

Community Engagement Toolkit

Building Purpose and Participation



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Community Planning and Development



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An Ongoing, People-Centered, Community-Building Engagement Process

The ever-changing landscape of community needs and challenges makes community development – and public engagement to inform it – a constant practice. Interactions between people and their community expose complex realities, many of which hold meaningful potential for change.

Each day, as we navigate the places we live, who and what we encounter – from sidewalks and structures, to public services and access – impact not only how we experience our communities, but how we define them. The places we live are integral to how we experience our lives, yet most people are isolated from the decisions and decision-makers who are shaping the conditions and environments of a community.

Often, even if decision-makers have good intentions, decisions are made by organizations, professionals, and small groups of vocal residents. Or, decisions are made by those who don't live directly in the area and/or don't experience the long-term effects of what happens next. Instead, a foundational goal for engagement should be to support existing stakeholders, tap into existing networks to gather public opinions, and bring together diverse groups of residents (who traditionally do not co-create) to demonstrate that each have shared values around particular challenges and needs.

Introduction

Towards a Shared Vision: Empowering Community Through Development



Successful strategies to engage and encourage community participation are important. When the needs and interests of community members inform the design of programs and plans, the result is strong investments that reflect community health and wellbeing – not just the interests of a few. By allowing people to create shared value amongst community members, community engagement can help public investments solve real challenges within the context of development programs. It also creates a space where people can build trust with each other, contribute to shared knowledge, and identify tangible short and long-term goals, and provide a space to assess and reassess the effectiveness of a program or project.

When this is done well, the quality of engagement and the caliber of feedback data will improve. As a result, grantees will also have a much richer understanding of community needs, grounding a confidence and trust that the range of people who exist within their borders are better represented in the feedback they have collected.

Project-based and programmatic goals are important components for a community engagement plan. Flexibility for the scope of engagement to move beyond the life cycle of a program or project is equally important. Focusing on community-building activities beyond the scope of project or program itself creates the necessary continuity that in turn invites participation from a wider community of stakeholders. In turn, other community stakeholders can not only join your existing efforts, but also branch out and activate their own. As a result, more people feel ownership and are empowered to explore additional interests and needs of their communities. This generates more connectivity between community members while creating a deeper understanding of shared value amongst those who may not usually convene together.



Centering shared values in the engagement process can help ensure that the design of places, programs, and plans contributes to outcomes that reflect diverse community needs. It is an iterative journey, where decisions are made in conjunction with those who live and interact in the communities themselves when a given initiative or funding cycle has ended. Projects and programs that are rooted in such community-driven strategies create benefits across the many people who have a stake in the outcome. And because stakeholders have unique and often conflicting interests, the intention of creating shared values is important to be incorporated into the process.

Importantly, successful engagement can only be possible if it is institutions whose aim is to nourish a vibrant culture of propelling communities towards a prosperous future.

This Toolkit can be a catalyst and starting point, but it isn't exhaustive. It will build upon the traditional strategies for community engagement, while also uplifting a new set of values and approaches. Use the references that accompany each part, engage the tools to improve how you might listen to the individuals in your community, and allow these assets to take you further. At its core, this Toolkit offers renewed ways to engage.

Recognizing the many individuals of various backgrounds who may arrive at this page, this Toolkit is meant to be read in various ways. Whatever brings you to this Toolkit, and wherever it may take you, we hope that it will uplift, catalyze, and advance your community engagement efforts. Again, this is an ongoing commitment; it doesn't end here. Community engagement processes are always growing and evolving. Don't stop here.



Achieving the desired results, vision, or shared value from a community engagement plan will require each of us to reflect on the role we play in our community, as well as how community engagement in the past may have been challenging, not yielded the results you were hoping for, or caused harm. It's important to ask ourselves the difficult questions, then put reflection into action. Wherever you are in the process, allow yourself time for honest reflection, then keep going

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- **How can these activities and tools be applied to your community engagement plan?**
 - **What challenges have you experienced, or do you anticipate?**
-

Your reflection should be personal, as well:

-
- **How has this work changed you?**
 - **What internalized biases or assumptions have you come up against in this work?**
 - **What abilities or capacities did you discover in yourself?**
-



community engagement requirements. The majority of these activities take place during the development of the grantee's Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. The regulations in [24 CFR Part 91 Subpart B](#) require all grantees to develop and follow a [Citizen Participation Plan](#) that summarizes how a grantee will engage the public in its planning and implementation of HUD Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds. The basic requirements of the Citizen Participation Plan include:

- Description of the public participation process, including public hearings and public comment periods.
- Ensured opportunities for involvement of affected persons and other concerned citizens in the planning process.
- Transparency of the planning process and freedom of access to the Plan.
- Definition of amendment thresholds for HUD CPD grants.
- Instructions to guide the public's submission of comments and the standards for the grantee's response.
- Procedures participation throughout all stages of the Plan's development.

Grantees are encouraged to review their Citizen Participation Plan at the onset of each Consolidated Plan cycle to ensure it meets all regulatory requirements. The strategies described in this Toolkit can be integrated into a grantee's Plan to maximize engagement throughout the lifecycle of HUD grant programs.

[Search here for grantees in your area and view their awards, contact information, reports, and more.](#)

HUD grantees receive funding to support HUD's mission to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD grantees include state and local governments, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, public housing authorities, and tribal entities.

An ongoing, people-centered, community-building engagement process will yield lasting benefits.

1. It helps strengthen and expand the base of support for community development activities. More people become informed, activated and mobilized through engagement efforts.
2. You are able to engage and hear a range of perspectives and viewpoints to better ensure that concerns or gaps are addressed in the planning process.
3. Engagement creates and empowers leaders who will advocate for and advance an effort. The more champions there are for a plan or an idea, the more likely it is to become a reality.
4. Engagement strengthens collaboration and connections. It helps to create shared value and pave the way for long-term sustainability of an effort by increasing visibility, credibility, buy-in, accountability, and ownership of solutions and bright ideas.
5. Engagement often nurtures and reinforces a strong connection to place and a sense of identity. Essentially, by engaging in something together, people can witness and feel a shared energy and commitment. Involvement feels rewarding, and the possibility of change and progress excites communities.
6. Perhaps most significantly, participatory planning improves the substance or content of an initiative. When an effort has been supported by community engagement, it helps the people it affects raise their voices to influence outcomes and will more accurately reflect their ideas. It responds to present-day needs and priorities while incorporating a valuable range of perspectives and expertise.



This process requires deliberate and targeted investments and efforts by public and private partners to learn from others, support initiatives, and spearhead efforts themselves. It also calls for community leaders to be cultivated and equipped to strengthen connections among constituencies, neighborhoods, organizations, and/or sectors. And finally, it requires all of us to create an atmosphere of trust, empathy, respect, shared goals, and mutual responsibility.

Definitions That Support a Shared Values Approach



Equity

Equity is the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including all individuals who belong to underserved or marginalized communities that have been denied such treatment.

Racial Equity

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. It includes working to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestations. This includes elimination of the policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Power

Power is unequally distributed globally and within U.S. society. Some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterocentrism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations include power with (used in the context of building collective strength), and power within (which references an individual's internal strength).

Inclusion

Inclusion means the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of people of all backgrounds. It is a state of being valued, respected and supported. It is about focusing on the needs of every individual and ensuring the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve his or her full potential. We define inclusion as a set of behaviors (or culture) that encourage people to feel valued for their unique qualities and experience a sense of belonging.

Diversity

Diversity is the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities. It encompasses the range of similarities and differences each individual brings to a community, including but not limited to national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures.

Accessibility

Accessibility is the design, construction, development, and maintenance of places, information and communication, technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities and other economic and social barriers to access, can fully and independently use them. Accessibility includes the provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to participation. It also includes the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities, a commitment to ensuring that people who face barriers to participation can independently access every outward-facing and internal activities or electronic space, and the pursuit of best practices such as universal design.

Empowering Community Through Engagement

The objective of this Toolkit is to provide grantees with a path to establish and maintain robust engagement with community stakeholders. However, this toolkit can and should be used by anyone – whether you are:

- A new federal grantee
- An existing team looking to strengthen engagement
- A community organization interested in championing best practices across development within your community, or
- An individual interested in participating in or activating an engagement plan.

The tools and approaches outlined in this Toolkit will provide helpful guidance to individuals and groups new to community engagement, as well as those who are already well established. Tools and resources have been created with the intention to "plug-in" where needed, without the need to finish one activity or section before moving on to the next.

Successful engagement strategies commit to long-term value by following an iterative process of continuous engagement for community impact. The success of an engaged community is dependent on how adapted the activities are to meet the changing needs and strengths of a community.

This Toolkit provides approaches and tools to begin with a focus on the community and grow until the community is empowered to take initiative in the planning and evaluation process.

Different community approaches are defined on the right.



Community-focused:

This approach involves informing and mobilizing the community to participate in addressing short-term issues. Consider using community meetings, surveys, and door-to-door visits to involve community members.



Community-centered:

In this approach, the community is consulted and involved in improving access to services and basic elements of their neighborhood. Consider using focus groups, community hubs, and community events to engage with the community.



Community-led:

This approach involves collaboration with community leaders to enable priority setting and decision-making by the community. Consider using workshops, design sessions, and leadership training to empower community leaders.



Community-empowered:

This approach involves fully mobilizing community "assets." Consider using community resources, such as volunteers and community organizations, to drive engagement and ownership.

Lifecycle of Community Engagement

Community engagement is not something that just occurs during the development of your Consolidated Plan and Action Plan. Effective engagement takes place throughout the course of the program year and aims to go beyond. While we highlight a lifecycle for a HUD grantee, we hope this toolkit can support ongoing engagement for anyone.



1. Initial Planning

Planning begins months before the Action Plan is due to gather feedback on community needs and potential activity ideas. During this period, grantees generally engage with key stakeholders and community members through outreach and community meetings as outlined in their Citizen Participation Plan.



2. Plan Development

Using information gathered during the planning phase, grantees develop the draft Action Plan or Consolidated Plan. Grantees may continue to seek input from stakeholders and community representatives. Grantees will also publish a draft copy of the Plan for stakeholder input.



3. Plan Finalization

At the end of the comment period, grantees will generally conduct a hearing to receive additional comments and finalize the plan based on written and verbal comments received on the Plan.



6. Evaluation

At the end of the program year (and as an ongoing practice), grantees should consult with stakeholders, program operators and program users to gather feedback on what worked well, what didn't, and what could be done differently in the future.



5. Implementation

When implementing a public service, economic development or housing program, the program often needs to be adjusted based on lessons learned and experiences. Program implementers should regularly engage with program users and stakeholders to ensure that the implementation methods not only meet the needs of residents, but help to uplift and empower their communities.



4. Program Launch

At the start of the program year, grantees will launch the activities outlined in the Action Plan. Launching an activity generally requires engagement with the public to ensure the program design aligns with the community needs and that community members are aware of the upcoming program.

Elements of This Toolkit

The Toolkit is organized into three parts. Collectively, these parts provide a pathway for readers to initiate, carry out and evaluate a robust community engagement strategy.

PART 1: Creating a Strong Base for Active and Sustained Community Engagement

PART 2: Developing an Engagement Strategy that Empowers Community

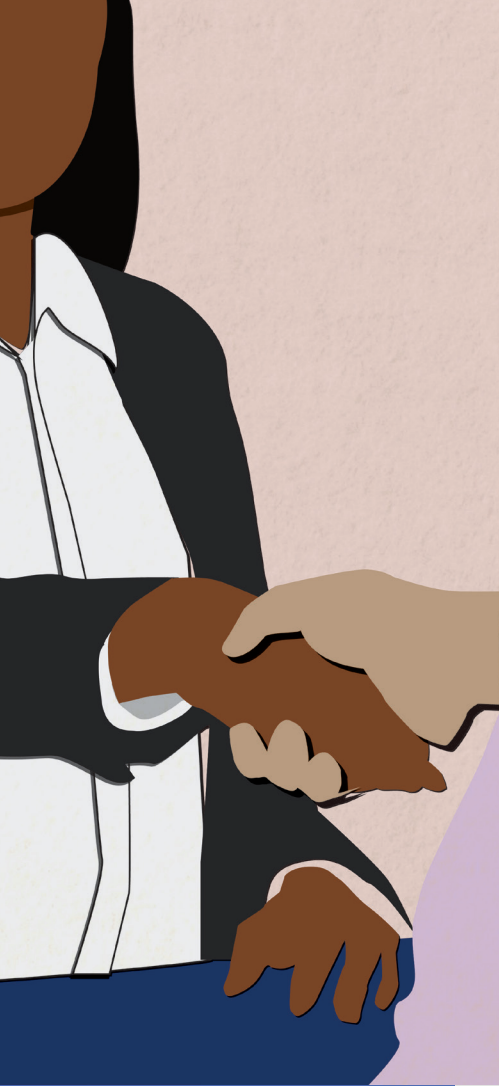
PART 3: Conducting Engagement and Evaluating Impact

Each part includes an introduction and has detailed descriptions and recommended activities of the corresponding steps or sections that comprise that part. Each part includes a series of templates and resources to assist grantees in carrying out those activities as well as case studies and external examples.

Users may find it helpful to follow the Toolkit from Part 1 through Part 3. Others may only use strategies or tools from a single part. Each part is designed to both build upon the prior part, but also as a standalone section.

Video Introduction





PART 1 - Introduction

Creating a Strong Base for Active and Sustained Community Engagement



Building the Foundation of Your Strategy With Guiding Values and Principles

Decisions made by community development professionals and policymakers influence the realities of local communities. Creating a solid base, team, plan, and evaluation process for your community engagement strategy will help you to engage with and evaluate the feedback you receive from community members, producing strong and relevant outcomes.

Having clear values and principles drive the process is foundational to the integrity of your engagement. Values and principles help guide an iterative engagement process, and encourage clear communication of how the process is honoring those values voiced by community.

Without clearly defined guiding values or principles, the understanding and application of community-defined goals that will be developed throughout this Toolkit may not be achieved. Often, public engagement strategies that aren't intentionally founded in values or principles end up favoring certain communities and marginalizing others. The establishment of guiding values and principles helps ensure checks and balances for accountability.

The sections in Part 1 will help you arrive at these guiding values and principles. By understanding the landscape of your community, tapping into existing networks (and seeing how their values and principles are in alignment with yours), creating a community advisory team, defining an iterative process, and planning for the timeline and funding, you will get there.

Values-driven and community-centered engagement help to ensure that community development activities are more transparent and democratic.



Picture this:

A city holds a public hearing to invite feedback on a proposal for a large mixed-use development in a larger neighborhood. The City informs the community about the meeting through neighborhood online forums on Facebook. In theory, all community stakeholders are invited to participate. In reality, not everyone has access to the information. Lower-income community members may not have access to the Internet or forums in which the city is posting. New community members or immigrant community members may not have been invited to participate in certain social groups, and senior community members may not have Facebook at all. Community members who are not fluent in English may not be able to read the information about the meeting. People who are homeless likely won't be invited. Let's say the meeting is on a Tuesday night. A person who works multiple part-time jobs may find it more difficult to attend the meeting than a person who works a predictable 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. A single-parent household will find it harder to send someone than a two-parent household. A person suffering from unseen domestic abuse or mental health challenges will be less able to attend than an individual who comes from a safe and supportive household.

As these scenarios show, it is clear who will not show up if engagement strategies aren't intentionally designed for diverse participation. Some people will show up, while others won't – exacerbating already-existing inequalities. Without a set of community-driven values or principles with equitable access, would these scenarios have been considered?

Strategizing engagement accessibility is important to address the obstacles of participation. It requires a thorough understanding of the nuances within communities, along with an intentionally collaborative process to overcome barriers that different community members face to participate. Community-driven engagement opens dialogue among all community stakeholders, builds relationships, centralizes information, and expands additional opportunities for community involvement.

Part 1 of this Toolkit helps you define a strategy that is guided by all of this, and more. The result is that community development activity visions, goals, and plans commit to value creation that benefits all community stakeholders.

1. Understand Community Context

- Actively learn about the cultural, geographical and historical elements of the community.
- Talk directly with community members in casual settings.
- Walk around the community and observe daily life.

2. Tap Into Existing Networks

- Research primary community groups, leaders, and spaces.
- Reach out to community stakeholders.
- Facilitate introductory and informational conversations.
- Identify existing physical or digital platforms that could serve as a community hub.
- Build trust.

3. Create a Community Advisory Team

- Make sure diverse perspectives are included.
- Create meaningful invitations.
- Team build to set the team up for success.

4. Design for an Iterative Process

- Create a timeline for community review.
- Create a set of shared outcomes and trackable metrics.
- Define a set of approaches to use.
- Empower the community through collecting feedback.

5. Develop a Timeline

- Compile all necessary activities.
- Determine appropriate process phasing and timeline.
- Outline a budget for community engagement and costs for development activities.
- Make sure to allocate room for iterations and new information that will arise through the engagement process.

6. Secure Funding

- Identify potential sources of funding.
- Create a budget that centers equity and compensation for the networks and existing community channels that will support engagement.

Understanding Community Context

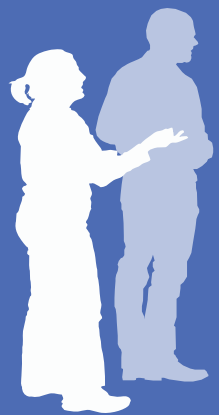
PART 1 SECTION 1



An Initial Landscape Analysis

Communities are networks of interdependent individuals, groups, institutions, and ecosystems. The landscape of a community includes many dimensions, including but not limited to: diverse demographic compositions, wide ranges of lived experiences, social and economic patterns and access, historical and cultural elements, physical infrastructure, and the natural environment. The realities of community stakeholders – including factors of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, language, ability, health, and safety – play an important role in determining the landscape and cultural foundation of a community. Many other factors intersect to create a unique set of collective needs, interests, assets and challenges. Developing an effective engagement strategy means working with these factors to encourage active engagement.

This initial analysis will be an introduction into a place and its context, but shouldn't drive development decisions until supported by a community advisory team (see Part 1 Section 3), along with your engagement later on. Taking a community-focused approach through interviews and observing a community's conditions is a great way to begin researching. An important aspect of an authentic understanding is speaking with individuals, learning about their grievances and their dreams, and working towards sustained relationships. If you are already familiar with this process and actively doing it with your development programming, then think about how you can improve upon it and expand your impact. Often, people have already asked the same questions you are thinking about – it just requires some research to find it.



"I'm not from the community, but I want to understand the landscape of who lives here, what their lives are like, and how they think about development. How can I effectively research the community where I'm working, even though I'm not a part of it myself?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

"Someone from the city government is asking my neighbors for interviews. What are they looking for? Why would our perspectives matter to them?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



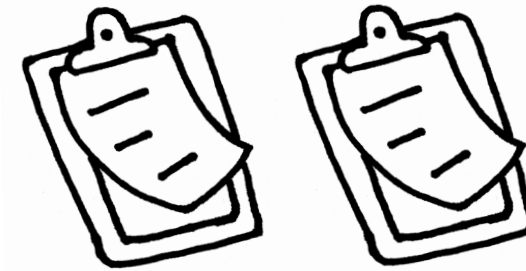
Why is community research important?

- A complex web of factors makes up community context. To understand what this means for your work, it's important to conduct qualitative research that shed light on social, cultural, economic, safety, environmental, and historical dimensions.
- This initial data will help define the unique needs and interests of a community, the "assets" a community has, and the challenges community members face.

Why should I understand the social, economic, and geographic nuances of a community before engaging with people?

- Together, the lived experiences of people help explain where people's needs and perspectives come from. The culture, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education level, English language fluency, physical and mental health, abilities, and safety of each person in the community will matter in how you strategize encouraging engagement.
- Perspectives are also shaped by geographic aspects such as neighborhood structure and commercial corridors, public infrastructure like parks and transportation access, and environmental factors like air quality, pollution, and wildlife.
- Understanding these unique dynamics is crucial to navigating the complexities of opinions to create shared values and solutions in your program or project.

What are some activities to help develop a better understanding of your community?



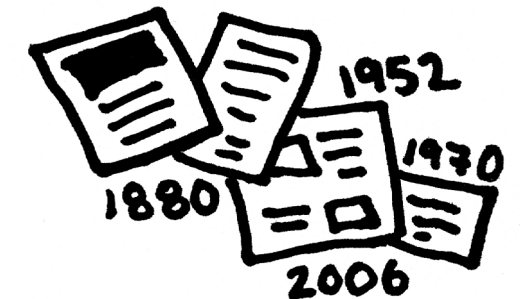
1. Conduct Participatory Research: This people-centered methodology involves researchers and community stakeholders collaborating together, to understand community issues and how to solve them.



2. Develop a Neighborhood Tour: Take an undirected walking exploration of an area. What's happening? A photo study can help capture the experiences and conditions of the neighborhood.



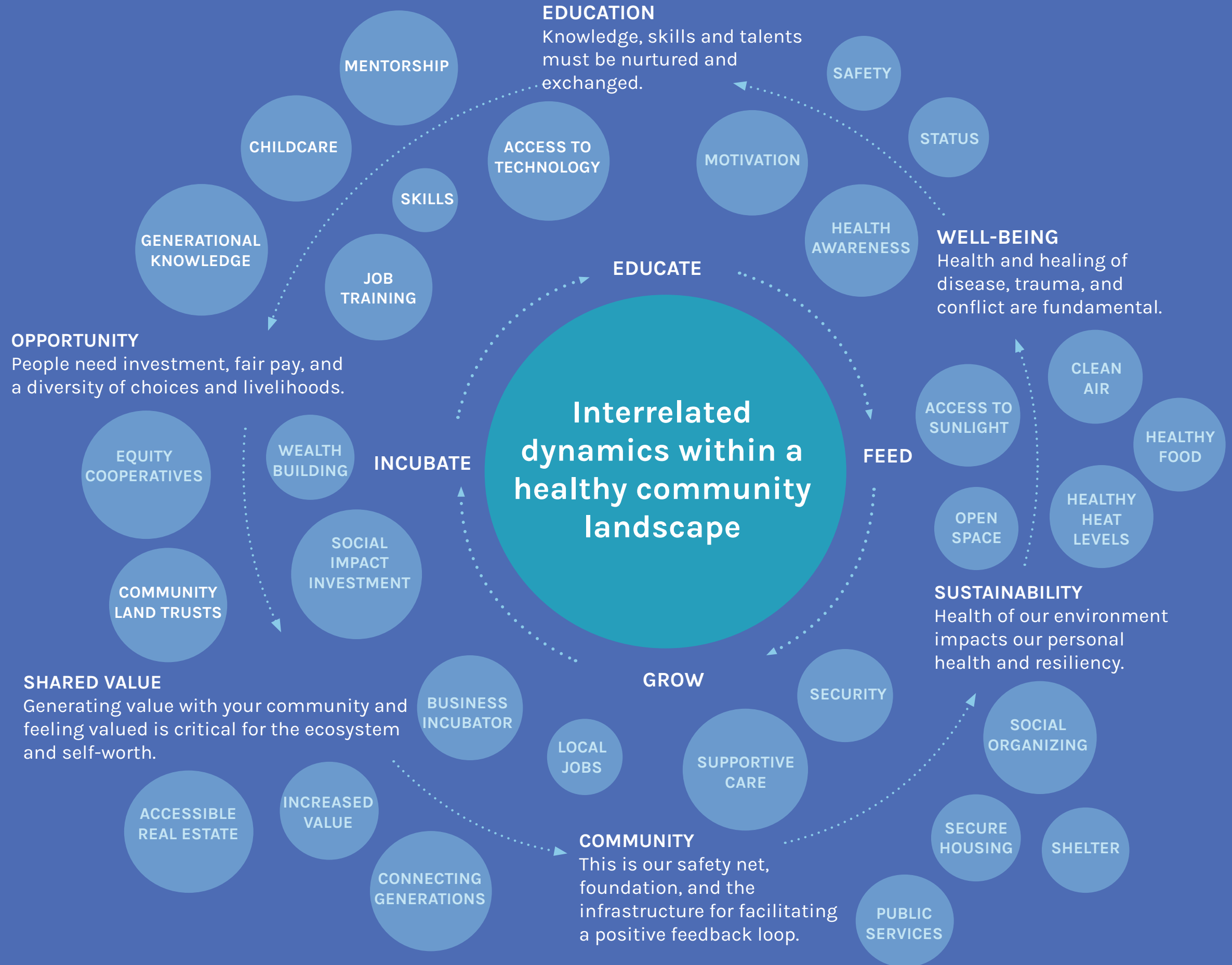
3. Seek out Local Stories: Explore the impact of the built environment on the daily lives of people. How has the community changed over time? What caused those changes? How has the community responded?



4. Learn the Historical Context: Looking across time helps us understand the varying degrees of agency that community stakeholders have had over the evolution of their neighborhoods.

Stories and narratives are valuable when pieced together to identify the larger picture.

This visual helps provide a framework to begin mapping a holistic picture of and the interactions between narratives, showing what is or is not currently happening within a community.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Participatory Action Research</u>	This template offers a step-by-step guide for conducting participatory action research. It can be used to help gather information about a community, clarify plans, and gather feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What specific aspects of the community are you conducting research to learn about, and who is affected by these different elements?• How do different stakeholders perceive their community differently?• Where can you find information about where challenges come from?
<u>Initial Informal Outreach</u>	These informal exercises can support the engagement team in learning community perspectives – helping to build better local understanding, creating a sense of empathy, and beginning the process of relationship building with local stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can these informal conversations impact the outcomes of the community engagement process?• How can you make sure the people you talk to feel comfortable and open for a conversation?• What should the people you are interviewing know about you and your program, project, or initiative by the end of the conversation?
<u>Neighborhood Walking Tour</u>	This tool helps to better understand daily life in a neighborhood, the experiences of the people living there, the conditions of the geography and architecture, and in identifying the neighborhood networks where relationships can be built for future engagements. This method of research uses observational analysis as a way of understanding place in a more interactive way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As you notice the services and spaces that exist in the community (and those that don't), what would you like to see?• What do you notice about under-used spaces, such as abandoned buildings or vacant lots?• What assets or support may organizations or people you know be able to offer, that other members of the community might be unaware of?
<u>Visiting an Archive</u>	Visuals and documents from the past help show how history is connected to today. Archives help tell stories that are not immediately visible or obvious. Archives may include libraries, museums, digital archives, and other locations that contain first hand historical materials. Archival research can help build a connection to the local area, and provide insight that can guide future conversations with community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How could the archival research help shift the narrative about current neighborhood conditions, and how past events and decisions have informed what the conditions of the neighborhood are today?• What previous planning or organizing efforts existed in the past that tried to address similar community conditions?• What are the lessons that can be learned from those efforts?

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Link	Summary	Why It's Important
<u>YPAR Participatory Action Research</u>	An innovative approach to positive youth and community development in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.	This approach demonstrates how community stakeholders can be involved in the research process.
<u>WeAct Community Research</u>	This is an example of community-based participatory research.	By ensuring communities have the resources and tools to vocalize their needs, share their stories, and lead research efforts within their community, they help to build capacity and resources in communities and ensures that governments and academic institutions are better able to understand and incorporate community concerns into their research.
<u>Wilksburg Vacant Homes Tour</u>	A project in Pennsylvania that worked to reframe vacant properties as assets, instead of liabilities	This is an example of participatory research that raised community awareness about opportunities and assets within a neighborhood.

Tapping Into Local Networks

PART 1 SECTION 2



Existing Community Spaces Encourage and Facilitate Active Engagement

Tapping into local networks is about meeting the community where they are, building trust, and growing the existing landscape analysis with local narratives and community input. A community engagement strategy that centers people and activates participation should provide disenfranchised communities, along with individuals who face a variety of barriers to participation, with a greater voice in the planning process. A successful community planning process is realized when individuals and communities who are usually inactive within decision-making are seen and recognized for their worth. Establishing relationships within people and organizations who represent the conditions and realities of excluded demographics, from the very beginning, will both deepen the long-term impact of the development, and increase engagement before, during, and beyond the engagement activities.

There are many ways to go about tapping into local networks, including attending local events to meet people, setting up one-on-one conversations with local organizations, and utilizing existing physical or virtual spaces to meet with community members. With that in mind, your foundational approach should always be to integrate your strategy within existing community spaces and social infrastructure. People will feel safest and most comfortable to engage in these existing spaces. The relationships you build here will then become assets throughout the entirety of your timeline.



"My team is embarking on an engagement initiative in a neighborhood that doesn't have many public meeting areas. I've heard from colleagues that it might be difficult to get residents engaged. How do I begin building relationships with the community? What non-traditional avenues exist?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

"My community hasn't received much attention as long as I've lived here. Now there are people coming in and telling me that they want to hear my opinion about what should happen. Why should I trust them, when I haven't seen any positive change in the past?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



What purpose does a community space serve for community engagement?

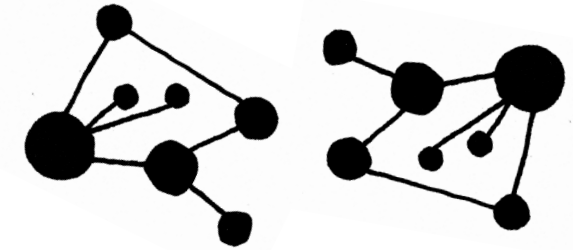
- A community space will help you build trusted and organic communication channels. You can use the space to distribute information and collect feedback from stakeholders, which is an essential function of the engagement process.
- The community space can also serve as a place for people to access services, collaborate, and act collectively with others. These relationships formed through the space can enhance connectivity between community-based organizations and local governments as well, which helps to break down barriers and build trust amongst community stakeholders.

What can I do if there isn't an existing community space?

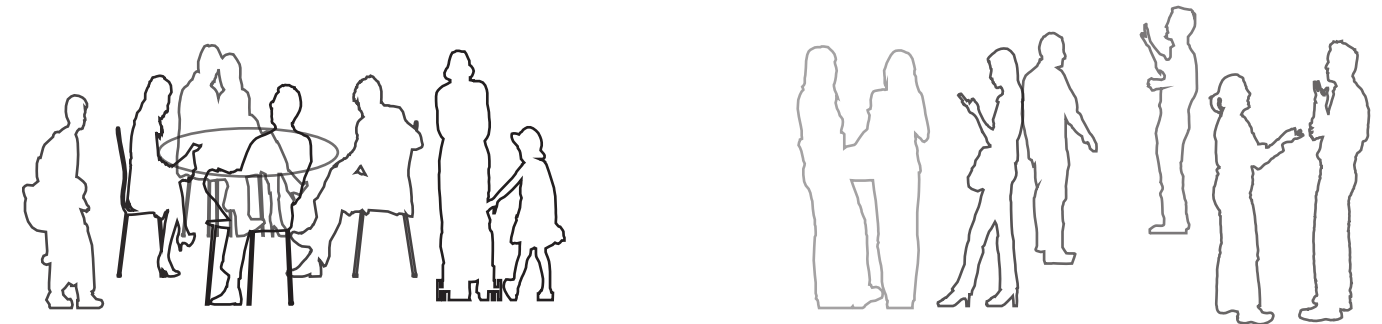
- If an available space doesn't currently exist within the community, consider how you can create that environment either virtually or in physical space through partnerships.
- A physical hub can provide an accessible and culturally welcoming space for in-person services and face-to-face education and meetings. The downside is that physical locations require time, resources, and able bodies for people to get to.
- A digital hub can provide a similar welcoming function, with different groups of people able to access the Internet more or less than a physical hub.

What are the steps for tapping into your community?

1. Map the Community Landscape: Connect insights, perspectives, community assets, community challenges, and deeper understandings of neighborhood landscapes and resident experiences for a more holistic and inclusive landscape analysis.



A community asset is not necessarily just financial - it can be anything that improves the quality of life. This includes associations that strengthen community cohesion, institutions like hospitals and schools, physical spaces like parks and bike paths, as well as economic mechanisms like local businesses and banks. The challenges stakeholders face can include factors that impede the quality of life like poor air quality, lack of access to transportation or public spaces, poor healthcare facilities or inadequate educational opportunities.



2. Identify Existing Community Organizations and/or Hubs to Host Activities: Locate existing physical community hubs or online venues. These are trusted spaces where community members gather, share information, and connect. Explore ways to partner with existing community hubs and meet people where they are.

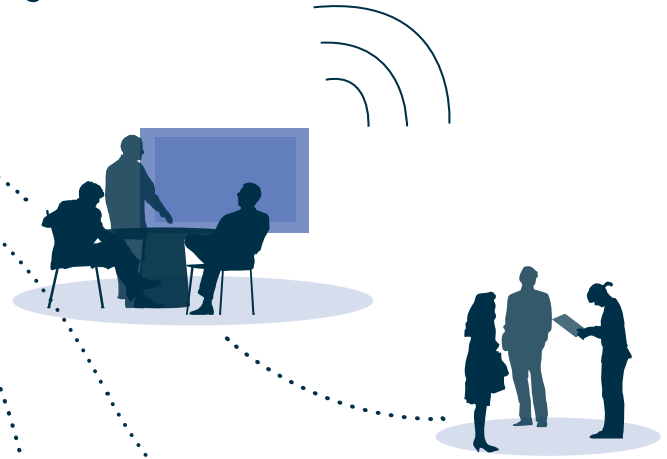
3. Work with Community Organization Leaders to Develop a Sound and Respectful Community Collaboration Structure: Explore ways to collaborate with the leadership of community organizations to engage community members in interactive engagement activities and provide updates on key dates, information, and progress.



Project team + community advisory team



Community hub



Community organizations hosting smaller scale groups



Interacting with individuals in-person or virtually



It takes an integrated network to build integrated ideas, share information and involve everybody.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Questions for the Core Team</u>	Answering these questions as a team can help inform your approaches to outreach and collaboration with community organizations in a way that is grounded in your plan's short term, medium term, and long term goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the answers to the following questions inform the way a (virtual or in-person) hub interacts with people? • How can engagement activities be planned and experienced in a way that makes participants feel part of a larger vision for their communities?
<u>Activities for a Community Hub</u>	A community hub should be based on the principle of co-creation. It should facilitate cooperation, co-ideation, and ultimately be a space where residents feel empowered to help shape their own community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can a community hub be most effective and inclusive? • Which individuals or organizations are best suited (and most trusted by community) to lead these different activities, to encourage the highest participation turnout?

EXAMPLES OF NETWORKS AND COMMUNITY HUBS

Link	Summary	Why it's Important
<u>University of Orange</u>	This is a free school of restoration urbanism in Orange, New Jersey, building on a 64-year history of progressive organizing in the city	The school offers free courses, works in local coalitions to promote education across the lifecycle, and advocates for equity in urban planning.
<u>Ant Farm</u>	Ant Farm has become a "third space" that people trust and use as a source for information sharing.	A safe space where people share information and connect with each other.
<u>Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village</u>	A neighborhood revitalization effort developing an artist village in the historic East Macon neighborhood, Fort Hawkins, to address blight and foster economic growth.	An intentional space created in collaboration with the neighborhood (existing and future residents).

Building a Community Advisory Team

PART 1 SECTION 3

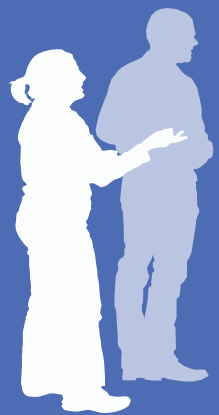


Bringing Together Community Expertise

It's important yet challenging to provide inclusive, accessible, and realistic ways for diverse voices to participate in the steering and decision-making of community development. Fostering a space for participation through a community advisory team, while inherently not all-inclusive, will help increase participation from a wider range of people and provide more authentic representation of community voices.

An initial advisory team should be built with the intention of building trust within the community: it should be composed of individuals who represent diverse stakeholder groups, particularly those who are not often involved in decision-making. For each community, this will be different. In general, relevant stakeholders include community members (of which there are many diverse groups), nonprofits, organized community groups, local government, business leaders, and others. Creating a team of a number of actors, rather than just the typical few who are already engaged, will activate a more representative voice of advice to important values, thinking, and resources to your program or project.

The community advisory team will help to build capacity and distribute impact. It also identifies a committed team of community stewards who can help expand the engagement process. For this process to have integrity, the team as a whole must be seen as a core decision-maker within every stage of the program or initiative.



"I'm leading an initiative in a diverse and vibrant community. How do I ensure that everyone's perspectives are represented when there are so many to consider?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

"Although I attend a lot of community engagement events, I never see anyone who represents my community's voices. How can we include more voices in community engagement events?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



Who should be included in the community advisory team?

- The purpose of an advisory team is to represent diverse (and sometimes conflicting) interests of community stakeholders. A community advisory team should be reflective of community stakeholders – particularly those who have barriers to entry to direct engagement.
- There will inevitably be people and interests who aren't represented in this team. When you conduct broader engagement later on, the focus and strategy should center on reaching these people. To get there, the individuals and/or organizations in the advisory team should be equipped to help.

How do I invite community members to join?

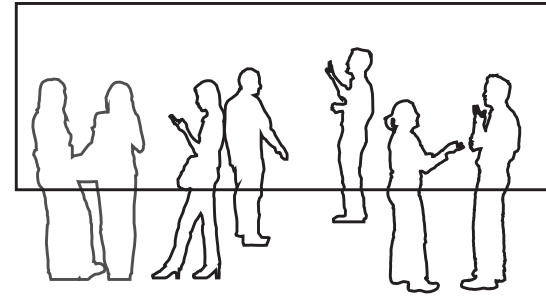
- Community advisors should be compensated for their time – particularly if they are nonprofit or community leaders who already often lack adequate compensation for their many contributions to the community.
- By following the first two sections of this Toolkit thoughtfully, relationships will be built with the community. At this point, you can call upon these relationships for involvement and suggestions. It is a matter of sending emails or calling stakeholders to join.

How do I ensure that traditionally underrepresented voices are included?

- When recruiting members for the team, it's important that each person understands the needs of the stakeholders they represent and can advocate for their interests.
- Not every person or organization will have the capacity or resources to participate in a community advisory team. In order to have a truly representative team, it's important to address any barriers that might prevent individuals from joining – such as lack of financial flexibility, time to participate in meetings, access to technology, and trust, including cultural or learned preconceptions around development, or negative past experiences.
- Developing relationships with community leaders is an essential first step to create local interest in joining the team.



What are the steps to forming an initial community advisory team?



1. Identify the Community Advisory Team: Connect with your networks to ask for insights and perspectives on what people and/or groups would be a great fit to participate. Use your initial landscape analysis to uncover where the gaps are in terms of representation, and who is missing.

2. Recruit Members: Finding the right people to serve on the advisory team is worth the time. The best teams have a balance of people who are already activated and those who will be new to the space. Take care to compensate people fairly and be transparent about what's needed.



3. Establish Group Norms: Explore the ways in which you will collaborate together and engage community members in interactive engagement activities and provide updates on key dates, information, and progress. A shared understanding of purpose is important at this stage.

EXAMPLES OF ADVISORY TEAMS

Link	Summary	Why It's Important
<u>Castro Community Benefits District</u>	Consisting of residents, community activists, business representatives, and property owners, the Community Benefits District "team" meets monthly to respond to neighborhood issues, influence land use and economic development, and inform future planning in their area.	This example shows what a community advisory team can look like in practice - including responsibilities, decision-making structures, and the importance of including diverse community members.
<u>Community Advisory Board on Housing and Homeless</u>	The role of the CABH is to act as an advisor to the City of Grande Prairie for grant funding received from the Government of Canada and the Province of Alberta and to give input into current and future priorities for affordable housing and ending homelessness.	The advisory team is made up of the following: community at large, indigenous community, youth health services sector, persons with disabilities, seniors, faith-based, businesses, newcomers/immigrants addictions and mental health resource members, and multiple levels of local government.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Visualizing Where the Community Advisory Team Fits in</u>	<p>It is valuable to visualize where development stakeholders fit into the larger picture. Mapping out where individuals and organizations fit in the context of community development can help ground the team in the complexity of actors.</p> <p>This activity can be done as a part of the team recruitment process. It can also be re-visited once an initial team is established to identify who else may be missing at the table.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do my research and observations include a diversity of lived experiences, abilities, and perspectives within the community? Think about people from different ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds; people with disabilities, people who experience seen or unseen abuse; people who don't speak English or are not fluent, and people who are without homes, or who face food or housing insecurity.• What seem like the most important elements on the map?• How can this map be continuously added upon throughout the entirety of the development process?
<u>Questions for Building a Community Advisory Team</u>	<p>Inviting someone to participate in an advisory team isn't a light ask, particularly if they will be representing perspectives that aren't typically considered in development. Use this resource as a guide for individual conversations with potential advisory members, hub partners, and other organizations who can help serve as the broader network of trusted community partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which individuals or groups are currently at the table?• Who is missing?• Does the individual or organization have existing relationships with others who might receive an invitation to join?• Where do other recommended organizations or perspectives fit in?
<u>Engagement Announcement Letter</u>	<p>A community letter is a personable way to invite diverse stakeholders to participate in on-going engagement through the initial community advisory team. This example provides language and framing that can be helpful when crafting a letter. The most important aspects of this letter are the details and information specific to the community and initiative at hand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the most welcoming way to frame this invitation letter?• How might different readers of this letter interpret what they read?• How can the information be framed differently based on the kind of recipient the community stakeholder represents?• Does the sending organization have existing relationships with the individuals or organizations who receive an invitation?

Community stakeholders include:

An engaged community member...

An engaged ecosystem includes:



Residents



Nonprofits



Faith Groups



Business Owners



Institutions



Governments



Philanthropists



Media

Builds networks and leads others

Generates resources

Is stable, safe, and secure

Facilitates change

Is an informed voter

Cares for the community

Connects the dots

Takes pride in the city

Is a powerful influencer

Contributes ideas and actions

Gets involved in the neighborhood

Celebrates cultural assets

Is a valued coworker



Designing for an Iterative Process

PART 1 SECTION 4



Planning for a Positive Feedback Loop

An iterative process goes deeper than the typical end-of-project consultation with stakeholders to gather feedback on what worked well, what didn't, and what could be done differently in the future.

Rather than evaluate at the end of an engagement cycle, the purpose of an iterative process is to provide opportunities for community feedback when there is time to act upon it in real-time. In other words, an iterative process is critical to building a community empowered development plan - one where residents can build a sense of ownership of a program by providing feedback that will be listened to and acted upon. This process requires continuous refinement of a program's strategy and objectives based on the perspectives and data you collect from the community over time.

By responding to community feedback and pivoting plans based on new learnings, you are inherently deepening the integrity of the development process itself. For example, you may have an exciting engagement strategy that is working for certain stakeholder groups, but not reaching others. Soliciting engagement of these hard-to-reach stakeholders may not require completely changing your approach, but expanding or adapting certain elements of it. An iterative development process allows for you to test different strategies until you achieve truly representative community engagement.



"We know that our understanding of the challenges and opportunities will evolve as we begin conducting development activities. How do we create space for community members to provide feedback as we implement the vision?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

"I want to contribute my ideas for a development program that is already underway in my neighborhood. Is it too late to provide feedback, since the process is already underway?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



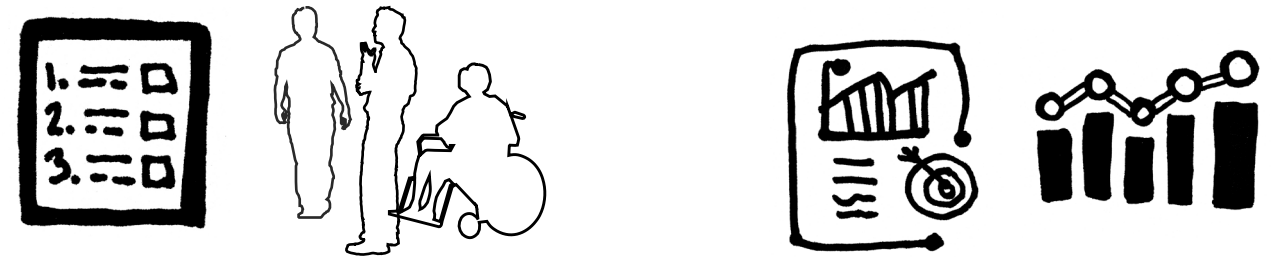
What is an iterative process?

- An iterative process is the ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, assessment, and adaptation of community development projects or programs. It involves gathering feedback from community members, analyzing data, and using that information to adjust strategies and interventions to better meet the needs of the community.
- It's important to ensure that community members and stakeholders all have access to information and are able to inform next steps. Utilizing community and networks is a great way of distributing information and gathering real-time data and feedback.

At what stage in the process do I use the iterative framework?

- Your iterative framework should be implemented at the beginning of any work that you start. From the onset of the process, you should create channels for community members to submit feedback and access project data and updates.
- Feedback and data should be tracked as an ongoing element of project management. Adaptations and pivots should be planned for and embedded into the timeline. And feedback should inform real-time course correction if the program or initiative is straying from its goals and values.

What are the steps to an iterative process?



1. Create a Timeline for Community Review: Plan for the community advisory team to convene and review the feedback gathered from community engagement, which will inform future decisions and potential real-time pivots. Integrate this into the timeline you develop in Part 1 Section 5.

2. Create a Set of Shared Outcomes and Trackable Metrics: As a community advisory team activity, create a shareable document outlining outcomes and metrics for tracking progress and engagement feedback. Share these with your larger stakeholder network in later sections.



3. Define a Set of Approaches: For an iterative process, community stakeholders' feedback is important for defining and tracking impact. Build out accessible platforms to illustrate feedback to the community: these can include websites, listening reports, and other platforms.

4. Empower Community Through Collecting Feedback: Tap into existing community networks, including community organizations and volunteers, to share information and lead conversations with community members. This will primarily happen through the conducting engagement sections.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

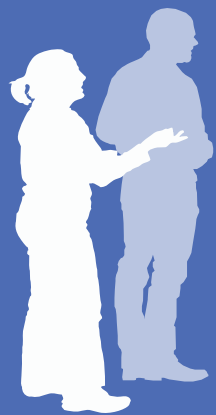
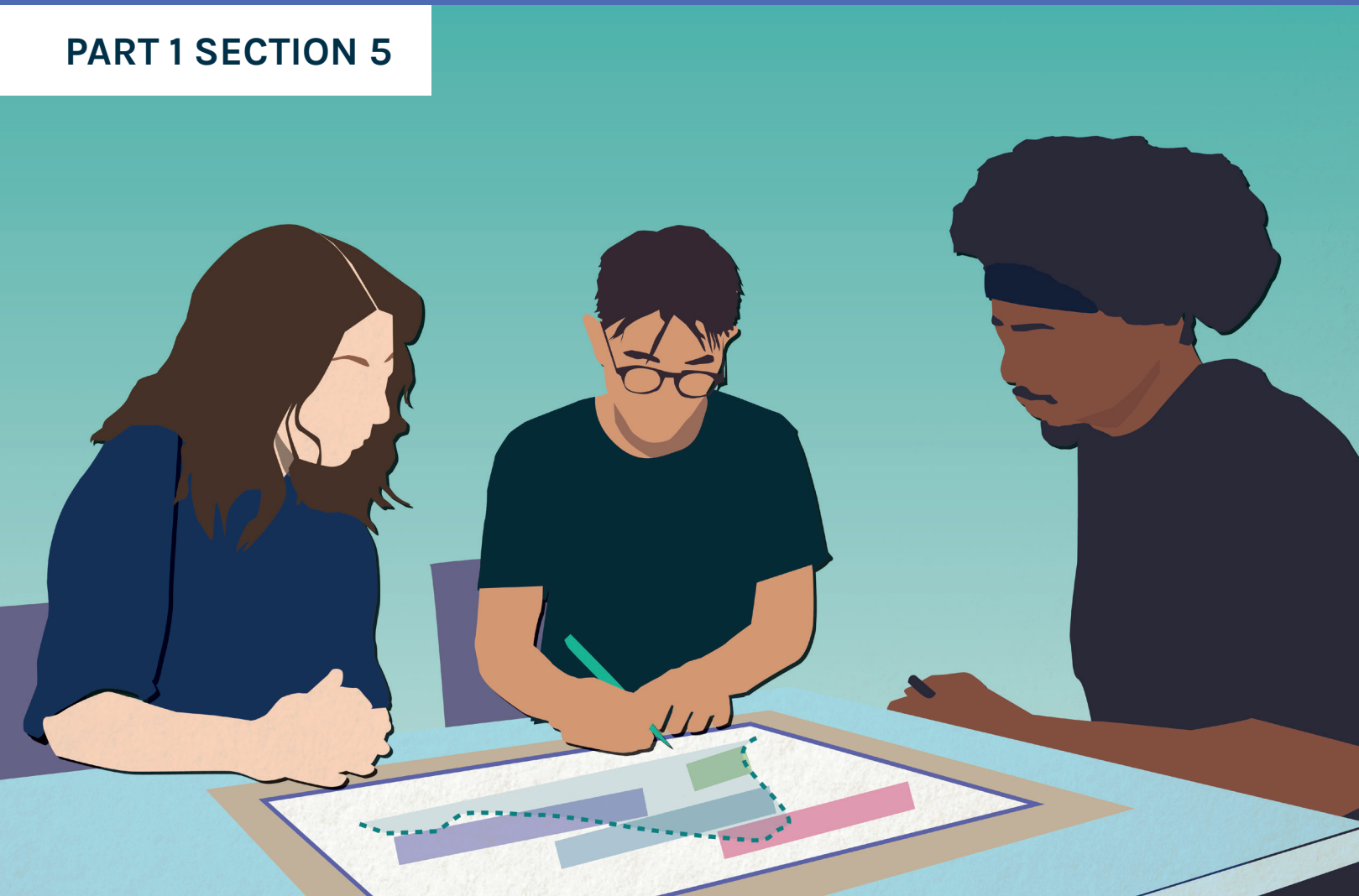
Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Iterative Timeline</u>	A timeline for your iterative process is a way to openly track key dates, and ensure repeating cycles of design, development, testing, and evaluation throughout each stage of your engagement and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I make sure the timeline is aligned with the larger development timeline? • What are the key events and activities that should be included in this timeline?
<u>Shared Outcomes & Metrics</u>	This template shows how you can track the progress of the development program in accomplishing its vision and desired outcomes. It can and should be available to community based organizations, community members, and public and private partners to provide feedback and guide future development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you create an outcomes tracker that is representative of the wants and needs of community stakeholders, while also fulfilling grantee requirements? • How will you track the future progress of the development? • How will you visualize the feedback?

EXAMPLES OF AN ITERATIVE PROCESS

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Iterative Framework Process</u>	Framework for an iterative process, including the cost and benefits of implementing this approach.	Easy resource explaining why using an iterative framework process can be valuable.
<u>Using a Feedback Loop</u>	Example of how an iterative process can be established by creating a feedback loop between project partners and community stakeholders.	Demonstrates how you can go about tracking feedback and communicating your progress with the greater community, empowering residents in the process.
<u>Gehl's Iterative Engagement Process</u>	Case study demonstrating what an iterative process looks like in practice and as an integrated part of a community-oriented planning process.	This example shows the complexities and advantages of using an iterative process, and how you can involve the community throughout the different stages.

Developing a Timeline

PART 1 SECTION 5



“The number of activities I have to complete in my engagement plan feels overwhelming. How do I manage all of them?”

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Support Inclusion and Plan for New Feedback

Community engagement is a multidimensional process that requires many steps and stakeholders. Diving into an engagement plan can be overwhelming, to say the least. That’s why activity planning within a clear, yet adaptable timeline is essential. Activity planning begins with mapping out your program’s goals, outcomes, objectives, activities, tasks, stakeholders, budget and timeline. Each of these elements is defined not only with budget timelines and programmatic priorities, but also by the community advisory team.

Once the goals, outcomes, and objectives of the engagement plan point towards a clear North Star, you are ready to break down the corresponding activities into manageable sections that allow for tracking costs and budget needs.

Creating a structure for your community engagement process is necessary for completion, but it’s equally important to build in flexibility. Taking a phased approach is important when developing your timeline; opportunities for new learnings should be integrated into the process in a regular and methodical manner.

Phasing your timeline creates intentional responsiveness to community opinions and expertise that are impossible to predict at the onset of plan development. Doing so allows new ideas and course corrections to be made based on valuable real-time community feedback.

“I want to provide my thoughts on the development plans for my neighborhood. How do I find out when and where I can learn about the plans and contribute my opinions?”

COMMUNITY MEMBER



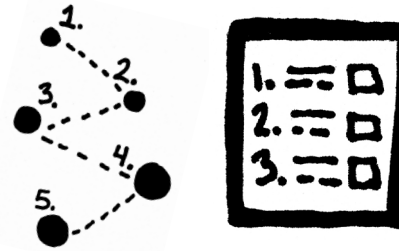
How do I organize a complicated process like community engagement?

- Diving into an engagement plan can be overwhelming. Having a clear timeline is important for managing a complex engagement plan.
- It is also important for a community development plan to include intentional flexibility for new ideas and course-corrections based on community feedback.

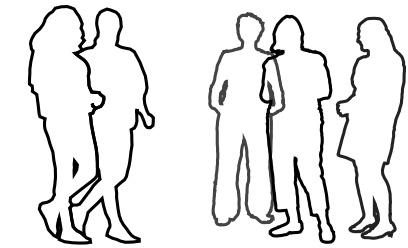
How can I make the public aware of our timeline, without creating unrealistic expectations?

- A publicly available timeline is always important for transparency. At the same time, committing to a timeline that will inevitably change has the potential to disappoint communities and appear mistrustful.
- Anything published to the public should highlight the flexible nature of timelines and note the different considerations or contexts in which the project is working, so that community members feel keyed in.
- In future sections, we will talk through how to provide continuous updates on the timeline throughout the community engagement process.

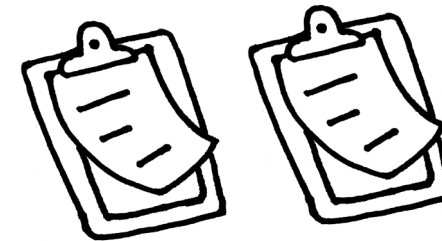
What are the steps to creating a timeline?



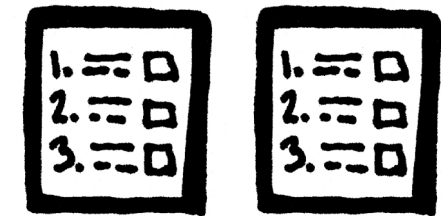
1. Map Community Events: Map out key activities that provide a variety of ways to engage with the program, project, or initiative.



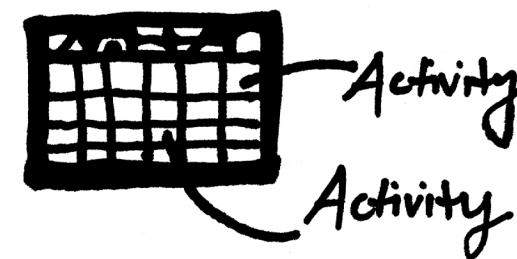
2. Identify Existing Opportunities: Identify existing events within the greater community that are well-attended and trusted by people.



3. Create Activities Lists: List activities that need to be completed for each engagement area. Prioritize underrepresented perspectives.



4. Organize Engagement: Create phases for engagement and themes which help place the different activities in a clearly defined list.



5. Develop Schedule: Select dates for each activity, taking into account seasonal availability, cultural holidays, and other constraints.



6. Solicit Feedback: Receive feedback from the community advisory team about the timeline, and if necessary, adjust to encourage and foster strong participation.

One way to approach the project planning process:

1. Clearly define the goals and expected outcomes of this engagement

Goals▶
Goals▶

What is at the heart of this engagement? How will the information be used, and where does it fit into the larger project?

4. Input stakeholders into activities



Who needs to be involved in each activity? Who is missing? Are there any conflicts between stakeholders to navigate?

7. Estimate timeline: How long will each activity take to complete?



2. Create a list of objectives

Objectives▶
Objectives▶
Objectives▶
Objectives▶

What must be achieved to complete this engagement? What is needed for delivery of the goals at hand?

5. Determine objectives sequencing

Objective 1▶
Objective 2▶
Objective 3▶
Objective 4▶

What objectives come first? Which objectives are dependent on the completion of other objectives or activities?

3. Break objectives down into activities

Activity 1▶
Activity 2▶
Activity 3▶
Activity 4▶

What needs to happen to accomplish each objective?

6. Group objectives and activities into phases

- Phase 1 - Objective 1, Activities 1, 3**
- Phase 2 - Objectives 2, 3 Activities 2, 4, 5**
- Phase 3 - Objective 4, Activity 6**

How can the sequence of objectives be divided into manageable chunks?

This template is a tried-and-true design for project planning, but it is also only one approach. There are many other ways to approach the process.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Engagement Timeline Template</u>	Developing a clear timeline will help organize internal team members and collaborators around the process. It also helps to visualize the arch of engagement.	Who needs to be involved with each phase of the timeline? What internal communications processes need to be set in place to ensure smooth delivery on the timeline components?

EXAMPLES OF TIMELINES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>USC Sea Grant</u>	Community Engagement timeline for climate change awareness project in California.	This paper contains a visualization of a thorough community engagement process.
<u>Zoning Redesign in Newton, MA</u>	Community Engagement timeline for a zoning reform process in Massachusetts.	This website shows the engagement timeline for a local political process.
<u>Oakville Hospital Redevelopment</u>	Community engagement timeline for the redevelopment of a hospital site in California.	This chart shows a multi-dimensional engagement timeline.

Securing Resources

PART 1 SECTION 6



Resources and Compensation are Crucial to an Equitable Process

Securing funding to conduct engagement is an essential part of a democratic and accessible planning process. Funding allows you to hire individuals who can lead the community engagement process and to pay community members and the community advisory team for their participation in community engagement activities. Allocating community engagement funds to compensate community members lowers the barriers they face to participating in community development. Compensating community members not only provides incentives for engaged participation, it also signifies that the planning authorities genuinely value the input of the communities. This can be a foundational building block for deep and ongoing relationships around engagement, and overall will show an increase in community participation.

There are three main sources of funding to support community engagement: public, private, and nonprofit. Aside from HUD allocations, nonprofit entities like foundations may also fund community engagement, particularly if the engagement will provide valuable information about communities the nonprofit seeks to serve. Private entities such as local businesses and corporations can be another option for funding. A private entity or entities could be interested in funding an engagement process if they are already involved in the local community and see the value in the development process, or have initiatives that align with your program vision.



"I know community engagement is an important part of developing programs that can have a positive impact for my community. But how do I get the funding to do it right? Where do I look for additional resources?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

"A community development coordinator asked me for an interview to discuss plans for my neighborhood. I want to participate, but I have a lot of other responsibilities. Could they somehow make it easier for me to justify spending my time with them?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



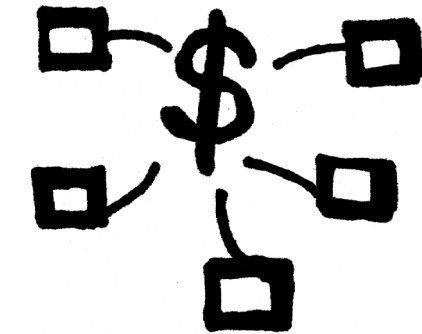
Where does funding for community engagement go?

- Funding should be directed not only at the project team, but to compensate community leaders and individuals who lead the community engagement process from an external standpoint.

What does a phased budgeting approach look like, and why is it important?

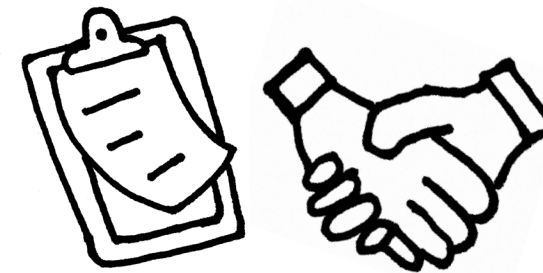
- A phased budgeting process involves breaking down the engagement budget into increments that can build upon each other, based on the data from community engagement.
- The objective of initial phases should be to gather data and synthesize priorities based on community feedback from those phases. Subsequent phases' budgets should be designed conditionally, so that they are contingent upon the initial phased feedback from the community.
- Taking an iterative, and thus community-focused approach allows for important adjustments to be made based on new understandings gained from initial engagement.

What are the steps to securing resources?

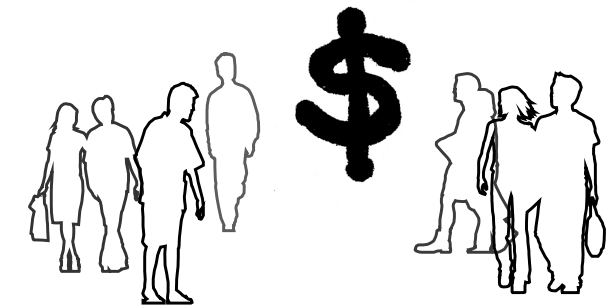


1. Find Your North Star: Develop a mission, goals, and objectives for the specific engagement. These should be co-created by the community advisory team and up for refinement as community feedback comes in.

2. Allocate Resources: Create a budget for engagement materials and facilitation, community advisory team compensation, external partners' compensation, and a flexible budget for other resources as they are needed.



3. Get Clear on Your Ask and Make Giving Accessible: Make clear ask(s) accompanied by a defined list of need(s). Provide multiple ways that organizations can support, donate, or help with the engagement.



4. Meet with Potential Funders: Meet with individuals who have similar interests as your program's goals. These may include organization leadership that are involved in government, nonprofits, or philanthropic spaces.

HUD allocation or other federal, state or local funding

Grants, organizations, or foundations who support engagement and community involvement

Funding from private developers who meet government funding requirements for community engagement

FUNDING AND RESOURCES



Stewardship Team Members



Community Organizations serving as trusted bridges to individual residents



Community hub location and programming



Communications development, materials, activities and events

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Budget Template</u>	It is crucial to create a budget that includes and reflects multi-modal elements of engagement. The budget should include fair compensation for those involved in all levels of the engagement, as individuals from all walks of life often do not have time to volunteer uncompensated. The budget should also acknowledge that the best engagement processes are iterative and based on community feedback, and allocate funds accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there space in the budget for compensation for individuals to participate in engagement activities? • What is the target number of people to reach? • How will community organization partners fit into the budget? Will they be advisors, leaders of programming, or serve another role? • How can unanticipated costs be factored into the initial budget?
<u>Potential Funding Pipeline Template</u>	Categorizing the funding pipeline can help match potential funders to the mission and goals of the engagement at hand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities exist to leverage funding pipelines? • Are there other initiatives, grants, or priorities currently being funded that this community engagement could support through its findings?

EXAMPLES OF FUNDING AND BUDGETS

Link	Summary	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Marguerite Casey Foundation</u>	An example of participatory budgeting with young people.	This paper contains a visualization of a thorough community engagement process.
<u>Youth Led the Change</u>	An example of participatory budgeting with young people.	Youth and other "non-experts" can have significant roles in the decision-making process
<u>People's Budget Chicago</u>	An inclusive, community-led process to define budget values and priorities for the Chicago area, creates an accountability framework, and ultimately designs a community-oriented budget.	Having a community-centered budget can help to define priorities for budget decisions relating to the development. This ensures that money is allocated to the needs of the community.



PART 2 - Introduction

Developing an Engagement Strategy That Empowers Community



Community Vision

= Community Ownership

= More Equitable Outcomes

The ultimate goal of accessible and equitable community engagement is to deliver development activities that provide shared community benefits across many community stakeholders - most importantly, those who are not often able or welcomed to share their perspectives. Achieving shared prosperity starts with a foundation of shared values between stakeholders. Because stakeholders have different and often conflicting interests, values must be negotiated and decided upon before the broader community engagement process begins.

Negotiating this foundation of shared values is the work of the advisory team, who can produce this foundation through collaborative conversations and strategy sessions. Having development objectives which center the community's existing interests and values will help to connect to a broader audience and thus assure greater engagement. With a foundation of shared values established, the community engagement team can then work with community stakeholders to articulate their aspirations through a community visioning process.

Community visioning can be understood as a three-step process. First, community visioning begins with establishing shared values and purpose, which serve as the foundation on which visions for the development can be built. Second, community development professionals convene community stakeholders in a series of workshops designed to develop visions for the future. The community visioning process could help realize any prospective designs for how the development can deliver that shared values and purpose. Third, the community development professionals and engagement team present the visions from the workshops to the broader community. At each step in the process, the development professionals should be striving to build the stakeholder base, and cultivate a stronger sense of community.

PART 2 ACTION ITEMS

1. Identify Challenges and Opportunities

- Conduct a context-specific situational analysis.
 - Assess learnings to provide important insight to the program at hand.
-

2. Develop a Shared Vision and Understanding of Community

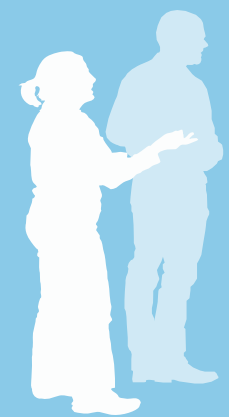
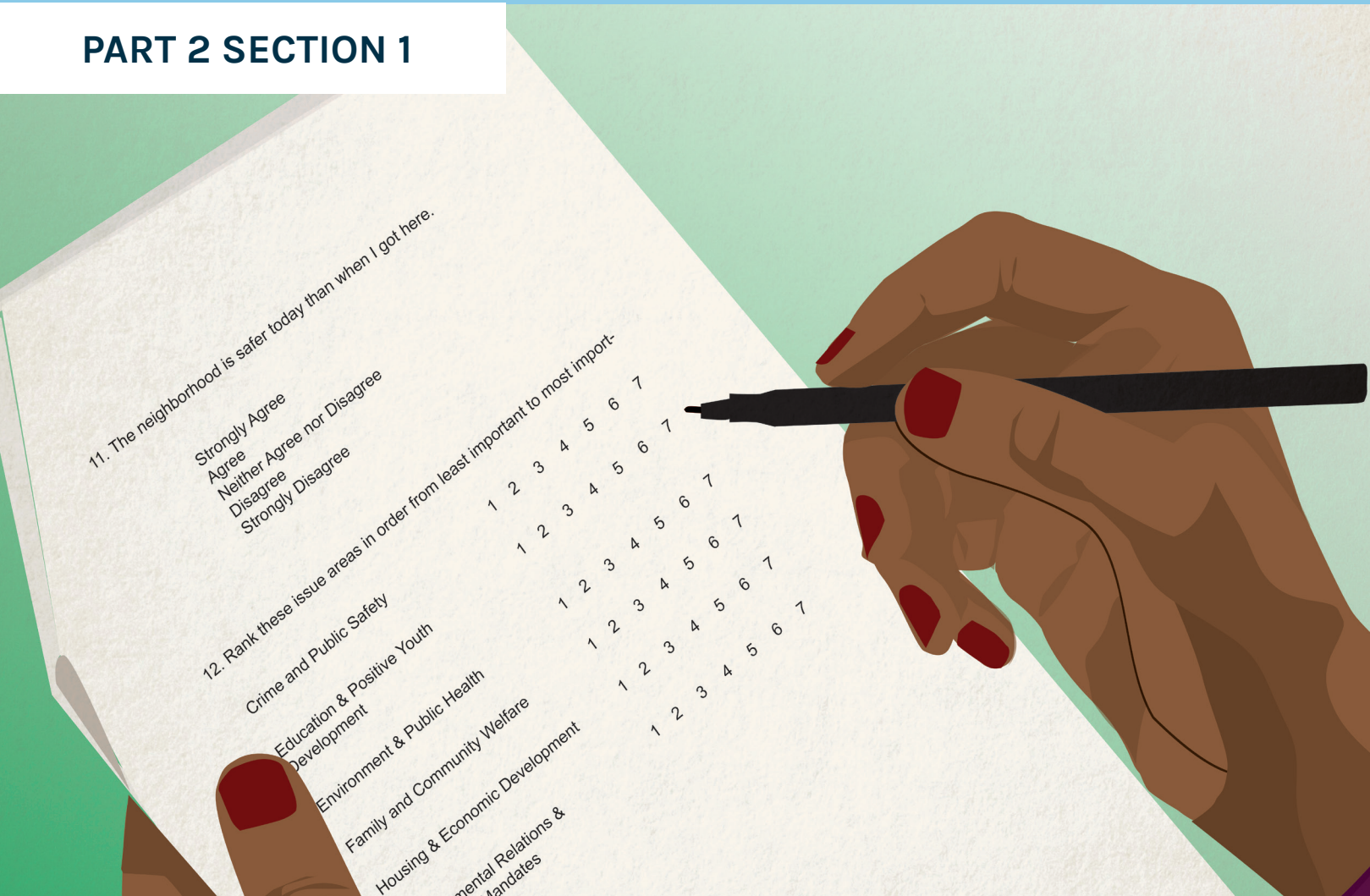
- Build a foundation of shared values for project development.
 - Help build collective ideas for community development.
 - Lead community visioning workshops to identify goals and desired outcomes.
 - Work to incorporate this vision into the specific development or program at hand.
-

3. Develop the Community Engagement Plan

- Work with community organizations.
 - Strategize how to reach those who don't feel welcome, able, or safe to participate.
 - Identify the most impactful activities from an accessibility standpoint.
 - Create a communications strategy that allows the public to provide input.
 - Design and develop engagement materials.
 - Create opportunities for feedback.
-

Situational Analysis

PART 2 SECTION 1



"I've researched my community; now I want to apply that research to inform our community engagement. I know that community development is understood within the context of a community's unique challenges, needs, and opportunities. How can I better understand the specifics?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Situate Your Initiative Within the Specific Challenges and Opportunities People Face

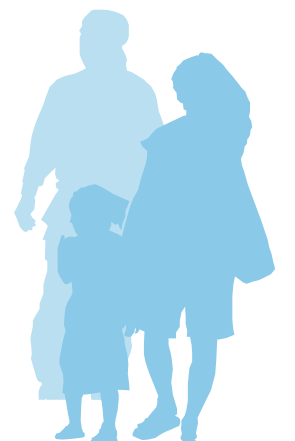
Situating community development within the specific context of a community's challenges and opportunities creates powerful potential for your project, program, or initiative. A situational analysis helps build on the general understanding of the community's landscape that you should have at this point. It dives deeper and identifies the opportunities, challenges, needs, and assets for the community, at this specific time, in this specific place.



A situational analysis utilizes data from the earlier landscape analysis, stakeholder interviews, public questionnaires, and other tools to assess specific circumstances within the location of the development and how to begin to utilize local assets and address local barriers to achieve the development outcomes. Guidance for using these tools are included in the resource section.

"I have lived on my block for over three decades. My community is very strong and very special. We have seen a lot of change for better and for worse. Many families have differing priorities here. How can I trust that a new development will take all of us into account when making plans for our community?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



What role does a situational analysis serve?

- A situational analysis helps to track specific opportunities, challenges, needs and assets of a community that define the context for your project or initiative.
- To yield results with the deepest integrity, the information gathered in this process should be a core source of feedback to inform decision-making throughout the entirety of the development timeline.

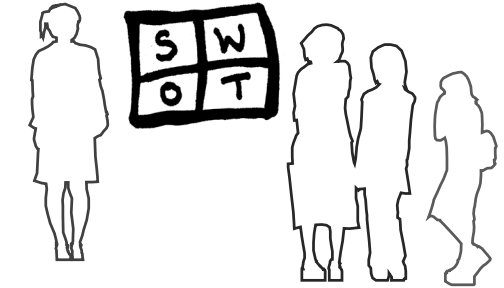
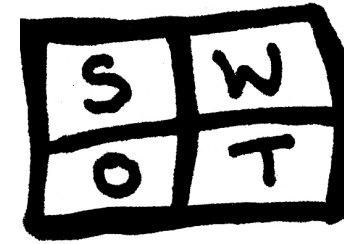
How do I conduct a situational analysis?

- The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) framework is a helpful foundation for collective discussion and decision-making, as it clearly lays out relevant factors for community stakeholders to consider and address.
- You might already have a specific set of approaches that you use for addressing the "threats and weaknesses" of a community. Regardless, the most important part of this activity is providing opportunities for community stakeholders to give their feedback in a way that is framed around their local context.

How do I conduct a situational analysis?

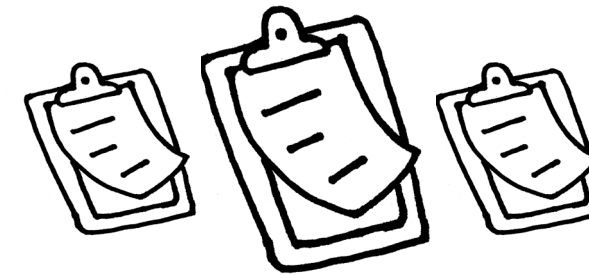
- The situational analysis should be created by the project team and community engagement professionals, with input and feedback from the community advisory team.

What are the steps to conducting an analysis?



1. Develop an Initial Situational Analysis: The SWOT framework can serve as baseline to understand the interactions between a program and the community. It should be taken as a work in progress, and will develop from incoming feedback.

2. Conduct Community Outreach: You will have a higher rate of engagement when leveraging existing community networks and locally trusted organizations. Work with community leaders to empower people to get involved and activated to create positive change.



3. Track and Identify Challenges and Opportunities: When faced with obstacles, we are all capable of finding unique solutions. As you take stock of the challenges facing a community, examine the different responses of community members. Did anything surprise you?

4. Assess Learnings: You should be hearing from many diverse voices and perspectives. Record the data gathered in the surveys, and create an average and mean answer for each question. Reflect as a team: what did we expect from these answers, and what did we learn?

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Pro
<p><u>Challenges and Opportunities Workshop</u></p>	<p>There may be any number of original responses to challenges. While identifying challenges, find the opportunities that have been developed in response to those challenges. Begin with people in the community who have faced the same challenges and found positive, imaginative solutions to a collective problem. You will likely learn from each one and discover creativity that can only be found in living with such a challenge firsthand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What challenges do people face in the community? • What barriers exist to the quality of life? • Who is most negatively impacted? Has the community come together in the past to improve their community, and if so, what has that looked like?
<p><u>Community Survey</u></p>	<p>Gathering data on community input can be partially facilitated by surveys, which provide a more objective look at the opinions of the neighborhood. Community development practitioners use surveys in conjunction with other, more in-depth forms of information gathering, like interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the data developed, and how do you move from the data into action? • Is the survey using language that is accessible? • Will people have time to fill out the survey?
<p><u>Learning Assessment</u></p>	<p>Within your community is a powerful learning network. We learn from one another, and as we teach one another, we become more comfortable in our knowledge. While we can gain valuable insight from outside experts, the process of peer-to-peer teaching is necessary for the sustainability of a project and its evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How formal or informal is your network you've learned from? • Do people have the opportunity to regularly share? • What kinds of knowledge is being valued? Is it just statistical research, or are you also recognizing other forms of knowledge and knowledge sharing, such as storytelling? • Where are the gaps in knowledge? • What challenges might exist that are unseen, unmentioned, or deemed too taboo to have shown up in the analysis?

EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONAL ANALYSES AND OUTCOMES

Link	Summary	Why It's Important
<u>Actua's Community Mapping</u>	A video walking viewers through the process of community mapping with students.	Community mapping with residents can help you identify existing assets, and help to build local trust and communication networks.
<u>ABCD Toolkit</u>	This Toolkit exemplifies an asset-oriented community analysis. Seeks to understand how communities can drive development through understanding existing assets and how to scale them.	ABCD builds on the assets that are already found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to build on their assets-- not just concentrate on their needs.
<u>Wilmington, Delaware SWOT</u>	This is a A SWOT analysis for the city of Wilmington, Delaware. The analysis is a high level evaluation of the City's current demographic, socio-economic, and economic landscape.	This serves as a prime example of how a SWOT analysis can be used to build a deep understanding of a place and inform intentional decision-making.
<u>Beyond Walls in Lynn, MA</u>	A community-identified public art program in industrial spaces in Lynn, Massachusetts.	This program came out of stakeholders' identification of assets, challenges, and opportunities in a deindustrialized society.
<u>PASS Community Based Participatory Research</u>	The Urban Institute partnered with the DC Housing Authority, residents, and community-based organizations from the Benning Terrace Development to co-create and test the Promoting Adolescent Sexual Health and Safety (PASS) program.	The program focused on creating pathways for community members to help define the direction of the program and evaluation process. By creating strong ties between the research teams and community members, the program provided better research and program outcomes.

Defining a Community Vision of Shared Value

PART 2 SECTION 2



"I'm working in a community with many different interest groups: homeowners, renters, small businesses, a large institution, and several immigrant communities. Their interests often conflict with each other. How do we design community development that maximizes community benefits in an equitable way?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

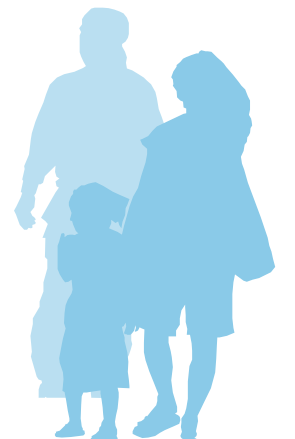
Envisioning a Collective Path Forward

The first step in community visioning is to define a foundation of shared values and purpose which reflect the unique makeup of the community. To do this well, it's important to consider a spectrum of community needs such as housing access, affordability, culture and education, the nature of public spaces, and both public and domestic safety. Historical perspective is important to consider when establishing purpose around community needs. The past informs present day challenges. For example, if there is a history of redlining or environmental contamination in the community, redressing that injustice should be integrated into the foundation of shared values and purpose. Additionally, history has particular implications for an equitable community engagement strategy. In virtually all contexts, some stakeholders have had more power than others to influence the direction of a community. Understanding those contexts allows you to take a more informed approach and open up the conversation to a wider audience.

After establishing a foundation of shared values and purpose, it's time to build a concrete vision for a path forward. This stage of the visioning process uses a community-led approach, and can take place in a series of workshops designed for the co-creation of ideas for how community development can deliver on the community's shared values and purpose. The workshops focus on translating shared values into goals and desired outcomes, and how to translate them into the design of the program.

"I'm a long-term renter in my neighborhood. My homeowner neighbors are enthusiastic about investment in our neighborhood because it will increase their property values. But I won't be able to afford to live here if rents increase. How can we navigate this tension? Who will developers or public programs listen to?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



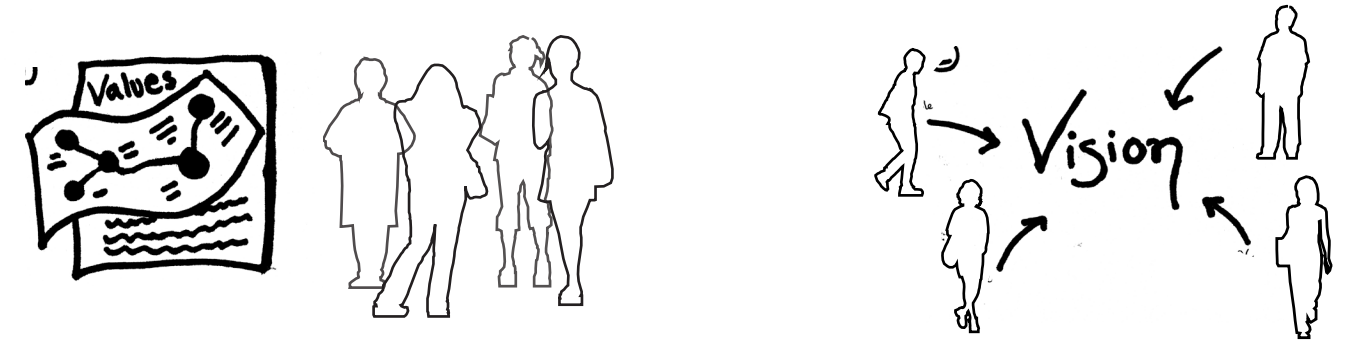
What do shared purpose values address?

- A set of shared values and purpose will arise from acknowledging a spectrum of community needs. It also includes the specific hopes and desires for the program in development. If you are currently addressing these aspects in an existing community engagement strategy, consider how you can expand and integrate a wider diversity of perspectives. Use the advisory team to support you through this process.

Why are visioning workshops important?

- Workshops are a great format to work together and translate shared values into goals and desired outcomes. These decisions are then taken to the larger community for feedback, pushback, and inputs (covered in following sections). These elements can help drive the community's vision for where they want to be. Supported by an iterative approach, your strategy will morph with the vision of the community as the team builds trust and uncovers new aspects to consider.

What are the steps of community visioning?



1. Identify What's Important to the Community: Bring the community advisory team and other supporting groups together to develop a shared vision, incorporating the initial landscape analysis.

2. Co-Create a Community Vision: Transform the ideas and values of people into a vision for practical, equitable change. The vision should include as many perspectives and historical contexts as possible.



3. Incorporate the Vision Body: Incorporate the community vision and mission into the plans of the development or program at hand.



A community vision for the health, well-being, and prosperity of residents.



The design, details, mission and strategy of the program or project.



Creating a way for development to directly serve a community vision through explicit goals and objectives.

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY VISIONING

Link	Summary	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Principles of Environmental Justice</u>	Seventeen principles of Environmental Justice were created at the multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.	These principles show what can happen when multiple community organizations come together for a vision.
<u>East Multnomah County Community Resilience</u>	The report shows how visioning workshops with community organizations has influenced the program's strategy and impact metrics.	This example shows how visioning workshops play a crucial role in participatory design to create creative, place-based community solutions.
<u>Tired-A-Lot</u>	This is a youth-led project that created playgrounds in vacant lots with spare materials in the neighborhood.	The project arose from youth's desire for activities, adult residents' desire for neighborhood beautification, and everyone's desire for recreational spaces.
<u>Nonconform</u>	Together with people on site, the organization develops spatial concepts for long-term lively environments in creative participatory processes.	This example shows how engaging participatory design allows for the creation of creative and place-based solutions.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link

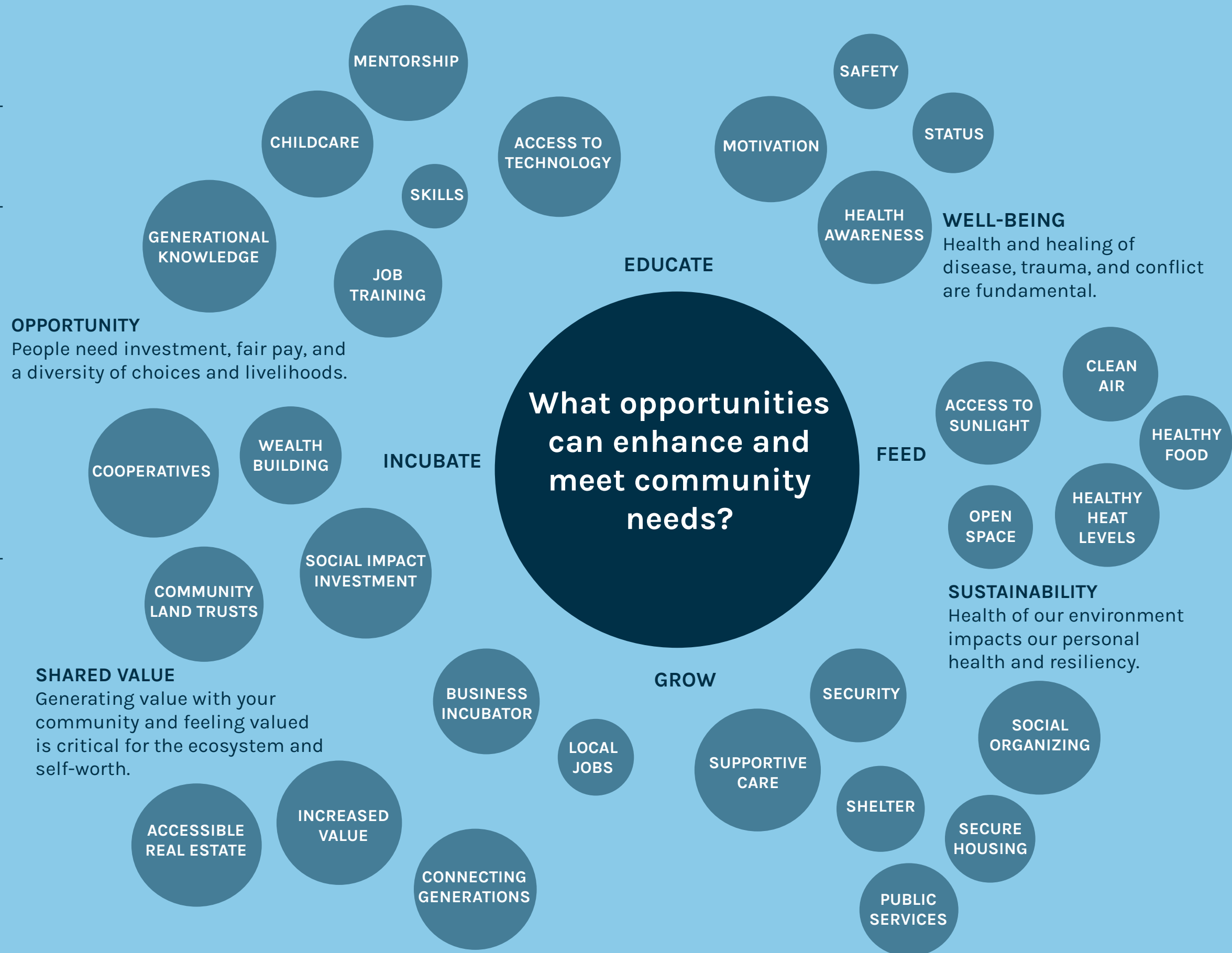
[Stories That Shape a Community](#)

Assessment Points

The initial advisory team can identify community conditions and opportunities, to begin the process of inviting a wider community voice into the process adding their views. This activity can be done throughout different phases of a community engagement process. Each opportunity to brainstorm community opportunities helps to facilitate a community vision centered on shared value.

Key Questions and Prompts

How can initial dialogue and workshopping help to frame community challenges, needs, and opportunities in a way that centers equity? Think about the conditions and opportunities in your community. In what ways does a brainstorming activity ensure different community voices, needs and opportunities are heard?



Developing the Engagement Plan

PART 2 SECTION 3



"I'm working in a diverse neighborhood that doesn't have many public meeting spaces. How do I make the community engagement process accessible to all community members? How can I make sure they understand and feel connected to the community development I'm a part of?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

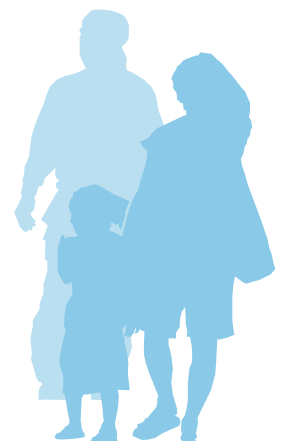
Strong Communications Strategies Exist in the Heart of Communities

Regular communications are critical for driving participation in your engagement and ensuring strong, relevant community feedback. Creating a communications plan that prioritizes accessibility and making people feel welcome ensures that as many different stakeholders have access to timely and accurate information about the project or program at hand. Communication should come both directly from you and indirectly shared through your partner community organizations. It can occur online, via physical materials, and from face-to-face interactions. Information can be presented visually, with data, and through narrative storytelling - to facilitate discussion and feedback from an experiential perspective.

A strong engagement strategy will leverage existing community networks and work in collaboration with community groups to publicize events and identify opportunities to align and even hold combined events for greater reach and impact. It should focus on reaching people who don't typically feel welcome or comfortable engaging in traditional settings. By taking both a community-led and focused approach, community members will more likely feel their ideas and opinions are being heard and considered, and in return, support the decisions being made and participate again in the future. It's all about building trust and encouraging authentic participation at every stage.

"I'm not very knowledgeable about what's happening in my community, and I mostly keep to myself in public. That said, I've seen signs about a future development project at my daughter's preschool. I'm not sure what to think, but I do know it might affect my ability to afford our rent. How can I learn more?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



Why is a communications strategy important to centering community voices and ensuring participation?

- When people don't know what's happening, or don't feel compelled to join, they won't. Engagement communications should welcome participation by making opportunities easy to join and accessible for people who don't normally participate. How and where communications are shared are key.

How can I leverage existing trust within communities?

- Lean on your partner organizations and community advisory team. A successful strategy works closely with organizations who are already in regular communication with people from backgrounds and with lived experiences that are excluded from decision-making. Utilizing a community hub, whether physical or virtual (Part 1 Section 3), is a great way to organize your activities where people are already gathered together.

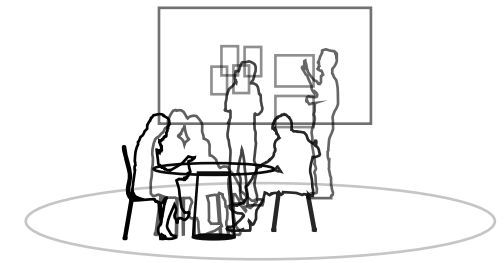
How do I create accessible opportunities for online engagement?

- It is valuable to reference your community context learnings, reference the landscape and situational analysis, and discuss ideas with the advisory team when choosing the best online channels for communication.

What are the activities to create the plan?



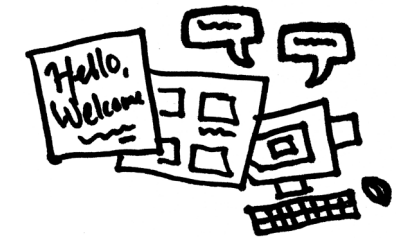
1. Evaluate Impact: Discuss the types of online and in-person engagements that will have the most impactful response from the community with the advisory team.



2. Work With Community Organizations: Include organizations beyond the advisory team to participate. Utilize the network from your initial outreach.



3. Create a Communications and Engagement Strategy: Utilize the landscape and situational analysis, along with the vision and shared values to inform the strategy.



4. Design and Develop Engagement Materials: Develop and schedule the content. Assign responsibilities amongst the internal and advisory teams, as well as external partners.



5. Develop a Strategy for Community Hub Communications: Identify ways to engage the hub. Outline roles and responsibilities, prioritizing community trust.



6. Create Opportunities for Feedback: Allow community members to ask questions or provide feedback to the advisory team at any point in the process.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Organizing the Communications Strategy</u>	An engagement and communications strategy should answer four primary questions found to the right. This template can be used to guide your process in understanding how to answer these questions, and how to utilize a community informed approach to build your engagement and communication strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the core elements and objectives of outreach and community development?• Who am I trying to engage through this process?• How can I connect with those communities in an accessible and inviting way?• What do I want these communities to gain from this outreach?
<u>Creating / Amplifying Your Community Engagement Plan</u>	Your strategy should outline and explain decisions around important materials, timelines, and objectives for community outreach and engagement. Reference this template’s table for support on how to develop the strategy. You can reference outputs from Parts 2 and 3 to ground the strategy in shared values and community needs. Include any potential barriers and gaps that need to be addressed to ensure inclusion of all key community groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the important considerations and elements for creating a community engagement plan?• How do you create an intentional outreach plan that is community specific?

EXAMPLES OF PLANS

Link	Summary	Why It's Important
<u>Vision Zero Communications Campaign</u>	Study looks at two municipal early-adopters of Vision Zero -- New York City and San Francisco - and their promising approaches to communicating about Vision Zero in order to garner attention and influence behavior at all levels of society.	By creating a well thought-out communications plan, you can build awareness and understanding of a project and provide opportunity for traditionally left-out communities to have a voice in a project's vision.
<u>Collective Climb</u>	Collective Climb implements restorative justice principles among youth interacting with the criminal justice system in Philadelphia.	As a youth-focused organization, Collective Climb's engagement strategy is digital-forward. Their website is clear, thorough, and informative.
<u>Emory University Community Engagement</u>	Emory's strategy seeks to make a deeper impact in Georgia through its continued work to identify, address, and solve challenges with community partners.	To do this, they concentrate on three areas: social and economic mobility; health and well-being; and arts, science, and cultural enrichment.
<u>Project Connect Engagement Plan</u>	Project Connect shared information, received feedback and collaborated with more than 1,200 Central Texans, including the process and previously identified and future corridors. This effort included public events and engaging people where they were, by hosting tables at other events, giving presentations to neighborhood and civic organizations, and conducting pop-up engagement. Feedback received refined the Project Connect Vision and prioritized development corridors.	The Plan sought to share information in traditional and nontraditional ways, engaging stakeholders not traditionally reached by using a variety of tools. Its goal was to clearly communicate the process and the community's role, including what feedback is needed and how that feedback will be used. It also planned to provide multiple and meaningful feedback opportunities with ample notice at locations where stakeholders are already frequenting.



PART 3 - Introduction

Conducting Engagement and Evaluating Impact



Community Opinions and Expertise are Valuable Beyond Measure

Conducting community engagement is relatively straightforward after the intentional preparation of your community engagement plan, advisory team, budget, timeline, and communications strategy. Follow the phased timeline and budget approach to break activities down into manageable sections. Utilize the communications strategies you have identified that resonate with the community to reach community stakeholders, including leveraging already established communication networks. Ground all community engagement activities in the shared values and goals set by the advisory team. Implement the iterative design framework from the onset of the community engagement process, so that you can consistently evaluate the progress of the project alongside the stated values and goals.

The iterative design framework will also lay the foundation for program evaluation, which is a key responsibility of community development professionals. Evaluation is the process of measuring the actual impact of the program against the desired outcomes. The success of a community development program should be measured by how well it responds to the needs, interests, and desires of the communities it affects.

By implementing an evaluation practice from the commencement to the conclusion of your engagement process, you can ensure that the program is developing according to the needs and desires of the community.



PART 3 ACTION ITEMS

1. Implement Your Community Engagement Plan

- Plan according to the timeline and budget; adapt as necessary.
- Strategically choose methods of engagement based on demographics.
- Create content that will resonate with the people you hope to reach.
- Work with community organizations to leverage existing trust and communication networks.
- Utilize a community hub for centralized convening (virtual or physical).
- Present the program ideas and design in the context of the community vision to help obtain informed and meaningful feedback.
- Employ virtual platforms to help reach diverse stakeholders.

2. Continue Fostering Community Relationships

- Build trust with community members through sustained engagement.
- Host community activities that facilitate interaction.
- Create or utilize existing digital or physical spaces for ongoing communication.

3. Use An Iterative Approach to Facilitate Ongoing Evaluation

- Create metrics of evaluation.
- Collect data prior to, during, and after activity completion.
- Regularly review feedback and data to assess program effectiveness.
- Identify key opportunities to course correct and pivot if necessary.
- Make data and feedback available to all stakeholders.
- Measure success as the alignment of community vision and real outcomes.

Engaging The Broader Community

PART 3 SECTION 1



"The community advisory team has a vision, and we want to invite people to engage with it. How do we convince people to actually participate in the feedback process?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Meeting People Where They Are

Creating opportunities for the broader community to engage with your plans and provide feedback is essential to receiving quality community input. Even if your community advisory group is diverse, there will still be many unrepresented people and perspectives that are important to inform your work. Broader public engagement should be community-centered; accessibility is key in terms of space, location, language, framing, and more.

Leveraging existing community organization networks, engagement pop-up events at locations where people regularly convene can increase opportunities for a breadth of people to provide feedback. By reducing the role of time and transportation needs, pop-up events also help overcome cultural barriers to community participation by establishing trust and a feeling of being welcomed to participate. Utilizing partnerships (such as outreaching to local businesses, which can provide gift cards or supply food) is a great way to get community members excited to participate.

An online format to engage, such as a website or interactive forum (preferably integrated into existing networks or embedded into a community organization's site) can and should also be created to provide regular and accurate information and feedback opportunities. By creating a space for engagement online, a message is given to residents that community involvement and engagement isn't a one-and-done aspect of program or project development - particularly if this work is integrated into other trusted organizations' online presence.

"My neighbor is on the advisory committee for a development initiative. I'm glad he's able to represent his interests, but I worry his interests will outweigh mine. How can I make sure my perspective is included?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



Why do some not show up to presentations and public hearings, if everyone is invited?

- There are many reasons why community stakeholders might not come to a public presentation. They may be unable to due to work or family commitments, or they may not feel welcome, or even safe, to participate. Most of the time, people don't come because they don't actually know an activity is happening. By advertising a variety of opportunities to participate in lower-stakes environments, people will be more encouraged and incentivized to show up.

How do I solicit feedback from community members who don't attend presentations?

- The key to successfully engaging larger portions of a community is meeting the community where they are. By identifying places and events where community members regularly gather, you can host popup events to organically interact with them.

What role does language accessibility play in public engagement?

- Taking language and knowledge barriers into account will help individuals to voice their questions, comments, and concerns. You can also leverage local assets, such as community translators, to support you.

What activities are a part of community visioning?



1. Outreach to People and Organizations: Invite community members and groups to participate in engagement opportunities. Make sure to account for translation and other accessibility needs, and ensure that every team member has a clear role for outreach.



3. Track, Synthesize, and Report on Learnings: Create a listening report, coding key themes and narratives. Review the listening report to ensure that people's perspectives are appropriately represented and make updates if necessary.

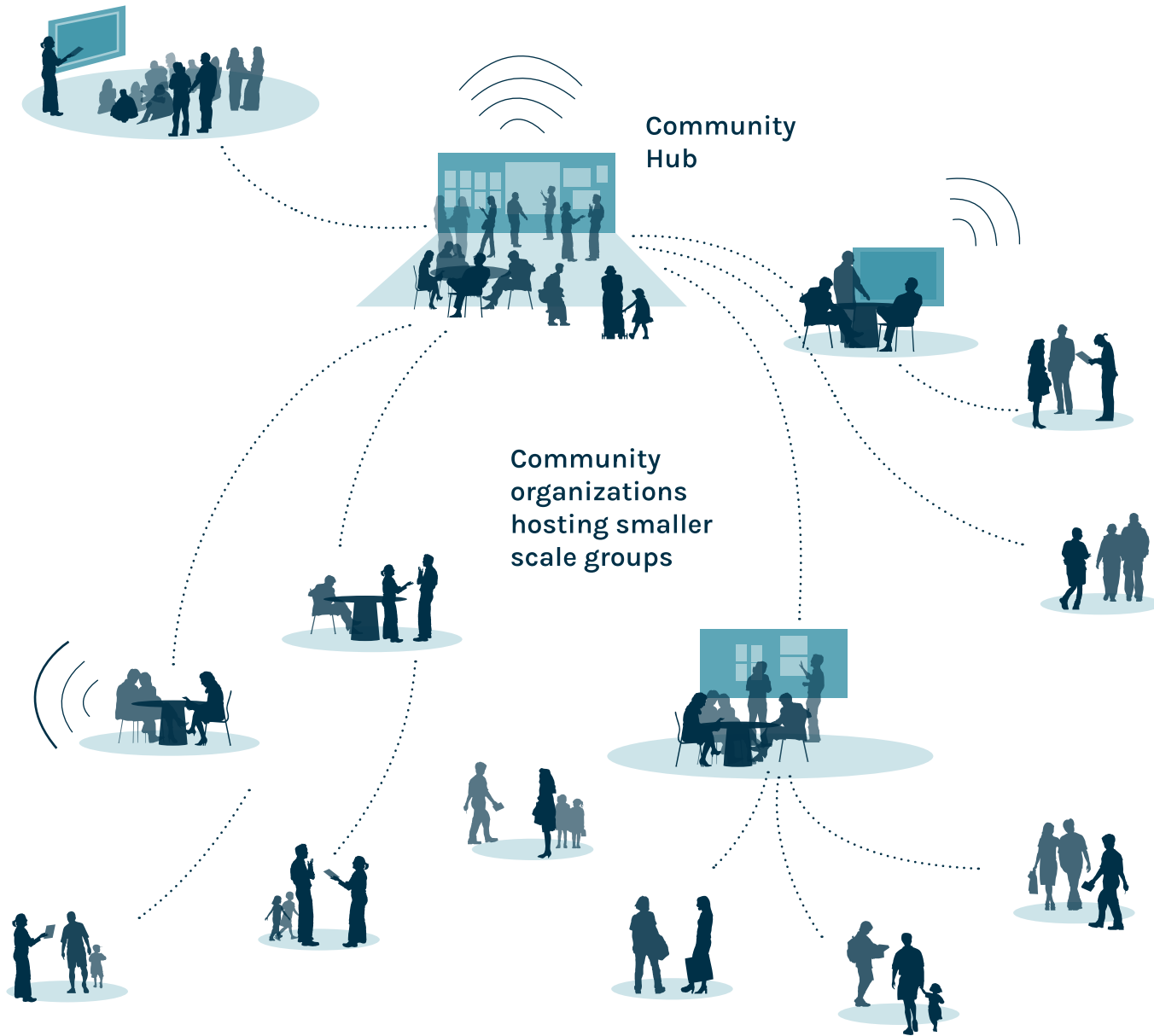


2. Facilitate Engagement: Once the materials are reviewed by the advisory team, begin facilitating community engagement. Make sure to highlight the engagement timeline and budget, sharing additional pathways for continued community input and participation.



4. Repeat the Process: Share the listening report to the greater community and provide iterative edits based on community feedback.

Development Team +
Stewardship Team



Interacting with individuals
in-person or virtually

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Summary	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Tracking Community Feedback</u>	Tracking community feedback is important for evaluating and sharing the success of your initiative, project, or program. Tracking also allows you to turn your findings into a useful resource for others. This will also generate a benefit if you are seeking funding, wish to grow momentum, or strengthen coalitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tools are at your disposal for documenting? • How can you transform an abundance of data or information into a user-friendly roadmap for others? • Does your documentation feature all participants in the project?

[How to Use Google Forms to Create a Survey](#)

[How to Create An Online Questionnaire](#)

EXAMPLES OF PLANS IN ACTION

Link	Summary	Why It's Important
<u>A Coalport Revival in Trenton, New Jersey</u>	This project used in-depth research, immersive public engagement activities, and design and visioning services to design and plan for a hybrid project that hopes to bring an innovative transformative vision to Trenton.	This work confronts the numerous challenges impacting the quality of life and economic advancement in Trenton, including toxic industrialization, redlining, urban renewal, deindustrialization, service cuts, and environment degradation. Their work confront the gentrification reinforces inequitable outcomes to the future potential of the city.
<u>Communities In Action: Louisville, KY</u>	With support from multiple grants, the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness expanded its partnership and improved access to healthy foods and physical activity in 12 neighborhoods most affected by health disparities.	Twelve neighborhoods had existing programs and resources that were able to execute the initiatives proposed. The coalition identified leaders who were already doing that type of work and trained them for engagement in a way that supported their organizations' missions
<u>LakewoodAlive Organization</u>	LakewoodAlive is a community-centered nonprofit organization in Lakewood, Ohio, seeking to foster and sustain vibrant and welcoming neighborhoods.	LakewoodAlive's strategies include: administering a housing outreach program; hosting large-scale community events; pursuing community development initiatives including public art and beautification; and providing small business support.
<u>Block Parties in Golden, CO</u>	The City of Golden, Colorado hosts block parties, chili socials, festivals, and community summits to gather community design input.	These community events are a strong example of the diverse and creative ways to gather large community input.
<u>Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District</u>	This is a program built around the idea that the experiences people have in downtown public spaces, and how safe they feel, are shaped by how those places are designed and programmed using tactical urbanism.	These three case studies show how tactical urbanism can be used to transform the built environment through do-it-yourself (DIY) community-led initiatives.

Strategies for Ongoing Community Engagement

PART 3 SECTION 2



"Community engagement is a long and complex process for my team, in part because it is difficult to recruit community members to participate. How do I make it easier to involve the individuals in community development activities in the future?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Relationships are Key for Continued Feedback

The purpose of creating a base of shared values through engagement is to deliver programs and plans that reflect the needs and interests of the community. To ensure successful community development, community engagement must continue beyond the initial design process of a given initiative. This requires both collaborating with community leaders, and empowering local community members through information sharing and building ongoing engagement platforms. Transparency is the key: it is important for the local community to be kept informed of all plans, progress, and any changes or delays. These updates can be delivered digitally through social media and email, via physical advertising around the neighborhood, with traditional media outlets like local newspapers, and with in-person events. Events can include open forums and conversations, walking tours, and festivals and celebrations that are related to the development process.

By keeping communities engaged throughout and beyond the development process, you build trust and goodwill with a community while fostering pride and a sense of ownership. When communities see that their voices are heard in the planning process, they become more likely to engage in other areas of civic life and they experience the power of democratic process. Relationships with community stakeholders during the planning process are valuable, both for future programs and development. It's important to find ways to maintain and deepen those relationships beyond formal engagement phases.

"I was involved in the planning process for a community development project in my neighborhood. I really enjoyed working with the planning team, and I would love to continue to participate in neighborhood decisions. How can I stay involved?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



Why is continued communication with the community important?

- Community development affects residents long after a specific project's implementation, particularly if changes are made to daily life in a neighborhood. Even if you are properly addressing the community input, keeping community stakeholders up-to-date can help demonstrate that the community is being actively listened to and respected throughout the program development journey.

What information should be communicated?

- It's important for the local community to be informed about the events, plans, progress, and any changes or delays in your project. Sharing data and feedback is valuable to community stakeholders to track goals and outcomes against the project vision.

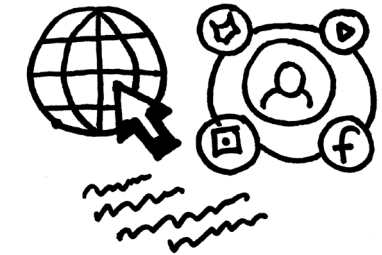
How do I facilitate continued community engagement beyond a project?

- Maintaining an informative and interactive online presence can create a strong sense of community involvement and a dependable avenue for engagement.

What are the activities for ongoing engagement with the community?



1. Organize and Distribute Materials: Organize and distribute program informational materials, such as project photos, mapping tools, data visualizations, and engagement reports.



2. Develop an Online Presence: Develop an online presence through the creation of a website, blog, or other interactive forums to share information, project updates, and opportunities.



3. Organize Community Events: Lead online and in-person walking tours to share the history of the site, plan for celebrations of development milestones, and provide other in-person opportunities for engagement.



4. Facilitate Continued Dialogues with the Community: Facilitate online dialogues and forums, which can be led by the project or advisory team to provide information and create opportunities for community involvement and engagement.

EXAMPLES OF ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

Link	Summary	Why It's Important
<u>The King's Canvas Campaign</u>	The King's Canvas is a creative gallery space for emerging artists in Montgomery, Alabama that is used for community development.	The organization uses the space as a platform for bringing community members into the broader community development process.
<u>SPUR Regional Strategy</u>	This is a regional strategy plan for the California Bay Area that creates an interactive experience for the user.	You can create a more inviting planning process by describing ideas and visions through storytelling and illustrations.
<u>Lancaster Community Engagement</u>	The City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania used online, offline, and blended approaches to ensure their diverse population was well represented in the City's new engagement initiatives, which ranged from policing to mobility planning.	This community engagement example shows the impactful difference between meeting the community where they are and expecting the community to come to you.
<u>The Yes! House</u>	This is a community center designed to be a youth recreation zone, hub for artists, and a space for continuing conversation around social change in Granite Falls, Minnesota.	The space allows for community development professionals to engage continually with community members of all ages on local issues and opportunities.

Evaluation Through an Iterative Process

PART 3 SECTION 3



"As our community initiatives have developed, we have received strong responses from the community that suggest their understanding of our work and goals have changed. How do we integrate this feedback into our plans?"

ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Creating a Positive Feedback Loop for Trust and Accountability

Evaluating the success of development is one of your core responsibilities as a community development professional. In a shared values framework, success is determined by how closely the outcomes of an activity align with community needs. To effectively measure impact, data should be collected on specific conditions prior to the program, throughout the program, and after its completion. By utilizing an iterative design framework, you can use assessment points to adapt the program development to respond to community needs and desires.

All data should be carefully reviewed and cross-checked to ensure its accuracy and reliability before it is included in analysis. To deepen the utility and application of the community insights collected, you may want to consider using a data platform that synthesizes quantitative and qualitative datasets together.

Taking a community-focused approach is important at this synthesis stage: data should be presented in a way that is understandable to non-technical stakeholders, and the next steps based on feedback should be extremely accessible to reach. It should be easy for the public to use this data for accountability within development decisions.

"When I learned about the new commercial corridor in my neighborhood, the developer said that there would be an affordable grocery store and a daycare center. Now that the center is finished, I see only upscale dining and shopping options. How do I hold the people in charge accountable?"

COMMUNITY MEMBER



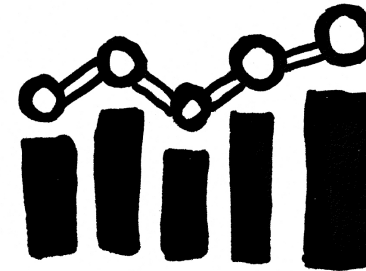
How does evaluation help achieve equity?

- To achieve equity, community development professionals must be held accountable not only for incorporating the interests of community stakeholders into the design process, but also for meeting the desired outcomes of the development.

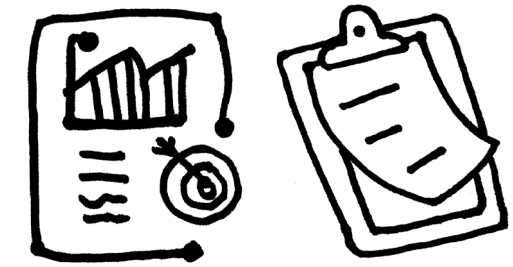
What type of data should be collected?

- Soft and hard data are important to collect in conjunction with each other. Soft data refers to qualitative information that reflects stories and human complexities, while hard data refers to quantitative data that can be measured and analyzed.
- How will I know if we are meeting the community's needs?
- Development goals should be created from a shared value framework, which is used to establish a collective community vision (see Part 2). These shared values drive the purpose of the development, and ensure that each of the needs and wants of the development stakeholders are aligned.
- By utilizing supportive tools and trackable outcomes, you will be able to measure the impact of the development at every stage of the process.

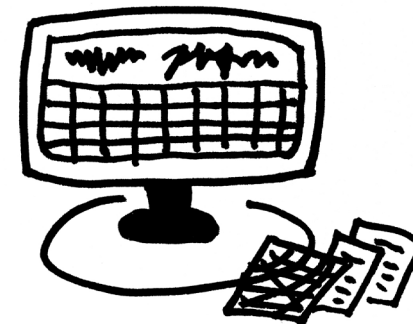
What are the steps to iterative evaluation?



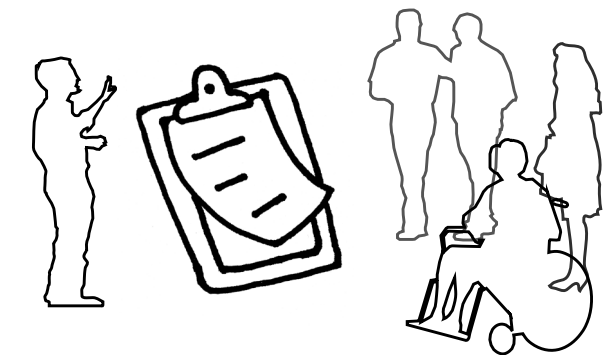
1. Create the Metrics: Create success metrics that directly correspond to the community vision. These include trackable outcomes (short and long term).



2. Create the Tools: Create the appropriate tools and methods for gathering your qualitative and quantitative research on community perspectives.



3. Create a Database: Create a basic database for collecting and organizing information. Strategize a way for this database to easily translate into accessible updates.



4. Collect Information: Collect information and perspectives from community members, taking care to track not only their words, but any other valuable context or intonation.

What should you be looking for?

What has changed?

What do people think?
How do they feel?

What are you measuring?

What is progress defined by?

What aspects should have changed? Why are these important to measure?

What are you comparing your measurements against?

What's your baseline? A certain year? A certain number? Before engagement?

Did your outcomes match the community vision?

EXAMPLES OF ITERATIVE EVALUATION

Link	Summary	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Knowledge Transfer Process Guide</u>	This guide includes advice and worksheets on creating targeted messaging, understanding audiences, transferring knowledge, and defining impacts.	Using these worksheets will help define the right methods for evaluation that allow the results of the activity to be used in other contexts.
<u>Whole School Assessment Tool Sustainability Assessment Tool</u>	This assessment tool provides a baseline of the 'stage of change' a school or district is in on the journey to educate for sustainability through curriculum design, organizational policy, and the built environment.	By tracking and continuously accessing impact and success, you are able to make better informed decisions – and, if necessary, adapt your strategy.
<u>Southwest Valley Storyboard Sustainability Assessment Tool</u>	This site includes guiding principles, strategies, and land use maps, developed through a combination of community input, policy objectives, and analysis of land use, zone, and development patterns.	These story maps show the Southwest Valley Community Plan's visions and impact as it grows and evolves. It is a great example of an interactive website to inform and engage the community.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Link	Assessment Points	Key Questions and Prompts
<u>Engagement Evaluation Worksheet</u>	Evaluation doesn't begin at the end of a community engagement process. Throughout the implementation of an engagement plan, evaluation should be an ongoing practice. Continued evaluation allows for a check-in process which tells you how the process is progressing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the engagement process meeting deadlines?• Who are the active participants?• Has recruiting new community members been effective?• Are expectations clear across the board?• What is working, and where is there room for improvement?
<u>Tracking Community Feedback</u>	The way that community feedback is tracked affects how the information is presented, interpreted, and used for decision-making. When organizing your feedback, it's important to make sure that there is a level of continuity and accessibility in how the data is categorized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What major categories and themes are emerging in the feedback you receive?• Are people's perspectives being tracked in a way that is accessible and easy to understand?• How will you categorize feedback that does not fall into one of your categories?
<u>Interview Sheet</u>	The most powerful tool in your community engagement toolbox are interviews. Meet with community members to discuss visions of positive community-based programs and to listen to their visions for their community. These meetings will provide the best opportunity to brainstorm ways to collaboratively turn visions into realities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you notice any patterns across multiple interviews?• Who else should you talk to?
<u>How to Use Google Forms to Create A Survey</u>		
<u>How to Create An Online Questionnaire</u>		



CONCLUSION

Tying it all Together: Ongoing Learning and Reflection

Reflecting on Your Process

Throughout your experience engaging with this Toolkit, take the time to reflect on your progress, learn from your experiences, and continue to work towards building a stronger, more resilient, and more equitable community.

As you engage with people, you will hear a range of perspectives and viewpoints. As you empower community leaders, you will strengthen collaboration and pave the way for long-term sustainability of your efforts by increasing visibility, credibility, buy-in, accountability, and ownership of solutions.

Achieving the desired results, vision, or shared value from a community engagement plan will require each of us to reflect on the role we play in our community, ask ourselves difficult questions, and put this reflection into action. Allow yourself and other community members time for honest reflection. Whether you are at the conclusion of your own community design project, or interested in starting one, take the time to reflect on the following questions, then keep going.

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- What challenges and lessons learned have you experienced?
 - How has this work changed you?
 - What internalized biases or assumptions have you come up against in this work?
 - What abilities or capacities did you discover in yourself?
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