servants in different departments, or between those of different elected officials.

Figure 3 The issues considered important to elected municipal officials in Canada¹⁰
(Lucas & Smith, 2019b)



¹⁰ Survey of mayors and municipal councillors of Canadian cities with over 5,000 inhabitants.

Knowing the concerns of your contacts enables you to strategically formulate your message (or different messages for different contacts):

- If appropriate, explain how the proposed initiative can offer a **response to citizens' demands** (Chantier sur l'évolution des pratiques, 2015, 2016).
- Highlight your **shared objectives**. An effective way to do this is to call attention to the way health is mentioned in municipal documents, for example in the municipal development plan. If these documents do not explicitly refer to health, it is useful to highlight the convergence between health promotion and improving quality of life, which is an overarching objective in the municipal sector.
- Demonstrate how a public health objective can indirectly **support the municipality's objectives**. For example, adapting to climate change, or creating a more attractive environment for tourism, or for other sectors of the economy, or for new residents – with the potential benefit of increasing revenue from property taxes and, in rural areas, supporting repopulation and local development (Lees, Philippe, Redman, & Berland, 2008; Prendre soin de notre monde, 2016; Sasseville, 2014).
- Emphasize the **advantages of collaborating with public health**, such as helping to extend the municipality's influence and that of its elected officials, or strengthening the capacity to act by pooling expertise and material and financial resources (Léger, 2018; Ontario Public Health Association [OPHA], Ontario Professional Planners Institute, & Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016b; Sasseville, 2014). Collaboration would thus appear to offer a solution to some of the concerns of municipal actors.
- **Acknowledge the legitimacy of their concerns**, to the extent that this is acceptable from your point of view, when their positions diverge from yours. Examples of such concerns include: the profitability of the municipal arena's cafeteria (a source of revenue for a small municipality) if healthy choices are found to sell less well; and the opposition of some citizens and local businesses to the establishment of supervised injection sites. The aim is to start a dialogue so that together you can find common ground.

Put foremost elements that municipal actors consider to be useful

- If you are proposing a new intervention, provide **examples of other comparable municipalities** where this type of intervention already exists (Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017d; Sancton, 2015). Actors in small rural municipalities, in particular, deplore the fact that the most studied and promoted examples often come from big cities and are not always applicable to their context (Sasseville, 2014).
- Talk about **your experience guiding other municipalities** through implementation of the proposed intervention: this is a reassuring factor for municipal actors, especially when the proposed field of action is new to them (Lemire, 2020).
- Rely on **local data** or **data from comparable settings** (similar municipalities in the same province or, failing that, elsewhere in Canada). For example: the results of a survey you conducted in the municipality itself; data on how your proposed intervention has improved some aspect of quality of life (related to health) in another municipality with the same characteristics as the one you are approaching (for example, a medium-sized municipality with large social disparities between neighbourhoods, located on the outskirts of a large urban centre).

- Based on your knowledge, formulate **precise, concrete and contextualized recommendations**, that is, adapted to the specifics of the local context and related to fields of action or activities already underway and to the municipality's intervention tools (Lees et al., 2008; Lemire, 2020; Sasseville, 2015): “[Learning about the municipality’s bylaws, standards, and guidelines] allows you to get into constructive discussions about where do things need to get fixed [...] We know you want a healthy community, we want one too, but you need to find a way of getting the discussion focused on the pieces that matter, rather than the principles of what you're wanting to achieve” (municipal planner, quoted in Morestin, 2019).
- Frame your message using a format that reflects the **current culture of the municipality**. For example, Hagan (2019) mentions that, in the area of environmental action, proposals made when a mayor who showed little sensitivity to the subject was in office in Toronto were nevertheless accepted because they were presented in the form of a business case. The same author observed a culture of targets and performance indicators in another municipality – another example of language that can be strategically used if it is the language of your contacts.

Make use of what your contacts may be expecting from public health

Some municipal actors expect the following from public health (Paquin, 2018; Sasseville, 2014):

- **well-established expertise** that can expand their knowledge about subjects they are less familiar with;
- **detailed knowledge of the realities on the ground** (health and social data collected by your organization through its regular surveillance activities or surveys; knowledge about the territories they serve possessed by front-line public health workers);
- evidence about **effective interventions**;
- **new ideas** on how to approach certain problems;
- **credibility** they hope to use to convince actors:
 - within the municipality. For example, the sports and recreation department can use the healthy living argument to emphasize the importance of its role to elected officials or to other municipal departments;
 - outside the municipality. For example, the public health argument can be used with citizens or other stakeholders to legitimize some of the municipality’s actions.

If your contacts have a specific expectation, present your contribution in a way that meets that expectation.

On the other hand, be careful to **counteract possible prejudices**, in particular the idea that public health might impose things on the municipality, an idea that sometimes stems from past experiences, for example with programs that have binding rules. Explain that, on the contrary, you want to be in a position to support the municipality in meeting its needs (Sasseville, 2015; L. Teasdale, personal communication, March 4, 2020).

“Translate” the knowledge you are sharing to make it accessible

- **Avoid jargon** (terms that are not well understood outside the public health field).
- Adapt the message to the **prior level of knowledge** of your contacts, given their profession, their degree of familiarity with public health and with research (if that is what you are presenting to them). If you have several contacts, the needs may vary from one to the other.
- Propose a **digestible format**, whether written or oral. In this regard, it is relevant to segment the message: for the first contact, start with a concise message highlighting why the subject being discussed is relevant to your contact. Leave the details for later in the conversation.

How do you go about this?

The search for information suggested in sections A, B and C (and in Box 3, if you wish to contact several municipalities) is essential, but will not immediately provide you with everything you need to communicate optimally with municipal actors. Your efforts to learn about the municipal sector, and the subsequent adaptation of your messages, should continue once contact with the municipality has been established.

Moreover, once a relationship of trust has been formed with certain contacts, it is useful to ask for their help in “reading” situations, in formulating messages, or even in circulating these messages within the municipality. Public servants, in particular, are used to thinking about how to frame the messages they present to elected officials (see for example Hagan, 2019), and they are in a better position than you are to do so, despite the fact that misunderstandings can exist within municipalities themselves, between the political and administrative spheres (Constantinou, 2017).

Box 3 – Contacting several municipalities

If you are interested in the municipal sector at a regional or provincial level (rather than in a specific municipality), you can learn about issues of concern to municipal actors by visiting the websites:

- of **associations of municipalities**: Federation of Canadian Municipalities, associations of municipalities in your province or territory (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015c);
- of **professional associations or orders** to which some municipal public servants belong (planners, engineers, municipal administrators, etc.).

Subscribing to the newsletter or social media accounts of a few key associations is a good way to keep up to date. Pay attention, among other things:



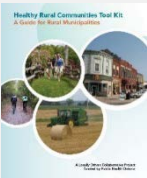
- to the themes of training activities and events that these associations organize – and where relevant, attend them (OPHA et al., 2016b);
- to promising municipal practices or interventions that are of interest from a public health perspective and that you could cite as examples;
- to announcements of programs (governmental or other) intended for the municipal sector, but for which a partnership with public health would be justified or could even be an asset (Lemire, 2020).

Analyze this information by type of municipality: is it relevant to small or large municipalities, in densely populated or remote regions, etc.? In fact, some provinces (Alberta, New Brunswick, Québec, Saskatchewan) have separate associations of municipalities to reflect these differences (Sancton, 2015).

You could ask professional or municipal associations to distribute to their members a document you have produced or an invitation to an event you are organizing. You could even propose an activity as part of an association conference (Lees et al., 2008; Léger, 2018; Sasseville, 2014). This type of broad approach can raise awareness among municipal actors. On the other hand, to arrive at concrete action, it is more effective to contact actors in a specific municipality.

Where **upper-tier municipalities** exist, these can also be a channel through which to reach their member municipalities. However, you should check whether the subject that interests you falls under their mandate or, at least, under one that is shared with member municipalities (see sections A and B). Moreover, going through an upper-tier municipality can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is an opportune place to pool resources and plan actions in a coherent manner at the regional level; on the other hand, it can be a locus of tension between member municipalities when some feel that their interests are under-represented, that decisions are imposed on them, or that resources are unfairly distributed (Lemire, 2017, 2020; Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017b; Sancton, 2015; Sasseville, 2014).

➤ Resources for further information:

Source	Reference	Content
<p>Advice of municipal public servants who have worked in Newfoundland and Labrador, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia</p> <p>Available in French and English</p>	<p>Morestin, F. (2019). <i>Approaching municipalities to share knowledge: Advice from municipal civil servants to public health actors</i>. Montréal, QC: National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy. Available at: https://www.ncchpp.ca/181/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=1948</p>	<p>50 pages.</p> <p>Contains numerous quotes from participating public servants. Reading their remarks helps build awareness of their situation and of their needs and expectations.</p> <p>Also sheds light on the functioning of the municipal sector, in particular the relationship between the administrative and political spheres.</p> 
<p>Québec</p> <p>Available in French</p> 	<p>Marion, D., Bolduc, C., Lauzon, B., & Bernardin, P. (2018). <i>Le milieu municipal en transformation : y-a-t-il une place pour la qualité de vie?</i> [Debate filmed on December 5, 2018 during the <i>Journées annuelles de santé publique du Québec</i>]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7Nxqbtm7C0&t=212s</p>	<p>Video (29 minutes).</p> <p>The warden of a regional county municipality, a mayor and a chief administrative officer discuss current issues facing municipalities.</p>
<p>Canada</p> <p>Available in French and English</p> 	<p>Canadian Institute of Planners (2018). <i>Policy on healthy communities planning</i>. Ottawa, ON. Available at: http://cip-icu.ca/Files/Policy-2018/policy-healthy-eng-FINAL.aspx</p>	<p>11 pages.</p> <p>Useful for gaining familiarity with the way planners approach the subject of health. You could borrow arguments and vocabulary from this when formulating messages to municipal planners.</p> <p>The English version of the website provides access to other resources for this topic: http://cip-icu.ca/Healthy-Communities</p>
<p>Ontario</p> <p>Available in English</p> 	<p>Caldwell, W. J., Kraehling, P., Kaptur, S., & Huff, J. (2015). <i>Healthy rural communities tool kit—A guide for rural municipalities</i>. Guelph, ON: University of Guelph. Available at: https://www.ruralhealthycommunities.ca/toolkit</p>	<p>68 pages.</p> <p>Describes healthy initiatives (related to a variety of topics) undertaken in rural municipalities in Ontario. If you are approaching rural municipalities, you may find here relevant examples from comparable settings.</p>

F. How should you initiate contact?

When to make contact

If possible, initiate contact at a time that is opportune from the point of view of municipal actors. Some moments are to be seized when they arise, others are recurring and predictable.

- **Times when municipal actors are interested in the subject** you wish to discuss or in a related subject. Hence the importance of keeping abreast of:
 - the **agendas** of meetings of the municipal council and its committees;
 - **municipal information or public consultation events** – however, at this stage, the development of municipal projects is often quite advanced and it is more difficult to redirect them (Paquin, 2018);
 - **social current affairs and issues in the media spotlight**, when the municipality is called upon to act (especially during crises) and is seeking solutions;
 - **news from the municipal sector**, in the publications of associations of municipalities (see Box 3 on page 21): announcements of funding programs, new regulations or laws applicable to the municipal sector, etc.
- **Municipal budget planning:** if what you are proposing requires the municipality to commit resources, you need to consider the budgeting process – described in Box 4 (Lees et al., 2008). Some municipalities consult their citizens during this process (public meetings, online survey, dedicated social media tool, dedicated email address or phone line). However, municipal actors will probably listen more closely to you if you meet with them well in advance to set the stage. Dates for major steps in the budgeting process are announced on municipalities' websites; contact them several months before the budget is expected to be tabled (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015a). In this context, it would be astute to present evidence demonstrating that what you are proposing is a good investment (Williams, 2019).
- **Periodic review of municipal documents**, for example, the municipal development plan, which is reviewed every x years. Here again, municipalities often consult their citizens, but only once the review process is fairly advanced. It is best to make contact in advance to propose your contribution.
- **Municipal elections:**
 - Before elections, candidates are looking for ideas that will make them stand out, ways to make municipal action more effective (Williams, 2019). Establish contact several months before elections so that your proposals have time to gain some ground.
 - In the weeks following elections, newly elected officials, along with public servants, are looking for ideas on how to implement the initiatives proposed during the election campaign and achieve the announced objectives. On the other hand, if the promises made run counter to public health positions, there is still time to try to redirect them (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015c; Williams, 2019).

Another aspect to consider is the **availability** of the municipal actor you wish to approach, especially if you want to discuss a subject that is unrelated to their current concerns.

- Can you pinpoint the most opportune times? For example, times of year that are less busy for their activity sector (consider the winter for public servants in the parks department).
- Inversely, are there times to be avoided because that contact is busy doing something else, such as managing a crisis or handling the crucial stages of a major issue?

Box 4 – Developing the municipal budget (as described in Sancton, 2015)

Municipal departments submit their requests, which are reviewed by the chief administrative officer. In some municipalities, certain committees of council are involved at this stage. The proposed budget is then formally presented to the municipal council, either by the administration or by a committee. It is then discussed by certain committees or by the municipal council. It is the latter that gives the final approval – often without major changes, since controversies usually arise only in relation to a few specific budget items.

How to make contact

Municipal actors are used to being approached by citizens and other stakeholders. The ways to contact them are simple and usually well received:

- Send them an **email** or **call them**;
- Send them a **letter**, if you want to make things more official;
- **Invite them** as participants or speakers to an activity you are organizing (for example, a workshop for discussing findings from your work or a round table);
- Approach them on the periphery of **municipal events** (public meetings, consultation sessions, launches);
- Approach them at a **meeting of an intersectoral consultative body** to which they belong, such as the Healthy City for All Leadership Table in Vancouver or the *Tables de développement social* in Québec (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015c). You will need to be introduced by your organization's (or a partner organization's) representative on the consultative body in this case.

As noted in section B, in certain cases it is preferable for decision makers in your organization to establish the initial contact with their counterparts in the municipality.

Note that the initial approach only serves to establish contact, with the aim of setting up a meeting to discuss the subject concerned in greater detail. Also, the first person approached is often not the person you will be working with, but someone who, due to circumstances, is more accessible – whether they be a professional from another municipal department, the director of the department you are interested in, or an elected official. The goal is to ask them to redirect you to the persons responsible for handling the issue that interests you.

If you have not received an answer a few weeks after your first attempt to communicate, it is perfectly acceptable to try contacting individuals again (Chantier sur l'évolution des pratiques, 2016).

Be mindful of first impressions

The first impression is often crucial in determining whether those approached will follow up on your request for contact. In particular, be sure to:

- **Avoid direct criticism.** This is an issue for municipalities in particular, one reason being that they are the level of government most accessible to citizens for expressing complaints.
- **Demonstrate that you have informed yourself** about the work the municipality is doing. Your effort to research the work of the person being approached will be appreciated, even if you still have a lot to learn.
- **Demonstrate an understanding of and respect for** the municipality’s capacities, its obligations and the fact that municipal actors often feel overburdened with requests (Marion et al., 2018; Sasseville, 2014)..
- **Propose a collaboration that is realistic** given the specificities of the municipality (for example, in remote rural areas). In particular, when you propose a project to several municipalities, it must be adapted to the realities of each one (Lemire, 2020; Sasseville, 2014).
- **Have a humble and constructive attitude** (Sasseville, 2015): “Don’t approach the City saying, ‘I am an expert and this is how you should be doing it,’ but approach them [saying], ‘I think I have something to contribute to your processes.’ And then [...], ask questions about the City process, or where [you] can learn more about the City processes, to understand where [your] expert knowledge may be relevant” (municipal public servant, cited in Morestin, 2019).
- **Be reassuring**, if this seems necessary, about the fact that the proposed collaboration is intended to support the municipality, and not to impose constraints on it (L. Teasdale, personal communication, March 4, 2020).

G. How do you foster positive interactions?

- **Adhere to a consistent strategy:** to the extent that you wish to foster dialogue with the municipality, avoid strategies that exert public pressure on it (for example, going to the media to denounce some of the municipality's actions).
- **Have an open and constructive attitude** to overcome a mutual lack of familiarity, absence of understanding or even mistrust that may exist initially.
- **Devote time and effort to maintaining communications** to strengthen relationships, to build understanding of your respective case files and roles, and to learn about your respective ways of doing things (Lees et al., 2008; Sasseville, 2015). The avenues proposed in section A for learning about the municipality's work are also relevant for staying up to date.
- Continue to **tailor your messages** to the needs of your contacts (see section E).
- **Make compromises:** take the knowledge of municipal actors into account, even if it means reconsidering your own positions; try to understand their concerns when their objectives diverge from yours, so as to try to find common ground (Marion et al., 2018).
- **Consult municipal actors at the outset** of a project and jointly establish the objectives to be achieved and the role of each organization (Lees et al., 2008; Marion et al., 2018; OPHA et al., 2016b; Sasseville, 2015), while remaining flexible, since roles and objectives could evolve over time depending on what is achieved, and on the opportunities and difficulties encountered (Lemire, 2020).
- Learn to **work at the same pace as your contacts**, accounting for the realities of the municipality: workload, resource constraints, decision-making processes (Lemire, 2020; Marion et al., 2018; Sasseville, 2015).
- **Provide concrete assistance** adapted to the municipality's needs. This can take various forms, from the simplest to the most ambitious, for example:
 - Assume the task of taking notes at inter-organizational meetings.
 - Provide expertise, not only during the planning of measures or activities, but also during their implementation (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015b; Lemire, 2017, 2020).
 - Assume the role of facilitator for a joint initiative when the municipality prefers to remain a simple partner. Other municipalities, on the other hand, will want to take a leadership role. This choice often depends on the municipality's resources (time and expertise available), and thus on its size (Lemire, 2020; Sasseville, 2014).
 - Assist in responding to funding opportunities (offered by the provincial government, the federal government or non-governmental organizations) that are of interest to both public health and the municipal sector: provide evidence to buttress the rationale put forth, help complete the application (Lees et al., 2008; Lemire, 2020).
 - Provide funding for a joint project. It should be noted, however, that for a small municipality, external funding can represent a significant percentage of its budget (Marion et al., 2018) and that this can have a perverse effect: the resources offered are welcome, but their acceptance does not necessarily mean that the municipality is deeply committed, especially if the project was designed without consulting it (Sasseville, 2014).
- **Be present when the municipality calls** on your organization.

- **Build human relationships.** Establishing contact may require the involvement of several persons, including your senior hierarchy, but thereafter it is best to limit the number of persons in your team (or even in your organization, see section C) who interact with a municipal actor. Those handling a particular issue will thus be clearly identified, and exchanges will be more personalized and human. This will build trust and facilitate information sharing (Lemire, 2020).
- **Plan a succession of small projects or activities,** if possible, as this approach allows for progressive individual and organizational learning, concrete engagement in action, and the potential to achieve successes that maintain the interest of all partners and strengthen collaboration (Lemire, 2020): “there have to be some small successes; personally I think it’s these successes that enable the establishment of a relationship of trust” (municipal public servant, cited in Morestin, 2019 [translation]).
- **Acknowledge learning and successes,** both those of the individuals involved in the collaboration and those of the partnership: highlight successes during meetings between partners or even in public communications (Lemire, 2020). The senior hierarchy of the organizations involved has a role to play in providing such recognition.

H. How do you maintain collaboration over time?

Involve the senior hierarchies and the political sphere

Section B proposes criteria for selecting the first municipal actor(s) to approach. Subsequently, to anchor the collaboration over time, exchanges must continue to take place both between the professionals (who do the work on a daily basis) and between the senior hierarchies of the two organizations – yours and that of the municipality.

Involving the municipal council is important because it has the power to adopt a formal position demonstrating the priority it assigns to the subject of the collaboration. Its positioning sends a clear signal to municipal departments, which encourages the convergence of their actions, and to citizens and other stakeholders (Lees et al., 2008; Lemire, 2017, 2020; Québec en Forme & Prendre soin de notre monde, 2017d; Sasseville, 2014).

Involving municipal managers helps sustain collaboration across electoral cycles (Lemire, 2017, 2020). Getting buy-in from managers (on both the municipal and public health sides) is also necessary for the organizational learning stemming from collaboration to translate into sustainable change – a step that is not easy to take when the organizational culture is entrenched (Lemire, 2020).

Assign professionals to the task of monitoring the collaboration

Entrusting one or a few professionals with the responsibility of monitoring the collaboration is a determining factor in keeping it active: it encourages the commitment of the other actors involved, better coordination of everyone's actions and compliance with the planned schedule (Lemire 2020).

In most cases, these professionals already work in the organizations, but it is essential that some of their time be freed up so that they can effectively engage in collaborative activities (Lemire, 2020; Sasseville, 2015). In rarer cases, a professional is hired specifically within the context of the collaboration, sometimes using additional funding that has been obtained (Lemire, 2020).

Pass the baton when actors change

As indicated in section G, it is advisable to limit the number of persons on your team who interact with a municipal actor. That said, having more than one contact on both sides ensures the continuity of the collaboration in the event of staff turnover.

When one of your contacts changes jobs, ask them to put you in touch with their successor; and when you change jobs, notify your contacts at the municipality without waiting until you need them (because they may need you in the meantime).

If the political sphere is involved in the collaboration, renew contacts after the municipal elections, not only with newly elected candidates, but also with re-elected candidates, to confirm their commitment.

Ensure the continuity of funding

Funding is an obvious issue when the proposed collaboration involves committing resources to concrete actions. Moreover, even if you provide additional funding for carrying out these actions, the municipality may be reluctant to offer new services that it will not be able to finance on its own when this funding has run out (Lemire, 2017, 2020).

Taking advantage of funding opportunities offered by other levels of government or foundations can help (Lees et al., 2008; Lemire, 2017, 2020); but again, this does not equate with long-term funding. It is useful to encourage the municipality to set aside a portion of its budget to pursue the proposed actions, but this requires political will and financial capacity on its part.

Formalize the collaboration

Interpersonal relationships are a key factor in the success of a collaboration, but they are vulnerable to the possibility of those involved leaving (Lemire, 2020), hence the value of formalizing the collaboration. It is best to formalize it through *existing* structures and processes:

- to avoid overburdening municipal actors by increasing the number of cooperative structures (Lemire, 2017; Sasseville, 2014);
- and because existing municipal processes, particularly in the area of land-use planning, which is well codified, provide sanctioned means for municipal actors to secure feedback that they can act upon (Lees et al., 2008).

You could try:

- to get a seat for your organization on **existing intersectoral consultative bodies** and have your objectives added to their mandate (Lemire, 2017; Marion et al., 2018; Sasseville, 2014).
- to get a seat on **committees of council**. Your organization may have to make a presentation to the municipal council to justify its request. It is a good idea to seek the assistance of the directors of the municipal departments concerned by your subject to prepare this presentation (Lees et al., 2008).
- to ensure that your organization is **automatically consulted regarding the development or review of certain documents** (CQFSHV & Québec en Forme, 2015b; Grey Bruce Health Unit, n.d.; Lees et al., 2008; OPHA et al., 2016b):
 - The **municipal development plan**¹¹ (or its equivalent at the level of a regional municipality). Having health included as a major objective in the plan opens opportunities for your organization to play a more active role in the municipality's urban planning processes (OPHA et al., 2016b). In addition, influencing the broad policy directions set out in the municipal development plan enables you to act more effectively downstream – for example, when reviewing development applications (as suggested below). It is indeed difficult to ask that development projects respect certain urban planning principles if these principles are not included in the municipal development plan (Lees et al., 2008).
 - **Secondary plans/Local area plans**,¹² which are more detailed than the municipal development plan because they focus on one sector of the municipality. Depending on the resources available to your organization, it may be necessary to target certain strategic sectors of the municipality rather than to comment on *all* of these plans (Lees et al., 2008).
 - **The zoning bylaw and amendments to it**.¹³ Here again, it may be relevant to comment only on proposed bylaw amendments that are most strategic from a health perspective (Lees et al., 2008).

¹¹ The municipal development plan sets out the broad policy directions by which the municipality's land-use planning decisions must be guided.

¹² The name may vary from one province or territory to another (in Québec: *Programmes particuliers d'urbanisme*).

¹³ The zoning bylaw divides up the municipal territory into zones and indicates which type of land use (residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, agricultural, etc.) is permitted in each zone.

- **Development approval information requirements or development checklists** for developers applying for permits. The aim is to have criteria included that promote a healthy built environment.
- **Permit applications for (large) development projects.** It is necessary to consider whether the effort required to review these files is worthwhile, especially if the current policy framework (municipal development plan, bylaws, etc.) does not specifically support requiring that the project be reoriented so as to be more conducive to health. Conversely, your contribution can be very useful when the planning department lacks the resources to meticulously study development applications (Lees et al., 2008).
- The municipality’s **master plans or strategic plans**, for example, for transportation, parks and recreation, housing, food security, etc.


While it is preferable to consider existing municipal processes first, in some cases **parallel processes** can be created as useful complements. For example:

- Developing a **multi-year joint action plan** favours the continuity of the collaboration, especially beyond municipal elections (Lemire, 2020);
- Establishing a **working group** with representatives chosen by each organization for their expertise, regardless of their level in the organizational hierarchy, creates a collaborative mechanism that is less formal, that promotes communication, and that is potentially able to function at a faster pace (M. Lemire, personal communication, March 25, 2020).

Aim to achieve results that will outlast the collaboration

Depending on the nature of the collaboration between your organization and the municipality, some of the results achieved will be inherently sustainable: for example, changes to the built environment, or the adoption of municipal bylaws, or even the creation of expectations among citizens that they will continue to express to the municipality (Lemire, 2020).

➤ **Resource for further information:**

Source	Reference	Content
British Columbia Available in English 	Lees, E., Philippe, D., Redman, H. & Berland, A. (2008). <i>Introduction to land use planning for health professionals</i> . Vancouver, BC: Provincial Health Services Authority. Available at: http://www.bccdc.ca/pop-public-health/Documents/land-use-introduction.pdf	102 pages. Describes the situation in British Columbia a few years ago; some considerations (for example, regarding the legal context) do not apply elsewhere and should perhaps be updated. That being said, this document presents some very relevant reflections on the involvement of public health actors in municipal land-use planning processes: opportunities for getting involved (these may vary from one province or territory to another, but the broad outlines are similar), aspects of urban planning to be considered in relation to health, reasons for and against getting involved.

Conclusion

The most fruitful collaborations between public health organizations and municipalities can take several years to become established: time is needed to identify new contacts, to get a response to attempts to communicate, to build trust and mutual understanding, to let new ideas gain ground, to get buy-in not only from your first contacts at the municipality, but also from all the others concerned by the subject in question, and to obtain results in terms of positioning with respect to the issue and concrete actions. Then there is the challenge of maintaining a well-functioning collaboration over time. Nevertheless, pooling the ideas and resources of municipal and public health actors is often a promising way to achieve common goals that promote the health of the population. This practical guide is intended as a modest contribution to guiding you through the establishment of such collaborations.

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