



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ALMANAC

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A tactical guide for supporting productive and equitable conversations with community-based stakeholders



## The Community Engagement Almanac is a tactical guide for supporting productive and equitable conversations with community-based stakeholders.

Inspired by the Farmers' Almanac, this resource helps community-based organizations plan for the upcoming year of comprehensive engagement. The almanac presents best practices and ideas that respond to the constantly changing environment with COVID-19. **Use this almanac to proactively prepare to facilitate conversations across different formats while maximizing the health and safety of stakeholders.**

The Community Engagement Almanac provides effective tools to make engagement decisions equitably and helps you advocate for the value of community engagement even during crisis. The content and structure is conscientious of how the pandemic impacts people differently, requiring a shift in how we meet stakeholders where they are.

**This almanac is not oriented to be read from start to finish. Instead, consider this a resource you can continue to reference as your work and the ways you reach stakeholders evolve.**

We encourage you to pull the most necessary sections to meet your needs.

Upon research and direct experience of leading engagements during the pandemic, we've identified six major considerations for adapting community engagement to the post-COVID-19 context:

- **It is not as simple as just saying, "Let's do it virtually."** Facilitating a virtual engagement is not the same as facilitating in-person. This takes patience and practice to master, and you will build your capacity each time you host an engagement.
- **The digital divide is ever present.** Certain groups lack access to digital communication resulting from systemic oppression across race, social, and economic lines. The divide has been further exacerbated by the pandemic with stakeholders disconnected from engaging in community-based settings.
- **We all have different levels of comfort.** People may have varying levels of comfort and capacity to engage, especially as some are juggling many responsibilities. There are also varying levels of comfort with exposing others to one's personal space, e.g. home, that needs to be respectfully navigated.
- **Physical distancing can be an opportunity, not just a limitation.** Even with the lifting of social distancing mandates, there are opportunities for engagement to be conducted safely in person or virtually, to provide accommodations and accessibility to those who may not be ready to meet in person.
- **Equitable engagement requires intention.** Understanding the impact of the digital divide and the varying levels of comfort stakeholders have opened the opportunity to lead with an anti-oppression approach to planning and facilitating community engagement.
- **Honoring your stakeholders' trauma in times of crisis.** Some stakeholders may have experienced immense trauma resulting from the pandemic, and trauma is valid. The tools, assessments, and mini-guides across this almanac challenge you to reshape your intentions, approach, and agenda. This guide orients you to lead engagements by cultivating space to reflect and honor trauma.

## INTRODUCTION I.1

# HOW TO USE THIS TACTICAL GUIDE

We recommend utilizing sections most pertinent to your team's engagement needs. As community, context, programs, and services shift, your community engagement practices must also adapt. This almanac is intended for community engagement that is:

- Conducted today as we navigate "reopening," and as you shift your strategies to conduct community dialogue and build capacity in this changing context, and
- Conducted the years to come as virtual and phone engagements are supported by varying levels of in-person engagements.

The tools, assessments, catalog, and mini-guides allow for you to begin to adapt your community engagement strategies for 2022 and beyond.

## PART II TOOLS AND ASSESSMENTS

Provides the process to plan community engagement with targeted stakeholders.

This section supports your approach, including choosing the right format for your stakeholders, uncovering your blindspots, and leveraging your resources for mutually beneficial engagement, all while ensuring your engagement is equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

[Pages 13 to 27](#)

## PART III MINI-GUIDES

Presents best practices, resources, and checklists to support all aspects of the community engagement experience, as well as methods for promoting safety both in-person and remotely (virtually, digitally, or by phone/SMS).

The mini-guides are designed to be used independently as a way to build capacity and alignment or address a specific need, depending on the type of engagement.

[Pages 28 to 84](#)

## PART IV CATALOG OF IDEAS

Presents a set of creative and effective ideas for leading engagements across alternative platforms, both in-person and remotely.

These ideas feature methods for conducting engagement across the full spectrum of participation- from outreach to shared leadership. This section offers ideas for different ways to set up productive, creative, and safe engagements.

[Pages 85 to 90](#)

**APPENDIX |** Glossary, *el Almanaque de participación comunitaria*, and sources

[Pages 96 to 101](#)

### IN THIS SECTION

[I.1 How to Use this Tactical Guide](#)

[I.2 Why Community Engagement Matters in Times of Crisis](#)

[I.3 What Does Community Engagement Look like?](#)

[I.4 Case Study: El Barrio Bikes](#)

Note that we have not published an exhaustive list of all the options for facilitating community engagement. Instead, our guide is more focused on the comprehensive ecosystem of planning and facilitating engagement, leading first with your intentions and approach, rather than proposing the digital tool that works best.

There are many other great toolkits and resources available that provide platform options that can also inspire you and be used in tandem with tools included in this almanac.

All three parts can stand alone or work comprehensively together to provide the principles for why and how we conduct community engagement, introduce you to the platforms available today, and share best practices for ensuring successful engagement.

## TIPS FOR APPLYING THE ALMANAC TO YOUR WORK

- **Start a conversation** with your team on community engagement priorities. Use the almanac to frame your discussion, find alignment, or build team capacity.
- **Be proactive, not reactive.** Prepare for shifting challenges in community engagement and competing priorities. Use this as a way to stay ahead of the pressure.
- **Advocate for why this work matters.** Use the advocacy tips ([see section to follow on page 5](#)) and information from other sections to improve your community engagement practice and ensure this work happens.
- **Collaboratively adopt the tools and assessments** into your practice. Build new work processes and best practices based on information offered in [Part II - Tools and Assessments](#). By using a set methodology for each engagement, you can more easily train team members and streamline workflow to boost collaboration.
- **Take inspiration or reference for strategies.** This is not an exhaustive manual for performing community engagement, instead [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas](#) is intended to inspire future engagements, build up your expertise and creativity, and, most importantly, foster stakeholder equity.
- **Use the checklists** in each of the [Part III - Mini-Guides](#) to track your process. The checklists can help you understand if something was missed or where you might need a stronger strategy.
- **Share with peers** across your network that use community engagement as a core planning and decision-making tool to help build knowledge and thought-leadership.



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## DESIGNED FOR ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE SOCIAL SECTOR

This almanac was originally oriented for the public sector, in response to a public health agency's pivot to adapt to COVID-19, while fulfilling the charge for sustaining community engagement outcomes. We led a collaborative needs assessment that identified a desire to adapt existing, in-person engagement strategies to the virtual/digital space. We built this almanac to not only address the needs now, but to capture best practices supporting their future facilitation.

All content is usable in any social sector organization looking to sustain their community engagement practices in an ever-changing public health climate.

## INTRODUCTION I.2

# WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATTERS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Across the social sector, community engagement is a core operational component of many organizations. Policies, programs, and services are designed in direct response to community-based collaboration, insight, and data collection. In a post-pandemic environment, challenges remain to reach vulnerable stakeholders. While social distancing is no longer a mandate, community members experience a variety of comfort levels when it comes to "re-entry." This can limit the capacity for sustaining relationships and trust that have been built within the community over time.

The pandemic exacerbated systemic inequities that have impacted stakeholders across racial, social, and economic lines, as local government struggled to meet community priorities. Although many stakeholders have been traditionally left out of decision-making, engagement is particularly important during times of crisis, as decision-making becomes more urgent and more impactful.

With all of this, many who work across the sector are asking, "Is this the right time to conduct engagement?" With the ongoing effects of the pandemic on the local economy and public health and safety, many have set community engagement as a lower priority item. As postponing or canceling engagements is detrimental to the promotion of community equity, we believe the question should be reframed, "How can we apply what we've learned from Covid-19 to conduct safe and equitable engagement as we emerge from the pandemic?"

Community engagement at this moment presents an opportunity to build relationships and community trust differently, and even perhaps more authentically- as long as it is led with transparency, access, and inclusion.

## TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY

Community engagement is hard work that takes time and resources from both the organizer and stakeholders. At times, organizations or staff might receive push-back against conducting engagement, and you can anticipate that there will be more in a post-pandemic world. The following talking points can support you in advocating for community engagement:

ISSUE STATEMENTS	TALKING POINTS   Addressing the concerns of community engagement today
Community engagement is not a priority at this moment. We need to focus on basic needs-not relationship building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decisions are still being made that affect our target stakeholder group. These decisions may be damaging, if we do not bring them to the table. We need to understand how the target stakeholder group is experiencing the current moment in order to better serve them.</li><li>• Engagement can help improve our effectiveness and efficiency of our programs that serve basic needs. It allows us to meet their needs head on.</li><li>• As many of our programs, services, systems, or processes have pivoted, engagement gives us the opportunity to gain insights to reflect on which still need to shift to better meet basic needs.</li></ul>

ISSUE STATEMENTS	TALKING POINTS   Addressing the concerns of community engagement today
We do not have time for this, our current timeline is too short.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We must be proactive, not reactive in our work, and engagement helps us improve our chances for long-term impact, even beyond our project timeline.</li> <li>• It is important to build it into our timeline as it informs what our intentions and approach should be. By incorporating engagement, we can ensure any decisions and outcomes outlined in our timeline are in alignment with stakeholder needs.</li> <li>• The pandemic has presented a new opportunity to leverage our networks and partnerships differently, and engagement can support the development of a shared leadership strategy to impact our project beyond our timeline.</li> </ul>
We have limited resources and capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We do acknowledge that planning an engagement will take time and effort. However, our project will lack legitimacy without the insights of stakeholders.</li> <li>• By investing in our resources and capacity by engaging with stakeholders on the project now, it will allow us to avoid barriers and misunderstandings later. Additionally, it will build support and buy-in.</li> <li>• We have the opportunity to engage stakeholders differently through virtual and digital platforms that are proven effective and cost saving. It allows us to meet stakeholders where they are, so they can engage in ways that fit their lifestyles.</li> </ul>
We are not going to reach the same number of stakeholders as we would have before the pandemic hit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The way we previously reached people has changed, and this is a moment for us to be innovative and find better ways to reach the community in the future.</li> <li>• This moment presents us with an opportunity to rethink how we evaluate community, and begin to go beyond numbers, in regards to how we reach and engage with stakeholders.</li> </ul>
BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT	TALKING POINTS   Advocating for community engagement today
Community engagement can be beneficial in keeping our community healthy and building a more just society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 has exacerbated social isolation, which is a public health issue. Engagement combats isolation, as it is a stress reliever and builds a strong social infrastructure to help us address the crisis.</li> <li>• The pandemic does not impact all communities equally. Black, Brown, and immigrant communities have been disproportionately affected. Engagement will help us serve our stakeholders more equitably, by providing different access points to engage, whether in-person, digitally, etc.</li> </ul>
Engagement helps our organization stay relevant, transparent, and effective during and after a crisis. It can help us retain and build trust among stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineffective decision-making is a result of not having the right people at the table, and the pandemic has left certain stakeholder groups out of the decision-making process. We need a collaborative approach with different demographics to make more impactful decisions. It also helps us to begin to build trust and ultimately sustain our long-term relationships with these stakeholders.</li> <li>• Community engagement allows for our team to advocate across the rest of the organization, and our larger network, on the policies and actions that impact the stakeholders we co-design with.</li> <li>• Decision-making is happening around us, and engagement can inform us, improve transparency, and combat misinformation as we shift out of crisis-mode. It also holds us accountable to our stakeholders to ensure they are a part of decision-making on an ongoing basis.</li> </ul>
Leading engagement through a crisis has made our team stronger and better equipped to have a broader reach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As platforms for engagement became more versatile and accessible during the pandemic, we have new capabilities to reach more stakeholders through alternative methods to strengthen our reach.</li> </ul>

# WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Community engagement can range from simply informing the public about plans for a project to participating in more on-going practices, such as getting feedback from various groups and empowering key stakeholders in a final decision-making process.

It exists along a spectrum of deepening participation by stakeholders. Depending on your goals and intentions, stakeholders will engage across varying levels of participation. The spectrum of engagement is divided into four categories: being informed through Outreach, being engaged through Consultation or Collaboration, or being empowered through Shared Leadership.

Throughout the almanac, we will reference this spectrum, to support you in making decisions and planning according to the level of participation by your stakeholders.

## OUTREACH



Engagement with the purpose of informing and **building awareness of stakeholders**. Generally this interaction is one-directional with information flowing from your organization to stakeholders, with little space for collaboration.

Dissemination of information can support community relationship-building or be supplemental to your entire engagement process, as this is often the first step in larger engagement initiatives- mobilizing stakeholders to first understand the situation, so they can later become more involved.

Common methods for **Outreach** can include:

- information distribution through mail, email and phone campaigns
- social media and digital campaigns
- tabling or canvassing
- public presentations
- media campaigns through press releases and interviews

### PROS

- Engages a large number and diversity of stakeholders
- Less stakeholder time
- Can be a singular engagement/activity
- Less planning time and capacity for organizing team

### CONS

- Low stakeholder participation
- Limited stakeholder influence

## CONSULTATION



Engagement with the purpose of **gathering insights** and feedback from stakeholders. Generally in this bi-directional interaction, information is presented to stakeholders, who are then asked to give specific feedback or input.

Stakeholder input is typically incorporated into the decision-making process to ensure community voices have influence. Input can support conducting need assessments, prioritizing decisions, or reframing initiatives.

Common methods for **Consultation** can include:

- insight solicitation through surveys, questionnaires and polling
- information gathering through interviews, focus groups and facilitated discussions

### PROS

- Medium amount of stakeholder participation
- Engages a large amount and diversity of stakeholders
- Can be a singular engagement/activity
- Medium amount of planning time and capacity for organizing team

### CONS

- Some stakeholder influence
- Less stakeholder time

## COLLABORATION



Engagement with the purpose of **involving stakeholders in a co-design process** of idea generation and decision-making. Generally these bi-directional interactions mobilize stakeholders to support community buy-in of your initiative and build trust and long-term partnerships.

Common methods for **Collaboration** can include:

- focus groups, round-table discussions, and facilitated workshops
- implementation support of an initiative
- partnership development to support an initiative

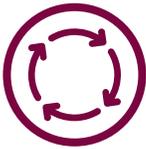
### PROS

- High stakeholder participation
- Medium to high stakeholder influence
- Can be a singular engagement/activity but is best as a longer process

### CONS

- Engage a smaller amount of stakeholders
- More stakeholder time
- More planning time and capacity for organizing team

## SHARED LEADERSHIP



Engagement with the purpose of **distributing ownership of a process or project** that includes some form of participatory decision-making with stakeholders. Generally this bi-directional process takes time to build, but in doing so all stakeholders take collective responsibility and ownership of the outcomes.

Shared control and accountability of an initiative builds lasting partnerships and transparency. These engagements benefit from leveraging a diversity of impactful voices in developing solutions. The facilitator's role in shared leadership is to support stakeholders with tools and resources that enact change.

Common methods for **Shared Leadership** can include:

- partnership development and coalition building for specific initiatives
- providing administrative and technical support to community led initiatives
- micro-grants for community projects
- providing a framework for community impact.

### PROS

- High stakeholder participation
- High stakeholder influence
- Must be an engagement process, not a singular event

### CONS

- Engage a small amount of stakeholders
- More stakeholder time
- More planning time and capacity for organizing team

# CASE STUDY: EL BARRIO BIKES



## WHAT IS EL BARRIO BIKES?

El Barrio Bikes is a mission-driven, community collaborative in East Harlem, New York City with the aim of promoting inclusivity and eliminating barriers to biking within the community. Through events, programming, and advocacy, they work to build local confidence and enthusiasm around biking. El Barrio Bikes was formed in 2016 in collaboration with The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (NYC Health Department) Bureau of Harlem Neighborhood Health (Harlem Bureau) and their community partners, as a multi-sector collaborative that employs a place-based approach to advance health equity. El Barrio Bikes was born from the diverse resources and goals of organizations already working in the community, as well as similar groups in NYC.

El Barrio Bikes evolved from a simple open community meeting of city agencies, biking advocates, local community-based organizations, and bike share operators to discuss barriers to biking in East Harlem into a thriving community-based collaborative directly addressing those barriers. This evolution was shepherded by the NYC Health Department's commitment to community engagement and dedication to health equity. This collaborative employs many activities and initiatives across the spectrum of community engagement (as described on [pages 7 and 8](#) of this almanac).

El Barrio Bikes utilizes the [Spectrum of Engagement](#) strategically with each initiative supported or framed by insights from other engagements on the spectrum:



**Outreach** to promote inclusivity in biking in East Harlem



**Consultation** in understanding barriers to biking



**Collaboration** in building community-driven biking initiatives



**Shared Leadership** through consensus decision-making



El Barrio Bikes operates as a collaborative of partners and volunteers committed to the shared mission and enacting impactful initiatives. New and existing partners participate in open-invitation monthly meetings to select and develop activities to support the overarching mission. Voluntary subcommittees operationalize selected projects, develop initiatives, and regularly report back to the full group.

While their mission is bike-advocacy focused, their stakeholders are a much larger group than those interested in biking. El Barrio Bikes considers all of East Harlem and the neighboring communities to be their stakeholders, including the individual and the neighborhood itself. Their work is impactful through supportive partnerships with government agencies, local nonprofits and organizations, small businesses, and street fairs.



### Demonstrating Outreach

Outreach is a key tool for El Barrio Bikes to promote inclusivity and eliminate barriers to biking in East Harlem. Outreach is engagement with the purpose of informing and building the awareness of stakeholders. They take a hyper-local approach to sharing resources and information with their stakeholders, utilizing in-person events or initiatives coupled with strategic social media campaigns. The following are a few examples of how El Barrio Bikes uses outreach events to build community awareness of local issues:

- El Barrio Bikes hosts events like “Bike Bashes,” where residents are provided with free biking lessons, helmets, and other resources. This is an opportunity to build awareness in the community on biking issues and speak directly with stakeholders.
- They are one of the sponsors of “Party on Park,” an annual street festival in East Harlem. More than 10,000 people are engaged through these large community events.

Throughout all outreach efforts, El Barrio Bikes maintains a community leadership role and acts as a trusted source of biking information by maintaining a community biking calendar, increasing bike share opportunities, and participating in discount programs.



### Demonstrating Consultation

Consultation is another key tool to help address barriers to biking by promoting community health through the improvement of local access to transportation and engaging public spaces to collect community input. Consultation is engagement with the purpose of gathering insights and feedback from stakeholders. As an example, stakeholders expressed resistance to biking, citing the community’s exclusion from earlier bike infrastructure planning processes, the lack of autonomy to make environmental and policy decisions in their neighborhood, and the perceived contribution of biking to gentrification.



The consultation engagement approach is a crucial type of community engagement that El Barrio Bikes has used throughout the years, especially as part of its inception. To better understand perceptions, concerns, assets, and barriers to biking in East Harlem, and before the formation of El Barrio Bikes, the NYC Department of Health carried out one-on-one conversations with 30 stakeholders. Key to success in these conversations was the Health Department's acknowledgment that resistance was justified by a long history of disinvestment. These conversations established the initial direction for biking advocacy by revealing partner priorities, including communities in planning processes, increasing information and education, and introducing community-led programming.

The facilitation of surveys, as well as event monitoring and evaluation, is another consultation tool employed by El Barrio Bikes. Members regularly track participation and community engagement through surveys and observations. Facilitating consultation has delivered the following outcomes for El Barrio Bikes:

- Bike storage as a potential policy and advocacy priority
- Increased bike share membership and participation in discount programs
- Local bike rack installations
- El Barrio Bikes's attendance at local community board meetings

Results are shared at member meetings, bolstering strategy for future activities and initiatives.



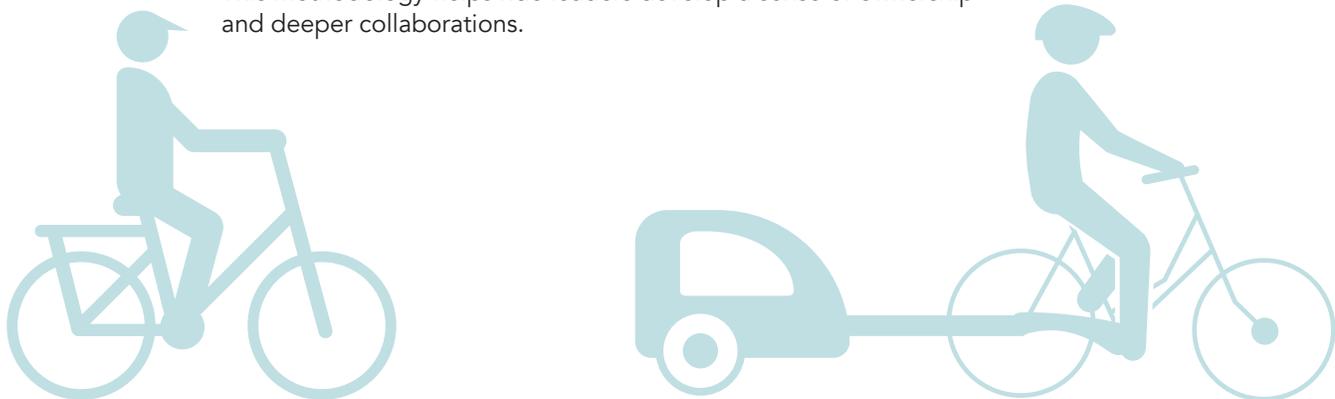
## Demonstrating Collaboration

Community engagement in the form of collaboration is one of El Barrio Bikes's strongest methods for promoting inclusivity and breaking down barriers to biking. Collaboration is engagement with the purpose of involving stakeholders in a co-design process of idea generation and decision-making. Led by a [Black-owned business consultant](#), El Barrio Bikes hosts free training for potential group ride leaders. The training itself acts as an opportunity to meet others and collaborate - designed specifically to build both biking and leadership skills among residents and people of color. After participants are trained on how to safely ride a bike, they are expected to lead community rides. Participants are encouraged to lead rides with their own perspective and flair, producing truly community-led events and providing more accessible opportunities to bike safely with other people, especially residents and people of color. Ride leaders created partnerships and ride themes that were fun and meaningful to them, like the History and Ice Cream ride. This methodology helps ride leaders develop a sense of ownership and deeper collaborations.

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## VIRTUAL EVENTS

While movement was restricted in New York City in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, El Barrio Bikes's ride leaders pivoted to host virtual bike rides in English and Spanish. Ride leaders sought to address the lack of Spanish-led biking initiatives. They hope to expand on their Spanish-led programming in future initiatives.





## Demonstrating Shared Leadership

While the formation of El Barrio Bikes has been an exercise in community collaboration, the collaborative has developed into a model of shared leadership. Shared leadership is engagement with the purpose of sharing ownership of the project and final decision-making with stakeholders. The individuals on the leadership team at El Barrio Bikes are contracted with the NYC Department of Health and compensated for their labor, transforming a small subcommittee into a community builder. Relationship-building is critical to their work, leveraging community connections to better enact their mission. El Barrio Bikes hosts quarterly group meetings to provide open opportunities for neighborhood residents, advocates, and local organization staff to interact with programmatic and systems-level decision-makers.

All members of the organization, contracted and volunteers, are stakeholders in the East Harlem biking community, coming together to promote inclusivity through biking. Leadership meetings include structured decision-making time during which the group discusses collaborative plans and activities together. Members of the team are able to leverage their own personal interests and core values into El Barrio Bikes's initiatives, further developing relationships with partners and deepening their commitment to the mission. Importantly, members of El Barrio Bikes are demographically representative of their community. Key to promoting inclusivity is ensuring members of the community see people who look like them biking and leading community-driven initiatives.

El Barrio Bikes's commitment to collaborative-leading and playing a larger role in the NYC biking community is a core component of their work. They host regular group meetings, bringing together members of their organization and members of the greater East Harlem biking community to address barriers. By hosting these meetings and attending others, they are able to support changes with a greater impact. Connecting to their advocacy work, El Barrio Bikes utilizes group meetings to listen, share, and, eventually, address challenges related to health equity and biking.

El Barrio Bikes succeeds in community engagement throughout the spectrum of engagement by putting in the effort to listen to and work directly with their community. Activities in each engagement category build off of one another, ensuring a productive and informative feedback loop. As El Barrio Bikes prepares for the future, they look to their community for what needs to be addressed first. Their focus in 2021 and 2022 is one of recovery and advocacy: recovery for small businesses that need economic support after a challenging two years and advocacy for biking inclusivity as more individuals are able to experience slow streets and gain access to parks. El Barrio Bikes will continue to utilize the spectrum of engagement to inform and guide their work.



### FIND EL BARRIO BIKES ONLINE



[elbarriobikes.wixsite.com/  
elbarriobikes](https://elbarriobikes.wixsite.com/elbarriobikes)



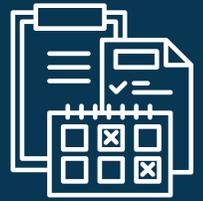
[facebook.com/elbarrio-  
bikes](https://facebook.com/elbarriobikes)



[@elbarriobikes](https://@elbarriobikes)

## 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

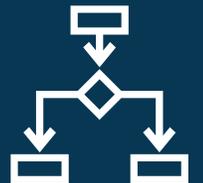
**EQUITY AND INCLUSION ASSESSMENT:** an overview of key considerations for promoting access, equity, and inclusion in your community engagement.

# 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.



1

2

3

## 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**

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

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?

**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:

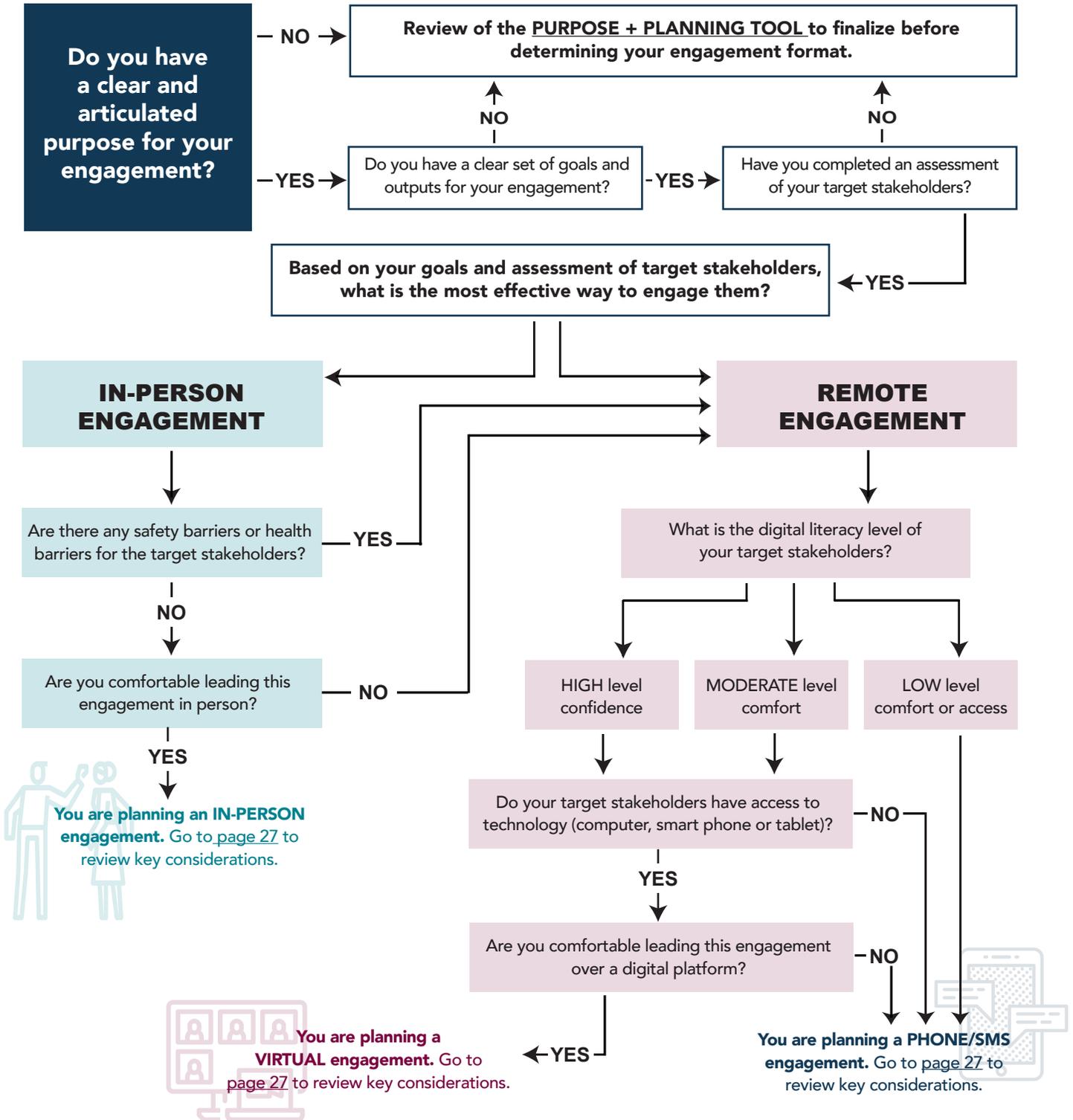
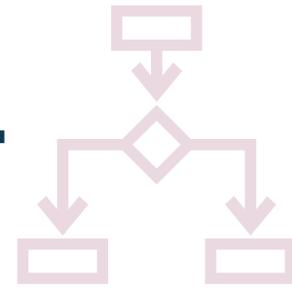
**1** Review your agenda and make adjustments to ensure you are providing an welcoming, equitable, inclusive and accessible engagement.

**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

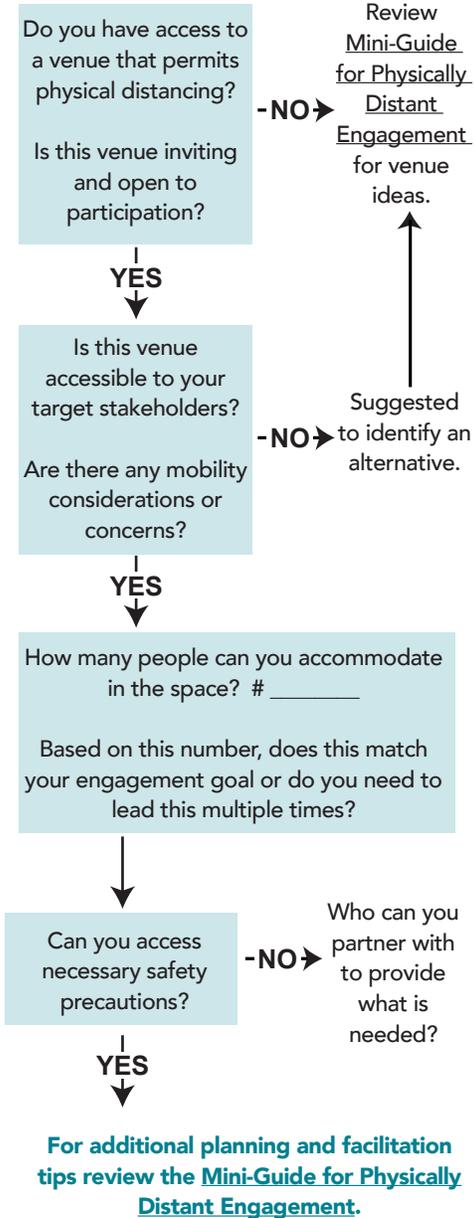
A DECISION-MAKING TOOL TO SUPPORT CHOOSING THE RIGHT FORMAT FOR YOUR ENGAGEMENT



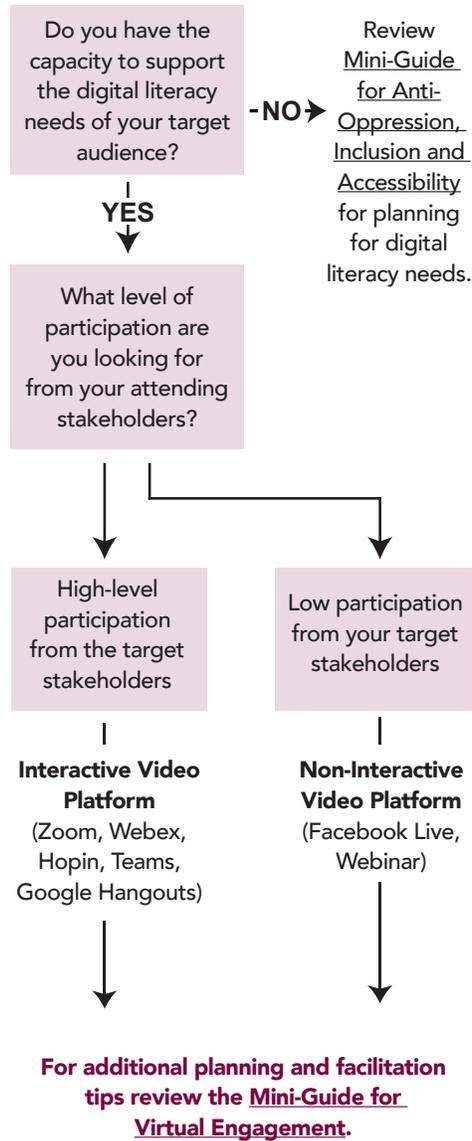
FIND YOUR FORMAT



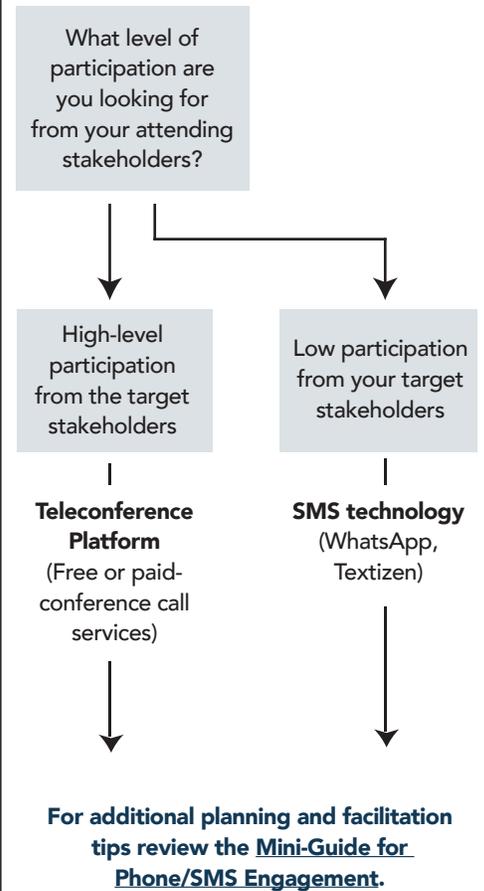
## IN-PERSON CONSIDERATIONS



## VIRTUAL CONSIDERATIONS



## PHONE/SMS CONSIDERATIONS



## HYBRID CONSIDERATIONS

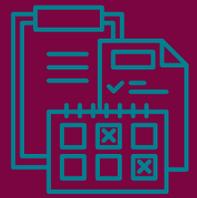
A hybrid experience might include a combination of formats. To find out if a hybrid engagement is right for you, review the [Mini-Guide for Hybrid Engagement](#).

## PART III

# MINI-GUIDES

This section presents eight mini-guides, each one including best practices, helpful information, and checklists designed to support your community engagement process. As you plan your next event, review relevant mini-guides to maximize your success.

- 1** **MINI-GUIDE FOR PLANNING ENGAGEMENTS** guides you through identifying the purpose of an engagement, building an agenda, utilizing arts and culture, and promoting your engagement. It also provides information on planning for participatory decision-making and planning for safety and inclusion.
- 2** **MINI-GUIDE FOR ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION** covers strategies for effectively evaluating your engagement by providing resources on the identification of key performance indicators, data collection, and result-sharing.
- 3** **MINI-GUIDE FOR FACILITATION** covers how to support productive dialogue and the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator. Within this document are key tools and guides for managing the flow of the engagement and stakeholder interactions.
- 4** **MINI-GUIDE FOR ANTI-OPPRESSION, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY** provides an overview and helpful strategies to plan and lead a more inclusive engagement. This broadly covers barriers to stakeholder participation stemming from power dynamics, digital and internet access, and accessibility.
- 5** **MINI-GUIDE FOR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT** guides you through everything from planning to facilitating virtual engagements. It includes strategies for supporting participants in engaging comfortably and best practices for leveraging digital collaboration.
- 6** **MINI-GUIDE FOR PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT** guides you through planning and facilitating Phone or SMS engagements while also providing resources for outreach.
- 7** **MINI-GUIDE FOR PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT** provides resources and information to support planning and facilitating a physically distant engagement. It includes strategies for planning while keeping safety front and center.
- 8** **MINI-GUIDE FOR HYBRID ENGAGEMENT** guides you through planning, facilitating, and structuring engagements that support in-person and virtual participants.



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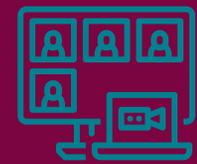
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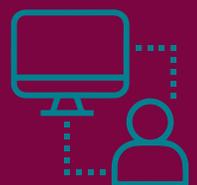
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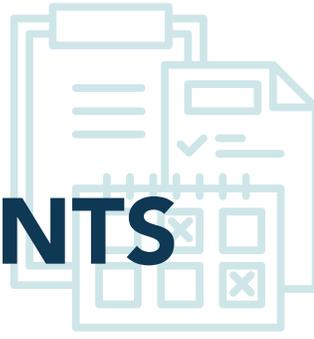
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## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# PLANNING ENGAGEMENTS



## 1.1 IDENTIFYING YOUR ENGAGEMENT'S PURPOSE

Before planning the specifics of your event, it is important to clarify your goals and frame your expectations. As with in-person engagements, virtual and phone engagements require significant planning time to determine purpose and appropriate methods to be successful. The three essential aspects of any engagement that must be determined to ensure success are:

**Goals** are broad ideas about what you hope to achieve through the engagement. These goals should be both tangible (measurable) and intangible. Tangible goals are measurable, while intangible goals might be a bit difficult to evaluate immediately, such as improved collaboration with your team, strengthened communication across a community, the creation of a safe space for individuals to share feedback, or shifted understanding or attitudes.

**Outputs** are specific and tangible information or artifacts that you will take away from the engagement. They might include insights and anecdotes from stakeholders that you will gather, an implementation plan, project concepts to pursue, etc.

**Evaluation** is a powerful tool for understanding your engagement and can support your ability to increase internal and external capacity, influence policy, and secure funding. There is no singular approach to evaluation, but it is important to consider it from the outset of your engagement planning to ensure alignment with the project's purpose. Check out the [Mini-Guide for Engagement Evaluation](#) to support your development of an evaluation framework.

**Understanding of the needs of stakeholders** can circumvent challenges and lead to a successful experience. Once you have identified your stakeholders, take some time to consider the motivations and concerns they have in regards to the engagement. Engagements are substantial time commitments for both the facilitator and stakeholders, so it benefits everyone to use meeting time wisely. Understanding stakeholders in a deeper way can support you in:

- Developing appropriate activities based on the stakeholders' familiarity with one another, as well as their areas of expertise, attention spans, and comfort levels with the process
- Finding ways that you can reciprocate the value you gain from stakeholders' involvement to garner support and improve participation
- Anticipating challenges by being cognizant of personal (or organizational) agendas and addressing these challenges head-on by allowing stakeholders to vent before moving into the workshop itself.
- Understanding the key socio-historical and cultural contexts that may impact the perceptions and participation of stakeholders, in order to support challenges or sensitive subjects
- Developing the appropriate technological support based on the technology platform being used or comfort levels of stakeholders

### IN THIS SECTION

- 1.1 [Identifying your Community Engagement's Purpose](#)
- 1.2 [Building an Agenda](#)
- 1.3 [Planning a Safe, Inclusive a and Productive Environment](#)
- 1.4 [Planning for Participatory Decision-Making in your Engagement](#)
- 1.5 [Utilizing Arts and Culture in Engagement](#)
- 1.6 [Best Practices for Promoting your Engagement](#)
- 1.7 [Checklist for Planning Engagements](#)

### TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

You can use [Purpose and Planning Tool](#) to help clarify the purpose of a community engagement event for a plan no matter if it is in-person, over the phone, or virtual.

## 1.2 BUILDING AN AGENDA

Building on the purpose you have already defined, plan the flow of the experience and specific activities that will set the stage for the group to achieve the outcomes you have defined in an inclusive and respectful way. If you started with your engagement type and have not articulated your purpose, we recommend that you use the [Purpose and Planning Tool](#) to ensure it matches your capacity, stakeholders' comfort levels, and the goals of the engagement.

An agenda should take into account ways to create an experience where everyone gets a chance to speak, and stakeholders are encouraged to listen with attention. For every engagement type, no matter if in-person, over the phone, or virtually, it is important to build an agenda that is sharable to your facilitating team (if appropriate). For each agenda, make sure to:

- **Build in time at the beginning of your agenda** to share your purpose with the stakeholders--clarifying goals and next steps. Often, a portion of the opening will be spent bringing everyone up to speed through a presentation or discussion.
- Similarly, **make time at the end of your agenda for closing and a discussion of next steps**. Explain how stakeholders' contributions will be used moving forward. Focus on how and where information will be shared, how it supports a larger process, and what happens next, especially if you are holding another event. Make sure to end by providing stakeholders with a unified sense of completion.
- **Incorporate flexibility** into your agenda. If your engagement is scheduled for more than two hours, build in extra time for a break. Should you need a moment to reset the tone, use your break to regroup and refocus the experience.
- **Do not forget to plan how you will set the tone**. No matter the format, remember to plan in time to appropriately set expectations, build and review a set of group rules for the experience, and allow time to address questions, if needed.
- **Add in all the details**. Make sure for each part of your agenda you articulate the goals of the topic or activity, needed materials, steps, prompt questions, role of team members, potential issues, and, if appropriate, how you will collect the insights.
- **Identify opportunities for evaluation**. Identify how monitoring, tracking, and impact evaluation might fit into your engagement. It could be as simple as taking attendance or providing a survey.

When planning, do not forget to address working safely in-person. In order to reduce risk to participants and the organizing team, we must change how we interact when facilitating an in-person engagement. This involves assessing the safety of the planned engagement and how you are preventing and mitigating risks for the participants. Make sure that you adopt physical distancing measures, and promote the use of masking, to accommodate the comfort and safety of all stakeholders. Review the [Mini-Guide for Physically Distant Engagement](#) for further information.

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### DETERMINING YOUR TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

- Gauge stakeholders' ability to participate before creating your agenda.
- Determine stakeholders' accessibility to a WiFi connection or if they require hotspots.
- Smartphone mobile technology is often more prevalent than laptops or desktop computers for many.

**TIP:** Reach out to the community with an easy, short survey to determine access and technology capabilities.

Review the [Mini-Guide for Virtual Engagement](#) to think through how to choose a platform and their pros and cons.



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### OPEN ENGAGEMENT EARLY TO SUPPORT ALL

When planning a virtual engagement, plan to open your engagement 15 to 30 minutes before formally starting the engagement. Encourage stakeholders who might have technology needs to join beforehand for individual support and review of the platform features.

For other key considerations of planning virtual engagement, review the [Mini-Guide for Virtual Engagement](#).

## 1.3 PLANNING A SAFE, INCLUSIVE, AND PRODUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT

As you begin to plan the specifics of the engagement, do not forget to consider the limitations and opportunities unique to your capacity, community, and context. Building a deeper understanding of your available resources will support your planning by clarifying your human capacity—including strengths to leverage and areas that might require additional attention or consideration.

### Make accommodation requesting easy

Ensure stakeholders know how to make accommodation requests before your event. You can include an email or phone number they can reach out to for their request on any communication materials. Stakeholders will know best how to meet their own needs, so give them the opportunity to let you know.

### Center marginalized voices throughout your planning process

Everyone has a role in ensuring that equity, access, and inclusion are a reality:

- Recognize the privilege of people on your team.
- Recognize that civic engagement is highly correlated with income and formal education, whether the setting is in-person or virtual.
- Recognize some will have limited access to technology needed to participate virtually. Consider data usage when developing phone applications and design them to be data-lite.
- Understand the level of trust within the stakeholder group.
- Understand the level of comfort engaging online.
- Clearly define your engagement approach and communicate roles.
- Take the time to invest in relationship-building.

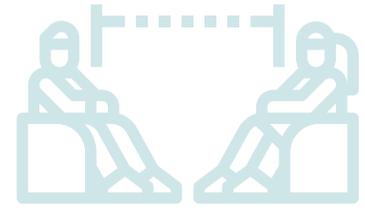
To ensure your engagement is inclusive and rooted in equity, review the [Mini-Guide for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#).

### Be thoughtful about scheduling

There is no perfect time of day, but certain times may be better than others for your target stakeholders. Think when they may have a natural break in the day or where they might be able to travel easily and safely. If a goal is to gather a varied perspective, consider hosting two events on different days to capture a wider audience. Also consider how you can join forces or combine with an existing event. It is better to have access to your desired group for even an hour than planning a three-hour event with no attendees!

### Reach out respectfully and inclusively

Give people plenty of notice. Use the outreach channel that suits your network and capacity. Choose media that matches your strengths, while being appropriate and accessible to your stakeholders. This may mean putting up posters in shop windows or laundromats, or contacting participants through an existing listserv.



### SETTING UP YOUR ACCESSIBLE, IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

- For in-person engagement there are considerations needed for a safe, accessible, and inclusive space.
- Consider laying out your space to accommodate 6-feet of physical distancing.
- Allow enough room between rows of seats for easy navigation, sitting, and standing. Ensure that aisles are wide enough for wheelchair access.
- If a standing-only event, have chairs available for stakeholders who cannot stand for any length of time.
- Ensure space for stakeholders using wheelchairs and include chairs for companions to be seated with them.
- Allow clear aisles around the seating area; patrons with low vision may wish to orient themselves along the outer walls of a room.
- Consider the height of displays and wheelchair accessibility.
- Tape down or remove any loose cables or wires so that they do not become a tripping hazard.
- Use microphones to ensure good audibility of speakers, even when it doesn't seem necessary.
- Set-up assistive listening devices, if they are available.



## ENSURING YOUR PRESENTATIONS ARE ACCESSIBLE

For webinars or in-person presentation:

- If using a Powerpoint or handout with pictures, include a descriptive caption with images or briefly describe any images of charts on each slide.
- Make audio visual presentations captioned, or have transcripts available.
- If audio is used, include captioning or transcription, such as [Otter](#).
- Consider possibilities for audio description for video or film presentations. Note: you can add your own audio description using [youdescribe](#).
- Find out how to make ASL interpreters or CART service available.

If possible, by request, provide handouts and presentation materials in large print and other languages. For large print materials, use at least 18 point font and a clear, non-serif, aligned font such as Arial, with 1.5 spacing between lines. Provide contrast, as requested (e.g. black text on white background, white text on black background, or other color combination).

## 1.4 PLANNING FOR PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING IN YOUR ENGAGEMENT

(VIRTUAL AND PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT)

As productive dialogue supports the creation of a space to prioritize ideas, participatory decision-making provides the space for narrowing those ideas further. It creates a democratic pathway towards choosing the most effective option that works for everyone in the group. It is important to clearly determine your participatory decision-making process to best include all voices without creating unanimous agreement.

### Finding the best participatory decision-making approach

The approach to decision making is significantly impacted by the format of your engagement. In-person engagements include more creative options for engaging stakeholders and creating productive dialogues around the decisions. To select your approach, review the list of activities provided in the [Mini-Guides for Virtual Engagement](#), [Phone/SMS Engagement](#), and [Physically Distant Engagement](#).

No matter the approach, take into account the following:

#### How to define consensus

Consensus is reached when a decision is deemed acceptable by everyone in the group. Acceptance is key in consensus as it is not the same as agreement. A decision can enjoy consensus and move forward in a group even if not everyone personally agrees with all the details of the decision or sees the decision as their first choice. For consensus to work, stakeholders prioritize decisions that work well enough for the whole group above decisions that must work perfectly for oneself.

#### Silence is not agreement

When asking for agreement, it might be tempting to accept silence as a response. However, it is important to facilitate conversation to allow stakeholders to voice their position, whether they agree or disagree.

#### Limitations with 'yes' and 'no'

While yes and no may be used to voice agreement or disagreement, it is important to give all stakeholders space to voice their opinion. Those who vote yes may have some reservations that should be taken into account, and those who vote no may simply want to learn or discuss more before agreeing.



## 1.5 UTILIZING ARTS AND CULTURE IN ENGAGEMENT

Arts and culture is an integral part of a community, and everyone can bring their culture to benefit community dialogue. Arts and culture presents an incredible framework for promoting inclusive engagements where stakeholders feel welcomed, included, and can bring their whole selves to the engagement. Additionally, it can also help to cultivate a creative space that is easier, fun, and effective in what you are trying to achieve. Arts and culture can be facilitated in-person, over the phone, and virtually.

### THE BENEFITS OF ARTS AND CULTURE

The incorporation of arts and culture allows for dynamic possibilities for sharing and belonging, further supporting the process for community engagement, and outcomes that support long-term community building.

#### Increases attendance

Use it not only as an engagement tool, but also a promotional tool. By partnering with local arts, musicians, and storytellers, this could lead you to a new set of stakeholders and can help expand your reach to those who typically would not attend otherwise. Additionally, this can be a positive way to start the engagement before diving into dialogue.

Introduce an engagement or organize **virtual performances** throughout your agenda by a local community member who is participating.

#### Sets the tone

From the on start an engagement is only as successful as how it has introduced and welcomed all stakeholders to the engagement, allowing them to feel comfortable to bring their whole selves to the experience and process.

Lead with **icebreakers** like scavenger hunt that allows for stakeholders to bring an item that resonates with their cultural identity or expression to present to the group.

#### Finds commonalities

It helps build connections across different cultural groups participating in an engagement. Stakeholders can learn through dialogue and activity about the artistic practices of others, as well as their cultural heritages, identities, and expressions. Thus, participants find commonalities they have with others through artistic and cultural practice and expression.

- Build a **collaborative community tree** using art supplies for collaging mapping commonalities.
- Invite a **local chef** to cook a shared recipe and support leading a discussion with attendees.

#### Increases participation

It offers new ways for stakeholders to be involved in framing questions and problems together, rather than “inserting” their thoughts into an existing dialogue or responding to pre-determined questions. Make a process fun and attract stakeholders to a project.

- Including **virtual performances** can generate memorable experiences that are deeply responsive to people and place, offering more meaningful avenues for participation and the opportunity to generate more adaptive approaches.
- Use a think analog that asks stakeholders to **create, draw, build...** and then shares their results over the video platform.



### DEFINING ARTS AND CULTURE IN A COMMUNITY-BASED CONTEXT

Arts is the practice of artistic expression through visual mediums (drawing, sculpture, muralism, photography, design, etc.) and performative mediums (theater, music, dance, storytelling, poetry, etc.) that leverages engagement in cultural, social, and economic development. Culture is the cultural identity and expression of a stakeholder group and that benefits community building and sustainability.

### **Bolsters relationship building and mutual respect**

As stakeholders can come to the engagement as their whole selves, they are also building relationships and respect with one another. This helps to make for a more inclusive dialogue in the moment, and bolsters cooperation and problem-solving in community engagement. Additionally, it can strengthen the understanding and value of community values, especially when working with stakeholders of similar cultural and social identity.

### **Increases civic and community involvement**

Incorporating engaging and relevant arts into your engagement allows stakeholders to remain interested, committed, and thirsty for additional opportunities to utilize their creative expression in the community. Depending on the context, stakeholders can use their artistic practices to support the outputs of your community engagement's intentions. Utilize the cultural blueprint which promotes cultural identity and expression as a drive for community development projects.

### **Honors the time stakeholders give**

It supports a reciprocal relationship between you and the stakeholders. As you are asking for their time, insights and commitment, you can then offer them a fulfilling experience.

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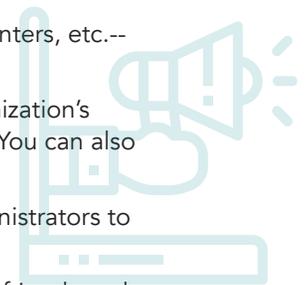
## **HOW ARTS AND CULTURE FIT IN THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Arts and culture can both augment an Outreach and Consultation engagement. If facilitating a discussion, focus group, community input session, or any other group engagement, provide an opportunity in your agenda to incorporate icebreakers rooted in cultural identity, or an activity that allows stakeholders to get creative.

## **1.6 BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING YOUR ENGAGEMENT**

In support of the circulation of your messaging and promoting your engagement, it is important to design a communication strategy that can differentiate between messaging intended for engaged stakeholders, versus messaging intended for stakeholders designated to receive project outcomes.

- Create **a clear identity and message** for the engagement from the outset.
- The most effective promotion is **word of mouth**, ensuring your engagement has ways for stakeholders to invite their friends or colleagues (e.g. adding an "invite your neighbor" button to an email campaign).
- **Carry out broad outreach**, using multiple communication tools to reach the diversity of stakeholders (e.g. mailed and printed information, website and email lists, cable TV and PSAs). Include targeted outreach to communities of color and other affected groups that tend not to participate (consultations with leaders, info at community events, speakers, etc).
- **Have a single contact point for the public** (e.g. a hotline and/or email address) to provide easy access to information and provide input at the engagement.
- **Use media strategically** – press releases, feature stories, op-eds, news conferences, etc.--to announce initiation of the engagement; key milestones, and other decision-points. Focus on community newspapers and programs.
- **Use public facilities** – branch libraries, community centers, neighborhood service centers, etc.-- as information repositories to provide ongoing updates on the project.
- **Use technology to promote an interactive public process.** Use your agency/organization's website to provide information and opportunities for feedback on the engagement. You can also use online message boards and social media groups.
- **Find local groups** with an online and/or a social media presence, and ask their administrators to share a link to your engagement.
- **Email your entire staff and relevant local organizations.** Ask them to pass it on to friends and family (if applicable).
- **Hand out leaflets or QR codes at public events**, in the park, at public transit stations, or wherever else your audience may frequent.



## CATALOG OF IDEAS

For specific outreach methods for individuals and groups, be sure to check out [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas](#).

### 1.7 CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING ENGAGEMENTS

#### Identifying our community engagement's purpose

- Have we identified the goals and desired outputs of the meeting or engagement?
- Have we revisited the [Purpose and Planning Tool](#) to support the clarity of our intentions?
- Have we reviewed the [Mini-Guide for Engagement Evaluation](#) and considered where evaluation fits in our engagement process?

#### Building our agenda

- Have we planned the dialogue so that it flows effectively and reaches the goals previously identified?
- Have we prepared a system for recording information?

#### Planning a safe, inclusive, and productive environment

- Have we planned for a space and tone that is inclusive and welcoming to all?
- Have we considered the ways that the experience is inclusive, accessible, and encourages participation?
- For virtual or phone engagements, have we chosen a platform that meets the digital access and inclusion needs?

#### Planning for participatory decision-making in our engagement

- Have we identified a participatory decision-making approach that helps to build consensus across our stakeholders?

#### Utilizing arts and culture in our engagement

- Have we considered ways to incorporate arts and culture to support community belonging and inclusive dialogue?

#### Best practices for promoting our engagement

- Have we designed a communications strategy for this engagement?
- Have we considered all possible stakeholders beyond our core stakeholders who can benefit from the engagement?

## SOURCES

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## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION



# 2

Evaluation can be a powerful tool to support community engagement. Tracking and understanding engagement can support your ability to increase internal and external capacity, influence policy, and secure funding. It is important to consider evaluation from the outset of your engagement planning and incorporate opportunities to evaluate throughout the lifespan of your engagement. You are likely already doing some sort of tracking, monitoring, or evaluation work, so this guide will help build upon that existing foundation.

The purpose of this mini-guide is to support your organization through the process of creating an evaluation plan, selecting evaluation activities, and sharing findings for your specific engagement. It is intended for engagement planners who are new to evaluation or who are looking to expand their evaluation abilities. This mini-guide will help you:

- Understand why evaluating engagement is important and how to advocate for allocating time and resources
- Create an evaluation plan that aligns with your engagement plan
- Implement evaluation activities that match your engagement purpose and organizational capacity

There is no singular approach to evaluation; instead evaluation is conducted based on an organization's capacity and in alignment with the project's purpose. This mini-guide draws from the vast world of program evaluation and tailors recommendations and resources to the context of engagement. The final section of the mini-guide provides some additional evaluation resources.

## 2.1 WHY EVALUATE?

Organizations conduct evaluation for a variety of reasons, including to understand the work they do and make strategic adjustments to their operations. "In 2016, nonprofits continue[d] to prioritize evaluation for the purpose of strengthening future work (95% of respondents identified it as a priority), learning whether objectives were achieved (94%), and learning about outcomes (91%)." ([Innovation Network, Transforming for Social Change, 2016 State of Evaluation](#)).

Evaluation is a powerful tool for making intentional and impactful adjustments to your work. It is also useful for understanding your team's capacity and ability to produce effective community engagement.

**TIP:** Evaluation can test a Theory of Change or Logic Model, generating insights about whether your efforts achieved the desired outcomes. These are simple and adaptable tools that can be used to plan your engagement or initiative. Check out [this resource](#) from What Works to help build a Theory of Change or Logic model.

### IN THIS SECTION

- [2.1 Why Evaluate?](#)
- [2.2 Building Evaluation](#)
- [2.3 Catalog of Ideas for Collecting Data](#)
- [2.4 Best Practices for Utilizing Evaluation](#)
- [2.5 Checklist for Evaluation](#)



**TIP:** Evaluate for authentic engagement. Everyday Democracy has a great [framework](#) for defining indicators and measurement methods for authentic engagement.

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## IT IS NOT ALL ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOW UP

Oftentimes, engagements are evaluated solely on attendance numbers which could be an inaccurate representation of success. Attendance could be one standard of evaluation, but should be supported by others that measure if the goals were reached, or if insights are usable.

## DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE ENGAGEMENT

It is important to understand if your community engagement initiative was effective and why it was effective. As a tool to measure learning and impact, evaluation can provide clarity on what aspects of an engagement worked and which elements need improvement. Understanding what worked or didn't can be utilized to articulate needs and generate support for future engagement efforts.

The act of building an evaluation plan is an integral part of clarifying the purpose of the engagement. Before developing your plan, it is critical that you have identified the purpose, goals, outputs, and method of engagement, along with an assessment of the target audience. To develop an evaluation plan is to identify the reasoning behind evaluating the experience, or the objectives for evaluation. Community engagements are generally evaluated in order to improve the engagement process, hold organizations accountable, discern stakeholder reach/participation, and understand the effectiveness of the engagement.

### Improve Operational Processes

Evaluation can help you understand your team's capacity and the effectiveness of your operational design. Understanding the success, struggles, and time and effort allocated to your engagement will help with project planning and management, as well as reporting outcomes. For example, a survey not only gathers important feedback about a program, but understanding how successfully you administered it to get the desired results (e.g. in-person versus email) will help you plan for the future. Ask yourself, "What were some successes and barriers to our community engagement approach?"

Examples of some of the many uses of evaluation activities include:

#### Building Accountability with Partners

Sharing evaluation outcomes with stakeholders and contributors supports transparency and accountability. Consistent and planned evaluation can encourage honest conversations among stakeholders by building in an appropriate space for giving and receiving feedback. When team members and stakeholders are aware of the evaluation process, they are more informed on how to contribute to the purpose. When possible, efforts should be taken to share data with the community, especially if they contributed to that data or if the results affect them.

**TIP:** In order to be transparent, inform partners at the start of your engagement that you are doing an evaluation, how the evaluation will be shared, and that you will report back on ways that changes will reflect their feedback.

#### Advocacy

Evaluation can be used to highlight or make the case for the importance of the engagement initiative. It can focus attention and clarify pathways for those with decision-making power. Evaluation results not only communicate the engagement strategy and value, but they can also be used to make the argument for future needs.



### NEGATIVE RESULTS ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS POSITIVE RESULTS

When you frame negative results as a learning opportunity, or a call to action or improvement, you foster an atmosphere of transparency and buy-in from those you will need to make the necessary changes. Sometimes, negative evaluation can be more impactful in enacting organizational change than a positive result.

### **Oversight and Compliance**

Having clear and measurable parameters for evaluation at the start of your engagement will build alignment among team members about what is to be achieved through your engagement effort. Using evaluation throughout the engagement, not just at the end, supports team members and stakeholders in knowing if they are meeting expectations. If an engagement initiative is off-track or not meeting expectations, utilize your evaluation plan to communicate or flag the issue with your stakeholders. Evaluating throughout an initiative will help your team understand why expectations were not met.

### **Capacity-Building**

The evaluation process is an opportunity to build your team's and stakeholders' monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) capacity. Check out [this toolkit](#) from MEASURE Evaluation for more information. By taking time to reflect on and discuss evaluation findings, your team can make more strategic decisions for upcoming projects and better understand how their work impacts the initiative outcomes.

### **Sustainability**

Evaluation outcomes can be shared with funders and decision-makers to encourage them to invest in or replicate future engagements, expand programs, or take a policy position.

### **Building Awareness**

Sharing evaluation results and asking stakeholders to participate in evaluation is an opportunity to re-engage or introduce the community to the initiative. Build community awareness and leverage more possible evaluation input by providing opportunities for stakeholders to hear about, reflect and discuss the results. This is an opportunity to have the community provide a check on you, ensuring the results reflect their experiences.

### **Knowledge-Building**

Evaluation results can be used as a device to communicate what works. It can help funders and nonprofits discover the 'secret ingredients' of effective community engagement implementation. It can help uncover insights on what stakeholders are feeling and perceiving. Those insights can be used for future work for your organization or can help other organizations working with the same community.

### **Leveraging Community Support**

Through the process of sharing and discussing evaluation results with stakeholders and community members, you can leverage community support. Showcase how your engagement efforts achieved a specific outcome or change and how supporting more efforts like this might further benefit the community. Be transparent with negative findings, as they are an opportunity for learning.

## **2.2 BUILDING EVALUATION**

### **Determine Why You Are Evaluating**

The act of building an evaluation plan is an integral part of clarifying the purpose of the engagement. Before developing your plan, it is critical that you identify why you are conducting an evaluation of your engagement. Perhaps you want to evaluate the impact of the engagement. Maybe you want to learn about where your engagement process could be improved. Maybe you want to learn about both. You can choose from the benefits of evaluating above to help you decide.

It is critical that you have identified the purpose, goals, outputs, and method of engagement, along with an assessment of the prioritized audience. To develop an evaluation plan is to identify the reasoning behind the experience and the objectives of the engagement.

**Evaluating Outcomes:** These metrics evaluate the effectiveness of your engagement in achieving your desired outcomes and should relate directly to the project goals developed in this Almanac's [Purpose and Planning Tool](#). An example of outcome data might include changes in knowledge, attitudes, or understanding through surveying.

**Evaluating Process:** These evaluation metrics relate to the planning and implementation of the engagement itself. These objectives can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of your project management, guide program improvement, and assess whether a program was delivered as intended.



The type(s) of evaluation you chose to conduct should support why you are evaluating and what you hope to accomplish with your engagement. You may choose to evaluate participation, process, or a combination of both. As an example, if ‘building staff capacity’ is your evaluation goal, you may focus your effort primarily on a process evaluation. If your intention is to understand the impact of your initiative, you might focus your effort on impact evaluation, monitoring, or participation evaluation.



**TIP:** Have an observer available in your virtual engagements. Observing participation in a virtual meeting can be especially challenging for facilitators, as they cannot easily see all individuals at once, or they may be focused on other technical needs. Having a dedicated observer can help to monitor chat, too.

### Determine Who is Involved

Determine early in your planning process who you need to involve for a successful evaluation. Your evaluation participants will include both the internal staff conducting the evaluation, as well as the stakeholders whose insights will be collected through the evaluation. Will you be interviewing people? Collecting demographic information? Asking people to fill out surveys? Anyone who will contribute to your evaluation outcomes should be engaged as early as possible in the planning process to generate buy-in, solicit feedback and assess risks, and build a pattern of accountability and transparency.

### Determine What to Evaluate

There are endless ways to perform evaluation and even more things to evaluate. It is important to narrow your focus to avoid being overwhelmed by possibilities. In narrowing your evaluation focus, refer back to the [Purpose and Planning Tool](#) to identify where in your process you can improve.

The table below can be used to help you determine what you are evaluating by guiding you through different ways to evaluate and questions to ask yourself and your evaluation team.

## EVALUATING OUTCOMES

WAYS TO EVALUATE	ASK YOURSELF:
<b>Demographics</b> Understand the population(s) you’re engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you want to track who you reached? Why?</li> <li>What information do you want to know about the people you reach?</li> <li>How does understanding who you reach help you understand the impact of your engagement or initiative?</li> </ul>
<b>Participation</b> Understand the experience of participants in your engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does tracking the participation support your engagement or initiative?</li> <li>What could the tone or engagement level of participants tell you about the success of an initiative?</li> </ul>
<b>Accuracy and Utility</b> Determine the validity of research or data collected and the usability of that data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the data and insights collected support your engagement, program, or initiative?</li> <li>Were the methods for data collection hindered by bias? How might bias impact the accuracy of our data?</li> <li>How can you ensure data collected is reliable and valid?</li> </ul>
<b>Short-Term Impact</b> Understand immediate effects of engagement or initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are your short term goals for this initiative?</li> <li>How does collecting insights help you determine if you’ve met these goals?</li> <li>What are the changes in stakeholder perceptions, awareness, or knowledge?</li> </ul>
<b>Mid-Term / Long-Term Impact</b> Track longer term effects of an engagement through surveys, observations, data collection, and potentially additional engagements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are your long term goals for this initiative?</li> <li>How does collecting insight help you see if you’ve met these goals?</li> <li>What can evaluation tell you about the success of the initiative? Its barriers?</li> <li>What needs to be improved and how?</li> <li>What are the changes in awareness or knowledge of an issue, community behavior, policy, or community capacity?</li> </ul>

## EVALUATING PROCESS

TYPES OF EVALUATION	ASK YOURSELF:
<p><b>Project Management</b> Assess components related to project management and strategy used throughout the engagement process-- from planning to follow-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does tracking your project management support leading this initiative again?</li> <li>• How does tracking your project management support reporting this initiative to management? Or the public?</li> <li>• How will you ensure your engagement has met inclusive and equitable requirements?</li> <li>• How can evaluation clarify if your strategy was successful in reaching the intended audience?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Team Capacity</b> Assess your team's ability to work together and accomplish tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How could tracking your team performance, collaboration, and service deliverable support your organization?</li> <li>• How can evaluation clarify if your services were delivered as planned and implemented with a high quality?</li> <li>• How does tracking team capacity support the understanding of your team member's performance and the effectiveness of your collaboration?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resource Use</b> Assess how efficiently resources were used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might tracking your budget be helpful to understand the effectiveness of your initiative?</li> <li>• How does tracking support the understanding of the usefulness of engagement materials (e.g. printed handouts, table activity materials, or virtual tools)?</li> <li>• How can evaluation clarify if the location or virtual platform of the engagement was valuable and/or accessible?</li> </ul>

## LEVERAGING WHAT YOU ALREADY DO

You do not have to build an evaluation plan from scratch. Leveraging your existing process to be more robust and work specifically for your needs can save you time, money, and frustration!

### Get More From Your Registration Process

- Use a tool for engagement registration (e.g. Eventbrite, Google Forms, etc.) to help track the number of participants, follow up and further engage them, and learn more about them.
- Add a survey question, or set of questions, to your registration form. You can make this anonymous, or you can make it a required step.

### Take Opportunities to Reflect

- Use the notes from your post-engagement meeting in your evaluation. Make those meetings more formal, structured, and repeated.
- Keep track of stakeholder feedback! It can be used as testimonials or quotes in an evaluation report.
- When your team or stakeholders are reflecting on your engagement initiative, take notes to use in evaluation. Take notes of any changes you made during the process to showcase learning.

### Record Observations

- Research does NOT have to be formal. Observe what is happening during your engagement initiative (e.g. the overall tone of the event, how engaged participants are, or if they stay for the entire time).
- As you get more comfortable with what observations work for your evaluation, build out a more structured process.

### Build in Surveys

- Create short, post-engagement surveys to distribute to participants that include evaluation questions.

### Catalog Draft Materials and Utilize Meeting Notes

- Keep drafts of all engagement materials, including promotional content, agendas, presentations, and speaker notes. If you made changes to these documents so they better serve the engagement initiative, those changes are a reflection of your learning.
- Showcase how your work evolved over time to be more responsive to community needs. Articulate these changes through evaluation reporting; those lessons learned can be utilized for future work.

### Utilize Reports

- Monitoring, whether its attendance tracking, taking meeting notes, or pulling reports from your web or social media presence, can be key to your evaluation reporting.

### Utilize Check-in Meetings

- Check-in meetings with your team, partners, or stakeholders are a great opportunity to fold in evaluation informally by simply keeping meeting notes or more formally by asking a series of questions or facilitating a reflection and analysis conversation.

## 2.3 CATALOG OF IDEAS FOR COLLECTING DATA

Below is a table of common data collection methods and additional ideas. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages in regards to the amount of time required, the reliability of the data, and the resources you will need to deploy. When choosing a data collection method, ensure it gets at the *why* you are evaluating. Data collection, as part of overall engagement, should be determined by scope, objectives, resources, time, expertise, and other internal/external factors.

TALKING TO PEOPLE	SOLICITING WRITTEN RESPONSES	REVIEWING DOCUMENTATION	OBSERVING IN REAL-TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Story circles</li> <li>• Oral histories</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Public forums / community engagement events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys &amp; questionnaires</li> <li>• Polls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census data</li> <li>• Reports</li> <li>• News articles</li> <li>• Previous survey results</li> <li>• City records</li> <li>• City data &amp; maps</li> <li>• Data from community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe &amp; document participants at events</li> <li>• Map assets &amp; stakeholders</li> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Field observational studies</li> </ul>

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### Stakeholder Surveys & Questionnaires

Surveys can be built in a number of ways to glean both qualitative and quantitative data. They can be used repeatedly over time to show longitudinal impact or can be used at the end of the event to gather immediate feedback.

### RESOURCES

- [Best Practices for Surveys](#)
- [Writing Survey Questions](#)
- [Question-Wording Tips](#)

#### Polls

Polls can be a very quick way to receive a large amount of data on a specific topic. They can be used as ‘temperature checks’ to gauge energy level or understanding and can be used at the start of a program to find out demographic information or at the end to understand sentiment. If your team does not have the capacity for a robust evaluation plan, polls are a great way to showcase stakeholder perceptions quickly.

- [The Beginner’s Guide To Creating Effective Polls](#)

#### Observation

Observations about the engagement beyond attendance numbers might include the level of participation or enthusiasm, tone, openness in communication, community trust, etc. It is important to identify what you are observing first, and then create a definition or rubric to measure your observations.

- [Ethnography in Evaluation](#)
- [Observation in Evaluation](#)
- [Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods](#)
- [Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation: Observation](#)

#### Interviews

Similar to surveys, interviews can be built in a variety of ways to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. An interviewer can pre-create a set of questions or simply practice ‘free listening.’

- [Evaluation Interview Guide \(doc\)](#)
- [Better Evaluation: Interviews](#)

## MORE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

### Testimonials

Use an interview to get a testimonial about the project from a stakeholder or partner. You can ask participants to generally share their experience, or give a more structured format.

### Monitoring Systems, Logs, Activity Forms, & Registries

These are project management tools used throughout the engagement process that you can refer back to for evaluation. Track attendance over time, monitor how resources were utilized, assess the effectiveness of your process, etc. Alternatively you can track activity forms or meeting agendas to evaluate how staff worked through the engagement process.

### Peer Evaluations

Peer evaluations can offer significant insight into your process and impact, as team members are the most familiar with the type of work you are doing. Peer evaluations can also be used for team members to give feedback on one another and the process.

### Documentary

Documenting your engagement through video, photos, recordings, or written observations (like journals) can help tell the story of success. While it can be difficult to identify what you will measure beforehand through documentation, analyzing it afterwards can help bolster evaluation data or illustrate gaps and challenges.

### Debrief Sessions

These sessions are an important part of improving an engagement's process and impact. They should be completed shortly after the engagement and conducted either formally, with a set agenda, or informally, as a discussion. Debriefing should always be done with the key planning team and partners, but it can also be completed with key participants in the engagement to understand their perceptions of the process.

### Participatory Analysis

Involve stakeholders in the design and decision-making in regards to the evaluation plan. This helps program planners better understand what the stakeholders found valuable and/or impactful about the experience.

### Focus Groups

These facilitated and structured group interviews can be used to collect information about a shared group experience. These can be used to support participatory analysis or when individual interviews are not practical.

### Story Circles / Oral Histories

These facilitated and structured group interviews ask participants to share their experiences to be used to create case studies or comments in a report.

### Information from Community Partners

Share data that community partners may be collecting for their own evaluation, tracking, and monitoring. See if they're willing to add an additional set of evaluation metrics, or if, in return, you can do a specific part of the evaluation and share the results. Leverage this shared work to benefit both of you.

### News Articles

External media published about your engagement can be used in reports or presentations and to showcase your reach and impact. **TIP:** Track the number of views or downloads you get to help understand the greater community's interest in your engagement topic.



## POLLS, QUESTIONNAIRES, AND SURVEYS

As stakeholders are already on a computer or phone, they can quickly complete the questions in real time. Use these tools to not only measure stakeholder engagement and feedback, but to collect demographic or other important tracking information.

## CENSUS DATA / PRIOR SURVEY RESULTS / CITY RECORDS, DATA, & MAPS

Information already created by venerated institutions can help establish a baseline in your evaluation to bolster data sets or create a comparative study. This information can also help in your planning of an engagement - ensuring that your understanding of the target audience and their perceptions are in alignment.

## ASSET MAPS / STAKEHOLDER MAPS

Building these types of maps can help you understand participants' perceptions of their needs and their built environment. You can use them at the beginning of an engagement process as your baseline, or you can use them throughout to showcase changes in perception. **TIP:** These maps are visually interesting! They are great to add to reports and presentations.

## 2.4 BEST PRACTICES FOR UTILIZING EVALUATION

A significant aspect of evaluating an engagement is identifying the ways in which your evaluation will be utilized and by whom. Before collecting the data even begins, a plan should be made on who is responsible for collecting, analyzing, reporting, and presenting the results. These next steps take time and effort, and it is important to ensure your team has the capacity to deliver the desired evaluation results.

Remember that the evaluation format that best fits the needs of your internal and external stakeholders requires an assessment of what data will actually be used. Good evaluation involves a feedback loop.

### TOP EVALUATION USES

- Report to the Board of Directors
- Report to funders
- Plan and revise program initiatives
- Plan and revise general strategies
- Report to stakeholders
- Make allocation decisions
- Advocate for a cause
- Share findings with peers

SOURCE: [Innovation Network, Transforming for Social Change, 2016 State of Evaluation](#)

METHOD OF SHARING	CONTENT TO SHARE	BENEFIT TO THE AUDIENCE	
		Stakeholders	Internal Team / Organization
<b>Follow-Up Emails</b>  <b>TIP:</b> Consider what you have promised to provide, and be sure to include it in the email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgments and thanks</li> <li>• Short summary of outcomes, including photos</li> <li>• Next steps and opportunities for continued participation</li> </ul>		
<b>Website / Blog Post</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your approach and process</li> <li>• Photos and 'light' data</li> <li>• Summary of your progress or high-level experience outcomes</li> <li>• Ways to get involved</li> </ul>		
<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process highlights (photography, quotations, 'light' data, visuals)</li> <li>• Logistical information about timeline and next steps</li> <li>• Ways to get involved or learn more</li> </ul>		
<b>Case Studies</b>  <b>TIP:</b> If public-facing, this is a great tool for transparency, and, if internal, it can help focus on process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your approach and process, photos, and 'light' data</li> <li>• Summary of your progress or high-level experience outcomes</li> <li>• Ways to get involved</li> </ul>		
<b>Shareable One-Pager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-level topics</li> <li>• Process highlights (photography, quotations, 'light' data, visuals)</li> <li>• Summary of quantitative and qualitative outcomes</li> <li>• Acknowledgment of those involved</li> </ul>		

**TRANSPARENCY**   
 **ADVOCACY**   
 **KNOWLEDGE BUILDING**

METHOD OF SHARING	CONTENT TO SHARE	BENEFIT TO THE AUDIENCE	
		Stakeholders	Internal Team / Organization
<b>Stories &amp; Participant Anecdotes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value of the engagement</li> <li>Intangible aspects of an engagement</li> </ul>	<b>T A KB</b>	<b>A KB</b>
<b>Presentations</b> <b>TIP:</b> Presentations can be oral, but a best practice is to have visual aids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data directly presented to viewers</li> <li>Key findings, in a visual and captivating way</li> </ul>	<b>T A KB</b>	<b>T KB</b>
<b>Reports</b> <b>TIP:</b> Refer to <a href="#">this checklist</a> on effective reports from the CDC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The process and methodology</li> <li>Details from the engagement</li> <li>An analysis of the outcomes and data</li> </ul>	<b>T A KB</b>	<b>T KB</b>
<b>Data Visualization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured presentation of complex or intangible information</li> <li>Observer's understanding</li> <li>Graphs, charts, research walls, journey maps, personal profiles, or infographics</li> </ul>	<b>T A KB</b>	<b>T KB</b>

**T** TRANSPARENCY
**A** ADVOCACY
**KB** KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, PRACTICE, OR POLICY FROM YOUR EVALUATION FINDINGS

Sometimes your evaluation findings could have implications on a theory, practice, or policy. Knowing this early on can help you plan how the findings will be communicated, by whom, and when. Such planning is crucial to ensure the findings are shared properly - not taken out of context, exaggerated or dismissed. Here are some questions to guide your approach:

- How interactive should the communication be for each of the intended audiences? (e.g. Written and print materials are least interactive, while discussions and working sessions are most interactive. Verbal and video presentations fall somewhere in the middle.)
- What are the risks in sharing the findings that could affect the strategy, initiative, program, organization, or the community you serve?
- Can the findings be taken out of context and harm the effort, organization, or community?
- What can you do to mitigate the risks and consequences?
- What roles do you, your staff, your board members, and your internal or external evaluator(s) have in summarizing and communicating the findings and insights?
- Who would be the most effective messenger of the information?
- Do you need a facilitator skilled in adult learning techniques to assist with discussions, working sessions, and verbal presentations?
- Should you provide training for the messengers as spokespersons for the media and other types of inquiries?

*Excerpted from W. K. Kellogg Foundation Step-by-Step Guide to Evaluation: How to Become Savvy Evaluation Consumers, 2017. (p. 68)*

## 2.5 CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATION

### Identifying what you are evaluating

- Have we identified our objectives (stakeholder, participation and process)?
- Have we identified our measurable indicators?
- Have we referred back to the [Purpose and Planning Tool](#) to identify where we can improve in our process?

### Methods for collecting data

- Have we identified quantitative and qualitative methods?
- Have we identified who on the team is responsible for data collection?
- Are we prioritizing data collection that will be reported out?

### Sharing your results

- Have we identified who we plan to share the results with and why?
- Have we identified what exactly is important to share?

## SOURCES

The following resources provide an assortment of frameworks, research, toolkits, and materials to support the development of evaluation for your community engagements. Learn more about the principles of evaluation and ways to design meaningful and impactful evaluation for your initiatives.

Americans for the Arts. [Arts and Social Impact Explorer](#).

Center for Disease Control, [Criteria for Selection of High-Performing Indicators: A Checklist to Inform Monitoring and Evaluation](#).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health](#).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Program Evaluation and Evaluating Community Engagement](#).

Everyday Democracy. [An Evaluation Guide for Community Engagement](#).

Governance and Social Development Resource Center. [Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Impact Evaluation and Measuring Results](#).

W. K. Kellogg Foundation. [Step-by-Step Guide to Evaluation: How to Become Savvy Evaluation Consumers](#).

# FACILITATION



## 3.1 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITATOR

Facilitation is the practice of guiding a dialogue or engagement towards desired goals. Facilitators help to provide the space for stakeholders to share and listen to one another and exchange ideas. Facilitators are skilled in helping stakeholders stay on track, participate, and feel heard. A key component of a facilitator is neutrality, and ensuring a neutral stance to guarantee a smooth and equitable process.

## ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

Facing community crises at any time is difficult. Stakeholders can feel disturbed, frightened, or anxious. At the same time, organizations are also grappling with how to adjust, change, and continue to move forward.

**Embrace and work with emotions** (even if it is not your normal mode of operating). Understand that fear is normal, but it is not 'just' fear; it is a family of emotions ranging from apathy and concern through to denial. Do not try to 'save' people from their emotions. They are part of being human and help us build resilience. Get ready for the long haul. Emotions will pop up continually and impact can be felt for decades.

**Acknowledge it.** Recognize what is happening and what people are feeling. Over the next year or two, you are going to need to notice, listen, and acknowledge. Remember to be an engagement practitioner, not a counselor. Do not ignore or dismiss what people are feeling. Recognize emotions before you 'park' them; once acknowledged, stakeholders can concentrate on something else meaningful.

**Recognize that everyone is feeling the pain.** Everyone will be hurting - your colleagues, your boss, even you. 'Anticipatory grief,' linked to uncertainty, affects behaviors and capacities. Recognize and sensitively manage your own emotions, and you will be more empathetic and better able to engage effectively.

### IN THIS SECTION

- 3.1 [Role and Responsibilities of the Facilitator](#)
- 3.2 [Supporting Productive Dialogue](#)
- 3.3 [Checklist for Facilitating Productive Conversations](#)



### TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

You can use the [Equity and Inclusion Assessment](#) to ensure your engagement is an inclusive, equitable, and accessible facilitated experience.



### FIND YOUR STYLE

Here is a [free video and email series](#) from *The Conversation Factory* about developing clarity on your style, values, and approach as a facilitator through the lens of a simple metaphor: visualizing the hats you wear.

## FACILITATOR ROLES

**Planning the experience.** Be prepared for the engagement, so that you can be relaxed, centered, and clear when you are facilitating. For planning tips review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#). To support new technology, send an outline prior to the meeting with clear goals, outcomes, and questions for the group. Include instructions on how to use the online meeting technology.

**Setting the tone.** Ensure you are your natural and authentic self as you facilitate. Attempting to perform as a certain type of facilitator that is not natural for you can negatively impact the tone in the room.

**Setting expectations.** When you set expectations, you are setting the path for a more cohesive and focused engagement. Make sure your expectations are clear, thorough, and rooted in how these expectations will lead towards achieving your shared goals. For phone and virtual engagements, make sure to walk through the different logistical features of the platform:

- Speakers should identify themselves each time they speak to ensure that members of the public who are only listening in know which public servant is responsible for each comment or decision.
- Consider allowing members of the public to make comments using email or a video conference chat function and reading comments into the record.

**Setting and enforcing community agreements.** Provide expectations for the experience to ensure you stay on track and are all on the same page. Community agreements, also known as 'setting norms' or ground rules, always sit better when the full group creates them, rather than if the facilitator establishes them for the group. When drafting agreements, be specific to your groups' specific context, and avoid using jargon. Always remember that you are leading by example for the group and should abide by the agreements as well! Try to take the lead in reinforcing the community agreements, as this will help manage other stakeholders who might want to police others' behaviors. The following are examples:

AGREEMENT	WHAT IT MEANS
Stay engaged	Remove distractions (such as cell phones), and engage in active listening.
Be honest	Only speak for yourself, and always speak in the 'I.'
Step-up or step back	Step up if you tend to be quiet, and step back if you tend to be talkative.
Keep an open mind	Agree to disagree. There are no right or wrong answers.
Suspend judgment	Challenge yourself to avoid making generalizations or assumptions.
Accept and embrace discomfort	Explore beyond what you already know, and expand outside of your comfort zone.



### BE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR EMOTIONAL STATE

As soon as the facilitator begins to speak, even over video, their emotional/energetic state begins to impact the group through the phenomenon of 'limbic resonance.' This is great if you're relaxed and confident but less beneficial if the group begins resonating with your anxiety! Remember that 80-90% of communication is nonverbal.

### REMEMBER

For phone and virtual engagements, community agreements are different from a review of the platform functionality. Make sure to account for reviewing both in your agenda.

## FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

**Agenda keeper and time management.** You set-up each discussion or activity, facilitate transitions, and wrap-up conversations. You provide enough time for stakeholders to discuss a topic freely and are prepared for activities to take more or less time than originally anticipated.

**Group well-being.** You continuously monitor the room, assess the energy level of the group, and determine when it is time to diverge from or stick to the planned agenda.

**Closing a dialogue.** When closing a meeting, you always connect back to the original goals, in order to clarify next steps for the group.

## ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD FACILITATOR

**Provides a neutral structure** for the discussion that values every stakeholder as an equal. You are an active and engaged listener who provides feedback rather than judgment and acknowledges differences as strengths rather than barriers to a solution.

**Creates a safe, respectful environment** for the group to interact with one another and engage with the topic at hand. You connect with stakeholders and respond appropriately to their needs, monitoring emotions, and ensuring stakeholders' safety and well-being.

**Sets clear parameters** for the area of focus. Keeps the conversation cohesive and maintains progress towards the primary purpose.

**Maintains productive energy** in the room, on the phone or through video. You are mindful of body language and non-verbal responses that may indicate approval or disapproval.

**Is aware of what is not being said or who is not speaking** and elicits these perspectives with challenging questions.

**Maintains impartiality** to build confidence and trust among stakeholders. You earn this trust through your ability to act fairly and competently in serving the purpose of the group, the goals of the meeting, and the interests and needs of stakeholders.

## FACILITATING VIRTUALLY IS THE SAME AND DIFFERENT AS IN-PERSON

Start by changing your mindset/expectations, and allow for more time to do less. Things take longer on a virtual platform. Keep your focus on what is essential.

- **Facilitate with empathy and patience.** Remember that everyone has a lot going on today. Be empathetic to their surroundings, their technology, and their willingness to let you in their home.
- **Stop looking at yourself.** You are cute, but it is like sitting in a restaurant and looking at the mirror behind your friend's head the entire time. Cover the video of yourself with a post-it.
- **Be creative.** Invite stakeholders to bring physical objects and symbols as a way to help large groups visually participate.
- **Do not be afraid of breakout rooms.** Allowing stakeholders' space to have small group conversations can help to move the dialogue forward more quickly. But make sure to set parameters in the room, as people can get off track.

For other key considerations for facilitating online, review the [Mini-Guide for Virtual Engagement](#).



## FACILITATION AND COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR PARTICIPANTS WITH DISABILITIES

- **Use "people-first" language.** Focus on the person, not the disability (e.g., "person with a disability" not "disabled person")
- **Ask "How can I help you?"** Some stakeholders' disabilities are hidden; others are more obvious. Allow the person to explain what they need. It is okay if you don't know how to answer a question or accommodation request. Say, "Let me look into that," or "I will find out and get back to you."
- **Avoid using terms that have negative connotations** (e.g., "confined to a wheelchair"). Assistive devices (e.g., canes, walkers, etc.) are tools for independence.
- If you meet a stakeholder with a service dog, **talk to the person first**, not the dog. Make the person your main focus of attention.

## 3.2 SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

Productive dialogue is when a group can come together and explore ideas, discuss strategies, and make decisions collaboratively. Convenings are accessible, inclusive, and productive for all stakeholders. Productive dialogue helps to decrease hierarchy and provides a space where everyone can feel welcomed, where they know that their voices are equally heard. It helps to increase participation and supports a group to arrive at a mutually beneficial plan of action.

### STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

There are participatory methods that you can employ to support your group's convening. The development of an agenda and specific goals will ensure all stakeholders feel safe, respected, and heard. The following strategies work well not only during in-person engagements, but also in phone and virtual meetings.

**Active listening.** Good facilitators listen well and ask good questions. A powerful question can generate curiosity in the listener, stimulate reflective dialogue, bring to the surface any underlying assumptions, and invite creativity. There are a range of question types; some provide structure and others help groups reach some form of closure.

ACTIVE LISTENING QUESTION TYPE	EXAMPLE
<b>Open questions</b> are designed to gather information and facts.	<i>What are your concerns about this situation?</i>
<b>Probing questions</b> are designed to gain additional details.	<i>Can you specifically explain why that matters?</i>
<b>Reflective questions</b> are designed to confirm understanding.	<i>Would you prioritize the most critical areas for attention first?</i>
<b>Deflective questions</b> are designed to help transition a negative situation into a collaborative problem-solving dialogue.	<i>What can we do to make it right? If you were to do it, what would be your approach?</i>

#### Paraphrasing to support mutual understanding.

When stakeholders make confusing statements or repeat themselves, you can facilitate an opportunity for clarification, which simultaneously legitimizes their contribution:

1. Recite in your own words what you believe the stakeholder just said. (e.g. "It sounds like..." or "Have I understood you correctly?")
2. Based on verbal or nonverbal reaction, confirm with the stakeholder that you paraphrased their point correctly before you move on with the dialogue.

#### Linking to find common ground.

If a stakeholder is straying from the dialogue, or if stakeholders are not seeing eye to eye, this technique can encourage them to regain their focus, while also building trust by treating their thoughts with care:

1. Start by paraphrasing the topic or point. (e.g. "Let me summarize what I'm hearing from each of you. I am hearing a lot of similarities and differences.")
2. Ask the stakeholder to link the idea to the topic. (e.g. "How does this tie to...?" or "Can you help us make the connection?")
3. Validate their response. (e.g. "I see what you mean.")
4. Encourage stakeholders to write down off-topic statements on paper for review at a later time.

### CATALOG OF IDEAS

Find more methods for facilitating dialogue in a variety of engagement formats, check out [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas](#).



### TIPS FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

Maintain honesty with the group.

Admit when you have lost track or need a stakeholder to explain something further. By ensuring you understand precisely what the participant has stated, you can avoid assumptions or generalizations.

It can be patronizing to tell a stakeholder "You know how they feel," as members come to the dialogue with their own unique experiences and perspectives.

## MANAGING DISRUPTIVE STAKEHOLDERS

While facilitation is often about managing the energy of the room and interactions between the group, sometimes specific stakeholders may stand in the way of your attempt to create a leveled, creative, and productive atmosphere. When you realize that an individual is creating challenges, it can be helpful to determine whether the person is being disruptive purposefully or unintentionally.

**Unintentional disruption** occurs when a stakeholder's behavior clashes with the goals of your facilitation. The individual is not trying to be disruptive, but they cause others in the group to be less productive.

**Purposeful disruption** is an intentional attempt to cause trouble or disturb the process. These behaviors not only hinder productivity but can also affect the energy of an entire room.

### Managing unintentional disruption

- **If a stakeholder is being disruptive, stop the person, thank them, and paraphrase what they have said.** Then ask if anyone has thoughts to build on what has been said, a different point to include, or ask a prompting question to bring the group back on task.
- If non-confrontational tactics have not worked, it is time to take a break. **Invite the disruptive person(s) outside the room and politely, but firmly, state your feelings.** Try to uncover what's going on and seek other ways to address that their concerns.
- When working in virtual settings, if a stakeholder is being disruptive, **utilize the mute or waiting room function** to remove them from the main conversation.
- When working in a conference call setting, **managing disruptive behavior can be best addressed by "playing traffic cop"** with a verbal cue; by asking to hear from specific people before the person who is disrupting. You can also bring others into a discussion intentionally, as it is difficult for a dominator to continue talking over another person when someone redirects verbal traffic to a specific person.

### Managing purposeful disruption

Confrontation is most effectively handled in a caring context. It is an invitation for an individual member to carefully examine their behavior and its consequences; to express care and concern, not punishment.

- Focus attention on the dysfunctional behavior itself and **avoid labeling or classifying the person.** Personal labeling only increases individual defensiveness.
- **Point out the effects of dysfunctional behavior.** Often the person who is interfering with group functioning is unaware of the negative impact they are having.
- **Suggest alternative activities** that will lead to more productive, satisfying participation for the disruptive member and the rest of the group, as well. (e.g. encourage the disruptive member to be the note-taker for the group for the day).

## UNDERSTAND WHY NO ONE IS TALKING, ESPECIALLY DURING VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

What happens if stakeholders are not talking? Silence or reluctance can feel like failure, but it is a common pain point in virtual or phone environments. While no foolproof solution exists to get quiet stakeholders talking, the most effective strategies start from an understanding of why no one is talking.

- **Embracing silence.** Sometimes a pause is needed for stakeholders to process, reflect, and take themselves off mute before responding. It can be helpful to remind stakeholders how to take themselves off mute.
- **Misunderstanding expectations of participation.** Some may come in with an expectation of a listen-and-learn environment. Be sure to set expectations before the first event, and keep reinforcing the idea of ongoing conversation as a community practice.
- **Discomfort and unfamiliarity.** The online environment can be intimidating for stakeholders because it can feel like public speaking, especially if the event is recorded. When the atmosphere feels overly formal, loosen up the group by using a more conversational and questioning tone. Start with icebreakers that focus on creating social cohesion before diving into the subject-matter.

## HONOR EMOTIONS AND TRAUMA DURING CRISIS

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department) acknowledges how stressful and painful this past year has been. The loss of loved ones, jobs, businesses, homes, and livelihoods, combined with feelings of uncertainty, sadness, fear, and worry, have been a huge weight on us all. We acknowledge that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and continue to experience and resist the daily impact and reality of years of disinvestment, racism, biased treatment, and oppression. We acknowledge the historical and contemporary injustices in government and health care that have deepened distrust and contributed to the causes of individual and collective trauma and structural inequities. The Health Department names racism as a public health crisis and commits to becoming an anti-racist institution that acknowledges our history, takes action to eliminate inequities, and protects and promotes the health of all New Yorkers.

To support this, build into your practice:

- Grace and patience to promote a space that acknowledges the emotions of stakeholders.
- A culture of checking-in with one another.
- Frequent breaks, as needed. Read the room, and ask if breaks for moments of reflection are needed.

### 3.3 CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATION

#### Roles and responsibilities of the facilitator

- Have we planned for a space and tone that is inclusive and welcoming to all?
- Have we considered the ways that the experience is inclusive, accessible, and encourages participation?
- Have we identified a set of community agreements and ensured they are visible to all throughout the engagement?
- Have we set expectations to ensure that roles, responsibilities, and next steps are transparent and agreed upon?

#### Supporting productive dialogue

- Have we adjusted the experience where necessary to ensure everyone is comfortable and has equal opportunities to participate?
- Have we approached disruptive behavior head-on where necessary in order to create a better experience for the disruptive person and the group as a whole?

## SOURCES

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## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# ANTI-OPPRESSION, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



Every organization has a role in ensuring that equity, inclusion, and accessibility are a reality. All efforts to mitigate intentional and unintentional oppression in community engagement must be taken. Without the recognition and direct addressing of inequity in the community engagement process, organizations perpetuate systemic and structural inequalities, including racism, xenophobia, gender and identity bias, etc. It is imperative that equity and anti-oppression are an essential component of your community engagement process, not just a check-box. This mini-guide acts as a reference tool of resources and information on promoting equity and providing accessible and inclusive services.

## 4.1 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AND POWER DYNAMICS

Without a focus on power dynamics, community engagement is inherently unequal. Race, power, injustice, ability, language, immigration status, socio-economic status, identity, and age all play a major role in engagement experiences. Extensive research and a deep understanding of your stakeholders is needed to understand what barriers to participation might occur due to power imbalances both within the community and as a result of the engagement process. Pay close attention to those who have less access to power, and work to identify opportunities in your engagement for stakeholders to influence decisions.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING POWER DYNAMICS

**Challenge your assumptions.** Building competency in equitable engagement requires a learning mindset. Without taking the time to challenge your own and your organization's assumptions about your stakeholders, you risk upholding and perpetuating systems of oppression.

**Understand your positionality.** You are most likely an employee of an agency, organization, or system working in communities. Depending on the reputation of that institution, stakeholders may have immediate distrust that affects long-term relationships and trust-building.

**Attendance-driven results will be exclusionary.** If evaluation of an engagement effort relies only on attendance numbers you may fail to reflect the community. Engagement efforts should evaluate what communities or target audiences were reached and weigh that against attendance numbers. A first step to address this is to identify a targeted outreach and promotion campaign.

### IN THIS SECTION

- 4.1 [Barriers to Participation and Power Dynamics](#)
- 4.2 [Digital and Internet Access Barriers](#)
- 4.3 [Disability Barriers](#)
- 4.4 [Checklist for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#)

# 4

### STAKEHOLDERS AS ADVOCATES OF CHANGE

Find ways to support stakeholders in becoming advocates of the community change desired. Stakeholders who offered their time, insights, and efforts to a community engagement are the best people suited to turn an engagement into action. Provide leadership opportunities and ensure stakeholders continue to be part of the decision-making process.

### TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

Use the [Equity and Inclusion Assessment](#) to ensure you are creating an engagement that is equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

**Understand the socio-historical context.** To best serve and engage your stakeholders, you must have cultural competency and knowledge about the inequities faced by your target community. It is important to understand the social, environmental, and structural determinants of inequity in your community. Work to acknowledge the history and experiences of your community in the engagement process.

- Analyze the impact of white culture on the community. Over time, this knowledge will support you in addressing specific needs and desires that help to intervene.
- Be mindful not to reduce complex and varied communities into one stereotype. An engagement targeted at a Spanish-speaking community might have multiple target audiences like Puerto Ricans, new arrivals from Belize, or 3rd generation Americans.

**Build and sustain trust.** Trust between stakeholders and the facilitator is one of the most essential components for building authentic engagements. Create an environment that *exchanges* information rather than *collects* it, shares power, and has clear rules of engagement.

**Create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.** Your choice of location or platform might exclude certain stakeholders. Understand how characteristics of spaces may be exclusionary (e.g., A government building may exclude undocumented immigrants.). Additionally, make your space accessible to those who are differently-abled by choosing venues or platforms with all stakeholders in mind.

**Foster authentic relationships and leadership.** Rarely are community engagements a one-off event, but, rather, they are part of ongoing and continued programming and community development. As such, engagement efforts should focus on continuous relationship development.

- Identify community leaders and organizations, and ask for their insights in the planning process; everything from guidance on when a community might prefer to gather to gaining insights on the community's priorities and needs.
- Foster strategic partnerships with diverse organizations and agencies that have relationships across the whole community.

**Actively listen.** Make space and time to actively listen to stakeholders. While you may be an expert in your field, you may not be an expert of this community and their experiences. Take time to have difficult conversations and discuss concerns, opportunities, and priorities.

**Work towards transparency and accountability.** Facilitators should be transparent with stakeholders about their role, the context of the project and, most significantly, how their input is being used. Any opportunities to share results from the engagement back to the community should be taken.

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## VULNERABILITY IN VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Asking stakeholders to have their video on in a virtual engagement puts them in a vulnerable position.

It is rare that we see the inside of our stakeholders homes and uncommon to glimpse their personal family dynamics. Many may not want to share what their home looks like, may not have privacy from other family members, or may be uncomfortable with their appearance. Be flexible and empathetic, a stakeholder might have a valid reason for keeping their video off.



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## ARTS AND CULTURE AS AN EQUITY TOOL

Arts and culture are great strategies to promote inclusion, connection, belonging, identity, and more. Through art-making practices and cultural exchanges, your stakeholders are building relationships with others in their community, becoming more comfortable around each other, and more welcomed to the engagement space. For more on arts and culture, review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#).

**Be okay with discomfort.** Allow yourself and your stakeholders to sit and learn from discomfort. This is especially true for those of us who work in communities that have been historically marginalized. As uncomfortable as it can be, it is a critical step towards leading with an anti-racism lens in community engagement.

**Be ready to learn.** Allow yourself to hear everything that stakeholders have to share. Some of the insights explored may be triggering and uncomfortable, but it is necessary in order to understand, challenge our own assumptions, and to build empathy.

**Be vulnerable.** Bring your whole self to the engagement, including your vulnerability. Oppression has a deep-rooted impact on our neighbors and everyday systems, and it is important that everyone comes to the table knowing that vulnerability is a strength in order to build capacity and problem-solve.

**Review the levels of comfort.** When facilitating, check in with your stakeholders and their comfort levels. While you can analyze comfort through body language and level of participation, knowing the *Three Zones of Comfort*, developed by [Daniel Lim](#), can help you understand the most appropriate agenda, and prepare you to pivot in the moment to promote the safest dialogue possible for everyone.

- *Safe zone:* Stakeholders are very familiar with content and are comfortable. Little learning happens in this zone, and stakeholders may not be challenged to learn beyond what they already know.
- *Challenge zone:* Stakeholders' beliefs are challenged, but they still feel safe and included. Most learning outcomes are achieved in the challenge zone.
- *Danger zone:* Stakeholders' worldviews are breaking down. They may feel uprooted and unsafe; therefore, no learning can happen in this zone.

**Remain flexible.** In terms of facilitation, a key consideration for equity is to remain flexible, and understand that the anticipated course of the engagement may shift or pivot. Stakeholders may come to an engagement needing a space to vent. This may delay your agenda, but remain flexible and allow unpredicted discussions to happen in the moment. These conversations could be instrumental for solution-thinking.

**Walk away with the lessons learned, not the specific context.** To honor confidentiality in an engagement, remind yourself and the stakeholders to walk away with the lessons and knowledge they learned, rather than the people, places, or specific circumstances shared in the dialogue. To review best practices for setting ground rules and group norms review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#).



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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

You have probably participated in or witnessed a [land acknowledgment](#). This practice is incorporated into community engagements as a way of acknowledging the Indigenous groups that once occupied the land on which the engagement is taking place. Land acknowledgments are a critical learning tool and a strategy for honoring the socio-historical and cultural context of where we work.

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## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Take a lesson from the education community and fold culturally responsive practices into your engagement. Being culturally responsive helps stakeholders better connect with your subject matter, and they become more willing to engage. One simple way is to offer an engagement in a language other than English. Another solution could be to share images, text, or examples that reflects the participants in the room. Learn more at [Edutopia](#).

## 4.2 DIGITAL AND INTERNET ACCESS BARRIERS

COVID-19 caused a shift in what we thought possible and reasonable in community engagement. While previously in-person methods were heavily relied on, there are significant benefits for virtual engagements when it comes to time, safety, and access. Those benefits are not without drawbacks. Online engagements can be less effective and barriers of internet access, digital literacy, and infrastructure continue to prohibit participation for all.

Internet access and access to internet-capable devices can be cost prohibitive, and those that are not may not work effectively. You can read more about the digital divide from the [Digital Divide Council](#). Furthering the divide are stark differences in *digital literacy*, an individual's ability to navigate hardware and software. Literacy levels can vary from those who have never used a mouse or trackpad, to those who struggle with Photoshop. Socio-economic status and age play a major role in an individual's digital literacy.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING DIGITAL AND INTERNET ACCESS BARRIERS

**Understand your community's capacity.** To best engage and serve your community, find out their comfort level with digital access and connection capabilities.

- Take time to listen to your community to find out how they connect, their preferred method of connection, and what might support them in connectivity challenges.
- Research broadband access of specific neighborhoods. Check out this great [example](#) from Hester Street.
- Mail or text out a survey. Find out your target community's capacity, interests, and needs.

**Build community capacity alongside engagement.** According to the [United Nations](#), digital literacy and internet access are rights. Work to build community capacity by supporting these efforts.

- Provide internet access to stakeholders. If resources permit, provide them with hotspots, internet concessions, or prepaid SIM cards.
- Work with a partner organization, like the library, to provide internet access and/or internet-capable devices. Provide digital literacy learning opportunities. Work on skill development with stakeholders to strengthen their digital literacy by offering classes, workshops, 1-on-1s, and tutorials.
- Offer time before an engagement to teach stakeholders how to use the platform, or dedicate time in your session to address digital literacy.



### ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide is a national challenge. It will take more than one organization, more than one initiative to bridge the divide.

If you are unable to mitigate barriers to internet access and/or digital literacy, use different methods for engagement. Instead partner with an organization already doing the work (libraries are often a great starting place).

Here is a [list of additional Digital Literacy tools](#) for learners of any age from the New York Public Library or Digital Literacy's [tools and resources](#) to expand your own training.

### CATALOG OF IDEAS

When considering accessible methods of engagement, look to [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas](#) for ways to support your chosen format.

## 4.3 DISABILITY BARRIERS

Stakeholders with disabilities are among the most diverse and vulnerable groups in a community, and engagement efforts must take this into account. [The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 \(ADA\)](#) is a federal civil rights law enacted to prohibit discrimination based on disability by employers, businesses, and public services. Organizations are required by law to make reasonable accommodations, meet the basic requirements of ADA, and are prohibited from discrimination on the basis of disability. Accommodations can be small changes, such as how instruction is delivered and communication occurs, that should not alter the goal of the activity. They are intended to provide the stakeholder with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from engagement opportunities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “a disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)...”

- **Impairment** in a person’s body structure or function, or mental functioning; examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision, or memory loss
- **Activity limitation**, such as difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving
- **Participation restrictions** in normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities, and obtaining health care and preventive services”

While some disabilities are visible, others, like Diabetes or mental illness, are not, and no two people with the same disability are impacted in quite the same way. Understanding the medical and environmental barriers as you plan an engagement can help make sure your event is accessible to as many stakeholders as possible.

Among the wide array of disabilities one might see in one’s community these are the primary classifications:

- Cognitive
- Communication
- Hearing
- Learning
- Memory
- Mental health
- Physical
- Social
- Vision

For detailed resources on specific disabilities in these categories, see [pages 58 & 59](#).

This is an evolving field, and it is important that the ownership of any classifications or labels is on the person themselves. “Nothing about us without us.” Persons with disabilities know best what they need and how to create engagements that serve them. If developing an engagement to reach a specific disability community, be sure to utilize members of that community in your planning. More resources and better ways to serve this population are constantly shifting and being added to the conversation. **Ask before making assumptions.**

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### LANGUAGE MATTERS

The terminology used to define or describe disabilities depends on the context in which it’s being used. There is much debate among the disability community around language, as it is personal and always evolving. It’s essential that as a program planner and facilitator you are sensitive to the words you choose.

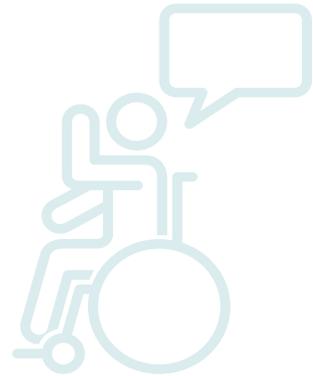
## COMMON BARRIERS

The CDC reminds us that “activities and participation can be made easier or more difficult as a result of environmental factors, such as technology, support and relationships, services, policies, or the beliefs of others.” It is the responsibility of the planning and facilitation team to plan engagements with common barriers in mind to make it accessible to a wide range of stakeholders. Eliminating barriers for some, can make the event more accessible for all.

The [World Health Organization](#) defines barriers as “factors in a person’s environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as:

- a physical environment that is not accessible,
- lack of relevant assistive technology (assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices),
- negative attitudes of people towards disability,
- services, systems, and policies that are either nonexistent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life.”

Those barriers can be categorized as attitudinal, communication, physical, policy-related, programmatic, social, or transportation-related. Often more than one barrier may be present at once. When planning your engagement, use the following chart to help you identify and dissolve barriers to access for your community.



Adapted from [Center for Disease, Control, and Prevention](#)

TYPE OF BARRIER	EXAMPLES OF BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION	BEST PRACTICES
<b>Attitude</b>  <i>social perception of people with disabilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitators or other participants stereotyping or discriminating (intentional or otherwise)</li> <li>• Facilitators or other participants rushing to judgment</li> <li>• Facilitators or other participants making assumptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite stakeholders to tell you what support they may need (<i>Don't assume you already know!</i>)</li> <li>• Ask, “What’s the best way I can help you?”</li> <li>• Ask before touching / moving anyone’s adaptive equipment</li> <li>• Speak directly to the stakeholder, not their companion, aide or interpreter</li> </ul>
<b>Mobility</b>  <i>physical obstacles that prevent or block movement or access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue features steps, platforms, or furniture placement that restricts movement around a space</li> <li>• Venue has counters or displays that cannot be reached / visible to someone in a wheelchair</li> <li>• Venue lacks available seating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When speaking to someone seated or in a wheelchair, be seated to be eye-level with them</li> <li>• Offer seating options</li> <li>• Allow aisles and pathways that are at least 36” to accommodate stakeholders using adaptive equipment</li> </ul>

TYPE OF BARRIER	EXAMPLES OF BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION	BEST PRACTICES
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p><i>related to hearing, speaking, visual, reading, writing, and processing abilities</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitators fail to provide:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>braille or assistive technology</li> <li>sound amplification</li> <li>large print/ readable font text</li> <li>captioning or ASL interpretation</li> </ul> </li> <li>Facilitators present rapid-fire questioning or long, multi-step instructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have transcriptions / closed captioning available for virtual engagements (see apps like Otter for support)</li> <li>Use a microphone for amplification, even when it seems unnecessary</li> <li>Ensure fonts and text are easy to read (refer to federal ADA guidelines)</li> <li>Provide verbal descriptions of visual images, slides, or chat box responses</li> <li>Ensure that virtual platforms are compatible with assistive technology, like screen readers</li> <li>Offer verbal and visual information</li> <li>Break instructions into short steps, move slowly, and repeat as needed</li> <li>Allow “wait time” of at least 7-10 seconds after asking a question to allow for processing time</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social</b></p> <p><i>conditions that contribute to barriers</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information presented displays prejudices against people with disabilities</li> <li>Facilitation team and/or stakeholders lack representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the representation of your team</li> <li>Be intentional about inclusion of all voices in the room (in person or virtually)</li> </ul>

## ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

[ADA](#) | Information and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

[ADA Requirements: Effective Communication](#) | Lays out guidelines, services, and provisions to make communication accessible to individuals with disabilities.

[ADA Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field](#) | Provides guidance on making outreach ventures accessible to people with disabilities

[American Foundation for the Blind \(AFB\) Accessworld](#) |

Resources to support a world with no limits for people who are Blind or visually impaired

[The Arc](#) | Promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes

[CAST’s Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) | A framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn

TYPE OF BARRIER	EXAMPLES OF BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION	BEST PRACTICES
<p><b>Policy</b></p> <p><i>lack of acknowledgment of laws and regulations in place to protect the rights of people with disabilities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement planner and facilitator denies access to or benefits of events or services</li> <li>Engagement planner and facilitator fails to provide reasonable accommodations</li> <li>Engagement planner and facilitator is unfamiliar with existing laws and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarize yourself and your team with the <a href="#">Americans with Disabilities Act</a> and the <a href="#">Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</a></li> <li>Offer accommodation opportunities on registration forms and engagement marketing materials</li> </ul>
<p><b>Programming</b></p> <p><i>limited delivery of public programs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Event lacks accessible resources and equipment</li> <li>Engagement planner and facilitator places limited priority on accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize accessibility when you plan your engagement</li> <li>Offer a virtual option for engagement</li> <li>Carefully consider the time of day at which you are offering your program; offer multiple sessions, when possible</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transportation</b></p> <p><i>ability of all people to independently access sites</i></p>	<p>Event is held in a remote location, inaccessible by public transit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer a virtual option for engagement</li> <li>Be mindful of public access to locations when choosing a venue</li> </ul>

## ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES (continued)

[Disability Rights New York](#) | Provides free legal and advocacy services to individuals with disabilities.

[Federal Social Media Accessibility Toolkit Hackpad](#) | Provides guidelines for supporting accessibility through social media platforms.

[IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) | Offers resources and language to provide support and guidance to families and educators as they accommodate individuals with disabilities.

[National Association of Council on Developmental Disabilities](#) | Supports programs that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion for all people in the United States with developmental disabilities.

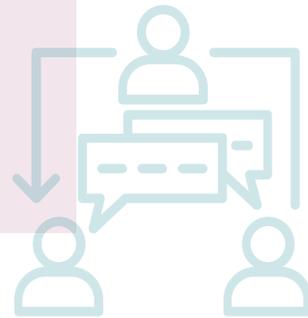
[National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders](#) | Conducts and supports research in the normal and disordered processes of hearing, balance, taste, smell, voice, speech, and language.

[Project Enable](#) | Professional development to build capacity for providing equitable access and services to students with disabilities, an under-served population

## BEST PRACTICES FOR ACCOMMODATING ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Providing access, regardless, will benefit everyone. Learn more about how to eliminate barriers with [Universal Design for Learning](#).

- Remember that not all disabilities are visible.
- Listen and be patient.
- After offering, wait for acceptance
- Do not be afraid to ask questions if you are not sure about something.



### 4.4 CHECKLIST FOR ANTI-OPPRESSION, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

#### Barriers to participation and power dynamics

- Have we developed an outreach plan that reaches all the appropriate audiences?
- Have we ensured that the engagement serves the community and that it is worth their valuable time? Are there opportunities for them to be part of decision-making, or are they offering insights with no return?
- Are we the best people to lead the engagement? For example, a majority white and English-speaking team could partner with a Chinese community group to lead an engagement in a community of immigrants.

#### Digital and internet access barriers

- Have we identified and addressed barriers to participation?
- Does our outreach plan explicitly include and engage an equitable audience?
- Are we meeting people where they are?

#### Disability barriers

- Have we researched the needs in our community?
- Have we identified and addressed barriers to participation?
- Have we created space for stakeholders to guide us through their necessary accommodations before and during the engagement?

### SOURCES

Aorta. [Anti-Oppression Facilitation for Democratic Process Making Meetings Awesome for Everyone](#).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Advancing Health Equity](#).

Coalition of Communities of Color. [Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity](#).

Collective Impact Forum. [Collaborating to See All Constituents Reach Their Full Potential](#).

CTSA. [Principles of Community Engagement](#).

Minnesota Dept. of Health. [Community Engagement to Advance Health Equity: Strategies and Tips](#).

New York Department of Health. [Disability and Health in New York State](#).

Seattle Office for Civil Rights. [Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement Guide](#).

University of Michigan. ["Check Yourself" Community Engagement Checklist](#).

## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT



Technologies like video conferences and online surveys are great tools, but simply moving planned activities to an online platform are not going to be effective. Stakeholders participating in virtual engagement may include older adults, non-English speakers, immigrants, people living unsheltered, people of color, people with disabilities, low-income working people, and others who may not have reliable access to the internet. Virtual engagements may exacerbate challenges with reaching those who are already left out of traditional community engagement.

COVID-19 has offered us an opportunity to re-center equity in engagement and maintain our commitment to dismantling the systems that systemically disregard and oppress these stakeholders. The traditional principles of in-person community engagement still apply to virtual engagements. Review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#) and [Mini-Guide for Facilitation](#).

## 5.1 PLANNING VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Approach the planning process for a virtual engagement just as you would in-person community engagement activities. Identify your purpose and stakeholders, build your agenda, incorporate participatory decision-making (if applicable), and promote your engagement.

### DETERMINING YOUR VIRTUAL PLATFORMS

Before you start planning, determine which virtual platform will be most successful based on your stakeholders' ability to navigate the technology.

**TIP:** Reach out to your stakeholders in advance with an easy, short survey to determine access and technology capabilities. Smartphone technology is often more prevalent than computers.

When choosing a platform, consider:

- Is the tool easy-to-use and intuitive? Does it require downloading an app, lengthy account creation, etc.?
- Are the formatting and functions compatible on a smartphone?
- Is the technology something that can be accessed by non-English speaking or low literacy community members?
- Is the technology something that communities can use repeatedly (e.g. Is it free, low-cost, and accessible)?
- Can you record meetings to be sent at a later date?

### IN THIS SECTION

[5.1 Planning Virtual Engagement](#)

[5.2 Strategies to Ensure Stakeholders are Prepared to Engage Online](#)

[5.3 Facilitating Virtual Engagement](#)

[5.4 Creative Virtual Collaboration](#)

[5.5 Checklist for Virtual Engagement](#)

# 5

### PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

Will this be an open forum anyone can join or will you need to target specific members of the community? Be aware that forums open to the public and anonymous sessions present a risk of "Zoom-bombing," a method of internet 'trolling' that seeks to interrupt a session by screen sharing explicit images or other inappropriate or offensive content. Features on video platforms can help prevent this by setting screen share to "host only" and using the waiting room feature.



The following virtual platforms include their own pros and cons, and it is important to understand the features that fit your purpose and community.

<b>ZOOM</b>	<b>CISCO WEBEX</b>	<b>MICROSOFT TEAMS</b>	<b>GOOGLE MEETUPS</b>
<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recurring meetings</li> <li>• Raise hand feature</li> <li>• Q&amp;A and polling feature</li> <li>• Easily recordable</li> <li>• Breakout rooms feature</li> <li>• Closed-captioning feature</li> <li>• Multiple presenter setting</li> <li>• Toll-free dial-in numbers</li> <li>• Webinar capacity</li> <li>• Mute &amp; unmute capabilities</li> <li>• On-screen whiteboard feature</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polling feature</li> <li>• Raise hand feature</li> <li>• Same link for future meetings</li> <li>• Easily recordable</li> <li>• Ability to take attendance</li> <li>• Polling</li> <li>• Noise detection and suppression feature</li> <li>• Webinar feature</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screen sharing</li> <li>• See video and chat comments simultaneously</li> <li>• Save chat comments automatically</li> <li>• Background blur feature</li> <li>• Integration with Microsoft Office</li> <li>• Video chat with up to 250 people or present live to 10,000</li> <li>• Share meeting agenda</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free video calls for up to 10 people</li> <li>• Screen sharing</li> <li>• Recurring meetings</li> <li>• Easily recordable</li> <li>• See video and chat comments simultaneously</li> <li>• Message contacts anytime, even if they are offline</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free account is limited (no breakout rooms, 40-minute sessions for 3-100 people, etc.)</li> <li>• Free accounts are not encrypted</li> <li>• Must set controls to avoid “Zoom-bombing”</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult for moderator to share screen and monitor chat comments simultaneously</li> <li>• Must save chat comments manually</li> <li>• No toll-free dial-in numbers</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be able to record video meetings</li> <li>• No in-meeting poll feature</li> <li>• More focused on business function than video/community needs</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No breakout rooms</li> <li>• No in-meeting poll feature</li> <li>• More focused on business function than video/community needs</li> </ul>

All of these platforms (and others) provide unique and robust capabilities, but none of them do everything. Some platforms are stronger in hosting breakout groups, and others are better for polling and voting. Keep in mind that it could be beneficial to combine different platforms for different engagements.

## CONFERENCING PLATFORMS

[Hopin](#) is a web-based application that promotes knowledge-sharing across stakeholders. The capacity for Hopin is as small as 50 and as large as 50,000. It features recording capabilities, breakout rooms, screen sharing, Q&A, and a data analysis tool for comprehensive data tracking. For more on how to use virtual conferencing, visit the [Catalog of Ideas for Virtual Engagements](#).

## VIDEO ONLY PLATFORMS

Some of the video broadcasting capabilities you will find on digital platforms are:

- [Twitch](#)
- [Facebook Live](#)
- [Instagram Live](#)
- [YouTube Live \(through Zoom\)](#)

These platforms allow chat discussions while videos are streaming and can be a great channel for sharing information and addressing questions and concerns.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS FOR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENTS

OPPORTUNITIES	LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supporting the full spectrum.</b> Digital engagement tools, including virtual engagements, can support community engagement at all levels of the engagement spectrum; from outreach through consultation, collaboration, leadership, and even empowerment.</li> <li>• <b>High accessibility.</b> Virtual engagement provides an accessible option for involving stakeholders in important conversations, like working parents, younger people, mobility-impaired people, and shift workers. A virtual setting allows them to participate by not needing to travel to an engagement.</li> <li>• <b>Anonymity.</b> The relative freedom of an anonymous online environment removes the barriers of aggression, loudness, and power that may be present at in-person community meetings and often stifle debate.</li> <li>• <b>Cost effective.</b> Online engagement platforms are cost effective and efficient. You can contact more potential stakeholders directly at less cost.</li> <li>• <b>Supports culture shifts.</b> Online engagement can also shift an organization's culture by improving transparency and responsiveness.</li> <li>• <b>Builds connections.</b> When you meet someone face-to-face, you feel like you know them better because you can put a face to their voice. Video conferencing allows for the same sense of connection, even at a distance.</li> <li>• <b>Recording capabilities.</b> Software can record digital meetings and conferences so that these chats and discussions can be watched back later or seen by those who could not attend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of personal contact and relationship-building,</b> especially when not everyone turns on their video. While we <i>interact</i> through an online meeting, it's challenging to understand a person deeply. Communication may be one-directional or bi-directional, limiting the capacity to promote sustained relationships with stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Trust and transparency.</b> It can be hard to build trust and transparency over virtual settings, especially with data breaches, hacking, and other security issues associated with the technology.</li> <li>• <b>Learning curve.</b> Stakeholders have had to get used to video conferencing. Some have fallen in love with it from day one just because it was shiny and new. Others have hated it from the start.</li> <li>• <b>Talking over each other.</b> Audio lags can lead to people talking over one another and interrupting the flow of the meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Difficult to manage distractions.</b> Virtual spaces present distractions such as working while parenting/ care-taking. You have less control over your engagement environment.</li> <li>• <b>Gender-based communication gap.</b> There is a gender communication gap which is exacerbated in virtual meetings. The tendency for men to take more (virtual) space by speaking louder and more frequently than women gives unequal time for contributions. The common dominance of white and/or male opinions during meetings creates harmful power dynamics not only for women but serves to exclude the participation of people of color, limited-English communities, youth, and other marginalized groups.</li> </ul>

### INCORPORATING ARTS AND CULTURE INTO YOUR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Arts and culture translate very well into the virtual space. It is an excellent way to support stakeholder dialogue and comfort engaging with others with whom they may share **similar cultural practices and interests**.

- **Hold a virtual dance party.** Creative expression, such as art-making, dancing, or acting, can offer stakeholders a unique way to share thoughts or feelings about an issue.
- **Build a community tree using technology for collaging.** Collaboratively, starting from the roots and working your way up to the leaves, have each piece of the tree represent a theme that participants contribute to. After constructing the tree, host a viewing exhibition to allow stakeholders to find commonalities. Community trees can be designed virtually utilizing an online whiteboard tool such as [MURAL](#).

For more information on art and culture, review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#).



## BEST PRACTICES FOR BUILDING YOUR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT AGENDA

- **Lecture less, engage more.** Presenting information in varied ways will help keep your stakeholders engaged. Most platforms have chat features, polls, timers, and screen sharing features. A common practice is to give a poll question on a topic you'd like to consider, show the results, and then talk about what was said. Another strategy is to take live notes that stakeholders can see on a digital notepad. This increases the opportunity for interactivity, like a flip chart at an in-person training.
- **Plan time for stakeholders to engage with the platform.** Build in time at the beginning of the session for stakeholders to familiarize themselves with the functionality of the platform.
- **Incorporate a warm-up activity.** Just because people are online does not mean they do not need an activity to set the tone or get to know each other. Think about ways to incorporate arts and culture into activities to help set the tone. (See the [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas for Virtual Engagements](#) for examples.)
- **Break large documents into bite-sized pieces that can easily be delivered online.** Try using infographics, photos, and/or videos to convey relevant information and encourage online sharing across stakeholders.
- **Use breakout sessions.** This gives stakeholders the opportunity to share ideas and network with those around them, in smaller, more manageable group sizes.
- **Be mindful of attention spans.** Be prepared to adapt your agenda in the moment, if necessary, to help recenter the group. With more distractions to contend with, virtual engagements can be more difficult than those in-person when it comes to maintaining attention and focus.
- **Plan how people arrive.** Determine if a waiting room could be beneficial if people arrive with their videos/microphones turned on. For larger groups, starting with mics off is advisable.



## PLANNING FOR AN INCLUSIVE VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

- Ensure a phone option is available--as an alternative to accessing the internet or for technical challenges. Read written comments out loud to give callers an opportunity to participate. Stakeholders who join by phone will likely not have access to video interpretation services.
- Make a recorded presentation available for stakeholders to view when convenient. If you are recording an engagement, be sure to inform all stakeholders it will be recorded and how it will be distributed, in order to build trust.
- Make notes from a meeting available.
- Provide translation services for any meeting transcripts.
- Provide ASL and subtitles/closed-captioning options for people who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Check out tools like [Otter](#).
- Provide image descriptions for people who are blind or use screen readers. (Screen readers cannot interpret images and must rely on text to read out loud the information on the page.)
- Ask participants to submit questions or responses before an engagement (via email or a simple form), instead of assuming their comfort level with features like Zoom's Q&A function.



## DON'T FORGET TO HAVE SOMEONE PROVIDE SOUND AND TECH SUPPORT

Even with the best-laid plans and practices, technology issues will arise. Someone may not put themselves on mute or will forget to take themselves off. Links may not work. The sound will get wonky. You need to be able to focus on facilitating the engagement, so have a tech-savvy team member join as a 'tech facilitator.' They can help review the chat or be available for anyone who dialed-in over the phone.

## INCORPORATING PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING INTO YOUR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Interactive activities are useful for facilitating participatory decision-making. They provide structure, transparency, and opportunities for people to share their perspectives.

### Strategies for Online Voting

- **Poll** (in Zoom): Set up your poll before or during the event. It is anonymous, and you can keep the results private.
- **Chat Function** (in Zoom or other video platform): Think of this as the same as if it were paper. Ask people to submit their vote privately (by sending it only to the host) or to the whole group.
- **Doodle**: In just a few minutes you can create a poll, and share it with stakeholders. You can easily view the results of your free online voting.



**TIP:** A simple way to take Dot Voting online would be to use a combination of platforms. Zoom can be used to conduct your online meeting, but, for voting, use a Google document. Create a table with two columns (one for the ideas and one for people to place their 'dots' or votes.) To make it fun, you can use emojis instead. To learn more about Dot Voting, check out [this resource](#) from Nielson Norman Group.

### GRADIENT OF AGREEMENT

Polling is an activity that focuses on making a final decision about how to move forward. By creating a scale of agreement or disagreement, stakeholders can share their full perspective, and options can be discussed before a final decision is made. This is a powerful way to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and incorporated. One way to do this in a virtual setting is to have participants enter the number where they fall on the gradient in the chat box, and request participants share their rationale aloud.



## 5.2 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE STAKEHOLDERS ARE PREPARED TO ENGAGE VIRTUALLY

Not all stakeholders will be familiar or comfortable with the chosen platform.

- Ask everyone to download technology in advance. Ask stakeholders to test the technology and download any necessary software before the engagement starts.
- Ask stakeholders to reach out if they anticipate any technical or participation challenges so that, even if you cannot solve them, you will be prepared to structure the agenda and activities in ways that will still engage them as much as possible.
- Reach out to those you think might struggle. If you anticipate certain individuals may struggle with connecting or participating remotely, do not wait for them to reach out to you, reach out to them with a personal note. Try a friendly email offering to assist them with any technology issues because you value their contribution and want to ensure they can fully engage and connect.
- Over-communicate the technology details. Do not send just one email and assume everyone will read it. We can promise you, everyone will not. Include notes about technology in all of your pre-workshop communications, and send follow-ups as needed.
- Open the workshop platform early to help people test and troubleshoot. Let stakeholders know you will be on the platform 20-30 minutes before the workshop and can help troubleshoot connection issues. Then you do not have to waste precious time fixing glitches once everyone is online.

### PROMOTING BELONGING IN VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENTS

As in any community engagement, virtual settings are no place for language, perspectives, or activities that perpetuate systemic oppression, promote barriers to particular community demographics, or alienate specific cultural groups. Stakeholders should feel safe to share their stories and experiences. Design and lead with ground rules that communicate and amplify this message across stakeholders.

For more on this subject, review the [Mini-Guide for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#).

## 5.3 FACILITATING VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Leading virtual engagements comes with many different types of technical difficulties. Before going live:

### Prepare your team.

- Designate the roles and responsibilities of team members. Try to assign one role per person; it is difficult to multi-task in a virtual setting. (e.g. Getting someone else to read and respond to comments helps to ensure the facilitators are staying on track.)
- Adopt a team strategy for collecting notes throughout the engagement.
- Plan to have a “back channel” during the meeting. This discussion method allows your team communicate during the session.

### Test run your virtual platform.

- Preview your webcam. Adjust your indoor lighting and camera angle to properly light your face, and be mindful of your background. Anything you would not want your colleagues to see should be out of the frame.
- Test your microphone. Confirm with colleagues that your sound quality is sufficient. Wear a headset with a built-in microphone or use an external microphone, when you can.
- Visit [SPEEDTEST](#) to check your internet speed. If your speed is below 20 megabits per second, it is likely your video will look pixelated and have audio delays.
- Test all features of the platform: your screenshare, videos, and music. Make sure your 'back-channel' discussion plan is ready to go.

### Have a backup plan if technology fails.

- If possible, set up a backup hotspot in case the WiFi is not reliable.
- Have more than one host. This ensures the engagement does not end for the whole group if the host's connection is interrupted.
- Have a backup conference call line.
- Plan back-up activities. Stakeholders may struggle with an activity that requires opening another platform or more tech literacy, have a back-up plan for lower-tech activities.

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## STAKEHOLDER ANONYMITY

Virtual engagements allow for a certain level of anonymity that can remove barriers, break down power relations, and free up individual expression. In situations where stakeholders may feel vulnerable in an engagement setting, being able to choose how they are identified and keep their cameras off.

- Removes the possibility of bias due to sex, ethnicity, and age.
- Allows an individual to express an opinion without the fear of intimidation. It greatly reduces the ability of anyone to bully or humiliate others, particularly in an online discussion forum.



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## GO-TO BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES FOR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

There are lots of techniques for brainstorming, either in-person or virtually. Try the various alternatives, and find those that work best for you and your team. For more details on these and other virtual brainstorming techniques, check out this [resource](#) from MIRO.

- **Mind Maps** — Set up your main question or issue at the center of an online whiteboard (or other shared document). Invite your team to build out from it with their ideas or thoughts. Link related points to create a map of information, opportunities, and issues.
- **Rapid Ideation** — A bit of time pressure is sometimes the recipe for creativity. Give your stakeholders a limited timescale to come up with as many ideas as possible.
- **Round Robin** — The round robin technique starts by inviting one stakeholder to share an idea. Then go around the group, and have each person share an idea that builds off of the previous ones. Think of it as real-time improvisation — you say “yes, and” to an idea to build upon it as a group.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR FACILITATING VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

- **You don't have to be involved in the discussion.** Make it clear this is a space for community-generated dialogue and that your team is listening.
- **Do not just be clear, be impossible to misunderstand.** As the speaker in a remote meeting, it's harder to know if your message was heard clearly and understood other than by confirming that you've been clear.
- **Acknowledge participant contributions.** Acknowledging what individuals are saying helps to keep the dialogue moving forward.
- **Body language still matters.** Be conscious to make eye contact and exude the tone of the engagement through your body language. **TIP:** If you are distracted by your own video, turn it off on your computer, but still remember to speak directly to your stakeholders.
- **Facilitation and group dynamics are still a challenge online.** It is still a reality that even though online engagements can broaden participation rates, disparities can be exacerbated through virtual settings, such as the digital divide.



## 5.4 BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATIVE VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

Brainstorming sessions are excellent for generating innovative solutions and approaches. While traditionally held in-person, there is no reason you can not run an engaging session for your remote stakeholders. It is worth the effort, and the following tips will help you on your way:

**Plan your platform ahead of time.** For virtual brainstorms, you want to allow extra planning time to find the right combination of platforms. You want to replicate the experience of a physical brainstorm session as closely as possible. Make sure to have a video conference solution and online collaboration tool/whiteboard in combination.

**Provide a warm-up activity to allow participants to get comfortable with the platform.**

- Take time to walk your stakeholders through all the functionality of the collaborative platform.
- Use an icebreaker as a way to get comfortable with the platform (e.g. ask each stakeholder to add some fun facts about themselves.). In the instructions for the activity, explain how to contribute to the brainstorming board. That way, they will be ready to go when the brainstorming starts in earnest.

**A few digital collaboration platforms:**

[Zoom Whiteboard](#) is a function that allows synchronous visual interactions. This function is great for instructors who use chalkboards or whiteboards for group brainstorming.

[MURAL](#) and [MIRO](#) provide digital workspaces for group brainstorming and collaborative creation through the use of templates or blank whiteboard spaces. Within each board, you can add sticky notes, text boxes, images, shapes, connectors, as well as link to outside URLs or files. Additionally, the platform supports timed brainstorming and voting.

[Padlet](#) is an intuitive platform for creating collaborative virtual bulletin boards. You can add links, text, and images to a clean and orderly interface with a selection of colorful and themed backgrounds. You can choose from different Padlet designs, including grids, free-form canvases, timelines, or maps, to meet the needs of your engagement.



## CATALOG OF IDEAS

Need a starting point for your virtual engagement? [The Catalog of Ideas for Virtual Engagements](#) has outreach methods for individuals and groups in an online setting!

### 5.5 CHECKLIST FOR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

#### Planning virtual engagement

- Have we considered the digital preferences of our stakeholders?
- Have we determined the most appropriate platform for this engagement?
- Are we prepared to lead with accessibility and inclusion in mind?

#### Strategies for to ensure stakeholders are prepared to engage online

- Are we reaching out in advance to stakeholders who require additional support?
- Do we have a backup plan in the event of technical difficulties?
- Will we open the engagement early for additional troubleshooting?

#### Facilitating virtual engagement

- How are we honoring the emotions and trauma in the room as we emerge the pandemic?
- Have we done a test run of the virtual platform we are using?
- Have we assigned all the necessary roles among our team members?
- Have we set up a 'back channel' to communicate with our team during the engagement?

#### Leveraging creative virtual collaboration

- Have we incorporated digital tools that support collaborative brainstorming virtually?

#### SOURCES

Bang the Table. [Know your Community? 100 ideas to help engage your community online.](#)

Miro. [The Guide to Mastering Online Brainstorming.](#)

The New York Times. [The Do's and Dont's of Online Video Meetings.](#)

Society for Cultural Anthropology. [Visual Collaboration and Brainstorming Tools for Student Teams.](#)

Time Doctor Blog. [Tips to Run Engaging Virtual Brainstorming Sessions with Remote Teams.](#)

## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT



Engagements over the phone, via SMS/text messaging, or through other digital means present their own set of opportunities and challenges. Whereas phone-based engagement predates COVID-19, the pandemic presented challenges that suggest phone/SMS engagement could, in fact, produce a safe and thorough workaround to traditional, in-person engagement. In some instances, phone-based engagement can actually help expand your reach, rather than meeting with only a select group of participants in-person at a centralized location.

While not conducted face-to-face, the traditional principles of in-person engagement still apply to your phone/SMS engagement. To review these principles, see the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#) and the [Mini-Guide for Facilitation](#).

## 6.1 PLANNING PHONE ENGAGEMENT

Regardless of whether you are planning to engage with one stakeholder over a phone call or with a group through a facilitated conference call:

- **Schedule the call during appropriate times.** Survey stakeholders to see what time works for everyone. If some stakeholders are left out of the discussion, provide them with a follow-up opportunity to engage with you at another time.
- **Identify the method for note-taking.** It is critical to take notes during a group call and to indicate to the participants that notes will be recorded for synthesis and analysis purposes. Notes should never be shared beyond the individuals directly involved in the specific engagement. It's not necessary to take traditional notes during a call because the facilitator can employ a digital-based recording application.
- **Draft the agenda.** Phone-based engagement should still follow an agenda. You may witness that time management can be trickier in a phone setting (especially without the opportunity for direct eye contact with stakeholders), so ensure you design an agenda that is flexible to account for factors such as technical difficulties or conversations that may be sidetracked.
- **Set roles and responsibilities to fit the context.** If you have the capacity to hire an interpreter to support stakeholders who may have verbal or audio disabilities to amplify your participation rate, you should absolutely strive for that. Other roles, such as a co-facilitator, may be developed as appropriate for the context you are working in.
- **Test your equipment.** If calling from something other than a phone, such as a computer, test the equipment beforehand to verify that it is working as expected. Technical difficulties during the call can throw off the rhythm of the conversation and ultimately wastes everyone's time.

### IN THIS SECTION

- 6.1 [Planning Phone Engagement](#)
- 6.2 [Facilitating Phone Engagement](#)
- 6.3 [Best Practices for SMS/Text Message Engagement](#)
- 6.4 [Checklist for Phone / SMS Engagements](#)



### PLANNING TIPS

Planning a conference call is similar to planning a round table meeting. Remember each person speaks one at a time, therefore, discussions may take longer. The ideal number of people is between 8-10, but if you have a larger group, remember to reduce the number of discussion topics or activities to allow all stakeholders to participate.

If participants need to use speakerphone, ensure they move as close to the microphone as possible, so they are clearly audible.



### CATALOG OF IDEAS

For specific outreach methods, check out the [Catalog of Ideas for Phone / SMS Engagements!](#)



### Promoting access during phone engagements

- Understand the power dynamics and the role that you play as the facilitator in phone engagement. By understanding your positionality, you can better prepare for an honest dialogue.
- Be comfortable with uncomfortable conversations that may come up during the call, in which you may need to adapt the agenda in real time. Maintain focus and patience, as these conversations can help surface equitable, solution-oriented insights.
- Be prepared, and maintain patience for stakeholders that are Hard-of-Hearing, or have background noise. It is important to remember that stakeholders are navigating multiple responsibilities in order to attend a phone engagement.

For more on the topic of equity, review the [Mini-Guide for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#).

## OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS FOR PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT

OPPORTUNITIES	LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reach.</b> During this time where some still feel safer at home than outside, phone/SMS engagement is an incredible platform for maximizing your reach. Especially with SMS, people can share insights and stories quickly.</li> <li>• <b>Ease.</b> Phone &amp; SMS are easier to use than computer applications since they take advantage of a technology that is familiar to all of us.</li> <li>• <b>Cost.</b> Audio/phone conferencing is much cheaper than other means of virtual conferencing.</li> <li>• <b>Accessibility.</b> Phone and SMS are great platforms to meet different accessibility needs. For example, there is no need for broadband access for phone/SMS, so stakeholders who are Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing can engage without additional support.</li> <li>• <b>Meet stakeholders where they are.</b> Phone/SMS engagement gives them the option to identify the means of communication that works best for them. Research indicates that young people prefer to communicate through SMS, while seniors are more likely to opt for a phone call, either through a landline or cell phone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Navigating the text divide.</b> Just because most of your stakeholders own a cell phone does not mean they can afford unlimited talk and text plans.</li> <li>• <b>Noise.</b> This can affect the conversation and may even cut the facilitator out.</li> <li>• <b>Impersonal settings.</b> This communication medium does not support visual images, so this kind of setting may be impersonal since you cannot understand the body language and cues of the people on the call.</li> <li>• <b>Interruptions.</b> Talking on cell phones can create static or other noise as the user moves in and out of dead zones. Some take advantage of teleconferences to stay at home that day, leading to crying babies, barking dogs, or people at the door disrupting the call.</li> <li>• <b>Dominating voices.</b> There is also difficulty in determining stakeholder speaking order; frequently one person may monopolize the meeting.</li> </ul>

## INCORPORATING ARTS AND CULTURE INTO YOUR PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT

COVID-19 allowed many organizations, clubs, and associations to pivot their communications to the phone, in order to sustain relationships and stay on track with obligations and community events:

- *Invite local artists* (such as poets or storytellers) to kick off a phone engagement to support stakeholders comfort level, creativity, and inspiration.
- Facilitate an *SMS focus group that invites stakeholders to share photos or audio recordings of their own art practices* or arts and culture seen across the community, as a way to break the ice before a dialogue.

For more information on arts and culture, review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#).

## 6.2 FACILITATING PHONE ENGAGEMENT

As you prepare to facilitate a phone engagement, either with a single stakeholder or with a group:

- **Be conscious of your tone.** Vocal cues are strongly interpreted by your stakeholders, so speak clearly and slowly. Build in pauses after you ask a question, so stakeholders can silently reflect for several seconds before responding.
- **Support stakeholders through active listening.** As there is no eye-contact in this setting, this requires the facilitator to utilize active listening skills to hear how stakeholders are receiving and responding to your dialogue. If you hear that some stakeholders are not speaking enough on the call, find appropriate ways to help include them. Most importantly, be aware of your 'air time,' the time you spend talking, as you facilitate.
- **Keep your agenda flexible.** Depending on how the conversation is going, you may realize that the dialogue is going off-course from the planned agenda. Remain flexible, and honor where the discussion goes.
- **Set up an option to record the meeting.** Especially if there isn't a note-taker, you can obtain consent with the stakeholders to record the call. This should only be utilized during appropriate moments and always be announced.
- **'Round-robin' speaking can be used on conference calls.** The facilitator calls on each stakeholder in turn and asks for comments. Use the participant list, and call on each person in the same order each time there is a discussion. This avoids one person being cut off before they are finished or more than one person trying to speak at once.
- **Solicit opportunities for feedback.** Although you are on the phone, provide an opportunity for stakeholders to give feedback or comments on the discussion. If they have the opportunity to use their devices simultaneously, ask stakeholders to send comments to you during the call. That can be a great way to collect feedback. It is also important to gather feedback after the engagement through a brief online survey or form or via email.
- **End on time.** No matter whether or not you started on time or accomplished everything set on the agenda, it is important to respect stakeholders' time, and end when you initially communicated you would.
- **Always follow-up.** By providing the transcribed notes that your note-taker records or sending the recording of the call, you can send this as a follow-up to stakeholders for future reference or next steps.

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### ESTABLISH GROUND RULES FOR CONFERENCE CALLS

Here are some of the most common ground rules to support the facilitated conversation:

- Always identify yourself.
- Wait for one stakeholder to finish before speaking; otherwise, comments will be muddled or cut off on speaker phones.
- Stay on the call from start to finish. If you cannot stay on the call, let stakeholders know at the start of the call.
- Be fully present. Have someone else handle business while you are on the call.



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### TIPS FOR KEEPING TRACK OF PARTICIPATION

Start by making a list of everyone on the call. Each time someone speaks, track it on the list. This can help you identify who may be speaking too much or too little.



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#### REACHING PEOPLE OVER SMS

**90% of people read text messages within the first three minutes of receiving them.** In contrast, only 24% of emails are opened in the first hour of being received, and a high percentage of emails are never opened at all.

- Conduct community input surveys solicited through SMS, allowing you to ask single questions of targeted respondents.
- Post information regarding upcoming community events, meetings, and programs, (e.g. NYC launched a citywide [COVID-19 text announcement system](#)).
- Combine SMS engagement with other in-person methods, such as for a polling activity conducted in real-time while facilitating community engagement in-person.

## 6.3 BEST PRACTICES FOR SMS / TEXT MESSAGE ENGAGEMENT

SMS or text messaging outreach is a great strategy for disseminating pertinent information, sharing involvement opportunities, and for staying connected to a large, targeted group. As you approach SMS engagement:



- **Identify a reliable SMS platform.** Depending on how you are conducting the outreach, different applications may be appropriate for your communications. Platforms like [WhatsApp](#) are very effective for small and large group outreach.
- **Configure your communications to be accessible.** As SMS is powerful in reaching a widespread audience, you may be reaching participants who speak a variety of languages and dialects. Luckily, many SMS-based platforms allow for multilingual access.
- **Follow up.** Give respondents instructions on how they can follow-up, comment, or get in touch with you and your team directly.
- **Choose an appropriate time to reach out.** As with phone calls, consider the schedules of participants, and avoid assumption-making on their capacity to immediately follow-up.
- **Consider any potential SMS divide.** Not all stakeholders will have a smartphone, so not everyone will be able to effectively engage if web links or videos are a component of your engagement.
- **Be mindful of flooding a recipient's SMS inbox.** Make sure you get your points across in as few words as possible. If stakeholders are faced with costs, be prepared to reimburse.
- **SMS is just one option.** Depending on your intentions, some may be uncomfortable having their phone number on a community listserv or shared with other stakeholders. Others simply may not be savvy with SMS. Before moving forward with SMS, check to see if that is the most appropriate platform.

## 6.4 CHECKLIST FOR PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT

### Planning phone engagement

- Have we drafted a flexible agenda, in anticipation that the conversation may go off-course? Have we built in opportunities for feedback from the stakeholders?
- Have we tested our equipment?

### Facilitating phone engagement

- Have we built a plan that allows each stakeholder to speak, in order to avoid any one participant from monopolizing the conversation?
- Have we set up an option to record the phone conversation with the consent of the stakeholders?
- Have we prepared an opportunity for follow-up and next steps?

### SMS/Text message outreach and engagement

- Have we considered if this is the best approach and any potential barriers?
- Have we provided a means for stakeholders to follow-up on their own time?

## SOURCES

Connected Learning Alliance. [What Does Digital Civic Engagement Mean in the Era of COVID-19?](#)

Luma Health. [5 Ways Providers Can Use SMS Text Messaging to Communicate with Patients during the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak.](#)

Safe Route Partnership. [Equitable Community Engagement in the Time of Social Distancing.](#)

## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT



Engaging with one another safely presents its own set of strategic practices for following up-to-date CDC guidance around the continuing spread of COVID-19 and beyond. Incorporating physical distancing and safety can be beneficial for engagements held during cold and flu season, with stakeholders who may be uncomfortable with sharing materials, touching others, or those who may have health conditions or be immunocompromised. When planned thoughtfully, community engagement promotes social connection that can occur at a physical distance. Head to the [Mini-Guide for Facilitation](#) to review a variety of ways to facilitate in-person engagement safely.

## 7.1 PLANNING IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

After review of the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#) consider the following:

### Planning your Agenda

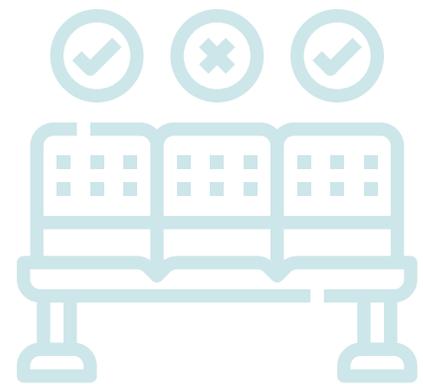
- **Build in time for social networking.** Because of the mental and social effects that the global pandemic has had on us, time for stakeholders to safely mingle, exchange, and network will help boost energy and participation, as well as contribute to creating a safe space.
- **Do not forget to lead warm-up activities.** Just because people are sitting far apart, making time to get to know each other is still important.

### Determining the Most Appropriate Engagement Size

- **Check your comfort level facilitating at a physical distance.** The first question you should ask yourself is how comfortable you are with moving forward with an engagement. And what is the maximum group size you're comfortable leading? If you are not yet comfortable with in-person engagement, that is okay, and you can always use a [virtual](#) or [phone](#) approach instead.
- **Refer to local government guidance.** With physical distancing and avoiding large group gatherings still recommended, it is essential to continue researching government guidance on mandates for social gatherings.
- **Determine a ratio.** Consider a stakeholder ratio that meets both your comfort level and team capacity. If you are the only facilitator for an engagement, consider a group size between 6 and 10 stakeholders, a ratio of 1:10. Be sure your space accommodate the size of your group.

### IN THIS SECTION

- 7.1 [Planning In-Person Engagement](#)
- 7.2 [Leading Safe In-Person Engagement](#)
- 7.3 [Checklist for Physically Distant Engagement](#)



### CATALOG OF IDEAS

Looking for ways to keep stakeholders safe but engaged? [The Catalog of Ideas for Physically Distant Engagement](#) is the perfect starting point!



## Secure your Engagement Space

**Outdoor spaces.** Outdoor spaces are in high demand and can be accessible in different ways than indoor spaces can. Working outside requires you to cultivate a space that feels centered and connected, and not every location can deliver on that. As you seek and secure the most appropriate space:

- **Find out what locations your stakeholders frequent.** There is a good chance that your stakeholders are already visiting their local parks, gardens, playgrounds, public spaces, or plazas. Learn more about, and visit, these spaces, and inquire as to the availability and necessary permissions to utilize the space.
- **Think creatively about outdoor spaces.** Plan an engagement in an atypical urban space that can inspire and spark imagination. Some amphitheaters in parks, plazas within office buildings, and backyards of community-based organizations currently sit under-utilized or vacant. These are unique and available spaces and may already have basic furniture available. **TIP:** Have a plan for a [hybrid](#) or in-person engagement and virtual engagement, especially if working outdoors and weather is a potential barrier.

**Indoor spaces.** Indoor settings can still support physically distanced collaboration, but you need to think creatively, especially if engagement spaces you typically frequent (such as schools, libraries, and community centers) are not currently available. Consider indoor spaces that are more frequented by your stakeholders and/or in close proximity to where they live. When securing indoor space, make sure to practice physical distancing, establish hand-washing protocols, and manage clean supplies.

## INCORPORATING ARTS AND CULTURE INTO PHYSICALLY DISTANCED ENGAGEMENT

In-person engagement, even at a distance, allows us to continue to engage through artistic expression and cultural connection to promote relationship building and dialogue.

- Launch your engagement with an *at-a-distance icebreaker or performance* from a stakeholder or local musician.
- Organize a *walking photography tour* to map out and learn more about the local cultural assets that your stakeholders take pride in.
- Facilitate a *story circle for community building* that holds space for everyone to share a story relevant to their lived experience or identity. Stakeholders can practice their active listening skills, while building empathy for one another.

For more information on arts and culture, review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#).



## TIPS FOR FINDING SPACE

The [New York Times](#) has great examples of engagements facilitated outside in shady spots, under open-sided shelters, at picnic tables, or that invite stakeholders to bring their own lawn chairs to physically distance.

Get creative with spaces for engagement. Since go-to spaces for workshops have been inaccessible, facilitators are finding alternative indoor and outdoor spaces including:

- Restaurants that are underutilized or are permitting a low capacity
- Churches with pews that are already distant
- Community gardens
- Privately-owned public spaces in commercial areas that may be under-utilized as people continue working from home.



## UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY OUTDOORS

Just because you are working outside does not mean you cannot use tech in your engagement. This might include portable, battery-operated projectors and projection screens to share a slide deck or video or providing hotspots for stakeholders to engage with participatory decision-making tools on their phones.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT

OPPORTUNITIES	LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Promotion of social engagement.</b> People need opportunities to connect. As many continue to experience feelings of isolation and fear, engagement helps to bring people together to spend time, share, laugh, and learn from one another.</li><li>• <b>Stress deactivation.</b> Social engagement has a direct linkage to our mental health, and community engagement activities can help lower high levels of chronic stress through group conversation.</li><li>• <b>Improvisation and innovation.</b> Typical engagement spaces may not be accessible during this time, and physically distant engagement requires creativity to re-imagine and shape spaces.</li><li>• <b>Social cues.</b> In-person, rather than online, you can more successfully read body language and other social cues.</li><li>• <b>Better relationship-building.</b> There is simply nothing like in-person, human contact and connection to support community dialogue.</li><li>• <b>Opportunity for 1-on-1 support.</b> Stakeholders may feel more comfortable accessing support in-person, which is much more fluid and organic than soliciting support virtually.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Reach.</b> Because you can only engage a small number of stakeholders at once, you may not be reaching your target or you may need to run these events several times, which impacts your capacity.</li><li>• <b>Trust-building.</b> Relationship and trust building may be challenging in this context. People may still be weary of engaging with strangers, especially when wearing masks.</li><li>• <b>Low energy.</b> As stakeholders are being stretched thin to manage home, work, and health, many may come frustrated or bothered, further impacting low energy in participation.</li><li>• <b>Spaces.</b> Indoor spaces may be poorly ventilated and are less safe. Outdoor spaces often lose the sense of privacy and confidentiality that can be guaranteed when facilitating indoors.</li><li>• <b>Sound quality.</b> When facilitating in an outdoor context, the sound quality can be poor, often requiring the facilitator to remind stakeholders to utilize their "outdoor voices," and limiting accessibility for those participants who may be Hard-of-Hearing.</li></ul>

### PLANNING FOR INCLUSIVE, PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT

Recognizing that community engagement is highly correlated with income and formal education is critical.

To support challenges:

- Have a plan for childcare for stakeholders juggling parenting and work. Get creative with how you provide this need by partnering with local community organizations or businesses who can support childcare.
- Facilitate transportation access, or plan engagements within walking distance of the stakeholders' homes. If travel is required, reimburse for cabs or public transportation, as needed.
- Find spaces that can adapt to stakeholders with physical disabilities or mobility issues so they can participate.
- Translate all engagement documents for stakeholders into relevant languages.
- Provide image descriptions for people who are Blind and prepare to read aloud information in your facilitation.
- Provide ASL and subtitles/closed-captioning options for any presentation materials for stakeholders who are Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing.



## 7.2 LEADING SAFE IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

Before making the determination that you're ready to host an in-person event, be sure to check local health department and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for group gatherings, then review the [Mini-Guide for Facilitation](#) to incorporate the following practices into your approach:

### Practice physical distancing, indoors and out!

- Ensure stakeholders have adequate space to maintain a 6-foot distance from one another. The facilitator must also be able to maintain physical distance from stakeholders.
- If using materials, create individual packages so that people can participate without having to share supplies.
- Follow all recommended local guidance around masking, and bring extra masks, in case anyone is in need. If your space does not allow for 6-foot physical distancing, then all stakeholders should be asked to wear masks in order to participate.
- As people might be spread out, making sure people can hear you and each other is important. Use microphones whenever possible.

### Maintain cleaning protocols.

Ensure stakeholders have access to a hand-washing station or sinks with soap. If there is no sink access at your space, ensure individual hand sanitizers or a hand sanitizing station is available to everyone.

- Ensure the facilitator and stakeholders have access to cleaning wipes.
- When working indoors, keep windows open to promote air flow. **TIP:** Bring an air purifier with a HEPA filter if windows cannot open. Leave doors open, when possible.
- Provide individual packages of snacks for each stakeholder, if offering refreshments.
- Package individual supply kits for each stakeholder that includes the engagement.

## 7.3 CHECKLIST FOR PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT

### Planning in-person engagement

- Are we comfortable conducting an engagement of this type right now?
- Have we identified if our stakeholders are comfortable with meeting in-person?
- Are we planning to find an engagement space that allows us to meet stakeholders where they are?

### Leading safe in-person engagement

- Are we prepared to practice physical distancing and hand-washing protocols while facilitating the agenda?
- Do our stakeholders understand the process for supply distribution?

## SOURCES

Joanna Maberly. [Why Play in a Time of Crisis?](#)

OXFAM. [Community Engagement during COVID-19: A Guide for Community-Facing Staff.](#)

Safe Route Partnership. [Equitable Community Engagement in the Time of Social Distancing.](#)

## MINI-GUIDE FOR

# HYBRID ENGAGEMENT



Hybrid community engagement utilizes a combination of in-person and remote features to achieve your project goals. They support a flexible and accessible alternative to an exclusively in-person or virtual engagement. Successful hybrid models will combine technology, like video conferencing or online surveys, with in-person activities. Balancing the combination of the different modalities is an important planning step because simply adding video streaming to an event will not, alone, create a successful hybrid engagement.

Hybrid models will be a key and necessary modality long into the future, as COVID-19 has shifted the way we engage across multiple industries (sports, education, entertainment, etc.). There is a growing expectation that both in-person and virtual options for participation will be guaranteed. While at first glance this may seem like a hassle; hybrid engagements can be an impactful tool for achieving your goals. Hybrid engagement can help expand your field, reach new audiences, and meet your accessibility and inclusion goals.

## 8.1 CHOOSING A HYBRID PROCESS

The first step in developing an approach using a hybrid model is to understand the best ways to build participation options into your plan. Explore how a combination of different modalities, such as phone or in-person, will help you achieve your intended goals and outcomes. Adding a remote broadcast option to an event might not meet your participation goals, but pairing an in-person session with a survey might help you reach a larger audience.

There are a variety of ways to develop and produce a hybrid engagement, but before planning you should determine which of the following category aligns with your purpose:

### Hybrid Process

An engagement process offering multiple ways to engage through a variety of modalities, like offering in-person and virtual events at different times (instead of combining them). This means more touch-points over time, designed to support your engagement outcomes in different ways.

**For example:** A hybrid process could involve engaging stakeholders through a virtual event, an in-person event, a survey, and a signage campaign. It utilizes many different strategies, engaging more participants than would be able to participate in a singular event.

### Hybrid Event

An event offering different ways to be present by pairing a limited in-person audience with a remote audience. Engaging two unique audiences at the same time is a balancing act and requires organizers to think about creating an engaging experience for both.

**For example:** A hybrid event could involve engaging a small set of participants in-person and another set of participants virtually, through tools like broadcasting or meeting software. It engages both sets of audiences at the same time and utilizes tools to promote cross-audience participation.

## IN THIS SECTION

- [8.1 Choosing a Hybrid Process](#)
- [8.2 Planning a Multi-Pronged Hybrid Engagement Process](#)
- [8.3 Planning a Single Hybrid Engagement Event](#)
- [8.4 Checklist for Hybrid Engagement](#)



The following are some brief steps to support you in developing a hybrid model:

1. Ask yourself, "Would my engagement objectives be better met by adopting a hybrid model?"
2. Determine if a hybrid process or a singular hybrid event best meets your engagement goals. Take time to reflect on the key considerations below to help determine which model would best fit your goals and capacity.
3. Prepare for your engagement utilizing the suggestions in this mini-guide and other sections of the Community Engagement Almanac.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHOOSING A HYBRID FORMAT

Generally, a hybrid process that layers multiple engagement opportunities is recommended. This increases accessibility and outreach, but, remember, don't plan to do it all. Use time and resources efficiently. Whether you are leading a one time hybrid event or multiple engagements, the following considerations will help you determine your format:

### Evaluate accessibility & inclusion for participation.

A major benefit to virtual engagements is how seamlessly access and inclusion can be woven in. Features, like live captioning for those who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, language interpretation, and time and movement flexibility for those who cannot as easily travel to your location, make virtual engagements more accessible to many. Unfortunately, virtual engagements are not a solution for all access needs, specifically those without broadband and/or computer access or those with lower digital literacy. Consider how you can utilize a hybrid model to offer targeted access to your stakeholders. A *hybrid event* can increase your accessibility but may not have as high a level of participation. A *hybrid process* will increase your level of inclusion, and you can tailor different engagement opportunities to reach specific audiences.

### Determine if one event will meet your needs.

For engagements that require all participants to engage with each other, a *hybrid process* would hinder that type of collaboration. While splitting engagement events into remote, in-person, etc. might foster distrust, as participants may perceive a lack of transparency; they may want to know what was said and respond to others, which requires all participants to be present at the same event.

### Work with stakeholders to find methods that align with their needs.

Different stakeholders may have different regulations around in-person or virtual activities. Consider their boundaries when planning your processes, ensuring you are working within their rules. For example, some partners may not feel secure using Zoom, while others may not allow individuals in their offices. Find a balance that fits everyone's needs.

## CATALOG OF IDEAS

Use the [Catalog of Ideas](#) to select the right outreach methods for your hybrid engagements.



## PROMOTE ACCESS IN YOUR ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Not everyone has the ability to engage in the same way. Stakeholders may be short on time, unable to travel, need longer to digest content, or need access to content in other languages. By using a combination of engagement formats you can reach more stakeholders in more meaningful ways. Consider how to utilize a mix of formats to target different stakeholder groups. Review the [Mini-Guide for Anti-Oppression, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#) for more information on building access into your engagement.

### Anticipate your team's capacity.

Hosting a hybrid event requires more staff, technology, and A/V equipment than you may have access to. You may not be able to meet your project goals with your current capacity. Consider how you can build capacity or adapt your plan by hosting two different events instead of a hybrid event.

- Can you foster authentic engagement between in-person and virtual audiences? If not, a *hybrid process* might be a better fit.
- Do you have access to, or will your audience have access to/ competency with software that promotes cross-audience engagement? Software that connects audiences who are in-person to those who are remote can be expensive and challenging to learn.

### Identify how many stakeholders you hope to reach.

Hybrid models can allow you to reach a much larger audience through different channels and modalities for engagement. Many people may not be able to attend public meetings due to health concerns or lack of flexibility in their schedules. Utilize digital tools to offer stakeholders multiple ways to engage. Digital surveys or questionnaires can supplement an open comments section at a meeting. Virtual workshops can be paired with in-person discussions for stakeholders to engage over a longer period of time. Consider the different ways to reach an audience in order to achieve the desired outcomes, but be sure that if you are engaging across different modalities, you are designing each experience equitably.

### Clarify the level of participation for remote participants.

For all hybrid engagements, there is an assumption that a part of the group is remote. Consider how to engage remote participants.

- Is communication only one way? If yes, then perhaps a broadcast type feature would work.
- Do you want remote participants to respond in real-time and be seen and heard by the in-person group? If yes, consider hosting two different events-- one in-person and one virtually, as hybrid events may not feel as equitable for the remote participant.
- Do you want virtual and in-person participants to engage with each other? If yes, then you may want to consider the technology capacity for in-person attendees.

Consider how attendee participation impacts your goals and how different modalities might be adapted to meet your needs. Attendance should not be confused with engagement!

### Decide how much power you are willing to share.

While we never recommend 'gate-keeping' in community engagements, there is a certain amount of uncertainty in virtual events that may make a facilitator nervous. Instances of 'Zoom-bombing' or disrupters not allowing a conversation to continue can negatively impact your engagement. Low staff numbers could mean you may not have a staff member to observe or note-take in every breakout session. Consider how much responsibility you are willing to share and how different modalities might best support your intentions.



## ENGAGEMENT SIZE

Engagement size will be one of the biggest attributes in planning a hybrid event. You may be able to have a large event if all stakeholders are simply watching and receiving information. You will want a much smaller number of participants if you are encouraging cross-attendee conversations.



## CONSIDER VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT FATIGUE

As workers increasingly rely on their computers for work, consider how adding another virtual engagement opportunity might impact their general fatigue. When engaging virtually, stakeholders may be more distracted and have a shorter capacity for long engagements. A virtual engagement cannot have the same agenda as an in-person engagement. Consider how audiences will interact and participate differently in-person versus virtually.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF HYBRID ENGAGEMENT

OPPORTUNITIES	LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Attendees can be more flexible</b> in choosing how they participate in regards to time conflicts, access, transportation, internet connectivity, etc.</li><li>• Providing more tailored options to stakeholders' specific needs will <b>offer greater access</b> and has been shown to greatly increase participation. Use captioning and language interpretation to further meet stakeholders' needs.</li><li>• You can utilize a virtual platform to record, create transcripts, and download event chat. This can all be more easily analyzed together and <b>improve record-keeping</b>.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instead of impromptu and serendipitous meetings, <b>everything needs to be scheduled</b>.</li><li>• While a combination of modalities is still better than one, <b>not all experiences are equal</b>.</li><li>• Participants may express a <b>fear of invasive surveillance</b>. Different platforms may track attendees. You will not have control over this, but consider how it might impact who attends.</li><li>• <b>Virtual attendees may feel left out</b> or forgotten about. They will not be easily able to participate in small talk or light networking.</li><li>• <b>Virtual attendees may resent in-person attendees</b> for their ability to get closer to each other while in-person attendees may be resentful of the time and flexibility of virtual attendees.</li></ul>

## 8.2 PLANNING A MULTI-PRONGED HYBRID ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

A *hybrid engagement process* differs from a *hybrid engagement event* in that different modalities for engagement are used over an extended period of time, instead of merging both for a single event. This could present as offering in-person and virtual events on different dates, or taking a multi-pronged approach to how you reach your audiences by using surveys, workshops, and virtual meetings. A hybrid process will mean more touch-points with stakeholders tailored to their specific needs.

### DETERMINE MODALITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

In building or adapting to a hybrid engagement plan, refer to [Part II - Tools and Assessments](#) in combination with the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#). To build a successful hybrid process, review your goals and identify how different modalities, or engagement formats, can help you reach those goals.

Generally, a longer engagement process will utilize multiple modalities of engagement. The trick with a hybrid process is being intentional about how you merge these modalities to offer stakeholders engagement opportunities that meet their comfort level. Take a multi-pronged approach to reaching your goals by offering different opportunities for stakeholders to participate.

When reviewing your entire engagement process, look for moments where in-person is absolutely necessary and moments where another method of engagement might be more appropriate or would work just as well. Review the [Find Your Format Tool](#) and then [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas](#) for inspiration on choosing different modalities.

### IDEAS FOR A HYBRID PROCESS

- Host the same event twice; once in-person and once virtually.
- Post a link to a survey on your event marketing materials.
- Develop engagement events with the same agenda, but designed differently to meet the needs of specific audiences (e.g. hosting in different languages or one event with computers and another event tech-free).
- Create a newsletter to keep all participants informed of other engagement opportunities in your process. (They could help you promote through word-of-mouth.)



## IN-PERSON, REMOTE, OR SMS/INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES AND THE SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT

The following table outlines which type of activities are best suited for which format. When thinking about a multi-pronged approach, be realistic about what works best and in which **context to build a successful plan.**

	BEST FOR IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES	BEST FOR VIRTUAL OR PHONE EXPERIENCES	BEST FOR SMS / TEXT OR INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES
<b>OUTREACH</b>	One-on-one instruction for vulnerable stakeholders	Informational webinars or presentations ( <i>especially where stakeholders can engage at their own pace</i> )	Informational campaigns on social media
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Workshops that require supervision or facilitated instruction	One-on-one or small group interviews	Surveys, questionnaires, or other written feedback
<b>COLLABORATION</b>	Interactive or hands-on discussions or workshops	Small group discussions or meetings	
<b>SHARED LEADERSHIP</b>	Participatory events	Conferences	

Review the [Introduction](#) for details on the Spectrum of Engagement.

Use a combination of the formats above to plan an engagement process that flows across different levels of the spectrum of engagement. Think through how a combination of formats might better meet your engagement purpose and needs of your participants instead of one singular event. **REMEMBER: Not all formats work at every level of the spectrum.**

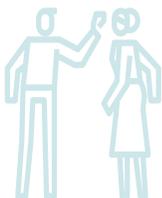
### BEST PRACTICES FOR BUILDING YOUR HYBRID ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



- **Maintain transparency and flexibility with stakeholders.** Do not use the limitations of a global pandemic as an excuse for poor service. Instead, communicate with your stakeholders on how you are adapting services into a variety of models to be respectful of the current situation.



- **Give stakeholders the opportunity to inform how to adapt a hybrid process.** Ask stakeholders to share their ideas and comfort level. This not only fosters their buy-in but gives you insight into some of their barriers to participation. For example, a stakeholder group you meet with regularly might be open to moving check-in meetings online while keeping workshops in-person.



- **Remember your project goals, and be flexible in achieving them.** The current context will continue to shift, and you may need to adjust arrangements that are different from your usual models to ensure you are addressing community needs, in regards to certain deliverables, amount of contact hours, etc.

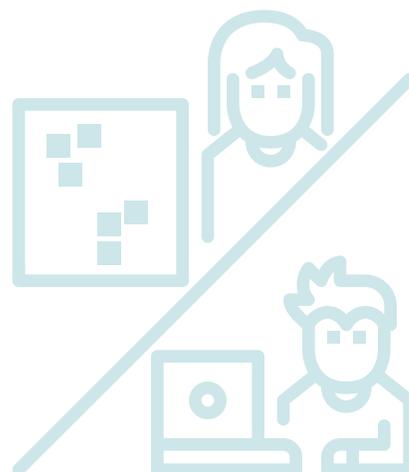
- **Reflect on what works.** Offer stakeholders and your planning team the opportunity to reflect on what processes and modalities are working well. These experiences can be applied to later engagements. For example, you may find that using phone or SMS for one-on-one interviews instead of in-person meetings is effective, or offering a virtual workshop may not have been as successful as you'd hoped.

## 8.3 PLANNING A SINGLE HYBRID ENGAGEMENT EVENT

### DETERMINING LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Take a step back and consider what the event experience will be like for each stakeholder. Imagine their journey through the event, what drew them there, what keeps them there? A key to planning a successful hybrid event is having a plan for how each audience will engage during the event and how different activities and platforms might help you achieve this.

When building the agenda for your hybrid event, focus on what kind of experience you want your stakeholders to have, and what kind of technology will be available to support you in achieving those results. Each distinct audience will engage differently in the experience. For example, if you hope to have many small breakout discussions, you must decide if you will keep all virtual participants to their own breakout sessions, or have small groups of in-person and virtual participants. If the former, consider a virtual facilitator to explain the activity rules, answer questions, and troubleshoot tech challenges. If it is the latter, consider what hardware and software is available to the group.



	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR HYBRID EXPERIENCES	HOW TO UTILIZE THE HYBRID MODEL
<b>OUTREACH</b>	Informational webinars or presentations	Stream online in front of an in-person audience.
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Small group interviews / focus groups	Use technology, like table microphones and projectors, so all attendees (in-person and remotely) can see and hear one another.
<b>COLLABORATION</b>	Small group round-tables or meetings	Use technology built for hybrid meetings, and minimize distractions with a well-planned agenda.  Keep all participants working together by using collaborative online tools.
<b>SHARED LEADERSHIP</b>	Interactive or hands-on discussions or workshops	Small breakouts keep conversations manageable between audiences.  Use virtual tools like polling or chat through the phone to keep all conversations in one ecosystem.



### PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR HYBRID EVENTS

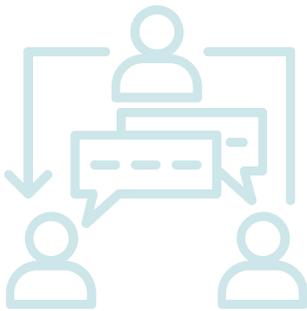
- Have a screen at each in-person table to encourage collaboration between stakeholders.
- Pair a virtual attendee and an in-person attendee for the entire engagement, and ask them to support each other's needs.
- Project the virtual attendees' videos on a wall so the speakers and in-person attendees can see and react with them. Conversely, make sure virtual attendees can see in-person attendees.

## FACILITATING A HYBRID ENGAGEMENT EVENT

Facilitating a hybrid engagement can be more difficult than facilitating an exclusively in-person or virtual event as you have to adopt facilitation strategies from both formats.

### Key Considerations for Facilitating a Hybrid Event

- **Have realistic expectations.** A hybrid event will be different. To make it work, you will likely need more planning, more resources, and more support staff. Have realistic expectations of your team's capacity and the capacity and comfort level of your stakeholders.
- **Be mindful of differences virtual and in-person audio and visuals.** An in-person speaker will likely have considerably more background noise than someone participating virtually. Consider how microphones or having a speaker talk directly into a computer might help accommodate the noise. Meanwhile, online you have the ability to mute attendees, but that is an impossible practice in-person. If you are on a microphone or close to the virtual microphone, be aware of what attendees can hear, that includes whispers, rustling papers, etc.
- **Plan ahead and rehearse often.** You may not be aware of sound, tech, or agenda issues until you have a rehearsal. Familiarize yourself with the virtual software tool, and test the blended interactions you hope to create.
- **Minimize distractions.** Those engaging virtually will not be able to participate in small-talk between transitions, get up to grab a snack, or view the room from a different angle. Consider if you how you might go about curbing these behaviors.
- **Define roles.** You may not be able to facilitate both virtually and in-person at the same time, so consider what supporting roles you can create to ensure each audience has a full and thoughtful experience. This may mean having both audiences watch the same speaker panel and then using different facilitators for follow-up activities or discussions. **TIP:** Each breakout could benefit from a facilitator, note-taker, and tech support person; you can assign these roles to staff beforehand, or ask participants to volunteer for roles like note-taker.
- **Honor emotions and trauma.** Facilitating a hybrid event can be difficult, but so can attending one. Be transparent about why a virtual event was necessary. Honor the efforts both audiences are making in order to participate and how the impacts of the current context are still evolving. Leave space for grace and patience, and acknowledge the emotions of stakeholders. Foster an environment where participants can check-in with one another and take frequent breaks for moments of reflection.



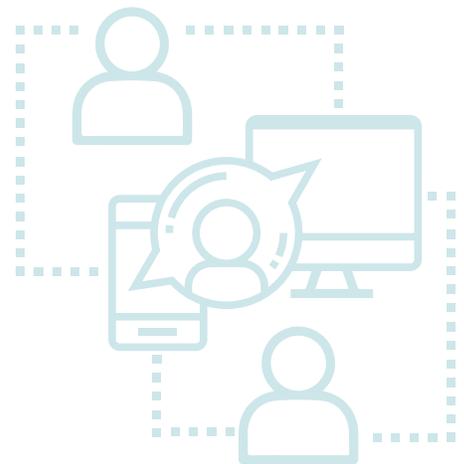
### INCORPORATING ARTS AND CULTURE INTO HYBRID ENGAGEMENT

Storytelling is the perfect cultural connection point for a hybrid event. Using storytelling to promote conversation works by supporting setting expectations, creating norms, and reinforcing conversation structures that are easy for all attendees to follow. Storytelling is a highly engaging activity that can work to combat 'Zoom Fatigue.' Check out [this resource](#) from Wired magazine for community storytelling strategies.

For more information on arts and culture, review the [Mini-Guide for Planning Engagements](#).

## BEST PRACTICES FOR BUILDING SINGLE HYBRID ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- **Foster engagement between in-person and virtual audiences.** It can be challenging to make the two audiences feel connected. Encourage interaction through *gamification* (applying traditional game-playing elements to other activities), networking, or opening a shared platform for chat between the audiences. Small group discussions, virtual hangouts, and other lightly facilitated activities can help foster cross-connection. Remember to prioritize making your virtual audience feel included.
- **Tailor content for both in-person and virtual audiences.** Consider how a presentation might look on a smaller screen or how a handout could be used in hard copy as well as digitally. Taking in content on a large screen or monitor is quite different than on a laptop, so consider text, video, and imagery that will translate well across platforms, including smartphones.
- **Use software that can engage both audiences.** Have software that in-person attendees can use on their phones that can bridge the gap between audiences. This means having all attendees use the same chat platform or polling tool.
- **Content length and breaks are different for each audience.** In-person and virtual audiences engage differently; the distractions and needs for both can be challenging to manage. In-person attendees need longer breaks, while you may lose virtual attendees if a break is too long. Long keynote sessions work when your entire audience is together in-person, but for a hybrid event, you may want to offer shorter, digestible content to keep your virtual audience engaged.
- **Celebrate how hybrid events are positive for all participants.** Focus on how stakeholders can benefit from the experience, rather than what makes it challenging.
- **Host presenters virtually and in-person.** In order to illustrate equal weight to all participants, find a balance between in-person speakers, and those presenting virtually.



### 8.4 CHECKLIST FOR HYBRID ENGAGEMENT

#### Choosing a Hybrid Process

- Do we have the capacity to meet the different needs that hybrid engagements require?
- Have we identified how different stakeholders might engage differently in hybrid opportunities?

#### Planning a Multi-Pronged Hybrid Engagement Process

- Have we determined which modalities will support our engagement goals?
- Have we identified which stakeholders we hope to engage through different modalities?

#### Planning a Single Hybrid Engagement Event

- Have we determined the level of participation of stakeholders?
- Have we ensured we have the correct technology to meet our needs?

#### SOURCES

Forbes. [The Unintended Consequences of the Hybrid-Work Model.](#)

Public Input. [How Hybrid Public Meetings are Reshaping the Future of Public Engagement.](#)

## PART IV

# CATALOG OF IDEAS

This section provides three mini-catalogs that detail opportunities and resources for engaging stakeholders.

**1 VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT**  
Tools and opportunities for engaging stakeholders digitally.

**2 PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT**  
Utilized for outreach, consulting with individuals, and facilitating group conference calls and text messaging.

**3 PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT**  
Tools and resources to safely engage stakeholders in person.

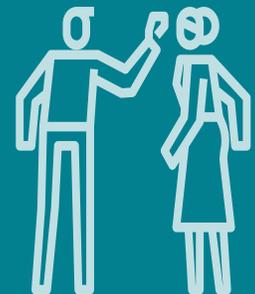
**Tips for Sorting:** Each of the methods uses icons to indicate the level of participation of your stakeholders. Review [What Does Community Engagement Look Like?](#) for details.



1



2



3



**Outreach**  
educate the public



**Consultation**  
gather information  
and ask for advice



**Collaboration**  
engage the public  
to work with you  
in understanding,  
developing, and  
implementing



**Shared Leadership**  
delegate decision-  
making power to  
stakeholders, or give  
them a formal roles

## CATALOG OF IDEAS FOR

# VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT



Virtual engagement supported stakeholders during COVID-19 and can continue to do so beyond the pandemic. This catalog presents ideas for implementing virtual outreach and engagement. When selecting the best method for virtual engagement, be mindful that some of the included suggestions offer free resources, and some require a fee or account. Choose what best meets the capacity of your organization. For more resources, review the [Mini-Guide for Virtual Engagement](#).

## OUTREACH METHODS

Digital outreach methods, like social media platforms, allow for relatively quick and broad channels of communication with stakeholders by disseminating information and building possible relationships as an outcome. Unfortunately, information sharing does not offer high levels of engagement and social media outreach can be perceived as intrusive or impersonal.

### CREATE A WEB PRESENCE



Organizations can perform outreach by making information available, and engaging, through web presence. This can include:

- social media campaigns
- newsletter and email blasts
- website or blog updates

This form of outreach is great for disseminating information to those already within your network. Strategic marketing efforts can be used to grow engagement beyond your network. Review [Digital Engagement in Culture, Heritage and the Arts](#) for impactful strategies.

- **Create a virtual care package.** Include books, music downloads, movie recommendations, recipes, games, self-care routines, etc. Try to make this care package fun but also related to your chosen topic. (e.g. If outreach is to inform stakeholders about hand-washing include a recipe for homemade hand soap.)
- **Post live vlog announcements.** This is a great way to share updates and new initiatives that you want stakeholders to know about. Your organization can adapt a regular blog into a Facebook Live vlog, which is more interactive and physically engaging than a traditional written blog.
- **Launch a crowdfunding campaign.** Many virtual platforms promote public engagement through specific community-based projects or campaigns that garner insights and support your team in making an initiative a reality. Use your web presence to launch a community-based fundraising campaign on [ioby](#).

### HOST A WEBINAR



A webinar, similar to a typical “subject-matter expert shares basic information” model, is a live or prerecorded video where a presenter shares out information with the community. With the support of interactive features, the presenter can address questions from attendees. Different from a workshop setting, in a webinar, the hosts run the show.



- **Host a virtual press conference.** Invite relevant media outlets and influencers to a live broadcast of your press conference to gain additional coverage and maximize reach through platforms like Facebook Live or Instagram Live.
- **Host a webinar panel.** The panel model allows for multiple individuals to discuss a topic. A panel can be more interactive if the moderator utilizes the interactive features to field questions from the attendees as discussion topics versus just a question and response.
- **Host virtual town halls.** A town hall is an event where a public official answers questions from members of the public. Use the chat function in an online tool, like Zoom webinars or Webex, to lead an engaging town hall experience that addresses community questions and concerns in a safe and anonymous way.



## STREAM VIDEO (FACEBOOK LIVE, TWITCH, INSTAGRAM LIVE, YOUTUBE, REDDIT)



Social media video streaming platforms allow users to create their own broadcasts. Utilize the chat function to transform a video from outreach to consultation.



- **Stream how-to videos.** These can include topics such as emergency preparedness, drumming up interest in community programs, or voter registration. Once the broadcast is completed, you can save it to your website or social media account for future viewing.
- **Stream events.** Community cultural events are a great way to bring together members of the public. You can connect with those who are unable to attend in person by broadcasting the event online.
- **Stream an “Ask Me Anything.”** These events prompt stakeholders to ask any question of an interviewee, generally a celebrity or subject-matter expert. This can be a great way to answer a wide array of questions on a given topic.

## DEVELOP VIRTUAL ADS



Virtual advertising can be a relatively affordable and easy way to reach specific populations. By placing ads on platforms like Google or Facebook, you can reach a much larger audience, though measuring the impact of this reach can be challenging. Try to think of digital ads as fliering, not as selling services.

## THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX



Virtual outreach and consultation can not only be facilitated digitally, but it can also utilize radio, podcasting, and television to support your engagement.

### Tapping into Radio

Radio or podcasts can be a vital tool to reach a wide audience, who may not engage with television or social media. Use radio programs to share information with communities and as a platform to encourage open discussion and feedback on a range of important topics. Tools like [Buzzsprout](#) allow you to create a free podcast with [Anchor](#) to share community information.

### Tapping into Television

At two [HumanGood](#) developments in the Philadelphia area, staff keep residents engaged through television with preprogrammed activities including Qigong, Tai-Chi, a comedy hour, sing-along karaoke, and a concert series.

## EXPAND YOUR VIRTUAL OUTREACH

Virtual outreach (through web, social media, digital fliering, etc.) has the potential to reach a large population, at their convenience, and supports the long-term outcomes to foster community engagement.

Consider the following strategies:

- Place a **prominent link** to your engagement activity or forum on your website. Pick a short and easy to remember URL. Make sure it appears on all collateral, media releases, and any editorial pieces you publish in the local paper.
- Make sure your project can be **easily found** by search engines (if applicable) through the use of relevant keywords in your project description, and let the world know about it through social media.
- **Email** your entire staff and relevant local organizations. Ask them to pass information on to friends and family (if applicable).
- Find **other local groups** with an online presence, and ask them to distribute your outreach materials.





## INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT METHOD

Engagement strategies to connect with individuals virtually

### 1:1 VIDEO MEETINGS



Utilize a video platform to lead 1-on-1 interviews, build relationships, and capture insights through virtual meetings. Similar to phone interviews, these can be used for formal interviews or informal conversations to solicit insights and input. Unlike phone interviews you can utilize the video function and features of the platform to make this more engaging by playing a game or adding visuals to support idea generation.



- **Conduct a video 'safari interview.'** Use phone video technology to allow the interviewee to, not only respond to the interview questions, but also show with their phone camera their location and context.
- **Host virtual office hours.** This is especially great for team leaders to open up their time without requesting 1-on-1 scheduled meetings. Leverage features such as waiting rooms, co-annotation, and interactive whiteboarding to make the most out of your time.

## GROUP ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to engage and participate with others

### MEETINGS AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS



Video platforms are appropriate for conducting strategic planning meetings and engaging with stakeholders in small group settings, like focus groups. Online meetings can be more accessible and encourage attendance.



- **Host a virtual lunch and learn.** Sharing a meal is an excuse to catch up and talk and one of the few times where people are happy to put aside their work and take time out of their day to decompress. Keep your community connected and in touch with a virtual lunch or coffee hour.
- **Facilitate community 'speed-dating' (or 'get to know you' event).** Use the breakout feature to allow for structured time for participants to meet, greet, and find commonalities. Review these [resources](#) from Liberating Structures for impromptu networking ideas.
- **Facilitate community storytelling through screen sharing.** Bring community together through a storytelling event. Host an open mic on a subject (like local history) or feature specific storytellers. Stakeholders have an opportunity to tell stories, respond to stories, or just listen.

### PARTICIPATORY EVENTS



Virtual platforms with features like breakout rooms (available on select platforms), the chat box, screen sharing, digital whiteboards, and polling features encourage high-participation virtual engagements.



- **Conduct an collaborative needs assessment.** Work with stakeholders to understand their needs by using live polling features to help set the agenda of the engagement by continually prioritizing ideas. Polls can collect anonymous input to be shared with stakeholders, increasing transparency and trust.
- **Build opportunities for virtual civic engagement.** Democratic processes like [participatory budgeting](#) promote participatory decision-making and opportunities for shared leadership through collaborative decisions on how public funds are allocated in communities. Review the [Mini-Guide for Virtual Engagements](#) for more information.
- **Host a World Café.** Promote community conversations by utilizing the [World Café](#) method. It works well in a digital space, allowing stakeholder groups to come together on a virtual platform to share knowledge and encourage collective action.

## CONFERENCES



Hosting virtual conferences is a great opportunity to engage with a large number of stakeholders online, as different platforms come with versatile activities to utilize.



For more on virtual conferencing platforms, visit the [Mini-Guide for Virtual Engagement](#).



- **Host a job fair.** Bring career advice experts, potential employers, educators, and job-seekers together in a virtual job fair. Attendees can pre-register for breakout sessions with potential employers, those giving educational or career advice, and other relevant sessions.
- **Host a theme-based conference.** For example, hosting a healthy-eating conference to support a neighborhood in understanding their healthy eating options will allow you to bring in keynote speakers like neighborhood chefs. Breakout sessions could host local grocery stores, cooking classes, budgeting workshops, etc. A conference format provides an opportunity to learn from the community and give them a chance to share challenges and opportunities.
- **Host a youth summit.** To support youth engagement through your initiative, a virtual youth summit can bring young people from across the community together to vision, strategize, analyze, and present the things that matter most to them in their neighborhoods.

## CREATIVE WORKSHOPS



Utilize a creative platform (MURAL, Miro, Padlet, etc.) to allow for real time creativity and collaboration. Depending on your engagement goals, a creative platform is especially helpful for stakeholder-based brainstorming, consensus building, ecosystem, asset, & power mapping, and participatory decision-making.

- **Facilitate virtual decision-making.** Host a workshop where stakeholders can learn about a subject, debate and hear what others have to say, and then vote or collaborate on a decision. Check out this [resource](#) from Voltage Control.
- **Facilitate a Hack-a-Thon or Makers' Challenge.** Generally Hack-a-thons are live events for designers, programmers, and engineers who produce a piece of software. Hacking brings different types of stakeholders together to co-create a community product, like a prototype of a new online community event board or a proposal for a new community project.
- **Facilitate crowd-sourced mapping.** Use online tools to co-create a community needs assessment through a mapping activity. Tools could include a Google map or platforms such as [Bang the Table](#) or [Social Pinpoint](#).
- **Build a collaborative community scrapbook.** Virtual tools, like [Padlet](#), allow stakeholders to share stories and use those stories to build a community timeline--a scrapbook of sorts.
- **Run a power mapping activation.** Design a [MURAL](#) whiteboard to illustrate a [power map](#) relevant to your targeted community that invites stakeholders to collaboratively map out individuals and institutions with influence.
- **Facilitate a journey map.** A [journey map](#) is a visual storyline that puts you directly in the mind of the community you serve, so you can see what you are doing right and where you can make improvements. Use your project as an opportunity to engage stakeholders through a journey map that allows them to demonstrate their experience and perspective within a community-based issue you are addressing.



## SOURCES

Arts and Planning Toolkit. [What is Creative Engagement?](#)  
 Jasper Visser. [Digital Engagement in Culture, Heritage, and the Arts](#).  
 Miro. [The Guide to Mastering Online Brainstorming](#).



# PHONE/SMS ENGAGEMENT



Conducting individual and large group engagement through the phone/SMS provides an accessible workaround even beyond the global pandemic. With roughly 45% of the world population owning a smartphone, SMS presents an [opportunity](#) to communicate with stakeholders in a way that fits into the flow of their daily lives. **SMS can expand your effectiveness in reaching audiences, with 90% of text messages read within 90 seconds of arrival and an overall open rate of 98%.** When planning to lead engagements over the phone or SMS, review the [Mini-Guide for Phone/SMS Engagement](#).

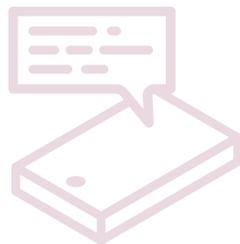
## OUTREACH METHODS

Phone and SMS, also known as text messaging, services can be used to disseminate information to a large community population and potentially build relationships as an outcome. It is a relatively quick way to inform stakeholders on a particular program, service, or project. Unfortunately, this engagement type does not offer the opportunity for high levels of engagement, and sometimes, may be perceived as intrusive.

### MASS PHONE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ALERTS



For many households, regular access to the internet is a persistent challenge, but phone capability is likely—whether it's a landline or a cellular calling plan.



- **Send a pre-recorded message.** A phone call with a prerecorded announcement is an efficient way to reach a wide array of stakeholders.
- **Set up a phone tree.** Establish an old school phone-tree, where each stakeholder is responsible for calling several other stakeholders, as a mechanism to disseminate important information and engage with the public.
- **Set up a phone-banking event.** This is an opportunity to promote shared leadership by working with existing stakeholders as [phone-bankers](#) to make calls and debrief on the experience.

### MASS SMS/TEXT MESSAGE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ALERTS



This has been a method for engagement ever since mass SMS /text messaging became a social and professional norm. Different tools like WhatsApp or [CitiBot](#) help reach a vast number of stakeholders. These applications allow you to disseminate information on programs, services, and events, make local news announcements, or connect stakeholders to community-based campaigns.



- **Set up an SMS 'Connection Desk.'** Give members an opportunity to learn more about community news or events. In most cases, this can be done through an online 'connection desk' or community events board. You might even try leveraging a textable number (like [EZTexting](#)), where members can text a number and receive a link to an online events calendar.
- **Provide an opt-in to a texting service.** An opt-in is a way for organizations to provide information. For example, during the pandemic, NYC government used the [692-692 NYC COVID Hotline](#) to provide information regarding COVID-19 and other services.

## INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Engagement strategies to connect with individuals via phone or SMS/text messaging.

### 1-TO-1 PHONE CONVERSATIONS



Individual phone calls can be used in formal settings or informal conversations to solicit insights and input. To make participants feel comfortable, always request consent to call a stakeholder, provide an agenda or script, remain relaxed, and cover costs for the call(s).



- **Conduct interviews.** Interviews can take all types of formats. This great [resource](#) from Community Tool Box is for utilizing interviews as a needs assessment tool and has a section specifically about conducting telephone interviews.
- **Check-in with older adults.** Use calls to reach out to older adults in the community to build relationships, rapport, and potentially capture information about their wellbeing.

### PEER-TO-PEER SMS/TEXTING



Similar to 1-to-1 phone conversations, with the consent of stakeholders, you can send them direct texts as a means of community engagement. Different from mass SMS, peer-to-peer SMS is more personal and allows for you to build a relationship with the stakeholder. As with calls, ensure you handle any costs associated with SMS or the phone provider.



- **Administer a volunteer text campaign.** Recruit volunteers to reach out through text to your stakeholders. Give them a script and set of resources, so they can begin to build relationships and identify questions. Texts from community members, as opposed to bots, can help build trust within a community.
- **Offer training for volunteers to refine their peer-to-peer skills.** The [practice of peer-to-peer SMS](#) is one that requires defining your objectives, knowing exactly who your audience is, and bringing in your own voice through SMS.

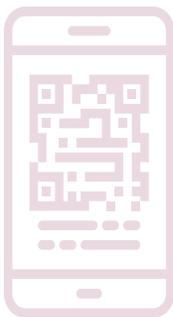
### SURVEY AND INFORMATION COLLECTION



Phone / SMS initiatives to gather information often have high response rates, as they are accessible and convenient for stakeholders to complete. You can set up an initiative where you reach out directly to stakeholders through mass-texting, or you host an SMS or phone line that stakeholders can text or call for feedback, questions, or information.



- **Utilize SMS as a survey tool.** The [Texizen](#) platform is an interactive text platform that sends, receives, and analyzes text messages. As SMS surveys are impersonal, be sure to make an introduction to your stakeholders within the first text, and schedule the survey at convenient times.
- **Plan for community- or location-based texting.** Ask individuals open-ended questions to gather insights through SMS-based visual requests. For example, have an SMS line posted at a location such as a park, office, or housing complex. The online platform [coUrbanize](#) used this technique to gather insights from stakeholders about what they would like to see in specific community locations. Learn more [here](#).



#### QR CODES

QR Codes are graphic barcodes that, when scanned by a smartphone camera, link to a specific internet page or resource. They can be a quick and easy way for stakeholders to pull up information on their smartphone instead of typing in a long web address.



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## INCORPORATING PHONE/SMS WITH OTHER ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCES

Phone/SMS engagement can be incorporated into other methods of community engagement presented in [Part IV - Catalog of Ideas](#). For example, you can incorporate a call-in option to an existing virtual engagement on a platform like Zoom. You can also utilize SMS/text messaging for polling or voting at an in-person engagement to promote safety and hygiene. For more on this, see the [Mini-Guide for Hybrid Engagement](#).

## GROUP ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to engage and participate with others via phone or SMS/text messaging.

### GROUP SMS / TEXT MESSAGES



Group SMS discussion can be a powerful tool in keeping a small group of participants engaged and collaborating. A best practice is to set ground rules to keep the text group from becoming unwieldy. (e.g. no messages after 9:00pm, no pictures of pets, etc.)



- **Facilitate a focus group over SMS.** Have a topic or a question you want to explore, a moderator, ground rules, and a set amount of time for the engagement. Through this format participants can respond to each other instead of responding only to the question, thus deepening insights. **TIP:** Do not let this fizzle out for 6 hours or 3 days! Make it quick and highly engaging.
- **Create a meme/GIF campaign.** Engage a younger demographic by asking them to help create memes and GIFs for a campaign or to represent an idea. Asking a group to co-develop these graphics supports their buy-in and helps you understand their level of knowledge.

### CONFERENCE CALLS



You can use a conference call to facilitate conversations, meetings, focus groups, or community input sessions with a group as small or as large as necessary. Use [Free Conference Call](#) for a free, basic conference line.

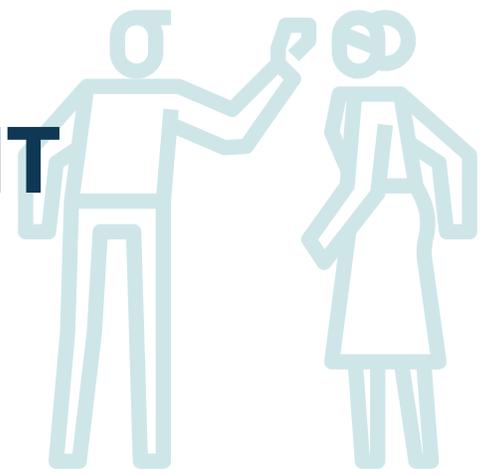


- **Facilitate a roundtable, town hall, or focus group.** Similar to an in-person focus group, these engagements require strategic facilitation to lead stakeholders through to chosen topic and ensure all voices are heard. Use [Tele-Town Hall](#) to conduct traditional, in-person style engagements that can be accessed offline. Ground rules are important for phone roundtable participation, as this will help those on the call understand when and how they can contribute.
- **Schedule advisory committee meetings.** Phone conferencing can be flexible to the needs of the stakeholders. A best practice for supporting advisory committees is to lay the groundwork before the call. Provide them with an agenda, talking points, and the opportunity to submit questions in advance.
- **Launch a telephone book club.** This practice has been used by librarians for generations to support home-bound patrons. The engagement follows similar rules to an in-person book club, but a moderator should work to ensure everyone's voice is heard.

### SOURCES

Hillary Aidun & Daniel Metzger, Columbia Law School. [Public Participation in the Coronavirus Age](#). Safe Route Partnership. [Equitable Community Engagement in the Time of Social Distancing](#). S360 Campaign Services. [Campaigning During COVID-19](#).

# PHYSICALLY DISTANT ENGAGEMENT



The following catalog presents ideas for implementing in-person community engagement at a physical distance and can be used as we emerge from the pandemic and beyond. When selecting the best method for in-person engagement at a physical distance, review the [Mini-Guide for Physically Distant Engagement](#).

## OUTREACH METHODS

Outreach methods are used to disseminate information one-directionally, in order to build potential relationships with community stakeholders, and make them aware of your projects and priorities. It allows for relatively quick and broad channels of communication with stakeholders.

### DOOR-TO-DOOR ACTIVITIES



Door-to-door activities can include handing out fliers. Even as the threat of Covid-19 diminishes, decisions about door-to-door activities must come from the lens of safety and comfort for stakeholders and your team.

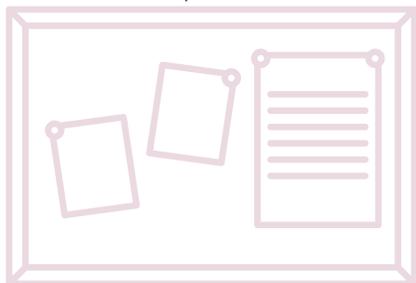


- **Set up a literature drop.** Create a buzz by promoting that this special “drop” of information will be happening in a specific area. Gather a team, package materials, and distribute them door-to-door, if deemed safe to do so.
- **Invite other neighbors to support outreach.** Invite other stakeholders who feel safe supporting your team to conduct outreach through door-knocking, where appropriate. This can help build relationships across community members.
- **Mail materials to stakeholders.** Prepare a package of relevant fliers and marketing for stakeholders, and drop it in the mail.

### OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



Host outdoor activities, or set up an informational table to perform outreach while meeting stakeholders where they are. Utilize megaphones or large visuals to help get the message across in outdoor spaces.



- **Set up a self-service physical distancing station.** Allow for stakeholders to safely pick-up information packages, in order to consider everyone's comfort level in a post-Covid world.
- **Return to the old-school bulletin board.** Utilize the outside of your space to allow for stakeholders to read (in very large print) updates and pick up information packages. Make it more engaging by making it interactive (e.g. dot voting, etc.).
- **Facilitate outreach through public art.** Tap into the local artists or community arts programs that are engaged in public art interventions across the community for you to circulate your outreach materials. Organizations, like [Groundswell](#), often host community painting days, which invite people from all over the neighborhood to get creative.



## INCORPORATING REMOTE FORMATS INTO IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

In-person socially distant engagements can be conducted in combination with virtual, digital, or phone platforms to maximize your outcomes. For many, meeting or engaging in-person is still a health risk, beyond their comfort level, or simply not as accessible as meeting virtually. As a result, it is important to lead with inclusion in mind (e.g. conduct a facilitated conversation or workshop both in-person at a physical distance, set up a conference call line or Zoom dial-in for additional stakeholders to join safely, or record - with consent - your in-person engagement to have additional stakeholders watch it remotely afterwards). For more information, refer to the [Mini-Guide for Hybrid Engagement](#).

## INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Engagement strategies to connect with individuals to build trust and transparency

### 1-TO-1 INTERVIEWS



1-to-1 meetings are a powerful method for collecting individualized insights. Through the interview process, the stakeholder builds a stronger relationship with the facilitator, while the facilitator collects. By the end, the stakeholder will better understand the impact that their participation can have on your work.



- **Conduct an interview on a park bench.** Respect distance needs by interviewing your stakeholder while sitting on either end of a bench. Standard NYC park benches are approximately six feet in length.
- **Conduct a walking interview in the neighborhood.** Instead of taking a seat for an interview, join a stakeholder on a walk in their neighborhood to build rapport, understanding local context, and collecting information.
- **Facilitate a mail-in survey.** Send stakeholders a [survey in the mail](#), providing a straightforward way for respondents to send it back to you.



## SMALL GROUP ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Allow a targeted stakeholder group the opportunity to participate and interact with others to share stories, insights, and experiences that can impact collaboration and identify solutions

### FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS



Facilitated conversations and focus groups are appropriate settings for meeting with people to analyze where they are concerned about an issue and giving them the time and respect to hear out their concerns, ideas, perspectives, and/or solutions.



- **Use parks, benches, or church pews.** Many NYC parks benches are located in close proximity. Asking people to each sit on their own bench is a safe and comfortable option for facilitating a small group conversation or focus group. Alternatively, seating stakeholders in alternate rows of church pews allows you to meet comfortably, while respecting physical distance.
- **Host a picnic.** Throw down picnic blankets, and have separately packaged snacks available to grab for an intimate feel while still being distanced. This is a great way to break down barriers and keep participants engaged in a conversation or focus group.



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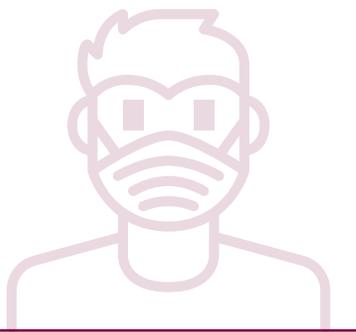


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## WORKSHOPS



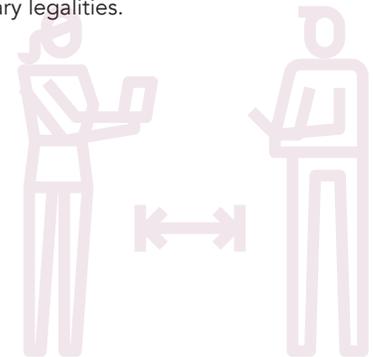
Workshops provide great opportunities to collect ideas from stakeholders, where participatory methods support group consensus and trust-building with the facilitator and their team. Workshops are often the most effective option for maximizing reach, and they help to set project expectations authentically with stakeholders.



## BEST PRACTICES FOR PHYSICAL DISTANCING POST-PANDEMIC

- Be mindful to provide space for 6-feet of distance among participants.
- Practice other preventative measures such as washing hands, avoiding touching your face, and coughing into your elbow.
- Provide materials (handouts, snacks, pens, post-its) in individually wrapped packages.
- Avoid body contact, including shaking hands.
- Post signage with expectations for distancing protocols and inclusive language that ensure everyone feels safe.
- Provide stakeholders with an option for wearing PPE.

- **Host in odd places.** Like a supper club, host your workshop in surprising and unusual spaces. This can help you choose spaces that allow for physical distancing and embracing the innovations that evolved from the pandemic. Imagine a crochet class in a park or a cooking class in a gym or schoolyard.
- **Use extra large materials.** Physical distancing can make it hard to collaboratively brainstorm ideas together. Use bold markers and extra large post-it notes so everyone can see other's input. Ensure that all stakeholders have their own supply kits, further minimizing contact with others.
- **Bring a hotspot.** For many, meeting in-person may still challenge their comfort level, however access to WiFi is not accessible at home. Set up a hotspot in a public space, allowing individuals to join a virtual workshop while safely distancing.
- **Facilitate a story circle.** Best for 8-10 participants, invite a small group of stakeholders to a [story circle](#) with chairs spaced apart, or split the group into two circles. Have one facilitator lead the circle using the methodology linked above that builds empathy by bringing together the lived experiences of your stakeholders.
- **Host performances.** Team up with local musicians, theatre artists, or dancers to kick-off your engagement, during a break in your workshop. Survey your target stakeholders to gather recommendations for local artists.
- **Utilize public art.** Partner with a local, such as a muralist or projection artist to bring awareness to a community project through art. Work through a local arts organization to guarantee that you follow the necessary legalities.



## SOURCES

OXFAM. [Community Engagement during COVID-19.](#)



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# APPENDIX

1

## **GLOSSARY**

Definitions of key terms from throughout the almanac

2

## **SOURCES**

A collection of resources referenced throughout the almanac

## **EL ALMANAQUE DE PARTICIPACIÓN COMUNITARIA**

Key sections of the Community Engagment Almanac are available in a Spanish translation.

1

2

# GLOSSARY

**Accuracy and utility objectives:** evaluation objectives related to the validity of research or data collected and the usability of that data

**Active listening:** the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information, and respond thoughtfully. Good facilitators listen well and ask good questions. A powerful question can generate curiosity in the listener, stimulate reflective dialogue, bring to the surface any underlying assumptions, and invite creativity.

**Activity limitation:** in regards to disabilities such as difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving

**Adaptive equipment:** devices that are used to assist with completing activities of daily living; examples include wheelchairs, hearing aids, prosthetic devices, etc. *(sometimes used interchangeably with assistive technology)*

**Case studies:** a summary of your engagement process and impact. It should include the why, what, how, and results of your entire engagement process. They can be used to showcase your work, demonstrate success, and report on the process.

**Challenge zone:** the space in an engagement where stakeholders' beliefs are challenged, but they still feel safe and included. Most learning outcomes are achieved in the challenge zone.

**Collaboration:** engagement with the purpose of involving stakeholders in a co-design process of idea generation and the decision-making process; generally bi-directional interactions mobilize stakeholders to support and have some influence over the initiative

**Community agreements:** also known as setting norms or ground rules. When drafting agreements, be specific to your groups' specific context, and avoid using jargon. It always sits better when the full group creates them, rather than if you establish them for the group.

**Consultation:** engagement with the purpose of gathering insights and information from stakeholders; generally bi-directional interaction where information is presented to stakeholders, who are then asked to give specific feedback or input

**Culturally responsive engagement:** helps stakeholders better connect with your subject matter and become more willing to engage (e.g. offering engagements in a language other than English, offering food culturally significant to a specific community).

**Danger zone:** the space in an engagement where stakeholders' worldviews are breaking down. They may feel uprooted and unsafe; therefore, no learning can happen in this zone.

**Data visualization:** can bring structure to complex or intangible information, deepening an observer's understanding. This can be done through graphs, charts, research walls, journey maps, persona profiles, or infographics.

**Debriefing sessions:** an important part of improving an engagement's process and impact. They should be completed shortly after the engagement and can be conducted either formally with a set agenda or informally as a discussion.

**Demographic objectives:** evaluation objectives related to your intended target stakeholders

**Developmental disabilities:** a diverse group of chronic conditions that are due to mental or physical impairments. Individuals living with them have difficulties in certain areas of life, especially in language, mobility, learning, self-care, and independent living.

**Digital divide:** refers to the idea that access to the internet and capable devices are a privilege not experienced by all communities. The impacts are serious, as internet-capable devices can be cost prohibitive and may not work effectively.

**Digital literacy:** refers to an individual's ability to navigate digital hardware and software. Literacy levels can vary from those who have never used a mouse or trackpad, to those who struggle with Photoshop. Socio-economic status and age play a major role.

**Digital outreach:** used to disseminate information, while building possible relationships as an outcome; allows for relatively quick and broad channels of communication with stakeholders. Information sharing does not offer high levels of engagement and could be perceived as intrusive or impersonal.

**Disability:** any condition of the body or mind (*impairment*) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (*activity limitation*) and interact with the world around them (*participation restrictions*)

**Documentary:** documenting your engagement through video, photos, recordings, or written observations (like journals) can help tell the story of success at a later date. Analyzing your documentation can help bolster your evaluation data or illustrate gaps and challenges.

**Equitable engagement:** ensuring everyone has a role in creating equity, accessibility, and inclusion; recognizes power dynamics, levels of trust, digital divides, disabilities, different levels of comfort, etc.

**Ethnographic observation:** observations about the engagement beyond attendance numbers. These can be things like level of participation or enthusiasm, tone, openness in communication, community trust, etc.

**Evaluation objectives:** aspects of your engagement you intend to evaluate; typically fall into three categories: stakeholder and participation objectives, impact objectives, and process objectives.

**Facilitation:** the practice of guiding a dialogue or engagement towards desired goals. Facilitators help to provide space for stakeholders to share and listen to one another and exchange ideas and are skilled in helping them stay on track, participate, and feel heard. Facilitators have a neutral stance to guarantee a smooth and equitable process.

**Goals:** broad ideas about what you hope to achieve with an engagement; should be tangible (measurable) and intangible. Intangible goals might be difficult to measure immediately, such as improved collaboration with your team, strengthened communication across a community, the creation of safe space for stakeholders to share feedback, or shifted understanding or attitudes about the project.

**Indicators of success:** specific and measurable evidence of change

**Impairment:** in regards to the condition of a person's body structure or function, or mental functioning; examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision, or memory loss.

**Interviews:** can be built in a variety of ways to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. An interviewer can pre-create a set of questions or simply practice free listening.

**Land Acknowledgment:** an acknowledgment of the Indigenous cultural groups that once occupied the land in the cities that we now call home. Land acknowledgments are a critical learning tool and a strategy for honoring the socio-historical and cultural context of target communities.

**Mid-term/long-term objectives:** look at the longer term impacts of an engagement and can be tracked through surveys, observations, data collection, and additional engagements

**Monitoring systems, logs, activity forms, registries:** tools you use throughout your engagement process that you can refer back to for evaluation. You can track attendance over time, how resources were utilized, the effectiveness of your process, etc.

**Outputs:** specific and tangible information or artifacts that you leave with after the engagement; might include insights and anecdotes from stakeholders, an implementation plan, etc.

**Outreach:** engagement with the purpose of informing stakeholders; generally one-directional with information flowing from you to stakeholders with little space for collaboration

**Participation objectives:** related to stakeholder participation during and after the experience

**Participation restrictions:** in regards to how a disability presents in normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities, and obtaining health care and preventive services

**Participatory decision-making:** supports the creation of a space to prioritize ideas; provides the space for narrowing those ideas further. It creates a democratic pathway towards choosing the most effective option that works for everyone in the group. It is important to clearly determine your participatory decision-making process to best include all voices without needing unanimous agreement.

**Peer evaluations:** can offer significant insight into your process and impact as peers are most familiar with the type of work you are doing; can also be used for team members to give feedback on each other and the process

**Phone/SMS engagement:** provides an accessible workaround for COVID-19 safety precautions. SMS/Texting presents an opportunity to communicate with stakeholders in a way that fits into the flow of their daily lives.

**Physically distant engagement:** has supported community engagement throughout COVID-19 and can be adapted beyond the pandemic, as a platform that supports meeting stakeholders where they are

**Polls:** can be used as 'temperature checks' in the middle of an engagement to gauge energy level or understanding of content. They can be used at the start of a program to find out demographic information or at the end to understand sentiment.

**Positionality:** refers to the how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society. Depending on the reputation of your institution, stakeholders may have immediate distrust and long-term relationships and trust-building becomes necessary.

**Power dynamics:** acknowledgment of the inherently unequal dynamics of community engagement. Race, power, injustice, ability, language, immigration status, socio-economic status, identity, and age play a major role in engagement experiences. Extensive research and a deep understanding of stakeholders is needed to understand what barriers to participation might occur due to power imbalances within the community. Pay close attention to those who have less access to power, and work to identify opportunities in your engagement for stakeholders to have power and influence decisions.

**Project management objectives:** related to the project management and strategy used throughout the engagement process, from planning to follow-up

**Resource-use objectives:** related to how efficiently resources, like a budget, were used throughout the engagement process

**Safe zone:** the space in an engagement where stakeholders are very familiar with content and are comfortable. Little learning happens in this zone, and stakeholders may not be challenged to learn beyond what they already know.

**Shared Leadership:** engagement with the purpose of sharing ownership of the project and final decision-making with stakeholders; generally bi-directional, takes time to build collective responsibility for a community challenge and its solutions

**Short-term objectives:** can be tracked directly after or shortly after the engagement

**Socio-historical context:** cultural-competency and knowledge about the inequities faced by your target community. To build this knowledge it is important to understand the social, environmental, and structural determinants of inequity in your community. Look at how different stakeholders might perceive your engagement based on their very different histories. Work to acknowledge this history and the experiences of your community in the engagement process.

**Stakeholders:** participants in an engagement

**Stakeholder groups:** particular groups of participants targeted for outreach

**Stakeholder surveys and questionnaires:** can be built in a number of ways to glean qualitative and quantitative data; can be used repeatedly over time to show longitudinal impact or at the end of the event to understand immediate feedback.

**Stories and participant anecdotes:** can be highly effective in showcasing the value of the engagement. Narratives or short soundbites directly from stakeholders can be powerful tools in highlighting some of the more intangible aspects of an engagement. Stories can show how meaningful the engagement was to an individual and how that produced change in their life.

**Team capacity objectives:** related to your team's ability to work together and accomplish tasks

**Testimonials:** an interview that captures a personal account of the project from a stakeholder or partner. You can ask stakeholders to generally share their experience or give a more structured format.

**Virtual engagement:** virtual engagement has supported stakeholders during COVID-19 and will support community engagement beyond the pandemic, as a platform that supports meeting stakeholders where they are

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2022 | Version 2.0

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