

# Strategies to Promote Equitable Community Engagement

in City Decision-Making Processes



Developed by the Arizona Prevention Research Center

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Arizona Prevention  
Research Center

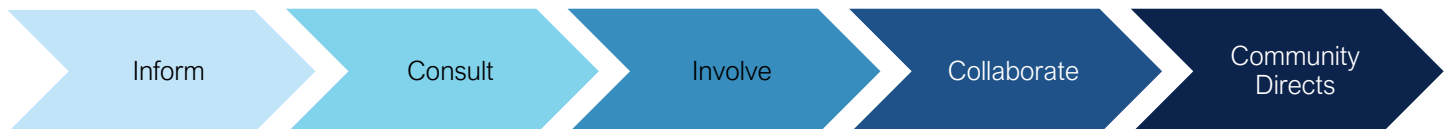


**PAPRN+**  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
POLICY • RESEARCH • NETWORK • PLUS

# The spectrum of community engagement

*This toolkit is modeled after the International Association of Public Participation's [Public Participation Spectrum](#), developed to assist agencies with "establishing and communicating clear expectations regarding the intent of public participation projects."*

*Definitions and key takeaways from each level can be found below, and a more detailed description of each level of the spectrum is found in the following pages.*



**Inform:** Providing the community with balanced, factual and culturally appropriate information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, and/or solutions

- Informing is a critical first step in educating the community to foster interest and promote further participation. Providing information in accessible formats, particularly in Spanish, communicates a commitment to equity.
- Examples: informational events, candidate forums, presentations, media campaigns, publicly available reports

**Consult:** Obtaining community feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions

- Consultation methods are essential when attempting to engage as many people as possible. Non-traditional and creative methods of consultation can be a critical way to build participation of marginalized communities.
- Examples: pop-up engagements, workshops, neighborhood association presentations, engagement in community settings (bus stops, parks, streets, community organizations)

**Involve:** Working directly with communities throughout the process to ensure that community issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered

- A critical element of involvement is the necessity to ensure it is mutually beneficial for the city and community members, including providing opportunities for skills development and coalition-building.
- Examples: task forces, community ambassadors, community mapping, digital storytelling, walking assessments

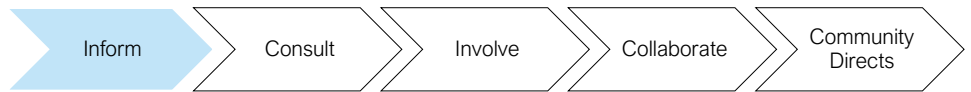
**Collaborate:** Partnering with communities in each aspect of the decision, including the initial development of alternatives and the preferred solution

- When seeking more extensive and long-term participation from community members, particularly community members from marginalized communities, compensation in some form is an essential element to include.
- Examples: coordinating councils, participatory planning, budgeting and project prioritization

**Community Directs:** Place final decision-making in the hands of the public or community

- While cities can actively support the success of grass-roots coalitions and their leadership in formal city processes, initiatives and solutions that are community directed must be just that, and originate within the community itself.
- Examples: citizen's panels and juries, participatory budgeting, ballot initiatives

# Inform



Providing the community with balanced, factual and culturally appropriate information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, and/or solutions

## *Key Considerations*

- Critical for building community understanding of issues to foster interest and promote further participation.
- Providing information in accessible formats, including multiple languages and mediums, and in spaces that community members naturally access and congregate, communicates a commitment to equity.
- Ease of access to city documents at all stages of a process is critical for building community trust and interest.

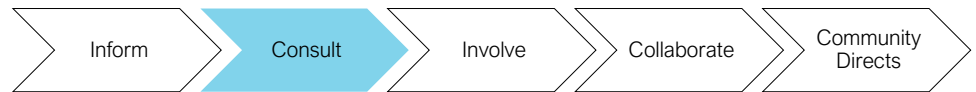
## Examples

- [Community forums](#)
- [Public service announcements](#)
  - [Value-based messaging](#)
- [Media events](#)
- Social media engagement
  - Events, informational posts, [calls to action](#)
- [Public talks](#)
- Informational presentations
- City progress reports
- Publicly-available documents & policies



[Living Streets Alliance World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims 2017](#)

# Consult



Obtaining community feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions

## *Key Considerations*

- Consultation should expand beyond traditional city engagement strategies, such as designated speaking time at official meetings and open houses, to include efforts to engage residents in community settings and using creative facilitation strategies that better foster broad participation
- While broad participation is an important goal, particular effort and attention should be given to engaging communities traditionally excluded from city engagement to ensure better representation.

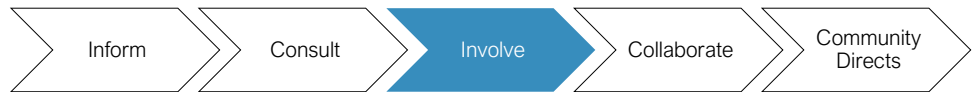
## Examples

- [Pop-up engagements](#)
- City presence in community settings (bus stops, parks, streets, community organizations)
  - [Community walkshops](#)
  - [SpeakOuts](#)
  - [Community capacity inventories](#)
- [Community demonstrations](#)
  - Tactical Urbanism/Lighter Quicker Cheaper Techniques
- [Dialogue workshops](#)
- [Public deliberation](#)
- [Focus groups](#)
- Surveys
  - [Visual preference surveys](#)
  - [E-engagement](#)
- [Asset usage mapping](#)
- [Scenario planning](#)



[Living Streets Alliance pop-up engagement at the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona](#)

# Involve



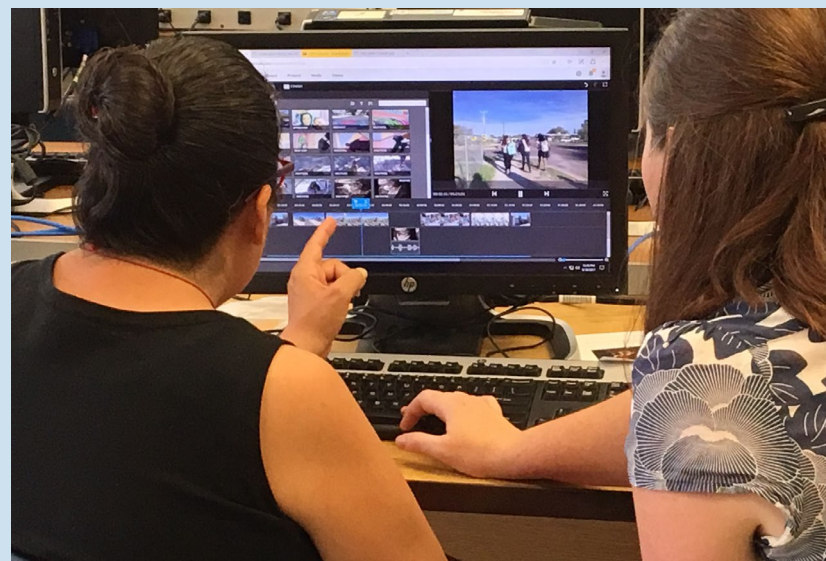
Working directly with communities throughout the process to ensure that community issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered

## *Key Considerations*

- A critical element of involvement is the necessity to ensure it is mutually beneficial for the city and community members, including providing opportunities for skills development and coalition-building, rather than simply extracting information from communities.
- Specific efforts to involve youth in city planning and engagement efforts should also be considered.

## Examples

- Eliciting community voice
  - [Digital storytelling](#)
  - [PhotoVoice](#)
  - [Photo visioning](#)
  - [Walking assessments](#)
- [Community visioning](#)
- [Task forces & advisory committees](#)
- [Digital storytelling](#)
- [Community mapping](#)
- [Community conferences/summits](#)
- [Facilitation techniques](#)
- [Youth involvement](#)
- [Community design charrettes](#)
- [Health Impact Assessments](#)



# Collaborate



Partnering with communities in each aspect of the decision, including the initial development of alternatives and the preferred solution

## *Key Considerations*

- True collaboration requires intentionally engaging community members from the beginning of the process, with an established set of shared expectations between city and community.
- Compensation, scheduling, amenities, and facilitation styles should be approached in a way that reduces barriers to participation for people traditionally unable to attend traditional meetings.
- Utilize tools to assess power dynamics in meetings to understand additional invisible barriers to participation.

## Examples

- [Formalized agreements with coalitions/community organizations](#)
- [Community ambassadors](#)
- [Participatory decision-making](#)
- Project Prioritization Processes
- [Community capacity building](#)
- [Participatory action research](#)
- [Assess power dynamics in meetings](#)
- Advocacy training



[Tucson coalition's agreement gives locals more say in 4th Avenue apartment plan](#)

# Community Directs



Place final decision-making in the hands of the public or community

## *Key Considerations*

- In order to be community-directed, engagement must be driven by the interests and leadership of the community and grow out of initiatives and coalitions started within the community.
- Other efforts to ensure the community is directing decision-making should include influence over city finances, given that how money is spent is one of the most significant measures of a city's priorities and values.

## Examples

- [Support of local leadership and coalition-driven initiatives](#)
- [Ballot initiatives](#)
  - [Pro-voter policies](#)
- [Citizen's Juries](#)
- Citizens Panels
- [Participatory budgeting](#)



# Key Resources

Below are great resources to guide effective and creative uses of community engagement in city practice that informed the creation of this toolkit.

[A Blueprint for Changemakers Achieving Health Equity Through Law & Policy](#)

[A Guidebook to Community Engagement: Involving Urban & Low-Income Populations in an Environmental Planning Process](#)

[Building Healthy, Equitable Communities](#)

[By the People, For the People: Participatory Budgeting from the Bottom Up in North America](#)

[Center for Community Progress Resources](#)

[Creative Placemaking and Community Safety: Synthesizing Cross-Cutting Themes \(Urban Institute\)](#)

[Community Visioning Process: A Tool for Successful Planning](#)

[Cultural Indicators and Power](#)

[Data for the People – Community Research Tools](#)

[From Start to Finish: Health in All Policies - How to permanently improve government](#)

[Futurewise Community Engagement Toolkit](#)

[Health in All Policies - Collaborating across sectors to improve health](#)

[Improving Government to Improve Health](#)

[Improving Local Government](#)

[Inclusive Community Engagement & Equitable Participation to Improve 4 Core Functions of Local Government](#)

[Making Public Participation Legal](#)

[MAPC's Community Engagement Guide](#)

[National League of Cities – Local Practices in Public Engagement](#)

[Participation Tools for Better Community Planning](#)

[Participatory Budgeting Project](#)

[Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st Century \(Innes & Booher\)](#)

[The Principles of Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement](#)

[The Health and Housing Starter Kit](#)