

Final Report for 90739-J Systems Synthesis I
Carnegie Mellon University Heinz College

Reaching Underserved Communities & Populations in Pennsylvania

Haleema Ahmad, Brandi Burke, Clayton Caldwell,
Ryosuke Kurematsu, Oscar Medina, Sam Zdunski

9 May 2022

Table of Contents

Glossary.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Background.....	5
Description of PennDOT Survey Strategy.....	5
TIP and STIP Process.....	5
Engagement Strategies at State and Local Levels (M/RPO).....	6
PennDOT Connects.....	7
Definition of “Underserved Communities”.....	8
Analysis.....	10
Interviews.....	10
Literature Review.....	18
PPP Analysis.....	23
Quantitative Analysis of Underserved Communities.....	24
Analysis of TIP Project Data and the Local Match.....	31
Findings.....	36
Interviews and Personas.....	36
Literature Review.....	37
Quantitative.....	37
Recommendations.....	41
Limitations.....	43
Future Work.....	44
Conclusion.....	47

Glossary

STIP - Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

TIP - Transportation Improvement Program

PPP - Public Participation Plan

GIS - Geographic Information System

PennDOT - Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization

RPO - Rural Planning Organization

M/RPO - Metropolitan and/or Rural Planning Organizations

Abstract

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) does not receive adequate levels of engagement from underserved communities and populations (shortened to “underserved communities” in this report). This report utilizes interviews, geographic information systems (GIS) analysis, and social science research to examine public engagement activities in transportation planning and discover why PennDOT is not achieving equitable involvement. This analysis finds that Public Participation Plans (PPP) vary widely in quality among all Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations in Pennsylvania and, because of the local match necessary for Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) projects, wealthier municipalities are more likely to be served by PennDOT. Also, community members are unsure of PennDOT’s purpose and rarely come into contact with the department. This is a common problem. Planners and underserved communities are fundamentally disconnected due to their histories, differing priorities, and lackluster attendance-based engagement activities. With the right values and strategies, PennDOT can overcome these issues and achieve meaningful involvement with underserved communities. This report recommends using clustering analysis to create defined underserved community areas, and use the created map to identify targets for community engagement and underserved community data comparison. It also recommends utilizing PennDOT Connects to provide TIP education to community groups and to develop a proactive engagement plan for PennDOT Connects that is influenced by the actions of planners to successfully involve underserved communities.

Background

Description of PennDOT's Survey Strategy

One of PennDOT's primary goals for the project was to increase survey participation from underserved communities. They communicated to the team that the survey responses they received were not representative of the diversity in Pennsylvania. To understand the breadth of PennDOT's survey engagement, the team conducted a review of its survey domain and distribution practices.

PennDOT distributes many issue-specific surveys on autonomous vehicles, litter behavior, winter services, and other similar topics.¹ These surveys are usually not distributed by location and are instead made available on the PennDOT website. However, PennDOT's primary planning survey is the 12-Year Program Update Transportation Survey administered by the State Transportation Commission (STC). PennDOT and STC distribute the survey through newsletters, website announcements, emails, social media campaigns, and engagement events.²

The 12-Year Program Update Transportation Survey is distributed every two years. The last time it ran was from March 1 to April 14, 2021, and it received 7,423 responses.³ Respondents answered questions about their travel behaviors and transportation priorities. They also were allowed to geolocate transportation issues they wanted to flag and provide descriptions of those issues. This "Issues" point dataset was shared with our team and formed part of our analysis.

TIP and STIP Process

The scope of this analysis includes the Transportation Improvement Programs, better known as TIPs throughout the Commonwealth.⁴ The TIPs are projects that are created in tandem with Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations (MPOs and RPOs) for a region and shared with PennDOT. PennDOT compiles the projects into a statewide initiative known as the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program or STIP. The STIP is the umbrella process that incorporates TIPs from all 24 Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations (M/RPOs).⁵ TIPs list the projects each region wants to implement using federal and state funds. The STIP comprises the first 4 years of a mid-range planning tool called the 12-Year Program (TYP). These projects involve transportation improvements which span a 12-year period. This includes improvement projects for highways, bridges, public transit, aviation, rail, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.⁶

At the start of each TIP cycle, PennDOT provides M/RPOs with an allocation for how much TIP funding they will receive. The regional planning organizations submit a list of projects to PennDOT for how they intend to spend their TIP funds. Once a TIP is accepted, it is folded into

¹ Rice, "CMU-PennDOT Capstone Resources," January 21, 2022.

² "2023 12-YEAR PROGRAM UPDATE STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION SURVEY SUMMARY." State Transportation Commission, June 2021. https://talkpatransportation.com/perch/resources/survey-results-2021/statewide_Statewide_Summary.pdf.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Transportation Improvement Program - Talk PA Transportation." Accessed April 19, 2022. <https://talkpatransportation.com/how-it-works/tip>.

⁵ "Four & Twelve Year Plans." Accessed April 22, 2022. <https://gis.penndot.gov/paprojects/TIP.aspx>.

⁶ 12-Year Program - Talk PA Transportation." Accessed April 19, 2022. <https://talkpatransportation.com/how-it-works/tip>.

the STIP and becomes part of the first four years of the statewide 12-Year Transportation Plan.⁷ The TIP process is a foundational step in transportation planning when each community prioritizes projects and assigns resources. This process is outlined in Figure 1.

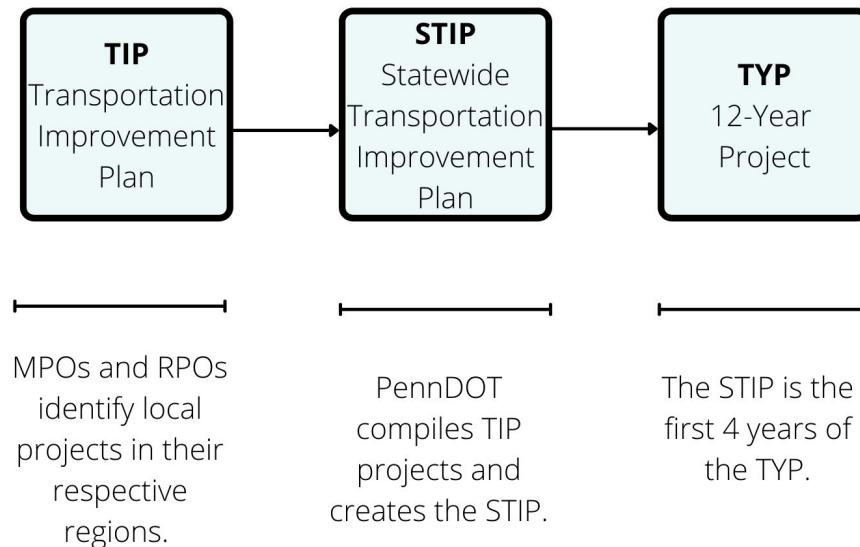


Figure 1 - Transportation Project Planning Diagram⁸

Engagement Strategies at State and Local Levels (M/RPO)

Since the TIP projects are federally mandated, any entity that uses federal funding for transportation projects is required by law to create and maintain a public participation plan, as stipulated in 23 CFR 450, which establishes guidance on how to create the plans as well.⁹

To better understand where underserved communities in Pennsylvania are, we looked into using Environmental Justice communities as a starting point. Environmental Justice is defined as 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.¹⁰

We then explored the 24 M/RPOs across the Commonwealth with the goal of locating and evaluating their respective Public Participation Plans (PPPs), as well as PennDOT's PPP. While some planning organizations had robust PPPs readily available on their websites, we identified a few discrepancies with others. For example, some plans were difficult to locate and not easily accessible. Others had some overlap with their PPPs and other public involvement plans that

⁷ Statewide Transportation Improvement Program - Talk PA Transportation.” Accessed April 22, 2022. <https://talkpatransportation.com/how-it-works/stip>.

⁸ “12-Year Program - Talk PA Transportation.” Accessed April 19, 2022. <https://talkpatransportation.com/how-it-works/typ>.

⁹ “23 CFR Part 450 -- Planning Assistance and Standards.” eCFR. n.d. Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-E/part-450>.

¹⁰ US EPA, OP. “Learn About Environmental Justice.” Overviews and Factsheets, February 13, 2015. <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

were created in compliance with Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.

More robust plans were easily accessible through the M/RPO websites. Published versions included a Limited English Proficiency Plan and were readily available in multiple languages. Additionally, these plans were regularly updated and maintained. PPP overviews also displayed a strong emphasis on public participation with clearly outlined goals and objectives to engage the public. These included presenting opportunities for public engagement with means for input, documenting, publicizing, and following up on citizen input, and seeking out the needs of interested parties. To optimize the PPPs as tools, this information was documented via websites with public meetings advertised in press releases and public service announcements. The effectiveness of the plans was also supplemented with social media and visualization tools.

Overall, the highest-quality PPPs are easily accessible to the public in different formats and different languages. The content within the plans clearly demonstrates tactics used for community engagement with clearly stated modes, addresses for locations, and appropriate notice in different formats is provided to the general public. And finally, the best reports also analyze the community demographics with visualizations that demonstrate clear need and justification of the TIPs.

PennDOT Connects

PennDOT Connects is a state-wide outreach policy to better integrate planning and engineering in transportation project planning and execution throughout the Pennsylvania Commonwealth.¹¹ PennDOT Connects was created in 2016 to foster better collaboration between planning partners and stakeholders before project scopes are developed, with a specific focus on topics directly concerning citizens such as safety issues, pedestrian accommodations, and transit access.¹²

PennDOT Connects aims to work collaboratively with local municipalities and M/RPOs to identify the needs of the local areas and offer adequate resources to help project proposal and development. While some of these projects may be included in future TIP projects, PennDOT Connects strives to remove barriers that prevent municipalities without adequate resources from identifying critical transportation projects necessitated by localities that lack funding, engineering, and planning resources to execute.¹³ As such, PennDOT Connects has allocated \$3 million annually to projects.¹⁴

While the initiative continues to expand, PennDOT Connects is being incorporated into engagement manuals and program processes and is supplemented by training for department staff at MPOs and RPOs.¹⁵ To date, only local municipalities can request PennDOT Connects

¹¹ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. "PennDOT Connects." Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://www.penndot.pa.gov:443/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/PennDOT-Connects.aspx>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. "PennDOT Connects." Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://www.penndot.pa.gov:443/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/PennDOT-Connects.aspx>.

resources and will work with their respective planning organization to receive relevant resources.¹⁶ This is important because it means PennDOT Connects is limited to reactive instead of proactive community engagement. As the Findings section will show, there is a gap between the resources needed by underserved communities and the resources provided by PennDOT Connects.

Definition of “Underserved Community”

How the term “underserved community” should be defined was explored in the Quantitative Analysis phase of the project, but the term also needs to be clarified here. As the PPP analysis demonstrates, the term “underserved community” is highly inconsistent and varies by M/RPO throughout the state. For reasons explained through the analysis, this is due to the nature of a community being “underserved” strongly depending on local contexts. In other words, the way one community is underserved by the transportation system may be completely different from how another community is underserved. For example, Amish communities often struggle to use roads that are chiefly designed for vehicle use. Because of this, there is no map of underserved communities or dataset specifically about those communities for the project to use. Additionally, the subjective, context-dependent nature of underserved communities means that creation of a comprehensive definition of underserved communities is impossible. However, this report defines underserved communities as specifically those which are underserved by the state transportation system (simply referred to as “underserved communities” for the remainder of this document).

While a map or database of underserved communities does not exist, there are several terms which are similar in meaning to “underserved community.” These include:

- Health Equity: The Health Equity Analysis Tool (HEAT) from Pennsylvania’s Department of Human Services shows discrepancies in health outcomes across several variables.¹⁷
- Social Vulnerability: The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) lists how census tracts are socially vulnerable across a variety of factors.¹⁸
- Environmental Justice Communities: Communities which, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards.¹⁹

Just as the above terms are distinct from one another, so too is the term “underserved community” distinct from these terms. Because of this, a unique quantitative definition of underserved communities was created by combining relevant data from several sources. The process of quantitatively defining this term constitutes a major analytical component of this

¹⁶ K. Atkinson. UX Interview - PennDOT Connects, April 13, 2022.

¹⁷ “Health Equity.” n.d. *Department of Human Services*. Accessed 8 May 2022.
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/HealthInnovation/Pages/HealthEquity.aspx>.

¹⁸ “CDC/ATSDR SVI Data and Documentation Download.” 2021. *ATSDR*. Accessed 8 May 2022.
https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/data_documentation_download.html.

¹⁹ “What Does Environmental Justice Even Mean?” 2017. *Foresight Design Initiative*. Accessed 8 May 2022.
<https://www.foresightdesign.org/blog/2017/7/19/xcd8aq95i73fy933hw4ppiappy346t>.

project. The method for doing so and a statewide map of defined underserved communities is explained under “Quantitative Analysis of Underserved Communities.”

Analysis

Interviews

The community plays a crucial role in the success and implementation of meaningful engagement. To better examine user experience, test the usability of the transportation planning processes, and verify trends identified in the literature review and PPP analysis, over 20 interviews of relevant stakeholders were conducted to shed light on the thoughts and feelings of individuals involved in this process.²⁰ Highlighting these voices fosters hope for a better relationship between PennDOT and the communities they aim to serve.

We identified individuals who would be affected by transportation projects in their area and grouped them into categories. These categories, *Community Member (7)*, *Neighborhood Revitalization and Advocacy Group (3)*, *City Planner (1)*, *Local Government Official (2)*, *Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations (7)*, *PennDOT Engineers (1)*, and *PennDOT Connects (1)*, made it easier to identify the types of people that are most impacted by transportation projects throughout the commonwealth. Questions asked were relevant to the respective user group that would provide the most useful information. From these responses, we were able to draw conclusions that supported our analysis and informed our recommendations.

User Personas and Archetypes - Background:

User research was conducted to better understand the community served by PennDOT. Through outreach, Pennsylvanians of various professional backgrounds, demographics, and roles within transportation planning were interviewed about their experiences. The interviews were sorted into seven distinct archetypes based on the interviewee's role and extent of interaction with PennDOT. In total, 23 interviews were conducted. A full synthesis of the user interviews can be found in Appendix 1/2/3.

Community Members and Residents (7):

Community members and residents are composed of Pennsylvanians throughout the commonwealth that reside in metropolitan and rural areas. To qualify as community members and residents, these individuals must have been living in Pennsylvania for at least two years prior to the interview. Despite the residency requirement, 85% of the interviewees were long-time Pennsylvanians that have only resided within the Commonwealth. Additionally, these individuals did not have a role in local government or within a neighborhood revitalization or advocacy group. The extent of the community members and residents' interactions with PennDOT are solely as members of the community.

Community members were asked about the extent of their interactions with neighborhood groups, local government, their respective M/RPOs, as well as PennDOT. Community members have extensive interactions with local government and neighborhood groups but only one of the interviewees had any interaction with their local M/RPO. Residents have extremely limited interaction with PennDOT, usually the extent of which is through experiences at the local DMV. Similarly, due to the narrow interactions, all

²⁰ The Interaction Design Foundation. "What Are User Interviews?" Accessed April 23, 2022. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/user-interviews>

of the interviewed residents did not understand the range of PennDOT's responsibilities or jurisdictions; nor do they recall ever taking or being asked to take a transportation survey issued by PennDOT.

Finally, residents expressed ill sentiments about state construction projects, usually citing inconvenience due to increased traffic near construction sites, and poorly managed construction project timelines. Comments included complaints about local road quality and project priorities, often referencing potholes and poor road and sidewalk conditions in their local neighborhoods.

When interviewers explained that PennDOT and the M/RPOs have an open commentary period on TIP projects, the interviewees were keen to learn that they were welcome to participate and submit commentary but specifically expressed preference in providing commentary when TIP projects are being proposed.

The identified themes included a lack of understanding of PennDOT's responsibilities and how they differ from those of local municipalities. Interactions with construction and contractors responsible for the construction were poor. Finally, there is very little trust or interaction with PennDOT due to the extremely limited interactions with the agency.

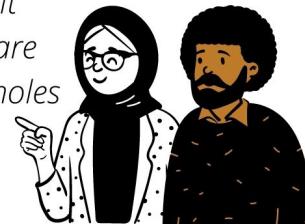
Community Members

Key Quotes:

"I hope PennDOT is going to fix that [potholes]. Just hope that sooner or later, they are going to fix it."

"There's so many potholes and I don't know what to do. And you don't know if it's the city of PennDOT. Who do you contact?"

"The responsibilities [of PennDOT] in my mind are projects as it relates to transpiration, when the weather is bad I believe they are responsible for clearing those roads as well, roads that have potholes they are responsible for that as well."



Neighborhood Revitalization and Advocacy Groups (3):

Members from three local neighborhood revitalization and/or advocacy groups were interviewed during the interview phase of this project. The three agencies are directly involved in projects involving PennDOT and the local M/RPOs.

These groups were interviewed about their respective organizations and their roles within the groups. The interviews aimed to understand how these groups interacted with PennDOT and what the agency's engagement strategies look like in practice.

Neighborhood groups often serve as a liaison between the local communities and PennDOT. Based on interviews, groups reported that PennDOT will disseminate instructions to the municipalities and the municipalities will pass the management responsibilities onto the neighborhood groups which are the

recipients of the project. Then, the groups work in tandem with the contractors hired by PennDOT to execute projects. In these processes, the interviewed groups reported that representatives from PennDOT rarely visit project sites.

Neighborhood groups commented on the unique sets of transportation challenges that rural communities are faced with and how they differ significantly from those of metropolitan residents. For example, the Amish communities in Pennsylvania that rely on walking and biking for transportation may necessitate more bike lanes and sidewalks than roads on which to travel by car. Similarly, issues are described as “top down and bottom up” meaning that the federal government does not provide adequate funds for the rural communities with furthers the extent to which these communities are disadvantaged; however, despite awareness of these inequities, there is little advocacy from the bottom up that aims to change the nature of funding. As such, there are a number of unintended consequences of transportation planning policies that have gone unaddressed for too long.

From these interviews, the following trends were identified. First, the local municipalities do not always do an adequate job of engaging and are partly to blame for this because it is perceived that PennDOT does a good job of engaging with municipalities, but PennDOT and the municipalities fail to communicate as well with the local neighborhood groups. Also, as directions get passed down from one entity to another, it creates ambiguity around responsibility and accountability. As such, accountability is often unclear or non-existent. Finally, PennDOT literature on projects is dense, difficult to understand, and archaic, creating a barrier for residents and community members to adequately access and understand PennDOT projects.

Neighborhood Revitalization & Advocacy Groups

Key Quotes:

[The municipality] relies on them [PennDOT] for major projects because the city doesn't have 100% of the funding to do those projects...PennDOT provides 80% but not without heavy tolls on the community."



· "PennDOT will tell the city what to do and the city will tell us."

· "PennDOT material is incredibly dense."

City Planners (1):

Despite outreach efforts, only one city planner agreed to participate and was interviewed from the City of Pittsburgh. The goal of the interview was to better understand how engagement efforts at the local and municipal level differed from interviews at the M/RPO and state level. Understanding these differences could better inform strategies used at the state-level.

The planner was asked how projects are planned, as well as the extent of community engagement involved in this planning process. Additionally, the extent of interactions with PennDOT was explored.

The interviewee expressed that even at a localized level, engagement is still rather difficult. However, the municipality has resources that they use to engage the community throughout the project planning and execution process rather than just ask for feedback before the project process. Recommendation three of this report leverages one of these resources, a guide published by the International Association for Public Participation on how to conduct active and meaningful engagement throughout the duration of a project from initiation, planning, and execution.

City Planners

Key Quotes:



"Neighborhood plans are a 2-year planning process but account for outcomes over 1-2 decades. Planning fatigue exists in many neighborhoods. Following this process, it can be hard to get people to give more details and inspire the desire to spend more time talking. Many times, people don't have interest in specific topics."

Local Government Officials (2):

Outreach was conducted and two government officials participated in the user research, one of which was Mayor Ed Gainey of Pittsburgh. Insights from the local government officials clarified how engagement strategies are developed based on the communities within them.

These officials were asked about what they believe are effective and successful engagement strategies as well as how often they interact with their local M/RPOs. Other questions included inquiries about effective outreach methods and any lessons learned.

Interviewees expressed that effective engagement hinges on understanding the residents of their respective communities and working with them to address unique needs and challenges. These local government officials confirmed the perplexities associated with meaningful engagement, emphasizing the constant demands associated with such an undertaking.

Unfortunately, the local government officials expressed that PennDOT's current focus is not aligned with underserved communities and cited priorities such as continuous traffic and decongestion that do not take into consideration the most pressing concerns for pedestrians. Additionally, the concerns prioritized by PennDOT, and subsequent transportation projects are of those communities that have the capability to mobilize. Local community groups are not always regarded positively as they may be composed of members that are not residents of the neighborhoods or the community areas that they represent.

Local Government Officials

Key Quotes:

"Engagement means being involved – getting the word out there and staying on top of things."

· "There are still people who rely on paper and the telephone. Our internet is not strong here. We still have places that do not have good internet in this country."

· "Knowing your audience is key to effective engagement."



Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations (7)

Seven of the 24 metropolitan and rural planning organizations in Pennsylvania agreed to participate in this user research study.

The M/RPOs were all asked about their engagement tactics and strategies and how they align with those identified in their respective PPPs. They were also asked about challenges their respective communities face, the extent of their engagement with PennDOT, and how TIP projects are identified.

The M/RPOs reported that reaching out to communities is difficult, but reaching minorities and low-income residents is even more challenging. Further, engagement among low-income populations needs to take place in settings that are easily and comfortably accessible such as libraries and local schools instead of government facilities. Like the neighborhood revitalization and advocacy groups, these organizations reported that PennDOT documentation is dense and difficult to understand. Because of this, they advise that PennDOT should make literature and resources more transparent, accessible, and readable. Much like the trends identified among previous archetypes, the planning organizations confirm that residents that are not familiar with PennDOT or with PennDOT's responsibilities will not engage with PennDOT.

To aid in their engagement tactics, especially with disseminating resources to the municipalities within their jurisdictions, the planning organizations requested additional resources from PennDOT Connects and for PennDOT Connects to work more closely with the M/RPOs to provide feedback on policy efficacy. Prior to the PennDOT Connects inauguration, many of the planning organizations were working alongside their local municipalities to connect them with available resources.

Metropolitan & Rural Planning Organizations

Key Quotes:



·“There’s a disconnect that the community doesn’t understand because when you’re using federal funds, you need a couple of years to get through that process. There’s also a disconnect between what the government wants to maintain and what the community wants.”

··“Only one comment [on the TIP] in 28 years.”

·“Publishing official documents is not effective because they’re so dense and technical that people won’t read them.”

PennDOT Engineers (I):

While multiple PennDOT engineers provided feedback and insights about current PennDOT processes, one PennDOT Engineer participated in the user research.

Questions posed were aimed to identify when engagement efforts are conducted and how strategies are formulated as well as whether or not local matches are a barrier for underserved communities to receive transportation funding.

Not only is the local match a barrier, but there are many disadvantages and barriers that seem to be compounding against rural communities. For example, rural communities face many unique challenges in regard to transportation projects, citing local Amish communities that struggle with accessibility on roads built solely for vehicles, posing an element of danger to commuting on carriages, bikes, or by foot on roads intended for cars and freight. Unfortunately, the budgetary match is also a barrier that prohibits many municipalities from following through with necessary projects because of funding, despite the match being only a fraction of the price. Thus, available funding will likely be distributed to municipalities that are able to make the match and thereby further disenfranchising communities with limited funds but a need for transportation projects.

Despite the many challenges, PennDOT aims to address these barriers through PennDOT Connects and it has a lot of potential. This feedback prompted an interview request from administrative members of the program.

PennDOT Engineers

Key Quotes:

"For some cities, if you ask them for 20%, you might as well ask them for the whole 100% because they do not have the money either way."

· "When it comes to engagement, it is really budget based on when that is going to happen and when you can get that down."

· "There's not a lot of [federal or grant] money out there for rural communities."

PennDOT Connects (1):

In an interview with an administrative member of PennDOT Connects, questions aimed to provide an understanding of what the program aims to do as well as how the program aims to fill capacity gaps when providing resources on community, engagement, and engineering as they pertain to TIP planning.

PennDOT Connects is a municipal resource created solely to reach municipalities and provide support to them. Because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the extent of PennDOT Connects outreach has been limited, prompting a roadshow to showcase the resource to M/RPOs throughout the commonwealth. As explained by PennDOT Connects, municipalities can request assistance from the PennDOT Connects website and then in tandem with their respective M/RPO, PennDOT Connects will provide free resources to help in planning.

As of the publication of this report, support from PennDOT Connects is limited to municipalities and M/RPOs only. They currently do not offer guidance to the M/RPOs on how they can offer the resources to their respective municipalities but aim to address this discrepancy in the future. The recommendations in this report offer suggestions to PennDOT Connects that would extend the program's outreach and efficacy.

In the following section, many of these trends are juxtaposed with a literature review that analyzes the history of transportation policies and their discontents in the United States with an evaluation of current practices that aim to facilitate more equitable community participation in transportation planning.



PennDOT Connects

Key Quotes:

"The mission is to reach any municipality - city, township, borough - to support them not to support the citizens. This is a municipal resource program."

I think we need to provide more guidance [to MPOs and RPOs] before we reach those groups. A lot of them do the basics - its just staff and resources - but if there was something we could provide like here are some great ways to go about it that would be great."



"A municipality can literally go on the PennDOT Connects website and request assistance. Then we work with the M/RPO and make sure that this is a good system to work with."

Literature Review

While the project's interview strategy showed how stakeholders interacted with and perceived underserved communities and PennDOT, a review of current literature on underserved communities explained what factors contribute to communities being underserved and what strategies are most effective in engaging them. Major barriers keep underserved populations from true engagement, but equitable values and smart strategies at the grassroots level of civic engagement can remedy them. While the information in this section takes inspiration from numerous sources, the two most influential are from the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program's 2012 report "Practical Approaches for Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations in Transportation Decisionmaking".

Before examining barriers and practices, an important distinction needs to be made between *community engagement* and *meaningful involvement*. Community engagement, as it is now, comes across as an "event" or a "period" of community engagement (i.e. planners enter the "community engagement" section of their projects). Meaningful involvement, the true goal of public engagement, is a continuous transfer of information between the planner and the community based on mutual trust.²¹ This trust assures that the community is open to receive information on projects and that planners are open to feedback and willing to make changes. Planners may want to quickly find ways to engage underserved communities, but equitable involvement requires both significant buy-in and that planners understand the barriers, adopt effective strategies, and truly wish to make this change in the planning process.

Physical Barriers are Real and Impactful:

Planners generally use attendance-based strategies to gauge input from the community. These are strategies that require community members to approach planning organizations first in order for engagement to be possible. This includes strategies like providing comment forms at planning offices, fulfilling engagement-based support services like translation upon request, and hosting public meetings in specific locations. In inequitable planning structures, meetings occur at the same time, day, and location. For employed underserved populations, these meetings are inconvenient or even impossible to reach if they take place during working hours.²² This is often the case, particularly in rural areas.²³ Rural citizens are often long distances from the meeting location and disproportionately do not have access to reliable broadband that would allow them to even attend hybrid meetings, leaving no visible recourse.

Underserved populations, both urban and rural, often do not have the resources, time or money, to attend events. 10.5% of metropolitan households have no vehicle and many rural populations can be hours of driving distance away from the meeting location.²⁴ Childcare also becomes a major issue. Parents and especially single mothers

²¹ Aimen, D., Morris, A. (2012). Practical Approaches for Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations in Transportation Decisionmaking (pp. 1–16). National Cooperative Highway Research Program.

²² Dobbard, J., Forouzan, L., & Ramirez-Zarate, A. *Making Public Participation Equitable: Recommendations for an Office of Civic Engagement in Los Angeles* (p. 15). Los Angeles, CA: Advancement Project California, 2018

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ NCHRP, *Practical Approaches* 2-27

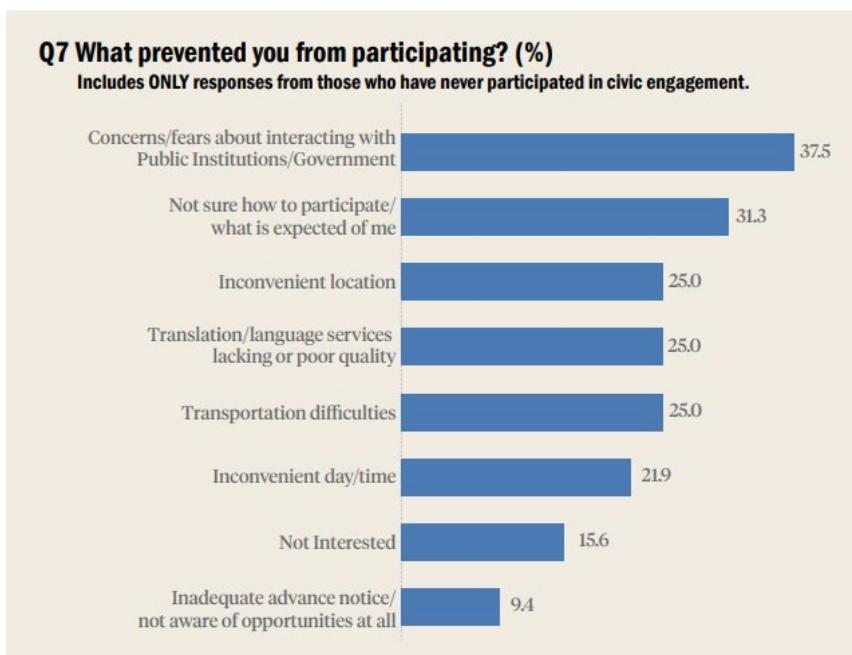


Figure 2 -Obstructions to Participation from Advancement Project California

lack access to childcare resources during meeting times, making staying home the only feasible option.²⁵ Finding ways to transition from attendance-based meetings and reaching these communities where they are, such as block parties, schools, high school sports games, door-to-door canvassing, and text blasts, is an important part of mitigating these issues.²⁶

Transportation Planners are Disconnected from Underserved Communities:

There exist powerful disconnects between planners and underserved communities that persist on many levels. Acknowledging these differences and reaching out to underserved communities rather than expecting them to do the work will facilitate meaningful involvement. The most common disconnects between planners and underserved communities are described below.

First, the goals of low-income populations and those of planners are often unaligned. These communities do not tend to care about traffic analysis. People who are traditionally underserved by their state's department of transportation are concerned about whether they are going to make it to work on time or whether the roads will be safe in their community. Low-income citizens also drive significantly less than those with higher incomes, leading to having less to gain given the primary considerations of planners.²⁷

²⁵ Toor, Pardeep, Jason Cox, & Mark Wyckoff. *A Guidebook to Community Engagement: Involving Urban and Low-Income Populations in an Environmental Planning Process*. Michigan State University: Flint River Watershed Coalition, 2014.

²⁶ "DFC Detroit Strategic Framework Plan." Detroit Future City , 2012, pp. 720

²⁷ Andersen , Michael. "Low-Income Households Drive Much Less than High-Income Households." Bike Portland, January 29, 2020.

Underserved populations don't always want to speak to planners, either. Advancement Project California, a California nonprofit focused on expanding opportunities for disadvantaged communities in their state, polled residents of low-income communities in Los Angeles about their engagement with the government. The primary issues for these communities are visible in Figure 11.²⁸ Only 16% of residents in underserved areas said they had never participated in the planning process. Only 2% of low-income neighborhood residents said they have never participated and have absolutely no interest in participating, so there is substantial room for improvement.²⁹

Of all those that never participated, 47.5% did not trust the government enough to engage and 31.3% either did not know how to get involved or what they would do if they were engaged. The results suggest that interacting with planners can be incredibly intimidating for many people, particularly when attendance-based forms of engagement are used. In addition to the physical issues also listed in this survey, past work shows that attendance-based participation is ill-suited for achieving meaningful involvement in the planning process.

It is unsurprising that underserved communities are not keen on interacting with the government, let alone transportation planners. Due to choices taken by the same organizations that contemporary planners represent, low-income communities have been negatively impacted by the entirety of transportation organizations. They were often taken advantage of in transportation planning, especially with high-traffic roads being run through their neighborhoods.³⁰ For this reason, underserved citizens may experience latent demand with planning engagement. They have been ignored enough that it feels useless to keep engaged in the planning process. Unless they are shown that their feedback is useful and can impact transportation projects, they are unlikely to begin engaging.³¹

Lack of funding leads to lackluster engagement efforts. Since funding is tight, planners are often forced to be satisfied with only publishing what time meetings are happening or requesting survey responses, otherwise things that do not lead to meaningful involvement.³² From a study done on civic engagement with Virginian MPOs, those which employed dedicated staff for community engagement experienced meaningful involvement at much higher levels than those who did not.³³ Both Richmond MPO and the National Capital Region Planning Board MPO allocated institutional resources to reaching out to these communities and have not only been improving on the choices of past planners, but have demonstrated to underserved communities that they are listening and open to cooperative planning, building a true partnership.

In some cases, it is questionable whether transportation planners are invested in what underserved communities have to say. Planners sometimes view public participation as a

²⁸ Dobbard, *Making Public Participation Equitable*, 15

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Velasco, Gabi. "How Transportation Planners Can Advance Racial Equity and Environmental Justice." Urban Institute, August 18, 2020.

³¹ Detroit, *Strategic Framework*, 714

³² NCHRP, *Practical Approaches*, S-3

³³ Dabney, Unwanna. "Public Participation in Transportation Planning: How Does the Level of Engagement and Deliberation Affect Transportation Decisions in Virginia's MPOs?" 2013.

procedure, not as an opportunity for meaningful involvement.³⁴ The community engagement process becomes a public information process, or a public relations exercise, rather than cooperative planning.³⁵ Instead of actively searching for feedback, planners often told meeting organizers to defend the program against criticism, not to consider whether the criticism is valid. Since the engagement process often takes place so far down the process, it is resistant to change.

Lastly, the science and language of transportation planning is incredibly complex and hard to understand. Even people close to planning, such as M/RPO board members and community leaders, have tremendous difficulty in grasping what plans entail.³⁶ The high barrier of entry for knowledge to engage in the process blocks out many, growing the disconnect between communities and planners.

Roadmap of Successful Strategies:

Identify and Map Underserved Communities - The Miami-Dade County MPO collaborated with local universities to develop the Integrated Transportation Information System (ITIS), where they examined and created a community background for 35 municipalities in the county.³⁷ North Carolina DOT included the identification of specific underserved communities, including site visits, into PPPs as well. PPPs can further outline and include reports about these underserved populations' needs that have been identified through engagement efforts and site visits, as both the Minnesota and New Jersey DOT have done.³⁸

Develop Metrics to Track Progress - Planners should quantifiably track progress towards goals surrounding underserved populations. The Hillsborough County MPO (FL) has a Public Participation Measures of Effectiveness Report that examines PPP activities, projects or plans addressed, the number of contacts, potential changes to the PPP, and a summary of activities and results. The report includes the number of attendees from the designated underserved areas.³⁹ Even past whether their engagement is working, metrics should be kept about whether plans have been serving underserved populations efficiently.

Keep Plans Understandable with “Plain Talk” and Visualizations - Washington State has implemented “Plain Talk”.⁴⁰ This Executive Order mandates that all government communications be written clearly, without complex jargon, so they can be understood by all who read them. Planners should adopt this idea. Further, clear visualization techniques should be published for plans. Models and clear infographics on potential changes from plans should be published to lower the high knowledge barrier needed to engage in transportation planning.

Allow for Proper Informing and Full Transparency Early - The Federal Highway Administration outlines the need to inform early to lower the economic burden of changing plans that leads to

³⁴ Ibid, 70

³⁵ NCHRP, *Practical Approaches*, 1-17

³⁶ Ibid, 5-71

³⁷ NCHRP, *Practical Approaches*, 3-8

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid 3-17.

⁴⁰ Exec. Order No. 05-03, WA, (March, 2005).

resistance to adapt based on feedback.⁴¹ Information should be delivered where underserved communities will actually find it. These places can include social media, foreign language radio, text blasts, and both digital and print newsletters.⁴² Further, it states that when sharing information, underserved communities should be informed of: 1) the project's purpose and its consistency with the goals for those communities, 2) the project's alternatives and major design features, and 3) the social, economic, environmental, and other impacts of the project.

It is also critical to inform these communities when plans change because of their feedback. Detroit Future City describes this in a four-step process that will prove their time is not wasted engaging in plans.⁴³ This plan inspires citizens and directly informs them of when their feedback actually made a difference. This feedback loop establishes credibility of planning organizations for underserved communities and ensures those communities that the planning organizations are actively listening and that their feedback has power. This gives citizens confidence that their engagement is not a waste of their time.

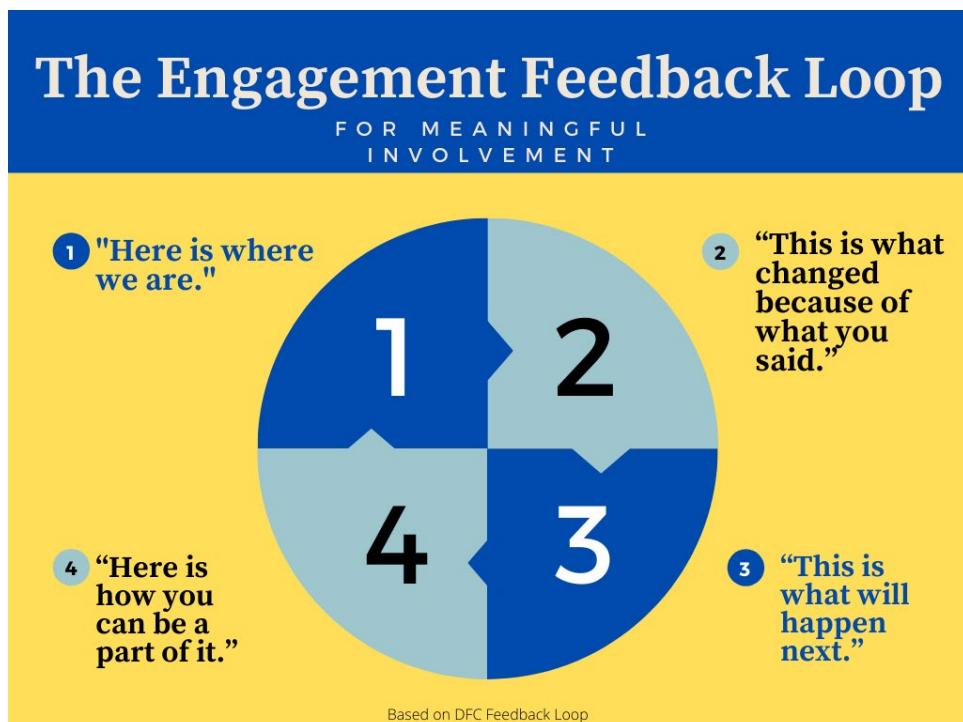


Figure 3 - The Engagement Feedback Loop

Reach out to Communities on Their Terms - Lowering the stress it takes to interact with planners is crucial. The Seattle Neighborhood Plan, for example, instituted a two-month period that mobilized liaisons to host 41 workshops and small group discussions throughout Southeast Seattle in convenient locations that were attended by 1,200 participants that represented 14 historically underrepresented communities.⁴⁴ This plan acted as a way to educate the community

⁴¹ NCHRP, *Practical Approaches*, 1-10

⁴² Ibid 4-54.

⁴³ Detroit, *Strategic Framework*, 712

⁴⁴ NCHRP, *Practical Approaches*, 3-29

on urban planning and how to begin engaging and was considered a success. Planners should also enter these communities and reach out to underserved populations, featuring door-to-door canvassing and showing up to their gatherings. Detroit Future City implemented the “Roaming Table” to inform communities of plans and gauge feedback by meeting them where they are comfortable.⁴⁵ The Roaming Table can be set up at places like music festivals, neighborhood street corners, block parties, and high school football games.

Handling Meetings and Surveys - Current strategies, like meetings and surveys, are useful but mainly supplementary for information. Getting populations to be engaged first will allow for them to become meaningfully involved. Then, information can be collected through these means. Underserved populations state that they would attend more meetings if they were held on weekends, during non-working hours, and in their neighborhood.⁴⁶ Surveys, to get the highest quality feedback, should be written in accessible language and brief to not dissuade citizens.

This section presented several examples of successful community engagement. It also highlighted effective strategies used to improve engagement with underserved communities. These examples can be analyzed in detail for tactics most relevant to improving PennDOT’s engagement with underserved communities across the state. These examples ultimately serve as evidence for actionable recommendations that PennDOT can adopt to more equitably engage with its constituents. In a similar manner, comparing PPP quality and determining the locations of underserved communities across the state can show how current engagement strategies are ineffective and where PennDOT’s resources should be focused.

PPP Analysis

Reading through the PPPs of each M/RPO was the first analytical step of this project. Important trends common among PPPs and their quality relative to one another served as a starting point for identifying weaknesses in PennDOT’s engagement of underserved communities. They also supported many of the findings from the interview and literature review components. The following trends were identified and served as a framework for the remainder of the project.

- Each M/RPO has a different definition of “underserved community.”
- All PPPs are radically different.
- Lack of accountability is common across PPPs.
- Attendance-based engagement strategies are common across PPPs.
- Resource endowments seem to strongly influence PPP quality.

To enable the comparison of PPP quality throughout the state, the findings were quantified into a data table based on the most relevant variables. The variables are earliest publish date, identification of a clear engagement strategy, collection of engagement metrics, and page length of relevant participation info. Comparing the PPPs to one another illustrated that inequity was a

⁴⁵ Detroit, *Strategic Framework*, 720

⁴⁶ Dobbars, *Making Public Engagement Equitable*, 16

major influence on engagement and proceeding work must address it. The entire data table is located in the appendix, along with several maps comparing PPP characteristics.

Quantitative Analysis of Underserved Communities

Issues and TIP Project Data:

Two datasets are used to analyze engagement and TIP project data relevant to underserved communities. Issues reported during PennDOT's 12-Year Program Update Transportation Survey and 2021 TIP project data were provided at the start of the project. The Issues dataset shows the precise locations of reported issues and categorizes each issue by type. Similarly, the TIP project dataset shows the location of TIP projects and assigns several categorical classifications to each. These data can be respectively used to show how engagement rates and TIP project types differ between underserved communities and the rest of the state. Showing these differences can demonstrate not only why equitable representation of underserved communities is important in the planning process, but also suggest what PennDOT's next steps for improving underserved community engagement might be.

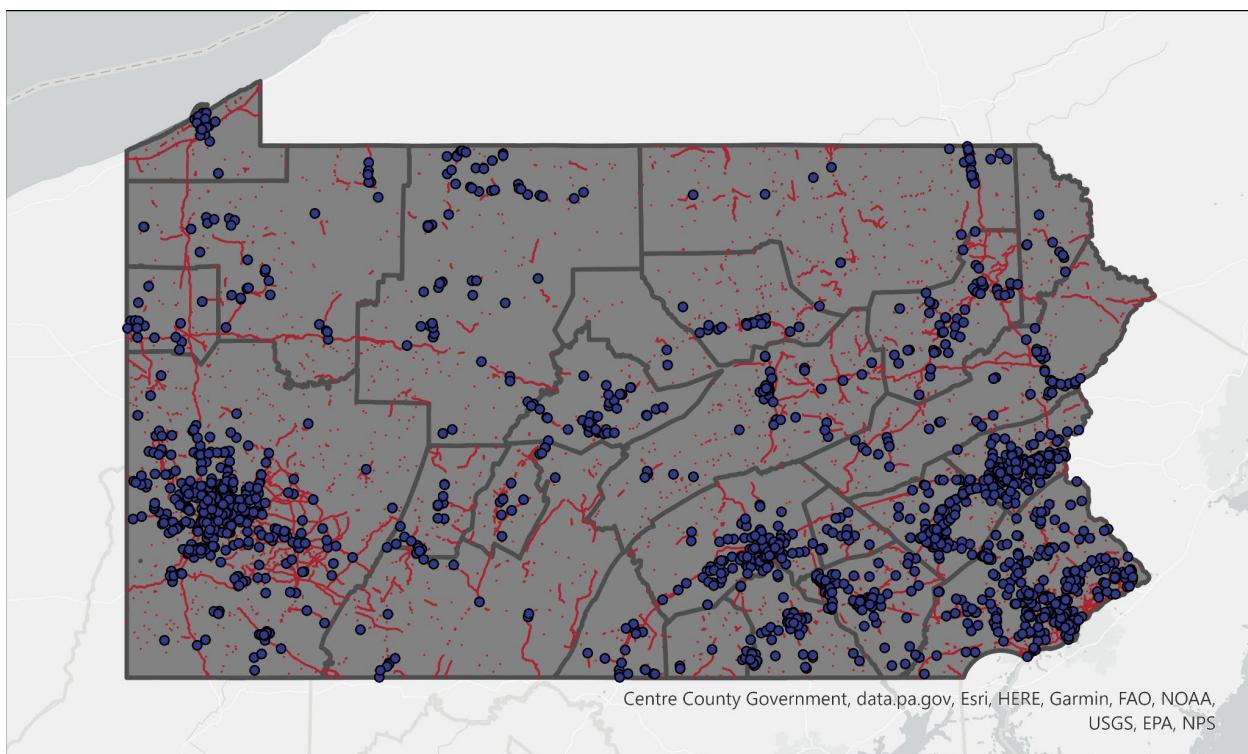


Figure 4 - Issues and TIP Project Data

Figure 4 maps the distribution of Issues (circles) and TIP project locations (red lines). It is possible that the data location and type may be related to underserved communities in some way. However, such a comparison is currently impossible due to no concrete definition of underserved communities existing. Without clearly indicating certain areas as underserved, the Issues and TIP

project datasets are largely useless for this project. The next steps outline the process for creating clear definitions of underserved communities which could be used to analyze the Issues and TIP project datasets.

GIS Analysis:

One of the earliest attempts to map underserved communities in the state was to use the Social Vulnerability Index (2018) created by the CDC.⁴⁷ This dataset ranks census tracts across each state based on the following values, which are chiefly derived from ACS datasets.

- Below poverty
- Unemployed
- Income
- No High School Diploma
- Aged 65 or Older
- Aged 17 or Older
- Older than Age 5 with a Disability
- Single-Parent Households
- Minority
- Speaks English “Less than Well”
- Multi-Unit Structures
- Mobile Homes
- Crowding
- No Vehicle
- Group Quarters

These data are then aggregated into a single percentage score representing social vulnerability, with higher values representing a greater rank of social vulnerability. An early attempt at mapping underserved communities was to map only the values of the top 75% most socially vulnerable tracts in the state.

⁴⁷ “CDC/ATSDR SVI Data and Documentation Download.” 2021. ASDR. Accessed 8 May 2022. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/data_documentation_download.html.

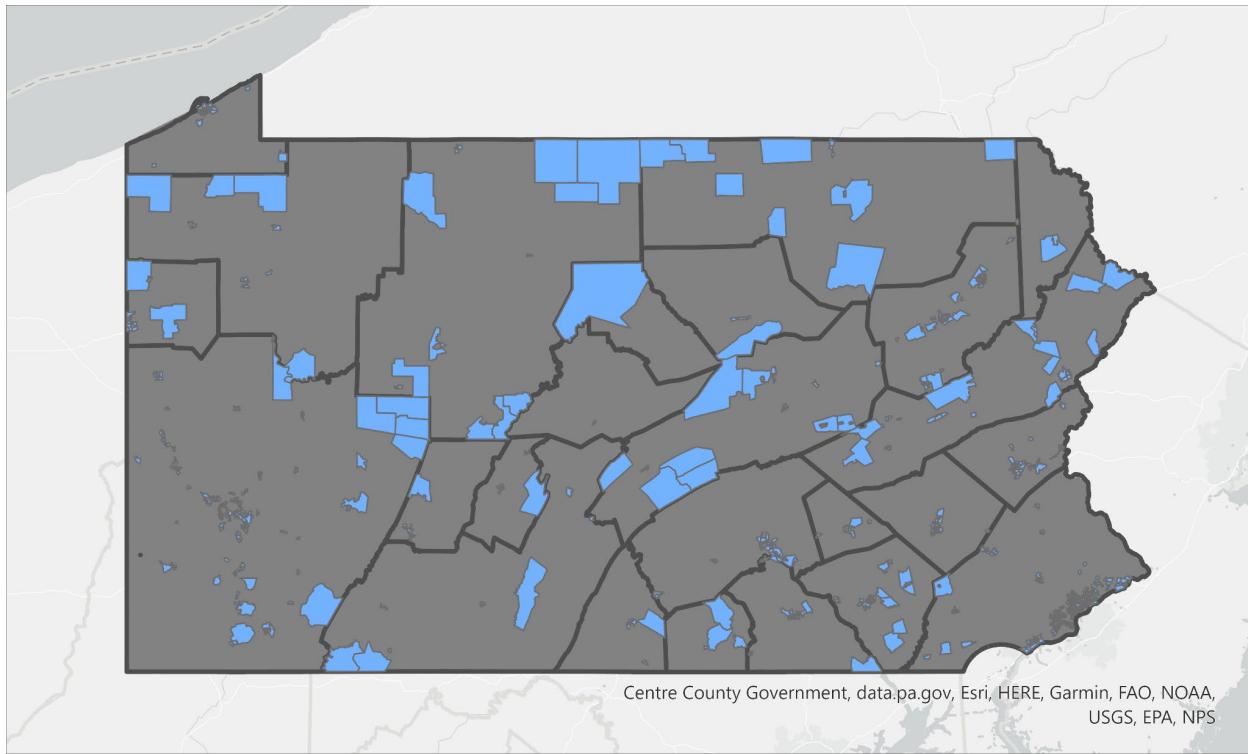


Figure 5 - Top 75% Most Socially Vulnerable Census Tracts in Pennsylvania

This strategy of classifying tracts as either “served” or “underserved” based on meeting criteria of multiple variables was used throughout the quantitative analysis in this project because it simplified comparing the two tract classifications to one another, in particular the Issues and TIP project data found in aggregate within the two categories. However, the method shown in Figure X was not used for data analysis because many of the variables used in the SVI dataset are not relevant to public transportation and PennDOT’s work in community engagement. For example, it is unclear how relevant the prevalence of multi-unit structures within a census tract is to determining how an area is underserved by the state’s transportation system. Even if a relationship exists, there are other variables which are likely more appropriate for defining underserved communities.

The next phase of this project saw the identification of variables which are more appropriate to describing underserved communities. Consultation with advisory board members, findings from the literature review, and interviews with community stakeholders, district planners, and M/RPO staff identified a series of variables particularly relevant to defining communities which are underserved relative to Pennsylvania’s transportation system.

- Proportion of racial/ethnic minority persons
- Proportion of persons over age 65
- Proportion of persons in poverty
- Persons with no access to a vehicle
- Percentage of persons with limited English proficiency

- Access to broadband internet
- Rurality

Many of these data are already used in the SVI dataset. Additionally, these data comprise the majority of those cited in PPPs throughout the state. Rurality in this project was defined using shapefiles created by the US Census Bureau, where tracts that intersect an urban area are considered rural and all others are considered rural.⁴⁸ Finally, broadband data is collected regularly by the FCC under Form 477.⁴⁹ As such, all of the data used to define underserved communities is easily accessible. Further explanations of why these variables are relevant to underserved communities can be found in Appendix 1/2/3.

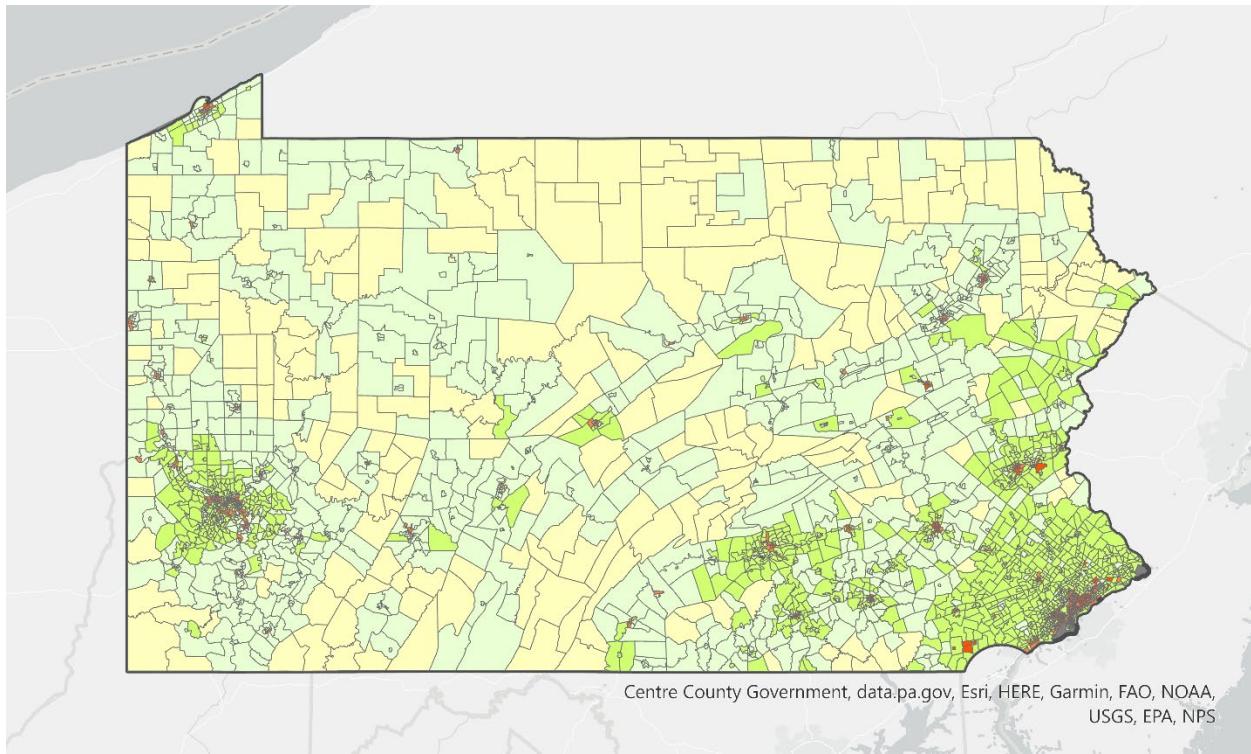
It is important to reiterate that no comprehensive definition of underserved communities exists due to community engagement being heavily based on the unique circumstances of the area. As such, the list of relevant variables is non-exhaustive and other data could be included or removed based on need in a future clustering analysis. However, the variables used in this analysis were determined to be particularly relevant to identifying communities underserved by the state's transportation system.

Clustering Analysis Results:

To consolidate the identified variables into one map of underserved communities, a clustering analysis was completed using the underserved community variables and the clusters which represented the identified variables the most were classified as underserved.. The clustering analysis was completed three separate times. The first iteration (Figure 6) applied all variables equally with no preference for any of them. The second iteration (Figure 7) was performed on rural tracts only. The third was performed on urban tracts only, and was functionally identical to the first iteration. The first iteration used five clusters, while the second and third iterations used four clusters due to the removal of the “Rurality” variable. The following figures show a clustering of all census tracts, a clustering of rural tracts only, then a map combining rural and urban underserved tracts to create one state-wide map of underserved communities (Figure 8). Additional information on tract classification and related statistics is included in the appendix.

48 “TIGER/Line Shapefile, 2019, 2010 nation, U.S., 2010 Census Urban Area National.” 2021. *US Census Bureau, Department of Commerce*. Accessed 8 May 2022. <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/tiger-line-shapefile-2019-2010-nation-u-s-2010-census-urban-area-national>.

49 “Form 477 Census Tract Data on Internet Access Services.” 2022. *Federal Communications Commission*. Accessed 8 May 2022. <https://www.fcc.gov/form-477-census-tract-data-internet-access-services>.



Clustering Classification of All Tracts

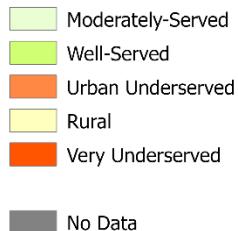
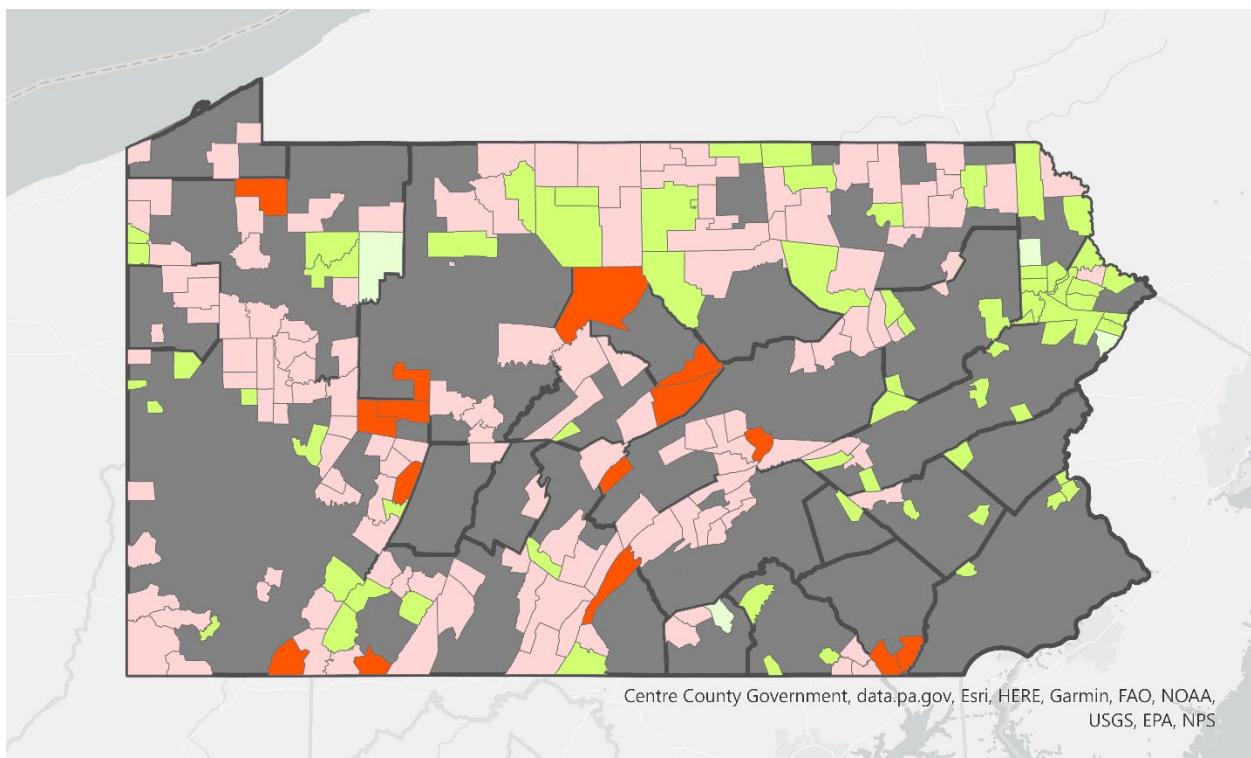


Figure 6 - Clustering Analysis of All Pennsylvanian Census Tracts

Figure 6 applies the analytical tool to all tracts throughout the state. Doing so creates a problem where only urban areas are identified as underserved communities and rural areas are exclusively sorted into their own separate category. This effectively makes it a map of urban underserved communities, and repeating the same model for urban areas only creates a nearly identical map. The interviews completed during this project showed that many rural areas are underserved relative to one another, meaning a statewide map of underserved communities must consider both rural and urban areas. This demonstrates why the term “underserved community” is so inconsistently defined; how a community is underserved is strongly influenced by a number of regional factors. For example, a rural area may be underserved due to poor internet access while an urban area may be underserved due to the greater prevalence of poverty and nonmajority racial/ethnic groups. Repeating the clustering analysis for rural tracts only highlights the rural areas which are underserved.



Rural Clustering Classification of Tracts



Figure 7 - Clustering Analysis of Pennsylvania's Rural Census Tracts

Figure 7 shows clusters found among rural tracts, and the rural tracts identified as underserved are shown. It is important to note that communities are not simply served or underserved, but exist as intersections of numerous factors. While only the dark orange areas are considered underserved by this project, other factors may indicate that a given tract is underserved in a specific context. For example, poor internet access is a distinct quality that merits study and policy responses on its own. However, mapping tracts in this way can show not only areas which very likely warrant attention on PennDOT's part, but also areas which would likely be poor candidates for targeted outreach efforts. The next map (Figure 8) will combine the underserved communities identified into one map usable for data analysis.

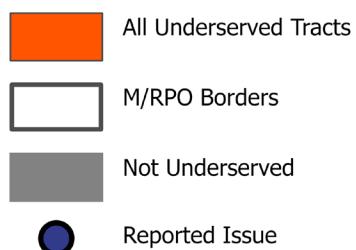
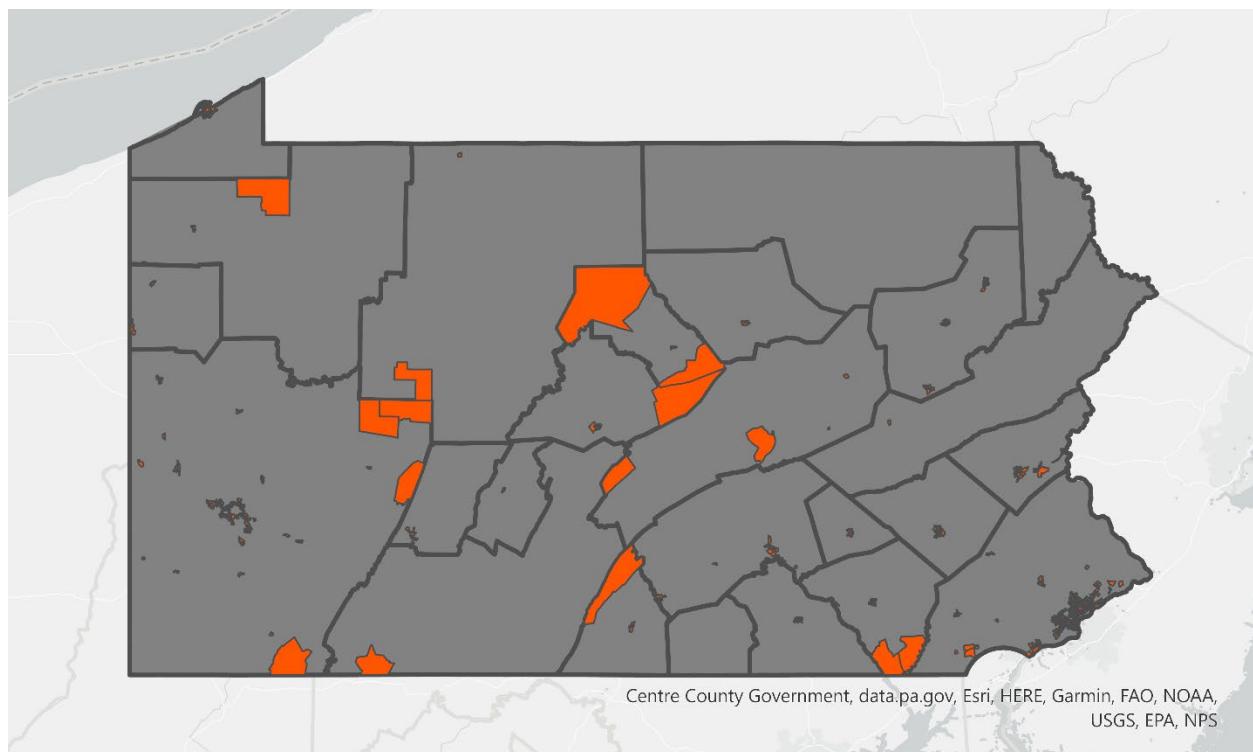


Figure 8 - Map of Pennsylvania's Underserved Census Tracts

The new map bears resemblance to the SVI map shown earlier. However, the number of tracts is smaller and the tracts identified are more relevant to PennDOT's work. With Pennsylvania's underserved tracts identified, it is now possible to meaningfully analyze the Issues and TIP project data sets. This can be done by combining the datasets with the underserved tracts identified in Figure 4, and selecting for or against the data located within the identified tracts. Figure 9 shows a picture of Philadelphia's underserved tracts combined with the Issues data.

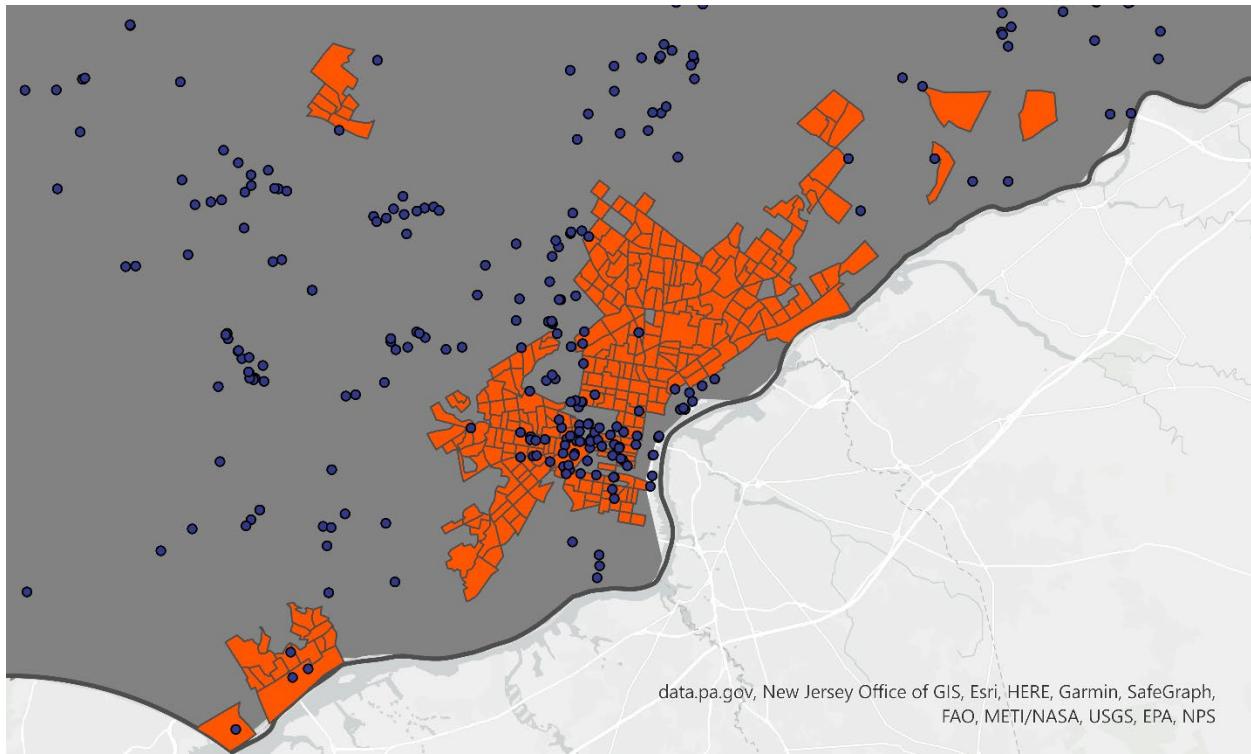


Figure 9 - Comparison of Issues Data Points and Underserved Communities in Philadelphia

One observation the team immediately made upon seeing the map above was how uncommon Issues data seemed to be within underserved communities. The extent to which this may be true and other comparisons will be explained in the Findings section. However, the codification of certain tracts as underserved can be used for more than comparing geospatial data points. Next, the underserved tracts will be used to analyze TIP project distribution.

Analysis of TIP Project Data

Just as the Issues data can be combined with the quantitative definition of underserved communities, so too can TIP project data provided by PennDOT be used to compare served and underserved communities. We compared the locations of TIP projects across Pennsylvania with underserved communities. The maps below show that TIP Projects seem to be located disproportionately outside of underserved communities. Of the 8436 TIP project points, 566 (6.7%) TIP projects are situated within underserved communities.

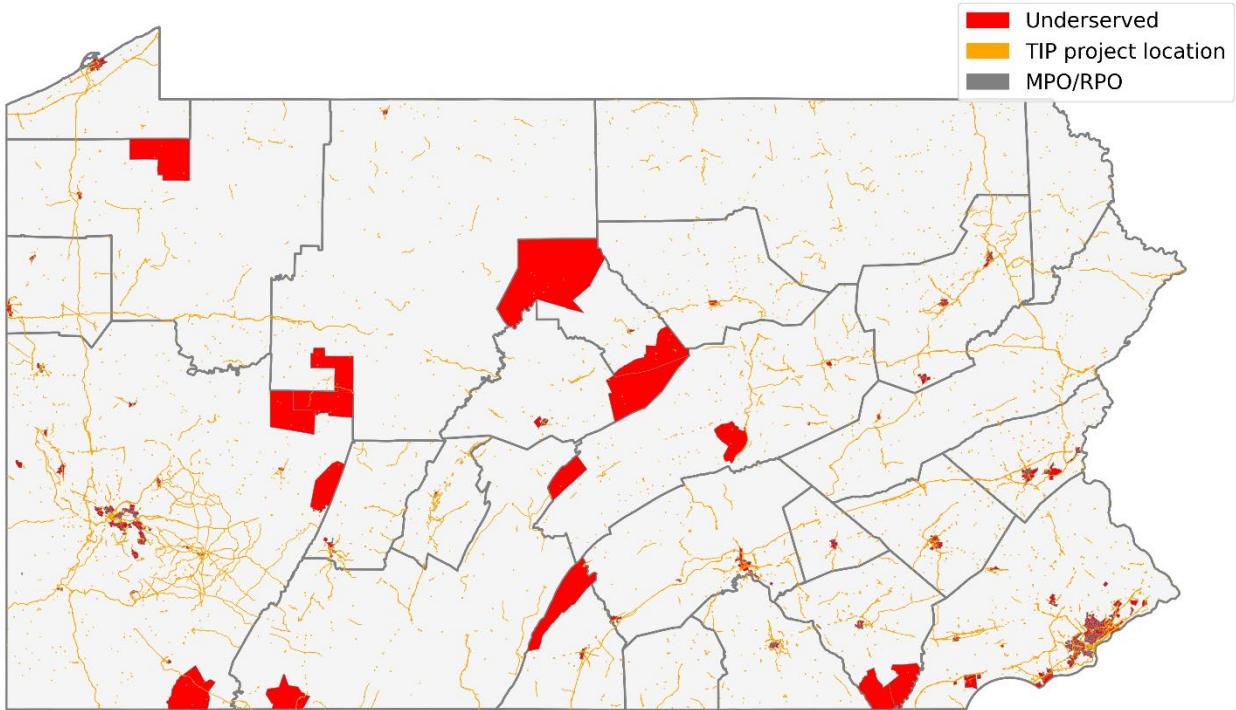


Figure 10 - The Geospatial Relationship between TIP Projects and Underserved Communities

Closer analysis shows that patterns in TIP project placement differ between served and underserved areas. For example, in the Philadelphia region (Figure 11), TIP projects are distributed outside of underserved communities. Similarly, in Pittsburgh (Figure 12), most TIP projects are located outside underserved communities. TIP projects also concentrate on urban areas, as shown in Figure 10.

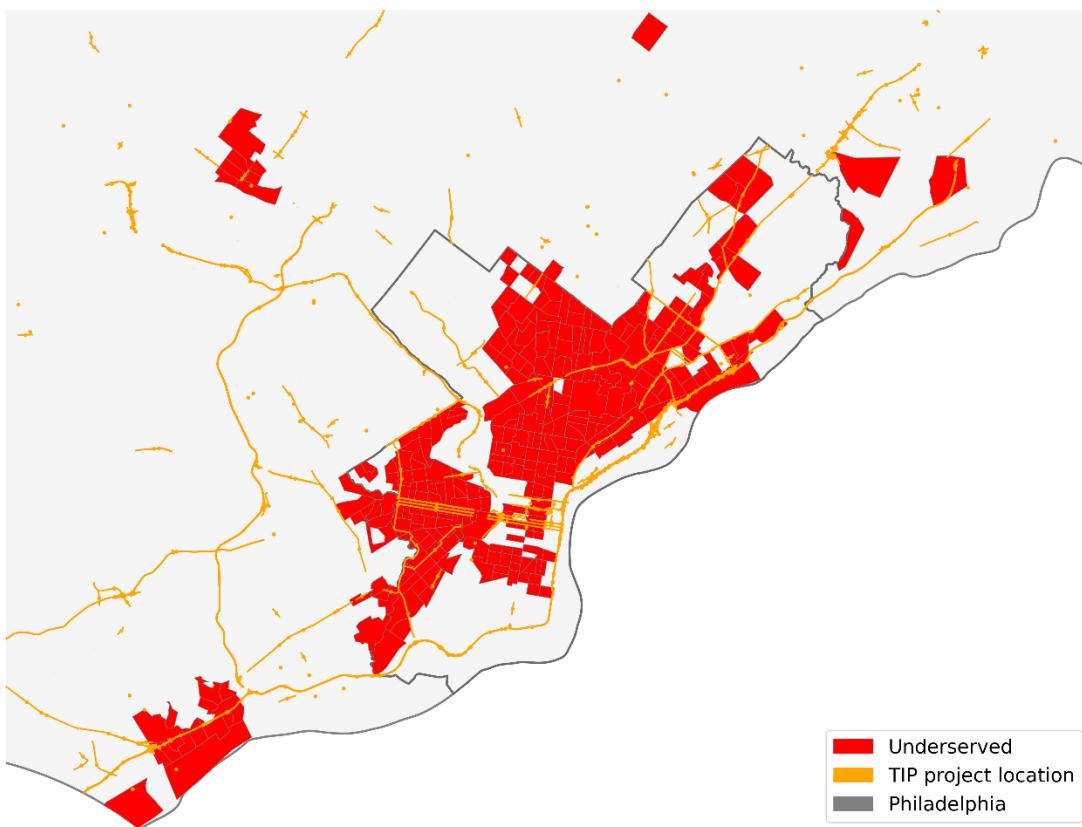


Figure 11 - Close View of Philadelphia

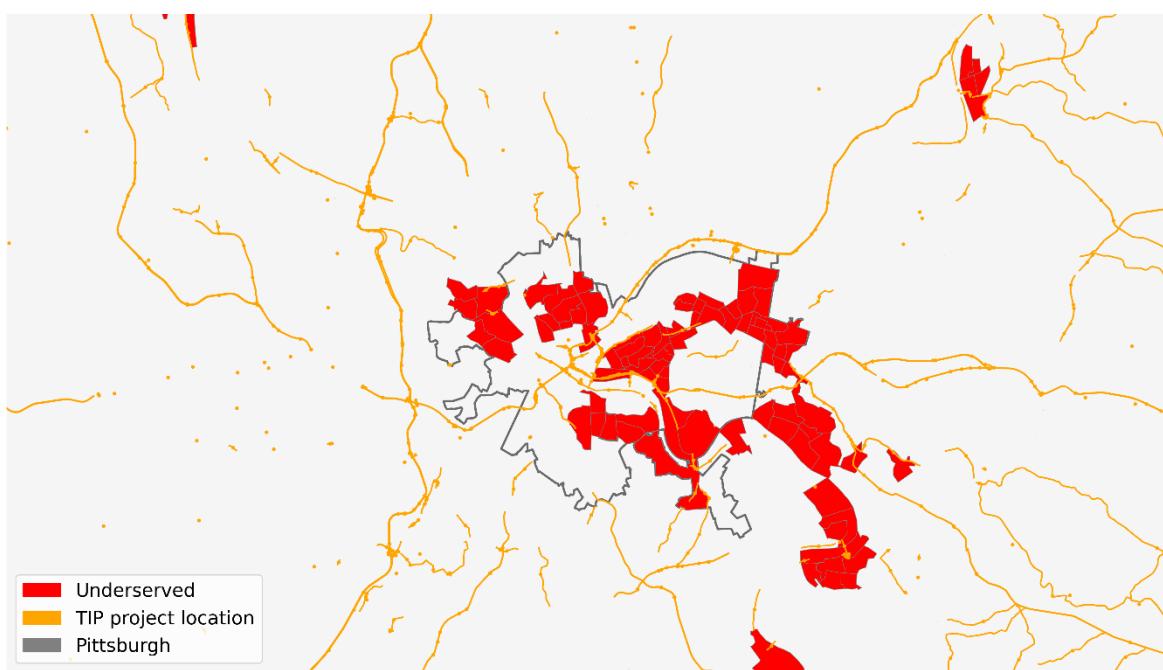


Figure 12 - Close View of Pittsburgh

In addition to location, the data points in the Issues and TIP project datasets also contain categorical values. This makes possible an analysis of the composition of TIP project types in underserved communities and other areas. TIP projects outside underserved communities seem to focus on replacement, upgrading, improvement, etc. (Figure 13). By contrast, TIP projects in underserved communities and populations focus on maintenance and upkeep (Figure 14).

An important point is that some TIP projects, like highway reconstruction, simply pass through the underserved communities. In other words, even though 6.7% of TIP projects are located in underserved communities, some of those projects do not benefit underserved communities and instead benefit wealthier communities.

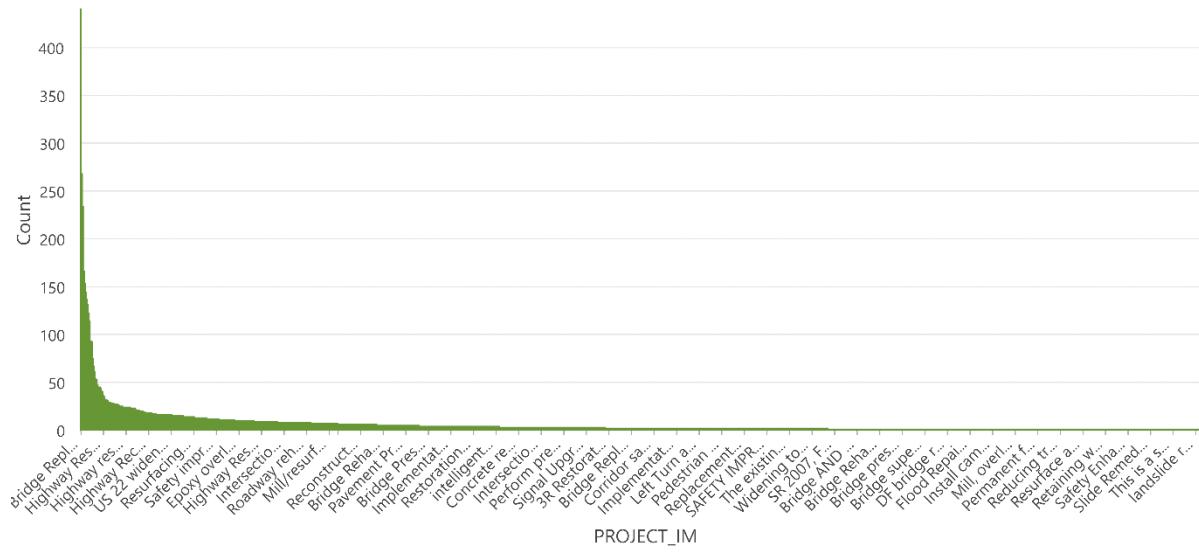


Figure 13 - Statewide TIP Project Categories

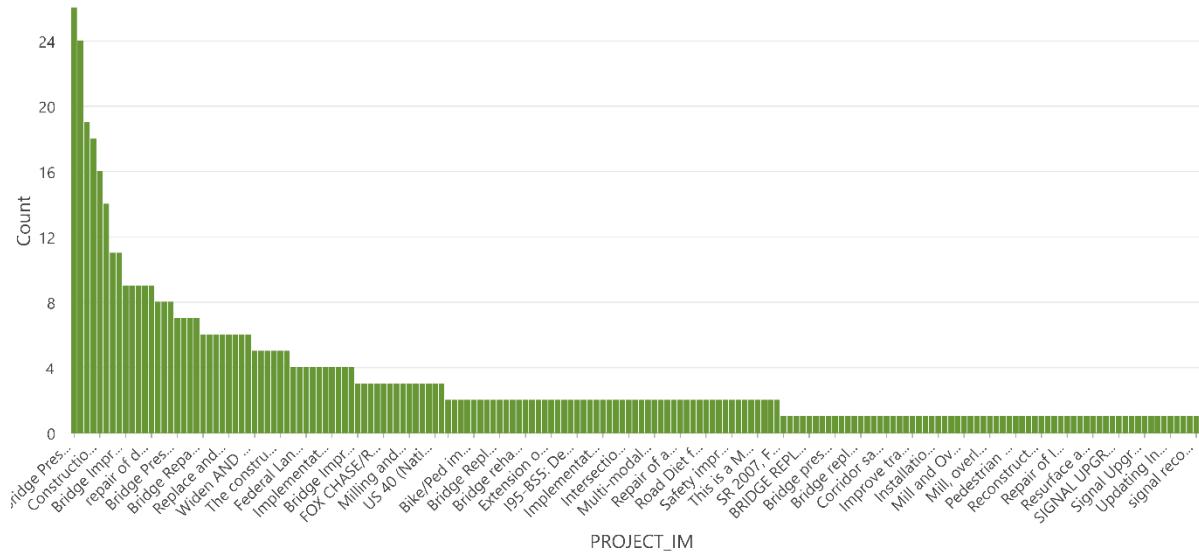


Figure 14 - Tip Project Categories within Underserved Communities

Similar to comparing Issues data inside and outside underserved communities, comparing TIP project data between the two groups can illustrate how disproportionate engagement outcomes might impact planning decisions that influence countless people. Supported by the robust findings from the literature review and interview components of the project, the quantitative findings of the project can be used to show weaknesses in current engagement strategies and pinpoint where and how PennDOT's resources should be directed.

Findings

Interviews and Personas

There are many misconceptions about the true responsibilities of PennDOT. The lack of education within underserved populations causes confusion and leads to misrepresentation of the agency. Community residents and local public figures alike were very confident in their answers to questions that involved describing the responsibilities of PennDOT, unaware of the lack of validity in them. Public transportation systems are not a part of PennDOT's jurisdiction, however, this seemed to be a common answer among community members. In addition, bridges and highways do not represent the full extent of PennDOT's responsibilities either. Interaction with PennDOT for the average resident is limited to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), but the perception of the agency is far more skewed by members of underserved communities due to the heavy reliance on public transit.

Distrust has also developed between the two parties based on past interactions. While the community engagement is accounted for in the transportation planning, the feedback from underserved communities was not incorporated or taken into consideration during the continuation of previous projects. This creates feelings of neglect and causes communities to feel unseen and unheard. All persons asked about feelings of neglect or consideration in the planning process had agreed that communities feel unheard. After a while, individuals in these communities lost hope of being respected partners alongside the agency. To increase participation, participants must feel valued, and these communities do not.

Despite the lack of trust, however, community members want to be involved and are simply unsure how. For example, an interview with one MPO suggested that a major obstacle faced by community members willing to engage with PennDOT is the website, which is filled with unfamiliar acronyms and is difficult to navigate.⁵⁰ When the opportunity arose to ask the interviewer questions, many community members were curious about the lasting effects of the project and any signs of change. The community involvement process has not been explicitly laid out on an educating platform, leaving residents unsure of how to navigate the process.

Based on our community interviews, we identified three main issues with community engagement.

- There is a lack of understanding of PennDOT's responsibilities and jurisdiction and how they differ from the local municipality's responsibilities and project jurisdiction.
- There is a lack of trust between the communities and PennDOT. There is less trust because there is less local engagement between PennDOT and the local communities. Contractors typically represent PennDOT on the ground and interactions with the contractors are not typically positive ones.
- Municipalities do not always have resources to address pressing transportation issues in their communities or the budgets to support such projects.

⁵⁰UX Interview - Planning Partner 4. Lackawanna Luzerne MPO, April 12, 2022.

Literature Review

Ensuring that planners have the right values in mind while engaging the community is critical. Procedures do not engage people, human connection does. Planners need to truly believe that underserved populations deserve power over things that affect them, respect the history of these communities, and embrace the constant flow of information. Further, they need to value accountability, make sure they make as much contact as possible in these communities, and value human connection above all else.

Effective involvement with underserved populations is not simple, and the PPP should reflect this. PPPs are often viewed as a procedural document, but they should be viewed as a living toolkit. It is not the best process that will get underserved populations engaged, but actually visible attempts to keep them in the conversation.⁵¹

Quantitative Findings

Underserved Communities are Under-Represented by Current Engagement Strategies:

Only 10.11% (250/2473) of Issues data points are located within underserved communities despite 18.71% (602/3217) tracts being classified as underserved. Issues data points are typically found outside underserved communities and this trend is highly persistent across the state (Figure 15).



Figure 15 - 6 Values for Meaningful Engagement

⁵¹ Detroit, *Strategic Framework*, 702

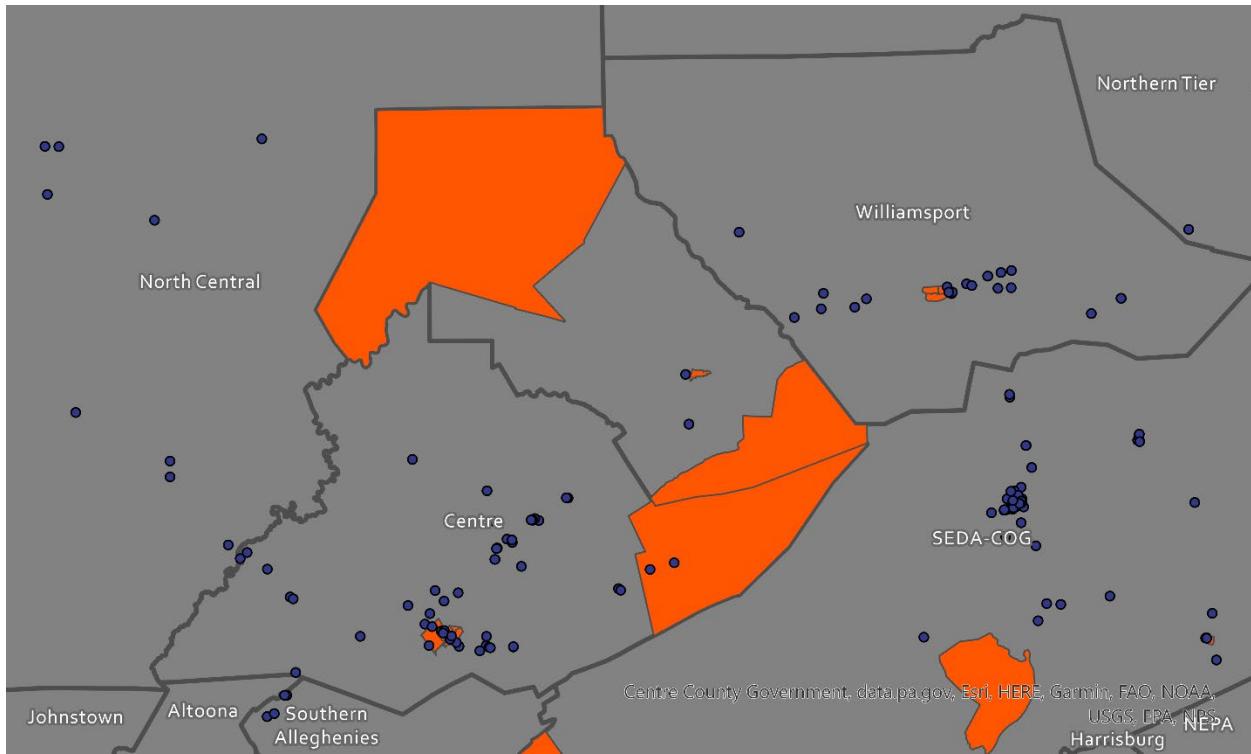


Figure 16 - Comparing Issues Data and Rural Underserved Tracts

A brief glance at Figure 16 shows that issues are disproportionately reported outside of underserved communities. Further, issues reported within underserved communities are often made at or near the borders of those communities and less often made deeper within them. Because of this analysis, it is clear that the self-reporting method used to inform the 12-Year Program Update Transportation Survey sees a lower response rate from underserved communities. It is likely that strategies such as improving survey quality or decreasing survey length will have limited success in making survey data more demographically representative because the survey strategy itself already excludes underserved communities.

The kinds of issues reported also differ within and without the underserved tracts. The bar charts below (Figures 17 and 18) show the categories of issues reported statewide followed by within underserved tracts.

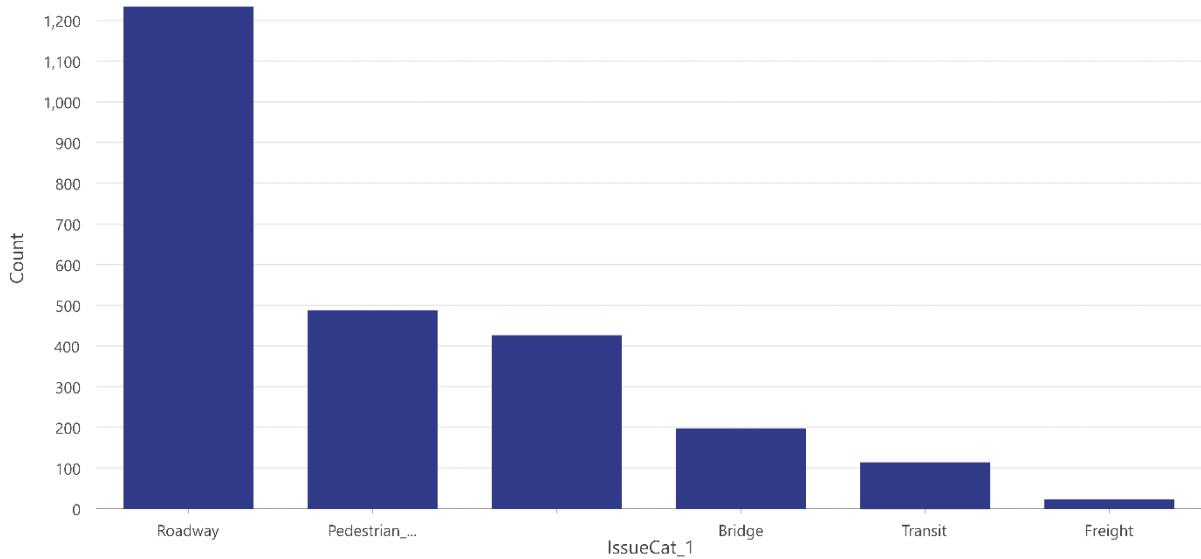


Figure 17 - Statewide Issues by Type

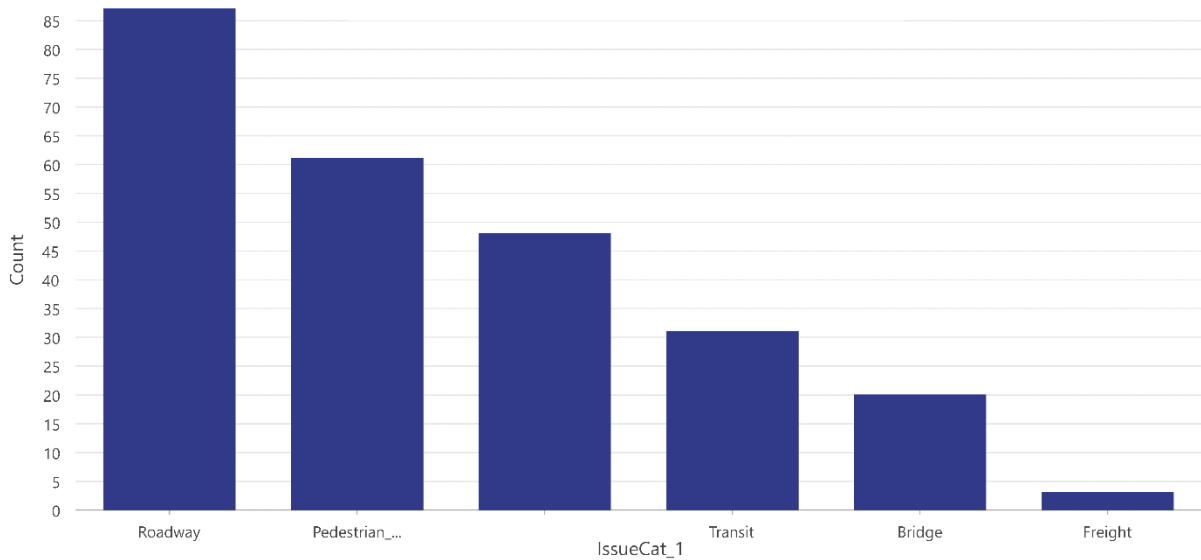


Figure 18 - Underserved Issues by Type

Comparing the data shows that underserved communities prioritize pedestrian-related issues more than other tracts. Underserved tracts also prioritize bridge-related issues over transit-related issues, while better-served tracts are the opposite. Similar to the analysis of Issues types explained above, the TIP project analysis found that TIP projects concentrate in urban areas. Moreover, most of the TIP projects are located outside underserved communities. These findings infer that TIP projects are disproportionately distributed.

This information demonstrates how the needs of underserved communities are different from the wider population. It also illustrates how the needs of underserved communities are not effectively represented by current survey methods. This has negative implications on the statewide planning process. Because the needs of underserved communities are underrepresented by current surveys and reporting tools, any data used in the planning process will favor communities already well-served by the transportation system.

As PennDOT stated at the start of the project, their surveys are not demographically representative of the state's population. PennDOT's current survey strategy chiefly captures the responses and behaviors of those well-served by it. For example, the 2021 AV Survey respondents were 79.33% white and 62.27% male.⁵² By clearly identifying certain tracts as "underserved", it is possible to meaningfully quantify community engagement from those communities. While the data collected from the surveys on PennDOT's website may show bias in their engagement strategy, collecting data from specific tracts provides much more useful information on how those communities are underserved and how PennDOT may be able to improve their community engagement strategies. Finally, the use of clustering analysis creates a roadmap for more effective community engagement. As the outreach and literary findings demonstrate, proactive and in-person community engagement is crucial for obtaining useful input from underserved communities. Using a clustering analysis strategy quickly identifies areas deserving of further study, targeted engagement, and limited resources.

⁵² 2021 AV Survey Summary." *Pennsylvania Department of Transportation*. 2021.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: PennDOT should use clustering analysis to measure the public engagement from specific underserved communities.

PennDOT does not have a clear definition of “underserved community.” So, even though they try to improve the public engagement from underserved communities, they cannot quantitatively measure their accomplishments. PennDOT should replicate the clustering analysis process using similar variables relevant to transportation access to identify underserved communities. The cluster is based on census tract area, which is small enough to identify specific regions as underserved while also being applicable to many kinds of data. The use of specific locations to drive engagement strategy provides important spatial data from underserved communities not currently provided by PennDOT’s current survey strategy. Only two of the five PennDOT surveys provided for analysis included zip code data, meaning respondent location data is unreliable. Further, a persistent racial and gender bias exists throughout the surveys, suggesting the surveys mainly describe well-served communities and not underserved ones. Therefore, PennDOT can measure the public engagement from underserved communities and populations such as response rate as it collects the location data.

Moreover, another benefit of this recommendation is that PennDOT can more directly interact with underserved communities. This is critical because we find out through our research that in-person communication is more effective than indirect communication that has perpetuated the lack of attention and trust towards PennDOT. For example, identifying specific underserved communities enables them to reach out to underserved communities in-person to carry out surveys instead of relying on attendance-based strategies.

Recommendation 2: PennDOT should provide TIP project education from PennDOT Connects to community organizations.

PennDOT Connects aligns under resourced municipalities with specific transportation needs, funding opportunities, or existing PennDOT projects that could help cities realize their communities' vision.⁵³ To assist cities, PennDOT Connects provides several useful resources in training, consultations, and hosted workshops, among others.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, only municipalities can request PennDOT Connects services through official government channels.⁵⁵

Motivated community members that want to affect change in their communities must work with their local governments to request PennDOT Connects services. It is reasonable to expect that cities be involved in potential projects; however, the PennDOT Connects workshops on the TIP are educational and do not require a commitment from any stakeholder. This workshop explains

⁵³ PennDOT Connects. District 11 Municipal Outreach Session (2022).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

the TIP process and how it can fund specific transportation projects, serving as an invaluable translation service for those who struggle to understand the dense and convoluted TIP process. Allowing community groups to request this workshop from PennDOT Connects would educate them and provide them with tools to navigate the TIP process to be more engaged, effectively lowering engagement barriers for community groups which are already interested in active engagement with PennDOT.

Recommendation 3: PennDOT Connects should develop a proactive engagement plan to interact with underserved communities.

Proactive engagement plans are living documents that establish the approach to engagement for a project, set expectations with the public for engagement, and host records of all engagements throughout the course of a project. Levels of public engagement vary by project, size, and scope. Engagement goals, different from project goals, describe what you intend to achieve with the public. By establishing the level of engagement at the start of the process, constituent trust is built over time.

It is important for PennDOT Connects to develop a defined proactive engagement plan to better serve and interact with underserved communities. PennDOT Connects should leverage the same participation plan guidance used by the City of Pittsburgh Planners, the International Agency for Public Participation guide included in Appendix 1/2/3. Currently, many PPPs highlight attendance-based strategies as a way to ensure and measure participation. Avoiding reliance on these types of strategies and instead focusing on making direct contact with underserved communities through proactive engagement strategies like site visits and door-to-door canvassing has proven to be more effective for engaging with the public. The clustering analysis provided in the first recommendation would make this easier to accomplish by providing a map displaying where PennDOT Connects should direct its limited resources.

One of the main drivers and criteria for the practices identified in this guide is the desire to successfully engage residents that traditionally have had limited participation in planning processes. Evidence from the literature review has shown that this has been done effectively in other places. The Seattle Neighborhood Plan has developed strategies that mobilize liaisons to host workshops and discussions throughout the area while Detroit Future City has created something similar called the “Roaming Table.”

It is understood that PennDOT Connects is not designed to serve as an outreach entity, and underserved communities are impossible to comprehensively define. The strategy created is intended to serve as guidance that can be adapted to specific project needs. There is no singular policy or practice tool that ensures better participation in every instance; however, there are practices and tools that can better establish a framework for meaningful engagement. PennDOT Connects has the resources to create and implement an engagement plan that will better serve and increase engagement from underserved communities.

Limitations

Data Analysis

The largest limitation of the clustering analysis strategy is the fact that no comprehensive quantitative definition of “underserved community” can exist due to the circumstantial nature of being “underserved.” There are countless ways a tract may be underserved and variables relevant to one M/RPO may not be relevant in another. Similarly, the variables used are not comprehensive and some variables may be added or subtracted from the clustering analysis based on need and data availability. Another important limitation is the age of some of the data used in the analysis. Because the quantity and FIPS codes of census tracts changed with the 2020 census, older data using the same tract data must be used to prevent data loss from matching errors. For example, the broadband data used in the clustering analysis was from 2019.⁵⁶ Since this data is from before the census tracts were changed, all of the data used in the clustering analysis must be old enough to use the older census tracts in order for broadband data to be usable. Finally, a state-wide clustering analysis is less precise than a local-level measurement of underserved communities. As such, this analysis is more useful to PennDOT for understanding state-wide engagement trends instead of the needs of individual communities.

Moreover, the data quality of TIP projects and the local match is another limitation. Although the analysis split the local match by city level, we do not have weight information. So, the local match was split in equal proportion for TIP projects related to several cities. Another limitation is that among roughly \$121M, only \$70M can be connected to cities using the data we have, but about \$50M is not utilized because of low data quality, which is likely statistically significant. Therefore, the analysis of TIP projects and local matching is a rough estimate.

Lack of Veracity

Conducting interviews with community members presents a limitation through the possibility of bias. The responses received from the interviews present issues of veracity and validity concerning individual opinions. Despite the limitations the interviews presented, the main conclusions derived from the interviews are supported by our literature research.

⁵⁶ “Form 477 Census Tract Data on Internet Access Services.” FCC. Accessed 22 April 2022. <https://www.fcc.gov/form-477-census-tract-data-internet-access-services>.

Future Work

For a project to be included in its M/RPO's TIP, the municipality where the project is located needs to provide a local match, typically 20% of the estimated project cost.⁵⁷ This local match makes it so the city has "skin in the game" and serves as a type of down payment to incentivize project buy-in at the local level.

We repeatedly heard during our interviews about the limitations created by the matching requirement. For example, one PennDOT district planner told us that "for some cities, if you ask them for 20%, you might as well ask them for the whole 100% because they do not have the money either way."⁵⁸ This statement raises an important question: does improving engagement in underserved communities translate to meaningful projects if those same communities are incapable of coming up with matching funds?

We did a preliminary analysis comparing the identified underserved communities with local match data from the most recent STIP budget. The maps below (Figures 17-20) show the number of local matches provided by a city as a graduated scale in blue. The more money they provide as a match, the darker the blue. The underserved communities are shown in red. You can see that there is some overlap, but many underserved communities do not have local match money. Of the 71 million local match dollars we could join to our data set, only \$9.4 million, or 13.3%, came from an underserved community.

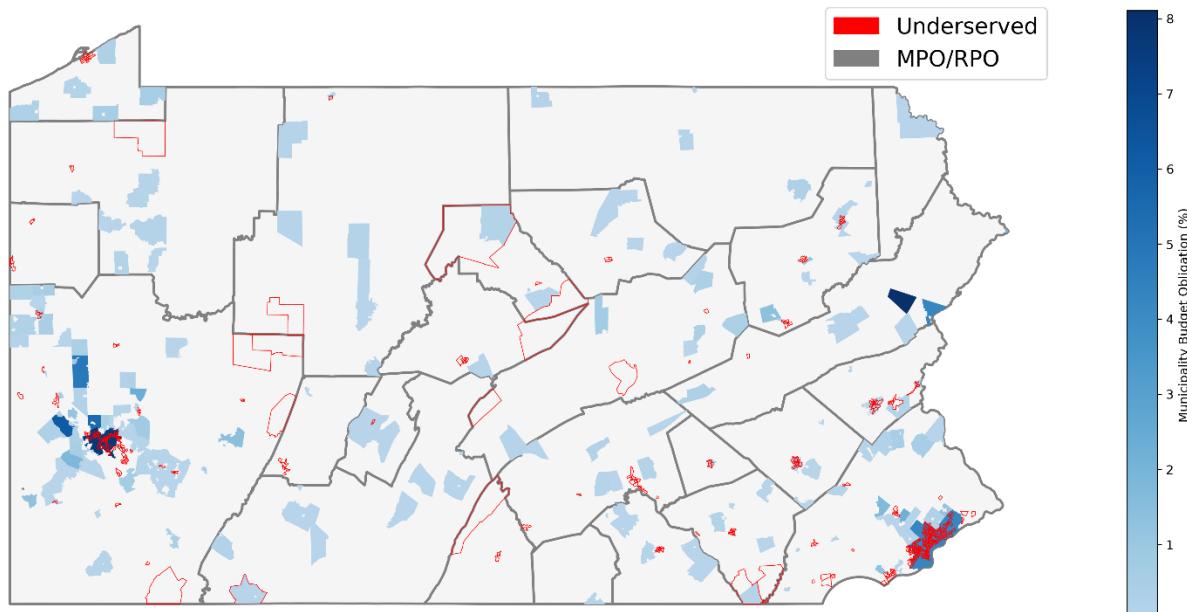


Figure 17 - Local Match: Statewide STIP Budget

⁵⁷ PennDOT. "PennDOT GUIDEBOOK FOR COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS," n.d.

https://www.penndot.pa.gov/Doing-Business/LocalGovernment/Documents/PennDOT_Guidebook_for_County_and_Municipal_Officials.pdf.

⁵⁸ Ruggles, Justin. CMU/PennDOT check-in. Zoom, March 18, 2022.

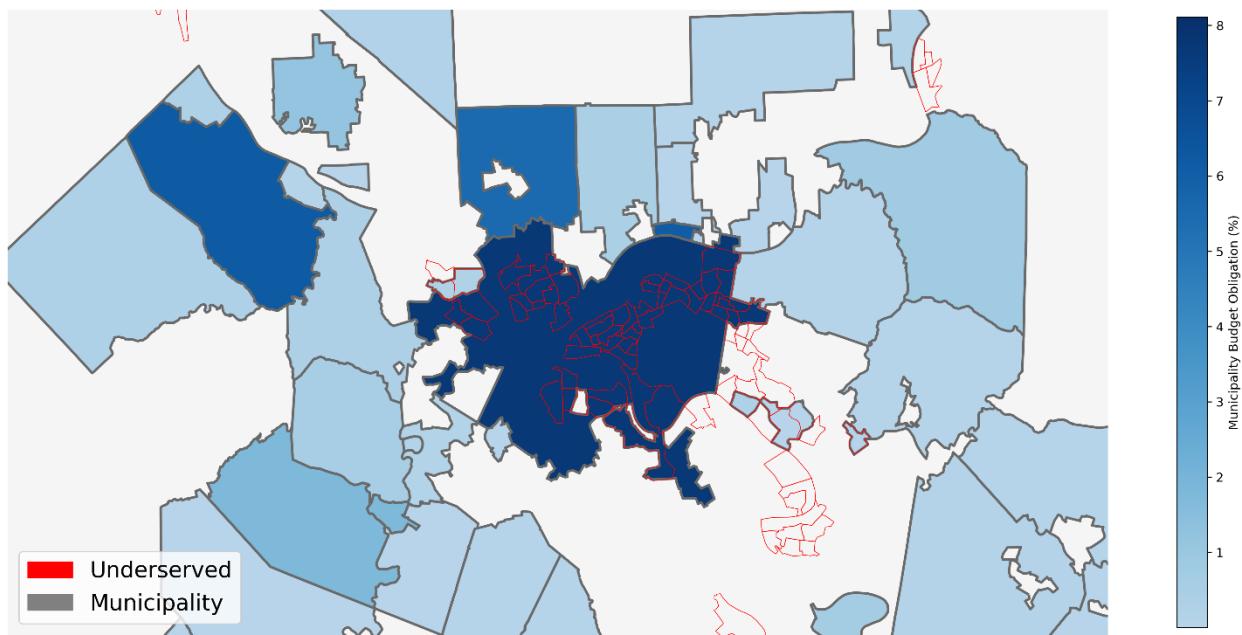


Figure 18 - Local Match: STIP, Pittsburgh Area

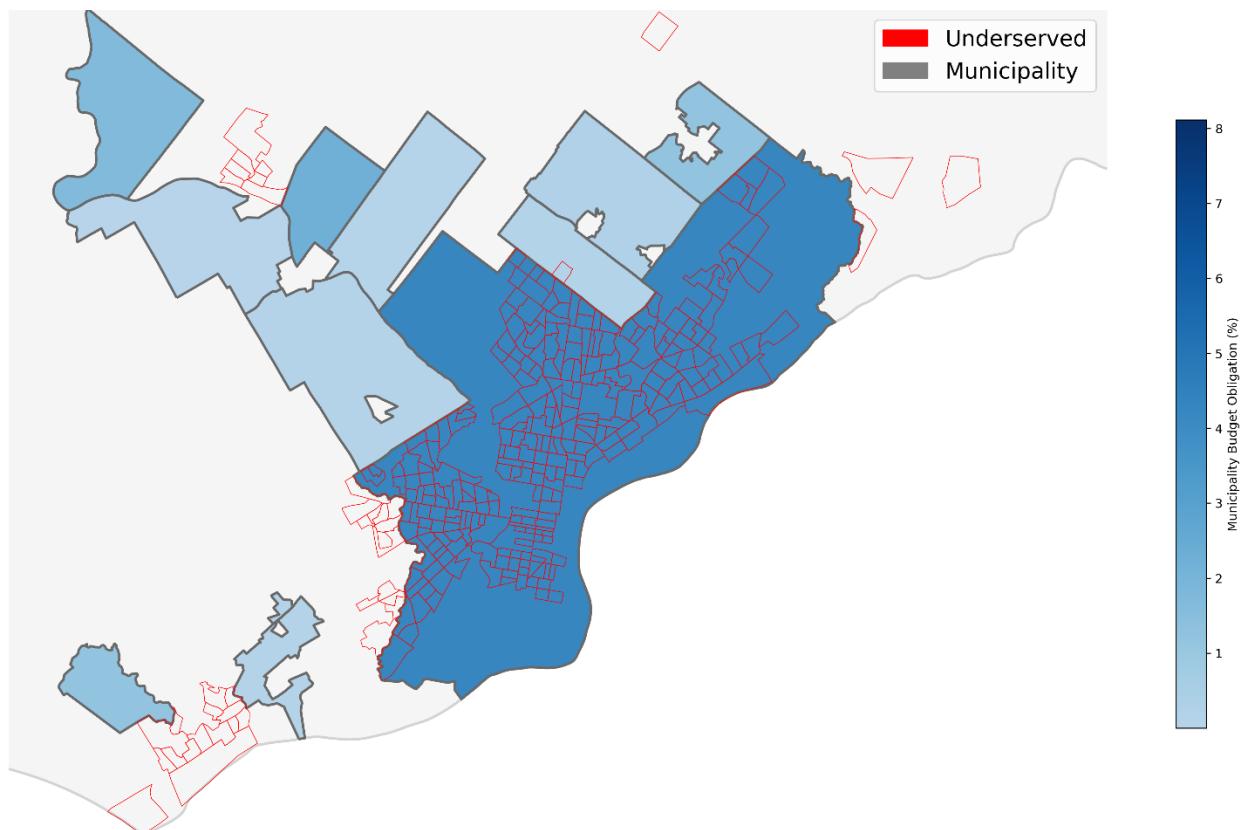


Figure 19 - Local Match: STIP, Philadelphia Area

The complete answer is probably rich with nuance. As a group, we were intrigued to dig deeper, but it was outside the scope of our project. A future project could explore how Pennsylvania's current transportation funding system limits underserved communities from receiving state funding, which contributes to a cycle of being under-resourced.

Conclusion

PennDOT's civic engagement activities do not effectively reach underserved communities. PennDOT and M/RPOs often use insufficient strategies and fail to identify underserved communities within their respective jurisdictions.. Current strategies include public meetings, TIP commentary periods and surveys, but these strategies should be seen as information-gathering tools that take place after the citizens have been engaged, not as starting points.

Through data analysis, community interviews, and literature reviews, this report demonstrates that disproportionately low response rates from underserved communities are not caused by a lack of interest from those communities. Rather, a complex array of factors including the prevalence of attendance-based strategies and the inaccessible language of PennDOT resources acts as a barrier to meaningful engagement from those communities. Underserved communities have also historically been harmed by poorly planned transportation projects and priorities, such as in high-traffic freeway construction projects that cut through low-income neighborhoods and further disenfranchise vulnerable populations. Practices like this have deteriorated trust between planning agencies and local communities that persists today. Reaching out to underserved communities in their neighborhoods, proving their input is valuable, and continuously engaging them is vital if planners are serious about equitable engagement in transportation planning.

PennDOT should utilize clustering analysis to create defined classifications of underserved communities. It is important that PennDOT and M/RPOs know where underserved communities are located and identify the criteria that constitutes them as underserved so as to accurately prescribe policy and transportation solutions. Clustering analysis based on transportation-based underserved variables makes knowing where these communities are located a simple and efficient process that expedites effective engagement in several areas.

PennDOT Connects should also adopt a valuable role in improving equitable engagement. First, they should provide TIP education for community-based organizations such as neighborhood revitalization and advocacy groups to democratize planning processes and increase accessibility to adequate planning resources. Lastly, PennDOT Connects should also be used as an avenue for creating a proactive engagement plan while leveraging resources such as the International Agency of Public Participation guides. This plan can help give planners the necessary tools to reach underserved communities and ensure that necessary strategies are employed, particularly with meeting communities where they are and moving beyond attendance-based engagement.

Improving civic engagement with underserved communities requires resources and dedication from PennDOT. As the literature review has shown, this is not impossible despite existing resource and time limitations. If PennDOT adopts the recommendations outlined in this paper, the agency can commit to pursuing meaningful engagement and become an equitable force in transportation planning.

Appendix 1: Detailed Explanation of Quantitative Findings

Table of Contents

Key Trends from PPP Analysis.....	2
Quantified PPP Data.....	3
Maps of Quantified PPP Data.....	4
Top 75% Most Socially Vulnerable Census Tracts in Pennsylvania.....	6
Data Used in Clustering Analysis.....	7
Clustering Analysis of All Tracts.....	9
Clustering Analysis of Rural Tracts Only.....	11
Map of Clustering Analysis of All Pennsylvanian Census Tracts.....	13

Key Trends from PPP Analysis:

- *Each M/RPO has a different definition of “underserved community.* Some M/RPOs clearly define communities which are underserved, while others fail to clearly define the term or acknowledge their existence in the area.
- *All PPPs are radically different.* PPPs comply with federally-mandated requirements regarding Limited English Persons (LEPs) and environmental justice communities. However, page length, release date, quality, and engagement strategy all highly vary across PPP documents.
- *Lack of accountability is common across PPPs.* Federally-mandated guidelines are low and have limited requirements for community engagement. As such, many PPPs do not acknowledge the existence of underserved communities or define clear strategies for engaging them. Such M/RPOs also commonly offer little to no evidence suggesting their engagement strategies are inclusive.
- *Attendance-based engagement strategies are common across PPPs.* These strategies rely on planning organizations being approached by community members in order for engagement to occur. As this project’s findings will show, this is a problem because underserved communities are often resistant to standard means of engagement by the institutions which have underserved them. (Ivanoff, A. and Jackson, A. “Reduction of Low Response Rates in Interview Surveys of Poor African-American Families.” 1998. Journal of Social Service Research. Vol. 25. 42-61. Pg. 42)
- *Resource endowments seem to strongly influence PPP quality.* Larger MPOs with greater resources dedicated to PPP development seem to have clearer, more detailed PPPs than M/RPOs with fewer resources.
- *We should build on existing work in underserved community engagement.* Considerable work on community engagement has been completed in the state and it should serve as the foundation for the rest of the project.

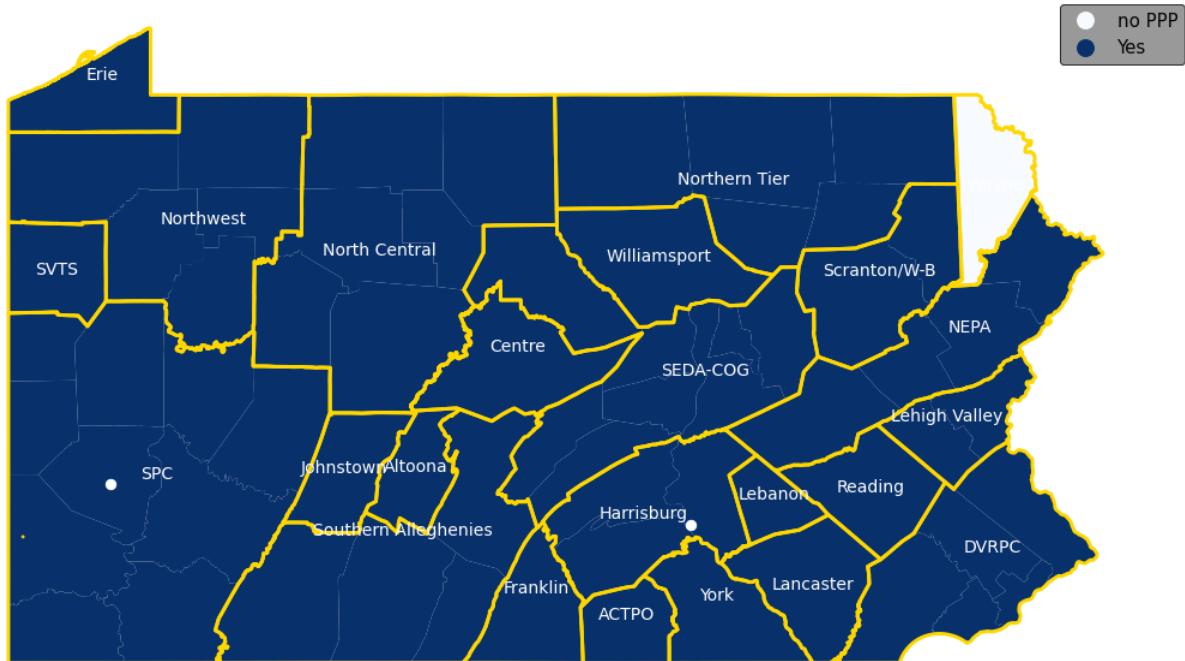
Quantified PPP Data:

Type	Name	Earliest Publish Date	Identifies Engagement Stratag	Collects Engagement Metrics	Relevant Page Length
NULL	Wayne County		0	0	0
MPO	Harrisburg Area Transportation Study	2020	1	0	7
MPO	Southwest PA Commission MPO	2020	1	0	20
RPO	Southern Alleghenies RPO	2020	0	0	3
MPO	SEDA-COG MPO	2010-2014	0	1	30
MPO	Berks County Planning Commission (Reading MPO)	2015-2019	1	1	19
RPO	Northwest RPO	2020	0	0	10
RPO	Northern Tier RPO		0	0	15
MPO	Northeastern PA Alliance MPO	2015	0	0	38
RPO	North Central RPO	2020	1	1	30
MPO	Mercer County MPO	2015	0	0	24
MPO	Lycoming County MPO	2020	0	0	44
MPO	Lehigh Valley MPO	2015	1	1	13
MPO	Lebanon County MPO	2015	1	0	8
MPO	Lancaster MPO	2015	1	1	11
MPO	Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO	2015	1	1	0
MPO	Johnstown MPO	2015	0	0	0
MPO	Franklin County MPO	2020	1	0	0
MPO	Erie County MPO	2005	0	0	0
MPO	DVRPC MPO	2015	1	1	9
MPO	Centre County MPO	2010	1	1	12
MPO	Altoona MPO	0	0	0	0
MPO	Adams MPO	2015	0	0	9
MPO	York Area MPO (YAMPO)	2015	1	1	29

Maps of Quantified PPP data:

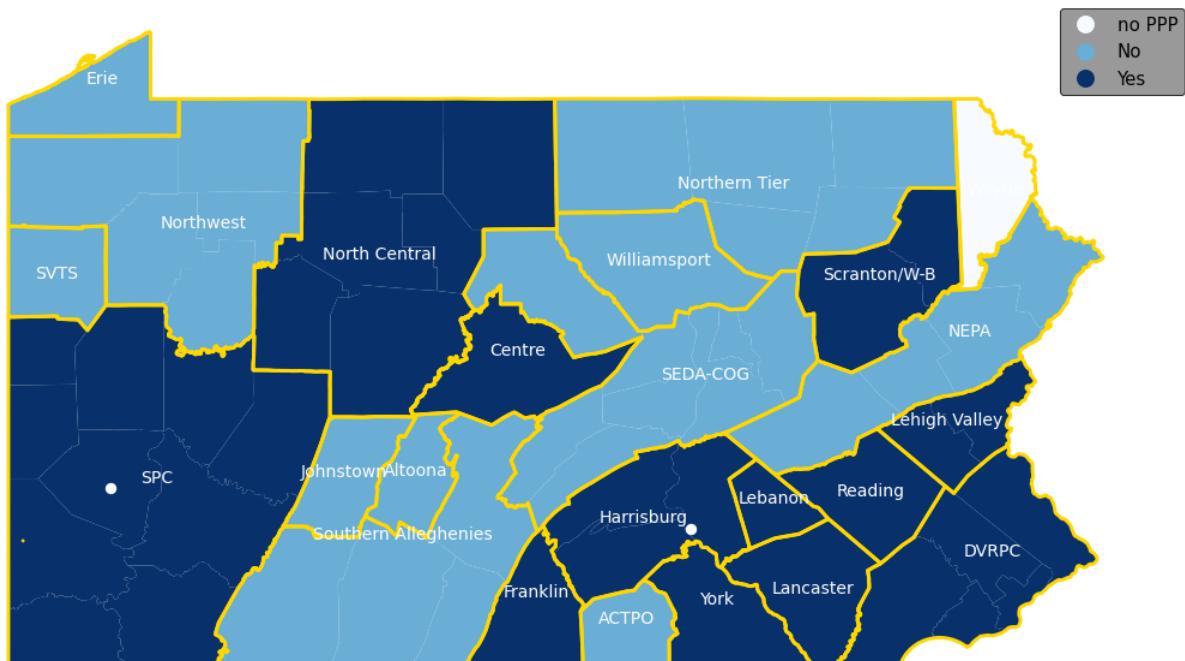
Existence of PPP by M/RPO:

Wayne lacks a PPP.



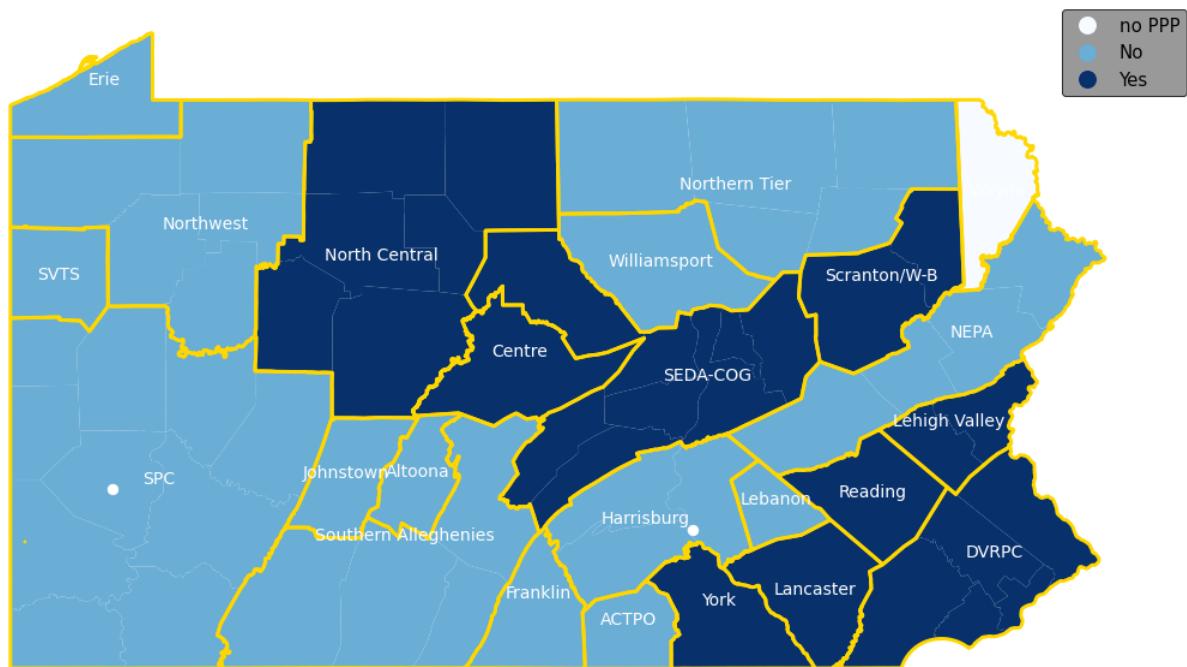
PPPs with Clear Engagement Strategies:

Half of PPPs do not have clear engagement strategies.



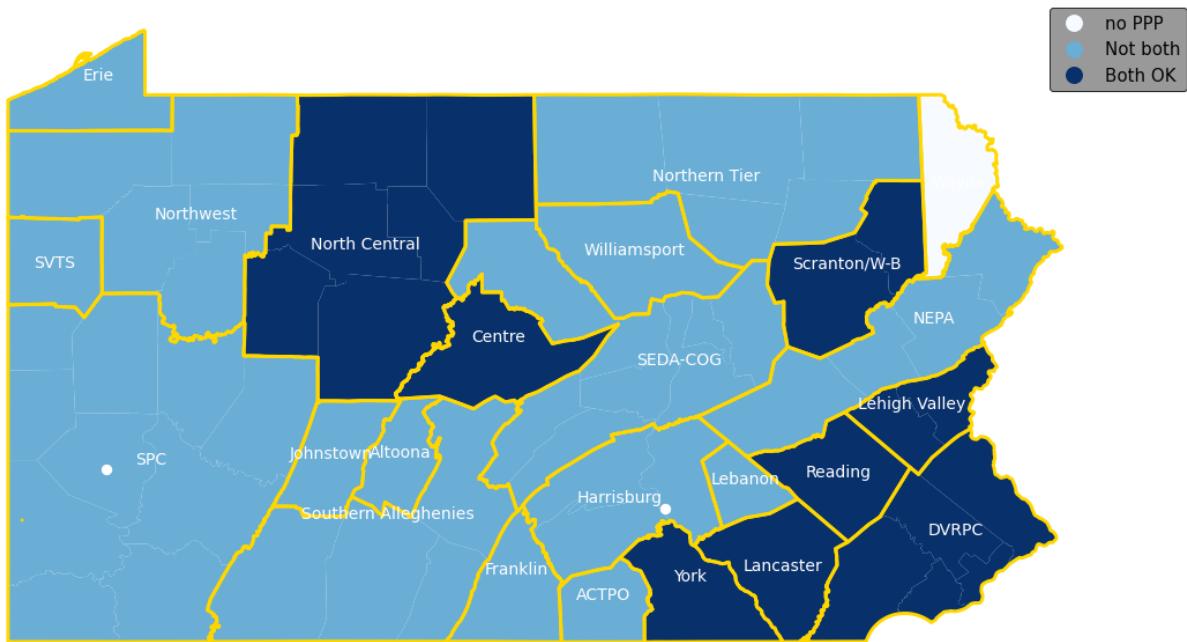
PPPs with Clear Engagement Metrics:

Half of PPPs do not describe clear metrics for public engagement.

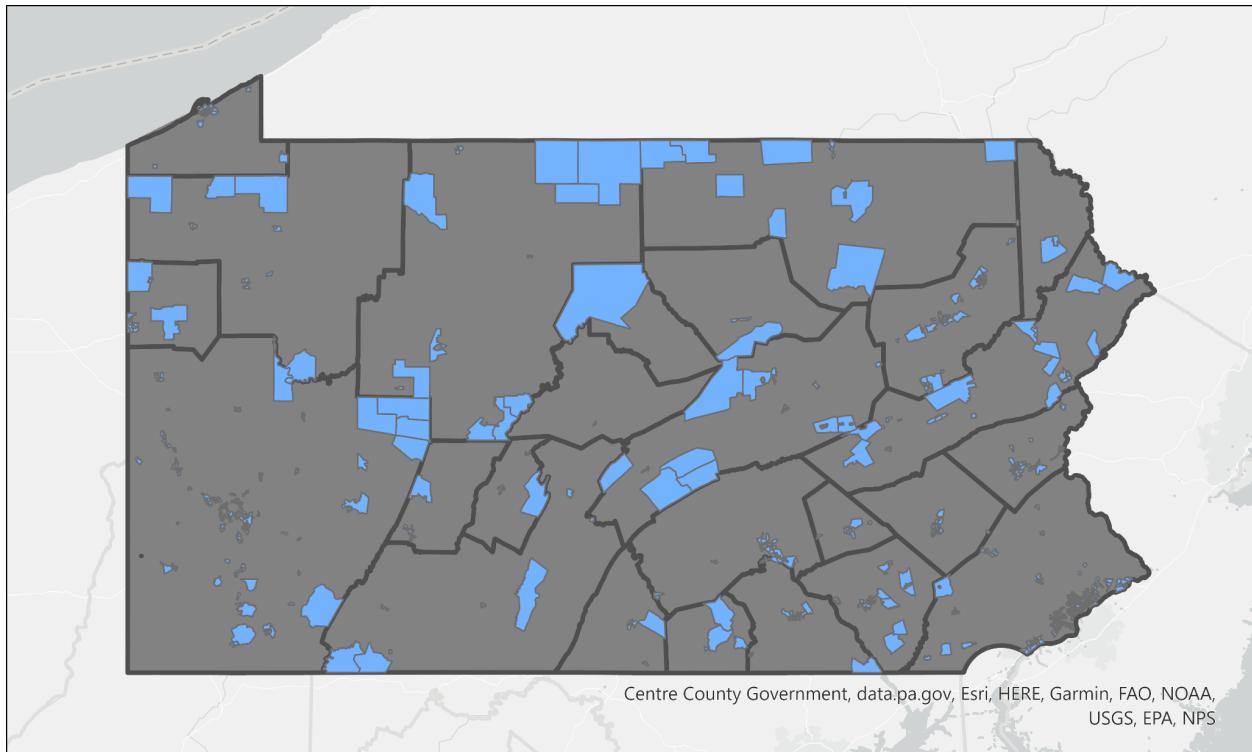


PPPs with Both Clear Engagement Strategies and Metrics:

Most PPPs do not have both clear engagement strategies and metrics.



Top 75% Most Socially Vulnerable Census Tracts in Pennsylvania:



Data Used in Clustering Analysis:

- *Proportion of racial/ethnic minority persons.* Racial and ethnic minorities are historically underserved by state and federal government in a wide variety of ways. Additionally, PennDOT's surveys historically skew in favor of white men (cite one of the surveys), meaning it is likely racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately underserved. This data is included in the SVI dataset.
- *Proportion of persons with no vehicle access.* Much of the US transportation system is designed around car ownership, meaning that areas with disproportionately low vehicle access are likely to be underserved.
- *Proportion of persons over age 65.* Older persons often are less capable of driving or may have driving ability revoked. As such, disproportionately older tracts are likely to be underserved by the transportation system. This data is included in the SVI dataset.
- *Proportion of persons in poverty.* Similar to racial/ethnic minority persons, poverty is a common factor among underserved communities and likely plays a factor in their engagement with PennDOT. This data is included in the SVI dataset.
- *Percentage of persons with limited English proficiency.* LEP data is commonly cited in PPP documents due to the [federal mandate for LEPs]. Additionally, language barriers can significantly impact the capacity for meaningful engagement, particularly in M/RPOs which rely on attendance-based engagement strategies. This data is included in the SVI dataset.
- *Access to broadband internet.* Access to broadband internet is an ongoing sociopolitical issue in Pennsylvania due to the presence of many rural areas which lack high-speed internet. For example, the ongoing legislation HB 1042, PN 1078 seeks to update Pennsylvania's definition of broadband from 1.544mb downstream to 25mb downstream. This data is included using census tract ranks of broadband access across households as collected by the FCC under Form 477. The data set ranks tracts with numbers 1 to 5 representing the percent of houses with downstream internet access. For example, a rank of 1 indicates less than 20% of all households have internet access while a rank of 5 means more than 80% of households have internet access. A definition of 10mb downstream internet access is used here to represent Pennsylvania's ongoing broadband discussion.
- *Rurality.* While not shared by all underserved communities, rural areas can be underserved by the transportation system in unique ways. This information was quantified by creating a custom dummy variable representing rurality, where 0 indicates a census tract overlaps or includes the border of an urban center and 1 indicates that no such overlap occurs within the tract.
- *Issues data set.* During the 12-Year Program Update Transportation Survey last distributed in 2021, respondents were allowed to geo-locate transportation-related issues that interested them. 7,423 data points are included in the data set and are used to compare the issues raised by survey respondents both within and outside the underserved communities identified using clustering analysis.

- *TIP project points*. Similar to the Issues data set, this data set shows 2021 TIP projects as geographic points. Using the same analysis strategy as the Issues data set, comparing TIP projects inside and outside underserved communities can illustrate how the two community types may differ.

Clustering Analysis of All Tracts:

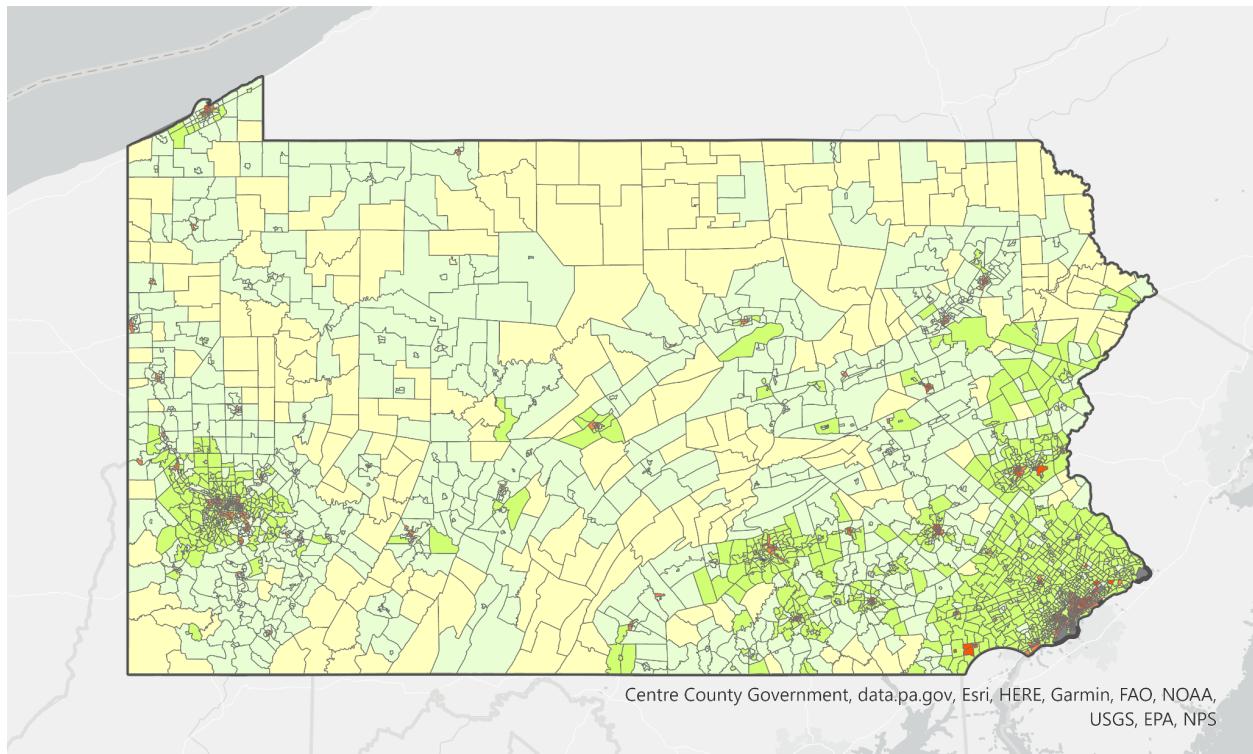
CLUSTER_ID	FREQUENCY	MEAN_Downstream_10	MEAN_EP_AGE65	MEAN_EP_LIMENG	MEAN_EP_MINRT	MEAN_EP_NOVEH	MEAN_EP_POV	MEAN_Rural
1	1125	3.518222222	21.11848889	0.601688889	8.910844444	8.724	12.01422222	0
2	1261	4.842188739	16.61760508	1.40555115	19.55321174	6.373513085	7.350832672	0
3	433	4.041570439	12.72424942	2.375961524	66.20854503	35.91108545	34.58198614	0
4	222	2.891891892	20.48803604	0.5	4.562162162	5.53018018	11.22702703	1
5	154	4.175324675	10.29675325	16.33896104	74.23571429	26.08701299	31.07337662	0

Cluster#	Frequency	Internet	Age	Lang	Minority	Noveh	Poverty	Rural
1	High	Med	High	Very Low	Low	Low	Med	No
2	High	Very High	Med	Low	Med	Low	Low	No
3	Med	High	Low	Low	High	High	High	No
4	Low	Low	High	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Med	Yes
5	Low	High	Low	Very High	Very High	High	High	No

Tract Classification:

- 1: Moderately served
- 2: Well-served
- 3: Underserved, urban
- 4: Rural
- 5: Very underserved, urban

Clustering Analysis of Pennsylvania's Census Tracts:



Clustering Classification of All Tracts

Moderately-Served

Well-Served

Urban Underserved

Rural

Very Underserved

No Data

Cluster Analysis of Rural Tracts Only:

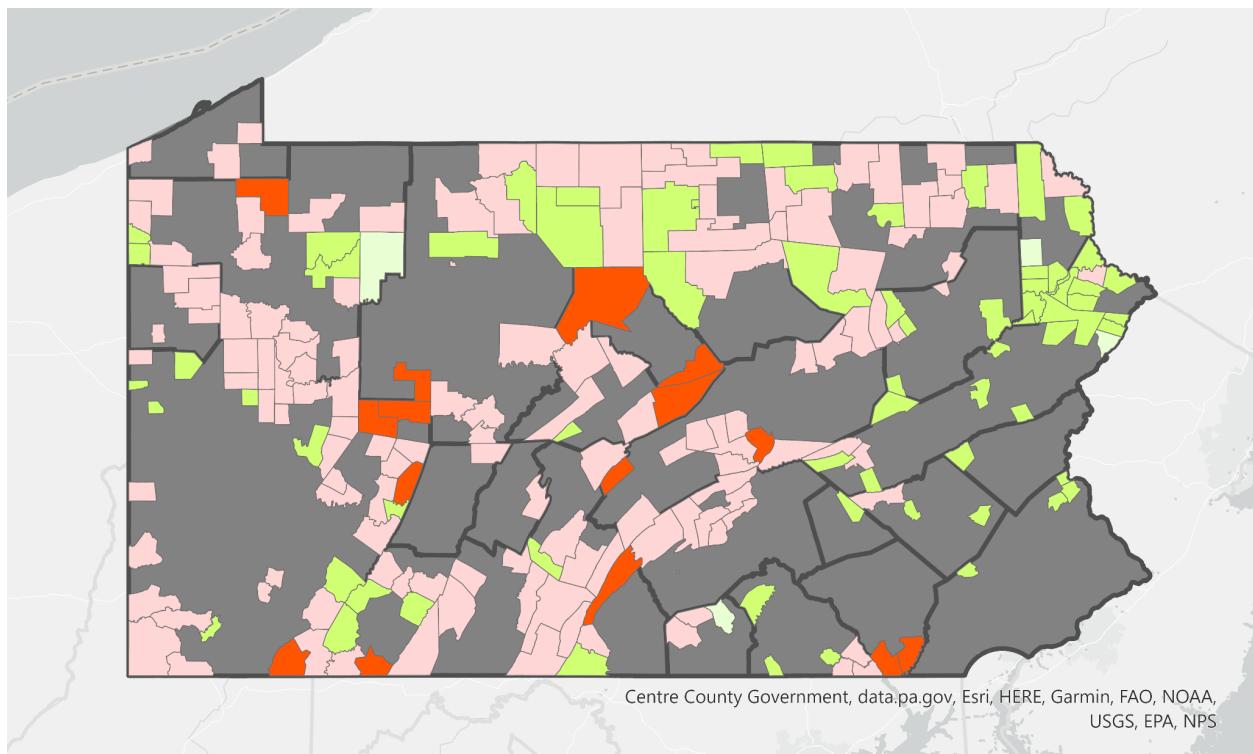
CLUSTER_ID	FREQUENCY	MEAN_Downstream_10	MEAN_EP_AGE65	MEAN_EP_LIMENG	MEAN_EP_MINRTY	MEAN_EP_NOVEH	MEAN_EP_POV	MEAN_Rural
1	1125	3.518222222	21.11848889	0.601688889	8.910844444	8.724	12.01422222	0
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3	433	4.041570439	12.72424942	2.375981524	66.20854503	35.91108545	34.58198614	0
4	222	2.891891892	20.48603604	0.5	4.562162162	5.53018018	11.22702703	1
5	154	4.175324675	10.29675325	16.33896104	74.23571429	26.08701299	31.07337662	0

Cluster#	Frequency	Internet	Age	Lang	Minority	Noveh	Poverty
1	133	Low	High	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low
2	15	Very Low	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Medium	Medium
3	70	High	High	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low
4	4	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Low	Low

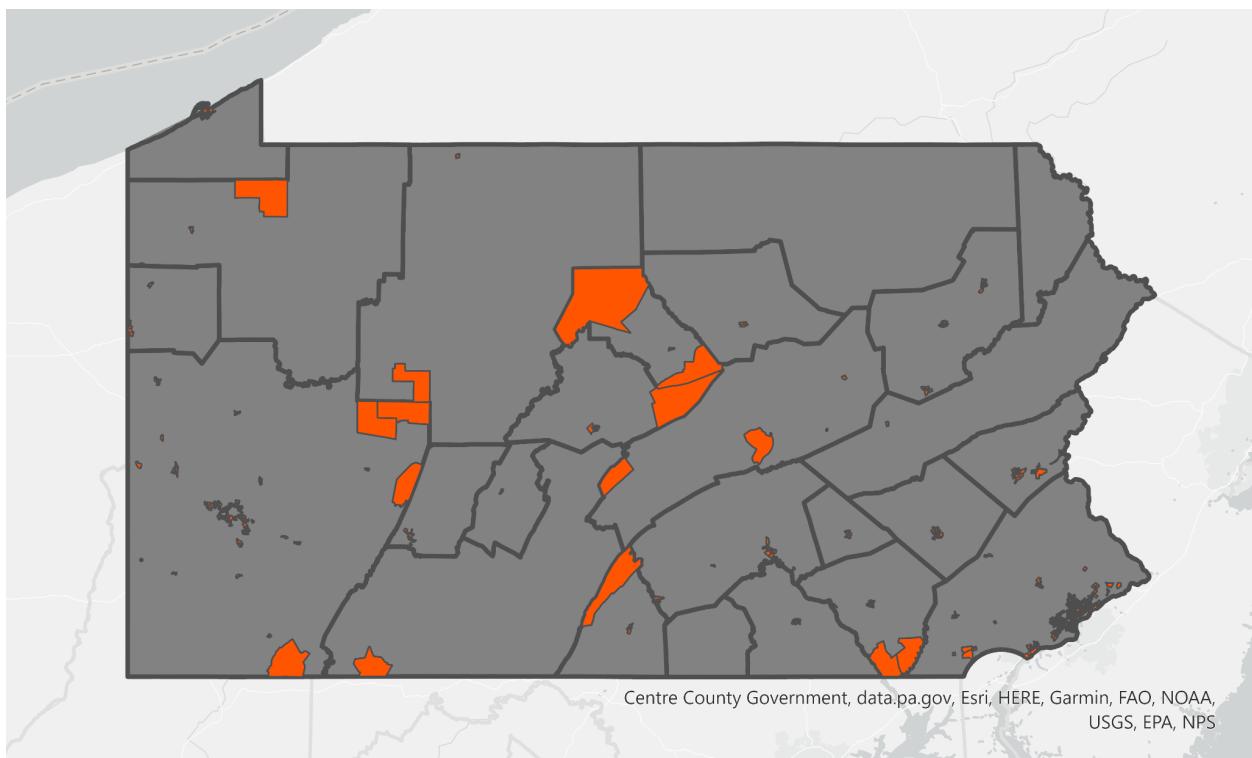
Tract Classification

- 1: Old and low-internet
- 2: Underserved
- 3: Very well served
- 4: Fairly Well Served

Map of Clustering Analysis of Rural Pennsylvanian Census Tracts:



Map of Pennsylvania's Underserved Census Tracts:



- █ All Underserved Tracts
- M/RPO Borders
- Not Underserved
- Reported Issue

Appendix 2: User Research Synthesis and Archetype Summary

Table of Contents

User Persona 1: Community Members and Residents.....	2
User Persona 2: Neighborhood Revitalization and Advocacy Groups.....	3
User Persona 3: City Planners.....	5
User Persona 4: Local Government Officials.....	6
User Persona 5: Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations.....	7
User Persona 6: PennDOT Engineers.....	9
User Personas 7: PennDOT Connects.....	10

Archetype 1: Community Members and Residents

Sample Questions

- “What type of transportation do you use?”
- “Are you familiar with PennDOT?”
- “What do you think are the responsibilities of PennDOT?”
- “To what extent do you interact with PennDOT?”
- “Are you familiar with the term Metropolitan/Rural Planning Organization or M/RPO?”
- “Have you ever taken a transportation survey for PennDOT?”
- “What does community engagement look like to you?”

Key Quotes

- “I hope PennDOT is going to fix that [potholes]. Just hope that sooner or later, they are going to fix it.”
- “There’s so many potholes and I don’t know what to do. And you don’t know if it’s the city of PennDOT. Who do you contact?”
- “The responsibilities [of PennDOT] in my mind are projects as it relates to transpiration, when the weather is bad, I believe they are responsible for clearing those roads as well, roads that have potholes they are responsible for that as well.”
- “I would probably contact the port authority about it [pothole]. Or I would probably not do anything because I wouldn’t know who to contact first regarding it.” The most important part is transparency. You can volunteer as much as you want but if someone is taking advantage of you, then they are not doing it for the right reasons and it’s called community engagement for a reason, meaning 2 parties involved
- “I would say, [engagement is] having the company itself communicating with the community that they have whether it be through leadership, or they have a designated team for community feedback they have reliable methods of communication for example like hotline or town hall or a form where they can discuss future plans, an open forum. Essentially some way that higher ups can engage with the community.”

‘Aha’ Moments

- The community does not understand what PennDOT does.
- The community members we interviewed do not recall ever being asked to fill out a survey on transportation issued by PennDOT.

Emerging Themes

- There needs to be better education about PennDOT’s responsibilities and jurisdictions.
- Community members are more likely to interact with agencies they are familiar with, like local government or the Port Authority.
- Even with something as simple as reporting a pothole, residents are unsure of who to escalate to.

Big Takeaways

- Despite the availability of literature from PennDOT, it does not seem like residents know about it or know how to access it.
-

Archetype 2: Neighborhood Revitalization and Advocacy Groups

Sample Questions

- “Can you tell us a bit about your organization and your role within it?”
- “Can you please describe your past involvement with PennDOT-led projects?”
- “How can PennDOT improve its engagement efforts?”

Key Quotes

- “PennDOT material is incredibly dense.”
- “[The municipality] relies on them [PennDOT] for major projects because the city doesn’t have 100% of the funding to do those projects...PennDOT provides 80% but not without heavy tolls on the community.”
- “When they [PennDOT] schedule a project, it’s for a 3–4-year time window that gets done in 6-7 years. The city will never complain too loudly because they don’t want to lose that money but privately, they’ll tell you that working with PennDOT is one of the worst things.”
- “PennDOT is like a 900-pound gorilla. You know them but they’ll never come out to the site.”
- “Once in a while, we’ll see a PennDOT engineer at a planning meeting.”
- “PennDOT will tell the city what to do and the city will tell us.”
- “We send out the fliers and put out a monthly bulletin that gets sent out...we have to be the ones to coordinate those meetings.
- “There is a lack of accountability in our government today – local and state and federal. It makes people like us think we shouldn’t plan things so big.”
- “They need to appoint an ombudsman – a fixer, a troubleshooter, someone who is accessible to people in the community. Here’s my card, here’s my cellphone – you know, someone you can come to when you get frustrated with PennDOT or the city, or the contractor. I don’t think there’s collective intelligence at PennDOT to even create something like this.”

‘Aha’ Moments

- Rural communities face so many unique challenges when it comes to transportation projects.
- The issues are top down and bottom up. The federal government doesn’t make funds available for rural communities which furthers the extent at which they are disadvantaged. But is anyone escalating this discrepancy up to the fed?
- There are a number of unintended consequences of transportation planning policies that have gone unaddressed.

Emerging Themes

- The local municipality interviewed is not doing a good job of engaging and is to blame for this because PennDOT does a good job of engaging with the municipalities, but the municipality does not do as good of a job to engage with the local community.
- Directions get passed down, from PennDOT to city, city to local groups, and that leads to a lot of disconnect and breaks down accountability.

Big Takeaways

- PennDOT does not do a good job of engaging.
- PennDOT does not do a good job of communicating.
- Neighborhood groups are more likely to engage with the community than the city/municipality.
- Enter another key player: the contractors that execute the construction of the projects. There is a dissonance here where the relationship between the contractor and the neighborhood group is incredibly dense and their work together represents the lack of communication and collaboration between PennDOT and the people.

- Accountability is fraught – nonexistent.

Archetype 3: City Planners

Sample Questions

"How do you determine which projects to plan?"
"To what extent do you work with the community to engage them in local planning projects?
"What are some challenges you have faced around engaging citizens to participate in planning projects?"
"To what extent do you interact with PennDOT for planning related activities?"

Key Quotes

"It'd be nice to have someone who specializes in community engagement with projects."
"Neighborhood plans are a 2-year planning process but account for outcomes over 1-2 decades.
Planning fatigue exists in many neighborhoods. Following this process, it can be hard to get people to give more details and inspire the desire to spend more time talking. Many times, people don't have interest in specific topics."
"Many projects are assigned to them by mayor's office, city council districts, various political powers. The budgeting process determines a lot of what they do"

Aha' Moments

Even at a more localized level, engagement is still difficult but the city has a really great resource that they use to engage the community throughout a project planning and execution process. We are including this in our recommendations.

Emerging Themes

Project budget really determines the extent to which the community is engaged. We see this theme emerging from different user groups as well.

Big Takeaways

IAP2 Guide is critical. This is the first time we've seen a guide that formally demonstrates how one can engage the community throughout the duration of a project rather than just at the beginning or during the planning stage.

Archetype 4: Local Government Officials

Sample Questions

- “What does community outreach look like to you?”
- “How often do you interact with your local MPO or RPO?”
- “Where have you found success in community engagement?”
- “What do you wish you would have known about community engagement before you began working with the community?”
- “What is your most effective method of outreach?”

Key Quotes

- “Engagement means being involved – getting the word out there and staying on top of things.”
- “There are still people who rely on paper and the telephone. Our internet is not strong here. We still have places that do not have good internet in this country.”
- “Knowing your audience is key to effective engagement.”

‘Aha’ Moments

- Effective engagement comes from knowing who is in your community and working with them.
- There is no easy fix to effective and meaningful engagement. It is hard work, and this could be the reason why bureaucracy avoids it.
- People can be opinionated and while not everyone will be happy with projects, it should not deter from meaningful conversation. Avoiding these kinds of conversations could very well be the reason that there is so much disconnect within society and distrust for government among the community.

Emerging Themes

- Community engagement is not easy. It takes a lot of constant work.
- Community engagement is good for planning.

Big Takeaways

- PennDOT’s focus is not aligned with underserved communities. Their engineers are focused on continuous traffic and decongestion, but that’s terrible for pedestrians.
- The only ones who get heard are those with the capability to mobilize.
- Local community groups are not always a good source because they may be composed of members that are not residents of the neighborhood or community area in question.

Archetype 5: Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations

Sample Questions

- “How does the organization engage with local communities?”
- “What are some challenges your organization faces within the areas you serve?”
- “How does your organization collaborate with PennDOT?”
- “What can PennDOT do to increase its engagement tactics?”
- “Have you heard of PennDOT Connects? If so, how do you engage with them?”
- “How do you identify TIP projects?”

Key Quotes

- “It is challenging to identify minorities in such large areas.”
- “There is a responsibility on the public to engage.”
- “There’s a disconnect that the community doesn’t understand because when you’re using federal funds, you need a couple of years to get through that process. There’s also a disconnect between what the government wants to maintain and what the community wants.”
- “PennDOT is a big agency. It’s hard to talk to the right people.”
- “Our guiding document is the public participation plan.”
- “We struggle with it [engagement]. There are not enough resources to go door-to-door.”
- “People only care when construction starts, and by then, it’s too late.”
- “Only one comment [on the TIP] in 28 years.”
- “MPOs are there to advocate for their municipalities.”
- “Growing elderly population struggles with newer technologies and inability to drive due to age.”
- “Publishing official documents is not effective because they’re so dense and technical that people won’t read them.”
- “Different groups have unique needs. It’s not enough to translate them.”
- “We were already doing the PennDOT Connects process before PennDOT Connects came to be.”
Other departments have been engaging in similar programs. PDC is a great process, but there are certain gaps in it.”
- “The complexity of the system makes outreach exponentially more difficult.”
- “We’re data rich but resource poor.”
- “Make engagement as painless as you can.”
- “A lot of money goes to state routes and state roads so you also have to understand where these roads go through. Underserved communities get a lot of those projects that run through their communities. Gaining a better understanding of those communities will help get more funding in those areas.”
- “PennDOT uses MPOs to do the engagement for them.”
- “PennDOT has mostly given up on rural communities.”
- “PennDOT does great things, but people don’t know it.”

‘Aha’ Moments

- The level of disconnect between the POs and the community is stark. The POs rely on the engagement tactics in the PPPs and expect the public to meet them halfway.
- Engagement among low-income populations needs to take place at settings that are easily and comfortably accessible (library vs. government building).

Emerging Themes

- Reaching the community is difficult but reaching minorities and low-income residents is even more difficult.
- PennDOT documents are DENSE. (x2)

- PennDOT Connects should look to the MPOs and RPOS for local feedback on its efficacy because a lot of these agencies were already trying to fill a gap with strategies when PDC was not a resource.

Big Takeaways

- Employees at these organizations have established tenure. The people that work at these agencies tend to have been working there for a long time, so they've seen a thing or two in regard to engagement. They also have a first-hand account of how effective certain strategies for engagement actually are.
- The MPOs and RPOs lack sufficient resources to execute their plans.
- PennDOT needs to make information and resources more transparent, accessible, and readable.
- People who don't know what PennDOT is or what PennDOT does will not engage with PennDOT.

Archetype 6: PennDOT Engineers

Sample Questions

“Can you please describe some examples of when your office would conduct community engagement efforts?”

“How do you formulate your engagement strategies?”

“Do you receive guidance from PennDOT?”

“Are local matches a barrier for underserved communities to receive funding?”

Key Quotes

- “When it comes to engagement, it is really budget based on when that is going to happen and when you can get that down.”
- “It’s always better for the community to participate with the project when it’s happening and it’s better for the budget.”
- “Overall it’s [PennDOT Connects] great and the game plan is to have the community involved from the very beginning but it’s an awesome program but it’s hard to find that sweet spot right now so there has to be more coordination at an optimal level.”
- “There’s not a lot of [federal or grant] money out there for rural communities.”
- “It wasn’t set up with that intent but that’s what’s happening because those matches are **just as unattainable at 20% as they are at 100%.**”

‘Aha’ Moments

- Rural communities face so many unique challenges when it comes to transportation projects.
- PennDOT Connects has a lot of potential to bridge many of these gaps and barriers to equity.
- PennDOT engineers are extremely limited in how they can help the communities – relying mostly on guidance from PennDOT and M/RPOs.

Emerging Themes

- Lots of disadvantages and barriers that seem to be compounding against rural communities.

Big Takeaways

- There’s a communication issue here.
- This is not a one-size fits all – transportation projects are different, municipalities are different, MPOs and RPOs are all different, and execution of projects is different. We need to regard them as such.

Archetype 7: PennDOT Connects

Sample Questions

“Can you please provide a brief overview of what PennDOT Connects does?”

“We’ve heard from some under-resourced MPOs, and RPOs about PennDOT Connects filling gaps in capacity by providing community engagement, planning, and engineering to support their TIP processes. Can you talk about how PennDOT Connect does that?”

Key Quotes

- “The mission is to reach any municipality - city, township, borough - to support them not to support the citizens. This is a municipal resource program.”
- “I think we need to provide more guidance [to MPOs and RPOs] before we reach those groups. A lot of them do the basics - it’s just staff and resources - but if there was something we could provide like here are some great ways to go about it that would be great.”
- “A municipality can literally go on the PennDOT Connects website and request assistance. Then we work with the M/RPO and make sure that this is a good system to work with.”

‘Aha’ Moments

- Because the program is federally funded, the extent of who can use the program is limited to municipalities.
- While community members, residents, and neighborhood revitalization and advocacy groups cannot use PennDOT Connects resource, they can still reach out to PennDOT Connects and the program will connect them with their local municipality and M/RPO to help facilitate the use of any resources.

Emerging Themes

- PennDOT Connect aims to help connect municipalities with resources to help them plan but it is not clear whether or not municipalities that lack the resources will take advantage of the program or if municipalities with more resources are going to be able to have just as much access to this program as those that are in more need.

Big Takeaways

- PennDOT Connects should create a proactive engagement plan to help interact with underserved communities and areas within the commonwealth.

Appendix 3: Public Engagement Toolkit and Public Engagement Guide

Table of Contents

Public Engagement Toolkit.....	2
Public Engagement Guide.....	55



04/ Public Engagement Toolkit

Public Engagement Toolkit

The toolkit in this document consists of engagement tools organized so as to help project leaders select appropriate tools based on what they are trying to achieve through the engagement. When choosing tools, it is important to consider the context (geography), audience, and desired outcomes. The toolkit is organized by the format of the engagement technique, and it is denoted for each tool the levels on Public Engagement Spectrum it can help achieve, as most tools can fit under multiple levels on the Public Engagement Spectrum.

Here, you can see an overview of the engagement tools organized by the format of the engagement technique, including: (1) Sharing Information, (2) Collecting & Compiling Input, and (3) Bringing People Together. Each tool is further elaborated on the following pages.

Following this overview table, each tool is called out on a page below with a description, list of resources needed, and relevant examples. The tools are organized by their level on the Public Engagement Spectrum, also shown at the top of each page with the following table:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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	#	Tool	Description
Sharing Information	1	Fairs and Events	Host an information stand or session at community events to showcase plans or present designs.
	2	Newsletters	Inform and remind subscribers of relevant events, and offer follow-up opportunities.
	3	Website and/or Blog	Publish information and blogs including event descriptions, photos, comments from attendees, and future events.
	4	Social Media	Announce events and provide prompt feedback; attract new and hard to reach audiences using online tools.
	5	Advertising Products	Use tools like stickers and coasters to broadcast and remind of community events in a fun way.
	6	Office Hours/ Coffee Hour	Set up shop near stakeholders to offer regular in-person updates and discussions.
	7	Briefings	Build trust and interest by giving informative presentations to the media and organized groups.
	8	Information Kiosks	Increase awareness and provide the general public with easy-to-access information
	9	Responsiveness Summaries	Show how public comments have been addressed by consolidating feedback into a report and sharing them online.
Compiling Input	10	Surveys	Conduct questionnaires in person or through online tools to gather additional feedback.
	11	One-on-One Meetings	Meet with residents individually or in small groups to facilitate more natural and informal conversation.
	12	Comment Forms	Allow people, especially those who are less vocal, to provide comments and views individually.
	13	Scientific Surveys & Questionnaires	Administer surveys and questionnaires to obtain quantitative results about a larger population.
Bringing People Together	14	Open House	Engage stakeholders and confirm ideas, sometimes as a follow-up to more detailed engagements.
	15	Summits	Bring together a panel of experts from other areas to discuss relevant issues and stimulate dialogue.
	16	Storytelling Workshop	Learn about historical memories directly from residents through firsthand images and lived experiences.
	17	Community Walkshop	Create an interactive way for participants to share stories and identify challenges and opportunities.
	18	Problem Tree Analysis	Identify central problems, causes, influences, impacts, and how these problems relate to the project.
	19	Pop-Up Exercise	Use an idea comment poster, graffiti board, or picture tool to seek open-ended input and let comments be visible to others.
	20	Community Mapping	Use maps as a geographic reference for comments about current situations and opportunities.
	21	Visual Preference Survey	Have participants vote, perhaps electronically, on images to get feedback on visual preferences.

Bringing People Together (continued)

#	Tool	Description
22	Focus Group	Assemble stakeholders based on interest topics to regularly provide feedback and shape the project.
23	Collage Scenarios / Dot Activity	Groups prioritize ideas using icon or dot stickers on maps or images to suggest design options and preferences.
24	Visioning Exercises	Work with residents to identify visions, goals and aspirations for a topic or geography relevant to a project.
25	Meeting-in-a-Box	Provide communities an accessible activity in a shoebox for them to facilitate independent meetings.
26	Demonstration Projects	Use temporary installations and tactical urbanism to test ideas or demonstrate potential conditions.
27	Charrette	Facilitate discussion and a series of hands-on working sessions in small groups about design proposals.
28	Facilitator / Advocacy Training	Offer trainings that empower and educate residents to participate in government planning processes.
29	Stakeholder Mapping	Identify partnership opportunities and build more informed interviews and stakeholder outreach.
30	Participatory Budget Making	Enable community members to work with government staff to make budget decisions democratically.
31	Action Teams	Teams of experts, residents, and leaders discuss certain topics, provide ideas, and identify implementers.
32	Community Meetings	Organize community meetings to give people the opportunity to publicly vocalize their opinions.
33	Public Hearings	Hold public hearings to address questions and comments, sometimes to an appointed/technical board, and to meet legal requirements.
34	Revolving Conversations	Foster open and meaningful discussion through a self-facilitated conversation.
35	Card Storming	Identify all perspectives on a topic by organizing ideas and issues into natural groupings.
36	Workshops	Encourage participants to learn and provide input by working together on defined assignments.
37	Focused Conversations	Explore challenging situations or issues by having structured discussions with attendees.
38	World Cafe	Bring people together in simultaneous rounds of conversation through a cafe-style setting.
39	Open Space Meetings	Enable people to create and design their own agenda through self-directed meetings.
40	Appreciative Inquiry Process	Focus on best practices and how to build on existing positive aspects to co-create a vision for the future.
41	Deliberative Forums	Discover where there is common ground for action on contentious issues where there is no "right" answer.
42	Advisory Groups	Assemble a group of stakeholders on a regular basis over a designated period of time to produce recommendations to a decision-maker.

Techniques for Sharing Information

How do we share information?

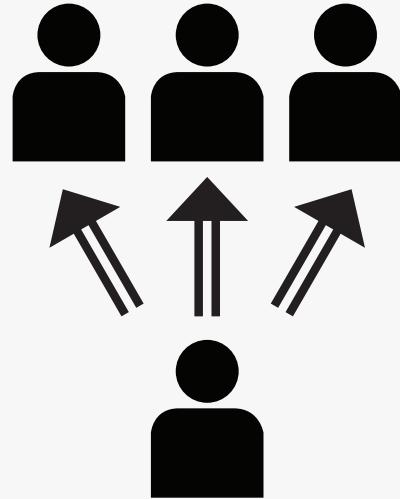
Techniques for sharing information generally are either part of an awareness campaign or part of an information/education program. They may also be used as mechanisms to report on public comments received.

Awareness campaigns are typically conducted in conjunction with a participatory process; their purpose is to make people aware of the opportunity to learn more or be involved. For example, a community initiating a long-range planning process might first conduct an awareness campaign to alert people to the upcoming decision.

An information/education program is designed to educate people on a particular topic. One example is a national campaign to inform people about an upcoming effort to update flood zone maps before a series of meetings and solicitation of comments on proposed changes to those maps. An information program may be focused on the INFORM level of the Public Engagement Spectrum or it may support another level of engagement.

Why is the distinction important? Techniques for awareness campaigns, such as bill-stuffers and advertisements, are geared for getting peoples' attention. They convey relatively little information. Techniques for information/education programs are focused on conveying information and need to be sensitive to the level of complexity of the information as well as how the recipient will receive the information.

Feedback mechanisms are ways to share with stakeholders the comments you have received and how stakeholder input and comments have been addressed to date.



Awareness campaigns:
information kiosks, fairs and events

Information/education programs: office hours/coffee hours, websites, social media, briefings

Feedback mechanisms:
responsiveness summaries, progress reports, newsletters, and direct mail

Tool 1: Fairs & Events

Sometimes planning staff will be able to collaborate with community groups or other City departments and take advantage of existing community events or meetings to share information about upcoming planning projects.

Existing community events can be an effective way to disseminate information to a broader audience and allow planners to capture ideas of residents who may not normally participate through other conventional public involvement activities. Another advantage of piggybacking on community events is that it requires less effort on the part of planning staff related to logistic preparation of the event.

Resources Needed

- Boards with introduction and illustrations for plans
- Fliers to hand out to event attendees
- Staff to present at stands or meetings

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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Tool 2: Newsletters

Send out newsletters before engagement events to inform subscribers and remind them as the event approaches. Individuals can subscribe to newsletters to give you access to a broader audience. Follow up with subscribers after events with highlights and main takeaways. While this process will require staff time dedicated to writing and designing the newsletter, it will allow the Project manager to keep individuals posted with calendar invites, and loop in subscribers to things happening in the community to educate them on the opportunities for getting involved in their community and making an impact.

Resources Needed

- Build a network of subscribers
- Graphic design of the newsletter for a pleasant reading experience
- Camera to take photos of events
- Staff to gather photos, quotes, comments, etc. from participants, and write short articles

Tool 3: Website/Blog

Creating a blog or a website where planning staff can write and publish posts with project updates. The updates should include general descriptions of events, photos, comments/ quotes from attendees, visions for the future, etc. As the blog is available on the internet, it can be shared with the general public in the City and beyond.

Blogs can help keep the community updated on the progress of projects in a format that they can access at almost any time and from anywhere. They document events with descriptions and photos to let the general public know about what has happened. Blogs can also serve as a way to follow-up with the attendees of events to confirm the highlights and key takeaways from the events. Given the public accessibility of the blog, planning staff in both Pittsburgh and other cities can use it as a reference for future projects.

Resources Needed

- Graphic design of the website for a pleasant reading experience
- Camera to take photos of event
- Staff to gather photos, quotes, comments, etc. from participants

Tool 4: Social Media

Use iconic images or descriptions of events on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter in the days before an event or at an event. This will attract people to engage and showcase happenings to people who are not able to attend the engagement. Using social media will allow the Project Manager to announce events and provide prompt feedback for events due to the fast and accessible nature of social media platforms. Additionally, establishing a presence online will increase awareness of planning processes and associated opportunities for engagement.

Resources Needed

- Build a network of followers on the various social media platforms
- Camera and ability to edit photos and text on social media
- Mobile devices to live stream events on Instagram or Facebook

Tool 5: Advertising Products

Distribute tools such as stickers, coasters, and vinyl cutout signs in public gathering places with event information to advertise community events in a fun way. These tools broadcast community events and serve as easy reminders to the public of meeting times.

Resources Needed

- Graphic designs for stickers, coasters, or other advertising products
- Budget to manufacture the products
- Staff time or trusted partners to distribute the products

Tool 6: Office Hours/Coffee Hour

The purpose of office hours and coffee hours is to bring planner and project managers to the people and provide opportunities for the public to engage with planners and project managers, one-on-one or in small, informal groups, on issues that affect the City or the project at hand and specific concerns they may have about development and policy in the City.

The format for this is simple. You can bring a tent, a table, some planning materials, and a couple planners and set up in a park, rec center, or at a special event like a farmer's market or festival. Alternatively, one or two planners or Project Managers could advertise that they will be at a specific coffee shop, library or community space and that anyone who wants to can come and ask them questions.

Resources Needed

- Space to sit for a couple hours (either bring a tent/table, or ask a coffee shop or library if you can sit for a while and answer questions)
- Planning and project materials for reference and advertising
- Comment cards, pens, paper, and business cards

Tool 7: Briefings

Briefings are a great tool to use in the preliminary stages of the process. These presentations provide information to the media or organized groups while raising awareness and interest in participation. Presenters can address any questions or concerns that the audience may have as well as identify individuals for subsequent interviews. Be sure to know your audience beforehand.

Resources Needed

- Staff or trusted partners trained to present and answer questions
- Space to hold briefings
- Projector screens, computers, or other technology to display presentations
- Informative handouts

Tool 8: Information Kiosks

When the general public shows high interest in the project, information kiosks are a helpful way to provide easy-to-access information and generate additional awareness. You may use computers or tablets in these kiosks, which can be linked to the project website. Additionally, users can pick up informative materials and submit input. These stations can be permanent or used temporarily, and are best located in high-traffic pedestrian areas.

If using a computer or table in your kiosk, ensure that the equipment cannot “walk away” from the station and regularly check that it is in working order. Also, be sure that any distributive materials are restocked and content is updated.

Resources Needed

- Kiosks or information stations
- Equipment and information materials
- Staff to check that equipment is in working order and restock any materials

Tool 9: Responsiveness Summaries

To maintain transparency throughout the process, it is important to publicly and openly show how public comments have been addressed. In some cases, this is legally required. Summarize the feedback to comments in a well-organized report that includes how each comment will be incorporated into the decision-making process. You may also consider including key words or issues related to each comment so that people can conveniently search for them within the summary.

Resources Needed

- Public comments
- Report summary
- Staff to distribute summary

Techniques for Collecting & Compiling Input

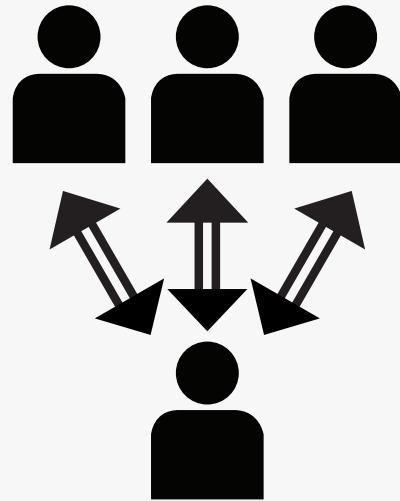
How might you collect input from individuals or from groups of people? How will you summarize this data and share it with those who are interested?

This section presents various techniques for collecting and compiling input from the public. Some of the techniques are conducted on paper or through electronic methods, while others are conducted in person. The techniques also vary in who is providing input. For some techniques, respondents self-select, while for other techniques, a representative sample is polled or a pre-selected group is contacted.

With **individual inquiries**, the individual responds to an in-person questionnaire or online interview request or survey. Alternatively, this might occur during, before, or after a meeting. Results are summarized to present the views of those who respond.

In **social science research**, individuals respond to a survey instrument or participate in a focus group. Results are generalized for a larger population. A survey should be designed to gather data from a statistically valid representation of the larger population. Focus groups, by contrast, give an indication of what a similar group might believe, but the results are not statistically valid for the larger population.

Voting is the most basic form of participation in democracy. A referendum, where citizens vote on a specific proposal, is an example of a voting technique.



Individual Inquiries: comment forms, interviews, social media

Social science research: scientific surveys, questionnaires

Voting

Tool 10: Surveys

Conduct questionnaires in person or through online tools to gather additional feedback.

Resources Needed

- Questions
- Online platform for creation and distribution of survey, or capacity for in person distribution
- Method for organizing and presenting responses

Tool 11: One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings can serve to allow planners or Project Managers to meet with residents individually or in small groups to facilitate more natural and informal conversation. Similar to coffee hours or office hours, one-on-one meetings are set up ahead of time with specific stakeholders to gather input, feedback and ideas. While one-on-one meetings do not have the same opportunity for transparency as others, they are a necessary component of engagement processes as they allow planners and Project Managers to meet people where they are and make engagement as easy as possible.

Resources Needed

- Meeting location
- Planning and project materials for reference and advertising
- Business cards, note-taking materials

Tool 12: Comment Forms

Comment forms allow people, particularly less vocal participants, to provide individual feedback about the proposed project or process. It is critical to tailor the form to the project's public engagement objectives while soliciting other information that can be used throughout the decision-making process, and not simply ask questions specific to the project. These forms can be completed and returned to staff in person or completed online. You may consider including a space on the form for participants to provide their contact information if they would like to receive updates about the project. Although insightful, the results of these forms are not representative of a larger population. Be mindful not to characterize public opinions solely from these comment forms.

Resources Needed

- Comment forms
- Staff to distribute comment forms

Tool 13: Scientific Surveys & Questionnaires

When you would like to learn about the opinions and preferences of a larger group, scientific surveys and questionnaires are a great tool to obtain this information. By attaining quantitative and statistically valid results, you can better understand a group as a whole or compare among various groups. Bear in mind that this tool is best used when there is no need to develop relationships or for stakeholders to interact with each other. Additionally, the objectives for the data should be established. Determine how you will utilize the results of the surveys and questionnaires beforehand.

You may administer these surveys and questionnaires in person, through the mail, over the phone, or online. Since there are potential biases, including sample bias and response bias, have a professional design and conduct the surveys, if possible. Poorly designed questions can lead to biases, so test the questions to ensure that they are not biased or leading. Close-ended, fixed-response questions work better than open-ended questions.

Resources Needed

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Staff or trained surveyors to administer or mail and collect surveys
- Call center for telephone-conducted surveys
- Working website for online surveys

Techniques Bringing People Together

How might you bring people together to inform them about a topic?

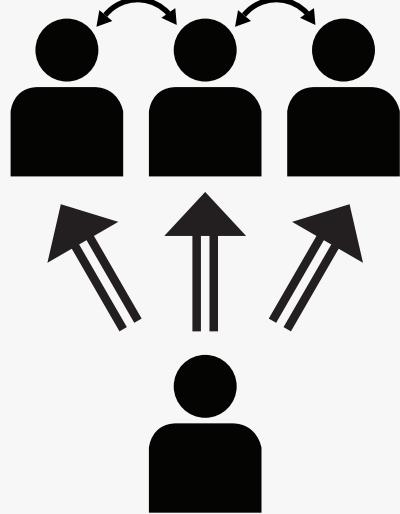
Open public forums are events of various designs generally open to anyone. These might include Open Houses, Workshops, Public Meetings and Public Hearings. Less common tools include Revolving Conversations, Tours/Field Trips, and Summits.

Specialized processes are those with multiple steps that include a specific methodology. Examples include Open Space Meetings, World Cafes, Deliberative Forums, and Charrettes.

Note that some of these methodologies were developed by an individual or organization and appropriate credit should always be given when used.

Representative participation occurs when a sample of the population is engaged to represent the larger public. Focus Groups are a type of representative participation technique that typically involve a small group of citizens selected at random, but the results cannot be generalized.

Advisory groups are selected small groups that meet over a period of time for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. Advisory Groups are distinguished from stakeholder meetings in that the intent is for the group to meet several times to accomplish a specified objective. The membership of an Advisory Group is typically selected to include representatives of different perspectives, interests or organizations, but the members are not typically selected at random. There are many variations of Advisory Groups, including task forces and working groups.



Open public forums: public meetings, public hearings, open houses, summits, tours & field trips, revolving conversations, card storming, workshops

Specialized processes: charrettes, focused conversations, World Cafes, Open Space Meetings, Deliberative Forums

Representative participation: focus groups

Advisory Groups

Tool 14: Open House

An open house engages stakeholders and informs ideas, sometimes as a follow-up to more detailed engagements such as charrettes. A follow-up open house can include turning drawings into renderings and presenting to the general public.

This tool allows for planning staff to engage stakeholders from the charrette and provide information to community members who were not able to attend previous meetings, or who are not able to commit two full hours for a regular public meeting but might be able to drop in on an Open House for 15-30 minutes. Open houses can also provide an opportunity to confirm what you heard with the attendees at the previous engagement events.

Resources Needed

- Documentations of the engagement activity
- Transcriptions of the designs at the charrette; e.g. rendering digital models out of the sketches that were done at the charrette
- Handouts of the design ideas
- Presentation boards

Tool 15: Summits

Summits are an opportunity to bring a panel of experts from other cities and areas to discuss planning issues/topics together with residents and professionals from the City.

They are a good opportunity to educate the general public about planning issues and topics. Summits also encourage conversations with broader attendees from different fields in the City. They also enable professionals to have a dialogue with the general public directly.

Resources Needed

- A large venue to host the summit that has:
- Good accessibility (ADA compliant, close to transit, available parking, etc.)
- On-site childcare
- Presentations or keynote talks

Tool 16: Storytelling Workshop

During a Storytelling Workshop, community members bring photos and share stories about significant places and/or activities that they participate(d) in the neighborhood during their daily lives. Photos are scanned into the photo library during the event, to be used as historical artifacts for the neighborhood.

These workshops allow planners to learn about historical moments directly from the residents through first-hand accounts and for residents to share their visions of the community. The memories can provide important context and be used in the plan when discussing the history of the community. Artifacts collected can also inform art projects.

Resources Needed

- Camera to capture images of items or creations
- Audio recorder to capture stories
- Pens & paper at tables for recording key notes

Highlighted Technique: Place It!

Place It! (c) is a design- and participation-based urban planning method that uses innovative model-building workshops to bring people from a variety of backgrounds into a design conversation.

1. Place a collection of random objects on a table (children's play items, office supplies, construction paper, holiday decorations, etc.). The Pittsburgh Department of City Planning also has a small number of supply boxes available for this tool.
2. Ask participants to use the objects to create their favorite memory of a City, place, or topic. Re-word this prompt to best fit your project, keeping in mind that this should be about telling and sharing stories.
3. Have participants tell their neighbors about what story they built and what made it such a great memory. If time allows, have small groups report out to the greater room on their discussion and any key elements they all associated positively.

You can always add another prompt if time allows. This is a great activity to when you have participants who feel their voices have not been heard, if there are multiple languages spoken, or if there are varying levels of project expertise.

Tool 17 Community Walkshops

Participants identify the elements of their community that they like, as well as challenges and opportunities while walking with a guide, a map, and a camera. Walkshops create an informal and interactive ways for participants to share stories. They can be based on selected themes, such as natural environment, open space, and transportation.

Walkshops allow planning staff to engage people more deeply in their communities and learn about how people view the communities through their own eyes.

Resources Needed

- Reasonable sized and selected area for walkshops
- Guidance for participants to pay attention to certain elements
- Maps
- Camera

Tool 18: Problem Tree Analysis

Problem tree analyses allow participants to identify main problems including with their causes, what influences the problems, and their effects through visualization and mapping. It shares many similarities with mind mapping. This tool can allow participants to break down large problems into more manageable issues/tasks.

Problem tree analyses can promote shared understanding of the problems the plan should address and provide a mechanism for prioritizing how the overall problem will be addressed. Planning staff can use this tool for co-creation of solutions/strategies.

Resources Needed

- Large wall or sheet of paper
- Sticky Notes
- Categories for problems to help organize the activity

Tool 19: Pop-Up Exercise

This practice can vary from a graffiti wall that is in place over a long period of time, to an interesting map set up in a public space with comment cards, to a one-off event that would draw people to comment and share pictures on social media. The idea is to provide an open-ended prompt, seek input, and make that input visible for a period of time for others to see and interact with.

This is a fun and engaging way to reach community members, and it can be designed to be complicated or easy to create. Pop up exercises engage people informally on topics relevant to their neighborhood or City, and create a feedback loop by allowing community members to interact with each other and view each other's comments.

Resources Needed

- Question(s) to be asked of the public
- Posters, boards, walls, chalkboards, artwork, etc. to write/stick ideas on and associate writing materials

Tool 20: Community Mapping

Use maps and photographs of an area or specific location to illustrate how people view their area, what they like or dislike and improvements they would like to see implemented. Ideas generated in small group discussions are recorded on sticky notes or pre-prepared cards. Discussions are facilitated to help explore issues, build consensus or identify areas of conflict. Specific challenges can be posed that groups have to wrestle with, such as where should a building be placed, the size and shape of buildings and the location of basic amenities and those less desired (ex. Waste facilities, substations, industry). Community mapping can be an effective approach to engaging people of all ages and interests.

There are two common approaches to community mapping activities:

1. Create a large map that can be laid on the floor or on a table so people can engage in a fun and interactive way, by walking on or around it and marking elements or placing icons on it.
2. Guided walks of the area to develop visual photographs of things people like and those they want addressed that can be brought back and used in the mapping exercise.

Using either approach, the goal of community mapping is to understand challenges and opportunities that communities face and parse out preferences for future development.

Resources Needed

- Maps
- Photos
- Sticky Notes and Pens
- Icons for identifying various ideas or places, like colored dot stickers

Tool 21: Visual Preference Survey

Present participants a selection of preference or alternative images. These can be physical options with handwritten comments, or you can use clickers or apps on cell phones to get feedback. For example, Slido can provide real-time survey results. The goal of this engagement is to understand challenges and opportunities that the community faces and preferences for future developments.

Resources Needed

- Preference images tailored to the community
- Voting method
- Results analysis capability

Tool 22: Focus Group

Focus groups allow groups of stakeholders to assemble based on interests, such as housing, development, transportation, etc. Focus groups meet periodically (sometimes only once) with planners and Project Managers to provide detailed and focused feedback to proposals. Focus groups can also gather a representative group of a certain population within the project geography for the purpose of asking general or values based questions to understand the different values of the diversity of residents and interests. Usually, an incentive is offered at focus group meetings in order to encourage attendance, as you might be looking to hear from individuals without the time or resources to attend all project meetings or be involved in the Steering Committee or Action Teams.

Focus groups allow planners and Project Managers to receive concentrated feedback efficiently from stakeholders who are familiar with issues and impacted by potential project outcomes. They provide an opportunity for stakeholders to influence plans through the planning process and community directly with planners or Project Managers.

Resources Needed

- Community initiative or consultant to organize focus group and bring in planners and consultants
- Clear questions and goals for the focus group attendees
- Food or other incentive for attending

Tool 23: Collage Scenarios / Dot Activity

Participants are broken out into groups (this can also be accomplished in an Open House style event). Each group will prioritize ideas using icon or dot stickers on maps or images to suggest design options, preferences and/or priorities.

In a collage scenario, participants put activity icon stickers on a map, indicating activities such as biking, walking, driving, and parking. This allows the Project Manager to figure out how much space is needed for each activity and prioritize and organize different modes of transportation, or another activity type. This tool empowers residents through participation to suggest design elements and understand the design process and tradeoffs.

In a dot activity, individuals place dots or pins to vote for elements they do or do not want to experience in their neighborhood. The voting board can be simply a collection of reference images or activity names. Additional layers can be added to this engagement to indicate priority levels, or others. This tool allows the Project Manager to learn from residents' preferences to build a final design and prioritize implementation items.

Resources Needed

- Maps, graphics of programming options and prioritizing preferences that people can choose between
- Sticky Notes and Pens, icons for identifying various ideas or places, like colored dot stickers

Tool 24: Visioning Exercises

Visioning generates common goals, hope and encouragement, and gives people a sense of what a project can accomplish. Instead of starting with problem solving, the identification of something negative to move away from, which can become fixated in technical details and political problems and other disagreements, beginning with visioning gives participants the opportunity to identify something positive to move towards.

Visioning exercises should work with residents to identify visions, goals and aspirations for a topic or geography relevant to a project, but there are many different ways to achieve this end.

Highlighted Technique: Vision Flashcards

1. Consider generating a list of 20-40 key words related to the vision or values for a project. You might collect these words from past surveys or interactions with the public on the same topic. Put each word on a different flash card.
 2. Separate participants into small groups, each with a full set of flashcards. Ask each group to go through the words and choose all they identify with the success of the project. Then have the groups assemble all the chosen words into 3-5 categories.
 3. Finally, the groups should write a vision or value statement for each category and report back on their process to the group.



Tool 25: Meeting-in-a-Box

A meeting-in-a-box is a tool designed to allow community groups, neighborhood associations, and friends to meet at a time that is convenient for them in order to provide feedback. All of the materials that are needed are kept in a literal box that community members can acquire from planning staff and return once they have completed it.

A meeting-in-a-box allows for the opportunity to reach out to more residents in a more direct way. Since the meetings are conducted by community members, rather than the City, it is an effective way to collect ideas and opinions from residents who are unlikely to attend public meetings and whose voices are unlikely heard at community events. The boxes can be designed to fit the specific needs of the project.

Resources Needed

- Boxes (about the size of a shoe box)
- Meeting-in-a-Box Guide for meeting leaders
- Materials to complete meeting activity (Potential Needs: pens, pencils, sticky notes, City of Pittsburgh maps, visioning images, etc.)
- Report forms

Tool 26: Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects are temporary installations that are useful for testing ideas or demonstrating the potential of a changed condition.

These projects can help raise awareness for the planning process and provide an opportunity to obtain feedback from the public for potential interventions in expressive ways.

Resources Needed

- Pop-up event stands
- Art installations to represent potential designs
- Volunteers from the community
- Fliers to advertise the projects/events
- Staff to facilitate the project

Tool 27: Charrette

A charrette starts with an orientation presentation, followed by discussions and a series of hands-on working sessions in small groups about design proposals. At the end of the charrette, every group reports back and discuss together.

A charrette allows for broader community input on a design proposal. Planning staff can use the comments from the charrette activity to form a key set of parameters to inform future steps. A charrette can also serve as an opportunity to educate attendees about the different issues that the project must resolve.

Resources Needed

- A venue centrally located near project area
- Materials to complete meeting activity (Potential Needs: pens, pencils, sticky notes, City of Pittsburgh maps, visioning images, etc.)
- Staff/facilitators to run smaller group discussions
- Food or other incentive for attending

Tool 28: Facilitator / Advocacy Training

Advocacy training serves to empower community members to participate in government planning processes by offering training on decision-making processes, providing opportunities to speak out, and encouraging equal conversations. While often termed "advocacy training", a large component of this is training in public speaking and facilitation to empower residents to advocate for themselves.

Many are nervous or unprepared to speak in front of City and county councils at public hearings and meetings. This process is even more difficult for those from communities not traditionally engaged in the planning process, those with language barriers, and those with distrust of government or with past experiences of discrimination. This process is also new to many immigrants, as publicly opposing government may not be allowed or common in their home country. In this way, it is important to provide training directly or to provide funding to community organizations that can provide training in topics such as:

- Civics 101
- How to facilitate group discussions
- Understanding the project planning process
- How to testify in front of City council or planning commission
- Telling your story in two minutes

While an online webinar or downloadable video can suffice, an in-person training that includes role-playing is ideal for maximum impact.

Resources Needed

- Training workshops
- Facilitators

Tool 29: Stakeholder Mapping

This tool provides an opportunity for community members to create a relationship diagram of stakeholder groups involved in their community. These maps should connect different stakeholder groups by the services, capital, or goods that are transacted or interactions between the groups.

Stakeholder maps can be used as a tool to inform later interviews and other stakeholder outreach. They can also be used to identify partnerships across different sectors/interest groups and potential connections that don't currently exist.

Resources Needed

- Example of mapping stakeholder relationships as a warm-up instruction
- Paper, pens, pencils, sticky notes

Tool 30: Participatory Budget Making

Participatory budgeting is a deliberative, democratic approach in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public or municipal budget. Participatory budgeting allows participants to identify, discuss and prioritize spending project, and gives them the ability to make real decisions and tradeoffs about how money is spent. These processes are typically designed to involve those left out of traditional methods of public engagement. Frameworks for participatory budgeting vary by scale, procedure and objective, and so the amount of money can be very different from one project to the next.

It is necessary to do a lot of preparation work for a participatory budgeting meeting in order to fully present and educate attendees about the money being discussed and the relevant limitations and tradeoffs associated with different choices. Typically, participatory budgeting happens across a series of meetings, preferably with regular attendance, but with smaller amounts of money one-off meetings can be accommodated.

Resources Needed

- Flexible budget, decision on if the public will be given options for spending or a blank slate
- Develop a presentation on the money and represent any limitations or tradeoffs
- Facilitate meeting and potentially break out groups
- Diversity of attendees in terms of age, race, and type of stakeholder

Tool 31: Action Teams

Teams of community residents, trusted community partners, and subject matter experts meet regularly to write and provide proposals for a project through discussions focused on thematic sub-topics under a pre-identified community vision. Action Teams should be formed as sub-committees of a Steering Committee to work together to create the policies, project and programs for the various components of a project. Each Action Team should be led by a member of the Steering Committee of a project with expertise in the chosen topic. This ensures that the work of Action Teams is directly linked to Steering Committee work. Staff from various public agencies should coordinate to attend and provide input at appropriate Action Team meetings.

In Neighborhood Plans, Actions Teams are required for every process, and consist of four sub-groups, including: Community, Development, Mobility, and Infrastructure.

Resources Needed

- Focused energy on specific topics
- Meeting space
- Meeting agendas and presentations as needed
- Note-taker
- Flip chart or whiteboard for discussion

Tool 32: Community Meetings

Community meetings are an effective tool to give people the opportunity to publicly ask questions and give comments. They also give attendees the chance to hear the same information and comments. Typically, staff members open the meeting with a presentation and then open the floor to the public for questions and comments.

Since community meetings are open to the public at large, preparation is key. Ensure that all staff and facilitators are well-trained and knowledgeable by reviewing all materials and components of the meeting beforehand. Set up the meeting to be as welcoming and receptive to public comments as possible. Allow attendees to vent their frustrations and concerns, but beware that public meetings can escalate out of control if emotions are high.

Resources Needed

- Staff to conduct and facilitate public meetings
- Space to hold meetings
- Projector screens, microphones, etc.
- Sign-in sheets, pens, handouts, etc. for attendees

Tool 33: Public Hearings

Similar to public meetings, public hearings allow people to publicly provide their views. Often times, public hearings are used to meet legal or regulatory requirements. Consequently, the notification process and structure of hearings are more formal. You must post an agenda at least 24 hours prior to the hearing and recordings or notes of the proceedings after. During the hearing, the public may comment during an allocated comment period. These comments must also be recorded.

Resources Needed

- Staff to conduct and facilitate public hearings
- Space to hold hearings
- Mailed notices, news releases, or other media to advertise hearings
- Agenda and website to post agenda in advance
- Staff to record hearings and take notes published afterward

Tool 34: Revolving Conversations

Also called Samoan Circles or Conversation Circles, Revolving Conversations are an excellent tool to foster open and meaningful discussion of a topic, such as the vision or values related to the project. The premise involves a self-facilitated conversation that is carried out by an inner circle of four speakers that change over the course of the conversation. Revolving Conversations can be great icebreakers, particularly, in the beginning stages of the project. Since there is no leader or appointed facilitator, this tool can be great to use in a low-trust environment. Conversely, it is crucial that you or the convener clarifies that the participants, as a group, controls the conversation and that they must not monopolize the circle.

The setup of the room is fundamental to a Revolving Conversation. Generally, you will need to form a small circle with four chairs, possibly around a table, for the speakers involved in the inner circle. Other participants may gather around the circle and form a line when they would like to join the conversation by replacing someone in the inner circle. Depending on the size of the room and attendance, microphones can be helpful as well. Though the conversation does not require a leader, you may consider recording it or taking notes on flip charts, which can be summarized and published later.

Resources Needed

- Staff to set up room and document conversation
- Space to have conversations
- Chairs, table, microphones, etc. for speakers
- Sign-in sheets, pens, name tags, etc. for participants
- Flip charts, markers, computers, etc. to document conversation

Tool 35: Card Storming

Card Storming is a brainstorming method that permits a large number of people to provide input about what is important to them about an issue, problem, or process. Working in small groups, participants identify these ideas on sticky notes or cards, accumulating between 20 to 35 in total. The participants then organize the notes into natural groupings and provide themes based on what is emerging. This tool maximizes engagement because the results are visual, audio, and kinesthetic. It also builds ownership and highlights inclusion by ensuring that no ideas are wasted.

Resources Needed

- Flip charts, sticky notes, pens, markers, etc.
- Theme cards
- Staff to facilitate activity

Tool 36: Workshops

When you would like participants to provide input that can be used more directly in the decision-making process, workshops are suitable. They involve public forums in which participants work together in small groups to complete defined assignments and activities. Typically focused on a specific set of issues or discreet tasks, workshops encourage participants to learn through discovery and exchange with one another. Graphics, including maps, and other materials, such as sticky notes, can be helpful in aiding these collaborative efforts.

Resources Needed

- Staff to facilitate workshop
- Space to hold workshop or public forum
- Projection screens, computers, etc.
- Flip charts, sticky notes, pens, markers, etc.

Tool 37: Focused Conversations

Focused conversations are useful to explore certain situations or issues. Instrumental to public engagement, such dialogues with groups of participants can be rather insightful and meaningful. The questions that you prepare can be arranged in four stages that flow from surface to depth of the conversation: objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional. Objective questions review facts, reflective questions evoke emotional responses, interpretive questions draw out meanings, and decisional questions consider future actions. Though the questions you ask may target controversial topics, be sure to remain neutral and open-minded throughout the conversation.

Resources Needed

- Staff to hold and document conversations
- Space to have conversations
- Prepared questions

Tool 38: World Café

World cafés are a refreshing way to bring people together and foster open communication. They remove the formalities of traditional meetings and create atmospheres that are more commonplace and comfortable for participants. Participants may volunteer to stay at a table as a table host, or move to different tables around the room and mingle between rounds. As you design your world café, remember seven key principles: 1. Set the context; 2. Create a hospitable space; 3. Explore questions that matter; 4. Encourage contributions by everyone; 5. Connect diverse perspectives; 6. Listen together for patterns and insights; 7. Share collective discoveries.

As their name suggests, world cafés mimic a comfortable and informal café-style setting. Roundtables are ideal and should be set up randomly around the room. Aside from chairs for the tables, you may also consider using tablecloths, small centerpieces, and refreshments to enhance the café atmosphere.

Resources Needed

- Staff to facilitate cafes
- Space for cafe
- Prepared questions and directions
- Chairs, tables, tablecloths, etc.
- Refreshments
- Flip charts, paper, sticky notes, pens, etc.

Tool 39: Open Space Meetings

To address issues and concerns of a large group, open space meetings are beneficial by giving participants control of how they want to participate and what they want to discuss. To begin, all participants start in the same room with seats arranged in a circle. On the wall, a blank matrix lists available meeting places on one axis and times on the other. After the convener reviews the central theme of the meeting and describe the Open Space process, they can introduce the four fundamental principles: 1. Whoever comes are the right people; 2. Whenever it starts is the right time; 3. When it's over, it's over; 4. Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen. They can also introduce the Law of Two Feet: If you are in a situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, it is your right and responsibility to go elsewhere. Though these meetings can be as short as half a day, they typically last 1 to 3 days, so plan for refreshments and materials accordingly.

Resources Needed

- Staff to convene and document meetings
- Space to have meetings
- Flip charts, pens, computers, etc.
- Refreshments/snacks for all-day or multiple sessions

Tool 40: Appreciative Inquiry Process

This process places the focus of the discussion almost exclusively on positive elements and attributes, rather than challenges that the project or system faces. They are based on selecting topics for the inquiry, interviews with individuals throughout the system, and identification of themes that represent the community's idea of an ideal future. The process typically takes multiple months and includes four phases:

- Discovery: to appreciate what is
- Dream: to imagine what might be
- Design: to determine what should be
- Destiny: to create what will be

The Discovery phase is used to prepare for interviews and train those who will be conducting the interviews on the best practices related to this method. During this phase a map of the "positive core" should be created. The Dream phase allows for reflection on the key questions the process aims to address and to clarify and document the dream through an organization dream map. The Design phase is when design options are formulated for enacting the community's dream. The Destiny phase is the final phase and includes a review of the entire process, publication and celebration of process accomplishments, and development of a list of potential next steps to move towards the community's ideal future.

An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit held over 1-6 days could help condense a process timeline by accomplishing all four steps within the timeframe. This summit would be an opportunity for the entire "system" to be present and participate in the experience. Extensive preparation is required to accomplish all four stages in such a short timeframe.

Resources Needed

- Space to hold the meeting(s)
- Staff to facilitate, coordinate logistics (6-10 depending on size of group), and take notes (1 staff person for each 25 attendees at least)
- Projector, microphone, laptop computers, printers, digital camera, etc.
- Flip charts, pens, markers, etc.
- Refreshments for all day or multiple sessions

Tool 41: Deliberative Forums

This type of forum is most useful to address complex issues that do not have a “right” answer. What separates this type of forum is that the organizers prepare and share a discussion guide ahead of time that includes approaches to solving the problem. This guide is distributed ahead of time and frames the deliberations that occur at the forum.

Organizers should work to make sure a diverse set of opinions are represented by attendees. The forum begins with a welcome from the convener and/or moderator, followed by introductions at smaller table groups. Attendees should share how they are personally related to/impacted by the issue. Only after introductions are completed should the deliberation begin, guided by the moderator. At the end of the forum, all attendees will be asked to reflect on what they learned.

Resources Needed

- Staff, including a convener, moderator, and recorder
- Space that includes open seating arranged in a “U” (for small groups) or circle shape
- Flip charts, markers, masking tape, name tags, etc.
- Discussion guides to frame the issue for deliberation
- Exit surveys that allow for feedback and comments

Highlighted Technique: Deliberative Democracy

Championed by The Art of Democracy and Carnegie Mellon University’s Program for Deliberative Democracy, this is an innovative way to engage difference as a resource by seeking to develop informed opinions about a topic as a way to provide consultation on action items.

This type of forum works well for larger groups, upwards of 50-70 people, as participants are broken into tables of 6-8 participants. After introductions by the moderator and convener, table participants are asked to introduce themselves and then move through the topics in an ordered way (facilitated by a “moderator guide”). Each table will be asked to come to a consensus on two questions to be asked of a resource panel (stakeholders and decision-makers). Tables ask their questions of the panel. At the end of the forum, all attendees are asked to fill out an exit survey that contains both check boxes and comment areas.



Tool 42: Advisory Groups

Advisory group is an overarching term that can describe a wide variety of groups that help provide decision makers with recommendations that reflect the range of opinions on a topic. Because of the broad nature of their work, each advisory group's charter and process will be unique. Some are convened to address one specific question or event, others provide guidance over a longer period of time. Others are purposefully technical, and might report to a more general Action Team.

Selecting a name for an advisory group is an important part of the process and should be intentional. The following categories are not exclusive, but can be used as a reference when selecting an appropriate name for an advisory group. One word should be selected from each category to form the name of the advisory group:

Category 1: Stakeholder/Community/Citizen/Local/Technical

Category 2: Reference/Advisory/Working/Steering/Consultative/Ad hoc

Category 3: Group/Committee/Board/Task Force/Action Team

There are five components of advisory groups: 1) Mission, 2) Membership, 3) Roles and Responsibilities, 4) Operations, and 5) Documentation. Consider policies for each in the formation of any Advisory Group.

Resources Needed

- Identification of key community and technical experts willing and able to volunteer their time and knowledge
- Staff, including extensive administrative support, to organize/prepare materials and synthesize outcomes into reports/notes
- Space to have meetings (specification are dependent upon the needs of the group)
- Technical resources as needed for members to comment on and respond to

Resources

IAP2 Trainer's Manual: Planning for Effective Public Participation

http://static.qwad.com.au/iap2/files/06Dec_TrainersPlanning.pdf

IAP2 Public Participation Pillars

https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2_Federation - P2_Pillars.pdf

Salt Lake City Public Engagement Guide

<http://www.slcdocs.com/recorder/publicengagement.pdf>

Minneapolis Civic Engagement Plan

www.minneapolis2040.com

Community Engagement Toolkit: Guidance and Resources for Engaging Community in Planning and Policy Development

<http://www.futurewise.org/assets/reports/CET.pdf>

Community Engagement Guide: A Tool to Advance Equity & Social Justice in King County

<https://healthyplacesbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CommunityEngagementWorksheet.pdf>

Making Austin: Public Participation in a New Comprehensive Plan

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=130643>

Portland Community & Civic Life: Engaging Underrepresented Communities

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/61415>

Portland Comprehensive Plan Update: Community Involvement Plan

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/451620>

City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update: Revised Public Participation Program

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/CompPlanPublicInvolvementProgram.pdf>

Seattle: Scoping the Major Review of the Comprehensive Plan: A Report on Public Engagement

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/ComprehensivePlanReportonPubilcEngagement.pdf>

San Francisco Public Outreach & Engagement Effectiveness Initiative

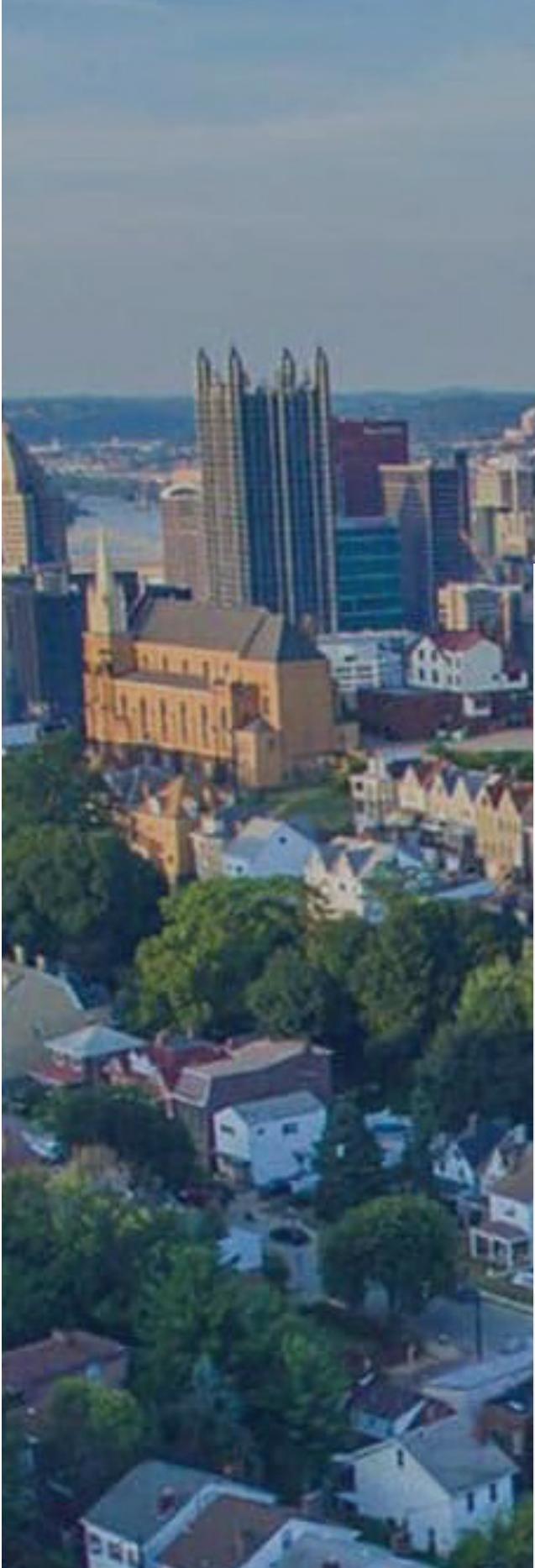
http://default.sfplanning.org/administration/communications/poe/POE_REPORT_FINAL.pdf

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Public Engagement Guide

Recommendations and resources
for equitable, transparent
and inclusive engagement for
planning and policy development
in Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
PLANNING COMMISSION: 11.19.2019



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Contents

- 04 Acknowledgments
- 05 How to Use the Guide

Section 1 / Introduction

- 10 What is a Public Engagement Guide?
- 10 Why a Public Engagement Guide?
- 11 How was the Public Engagement Guide developed?
- 12 When does the Public Engagement Guide apply?
- 13 Who will use the Public Engagement Guide?

Section 2 / What is Public Engagement?

- 17 Identifying the Public
- 20 Foundations of Public Engagement
- 22 Equity in Public Engagement
- 26 Engagement and Sustainable Decision Making
- 28 Spectrum of Public Engagement

Section 3 / The Stages of Public Engagement

- 33 Principles of Public Engagement
- 34 Stages of a Typical Public Engagement Process

Section 4 / Developing a Public Engagement Plan

- 45 Sections of a Public Engagement Plan
- 49 Process Review

Resources for Public Engagement Plans

- 52 Resources for Section One
- 53 Resources for Section Two
- 64 Resources for Section Three
- 69 Definitions
- 70 Glossary & Footnotes

Acknowledgements

This plan was a culmination of collaboration and would not have been possible without the time, knowledge, and energy of those listed below and of the hundreds of stakeholders who came to events, sat for interviews, joined focus groups and provided their invaluable input.

City of Pittsburgh

Mayor William Peduto

The Office of Equity (a special thank you to Lindsay Powell & Oliver Beasley)

Andrew Dash, Acting Director, Department of City Planning

Sophia Robison, Project Manager, Department of City Planning

Andrew McCray, Housing Specialist (formerly Department of City Planning)

Department of City Planning Interns

Liz Allen, University of Pittsburgh

Annie Gould, Carnegie Mellon University

Natalie Tse, University of Pittsburgh

Genesis Hill, Cornell University

Sarah Ali, University of Pittsburgh

Emma Yourd, University of Pittsburgh

Jack Wanner, University of California San Luis-Obispo

Consultant Assistance

Ivette Mongalo-Winston, MonWin Consulting

Panelists on Public Engagement

Patrice Carroll, Strategic Advisor, City of Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development

Matt Dugan, Division Manager, City of Austin Department of City Planning

Julia Lindgren, Senior Project Manager, Hester Street Collaborative

Gabo Halili, Senior Project Manager, Hester Street Collaborative

James Rojas, Founder, Place It!

Public Engagement Working Group (PEWG)

This project benefited from a 29-member Working Group composed of representatives from resident groups, non-profits, major institutions, businesses, and government agencies. This group represented each Council District in the City of Pittsburgh and met throughout the project development to co-create the Public Engagement Guide's content and provide feedback on early drafts of the Guide.

We thank our Working Group members, listed alphabetically on the following page, for their dedication and time.

Public Engagement Working Group Members

Zeba Ahmed, Fineview & Perry Hilltop Citizen's Council

Karen Brean, Brean Associates

Rashod X. Brown, Arlington Resident, Garden of Peace Project

Brian Burley, Young Black PGH

Geoff Campbell, Greenfield Community Association

Rachel Canning, Perry South Resident

Robert Cavalier, Deliberative Democracy Forum - CMU

Keyva Clark, Mayor's Office LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council Representative

Patrick Clark, Jackson/Clark Partners

Phyllis Comer, Crafton Heights Resident, HOPE Project

Kristen Compitello, Crafton Heights Resident, PHLF, CDC

Martell Covington, Lincoln-Lemington Resident, Community Empowerment Association, Homewood Community Sports

Tim Dawson, Deliberative Democracy Forum - CMU

Krista DiPietro, Hazelwood Initiative, Resident

Carol Hardeman, Upper Hill Resident, Bedford Hill Choice Neighborhood Board

Christina Howell, Bloomfield Development Corporation

Shannon Hughes, Lower Lawrenceville Resident, PA Health & Wellness

Donna Jackson, Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar Resident, Larimer Consensus Group

Natalie Jellison, Brookline Resident

C. Denise Johnson, Crawford-Roberts Resident

Joshua Kivuva, Stanton Heights Resident, PhD in Engagement for Democracy

Kevin McNair, 1Nation Mentoring

Christine Mondor, Pittsburgh Planning Commission

Aweys Mwaliya, Somali Bantu Community Association of Pittsburgh

Grace Oxley, Highland Park Resident, Homewood Children's Village

Chase Patterson, Urban Academy of Greater Pittsburgh

Renee Robinson, Garfield Resident, Carnegie Library Engagement Coordinator

Sarah Steers, Brighton Heights Resident, Member of Disability Community

Guillermo Velasquez, Pittsburgh Hispanic Development Corporation

Additionally, thank you to all the Pittsburgh residents who attended the various public meetings associated with this work, and the City of Pittsburgh employees who provided support at those public meetings and feedback on the development of this work.

How to Use the Guide

The goals of the City's Public Engagement Guide are for each applicable City project and program to have resources to:

- Define public engagement and understand its value, risks and benefits
- Understand how to integrate public engagement into decision-making process
- Design, deliver, and evaluate effective public engagement planning processes
- Select appropriate techniques that align with public engagement objectives

To create consistency and clarity in all the City's engagement processes, this document will serve as a guide to creating Public Engagement Plans (PEP). Public Engagement Plans will be required for all applicable City projects and programs and will ensure that projects fulfill the principles for public engagement identified herein. With this guide, users will be able to:

- Understand and employ the correct types of engagement tools for effective public engagement
- Articulate and assess the benefits and risks of integrating public engagement into decision-making
- Develop appropriate public engagement objectives that clarify the public's role and are aligned with and support the decision process
- Identify stakeholders and their needs and expectations, and select way to effectively engage them in a decision process
- Evaluate public engagement processes being used and outcomes achieved

In addition to describing Public Engagement Plans, there is also a detailed Public Engagement Toolkit, which outlines a myriad of engagement tools and resources for those carrying out those engagements. These tools can be found in the Resources Section.

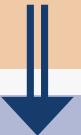
Section 1: When does this guide apply, and why does it matter?

- Review page 12 to determine if these guidelines apply to your project
- Chapter 4 will describe exactly what's required in a Public Engagement Plan, and who will review it...In the meantime, proceed to Section 2



Sections 2 & 3: What should I be striving for in our public engagement process?

- Learn the basics of public engagement on page 15
- Equity considerations (p. 22)
- Refer to page 34 for overarching principles that your plan should address, including traditional barriers to engagement



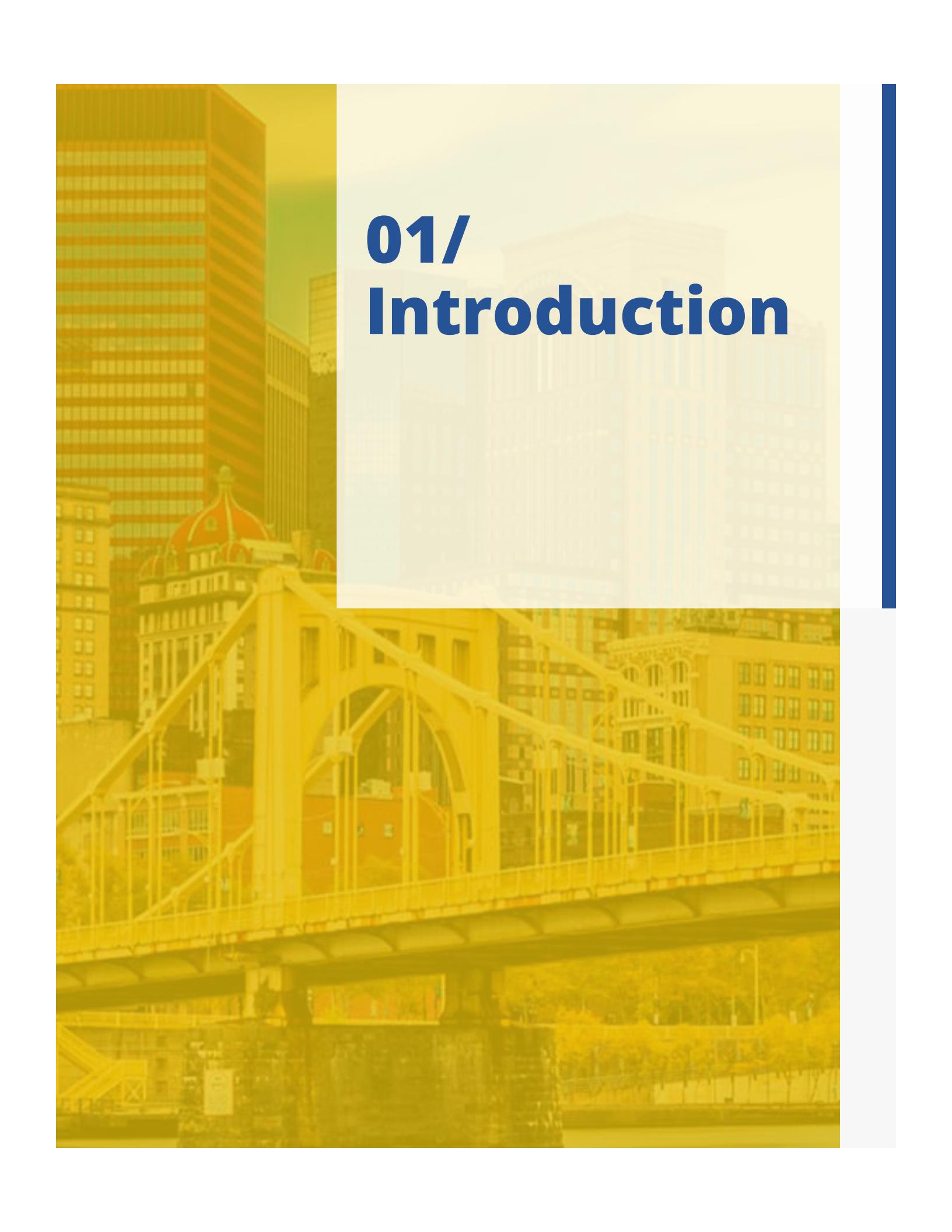
Section 4: What should be included in my Public Engagement Plan?

- Refer to Page 46 for instructions on developing a Public Engagement Plan
- How do I illustrate the impact of public engagement?



Section 5: Where can I find more ideas and resources for a public engagement process?

- Refer to pages 53-70 for sample tools, templates and resources



01/ Introduction

01 / Introduction

What is a Public Engagement Guide?

This document is a Public Engagement Guide for the City of Pittsburgh and other users who may be undertaking large-scale planning and policy projects in the City. This Guide outlines a framework for how the City, primarily through the Department of City Planning (DCP), conducts engagement efforts throughout long-range planning processes, and the principles and guidelines for improving the City's approach to engagement in them.

The Public Engagement Guide is a component of the City's Comprehensive Planning project, which began with the City's adoption of Open Space and Cultural Heritage Plans, and will ultimately create a land use vision for the City for the coming decades. The guide sets expectations and best practices for the public, community groups, and staff engaging in the Comprehensive Plan process. It defines what participants can expect as City Planning undertakes specific portions of the Comprehensive Plan, such as land use, open space, and infrastructure, and other projects such as Neighborhood and Corridor plans.



Public Engagement Working Group

Meeting #1: Participants engage in an activity designed to help identify common values around public engagement.

(People, Planet, Place and Performance), will shape policy and practice for the City's sustainable growth to 2030 and beyond.

Why a Public Engagement Guide?

Authentic public engagement is key to the successful completion of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which, in coordination with major planning initiatives including the OnePGH Resilience Strategy and the p4 Principles

All City Departments and Authorities participate in public engagement on projects of various scales, yet they employ differing standards and best practices. Meaningful public engagement is an anchor activity critical to the successful implementation of plans, stewardship of our City, and to meeting the vision for a resilient City that is livable for all. Recognizing that public engagement efforts have varying levels of success, the Public Engagement Guide will create consistency in quality of engagement across the public's interactions with the City. The Department of City Planning recognizes the need to establish a solid foundation for Comprehensive Plan activities, and as such establishes the following goals for the Public Engagement Guide:

- To renew the approach to public engagement in the City's long-range planning process
- To encourage and achieve active participation across a broad and diverse cross-section of the Pittsburgh community
- To establish City-wide principles for public engagement across Departments and Authorities
- To provide City staff with a diverse palette of tools and resources that they can easily employ as they undertake engagement efforts across the City
- To set clear expectations among residents regarding public engagement efforts
- To acknowledge local expertise, and to look to the expertise of our residents to inform the development of these standards

How was the Public Engagement Guide developed?

This guide was developed in collaboration with the Public Engagement Working Group (PEWG), a group of City residents, stakeholders, advocates, and professionals interested in improving public participation. Members of the Public Engagement Working Group applied their collective experiences to develop the forward-looking participatory guidelines that set the framework for this approach.

The Public Engagement Working Group was a crucial part of developing standards that respond to the unique issues in Pittsburgh and reflect the diversity of our neighborhoods. Discussion with internal departments and the Mayor's Office also inform this document. The result is a compilation of best practices locally and nationally that reflect our collective intelligence. This document will grow over time as new techniques are developed, and as Pittsburgh evolves. The framework set forth here can serve as a foundation to build on in years to come.

When does the Public Engagement Guide apply?

The Public Engagement Guide outlines how the City will conduct public engagement exercises and events; principles and standards which those engagements should achieve; and a comprehensive toolkit outlining different engagement tools that can be used for various purposes and across contexts. In this way, the Public Engagement Guide applies to all long-range planning and policy projects managed, accepted, and/or adopted by the City of Pittsburgh. While development review has not been included in the scope of this strategy, there is potential for specific guidelines relating to that in the future. Some examples of planning efforts when this Guide does apply include the following:

- City-wide Comprehensive Planning
- Neighborhood, Corridor, Art, and Mobility Transportation Plans
- Public facility/asset siting, design, planning, and other significant changes to public assets
- Major policy decisions and issues of significant public interest

Department administrators and project managers share a joint responsibility to identify which City actions need public engagement, decide the appropriate level of public engagement, and design and implement the public engagement process. Department administrators are responsible for sharing these standards with consultants to ensure that all processes are respecting the herein established principles. All engagements should uphold the principles outlined in this document, and the toolkit should further serve to determine types of engagement used for different City actions.

Moving forward, Public Engagement Plans will be required of all applicable City long-range planning and policy projects. To learn more about the Public Engagement Plan process, see page 46.



Building values

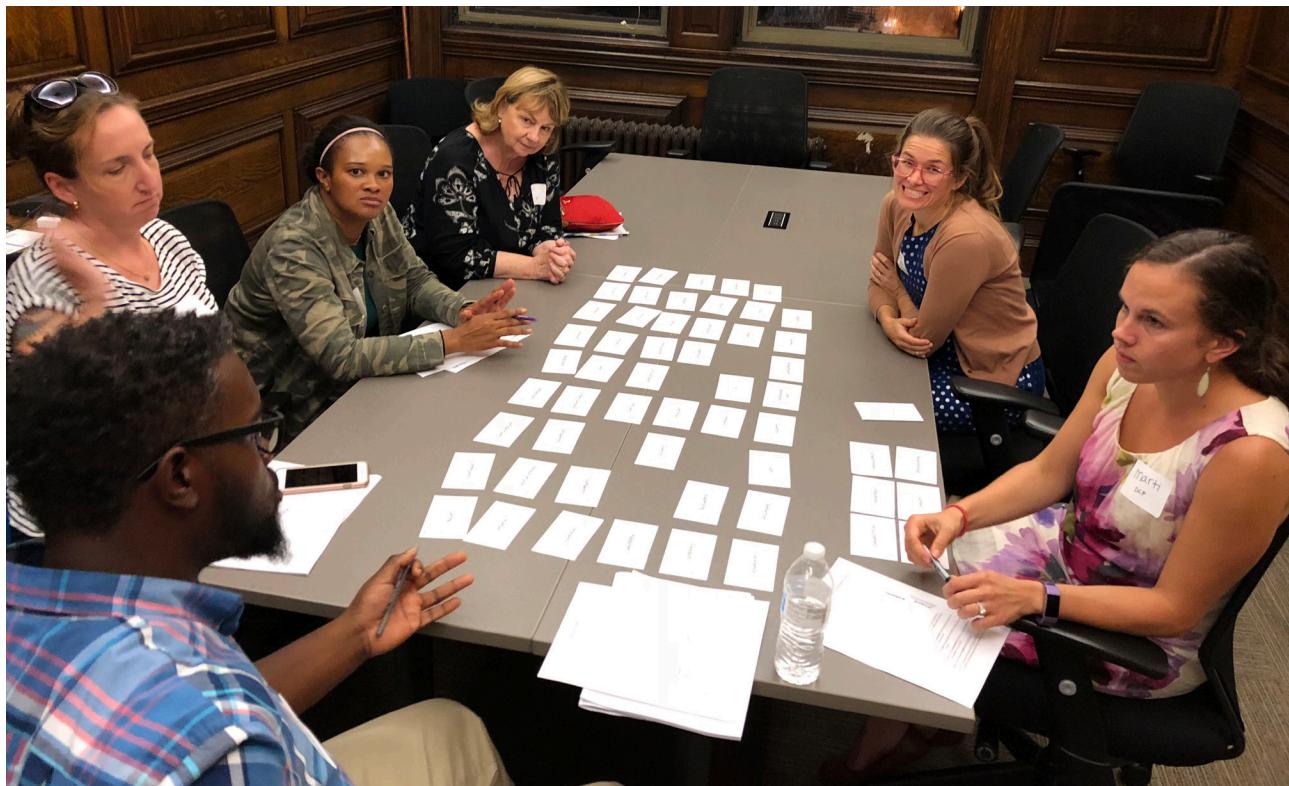
Working Group members used key words from the exit surveys at the Panel on Public Engagement to help identify common values.

Who will use the Public Engagement Guide?

This document is intended for both those doing planning, and those taking part in public engagement efforts as a participant or a stakeholder. Users may include:

- Neighborhood groups working on local plans;
- Practitioners: reference this as a toolkit of techniques and resources throughout the City (this applies to both private practitioners, and city departments);
- Planning process participants and residents: learn about best public engagement practices to be informed about options and not always settle for the same approaches.

For all users, this Public Engagement Guide pushes us to think more critically about what engagement techniques are most appropriate when trying to work through a set of issues.



Diverse viewpoints Working Group members represented a diversity of potential users, including CDC representatives, urban planning consultants, and members of Registered Community Organizations.



02/ What is Public Engagement?



02 / What is Public Engagement?

Public engagement is any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision-making and uses public input to make sustainable and enduring decisions. Public engagement includes all aspects of identifying problems and opportunities, developing alternatives and making decisions. It uses skills, knowledge and processes common to other fields that require interactions with people.



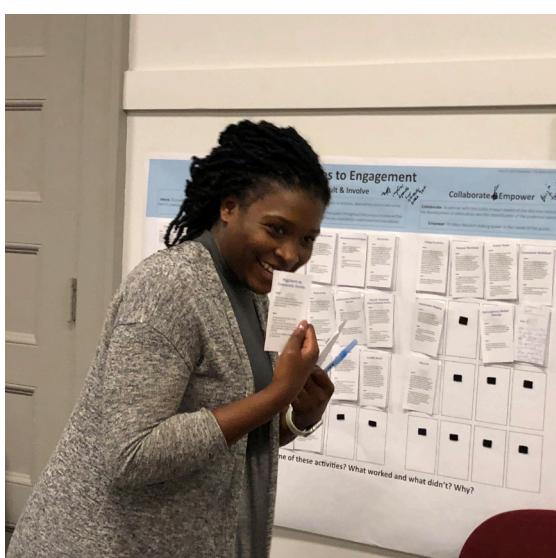
¹Graphic adapted from International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Identifying the Public

The public is any individual or group of individuals, organization, or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a planning decision. They are often referred to as stakeholders. They may be, or perceive that they may be, affected directly or indirectly by the outcome of a decision. Internal stakeholders (individuals who work for or with the decision-making organization) are also part of the public. This public engagement process should reflect their needs as well.

Two effective ways to identify the public are:

- Consider the extent to which the individual, group or other entity perceives it will be affected by the problem/opportunity to be addressed.
- List the people and groups that care about the decision and identify their interests and concerns.



Contextualizing engagement tools In the third Working Group meeting, participants were asked to think about which engagement tools they would use with various publics.

from the impacts of a decision. Some people will be extremely engaged, attending every meeting and consistently being part of the process. Others will comment occasionally from afar. Some might know the process is occurring, but will not become engaged. A visual representation of these “Orbits of Public Participation” is shown on the following page.

Some common terms include:

Stakeholder: any individual or group who has or perceives a stake in the outcome of a project

General public: any individual or group that is not associated with the decision-making power or special interests.

Professional stakeholders: full-time (paid) advocates for specific issues with an agenda. These may be paid employees of advocacy groups, companies, community groups, etc.

Sponsor: the organization seeking the input in a project.

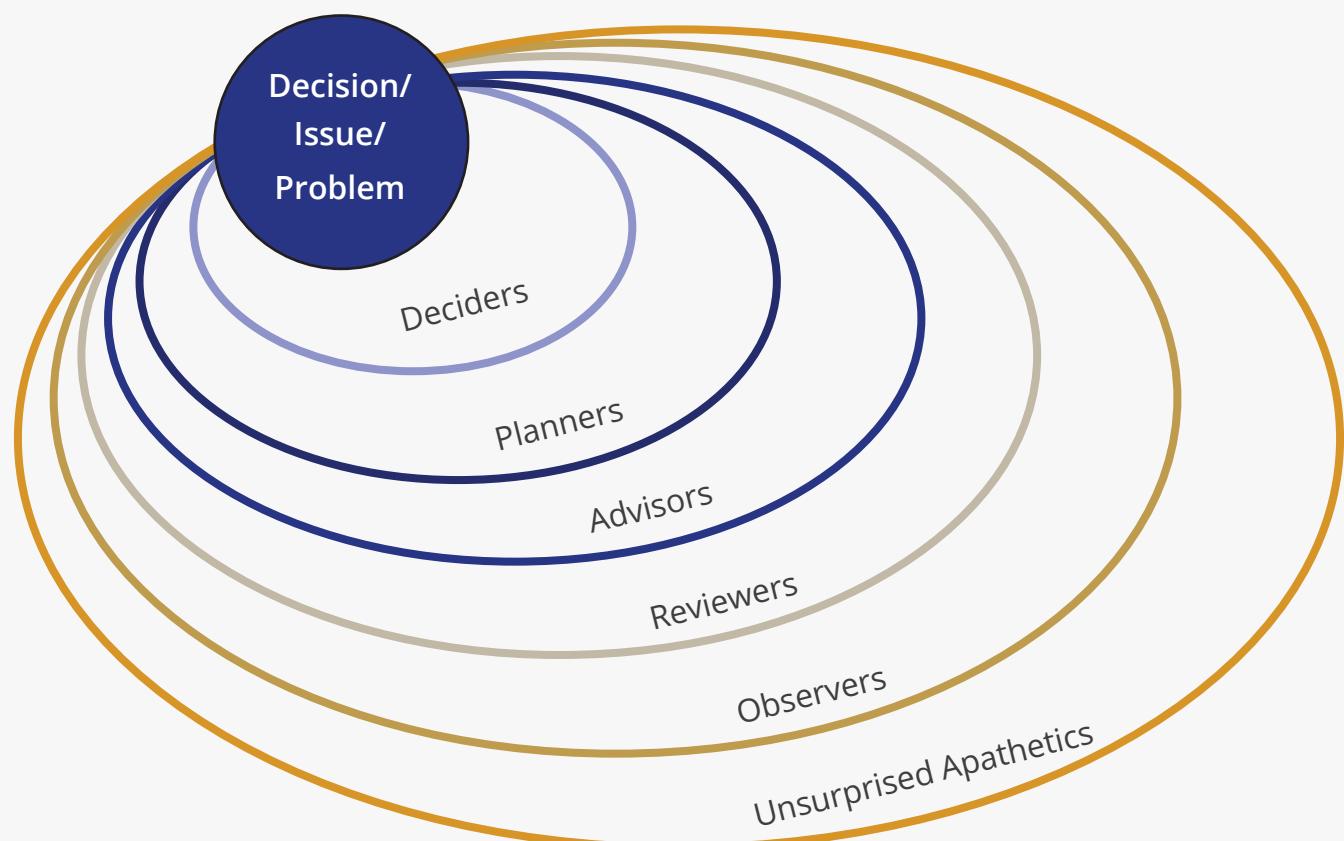
In identifying stakeholders, you can think about the extent of their level of interest and perceived distance

Orbits of Participation

The model below shows a decision-making center surrounded by “orbits” of activity; the closer to the center, the greater the activity and energy. If you are in an orbit closer to the center, you may have more influence on the decision, but you will need to devote more energy to the process and your participation.

This model clarifies that there is no single public, but different levels of public based on differing degrees of interest and ability to participate, even within a single interest group. Your public process needs to provide for the needs of those in all orbits.

People move from orbit to orbit. The outermost orbit includes people who know of a project, but choose not to participate. People uninformed of the project of decision are outside all the orbits.



Orbits of Participation by Lorenz Aggens

Things to Remember

When to Start Thinking About Public Engagement

Start at the beginning. Before starting any project, it is imperative to build out a Public Participation Plan (see page 36). Although individual engagement activities may not be used until later in the decision-making process, the design of a Public Engagement Plan should occur as part of the overall strategic approach to the project and be created when the project concept is first discussed.

Ongoing vs. One-Time Public Engagement

Consider the duration of the engagement that is needed (or appropriate). Some engagement activities are one-time activities aimed at a single project. Yet, there is often a need for ongoing engagement about a particular subject. It is critical to determine at the beginning of the project the ways in which you will continue to communicate with participants. Relatively simple tools and policies such as web pages requesting feedback and clear recording of public input can improve communication with target audiences and help to build trust. Identifying these tools at the outset can also increase the degree to which the Project Team is perceived to be open and responsive to the public.

Building Positive Dialogue

For issues or projects that generate a high volume of interest, public engagement becomes a dialogue. In this two-way conversation, the Project Team and the public both speak and listen. Ideas are shared and discussed. There is a flow of information, insights, and opinions. Dialogue is more than one-way and one-time communication; it is a two-way conversation that occurs over time. The following figure illustrates three types of communication with the public. Recognizing that processes are iterative, consider the type of dialogue you seek and the appropriate tools for that point in the process.

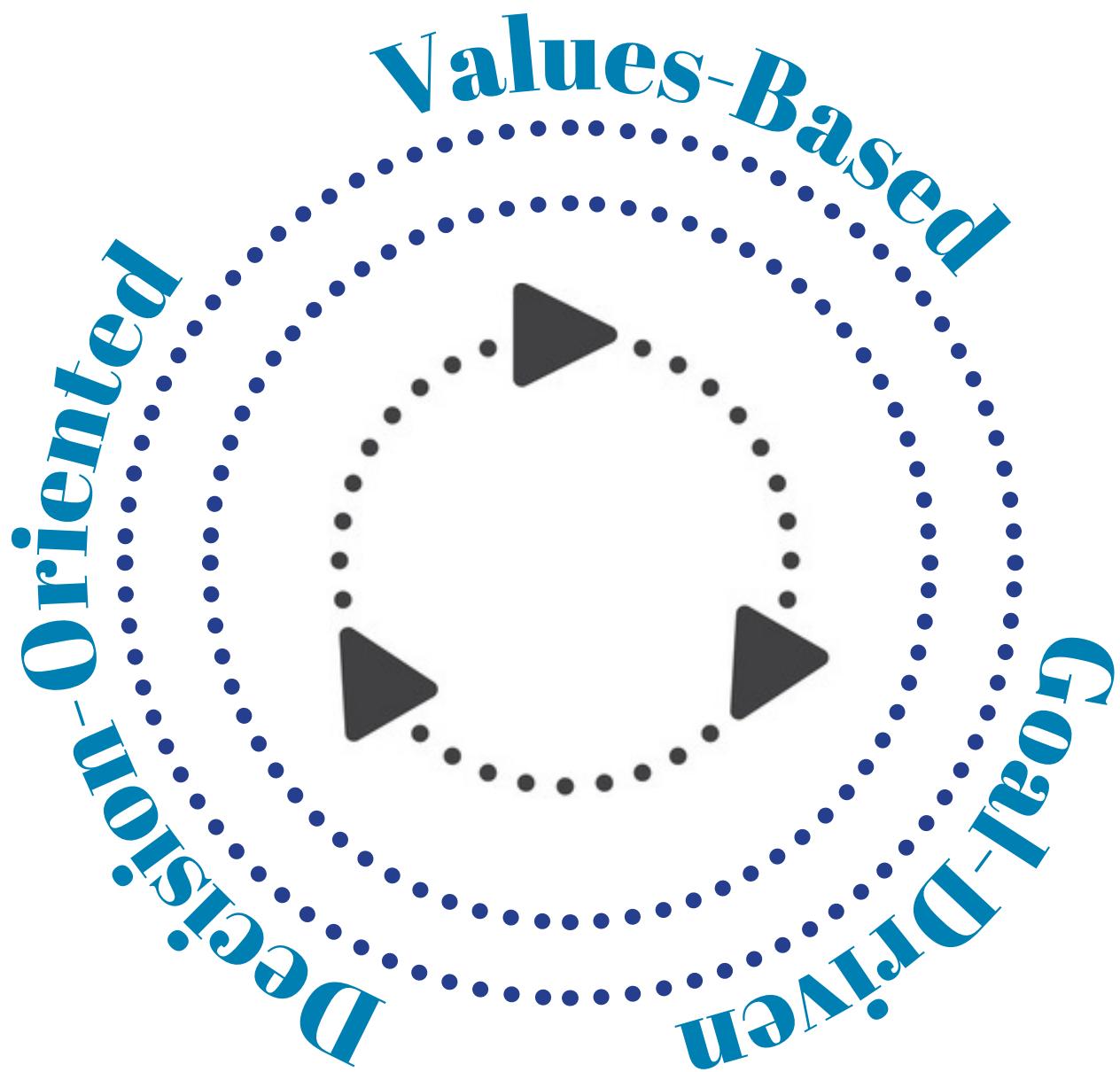
You Inform Us	We Inform Each Other	We Inform You
Public → Project Team	Public → Project Team	Project Team → Public
You tell us what central issues are and what your vision is.	We test ideas, brainstorm, and co-create vision statements.	We tell you about policy, resources, and outcomes after some other form of engagement.

Foundations of Public Engagement

Effective public engagement is based on three foundations that guide the level of participation to be applied to a project or initiative. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) identifies the following Public Participation Foundations ³:

- 1. Values-based:** Meaningful participation is focused on talking to people about what matters most to them and what matters most to you. Within a process, values affect how people perceive the decision process, participate or not, and how they perceive the decision outcome
- 2. Decision-Oriented:** Outlining the scope of issues under discussion to purposefully come to a conclusion or decision over the course of a process.
- 3. Goal-Driven:** Outlining the public's role and potential to influence the issues under discussion with clear objectives of what will be achieved. For example, information is communicated, input or feedback is sought and collaborative development of alternative criteria is desired.

Effective public engagement processes will encompass all three of these foundational elements.



²Graphic adapted from IAP2

DCP Equity Statement

The Department of City Planning will strive to incorporate equity into all levels of planning, understanding the particular role of **public engagement** in reconciling these past inequities. The following is the generally accepted definition of equity from The Department of City Planning:

Equity is when everyone has access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their wellbeing and achieve their full potential.³

This Equity Statement supports the Mayor's Office of Equity which works with Pittsburgh's elected officials and various departments to ensure that the policies, programs and practices of the Department create and promote an equitable Pittsburgh.

The Department of City Planning recognizes that it is the responsibility of the City to engage all communities and seek out voices of underserved and underrepresented people. City Planning will approach all projects through an equity lens, a critical thinking approach to undoing institutional and structural racism⁴. An equity lens evaluates burdens, benefits, and outcomes to underserved communities. In utilizing this technique, City Planning will:

- Identify disproportionate adverse effects our work may have on any community, but particularly on low-income populations and communities of color.
- Recognize the ways communities' needs can influence planning, investment, implementation and enforcement processes.

The Department of City Planning's Public Engagement Guide is a resource towards achieving the Department's Equity Statement and was created in coordination with the Mayor's Office of Equity.

"Pittsburgh, like many cities in North America and around the world for that matter, has experienced growing separation between peoples, classes, and races. These divisions are deep and complicated and rooted in history and embedded in systems. Taking the difficult, but first step of looking in the mirror and acknowledging these separations and their associated challenges is not new. In fact, it is actually in Pittsburgh's DNA."

Mayor Peduto, Pittsburgh Equity Indicators 2017

³Definition from the Portland Community Engagement Manual: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/581458>

⁴From the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE): <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-getting-results/>

Equity in Public Engagement

Thinking of public engagement through an equity lens is critical to hosting community meetings that are inclusive and allow for diversity of thought. When done correctly, projects have the ability to address historic inequality and restore communities' ability to participate and interest in civic engagement.

Without acknowledging how equity can be a part of public engagement processes, city projects can often unintentionally have disproportionately adverse outcomes for minorities and low-income communities. Structural inequality and institutionalized racism have long impacted how city projects are designed and how marginalized communities are affected whether they do or do not have the ability to provide input and consultation. Additionally, when communities are excluded from engagement, residents' needs and visions for their neighborhood go unheard and new plans and policies can be adopted without addressing core systemic issues.

City Planning Recognizes that there are many factors that relate to equity including but not limited to⁵:

- Racial
- Economic
- Environmental
- Immigration Status
- Religion
- Social
- Gender
- Ability
- Sexual Orientation
- Housing

Without a commitment to an inclusive public engagement process, City projects impact some of our most vulnerable residents. Inclusive outreach creates processes where the host is conscious of the inclusion or absence of people of diverse races, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic status and where negative impacts can be mitigated.

This approach requires that access to information, resources, and civic processes are transparent and that Project Teams actively seek input from all community members to engage in the design and delivery of public services⁶.

⁵Department of City Planning understands that there are more factors that may be considered in equity as well. More information on the definitions and different factors that go into equity can be found through the Office of Equity and in the glossary at the end of this document.

⁶The Government Alliance on Racial Equity, (GARE) to which the City of Pittsburgh is a partner, has been a major resource in identifying and incorporating best practices into this work.

02 / What is Public Engagement?

Listed below are some strategies for equitable public engagement practices. These should not be restricted to a single project timeline, but should be an ongoing practice for project managers as they interface with communities⁷.

Understanding the Community

Understanding the community fosters a more informed decision-making process, that focuses on the change community members want to see. Each neighborhood is different across a variety of factors. Failing to understand the different demographics and characteristics of a neighborhood will result in projects that do not reflect the needs of the community nor highlight aspects of the neighborhood already present.

Determinants of Success:

- A thoughtful approach was used to gain insight into the experience of underserved and under-represented communities.
- New information affected the design of the community engagement plan.
- Community members feel heard, have a sense of ownership of the plan- and they express that by continuing to participate and see the plan through implementation.

Examples:

- Ask "How will this project impact people of color and low-income communities?"
- Research community history and current events through interviews, community mapping, or review of documentation.
- Perform a demographic/neighborhood analysis to identify the under-represented and under-served groups and understand current and/or historic trends.
- Assess vulnerability to socio-economic and environmental factors such as 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.
- Train key staff members in equity, transparency, facilitation, and engagement.

Apply the Equity Lens

There must be a conscious effort from staff to dismantle institutional barriers faced by underserved communities. Project managers will seek out the interests and voices of underrepresented community members. Thinking of public engagement from an equity lens is critical to hosting community meetings that are inclusive and allow for the diversity of thought.

⁷ From GARE: <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/> and the Portland Community Engagement Manual: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/581458>

Determinants of Success:

- Stakeholders had a say in the setting of goals and benchmarks.
- Steps were taken to prepare staff to work with communities of color and/or low-income communities.
- Stakeholders understood the goals, the size, and the engagement opportunities of the project.

Examples:

- 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 reassess who is engaged in the planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Build in time to check in with participants about how the process is working for them.
- Follow through to track how the process includes activities to mitigate for impacts.

Build Partnerships with Community

The City is invested in allocating sufficient staff time to fostering relationships with underrepresented communities. Previous negative experiences with the government by these under-represented communities demands ample time and support from project managers. This starts with consistent dialogue with community members throughout, and even before, the public engagement process.

Determinants of Success:

- Partners and collaborators who represent communities of color and low-income communities positively evaluated the quality of the relationship with staff and the project.
- Staff time and/or funding was allocated to support building capacity for communities of color or low-income populations.

Examples:

- Support staff participation in community-based initiatives.
- Clarify roles and expectations from the start.
- Institutionalize representation from impacted communities in decision-making.
- Use transparent and proactive communication to impacted communities.
- Report back to the community on how feedback was used.
- 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.
- Provide orientation or training on subject matter to community members.
- Coordinate administrative processes to simplify community interaction.

Factors that Affect Participation

The Orbit of Participation allow us to think about how best to maximize engagement, particularly from harder-to-reach groups. Not all stakeholders will be interested in every topic, and some might find participation difficult because of other commitments and priorities in their lives, even if they profess an interest in the issue. Strategies to maximize participation include:

- Increase Clarity

Project leaders should assess if they have sufficiently communicated: (1) the decision to be made, the problem to be solved or the opportunity to be met, (2) the possible impacts of the decision, (3) the decision process and opportunities to participate, (4) the level of influence individuals can have on the decision, and (5) the benefits of participation to members of the public.

- Improve Communication

Contributing obstacles for stakeholders include: (1) they did not see/hear/receive notification, (2) the notification did not provide sufficient reason for them to attend, (3) the notification was not in their language, (4) the notification was not culturally appropriate.

- Respect Belief Systems

Contributing factors for stakeholders include: (1) they have had previous unsatisfactory experience with the sponsoring organization, other similar organizations, or past participatory processes, (2) they do not believe their participation will be worthwhile or make a difference, (3) they believe their efforts to protect their own interests will be inadequate, (4) they do not trust the process and/or other stakeholders.

- Maximize Accessibility

The accessibility of a process or physical location may be particular challenges for: those with physical disabilities, the elderly, child strollers, those who use public transport or have special transport requirements, interested individuals separated from the location by distance (absent property owners), people without access to childcare, those whose public engagement activity will interfere with their work schedules, those celebrating non-traditional holidays or religious observances, those who feel the location is not culturally appropriate, busy people (double income, no kids or single-parent families).

Reaching the Hard-To-Reach

Project managers might also struggle to engage harder-to-reach stakeholders. For these groups, a single advertisement in one local newspaper will not be sufficient to attract all those potentially affected. Some groups who are difficult to reach with traditional communication methods include:

- People who speak a language other than the local language
- People from different cultures
- Indigenous people
- Youths and the elderly
- People with disabilities
- Families with young children
- People who do not belong to organized groups
- Unemployed people

To reach these and similar groups, project managers might use some of the specific and non-traditional approaches to encourage equitable participation on pages 22-23.

Engagement and Sustainable Decision-Making

1. Effective public engagement acknowledges the desire for humans to participate in decisions that affect them.

- Provides a means for incorporating the public's values, interests, needs and desires into decisions that affect their lives.
- Encourages the public to provide meaningful input to the process.
- Effective public engagement facilitates understanding.

Both the public and the decision-maker need to fully understand both the problem or opportunity and the available options if a solution is to be found. Depending on the approach implemented, it is possible to achieve the following outcomes:

- A clear definition of the problem/opportunity & relevant information
- A forum for sharing ideas and concerns and finding common ground
- A comprehensible decision process and explicit decision criteria
- Incorporation of the public's issues (fears, concerns, needs and desires) into the decision process
- A clear, understandable rationale for the decision

2. Effective public engagement improves decisions.

- Effective public engagement includes all perspectives.
- Effective public engagement improves decisions by bringing all perspectives to the table. Sustainable decisions result when you find common ground.
- Effective public engagement improves decisions by identifying issues early.
- Effective public engagement improves decisions by promoting opportunities to build understanding and balance reviews of the problem or opportunity.

3. Effective public engagement leads to improved stewardship, and ownership of outcomes.

- Effective public engagement can create a sense of buy-in early in the process, and thereby enhance stewardship of the project. Over time, this can ensure more successful (and possibly more cost-effective) implementation of the project.
- Building trust with the community can often expedite, and minimize project costs when there are complex issues at stake.



⁸Graphic adapted from IAP2

Spectrum of Public Engagement

Levels of public engagement vary by project, size, and scope. Since language drives expectations, clear goals for each stage of engagement are critical. Engagement goals, different from project goals, describe what you intend to achieve with the public. By establishing at the beginning of the process the expectation for the level of engagement, trust is built in the process -- think of this as your promise to the public.

INCREASING IMPACT ON DECISION



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Action: Refer to the chart above and think proactively about what level of engagement is desirable, and appropriate ⁹.

⁹ Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Using the Spectrum of Public Engagement

Review the boxes on the left to choose an outcome that aligns with the level of engagement you are anticipating. Higher is not necessarily better -- promise only what you can deliver¹⁰

The level you select will be the highest level of potential influence, yet many stakeholders will choose to engage at lower levels, or not at all. For example, if you determine your project to be at the **collaborate** level on the spectrum, be sure to also provide opportunities to **inform**, **consult** and **involve**.

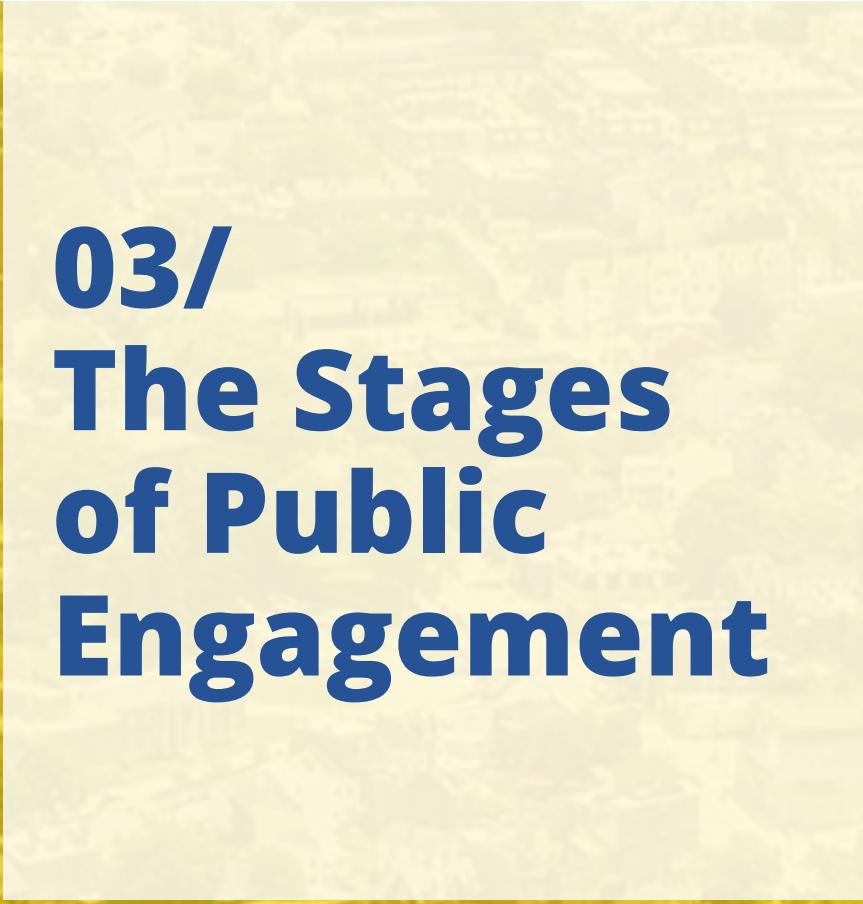
My goal is to...



¹⁰ Adapted from The Participation Company



03/ The Stages of Public Engagement



03 / The Stages of Public Engagement

The complex and dynamic nature of participation and engagement means there is no singular policy or practice tool that ensures better participation in every instance; there are practices and tools that can set better conditions for success. Best practice is to define from the beginning of a process the intended engagement plan, and to make that information available to the public.

This section explains the typical stages of an engagement process, and the city-wide principles that all processes should embody. It provides recommendations to address the opportunities and barriers to getting more people involved in a robust and impactful way, and having that engagement result in a more positive experience for participants. It is important to note that every project and audience is different and so the strategy outlined in this document is intended to serve as a guideline that can be adapted to specific project needs. This section includes two key components:

- 1. Principles for Public Engagement**
- 2. The Stages of a Typical Public Engagement Process**

The process for developing this Guide revealed a series of principles that are fundamental towards establishing more authentic public engagement in our City. These principles were developed through a values exercise with the Public Engagement Working Group, and reflect the crucial considerations when undertaking public engagement efforts. In developing a Public Engagement Plan, project teams should keep the principles outlined on the next page at the forefront of the planning process.

One of the main drivers and criteria for the practices identified in this section is the desire to successfully engage residents that traditionally have had limited participation in planning processes; therefore, attention was given to developing tools that communities can tailor and use to successfully engage residents in local planning and problem-solving efforts.

Principles of Public Engagement

The foundation of successful, meaningful public engagement is establishing a shared set of values. The following Principles, a result of collaboration with the Working Group, reflect the values that all public engagement processes should embody. When contracting or otherwise working with City Planning, Project Teams will be expected to articulate how their public engagement reflects these values. This will be one of the accountability measures to raise the bar for public engagement throughout the City. While specific tools may vary on each project, these principles establish a standard for public engagement.

While it's possible to strive for endless ideals, these are the five fundamental principles that should lay the foundation of any effective engagement process:

1. Transparency and Open Communication

Legitimate processes and credibility are built through transparency and open communication with all stakeholders.

2. Build a Foundation of Trust

Reconcile historic inequities to build a new foundation based on trust.

3. Center Equity and Fairness

Acknowledge systematic issues and make intentional efforts to address equity considerations in any engagement process.

4. Value Relationships

Human relationships with the community foster respect and increase engagement from representative community groups and residents. Project leads should value those relationships in any process.

5. Maximize Participation

Well-designed engagement processes maximize participation of residents and stakeholders.

These principles reflect the core desire to build trust among constituencies and to ensure that processes are intentional about the type of participation, not just the quantity. The ways in which these principles are expressed in everyday practices are described through the steps to a Public Engagement Plan and the guidelines and actions for each step. These Principles reflect some of the most common gaps in past experiences and the desires of participants that do want to participate productively in planning.

Stages of a Typical Public Engagement Process

It is important at each point of the public engagement process to clarify where you are in the process and what the goals of any given engagement are. This preserves the integrity of public messages to decision-makers, and ensures the public's trust that the City has utilized an effective participatory process. Outlined here are the typical phases of a public engagement process:

1. PREPARE: Setting Up the Process

The Project Team begins engaging with local partners, and drafting their Public Engagement Plan.

2. NOTIFY: Getting the Word Out

Let stakeholders and the public know the project has started, and set expectations for what the process will be moving forward.

3. EDUCATE & LISTEN: Creating Opportunity for Conversation

The project is live, and the team is soliciting & recording input and facilitating conversations. This is the core period for soliciting project input and hosting engagement activities.

4. FOLLOW THROUGH: Letting People Know What Happened

Based on what you heard throughout the engagement process, adjust the project as deemed appropriate. Communicate this clearly to the public (feedback loop).

ONGOING. ADAPT: Incorporating Flexibility

This is a reminder that engagement is iterative and any given approach should be able to be updated as a project progresses.

The process described above should be documented in a Public Engagement Plan, which will be reviewed by the Project Team at the beginning of a project.

When interacting with the public about an engagement process, think about using these key words (PREPARE, NOTIFY, EDUCATE & LISTEN, FOLLOW THROUGH, and ADAPT) to describe the goals and expectations for an engagement.

Communication & Access

While the internet is an excellent tool for communication and outreach, the Project Team should also include active efforts to reach out directly to the public. Some examples of active outreach are sending flyers or emails directly to stakeholders and presenting at community meetings. Often, active outreach is accomplished through community organizations. There are various community organizations in the City that represent various populations and interests. Some organizations, like community groups, are geographically focused. Others are organized by special interests such as bike and environmental advocates; or populations such as the Latino, Pacific Islander, and African-American, religious, LGBTQIA+, or disability communities. Community organizations can be vital vehicles through which public engagement occurs.

It is a good practice to diversify the groups you reach out to and the techniques you use for outreach in order to reach the greatest number and most representative section of the public. A good place to start is the City's record of Registered Community Organizations (RCO), which are community groups required to meet various transparency and inclusion requirements and that have a history and knowledge of community processes.

When thinking about informational tools to use in your process, be sure to consider potential barriers to engagement and the potential tools to address those barriers. This is an important step in considering the equity implications of decisions about engagement activities.

Consider answering the following questions during the PREPARE step to begin addressing some typical barriers to engagement:

- Will the meeting need a translator?
- Would people from different cultures feel welcome at this event?
- Are there technology or literacy skills needed that may be difficult for people with less education or from another generation?
- Is there a history of mistrust or neglect?
- Is the event held in an ADA compliant location?
- Are informational sessions held at a variety of times to accommodate people with alternative work schedules?
- Would it be appropriate for children to accompany a parent to the event if childcare is an issue for a single parent?
- Should childcare be provided?
- Have you considered power dynamics and differences around race, age, gender, and culture?

1. PREPARE: Setting Up the Process

The first step is to engage major stakeholders & design a Public Engagement Plan.

1.1 What is the level of Engagement?

- Determine the level of engagement expected
- based on the scope/impact of the project.
Identify who the “Public” is for your project and
- how you will reach them.

Do your research to understand the community before the process begins.

- Align resources with community needs.
- Recognize the local history that may have included injustices, disenfranchisement, and planning policy that led to the way people may
- perceive planning today.
- Establish project values at the outset. Consider community stewardship and ownership as tools to achieve goals and promote equity.

1.2 Who will make decisions?

- Engage local community partners to build equity and ownership in the process.
- Identify decision-makers and dates formal decisions will be made (Elected officials? Administrators? Boards or commissions? Working groups? Ad-hoc committees?).
- Support existing and upcoming leaders by providing structured leadership development opportunities throughout the engagement process.
- Utilize existing networks, and consider less visible communities and networks.

1.3 How long will your process take?

- Develop a timeline to set expectations for both the public, and the project team.
- Work backwards from target dates for final decisions to determine how much time engagement will require. For small projects, plan engagements two to three or more months before final decisions are made; medium and large projects require additional time.

Appendix Materials:

[Project timeline \(pg. 52\)](#)

[Stakeholder worksheet \(pg. 53\)](#)

[Assessing public impact \(pg. 54-55\)](#)

2. NOTIFY: Getting the Word Out

After you have laid out your Public Engagement Plan, the second step is to sufficiently notify the public about the project and the Public Engagement Plan. This requires getting the word out early, to as many members of the public as possible, so that the Project Team is clearly communicating the engagement process, and begins to establish trust with core constituencies.

The notification step sends the message to the public that “this project may affect you”, it sets expectations for all parties, and starts the project off on a good foot. During notification, describe the purpose and goals for the project.

2.1 What are some basic communication strategies?

- Build trust by identifying realistic expectations related to process and outcomes, and acknowledging engagement limitations.
- Convey to people who are willing and able to participate that there are opportunities for varying commitments, including options that are simple and enjoyable without major responsibilities.
- Consider visits to community organizations, open houses, emails, letters, phone calls, and posting on the City website.
- Consider how information is shared- long staff reports may need to be summarized in an executive summary or in a bullet-point format.

Appendix Materials:

Communications strategy (pg. 58-59)

Logistics of community engagement (pg. 60)

Comment card (pg. 61)

Website template (pg. 62-63)

2.2 How will you communicate?

- Publish relevant documents & information in an easily accessible online format and in common physical locations.
- Promote upcoming public meetings three weeks in advance, and no less than two weeks ahead of time. This gives community organizations time to share information and promote an engagement opportunity.
- Provide opportunities for people to get up to speed throughout, even if they were not involved in the earlier part of the process.

3. EDUCATE & LISTEN: Creating Opportunity for Conversation

Education allows for meaningful discussion and dialogue to occur by providing common ground for all interested parties.

3.1 What education is necessary and helpful?

- Provide opportunities for education about project topics to eliminate barriers to engagement and increase the comfort level of participants in joining the discussion.
- Create a database that uses knowledge of other City departments and key stakeholders so residents have a clear idea of who to contact to learn more about various topics.
- Refer to community history and past dialogue to build credibility and relevance.
- Take time to clarify the decision-making process, the scope and impacts of the project, and the variables and alternatives to be considered.
- Technical jargon should be translated into simple lay terms.
- Use print and digital resources in addition to public meetings/events to educate.

Appendix Materials:

Strategies for equitable public engagement (pg. 22-23)

Engagement process table (pg. 56-57)

Engagement toolkit

Engagement survey (pg. 66)

Demographic survey (pg. 67)

Sign in sheet (pg. 68)

3.2 How do I use listening and storytelling strategies to improve outcomes?

Gather public input and actively listen to the histories and stories from the public. Once everyone is at the same level of understanding, it is more reasonable to expect a two-way dialogue. Be sure to listen with empathy and mindfulness, and to pay attention to your own nonverbal cues. Consider the following:

- Eliminate barriers to engagement such as language by providing skilled, culturally competent facilitators and interpreters, and ensuring accessibility of content regardless of background.
- Eliminate barriers to attendance by providing childcare and flexibility in location and time. Consider providing relevant trainings to engagement staffers in facilitating the removal of these barriers.
- Provide clear ground rules and norms that foster respectful dialogue at meetings.
- Ask intentional questions and establish the reason for the meeting and the opportunities for change. Use the stages of a typical engagement process (p.36) to clarify expectations for the public.
- Let engagement be a creative, collaborative process that celebrates the uniqueness of communities and their residents. Incorporate activities that are fun and make people happy, that make them want to participate.
- Co-facilitate meetings with community members and leaders.
- Use various methods such as emails, surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

3.3 How should I record public input?

- Keep accurate records of input received. Publish these on the project website to support the fourth engagement stage (FOLLOW THROUGH).
- Determine how verbal input will be recorded.
- Track and share results of any polling or voting conducted.
- Explain how input will be considered, and where/how it will be shared.

4. FOLLOW THROUGH: Letting People Know What Happened

The final stage is to follow through by illustrating how the public engagement process has impacted decision making.

4.1 What are the necessary feedback loops for a project?

- Show how community engagement influenced the outcomes of a project by demonstrating how feedback was included in policy and planning development, even when not directly applied.
- Utilize and share feedback and data collected throughout the process to assess the success of engagement activities after each engagement and at the end of the entire process.
- When possible, invite participants to observe the decision-making process (ex. Planning Commission, City Council, proclamation signing, etc.).
- Inform participants when a decision has been made and of continuing opportunities for engagement on this or similar projects.

Appendix Materials

Engagement log (pg. 64)

Engagement report (pg. 65)

Project website (public comments/past events + additional resources) (pg. 63)

ONGOING. Adapt: Incorporating Flexibility

Regularly assess whether goals and expectations related to public engagement are being met, and revise the plan as needed. This may require any of the following:

What are common changes in long-range planning engagement processes?

- Changes to timelines.
- Creation of additional education materials in response to confusion.
- Meeting an additional time with a community group to provide sufficient time for discussion on the topics.
- Adding time for a new group of stakeholders not previously identified to catch up with others in the process.
- Expanding the public engagement process because the level of impact was found to be greater than initially thought.

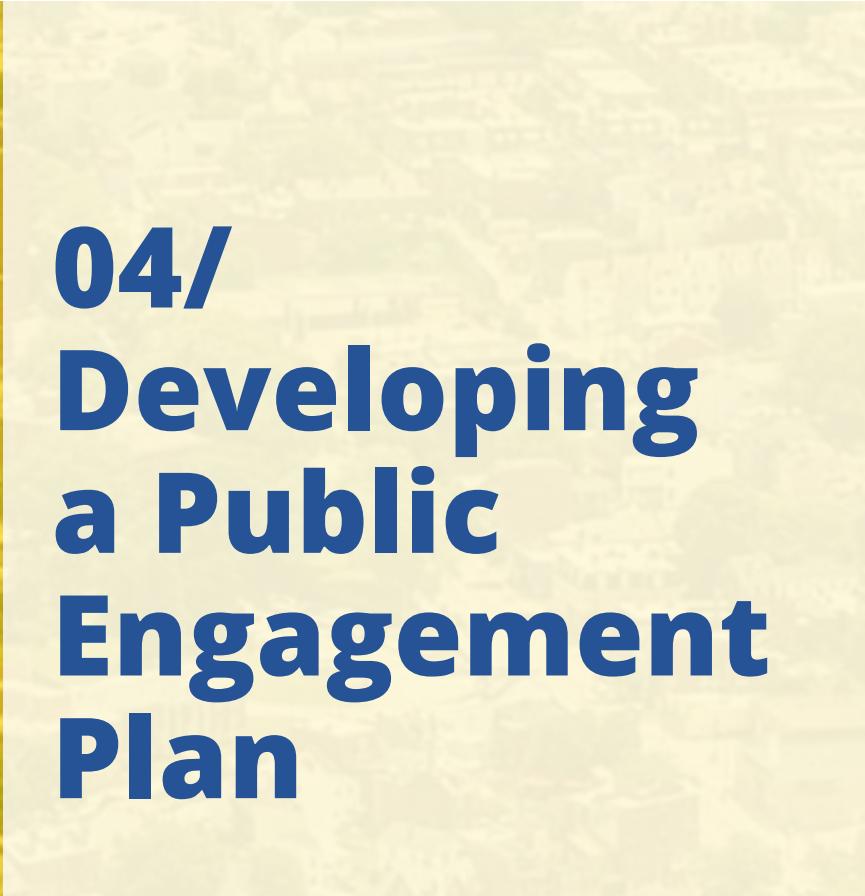
How can I identify lessons learned for future engagements?

During your project, consider gathering feedback from the public and internal working groups on the quality of the process and whether it is meeting their expectations.

After your project is complete, “debrief” both internally and externally with discussions about how public engagement for future similar projects can be improved. Answer the following questions:

- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- What recommendations do you have for the future?

Take time to clarify the decision-making process, the scope and impacts of the project, and the variables and alternatives to be considered.



04/ Developing a Public Engagement Plan

04 / Developing A Public Engagement Plan

A Public Engagement Plan is a living document that establishes the approach to engagement for a project, sets expectations with the public for engagements, and hosts records of all engagements throughout the course of a project.

Public Engagement Plans benefit project outcomes because they:

- Set expectations with the public and the Project Team for the approach to public engagement on a project from the beginning and creates an avenue for follow-through
- Support well-researched and transparent decision-making using principles and standards co-created with a diverse public
- Documents how a given project will achieve the City's expectations for engagement

This section includes the following information:

- Sections of a Public Engagement Plan with guiding questions
- Process Review for a Public Engagement Plan

Sections of a Public Engagement Plan

Below, each of the sections of a Public Engagement Plan are described in detail. The Public Engagement Plan should follow this format and include an Appendix where all major tables, worksheets, and charts referenced throughout the document are included (this facilitates ease of reading).

1. Project Overview

By the time you start working on your Public Engagement Plan, you should already have a good idea of the big question your project is trying to answer. In this section, you will be asked to describe the project, its impacts, timeline, resources, and context. While some of this may seem repetitive, remember that this section needs to be written for the general public, and so should use simple, straight-forward language that it to the point. Remove all jargon and technical vocabulary from any existing project descriptions. Keep in mind that this section is about explaining the actual project, and not the engagement that will be done for the project. In total, this section should be two to three pages.

2. Explanation of Public Engagement Process

In this section, you will describe your approach to engagement for this project, the engagement goals, the decision-making process, and the communications approach. There are numerous worksheets and guiding documents to help you think about completing this section. This section should be four to six pages, plus a number of pages in the Appendix showing Working Group members, stakeholders, and communications strategies. None of the resources/worksheets provided are required, but are strongly encouraged.

3. Accountability & Evaluation Metrics

This section will describe how you intend to evaluate the success of your engagement approach, and how participants can see follow-through. This section will need to be updated throughout the course of the project, and so in the beginning will be just a couple short descriptions of the accountability and evaluation approach. Before the entire project wraps up, you will need to update this section to reflect the results of your various engagements. At the beginning, this section might only be one page, but by the end of your process it will include a host of evaluation worksheets in the Appendix and a completed engagement log.

The following pages provide more detail and walk you through how to create a Public Engagement Plan.

Section 1. Project Overview	
Introduction	<p>State briefly what the project is and why the community is/will be invested in the project outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose is to have simple language that can be shared broadly. This should be brief, clear and explain why the public should invest their time in the project. It should include all information relevant to potential Steering Committee members.
Project Area & Demo-graphics	<p>Gather background information about the affected population you intend to reach (ex. population, race, income, language or dialect spoken, customs, historical or geographic data, relevant data reports, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, see the Comprehensive Plan State of the City report (2020). What other research will you need to better know and understand the relevant public? How will you identify community strengths and assets? Include a map or representation of the affected geography.
Project Goals & Outcomes	<p>Explain what you hope to achieve by completing this project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your main purpose for involving community members? What are the key issues that the project will address? How have you addressed the equity implications of your project (pages 22-23)?
Project Timeline	<p>Complete a table timeline for your project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example timeline can be found in the Appendix on page 52.
Project Resources	<p>Outline your resources for the overall project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide broad terms such as funding sources, overall budget for engagement, food and advertising, and capacity being dedicated.
Previous Planning	<p>List previous planning or policy created on this topic and how it is related to this project.</p>
Concurrent Efforts & Coordination	<p>Discuss what concurrent planning or policy is underway across the City that may impact your project. Consider what impact it may have on your process, or your outcomes.</p>
Decision-Making Process	<p>What decisions will be made as a result of this process, who decides them, and how does the engagement fit into the overall decision-making process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have representation from affected communities in decisions? What decisions need to be made after the engagement and how will the community be involved in that process? How will the affected community be informed of final decisions?

Section 2. Public Engagement Process

Stakeholder & Issues Assessment	<p>Identify key stakeholders using the Stakeholder and Issues Assessment Worksheet (pg. 53).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is affected by, involved in, or has interest in the project issues? What steps will you take to ensure impacted communities that were not historically included in the decision-making process are included?
Project Team & Steering Committee(s)	<p>List all members of the project team and their contact information. Explain how the Steering Committee is chosen; list all members and their affiliations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What stakeholder type are they and are there any conflicts of interest?
Public Engagement Overview & Tools	<p>Briefly describe how you intend to engage the public about your project. Explain in detail each engagement opportunity, where it falls in the Public Engagement Spectrum, and what engagement tools will be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the worksheet for Assessing Public Impact and the following one-pager on Determining the Level of Engagement (pg. 56-57) Use Engagement Process Table to map out your engagements (pg. 58-59). To choose engagement tools, refer to the Public Engagement Toolkit (separate Appendix document). Why, and with what frequency/geography will each tool be used? Who are the key audiences for each intended engagement? Do you or others in the project team have appropriate partnerships or contacts to initiate and support the determined level of engagement?
Communications Strategy	<p>Identify a plan identity and name. Explain your Communications Strategy (pg. 58-59).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how you will use various communication tools and why. Consider the Logistics of Community Engagement (pg. 60). Apply accessibility considerations (per p.60) Use communications tools such as comment cards (pg. 61) and a project website (pg. 62-63) Establish consistent messaging (including branding) from the outset
Public Engagement Principles	<p>How does your chosen engagement process realize the City's Public Engagement Principles (pg. 34)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there trust issues among members of the public or a community that may prevent or make difficult full engagement? How will you address the differences among affected communities? Is there community and public support for your project?

<h3>Section 3. Accountability & Evaluation</h3>	
Feedback Loop	<p>What is in place to inform the community of benchmarks or progress about the project during the process, and after completion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you recognize the contribution of community members? • Will there be opportunities for formal project/program updates and feedback (ex. meetings, website updates, phone calls, emails)? • Who will inform the community on impacts of final decisions? <p>After each engagement, complete the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Log (pg. 64) • Engagement Report (pg. 65)
Evaluation & Monitoring of Success	<p>Determine how you will evaluate the success of your project both in terms of process and outcomes. Use Exit Surveys (ex. Engagement Survey, pg. 66, and Demographic Survey, pg. 67) at large public meetings to assess the impact of engagement. Summarize Exit Surveys after each phase of engagement into short reports uploaded to the project website that cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you able to successfully reach the intended audience? See sample sign in sheets on pages 68-69. • Did people receive necessary information to make a relevant response? • Was the right type or level of engagement chosen? • Was feedback from the community positive or negative? • Did the community feel like they received proper feedback on the results of previous engagements? • How does the project outcome reflect the specific feedback and insight you received through the engagement process? • Did attendees indicate they want to be part of a similar process again? Why? • How can you adapt going forward to make the process better, more inclusive, and more impactful?

Process Review

Although a Public Engagement Plan is developed at the very beginning of a project, expect that it may be continuously updated until the project itself ends. Along the way, a Public Engagement Plan will be reviewed by four different bodies. This is the process by which a Public Engagement Plan becomes finalized:

A. REVIEW

The initial audience for the Public Engagement Plan is the relevant City Department, and in this way it should provide a basic overview of the project and the intended public engagement that will occur throughout the course of the project. All language should be simple and understandable, and should identify where there is room to adapt the course given changes to circumstances. The Public Engagement Plan will reflect the desired outcomes of each engagement activity, but the engagements will not have already happened. Wherever the Project Team will provide additional information as the project progresses should be noted. Once the initial Public Engagement Plan is uploaded to the City website, it must be presented to the Planning Commission once every six months until adoption.

B. PUBLISH

Once the Public Engagement Plan has been approved by the relevant City Department, it is then uploaded to the project website and distributed to the Steering Committee(s) and relevant community organizations (ex. RCOs). This is so they can plan to engage appropriately & set realistic expectations for the course of the project.

C. RECORD

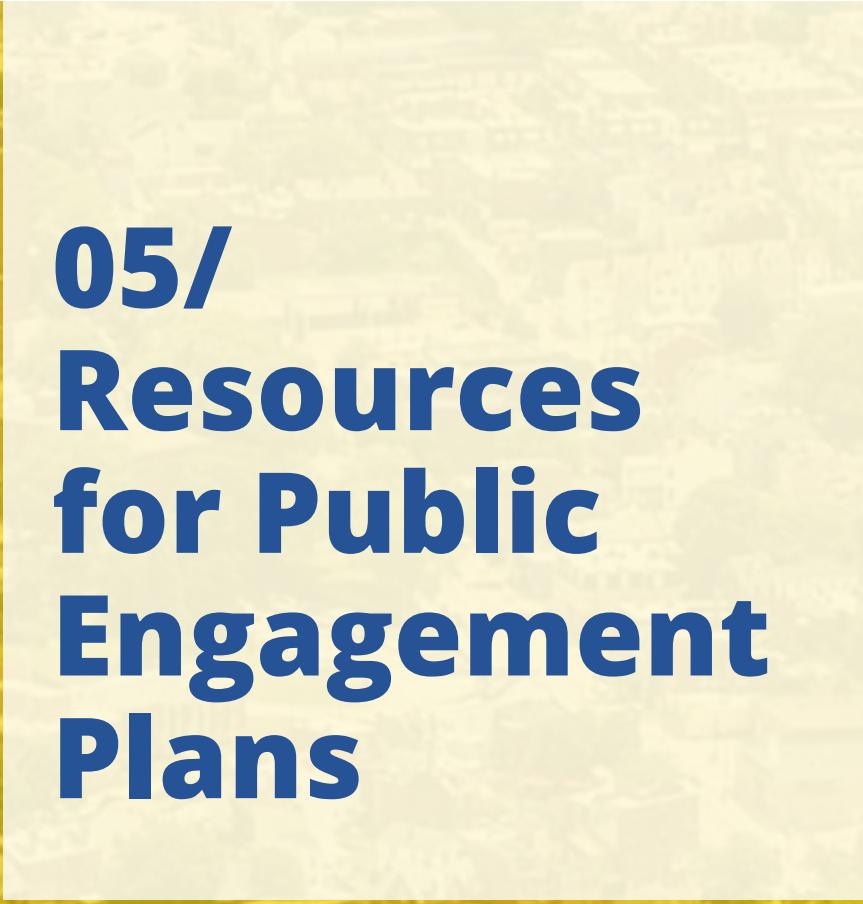
Throughout the course of the project, the Project Team should continuously fill out the Engagement Log and fulfill the communications plan. Keep records of each engagement and add them to your Appendix. Periodically, you should update the Accountability & Evaluation section of your Public Engagement Plan to reflect your success metrics and denote any changes made throughout the process.

D. REPORT

The final audience for the Public Engagement Plan is the City Planning Commission, who will be given a copy of the Public Engagement Plan with the final product as a way of determining if appropriate public engagement was conducted that fulfills the City's Public Engagement Principles.



05/ Resources for Public Engagement Plans



Project Timeline

This is a rough outline of a process that requires Planning Commission input and a decision by City Council. A timeline such as this could be made available to the **public** to provide an overview on project timing and opportunities for public education and input. The basic **public engagement** steps from this guide are noted in the right-hand column to illustrate the generally linear, but sometimes repetitive and circular progression of the steps throughout the process.

January 2019	Initial meeting with stakeholders. Additional meetings to be held throughout the process	NOTIFY
February 2019	Notify the public about the project and timeline. Initial meeting with community groups to describe the purpose of the project and the public engagement effort.	NOTIFY
February 2019 – July 2019	Online public comment begins. Visit the project website or email comments to the Project Manager @ email/phone/address.	NOTIFY EDUCATE LISTEN
March 2019	Presentation to neighborhoods directly affected and other community groups upon request.	EDUCATE LISTEN
March 2019	Dialogue meeting with adjacent residents.	EDUCATE LISTEN
March 2019	Focus groups with stakeholders and residents.	EDUCATE LISTEN
May 2019	Planning Commission briefing, public hearing, and decision.	LISTEN
June 2019	Public input summarized and transmitted on website and to the Mayor.	FOLLOW THROUGH
July 2019	Staff report with Administration recommendation and Planning Commission recommendation sent to City Council.	FOLLOW THROUGH
August 2019	City Council briefing, public hearing, and decision. (May include additional public engagement and discussion)	EDUCATE LISTEN FOLLOW THROUGH

Please note that this timeline is subject to change based on scheduling opportunities and the potential for additional discussion on the topic.

For any questions, please contact the Project Manager.

NAME
EMAIL
PHONE

1. Project Overview	2. Engagement Process	3. Accountability & Evaluation
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Stakeholders & Issues Assessment Worksheet

Use this worksheet to map priority issues, and relevant stakeholders.

Issue	Stakeholders		
	Stakeholder Group	Geographic Frame of Reference	Contacts
1. Impact on Property Values	Area residents	Quail Run & Mountain Ranch neighborhoods	Joe Smith, President Quail Run Sun Moore, President, Mountain Ranch
	Developers	West of Grand Ave. to White Mountains	Sunstar Development, Inc.
	State Land Department	Statewide	John Ritter, Regional Planner
	Farmers	South of Cotton Land	Brad Duncan, Duncan Farms
	Air Force Base	Within their property limits	Captain Beth Owens
	Flood Control District	Watershed basin	Cathy Jones, Regional Engineer
2.			
3.			

Assessing Public Impact

Based on your public impact score from this worksheet, identify an appropriate level of public engagement for your project. The minimum level of public engagement for City actions is almost always public information and education. Just one mark at the "High" level will warrant careful evaluation about the level of public engagement, even if your answers to the other questions were otherwise low. Note that each level has a different obligation and outcome, and that the levels are cumulative, so if you choose to collaborate, you must also inform, consult, and involve.

- 1-2 Indicates very low to low; Spectrum recommendation: at least INFORM
- 2-3 Indicates low to moderate; Spectrum recommendation: at least CONSULT
- 3-4 Indicates moderate to high; Spectrum recommendation: probably INVOLVE
- 4-5 Indicates high to very high; Spectrum recommendation: minimum INVOLVE, consider opportunities to COLLABORATE or EMPOWER

See the next page for examples within each engagement level given your impact score.

ASSESSING THE PUBLIC IMPACT	Very Low	Low	Mod- erate	High	Very High
1. What is the anticipated level of conflict, controversy, opportunity or concern on this or related issues?					
2. How significant are the potential impacts to the public?					
3. How much do the major stakeholders care about this issue, project or program?					
4. What degree of involvement does the public desire?					
5. What is the potential for public impact on the potential decision or project?					
6. How significant are the benefits of involving the public?					
7. How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the public?					
8. What level of public participation does the Mayor and/or City Council desire or expect?					
9. What is the possibility that the media will become interested?					
10. What is the probably level of difficulty in solving the problem or advancing the project?					
Count the number of checks in each column					
Multiply number of checks by the weight	x 1	x 2	x 3	x 4	x 5
Enter column score					
Add total of all five column scores					
Divide total score by the number of questions	/ 10				
PUBLIC IMPACT SCORE (number is out of five)					

Determining the Level of Engagement

Use the results of the Assessing Public Impact worksheet to give you a sense of the level of public participation that you should recommend to the decision maker. These worksheets are only meant to be used as a rule of thumb.

You may choose to apply additional questions that are important to the organization or community to increase the usefulness of the Assessing Public Impact worksheet. In addition, a minimum level of participation may be prescribed by regulation or by internal expectations, in which case this worksheet might be useful in determining whether the required level is sufficient or if another level on the Spectrum should be considered.

NOTE: If any question scores were registered at the very high level, careful evaluation should be given to the level of public participation, even if the average score was otherwise low.

PUBLIC IMPACT SCORE				
1	←	→	5	
Inform (1)	Consult (2)	Involve (3)	Collaborate (4)	Empower (5)
<u>We Inform You</u> The City will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	<u>We Inform Each Other</u> <u>You Inform Us</u> Use public dialogue to seek feedback on proposals, analyses and alternatives. Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered. Involve adds dialogue to the elements of the "inform" and "consult" levels.	<u>We Inform Each Other</u> Collaborate with the public on some or all aspects of the planning decision-making process, including the identification of issues, development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.		
Goal				
We will keep stakeholders informed.	We will work with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. Ensure that stakeholders are informed and feel heard.	We will look to stakeholders for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate their recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.		
Examples of Techniques				
Letters (mail/email), flyers, fact sheets, reports, newsletter articles, websites, press releases, social media, open houses, signs	Comment forms, public comment periods, small discussion groups, surveys/pools	Advisory groups, workshops, design charrette, deliberative dialogue	Public-involved workgroups/partnerships, joint venture, ballot, participatory budgeting	
Techniques in Toolkit				
Office Hours / Coffee Hour	Storytelling Workshop	Demonstration Project		
Open House	Community Walkshop	Facilitator / Advocacy Training		
Summit	Community Asset Mapping	Action Teams		
Website / Blog	Pop-Up Exercise	Visioning Exercise		
Advertising Products	Collage Scenarios / Dot Activity	World Cafe		

Engagement Process Table (covers two pages)

Use this table, or similar, to lay out the intended engagements for a project. This is meant to help in brainstorming and visualizing a project's total engagements.

WHAT	LEVEL	LED BY	#	FROM	TO	DESCRIPTION
Short Presentations at Existing Community Meetings	Inform/ Consult	Project Team / Working Group members	~25	5/27	7/2	15 minute presentations on project. OPTION: q&a or values activity. Working Group members might lead some of these meetings.
Website Updates	Inform/ Consult	Website	1	5/27	7/16	Public comment period
Open House	Inform/ Consult	Project Team	2	5/27	7/17	Open house presentation of project with focused activities.
Hands-on meeting	Involve	Project Team	2	5/27	7/2	Values activity and revolving conversation for those who want to contribute at a discussion level
Information Kiosks at Public Spaces/ Events	Inform	Project Team	2	5/27	7/2	Set up an information kiosk at fairs & events already happening.
Focus Groups	Inform/ Consult	Project Team	6	5/27	7/2	Focus groups with specific user types. Two for each target, accommodate schedules.
TOTAL	CONSULT		38	5/27	7/16	

1. Project Overview	2. Engagement Process	3. Accountability & Evaluation
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TOOLS	GEOGRAPHY	RESOURCES	TARGET AUDIENCE
Discussion group or values activity	Single neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods	Staff, flashcards for values activity	Neighborhood groups that might be going through Nghbd. Plans, RCOs, hard-to-reach groups
Digital media	All	Website, maybe website developer	General public
Open House	City-wide, one in each quarter of the City	For each: food (\$200), childcare, ASL	General public, specifically those with limited time
Card storming, revolving conversation, values activity		Food: \$200 Posters: \$200 Stickers: \$200 Childcare, ASL, translation	General public, specifically those looking to comment on values & discuss
Information kiosk	All	Posters, stickers, brochures	General public, maybe those who wouldn't otherwise come to public meetings
Focus group	N/A	Snacks: \$20 each \$120 total	(1&2) City Staff, (3&4) Consultants/Developers, (5&6) community/RCOs/advocates
		\$1,320	

Communications Strategy

In developing a communications strategy, answer the following questions:

- Who are priority targets for communication? What are key messages?
- Who will be in charge of communicating with stakeholders? What are anticipated questions?
- What are the best methods for communication for this project?
- Have you allocated enough time to carry out the engagement properly?
- Have you asked stakeholders how they would like the process communicated?

Use the tables below and on the right to establish how you will communicate about each major element of a project.

WHAT?	KEY MESSAGES/ PURPOSES	STAKEHOLDER GROUP(S)	TEAM MEMBER?	WHEN?	HOW?	SUCCESS IS:
Neighborhood Plan	Comprehensive update on neighborhood plan	Staff	Adam	Within next month	Staff meeting	Presentation at meeting
	Summary update on neighborhood plan					
Development Activities Meeting (DAM), June	Help us promote our meeting	Community leadership	Darlene	Within 2 days of DAM date fixed	Telephone	Announcements of meeting appear in at least 3 outlets managed by leaders
	Feedback needed before DAM					
	Promote attendance at DAM	New Community Members	Ranita	1 month prior to DAM	Flyers, door-knocking	Community level of satisfaction with our communication, based on annual survey
	Help us staff the DAM		Marge			

1. Project Overview	2. Engagement Process	3. Accountability & Evaluation
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COMMUNICATION TOOL		Project Kick-Off	Kick-Off Survey	Community Meeting	Steering Committee Meeting	Action Team Meeting	Public Unveiling	Commission
Hard Copy	Local Distribution	X		X		X	X	X
	Mailing	X		X		X	X	X
Electronic	Email	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Project Website	X	X	X		X	X	X
	Social Media	X	X	X		X	X	X

Logistics of Community Engagement

The logistics of community engagement are critical for turnout and community interest. Paying attention to a number of logistical issues will enhance participation and improve the overall effort. For each engagement tool chosen, answer the following:

- **Venue:** Making meetings geographically close to communities or stakeholders is critical to getting a good turnout. Choosing a site that is community centered may be more familiar and comfortable for attendees. Does the venue accommodate for public parking and/or transportation?
- **Host:** Consider that the host of the event may drive participation. Consider who you are partnering with to host any event. If inviting public officials, make sure you have followed appropriate channels before inviting them to participate. Clarify in advance the role for each public official and community members prior to the engagement.
- **Staffing:** Will you use program staff, other City staff, or partner staff to help with set up, welcoming and check-in, and meeting facilitation?
- **Budget:** Is your budget adequate to provide resources for advertising, communication and promotion, rental space, refreshments/food, transportation, childcare, translation/interpretation?
- **Accessibility:** Is the location wheelchair accessible and code approved for people with disabilities? Does the building have a clearly marked front entrance, and are the bathrooms ADA compliant? How do you plan to address physical accessibility, and language & literacy needs including translations, interpretations, & reading levels? With regard to materials, provide handouts in larger font; avoid handwriting; use microphones when possible; make websites & all content “readable” by a screen reader. (<https://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm>)
- **Time:** Are you holding the meeting at a time where your core audience can attend? Do you have staff that can attend evening or weekend meeting? Can you accommodate community members to hold evening or weekend meetings?
- **Media/News Coverage:** Will you communicate the event to local news outlets and the City television channel so that it can be viewed on cable/YouTube or reported in the local papers? Do you want to issue a press release? What is your social media strategy?

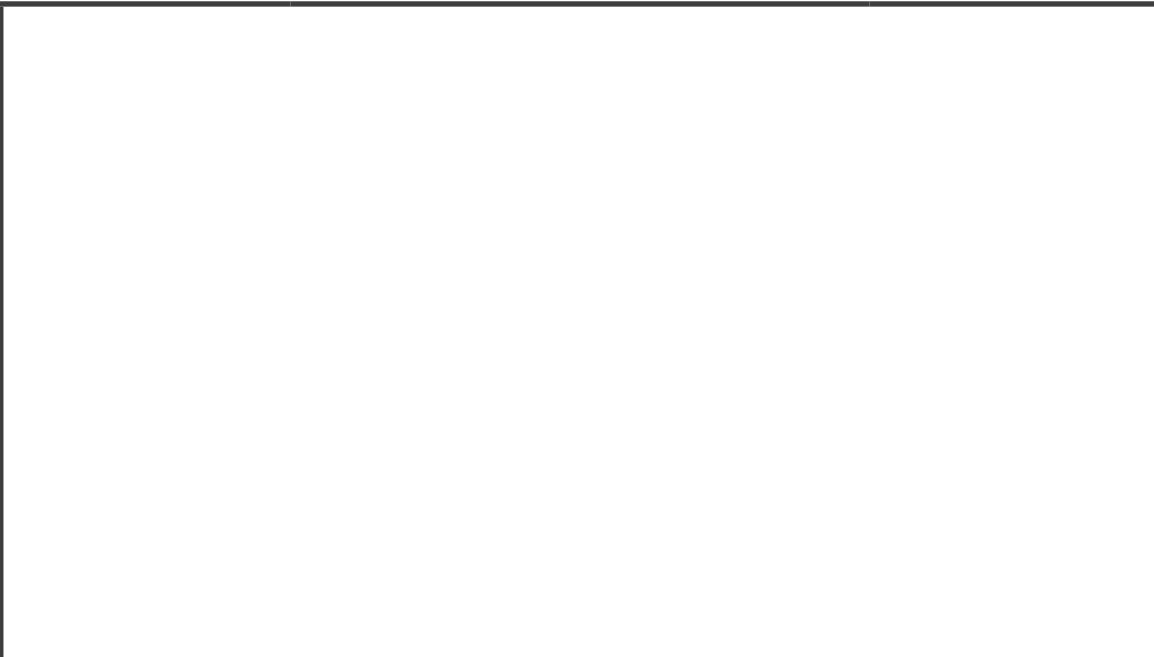
1. Project Overview	2. Engagement Process	3. Accountability & Evaluation
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Sample Comment Card

PROJECT NAME

What are your big ideas for the future of YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Write or draw your big ideas, and tweet them to #XYZ



WEBSITE

TWITTER

FACEBOOK

Sample Project Website

Project Title:

Location (link):

Logo:

Website Format: Tabs

1. INTRODUCTION

- **Overview:** One page or less explanation of what the project is and why it's happening. Update this as the project progresses
- **How to Navigate:** Explain the tabs within "THE PLAN" and how to find upcoming events, past input, contact information, and any other necessary information. This tab may seem superfluous at the beginning of a process.
- **Get Involved / Upcoming Events:** Details on when meetings are happening, a rough timeline, and information about how to get more involved in the action teams, etc. It would be useful to include a calendar.

2. THE PLAN: These sub-tabs will need to reflect the content of the project you are building and should be adapted as necessary. Be sure to provide definitions in the sub-tabs and in the glossary for your chapter titles or keywords.

- **Goals:** Intended to state a project's intent as clearly as possible. These should be co-created with stakeholders.
- **Topics:** Contain policies that relate to the built, natural, economic, and political environment of the City. They are the organizing framework for policies.
- **Policies:** Adopted statement in the project that support one or more of the goals and topics of the project. You should state which policies and topics are supported by each policy. Policies can also outline action steps.
- **Implementation:** Overview of how the project is implemented through City policies, regulation, process, and programming. Includes an implementation timeline. Consider explaining challenges to implementation and the process for amending the project.

3. BACKGROUND

- **Planning Process:** This is where your Public Engagement Plan should be published. Be sure to include general information about what public engagement is and why it is important. Update this frequently with a general list of the types of engagement tools used throughout the process and types of stakeholders engaged. Be sure to also explain the internal and Steering Committee structure of the planning process.
- **Public Comment / Past Events:** Provide a summary of each engagement, and link the raw data collected at each engagement, any presentation given, and meeting minutes/notes. You may want to consider separating these out by policy and content, or by method received (online, in person, etc.). You may also consider adding a map of where the comments come from to demonstrate the geographic coverage achieved during the engagement process. This map could include pins showing where each public meeting happened.

4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Documents:** Link to all draft or adopted documents and appendices (PDF format).
- **FAQ:** Sample questions include: What is this type of project? How does this project fit into other work being done by the City/Department? How much community engagement has there been? How will the City use this project? How does this project address various hot topics (housing affordability, equity, etc.)? When will the policies in this project take effect? Who can I contact if I have questions about this project?
- **Glossary:** Try to highlight key terms and words, especially if they are a form of jargon. Provide definitions for these terms where possible. You may want to consider building some of these definitions with your Steering Committee or Action Teams.

Notes

Incorporate graphics and visuals into your website to make help communicate complex ideas and timelines. You should also consider the accessibility of your website. Make sure that all text is readable, for example, so that a computer reader can access the site. This will also help with translation, if you're not planning to provide the website in more than one language.

Engagement Log

Keep track of all engagements using this log. It is best displayed in landscape mode.

Date Advertised	Date of Event	Tool	Event Name	Key Audiences	Approximate Attendance	Staff	Comments
1/17/19	2/15/19	Cultural Event	American Indian Attendance Fair	American Indian, Youth & Families, Students	40	Nancy & Bob	etc...

1. Project Overview	2. Engagement Process	3. Accountability & Evaluation
----------------------------	------------------------------	---

Engagement Report

Use this worksheet to document outcomes of each engagement event.

LOGISTICS	STAKEHOLDERS
Event:	Name of Group(s) / Organization(s) Represented:
Location:	
Date:	
Time:	
Staff person(s):	Approx. Number of Attendees:

How did the meeting inform the community about the project/program? What was the intended engagement level for this event?

Ex. Community engagement to date, location and history of the project/program, action items/next steps, how to get involved, upcoming events.

--

Input and Responses

Questions & Comments from Attendees	Responses from Project Team

Comments:

Planner Completing Report:

Engagement Survey

The purpose of this survey is to provide City staff feedback on the effectiveness of engagement methods during the PROJECT planning process to ensure equitable access to information for all stakeholders. The response that you submit will remain anonymous and will be used to improve future engagement with community members.

1. How would you like to engage in the upcoming PROJECT planning process?

- Large community meetings
- Interactive website
- Social media
- Email updates
- Festival and cultural events
- Smaller group discussions
- Other (please specify)

-
2. What are your big ideas for the future of Pittsburgh's built, natural and economic environment?
-
-
-

3. How did you hear about today's event?
-
-
-

4. I was able to fully participate in today's activity.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. The information presented today is important to me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. I was provided enough information on how to be informed and involved in the planning process.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. How likely are you to share the information you hear today with others?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Neutral
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

8. How can we make it easier for you to be involved in the planning process?
-
-
-

Demographic Survey

The following questions are OPTIONAL. If you choose not to answer this portion of the survey, please tell us why in the space below. We still want to hear from you!

1. Do you live in Pittsburgh?

Yes No

If yes, which neighborhood?

2. Do you work/study in Pittsburgh?

Yes No

In which neighborhood or suburb do you work or study?

3. Are you a renter or homeowner in Pittsburgh?

Yes No

If yes, which neighborhood?

4. What is your age?

5. What language do you speak?

6. What is your education level?

7. What is your gender identity?

8. What race or ethnicity do you most identify with? The following categories are based on the US Census (Check all that apply).

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

9. What is your zip code?

Sample Sign In Sheet

You may want to display your sign in sheet horizontally to give more answer space or add a column for phone numbers.

1. Project Overview	2. Engagement Process	3. Accountability & Evaluation
----------------------------	------------------------------	---

Definitions

Accountable - Responsive to the needs and concerns of those most impacted by the issues you are working on, particularly to communities of color and those historically underrepresented in the civic process.

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

Equity Lens - A conscious effort by leaders to dismantle institutional barriers faced by underserved communities.

Gender - The behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits associated with one sex.

Individual Racism - Pre-judgment, bias, stereotypes about an individual or group based on race. The impacts of racism on individuals including white people internalizing privilege and people of color internalizing oppression.

Institutional Racism - Organizational programs, policies or procedures that work to the benefit of white people and to the detriment of people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

Opportunity - A good chance for advancement or progress

Professional Stakeholders - full-time (paid) advocates for specific issues with an agenda. These may be paid employees of advocacy groups, companies, community groups, etc.

Public - The public is any individual or group of individuals, organization, or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a planning decision. The general **public** is any individual or group that is not associated with the decision-making power or special interests of a project.

Public Engagement - Any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision-making and uses public input to make sustainable and enduring decisions.

Race - a class or kind of people unified by shared interests, habits, or characteristics or; a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits.

Racial Equity - When social, economic and political opportunities are not predicted based upon a person's race.

Racial Inequity - When a person's race can predict their social, economic and political opportunities and outcomes.

Stakeholders - Any individual or group who has or perceives a stake in the outcome of a project. Includes all those impacted by a proposed policy, program or budget issue who have potential concerns or issue expertise. Examples might include: specific racial/ethnic groups, residents and property owners, quasi-governmental institutions, schools, community-based organizations, CDCs, unions, etc.

Structural Racism - The interplay of policies, practices and programs of multiple institutions which leads to adverse outcomes and conditions for communities of color compared to white communities that occurs within the context of racialized historical and cultural conditions.

05 / Resources for Public Engagement Plans

Glossary

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CDC	Community Development Corporation
DAM	Development Activities Meeting
DCP	Department of City Planning
DOMI	Department of Mobility and Infrastructure
GARE	Government Alliance on Race and Equity
HACP	Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, +
p4	People, Planet, Place and Performance
PEG	Public Engagement Guide
PEP	Public Engagement Plan
PEWG	Public Engagement Working Group
PWSA	Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority
RCO	Registered Community Organization
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority

Footnotes

¹ Graphic adapted from International Association for Public Partnership (IAP2)

² Graphic adapted from IAP2

³ Definition from the Portland Community Engagement Manual: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/581458>

⁴ From the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE): <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-getting-results/>

⁵ Department of City Planning understands that there are more factors that may be considered in equity as well. More information on the definitions and different factors that go into equity can be found through the Office of Equity and in the glossary at the end of this document.

⁶ The Government Alliance on Racial Equity, to which the City of Pittsburgh is a partner, has been a major resource in identifying and incorporating best practices into this work.

⁷ From GARE: <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/> and the Portland Community Engagement Manual: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/581458>

⁸ Graphic adapted from IAP2

⁹ Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

¹⁰ Adapted from The Participation Company

05 / Resources for Public Engagement Plans

Resources

City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update: Revised Public Participation Program

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/CompPlanPublicInvolvementProgram.pdf>

Community Engagement Guide: A Tool to Advance Equity & Social Justice in King County

<https://healthyplacesbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CommunityEngagementWorksheet.pdf>

Community Engagement Toolkit: Guidance and Resources for Engaging Community in Planning and Policy Development

<http://www.futurewise.org/assets/reports/CET.pdf>

IAP2 Public Participation Pillars

https://cymcdn.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2_Federation_-_P2_Pillars.pdf

IAP2 Trainer's Manual: Planning for Effective Public Participation

http://static.qwad.com.au/iap2/files/06Dec_TrainersPlanning.pdf

Making Austin: Public Participation in a New Comprehensive Plan

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=130643>

Minneapolis Civic Engagement Plan

www.minneapolis2040.com

Portland Community & Civic Life: Engaging Underrepresented Communities

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/61415>

Portland Comprehensive Plan Update: Community Involvement Plan

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/451620>

Salt Lake City Public Engagement Guide

<http://www.slcdocs.com/recorder/publicengagement.pdf>

San Francisco Public Outreach & Engagement Effectiveness Initiative

http://default.sfplanning.org/administration/communications/poe/POE_REPORT_FINAL.pdf

Seattle: Scoping the Major Review of the Comprehensive Plan: A Report on Public Engagement

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/>

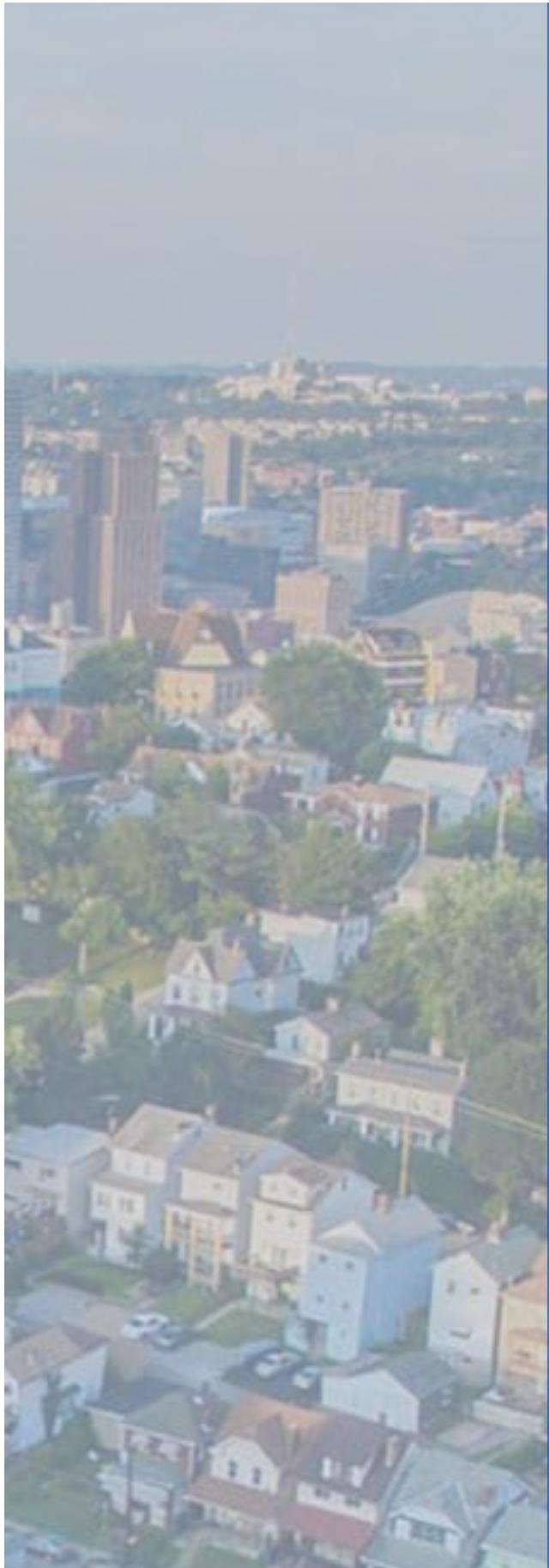
<SeattlesComprehensivePlan/ComprehensivePlanReportonPubilcEngagement.pdf>

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Johnston, K. A. (2018). Toward a theory of social engagement. In K. A. Johnston & M. Taylor (Eds.), The Handbook of Communication Engagement (pp. 19-32). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Reference for Business. (2018). Community Relations. In Encyclopedia for Small Business.



PITTSBURGH DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

www.pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/EngagePGH

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