DRAFT Public Participation Plan & Toolkit

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

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The CCRPC Public Participation Plan & Toolkit is the result of several years of learning, collaboration, and community input. Over the past five years, CCRPC has gathered best practices, learned from community partners and organizations, and drawn on lessons from its own engagement work. Building on this foundation, CCRPC developed an initial draft in collaboration with the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC). The Plan was then reviewed by CCRPC staff, the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and community and organizational partners. Feedback informed revisions before the Plan was released for formal public review and hearing, and ultimately adopted by the CCRPC Board of Directors.

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Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Background 5

Purpose 5

Plan Framework & How to Use this Plan 6

PART ONE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 7

Foundations of This Plan 8

CCRPC's Approach to Community Engagement 8

Moving Beyond Traditional Public Participation 8

Guiding Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement 9

The Spectrum of Public Participation 12

CCRPC Activities & How to Get Involved 12

Major Plans & Programs 13

How to Get Involved 17

PART TWO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT 18

Design 19

Plan 20

Plan to Inform – All Projects 20

Planning for Public Participation – Using the PIE Worksheet 21

Section 1 and 2. Project Information & Summary 21

Section 4. Level of Public Participation 23

Section 5. Identifying Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs) 23

Section 6. Learn Before You Engage 25

From PIE Worksheet to Engagement Plan 30

Implement 31

Prepare Outreach & Engagement Materials 31

Reduce Barriers and Organize Accessible Activities 32

Facilitate Meaningful Participation 35

Evaluate 39

Track & Evaluate Engagement 40

Collecting Demographic Information 41

Continuous Improvement 42
Appendix A: Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet 43
Appendix B: Community Engagement Plan Template 49
Appendix C: References, Tools & Supporting Resources 50
Appendix D: Stipend Policy 51
Appendix E: Community Liaison Policy 51
Appendix F: Language Access Plan 51
Appendix G: Legal Regulations & Requirements 51
Appendix H: TIP Amendment Policy 56

Introduction

Background

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) works with the county's 19 municipalities to plan for the region's future. As the region's designated Regional Planning Commission (RPC) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), CCRPC helps communities coordinate planning efforts, make informed decisions, and address issues that cross municipal boundaries. Its work includes transportation, housing, land use, economic development, natural resources, energy, emergency preparedness, and other issues that affect people's daily lives.

Community engagement is central to this work. Meaningful engagement brings local knowledge, lived experience, and diverse perspectives into planning and decision-making. It helps identify community needs, priorities, and potential impacts that might otherwise be overlooked, leading to better-informed decisions, more creative solutions, and plans that reflect the people they are intended to serve.

Engagement also builds trust, transparency, and accountability. When community members have opportunities to participate early, understand how decisions are made, and see how their input is used, they are more likely to trust the process and support its outcomes. Bringing people together can strengthen relationships, build understanding across different perspectives, identify and address concerns before they become conflicts, and create a stronger sense of shared responsibility for the future of their communities.

These benefits depend on engagement that is thoughtful, inclusive, accessible, and responsive. CCRPC is committed to reducing barriers to participation, reaching communities that have been historically and are currently underrepresented in planning processes, and creating meaningful opportunities for people to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Purpose

This Plan & Toolkit serves three purposes:

1. **Establish CCRPC's commitments and requirements for public participation.** It supports compliance with applicable federal and state requirements while advancing CCRPC's commitment to thoughtful, inclusive, accessible, and responsive engagement.
2. **Provide practical guidance for CCRPC staff and project partners.** It offers tools, resources, and a consistent approach for planning, carrying out, and evaluating engagement throughout a project's lifecycle, from initial development through completion. Rather than prescribing a single approach, it helps CCROC project teams select engagement methods that fit each project's purpose, potential impacts, and affected communities.
3. **Serve as a resource for municipalities and other organizations.** The guidance, templates, and resources in this Toolkit can be adapted by local governments and community partners to support thoughtful and effective engagement in their own planning and decision-making processes.

Developed collaboratively with CCRPC staff, the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC), and community partners, this Plan builds on years of organizational experience, community feedback, research, and lessons learned. It is intended to evolve as CCRPC continues to learn, strengthen relationships, and improve its engagement practices.

Plan Framework & How to Use this Plan

The Plan & Toolkit is organized in two parts:
Part One: Public Participation Plan | Describes the foundations of CCRPC's approach to public participation, including applicable requirements and organizational commitments, opportunities for the public to participate in CCRPC's work, and the principles and public participation framework that guide CCRPC's engagement practices.

Part Two: Community Engagement Toolkit | Provides practical guidance for applying this approach to individual projects. Organized around four stages of the project lifecycle—Design, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate—it provides a consistent process for determining engagement needs, developing an engagement strategy, carrying out engagement, documenting results, and applying lessons learned to future work.

Where to Start

- **Community members:** Start with Part 1 to learn how CCRPC approaches public participation, what opportunities are available, and how to get involved.
- **CCRPC staff and project partners:** Use Part 2 to guide engagement throughout a CCRPC project, including selecting strategies, addressing barriers to participation, and evaluating results.
- **Municipalities and other organizations:** Use Part 2 as a resource for designing and improving engagement in your own projects. The tools, templates, and guidance can be adapted to fit different needs and resources.

A Note on Terminology
Public participation refers to the opportunities CCRPC provides for the public to help inform planning and decision-making. **Community engagement** refers more broadly to the relationship-building, outreach, and collaboration that support meaningful participation, particularly with communities that are often underrepresented in planning processes.

CCRPC uses the term **Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs)** rather than *stakeholders*. While *stakeholder* is commonly used in public participation the term has colonial connotations associated with settlers "staking" claims to Indigenous lands and can imply ownership or a claim over land, resources, or decisions. IAPs more specifically describes the people, communities, organizations, and institutions that have an interest in a project, may be affected by its outcomes, or have knowledge or experience relevant to the decisions being made.

This Plan also follows the approach to inclusive language outlined in the 2026 ECOS Regional Plan (pages 16–18). CCRPC recognizes that language and identities are complex and evolving, and strives to use terminology that is respectful, accurate, and reflective of how communities identify themselves. Readers are encouraged to

reference the ECOS Regional Plan for definitions of terms related to inclusion, identity, and marginalized communities.

PART ONE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Foundations of This Plan

Public participation is both a legal requirement and a core part of CCRPC's work. Federal and state laws establish minimum requirements for public involvement, while CCRPC's policies and regional goals guide our broader commitment.

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Chittenden County, CCRPC is required to maintain a Public Participation Plan that provides opportunities for public involvement in transportation planning and decision-making. CCRPC's engagement practices are also guided by federal civil rights and accessibility requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), federal language access requirements, and applicable Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements. *See Appendix G: Legal Regulations & Requirements for additional information about the federal and state requirements that apply to CCRPC's public participation processes.*

CCRPC is committed to going beyond these minimum requirements for public participation by creating meaningful opportunities for people to understand, participate in and influence decisions that affect their communities. The Plan & Toolkit puts CCRPC's broader commitments to meaningful engagement into practice. It supports the implementation of:

- **CCRPC's Organizational Equity Statement,** which commits CCRPC to evaluating and transforming its practices, improving access, and meaningfully collaborating with people most affected by the issues addressed through CCRPC's work.
- **Vermont's Environmental Justice Law,** which calls for meaningful participation in decision-making, with particular attention to Environmental Justice Focus Populations, and for the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens.
- **The 2026 ECOS Regional Plan,** including its goals and actions related to equitable planning practices and civic engagement. The ECOS Regional Plan identifies reducing barriers, strengthening relationships, improving accessibility, and creating meaningful opportunities to participate as important components of equitable regional planning.

CCRPC's Approach to Community Engagement

Moving Beyond Traditional Public Participation

Public participation has traditionally relied on public hearings, open houses, advisory committees, and written comment periods. While these methods remain important—and are sometimes required by law—they often favor people who already have the time, resources, and familiarity with planning processes to participate. Outreach has also tended to rely on established networks and passive methods of communication, rather than proactively

reaching communities that have been historically underrepresented. Practical barriers such as work schedules, transportation, childcare, language, and accessibility needs can further limit participation. Planning processes can also be highly technical, difficult to navigate, and structured around decisions that have largely been made before the public is invited to weigh in. When community input is not meaningfully considered or people do not hear how their feedback influenced decisions, it can further erode trust and discourage participation. Together, these practices have contributed to the exclusion of many communities from decisions that affect their lives.

The planning field has increasingly recognized these limitations and the need to make community engagement a central part of planning, rather than a procedural step. A 2025 report from Social Pinpoint, drawing on a survey of more than 600 engagement practitioners, highlights the growing emphasis on relationship-building, partnerships with trusted community organizations, multiple ways to participate, and greater transparency about how public input influences decisions to support more meaningful engagement. The report identifies the largest barriers to participation as distrust in government, a lack of time, and limited awareness of opportunities.

Addressing these challenges requires more than making meetings accessible or offering additional ways to comment. It means reconsidering who shapes planning priorities, whose knowledge is valued, and how decisions are made. It also means building relationships and creating ongoing opportunities for community members to participate, so engagement becomes a familiar part of community life rather than something people are asked to do for the first time with each new project.

CCRPC's approach reflects this shift. Rather than expecting people to come to CCRPC, the organization strives to meet people where they are, work with trusted partners, listen and learn before proposing solutions, and create meaningful opportunities for communities to shape decisions early and throughout the planning process.

Guiding Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement

CCRPC's approach is informed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values, which emphasize that people affected by decisions should have opportunities to influence them and understand how their input was used. **The following guiding practices reflect these values, current research, and lessons learned from CCRPC's engagement work.** They provide a foundation for building trust, strengthening relationships, reducing barriers to participation, and creating meaningful opportunities for communities to shape planning decisions. Not every practice will apply equally to every project, but all are worth considering when designing and carrying out engagement.

Be Intentional and Transparent

Start with the "why." Before planning engagement activities, be clear about what decisions are open to public influence, what constraints exist, and what role community members will play. Be honest about what can and cannot change. Design each activity around a clear purpose rather than asking for feedback simply because a meeting or engagement is expected. Just as importantly, close the loop. Share what was heard, how input influenced decisions, and what happens next. If suggestions cannot be incorporated, explain why. Following through on commitments and demonstrating that participation matters are essential to building trust.

Build Relationships That Last

Meaningful engagement is built on relationships, not just outreach. Relationships take time, consistency, and genuine interest in communities beyond any single project. Rather than reaching out only when CCRPC needs input, look for opportunities to stay connected, listen to emerging priorities, and participate in community activities on an ongoing basis.

Whenever possible, partner with trusted community organizations, schools, libraries, cultural organizations, faith communities, and others that have established relationships, credibility, and local knowledge. Engage these partners early, not simply to advertise meetings, but to understand community priorities, identify barriers, and shape engagement strategies. In some cases, it may make more sense for a trusted community organization to host or lead a conversation than for CCRPC to do so. Recognize the time and expertise these partnerships require and consider compensation in accordance with CCRPC's Stipend and Community Liaison Policies.

Think about how planning conversations can become part of places and routines that already bring people together— gatherings, neighborhood events, or community meetings. Over time, these connections can make planning more familiar and accessible, build confidence and skills for participation, and help communities take a greater role in shaping their own priorities and futures.

Meet People Where They Are

Rather than asking people to come to your meeting, consider bringing the project to them. Some of the most valuable conversations happen outside traditional meeting rooms—at grocery stores, libraries, neighborhood events, transit centers, parks, community meals, or local businesses. Think about where the communities you hope to engage *already spend time* and whether you can build on existing gatherings instead of creating another event. Don't overthink it. Sometimes the best engagement is simply showing up, introducing yourself, listening, and getting to know people. A five-minute conversation at a community festival may reach people who would never attend a two-hour evening meeting.

Reduce Barriers to Participation and Create Welcoming Spaces

An open invitation does not necessarily mean people are able or feel welcome to participate. Strive to overcome common barriers to participation through strategies such as selecting transit-accessible locations, offering virtual participation, providing food and childcare, offering stipends for participation, providing language and communication assistance, or scheduling events outside traditional business hours.

Equally as important are the less visible barriers: unfamiliarity with government, past negative experiences, power differences, cultural expectations, and concerns about whether speaking up will make a difference. Create spaces where people feel respected, comfortable asking questions, and safe expressing different perspectives. Establish a collaborative tone, listen without defensiveness, and encourage dialogue rather than debate.

Sometimes the biggest barrier is simply making the project understandable. Skip the jargon, acronyms, and technical reports. Explain the project as if you were describing it to a friend who has never heard of it before, using visuals, examples, or stories to make complex ideas easier to understand.

CCRPC's Language Access Plan establishes requirements and procedures for providing interpretation, translation, and other communication accommodations at no cost to participants. **CCRPC's Stipend Policy** provides guidance on when and how eligible community members may be compensated for their time and expertise to reduce barriers to participation.

Offer Multiple Ways to Participate

No single engagement method reaches everyone. Some people enjoy speaking at a public meeting, while others prefer one-on-one conversations, small-group discussions, surveys, interviews, or informal conversations at community events. Offer multiple ways to participate throughout the project. Don't be afraid to get creative in selecting engagement methods: storytelling, photography, interactive mapping, visual exercises, community art, or short videos can make complex planning topics more accessible and encourage participation from people who might otherwise stay home.

Value Community Knowledge and Lived Experience

Planners, engineers, and technical professionals bring important expertise, but that is only one form of expertise. Residents are experts in their own communities. They understand daily routines, neighborhood history, cultural traditions, community relationships, and the impacts of planning decisions in ways that reports and datasets cannot capture. Approach engagement with curiosity and humility, listening first and talking second. Rather than only asking people to react to a nearly finished proposal, invite them to help define the problem, identify opportunities, and shape possible solutions.

Just as importantly, look for community assets, not just community needs. Too often, engagement begins by asking, "What's wrong here?" or "What problems should we solve?" While those questions are important, they tell only part of the story. Ask about what is already working well in communities, what people value, and what strengths can be built upon. An asset-based approach recognizes that every community already has knowledge, relationships, creativity, and resources that can help shape stronger, more enduring solutions.

Co-Design Engagement When Appropriate

For projects with significant community impacts or long-term importance, consider involving community members in designing the engagement process itself. Co-design may include establishing community advisory groups, developing outreach materials collaboratively, partnering with residents to facilitate workshops, or involving community members in evaluating engagement efforts. When communities help shape the engagement process, participation is often more inclusive, culturally responsive, and trusted, resulting in stronger project outcomes.

Create Welcoming and Enjoyable Engagement Experiences

Engagement should feel like an invitation, not an obligation. People are busy, and participation competes with family time, sports, entertainment, social events, and countless other priorities. To encourage participation, create experiences that are welcoming, interactive, meaningful, and—dare we say—even fun! People should *want* to participate, not feel like they have to.

Whenever possible, replace long presentations with conversations, visual exercises, storytelling, games, or hands-on activities. Build in opportunities for people to get to know one another, share ideas informally, and connect with neighbors. Consider familiar, comfortable, or unexpected spaces, and look for ways to bring creativity, food, art, or play into the experience. Meaningful engagement doesn't have to be serious or formal to be productive. Some of the best ideas and conversations happen when people are relaxed, enjoying themselves, and connecting with others. When people leave feeling heard, connected, and glad they came, they are far more likely to participate again and remain involved in shaping their community.

Follow Through and Stay Connected

Building trust requires more than listening. When someone raises a concern, asks a question, or shares an idea, follow up whenever possible, even when the issue falls outside the immediate project. CCRPC often serves as a connector between community members, municipalities, service providers, and other organizations. Helping someone find the right contact or resource can be a meaningful outcome of engagement in itself.

Keep relationships going after the project ends. Share results, acknowledge contributions, communicate next steps, and look for opportunities to reconnect or to show up in their work. Engagement should not end when the final report is published. Consistent follow-through, even on small commitments, helps build the trust and relationships that make future participation possible.

The Spectrum of Public Participation

CCRPC uses The Spectrum of Public Participation, adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), as a framework for understanding different levels of public participation. The spectrum includes five levels, each representing a different level of public influence over decisions. No single level is inherently better than another. The appropriate level depends on the project's purpose, potential impacts, decisions to be made, and opportunities for the public to meaningfully influence outcomes.

Inform is the foundation for all CCRPC projects. Every project should provide clear, timely, and accessible information to people who may be interested in or affected by the work. Some projects, such as technical data analysis, mapping, or traffic counts, may not require participation beyond Inform. Others call for greater public involvement, from gathering feedback on proposed transportation improvements (Consult), to involving residents throughout development of a regional plan (Involve), to working with community members to develop shared recommendations for a corridor study (Collaborate). Empower, where final decision-making authority is placed in the hands of the public, is less common in CCRPC's work.

CCRPC project teams determine the appropriate level of participation during project planning, using the Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet in Part 2 of this Toolkit. This process considers who may be affected, potential impacts, available opportunities for public influence, legal and funding requirements, project timelines, and available resources. The level of participation may change over the course of a project as decisions and opportunities for public influence evolve. Regardless of the level selected, CCRPC should be transparent about what decisions community members can influence and how their participation will shape the outcome.

[Note: CCRPC will update / create its own graphic version of the Spectrum of Public Participation]

CCRPC Activities & How to Get Involved

CCRPC carries out a range of regional planning activities related to transportation, land use, housing, economic development, natural resources, energy resilience, and other issues that cross municipal boundaries. Many of these activities have specific public participation requirements, including public meetings, hearings, and comment periods. **These requirements establish a foundation for public participation**, but meaningful

engagement often requires going beyond these minimums. CCRPC strives to provide additional opportunities for participation based on a project's scope, potential impacts, affected communities, and engagement needs, using the principles and approaches outlined in this Plan.

The following section provides an overview of CCRPC's major recurring plans and programs, their public participation requirements, and how the public can get involved.

Major Plans & Programs

ECOS Regional Plan

The ECOS Regional Plan is a statutorily required plan to protect Chittenden County's resources and guide its development by providing guidelines for managing growth. It incorporates the visions and goals of municipalities, organizations, businesses, and residents to enhance the whole community's vitality.

It combines four plans into one: the **Chittenden County Regional Plan**, **Comprehensive Economic Develop Strategy (CEDS), Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)**, and **Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP)**.

The **Regional Plan** guides decisions about land use, transportation, housing, climate, economic development, and natural resources across Chittenden County municipalities. Updates occur every eight years.

The **CEDS** establishes economic development priorities for Chittenden County. Updates occur every five years. See Supplement 4.

The **MTP** evaluates the long-term transportation needs of Chittenden County and develops strategies to meet the needs and achieve the county's transportation and climate goals. Updates occur every five years. See Supplement 5.

The **EEP** establishes the magnitude of change needed in the heating, electricity, and transportation sectors to advance Vermont's energy and decarbonization goals. Updates occur every five to eight years. See Supplement 6.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) lists transportation projects expected to receive federal funding in Chittenden County over the next four years. It shows which projects are planned, when they are expected to move forward, and how they will be funded.

Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) establishes CCRPC's approach, policies, and procedures for involving the public in regional planning and decision-making. It describes how people can participate in CCRPC's work and provides guidance and tools for CCRPC staff and project partners to plan, implement, and evaluate community engagement.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is CCRPC's annual work plan. It outlines the planning projects and activities CCRPC will work on each year, including projects with municipalities and other partners. The work plan covers the fiscal year, from July 1 through June 30.

Other Planning Projects

In addition to these recurring plans and programs, CCRPC conducts transportation studies, municipal planning projects, housing and economic development plans, water quality and resilience planning, technical assistance, and other regional and local projects. These projects vary in scope and may result in plans, studies, recommendations, designs, data and analysis, construction, or other technical assistance.

Summary of Public Participation Policies for Plan / Program Adoption & Amendments

The table below summarizes the public meeting and comment requirements for adopting or amending CCRPC's major plans and programs. **Adoption** refers to the formal approval of a new plan or program, or a comprehensive update that replaces an existing version. **Amendment** refers to a change to an already adopted plan or program. Amendments may range from minor adjustments to more substantial revisions, with public participation requirements varying by plan and the nature of the change.

Plan / Program	Public Meetings	Public Comment Period
ECOS Regional Plan		
Adoption	Two or more public hearings are held for the proposed Regional Plan. Public can comment at TAC, LRPC and Board meetings, as well as via mail, email or phone.	At least 60 days before the first public hearing, submit the draft Regional Plan to the Land Use Review Board (LURB) for review. At least 30 days before the first hearing, distribute the proposed plan and required materials to the parties identified in 24 V.S.A. § 4348.
Amendment	One public hearing is required for a Regional Plan amendment. Additional opportunities for comment may be provided through committee and Board meetings.	At least 15 days' advance notice of the public hearing must be provided to specified parties, including the LURB, under 24 V.S.A. § 4348(n).
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)		
Adoption	The public may comment at TAC and Board meetings, as well as by mail, email, or phone. Public hearings may also be held as appropriate.	25 days (CCRPC policy). Federal regulations require a reasonable opportunity for public comment but do not specify a 25-day minimum. See Title 23 U.S.C. § 134 and 23 CFR § 450.316.
Amendment	Public hearing for all amendments. No separate public hearing required under CCRPC policy for minor amendments.	25 days for major amendments (CCRPC policy). Federal regulations require reasonable opportunities for public comment but do not prescribe a specific minimum period. See 23 CFR § 450.316 and 450.324.
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)		
Adoption	The CEDS is incorporated into the ECOS Regional Plan and is considered through the Regional Plan public hearing and adoption process.	At least 30 days of public comment before submission to the Economic Development Administration (EDA), per 13 CFR § 303.6.

Amendment	Substantive revisions to the CEDS requiring submission of a new or revised CEDS to EDA are subject to public review. When incorporated into an amendment of the ECOS Regional Plan, the Regional Plan amendment process also applies.	At least 30 days for a new or revised CEDS and for certain substantive updates that trigger public review under 13 CFR § 303.6.
Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP)		
Adoption	The EEP is incorporated into the ECOS Regional Plan and is considered through the Regional Plan public hearing and adoption process.	Follows the Regional Plan adoption procedures above. If CCRPC seeks an optional determination of energy compliance, the draft must also be submitted to the Department of Public Service at least 60 days before the first public hearing, and feedback on the EEP must be solicited. See 24 V.S.A. § 4348.
Amendment	Amendments made as part of the ECOS Regional Plan follow the Regional Plan amendment process.	At least 15 days' advance hearing notice when processed as a Regional Plan amendment. Additional review may be necessary when seeking or maintaining a determination of energy compliance.
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)		
Adoption	The public may comment at TAC and Board meetings and via mail, email, or phone.	25 days (CCRPC policy). Federal regulations require a reasonable opportunity for public comment but do not specify a 25-day minimum. See 23 CFR §§ 450.316 and 450.326.
Amendment	Amendments require public review and comment and Board approval. See Appendix H: TIP Amendment Policy for details.	Public notice and a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment are provided for amendments consistent with Appendix I. Administrative Modifications do not require public review and comment.
Public Participation Plan (PPP)		
Adoption	Public can comment at Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC), Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and Board meetings, as well as via mail, email or phone.	At least 45 calendar days before adoption of a new or revised PPP, as required by 23 CFR § 450.316(a)(3).
Amendment	Public hearing for all amendments, as required by CCRPC policy.	At least 45 calendar days before adoption of a revised PPP, as required by 23 CFR § 450.316(a)(3).
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)		
Adoption	Public hearing for adoption. Public can comment at TAC, PAC and Board meetings, as well as via mail, email or phone.	25 days (CCRPC policy). Federal regulations establish UPWP development requirements but do not specify a minimum public comment period. See 23 CFR § 450.308.
Amendment	Public meeting for amendment. No public hearing required for minor amendments.	25 days for major amendments (CCRPC policy). Federal regulations do not establish a specific

		minimum public comment period for UPWP amendments.

CCRPC Board & Committees

Committees bring together municipal representatives, technical experts, community members, and other partners to share expertise, coordinate across organizations, review plans and projects, and provide recommendations to the CCRPC Board. They help ensure that regional decisions are informed by a range of perspectives and local priorities.

Meetings are open to the public but often focus on specific, technical topics and follow structured agendas. All meetings include an opportunity for public comment. Community members are encouraged to review agendas and materials in advance to understand what to expect. Those interested in joining a committee are encouraged to contact the staff member supporting that committee to learn more about its purpose, membership, and expectations. CCRPC uses group agreements to support respectful and productive discussions.

Meetings generally offer both in-person and remote participation, although formats may vary by committee or meeting type. Meetings of the CCRPC Board and its committees are conducted in accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. §§ 310–314)which establishes requirements for public notice, agendas, meeting access, public comment, and meeting records.

For current meeting schedules, agendas, materials, staff contacts, and participation information, visit ccrpcvt.org/committees.

CCRPC Committees	Role	Meetings
All-Hazards Mitigation Plan Update Committee (Ad Hoc)	Guides the updates and implementation of the region's All-Hazards Mitigation Plan (AHMP).	Meets as needed for AHMP updates and implementation.
Board Development Committee	Supports Board effectiveness through member recruitment, orientation, training, and governance practices.	Meets on a semi-annual basis or as needed.
Board of Directors	Governing body responsible for adopting regional plans, budgets, policies, and other major decisions. The board receives input and recommendations from the committees below.	Regular meetings are held at 6:00 PM on the third Wednesday of every month (except August and December).
Brownfields Advisory Committee (Ad Hoc)	Advises on re-use of properties that are vacant or underutilized because of potential petroleum or hazardous substance contamination.	Regular meetings are held at 11:00 AM on the second Monday of every month.
Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC)	Advises CCRPC on community engagement, equity, accessibility, and public participation practices, and provides feedback on projects and engagement strategies.	Regular meetings are held at 5:00 PM on the last Wednesday of every month.

Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC)	Advises water quality, watershed management, and clean water initiatives.	Regular meetings are held at 11:00 AM on the first Tuesday of every month.
Executive/Finance Committee	Acts on behalf of the Board between meetings and provides oversight of organizational administration, policy, and strategic direction. Reviews budgets, financial policies, audits, and fiscal performance.	Regular meetings are held at 5:30 PM on the first Wednesday of every month.
Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC)	Provides guidance on updates to the ECOS Regional Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and other long-range planning initiatives.	Meets as needed for Regional Plan and MTP updates.
Planning Advisory Committee (PAC)	Advises land use, municipal planning, housing, economic development, resilience, and other regional planning initiatives. Reviews municipal plans for regional approval under 24 V.S.A. §4350 and makes recommendation to the CCRPC Board.	Regular meetings are held at 2:30 PM on the second Wednesday of every month.
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)	Advises regional transportation planning, policies, projects, and funding priorities.	Regular meetings are held at 9:00 AM on the first Tuesday of every month.
Supported Committees (not committees of the Board)		
Northern Lake Champlain Basin Water Quality Council	Establishes policy and guides decisions on project prioritization and selection of clean water projects for funding.	Regular meetings are held at 10:00 AM on the third Thursday of every month.
Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities (O&D) Transportation Committee	Decides local funding contributions and advises on transportation services and program improvements for older adults and persons with disabilities.	Meets quarterly (March, June, September, & December) at 10:00 AM on the second Wednesday of the month.
Regional Emergency Management Committee	Coordinates and supports all-hazards emergency planning and preparedness activities to improve the region's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.	Meets quarterly (March, June, September, & December) at 9:00 AM on the third Wednesday of the month.

How to Get Involved

CCRPC encourages everyone with an interest in regional planning to get involved. There are many ways to participate, from connecting with a staff member to learn more about our work, to providing input on a particular project, attending a public meeting, or joining a committee. You do not need to be a planning professional or a committee member to connect with us and explore opportunities to engage.

Part Two: Community Engagement Toolkit outlines how CCRPC staff work to make participation in projects and planning processes accessible and welcoming for community members.

Visit us in person
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
110 West Canal Street, Suite 202
Winooski, VT 05404

Our offices are accessible to people with disabilities and are approximately a quarter-mile from bus stops served by Green Mountain Transit (GMT).

Give us a call
(802) 846-4490
Call our office to provide comments or to request information.

Invite us to speak
You can ask us to meet with your group, class, or attend your community event to talk about regional planning or CCRPC projects.

Receive our newsletter
Stay informed on the latest regional planning information by signing up to receive monthly project updates and news through CCRPC's newsletter: ccrpcvt.org/monthly-newsletter

Visit us online
www.ccrpcvt.org
Find a wealth of information on our website, including current projects, committees, upcoming meetings, public comment opportunities, and engagement activities.

Become a committee member
Visit CCRPC's website for information on standing committees and opportunities to join: ccrpcvt.org/committees

Attend a board or committee meeting
All board and committee meetings are open to the public, and virtual access is offered. Visit CCRPC's website for a calendar of upcoming meetings: ccrpcvt.org/event

[Insert accessibility icon] Requests for free interpretive or translation services, assistive devices, or other reasonable accommodations should be made to Emma Vaughn, CCRPC Title VI & ADA Coordinator, at 802-846-4490 ext. 121 or evaughn@ccrpcvt.org preferably at least five business days prior to the meeting for which services are requested.

PART TWO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

CCRPC projects vary widely in purpose, scale, impacts, and opportunities for public participation. This Community Engagement Toolkit provides a process and resources for planning, implementing and evaluating

engagement throughout a CCRPC-led project, while allowing the approach to be tailored to the needs of each project.

The Toolkit is organized around four stages of the project lifecycle: Design, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate. Engagement should be considered from the earliest stages of project development rather than added after the project scope, budget, and timeline have already been established. Each stage builds on the previous one, while recognizing that engagement is not always linear, and strategies may need to be revisited as projects evolve.

This approach draws on principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which recognizes that people directly affected by an issue bring valuable knowledge and should have opportunities to help shape solutions. PAR emphasizes learning, reflection, and action as an ongoing process. These principles inform CCRPC's commitment to involving communities throughout a project, using what we learn to guide decisions, and reflecting on how to improve future engagement. Learn more about Participatory Action Research.

The Four-Stage Framework & The Project Lifecycle

Stage	Purpose	Typical Project Activities
DESIGN	Define the project and determine anticipated engagement needs.	• Project need or opportunity is identified. • Expected project impacts, affected communities, and engagement needs are identified during the UPWP application process. • Project applications are reviewed through the UPWP Committee and approved by the Board. • Projects that are likely to involve community engagement are identified by CCRPC staff to ensure resources and staff time are allocated appropriately.
PLAN	Develop the engagement strategy.	• The project team completes The Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet. • CCRPC's Outreach & Engagement Manager and Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) may review completed PIE worksheets, depending on project scope. • The project team develops a Project Scope, Budget & Engagement Plan.
IMPLEMENT	Carry out community engagement.	• Engagement activities are conducted and strategies are adjusted as needed. • Activities and community input are documented and integrated into project recommendations and decisions, as appropriate. • The project team reports back to participants on how their input informed the project. • Final project reports and/or recommendations are shared with decision-makers for consideration.
EVALUATE	Assess effectiveness and improve future work.	• Engagement activities and outcomes are documented. • Project is evaluated and lessons learned and recommendations for future projects documented.

The following chapters provide guidance, tools, and resources for each stage. The level of effort should be proportional to the project: a project requiring limited public participation may use only a small portion of the Toolkit, while a complex or high-impact project may require more extensive planning, outreach, accessibility measures, partnerships, and evaluation.

Design

Purpose: Assess a project's purpose, anticipated impacts, and potential community engagement needs before establishing its scope, budget, and engagement approach.

Tasks:

- Municipalities and project partners submit projects for consideration through the UPWP application process.
- CCRPC staff review and refine proposed projects, including anticipated impacts and engagement needs.
- The UPWP Committee and CCRPC Board review and approve projects for inclusion in the annual work program.
- Initial engagement considerations inform the project scope and budget development in the Plan stage.

Tools to Use: UPWP Application *[Link]*

Initial responses to UPWP application questions about project need, benefits, and anticipated engagement needs inform the Plan stage when project teams use the Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet to determine the appropriate level of participation and develop an engagement strategy, as needed.

Plan

Purpose: The Plan stage helps CCRPC project teams determine how to communicate about a project, what level of public participation is appropriate, and how to design engagement that reflects the project's purpose, potential impacts, and affected communities. Projects that involve public participation beyond Inform should complete the Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet to guide this process. Even projects that only involve sharing information can use the Toolkit to identify effective communication strategies, develop accessible materials, and reach interested and affected communities.

Tasks:

- **For projects at the Inform level:** Refer to the "Plan to Inform" section below for guidance on communicating effectively with interested and affected communities.
- **For projects that involve participation beyond Inform, or where the appropriate level of participation is unclear:** Project managers should complete the PIE Worksheet in collaboration with project teams, the Outreach & Engagement Manager, and the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC), as needed. The worksheet helps teams determine:
    - What information should be communicated, to whom, when, and how.
    - The appropriate level of public participation.

    - Who should be engaged, potential barriers to participation, and appropriate engagement strategies.
    - Engagement evaluation considerations.
- Project teams / partners incorporate planned engagement activities into the project scope, schedule, and budget
- For projects with more robust engagement, the project team / partners develop a project-specific Community Engagement Plan.

Tools to use: Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet *[Link]* | Community Engagement Plan Template *[Link]*

Plan to Inform – All Projects

Clear, timely, and accessible communication is the foundation of meaningful public participation. All CCRPC projects should plan to keep interested and affected communities informed, even when a project does not include opportunities for public input. At the Inform level, the goal is to help people understand what is happening, why it matters, and how to stay informed.

Not every project needs a detailed communications plan, but project teams should consider:

- **What needs to be communicated?** Identify the key information people should know about the project, including its purpose, potential impacts, timeline, major milestones, and decisions.
- **Who needs to know?** Consider who may be interested in or affected by the project, including communities that may not typically receive information through CCRPC's existing networks.
- **How will information reach them?** CCRPC's website, monthly newsletter, professional listservs, and Front Porch Forum may be sufficient for some projects. Others may require more intentional outreach through trusted community organizations, municipal partners, community spaces, or direct communication with affected residents and businesses.
- **When should information be shared?** Plan for timely announcements and updates at key milestones, decision points, or when project outcomes become available. Consider whether ongoing communication is needed and how people can stay informed.

See Section 7: Communication Channels for additional outreach strategies and the Prepare Outreach & Engagement Materials section in the Implement chapter for guidance on developing clear, accessible materials.

Planning for Public Participation – Using the PIE Worksheet

For all projects that include public participation beyond the Inform level or are unsure of the appropriate level of participation, the Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet provided in Appendix A should be completed early in project development by the project manager / team and in collaboration with the Outreach & Engagement Manager as needed. The remainder of this chapter provides additional guidance, considerations, and resources to support completion of the PIE Worksheet and development of the project's engagement strategy. The level of detail should be proportional to the project's complexity, anticipated impacts, and planned level of public

participation. The worksheet is intended as a planning and thought exercise, not a requirement to have every answer fully developed. Complete the sections and questions that are relevant and useful to the project.

Decisions & Decision-Making

Meaningful engagement starts with a clear understanding of what decisions are being made, who has the authority to make them, and where the public can have influence. Not every aspect of a project is open to change. Funding, legal or regulatory requirements, adopted plans and policies, technical constraints, or previous decisions may limit the available options. Identifying these constraints early helps focus engagement on decisions where community input can make a difference.

It is especially important to involve decision-makers in planning engagement. For example, if a municipal Selectboard or City Council will make the final decision, they should be involved in determining the level of public participation and how community input will be considered. The same applies when a state agency, the CCRPC Board, or another entity holds final decision-making authority. The project team and decision-makers should have a shared understanding of what is open to public influence and what commitments they can realistically make to participants.

Being transparent about what is and is not open to public influence helps establish realistic expectations, build trust, and ensure that engagement can meaningfully inform decisions. The PIE Worksheet provides questions to help project teams work through these considerations before selecting a level of public participation and developing an engagement strategy.

Project Impacts

Understanding a project's potential impacts is a critical step in understanding what level of public participation is appropriate. Considering who may benefit, who may experience burdens, and how impacts may differ across communities helps identify whose perspectives are needed in the planning process.

Vermont's Environmental Justice Law (Act 154) provides a useful framework for thinking about project impacts. The law recognizes that planning decisions can affect communities differently and calls for considering both the distribution of environmental benefits and environmental burdens, with particular attention to Environmental Justice Focus Populations (EJFPs).

For the purposes of engagement planning:

- **Environmental benefits** are the assets and services that support healthy, thriving communities. Examples include clean air and water, parks and green space, public transportation, affordable clean energy, healthy housing, health care, nutritious food, employment opportunities, and other public investments or services that improve quality of life.
- **Environmental burdens** are significant negative impacts to people or the environment. Examples include air and water pollution, excessive noise, flooding and stormwater impacts, loss of access to parks or healthy food, public health hazards, damage to natural resources, and other conditions that diminish health, safety, or environmental quality.

- **Environmental Justice Focus Populations (EJFPs)** are geographic areas identified under Vermont's Environmental Justice Law (3 V.S.A. § 6002(4)), based on criteria related to income, race and ethnicity, and English language proficiency. Because much of Chittenden County meets the current EJFP criteria, identifying these areas is a starting point, not a substitute for considering which communities may be most affected or have historically been or are currently excluded from planning decisions.

As you complete Section 3 of the PIE Worksheet, consider both the intended and unintended impacts of the project, including who may gain or lose access to important resources, services, or opportunities. Pay particular attention to whether benefits and burdens may be experienced differently across communities, and how these differences should inform who is engaged and how.

Additional Resources

- Vermont Environmental Justice Law (Act 154)
- Map of Environmental Justice Focus Populations in Chittenden County
- 2026 ECOS Regional Plan, Supplement 3: Environmental Benefits & Burdens Analysis
- Local and Regional Demographic Data
- Chittenden County Engagement Tracker

Level of Public Participation

Determine the appropriate level of public participation using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, considering the following factors:

- **Project impacts:** How significantly could the project affect people, places, or communities?
- **Decision-making opportunity:** Which decisions are open to public influence, and how much influence can the public realistically have (i.e., what can actually change?)? Who is the final decision-making body?
- **Community interest:** Is the project likely to generate significant public interest, controversy, or concern?
- **Affected communities:** Are Environmental Justice Focus Populations or other communities likely to experience the project's benefits or burdens differently?
- **Legal requirements:** Are there statutory, regulatory, or funding requirements for public participation?
- **Project complexity:** Would ongoing collaboration with IAPs improve project outcomes?
- **Available resources:** Does the project budget and schedule support the level of engagement being proposed?
- **Existing relationships and information:** Are there existing partnerships, advisory groups, or previous engagement efforts that should inform the decision?

Use these considerations to select the appropriate level of public participation and briefly explain your rationale in Section 4 of the PIE Worksheet. The selected level should reflect both the project's potential impacts and the degree of influence community members can realistically have over decisions.

In general, projects with greater potential impacts, particularly on Environmental Justice Focus Populations (EJFPs) or other underrepresented communities, higher levels of public interest, or more opportunities for community influence warrant higher levels of public participation. Projects that may significantly affect EJFPs should aim for engagement at the Involve level or higher.

Identifying Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs)

Identifying who should be involved and why is an essential part of engagement planning. This step is often overlooked, with IAP lists limited to broad categories such as "residents," "businesses," or "community organizations." Be as specific as possible about the people and communities whose perspectives are needed before selecting engagement methods or scheduling activities. Identifying IAPs may also help refine the project's level of public participation.

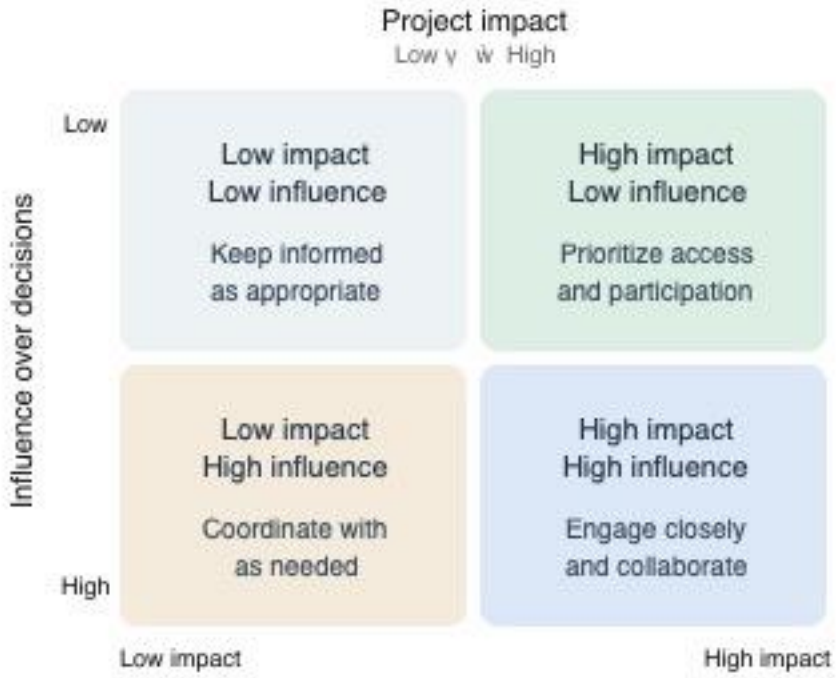
When identifying IAPs:

- **Who will be affected?** Start with people and communities most likely to experience the project's benefits, burdens, or other impacts. Consider those who live, work, learn, recreate, travel through, or otherwise have connections to the project area—not just those within its boundaries.
- **Whose perspectives are needed?** Identify people with lived experience, local knowledge, or technical expertise that could strengthen the project, including communities historically underrepresented or excluded from similar planning efforts and Environmental Justice Focus Populations identified in Section 3.
- **Who can help build connections?** Identify organizations that serve or work with affected communities, trusted community leaders, and places where people already gather, build relationships, or receive information.
- **Who else should be involved?** Consider decision-makers, government agencies, institutions, service providers, existing committees, and other partners with relevant responsibilities or expertise.

Consider conducting an IAP mapping exercise [Link] with the project team, particularly for projects with significant impacts or multiple affected communities. Set aside approximately 60–90 minutes and use the Impact–Influence Matrix below, along with sticky notes or a shared digital workspace, to:

1. **Brainstorm IAPs.** Identify people, communities, organizations, and institutions that may be affected by or have an interest in the project. Write each on a separate sticky note, being as specific as possible.
2. **Map impact and influence.** Place each IAP on the matrix based on two questions:
    2.1. **Impact:** How significantly might this person or community be affected by the project, positively or negatively?
    2.2. **Influence:** How much influence do they currently have over project decisions?
3. **Discuss where each IAP belongs.** Pay particular attention to those who may be highly affected but have limited influence, as they may need more intentional outreach and opportunities to shape decisions.
4. **Identify relationships and gaps.** Consider which IAPs CCRPC or project partners already have relationships with, where connections are missing, and which trusted community organizations or leaders could help build relationships. Ask whose perspectives may be missing from the map.
5. **Determine engagement priorities.** Identify who needs to be involved, what role they could play, and what outreach or support may be needed to enable meaningful participation. Use these findings to inform the project's engagement strategy.
6. **Document and revisit.** Record findings in the PIE Worksheet and update the map as new IAPs, relationships, or project impacts emerge.

[Insert image with IAP Impact – Influence Matrix, preliminary example below:]



[Call Out Box] IAPs and Partners to Consider
Depending on the project, potential IAPs may include:

- **People and communities:** residents; property owners and renters; people who work, attend school, recreate, travel, or use services in the project area; businesses and employees; youth; older adults; people with disabilities; and communities that may experience project benefits or burdens differently.
- **Community organizations and networks:** neighborhood groups; schools and childcare providers; libraries; faith communities; affordable housing providers; social service agencies; cultural organizations; advocacy organizations; youth and senior organizations; health care providers; and grassroots community leaders.
- **Government, institutions, and technical partners:** municipalities and municipal departments; state and federal agencies; transit and transportation providers; utilities; educational institutions; major employers; service providers; and relevant boards, committees, or advisory groups.

Use local knowledge and existing relationships to identify these groups and consult **the Chittenden County Community Asset Map** as a starting point. The Asset Map is a working resource that identifies trusted community spaces, gathering places, organizations, institutions, and other community assets that may be useful for engagement. It can help project teams identify potential partners, trusted messengers, places to conduct engagement, and existing community networks to work through. It is not comprehensive and should be supplemented with project-specific knowledge and research.

Learn Before You Engage

A lot of community engagement has already happened and is ongoing in Chittenden County. Before designing an engagement strategy, take some time to understand what is already known about the project and community. CCRPC's Chittenden County Engagement Tracker is a useful starting point, with reports and other documents informed by community engagement since 2020. Review previous plans, studies, and engagement efforts to understand community priorities and concerns, identify whose perspectives may be missing, and avoid asking people to repeatedly provide the same input.

Consider whether past decisions, conflicts, or engagement experiences may affect community trust or participation. This may include background research or conversations with municipal staff, community members, partner organizations, or community leaders. Building on existing knowledge helps avoid asking communities to repeatedly provide the same input and allows engagement to focus on gaps and new questions. Whenever possible, coordinate with municipalities, agencies, and community organizations conducting related engagement.

Additional Resources

- 2026 ECOS Regional Plan
- Previous project files
- Municipal plans and studies

Engagement Strategies

Before selecting engagement methods, identify two or three primary goals for public participation. What does the project team hope to learn or accomplish through engagement? Goals might include understanding community priorities, gathering feedback on alternatives, incorporating lived experience into recommendations, or working with affected communities to develop solutions.

Next, consider how to engage each Interested & Affected Party (IAP) identified in Section 5 and how to reach them. Use the engagement methods and communication channels below to identify approaches that fit the project's goals, intended participants, barriers to participation, and opportunities for public influence.

The methods below are arranged generally from lower to higher levels of participation, but they do not correspond exclusively to a single level of the IAP2 Spectrum. **The level of participation depends on how a method is designed and how much influence participants have, not the method itself.** For example, an open house could be used to share information, gather feedback on alternatives, or work with participants to develop recommendations.

Levels of participation are also generally cumulative. Projects at the Involve or Collaborate level will usually still need methods that Inform people and gather feedback through Consult activities. However, not every method is necessary or appropriate for every project.

Engagement Methods

Engagement Method	Description	General Level of Participation

Websites & Project Webpages	Provide a central location for project information, documents, updates, and participation opportunities.	Inform
Newsletters, Email & Project Updates	Share project information, upcoming opportunities, decisions, and progress with broad or targeted audiences.	Inform
Flyers, Posters, Brochures & Direct Mail	Share information and participation opportunities through printed materials distributed directly or in community locations.	Inform
Media Outreach	Use local newspapers, television, radio, community publications, and other media to share information and participation opportunities.	Inform
Videos & Recorded Meetings	Provide project information in formats that people can access outside scheduled meetings.	Inform
Door-to-door Canvassing	Visit residents or businesses directly to share project information and gather feedback.	Inform-Involve
Pop-Up & Community-Based Engagement	Bring engagement to events, organizations, and places where people already gather rather than requiring them to attend a separate meeting.	Inform-Involve
Public Meetings, Open Houses & Community Workshops	Bring people together to learn, ask questions, discuss issues, provide feedback, or explore alternatives.	Inform-Involve
Maps, Data & Visual Information	Use maps, graphics, data, and other visual tools to make project information and technical concepts easier to understand.	Inform-Consult
Surveys & Questionnaires	Gather input from a broad audience through focused online, mailed, or in-person questions.	Consult
Public Comment & Comment Forms	Provide opportunities to submit written or verbal feedback in person, online, by email, or by mail.	Consult
Community Meals & Shared Gatherings	Bring people together over food to build relationships, share experiences, and discuss community priorities in a welcoming, informal setting.	Consult-Involve
Interviews	Use one-on-one conversations to gather detailed perspectives, knowledge, and experiences.	Consult-Involve
Focus Groups & Listening Sessions	Facilitate deeper conversations with smaller groups about their experiences, priorities, or concerns. Consider partnering with trusted community organizations to host conversations in familiar, culturally welcoming settings, using approaches that reflect participants' languages, traditions, and preferences.	Consult-Involve
Storytelling & Oral Histories	Bring people together to share personal or community stories, preserving local knowledge and exploring how lived experiences can inform planning decisions.	Consult-Involve
Community & Participatory Mapping	Work with participants to map community assets, valued places, concerns, experiences, and opportunities, drawing on local knowledge to inform planning priorities and solutions.	Consult-Involve
Online Engagement Tools	Use interactive maps, idea boards, virtual activities, or other digital tools to provide additional ways to participate.	Consult-Involve
Interactive & Visual Activities	Use maps, images, models, prioritization exercises, or other hands-on activities to explore issues and gather input.	Consult-Involve
Walkshops & Site-Based Engagement	Engage participants in the project area to discuss conditions, experiences, opportunities, and challenges in place.	Consult-Involve

Photovoice & Participatory Photography	Invite participants to document their experiences, concerns, or community assets through photographs.	Consult-Involve
Youth & Intergenerational Engagement	Use age-appropriate activities, school partnerships, or intergenerational conversations to bring youth, older adults, and families into planning discussions.	Consult-Involve
Art-Based & Creative Engagement	Use drawings, photography, collage, music, or other creative activities to help participants express experiences, ideas, and visions.	Consult-Collaborate
Visioning Workshops	Bring participants together to develop a shared vision, goals, priorities, or desired outcomes.	Involve-Collaborate
Deliberative Dialogue & Small-Group Discussion	Use structured, facilitated conversations to explore different perspectives, consider tradeoffs, and develop priorities or recommendations.	Involve-Collaborate
Design Charrettes	Use an intensive, collaborative process to develop and refine design or planning solutions through iterative discussion and feedback.	Involve-Collaborate
Advisory & Steering Committees	Engage a consistent group of IAPs throughout a project to provide ongoing knowledge, feedback, and guidance.	Involve-Collaborate
Workgroups, Coalitions & Partnerships	Bring IAPs and organizations together to develop strategies, coordinate activities, or share responsibility for implementation.	Involve-Collaborate
Co-Design & Co-Creation	Work directly with community members and partners to develop alternatives, designs, recommendations, or other project outcomes.	Collaborate
Community Summits	Bring a broad group of community members, organizations, and decision-makers together to establish priorities and develop solutions.	Involve-Collaborate
Community-Led Engagement & Decision-Making	Place leadership or defined decision-making authority with community members, with CCRPC or partners providing support as needed.	Empower

Because of CCRPC's statutory responsibilities and role, relatively few CCRPC projects will operate entirely at the Empower level. However, individual components of a project may provide opportunities for community-led decision-making, and CCRPC may support municipalities or community partners in processes where greater decision-making authority can be placed with community members.

Communication Channels

People receive information in different ways. Rather than relying on the same outreach methods for every project, select communication channels that are appropriate for the communities you are trying to reach.

Questions to consider

- Are there IAPs who are unlikely to respond to traditional public notices, websites, or social media?
- Where do communities already receive information, both online and in person?
- Which organizations or individuals are trusted messengers within the community?
- What communication methods are most accessible for the intended audience?
- Will information need to be translated or provided in alternative formats?

Potential communication channels

- Personal emails or phone calls
- One-on-one meetings
- Meetings with community liaisons and organizations
- Outreach through existing committees, advisory groups, or partner networks
- Project webpages
- Email newsletters
- Social media
- Interactive online engagement platforms
- Municipal websites
- Community listservs or email groups (faith communities, schools, libraries, affordable housing providers, cultural organizations, etc.)
- Community organizations and nonprofits
- Food shelves, community centers, and other trusted community spaces
- Flyers and posters
- Direct mail
- Local newspapers
- Community bulletin boards
- Yard signs
- Community events and festivals
- Farmers markets
- Pop-up engagement
- Neighborhood meetings
- Tabling at existing events
- Existing community gatherings and meetings

The most effective communication strategies typically combine multiple channels and rely on trusted community partners to help share information with the people most affected by the project.

Accessibility

For each IAP, consider what might make participation difficult and how those barriers could be reduced. People may have limited time, competing work or family responsibilities, transportation challenges, or other needs that affect their ability to participate. Consider how scheduling, childcare, food, transportation assistance, language access, disability accommodations, virtual participation options, participant compensation, and other supports could make engagement more accessible. Whenever possible, ask community members or trusted partners what would make participation easier rather than making assumptions about their needs.

At this stage, the project team does not need to determine every logistical detail. Use Section 8 of the PIE Worksheet to identify anticipated participation barriers, potential supports, and any needs that should be discussed with IAPs or community partners. Incorporate these considerations into the engagement strategy and

preliminary budget. See the Implement chapter for guidance on providing accessibility and participation supports, including CCRPC's relevant policies and resources.

Resources & Budget

Start with the engagement strategy rather than a predetermined engagement budget. Consider the full resources needed to carry out the strategy, including preparation, outreach, community partnerships, accessibility, engagement activities, documentation, evaluation, and follow-up. Budget for the relationships and support needed to carry out meaningful engagement, not just individual meetings or events.

Use the budget planning table and cost estimates in Section 9 of the PIE Worksheet to develop a preliminary budget. Include a reasonable contingency for additional outreach, accessibility needs, or other expenses that may arise as the project evolves. The Outreach & Engagement Manager can help identify resource needs, develop engagement budgets, and navigate CCRPC's Community Liaison Policy, Language Access Plan, and Stipend Policy.

[Call out box] Common Costs by Engagement Activity

Engagement Activity	Common Budget Items
Survey	Printing, mailing, online survey platform, translation, incentives/gift cards, advertising
Interviews	Participant stipends, interpretation, community liaison support, travel, transcription
Focus Group / Listening Session	Participant stipends, food, interpretation, community liaisons, meeting space, childcare
Pop-Up / Community-Based Engagement	Display and activity materials, printing, food/snacks, giveaways, translation, community partner support
Public Meeting / Open House	Venue, food/refreshments, interpretation, childcare, meeting materials, A/V or virtual meeting support
Community Workshop / Visioning Session	Facilitation, venue, food, interpretation, participant support, printed materials
General Outreach	Printing, postage, translation, advertising, signage, community partner outreach, website/project page, staff outreach time
Reporting Back	Translation, printing/mailings, graphic design, accessible materials, community partner distribution

From PIE Worksheet to Engagement Plan

The Outreach & Engagement Manager should be involved in developing or reviewing the completed PIE Worksheet, and the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) may also provide additional input. Their role is to offer ideas, identify considerations or opportunities the project team may have missed, and strengthen the proposed approach. The resulting engagement strategies, accessibility measures, activities, and resource needs should then be incorporated into the project scope, schedule, and budget.

For projects involving substantial community engagement, project teams should develop a project-specific **Community Engagement Plan** (CEP) (see Appendix B: Community Engagement Plan Template *[Link])*. While the

PIE Worksheet identifies *what* engagement is needed, the Community Engagement Plan outlines *how* it will be implemented throughout the project. It serves as the project's roadmap for conducting coordinated, equitable, and effective community engagement.

Implement

Purpose: The Implement stage focuses on carrying out the project's planned engagement activities in ways that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to participants.

Tasks:

- Prepare engagement activities, including outreach, materials, accessibility, and logistics.
- Conduct engagement activities using strategies identified during the Plan stage.
- Document participation and feedback, share updates with the community, and adjust engagement approach as needed.
- Communicate how community input is influencing project decisions and provide opportunities for additional feedback before decisions are finalized, when feasible.

Tools to use:

- CCRPC Language Access Plan *[Link]*
- CCRPC Stipend Policy *[Link]*
- CCRPC Community Liaison Policy *[Link]*
- CCRPC Group Expectations

Prepare Outreach & Engagement Materials

Once an engagement plan is in place, project teams will need to develop materials to share information, invite participation, and gather community input. These may include emails, flyers, webpages, presentations, surveys, activities, and other materials. **All materials should be clear, accessible, and tailored to the intended audience.**

When preparing materials, consider:

- **Use existing templates.** Check for CCRPC templates and branding guidelines, and coordinate with the Communications Manager as needed.
- **Keep it clear and accessible.** Use plain language, avoid jargon, and consider visuals, maps, and examples to explain complex information. Follow CCRPC's **Language Access Plan** *[Link]* for accessibility and language access requirements.
- **Include the essentials.** Clearly explain what the project is, why it matters, what's happening and when, and where to find more information or ask questions.
- **Be transparent about participation.** If inviting input, explain how to participate and what decisions the input may influence. If the project is only informing the public, be clear about that distinction.

- **Design for meaningful input.** For surveys, presentations, and other engagement materials, use clear, neutral questions and activities that help participants provide useful feedback without requiring unnecessary time or technical knowledge.
- **Review and test materials.** Check for accuracy, clarity, accessibility, and ease of use before distributing or publishing.
- **Plan outreach and timing.** Provide sufficient advance notice, use communication channels appropriate to the audience, and keep project information updated.

Public notice requirements: Certain CCRPC meetings, plans, and programs are subject to specific public notice and participation requirements, including those established by Vermont's Open Meeting Law and applicable federal and state regulations. Staff should consult the requirements outlined earlier in this Plan and coordinate with the Communications Manager to ensure applicable notice, agenda, accessibility, and documentation requirements are met.

Reduce Barriers and Organize Accessible Activities

Many barriers to participation should be identified during the planning process; this section provides practical strategies for reducing those barriers as engagement activities are implemented.

Scheduling & Locating Engagement Activities

When and where engagement activities take place can significantly affect who is able to participate. Consider the needs, schedules, and preferences of intended participants when selecting dates, times, locations, and formats. Whenever possible:

- **Consider different schedules.** Account for work hours, school schedules, caregiving responsibilities, transportation availability, and other commitments. Evening, weekend, daytime, or drop-in activities may work better for different audiences. Consider offering multiple opportunities to participate.
- **Be mindful of religious and cultural observances.** Consult CCRPC's Religions and Cultural Days of Significance Calendar [Link] to avoid potential scheduling conflicts. Consider how fasting periods, prayer times, and other religious practices may affect participation. Ask community partners or liaisons about additional considerations.
- **Meet people where they are.** Choose familiar, welcoming locations that are easy to reach, such as libraries, schools, community centers, parks, and existing community gatherings, rather than always expecting participants to come to government offices.
- **Consider physical and sensory accessibility.** Choose spaces with accessible entrances, restrooms, seating, and parking. Consider lighting, background noise, acoustics, crowding, and other environmental factors that may affect people with disabilities or sensory sensitivities. When possible, provide quieter spaces and opportunities to step away from the activity.
- **Consider different participation formats.** In-person, virtual, hybrid, or informal drop-in activities may help reach people with different needs and preferences.

- **Plan for accommodations.** Arrange interpretation, captioning, assistive listening devices, or other supports as needed, and clearly communicate how participants can request accommodations.

For longer activities, provide breaks and consider whether a quiet space for prayer, sensory breaks, or other personal needs would be helpful.

Language Access Services

Meaningful participation requires that people can access information and engage in a way that meets their language and accessibility needs. Early in the project, determine whether interpretation, translation, captioning, accessible meeting spaces, or alternative formats may be needed based on the communities you hope to engage.

For guidance on when language services should be provided and how to access them, refer to the CCRPC Language Access Plan (LAP) *[Link].* Appendix A of the LAP includes step-by-step instructions for requesting interpretation, translation, and other communication services including contact information, pricing, turnaround time and planning considerations.

Stipends

Community stipends recognize that lived experience is valuable expertise and that meaningful participation requires time and effort. They can also help offset costs associated with participation, including lost wages, transportation, or childcare. Refer to the CCRPC Community Stipend Policy [Link] for guidance on when stipends are appropriate, eligibility requirements, recommended payment amounts, and payment procedures.

CCRPC's Stipend Policy applies to **CCRPC projects, not municipal projects**. For municipal projects, stipends should ideally be administered through the municipality's own financial and administrative systems. CCRPC staff can provide guidance and support to municipalities interested in establishing or implementing their own stipend practices.

Community Liaisons

Building trust often requires working through existing community relationships rather than relying solely on traditional government outreach. Partner with community organizations, cultural and faith-based groups, and other trusted messengers to connect with people who may be unfamiliar with or hesitant to participate in planning processes. **Community liaisons** are trusted community members who can help CCRPC build relationships, reach and recruit participants, shape culturally appropriate engagement strategies, organize activities, facilitate conversations, and gather community feedback. Involve community liaisons and other partners early in project planning, particularly when engaging communities that have historically been or are currently underrepresented in planning processes or have limited trust in government.

CCRPC's Community Liaison Policy [Link] provides guidance for working with community liaisons on CCRPC projects, including recommended rates, payment procedures, contracting and invoicing templates, and contact

information for community liaison partners such as CVOEO's Community Ambassadors and Burlington's Trusted Community Voices.

Transportation Support

Transportation can limit participation, particularly for older adults, those who live in remote places, people with disabilities, lower-income households, and those without access to a personal vehicle.

Whenever possible:

- Select locations that can be reached by walking, biking, or public transit.
- Ensure parking is available.
- Choose locations already familiar to participants.
- Consider providing transportation assistance or reimbursing transportation costs when appropriate.
- Offer a hybrid or remote participation option for those with mobility challenges.

Participant stipends can help reduce transportation barriers by offsetting the cost of travel to and from engagement activities. However, stipends may not be sufficient in every situation. Discuss potential transportation needs with the project manager early in the planning process to determine what support can be offered and how it can be incorporated into the project budget and logistics.

Childcare

For many parents and caregivers, childcare responsibilities are one of the biggest barriers to participation. But welcoming children isn't just about removing a barrier. Having kids around can make meetings feel less formal and more like a community gathering, creating opportunities for connection and helping people feel more at ease. Not every meeting needs to be quiet or perfectly structured to be productive. Consider ways to make participation easier for families, based on the needs of the community, the type of event, and available resources. Options include:

- **Choose family-friendly locations and activities.** Whenever possible, hold events at libraries, community centers, or other welcoming spaces with room for children. Consider providing a children's activity area or activities that families can do together. If childcare is not being provided, make clear that parents and caregivers remain responsible for supervising their children.
- **Partner with established childcare providers.** When formal childcare is needed, explore partnerships with local childcare providers, recreation departments, or community organizations that already have appropriate facilities and experience providing care. Begin coordinating early to address staffing, insurance, liability, and other logistical considerations.
- **Offer financial support for childcare.** When on-site childcare is not feasible, consider whether stipends or other financial assistance could help participants arrange their own childcare, consistent with applicable CCRPC policies and project budgets.

When collecting RSVPs, ask whether participants need childcare support and, if so, the number and ages of children. For events without registration, plan for potential childcare needs based on the intended audience and event format.

Important: CCRPC does not currently have a standard procedure for arranging or providing childcare at events. Staff should coordinate with the project manager before committing to formal childcare arrangements to determine appropriate provider qualifications, contracting, insurance, and liability requirements.

Food

Sharing food is one of the simplest and most meaningful ways people come together. It creates opportunities for informal conversation, helps people feel welcomed, and encourages participants to stay longer and engage more deeply. When planning your engagement budget, consider setting aside funding for refreshments or a meal, particularly for meetings held during mealtimes or longer than 90 minutes. Whenever possible:

- Purchase food from locally owned businesses. The CCRPC Community Asset Map can help identify local restaurants.
- Ask participants about dietary restrictions and preferences in advance, and provide options that accommodate food allergies, cultural and religious dietary practices (such as halal and kosher), and dietary needs (such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and dairy-free).
- Clearly label ingredients and common allergens.

Sometimes the most meaningful conversations happen before the meeting begins or after the formal agenda has ended. Building time for people to eat and connect can be just as valuable as the meeting itself.

Facilitate Meaningful Participation

Public meetings often bring together people with different experiences, priorities, and perspectives. While planners may not think of themselves as facilitators, effective facilitation is one of the most important skills for designing meaningful engagement and navigating complex public conversations. Disagreement is expected and can strengthen decision-making when managed constructively. The facilitator's role is not to persuade participants or resolve every disagreement, but to create a respectful process where people can be heard, understand one another, and contribute meaningfully.

People also bring different cultural experiences, communication styles, and expectations about how conversations and decisions should happen. Some may be more comfortable sharing in small groups, or writing down their thoughts than speaking in front of a large group. Other may want time to talk with family members, elders, or community leaders before weighing in. Social norms around greetings, eye contact, personal space, and interactions with authority figures can also vary. Rather than making assumptions, follow participants' lead, approach differences with curiosity and respect, and work with community partners to understand what will help people feel comfortable participating.

Good facilitation isn't about having all the answers or making every conversation go perfectly. It's about listening, being curious and flexible, and creating conditions for people to participate in ways that work for them.

Creating an Agenda

A successful meeting begins with a well-designed agenda. When building out an agenda, consider the following:

- **Be clear about the meeting's purpose and desired outcomes.** What should participants learn, discuss, or accomplish? If the group will make a recommendation or decision, explain what is being decided and how. When appropriate, invite participants to suggest agenda items.
- **Estimate the time needed for each item.** Be realistic about how much time activities and discussions will take. If there are too many agenda items, consider what can be addressed another time.
- **Think about the order of agenda items.** Consider tackling difficult topics after the group has warmed up but before people get tired. Alternating shorter and longer activities can help maintain energy and a sense of progress.
- **Build in enough time for participation.** Don't let presentations take up the entire meeting. Leave time for questions, reflections, discussion, and activities.
- **Choose facilitation techniques that fit the meeting's purpose.** For complex or sensitive topics, consider starting with paired conversations or small-group discussions before opening up to the full group. For brainstorming or prioritizing ideas, consider activities like sticky-note exercises or dot voting.
- **Plan how the meeting will begin and end.** Consider introductions, a check-in, or a warm-up activity to help people feel comfortable. Close by summarizing key takeaways, explaining next steps, and inviting feedback on the meeting.
- **Include breaks.** Plan breaks for longer meetings, particularly those lasting more than 90 minutes.
- **Have a backup plan.** Identify which agenda items or activities could be shortened or moved to another meeting if discussions run longer than expected.

Tips for Creating a Productive Discussion

Creating a welcoming environment where people feel comfortable sharing their perspectives is essential for productive discussion, especially when navigating complex or sensitive topics. Review the CCRPC Group Expectations to establish shared agreements for respectful participation. Refer to the CCRPC Group Expectations Facilitation Guide for guidance on introducing the agreements, responding when they are not being followed, and determining when it may be appropriate to adapt them for a particular meeting.

Throughout the discussion:

- Begin the meeting by clearly explaining its purpose, what participants can influence, and how their input will be used.
- Ask open-ended and clarifying questions rather than leading participants toward a particular answer. Allow participants to share personal stories.
- Listen actively and periodically summarize what you are hearing to confirm understanding and identify common themes.
- Be mindful of who is speaking and create opportunities for a diversity of voices to contribute without putting anyone on the spot.
- Use a variety of engagement techniques (e.g., paired conversations, paper for individual note-taking, small groups, sticky notes, polls, etc.) to accommodate different communication styles and comfort levels over the course of a project.
- Allow time for reflection. Silence often gives participants the space they need to think before responding.

- Pay attention to differences in communication styles and comfort levels. Avoid assuming that silence means agreement or that the people speaking most often represent everyone in the room.
- Be transparent about what you know, what you don't know, and what decisions are still open to public influence.
- Focus on understanding participants' perspectives before moving toward solutions.
- Keep discussions focused on the project and decisions at hand.

When conversations become challenging:

- Return to the CCRPC Group Expectations to refocus the discussion on the group's shared agreements.
- Acknowledge concerns and differing perspectives without taking sides.
- Help participants move from positions to the underlying interests, experiences, or concerns they are trying to express.
- If one or two individual begin to dominate the discussion, respectfully create space for others to participate.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, acknowledge it honestly and commit to following up.
- Re-ground the conversation in a shared problem. When groups recognize that they face similar challenges or issues, it can foster a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding.
- Recognize that success does not always mean reaching consensus. Often, success means participants feel heard, understand the decision-making process, and know how their input will be considered.

When closing the meeting:

- Summarize the major themes, questions, and any key areas of agreement or disagreement.
- Confirm participants have had an opportunity to share their perspectives and ask questions.
- Explain the project's next steps, timeline, and how participant input will inform future decisions.
- Let participants know when and where meeting summaries, project updates, or future engagement opportunities will be available.
- Collect feedback on the meeting itself, when appropriate, to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Thank participants for contributing their time, knowledge, and lived experiences, and acknowledge how their involvement helps shape stronger, more informed decisions that reflect community needs.

[Call-Out Box] Helping Groups Reach Agreement

Sometimes the goal of an engagement activity is to help a group move beyond sharing perspectives to identifying priorities, developing recommendations, or making decisions together. These conversations benefit from a little more structure, especially when participants have different ideas about the best path forward.

A few techniques to try:

- **Agree on what you're deciding.** Start with a clear question, such as "Which three improvements should we prioritize?" Explain who will make the final decision and whether the group is seeking consensus, making a recommendation, or simply identifying preferences.
- **Brainstorm before evaluating.** Give everyone time to generate ideas individually or in small groups before discussing their merits. This helps prevent the first or loudest suggestion from shaping the entire conversation.

- **Identify shared criteria.** Before comparing options, ask the group what matters most in a good solution. For example, should it be affordable, accessible, easy to implement, or beneficial to people with the greatest needs? Use these criteria to evaluate options together.
- **Use simple prioritization exercises.** Dot voting, ranking exercises, or having participants select their top three priorities can help reveal where there is broad support. These tools are useful starting points for discussion but shouldn't automatically be treated as a final decision.
- **Test for agreement.** Rather than asking "Does everyone agree?", try "Is there anyone who has concerns about moving forward with this option?" or "What would need to change for you to support this?" This can surface concerns and opportunities for compromise.
- **Document agreement and disagreement.** Clearly summarize what the group supports, where concerns remain, and what happens next. Don't force consensus when meaningful differences remain.

Not every group will reach agreement, and that's okay. Sometimes the most useful outcome is a clearer understanding of the options, tradeoffs, and different priorities that decision-makers need to consider.

Facilitating Accessible Online & Hybrid Meetings

Online and hybrid meetings can make participation easier for some people, but they also create challenges, especially when remote participants are joining an in-person conversation. Make sure everyone has a meaningful opportunity to participate, regardless of how they join.

- **Make sure people can see and hear.** Position cameras and microphones so remote participants can see and hear the people speaking in the room. Make sure presentations are visible and readable, including on a phone. Test the technology in advance.
- **Explain how to participate.** At the beginning of the meeting, explain how to mute and unmute, ask questions, use the chat, and participate in any polls or voting. Let participants know if the meeting is being recorded and how their questions and comments will be addressed.
- **Make participation accessible.** Enable captions and arrange interpretation or other accommodations as needed. Provide materials in advance when possible, and avoid relying on visual information alone.
- **Actively include remote participants.** Assign someone to monitor the chat and questions, regularly invite input from remote participants, and make sure they can see materials or activities being used in the room. Consider interactive activities that work for both in-person and remote participants.
- **Close the meeting clearly.** Summarize next steps, explain how participants can stay involved, and formally end the meeting so everyone knows when they can sign off.

Share What You’re Hearing & Invite Further Input

Community engagement should be an ongoing conversation, not a one-time opportunity to provide feedback. Throughout the project, keep participants informed about what CCRPC is hearing, how their input is shaping the work, and what happens next. As engagement activities progress:

- **Share what you're hearing.** Provide accessible summaries of key themes, questions, and concerns raised during engagement activities. Share these through project webpages, emails, community partners, or other communication channels appropriate to the audience.
- **Explain how feedback is being used.** Be transparent about which ideas are influencing project decisions, which may not be incorporated, and why. Acknowledge competing priorities, technical constraints, or other factors affecting decisions.
- **Invite further input.** When feasible, share preliminary findings, draft recommendations, or proposed decisions before they are finalized, giving participants opportunities to identify misunderstandings, raise concerns, or offer additional perspectives.
- **Connect people to answers and resources.** Not every concern raised during engagement will fall within the scope of the project, but that doesn't mean it should be dismissed. When participants raise issues that CCRPC cannot address directly, make a reasonable effort to share their feedback with the appropriate staff, municipality, agency, or organization, or help connect them with someone who may be able to help. Be transparent about what follow-up is possible, and don't promise outcomes outside CCRPC's control.
- **Check in on the engagement process.** Give participants simple opportunities to share what worked well and what could be improved. This might be a quick question at the end of a meeting, a few minutes for reflection, or a short follow-up survey. Ask whether participants felt welcomed, understood the purpose of the activity, and had a meaningful opportunity to contribute. Use what you learn to improve future activities.
- **Communicate next steps.** Let participants know when decisions are expected, how they can stay involved, and when they can expect further updates.

Evaluate

Purpose: The Evaluate stage focuses on assessing the effectiveness of community engagement, documenting how community input influenced the project, and identifying lessons to improve future engagement efforts.

Tasks:

- Evaluate engagement activities and outcomes, including who participated, whose perspectives may have been missing, and how well engagement goals were met.
- Document community feedback and how it informed project decisions.
- Complete engagement-related project reporting and closeout.
- Carry community feedback and lessons learned forward into future CCRPC work.

Evaluation should happen throughout the project, not just at the end. Regular reflection helps project teams identify gaps in participation, adjust engagement strategies, and learn what is working. At project closeout, a more comprehensive evaluation helps document results, demonstrate accountability to participants, and improve future engagement efforts.

Track & Evaluate Engagement

The Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) *Getting to Results* framework offer three useful questions for evaluating engagement: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off? These questions can help staff document activities, reflect on the quality of engagement, and understand how community input influenced a project. The level of documentation should reflect the scale and goals of the engagement effort.

How Much Did We Do?
Track the activities conducted and who participated. Consider maintaining a simple **Engagement Activity Log** throughout the project, recording information such as:

- Date, location, and type of engagement activity.
- Intended audience and approximate number of participants.
- Communities, organizations, and groups engaged.
- Staff, community partners, liaisons, interpreters, and other collaborators involved.
- Language access services, stipends, transportation assistance, childcare, and other participation supports provided.
- Other measures relevant to the engagement strategy, such as survey responses or project webpage visits.

How Well Did We Do?
Think about whether the engagement approach worked for the people you were trying to reach. Consider:

- Did we reach the intended audiences? Who might still be missing?
- Were activities welcoming, accessible, and easy to participate in?
- Were language access needs and other barriers to participation adequately addressed?
- Which engagement methods worked well, and which were less effective?
- What did participants tell us about their experience?
- What should we change for the next activity or project?

Use participant feedback, observations from staff and community partners, and available participation data to answer these questions. You don't need a formal evaluation survey for every activity. Sometimes a few questions at the end of a meeting can provide valuable insight.

Is Anyone Better Off?
Consider what changed as a result of engagement, particularly whether community input made a meaningful difference in the project.

- How did community feedback influence recommendations, priorities, decisions, or project outcomes?
- Were key concerns and recommendations considered and addressed?
- Did engagement reveal new issues, priorities, or opportunities?
- Were participants kept informed about what was happening and how their input was used?
- What relationships, knowledge, or lessons can carry forward into future work?

Not every benefit of engagement can be captured in a number. Building relationships, improving understanding, and helping people feel more connected to local decision-making are also meaningful outcomes.

Collecting Demographic Information

Understanding who participates helps CCRPC evaluate whether engagement is reaching the communities most affected by its work. This also supports an action in the ECOS Plan to develop systems for monitoring participation and evaluating the inclusivity and effectiveness of CCRPC's engagement strategies.

Collecting demographic information can be particularly useful for regional planning efforts, projects with significant community impacts, or engagement intended to reach specific populations. However, it may not be necessary or appropriate for every activity, especially when collecting this information could create barriers to participation.

When collecting demographic information:

- **Be clear about the purpose.** Communicate what the project team wants to learn about participation and how the information will be used to improve engagement.
- **Collect only what is useful.** Depending on the project, this might include age, race or ethnicity, primary language, ZIP code, housing tenure (rent or own), or other characteristics relevant to the intended audience.
- **Make questions optional.** Explain why information is being requested and make all demographic questions optional.
- **Protect privacy.** Whenever possible, collect demographic information anonymously or separately from names, contact information, and individual comments. Communicate how the collected information will be used. Protect participant privacy and communicate how the information will be used.
- **Use what you learn.** Compare participation with the communities the project intended to reach, identify gaps, and use findings to adjust outreach strategies. Summarize relevant results in the final project or engagement report.

Not every project needs to collect demographic information directly from participants. Depending on the engagement approach, staff may be able to learn about participation gaps through community partner feedback, geographic participation patterns, or other appropriate methods without asking individuals to share personal information.

At Project Closeout

At the end of a project, use the engagement documentation collected throughout the project to complete three steps.

1. **Complete Project Reporting**
   In the final project report, summarize engagement activities, who participated, barriers to participation and how they were addressed, major themes from community feedback, and how that feedback influenced project recommendations or decisions. Include what worked well, what could be improved, and lessons

for future engagement. This information may be prepared by CCRPC staff or incorporated into consultant deliverables, depending on the project.

2. **Document Community Feedback**
   Develop a concise summary of the community feedback gathered through the project and add it to the Community Engagement Tracker using the established form, as appropriate. Capture key themes, concerns, priorities, recommendations, and other information that may be useful beyond the immediate project.

   Public comments and records: Public comments submitted to CCRPC are a part of public record and may be subject to disclosure under applicable public records laws. Summaries of comments received and any CCRPC responses are made available through its website and in print upon request, as appropriate to the project and applicable requirements. Comment summaries or public meeting minutes may also be included in the appendices or plans, policies and studies.

3. **Report Back to Participants**
   Communicate project outcomes to participants and project partners, including what was heard, how community input influenced decisions, and why certain recommendations may not have been incorporated. Share final recommendations or project materials, address outstanding questions or commitments, and explain next steps or future opportunities to participate. Whenever possible, plan for timely follow-up throughout the project rather than waiting until closeout to demonstrate how contributions were used and maintain relationships beyond the project.

[Call-Out Box] Elevating Community Feedback
When community members share their time, experiences, and ideas with CCRPC, they are trusting the organization to use that information thoughtfully and responsibly. Staff should identify opportunities to carry community feedback beyond the life of a single project by incorporating relevant themes into future planning efforts. Feedback that has broader relevance should be documented, shared across program areas and with project partners, and revisited when related decisions arise. This helps ensure that community input continues to inform future work, reduces the need to ask communities the same questions repeatedly, and holds CCRPC accountable to what it has heard over time.

Continuous Improvement

Evaluation is intended to strengthen future engagement, not simply document completed projects. CCRPC will use project reports, engagement records, and evaluations to identify effective practices, improve guidance and resources, strengthen staff capacity, and support consistent engagement across projects.

Project-level documentation also supports organizational reporting requirements, including Title VI reporting to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and reporting to VTrans, DHCD, municipalities, and other funding partners. Consistent documentation reduces duplication, supports organizational learning, and helps CCRPC understand and improve its engagement practices over time.

CCRPC will periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies in this PPP and will update the Plan at least every five years to assess progress toward its performance measures, ensure continued compliance

with federal and state public participation requirements, and incorporate lessons learned and evolving engagement practices.

Appendix A: Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet

WHEN TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Complete this worksheet for any project that may include public participation above the level of Inform. It should be completed early in project development—before the scope of work is finalized—so that the appropriate level of public engagement can be incorporated into the project scope, budget, timeline, and community engagement plan.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Complete this worksheet collaboratively with the project team and the CCRPC Outreach & Engagement Manager. This may include municipal partners, consultants, community partners, and others involved in the project. For guidance, examples and supporting resources, refer to the Plan chapter of CCRPC's Public Participation Plan & Toolkit *[Link]*.

This is a thought exercise, not a form that needs to be completed perfectly. Work through the questions that are relevant and useful to the project; not every question needs an answer. The goal is to think intentionally about who may be affected, potential impacts and barriers, and how engagement can be designed to support meaningful participation.

Section 1. Project Information & Summary

- Project Name:
- Municipality/Project Area:
- Project Manager:
- Project Partners (if applicable):
- Anticipated Project Timeline:
- Project summary: What is the project about? What are the project's primary goals?

Section 2. Decisions & Decision-Makers

- What key decisions will be made or informed by this project?
- Which decisions or aspects of the project are open to public input or influence? Which are not? What has already been decided, and what constraints limit the available options?
- Who has final decision-making authority?
- Are the decision-makers supportive of public engagement? What role are they willing to give community members in shaping the project and its outcomes?
- When in the project will decisions be made, and when can community input meaningfully influence them?

Section 3. Project Impacts

- Who is likely to benefit from the project, and how?
- Who could experience negative impacts or unintended consequences, and how?

- Could Environmental Justice Focus Populations (communities of color, low-income communities, and communities with language access needs) or other communities experience the benefits or burdens differently?
- Are there impacts that should shape who is engaged or how engagement is conducted?

Section 4. Level of Public Participation

Project's level of public participation:

☐ Consult
☐ Involve
☐ Collaborate
☐ Empower

- Why is this level appropriate for the project?

Section 5. Identify Interested & Affected Parties

Identify the people and organizations that should be involved. Be as specific as possible.

Interested / Affected Party	Why should they be involved? How might they be affected?	Existing relationships, partners, or connections?

Consider who is most affected by the project or decisions being made, whose knowledge or lived experience is important to the project, and who may be missing from the list. Think broadly about affected communities, people with relevant lived experience or expertise, decision-makers, community organizations, and people who have historically been and are currently underrepresented in similar processes. Consider organizations, community leaders, liaisons, or other partners that could help build relationships, reach IAPs, or support engagement.

Section 6. Learn Before You Engage

Review existing information before collecting new input.

- What previous plans, studies, or engagement efforts relate to this project?
- What concerns, priorities, or community knowledge have already been identified?
- Who participated previously? Whose perspectives may be missing?
- Can this engagement be coordinated with another project or existing community effort?

Section 7. Engagement Strategy

- Primary engagement goals (2-3 bullets)

Interested / Affected Party	How will they be engaged?	How will they hear about it?

Consider:

- Which organizations or individuals already have trusted relationships with affected communities;
- Whether community liaisons or community partners may be appropriate;
- Whether existing community events or networks could support;
- Whether CCRPC staff members or partners have existing connections or relationships with any of the following groups; and,
- Which communication strategies are most effective for each IAP.

Section 8. Accessibility

What support may be needed for people to participate? Check all that may apply:

- ❑ Translation
- ❑ Interpretation
- ❑ ADA accommodations / alternative formats
- ❑ Transportation support
- ❑ Childcare
- ❑ Food
- ❑ Virtual or hybrid participation
- ❑ Low-tech participation options (e.g., paper surveys, phone calls)
- ❑ Flexible meeting times
- ❑ Community stipends
- ❑ Community liaisons
- ❑ Other: _____

Section 9. Resources & Budget

Use the Engagement Budget Planning Estimates at the end of this worksheet to develop preliminary costs. Not every category will apply to every project.

Budget Category	Considerations	Estimated Cost/Notes
Staff / Consultant Time	Planning, outreach, facilitation, project management, communications, note-taking, documentation, evaluation, and follow-up	
Community Partners / Liaisons	Community liaison time, partnerships with community organizations, recruitment and outreach assistance, cultural advisors, trusted community partners	
Translation	Translation of outreach materials, surveys, presentations, meeting materials, project updates, and report-back materials	
Accessibility, Interpretation & Communication Access	Spoken-language interpretation, ASL interpretation, CART, ADA accommodations, accessible meeting spaces, alternative formats, and other communication or accessibility needs; include preparation and minimum-hour requirements as applicable.	

Participant Stipends	Compensation for significant contributions of time, knowledge, or lived experience; survey or participation incentives where appropriate	
Food	Meals, refreshments, delivery, dietary accommodations	
Childcare	Childcare providers, space, supplies, or other associated costs	
Transportation	Transit passes, mileage reimbursement, rideshare/taxi, or other transportation assistance	
Outreach / Communications	Flyers, posters, mailings, social media advertising, website updates, media outreach, signage	
Meetings / Engagement Activities	Venue, supplies, technology, online engagement tools, display boards, maps, activity materials	
Documentation & follow up	Engagement summaries, graphic design, printing, photography, report-back materials, website updates, final communications to participants	
Other	Contingency, additional interpretation, expanded outreach, additional meetings, unexpected accessibility needs	

See table of Common Costs by Engagement Activity in CCRPC's Public Participation Plan & Toolkit for examples of budget items commonly associated with different engagement methods.

Section 10. Plan for Documentation & Evaluation

Plan early for how engagement will be documented, evaluated, and reported. Review the Evaluate chapter of the Public Participation Plan & Toolkit for CCRPC's documentation and project closeout requirements. Consider:

- **Engagement log:** Who will be responsible for setting up and maintaining the project's engagement log to track activities, participation, community feedback, and follow-up?
- **Evaluation and reporting:** How will the project team assess whether engagement goals are being met, document how community input informs decisions, and report back to participants?
- **Responsibilities and resources:** Who will be responsible for final engagement reporting and project closeout? Has adequate time been included in the project scope, schedule, and budget for documentation, evaluation, and follow-up?

Next Steps

Once this worksheet is complete:

1. Review it with the Outreach & Engagement Manager and the Program Manager.
2. For project involving significant engagement, the Outreach & Engagement Manager may share it with the CEAC for additional perspectives, ideas, and considerations.
3. Incorporate engagement activities, staff time, costs, and key milestones into the project scope, schedule, and budget.
4. For projects with substantial engagement, develop a Community Engagement Plan (see Appendix B of the Public Participation Plan & Toolkit for a template).
5. Begin coordinating with community partners and community liaisons, as appropriate, to refine and implement the engagement strategy.

Engagement Budget Planning Estimates, as of 2025/2026

The following estimates are provided for early project budgeting and should not be treated as fixed rates. Actual costs vary by provider, language, location, event size, and project needs. Confirm rates when developing the engagement plan. Estimates last updated: 2026.

Expense	Planning Estimate	Notes / Assumptions
Community Liaison / Partner Support	$75–$100/hr	Budget for all liaison time, not only attendance at events.
↳ Participant recruitment & outreach	$375–$900	Approx. 5–9 hrs
↳ Project/material review & preparation	$150–$500	Approx. 2–5 hrs
↳ Facilitation/event support	$150–$300	Approx. 2–3 hrs, plus preparation as needed
↳ Meetings & coordination with project team	$300–$600	Approx. 4–6 hrs
Written Translation	$50–$100/page/language	Simple standardized text; complex formatting or technical content may cost more. State guidance estimates about one hour/page. (Vermont Department of Corrections)
↳ Survey translation	~$480/language	Recent CCRPC/AALV planning estimate; confirm current rate.
Spoken-Language Interpretation	$75–$100/hr/interpreter	Allow for minimum charges, travel, and evening/weekend rates where applicable.
ASL / CART	$100–$150+/hr	Often subject to minimum hours; some events may require two interpreters.
Participant Stipends	$75/person for a 1.5-2 hour event	For focus groups, advisory roles, interviews, workshops, or substantial time/knowledge contributions.
↳ Short survey incentive	$25/person	Consider gift card or other incentive when appropriate.
Food — snacks/refreshments	$10–$20/person	Coffee, drinks, snacks, etc.
Food — meal	$20–$30/person	Simple meeting meal; include delivery, tax, dietary accommodations, etc.
Childcare	$150–$350/event	Planning allowance for a typical 2–3 hour meeting; confirm staffing and provider requirements.
Transportation Support	$25–$50/person	Transit passes, rideshare/taxi, mileage, or other transportation assistance as appropriate.
Meeting Space	$0–$500/event	Prioritize free community-based locations when appropriate; ~$200 is a reasonable placeholder when rental is needed. Some venues can be closer to $800.
Printing — flyers/handouts	$25–$100/event	Depends on quantity, color, size, etc.
Printing — boards/posters + mounting	$20–$150	Depends heavily on size and quantity.
Direct Mail	$1–$2+/household	Printing, envelopes, labels and postage; obtain estimate for large mailings.

Outreach Materials	$100–$500	Signs, posters, display materials, activity supplies, etc.
Paid Advertising	$100–$500+	Local print, digital/social media, community publications, etc.
Facilitation / Specialized Consultant	$100–$200+/hr	For projects requiring outside facilitation, engagement design, graphic facilitation, etc.
Contingency	10–15% of engagement budget	Allows the engagement approach to respond to participation needs that emerge during the project.

Appendix B: Community Engagement Plan Template

Project Name:
Project Manager:
Project Partners:
Project Dates:
PIE Worksheet Completed / reviewed

Project Purpose & Decisions

What is the project trying to accomplish? What decisions will be made, by whom, and when? What is open to public influence, and what is already decided or constrained?

Engagement Goals & Level

What should engagement accomplish? What information or perspectives are needed to inform decisions?

- Planned level of participation: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower

Summary of Previous Engagement Efforts & Community Context

What previous engagement has already been conducted that may inform this project? What were the takeaways? Is there additional community context or history that may shape the project?

Interested & Affected Parties

Identify who is affected, whose knowledge is needed, who has been underrepresented, and any existing relationships.

Groups / Communities	Why engage them?	How will we reach them (Partners? Liaisons?)

Engagement Activities & Timeline

List engagement activities and methods. Include any required public notice, hearings, and comment periods applicable.

Engagement Activity	Target Audience	Communication Strategy (How we will get the word out?)	Accessibility & Participation Supports	Timeline

Accessibility & Participation Supports: Identify anticipated barriers and the supports planned. Consult CCRPC's Language Access Plan, Stipend Policy, and Community Liaison Policy as relevant. Consider:

☐ Interpretation / translation ☐ ADA accommodations / accessible materials ☐ Accessible meeting locations or online options ☐ Transportation ☐ Childcare ☐ Food ☐ Stipends ☐ Community liaisons / trusted partners ☐ Other:

Outreach & Engagement Materials

What materials need to be developed or prepared to support outreach, engagement activities, and reporting back? Consider materials needed to inform people about the project, invite participation, gather input, and share results.

Roles, Resources & Budget

Who is responsible for outreach, facilitation, documentation, partner coordination, and follow-up?

Estimated Engagement Budget: $_____ | Funding / Task #: _____
Include: staff time, community partner or liaison support, accessibility, participant supports, materials, activities, and follow up.

Document, Evaluate & Close the Loop

How will participation and feedback be documented? How and when will the project team share what was heard, what changed (or did not) and next steps? How will the team assess who participated, whether engagement goals were met, and what to improve? Does the project team have an engagement log set up?

Related Resources

- CCRPC's Public Participation Plan
- PIE Worksheet
- Stipend Policy
- Language Access Plan
- Community Liaison Policy

Appendix C: References, Tools & Supporting Resources

- ANR's Language Access Plan (2024)
- State of Vermont Equity Impact Assessment Tool
- VDH Community Engagement Guide