

# Common Ground

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do individuals or groups advocate for the decisions they think governments should make?
- How are decisions made that affect the whole community?
- How can we find a balance between the priorities of specific individuals and groups and what's best for society as a whole?

## OVERVIEW

Participation in government consultations empowers individuals and stakeholders to shape policies and decisions that impact their lives and communities. This ensures that diverse voices are heard and democratic decisions reflect the true needs of society.

In this lesson, students participate in *Common Good*, a game that engages students in a simulated community planning process to strengthen their civic deliberation and decision-making skills. Working in committees, students assume stakeholder roles and collaborate to create a balanced proposal that meets diverse interests. Afterward, students reflect on the experience and outcomes.

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain the role of various stakeholders in the community;
- evaluate how different features of a community development can meet the needs of different stakeholders and community members;
- practice civic deliberation and decision-making skills, balancing individual interests and the “common good;”
- explain the value of participating in community or government consultations.

## SUPPLIES

The Common Good game is played with small groups, typically four students in one committee. Each student represents one of the four stakeholders [FUN, BIA, AFO, and CGC].

For **each committee (group of 4)**, you will need:

- One set of **Stakeholder cards**
- One set of **Feature Cards**

- One Score Sheet
- One game board **OR** two small containers labeled 'Include' and 'Maybe Include.' You can use cups, small boxes, etc. The containers just need to be big enough to hold some of the cards.
- Pencils/paper

### Essential Learning

*Students will explore the role of stakeholders and discuss the idea of "common good".*

1. Explain to students that governments organize various consultations to collect feedback from community members to inform their decisions. Highlight that different people or groups often have different priorities and ideas. Review the following definitions:

- A **stakeholder** is a person who is affected by or cares about a decision, project, or outcome.

Example: A student who wants a new school library because they love reading or want to be able to access more books and information.

- A **stakeholder group** is a collection of people with similar interests or concerns about the same decision, project, or outcome.

Example: All the students in a school who will use the new library.

2. Present one of the following proposals to students (or make up your own).

- A new dog park will be built next to the school.
- The school board/district wants to implement a four-day school week.
- A new shelter will be built near the local mall.

a) As a whole class or in groups, ask students to brainstorm a list of stakeholders who would have an interest in the outcome of the proposal.

b) Have students decide which stakeholders would likely be in favour of the proposal and which would likely be against, and ask them to explain why.

3. Explain the concept of the common good and ask students to share some of their own examples.

- When people make decisions for the common good, they think about what's best for everyone, not just themselves.
- It includes laws, policies and projects that help people live safe and happy lives together.
- For example:
  - Vaccination Programs – When people get vaccinated, they protect not just themselves but also others, especially those who are too young or sick to get vaccinated themselves.
  - Traffic Laws – Stop signs and speed limits help keep roads safe for everyone.

- Public Parks – Parks are open for everyone of all ages to enjoy.

4. Ask students to brainstorm some ways the proposal they discussed in Step 2 could be reworked in a way that balances competing priorities and gets closer to the common good.

### Getting Ready to Play Common Good (10 minutes)

*During this preparation phase, you will introduce your students to the Common Good game, organize them into Committees, and provide each group with the necessary materials. Students will also identify their roles for the game.*

**1) Remove the two “Flex Cards” from each deck of Feature Cards.** You will introduce these to the game in Part 3: Deliberations.

**2) Introduce the Game.** Read the premise of the game and highlight the objective and two ways to win.

#### **Premise:**

The municipal council has approved a new community development project in the town/neighbourhood and community planners are seeking input from citizens and stakeholders. A community development project is a plan that helps improve a neighbourhood or area where people live, work, or play. These projects are done to make life better for everyone in the community.

The municipal council is organizing a consultation process to ensure that a diversity of perspectives is represented. They have identified four community associations as key stakeholder groups to be included in the consultation process. The stakeholder groups are For United Neighbours (FUN), Business Improvement Association (BIA), All For One (AFO), and Citizens for a Greener Community (CGC). These stakeholder groups have different ideas for what they want to see included in this new development.

The name of the game, *Common Good*, represents the moment when someone might change their mind about a policy or decision because they are trying to balance between personal or group interests and what’s best for the community as a whole (common good). When people discuss and debate issues, they often have to think about different sides and figure out how to bring them together.

#### **Objective:**

You will form committees with one member from each of the stakeholder groups. The committees will be tasked with reaching a consensus about which features they would like included, balancing the priorities of all its stakeholders and the needs of the community as a whole, to create the best possible proposal.

At the end of the game, each committee will tally up each stakeholder’s score.

There are **two ways to win**:

- **“Stakeholder Interests” Victory:** At the conclusion of the game, each stakeholder in every committee will receive a score. These scores will then be tallied across all groups (i.e. All FUN scores would be tallied to reach a cumulative total). The stakeholder group with the

most points wins the Stakeholders Interests victory.

- **“Common Good” Victory:** At the conclusion of the game, each committee will calculate the difference between the highest and lowest stakeholder scores. The committee with the lowest number wins a Common Good victory, meaning they have done the best job balancing the interests of all stakeholders.

**3) Project the site map.** To help ground students, use Google Maps to digitally project a top-down map of your community onto a white board which they can use as their “site map.” If there are active community developments in your area, you may also be able to find official maps online.

You may also add the site map to the centre of the game board using the template provided.

Alternatively, you could ask students to collaboratively draw an overview map of their community to use as a site map.

**4) Organize the Class into Committees.** Group students into committees of four. Form as many groups of four as possible. Distribute remaining students among existing groups (students in larger groups can pair up and act as a single stakeholder). Afterward, provide each committee with the following materials:

- One pack of Stakeholder Cards
- One pack of Feature Cards (with the two ‘Flex Cards’ removed)
- One game board

**4) Assign Roles.** Ask each player in a committee to pick one Stakeholder Card. In groups with more than four members, students can partner up and share a single stakeholder role.

### Part 1: Stakeholder Meeting (10-15 minutes)

*The purpose of this part of the game is to give members of the same stakeholder group time to meet and identify features in the community development project that align with their stakeholder interests.*

**1) Organize Stakeholder Groups:** Students gather into stakeholder groups based on the role they selected. Make sure that each group has a pack of Feature Cards.

- For United Neighbors (FUN)
- Business Improvement Area (BIA)
- All For One (AFO)
- Citizens for a Greener Community (CGC)

**2) Establish group priorities:** Once students are in their stakeholder groups, ask them to review their stakeholder card and discuss the motivations, goals, and priorities of their stakeholder group (5 minutes).

Next, give the stakeholder groups a few minutes to skim the Feature Cards and identify any cards they think are especially important for their stakeholder group or ones that they feel are not important for their group. Encourage students to take notes and write down some of the cards their stakeholder group identified as important on a piece of paper or in a notebook. (5-10 minutes)

**Guiding Questions:**

- What Feature Cards align with our stakeholder goals and priorities?
- Which Feature Cards are less important to our stakeholder group and should be excluded from the project?

**Part 2: Individual Priority Setting (10 minutes)**

*Back in their original Committees, each stakeholder receives eight Feature Cards and sorts them privately into priority piles (Yes, No). Afterward, the 'No' cards are reviewed as a group and then discarded or picked up by another stakeholder.*

**1) Return to Committees:** Students regroup in their original Committees, ensuring each Committee has its deck of Feature Cards.

**2) Distribute Feature Cards:** One student in each committee shuffles the Feature Cards and distributes them evenly among the members. Each stakeholder should receive eight cards.

**3) Private Sorting:** Stakeholders independently sort their cards into two piles based on their priorities:

- **Yes:** I think this should be included in the Proposal.
- **No:** I think this should not be included in the Proposal.

**4) Group Review of the 'No' Cards:** Students share their 'No' cards with their entire committee.

- If another stakeholder thinks the card is important to them, they can take it and add it to their Yes pile.
- Cards unanimously agreed to be unimportant are placed in a discard pile and removed from the game. Ask students to set these cards aside.

**Part 3: Deliberations (20 minutes)**

*Next, students will deliberate their choices and work together to create the final Proposal. Students will try to balance their own stakeholder priorities with those of others.*

**1) Share Important Cards:** Each student in the committee takes turns presenting the cards from their 'Yes' pile and very briefly explaining why they think it should be included.

- If all Committee members agree that a card is important, it is placed in the 'Proposal' pile on the game board or in the 'Include' container.

- If there is no unanimous agreement, the card is placed in the 'Maybe Include' pile on the game board or in the 'Maybe include' container.

**2) Review the Proposal Pile:** After all of the 'Yes' cards have been reviewed, students evaluate the 'Proposal' pile to ensure it contains **exactly 16 cards**.

- Fewer than 16 cards: Students deliberate and decide which cards from the 'Maybe Include' pile to include until the 'Proposal' pile reaches 16 cards.
- More than 16 cards: Students deliberate and decide which cards to remove until only 16 remain.
- **Introduce the Flex Cards:** At this point, give each Committee the two Flex Cards you removed from their deck at the beginning. Explain that they can use Flex cards to combine two Feature Cards into one creative solution. They can then earn points for both cards. For example, the "Boardwalk" card and the "Bike Lane" card can be merged into a boardwalk with a bike lane. This would not count as a single card, but it would earn points for both cards during scoring.
  - Encourage students to be creative with the Flex Cards, though the proposed use should make sense. Flex Cards use is optional, and all Committee members must agree to their use.

**3) Finalize the Proposal:** The 16 cards in the Proposal pile become the committee's Final Proposal.

#### **Part 4: Final Tally and Debrief (10-20 minutes)**

**1) Distribute Score Sheets:** Provide a score sheet to each committee and have students write their names on it.

**2) Tally Stakeholder Points:** Committees calculate each stakeholder's points using the score sheet.

- Remind students that Flex cards score points for both cards that were combined.
- Record each stakeholder's final score on the score sheet.

**3) Calculate the Common Good Score:** Committees determine the difference between the highest and lowest stakeholder scores and record this number in the "Common Good Score" section of the sheet.

**4) Submit Score Sheets:** Ask the committees to return their completed score sheets. Add up the scores for each stakeholder group (FUN, BIA, AFO, and CGC) to calculate a Stakeholder Group total.

**5) Announce Winners:**

- The Stakeholder Group with the highest total score wins the **Stakeholder Interests Victory**.
- The Committee with the lowest "Common Good Score" wins the **Common Good Victory**.

**6) Class Debrief:** Conclude with an all-class discussion to reflect on the game, the decision-making process, and the outcomes. Some suggested guiding questions include:

- What was it like being a representative of a stakeholder group? How much did you personally agree with this group's views? Were you able to put your own feelings aside?
- What was the hardest part about making decisions within your committee? Did you use any strategies to help you reach a consensus?
- Do you think consensus is necessary for an idea to be in the interest of the common good?
- Was there a "Common Good" for you? Did you have to decide between what would be best for your stakeholder group and what would be best for the common good? How did you decide what to do?
- Review the proposal that obtained the "common good" victory. Do you think this proposal best reflects the common good? Why or why not?

### Consolidation

Ask students to complete Activity 5.1 to consolidate their knowledge:

## Activity 5.1: Reflection Slip

Pick **ONE** question from each column. Write a two to three sentence response to each question you choose. If you run out of space, continue in another box.

1	2	3
<p>While making decisions with your group, did someone share an idea that you really liked or that helped your group make progress? What was the idea, and why did you like it?</p>	<p>In the game, you played the role of a stakeholder. What made playing that role easier or harder for you?</p>	<p>What's the most useful thing you learned while playing Common Good?</p>
<p>During deliberations, did one of your committee members present an idea you disagreed with? Why did you disagree with it? How did you work through your disagreement?</p>	<p>The game challenges players to balance what benefits their stakeholder group with what's best for everyone. How did you work to find that balance?</p>	<p>What was the most challenging part of the game for you? Is there a skill you would like to work on if you were to play the game again?</p>