

12 Best Practices for Inclusive Community Engagement

Municipal governments, both nationally and internationally, have been taking steps to develop processes to better inform and engage residents and stakeholders in decision making. There are many recommended guidelines for inclusive engagement. Below are 12 best practices to take into consideration.

1. Demystify government. Let citizens know what their county government does and what are the issues it is dealing with currently and anticipates dealing with in the next year.
2. Identify, get to know, and involve the people and organizations with an interest in the focus of the engagement and clarify and communicate purpose. Meet them where they are.
3. Identify and overcome any barriers to involvement to help advance pro-equity and inclusive practices at all levels through leadership and the system. Orient and prepare community members for success. Acknowledge and mitigate power differentials to ensure fair treatment.
4. Gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to develop the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.
5. Engage people early in the process.
6. Use methods of engagement that fit the purpose and are at the appropriate level of participation including technological tools.
7. Use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively. Facilitate inclusively.
8. Ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.
9. Actively develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.
10. Feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.

11. Monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement.
12. Integrate public participation into the decision process whenever possible.

References:

Community Planning Tool, Scotland Provides their national standards for community engagement

<https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>

Community Engagement Toolkit, Leading Inside Out

<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Community%20Engagement%20Toolkit.pdf>

US EPA Public Participation Guide: Process Planning

<https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-process-planning>

San Rafael Community Engagement Action Plan

<https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/documents/community-engagement-action-plan/>