

Community Engagement Manual

Introduction

The following manual is a guide for implementing the goals and policies established in *Chapter 2, Community Involvement* of the Comprehensive Plan. Community involvement is integral to achieving all of the long-term goals of the Comprehensive Plan. It is also foundational to achieve equity and environmental justice throughout planning and investment projects.

The Comprehensive Plan makes clear that the City should work toward public processes and related outcomes that are equitable and help to correct past disparities. Benefits and burdens of decisions are expected to be shared equitably across our communities. Those who are both most impacted and have had the least power to influence decisions must be engaged. It must be clear how people can influence the priorities, processes, and outcomes of projects.

This manual, as called for by *Policy 2.17*, provides guidance on how to achieve this from project selection to design to implementation and evaluation of outcomes. It helps staff and partners see what resources are needed to have transparent, equitable engagement.

This manual does not include rigid prescriptions. Every project is different; community involvement practices need to be flexible and responsive, and there are many excellent resources already available that provide a “menu” of tools for community involvement and examples of how to use them effectively. This manual is intended to establish the baseline expectations for all relevant projects. It also supplies a framework that staff, community members, the Community Involvement Committee, and others can use to design and evaluate projects to help keep community involvement on track.

This manual, while intended to support project-specific work, can also be used to guide ongoing involvement work as directed by *Chapter 2*.

Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2

Goal 2.A: Community involvement as a partnership

The City of Portland works together as a genuine partner with all Portland communities and interests. The City promotes, builds, and maintains relationships, and communicates with individuals, communities, neighborhoods, businesses, organizations, institutions, and other governments to ensure meaningful community involvement in planning and investment decisions.

Goal 2.B: Social justice and equity

The City of Portland seeks social justice by expanding choice and opportunity for all community members, recognizing a special responsibility to identify and engage, as genuine partners, under-served and under-represented communities in planning, investment, implementation, and enforcement processes, particularly those with potential to be adversely affected by the results of decisions. The City actively works to improve its planning and investment-related decisions to achieve equitable distribution of burdens and benefits and address past injustices.

Goal 2.C: Value community wisdom and participation

Portland values and encourages community and civic participation. The City seeks and considers community wisdom and diverse cultural perspectives, and integrates them with technical analysis, to strengthen land use decisions.

Goal 2.D: Transparency and accountability

City planning and investment decision-making processes are clear, open, and documented. Through these processes a diverse range of community interests are heard and balanced. The City makes it clear to the community who is responsible for making decisions and how community input is taken into account. Accountability includes monitoring and reporting outcomes.

Goal 2.E: Meaningful participation

Community members have meaningful opportunities to participate in and influence all stages of planning and decision making. Public processes engage the full diversity of affected community members, including under-served and under-represented individuals and communities. The City will seek and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by planning and decision making.

Community Engagement Equity Framework

The following framework serves to provide key strategies for equitable community engagement processes. It is a staff responsibility to seek out the voices and interests of under-served and under-represented communities who may be negatively impacted by a decision, and to mitigate for these impacts. Throughout the life of a project, an equity lens must be continuously used to:

- Identify disproportionate adverse effects the project may have on any community, but particularly low-income populations and communities of color.
- Identify ways in which the communities' needs inform planning, investment, implementation and enforcement processes.

The strategies below are not linear, but should be utilized on an ongoing and iterative basis. The performance measures are intended to evaluate how a project was impacted by integrating these strategies. Each strategy is accompanied by a list of examples of what the strategy looks like in practice, to guide staff in their use.

- **Know the community** - Working to understand under-served and under-represented communities is essential to foster greater understanding and informed decision-making in a manner that will maximize benefits and minimize burdens for those communities. Different communities (e.g. geographic, racial, socio-economic class) experience different outcomes, and what works for one group will not work for everyone, due to cultural factors and existing disparities.
 - **Performance Measure:** What methods were used to gain insight into the experience of under-served and under-represented communities? How did the information that was gathered affect the design of the community engagement process?
 - **What does this look like in practice?**
 - Listen to community members.

- Research community history and current events, using methods such as interviews, community mapping, or review of documentation.
 - Perform demographic analysis of under-served and under-represented communities to understand current and historic trends.
 - Assess vulnerability to socio-economic and environmental factors (involuntary displacement/gentrification, hazard risk, etc.).
 - Become familiar with government initiatives and community-generated reports, such as plans or investment strategies, to identify potential cumulative impacts and/or opportunities for collaborative policy development.
 - Use focus groups and surveys designed and/or administered by the community.

- **Be accessible and responsive to diverse communities** – Effective policies need to be designed with a culturally responsive and community needs or community assets-based approach. This requires that engagement practices with diverse groups correct for inherent barriers to participation.
 - **Performance Measure:** Did efforts result in increased participation from targeted communities, and did participants feel that their participation was worth the time and effort?
 - **What does this look like in practice?**
 - Use people-friendly and culturally responsive strategies such as providing translated materials, on-site interpretation, childcare, food, etc.
 - Partner with and support cultural liaisons and community leaders.
 - Adapt to meet a community where it is, based on its needs for support, capacity building, information sharing, and also physically where community members live or organize.

- **Appropriately support staff and community capacity** – We must intentionally allocate resources to overcome the cumulative impacts of institutional racism on historically under-served and under-represented. Investing resources into quality engagement can prevent costly course corrections in the long-run. Because community engagement with communities of color and low-income populations is highly relational, one of the best investments that can be made is ample staff time to develop relationships with under-served and under-represented community members. Navigating across cultures and addressing previous negative experiences with government requires both cultural competency skills and time. It is also important to note this work does not begin and end with a project timeline, but should be viewed as an ongoing investment that is connected across projects over time.
 - **Performance Measure:** How much staff time and/or funding was allocated to support building capacity for communities of color or low-income populations? What steps were taken to prepare staff to work with communities of color and or low-income populations?
 - **What does this look like in practice?**
 - Provide orientation or training on subject matter to community members.
 - Coordinate administrative processes to simplify community interaction.
 - Pay for community expertise that may be difficult to incorporate otherwise.

- Train staff on cultural competency.
 - Allocate staff time to develop relationships with community members
 - Support staff participation in community based initiatives.
- **Build effective partnerships** - Effective partnerships and collaborations are essential to achieve equitable outcomes. Built on trust and accountability, they should also openly acknowledge and work to balance inherent power dynamics. They require clear and purposeful roles, consistency and honest communication to foster mutual respect and build power.
 - **Performance Measure:** How do partners and collaborators who represent communities of color and low-income communities evaluate the quality of the relationship with staff and the project?
 - **What does this look like in practice?**
 - Listen, learn, reflect, share.
 - Support staff participation in community-based initiatives.
 - Clarify roles and expectations at the start.
 - Institutionalize representation from impacted communities in decision-making and processes leading to decisions.
 - Train staff on power, privilege and institutional racism and bias.
 - Use transparent and proactive communication to impacted communities.
 - Report back to the community on how feedback was used.
 - Evaluate the relationship.
- **Scope the project with the community** - Ideally, the input of impacted communities should be sought in the project scoping process. Meaningful engagement with the public as partners requires clarity in roles and purpose.
 - **Performance Measure:** Do stakeholders understand the goal, the size, and the engagement roles and opportunities of the project? Do stakeholders have a say in the setting of goals and benchmarks?
 - **What does this look like in practice?**
 - Have an honest and transparent conversation with the project team and the community about the resources available for engagement and the decision-making process.
 - Establish mutually agreed-upon goals and benchmarks for the project or process, including criteria for a successful process and successful outcomes.
 - Clearly identify how public input will be used in decision-making.
- **Continuously apply an equity lens** – Staff are responsible for seeking out the voices and interests of under-served and under-represented communities who may be negatively impacted by a decision and mitigating for these impacts.
 - **What does this look like in practice?**
 - Identify disproportionate adverse effects the project may have on any community, but particularly on low-income populations and communities of color.
 - Identify ways in which the communities’ needs can inform planning, investment, implementation and enforcement processes.
 - Build in time throughout the project to re-assess who is engaged in the planning, implementation, and evaluation.

- Build in time to check in with process participants about how the process is working for them.
- Follow through to track how the process includes activities to mitigate for impacts.

Steps to Community Engagement

Every community is different, and every project is different, so the community involvement processes for each project will look different. However, the following steps are a necessary part of any project.

[Step 1: Identify Stakeholders and do a Power Analysis](#)

[Step 2: Scope the Level of Community Engagement](#)

[Step 3: Plan the Community Engagement Process](#)

[Step 4: Implement the Community Engagement Process](#)

[Step 5: Report Results of the Community Engagement Process](#)

[Step 6: Evaluate the Community Engagement Process](#)

For each step, this manual includes:

- baseline expectations
- questions that it may be helpful to ask along the way
- examples of tools that may be helpful

Step 1: Identify Stakeholders and do a Power Analysis

Comprehensive Plan Policies: 2.2, 2.9, 2.21, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26, 2.27, 2.31

The first step once a project has been scoped is to identify who the stakeholders are, how they may be impacted by the project and how they are able to influence the outcome. Knowing who has a stake and who will be impacted by a policy or plan is important in understanding the political landscape that will need to be addressed during the project in order to achieve equity goals. Power in this step is defined as the ability to influence planning processes and is often tied to class, race, gender and educational status. Some examples of types of influence include having:

- Mandated or perceived authority in the decision making process
- Experience or participation in similar processes
- Shared traits with decision-makers (such as appearance or communication style)
- Property ownership
- Existing relationships with decision-makers and/or staff
- Access to information that can affect analysis of existing and future conditions
- Access to resources that can affect implementation

Power is an effective means for advancing one's interests. It is therefore the responsibility of staff to ensure that impacted parties are empowered through community involvement so that decisions can be made with the best interests of all in mind.

Expectations:

- Do this assessment during the scoping phase of your project.
- Take the time to identify under-represented and under-served communities and how they may be impacted by the policy.
- Discuss what power means for different stakeholders in the process, including the power you have as staff.

- Break out clusters of stakeholders that have differing types of power (e.g. instead of breaking out based on neighborhood, break out into renters and homeowners)
- Identify specific strategies to address the involvement needs for those who may be very impacted by the decisions that will be made, but are under-represented in decision-making.
- Do not do this assessment as an individual. Seek out diverse perspectives to contribute to the analysis.

Guiding Questions

- What is the purpose of this project? Or, what problem is this project solving? Who shares this definition of the problem?
- Who are the stakeholders for this initiative?
- Who is the end user for this plan?
- Who is likely to be most impacted by the project?
- What has this stakeholder group experienced that might be relevant to this project?
- Does one stakeholder group carry more influence/access than another in regards to your initiative? Why?
- What community engagement strategies will you use to ensure under-represented/under-served stakeholders have more equitable influence/access?

Examples of Tools

- Whiteboard exercise mapping out impacts and power.
- Discuss previously gathered data.

Step 2: Scope the Level of Community Engagement

Comprehensive Plan Policies: 2.26, 2.27, 2.15, 2.17, 2.19

Assessing the degree of community concern, capacity and/or readiness will help to determine the appropriate level of community participation. The community will become involved based on its perception of the seriousness of the issue, but also based on its historic relationship with government. Therefore, it is important to both anticipate the community's level of interest, concern and institutional influence regarding a project or program as well as develop appropriate community engagement strategies to ensure equitable access and involvement in the process.

Expectations:

- Perform this assessment in consultation with community involvement and/or communications staff and management.
- Consider past experiences with similar work.
- Consider the political landscape over the anticipated lifetime of the project
- Determine whether and when the project will be reviewed by the Community Involvement Committee.
- Allocate staff resources to engage with community members in a meaningful way. Including, but not exclusive to: attendance at community-driven meetings, follow-up after feedback has been given, and evaluation.

- Plan ahead, and communicate clearly about how public input will be considered in decision-making. Determine how the influence of public input on the final decision will be reported, and make that clear to stakeholders at the beginning of the project.

Guiding Questions

- What is the legally required level of participation?
- What is the anticipated level of conflict, opportunity, controversy or concern on this or related issues?
- What is the possibility of broad community interest?
- How significant are the potential impacts to the community?
- How much do the major stakeholders care about this issue, project or program?
- Why do they care or not care?
- What degree of involvement does the community appear to desire or expect?
- What is the potential for community impact on the final decision or project?
- How significant are the possible benefits of involving the community?
- How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the community?
- What level of community participation do Council and/or bureau directors desire or expect?
- What is the probable level of difficulty in solving the problem or advancing the project?
- What level of media interest do you anticipate?

Step 3: Plan the Community Engagement Process

Comprehensive Plan Policies: 2.11, 2.12

It is essential to create a Community Engagement Plan. It will probably be necessary to revisit and update this plan at multiple points over the course of the project, particularly if significant changes are made to the scope, schedule or budget. Be sure to save an original draft and each subsequent version in case a reference is needed them later in reporting.

Note that this is also a good time to review evaluations from previous community engagement plans and feedback from the Community Involvement Committee on past projects so that you can implement the changes and advice you and others have provided.

Expectations:

- Establish goals for the community involvement process.
- Identify federal, state, and city requirements for community involvement that must be met. (See list at end of this document.)
- Identify strategies to address the needs of under-represented, under-served communities.
- Develop a reasonable and meaningful budget. Prioritize resources for engagement with under-served and under-represented communities. When needed, include: translation, interpretation, food, child care, print materials, meeting facilitation, contractors and consultants.
- Establish a reasonable timeline.
- Plan sufficient time for effective techniques and compilation of community input at each step in the decision-making process.

- Create a strategy for evaluation and accountability

Questions:

- What is the political and legal context of the project?
- How does this community involvement process advance the guiding principles in *Chapter 2* of the comprehensive plan?
- What equity (racial, ethnic, income, geographic) issues (disparate impacts, access) will be important to consider throughout this project?
- What tools will be necessary to accomplish the community involvement goals?
- Is there sufficient flexibility in the schedule to achieve the community involvement goals?
- Will staff be able to respond to the community in a timely manner during the process?
- How much time is required at each decision point?
- What will a successful process look and feel like for the affected communities?
- What will a successful process look and feel like for City staff?
- What mechanism is in place to let community members know how their feedback will be and has been used?
- How would the communities describe this project?
- How will performance be tracked?

Step 4: Implement the Community Engagement Process

Comprehensive Plan Policies: 2.32, 2.33

Now that the work of planning is complete, the job of implementation begins. The process of community engagement is dynamic. Expect to make process changes and adaptations from the original Community Engagement Plan.

Expectations:

- Review the community engagement plan regularly and document what adaptations have been made and why they were made.
- For multi-year projects, build in resources to do a substantial evaluation at major milestones to guide any necessary course corrections.

Questions:

- Does the schedule need to be adjusted?
- Are new concerns developing?
- Does stakeholder identification and analysis need to be revisited?
- Is the political/legal context changing?

Step 5: Report Results of the Community Engagement Process

Comprehensive Plan Policies: 2.14, 2.32

Whether your purpose is to educate, consult, involve, collaborate, or support shared decision-making, you will need to report the results of your community engagement process. It's likely that you will begin reporting about the community engagement process during the implementation phase, but you will certainly be asked to summarize once the project wraps up. Remember that it's much easier to summarize the community engagement process if you did a good job of tracking it during implementation.

Reporting back demonstrates that stakeholders' time and effort have been well invested. It also shows the community how their input has influenced the project, policy or program. The participants will appreciate their comments and concerns have been understood and accurately communicated to decision-makers.

Expectations:

- Summarize the community involvement activities for the project. This should include a plan and documentation of how it was implemented, including any measures of success. (For smaller projects, this may be very brief.)
- Provide documentation of feedback that was collected, and indicate how it was used.

Questions

- Have you described all of the community involvement elements of your project?
- What are the lessons learned from this process?
- What worked well and what did not work well, and why?
- What community involvement practices would you recommend for staff working on future projects that are similar?
- What changes did you make along the way to your initial Community Engagement Plan, and why?

Step 6: Evaluate the Community Engagement Plan

Comprehensive Plan Policies: 2.14, 2.34

Every project should include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the community involvement process. The evaluation is an opportunity to reflect and share insight about opportunities and challenges. It also enables recommendations to be incorporated into future community engagement processes.

Expectations:

- Tie the final evaluation to the plan's goals and objectives.
- Include observations and recommendations from the public as well as the project staff.
- Report the findings of the evaluation, and lessons learned. For larger projects, findings, highlights, and lessons learned should be shared with the CIC, project team, advisory committee and the public. Smaller projects should wrap up at the end with a project team debrief on what worked well, what didn't work well, and what should be changed in the future.

Questions

- What was your greatest challenge? How did you overcome it?
- What was your greatest success? What are you most proud of?
- What do you wish you had known going into the process?
- What would you have done differently if you could do it over?
- What advice do you have for yourself or others working on future projects?

Examples of Tools

- Informal feedback from stakeholders on a routine basis
- Short questionnaires following events
- Peer evaluations as strategic points for professional feedback
- Team debriefs following meetings and events to discuss needed adjustments
- Community telephone or web-based surveys

Legislative Touchpoints and Resources

All community involvement activities should comply with federal, state, and city laws. This is not a complete list, and should be considered a starting point. Many of these laws require action at many levels of the project, not just a single action. There are resources available at the City to help you navigate the requirements and make your project better along the way.

City Requirements and Guidance

The [Financial Impact and Public Involvement Statement](#) is required to be submitted with all City Council resolutions, ordinances and reports. The statement is a synopsis of the public input that was considered in the development of the legislation.

Portland's [Public Involvement Principles](#) guide City officials and staff in establishing consistent, effective, and high quality community involvement.

The [Public Involvement Advisory Council](#) (PIAC) works to:

- Develop guidelines and policy recommendations for citywide public involvement, to be presented to City Council for approval.
- Provide support and advice to City Council and City bureaus with implementation of shared public involvement guidelines and best practices.
- Encourage ongoing collaboration between the community, City bureaus and City Council in the development of shared public involvement guidelines

Portland's [Public Involvement Best Practices Program](#) is dedicated to supporting the City's community involvement activities.

Portland's [Citywide Racial Equity Goals and Policies](#) are binding City Policy, providing a guidepost for City employees and leadership to follow, to achieve the racial equity goals.

State Requirements

Oregon's Statewide Planning [Goal 1: Citizen Involvement](#) OAR 660-015-0000(1) lays out state requirements for public involvement in planning.

Oregon's [Public Record and Meetings laws](#) requires transparency in all public meetings.

Federal Requirements and Guidance

The City's [Office of Equity and Human Rights](#) provides support to City staff in working to meet and exceed the requirements of federal civil rights laws. There are City plans and programs in place to support the ADA and Title VI requirements.

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) requires that all city activities be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) declares that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. As Portland receives Federal financial assistance, discrimination is prohibited for all City activities. In public involvement activities, the City must provide interpretation and language assistance, avoid or mitigate environmental injustice, and ensure that all people are able to participate in meaningful public involvement. Title VI also requires

robust collection, analysis, and use of data about demographics, needs assessments, burdens and benefits, and more.

Other Guiding Documents

American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#)

[Federal Plain Writing Guidelines](#)

Selected Terms from the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Glossary

Community: A group of people with a shared sense of identity or belonging.

Environmental justice: The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Equity: When everyone has access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being, and achieve their full potential.

Transparency: Reliable, relevant, and timely publicly available information about government activities and decision making.

Under-represented: People and communities that historically and currently do not have an equal voice in institutions and policy-making, and have not been served equitably by programs and services.

Under-served: People and places that historically and currently do not have equitable resources, access to infrastructure, healthy environments, housing choice, etc. Disparities may exist both in services and outcomes.