

## PART II

# TOOLS AND ASSESSMENTS



This section provides a set of tools and assessments to plan successful and effective community engagement, in the time of COVID-19 and beyond. As you plan your next community engagement event, use all tools (in order) to maximize your success.

**1** **PURPOSE AND PLANNING:** *How to Plan a Community Engagement Event* includes an overview of setting intentions and goals for an engagement, anticipating outputs, and how to best prepare for your stakeholders.

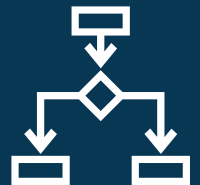
**2** **EQUITY AND INCLUSION ASSESSMENT:** an overview of key considerations for promoting access, equity, and inclusion in your community engagement.

**3** **FIND YOUR FORMAT:** *Decision Tree* allows you to identify the best format for conducting your specific engagement. This helps you double check if you are planning within your capacity and stakeholders' comfort levels.



### Considerations for Tools and Assessments

- Set aside as much time as necessary to complete the tools prior to planning your next engagement. The more time, thought, and dedication you spend on the tools will ultimately strengthen your intentions and collaboration, building the capacity to plan more effective engagements over time.
- Work with your engagement team to complete the tools collaboratively, in order to build and sustain internal alignment on the agenda and logistics for your engagement.
- To save time, use these tools as your talking points during planning meetings.
- Ensure that everyone on the team has a copy of the tool(s) after completion.



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## TOOLS + ASSESSMENTS II.1

# PURPOSE + PLANNING TOOL

## HOW TO PLAN A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT

Use this form with your team as you begin planning an engagement to identify gaps in your knowledge or methodology and critically examine your approach. It can be used as a guide in conversations for planning or as a step-by-step process.

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

A community engagement experience can be crafted in a number of styles depending on the goals and context of your community. Before planning the specifics of your event, it is important to clarify your goals and frame what you expect to get out of the engagement. This tool provides a framework for identifying your engagement's purpose by guiding you through a series of targeted questions.

## PART 1: FIND YOUR PURPOSE

<p><b>ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE</b></p> <p><i>NOTE: This is not the goals or outcome of the program / project, but the reason why you are planning this engagement and how it relates to the larger project.</i></p>	<p><b>1. Define the 'why' of this engagement.</b> Identify why this project exists. Why is this important? Does it have a theme?  <i>How does this fit into your other work or larger ecosystem of your services?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is this connected to an overall organizational goal or theory of change?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is this connected to another initiative?</i></li> </ul> <p>• <i>What data/information are you using to support the why of the engagement? Do you need to collect additional data/information to better understand and articulate your why?</i></p>
<p><b>STAKEHOLDERS</b></p>	<p><b>2. BRIEFLY identify the stakeholders involved in this project.</b>  <i>This can include co-workers, clients, sponsors, media, funders, politicians, and community-based groups who will receive engagement research. Make sure to include those you intend to engage and those affected by the project outcomes. Remember: This should include voices that may typically face barriers to participation but are affected all the same (e.g. demographics like race, immigration status, income, and age).</i></p>
<p><b>TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT</b></p>	<p><b>3. Select how you will engage your stakeholders based on the purpose of your engagement, your expected outcomes, your internal capacity, and your stakeholder needs.</b>          Check all boxes that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Outreach:</b> Educate the public about a project/initiative/policy or decision.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Consultation:</b> Gather information, and ask for advice from the stakeholders to better inform your work.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Collaboration:</b> Engage the public (key stakeholder groups) to work with you in understanding, developing, and implementing the project.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Shared Leadership:</b> Decision-makers share decision-making power with stakeholders or give them a formal role in making final decisions to be implemented.</li> </ul>

## TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT (continued)

4. **What is your intent for engagement?** Clarify the extent to which stakeholder input can influence decision-making. Identify the reasons for engaging the public:
- To inform decision-making:
    - Define problems or understand a complex issue
    - Develop solutions or problem solve
    - Pilot programs, services, or ideas
    - Make civic decisions ( e.g. participatory budgeting)
    - Other:
  - To support community relationship-building:
    - Ensure the community feels they have a voice in decisions that affect them
    - Inform the community of policy decisions that may affect them
    - Develop relationships with specific demographic communities
    - Partner with other organizations
    - Maintain and strengthen a relationship with the community
    - Other:
  - Other:

## PART 2: SET GOALS

### STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS

*What do you hope your stakeholders will experience?*

5. **What are your expectations of stakeholders and what are their expectations of this process?**
- *How much time and what resources are stakeholders expected to commit?*
  - *What governance structure will be set in place?*
  - *How will stakeholders communicate?*

### DECISION-MAKING

6. **Describe what decisions can be made during the engagement or from information gleaned at the engagement:**
- *Who are the decision-makers?*
  - *Who influences those decisions?*
  - *Who is affected by the decisions? (refer back to [Part 1 - Question 2](#))*

### ENGAGEMENT GOALS

7. **Describe goals of engagement in less than three sentences.**  
Make sure to include the purpose ([Part 1 - Question 1](#)), level of participation ([Part 1 - Questions 3 & 4](#)) and degree of influence ([Part 2 - Question 6](#)).
- Example of one goal:** *Gather feedback on a mobile food service program by consulting with individuals experiencing homelessness in Essex NY, in order to improve those services.*

**GOAL EVALUATION**

8. Determine how you will evaluate the effectiveness of your engagement, as it relates to meeting your engagement goals.

- What about your goals is important to measure?
- If you met your intended goals, what do you hope to learn from evaluation?
- What processes can you put in place now to streamline the measurement of these goals?

**NOTE:** Review the [Mini-Guide for Engagement Evaluation](#) to support answering this question.

**TIP:** Make your goals easier to measure and evaluate by reframing them to meet the [SMARTIE framework](#) from The Management Center.

**PART 3: DEFINE OUTPUTS****ENGAGEMENT OUTPUTS**

**NOTE:** Outputs, what you hope to gain from the engagement, are connected to the goals but are the 'must have' that you need in order to move forward. (e.g. prioritized ideas or key decisions made)

9. What tangible outputs do you aim to achieve? What do you hope to walk away with from this engagement or project?

**STAKEHOLDERS OUTPUTS**

**NOTE:** Outputs are connected to goals and motivations of the stakeholders. (e.g. notes from the engagement or a new relationship)

10. What tangible outputs do you aim for stakeholders to achieve? What do you hope they walk away with from the engagement?

- How will you measure and evaluate your engagement outputs?
- If you met your intended outputs, what do you hope to learn from evaluation?

**OUTPUT USE**

11. How and why do the outputs of this engagement impact next steps in your project/work and how will they be utilized? (e.g. in decision-making, for reports, for transparency, etc.)

12. How will the engagement and its outputs be shared? Be sure to refer back to your stakeholders to ensure all are included in any output sharing.

- What are the ways the outputs will be documented and communicated back to stakeholders? (e.g. mechanisms like formal recommendations, progress reports, briefings, press releases, etc.)
- How will you share the evaluation of outputs with stakeholders?

## PART 4: DETERMINE STAKEHOLDERS

### RELATIONSHIP WITH TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

13. Have you engaged with these stakeholders before?

- Yes    No

If not, who can you speak with to have a better understanding of the stakeholders?

14. How might socio-historical and cultural context impact the way stakeholders engage with your project? If you are unaware, do you have methods (media, community partners, etc.) to find out?

15. What is the stakeholder perception of your organization, initiatives, or services? If you are unaware, do you have methods (media, partners, etc.) to find out?

**TIP:** Utilize the [Equity and Inclusion Assessment](#) and the [Mini-Guide for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#) to build a more inclusive engagement.

16. Could your positionality (e.g. your role, race, nationality, socioeconomic status, etc.) in any way impact the success of how your stakeholders engage with you? Are you the correct facilitator for this engagement?

- Yes    No

If not, who could be facilitating or co-facilitating this engagement? \_\_\_\_\_

### STAKEHOLDER MOTIVATIONS

17. Define the stakeholders' interests and concerns related to your project:

- Why do they care? What are their motivations? What are their expectations?
- How can they benefit from this engagement? From the engagement outcomes?
- Alternatively, how might they be impacted by the engagement outcomes?

### BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

18. Identify barriers that may prevent stakeholders from engaging. Check all that apply:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High risk of illness   | <input type="checkbox"/> Digital literacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural considerations  | <input type="checkbox"/> Language         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility - disability access                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility - transportation access                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Power dynamics   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility (technology, physical access, etc.)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family care      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barriers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Time             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barriers for Blind and Visually-Impaired                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barriers for developmental, cognitive, & intellectual disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> General appeal   |

Identify other barriers not mentioned above:

## OUTREACH

### 19. What are the existing channels you have to engage with your stakeholders?

Check all that apply:

- Paper communications (fliers, mail, coupons, etc.)
- Digital communications (newsletter, email, listservs, etc.)
- Social media communications
- Communication at events or programs
- Other community-based organizations
- Relationship developed through providing services
- Relationship developed through multiple touch-points
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have non-traditional methods of outreach to get people involved? What new channels do you need to consider in order to build relationships with this community?

### 20. Are there organizations that currently have relationships with your target stakeholders with whom you can connect? (Remember: Consider power dynamics)

### 21. What existing relationships and partnerships can you leverage to further support outreach for the engagement? Are there community-driven events where people will already be gathering that you can participate in?

## STAKEHOLDER EVALUATION

### 22. Determine how you plan to evaluate your engagement of stakeholders.

- What about reaching your stakeholders is important to measure?
- If you reached your stakeholders, what do you hope to learn from evaluation?
- How will you track if you reached your priority stakeholder population or why you may not have? (e.g. *Collect demographic information, record # of participants, characteristics of participants, evaluate outreach efforts, etc.*)
- How will you understand how engaged the stakeholders are? (e.g. *Request feedback or develop an observation process on how participants engaged*)
- How else can you understand your stakeholders and their participation in this engagement? (e.g. *Do you want to survey them, track their participation over time, etc.?*)

## PART 5: ASSESS CAPACITY

### TEAM CAPACITY

**23. Who are the supporting team members directly involved in this project? What are their roles and their depth of knowledge regarding this project?**

- Clarify partnering organizations, influencers, and consultants involved and their role in the project and decision-making.
- Articulate what assets they bring in this engagement (e.g. expertise, money, networks or tools).

**24. Where are there gaps in knowledge, expertise, and/or tools? What is your plan to address these gaps?**

**25. Define any constraints for this engagement.**

- What is the timeline for this project? Is there a completion date?
- Are there time, staff, and/or financial constraints to keep in mind?
- What are the legal requirements of this project?

### ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

**26. What resources do you have to pull off your engagement? Before you choose the engagement plan, assess what resources you have at your disposal. Check all that apply:**

- Online engagement resources:
  - Video conferencing platform
  - WiFi vouchers
  - Hotspots for stakeholders
  - Other:
- Physically distant engagement resources:
  - Space/furniture (*indoor or outdoor*)
  - A/V system
  - Incentives (*food, swag, etc.*)
  - Other:
- Phone/SMS engagement resources:
  - Phone conferencing platform (*pre-paid or toll free?*)
  - SMS texting platform (*pre-paid or toll free?*)
  - Podcasting technology and tools
  - Other:

**27. What additional resources do you have at your disposal? Think in general terms (e.g. outreach tools, communication, copy-writing, facilitation, etc.)**

## ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION

**28. Determine how you plan to evaluate the planning and implementation process for this engagement.** Some examples of this evaluation could include measuring the effectiveness of your project management, guiding program improvement, and assessing if a program was delivered as intended.

- *What do you hope to learn from evaluating the process itself? (e.g. work with a partner to observe and summarize the process and identify successes, challenges, and things to change)*
- *How will you understand how effective your process of planning and implementing the engagement was? (e.g. survey participants, review documents like meeting notes, hold a debrief meeting with planning partners, etc.)*
- *How will you analyze if you had all of the resources you needed to effectively implement this engagement? (e.g. track resource use, develop an observation process on how resources were utilized, etc.)*

**TIP:** Hold a simple “Plus/Delta” meeting, or pass around a “Plus/Delta” form with your planning partners. Learn more about the “Plus/Delta” assessment format [here](#).

**NEXT STEPS** After completing this tool, follow these next steps:

- 1** Complete the [Equity and Inclusion Assessment](#) to incorporate an equity and inclusion lens into your engagement’s purpose.
- 2** Complete the [Find your Format: Decision Tree](#) to determine the most appropriate engagement type based on your context and needs.
- 3** Combine your reflections from all three tools (including this one) to help you develop the final draft agenda.



# EQUITY + INCLUSION ASSESSMENT



## HOW TO ENSURE AN EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE, AND ACCESSIBLE ENGAGEMENT

This tool can be used before finalizing your agenda or afterwards as a refinement process. The assessment questions align with the community engagement categories.

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Identify the intended level of participation of your stakeholders. If you need help determining the engagement category for your activity, reference the [Purpose and Planning Tool](#).

- Outreach
- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Shared Leadership

2. Review and fill out the engagement assessment questions that correspond with the engagement category you are using.

**NOTE:** *The assessment questions build on one another. As a result, if you are leading a Collaborative engagement, you should address the questions in Outreach and Consultation as well.*

## ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

### OUTREACH

1. Is there an opportunity to identify and engage new, historically excluded, or non-traditional stakeholders and partners?

2. Do you understand the sociocultural context and inequities faced by your priority populations? Check all that apply.

- Do you know the racial, ethnic, and linguistic context of your stakeholders?
- Do you know and understand the social, environmental, and structural determinants of inequities for your stakeholders?
- Do you know the history of engagement efforts in this community?

If not, conducting this research in advance helps to build on your team's internal cultural competency and knowledge in order to build stronger relationships with your target stakeholders.

**What socio-cultural context and inequities are important to keep in mind when communicating and engaging with this target stakeholder group?**

*Educate stakeholders about the rationale for the project or decision, how it fits with project goals, policies, and issues being considered, or where input is needed.*

**3. How can this engagement build a reciprocal relationship with stakeholders?**

- Will this engagement benefit your stakeholders? If not, can you rethink the engagement to ensure reciprocal benefit?
- How do you know it will benefit your stakeholders? (e.g. How might spending time taking a survey be beneficial to an individual?)

**4. Can you offer multiple and non-traditional methods of outreach?** There are multiple ways for stakeholders to engage--virtual, in-person, or mailed efforts. Check all that apply:

- Is your communication culturally-responsive?
- Are you using plain language?
- Are outreach materials in multiple languages?
- Are outreach materials in accessible formats?
- Is this the most appropriate time for you to conduct outreach?

**What other strategies can ensure that you meet people where they are?**

- How are you going out to the community instead of asking them to come to you?
- Are there other initiatives that align with your engagement with whom you can coordinate efforts? (Check out [Part III - Mini-Guides](#) for additional outreach strategies.)

**5. How can you build a welcoming environment?** Check all that apply:

- Can you ask stakeholders what works best for them? Especially in regards to time, format, place, and priorities of the engagement?
- Does the venue or platform invite participation?
- Can you include ground rules for an inclusive dialogue to help set tone?
- Is there an available 'parking lot' to give stakeholders the space to ask and answer questions?
- Will you take time to assess levels of comfort with your stakeholders?
- Do you have a strategy for elevating underrepresented voices?
- Can you provide childcare?

What other strategies are you including to ensure a welcoming and productive experience?

**6. Does your team reflect the community, in regards to race and language competency?**

If not, is this a barrier?

## OUTREACH (continued)

7. Based on Question 6, are you the right person or organization to lead this engagement? Is there a community partner who might be a better fit?

8. What evaluation practices might you incorporate to ensure your engagement is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible, or to improve its accessibility for future engagement? (e.g. You might observe in a community vote that there are very few women or people of color present; or you might find that fewer people responded to an email survey than an in-person survey. What does that tell you about your engagement?)

**NOTE:** Use the [Mini-Guide for Engagement Evaluation](#) to support this step.

- Talk to people (interviews, story circles, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- Solicit written responses (surveys, polls, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- Review documentation (census data, reports, etc): \_\_\_\_\_
- Observe in real time (ethnography, site visits, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

## CONSULTATION

Answer all above in **OUTREACH** and:

9. What inequities may exist around the topic of your engagement? Frame your answer based on the socio-cultural context of your stakeholders and the power dynamics within the stakeholder group.

- What inequitable power dynamics might exist among your stakeholders?
- How might different stakeholders perceive the engagement content? How might they be affected?
- How might this cause barriers to participation in an engagement? How do you plan to support and/or address these anticipated barriers?

10. Is this engagement accessible? Check all that apply:

- Can individuals with disabilities participate (visual, physical, etc.)?
- Do you provide language translation services for people who do not speak English?
- Do you provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, captioning services, or audio amplification for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing?
- Are program materials in multiple languages and accessible formats?
- Is the engagement space or platform accessible (if applicable)?
- Are you meeting special accommodation requests?
- Will stakeholders have access to hotspots/WiFi (if necessary)?
- Will stakeholders have access to internet-capable devices (if necessary)?
- Will you provide compensation or reimbursement for transportation, time, and/or child care (if necessary)?

What other strategies are you including to ensure accessibility?

Gather information and ask for advice from stakeholders to better inform the project.

**CONSULTATION**  
*(continued)***11. How can you encourage respect and transparency with stakeholders?** Check all that apply:

- Do your agenda and talking points clearly articulate the purpose, goals, and how this information might be used?
- Do your agenda and talking points address how stakeholders might understand their position and power in the engagement process?
- Does your engagement ensure stakeholders' confidentiality and privacy?

**What other strategies are you including to build trust and ensure transparency with your stakeholders?****12. How have you ensured all stakeholders can engage to the best of their ability and comfort level?** Check all that apply:

- Does the agenda provide structure for each person to think individually? Have you included time for stakeholders to reflect?
- Does the agenda provide time to hear from each person attending?
- Does the engagement structure provide ways to engage, even if stakeholders aren't comfortable speaking? (e.g. forms, chat boxes, post-it notes, etc.)
- Do your materials provide adequate information to participate in the discussion?

**What other strategies are you including to ensure stakeholders can do their best thinking and participate at their comfort level?****COLLABORATION****Answer all above in OUTREACH and CONSULTATION, and:****13. How are you building a flexible and fluid space rather than a hierarchical one?**

Check all that apply:

- Can you provide time and space for social interaction and relationship building between stakeholders?
- Does your agenda provide space for individuals to think on their own and come together to collaborate?
- Can you provide time for building mutual understanding amongst the stakeholders (e.g. Q&A, sharing, feedback, etc.)?

**What other strategies can you include to build an equitable and inclusive collaboration?****14. In what ways are you honoring the time and effort of your stakeholders?**

Check all that apply:

- Are you leaving time to actively listen to stakeholders?
- Are you leaving time and space for stakeholders to reflect?
- Are you sharing materials ahead of time to better prepare stakeholders?
- Is there a system in place for stakeholders to hold you accountable or offer feedback?

**What other strategies are you including to ensure stakeholders feel this was worth their time and energy?***Engage key stakeholders to work with you to understand, develop, and implement a project.*

## SHARED LEADERSHIP

Answer all above in **OUTREACH, CONSULTATION and COLLABORATION**, and:

### 15. If decision-making is part of your engagement, how can you build an inclusive process?

Check all that apply:

- Does your agenda include a plan for participatory decision-making?
- Will stakeholders be able to utilize the tools necessary for decision-making? (e.g. *polling devices*)
- Do the affected communities have power in the decision-making process?
- Have you practiced strategies for ensuring all voices are heard?
- Is there a process for maintaining communication with community members so they can be informed of project updates?

What other strategies are you including to ensure an inclusive decision-making process?

### 16. Did you plan this engagement in an inclusive manner, promoting shared leadership?

- Was the agenda planned and/or reviewed collaboratively?
- Have you identified roles and responsibilities among the leadership and partners for the engagement?
- Do you have an agreed upon shared model for decision-making?

If none of the above are checked, what strategies can you deploy to ensure shared leadership from the planning stage of the engagement?

*Decision-makers delegate decision-making power to stakeholders or give them a formal role in making final decisions to be acted upon.*

**NEXT STEPS** After completing this tool, follow these next steps:

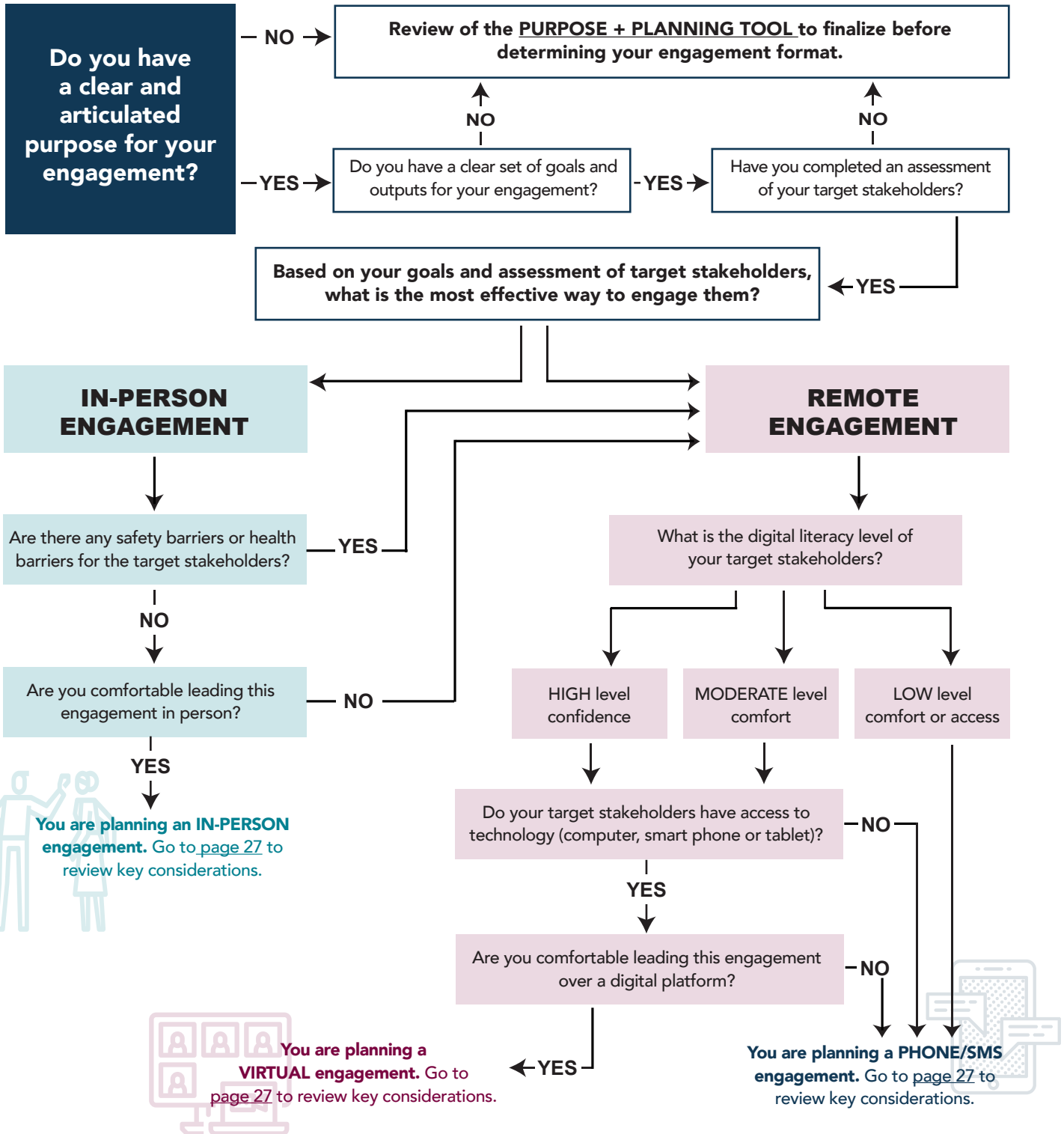
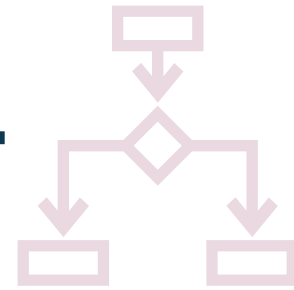
**1** Review your agenda and make adjustments to ensure you are providing an welcoming, equitable, inclusive and accessible engagement.

**2** For additional support review [Mini-Guide for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#).

**3** Complete the [Find your Format: Decision Tree](#) to determine the most appropriate engagement type based on your context and needs.

# FIND YOUR FORMAT

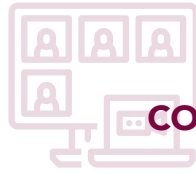
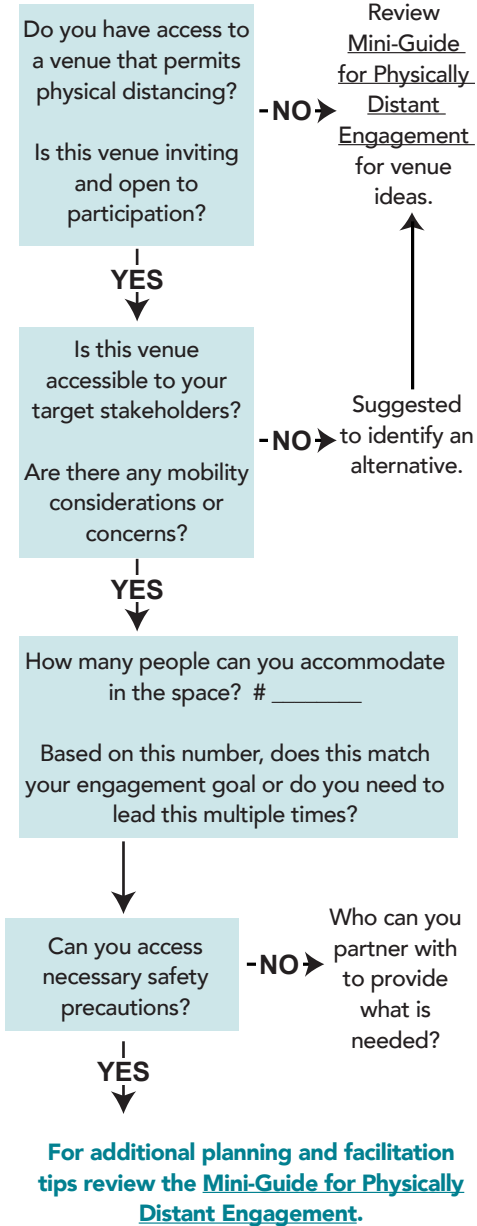
A DECISION-MAKING TOOL TO SUPPORT CHOOSING THE RIGHT FORMAT FOR YOUR ENGAGEMENT



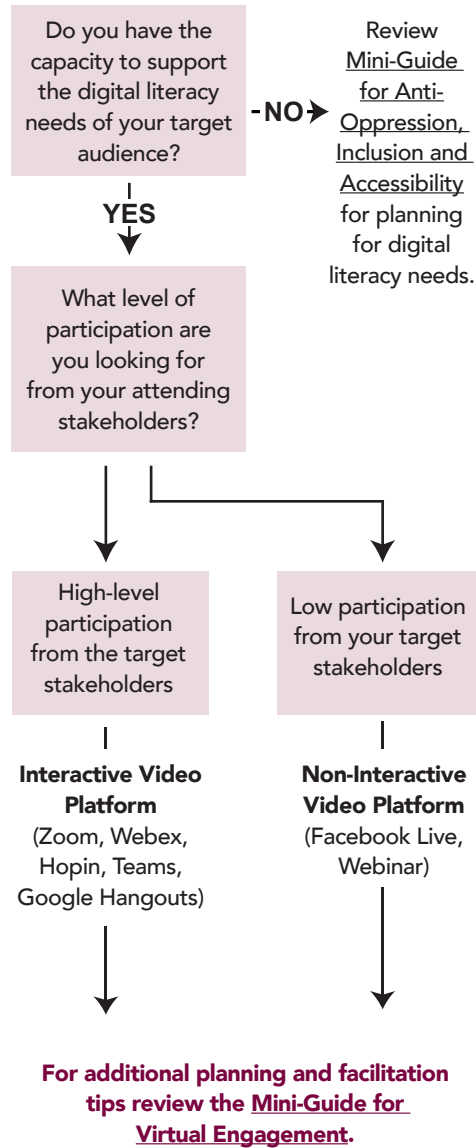
FIND YOUR FORMAT



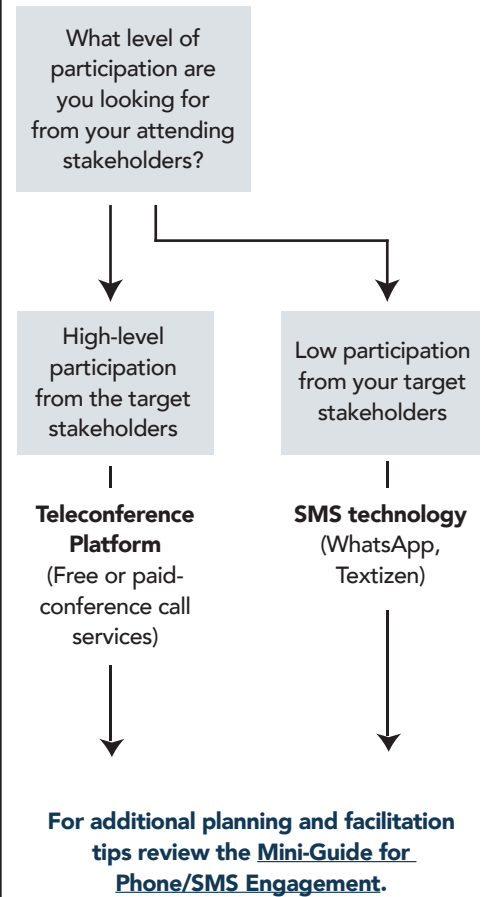
## IN-PERSON CONSIDERATIONS



## VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS



## PHONE/SMS CONSIDERATIONS



## HYBRID CONSIDERATIONS

A hybrid experience might include a combination of formats. To find out if a hybrid engagement is right for you, review the [Mini-Guide for Hybrid Engagement](#).



2021 | Version 2.0

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Our problem-solving approach draws on human-centered design: we provide insights and services that strengthen our partners in the social sector to be equitable, responsive, and innovative. With over 10 years of experience, we have led engagements and projects that intersect with community development, library innovation, education, workforce development, affordable housing, re-entry planning, arts and culture, and more.

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